

# The Hick Arrives: A Guide to Midwestern Living

by Rufus “Junior” Hickman, Jr.  
with Terry Dugan

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This book is dedicated to Momma.

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*Green Acres is the place to be.  
Farm livin' is the life for me.  
Land spreadin' out so far and wide  
Keep Manhattan, just give me that countryside.*  
— Ancient Filmways Proverb

# 1. HOWDY

When you think of folks from the Midwest part of these great United States of America, I reckon you probably think of people who are pretty simple—unsophisticated, you might call it.

In Nebraska, where I was reared, it's easy to tell who the simple folk are, who the Good Lord missed the day he was whackin' people with his Sophi-Stick™. If you lived there, there's a chance you know that person is you, and in return, you take great pride in it, using such phrases as "Don't be usin' them 10-cent words on my 5-cent mind."

**Lower Nebraskese:** "Don't be usin' them 10-cent words on my 5-cent mind."

**East Coast translation:** "What the fuck did you just say to me?"

We don't always do things by the book in the Midwest. Sometimes we put too much Ether in a tire to soup it up for the dirt-track race, and the tire blows up, almost killing us. Sometimes we rassel in a domestic dispute in front of several cops.

**HICKTIONARY** ☆ **cop (n.) 1. a form that wastes space in the atmospheric realm and its sole purpose is having it out for you 2. an onomatopoetic command signaling to run**

Lots of times, we get drunk, and we drive home. These are credited to not being branded by the Sophi-Stick™, and they're parts of being human.

I spent my high-school years in the town of Grand Island (pop. 35,000+). It's a conservative place with little sophistication (but enough balls to call itself an island despite not being anywhere near water). Folks go to work, folks go drink beer, folks go home, folks play with their kids, folks go to bed. There's no ballet, no black-tie affairs, and that's just fine with us. If being sophisticated means trading in cheap beer for something called a microbrew, which doesn't sound like something that would get me drunk, I'll pass.

**HICKTIONARY** ☆ **cheap beer (n.) tasty beer sold in large quantities**

We don't like polo, lacrosse, chess, fencing or other sports of sophistication. We like football, people beating each other's brains in and car wrecks.

We really like football. Our team, the Nebraska Cornhuskers, is one of the best in all the land. Big Red is our gift from The Maker, and our Huskers have captured the hearts and minds of many men ages 12-70 across the nation. They probably don't know where Nebraska is, but they like to root for a winner. Do they know a cheer for Big Red is a cheer for Jesus Christ himself and every time the Oklahoma Sooners win a game an angel dies? I'd like to think they do.

Are you filled with so little sin that you won't root for Jesus?



Although I'm unsophisticated, I'm a humanitarian at heart, just like a lot of folks you find in Nebraska. There is a group of people I'm really concerned for: the people who live on America's East and West Coasts.

Sadly, these people are sick. They suffer from a disease that has clouded their better judgment for more than 200 years: "Coastal Geography." Coastal Geography distorts people's thought process and stymies them from looking at the bigger picture. Worst of all, it makes them think that they are better than everyone else—makes them think they know what's right for the country.

This is the best example I can give to show the folly that is Coastal Geography:

**In the 1820s, people on the Coast were fighting over Missouri.**

Why would anybody ever fight over Missouri? I'll tell you why. They ain't never been to Missouri. If they had, this conversation would have never taken place:

**Yankee:** "We want Missouri, and you can have it over our dead bodies."

**Southerner:** "Oh yeah?"

That's all of that conversation you need to hear. Coastal Geography, in its infantile stages, had infested the minds of the legislators and somehow twisted their brains into thinking it

would be OK to give Missouri statehood. Had they lived another 180 years, they would have seen what a disastrous decision that was and fallen on their quill pens in disgrace.

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To relay to you how sinful and prevalent Coastal Geography really is, I embedded myself in the den of Satan, Seattle, Washington, and I can tell you, brothers and sisters, that Coastal Geography is rampant.

My second day in Seattle, I go to the grocery store. The grocery store had a bank in it. Even if I didn't bury my money, why would I go to the grocery store to give somebody money for something other than food? After shopping in Seattle, I figured it out. Banks are there so you can take a loan out so that you can grocery shop.

In 2006, the price for a pound of zucchini in Seattle was \$1.99. I've seen zucchini in the "wild." You can't stop making it grow. You have to scorch the earth to make it stop, and you want \$1.99 for a pound of it? This same grocery store wanted \$5 for a gallon of milk, which is the same milk that comes from a cow. In Nebraska, these items easily cost less than half that.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**zucchini (n.) a gourd confused with gold by those infected with Coastal Geography**

After I lost all my money at the grocery store like it was the poker room, the girl that wheeled the groceries out to my car noticed by my license plate that I wasn't from Seattle. She mentioned that one of her friends just moved from the Midwest to Seattle, too. Her friend got tired of Virginia.



At least some of these heathens acknowledge they've heard the word "Nebraska" before.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **Nebraska (n.) a place that is not near you**

Nebraska comes from a Native American tribe's word "Nebrathka," meaning "flat water." It refers to the Platte River that runs like a double amputee through the state. In 1820, Maj. Stephen Long traveled from the Missouri River up the Platte River to the South Platte headwaters near Denver. Long described this Nebraska land as a "barren and uncongenial district" and "almost wholly unfit for cultivation and of course uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for their subsistence." A map drawn by the cartographer of Long's expedition labeled the region a "Great Desert."

Guess what? We're still here, and now he's dead. Screw you, Long.

The U.S. Coastal Government, wanting land they've never seen, bought this Great Desert from the French who acquired the land from the Native Americans. Slaves were first bought and sold in Nebraska at Nebraska City in 1850, and I figure African-Americans have a long memory because I lived near Nebraska City for almost 5 years and never seen but one black person who wasn't just passing through. And we stared at him the whole time he was pumping gas.

President Franklin Pierce, who had never been to Nebraska, appointed Francis Burt of South Carolina, who had never been to Nebraska, as the first governor of the Nebraska Territory. Burt died in Nebraska two days after his inauguration on Jan. 16, 1854. Nebraska winters are a bitch.

**Upper Nebraskese:** "The wind chill is only 40-below zero today."

**Californian Translation:** "It's 50 degrees and I feel like dying! Burn something! For the love of God! Burn something!"

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Nebraskans have a Job complex (Bible Job, not job as in, "We don't have a job"). For you Northeasterners who aren't familiar with Job, living in Nebraska is like being a Boston Red Sox fan. We love the spring because it brings hope, but every winter

(playoff time), we know we're going to lose and lose badly. We stay and take it each year, no matter how many times we say it's the "last time." (Hey, just because the Red Sox won one World Series in 90 years doesn't make them winners. Even we can have a mild winter.)

I don't know if there's a worse, more pathetic job than meteorologist.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **meteorologist (n.) 1. a liar 2. someone who has no idea what he or she is talking about 3. anal-retentive prophet who preaches for money**

With these forecasters, we have a hate-hate relationship. We don't know whether to burn them at the stake or stone them. I'm not sure why there are meteorologists. Heck, I don't expect anybody to predict what God is going to set in motion next. It's like trying to predict how a woman is going to react to anything you say. One minute you're knee deep in a shit stream, the next it's sunny and muggy with a 20% chance of you getting laid.

The only thing we in Nebraska really expect from people is for them to have a clue what they're talking about or shut their yap. We may have rednecks in our midst, but at least they're not weathermen.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **redneck (adj.) an attribute given to people in the Midwest who aren't as sophisticated as those on the Coasts (n.) one of your relatives or possibly you**

Everybody in Nebraska has a redneck as a relative. But that doesn't mean "The Jerry Springer Show" has a casting office in the state. I'm not saying the Godless showbizzers ain't got no reason to comb the area for ticks, but it ain't that bad.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **double negative (n.) two bad things that happen to good people**

And when you come to our state with your sticky casting couch, don't try any of your fancy city talk on us, correcting our English because, basically, we'll punch your lights out. If you want to get a feller from the Midwest riled up, tell him he ain't using words right, and do it while he's talking. If you'd had this talk with me as I was writing this book:



**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “...ain’t got-”**

Idiot, interruptive you: “don’t have any”



I’d punched you in the face. Or rassled you to the ground. You might win, but I have principle on my side: the principle of the threat of senseless, non-lethal violence for the right to abuse the English language.

Just because I’m a hick who wouldn’t think twice about popping you in the mouth doesn’t mean I got a gun in my car and want to shoot you. I’m just “emoting.” The only time I might shoot you is when we’re hunting together, but most people survive hunting accidents.

Yes, we in Nebraska have guns, booze, country music and strange hair, but that doesn’t mean we’ll just accept any guns, booze, country music or hairstyle. We’ve got taste, even if a film of cigarette smoke gunk covers the taste buds.

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It’s time to cure you of your disease of ignorance, Coastal Dwellers. There’s a whole other world out there you don’t know about, a whole area filled with people who sort of speak your same language. Are you really better than those of us who languish landlocked in the middle of America’s mass? Does your shit not stink, or can you just not smell yourself? Come find out about my people. If you have a seat belt, don’t buckle it (Tip #1).

## 2. GOD'S WRATH

But First, a story of faith:

*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. A man who was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*

*One day, the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.*

*The Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?"*

*"From all ends of the Earth," Satan said.*

*"Surely, you know of my servant Job. There is none like him on Earth, a blameless and upright man who fears Me and turns away from evil."*

*"You have sheltered him in every way," Satan said. "You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased because of Thee. But if You did not shield him, he would curse You to Your face."*

*The Lord called Satan's challenge: "I put all that he has in your power, but his life you may not take."*

*So Satan went forth.*

*There was a day when a messenger came to Job: "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and a great wind struck the house. They are all dead."*

*Job arose, shaved his head, fell upon the ground and worshiped. He lamented, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."*

*In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*

*Satan afflicted Job with loathsome sores from head to toe. Job's wife said to him, "Look at what God has done to you! How can you still praise him when he tortures you? Curse God and die than live a life like this!"*

*"You know not of which you speak. We receive good at the hand of God; shall we not also receive evil?" Through all the pain and suffering, Job did not sin with his lips.*

*Job had been ripped from his family. His friends would not take his company. His servants would not answer to him. His presence repulsed his wife. His health had been taken from him.*

*Yet through all this, Job still praised the Lord. "The hand of God has touched me! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth. After my skin has been destroyed, I shall see God. My eyes shall behold him and no other. As long as breath is in me, my lips will not speak against him, and my tongue will not utter deceit. I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days."*

*On the day after Job's lament, he awoke in a new land, one untouched by human hands. The faithful man searched high and low for a sign from God as to what had transpired. The sign Job found read, "Welcome to Nebraska, the Cornhusker State!" Job looked toward the heavens, clutched his chest and yelled, "Damn you, God!"*

Let me learn you a bit about the God we worship. He ain't exactly a happy-go-lucky type of supreme being. Despite creating us, he's not really a "people person." I don't reckon God would have a great job interview, but I'd hire him because I'd be afraid of him snapping and killing me, er, asking me to "join him" if I don't give him the job. He has an impressive résumé. He shows great project-management skills, but in person, he's awful demanding.

He loves us, and we love him. There are times, however, when you have to call him on a deed or two that he has willed. This happens the most—almost exclusively—when it comes to the weather.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **weather (n.) a form of punishment afflicted on you for the sin you bathe yourself in in everyday life**

All we're looking for in day-to-day life is a little consistency. Now that I think about it, God does give us that consistency that we want with the weather. It's consistently bad.

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Probably the worst dose of God's wrath year in and year out is the tornado. It's difficult to describe how the threat of a tornado makes you feel to the uninitiated.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **tornado (n.) a destructive mass of wind that, at a moment's notice, can destroy everything you have or have worked for [See: politician]**

Most people with Coastal Geography know what a tornado is thanks to the "Wizard of Oz." It's true, being sucked up by a tornado can take you to a magical, faraway, incomprehensible place, but if you go there, you ain't coming back.

You really need to see a tornado in person once in your life. The smaller ones are the best to watch because you can see,

hopefully from a ways away, this funnel cloud just drop out of the sky. It's a holy-shit moment. At that moment, you don't feel an overwhelming need to get a closer look. If you can see it, you're already too close.

However, we do have our share of storm chasers, folks who get in their trucks and head for the path of a tornado, looking for the rush of Midwestern heroin that a funnel cloud can bring.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **storm chaser (n.)** bored, egoistic idiot with a death wish who only gets a rush when pushed to the brink of death or when ingesting methamphetamines or both

These people are ass holes.

Even though I've witnessed many tornados, I've never seen what a large, end-of-the-world twister looks like in person, and if I were to see one (meaning I was in Texas for some reason), I sure as hell wouldn't chase it. Just because I am from Nebraska doesn't mean I'm stupid.

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What's impressive about the large tornado, though, is its uncanny, sniper-like ability to find a town's trailer park and make it the first thing it destroys.

When a thunderstorm is getting intense to the point of spawning a tornado, we turn on our radios to hear the familiar sound of trouble: "The National Weather Service has issued a tornado warning, in effect until *blank* time for *such and such* a county. People in *such and such* a county should take shelter immediately."

**National Weather Service speak:** "Take shelter in your basement or cellar. If you don't have a basement or a cellar, lay flat in the nearest ditch or depressed area."

**Lower Nebraskese translation:** "If you live in a trailer, you are fucked, you poor white trash."

What kind of life-saving maneuver do you think that is, lay flat in a fucking ditch? As if the tornado, this massive, destructive, Samuel L. Jacksonian force of nature, this minion of God cast down upon the Earth to punish a trailer park for its shoddiness, is going to miss you in a ditch. If it does miss you, it's just toying

with you and will get you on the way back, maybe dropping a car on you and having a chuckle about it afterward.

I don't remember if we ever had any serious tornadic emergencies when I lived in a trailer. I'm sure that there were, but I was too young to remember. I don't remember ever taking a nap in a ditch in the pouring rain, if that means anything. There was a time I remember wearing a white t-shirt and underwear and getting gum or something from an old-man neighbor, but that's about all I remember from my trailer park days.

In general, we aren't afraid of tornados but only because we know we'll never win the lottery either. The odds of your house getting hit by a tornado are one in 10 million. Odds of hitting the Powerball jackpot are officially 120,526,770 to 1, meaning that you have a far, far better chance of being hit by a tornado in the Midwest than you do of winning the mega-million-dollar lottery. We play the lottery religiously; we don't fear tornados. It's a lifestyle, simple as that.

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Until the time I was 13, I lived in a town called St. Paul, a small place 2,000 people call home. When I was a boy, April 25, 1984 to be exact, I got my only taste of God's top-shelf wrath in action, and it put hair on my chest.

Three days after Easter. I can remember it was a Wednesday. It had to be a Wednesday because I was in catechism class like all the Catholic boys and girls of my town. We went to these classes because we had to in order to become Catholic. I didn't want to go to class. I'm 10. Why do I want more school than the school I had all day?

I reckon God's a pretty exciting guy, at base. Why are his classes so boring? Consider the class another of God's little punishments.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **punishment (n.) a test to make sure you're paying attention**

That night catechism was exciting. We had a tornado.

An hour and a half after the class started, the nuns scurried about. If you've never seen a nun scurry, then, well, you're not missing nothing because there ain't nothing to it, and I was gonna go somewhere with that and I can't. They brought us to the downstairs of the school, sat us against this cinder-block wall and

turned folding tables on their sides, making some strange trench, or fort at the very most. All this to protect us from the tornado. Thanks for the folding table.

After the storm, my parents picked me up at class, but we couldn't go home. There was no home. I stayed at my stepgrandmother's house that night. The next day, I saw the remnants of our shack. Insulation from the roof covered almost everything. Some fried chicken my stepdad picked up the night before lay on the carpet in the dining room. He was sitting at the kitchen table, eating supper, when the tornado hit. Most people didn't hear the warning sirens, I guess, or he really wanted that chicken. (I don't think he would have bolted for shelter anyway.) The twister knocked him off his chair and threw him against the glass patio door which cracked but stayed intact.

Most everything we owned was wrecked. One of the few things we salvaged was the Cabbage Patch Kids dolls that my mom gave my sister and me for Easter. I used that Cabbage Patch Kid, named Baird which I thought was a dumb name (later in life, I would use the word "gay" instead of "dumb"), with its rock-solid head to torture my little sister for much of the next 3 years by having it give her head butt after head butt.

The doll's hair smelled like baby powder, and for a reason I can't explain, the smell made me feel like things were gonna be OK. Maybe I felt that way just because I still possessed one of the hottest toys in the nation. That fucker could have been wearing a suit made out of insulation and I still would have kept it.



Cabbage Patchless Dumb-Ass Kid: "Is that Cabbage Patch Kid wearing an insulation suit?"

**Little Rufus: "What's your Cabbage Patch Kid wearing, dicklicker?"**



In a foolish bit of being a kid, as I sifted through my stuff while wearing work gloves to protect my fingers from the insulation, I cried, "What did we do to deserve this?" I said it in earshot of my stepgrandmother who naturally relayed the details of that sidenote to my mother who was none too pleased with my agonizing. I wasn't sure why Momma was so mad. Maybe she didn't like my line of reasoning. Maybe she was trying to instill in me that we were survivors and that ain't how survivors talked.

I like to think that she agreed with me but was afraid I might be right and admit that that's how things work: You get what you deserve. Your natural reaction is to say that it ain't right to think that God would want something bad to happen to anyone or that a natural disaster occurred because someone did something bad. When I was 10, I believed that God created and controlled everything. Before I turned 11, I stopped wanting to worship God. Then I reminded myself through the voice in my head that if I didn't, he'd kill me. Job had it worse, I reckon. Every house on our block, except one, was wrecked by the tornado in that minute.

After the tornado we had to start over, and we'd do it without my stepfather. He and my Momma had been going through those "tough times," and the destruction of the last thing they owned together, outside of my sister, made it a convenient time to end the marriage. That happens. Seems to happen a lot to people, minus the tornado.

My mom worked as a teller in a bank; my stepdad worked for a manufacturing company. We didn't have money for a new joystick for my Atari (those fucking joysticks always broke) let alone money to start our lives over, but we had no choice. My mom, sister and I moved into an old rental house that never felt like home, and it would be years before we rebuilt our perfect little house right across from the baseball field, right next to the cornfield and right inside my heart. But even then, it didn't feel like my home.

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Tornados get all the press, but they don't happen too much. Besides, the state's got plenty of miserable weather to spread around. In a good year, Nebraskans get 20 days of absolutely great weather. The other 345 days, well, in the summer, the temperature climbs above 100 degrees with 100 percent humidity. This is equal to having your head stuck in a camel's vagina. (Don't ask me how I know.) Winds regularly gust from 30 to 50 miles per hour. Rain falls 2 to 4 inches at a time. Snow drifts by the foot because of the fierce wind. Wind chills in the winter, using the old system of measurement, dipped to 60 degrees below zero. (C'mon, shouldn't zero be the lowest unit of measurement? There's no noticeable difference between zero degrees and minus-10 degrees. It's fucking cold, shut up and get inside.)

Lately I'm starting to wonder if the weather is the way it is

because “it’s Nebraska” or if it’s because I lived in Nebraska. The only time I visited Phoenix, for baseball spring training, Phoenix hit record high temperatures for March. My trip to Montreal in early August yielded some of the hottest weather they had there (and I love Montreal, but its hygiene ain’t exactly designed for sweltering heat, if you catch the drift, which I did). On a trip to Pocatello, Idaho, it snowed in June. My trip to San Diego sent chills down the residents’ spines in early December.

Then, there was my move to Washington State. In the span of my first two months there, Seattle goes from having one of its most beautiful summers ever (before I arrived) to two massive windstorms, historic flooding, rockslides, mudslides and having the wettest day in the city on record, which destroyed trails and nature-type stuff that had been molded for more than 100 years. Also during my stay Seattle faced another windstorm that knocked out power to a million people, the wettest month on record and 27 consecutive days of measurable rain. When I finish researching whether I actually influence weather patterns or not, I’ll let you know. Maybe I’ll wait for the genius meteorologists to figure that one out.

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Scientists studying global warming need to look at the big picture. When did global warming really start to kick in? When the automobile became an affordable alternative to the horse or the mule, which was the compact car of the day?

I would point them specifically to the Eisenhower administration, which really dug deep into Uncle Sam’s pockets for roads, as the origin of global warming. The Interstate System was built so that, in times of war, our troops could quickly travel across the country on big, wide roads. A mistake was made, however, in the design of Interstate 80 which connects San Francisco to New York City: They decided to go through Nebraska.

Starting in the Sandhills in northwest Nebraska and ending in the delta of Omaha, Interstate 80 covers 455 miles of real estate in the Cornhusker State, thus giving lifelong residents of Nebraska a fast, easy way of leaving the state since 1974, the year of my birth. The same year the weather went ape shit, according to no research I have done. Coincidence?

## **HICKTIONARY** ★

**coincidence (n.) an action that people in Nebraska are involved in on a daily basis**

That wasn't the only mistake they made when I-80 was built. Somebody had a brainstorm: "While we're at it, let's make Interstate 80 go through Chicago." He was another victim of Coastal Geography. New York is at the 40th parallel. San Francisco is at the 37th parallel. Chicago, however, is at the 41st parallel. Even I know that the 41st parallel is north of the 40th parallel, let alone the 37th. How does this route encourage moving troops quickly across the country?

The point is this: The Interstate System, running through Nebraska, gave Nebraskans a chance to leave, thus the deserters from Nebraska took their eternal burden of shitty weather with them to wherever the road led. You may say I have no "facts" to back this up, and I would tell you to shut your hole before I clog it up with my fist. I don't need to prove nothing to you. You calling me a liar?

## 3. TRANSPORTATION

But first, a story about temptation:

*A young man stood at the intersection of two gravel roads on a cold winter day. The few trees in the area could not shield him enough from the howling winds that bite at your skin with razor sharpness. The school bus for which he waited was always late. Seemed like on any given day the colder he was, the later the bus would come.*

*The young man heard a voice coming from one of the trees. "Is someone there?" asked the young man, wondering if the sound he heard was just the wind.*

*"Come closer," said the voice in the tree.*

*The young man slowly stepped toward the tree. When he looked up, one of the bare branches turned into a frightful serpent with a man's face. The young man was too shocked and frozen from the wind to move.*

*"Be calm, my child. I mean you no harm," said the serpent through its forked tongue. "You look so cold waiting for the bus. Don't you wish there was a better way, one that didn't cause you to freeze your fingers, toes and nose off while waiting for some forsaken vehicle that's cold inside and sickens you with a diesel smell?"*

*The young man agreed that that wouldn't be such a bad idea as no one likes to be cold.*

*"And what about the children inside the bus? You're in high school. You shouldn't have to listen to 8-year-olds play patty-cake as you're thinking about girls who will never date you. You should be in your own car! You should be driving your own car, listening to Iron Maiden turned up as loud as it can go. And as you drive by all the young women, they will ask themselves, 'Why am I not going out with that young stud in the Camaro?'"*

*As far-fetched as the idea sounded, the young man could visualize it all. "I reckon it don't hurt too much, havin' a car," said the shivering young man.*

*"Then here," said the serpent as he motioned toward the other side of the road. There, a cherry-condition Camaro awaited, sparkling and with the engine running. "What do you say? Want to go to school in style?"*

*The young man nodded. "But wait. Somethin' ain't right here. You tryin' to trick me into givin' you my soul or 'somethin'?"*

*"Don't be silly," slithered the serpent. "Where do you kids read that kind of stuff? Honestly..."*

*Partially embarrassed for making that stretch, the young man thanked the serpent, hopped into the Camaro and headed off for school. Within three seconds, the young man's real-wheel drive muscle car slid*

*on the icy, gravelly road, careening into the oncoming school bus, which tipped over into the ditch and started on fire. Everyone perished.*

*The serpent, he turned back into a tree branch, grinning all the way.*

If I lived in a big city, I wouldn't want Nebraskans driving around in it: We ain't used to driving in traffic and we consider the speed limit more of a suggestion than anything legally binding. If God didn't want us to drive fast, why wouldn't engines stop at 50 mph?

You would be hard-pressed to find anyone in Nebraska who can't drive a car or truck. Driving comes second only to shooting a gun in terms of things we learn to do before we grow up. We're not too picky. We'll drive anything, preferably a rig made in America.

Do you folks in big cities know what happens to your cars that you trade in or never buy? I think they get shipped to the Midwest because we've got more than our fair share of ugly, worthless cars roaming the roads. I wouldn't be surprised to find out that we were the Pinto capital of the U.S. in the 1980s if anyone is willing to decree that.

My first car, in 1988, was a 1975 Pontiac Ventura, canary yellow if that helps scar your brain. I didn't get any girlfriends with that car like the TV says I should, but I survived three accidents in it.

One time, I flew out of my seat and bashed my head into the windshield. I would have thought I was hard-headed enough to break that sucker, but instead I just traded in some working parts of my brain for fresh mush.

Another time a chunk of concrete jumped out of a big rig as it passed us on the highway. I have no idea what year they invented that super glass that don't break like glass, but I reckon it was before 1975 or you wouldn't be reading this book. Can you imagine the force of a chunk of concrete dropping at least 6 feet from a rig moving at least 55 miles per hour (low estimate: after all, it's Nebraska)? And that piece of fake glass stopped my head from looking like a mosquito mashed up on the wall?

No bones about it. I may not be rich, things may not go my way and I may be part Irish, but I lead a charmed life.

After the third accident, however, the car didn't make it (actually it did, but we found someone dumber than us to buy it).

## HICKTIONARY ★

**accident (n.) something other people are supposed to own up to but to which you are immune**

My family lived on a farm about 7 miles from my school (the city kids called the school Cow Pie High). In Nebraska, you can get a “school permit” when you're 14 years old, which lets you to drive to school without having to have a real license.

To get to school, I had to take gravel roads.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**gravel road (n.) a path, covered with rocks. Driving on it most closely resembles driving on shifting, rocky quicksand. After hard rains, these roads show signs of erosion, especially in the middle**

Gravel roads: dusty, dangerous, everywhere and necessary. Even if you're used to driving on them, you hit patches that make you say, “Whoa!” (which is a pretty serious sentiment). One day while driving to school, I lost control of my wheeled banana; it slid and ended up with the rear end in the ditch.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**ditch (n.) a hole you don't want to be in  
ditch digger (n.) a mythical occupation that you'd rather do than your current job at certain given moments**

We hadn't had rain in weeks because God gives us tough love. And since I was scared of my Momma knowing I ditched the car, I knew I had to get that car out of the ditch at all costs. I revved the engine. The back wheels turned and turned to try to get me out of the ditch and to Cow Pie High. However, the ditch was too deep, and the wheel rotation combined with the gravel from the road instead created a spark that set the ditch weeds on fire.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**ditchweed (n.) 1. plant life that grows well in gravel-packed dirt 2. wild marijuana that's as likely to get you high as listening to an ABBA record will**

I had to get that fire stopped.

### Tips for Putting Out a Fire in Nebraska

1) *Recognize if the burning object is supposed to be on fire*

This is very important. Nothing—except maybe listening to a

Toby Keith album—makes you look like more of an ass hole than extinguishing a fire that was meant to burn.

On some nights, the volunteer fire departments burn the weeds in the ditches, and if you stand on a hill overlooking the town, I reckon you can imagine yourself in a faraway land, like Rome or Detroit.

We like to burn things; that's our nature. We're bored. We like making bonfires on river banks because we want to see our cans of beer as we drink. Other people in Nebraska just don't like wood. Can you blame them?

*2) If something is not supposed to be on fire, try to put it out yourself before calling for help*

Most small-town fire departments are of the volunteer variety, and there's no sense in getting everybody out of bed or called away from supper if you can snuff out the blaze all by yourself.

No one expects you to put out a roaring house fire. That's stupid. Let the volunteers try to put that out. But if it's a small house fire, you might as well give it a shot, especially if there's a high school football game going on (which is where all the volunteer firemen are).

*3) Find the nearest shovel*

Cold soil or sand, if you can find it, does a good job of knocking down the flames so you can then stomp them out with your foot. If there's a lock on the nearest tool shed, take a blunt object, maybe a fire extinguisher, and break the lock open to get the shovel.

*4) Curse at the fire as you try to put it out*

"Son of a bitch" and "motherfucker" or "crap on Christ" work pretty well. "Jerkalope" is also acceptable if children are near the fire.

*5) If you can't put the fire out, recognize that you are beat and leave*

It's the worst-case scenario because we hate to admit when we're licked, but we ain't stupid enough to set ourselves on fire. If something's got to burn, let it burn and get some marshmallows and fireworks.

**L.A. City Talk:** “Like, the smog is, like, really thick today.”

**Upper Nebraskese:** “Crap on Christ! What’s on fire?”

Lucky for me a farmer helped smother the fire with dirt, otherwise the nearest house was at least a mile away. So the farmer took his shovel from the back of his truck, helped me put out the grass fire and even gave me a ride to school.

At school, I had to call my mom because I was tardy, that and I smelled like I spent the last two days at a Snoop Dogg concert. How would I explain to her that my car was in the ditch? My excuse: I swerved to avoid a squirrel in the road and ended up in the ditch. I claimed ignorance as to how the fire started.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **cornfield (n.) 1. cropland found in Nebraska in which farmers grow varieties of corn 2. a place where you will rarely ever find a squirrel**

My karmic punishment for my fib was that I had to drive the Ventura, black char marks on the driver’s side door, for almost two more years.



Acquaintance: “Dude, what happened to your car?”

**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “Squirrel.”**

Acquaintance: “Douche.”



You need a car. You simply can’t use public transportation in Nebraska and expect to get anywhere fast. College football Saturdays in Lincoln represent the worst of our driving spirit. Instead of parking away from Memorial Stadium and taking a shuttle (public transportation) to the game, people would rather park 20 to 30 blocks away and walk, this after driving around for an hour to find the closest available parking space.

The main reason why a person from this state would rather park and walk forever than take a shuttle is simple: You never know when you might want to leave. Of course, you live in Nebraska so where do you have to go?

I was 28 years old before I ever stepped foot in a subway car.

**HICKTIONARY** ☆ **subway (n.) a place where they make sandwiches**

It was in Montreal. I entered the tunnel, put my token in the slot and then tried to figure out what in the hell did I need to do to get myself to the baseball game. After I got clued in to how the subway worked, I snorted, “Huh, well I’ll be darned,” and made my way to the cigarette smoke-filled stadium.

Heck, I was tempted to ride the train all day. I almost could have, too, as everything was in French and being Nebraskan implies that you know no French outside of RSVP, words for food like croissant and maybe a swear word that ain’t as powerful as our swear words.

The closest thing we have to a subway in Nebraska is a device called the SUV. Our first question from the readership. Yes, hello:



Inaugural Questioner: “Hi, thanks for having me: How is the subway anything like an SUV?”

**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “Do you know how many of your relatives you can jam into an SUV? They both start with ‘S.’ Do you need me to name more?”**



Come to my state and you’ll find lots of SUVs, despite the fact that most people don’t make enough money to afford one. The SUV is the latest American Dream, the device that somehow will enrich our lives through 15 miles per gallon.

Although it doesn’t cost too terrible much to live in Nebraska, you sure don’t make much money. The challenge with owning an SUV, or anything in the Midwest for that matter, is Coastal Pricing. Cars cost the same in Nebraska where there isn’t much money as they do in Seattle where the streets are paved with money, which is why there are fewer lanes in Seattle and an addiction to traffic.

Half the SUVs produced cost more than what the average Nebraskan makes in a year. Yet, we try really hard to own one.

### **The Cost of Owning an SUV**

SUV payment per month (based on the 2010 Chevy Tahoe—not to pick on Chevy, they’re all real expensive)

MSRP \$37,000\* at 4% interest for 60 months: \$681.24\*\*

Auto insurance\*\*\*: \$200

Gas prices (based on 66 gallons\*\*\*\* at \$1.50 a gallon): \$99  
TOTAL: \$980.24

\*Coastal price passed on to us

\*\*"No shit?"

\*\*\*Bank makes you take full coverage. Fuckers.

\*\*\*\*The SUV gets 15 MPG, at most, in the city and 19 on the highway. You are going to drive it, aren't you? [and as a side note, the cost of gas as of this keystroke is actually \$2.75 per gallon. Have fun!]

That number of \$980 might be a shade high. Your trade in might take \$500 off the price (and you're bound to find a deal for about \$5,000 cheaper, right?), but you're still staring at a monthly premium bigger than your house payment. Is it smart to own an SUV in Nebraska? Sure it is, if you plan on living in it. Heck, you can cook on the engine block.

It might not be smart to own one, but just like you folks on the Coast, we have desires, too. Fact is, no matter what it costs, it's ours, by God.

## 4. BORDER STATE HATE

But first, a look back at Midwest history:

*In 1803, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out to discover the Northwest Passage, a water route to the Pacific Ocean in the uncharted (and newly purchased) American West. No one knew what they would find. In fact, President Thomas Jefferson himself believed woolly mammoths, volcanoes and a mountain of pure salt awaited the adventurers.*

*In 1804, the Lewis & Clark expedition of 40 men began in earnest from St. Louis, where the Missouri River joins the Mississippi River. On a normal day, the expedition only traveled 12 or 14 miles down the Missouri River, making the journey through Missouri that much worse.*

*By the end of their first month traveling through Missouri, the men of the expedition were, as Clark wrote, "much afflicted with Boils, and Several have the Deassentary, which I contribute to the water [which is muddy] ... The Ticks & Musquiteres are very troublesome."*

*Yes, the Musquiteres, which is how they spell "mosquito" in Missouri to this day, were as big as your head and could suck a pint of blood from you in a flash. The ticks, one must assume, were the French settlers they came across on the river.*

*As they passed the junction where the Kansas River joins the Missouri at modern-day Kansas City, the expedition came across three traders on a boat. One man was from Missouri, one from Kansas and one from Nebraska. Clark asked the men of the lay of the land at various spots along the river.*

*The man from Nebraska spoke: "Travel another 70 miles north and on the west banks you'll discover a land called Nebraska, a wonderful place inhabited by deer and buffalo just waiting for you to hunt them. You'll feast your eyes on the most beautiful sunset you will ever see. A man could become rich off this land. Everyone is so friendly that you'll love Nebraska. Even the Indians are well mannered. They will kindly give you a compliment you before they scalp you. There is no place like it." Clark was indeed impressed by the traveler's words and decided they might stop there.*

*The man from Missouri couldn't believe his ears: "Whut you talking'? Nubraska stupid dumb rash butt. All you need in Missoura! No go far none. Bear, deer, snake, Musquiteres, sisters: whut you no fun? Go Nubraska if you Indian luvver luck tryn trade durt, ho he ha ho muah!" Clark and company had experienced Missouri, and all the sweat that came along with it, for the last month and were accustomed to the local language. Although they appreciated the scurvy-ridden man's zest for his home territory, they did not share his love of Missouri or his lack of*

*desire to see the world.*

*The man from Kansas sat in the boat and stared at everyone. He said nothing to the travelers, didn't want them in his territory and wanted to kill both his traveling companions.*

*Clark and company traded the travelers some pelt for whisky and headed north. It was incredible, Clark thought, how men from such a similar place could see more clearly their differences than their similarities.*

*One of Clark's crew, young Sgt. Charles Floyd, understood the men; he had empathy for the passion they had for their own territories. It weighed on Sgt. Floyd's mind and grew deeper entrenched as they passed the Platte River at Omaha. As the explorers continued north, Sgt. Floyd felt the land in his soul.*

*He couldn't keep his eyes off the Nebraska side of the river. The hills that spanned for miles on the Iowa side spoke to Sgt. Floyd. "Come to us," they said, "this is your home. Come to us."*

*Soon, Sgt. Floyd was convinced that the Iowa hills would be his new home. Instead of looking out for Indians, St. Floyd daydreamed of sitting on a peak and overlooking the beauty to the west that was Nebraska and its sunsets. Nebraska was his promised land that he felt unable to enter.*

*However, to desert his post on the expedition would be treasonous.*

*There was only one thing he could do to have his way and keep his honor. At that moment, he figured out what the people who would follow him the next 200 years would come to know: Iowa is a good place to go and die.*

*After his death, they buried Sgt. Floyd on a hilltop, as he wanted. Some say Sgt. Floyd, the only casualty of the expedition, died of a ruptured appendix, but the reality is, he wanted to spend the rest of his days overlooking Nebraska.*

There are far worse places to live than Nebraska, and they ain't all on some different continent. They're right under our nose: Missouri, Kansas, South Dakota, Iowa and mountain-free Colorado and Wyoming.

The Coastal Geography infected say, "What's the difference? It's all waste in the middle." Is there a difference between being near a lion and having your head in its mouth? Is there a difference between making a s'more and lighting a marshmallow on fire with a torch?

If Nebraskans had their way and the property taxes weren't so high already, we'd demand that our state government build a fence around the perimeter of the state. We don't need a big,

steel wall—although that would be nice. The fence can consist of chicken wire and a few wood slats.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **chicken wire (n.) tightly knit fencing that country music acts like to sing behind**

We don't necessarily want to keep people from the border states out of our state; we just want an excuse to shoot them, and them breaking into our state should be excuse enough.

“What's the difference?” It's the way we talk, the way we act, the way we wave at each other while driving our cars (Nebraskans tend to lift their index fingers with their hands still on the wheels of their cars and make a horizontal wave; Kansans tend to nod their head up), the way we hate.

For the most part, we hate the citizens of the following states in this order, from most hated to a passing contempt:

- 1) Missouri
- 2) Iowa
- 3) Kansas
- 4) Colorado
- 5) South Dakota
- 6) Wyoming
- 7) Extreme Southeast Nebraska

Do we hate all people from these states? No, but we hate their stereotypes and that's good enough for us. What kind of world would it be if we couldn't slap a label on a group of people so that we can quicker describe them in conversation? A pretty shitty one. And definitely no fun. Might as well be Russia.

## MISERY

I never spent much time in Arkansas or West Virginia, but I reckon none of these states hold a candle to the fart that is Missouri. I sentenced myself to 6 months in this state that God forgot. I never missed Nebraska so much. You know your education system is in rough shape when your own people can't say the name of your state right.



Missourian: “Missoura.”

**Everyone else on the planet: “You mean ‘Missouri’?”**

Missourian: “Dat’s whut I ted, Missoura.”



I reckon it's possible everybody else in the world is wrong and those in Missouri are right. If it weren't for the 2000 Senate election, I might have given Missourians the benefit of the doubt.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **vote (n.) a tally used to make a decision (v.) an action in which you choose one item over the other (n.) something that is totally wasted in Missouri and Florida.**

On October 16, 2000, a man named Mel Carnahan died in a plane crash. He was the governor of Missouri, which I'm sure everybody's dying to apply for. Carnahan ran against Republican incumbent John Ashcroft for his Senate seat. Under Missouri law (who knew they had laws), Carnahan's name stayed on the ballot even though he was dead.

When election day rolled around, the people of Missouri elected the Democrat, Mel Carnahan, to the Senate. They decided to vote for someone who wasn't living. In fact, he was dead. In the history of Senate elections, it was the first time a dead man beat someone who was not dead, who was, in fact, alive and breathing and able to physically place a vote. Carnahan couldn't even vote for himself and he still won by 50,000 votes.

Not only was Ashcroft defeated by a man who was not even close to alive, Ashcroft was the incumbent. It ain't like these people never voted for him before. Nearly 1,700 more people voted in that Senate race than for the President race between Al Gore and George Bush. Gore lost Missouri by 80,000 votes. Missourians sent the country a message through their votes: We will vote for almost any Democrat (living or dead), but not Al Gore.

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Hope you didn't start crying for John Ashcroft already. He wasn't unemployed for long. After the dead man beat him, President Bush made Ashcroft the Attorney General of the United States, the nation's top lawyer. If he was such a fucking good lawyer, don't you think he would have found a way to get Carnahan's name off the ballot or the election thrown out on a technicality—the technicality that his opponent is dead?

Their inability to vote ain't no reason to spit on Missourians: Branson is. The Branson area, tucked in the Ozark Mountains and lakes, sure is pretty to look at. It's a painting you would appreciate, as long as you never found out that the subject is

actually in Missouri.

In 1960, the Silver Dollar City “theme” park opened in Branson. Heck, at Silver Dollar City, you can ride one of them there rollie coasters, git yer piccher taken with an’ old-tyme piccher taker, see a burleskee show and warch blacksmiths an’ candle makers blacksmith an’ candle make. The park takes you back to the magical time of 1880s Ozark life where you were so poor, your bedroom was also your outhouse. What a great way to spend a vacation!

Ozark life of the 1880s isn’t that much different than 2000s Ozark life, except now there are a few more strip clubs.

The real end of the beauty of the Ozarks started when someone decided to make it Las Vegas East. (Although one could argue that Branson is easier to take when you can’t see it because of the glare off the rhinestones.) Heck, more than 7 million people a year visit Branson, which shows how entertainment starved we are as a nation. I don’t blame country music for the Branson disease. I happen to like country music. I blame the bandwagon for the destruction of the Ozarks, which I reckon is still used in Branson to take people from their sod houses to the theater.

It’s one thing to have Roy Clark and Boxcar Willie jammin’ your juke joint. But now, anybody who has stepped onstage in the last 40 years performs in Branson at their own theater. Andy Williams? Paul Revere and the Raiders? Debbie Reynolds? Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff, in Missouri! How have they not strung him up yet? How dare that guy try to make money off joking about the differences between the Russia and the U.S.!

Questions from the readership: Yes, you there.



Reader: “Maybe I’m missing something here, but you claim to be a hick, right?”

**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “Yes, technically I am.”**

Reader: “And you say Branson has mountains, lakes, country music and gaudy trinkets.”

**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “You’re following just fine.”**

Reader: “But it seems to me that mountains, country music, lakes and buying crap are right up your alley. So what’s so wrong with Branson?”

**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “It’s in Missouri. Pay closer attention or you’ll never get through this book.”**



For the purpose of full disclosure, my favorite baseball team is the Kansas City Royals, and Kansas City is partially in Missouri. Maybe if they weren't in Missouri, they wouldn't be such losers.

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When I lived in Misery, me and my roommate got warned by Johnny Law to get the couch off our front porch. These pigs claimed there was a city ordinance against having furniture placed anywhere outside the house.

Who were they bullshitting? This is Missouri. The house across the street from us got so much traffic we figured it was a meth house. I can't find a damn toothpick in this state. The highways don't have these things called "shoulders." Everyone in this town calls the state in which they live "Missoura." Oh, and I'm pretty sure I saw a guy widdlin' on his front steps yesterday. But you want me to remove my couch, which was left on the curb by somebody who must have wanted me to have it, because you think that it makes your city look trashy?

As far as Missouri goes, I just would rather not go there if I could help it. It might be out of my hands at this stage.

## IOWA

Talking about Iowa used to be a bit more dangerous when I dated a woman from Iowa—Council Bluffs, Iowa, which is just across the river from Omaha. I tried to convince her that she was from "just outside Nebraska" and not Iowa, but that argument holds about as much water as the Platte River does. Whenever people we met in Seattle asked us where we're from, she took the lead by saying, "I'm originally from Iowa; he's from Nebraska." She beat me to the punch because she reckoned I would say something dumb, which I usually did.

Iowa and Nebraska really are similar as far as the land itself goes and what is grown from it. But, if brothers can go kill each other in the Civil War, I reckon I can muster up enough courage to trash Iowa the way God intended.

Iowa would rank number 4 on my shit list if it wasn't for one thing: They think they're soooooo smart. "We hold the first presidential caucuses, meh," "We have two major universities, pssstssbbrrt," "We have more people, muh muh muh," "Our schools are ranked higher than yours, bleeehh," "We're home to the world's largest strawberry, na-ner na-ner na na." Oh yeah? If

you're so great, why's your speed limit on the Interstate 70 mph when ours is 75? Shove that up your corn hole!

Iowans hate Nebraskans because they're jealous of our football team. Plain and simple. So, after feeling the crush of inferiority on the gridiron, they have to compensate for the small pigskin and buy the SUV of superior intellect.

They're real proud of how smart they think they are. "Our schools are in the top 10 in the nation. Must suck to be you, dirt farmer. If you could understand words, you might actually be insulted by that." In 2006, Iowa ranked something like 9th and Nebraska is 11th. Playing the "smart" card only goes so far in the Midwest because we're smart enough to know that they're not that much smarter than we are and that they think they are more than they know they are. Wait.

(I do question some of these school rankings because Missouri seems a lot dumber than No. 22).

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There's no need for them to try to pick a fight with us over football. Iowa's a basketball state. They almost always have good basketball teams at the University of Iowa and Iowa State, but they'll always be jealous of our football power.

That great, progressive state of Iowa loved its basketball so much that they forced the girls to play a different game: 6-on-6. After every other state let the girls play the same way boys play, Iowa kept 6-on-6. Three girls from each team stayed on one half of the court. If you were on one side of the court, you couldn't cross to the other side or your electric shock collar would paralyze you. They should have built a moat at half court.

Iowa, seriously, let's be friends, and we'll go to barn dances together during the summer. Once they stop living in denial about football, we'll be friends, I reckon. We'll have a beer together, if they're buying.

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There are good things about Iowa, though. They got a statue of the world's largest bullhead fish. Iowa is the only state that starts with two vowels. Arsonists keep burning down the bridges of Madison County. The only person to die in the Lewis and Clark expedition bit it in Iowa....

So now that I've seen all the great things Iowa's got to offer, I

guess they're right. They're so much better than us corn pickers west of the Missouri River. All we gave America was Arbor Day, Kool-Aid, the Reuben sandwich, 911 and the world's largest Kolache Festival.

I'll give Iowa this: They never elected a man that they knew was dead.

## KANSAS

Gosh, compared to Missouri, all these other states seem like paradise or a casino. I reckon it's easy to say all kinds of trash about Missouri. Heck, if some rich guy would pay me, I'd be a talking head on the idiot box and be the special expert on Missouri. I'd talk all day. When some dumb shit happens in Missouri, which it always does, the news channel cuts to me:



Glue-haired Anchor: "For more analysis on the tragedy, we bring in our Missouri analyst Rufus 'Junior' Hickman Jr. Mr. Hickman, good evening."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Howdy. Pleasure to be here."**

Glue-haired Anchor: "Can you share with us your comments on the day's events?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Well, it's Missouri.**

**What the fuck do you expect?"**

Glue-haired Anchor: "As always, your concise commentary is appreciated."



Kansans scare me. It ain't because they're such dirt farmers or creepy backwoods hillfolk or anything like that. They're quiet. Too quiet. Too nice. They're ready to explode at any minute, and being their border neighbors to the north, we have to defend ourselves against the impending attack from the Sunflower State.

The mascot of their biggest school is a jayhawk. What's a jayhawk? I have no idea. That's the thing. We don't know a lot about Kansas. Once every seven years or so, you actually meet somebody who is "from" Kansas, but they're quiet, nice and keep to themselves. Scary. The only person of prominence most people could associate with Kansas is former Senator Bob Dole, and he kept talking about himself in that third person. Very eerie. I wonder if I should start talking about myself in the third person.

How can you not watch your back against a state that had once won the honor of most beautiful license plate? How do you not fear a state that's home of the world's largest ball of twine? (And what's scarier is it's still growing.) What happens when they decide to actually do something with that twine? That's right: They're coming after Nebraska. What free-wheeling sort doesn't keep his eye on a state that once made it illegal to put ice cream on cherry pie? Hey, Rufus ain't talking euphemisms here, people! This is serious! You could not put ice cream on cherry pie!

Amelia Earhart was from Kansas, and now, where is she? That's right. WE DON'T KNOW! The guy who invented basketball, James Naismith, was the first basketball coach at the University of Kansas, and as you already know, Nebraska and basketball don't get along too good.

Naismith was the only basketball coach at the University of Kansas to have a career losing record (55-60). Ain't it just a coincidence that the feller who invented the game of basketball would actually have a losing record coaching the game he invented? Or, is it just an example of how Kansans refuse to show you their hand, preparing for the big attack against Nebraska one of these days? Naismith, by the way, was even Canadian!

You might have never been to Kansas, you probably couldn't point to it on a map and this might be the first time you've ever read the word "Kansas" in print, but mark my words: They're lying in the weeds, waiting....

## **MOUNTAIN-FREE COLORADO & WYOMING & SOUTH DAKOTA**

Rufus reckons it's easy to lump these three areas together on the hate scale like a combo plate at the local gag, and it's hard, it's real hard, to try to hate the people from these states. Mostly, that's because you can't find people in those states, and when you do find someone, you feel sorry for them because they live there.

This raises the question: If you hate eastern Colorado & Wyoming and South Dakota, and there ain't anyone to hate there, do you feel good about your hate? I wouldn't. What's the point of hating someone if you can't make them feel sad for being who they are? That's why Rufus gave up on hating telemarketers a long time ago.

Colorado, Wyoming and South Dakota all have a saving grace: They have mountains (the Rockies in Wyoming and Colorado and the Black Hills in South Dakota). Of course, less than 10% of South Dakota is covered by mountains which makes it 90% unlivable. Colorado and Wyoming have the good fortune of being half-covered with mountains but less fortunate to be half-covered with tumbleweed farms. Oh, and don't forget about the nationally protected grassland in Wyoming. You're about as apt to find a person who wants to drive through that grassland as you are to find a hardcover book in a trailer home.

Rufus should clear up something about the people living in these parts. They ain't illiterate, they don't all manufacture and distribute methamphetamines and they don't all live off the welfare system. But they will be the first to tell you how tough it is to look for a job in the newspaper when you don't know how to read and you're really high.

How boring is it to live in South Dakota? Well, someone spent 14 years carving the faces of presidents into a rock. That tell you anything? Tom Brokaw graduated from high school and college there, and he has been known to turn insomniacs into Rip Van Winkle. To actually have fun in South Dakota, you got to enter the Mashed Potato Wrestling competition in Clark, S.D. It's sad when mud is a more valuable commodity than potatoes.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**Jell-O (n.)** a precious monetary unit used in exchange of goods and services in South Dakota

Wyoming, much like South Dakota, has so much going against it that you can only pray for the land's eternal soul. It ranks 50th in population with no hope of being 49th. That's not an altogether bad thing, but on the other hand, they were the first state in the Union to give females the right to vote. As you can imagine, women flocked to Wyoming. I reckon somebody dropped the ball in marketing.

Woman #1: "Did you hear, Alice? We now have the right to vote!"

**Alice: "What a glorious and monumental day in the history of this country. Finally, we get the respect we deserve! Let's go vote!"**

Woman #1: "Wait. We have to go to Wyoming to do it."

**Alice: "Well, fuck that."**



Rufus once made a pilgrimage to Douglas, Wyoming, the “home” of the jackalope. God bless Douglas, but the only jackalope I found was the one in the middle of the town square and looked like it once belonged to a chain of gas stations and needed a paint job.

I ain’t saying you shouldn’t make up an animal in the hopes of bringing in tourists. Go all out. Because if someone will give you the benefit of the doubt that there “could” be a sasquatch or the spawn of an antelope and a rabbit, why can’t you draw people to see the cantankerous cog—the elusive offspring of a cat and a dog found only in northeast Arkansas?

However, if you’re gonna invent an animal, don’t let people show up to a town filled with dust and road construction. Rufus’s trip wasn’t a complete waste. I saw a statue in the park that I thought was a jackalope, but when I got closer, I saw it was a shrine to a horse. I stumbled upon a memorial for Sir Barton, the first Triple Crown winner. Ain’t never a wasted trip when horse racing is involved.

Douglas’s mountain surroundings are beautiful. I said, “Wow, this is beautiful” just before I arrived in Douglas. When I left Douglas, Rufus said, “It would have been nice if there were a few jackalopes.” Maybe that’s the joke, and it, of course, was on Rufus. I then contemplated suicide for the first time as I drove through the Thunder Basin National Grassland on my way to Devil’s Tower.

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Folks from Eastern Colorado are the most out of touch with their place in the Midwest. It’s people’s reaction to think of mountains when they hear “Colorado.” But like the kids of celebrities, the folks of Eastern Colorado bear a shame. They’re not as good as their parents, they have no problem name-dropping and they normally get mixed up in drugs.

My Momma, a Nebraska native, lives in Eastern Colorado. When I break down and tell people that she lives in Colorado and not Nebraska, folks on the receiving end of that message think, “Wow, she must love it out there, with all the mountains.” I say, “Oh yeah, it’s great” mostly because I’m ashamed to admit that she lives in the Colorado sagebrush crap.

For the most part, the only thing that grows in Eastern Colorado is depression. Every once in a while you’ll see a crop of

something or other, but mostly, driving across Eastern Colorado is like staring at a “Grapes of Wrath” flipbook for three hours.

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Rufus can’t blame Colorado for turning down the 1976 Olympics. I don’t know any Midwestern state wanting an influx of foreigners, let alone bidding for one. However, I don’t trust any state in which the U.S. government owns more than a third of the land. It goes without saying that they own the “good” land.

### **EXTREME SOUTHEASTERN NEBRASKA**

Rufus faced a tough choice when he decided to add extreme Southeastern Nebraska to this shit list because knocking your own people doesn’t accomplish much. It does make you feel good about yourself, though. One thing that makes us special is our willingness to punch each other in the teeth in order to reach a greater good. And that greater good is protecting our image from the outsiders who think we eat a big, fat bowl of dirt for dinner every night. That ain’t true, of course. Nobody could eat dirt EVERY night, for Christ’s sake.

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As a representative for the 92 other counties in Nebraska, I’m here to announce that we, as Nebraskans, are seceding Richardson County, in the southeast corner of our state, and giving it to Missouri or possibly Kansas. Probably Missouri.

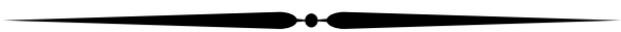
### **HICKTIONARY** ★

**seceding (v.) 1. doing very well at something 2. separating Richardson County from your state**

Richardson County would be a nice-enough place if it didn’t share a border with both Kansas and Missouri. Butting up against two other states has made the people of the county confused. Don’t think Rufus is picking on it just because of the two bizarre murder cases that happened there over the course of 15 years, one involving a cult, the other a transsexual. There’s just a creepy vibe that comes from that ’neck of the woods, that I-get-romantic-with-my-kin vibe.

That ain’t to say good people don’t live down there because there are some. Some are real nice, and I feel bad they have to get lumped in with the rest of these lunkheads. But Rufus sees them

living in Richardson County as a choice they made so they are responsible for being the flies circling the shit. Not much Rufus can do about that.



Besides being the only county in Nebraska to view dentistry as witchcraft, it's a place where it gets dark in the daytime. No matter where you are in the county, no matter what time of day it is, you feel a gratifying sense of paranoia. You would assume that in a county like this, somebody would be watching your every move, maybe following you around town. When you find out it's really happening, it's creepy and satisfying at the same time.

Two of the seven people on Nebraska's death row committed their murders in Richardson County. Heck, only 15 people have ever been executed by the state and only three since Charlie Starkweather went up in smoke in 1959. Hollywood made a movie about one of those murderers: "Boys Don't Cry," which won a Hollywood good acting award for Hilary Swank. Supposedly, she lived for six weeks with transsexuals so she could understand what it was like to have two genders. You just need to live in Richardson County for a day to know what fear feels like.

A town called Salem exists in the county. It burned to the ground in 1910. Folks in that county once wanted Salem to be the county seat, but the vote to do that ended in a tie. The vote to break the tie had caused such hard-feelings that a gun battle erupted, killing two men. I wonder if their votes counted. In Missouri, they would have.

## 5. FOOD & EATING

Rufus doesn't think there's anything wrong with being big boned. Part of our heritage, our genetics, is being either burly or Henry-Fonda-in-Grapes-of-Wrath skeletal. If you're in-between, people wonder what's wrong with you.

Food is as much a part of our culture as hard work. Nobody ever mentions Nebraska when it comes to fine food, but they should. We know food. Those with Coastal palates fall all over themselves to talk about France and how their food is so great. Don't believe the hype. Rufus doesn't trust skinny people's opinion on food. I value the opinion of the 300-pound man. He's been there. He knows what's good. He's eaten more food than I've even seen. If I want to know what the best pack of filters is, I'll ask a Frenchman.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **French (n.) a group of people in Europe who hate freedom but love cancer**

There are occasions in which we overindulge in our food, but there's a damn good reason for that: We're bored. We have much more time in the day to kill than you Coastal traffic addicts. If it takes a Nebraskan more than 10 minutes to get to work, he's probably a farmer. We have at least another free hour in our day that you don't because you spend it sitting in your car, talking on your phone and bitching about traffic to another person who's sitting in their car and talking to you.

Problem is, after a hard-day's work, what's a man to do with that hour? If you normally fall asleep around 11 or midnight, you have six or seven hours to kill. You can't expect us to go seven hours without eating, can you?

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When Rufus moved to Seattle, I would ask coworkers what their plans were for supper. They looked at me like I was trying to sell them a hand-sewn popsicle stick. Dinner and supper were pretty interchangeable terms, I thought.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **dinner (n.) Your third meal of the day, followed by supper**

One night, I treated some friends to a steak at this local restaurant. It was a pretty unassuming place, brick walls on

the outside, a strip mall built up around it, but the place had personality. The marquee of Beck's Steak and Seafood in Redmond promoted "Aged Nebraska Beef." Please take a moment to imagine the connotations of that phrase.

Of course, Rufus was immediately drawn to Beck's advertising pitch, mostly because Seattle tops my list as the most impossible place to buy tasty meat. I don't know how it's possible to find meat that doesn't taste good, but the meat in Seattle is brutal, bland, small and incredibly expensive. Way to go Seattle! Tops again.

As we approached the restaurant, I said, "This place really reminds me of some supper clubs back home."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.:** "This place really reminds me of some supper clubs back home."

**What the West Coastal lifer hears:** "This place really reminds me begerblaggle bler bler sound sound sound."

Of course, not knowing what supper was, they didn't know what a supper club was. The "whoa, we didn't agree to this" look covered their faces. I assured them that they would not be witness to the ritual killing of the meat, just the consumption.

Everybody knows breakfast is breakfast, but sometimes lunch isn't lunch, it's dinner. And then dinner isn't dinner, it's supper. Lunch will never be after dinner, and if you don't eat breakfast, you can just skip lunch. But at a lot of places, you can get breakfast any time of the day. So, I don't know why these friends of mine were so confused.

I think one reason Western Coastal sufferers don't fall in line with the term "supper" is that they're godless heathens who will burn in the fires of Hell for their transgressions. Have these people never heard of the Last Supper? Supper meaning "food" and Last meaning "end of the day/before you are nailed on a cross"? When The Bible dictates when you should have a meal, you should listen.

We went into the restaurant and had a quality time because I finally found good meat. The place was dark, relatively clean, had beer and a good waitress. Now that's a good supper club. Rufus ate a good rare steak—the best way to have a steak prepared.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **rare steak (n.) a barely cooked strip of beef that makes a moo sound when you cut into it and makes you stronger if it doesn't kill you**

The rare steak is the Russian Roulette of animal consumption (eating undercooked pork and chicken is just suicidal). Although a rare steak doesn't quite give you that adrenaline rush of a 1-in-6 chance of blowing your brains out, it is awful tasty and potentially dangerous if a restaurant isn't up to code. The rare steak is the perfect meal; it's a defining moment for us as human beings—our gigantic, screaming fuck you to the entire food chain. Not only did we just raise this beast that weighs 10 times what the average man does just to kill it and eat it, but we're not even going to cook it. I win, cow.

You could make a case that the Japanese do us one better when they eat raw steak, chicken and fish. But I don't really trust the Japanese. They're not fat enough and the ones that are wear thongs. Other than that, I think we would get along pretty well. They like rice wine; we dig corn liquor. They like uncooked food; we like undercooked food. They represent words with symbols; we prefer to use the picture menu at a restaurant. They wear robes; sometimes we'll cover ourselves with a curtain with arm holes. It's like we're brothers that we occasionally encamp.

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We can eat steak for every meal. Steak and eggs for brekkie, steak sandwich at lunch (prime rib sandwich is the best), a pan-fry steak for dinner and a nice, fat choice steak with plenty of fat on it for supper (if you just got paid, splurge for the prime steak.) Of course, if you do all that all day, every day, you run the risk of your heart raising the white flag as it's drowning in a sea of cholesterol, but you gain the respect of everyone in the Cornhusker state. I'm not sure if anyone has ever died of a cholesterol overdose from an all-day meat bender, but if they had, they were obviously from out of town and trying to win a t-shirt as they were passing through.

As cool as it sounds, eating a 3-to-5 pound steak at a restaurant to try to get a t-shirt isn't as glamorous as the liberal media makes it out to be. In Nebraska, we don't have too many of these colonic challenges. Thankfully, most of this food abuse takes place in Texas. A steak is meant to go with something to make a meal. Bread, salad, potatoes, steak fries, a smaller steak: It's a part of a whole. It's not THE meal. It's not supposed to be a biological weapon you experiment on yourself with. Any steak larger than 16 ounces should be considered a controlled substance. Your daily

limit of cholesterol is supposed to be about 250 milligrams or less. A pound of steak puts you well over that recommended limit. Of course, that's just a recommendation and we don't really like to limit ourselves.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **limit (n.) a dare challenging your manhood and rational thought process**

The 72-ounce steak that you can eat to win the t-shirt is not your friend. If you can even picture yourself sitting down at a table and eating a 72-ounce steak in an hour, picture a nun doing blow for the first time. It's the same thing. That blow (or God) will kill the nun. That steak could kill you, turning your family's life upside down with the fork being the tool of destruction.

## Steak Kills Man at Local Restaurant

ASSGRAB, Texas (AP) -- Hugh Jackaz was killed Thursday night during supper at the Big Fuck Y'all restaurant, home of the 72-ounce "Big Mooma!" steak. Jackaz, from Tampa, Fla., was attempting to win a free t-shirt by eating the restaurant's signature, mammoth steak.

According to the coroner's initial report, Jackaz died of natural causes sped up 40 years from TCS, toxic cholesterol shock. "It's as if he overdosed on LDL cholesterol and his body went into shock," said Dr. Jimmy Bob Beau Briggs-Bridges of the Texmexcana County coroner's office. "That's the bad cholesterol," he said.

Witnesses say that

after consuming 64 oz. of the steak Jackaz started twitching, clutched his right arm and fell back in his chair. Employees brought out the restaurant's defibrillator but were unable to jump-start Jackaz's heart.

His two children and wife were coloring on the tablecloth as they waited for him to finish the steak, get the t-shirt and get back on the road to the Grand Canyon.

"It was really sad," Janey Hereford, a waitress at the steakhouse, said, "His boy kept crying 'The cow killed my daddy! The cow killed my daddy!' Poor thing. Didn't even have sense to know the steak killed his daddy, not some cow."

This marks only the second time paramedics were called to the Big Fuck Y'all this week.





### Hugh S. Jackaz

Hugh S. Jackaz, 44, of Tampa, Florida, died unexpectedly in Assgrab, Texas, Thursday, March 9, 2006.

Services will be at 1 p.m. today at Kinder Brothers Colonial Chapel with the Rev. James Nelson officiating. Graveside services will be at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday in Greener Pastures Regional Cemetery brought to you by Earl May Garden Centers.

Hugh was born April 17, 1961, in St. Petersburg, Florida, the son of Frank and Denise (Brisso) Jackaz. He grew up in the Tampa area.

He married his high school sweetheart Kristi B. O'Hanrahan on June 7, 1984, in Tampa. He worked for six years as a natural remedies salesman and taught classes at the Tampa Homeopathic Institute.

Hugh was a member of The Right One Pentecostal Church and volunteered at a local petting zoo. He enjoyed bingo. An important part of his life was spending time with his family and friends.

Survivors include two sisters, Martha and Pepsi; his wife Kristi; and his children, Jennifer and Hunter. He was preceded in death by his parents.

## Florida Man Arrested in Cattle Slaying

ASSGRAB, Texas (AP) -- Authorities have arrested a man they think is responsible for the slaying of more than 50 cattle outside this sleepy Texas town.



Hunter Jackaz, 22, is being held in the Texmexcana County Jail until his preliminary hearing on Monday. The Tampa, Fla., resident is accused of several felony counts of criminal mischief. The cattle are valued at nearly \$200,000.

Jackaz was arrested

at the Steak In The Heart restaurant. According to waitress Janey Hereford, the young man walked in covered in cow's blood and started shouting incoherently about revenge. "We were going to shoot him because he was covered in blood, but he looked pretty harmless. Didn't feel like wasting the ammo," she said.

In related news, James Herdale of Provo, Utah, won a t-shirt just before the incident by eating the restaurant's signature 96 ounce steak, the "Mooma On Over!" within an hour. Congratulations James!

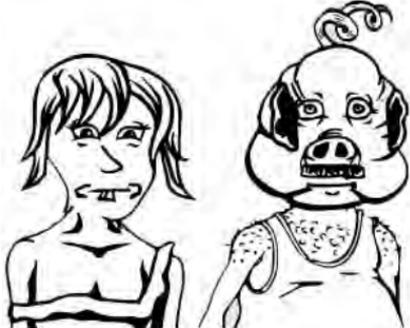
# Feds Bust Bestiality Ring

SARASOTA, Fla. (AP) -- Federal agents arrested 10 people and turned over 24 animals to Animal Protective Services on Saturday in a raid of a farmhouse used to make pornographic movies.

"This was a big one," said Agent Barry Scrapper, "after \$3 million spent over the last 12 months and many long, hard, sleepless nights, we were finally able to nab these 10 menaces to our society. The world is definitely a safer place now, for both man and animal."

Scrapper said most of the 24 animals found at the farmhouse in rural Sarasota off I-75 were cattle. "We rescued about 19 head of cattle, four calves and one dog from the facility," said Scrapper. "It just makes you sick when children of any species get wrapped up in this whole, disgusting thing."

In addition to recovering boxes of



"Mamma Moo" and "Papa Porker"

recorded Super HD-DVDs and Ultra-Giga DVCAM equipment, authorities also confiscated two computers, a digital camera and an obsolete iPod that were onsite.

Arrested and facing charges in the ring are Jennifer Jackaz, a.k.a. Mamma Moo, 22, of Tampa; Rod Grant, a.k.a. Adam Bombs a.k.a. Papa Porker, 40, of Sarasota; Jock Hurley a.k.a. Jocko Hurley, 24, of Naples, and seven Hispanic immigrants whose names you wouldn't distinguish from other immigrants names anyway.



## Kristi L. Jackaz

Kristi L. Jackaz, 52, of Tampa, Florida, died unexpectedly Sunday, March 9, 2014, of an apparent suicide at her home.

Services will be at 1 p.m. today at Kinder-Thompson Brothers Colonial Chapel with the Rev. Thomas Glitterbug-Moonsky officiating. Graveside services will be at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday in Greener Pastures Regional Cemetery brought to you by Lowe's Earl May Garden Centers.

The Hick Arrives: A Guide to Midwestern Living

Kristi was born Sept. 14, 1961, in Tampa, Florida, the daughter of Seamus and Dolores (O'Connor) O'Hanrahan. She grew up in the Tampa area.

She married Hugh S. Jackaz on June 7, 1984, in Tampa. She worked for Amway International before becoming a stay-at-home mother in 1992.

She was a member of The Born Again Reformed Pentecostal Church and led Sunday School there. She enjoyed talking to friends.

Survivors include her parents; 11 brothers and sisters, Michael, Peter, Gabriel, David, Tom, Doris, Catherine, Martha, Mary, Sharon and Rebecca; and her children, Jennifer and Hunter. She was preceded in death by her husband and three siblings, Sarah, Andrew and Jonathan.

There's no reason for a meal to turn into a Shakespearian tragedy. Your eyes are bigger than your stomach and heart, and a pound of anything is way more than you actually need to consume at one time. Question from the readership, yes what say you?



Nerdy Deconstructionist: "Yes, I was reading Mr. Jackaz's obituary."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Yes, what a tragedy."**



Nerdy Deconstructionist: "I just wanted to point out the irony that he was a Taurus and was born in the year of the Ox."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Why does everything have to be some cockamamie puzzle with you smart folk? Don't be reading into my book or I'll knock those glasses off your face!"**

Nerdy Deconstructionist: "This conversation also brings to the forefront your insecurities which bring about your false violent tendencies and your need for other people to 'get' your pseudo-clever allusions that honestly don't make any sense outside of the mere association of the two items. When you consider such subtle details are in the midst of incredibly juvenile names such as 'Big Fuck Y'all', it seems less symbolism and more happenstance."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: (pause) "Dicklicker."**

Whether it's steak or hamburger or potatoes or pie or fries or ice cream or bread or fried anything, we eat a lot of food. But we balance that out by not exercising. If you lived through the winters we do, you'd come to know that it's a little tough to get yourself emotionally up for that four-mile run when you know you're going to freeze your balls off.

There's little doubt some people over-prepare for the hibernation. When it comes to packing on the pounds, cheese and ranch dressing are two of our biggest enemies. Mix in a deep-fat fryer to that combo and you can feel your gut droop even further over your pant "waist."

This country used to like fat and deep-fat frying. It was part of the family. You'd invite it to dinner and let it marry your daughter, but thanks to the Coastal no-gooders who can't see the forest for the smog, the fryer is now the smelly migrant worker of food. You want to eat the food it produces, but you don't want to claim it.

Just because you sinners want to eat healthy and be healthy doesn't mean the rest of the world wants to. The Coastal bullies are using their strength in numbers to try to get the rest of us to follow their way of life because they think we'll be happier when we're liberated from the clutches of fat and other ills. I got one word for you know-it-alls: Rocky Mountain Oysters.

## **HICKTIONARY** ★ **Rocky Mountain Oyster (n.) portrayed as a Midwestern aphrodisiac, this**

**inside joke of foods is found on menus in order to haze outsiders**

When I was Little Rufus, probably about eight years old, Rufus's stepdad took him to a Ducks Unlimited banquet. This was a fundraiser for the organization that works to protect wetlands so there will always be ducks around for us to shoot. This banquet was the venerable cornucopia of exotic animal foods. You had squirrel, pheasant, quail: all the exotic animals you normally wouldn't find at the grocery store—or ever really think about eating.

On the banquet tables at the supper club, there were plates and plates of Rocky Mountain Oysters. The delicacy looks just like chicken fried steak: a flat, breaded piece of meat that goes really well with ketchup or country gravy. Being a fan of chicken fried steak, I tried a Rocky Mountain Oyster and really enjoyed it. Tasted like a cross between a chicken fried steak and fried chicken. I couldn't tell you how many Little Rufus ate, but you

can imagine the eight-year-old metabolism kicking in, bite after bite.

A little later in life, as Pimpled Rufus, I found myself in another small town restaurant that had Bull Fries on the menu. I asked someone, couldn't tell you who that person was, what Bull Fries were. He said, "You know, Rocky Mountain Oysters..." One second, Pimpled Rufus had a flashback of that great feast of Solomon, the night of the endless Rocky Mountain Oysters. The next second, the person whom I was with concluded his phrase: "Cow Balls."

What can you do after learning that information? You can't retroactively throw up five or so years later. You feel a little dirty about admitting that you had them, let alone that you liked them. "Hey guess what? I had a cow's balls in my mouth and I liked it! No, I loved it!" Rufus is probably a little too insecure for my own good because I haven't had Rocky Mountain Oysters since that fateful day. Haven't even considered ordering them even if the only three people involved in that transaction are Rufus, the waitress and the cook. But, I will eat them again if it means duping a Coastal know-nothing into eating them.



**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "You know, you just ate a fried cow testicle?"**

Coastal Initiate: "(after puking) Fucking Christ! What the fuck! Call the ambulance! Call a doctor! Call Dr. Phil!"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Would you just settle down? You liked it."**

Coastal Initiate: "I didn't know what it was! Hey, you ate it, too. You ate cow balls, too, you fucking sicko psycho."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Yeah, but you expect me to eat cow balls."**



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The rule of thumb of Midwestern Cuisine: You can eat anything if you fry it and dip it in ketchup. But you Coastal do-gooders and your health-care-paying brain, you don't want us to have our fat, do you? You want us to have salad, yogurt, pasta, granola and vegetables and live your freaky vegetarian lifestyle. You've already gotten to the Colonel. It's not Kentucky Fried Chicken anymore: It's KFC. Companies that used to make deep-fat fryers now call them deep fryers (and pretty soon will just call them "deep"). Fast food companies already took the "potatoes"

out of French Fried Potatoes so they'd sound less healthy and more desirable, and idiot Congressmen took the French out of the term and replaced it with Freedom. Soon, Freedom Fries will be just Freedom and go great with the double quarter-ponder. Rufus guesses that our government policies are a lot like Midwestern cuisine. If we dip them in the deep and smother them with ketchup, the Freedom will be edible enough for anyone to eat up.

KFC may have tried to trick Americans into thinking that KFC is more healthy for you now that the word "fried" isn't in the name, but we still go there for one thing: greasy fried chicken. We know that "fried" means cooked in edible, trans-fat grease that makes everything taste better!

Next time you folks who live near water are thinking about doing us a favor to solve the problem of obesity in America, ideas that you think up while you're doing your cell-phone aerobics while stuck in traffic, keep it to yourself. We have the right to eat as much meat and fried meat parts as we can, and we also have the right to get fat and the right to heart surgery and the right to sit on you to shut you up! Don't infringe on our freedoms because you think we need to be healthy. We'd much rather be happy.

## 6. COUNTRY MUSIC

But first, a tale about the Devil:

*The Devil played a particularly sultry tale of sin on his new golden fiddle. It didn't play with quite the same tone as his original one Stradivarius made for him. The great ruler of the underworld got a little cocky one night and lost that fiddle in a bet with a mortal. Satan blamed his poor showing on carpal-tunnel flare up. In reality, the Prince of Darkness got schooled. His age was starting to get the better of him.*

*Satan felt like he was losing his touch, not only with his playing but also his musical influence. Sure, he had in his pocket all those rock stars who sold their souls in exchange for fame and fortune. All they had to do was suggest people kill themselves (one song per record as mandated in subsection d of paragraph 16 of the binding Soul-for-Fame standard agreement). But taking over the rock world was all too easy in America. The challenge for the Devil, the one that gave him the greatest sense of accomplishment, was to have a hit song on country radio.*

*He lit up every time he heard a sinful song, a song of adultery or alcohol abuse, a song of killing or suicide, on God's beloved radio. The subversive Prince of Darkness turned country music away from guitar-picking hymnals to getting wasted and assaulting someone who looked at you the wrong way. But ever since God created Garth Brooks in his own image, Satan had been shut out of the country mix. With fiddle in hand, Satan was ready to make his comeback.*

*He arranged a meeting with Happy McNoital, the greatest corporate radio programmer in the land. Happy dictates the airplay on more than 2,000 radio stations across America. Lucifer, with golden fiddle No. 2 in hand, met Happy in his downtown Nashville office.*

*"Mr. Satan, how are you?" asked Happy.*

*"That's Satan," the Evil One said.*

*"Right, sorry about that. What you got there?"*

*"What do you mean?" asked Satan.*

*"That gold thing in your hand. Looks pretty cool," said Happy, "what is it?"*

*"Are you joking? This is a fiddle, the finest fiddle in the land," said Satan about his second-finest fiddle (he's the Devil and allowed to lie).*

*"Fiddle, huh?" said the most powerful man in country radio, "well, if you say so. Looks silly to me. What do you have for me today, Mr. Satan?"*

*Beelzebub pitched his newest artist, David Slain, a country rebel who went to prison for involuntary manslaughter: a drunk, a drug addict, a mean sumbitch who found his calling while strumming a guitar in prison. David Slain writes lyrics that touch the heart and are as true as American patriotism itself.*

*"Do you have a picture of him?" asked Happy. Satan did not. "How do you expect me to listen to his music, and more importantly market him, if I don't know what he looks like? He might be a great musician, but if he looks like the inside of a horse's ass, he'll never get airplay."*

*Satan promised he'd get back to him with the picture (although Satan lies). "Listen to these incredible lyrics: 'My last bottle of beer / should I finish it? / If I do, I'll have to go home to her. / Maybe one more bottle for the road to kill the pain.'"*

*"Doesn't rhyme," said Happy.*

*"I know but he's being artistic-"*

*"How am I supposed to play it if it don't rhyme," asked Happy, "and drinking and driving? We can't support that. What if the listener kills someone on the way home?"*

*"Yes, that would be tragic," said Satan.*

*"Nah, people don't want that. People don't want to think about alcohol abuse, drunk driving or unhappy home life. What else you got, Mr. Satan?" asked Happy.*

*Satan bit his lip and scratched his now-sweating head. "Well...I think you'll really love this ballad called 'Daddy Killed Mommy.' I think you'll find-"*

*"Let me stop you right there," said Happy, "I don't want to be rude or anything, but I think we're going in different directions. Does David Slain have any music about love or clothes or having a safe, good time with friends?" Satan shook his head no. "How about the liberation of women, America and how it kicks ass, driving large pickups or small children?" Satan shook his head. "I don't think I can do anything for you, Mr. Satan. See, these things I described, these are what people want. I know people. This is the 21st Century. No one wants to hear about the bad things. No one cares about your artsy-fartsy non-rhyming lyrics or your suggesting that people break the law. Radio has a responsibility to keep people abiding by the law and work with the government so they'll let us own as many stations as we want and make as much money as we possibly can. Sorry, Mr. Satan. This boat don't rock." After his speech, Happy took a drink of water as he waited for Satan to leave his office.*

*"OK, how about we do this-"*

*"Good day, Mr. Satan," interrupted Happy, "I really have many things to do today. Good luck with your artist. Who knows? Maybe we'll meet again."*

*"Oh, you can count on that," said Satan with his trademark last laugh.*

We like country music, a lot, mostly because (1) we're in the country, (2) we're supposed to listen to it and (3) there's not much else to listen to. When my Momma grew up, there were two radio

stations that she could tune in on the farm: a country station and a station she wasn't allowed to listen to. Times have changed, though. Now there are two country stations and three other stations she wouldn't be allowed to listen to.

The music she wasn't allowed to tune in to was pop music, which as we all know is from the Devil. If she wanted to listen to pop music, she'd have to be sneaky about it and make sure Granny wasn't around. Momma grew up in the mid-1960s and finally went out on her own in the early 1970s. While she lived under her parents' roof, she couldn't listen to The Beatles, The Monkeys, Tommy James and the Shondrells, Mamas and the Papas, Otis Redding, The Beach Boys, The Supremes, Three Dog Night, Jackson 5, Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, Rod Stewart, The Archies, Dionne Warwick, Cher, Temptations, Chuck Berry, The Partridge Family (and any Cassidies that went along with that) and more because this music was from the Devil and these people were the conduits of Satan's work. That and the radio station didn't really play a lot of these acts.

**Granny:** "What's the name of that song?"

**Momma:** "It's a Cher song."

**Granny:** "I didn't ask you who sang it."

**Momma:** "Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves."

**Granny:** "Harlot. Turn that off and go hay the horses."

Granny didn't want Momma to listen to this popular and rock-and-roll music because it was a bad influence. Instead, Momma was encouraged to listen to country music because she was supposed to listen to it.

## **HICKTIONARY** 🌟

**encourage (v.) support someone in their decision to do something you want them to do, and if they refuse you have the right to become physically violent with them**

You diseased, sorry Coastal types might not know this, but there are two types of country: pop country and real country. Recognizing a real country song isn't that hard. In order for a song to qualify as real country (and therefore a good influence on your children versus pop and rock), it has to be either the saddest song that you've ever heard or touch on at least three of the following subjects:

- Killing
- Drinking
- Loving
- Adultery
- Dogs
- Killing
- Law Enforcement
- Momma
- Weapons
- Drugs
- Trains
- Murder
- Fighting
- Prison
- Tobacco Use
- Assault
- Fire
- Dead Kin
- Horses
- Cat Fights
- Killing

You never hear real country music on country radio anymore. It's a shame because when country music is good, it speaks to you and understands what you go through in life. What makes real country music so good is that it's based on failure.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **failure (n) something we deal with every single day of our life [See: children]**

Failure is what drives us every waking moment. Some people say they never truly try because they're afraid of failure. Rufus knew this guy one time who talked a lot about moving away and getting educated and being rich, but he didn't want to do it because he was afraid of failure. Let's join that conversation in progress:



**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "What are you some kind of pussy?"**

Mr. Pussy: "No, man, I just, you know, what happens if I fail?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Dude, you're a teacher. You already failed."**



\*Face left blank in order to try to remain freinds.

Just like the punk music we never hear on the radio, real country music represents the people. St. Hank, the patron saint of country music, helped us come to grips with the fact that things have to be thought about, they have to be dealt with, and music could help your soul to know that you're not alone. Other people think like you and go through the same tribulations you face. A real country musician isn't just concerned with where the beer is and when do I get my money, although those are the first two important questions asked. He wants to connect with you and be your friend because he needs you.

There's so much pain, heartache and angst that goes into making a real country song; you have to let the singer be in pain. You're not going to fix his problems by saying everything's going to be OK and pat him on the back with your touchy-feely Coastal "there there." You could offer him a blow job to see if that would make him feel any better, but he would only say, "Yes."

The songwriter is a country music artist, the Evel Knievel of the music world. He's had every part of him busted up from years of life, but he keeps getting back on that horse until the drugs, alcohol and/or guns kill him. We need country singers to be in pain so that we can better understand our pain without having to go on tour.

We don't need this pop music with its empty soul and catchy lyrics. When Rufus often looks at Shania Twain, bless her sexy Canadian heart, and it's dark and I'm alone, and Jesus, where was I going with that? Why is it so hot in here?

I'd rather listen to Dolly Parton sing "Jolene." Now that's a song. A woman with self-doubt is losing her man to this Jolene tramp (adultery), but Dolly can't live without him (love). And even though the song don't specifically say it, if you don't stop messing with Dolly's man, Jolene, there's gonna be either a cat fight or killing or both.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**tramp (n) one of the most popular people in town with enough support to defeat John Ashcroft in an election**

To really learn to love country music, there are a few things you must do. To start, stop feeling good about yourself. You have any self-confidence in anything you do? Kiss it goodbye. Self-confidence ruins the country music listening experience. Before you really start listening, you should lock yourself in the laundry

room for an hour and just listen to the dryer run. After hearing that for an hour, anything else is going to sound good. Then, get in your car and just drive. You can't have any clue where you're going, but there are 12 beers in the cooler for the trip.

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Back in high school, Rufus's Momma was in a country band. She, her sister and two other boys made up the singing sensation The Country Protégés (without all those squiggles in the name).

## HICKTIONARY ★

**protégé (n.) similar to résumé, a word we don't know because it's not written in English you commie**

Momma didn't really want to be in the band at first; she would have been much happier with dance lessons. But after she started playing, she enjoyed the attention she got, and it was fun traveling to different cities, playing for people, watching them dance.

Granny wanted to keep her girls off the street and not pregnant, and she figured keeping them occupied in a band was a good way to accomplish that. This despite the facts that a) there were no streets near where they lived and b) no one has ever been in a band and not gotten laid in the entire history of music.

Of course, about the only places to play were local bars, so on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, the Protégés would play the juke joints and, therefore, be off the streets. Momma missed her junior prom because of a gig, but fortunately music didn't keep her from her senior prom. Granny just didn't like her date and wouldn't let her go.

Momma even got to play on TV twice. On two occasions the Protégés drove more than 3 hours to Lincoln at sunup to be ready to play on the Morning Show on channel 10. Since she couldn't set up a monitor for her voice, Momma sang off-tune both times because she couldn't hear herself.

Although all 10 people watching might not have heard the prettiest of music those mornings, it probably did wake them up. Plus, they got to see Momma's sewing skills in action. She made all the outfits for her and her sister: hot pants and culottes. One unwritten rule in country music is that your blouse must have fringe or a sequin or 20.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**sequin (n.) the order of events in which you put crappy, reflective dots on your**

**clothes and transform yourself into an idiot**

Every once in a while a miniskirt would be worn. Those were probably the best nights for the bar patrons in the middle of Nebraska.

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Mamma didn't have any listening rules for Rufus as I was growing up. By this time, we had the FM dial and two more radio stations. We ended up listening mostly to country, but occasionally we'd put on the 1980s pop radio station. Rarely did we ever have the dial turned to the rock radio station. By that time, rock had made the transition to noise. I understand how that transition was easy for you Coastal types. If you don't have noise, you know someone is about to mug you or you're already dead.

During the day, the rock station would play classic demon music like David Bowie and Queen, but at night, the new noise bands like RATT, Metallica and Iron Maiden took over. Every 1980s metal band had its own black t-shirt with a skeleton and sharp, pointy letters. Naturally, it was those t-shirts that scared the moms and pops in middle America.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**metal band (n)** a device used in Coastal areas to straighten teeth over an extended period of time

Between Dungeons and Dragons and metal band t-shirts, demon worship hysteria was at a 30-year high in our state and others.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**demon worship (n.)** rooting for Oklahoma football

Before the proliferation of cable TV, you could keep the nastiness of the Coastal world out of our section of the country. The media wouldn't allow such un-Christian metal bands like Stryper to confuse our children over the airwaves. The papers would either ignore these bands or print every negative article referencing them that they could. If record stores wanted to stay open, they wouldn't stock the devil's music. And if someone who had knowledge of the punk movement of the 1970s moved into our community, we stoned him post-haste before he tainted our gene pool.

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Cable TV, specifically MTV and HBO, handed kids the sledgehammer to tear down our moral walls. MTV and HBO were not designed with the Midwest in mind, and I am thankful for that every day of my life.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**HBO (n.) a television channel ranked by 11-year-olds as the number-one reason why they know there is a God**

HBO brought the word “fuck” and boobies into our households. That and Fraggles Rock. Before this channel, which you had to pay extra for, no one knew any swear words and only saw boobies, well, never. The first time Rufus saw a boob it was in Blake Edwards’ “S.O.B.” Those boobs belonged to Julie Andrews. Not quite who I figured my first boob shot would belong to, but it worked in a pinch. I was hooked on HBO from that point on. Never did quite figure out what a Fraggles was, but the Fraggles named “Boober” reminded me of boobies which then reminded me of Julie Andrews and the fact that Rufus needed to watch more HBO and that there was a God.

MTV, despite its miserable visual content, played music that we didn’t hear in Nebraska. Not only was it different, but it was accessible to everyone. Now we could see exactly how dangerous those metal bands were (which if you actually looked, you’d see they were 140 pound guys in make-up). There was a face to this evil, and it was Dee Snyder and Twisted Sister. One of the least influential groups in music, they were the first ones to really scare the living shit out of parents. He was one scary-looking mother fucker. And then when you saw him in make-up, holy shit! When you see Dee Snyder now, you’re like, “Did somebody order a pizza?” but that make-up, it made him so you didn’t know where Dee began and Satan ended.

KISS would have been a much deadlier, more demonized band had it come into existence 10 years later than it did. In the 1970s, you could listen to songs like Beth, Detroit Rock City and Rock and Roll All Nite without thinking of rejects from the Island of Dr. Moreau drinking blood onstage. If you never bought a KISS album or saw a picture of them, you would have no idea they wanted to enslave your children and brainwash them into killing you.

After the tornado destroyed our house, my stepdad moved into this two-bedroom job with a basement. Someone who previously

lived in the house left a KISS poster up in the basement. The poster featured the four members in full make-up, and every time I went down into this cold, damp, dark, unfinished basement, that poster scared the living shit out of me.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**living shit (n.) fecal mater that develops a mind of its own and gets a little jumpy in certain circumstances**

I'd always had this boogeyman fear to start with, but knowing that poster of freaks was there, staring at me, waiting to strike, it put my life in perspective. I was 12 and scared of a piece of paper. It was the first time I really realized that I was a pussy. I thought I was a pussy before that, but being scared by paper, that's the clincher.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**clinchier (n.) something you wish you had when the living shit comes calling**

MTV changed music from the sound to the look, and music really hasn't recovered. Had MTV been around in the late 1960s, I would better understand Granny's pop/rock hysteria. The meanest country musician out there looks like a man who might shoot you and leave you for dead. The most evil metal act out there looks like its ready to sacrifice you to Satan, rip out your heart, dip it in blood, eat it, shit it out, dip that shit in blood, use the defecation as the glue in a macaroni art profile of Paul Stanley, let a dog eat that Paul Stanley macaroni art, give the dog away to a new owner, kill the new owner in front of the dog, let the dog eat the new owner's entrails, dip the dog in blood, take that dog's shit, dry that poop, make a bracelet out of it and sell the bracelet on the side of the road in order to buy more macaroni for future artistic endeavors. That's real fear, people.

## 7. CHILD ABUSE

But first, a story about friendship:

*Harley and Bobby loved to play at the construction site. And who wouldn't? There's so much to play with: cinder blocks, pipe, large machinery and loose gravel and sand. It's a playground similar to one you would find in heaven, they thought.*

*Harley was having an especially good day because his momma just gave him a fresh haircut before Bobby came over. Harley's momma cuts his hair the same way every time. She takes the grooming clippers she bought at the superstore and runs the clippers over Harley's head, but she leaves several strands of hair that originate at the bottom-center of Harley's hairline. That clump of hair has been growing for seven years now. It's been braided, and those strands of hair that resemble a tail extend below Harley's shoulder blades.*

*"That's your birthright," Harley's momma always told him.*

*During this last haircut, Harley's momma told him that his "rat tail" had grown a full inch since the last time they measured it! Harley was so proud of his ability to grow hair that it was the first thing he and Bobby talked about as they were climbing up a pile of sand.*

*"Pretty soon that's gonna be down to your butt," said Bobby.*

*"I sure hope so," said Harley, who threw a handful of sand in his friend's face.*

*The two best friends ran all around the construction site, Bobby with his buzz haircut and Harley's tail flapping with every step. The two boys came upon a ladder that led to the roof of a smaller building on the site. They climbed to the top and ran back and forth on the roof, pretending to be like Spider-Man as they walked on all fours across the fresh shingles.*

*"Let's play Spider-Man, and you can be Lex Luthor," said Harley.*

*"OK," Bobby agreed, and Spider-Man Harley chased Superman's mortal enemy across the roof.*

*As Harley gave chase, a shingle slid from underneath his off-brand sneaker. He slid down the roof, screaming all the way, but instead of falling off the roof, Harley's tail became caught on a wire sticking out of the building's gutter. Bobby made his way to see his friend who hung by his hair 10 feet above the ground.*

*"Are you OK?" asked Bobby.*

*"Go get my momma!" Harley cried as he tried to deal with the pain at the base of his tail.*

*Bobby ran the three blocks to Harley's trailer as fast as he could. Bobby didn't even knock. He burst through the door and screamed at Harley's momma, who was sitting on the couch with a large bowl of a*

popular cheese-flavored snack.

*"Quick, get the scissors and run!" Bobby said.*

*"What's wrong?" Harley's mom asked.*

*"Harley's hanging from the roof by his rat tail!"*

*The panic-stricken mother screamed and ran into the kitchen. She opened up her junk drawer, a drawer filled with dead batteries, cigarettes and non-working pens: no scissors.*

*"Hurry! What's wrong?" yelled Bobby.*

*"I...I don't own any scissors," she said.*

*"What? You don't own scissors? Who doesn't own scissors? How do you cut his hair?" Ah ha, the mother thought as she grabbed the electric clippers from off the counter.*

*With clippers in hand, Harley's momma and Bobby sprinted back to the construction site. The sight of her boy hanging by his birthright was almost too much for her.*

*"Oh my baby! My baby!"*

*"Hurry momma, it really hurts," Harley said.*

*Bobby showed her the ladder they used to get up on the roof. She climbed the ladder and then crawled her way down to Harley. Her eyes fixated on his birthright, his beautiful tail. Maybe there was a way she could free him without having to cut it. She tried pulling on his hair, but not only was the hair wedged in tight, her pulling on it made Harley scream. She had to face facts: the only way to save her son was to cut off his birthright. She took a deep breath.*

*"I'm sorry baby," she said, "I have to cut it off."*

*"It's OK momma, just hurry," Harley said.*

*She looked longingly one last time at the hair cluster and then flipped the switch to power on the clippers. Of course, nothing happened because they weren't plugged in. She froze.*

*"What are you waiting for momma?" Harley screamed. She flipped the power switch on and off a few more times, coming to grips with the fact that she needed electricity for them to work.*

*A siren rang out, and from their rooftop view, the trio saw the volunteer firemen racing toward the construction site. A middle-aged man to whom no one talks and whom people are uncomfortable around called the fire station to report Harley's condition. Using their ladder, the firemen secured Harley's feet and then cut out the piece of gutter his hair was lodged in.*

*"Does anyone have a pocket knife?" the fireman asked.*

*"Oh yeah, I do," said Harley's momma as she handed the fireman the knife.*

*He cut the rat tail off at the base and asked the mother why she let them play at the construction site. She told him it was none of his damn business.*

*“What are you doing with those clippers?” he asked.*

*“I was going to free him from the gutter,” she said.*

*“You do realize that cutting his hair while he was hanging there would have sent him falling to the ground and possibly breaking every bone in his body, don’t you?”*

*“Good thing I didn’t cut it then,” she said as she kicked the fireman in the balls for talking to her in such a way, picked up Harley and his rat tail and headed back for the trailer.*

It’s definitely sad, brings a tear to your eye. Who knows what really causes it, whether it’s just a mental instability or environmental factors? I’d like to put the blame on Barbie and her flowing locks. However it came to pass, there’s no debating the end result: Giving your child a rat tail is the most severe form of child abuse today.

Rufus knows that you folks in the Northeast have plenty of rat tails lying around your apartments, but I ain’t talking about stapling a real rat’s tail to our kid’s head. You people are sick.

What I’m talking about is what some families think is ... well they’re obviously not thinking. These people will buzz-cut their boy’s hair, making it all short, with the exception of a long, braided clump of hair that starts at the nape.

For years and I mean YEARS (I have it undocumented), I have pleaded with child protective services to take these children away from their parents, but no one has answered my demands. I think their quietude is based on fear: Where would they put all the children?

What these “parents” of the rat-tailed child need to learn is that a child is not a toy. A slave, of course. A toy, no way. You shouldn’t have the right to do whatever you want with his hair. And for whatever reason, whether it’s financial or a determination that they can do a good job cutting hair, parents rarely send their young kids to the cosmetologist.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **cosmetologist (n.) Russians who landed on the moon and we still hate them**

Child abuse can take many forms, from the perm to the mullet to the permed mullet, but by far, the worst form of abuse is the rat tail. The reason Rufus despises it so much is because it’s a

follicular “fuck you” to the world. These parents, these wielders of abuse prepared for the haircut, took the sheers, cut 99% of the child’s hair down to the scalp and then made a conscious decision to leave a ridiculous strand of hair that will hopefully grow all the way down to his ass someday.

Women who value grooming, decency and the Lord Jesus Christ do not let their children have rat tails. However, there are some who live among us, mostly in trailers, who enjoy making their pride and joy look “good” by forcing a rat tail on him.

There isn’t a child in the world who, on his own accord, would want to sport a rat tail. He might think he wants it because mommy likes it and tells him it looks good on him. Fact is, the last thing a kid wants is something dangling from his head that’s a convenient leash.

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You can tell that kid with the rat tail is going to cause trouble and his mother has an old-school (some would say Spanish Inquisition old) approach to discipline. The second he lips off to her, she’s going to yank that rat tail and pull him to the other room where she’s going to give him a whoopin’. Of course, he deserves it, but with this style of discipline, the mother is not giving him a chance to develop an important life skill when she yanks on that rat tail: the skill of running away.

You’re setting up the child for a lifetime’s worth of beatings. He can’t experience fear with the rat tail because he doesn’t have time to be afraid; he just has time to get whiplash.

He has to learn fear at a young age. What happens in a real-world situation where being afraid will actually help him as a survival mechanism? Without fear, he will forget to run after yelling “nigger” at a group of black men. Without fear, he won’t know what to do after he’s caught red-handed with a car stereo in his pants. And what do you expect will happen when his woman comes home to find him in bed with another woman? That’s right, he’s going to get shot and die, all because you couldn’t teach him to run away, because you skipped the fear part of being a parent and went right to the rod, because you gave him the rat tail.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**fear (n.) a gateway emotion to violence, drinking and voting Republican**

The mullet, where the top and sides of the hair are cut short but the back is left long, is what the rat tail molts into when a boy becomes old enough to make his own decisions, especially the decision to become violent and confused on a consistent basis.

Why would you wear your hair like that even though your mom no longer cuts it? It would be easy to say the mullet is the result of bad parenting, but sometimes the reasons for the Achy Breaky Big Mistakey run a little deeper. It's possible that his shears broke as he was cutting his hair in the mirror. Maybe that Flowbee-brand vacuum-powered hair-cutting machine he bought from the shopping channel on TV lost suction. It's unlikely he's trying to cover up psoriasis. But outside of those three possibilities, there's no reasonable excuse for any man to mistakenly have a mullet.

If parents don't discourage the mullet at an early age, psychologists haven't suggested that their children will grow up to be retards.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **retard (n.) once who makes the decision to be a complete jackass**

“Retarded” was a word that used to describe mentally handicapped people, but then the word got banished for being degrading to mentally handicapped people (who obviously didn't choose to be abnormal) so we started calling those people mentally handicapped (or challenged). Today, we use “retard” to describe someone who defies logic and makes decisions that you would expect a mentally handicapped person to make. However a person wants to justify the word's place in the lexicon, Rufus is just happy to have “retard” back.

Let's say you were mentally handicapped—God chose you to be different. Rufus would expect you to see someone who has a mullet and wonder to yourself how you could get a cool haircut like that. How much would that cost, 12 buttons? How many times would you have to clap your hands to make it happen? I can understand why the mentally challenged person would think having a mullet would be cool. What isn't cool about seeing a mulleted man in the white t-shirt with the sleeves cut off stepping out of his Camaro and flipping his mullet? It's like something you see on TV. Everyone wants to be like the people on TV. That train of logic I can get behind because the poor guy is mentally handicapped.

The man stepping out of the Camaro, wearing a homemade wife-beater and flipping his mullet like he's in a shampoo commercial, he's a retard. He has made a conscious decision to wear his hair that way. He knows how socially unacceptable a mullet is. He, obviously, doesn't care what the rest of us think, and it's his way of railing against the wrongs of society by doing wrong himself.

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See, in Nebraska we're not real experienced at protesting like you Coastal Whale-savers, partly because we have basic knowledge of how things work. We know that if we sit down in a street, a car is going to run over us. That club in the policeman's hand will hurt when he uses it, and he's not just holding it for show. That fire hose the firemen are holding, water's coming out of that with enough force to kick our asses. Once you get beaten, drenched and squished, protesting kind of loses its charm. You goody-goody liberal whiners will protest any little thing like a war for oil, human rights violations, racial inequality and every other time a hat drops. Yawn city. Get a life and maybe get behind a real purpose that will help people while you're at it.

We protest just two things in Nebraska: life and death. End of list. You go to any of the two abortion clinics in the state (I'm just teasing—there are actually three), and you're sure to see someone, whom consequently no one would fuck, standing outside with a sign that reads how abortion is murder or God hates abortion or God should kill you for wanting abortion or something classic like that. We, in the last 30 years, have become very good at standing in front of abortion clinics, but as you know, abortion is still legal.

The seemingly innocuous, innocuous until he's liquored up, more powerful protest comes from the man with a mullet.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **innocuous (n.) the act of getting someone pregnant**

He's the anithero's everyman. He hates the government's involvement in his life but also the fact that the government isn't as involved as he'd like. He hates the cops and yet appreciates having them around when his parties get out of control or his friend steals his motorcycle. He hates businessmen, insurance agents and bankers, but he is willing to put on his best pair of

blue jeans—also known as his church jeans—to get a loan from the bank so he can buy a Camaro, buy a motorcycle or start a new entrepreneurial endeavor which may or may not involve bait, vinyl siding or independent contracting.

The mullet is his way of sticking it to every man he can. He's saying, you may control every aspect of my life, but you will never, ever, take away my right to look like a retard. That's how he sleeps at night, and Rufus does admire him for that. However, I will never respect his form of protest because it hurts the eyes of so many innocents, so many impressionable children. For the love of God, why does no one ever think of the children!

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Some believers in the Satanic idea of evolution say that this bearer of the Kentucky Waterfall doesn't choose to have this hairstyle but instead is conditioned into making it his hairstyle. The environmental factors—from the junk cars in the lawn and cinder blocks under the house to the fear the neighbors have of him and the friends who wouldn't think twice about stealing from him—should be held responsible for his wearing a mullet, not some conscious decision on his part. These nerds ain't never heard of a rite of passage.

## HICKTIONARY

rite of passage (n.) a pass to the tight end in a situation where everyone

thought the team was going to run the ball during a University of Nebraska football game

Like when a Jew boy chooses to become a Jew during his bah mitzvah, a young Nebraskan chooses to become a retard during a sacred moment—the first time he goes to see the cosmetologist. Be it a barber, a salon stylist or the beauty college (which it's probably the beauty college since the cuts are half price), the person with the scissors asks the age-old question: “How do you want that cut?”

**Upper Nebraskese:** “How do you want that cut?”

**Lower Nebraskese:** “Are you in or are you out?”

Since his mother had always fashioned him to have a rat tail and long hair in the back, he never had to decide how exactly he wants his hair. For the first time in his life, he's given a choice to

look like everyone else he sees. He could have the buzz cut like the football stars. He can get the traditional “Moe/Pete Rose” haircut like the cool kids who smoke after school. He could even get the bowl cut like all the smart kids he knows—all two of them.

“Would you like to be like everyone else, or would you like to look like a retard?”

“Do you prefer the government or anarchy?”

“Will you drive a Camaro or Taurus?”

“Will you wear briefs or fly solo?”

With the weight of the world on his shoulders, he looks in the mirror and thinks to himself, “I know you. You’re one sexy motherfucker.”

“Leave the length in the back, but cut everything else short,” he says to the cosmetologist and then clears his nasal passages, sucking the mucus back into his throat.

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Rufus has had my share of bad haircuts, but mostly after I made conscious decisions regarding my hair. For most of my childhood, Rufus’s mom cut Rufus’s hair, and she was a pro, had her cosmetology license and training and everything. I always tried to push the envelope and have my hair longer than most people, not like a hippie ponytail of course—that’s liable to get me shot—but more “boy, you could sure use a haircut, Junior.”

**HICKTIONARY** ☆ **male ponytail (n.) a suicide note affixed to your scalp**

She one time gave me a perm; that’s about the only flaw in her record. Unfortunately, pictures still exist of that experiment, and she won’t tell me where they are. She also dressed me up like a girl at least once. But I shit myself at her second wedding, so I figure we’re even.

One time, I went for the ultimate haircut and shaved my head, used razors and everything. Not the best idea, but it did feel kind of good. It’s hard to describe what your own bald head feels like in your hands. Even after you shave your face, your face doesn’t feel quite as perfectly soft as your newly shaven skull. Because the—I don’t know—muscle mass isn’t as dense between your scalp and

your skull as it is between your forearm and your forearm bone, you can feel your shaved, soft head and finger your skull. It really is hard for me to explain. I suggest you shave your head.

Not only does a shaved head feel pretty good, it gets you a lot of sympathy, prayers said in your honor and wishes of hope that you can survive your bout with cancer. The combination of a shaved head and Northern European skin tone goes together like Seattle and clear sky. When Rufus had his head shaved, several people who volunteered at the hospital wanted to know if I would come to the cancer ward to cheer up the patients. I was honored that they thought I was that funny, but after I looked in the mirror, I realized what they were getting at.

Most of the time, I just wear a hat.

## 8. COW TIPPING

But first, a story about everlasting love:

Charoles and Gus lived in the country with their father in a trailer house about a section away from the farm where their father worked. Charoles and Gus never knew what became of their mother. One day she sent them off to school, and they never saw her again. Their father would never tell them where she went, only saying, "She's gone." He never cursed or lamented the fact she was no longer around, so her disappearance just became a part of life, passed and was rarely mentioned again.

When the boys weren't in school, Charoles and Gus helped their dad tend to the cattle, feeding them and herding them into pens. The temperature had reached over 100 degrees on one particularly humid, late-summer day. Heat and humidity spells danger for livestock, and the boys needed to help their father keep the cattle cool or risk losing them.

At 3 p.m., the hottest time of that day, Charoles and Gus built a makeshift pen to follow the shadow cast by the few trees in the pasture. As they led each cow to the shelter and shade, one spoke.

"I don't think I could move even one more step," said the cow to the teenagers.

Surely the heat had gotten to them.

"Just let me lay down," the cow continued.

Charoles and Gus looked blankly at each other. They couldn't both be having the same delusion. This felt so real. They left the stubborn cow be and worked the rest of the afternoon to save the herd.

The next day, the heat relented, and Charoles and Gus went about their chores. Again, the cow spoke to them.

"You're such good boys for saving the others. I'm so proud of you," said the cow.

Not able to use the heat as an excuse, the boys confronted their problem: They had a talking cow.

"What are you?" asked Charoles, "Are you God?"

The cow said no, not God. "I am your mother. I died long ago and was sent back to Earth as this cow to look after my boys." The boys asked the cow questions that only their mother would know, and the cow answered them without hesitation.

Over the next days, Charoles and Gus spent extra time with the herd, asking their newfound mother question after question about the past. At long last, it felt like they had their mother back.

Their father was too busy to recognize how much time the boys were spending with the cattle. He pulled up in his pickup one day to find the boys sitting on the ground with the cow, petting it on its face and talking back and forth.

*"What's this all about?" the father asked.*

*"Taking a break from work, Pa," said Charoles. The cow stared at the father, and the look caught the father's eye. He spit tobacco juice out of his mouth and wiped his lip with the back of his hand.*

*"OK, you two, back to work."*

*As the father left, a tear ran down the face of the cow.*

*"I wished we could have had a life together," she told the boys. The boys agreed and watched their father drive away down the dusty gravel road. "Maybe I can still be your mommy," she said. "Would you like that?"*

*The boys agreed that, in principle, that's not a shabby idea.*

*"Let's start now," said the cow, who then offered up her teat to the boys.*

*"What's this all about?" asked Charoles.*

*The cow said she wanted them to be whole again, and the best way to start would be to share in her milk. Charoles and Gus looked at each other blankly.*

*"Fuck that," said Charoles, "I'm not putting my mouth on that thing, let alone suck on it." Gus nodded in agreement.*

*Disrespected, the cow turned on the boys. After all she had done for them—she gave them life, they turn around and stab her in the back.*

*"This is my way to come back to life, to leave this cow form and be your mom again," she said.*

*"No fucking way is that thing going in my mouth, cow," said Charoles.*

*With her tail, the cow whacked both children on their behinds, hard enough to sting. The two ran off, rubbing their backsides, as if that was going to make the pain go away.*

*Late that night, after their father had his beer and fell asleep, Charoles and Gus snuck out of the house and headed to the pasture. The herd stood still, asleep. Reincarnated mother or not, the boys weren't going to be whipped by some cow. They tiptoed through the field and stood right next to the sleeping cow. With his hand, Charoles counted up to three, and on three, the two boys pushed the cow with all their might. Taken by surprise, the cow fell to the ground. Stunned, it looked up at the boys, so proud of themselves.*

*The cow hung its head and never said another word.*

*No cows have slept standing up since that fateful night. (As a sidenote: The boys met a tragic end a few weeks later when they put too much ether in a tire, which blew up and killed them.)*

It's true, we like to have fun, but because of our financial situation and lack of entertainment resources, we have to make our own fun.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **entertainment (n.) an activity to accompany beer drinking**

Our entertainment is heightened to an unprecedented level when we can play someone for a sucker at the same time. Not only is it a cause for gut-busting hilarity when you're drunk or high or both, but if you can remember it happening the next day, it offers you a great story to tell for generations to come.

The Native Americans don't eat peyote on accident. The government, which has stripped everything away from them except the best, most wholesome parts of our society in gambling, smoking and alcohol, permit them to lawfully use peyote for religious ceremonies. When they take it, legend has it they can see colors and spirits.



Thomas Proudfeather: "What if I told you I held in my hand the key to unlock the door to the spirits."

**Matthew Tenderfoot: "How can this be?"**

Thomas Proudfeather: "This button takes you to another world where you become one with yourself, nature and the spirits. Will you take it?"



**Matthew Tenderfoot: "Yes, yes I must take it to become a man."**

Thomas Proudfeather: "True that. Take it."

**Matthew Tenderfoot: (takes the button, starts sweating profusely) "My journey has begun."**

Thomas Proudfeather: (laughing with others at Matthew) "Um, yeah. Let me know what the spirits say. You do that."

**Matthew Tenderfoot: "I'm trying to understand, but my head...my-"**

Thomas Proudfeather: "Yeah, you're like really high right now. Good luck with that. We'll see you in a few hours. We're going to borrow your Nintendo if that's OK."

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If you're asked to go cow tipping with anyone, do two things to prepare: eat a good supper and wear ratty clothes. In theory, you and your "buddies" are going to drive out to a pasture, sneak up on a cow that is sleeping and push it over so it lands on the ground like a hacked tree.

The night starts with everybody, including you, hopping into the back of a pickup with a full cooler of beer and driving to a side road out in the country. The driver parks the truck, puts down the tailgate and grabs a beer. Everyone cracks open a brew, hangs out and talks. An hour or so later, other people driving around find you and a party starts. Because it's getting dark and you hate wood, folks go scavenging for lumber to start a small bonfire.

As the fire begins to roar, everyone starts talking about the plans and how this "tip" is going to go down. They'll split into three groups: one group is the recon to make sure no farmers or other folk show up, a second group scouts the herd and the best route to the cattle and the third group, which includes you, will act as the infantry and push the standing cow to the ground.

Since you've been drinking and it's dark, you're having a hard time determining which cow you're supposed to go after once you get to the field, but luckily, your buddies are there to help you every step of the way. When you finally get to the cow, your heart is racing. You're doing something that is, at the very least, naughty if not downright illegal because odds are you're trespassing. You also have no idea how the cow will react once you push it down. Nevertheless, you and the crew get close to a cow, and your guide tells you, "We're doing it on four." One. Two. Three. Your trousers meet your ankles as you are depantsed by someone in the tipping party.

Disoriented, you run around with your pants around your ankles, and since you're drunk, you fall (probably into a cow pie). Once you're down, your buddies finish the job and take your pants clear off, leaving you with your shoes, shirt and a freshly cracked beer for the walk back to the truck. If the plot was really elaborate, group two of the party actually put on a costume of sorts and acted as the cow.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**cow (n.) 1. a bovine animal that does not sleep standing up 2. a female your sister or mother hates**

They say the N on our Nebraska football helmets stands for knowledge, and knowledge is definitely power when it comes to knowing if you're a mark. Education is very important in our state, but in other poor, degenerative states where the children can't even say the name of their state correctly, the education system lacks so dearly that kids will still go cow tipping even

after they learn that cows sleep lying down.

At the very least, if someone asks you to go cow tipping, be honored that they want to be your friend. Sure, the initiation process leaves a little to be desired when you're drunk, naked and covered in cow shit, but one day, you'll be able to pass along both this story and this experience to an unsuspecting sap. A question from the readership, yes, hello there:



Inquiring Mind: "What kind of friends show their friendship by taking your pants off and dipping you in cow manure?"

Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Darn good ones."



Inquiring Mind: "That's ridiculous."

Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "That's love."

**HICKTIONARY** ★ love (v.) an unconditional affection, often shown through violence or a "lesson learned," that you have for another person who better show that emotion back to you if they don't want to be hated

Being duped into cow tipping is a rite of passage. You cannot become a man or a woman until you gain either the knowledge that cows don't sleep standing up or the feeling of being depantsed and dipped in cow dung. It's an exercise in distrusting trust.

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But what games should you watch out for on the Coasts? Surely you wouldn't be interested in seeing a cow even if it was in a petting zoo, so cow tipping is out. I'd also avoid such games as "find the rat in Uncle Vito's pants," "three-card Monty," "stab the tourist," "battle the hurricane" and "underground cockroach fighting." But those are all things you know, tangible things, things you see everyday. What if someone presents you with an activity you've never heard of?

That's often the case with snipe hunting.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ snipe (n.) a mythical creature of varied size often hunted with a beer, a shovel and a pellet gun (v.) to shoot a person's ass with a pellet gun

Snipe hunting, like cow tipping, is merely a premeditated attempt to make a complete fool of someone. The rules for the snipe hunt are a little more flexible than that of the cow tip. The only key ingredients of a successful snipe hunt are a flashlight, beer, a gunny sack and a sucker. The story you use to convince a person to go on a snipe hunt can read like a Mad Lib.

Hey (sucker's name), you ever been snipe hunting? We should totally go (day and time). You don't know what a snipe is? It's a (description of animal) that hides (preposition of location followed by elemental location). You get a gunny sack full of them and then (name of activity). We'll grab some beer and have a good time. Make sure you wear (type of clothing easily removed) and (footwear). Heck, let's just go right now. Your life is (negative but realistic summation of friend's life) anyway. Let's go get (slang for drunk) and catch snipe.

You can drink some beer, wait for it to get dark, go hunting, put the sack over your friend and depants him. Then you'll share some more beer and have a great laugh at how dumb your friend is. You'll invite him to go cow tipping next week.

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Not all the games we play when we're drunk or bored have to do with humiliating our friends and strengthening our trust we have together by destroying it. We also have a knack for vandalizing random victims. If you have little creativity, all you need are a few rolls of toilet paper to throw up in the tree branches or a dozen eggs to throw at houses and you're ready for a good time.

It's the real inventive ones who can take vandalism to a philosophical level. Sure, it's easy to yard farm (drive your car on someone's lawn so that you leave tire tracks in the grass), but it takes balls to take the "for sale" sign from one house and put it in the lawn of another house. For the next few days, you drive-by those houses to see that the sign is still misplaced. If it takes three or more days for anyone to realize the sign is in their yard, you win. You don't get a prize you can hock, but you win nonetheless.

Of course, some folks will see this form of trickery as a sign from God that they should sell their house. How else would a person interpret waking up and seeing a "for sale" sign in the

yard? At the very least, the homeowner should feel uncomfortable about how the neighborhood is going to Hell, and moving isn't a bad idea. The homeowner will blame it on a Mexican and tell neighbors about the mounting frustration concerning undocumented immigrants.

## 9. GUNS & BOOZE

But first, a story about family:

*Two generations of the Tipple clan bundled up, grabbed their firearms and walked out to the deer blind in the field behind their house. The wooded acreage – one of the few places where trees roamed in packs within 70 miles - had been in the Tipple family since the Homestead Act, and for a good part of 60 years, Jim Tipple hunted everything from deer to coyote to turtle dove from various blinds he'd painstakingly cared for since he was a boy.*

*For 40 years, Jack Tipple hunted with his dad, mastering the sport. Jack learned the patience of hunting, when to strike, when to pack it in and when to wait just a little longer, recognizing when an animal was too young to kill. He helped his dad repair blinds, clear brush and fix fence. One day this property will be his, and even though part of him will be gone when his dad passes on, the hunting itself will stay the same: demanding, challenging and a way to get away from the wife and relax.*

*Both men appreciated the briskness of the winter air and the warmth that can be found in snow. Despite the advancements in firearm technology, Jim didn't even use a pump shotgun. His was of the single-load variety. You get one shot and you have to make it your best. Same with his rifle. Jack owned a pump shotgun that let him take three shots before having to reload. It wasn't that he couldn't hit an animal on that first shot because often he could. Jack wanted to make sure he didn't go home empty-handed. If it took three shots to get that bird, then that's what it would take.*

*Often the men would give the meat from bigger kills to folks who were down on their luck. The money they got from selling skins they gave to their church. The companionship they shared was reward enough.*

*On weekends in the winter, Jack would help Jim climb up a makeshift ladder - which was just boards nailed to a tree - to the deer blind. They'd pack a lunchbox of momma's sweetbread, a Thermos of coffee (the kind originating from a three-pound can), a pouch of chewing tobacco and a flask of whisky (just in case) and would sit for hours. In winters when they bagged their deer early, the men would go out to the blind to just talk, watch the deer and enjoy the morning air.*

*"Do you think it will ever change," Jack asked one time, "think those deer will ever leave and never come back?"*

*Jim chewed on his plug and thought about his answer. "I don't think so," said Jim. "This is their home. They'll live here, raise babies here, die here. As long as there's a winter, long as there's trees, there'll be deer. They'll be here long after we're gone. We'll change. I don't think they will."*

One morning before the two went out to the blind, the telephone's ring broke up the quiet of the morning. "Hi grandpa," said Jack's son, Bud, "you and dad going out to the blind today?"

Wasn't in Jim's nature to lie. "Yep, reckon we are."

"Can I come?" asked Bud.

Jim said he could. Wasn't in his nature to exclude kin from anything. Bud grabbed his rifle, got in his truck and sped out to Jim's to join the men. Bud rarely wanted to go hunting. He was raised in a different time with different comforts not afforded, or desired, by Jim or Jack. Hunting, to Bud, was too boring. It was always too cold; he didn't want to clean the animals killed. Mostly, he was a bad shot. If you can't make contact with a baseball, would you still swing a bat? Bud felt like he had to be a good hunter like his dad and grandpa, but his inability to shoot embarrassed him, made him retreat from them.

When Bud pulled up, Jim and Jack were already in the blind. Bud climbed up the makeshift ladder.

"Howdy Bud," Jim said, "what's that thing you got?" Bud showed off his newest, proudest purchase: the semi-automatic rifle. "What you planning on doing with that?"

"What do you mean, grandpa? We're hunting."

"Well," Jim said with a pause, "your dad and I, we're hunting. I don't know what you're planning on doing with that. You goin' to war, Bud?"

Trying not to be hurt by his grandpa's comments, Bud pulled some beer out of the backpack that he brought. When he popped the top, Jim and Jack winced. "Don't drive all the deer away," said Jack. Jim added, "That beer ain't frozen, is it? If you need something to keep you warm, we'll share a nip with ya, Bud."

Bud laughed it off, but he sat there quiet, sulking, pretending to be on the lookout for animals. After his third beer, he started to daydream about seeing a deer, standing up and filling it full of holes. The speed at which that deer would go down would surely impress his dad and grandpa. Beer four he saw himself holding up the deer by its antlers, and by beer five of his six-pack, he saw those great antlers mounted above a fireplace, some random fireplace.

It was at that point that Jim put his hand on Bud's shoulder, motioning to him to be very still: a deer came nearby, a big buck. All three drew their rifles. The adrenaline pumped through Bud's veins like a tidal wave over a dam. This was his chance. All he had to do was hit the trigger a few times, and he could be the hunter he always wanted to be. Bud saw the deer in the distance and pulled the trigger to fire. The gun merely clicked. The deer heard the click and ran toward the woods.

Jim held the clip of Bud's gun. He had taken it sometime between the fourth and fifth beer when Bud let him look at his gun. "We'll change," Jim said to Jack. "I don't think they will."

Like love and marriage, like chocolate and peanut butter, like incest and birth defects, few Nebraskans can live without their guns and booze. Most folks favor one over the other, but you'll be hard pressed to find anyone who hasn't had their hands on both and done some damage.

Some of the fine folk of Nebraska like guns and booze so much that they like to enjoy both at the same time. The drinks of choice are usually whisky and schnapps because these liquors fire up your insides to help keep you warm when the temperature is 2 degrees and you ain't bagged your deer for the year. Of course, not all hunters drink, not all drinkers hunt.

A question from the readership already this chapter. This is going to be a long chapter if you're at it already. Go ahead:



Readership: "Thank you for taking my question."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Sure."**

Readership: "I don't understand. You can drink and operate a weapon at the same time? How is that legal?"



**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Uh, in case you ain't noticed, this is America, and we don't legislate freedom."**

It is illegal to drink and have a gun if you're on state land, but it's straight-up illegal to drink on state land anyway. However, in small town Nebraska, everybody knows somebody who owns land that has wooded areas or a pond or land on the "river." Because it's private property, you can do anything you want on it, as long as it's not "illegal." If the owner says, "Don't be drinkin' on my land," then you don't drink. If the owner says, "Sure, you can hunt (or fish)," knock yourself out with booze.

More than 140,000 people hunt in Nebraska each year, and stunningly, only between 4 and 12 hunting accidents are reported annually—that number is 0.00008 percent of the people who hunt. Rufus reckons hunting gets a bad rap (is there a good rap?) in the Coastal hoity-toity parts because the only exposure to guns those people get is murder reports on the nightly news and good old-fashioned NRA zealotry.

Rufus doesn't have much good to say about the NRA. Their craziness over semi-automatic weapons leaves a bad taste in my mouth. I was raised to think hunting was more about sport than killing. The people I know would rather wait in a deer blind

for three hours and go home empty if they missed their only opportunity to shoot a deer with their single-shot rifle than unload 10 bullets into the critter in 5 seconds. What is the sport in that?

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **sport (n.) an event where one tries to prove he is a man**

It doesn't take a psycho to use a gun to commit a crime, or at worse a murder. It does, however, take a psycho to premeditate filling an animal with as many bullets as possible in the name of sport. More bullets flying around means more of a chance of freak hunting accidents. I don't have any real stats to back that up, but Rufus can't imagine more bullets being shot leading to fewer accidents or deaths.

### **Actual Nebraska Hunting Accidents**

Lincoln, Neb., Dec. 16, 2002—A man hunting near Lincoln was shot after a dog stepped on the trigger of a loaded gun.

Witnesses said the hunters put their guns in the back of a pickup truck, and then loaded the dog. The dog then stepped on the gun's trigger.

The bullet pierced the side of the pickup and hit Jeff Ketelson, 35, in the stomach.

"You can look back and say this could have been avoided if the individuals would have unloaded the shotguns prior to placing them on the bed of the truck," Lancaster County Sheriff's Deputy Bill Jarrett said.

*Published in the Lincoln Journal-Star*

North Platte, Neb., Nov. 24, 2003—A hunting accident southwest of Brady put a local man in the hospital Sunday evening. Lincoln County Sheriff's Deputy Wayne Connell says two men were sitting in a pickup, waiting for a deer, when one of them shot himself in the foot with his rifle.

26 year-old Casey Dishman of North Platte was transported to Great Plains Regional Medical Center. A hospital spokesman says Dishman is in stable condition. The sheriff's investigation is complete, and the accident is ruled an accident.

Rocky Hoffman with the North Platte office of the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, says, "Hunter safety is basically a common sense approach to hunting and even though there are no formal rules, basically if you don't point the gun at something you

don't want to shoot then you are not going to shoot it. If you don't want to get shot in the leg then don't point your gun at your leg.”

*Published in the North Platte Bulletin*

North Platte, Neb., Nov. 25, 2006— The first hunting accident of the year was reported last Sunday when Paul A. Niles, 26, of North Platte, reportedly lost his right big toe when a rifle discharged in a pickup.

Niles was deer hunting with some buddies on a pasture north of Maywood when the pickup hit a bump and the .308-caliber rifle discharged, according to Lincoln County Sheriff Jerome Kramer.

LCSO Deputy Bob Zeiler was running radar on Highway 83 about 9:30 a.m. Nov. 19 when he clocked a red Dodge pickup northbound about 96 mph. Zeiler gave chase and turned on his overhead lights to stop the speeding truck, according to Kramer.

When the men stopped, they explained what happened.

Niles was reportedly sitting in the truck with the barrel of the loaded weapon resting on his boot. When the truck hit a bump, the gun went off firing the bullet through his boot and the floorboard of the truck.

When Niles removed his boot, his right big toe fell out.

The men had the severed toe on the dashboard and showed it to Zeiler, who immediately decided to escort the men to the hospital but did not run excessive speeds, according to Kramer.

*Published in the North Platte Bulletin*

Shelton, Neb., Nov. 16, 2004-- A Kearney County woman was injured by bullet fragments Sunday in rural Buffalo County when a man fired a rifle over the top of the vehicle in which she was seated.

Rochelle Kreutzer, 38, was seated in the driver's seat of her 1979 Chevrolet Caprice and was injured by bullet fragments when Rodney Solano, 42, fired a rifle over the top of the vehicle and a bullet entered the passenger compartment, according to a press release from the Buffalo County Sheriff's Department.

Buffalo County Sheriff's Capt. Bob Anderson said Solano, who is also of Kearney County, was the front seat passenger in the Chevy. He got out of the car, left the door open and laid the rifle over the top of the car before firing.

Kreutzer was struck in the upper torso and head, Anderson said.

*Published in the Grand Island Independent*

Corpus Christi, Texas, Feb. 20, 2006-- Harry Whittington said Friday he was sorry for what Dick Cheney and his family have "had to go through" after the vice president shot him in a weekend hunting accident.

The 78-year-old Bush-Cheney campaign donor spoke briefly to reporters upon his release from a Corpus Christi hospital, but he took no questions.

Cheney sprayed Whittington with birdshot on his face and upper torso in Saturday's hunting accident. Whittington suffered a mild heart attack Tuesday, doctors said, after a piece of birdshot in his body migrated to a heart muscle.

"We all assume certain risks in whatever we do," Whittington said. "Whatever activities we pursue and regardless of how experienced, careful and dedicated we are, accidents do and will happen."

"My family and I are deeply sorry for all that Vice President Cheney and his family have had to go through this week," Whittington said.

*Published on CNN.com (since Cheney was born in Lincoln, we'll claim this one)*

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When I was a Little Rufus, hunting was a tradition between a stepfather and a stepson that I had no interest in, but bonding time is limited in Nebraska when the children are under 21 so I had to go on the hunting excursions.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **hunting (n.) an activity men use to subtly torture young boys**

If being a pussy means not wanting to go deaf from violent blasts, sitting in the freezing cold for hours on end and refusing to "clean" dead animals, then Little Rufus was the pinkest pussy wearing the brightest fuchsia dress and matching heels in the state of Nebraska. Little Rufus just didn't "get" hunting, but maybe that's because every hunting trip I've ever been on had been torture.

One day, we went duck hunting at someone's pond. Hunters are a patient lot, willing to sit for hours to get one shot off. On this occasion, my stepdad, four of his friends and I made a morning of it, sitting in the duck blind and waiting for the big score.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**duck blind (n.) 1. a seating area, camouflaged with various weeds, trees and vegetation, situated next to a pond**

**in which hunters hide out and wait for ducks to come to the water in order to shoot them for sport 2. an area to get away from your wife**

Before the crack of dawn on a Saturday, he woke me up to get ourselves right for our excursion. He made me some hot chocolate to put in the Thermos and helped me bundle up. We drove out to the pond and met the rest of the crew who had just finished putting the decoys in the water.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**decoy (n.) 1. fake animals used to trick real animals into taking a closer look**

**in the hopes of getting some tail 2. people who are a little shy but you can tell there's a devil inside**

We all popped a squat on the bench in the blind, calmly waiting in silence for a duck to get fooled by plastic. I took a slurp of my hot chocolate. My Thermos contained the worst tasting beverage ever. Mr. Mom made my hot chocolate with baking cocoa instead of the sugary sweetness of the normally marshmallow-laden beverage. They were drinking a nip of schnapps to keep warm. Meanwhile, Little Rufus froze in my thermal underwear, unable to get the taste of baking cocoa out of my mouth. Three hours and an uncountable number of shushes from the men later, the moment finally arrived: ducks, eight of them, off in the distance. One man broke out a cylindrical wooden device, the duck call, to attempt to lure the ducks to the pond.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**duck call (n.) a device that emits the sound of a cat dying in a wood chipper**

Then, they all used their calls, making a symphonic sound only a mallard would be stupid enough to be drawn to. The ducks, flying high above, heard the calls. They probably thought they were hearing a cat dying in a wood chipper and wanted to take a closer look because that ain't something you see every day. As they approached the pond and wondered why those other ducks looked rigid and where the cat was, the four hunters in the blind stood up and opened fire with their shotguns. Blindsided (pun intended), the ducks v-lined back into the sky, barely escaping the trap. The men who missed packed up their shotguns and called it a morning, birdless and looking forward to next Saturday.

The one time my stepfather did bag a duck, he sent Little Rufus and our yellow Lab to go get the fowl.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **Labrador retriever (n.) man's best friend, sometimes man's only friend, that is the dumbest dog ever but incredibly loyal [See: Rufus]**

If this was an actual job, finding that duck in the 6-inch-tall weeds, we would have been fired, immediately. After five agonizing minutes of looking around the brown weeds for a green, grey and brown duck, my steppop came over to see what the hell was taking so long. He pointed out that we had stepped on the duck at least three times, which we had. Little Rufus stared intently at the Lab:

**Little Rufus:** (mentally) "Where the hell were you on that one, 'retriever.'"

**Dumb-ass Lab:** (mentally) "Bone bone bone, grass, bone."

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One thing we love even more than hunting is our booze. Wine, licker, beer, rubbing alcohol, vanilla extract—we love it all. We got all kinds of beer from your working man's Pabst Blue Ribbon to your rich fancy guy's Miller High Life, but wine is most fine.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **wine (n.) a potent drink made from something, sometimes grapes (v.) the act of talking about the weather**

One of our favorite types of wine is affectionately referred to as Mad Dog—MD 20/20 if you're going to be exact about it. Night Train is good wine, too. That Boones Farm makes a real good wine on their acreage. Of course, for some folk in Nebraska, mostly women, the pure, unadulterated goodness of these beverages is too much to take straight up. That's when you add the 7-Up to it. Now that's good wine!

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There's a big problem with overconsuming booze at places where you're supposed to be learning, and our learning centers are no strangers to this binge drinking. You ain't supposed to be learning how to drink. It's something you're already supposed to know. There's something to be said for learning and polishing

your drinking craft, but you can do that without putting yourself into college loan debt. In fact, you can get much better at drinking by working at a bar than at any other learning place.

But who's Rufus to tell someone how to live, especially when it comes to something as important as picking a good drinking college? There are too many factors to consider. You can't just jump into a college because they got a good "program" or "degree thing." When selecting a college, ask yourself these questions:

### **Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.'s Crib Sheet for College Selection**

#### *1) Is there a body of water nearby?*

Water is a crucial part of college life. As you folks on the Coast understand, you always have a good time around it. Something about water seems to bring out the drinking spirit in you because somewhere in the back of your mind you ask yourself how drunk you need to get before jumping in without any clothes on. Rufus likes skinny-dipping, although I usually only do it when I need a free bath. The biggest difference between your Coastal water and ours is that ours has a beginning and an end to it, and that's how we like it. You have to worry about a shark gobbling you up. We only have to look out for crabs and possibly herpes, but that's part of the excitement of getting drunk, taking your clothes off and jumping in. There are many fine drinking colleges that aren't near water, but I wouldn't recommend them because they suck.

#### *2) If there's no lake, is there a place where I can start a fire?*

As previously discussed, we like fire. We like to see our beer, but mostly we like warmth and the destructive nature of burning things. Fires are for snuggling. Fires are for burning all the letters from your ex when your relationship is over. Fires are for sticking it to wood for all the bad things wood has done to us over the years. Do you think tree-huggers have bonfire parties? They would if they knew what was good for them.

#### *3) Is there a bowling alley near campus?*

Sometimes you need to combine sports and aggressive drinking for the ultimate rush. Lots of bowling alleys will let you drink when you're under age (if they know what's good for them), and bowling is set up for drinking. You can't have one pussy beer frame per game. You need to have 3 minimum, and

if everyone but one bowler gets a fill frame (a strike or a spare), that loser has to buy everyone a shot. Alcohol makes you bowl better for at least one game so you can stick it to those suckers that take their weekly escape from the house seriously. “Hey Mr. Life bowler! Suck it! I’ve had enough beer and shots to kill you, and I just bowled 20 pins higher than you! Thanks for practicing, douchebag!” Of course, you bowl a 60 your next game, but you have both a moral victory and you’re drunk. Now that the primer is out of the way, you’re ready to hit the lake or set something on fire and drink some more.

*4) Is it a liberal arts college?*

Normally, I’d say tell them liberals to go to Hell, but to be honest with you, they’re needed. Their stupidly jaded creative minds come up with some pretty exciting drinking games. Had to be somebody from Wellesley or Julliard who came up with the Century Club. Pretty simple concept: You have 100 minutes to drink 100 shots of beer, one shot every minute. Sounds easy, don’t it? It’s true, 100 ounces of beer is only 8 cans in less than 2 hours, but you can do that with your eyes closed when you’re set on doing it. There’s something about the organization of the whole deal that gets you. It ain’t like normal drinking where you want to slam a beer when it’s getting warm. One beer lasts you 12 minutes, which is a hell of a long time for a cold beer to last. By the time shot 100 comes around, you are G-O-N-E, gone. Every 59 seconds, you have to try to keep focus. It’s just damn hard to do. If you yak during the contest but still finish all 100 shots, you shouldn’t consider yourself a member. That’s like getting the C in class just because you showed up every day. You can’t just show up, man, you got to attack that beer!

*5) How far is the college from home?*

Better be pretty fuckin’ far.

## 10. RASSLIN

But first, a story about heart:

*When a boy wants to show how much of a man he is, he does not play pussy basketball in high school when it comes time for a winter sport. Instead, he wrestles.*

*Similar to boxing, wrestling is divided into weight classes with boys of the same weight grappling against each other. Some boys, because they're boys and supposed to be growing, have a problem staying under their "desired" weight. The lowest weight class in which a boy can wrestle is a sleek 103 pounds, and the weight classes climb to the 275-pounds-and-over heavyweight class.*

*Jimmy wrestled at the 140 weight class, and he was far from the best wrestler. That kid, however, had a lot of heart and no quit in his motor. Jimmy had struggled to stay under 140 pounds all season. He couldn't wrestle at the heavier weight classes of 145 or 152 because the school had much better wrestlers at those weights. If he wanted to wrestle on the varsity level, he had to weigh 140 pounds or less.*

*Two days before the biggest match of the year, he was staring at the numbers 1-4-3 on the scale. He did everything he could think of to get to 140. He ran lap after lap in the gym while wearing two layers of sweatshirts and sweatpants. He ate nothing but pan-fried eggs for two days and drank as little water as he could. But four hours before the match, he was still at 141 pounds, one pound over the desired weight.*

*As a last-ditch effort, Jimmy's coach brought him into the office. Without saying a word, the coach put a bottle of laxative on his desk and left the room. Jimmy wasted no time in opening the bottle and took a few chugs, not sure how much he was supposed to take to be effective. Worried about not making weight, he drank the entire bottle and tried to keep himself from throwing up.*

*Almost immediately, the medicine kicked in, and after Jimmy settled, he went to weigh in, tipping the scale at 139. A huge weight (2 pounds actually) was lifted off Jimmy's shoulders. He went to the bathroom again, showered up and put on his wrestling leotard with the school name across the chest.*

*Jimmy was focused, ready and determined to win the match. He'd gone through so much just to lose the weight, anything short of a win would be brutally disappointing. Jimmy's big match paired him with a freshman with little wrestling experience and not nearly as much heart. On top of that, a win for Jimmy was the key to his team winning the match.*

*When the buzzer sounded, Jimmy dominated. He scored a takedown right away and then used his sharp chin to drive the freshman's shoulder into the mat. Although the freshman tried to worm his way out of Jimmy's*

*grip, Jimmy kept the pressure on and held the freshman down to try to get the pin. Jimmy moved his legs and cradled the freshman's body, crushing him like an anaconda.*

*A pin was less than five seconds away. If he could just get him to hold still...*

*The freshman screamed with what air he could muster, and the referee blew his whistle. The audience gasped so deeply that they sucked all the oxygen out of the gym for that moment. Jimmy yielded his grip on the freshman and sat on the mat, tears starting to show in his eyes. The freshman darted up and ran to the locker room, screaming all the way.*

*Jimmy, however, just sat there in a pool of his own feces, unable to stop the flow as a wave of the laxative kicked in. He couldn't get up. He just had to sit there and ride it out.*

*The janitor sighed, left the audience to grab a bucket and mop and wished he was a ditch digger.*

Unlike you mysophobiacs on the Coasts, we don't mind touching each other.

## **HICKTIONARY** ★ mysophobia (n.) "I am afraid"

We'll shake your hand, pat you on the back, sternly poke you and give you a big hug. Sometimes we touch each other just to make sure we're still here. Unless you have that crazy look in your eyes that my touch would equate to my imminent death, expect me to touch you.



**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Hey that's a pretty neat-lookin' blouse you have on there."**

Unsuspecting female: "Thanks! It's my favorite."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "What kind of material is that? Is that felt?"**

Unsuspecting female: "No, it's not."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: (touching her sleeve) "It is now."**



Rufus can understand why you Coastal Sardines have an issue with touching. If I lived on the 20th floor of an apartment building, crammed myself into a subway, shared a cubicle with someone who spoke a different language than me and was a target for random acts of aggression every moment of the day, I reckon I would like a little personal space, too.

But in our wide-open spaces, we need some contact, so much so that we're willing to take our chances that we'll catch something. Most outsiders look at us and figure they will catch something if they come into contact with us. That just isn't true some of the time.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**communicable (adj.) descriptor for someone who looks like they could become a Communist**

If we were so unclean, don't you think we'd be dead by now? Or do you think we've built up some sort of immunity to ourselves? Unlike you fancy city types with your "soap" and toilets that shoot Old Faithful up your parts, we don't feel the need to waste perfectly good water and wash our hands after the slightest touch of ourselves. (Unless of course we're working at a restaurant because unwashed hands handling food is just gross.) We have the Finger Test when it comes to the toilet. Here's how it works:

### Finger Test

**Step 1:** Smell your fingers.

**Step 2:** If your fingers don't smell, skip to step 4. If they do smell, go to step 3.

**Step 3:** Rinse your hands off with water in the sink.

**Step 4:** Leave the bathroom.

Naturally, unless it's a clean break, we're more than likely sometimes possibly going to wash our hands after dropping the kids off at the pool.

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We're often less worried about what we're going to pass along to someone than we are having people find out that we made that horrible stink in the stall. There aren't a ton of people in Nebraska, and it seems like no matter who you are, folks can do a six-degree of separation thing back to you and that miserable-smelling dump you took 5 years ago at the county fair.

The reason some stinks are so memorable is because they're from Satan and unholy as all Hell. Strangely enough, we don't want the scent of a rotting animal associated with us. So, we are masters of the toilet subterfuge.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**subterfuge (v.) double-flushing the toilet to make sure all traces of evidence are banished**

Fact is, if you think I smell under false pretenses, you're probably not going to want to hang out with me—let alone touch me—and going to spread the word that I made the bathroom smell so bad you thought you were going to die or throw up or both. So when Satan attacks your output and sticks his unholiness on it, you have to do your best to make sure no one ever knows that Rosemary's Baby came from you.

### **Techniques for Outsmarting Smell**

by R."J." Hickman, Jr., olfactory therapist

*1) Before you enter the stall, scope the area.*

Know how many people are in the bathroom and listen for anyone who comes into the bathroom. This knowledge is power and will help you set the scene for your escape. If a bear drops a turd in the forest and no one is there to smell it, can it reek?

*2) Don't make any personally identifiable sounds.*

Don't whistle your trademark tune. Don't grunt or pant. And most of all, don't make an exclamation after a successful launch, such as "Holy shit that was a big one," "Crap on Christ" or "Fuck me."

*3) Get done before the person in the stall next to you.*

He's a pawn. A shitter patsy. You need to act like a commode ventriloquist and throw your smell. If you can get to the sink before someone else walks in, the bathroom's newest visitor will have his suspicions but won't be able to prove you were the guilty, stinky party.

*4) If you finish your work, start to leave but then hear the door open, head for the urinal.*

That way, it will appear that you came in for #1. Pretend to pee. Possibly comment on the fact that it stinks in the bathroom and someone is a bastard for leaving such a smell.

*5) As a last resort, if people keep coming in and out of the bathroom, just sit there.*

If you have to wait for a half hour, an hour, two hours—

doesn't matter. Just wait. If someone for some reason is waiting for your stall, just let them wait because they can rot in Hell as far as you're concerned.

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My worst bathroom experience of all time happened at Cow Pie High. Pimpled Rufus needed to crap real, real bad. Our high school had three sets of bathrooms. One nice (which was locked unless there was a sporting event), one average and one piss room. It was called that because you wouldn't ever, ever go #2 in that bathroom. Instead of having an enclosed stall for you to do your worst in, like every bathroom in the world, this bathroom had two toilets with no doors. Not only were there no doors, but a three-foot-tall cinder block wall separated the toilets from each other. A similar wall separated one toilet from the urinal. Essentially, unless you were a small freshman, when you sit down, everyone can see your head as you're trying to smash.

Not only is there a face to go along with the smell, there's also that uncomfortable moment where people think they have to talk to each other while they're going to the bathroom. Easy for the person taking a piss. He's there for 30 seconds, says his peace and then is gone. The young man taking a dump has to have that conversation maybe 4 or 5 times before the job is done. After that experience, you learn to hold it, even if it means you're going to get cancer.

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When we're going to the bathroom, that's when we want personal space. Any other time, we don't need it. Wrestling is a prime example of this. My wrestling career was cut short when tragedy struck me in the 8th grade: I discovered that I wasn't any good at wrestling and hated it anyway. Pimpled Rufus had a record of 9-18. It's one thing to have guys giving you a reach around for the sake of pinning you. It's another thing when you're on the receiving end all the time on account of you being a pussy.

I remember wrestling being a lot different when I was Little Rufus. We'd go to Granny's house for Thanksgiving or Christmas, and Rufus's uncles, all five of them, would take turns wrestling with the kids while the others napped from turkey and potato O.D. I did pretty good wrestling against those much bigger men. When I was Little Rufus, my friends and I played pro wrestling in

the backyard, where trees acted as the corner turnbuckles. I was pretty good at that, too.

But in 8th grade, as I was wearing a blue leotard, with my back flat against a mat, with a complete stranger cradling me and touching my ballsack and ass, it dawned on me that when I was Little Rufus, those other people let me win on purpose. My buddy who was twice as big as me and ended up playing football for the Nebraska Cornhuskers, he didn't smash my head into those trees on purpose. That guy could have cracked my head open like an egg! I always thought he just wasn't a good wrestler. Turned out, he didn't want to kill me. My uncles? They just wanted me to win and build my self-esteem.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**self-esteem (n.)** the vapors that rise from the ground when you piss on a very cold night

Had my uncles just whooped me like they should have, being three times my size, I wouldn't have been lying under another man, wondering what that thing poking into my side was as I was sprawled out flat against a carpet of foam rubber with the folks from the town looking on.

Rufus has no problem with wrestling. It's pretty exciting to watch, actually, and nobody in their right mind who ever has been around wrestling thinks those folks are gay for trying to grab other guys and pin them to the mat. The sport is a show of brute force, skill and strategy. When you realize you have none of those three things, you move on to video games.

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I don't like to wrestle, but I like to rattle. If you have yourself a real woman, you got one that likes to rattle. You shouldn't have to try too hard to coax her into it. Usually saying something like, "You're weak," "I'm going to give you a whoopin'," or "Woman, do \_\_\_\_\_" works just fine to get a rise out of her. If you have the delicate flower type, she'll just start crying and never talk to you again, so know ahead of time if it's OK to say the aforementioned phrases.

If it is OK to question her toughness, the reply from her will be, "Oh, yeah?"

This is the human equivalent of a duck call. She knows she can't pin you. About halfway through, she'll beg for you to let her

go, and then when you do, she'll reverse course and pounce back on you, only to get whooped again. But, like the duck call, she's being lured into your trap willfully because she knows you're telling her that you want to have sex.

It's not romantic to say, "Hey, let's go have sex." However, you can stir the emotions inside both you and her by groping the hell out of each other, showing domination, getting out of breath and then fucking each others brains out. Yes, a question from a very impatient readership, I can see your hand. You don't have to wave it, yes:



Woman: "I can't believe how much of a Neanderthal you are."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "No, that's Nebraskan."**

Woman: "No, Neanderthal—a caveman."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "What you mean?"**



Woman: "Women are to be cherished.

They are to be held up to the highest

regard. They deserve—no, demand—your respect. A woman is not a piece of meat. A woman is a gift and I will not stand here and read you denigrating them like they're an object that you throw around and disrespect."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Well..."**

Delicate Flower: "'Well?' Is that all you have to say for yourself? Let me dumb it down for you: You are an idiot who cares nothing for what a woman wants in life."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Guess what? A woman likes to fuck."**

Delicate Flower: (faints)

I mean, it's not a secret, is it? Women and men like to do it with each other. Yes, sometimes there's a need for treating a woman so delicately and so romantically that they know you appreciate the emotional side of their lives. But sometimes women like to be manhandled and men womenhandled. Heck, even in our conservative chunk of the planet we know that people like to get after it.

Beer and rasslin are two phenomenal aphrodisiacs. Put them together and you have a night that neither of you will forget if you even remember it in the first place or unless you end up getting a kid out of it.

## 11. MARY JANE SPLIFKOWSKI

But first, a story about keeping your children safe:

*Deputy Happ made his normal rounds, checking on which houses and barns in the countryside might be meth labs as he took a break from pulling over cars with out-of-state license plates. As his car kicked up dirt on the country road, Deputy Happ noticed a small marijuana plant growing randomly among the weeds.*

*"This will not do," he said to himself, "we can't let this weed grow. Someone might use it to illegally intoxicate himself."*

*The deputy pulled the car to the side of the road, approached the plant and ripped it out of the ground.*

*"There. We're safe now," he thought as he got back into his car and went on his way.*

*Two days later, Deputy Happ caught wind of a possible meth lab in the countryside. Neighbors claim people had been coming in and out of a farmhouse after seven at night. Awfully suspicious, don't you know? On his way to the farmhouse, the deputy passed the spot where he pulled the marijuana plant only to notice that another plant was in its place, this time the plant was more than a foot tall.*

*"I'll be," he muttered to himself as he got out of his car and yanked the new weed out of the ground. He looked around but saw no other marijuana weeds growing in the ditch. Figuring he needed to think about this over a donut, he went into town.*

*The next day, Deputy Happ made it a point to drive by that suspicious farmhouse. As he traveled down the dusty dirt road, his mouth dropped. The plant was back; this time, it stood almost three feet tall.*

*"Am I going crazy?" Happ thought. "Is this like that long hair you find coming out of your ear one day? This will not do. I must protect the people."*

*Needing a little more strength, he yanked the weed out of the ground, but this time, he snapped it in two pieces and put it in the trunk of the patrol car. Were those long nights of following around high school kids in the hopes of busting them for drinking alcohol getting to him? He definitely needed more sleep, he thought. He turned his car around and went straight home.*

*At the station, the police had been getting calls that the people in the possible meth lab have their lights on after nine at night. Someone has to do something! Deputy Happ, determined to put a stop to the meth problem in the county, got in his car and sped out to the country. His car came to a sliding halt as he approached the farm. The weed, now six feet tall, just as tall as he was, was back and thicker than ever. Deputy Happ popped a couple pills for his heart, swallowed them using his own saliva*

and slowly got out of his vehicle. He checked the trunk; the weed from yesterday was gone.

"What kind of trick is this," he said out loud. "Who is doing this to me?" Once again, he walked up to the plant and wrapped his hands around it.

"Dude, what do you think you're doing?" said a voice.

Deputy Happ stood straight up and looked around. He couldn't see anyone. "Who said that?" he said as he put his hand on his holster, "Show yourself!"

"What are you going to do, shoot me?" the voice said, "You've already pulled me out of the ground, like, three times. You think shooting me is going to work?"

Deputy Happ turned sharply and stared at the plant. "No...no, this isn't happening. You can't talk," said Happ.

"I can when someone isn't being cool, dude," said the weed.

"Seriously, dude, what are you doing? You keep coming to my crib every day. I'm just chillin', minding my own business, and next thing I, like, know I'm getting yanked out of the ground and I'm like, 'Duuude, where we going' and I'm just not getting this cool vibe from you so, like, what are you doing?"

"You are an evil weed," said Deputy Happ, "an evil weed with an evil purpose."

"Dude, my name is Gary. You can call me Gare. And I'm just chillin'. I don't want to hurt anyone."

"My duty is to uphold the law and get rid of scum plants like you that are destroying the moral fiber of this country."

"Dude, first off, I'm like the near-beer of pot. Do you know how much of me you'd actually have to smoke before you felt a tingle? Seriously, look at my leaves. I don't hit the gym. But most importantly, I'm a weed. You will never get rid of me. I mean, if you have, like, nothing better to do, you can keep coming back and pulling me out of the ground, but I'll keep coming back. Day after day, stronger and bigger than ever. Dude, I'm not your problem. I'm a plant."

Deputy Happ thought about what Gary the Ditchweed said. Maybe the problem isn't the actual plant growing from the ground, maybe it's the people who harvest, manufacture and distribute illegal drugs, with some of those drugs being man-made or chemically altered to be highly addictive. Maybe it is the people behind the operation.

Wiping his brow, Deputy Happ looked at the weed, grabbed it and ripped it out of the ground.

We have a huge drug problem in the Midwest. There barely seems to be enough to go around. You must find that hard to

believe on the East Coast where the crackhouses are navigational landmarks, but it's true.

**East Coast Lingo:** "Yeah, go true dose alleys, take a left at da crackhouse, and the day care is da turd buiding on the left, just past the funeral home."

**Lower Nebraskese translation:** "OK, drive over those lawns, take a left at Happy John's house, and the park is there next to the bar."

We don't have nearly enough weed in Nebraska. Sure, there's ditchweed, but compared to the real thing, smoking ditchweed is like standing near the fire instead of setting yourself ablaze. It's watered-down light beer. It's a fat girl who's picky about her men. It's a rapper with gold-plated teeth.

The government, especially law enforcement, makes a big to-do about ditchweed, as if it's a threat to our sanctity. It's Satan's flower. In Nebraska, we reward hard work. It's the backbone of our society, our manual labor "why am I doing this again?" ethos. Why is it OK for the roofer to work 8 hours in the blazing sun, getting shingles thrown at him shuriken-style by his idiot co-workers and constantly risking death from either heat exhaustion or a fall from the roof onto the ground, but it's not OK for him to pull ditchweed out of the ground, put it into a garbage bag and then go home and try to figure out how to get high for a few minutes before he has to go to sleep for four hours and get back on that fucking roof again tomorrow?

Not only is "harvesting" ditchweed hard work, it's damn time consuming because you have to find it. It's like a High Times scavenger hunt. Sure, you can find most of it at river bottoms and ditches off country roads, but you have to pick it without getting caught.



**Farmer:** "What, uh, what you doin' there with that there garbage bag?"

Hale Innis: "Oh, hey Ralph, how are you?"

**Farmer Ralph:** "Mighty good, Hale. What you got in the bag?"

Hale Innis: "Bag?...Oh, yeah (think, think! body, roadkill, body, trash, trash, trash, beer, trash) ditchweed, Ralph."



**Farmer Ralph:** "Ah, well, have a good one. See you at church tomorrow."

The biggest concern about ditchweed isn't with people smoking it, though, because ditchweed has a low level of THC.

**HICKTIONARY** ♣ **THC (n.) although not a vitamin, per se, Rufus still recommends getting your 100% daily dose along with C, B12 and zinc ("All I need is my one-hitter and One-A-Day and I'm going strong all day long." Suggested slogan still pending approval from Wyeth Consumer Healthcare - or even a response, really)**

In fact, if you believe The Man, the biggest concerns when it comes to ditchweed are, and Rufus swears he's not making this up (this was in the hippie Lincoln newspaper in 2000), "Transients (who) hop the train to pick it, area residents (who) help themselves and people from other states (who) park by the side of the road and fill up bags of it." Rufus doesn't see what the problem is.

First off, if you're a hobo, I think you should have all the ditchweed you want because your life really sucks. How are you're still hopping trains in the 21st Century? As for the residents who help themselves, of course you're going to harvest this crap. It's your land. You chose to live here. You're going to harvest it on principle. But those poor, sick bastards who come in from out of state to take our ditchweed...my God. How deprived are you that you don't have ditchweed where you're from? Do you have this new invention we call "Tee Vee"? How about the "transistor radio"? Not ringing a bell? A watch that you wear around your wrist? Hmmm... Can you imagine the risk these poor junkies are putting themselves in by coming to my state and yanking a few bags of ditchweed? Not only are they pathetic to begin with, not only do they have to watch out for The Man, but they also have to know that if we catch them "stealing" anything of ours, we have the right to shoot them. Now, come on. Is ditchweed really worth being shot over? (Please say yes.)

Instead of smoking ditchweed, what these people from out of state do is add this crap, this "weed" (not weed as in "weed, dude" but weed as in "you can never make it stop growing because it's from Satan, will survive a holocaust and will even outgrow zucchini") to legitimate marijuana to increase the yield. For you in Massachusetts, let Rufus break it down in a way you can understand:

**Northeast Chowd:** "They put less scotch in the drink, but more sodar so that the glass is still full and it tastes like scotch."

Yeah, now you're pissed! Now you got it! And that's why those ditchweed carpetbaggers get shot. They're not helping me out. They're trying to dilute Rufus's high!

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At least when these people are making crystal meth, they're not messing with nature's goodness. I've never heard of too many problems concerning the over-harvesting of the ephedra and Drain-o plants.

Who knew that we, perennial dirt farmers, had what it took to actually make drugs? Sure, you can picture us licking the back of a frog, trying to get that secret high that is actually your nervous system going into convulsions because you just licked a frog, but opening up our stolen chemistry sets and creating a highly addictive form of methamphetamine?

Well, the government wants you to think that we have the next round of Nobel-winning chemists just yearning to show our true colors by cooking so much crystal meth that Tony Montana would poop his pants, but the fact is we don't have a) the know-how, b) the ephedra or c) the ability to restrain ourselves in the presence of fire to add to the large-scale meth problems.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **meth lab (n.) an abandoned farmhouse, a barn or your house that is used to produce small quantities of the drug crystal methamphetamine. The structure eventually burns down in an expected mishap**

Rufus used to work at a small-town newspaper and, far and away, the biggest police news came every month or two when the cops held a dog-and-pony show after busting a meth lab somewhere in the rural part of the county. The biggest news from the volunteer fire department came when they extinguished a fire started in a meth lab. The biggest court news always had to do with convictions based on, you guessed it, meth possession and attempt to distribute.

There's no doubt that meth is bad. It's not good, unless you think licking a bathtub like it was the beater that just finished whipping together a Chlorox-Comet-Sudafed-Windex double-layer cake is good. Besides, what is the Midwestern meth-head's motivation for getting high enough to stay up all day and all night? There's not enough to do in Nebraska to justify going without sleep.

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The best way to curb the meth epidemic, which we in the States eventually did, is to ask the chemical companies that make ephedra to stop selling it to drug dealers. Seems pretty simple. Just like you shouldn't sell large amounts of fertilizer to people who have nothing to fertilize, selling ephedra in massive quantities to people who do not own pharmaceutical companies... well, what the hell else are you going to do with massive quantities of ephedra unless you have the worst sinus problem in the world?

When you degrade the purity of the meth—like it was cut with ditchweed, people aren't as interested in buying it because it sucks.

As of this writing, the only way to get ephedra is to buy pseudoephedra, which is now treated like a controlled substance. You can't just walk into a store, ask how much Sudafed they have, clean them out and then sit in your car and rip each pill out of the blister packs. Now, you have to register your name and are limited to the number of packages you can buy (everything else still applies though).

And I say, if you're going to go through all that hard work, going from town to town, store to store, ripping pills out of blister packs, setting up a chemical lab, learning what the words "chemical lab" mean, resisting using fire for things outside of cooking drugs, well, I support you because I support hard work. I don't think being the Swedish Meth Chef is what you should be doing, but I value hard work just as much as the next guy.

But to say that the mom-and-pop meth makers are the problem is being incredibly short sighted, another example of the government trouncing on people they can steamroll as opposed to taking down those in charge.

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This is how a small county works: there's about 10,000 people in the county, many of them farm or have farm-related businesses (bars, insurance, car dealerships), and these people will give you the benefit of the doubt when you tell them something that is believable. It's not that they're gullible. You're just not giving them a reason to question you. How do they know that the major meth problem stems from interstate trafficking and the subsequent distribution channels and not Clete and Bobby Jo whose lights are on all night? They don't because the authorities and liberal media

feed them this idea that their neighbors are the actual heart of the meth problem, which makes them think meth is easy to produce because they know their neighbors are pretty damn dumb.

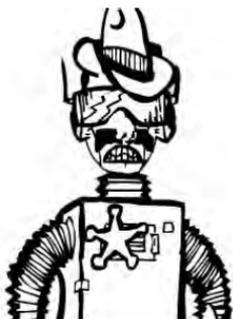
When people get tired of paying for meth, they do some research on how they can make it. Just like a beer connoisseur might make his own crappy microbrew in his house, folks start making meth for themselves and maybe their friends. They're not kingpins. The cops, who know what's going on because people notice every single little thing in a small community, prepare for a bust when they need to make a bust. Otherwise, they clue the fire department in on the presence of the lab, which will eventually require some water to extinguish the soon-to-be had blaze. When the cops decide to move in on this lab and make other drug arrests (or the fire engulfs the lab), they make sure the newspaper is there to record the event so that everyone else in the county knows both the cops are doing their jobs and that there's a meth problem.

It's lowest-common denominator law enforcement. It never gets to the root of the problem but is always able to make headlines and put fear in the minds of the citizenship on whether the meth addict will rob from them, or kill them, in order to get more drugs.

What cops spend a lot of their time doing, however, is profiling: staking out the bars, pulling over people from out-of-state and searching young people who are more likely to have weed (as in "good weed").

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Because I'm a good Rufus, I've had few run-ins with the law outside of speeding tickets. So far at least. There was one time when I got pulled over, though, I thought the cop was going to freak out on me.



Johnny Law: "Do you have any weapons?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "No, sir."**

Johnny Law: "Are you sure?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Yes."**

Johnny Law: "What's in your pocket?"

Slowly...."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "A set of keys. My hand."**

Johnny Law: "Do you have any drugs in the car?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "No."**

Johnny Law: "Can I search your car?"



Sure, knock yourself out, but I was going 65 miles per hour in a 55 zone. I don't care, but why is all this happening? It's a Sunday afternoon in the summer. Yes, I was going too fast, but I'm Nebraskan. True, I'm heading back to college and have a lot of stuff in the car, but I'm also a 170-pound stick who does not smell like pot, booze or have a swastika on my head. Rufus feels violated.

What they really want to find on you is pot. Pot is the fuzz gold mine because it's only a misdemeanor if you have less than an ounce on you, meaning they just give you a ticket and take the drugs. You pay \$100+ fine, and the police don't have to do any additional paperwork or make court appearances.

It's time to do away with the misdemeanor. It's time to make marijuana more available in Nebraska. Rufus never had a problem getting his smoke on in Missouri, but what would you expect? You have to be high ALL the time to live in Missouri.

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Grassroots efforts to chill out on marijuana demonization have to start in the small towns, though, because no one pays attention to the big-city lefty intellectuals. And because many folks in small towns ain't exposed much to the benefits of marijuana, at least not in their particular parishes, Rufus decided to put together a highly informative pamphlet.

### **It's OK for Your Son to Date Mary Jane**

Smoking the splif and you

by Rufus "Junior" Hickman, Jr.

*Have you ever woken up in a pool of your own vomit or known someone, quite possibly yourself, who got confused while drunk and urinated in your closet? How about fear? Have you ever been afraid of anything in your life, ever? Then this pamphlet is for you. I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine, but she's no ordinary friend. She's always been around, but you've been too busy looking at the girl next door to notice her. But now, for the first time, you notice that she's all grown up and ready to meet you. Go ahead, talk to her. Ask her some questions I've always wanted you to ask.*

#### **Your Son: "Who are you?"**

Mary: "My name is Mary Jane Splifkowski, but you can call me pot or smoke or weed if you want, I'll answer to it all. Want to be my BFF!?"



**Your Son: "I don't know. I've heard you're bad."**

Mary: "Oh, dear. This always happens to me. Everyone always judges me before they meet me. I guess you're like all the rest. I'm going to cry."

**Your Son: "No, don't cry Mary. I didn't mean it."**

Mary: "That's OK, really, it .... it's ..."

**Your Son: "Hey, why don't you tell me about yourself?"**

Mary: "Really? Cool! Well, I totally like to have fun and like to help people. Isn't that what life is about, helping people?"

**Your Son: "I like helping people, too!"**

Mary: "We're like totally the same! I love helping people relax. I mean, there's so much stress in this world, don't you think?"

**Your Son: "Boy howdy."**

Mary: "Well, not only do I help them relax, but lots of times, I help people laugh! He he!"

**Your Son: "Well, that sounds OK, but I've heard some things about you. I've heard people want to eat so much when they enjoy you that you make people fat!"**

Mary: "Me? Oh dear no! I am, and always will be, calorie free. Can you say that about beer and liquor? Have you ever been really drunk and then eaten some junk food at the end of the night?"

**Your Son: "Boy howdy."**

Mary: "Well, if you drink 10 beers, that's at least 1000 calories, but it's harder for your body to process the liquor. With me, you can still eat all the food you were going to when you were smashed, but with 1000 fewer calories! Would you really drink as much, and suffer that hangover and weight gain, if you could smoke me in the comfort of your own home? I don't think so. I can actually help keep obesity under control!"

**Your Son: "I still don't know. I sure like smoking cigarettes and drinking."**

Mary: "You like smoking and drinking because THEY tell you you like smoking and drinking. You'll like pot because you get high right away! Wheeeeeee!!!!!"

**Your Son: "You're so cute when you do that."**

Mary: "Wheeeeeeeeeee!!!!!"

**Your Son: "Ha ha. I would like to smoke you, but I don't want to have to buy you from any sweaty Mexican."**

Mary: "Silly, most of the people in your community who deal me are white. Besides, do you really expect people of different races to trust the white man when it comes to buying and selling drugs?"



**Your Son: “Interesting point.”**

Mary: “And unlike some vices, I actually encourage creativity. Have you ever seen some of the bongos people smoke me out of?”

**Your Son: “No, because they’ve all been banned in my town.”**

Mary: “How about water pipes?”

**Your Son: “Yes, we have those at the incense store.”**

Mary: “Silly, a bong and a water pipe are the same thing. But The Man makes you change the name of it because it’s not exactly legal right now to sell different outfits for me. But, with a little creativity, you can turn a beer can into a makeshift bong. If you put your mind to it, you could make a bong out of a lot of things: a piece of fruit, a mannequin, another bong. And you can give them fun names like Donkey Bong, Smokey McPot, Mr. Peeper’s Special Smoke Machine. But they don’t want you to buy bongos. They want to take away your creativity. You know who else hated creativity?”

**Your Son: “Who?”**

Mary: “Communists.”

**Your Son: “Oh no!”**

Mary: “That’s right. I don’t want you to fall into that trap and be hated by those who still follow McCarthyism.”

**Your Son: “Sounds great, but isn’t marijuana illegal?”**

Mary: “Sure, now it is, but so is speeding, cheating on your taxes, beating your kids and parking in handicapped spaces, but you do those, don’t you? Plus, you won’t ever have to suffer through another hangover again, therefore increasing productivity at work! You wouldn’t have to worry about what you were going to watch on TV that night because all that would play are cartoons! Aren’t cartoons fun? Plus, having legal pot would cripple the Internet pharmaceutical trade, whatever the “Internet” is.”

Honestly, Rufus doesn’t have any idea if any of that is true, but it sure does make me hungry for a huge blunt burrito.

# 12. BOOKS

## 13. AM I A SEXUAL MARK?

But first, a story about secret places:

Patrick came in from the field for a refill of his morning coffee. His wife, Sarah, had just sent their children off to school and began preparations for cooking the lunchtime meal for everyone working on the farm. Patrick knew by the look on her face that nothing but bad news was about to sprout from her mouth.

"What is it, Mother?" Patrick asked his wife.

"It's John; I found something in his room," she said as she pulled out a Sears catalog from behind the counter.

"Oh my God, he's started shopping!" said Patrick with a chuckle.

Sarah smacked him with the magazine, "No, you nut, it's where I found it: under his mattress."

"Well, the boy has taste, I'll give him that," said Patrick, slurping his coffee, "Sears has some of the finest bra and panty models around." Sarah smacked him again as they both started laughing. "OK, I'll have The Talk with him; you would think it gets easier the fifth time you have The Talk, but it just don't."

"You don't have to go through The Girl Talk, so I don't want to hear no complainin'," Sarah said. He agreed.

Toward the end of the day, Patrick radioed back to the house and had Sarah send John out on the four-wheeler to the field to deliver a sandwich and a couple beers. When John arrived, his father was ready for a break from fixing fence.

"That looks like hard work, Pa," said John.

"Sure is. You want to have some, it's free?"

"No thanks, Pa, schoolin's keeping me real busy."

"Seventh grade is hard, I reckon," Patrick said, "I remember it bein' pretty tough on me. It was tough on your brothers and sisters, too, but they made it."

"Yessir."

"John, I want to talk to you about somethin', if that's OK."

"Sure, Pa, if it's about that fire, I promise I didn't start it. I wanted to, though."

"No, no, not about that, John. See, your mother found a magazine under your mattress as she was making your bed."

"I promise, I wasn't shoppin', Pa."

"I know you weren't, John. I know, and I'm glad for it. It just reminded me that we never had a talk about men and women, and what you do when you love a woman."

Patrick had John take a seat on the four-wheeler, which was parked by the old elm tree that stood strong, but alone, in the pasture.

*"John, here's the deal: When a man finds the woman he truly loves, God says it's OK to put his boner inside her to try to make babies, but only when you want to make babies."*

*John stared blankly at his father, half in shock, half in confusion.*

*"Are you followin' me so far, son?"*

*"Kinda," said John.*

*"Let me take a step back: You been noticing people's boobies, right? That's why you're hiding dirty magazines."*

*"Yessir, I'll admit that I am."*

*"OK, ain't nothin' wrong with that, John, and you got the right idea. You got to be discrete about it until you get in your 40s."*

*"OK, Pa."*

*"Boobies are a lot like your Ma's cookin'. When you smell your Ma's cookin', you get hungry, don't ya?"*

*"Yessir."*

*"So, when you get done smellin' that fine food, you travel to the kitchen to get your belly full. Well, when you see a girl with boobies you like, sometimes your pee-pee gets a boner."*

*"Please, Pa, I'm almost 13. You can stop calling it my pee-pee. Call it my 'thing.'"*

*"Fair enough, John. When your thing gets a boner, it's kinda uncomfortable, as you may already know."*

*"Yessir."*

*"Sometimes God wants you to be uncomfortable; that's just his way. But when you fall in love with a girl who's gonna be your wife, God wants you to put your thing in her and try to make a baby."*

*John followed his Pa up to that point. He had a pretty good idea where the thing needed to go, but he was looking for a little confirmation.*

*"So, is that it?" asked John.*

*"More or less." After a few silent seconds, Patrick realized that "in her" might not have been specific enough direction. "Mind if I explain a little further?"*

*"No, Pa, go ahead."*

*"Men, we got two holes: pee hole and butt hole. Women, they got three: pee hole, baby hole and butt hole. You couldn't put your thing in their pee hole if you tried, OK? And God will pretty much send you to Hell if you put your thing in her butt hole. So, basically, there's a third hole that you'll...find."*

*John seemed to get it, but Patrick continued. "Women are a little like this elm tree. Think of this knot hole as the baby hole." Patrick moved closer to the tree, grabbing its branches. "So you grab her up by her boobies, put your thing in and then move it back and forth until your seed comes out—and you'll know when that happens. Then that's it, you're*

*done,” Patrick said as he backed away from the tree.*

*“OK, I think I get it,” said John, “But what do you do if a squirrel comes down the tree and starts messin’ with your nuts?”*

*“Son,” said Patrick, “that is the exact reason why you have to go as fast as you can and finish as soon as possible.”*

When you live your life wearing those Coastal goggles, the ones that can’t see through the smog, the ones caked with grime, the ones you’re unwilling to spit on and wipe clean on your shirt because your shirt cost \$100, no one expects you to see the big picture. In fact, you rely more and more on hearing as the smog gets thicker and thicker. So when you hear that people in the Midwest are some of the most obese in the nation, you assume that the young men and women there are pigs waiting to get slopped.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**slop (v.) the act of tossing food into a trough for pigs and Guantanamo detainees**

Not that it matters because you think everyone in the middle of the country is alike, but we in Nebraska aren’t nearly as fat as you think. I’m not here to knock on the lard-asses from the fattest states (Mississippi, Alabama, West Virginia, Louisiana and Tennessee), and I’ll admit that we could stand to lose a few pounds in the Cornhusker state. But by no means are we unfuckable.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**unfuckable (adj.) being undesirable for sexual intercourse until your prospective partner reaches a 0.12 blood-alcohol level**

Before you let that Coastlier-than-thou attitude set in, know this: You’re getting fat, too, sucking down those fish tacos and pizza slices. In fact, the only state not getting fatter is Oregon, and that’s because they’re protesting food right now. Rufus knows you want to say you’re getting fatter because Midwesterners are moving to your state, but just because that’s true doesn’t make it true.

Right now, the only state that touches an ocean that’s in the Top 10 of fatties is South Carolina, and you Coastal Liberals would probably prefer that they just secede from the East Coast anyway. The fattest Midwesternish state is Oklahoma at 14 (those damn Sooners, always trying to beat us), followed by Missouri at 16 and rounded out with Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas at 20. So yes, we’re fat, but we’re not Tennessee fat.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**Tennessee fat (n.)** the point of obesity at which even your parents start to distance themselves from you

For some reason, whenever Rufus sees people visiting Seattle from the Midwest, at least the people who stand out, they're fat. It's a little strange, maybe a bit off-putting, the way a Coastal coffee drinker can't order a beverage without making a complex sentence out of the order is off-putting. But if a person's fat, a person's fat. What's the point in piling on?

Just because a person's fat doesn't mean they don't like or want sex. Quite the contrary. Despite the extra humanity, an overweight person is still human and desires sex, even if they're from the Midwest where most sex is illegal. If you can't come to the Coast to escape sexual persecution, where can you go—Mars? A question from the readership, yes:



Goggle wearer: "Yes, I had a question."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Fire away."**

Goggle wearer: "How is it so easy to tell that someone is from the Midwest or a certain state? Frankly, you all look alike and your hair smells like popcorn."



**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "The easiest way to tell if a person is from the Midwest is by looking at their clothes. No one on the Coast who is from the Coast wears a shirt that says, 'Nebraska' or 'Iowa State' or 'Myseria'."**

Goggle wearer: "Why do you people wear the name of your state on all your t-shirts?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "We ate all the breadcrumbs."**

Goggle wearer: "Oh. So when I see this person, is it OK for me to walk up to them and ask them if they want to have sex?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Yes, please do."**

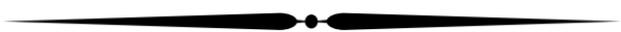
Because of our conservative nature, we're guilted into being sexually repressed—to a degree. Unfortunately for our libidos, we've been taught to have too much respect for ourselves. Then one day, the point comes where we just don't give a shit anymore and just want to get laid, which usually hits around age 24, maybe sooner. So if you're going to open that sexual window of opportunity for us, get ready for us to jump through it (you, uh, might want to butter the edges so we slip through faster).

If we go out of town, where no one else from Nebraska is, there's a pretty good chance we could do some things that won't get back to our judges back home.

### **Sexual incidences that will get you looked down upon by others in Nebraska**

- Having an abortion
- Having a child out of wedlock
- Being a single parent
- Having sex when you're not married
- Not having sex
- Having an affair where one or both people are married
- Masturbating
- Having sex in the wrong hole
- Enjoying sex
- Being gay
- Possibly being gay
- Thinking about sex
- Looking like there's a possibility you're thinking about sex

With all this in mind, Rufus would suggest you walk up to that guy or girl who is wearing the red Nebraska shirt and take a chance. If you want to improve your chances of getting laid by the tourist or immigrant, tell them you're from Hollywood. Tell them you remember them from somewhere. Tell them you hate the Oklahoma Sooners. Tell them anything! Offer them some fine Boone's Farm wine or Mad Dog. Most of all, tell them how beautiful/handsome they are.



Approaching us for sex is easy when we cross into your back yard, but how about the day Hell freezes over and you find yourself in Nebraska? Can you get laid?

It depends on what set of parts you have. If you're a woman, it's like shooting an elephant in a barrel. No matter what you look like, you will get laid in our state, especially if you go to a bar. If the only place you're hanging out is in our churches, it's going to be a little harder, but you should still be able to pull it off, depending on how much time you put into it.

You with the pocket protector, yes, can Rufus help you?:



Sweating man with glasses: "Whu, what are you doing?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "I'm sorry?"**

Sweating man with glasses: "Are you trying to ruin us with your filthy, disgusting sex talk?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Rufus doesn't understand you."**



Sweating man with glasses: "I work for the Nebraska Department of Tourism, and I think you should stop painting this picture of our state as a, as a sinful haven for sex and sin and depravity."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Are you shitting me?"**

Nerd: "No, I certainly am not pooping you! We work very hard on our messaging of Nebraska being a very beautiful place to visit, and here you are ruining it with your filthy, disgusting talk about immorality!"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "OK, Mr. Genius, tell me what some of the great landmarks of Nebraska are?"**

Nerd: "Of course you have the beautiful Chimney Rock (that's the landmark you see on the Nebraska quarter) in Western Nebraska, which Western Nebraska is also called the Panhandle. The settlers discovered it as they traveled west on the Oregon Trail. Then there's our beautiful State Capitol building in Lincoln. Don't forget all the amazing jets you'll see when you visit the SAC Air and Space Museum outside of Omaha--"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Let me stop you right there. Here's the deal: Chimney Rock looks like a cock. The State Capitol building is known locally as the Penis of the Prairie because it's the only tall building in Lincoln and also looks like a cock. Jets, especially twin-engine ones? You yourself said 'SAC.' Cock."**

Nerd: "(faints)"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "By telling people they can come to Nebraska and get laid, Rufus is doing you a favor, bub. In fact, you should be paying me for bringing all these people into the state to get a piece. I got your new slogan: 'Come in Nebraska: Everyone gets laid.'"**

Maybe it's not that easy. Sounds good, though, doesn't it?

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You want sex? All you have to do is ask, and it might be quick and painless depending on how much booze we've consumed before the act. If you're lucky, you can even do it with someone who has those Midwestern good looks.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **Midwestern good looks (n.) a trait denoting a person as generally unattractive but if you were stuck in the Midwest you would bang this person in a heartbeat**

Rufus was watching a TV show one time, and the narrator described the subject as having Midwestern good looks. All I could think of when I heard that was, if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. Didn't your momma teach you that?

Some have said that Rufus has Midwestern good looks, to which my first reaction is to ask them if they'd like to come with me to the Midwest for, I don't know, 5 or 10 minutes. I don't really take it as an insult. Rufus already knows he's ugly, but hearing a woman say I have Midwestern good looks means there is a chance, however small, that even I can get laid once the conditions are met.

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If you're a guy visiting the Midwest, it's going to be a bit tougher to get your game on. It's not going to be impossible, per se, but you're going to have to have more than Midwestern good looks. We already have those. Lots of them.

Females have more ... I was about to say "sense" but that doesn't sound right ... let's say "command." A woman isn't going to let any man put his thing in her stuff unless she's remotely convinced it would be in her best interest. You, being from out of town, don't have much time to convince her that it is a good idea. In addition to feeding her mass quantities of booze, if you want to pique her interest, you better have an accent.

## **HICKTIONARY** ★

**accent (n.) 1. a funny way of talking 2. an incredibly pungent smell**

This shouldn't be brain surgery to explain. If you have an accent, she's going to be more interested in you and where you're from. Not only is this a good way to keep a conversation going, but it also gives you a chance to act like you don't understand what she's saying. Every time you ask her to repeat something you're eating away time that you actually have to talk to her before the evening ends.

If you can't swing the accent, bowl her over with gobs and gobs of money. I mean gobs. Otherwise, you might want to set your sights a little lower. I wouldn't wait until the end of the night to start lowering those sights because others are being more realistic than you.

## 14. ARNOLD ZIFFEL

But first, a story about attention:

*Every morning young David had the chore of slopping the pigs. It wasn't as dirty of a job as it sounded. David put on his rubber boots, grabbed a bucket and threw food in the pigs' trough.*

*It was time for breakfast for the more than 20 hogs on the farm. Out of that bunch, one of the pigs stood out from the rest. It had a big, brown spot on top of its head that made the mostly pink pig look like it wore a ratty toupee. No matter where David walked about the pen, the pig with the toupee would follow him.*

*"I bet that pig thinks he's a dog," said David's father, John. "You teach it to get the newspaper in the morning and chase the sheep around, and I think you got yourself a real dog, unlike Buster here."*

*Buster hadn't been carrying his weight around the farm. He wouldn't chase the cows, he never barked when people drove onto the property, he never threatened the cats (causing the cat population to multiply to the size of a village) and, worst of all, he never listened to a thing his masters said unless the word "eat" was involved.*

*Now that a pig has threatened his livelihood, Buster knew it was time to do something or buy the farm in the most literal sense. He needed to get his dog's life in order and try to better himself to please his masters. Since that took too much work, effort and soul searching, Buster proceeded with alternate, time-tested means of securing his place in the world.*

*"I'm going to fuck you up, pig!" Buster shouted into the pen at the pig with the brown splotch.*

*"I'm sorry, are you talking to me?" the pig asked as he looked around.*

*"Your days are numbered, Lunch," Buster said as he made a throat-slashing motion with his paw. "I'm going to get you!" Then Buster left to follow his masters back to the house where he would beg for food.*

*The pig stood shocked, looking around to gauge the reactions of the other pigs who were equally astounded.*

*"Dude, what did you do to Buster?" asked one pig.*

*"Seriously, I didn't do anything," said Lunch. "You saw it. I was just standing here eating slop, and he went off!"*

*"Better watch your back; I don't trust that dog."*

*Later that day, David returned to slop the pigs again. As he was wont to do, Lunch followed David around, and the boy even patted Lunch on the head. Lunch, as he headed to the trough, heard a "psst" and looked over to see Buster shaking his head from side to side, giving his meanest sneer.*

*"Dude, stop doing that," said a pig to Lunch.*

*“Stop doing what?”*

*“Are you trying to get us all killed?” the pig asked. “Stop being friendly to the boy. Buster doesn’t like it.”*

*Lunch thought about his predicament. Why was it so wrong to be friends with the boy? Who was that dog to say who could be friends and who couldn’t? Lunch decided he wasn’t going to be bullied by some dog.*

*The next morning, David and Buster went out to slop the pigs. Lunch decided he would be extra friendly, Buster be damned. As David approached, Buster stared deeply at Lunch, but Lunch was undeterred. Lunch followed David around the pen and then put on a show. Lunch chased his tail, he jumped up, he sat down and he rubbed his head against David’s leg. It was the funniest, cutest thing young David had ever seen: a pig acting like a dog should act. David scratched Lunch all over. Buster turned as pink as the pigs, fuming at Lunch’s display. The other pigs ate nervously.*

*When David walked away, Buster spoke.*

*“So, that’s the way it’s going to be, huh Lunch?”*

*“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Buster,” said Lunch.*

*“I will rip out your soul, piss in your eye sockets and feed your balls to the cats,” Buster yelled.*

*“See, I don’t think you will,” said Lunch as the other pigs turned away. “David is my friend, and I’m going to be his new pet, so you better get used to it.”*

*“That was your last warning, Lunch,” said Buster as he trotted back to David’s side.*

*David told his father about the tricks the pig performed and insisted that the old man go with him when he went back to slop the pigs in the evening. His father, John, shook his head to the side and laughed. “OK David. This I gotta see.”*

*David, John and Buster made their way to the pig pen, and Lunch raced over to David. As he did earlier, Lunch chased his tail, jumped up, sat down and rubbed his head against David’s leg. John laughed.*

*“What do you think dad? Can he be my pet?” asked David. John sobered out of his laughter.*

*“Pet? That’s a pig,” said John.*

*“I know, but-“*

*“There’s no buts, David. Pigs aren’t pets. You can’t have a member of the four food groups as a pet. That’s why we have a dog, regardless of how worthless he is.”*

*Disappointment clouded the faces of David and Lunch. It was a sad truth but a time tested one: The worst dog is still a better pet than the best pig.*

*Buster raised his middle paw digit out at the pig, stuck out his tongue and left with David and John back to the farm house where he would beg for food.*

Hopefully this won't come as too much of a shock to you, but Rufus never had any farm animals as pets. Oh, I wanted to, just never could. Health codes aside, the opportunity just never came up.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **health code (n.) nonverbal communication, such as beating your chest or grasping your throat, meant to indicate you're about to die**

Because I was brought up by TV to know that everything I see on TV is real, I thought it would be great to have a pig run around the house like Arnold Ziffel did in the show "Green Acres." He had this Lassie-esque wisdom and Flipper-like determination about him; he knew what he wanted and how to get it. And I thought he would make a great pet. For once, all the kids would want to be my friend, and they could come over and play with Arnold—and Little Rufus of course.

Then Little Rufus learned the basic rule of thumb about pet ownership: Don't domesticate what you're willing to eat. When that animal dies, and if history is to be believed it will, you then have to make a decision about what to do with Bessy or Arnold or Cluckles. Because you're a Nebraskan, you're resourceful. Can you really let that meat go to waste?

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **resourceful (n.) poor [See: cheap]**

It's hard to say if it would be awkward or sentimental to remember the good times you and Arnold had, talk about that blue blanket he always carried around, as you're eating a plate of pork chops. I'd rather not find out.

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Despite the multitude of animals you'll find in Nebraska (where livestock and poultry outnumber people more than 14 to 1), you'll find that we mostly have cats and dogs as pets. Some folks have tiny birds or hamsters. The town weirdo might have a snake. He'll rot in Hell someday.

We love our pets. Love them too much to try to have sex with them. Love them enough to let them roam free, within reason. You won't find many people who own leashes for their dogs, not outside the big cities anyway. Neighbor dogs hang out with each other and go raise some Hell out in the fields; under various trees and bushes, cats find different ways to plot your demise. It's

almost as if these pets are your real-life friends and neighbors.

Everybody needs a cat to help keep the mice away and kill the birds who keep singing in the morning, despite the fact that Tweeter-Doodle knows you have a hangover. Then, you need a dog to keep those sneaky, deceitful, unfeeling, lying, cheating felines away from you and your stuff.

You won't find many aggressive dogs in Nebraska, although when you do they're usually coupled with the aggressive-looking, mulleted dude who lives in "that" house. Mostly, people share their homes with yellow Labs, mutts or very small yippie dogs — not exactly members of the canine group that strike fear in your heart when you see them without a leash. They're the Democrats of the pet kingdom.

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Little Rufus was lucky enough to only have one run-in with an aggressive dog, and it was because God was testing my courage and agility. I passed, at least half of that test.

New neighbors had moved onto my block, which was a really big deal. On the West Coast, Coastal Geography causes people to jump in and out of houses like promiscuous lovers, latching onto something better when it comes along and cashing in their relationship equity at the same time. In Nebraska, you buy your house, you live there and you die there. That is unless God destroys your house with a tornado, but he's the only Realtor I'm interested in listening to.

As I'm walking over to the new neighbor's house to meet their three kids I would come to despise, I hear a bark—a murderous bark. I don't remember what the dog's name was, but Rufus would like to think it was Armageddon. I noticed that the only thing standing between Geddy and my carotid artery in his mouth was a small stake in the ground, and I only really noticed that as it was flying in the air, dangling from the end of the chain that was attached to the dog that was now running at full speed toward Snack Rufus.

I screamed. I didn't holler. I didn't yell. I screamed.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **scream (v.) the sound you make when you're too scared to piss your pants**

I can only remember screaming twice over the course of the last 20 years. Once as I was driving through a cloud of snow

being on the Interstate, not knowing if there was a road on the other side of that cloud. The other: when I was about to become lunch.

With Geddy right on my tailbone, Little Rufus performed a miraculous two-step leap to the top of a neighbor's five-foot-tall wood pile.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ wood pile (n.) a blue-collar ladder

While I screamed at the top of my lungs, the Hell-beast jumped and jumped but could not reach me. The owners of the dog corralled their beast, and my dog innocence was lost.

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After being exposed to a dog I couldn't just walk up and pet, my outlook on canines changed dramatically. Rufus didn't need them. They were smelly, slobbery and dead to me. I held that stance for about 17 years until one day when my girlfriend and I adopted a dog, a basenji, who needed a home.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ basenji (n.) proof positive that God has experimented with drugs

This 30-pound, reddish-brown dog with white marks is the most confounding animal I've ever been exposed to. It's a dog that does not bark. Its tail curls like a pig's. Its howl sounds like a fire siren. It fancies the disgusting California blend of broccoli and cauliflower, especially if you dip the veggies in cheese, ranch, peanut butter and jerky. It will crawl under blankets at all costs to sleep. And if given the opportunity or opening, it would run like it had just broken out of prison and not look back.

This dog would be my pet.

After we adopted him, we noticed he had this funny quirk of wanting to bite anyone interested in petting him, including us. The solution to this problem in 21st Century America was drugs, of course. Prozac to be specific. That's what the animal behaviorist recommended.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ animal behaviorist (n.) one who shares the same attributes as a meteorologist

Every day, he would get a 5mg tablet of a generic equivalent of Prozac that I would slide into a meat product. I can't honestly

say that it helped him, but we were so scared of him flipping out that we kept him on the Prozac for almost three years.

When we moved to Seattle, there was something I noticed about him as he settled into the Great Northwest, something I never noticed back in the Midwest. Rufus was watching football one afternoon, puppysitting a two-year-old hellion basenji for a friend, and the two boys started playing. But then, as any good host would, my dog started humping the young boy.

Seattle had turned my dog gay.

I tell you what, Seattle. You're pretty, you have a nice personality, you're fun at parties and I'm sure you have a lot to offer someone looking for a domestic partner to share a health insurance plan with. However, I'm pretty sure my dog was not gay before we moved to your city. He was a lot of things, but puppy molester was not one of them.

I was at a bit of a loss as to what to do.



Questioner: "Did you scream?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "No, but I did wet myself."**

Questioner: "Did you separate them?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "What? No. I love my dog very much, whether he's straight or gay. I respect his decisions, even if his decision is to molest a smaller dog in front of**



**me. I asked myself, 'If the tables were reversed, what would I want him to do?'"**

Questioner: "Lick himself?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "No, sicko. Take pictures."**

I grabbed my Nikon SLR (product placement—Nikon, please send me a camera) and captured a moment that I hope will someday not only bring us closer together but can also be used in a civil lawsuit against the city of Seattle.

It's possible, I suppose, that taking him off Prozac liberated him sexually—opened up the techno nightclub that had been shut down by the state in his walnut-sized brain. It's possible, I guess, that all those Will & Grace episodes he would catch while I was at work could have opened up his closet door. The most rational explanation, however, is "It's Seattle."

Since his coming out party, we've never had "a talk" about his lifestyle. And as long as there are no other male dogs around, things are pretty normal, like they were back in the Midwest. I

sit around and watch sports on TV, and he chews on big bones all night, trying not to choke on them. Seattle, you may have taken his heterosexuality, but you will never take away his desire to bite anyone who tries to be his friend.

## 15. DOWN-HOME IRISH CATHOLICISM

But first, a story about devotion:

Maggie's morning routine differed from most of the girls in her senior class. Every day before school, you could find her kneeling in a pew, rosary beads in hand, head bowed. She would obtain a restroom pass just to go say 30 Our Fathers. During lunch, she would sit by herself in the lunchroom for silent devotion. After school, she would stop by the church to light candles and say even more prayers in the name of the Holy Trinity. At the end of the night, she would say her final set of prayers before going to sleep and starting her routine anew the next day.

Father O'Hanrahan had noticed her presence in church, twice a day for three weeks now, and wondered what may be troubling her.

"I think I see you here more than Sister Catherine, and she lives right next door," Father O'Hanrahan said to Maggie after the rosary concluded.

"Do you really think so, Father?" Maggie asked.

"Do you have a few minutes Maggie? It won't take long," Father O'Hanrahan said. Maggie figured the Lord's time was more important than school time so she followed him into his office. "Maggie, I can't help but notice that I've seen you more in the last three weeks than I saw you in the last six months combined," he said.

"I'm sorry, Father."

"No, no, that's quite alright, Maggie. Worshiping the Lord is nothing to be sorry about by any means. But I can't help but wonder if something is troubling you and if you would like to talk about it." Maggie shook her head no, said everything was fine and waited for Father O'Hanrahan to allow her to leave.

The next morning, Maggie reappeared at the church, said her rosary and then found Father O'Hanrahan afterward.

"I wasn't telling the truth to you Father," Maggie said, "I'm sorry."

"That's all right, Maggie, the important thing is that you are here now. The Lord forgives that which you're willing to confess," Father O'Hanrahan said. "What's on your mind, Maggie?" Father O'Hanrahan feared the worst, that maybe she was pregnant, that there was abuse at home.

"I'm in love," Maggie said.

"You are?" Father O'Hanrahan said relieved.

"Yes, Father, I am in love. He's the man of my dreams. I see him every day, and I can feel myself melt every time he looks at me."

"I see," he said as he prepared his speech on lust, abstinence and general moral indignation.

"The problem is he's a Protestant."

"Maggie dear, all the praying in the world won't help make your love for him OK," Father O'Hanrahan said. "Now run along to school."

I grew up thinking everyone was Catholic, which is the way many Catholics are brought up. I couldn't tell you if that's the perception kids of all faiths have, but what they think doesn't count anyway.

There's a pocket of central Nebraska's farming community that has been in the hands of Irish immigrants before the first "No Irish Need Apply" sign appeared in the state. As you folks on the cold Coast know, Irish immigration was such a problem in the mid-1800s that the government needed to act, and act fast. The solution to the problem was the Homestead Act.

**HICKTIONARY** 🌟 **Homestead Act (n.) a genocidal plot in 1862 that failed when the Coastal**

**Yankee government underestimated how much worse things were in Europe and the inner cities than the American West**

Here's how that went down:



**Yankee Senator No. 1:** This is ridiculous. All these immigrants are taking over our jobs, sucking us dry of resources! It's to the point where some of our families are down to one rat per household!

**Yankee Senator No. 2:** I know what you mean. Just yesterday, I was riding in my carriage when a scurvy immigrant came up, brushed my horse and demanded a penny!

**Yankee Senator No. 1:** The nerve! Have these people no shame?

**Yankee Senator No. 2:** I had to order the driver to get out and stomp him. We can't just kick these people out of the country. When we send one away, seems like there are three to take his place. What can we do?

**Yankee Senator No. 1:** We can't send them to the Confederacy because they're white.

**Yankee Senator No. 2:** True, true.

**Yankee Senator No. 1:** I hear there are artisans in France who can quickly make a landmark that can let the immigrants know, in no uncertain terms, that they're not welcome here. We can have it read, "If you are influential and rich, come on in. Tired and poor, stay away."

**Yankee Senator No. 2:** I fear that will take too long to make. We need a solution now before my daughter takes a fancy to one of these vermin.

**Yankee Senator No. 1:** I have it! Let's send them all to that miserable West. Surely, they will all die there. Lewis and Clark's report said as much.



**Yankee Senator No. 2: Oh, what a folly Jefferson's purchase was!**

Yankee Senator No. 1: Indeed!

**Yankee Senator No. 2: How will we convince these people to go? We can't force them out. We don't have nearly enough police or extra clubs because we cut the law enforcement budget in lieu of the underwater rail line.**

Yankee Senator No. 1: What a wonderful accomplishment that was for the economic success of our rail company!

**Yankee Senator No. 2: Indeed!**

Yankee Senator No. 1: Let's just give them that land. Surely they will die like Sgt. Floyd did once they're out there. We'll tell them they need to stay for 5 years, and if they do, they can keep the land.

**Yankee Senator No. 2: But naturally they will die before that, allowing us to take the land back! Brilliant!**

Yankee Senator No. 1: Brilliant!

**Yankee Senator No. 2: What shall we call it? I know, "The Immigrant Elimination Act."**

Yankee Senator No. 1: Although that's accurate, let's remember that marketing and spin is the key to making everyone believe that what you're doing is OK.

**Yankee Senator No. 2: Yes, quite. Sorry.**

Yankee Senator No. 1: Let's call it, "The Homestead Act." That way, it makes it sound like they'll be at home in this deathtrap.

**Yankee Senator No. 2: You are a genius!**

Yankee Senator No. 1: I could not have done it without you!

**Yankee Senator No. 2: To the end of immigrants!**

Yankee Senator No. 1: The end of immigrants! (embrace and kiss)

As hard as it is to picture yourself living (or even thinking about) Nebraska, imagine trying to live there 150 years ago with no roads leading out of the state, no electricity and no sewer system. Imagine braving a winter before global warming, where the winds swept across the plains at 40 miles per hour, blowing light, powdered snow everywhere, creating mammoth 6-to-10-foot drifts. Imagine dealing with 90-plus-degree heat with no air conditioning. Washing clothes with no washer and dryer. Making smoothies without a blender! That's right, you wouldn't survive.

Our forefathers knew how hard Midwestern life would be and figured the immigrants wouldn't stand a chance. Even if the scum did survive, who cared? The immigrants were gone and that's all that mattered. Convincing someone to leave their comfort zone,

even if that comfort was the holey blanket of poverty, is not an easy task. The spin doctors were at the top of their game, though. Just check out who they got to be the very first homesteader: Daniel Freeman. Free Man. You've got to be kidding me. My guess is Jeffrey Scurvy and James Randum Wulfattack were stuffed in gunny sacks when they got to the Homestead office and locked up for a day.

The joke was on Freeman, though, assuming he really did exist. His property was outside of modern-day Beatrice, Nebraska (another first for my state—eat it Iowa) which is south and west of Lincoln about 40 miles. It's also one of the most active areas for severe thunderstorms and tornados in the state. But The Man doesn't tell you about the tornados, droughts or blizzards; He tells you there's free land, and Americans, even new ones, will take anything if it's free.

What the Coastal Elite didn't account for in their Homestead scheme was the determination of immigrants not to die. It was going to take more than total isolation, Indians, wild animals, sub-zero temperatures and a lack of resources to kill them. It would take members of their own family or fire.

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My kin were just a few in a long line of immigrants to settle the state: some came because of the Homestead Act, others built the railroad. They stayed because this was their Plymouth Rock. This was truly the American dream—the promise of a fresh start, the idea of ownership. Now the American Dream is having a blog read by at least three people not related to you.

## **HICKTIONARY** ★ **blog (n.) a cry for help**

Immigrants set up all sorts of townships that most of their own countrymen gravitated toward. There's Wilber (Czech), Dannebrog (Danish), Stromsburg, Wausa and Oakland (bitterly fighting for title of Swede Capital of Nebraska), O'Neill (Irish), Loup City (Polish), Ohiowa (Dorks) and more. None of these farming communities are very big; in fact, most are slowly disappearing. If you did the grand tour of these cities, I'd first off call you the most bored person on Earth and possibly mentally insane, and I'd also bet that you'd think each town was incredibly similar outside of that sign at the entrance of town that read

“(ethnic group here) Capital of Nebraska.”

There’s really not much difference, at base, between the ethnic groups in big cities compared to the ethnic groups in our state, except it takes longer to go to the other city to go beat the hell out of someone for looking at your sister. In a big city, that march is just a couple minutes away. It’s easier to make the decision to pummel some Poles when you don’t have to estimate how much it will cost you in time, gas and wear & tear on your car to see if the beating is worth it.

Over time, of course, the ethnic divide has narrowed as people of different national backgrounds have crossed boundaries to have babies. My father is of mainly English descent, my mother of mainly Irish descent. In a court of law, I can use this information for the basis for pretty much any insanity defense. Of course, my mother is only part Irish as her mother’s parents were Scandinavian. No matter what kind of stew your genes resemble, people generally identify with one part of their heritage, and for Rufus it’s the Irishness. Hickman comes from the name “Hickey” which in Irishness means “healer” and in English “Hickey” means “a love bruise from sucking.” So after years of ethnic cross-breeding, Rufus’s name in American means “leech.”

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Besides my name, it’s my religion that has defined my ethnic identification. Being Catholic, it’s harder to identify with the English side of my genealogy. Besides, I hate myself enough as it is. I don’t need to add religious discrimination to that mix.

Growing up Catholic in Central Nebraska is a lot like being a child in a grocery store. It’s a lot of, “Don’t touch that... You don’t need that... What are you doing with that?... Get off that... I’m going to knock you into the middle of next week if you do that...” As I grew from Little Rufus to Rufus, subconsciously all those lessons and values followed me to this more advanced stage.



Woman willing to date Rufus: “I didn’t know you were Catholic.”

**Rufus “Junior” Hickman Jr.: “Didn’t you notice that I went into convulsions every time I wanted to touch you those first three months.”**



Woman willing to date Rufus: “I didn’t know you weren’t epileptic. This is very disconcerting.”

Rufus learned lots of life lessons in his church days. How to go to Hell. How not to touch a woman. How to get punished for lying. How to carry around beads yet still feel like a man. How to accept tough love. But mostly, how to skip out of church.

Lots of times, Little Rufus would ride his bike to church. The church didn't really have a bike rack so I left the bike lying in the grass by the back door. I didn't have to worry about locking my bike up; I figured no one in the town had enough stones to steal it from church. Mass was always an hour long, or longer if the Father was really feeling it. So as soon as I walked in, I grabbed a newsletter detailing all the deaths from the last week and bake sales and prayer services for the week ahead. I took a seat or a kneel or a stand, whatever was appropriate for the choreographed service, and started counting down the amens until I could leave.

The prime time for me to leave was after communion. Everyone would file down the aisle to accept the body and blood of Christ into their mouth, which probably has some people at the Center for Disease Control cringing, and then file back to their seat on a wooden bench. I, however, would often just keep on walking, right out the side door. After my sacrilicious dine-and-dash, I'd ride around town on my bike for about 10 or 15 more minutes and then head home to hand my mother the evidence—communion breath and the newsletter.

It's not that I hated God, far from it. Rufus just hates being bored.

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Sometimes I wonder if God wants us to be bored. He must. I wouldn't think he would, but He does. Otherwise, church wouldn't be so boring, would it? God's not a boring guy. Just like Russell Crowe (made in God's image) isn't a boring guy. Someone who can cause an immense amount of damage in such a short time can't be labeled boring. Yet, for whatever reason, we focus on the most boring-ass aspect of God: His neediness.

“Worship Me.” “Praise Me.” “Honor Me.” Holy crap. How boring is that to listen to for an hour? You wouldn't spend 10 seconds talking to someone you know who is that full of himself; why spend an hour listening to it? Mix it up a bit. How about we spend 20 minutes where you tell the story about how you turn people into salt, flood the Earth, have lions kill people and spread plague and frogs across the land, then maybe 5 minutes of “Oh,

by the way, did I tell you how incredibly great I am and will crush you if you don't praise me?" I mean, I did get out of bed for this. I have to have a little bit of entertainment—I'm American.

And that Jesus guy, talk about someone who really makes me appreciate Jewish belief, that's the guy. At least God is willing to dish out the wrath, Jesus, what does he do? Like many children of celebrities, he latches on to an aspect of his father and milks it. Rufus understands it must be hard to step out of the shadow, but seriously, the thing I liked most about your dad was his willingness to destroy humanity at any given moment. What do you do? Heal people? Feed people? Starve yourself? Oh my God, give me a break. Then you're all like, "Worship my Father," "Praise my Father," I mean, I got the message the first time; that's why I worship Him.

When it's time to read from the New Testament at church, I totally space it out. Every New Testament reading to me sounds like:

"And I sayeth unto you, if thou doth not remember the first time thee were told of the greatness of God, bear thee witness to what I now say is true and just. You will worship Him, praise Him and honor Him, in Jesus's name, the name of the son of God, who died for our sins, who was truly a son. For thou is one who must worship God to the fullest of thy soul, who must praise him for it is right and just, who must honor thy God in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven, and not be sent away from Heaven, but to be in Heaven."

That's the short version of the New Testament. Comparatively, the Old Testament reads as such:

"The voice said, 'For I am God, and since I am God, thee will do what I say or I shall send thee to burn in Hell for all the days of eternity, got that?'"

Maybe Rufus is not as fond of Baby J as I am of Papa G because Jesus reminds me of the hippies who are trying to destroy the world through kindness. Maybe I just like the tough love God gives me. Either way, my chances of going to Hell are lower if I smoke what the hippie's selling, especially after writing all this.

We certainly believe in the power of prayer. We have to. That and Nebraska football have gotten us this far. There's something about the Catholic prayer book that I really like. I can't put my finger on it except to say there is literally a prayer for every occasion. Rufus isn't saying that Catholics pray harder or more than other Christian religions. I'm just saying our prayers get answered more frequently.

## **Central Nebraska Prayer Book of Our Father**

(updated May 1, 2010)

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from Evil. Amen.

### **Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me  
beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of  
righteousness for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I  
will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they  
comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine  
enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

### **The Children's Prayer**

Dear God, holiest of holies, maker of all that is, all that ever will be,  
Please don't take my mommy and daddy away.  
Although I love Thee more, I love them very much.  
If You promise not to take them today,  
I'll do whatever they say. Amen.

### **Grace**

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest.  
Let this food, thus be blessed. Amen.

### **Prayer of Plowshares**

Praise to Thee, oh Lord, our God. Decider of fates,  
Whom we worship in all that we do and say.  
Please let the Cornhuskers, your divine team, win today,  
May they pulverize the opponent with Thou's Blackshirt Defense,  
The holiest of all defenses across Your States.

*(if playing Oklahoma add:*

*If You don't mind, smite all those both in Oklahoma*

*And those who make the ill-fated choice to support the team of Mammon.)*

In Your name we pray, Amen.

### **Prayer for the Unemployed**

Lord Jesus, who is right and just, for whom we put our trust,  
Please decide to let my brother have a job soon, for his feet doth  
stinketh.

He's decided to stop showering and watches TV on my couch all day,  
And his smell is rather unholy, possibly seeping into the couch.

Yet, I will love him as I love myself, even if it is your will to have my  
couch reshaped in the form of his backside.

And I will continue to buy him Cheetos and Funyuns, for it is thy's  
will.

I pray for more interesting plotlines in Hannah Montana so that we  
will have something more interesting to talk about when I come  
home from my work as a ditch digger. Amen.

### **The Easter Bunny's Prayer**

Dear Lord Jesus, we ask that you forgive this rabbit  
For it knoweth not what it doeseth.

Thy bunny servant is confused enough

As a rabbit that lays eggs.

We pray that you do not damn it to the fires of hell,

For all eternity, for slandering your crucifixion

With such pretty pastel colors.

It just wants us to be, well,

Whatever it thinks it's accomplishing

With these eggs.

Amen.

### **Praise the Day**

This is the day which the Lord hath made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
When the sun doth shine, we praise His name,  
When the wind doth chill, we praise the same.  
We praise and praise and pray forthwith,  
That He'll make sure that we get paid.

### **Prayer for March 18**

Oh God.  
Oh God.  
I'm going to die.  
Ho, my God.  
Please, please God.  
Oh my God.  
If you truly love me,  
You'll help me make it through the day.  
Hold on...

### **The Psalm of Snuggie**

Wrap me in Your Snuggie of joy, O Lord,  
Your half-jacket, half-blanket of peace and serenity.  
May You help me look like a Star Wars retard,  
Rejected by life but embraced by Your love.

Wrap me in Your Snuggie of joy, O Lord.  
Your cloth, your shroud, your dress shirt, your suit jacket.  
May You allow me to wear this holy gift to church  
So others won't know if I'm slow or just stupid.

Wrap me in Your Snuggie of joy, O Lord,  
Your garment that makes my hands free to pray  
While still staying warmeth – all the while knowing  
You were nailed to a cross so that I could someday wear this thing.

Wrap me in Your Snuggie of joy, O Lord,  
May my body still be warm when the paramedics  
Take me to the morgue with your holy gunshot wound  
Fully visible in my temple of Your house.

## 16. BEING POOR

But first, a story about growing trees:

*Farmer John, after a long morning of picking tomatoes, melons and corn with his wife and eight children, loaded up his truck and made the five-mile trip into town to sell his goods. Folks always liked buying from Farmer John; he didn't always have the best crop, but he was a heck of a nice guy who'd bend over backward for you and shoot you a good price. You help him feed his family, he'll help you feed yours. Good old John.*

*Bill Bragly, the local banker, stopped by John's truck toward the end of the day and struck up a talk.*

*"Howdy farmer," said Bill, "I was seein' as how you had that truck full-up just a couple hours ago and now you sold it all, is that right?"*

*"Yup," said Farmer John, a man of few words.*

*"It ain't none of my business to tell you what you should do with all that money you made, but what I do is I'm a banker. You got kids farmer?"*

*"Yup."*

*"My job is to help you save your money so your kids can still eat and wear shoes if we get drought, wrecked by a tornado or asked by God to join him. My bank is down there on the corner. If you want to hear more, you should stop by sometime." Bill Bragly left his sales pitch at that, knowing he'd see the farmer again, and walked back to his bank. Farmer John started his truck and headed back to his 40 acres.*

*The next day, Farmer John headed to town to meet with the banker.*

*"Howdy farmer, good to see you again," said Bill Bragly, "have a seat."*

*"How does this work?" asked Farmer John.*

*"Ah, I see you're a man who don't mix words. OK, what happens is, you give me your money; I invest your money, and each month I pay you interest for letting me invest your money. Let's say you give me \$10. At the end of the month, I give you 50 cents for letting me invest your \$10. Now you have \$10.50, the dollar amount gets bigger every month, and you can take your money out any time you want."*

*"So I don't get my money back?" asked Farmer John.*

*"No, you do," said Bill.*

*"When?"*

*"Whenever you want," said Bill.*

*"But I give it to you," said John.*

*"Right, the longer you give it to me, the more you make," Bragly said.*

*"But I don't make any money if I give it to you," said Farmer John.*

*"No, it's still your money, I'm just using it to make money."*

"I'm going to give you money so you can make money and then I have no money?" asked Farmer John.

"But you're making money, too," said Bragly.

"Not if I'm giving it all to you."

"It's still your money; you can have it any time you want," Bill Bragly said, now wanting the farmer out of his bank.

"If I can have it, why would I give it to you?"

"You know what, I don't want it. You want to make more money? Here," said Bill Bragly as he dumped some coffee out of its tin can and handed the can to Farmer John. "Put your money in here, bury it in the ground and water it. Six months later, a tree will start growing with money as its fruit. Now good day sir."

That was the first sensible thing Bill Bragly said all day, Farmer John thought. Farmer John never tried to grow money before, but he figured it couldn't hurt. So he put some of his money in that can, dug a hole, buried the can and watered that spot every day for six months. He buried it near his favorite sittin' spot where he'd drink some water and watch the sun set. Sometimes he'd stare at his spot in the ground and drift into his own world.

"What chu doin', Pa?" his son John asked one day.

"Oh, just seein' if a money tree will grow, John. Just seein'."

After the end of his six months, Farmer John dug the coffee can out of the ground, his money intact but failing to make roots into the ground. As he figured, he'd been had. Farmer John drove back into town to confront the banker and let him know that his idea for growing a money tree didn't work out.

A couple weeks passed, and Farmer John's son John caught him watering the dirt again at his sittin' spot.

"You still tryin' to make a money tree grow, Pa?"

"Nope," said Farmer John, "money don't grow on no trees, son."

"Then what you doin', Pa?"

"Seein' if I can grow me a banker tree."

Being poor sucks. What sucks about it the most is that it's all relative. No matter how sorry I want to feel for myself for being poor, there's someone worse off than me. Whereas I may have three chickens, they only have one. The pot they piss in? The bank owns it.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**bank (n.)** the alternative to hiding your money, it's a place where other people make money off of your money and you only get the money you originally put in it (see how they try to confuse you with their policies?)

Because we would feel wrong feeling sorry for ourselves for not being poor enough, we just move past it. We just acknowledge in a general fashion that some of us are poor, others are really poor, still others are dirt poor and then there's people who have money. Those are the people we work for.

Rufus wouldn't go as far as to say we live in poverty, even if many people qualify for that label. It doesn't feel like we do, anyway. A number of us may hover under that poverty line, but we do a pretty good job of not looking extremely poor.

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Qualifying for poverty ain't that hard. If you're single and make less than \$9,310 a year (the poverty line), there's no doubt, you are one broke bastard.

However, rest assured that if you work a minimum wage job for 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, you too can rise above poverty and make \$10,712! Heck, soon people will be asking to borrow money from you.

If you're hitched, the prospects of you being impoverished take a plunge. With two people in a house, the poverty level only bumps up to \$12,490. However, if you're both working minimum wage jobs, you should be pulling in \$20K+. Get those vacation plans to the Ozarks ready because you're rolling in it! Or, you could put that extra, above-poverty scratch you're making into a savings account.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **savings account (n.) a mythical holding place where you would actually earn money (called interest) for letting the bank hold your money**

Poor people do not have savings accounts. Poor people, instead, have credit cards. I don't know how people hovering near the poverty line get credit cards, but credit card companies keep sending them applications and pre-approvals in the mail. A person used to be able to make the credit card companies pay for their bad decision of letting poor folks have credit. A poor person used to be able to take all their "savings," pimp out their crib and then take a cash advance against their savings to hire a lawyer and declare bankruptcy.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **bankruptcy (n.) small-scale lottery you win once every seven years**

But thanks to the leader of the people, George Bush, that dream of ownership of things like furniture was crushed in 2005. Used to be you could declare bankruptcy and you wouldn't have to repay the people you owed (they would then get to write-off your debt as a loss, gaining them a tax break). The downside, if you want to call it a downside, is that your credit would suck for 7 years. At the end of the 7 years, the statute on the debt would essentially run out, making you a free man to start all over again with credit card companies foolish enough to give you a card. But now thanks to the bankruptcy reform, that dream is diffedered like interest.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**reform (v.) something you go through or that happens to you to make rich people feel safer**

Now when you declare bankruptcy, you don't get your slate wiped clean: You still have to pay back these debts plus interest, which is over 20% in almost every instance, which kills the point of filing for bankruptcy. It shouldn't come as a shock to learn that bankruptcies were at an all-time low in 2006.

The credit card companies, however, can continue to make as many high-risk unsecured loans as they want to people who have no money. Bankruptcy was really the only avenue for a poor person to own anything of quality or go on a month-long alcohol bender.

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Thanks to these new reforms, people have to really watch their pennies so they don't incur a massive debt like the government that encourages them to go into debt to help the economy. You can either watch every cent you have or do what I do: move at least once a year to evade the skip tracer.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**skip tracer (n.) someone who looks for "missing" people but if not for this job, this someone would be one of the missing**

Skipping out on a debt has become more of an art form than skip tracing. Thanks to whatever the Internet thing is, skip tracing is becoming easier to do every day, if not less accurate. That's why skipping is the road to take for those who want a challenge. Rufus has lived in more than 20 different dwellings the last 18 years. Once I became Pimpled Rufus, the longest I have ever

stayed in one house/apartment is 15 months. And I know for a fact that those skip tracers are at least four houses behind me. One of these losers has been “lucky” enough to find me in Seattle, but not only is that debt more than seven years old, it’s only for \$200. (By the way skip tracers, as you’re reading this, I’m not in Seattle anymore. Good luck.)

When I was Knucklehead Rufus (age 18-24), I dipped well into my savings. Somehow, when you turn 18, credit card companies find you. Are they comparing notes with Selective Service? Checking the graduation rolls in the paper? I have no idea, but they find you and dunk you into the pool of unsecured loans. And they do a darn good job of it, too. Of course, no one forced me to take their money.

Eventually, they wanted me to pay their money back. So, since that was money I didn’t have, it was a no-brainer to move rather than pay. The chase was on.

Since I was 14, I’ve lived in Grand Island (4 places), St. Paul (1), Hippietown Lincoln (2), back to Grand Island (2), college in Southeast Nebraska (3), Hell (2), back to SE Nebraska (1), Sioux City, Iowa (1), back to Lincoln (1), Des Moines, Iowa (1), and now Seattle (3). I think I’m even missing a place in there, but the important thing to note here is those skip tracers, who by all rights should have stopped looking by the time I left Lincoln, are still trying to find me in Seattle. And of course, they can’t find me. Hell, Rufus wouldn’t stand out at an NAACP rally. The fly has to stay one step ahead of the spider if he wants to see the end of his 20-day lifespan and not die at the hands (er, arms) of the arachnid that will always be around, snacking on fly generation after fly generation after fly generation.

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If folks ever come to their senses, they don’t get too keen about going into debt. On a house, they’ll go into debt if someone is foolish enough to give them a home loan. You won’t see the dude with the mullet lining up to go into debt. If he, who has chosen to be a retard, is smart enough to stay out of debt, surely the rest of us who choose to live a normal life can manage to stay out of debt. It’s hard, though. It’s real hard.

Owning a house, whether it was handed down to you or picked up on your own, is the biggest factor of what separates the poor from the poorest. It doesn’t even have to be a nice house; it just

needs to be your house. After being raised in a house my folks owned, it's hard for me to feel at home in anything short of my own home. I figure that's why it's so easy for me to move from one place to the next like a backwoods Spider-Man, slinging my webs of ditched debt in every city Rufus lives.

There are many advantages to living in an apartment, depending on your lifestyle choices. It's liberating to know that you can trash every aspect of your crib or let it all fall to shit, and all you have to do to make it better is move, usually under the cover of night. What are they going to do, keep your deposit? Try to collect repairs from you? Good luck. If the anti-establishment lifestyle and a general sense of self-pity are your calling cards, renting in Nebraska might be for you. Take this quick quiz to find out:

### **Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.'s Midwest Home Ownership Aptitude Test for Men**

#### **1. Do you like to clean?**

Yes (0 points)

No (1 point)

#### **2. Do you mind when your old lady bitches at you to fix things?**

Yes (1 point)

No (0 points)

Fuck her! (2 points)

#### **3. When you want to plug it in and get wasted, how many friends do you invite over?**

One or two buds (1 point)

Mostly cousins (2 points)

I got no friends (0 points)

#### **4. Does your dog love you?**

Yes (0 points)

No (1 point)

What kind of love we talkin' about? (2 points)

#### **5. What's your favorite or most-used 4-letter word?**

Fuck! (1 point)

Rock! (2 points)

What? (0 points)

**6. How big is that coffee can you keep your cash in?**

Folgers Instant Coffee Crystals (1 point)

Chock full o'Nuts 2.6 pound (0 points)

I got your can right here (2 points)

**7. What style of TV do you own?**

Color (0 points)

Black and white (2 points)

Gunshot (1 point)

**8. How would you treat a person coming onto your property to read the energy meter?**

With a howdy (1 point)

With a sneer (2 points)

By disabling the electronic fence (0 points)

**9. Johnny Law is my**

Friend (2 points)

Enemy (0 points)

Kin (1 point)

**10. What is your favorite sport?**

Staring (0 points)

Football (2 points)

Fucking Shit Up (1 point)

**Results**

**0-5 points:** Holy fucking shit! What are you, an accountant?

A banker? The Man's pawn? Your ass was made for home ownership. You're set for a lifetime of your chick nagging about things she wants, independent contactors and tire tracks in your lawn. Good luck to you, sucker! Loser.

**6-11 points:** You strike the natural balance that the good Lord ordained to the male thought process, a process that has gotten us through thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of years. Your philosophy: "I can take it or leave it." You know that when time comes when you become physically crippled, apartment living isn't going to be so bad. Might as well live it up right now in the house. Apartment life to you is much better than those studios underground.

**12-19 points:** To you, a house is not a home until you can fuck it

up. You know yourself too well and can see that home ownership clashes with your way of thinking like decision making clashes with a West Coast resident's lifestyle. There are a lot of houses and apartments out there for rent and a number that don't require a background check. For those that do, you can forge your application by pretending to be one of your cousins which is why you have their Social Security numbers tattooed to your inner thigh. What? Doesn't everybody?

**20+ points:** You're either a cheater, a liar or not very good at math. You're OK in my book.

### **Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.'s Midwest Home Ownership Aptitude Test for Women**

#### **1. Are you a woman?**

Yes (0 points)

No (1 point)

#### **Results**

**0 points:** There's no doubt in my mind that home ownership is for you. Every queen needs her castle, whether she's true royalty or just royal at times. Here's to many years of wanting something better!

**1 point:** You took the wrong test, dude. Go back to the other test. I mean, it's up to you if you want to try women's things. There's no reason to lie to yourself.

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Over the course of the last 15 years, Rufus has given about \$100,000 to people so that I can live in their empty cribs. \$30,000 of that in three years in Seattle. Couple things seem wrong with that. For one, where the hell did I get \$100,000 from? But more importantly, why the hell did Rufus give \$100,000 away and all I have to show for it is I don't have plague yet?

## 17. THEM COLORED PEOPLE

It's not too hard to spot some folks who ain't from Nebraska. We have a deductive process that's been in place for more than 100 years now and highly accurate.

Is the person white?

Does this person wear new shoes?

Does this person wear a shirt with another state's name on it?

That will catch most of them. Rufus doesn't think it's any secret that most people in Nebraska are white. In fact, almost 90% of the people in Nebraska are white. According the 2004 Census, Hispanics make up the next most populous race at 7% (which is up from 5.5% in 2000). When you think of non-white Nebraskans, you might think of Native Americans first and not Hispanics. In 2004, there were less than 10,000 Native Americans left in Nebraska, and that was down from about 15,000 in 2000.

If you ever talked to someone in rural Nebraska about Hispanics, you would think the state's Hispanic population was something like 35 to 40%. They would say that immigration is a huge problem.

### **HICKTIONARY** ★

**problem (n.) a minor detail in the grand scheme of things blown up by the liberal media and embraced by conservative activists**

“Mexicans are the root of all crime: they're dirty, they don't speak English, they're sucking off our tax dollars, they pop out as many kids as they can, they live 8 to 10 in a house and, worst of all, they're going to date our daughters.” Having the Mexican around, however, makes us feel better about ourselves. “I may be poor white trash, but at least I'm not some Mexican working at the packing plant.”

Racism, be it mild or extreme, will never go away. It's the way of the world. People of one race will always dislike someone of a different race, usually for no good reason. Since there are more Mexicans in our state, it's easier to dislike them for not being from Nebraska than it is to dislike blacks, who are nowhere to be found (except on the football field).

America's dirty little secret is we need the Hispanic laborer. We HAVE to have the Hispanic laborer, and we need him to work under the table. We need this because as citizens, we are barely getting by the way it is.

No one is falling all over themselves to give us a raise. The government certainly isn't. Your boss only wants to give you that "cost of living" raise which is commonly 3% a year (a 15-cent-per-hour raise if you work for minimum wage).

If the Hispanic laborer didn't process the world's meat and pick crops, you wouldn't be able to afford food anymore. A green pepper would go from 25 cents each to \$1 each, which they already are on the Coasts for some inexplicable reason. The day we get rid of the illegal immigrants is the day I'm going to ask the Oregonian how that \$4 pepper tastes on that \$35 salad.

I don't care if he's legal; I don't care if he's illegal. The Hispanic laborer is not hurting me. He's helping me. Of course, many people don't see it that way. They see Hispanics as the dirty root of all crime who can't speak English, live off our taxes, have seven kids, cram several families into a house and stalk our daughters.

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Hispanics are not even close to the root of all crime in Nebraska, although we arrest plenty of them. If you believe the statistics, it's really the black man we need to fear—all five of them.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**statistics (n.)** some numbers that mean something opposite of what you think they should mean

In 2004, 3.6% of Nebraska's population was Black or African-American (I can't tell the difference between them), but 24% of the inmates in the state penitentiary were Black/African-American. And that number of 24% is below the national average of Africa-American incarceration.

The reason why most people are in our state prisons? Drugs (about 1 in 3 people are in jail for this offense). Sixty percent of drug convictions in a year are for trafficking. Now, if we can just get that number to 100%.... No. 2 reason is theft at 13%.

With as much empty land as Nebraska has, you wouldn't think our prisons could be overpopulated like the Coastal lockups are, would you? Fact is, our prisons are a third over their capacity—4,200 prisoners jammed into 3,200-capacity clinks.

“But they smell, don’t you know? Hispanics are incredibly stinky. They don’t shower or change their clothes, assuming they have another pair of clothes. They just enjoy sitting around in their own filth, like pigs, like filthy pigs.”

It could also be that some of these folks do, in fact, have a scent to them because their job is to process meat all day long.

**HICKTIONARY** 🌟 **process (v.) seriously, you don’t want to know**

Before that meat that you overpay for at the store gets into its shrink-wrap packaging, someone has to do the dirty work of disassembling the cow. That person is the Hispanic.

Tyson Foods, parent company of IBP (Iowa Beef Packers), is the largest “protein provider” (that’s what they want to be called, that’s what Rufus will call them) in the world. IBP was the largest meatpacker in the world with several processing plants in Nebraska, namely in Columbus, Dakota City, Lexington, Madison, Norfolk (which some people there pronounce “Norfork” because they are unwilling to let go of the past), Omaha, West Point and York. A corporation called Swift & Co., although not as big of a player as Tyson, controls a large meatpacking facility in Grand Island.

Using 2000 Census figures, here’s the breakdown of Nebraska’s Hispanics:

<u>County</u>	<u>Major City</u>	<u>Hispanic Pop.</u>	<u>% of County Pop.</u>
Dawson	Lexington	6,178	25.4
Dakota	Dakota City	4,581	22.6
Colfax	Schulyer	2,732	26.2
Hall	Grand Island	7,497	14.0
Lancaster	Lincoln	8,400	03.4
Dodge	Omaha	30,928	06.7
<u>6-county totals</u>		<u>60,316</u>	
All 93 Counties		94,425	05.5

So, 63.8% of all Hispanics living in Nebraska reside in six counties, four of which have major meatpacking facilities. Are those 94,000 Hispanics legal aliens? Rufus doesn’t give a shit. I’m not going to process a cow, but I want to eat a cow. I also want to pay as little as possible for that meat.

I understand why the employer wants to bring the immigrant into this country. If there’s no one to process the meat, the meatpacker has no meat to sell. I sort of understand why the

worker would come to the States to do this job. He thinks that this occupation has the potential to make his and his family's life better. What I don't understand is why observers get angry at the person for working illegally rather than the employer who hires someone they know is illegal.

Leave immigration alone. If anything, it should be easier to come to the States to work. As soon as the government steps in and tries to fix immigration because people are complaining (without merit) that illegals are taking over this country, food prices are going to go through the roof. If you thought it was bad when oil prices nearly tripled, wait until you have to take out a loan for a steak and potatoes. (Luckily, you folks on the Coasts already have banks in your grocery stores.) And guess what? When food prices skyrocket, you still won't get a raise from your boss. How do you like them \$3 apples?

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"I'm not about to let them live off our taxes!"

I'm with you. If you're not paying taxes into the system, you shouldn't reap all the incredibly wonderful benefits, like government cheese, that the U.S. of A. has to offer.

If you breathe, you're paying taxes. Even if illegal aliens aren't paying their full due to Uncle Sam or the wonderful Social Security Administration, you have to assume that they're paying sales tax. Don't you pay tax almost every day of your life?

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"They're popping out a new kid every other week. Is there a Mexican woman who isn't pregnant?"

Rufus was surprised to find out that only about 28% of the people who live in Nebraska affiliate themselves with the Catholic faith. Growing up Catholic, in a seemingly Catholic area, I assumed more people were Catholic in the state. If there is one stereotype, or a doctrine if you will, that usually holds true for Catholics, it's that they like to race Mormons to see how many children they can bear. It's more like a marathon than a sprint, but a race nonetheless.

Latin America is heavily, heavily Catholic. Not only do they follow Catholicism, they actually believe in it. With that in mind, can you really fault them for following their religion? Can you fault some families for having five children when you only have

three or four?

Why is it a big deal if people, especially Hispanic people, have bigger families? My Momma had seven brothers and sisters (Catholic farm family). My Pop had nine brothers and sisters (Protestant farm family whose children's names all started with an "L"—can you even think of nine names that start with "L"?). They all seemed to turn out OK. Then again, they were white.

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“When they talk it's like ‘reeba reebba bladula blah bleh.’”

It's true that some Hispanics don't speak English very well (just like some people who are American), and the music they listen to is flat-out awful. They are different than you and me. While they're attempting to make a living in Nebraska, they're trying to not forsake their past while dealing with their future. They could do that by turning the car stereo down a little, but I digress.

Regardless of your color or language you speak, when you go to where you're not from, you're an immigrant—and usually unwanted or treated differently at the least.

In Seattle, people who are Northwest natives like to complain about the influx of immigrants to their area. Black, Middle Eastern, Asian, White: doesn't matter. These immigrants are causing problems—traffic problems, boosting housing prices, raising health-care costs. With any problem in the city, the natives could point to immigration as at least a partial cause, that and God's volcano that will destroy them all one day.

Rufus does his part to complicate things. Instead of trying to change my life to fit in with those with which I'm assimilated, I try to get them to like the things I like and do the things I do. Do you know how hard it is to get someone to go to a rodeo around here or follow college football?

And I struggle to do the things that are commonplace in Seattle, like eat seafood and light your cigars with \$100 bills. I eat meat; I don't eat fish. But when you move to a new place, you need to adapt. You hope people will have patience enough to give you that time to adapt.

I don't think most Mexicans would rather be in Nebraska. As much as I love Nebraska, I can't imagine that folks from closer to the equator are thrilled about fighting through four months of brutal winter just so they can go to a really, really shitty job. They do it for their families. Can you blame them for that?

## 18. THE SUPERSTORE

But first, a story about progress:

*A messenger boy found Mathias at the market and presented him with an invitation, summoning him to the home of his friend Judas Iscariot. When Mathias arrived at the home of Judas, Judas greeted him with open arms and a kiss of exaltation. Mathias had never seen his friend so excited.*

*“Brother Judas, I cannot recall a moment where I’ve seen you as jubilant as this moment right now,” said Mathias. “Is there a reason for this...great goodness! Look at all of these wares!” Mathias said as he glanced around Judas’s abode.*

*“Isn’t it great?” asked Judas.*

*“Where in all of the Roman Empire does one find these wares?”*

*“As you may have heard, a tent collective of epic proportions opened on the north side of the city,” said Judas.*

*“I do not believe I have heard of such a place,” Mathias said.*

*“The merchant has 100 tents, filled with the finest wares from Macedonia, Armenia and beyond!” said Judas.*

*“Is this a fish-shaped bowl that is used for serving fish that I see before me?”*

*“Indeed! Indeed it is, direct from the Euphrates valley.”*

*“And this sandal tree, look at the number of posts for your sandals there are on it,” said Mathias.*

*“This was one of the smaller ones,” said Judas. “You should see the ones that they have there for even bigger families. And I’ve noticed at the merchant that the larger quantity of something that you buy, the lower the price will be.”*

*“That is simply amazing!” said Mathias.*

*“The beauty of it is that unlike the downtown market, which is filled with lepers, thieves and week-old figs, you can always find what you need at this collective, and you find these things for lower prices than the market!”*

*“Why are the prices so low, I wonder?” said Mathias.*

*“For one thing,” said Judas, “they use slaves to do all the work instead of doing the work themselves.”*

*“Very wise business practice,” said Mathias.*

*“Additionally, I’m told that much of the goods and materials are made in Africa and then sent over here on boats,” Judas said*

*“It costs so little to make things there, you know,” said Mathias.*

*“Exactly, so why can’t we, God’s children, be the beneficiaries and live lives of luxury?” asked Judas.*

*“Goodness, is this a tapestry of King David?” asked Mathias.*

*"Indeed," said Judas, "and as you can see its base is a lion's skin. Very high quality pelt."*

*"Wonderful!" said Mathias. "How much did all of this cost you?"*

*"Are you ready for this?" asked Judas.*

*"Yes, please, please tell me."*

*"Only 30 pieces of silver!"*

*"That's it?" asked Mathias. "I can't even buy a slave for that much and you picked up all these wonderful wares!"*

*"It's the greatest place," said Judas. "I wholeheartedly support it and will encourage others to do the same. That place is as good as my word!"*

It's like a dream come true, like you stepped into Willy Wonka's world and didn't even need a golden ticket. In this store, not only can you get deodorant, you can buy a gun, milk and tube socks. In this store, you save both time and money, although you really didn't need to save the time part. In this store, a friendly elderly man or woman greets you with a smile and hello. And if you listen to the Coastal Brain Surgeons, shopping in this store means you're doing your part to ruin society. The store, of course, is Wal-Mart.

## **HICKTIONARY** ★ **Wal-Mart (n.) the store**

Is there a non-government-controlled business that is as hated and loved as Wal-Mart? It is a dream; it is a nightmare. It's everything that's great about this country and everything that's wrong with it.

Before Wal-Mart came to town, we didn't need Wal-Mart. We either made do with what we had or we went without. Now that Wal-Mart's here, we need it to stay, so you Yankee liberals need to stop trying to fuck with it. OK, maybe that's a bit harsh. Too many people tend to see the bad in Wal-Mart, like the slave wages, running every other business out of town, anti-union stance, no decent health coverage for workers, a Wal-Mart smell: Smell is a good place to stop. I tend to see the store as half-full, or at the very least, a domestic disturbance as opposed to the Great Satan. Just like a domestic disturbance, it's not Rufus's place to get in the middle of it. That's somebody else's job.

Rufus was Pimpled Rufus when the Wal-Mart came to Grand Island. The town isn't that small, 40,000 people or so, and Wal-Mart really didn't bring anything new to town. We had grocery

stores that carried non-food items. There were discount stores with plenty of clothes and housewares. But what Wal-Mart had that those other places didn't was a low price, a significantly lower price. Minimum wage at that time was \$3.35 about to be moved up to \$3.80. Needless to say, Pimpled Rufus didn't have a lot of money from working at the Dairy Queen and later the video store. Working at DQ was great, by the way, because of all the hot chicks who came in to lick ice cream cones.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**hot chicks (n.) girls who wouldn't give Rufus, or you for that matter, the time of day**

(I didn't actually see anyone licking ice cream, just for the record. I was too busy making chili dogs so maybe working at DQ was more sticky than erotic. And the women weren't hot, but some did have Midwestern good looks. Actually, most were in their 50s. Actually, most were really in their 70s.)

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Despite the fact that Wal-Mart is a major employer in about every state it's in, hires the disabled, hires the mentally challenged, hires the elderly to stand on their feet all day, hires the people you thought would never ever get a job outside of McDonalds (which is happy Wal-Mart is now below them on the "you can work at [crappy place to work because you're a retard who is 100% unemployable]" hierarchy), people against Wal-Mart try to guilt you into not shopping there.

It's been documented that Wal-Mart doesn't exactly earn the Mother Teresa blessing of approval when it comes to employee health coverage. They've been known to encourage their workers to go on Medicaid for health benefits. They've closed stores rather than face a unionized workforce. Even with that in mind, you're asking an awful lot when you tell my people not to shop there. For the most part, we can't afford not to shop there.

Things are different in your Coastal Sinkholes. There's so much competition and so many stores that offer the same products that Wal-Mart does, there's really no need to go to Wal-Mart. In Seattle proper, there are zero Wal-Mart's. That's right. You won't find a single Wal-Mart in Seattle. You have to go 10 miles outside of Seattle before you hit your first Wal-Mart, and there are only three within 20 miles. There are almost 600,000 people in Seattle

and none of them will ever get to experience Wal-Mart while in their urban cocoon. I met a girl from San Jose who had never been in a Wal-Mart, ever. Rufus almost fainted.

In Grand Island, 40,000 people strong, there are two Wal-Marts. You go into any urban liberal do-gooder area, and you'll find zero Wal-Marts. It's really easy for those who don't have Wal-Marts to throw stones at the store's plexiglass windows.

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In the Midwest, we often judge affordability by our own abilities. Can we make it for cheaper than we can buy it? When Momma was little, her clothes consisted of items her granny made, hand-me-downs from her brothers and a few nice outfits she got each year for Christmas and Easter.

## **HICKTIONARY** ★ **hand-me-down (n.) shit you don't want**

When she was in high school, she made a few of her clothes. At that time, it was more cost-effective to make your own blouses. Today, she can't make her own shirt for \$5. She can't make it for \$10, and she can't make it for \$15. But she can walk into Wal-Mart and buy a decent-enough Chinese-made blouse for very little money. For an extra 50 cents, she can get one with buttons even.

If you can't save money by making your own clothes, at least you can still save money cooking your own meals. That seems like the only way to save cash anymore.

One of the new tricks, er, services grocery stores offer is actually preparing the food for you. In exchange for doing all the prep work for you, they charge you twice as much as the food is worth. (Have you noticed how large grocery stores are now? In the past, you could have had a hole in the wall for your store and had plenty of food people needed. The larger grocery stores get, the larger people get.)

I bring these two staples up because they're the two things my peeps need: food and clothes. And cigarettes. Food, clothes and cigarettes. And a Thermos. Food, clothes, cigarettes and a Thermos. Our minimum wage, which is what people like to pay us, is \$5.15 per hour. That's one pack of smokes or half of a Wal-Mart blouse or 1 pound of zucchini in a Coastal state or I don't know how much of a Thermos but probably not very much. And this is before taxes. If we want to even think about having a

semblance of non-credit-card savings, to have more than \$100 in our account at any time, we HAVE to shop at Wal-Mart. You can't ask us not to do it.



The only thing that can keep us from shopping at Wal-Mart: the price of gas. My Momma lives in Deep Depression, Colorado, and the nearest Wal-Mart to her is two counties away. Despite the 45 miles between her and her Wal-Mart, it was STILL much cheaper for her to drive to Wal-Mart to get what she needed than to buy things in her town. But that was when gas was \$1.40 a gallon. Now at \$3 a gallon, it's finally cheaper for her to shop in her own town than to drive forever to get to the Wal-Mart. That is, until those high gas prices force the local stores to raise their prices...



Wal-Mart sure faces some challenges. Seems like every five years or so there's a real push to "Buy American." (I'm not sure if much of anything sold in Wal-Mart is made in America.) Their prices don't seem to be as low as they used to be. People are moving away from Wal-Mart's rural bread and butter. The price of gas has to be having an affect on people's buying power, or lack thereof. More and more people are buying their junk off the Internet, whatever that is.

That being said, you cannot ask us to stop shopping there. Because we don't make any money, we can't shop anywhere else. As long as we have a need, and there's a Wal-Mart within 60 miles, we will go there to fulfill our need.

## 19. THE THIRD-LARGEST CITY IN NEBRASKA

But first, a story about friendship:

Darryl packed up some clothes, grabbed his yellow lab, hopped in his pickup and headed south toward Houston to find some work for the winter where the weather was a little warmer than windswept Nebraska. That and the fact that he told his boss to go fuck himself last Friday.

He cruised down Highway 77, singing along to his cassette tapes of the Eagles, Doobie Brothers and Bob Seger. Every once in a while, his lab would shift its sleeping position in the passenger's seat, moving his face to or away from the heater vent at any given moment.

As he got his "Peaceful Easy Feeling" on as he was driving over a small hill south of Oklahoma City, Darryl's truck shook violently, and he pulled over. He got out of his truck to see if his tire was flat, and as he suspected, it was. After swearing at the tire for a while, he pulled his jack from his toolbox and started raising his truck to replace the tire with his spare.

He had just taken the flat off when he heard a rumble. A big 18-wheeler was barreling up the hill. Darryl wondered if he had pulled over far enough onto the shoulder. He hadn't. Darryl's truck caught the semi driver by surprise. The big rig didn't have enough time to move away from the shoulder and clipped the back end of Darryl's truck, flipping his truck on its side and pinning Darryl's lower body beneath it.

The semi driver pulled over and raced to the pickup to see if anyone was hurt. Darryl couldn't feel his legs.

"Oh God! Oh God! I'm so sorry," said the semi driver. "I didn't see you! My radio's broke, so I'm gonna go for help, mister!"

Darryl, fully conscious and in incredible pain, stared at the mid-sized man who had a neatly trimmed moustache. The man wore cowboy boots and blue jeans. Then, a t-shirt that screamed the glory of the Oklahoma Sooners college football team caught Darryl's eye.

"No, actually, I'm OK," Darryl grunted. "It's not that bad."

"What!"

"I'll be fine. You just go ahead. See, I'm feeling much better already," Darryl said as tears streamed down his face. "I've been through worse."

"Oh my God! You're delusional! You hold on mister, I'll be right back," the man said as he ran toward his semi.

"No...bah," Darryl said quietly as the man started his semi and went for help. Darryl needed to get out of this situation and quick. His lab, Rusty, started licking his face. "Rusty, Rusty, pull my shoulders, boy, pull my shoulders." The dog continued to lick his face. "Rusty, hop in the truck,

*get my hunting knife and bring it to me so I can cut off my legs." The dog started chasing its tail. "Rusty, damn it, listen, this is important! Rusty, when that guy comes back, bite his neck and chomp through it. Bite him hard!" The dog spotted a bird and chased it to the nearby tree.*

*The semi driver came back with a police officer and an ambulance could be heard racing behind them. "Now's your chance Rusty...Russ? ... Shit!" Darryl said as he watched his dog jump over and over and over to try to hop up the tree. Help, courtesy of the semi driver, was just seconds away. Darryl knew there was only one thing to do. He died.*

No matter where a baby is born in this country, one could surmise that it wants to be a Nebraskan: It has a big head and is red all over. Of course it wants to be a Nebraskan because it knows, even in its mother's womb, that it wants to be a part of the greatest college football team that this world has ever seen: The Nebraska Cornhuskers—Big Red.

Unbeknownst to most expectant mothers, that pounding they'd been passing off as a baby "kicking" has been something totally different. The baby is in fact throwing the placenta in a quest to get a head start in becoming the most prolific passing quarterback the Nebraska Cornhuskers have ever seen. The nice thing about using the placenta is that it will always come back to you after you throw it.

Rufus knew I was a Husker fan from the moment the liberals want you to think I wasn't alive. I can't say that I remember a lot from my time in the womb, but I do know this: There's no way we should have been shut out 27-0 at Oklahoma when I was gestating during my second trimester in 1973. The refs only blew, like, a million calls. If I could see a holding penalty from inside the womb, the refs sure as hell should have seen it on the field. That was the last time Nebraska was shut out at home, and Rufus was more or less alive to remember it.

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I'm not saying that we are fanatic about football in Nebraska, but I'd like to show you some population figures from 2005:

Omaha	414,521
Lincoln	239,213
Memorial Stadium	81,067
Bellevue	47,334
Grand Island	44,546

On game day, Memorial Stadium, where the Nebraska Cornhuskers play, becomes the third largest city in Nebraska, by a long ways. People come from all over, from the family farm to the Omaha downtown apartments, to create this city, this utopia, jammed into a stadium – which has been jammed to capacity since October 20, 1962, the last time the stadium failed to sell out all its tickets. And when we get to where the stadium is, the tailgating begins.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **tailgate (n.) the act of consuming large quantities of alcohol between the hours of 5 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on given Saturdays and within 30 to 600 miles of the third-largest city in Nebraska**

To be a Nebraska fan also requires you to be the most loyal, stubborn bastards that God put on this Earth. Husker fans stay loyal through thick and thin, through undefeated seasons and wasted one- and two-loss seasons, through the citations of merit for good play to the citations given out because a player assaults his or someone else's girlfriend.

**HICKTIONARY** ★ **10-34 (n.) 1. what Upper Nebraskans think is the name of a play called by the Nebraska football team 2. what Lower Nebraskans and Cornhusker players know as police code for a disturbance.**

Those detractors of the program see the annual initiation rite of getting arrested as an example of a runaway program and a reflection on the people of the state of Nebraska as violent imbeciles. To set the record straight: most of the players who get arrested are not from Nebraska. If a Nebraska boy would get in trouble with the law, the cops would be the least of his worries compared to when his family knocks the living crap out of him.

The reason why the people of Nebraska tolerate all the violent actions stemming from the players' off-field activities is because they want to win, every game, every year.

### **Things To Do In Nebraska When You're Alive**

- 1) Drink
  - 2) Hunt
  - 3) Eat
  - 4) Fuck
  - 5) Cheer on the Huskers
- \*Not necessarily in this order

It may be a simple existence, but we never have to pay \$30 for parking anywhere.

How much do we love the Nebraska Cornhuskers? We elected the coach, Tom Osborne, to be our man from the 3rd District (everywhere but Omaha and Lincoln, basically) in the U.S. House of Representatives. To be fair, John Ashcroft could have run in Nebraska's 3rd District and won.

To Dr. Tom's credit, he voted exactly as his party and constituency would have him vote: Republican. In his first term, he backed the president 88% of the time and the party more than 90%. His winning percentage at Nebraska was only 83.6%, so maybe he made the right career move.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**Republican (n.) person who upholds the values of the people of Nebraska; sometimes runs as a Democrat.**

Nebraskans don't have a lot of money, but usually we don't need a lot. In my first job at a newspaper, I grossed \$280 a week. A roommate and I split a house in a town of 3,500 people, which made us targets for rumors involving homosexuality, and we each paid \$150 a month in rent. The heating and cooling bills sometimes exceeded \$150 a month, but all in all, we did have a lot of money, for Nebraska, with at least \$100 left over after booze, food, and ammunition costs.

The only time where we really need money like normal people need money is when we want to take a vacation.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**vacation (n.) a trip you save up for and take in late December/early January to see a Nebraska football game**

Football people outside Nebraska know this, and they know it's a way to make a couple bucks off these hicks draped in the school colors of scarlet and cream. Folks in South Bend, Indiana, the home of Notre Dame, made a killing off my brothers and sisters on September 9, 2000.

It was a date that the people of Nebraska had circled in coal on their calendars. The beloved chosen ones, the Cornhuskers, traveled to play the posers, the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. What became bigger than the game itself was the question of

whether the Notre Dame faithful would keep their tickets to this epic game or be tempted by the green bills we clutched in our dirty hands and sell their tickets to us.

Notre Dame fans came out for the game with as much ferocity as the Iraqi Republican Guard. It turned out that the residents of South Bend intended to cash in on these straw-hat wearing, corn-cob-pipe smoking, overalled dirt farmers.

## HICKTIONARY ★

**Judas (n.) A Notre Dame ticket holder who sells his ticket v. Nebraska for upward of \$1,000**

Thirty pieces of silver. A thousand dollars. What's the difference? This house that Knute Rockne built. The Golden Domers. Win One For The Gipper. The Four Horsemen. Touchdown Jesus. This was Notre Dame football. Joe Theismann, Paul Hornung and Joe freaking Montana set South Bend ablaze, and how did the fans of the richest football tradition in America repay these icons? Their entire history sold for 30 pieces of silver on that fateful day.

Legend has it that in 1925 Rockne once stood on a hotel balcony in Lincoln and told the Husker faithful within earshot:

**Rocknese:** "We are here to lick you!"

**Lower Nebraskese translation:** "Come and get your whoopin'."

**Coastal translation:** "Want some fun tonight, Baby? How much you got?"

(Notre Dame lost that game 17-0.)

One of the most storied coaches in the history of football comes into Lincoln, offers to lick someone, anyone, and how do you Notre Dame fans repay his legacy? Irish eyes were smiling with greenbacks.

Notre Dame allotted 4,000 tickets for Husker fans to buy. However, estimates were that more than 25,000 Nebraska fans, clad in a vicious red, filled Notre Dame Stadium and its 80,000 capacity. More than 5 million households saw the pictures from the blimp. The aerial footage told the story. Beautiful if you're a Nebraska fan, disgusting if your heart bleeds for the Irish. No. 1-ranked Nebraska won that game in overtime, 27-24.

Irish Athletic Director Kevin White said the following to the Associated Liberal Press:

**White:** “When I was on the field before the game I wish I was color blind. Disappointing, very disappointing.”

**Lower Nebraskese translation:** “Aw shit.”

Now, \$1,000 is a lot of money to somebody in Nebraska, not to mention that the family mule is not going to make it all the way to Indiana. We Nebraskans should have been the ones selling big to Notre Dame fans who wanted to invade our stadium when the two teams met the next year in Lincoln.

## HICKTIONARY ☆

**Husker fan (n.) during a divorce proceeding, the one who forsakes everything for the season tickets**

September 8, 2001: The University of Nebraska, by mutual agreement with Notre Dame, allotted 4,000 tickets to the football game in Nebraska to Notre Dame fans. Did we sell out for some much-needed money?

The sea of red was in full force at Memorial Stadium that day as Jesus’ football team walked over Notre Dame 27-10. The game itself really didn’t matter as much as seeing the colors of the crowd did. We would not sell out to the Irish green. We would not sell out the thing we hold most dear so that we could pay our electric bill.

So, the fan support at the game September 8 did us proud. It was that rare moment where the dirt farmer, the liberal hippie in Lincoln, the urbanite in Omaha, the working man and the meth addict could set aside our prejudices toward each other and come together as one state, under God, for the purpose of promoting God’s team, the Nebraska Cornhuskers.

Of course, three days later two airplanes flew into a couple of buildings in New York. You might have heard about that. So, the victory celebration was pretty short lived.

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To be honest, though, Nebraska Football just hasn’t been the same since 1996 when the Big 8 conference was dissolved and Texas teams were messed with to form the Big XII (which I think means 12).

All my life, the culmination of living through a year of poverty and God’s Wrath was the matchup with Oklahoma for what almost always was the Big 8 title. We hated Oklahoma

(and they're not even a border state to Nebraska). We hated their Wishbone offense. We hated their dumb schooner that would always be pulled onto the field, and we hated that we would occasionally lose to them. As the famous bumper sticker reads, "My favorite teams are Nebraska and whoever is playing Oklahoma."

But the thing is, although Nebraskans claimed a rivalry on the grandest scale with Oklahoma, Nebraska was never REALLY Oklahoma's rival. Texas is Oklahoma's rival. So, when Nebraska stops playing Oklahoma every year, the "rivalry" dies – as does a little bit of ourselves. It really was a messy divorce and they took the kids with them.

Not only did Nebraska stop having a main rival, the team started doing the unthinkable: Losing more than one game in a year, getting beaten by teams we had been taking to the woodshed for scores of years, stopped having so many arrests. We've become an unshaven, beer-gut-having, Oprah-watching, Hank-Williams-listening, Prozac-gobbling, sweatpants-wearing mess. What, really, is the point of going on? Our rival has left us, and outside of the whitewashing of Notre Dame, we've been wandering like ghosts through the football landscape for years.

Nebraska playing Oklahoma now is like bumping into your ex-wife at the supermarket or strip club.

So what do we do now that we've had to cross football off of our proverbial "Things To Do In Nebraska When You're Alive" list? What do you do when the only thing you've ever really been trained to love is gone?

## 20. LONGING

Rufus isn't sure what it is about the state—whether it's a state of happiness, a state of denial, a state of confusion—that makes a person miss Nebraska. Odds are, it's Stockholm syndrome.

It might be the people and their values; it might be the land. (It's certainly not the weather.) Don't be surprised that the people of Nebraska would drink the state's proverbial Kool-Aid when we literally invented it. The University of Nebraska fight song, "Dear Old Nebraska U," details this Crying-Game-like attraction, with lyrics that could only come from the 1920s.

### **Dear Old Nebraska U**

There is no place like Nebraska  
Dear old Nebraska U.  
Where the girls are the fairest,  
The boys are the squarest,  
Of any old school that I knew.  
There is no place like Nebraska,  
Where they're all true blue.  
We'll all stick together,  
In all kinds of weather,  
For Dear old Nebraska U!

This song was written in the early 1920s by two ROTCs attending a summer camp in Minnesota. If you've ever seen the mosquitoes in Minnesota in the summer, you would understand why they wanted to get back to Nebraska. Our mosquitoes are strong in spirit, determined and full of life; their mosquitoes look like they've been sucking off roided-up athletes.

The tune debuted at a football game against Oklahoma in 1923. We won that game 24-0 so I guess the song stuck. Eighty-odd years later, the lyrics mostly work. I'm not sure what "squarest" meant in the 1920s. Rufus doubts it meant "uncool," but maybe the songwriters were trying to throw people off track and get all the girls for themselves by committing a mortal sin and saying, "We're from South Dakota; those Nebraska boys are squares. We'll totally go all the way with you."

“Da-dum da da-dum da daaa-da.” That’s pretty much how Little Rufus knew the Nebraska fight song for his first 14 years. I had no idea the words were “There is no place like Nebraska.” If you took a poll in the state, my guess would be that less than 1-in-5 people would actually know the first line of lyrics to that song. We may not know the words, but we know how that song goes because we hear it after every touchdown.

One day while Pimpled Rufus was sitting in band class, a fellow student started playing that line on her saxophone. She paused and asked me if I knew the words. I didn’t. So she quietly sang the lyrics to me: “Hold-on to that-ball you Niiii-ger.” She was pretty happy with herself. There was little chance she came up with that herself as she was one of the least creative people Rufus had ever met. She probably heard it from her parents, maybe an uncle, maybe from the old man at the filling station where she’d go to for all her hot dogs. Somebody thought they were being funny because a) black people are called niggers when no black people are around, b) a lot of black people play running back for Nebraska, and c) Nebraska running backs are notorious for fumbling the football.

If those racist-wannabees who made up that lyric knew what the actual lyric was, they would never—and I mean NE-VER—defile that lyric with a racist slur. There’s too much pride in the state; too much belief that there is no place like Nebraska to tarnish such a sentiment with racism toward a group of people who, as it turns out, are playing football, trying to win, so that the people of the state could feel even more pride in their school and state.

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Sometimes when I listen to other people living in the state, I wonder, “What really are our values?” The liberal media misleads people by twisting Midwestern values to mean religious values. Anti-abortion sentiment really isn’t a Midwestern value. Of course, there’s the religious sect that is vehemently opposed to abortion, but if pro-life really was a Midwestern value, Midwestern states wouldn’t be on par with other states when it comes to number of abortions performed per year per capita. Why would the University of Nebraska be one of the leaders in stem-cell research?

People, especially those on the Coasts, see Midwestern values as pro-life, pro-war, go to church, eat a lot of food, carry around

guns, ride horses to work and dress in gunny sacks. We're not anti- any of those things for the most part, but those things don't define us. Our values are a much less polarizing.

We value smiling. We do it a lot, even if it's fake. We wave to people in other cars as they're driving by. We value honesty, unless the truth hurts. Then we value you letting us down easy. Hard work is important to us, but it doesn't have to be hard labor. We know the people at the department of motor vehicles work hard, and we respect that, even if we hate them with a passion. We try to look people in the eye whenever we can. We value the resilient nature of our bodies. In fact, we won't go to a doctor unless our baby is involved, we can't move a body part or we feel literally near death. This is a good thing since soon there won't be any doctors around in most of the state. Insurance, no insurance, doesn't matter. Whatever makes us sick, sleep, chicken soup, 7-Up, aspirin, a drawing from your kid, a kiss and a shitload of NyQuil can fix it. If those things don't work, drink whisky. We value being at least a tad embarrassed about sleeping with someone you know you're not supposed to be sleeping with. But we have enough courage to do it again, and again if necessary, even if it's our spouse. We're the kind of people who will stop to help when your car dies on the side of the road, unless we're too busy. We're really good at doing the little things that help make living life easier.

Maybe you get this on the Coasts, but Rufus reckons that you don't, probably because there are a lot of people. How smiley can you pretend to be when thousands of people live within a square mile of you? Besides, if you smile or look at someone, they might actually talk to you.

Rufus misses living in a land that isn't so "me centric," a place where people actually care about the people they meet, even if the meeting is for a split second.



Readership: "Excuse me."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.:** "You're interrupting my closing monologue?"

Butter Man: "Yes, sorry."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.:** "Well, that's all right, I guess. What do you got?"

Butter Man: "How can you care for someone you don't know?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.:** "It's becoming harder every day."



The sad part about moving away from your home is that you lose your innocence. You see what real poor people live like. You find out how important money is. You actually have to watch your back, lock your car doors. You see young folks who would rather beg you for money than work. When everything comes together—traffic, beggars, bills, crime—you see the people affected by this lose a very important value: patience. It's hard, it's very hard, to care about people who have no patience for you, for people who on the outer shell don't want to be cared for. It sounds silly, and it's hard for Rufus to believe and sad to accept. People, more and more, don't want to be cared for. They think they're better off alone.

That's why I long for home.

There is no place like Nebraska, where the boys are the squarest and girls are the fairest, where a hard-day's work means a good-day's pay, where your kids wait for you every night with their eyes glowing that their mommy and daddy are home, where people are brought up to care for one another. There are good people all over the world, even in Missouri (Rufus just threw up a little in his mouth as I wrote that, by the way), but it's rare that you'll find so many in one place.



Captain Obvious: "I see."

Butter From Another Mother: "Excuse me, again."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Yessir?"**

Butter From Another Mother: "Is there any reason why you saved all these glowing sentiments about your people for the end of the book?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "How do you mean?"**

Mr. Answer Man: "Seems to me like something you'd want to go toward the front is all."

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Well sir, the folks in my state have a tendency to peek at the last chapter to see how a book ends; that way we know if it's worth reading."**

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Well, is it?"**

Critic: "I—"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "You hear that? It's the tornado siren!"**

Scaredy Cat: "Oh my God! What do I do?"

**Rufus "Junior" Hickman Jr.: "Follow me..."**



# HICKTIONARY

**10-34** (n.) 1. what Upper Nebraskans think is the name of a play called by the Nebraska football team 2. what Lower Nebraskans and Cornhusker players know as police code for a disturbance

**accent** (n.) 1. a funny way of talking 2. an incredibly pungent smell

**accident** (n.) something other people are supposed to own up to but to which you are immune

**animal behaviorist** (n.) one who shares the same attributes as a meteorologist

**anonymous** (adj.) a word used to con you into doing something you wouldn't normally do, usually followed by a big bite in your ass

**axiom** (v.) to pose a question to someone

**bailout** (v.) the act of gettin' all the damn water out of my basement

**bank** (n.) the alternative to hiding your money, it's a place where other people make money off of your money and you only get the money you originally put in it (see how they try to confuse you with their policies?)

**bankruptcy** (n.) small-scale lottery you win once every seven years

**basenji** (n.) proof positive that God has experimented with drugs

**blog** (n.) a cry for help

**cheap beer** (n.) tasty beer sold in large quantities

**chicken wire** (n.) tightly knit fencing that country music acts like to sing behind

**church** (n.) 1. a place of worship 2. a popular, weekly, planned pep rally from August to January 5 (see: Memorial Stadium)

**clincher** (n.) something you wish you had when the living shit comes calling

**coincidence** (n.) an action that people in Nebraska are involved in on a daily basis

**communicable** (adj.) descriptor for someone who looks like they could become a Communist

**cop** (n.) 1. a form that wastes space in the atmospheric realm and its sole purpose is having it out for you 2. an onomatopoeic command signaling to run

**cornfield** (n.) 1. cropland found in Nebraska in which farmers grow all varieties of corn 2. a place where you will rarely find a squirrel

**cosmetologist** (n.) Russians who landed on the moon and we still hate them

**cow** (n.) 1. a bovine animal that does not sleep standing up 2. a female your sister or mother hates

**decoy** (n.) 1. fake animals used to trick real animals into taking a closer look in the hopes of getting some tail 2. people who are a little shy but you can tell there's a devil inside

**demon worship** (n.) rooting for Oklahoma football

**dinner** (n.) your third meal of the day, followed by supper

**dissent** (n.) a smell coming from the person standing next to you or most likely yourself

**ditch** (n.) a hole you don't want to be in

**ditch digger** (n.) a mythical occupation that you'd rather do than your current job at certain given moments

**ditchweed** (n.) 1. plant life that grows well in gravel-packed dirt 2. wild marijuana that's as likely to get you high as listening to an ABBA record will

**double negative** (n.) two bad things that happen to good people

**duck blind** (n.) 1. a seating area, camouflaged with various weeds, trees and vegetation, situated next to a pond in which hunters hide out and wait for ducks to come to the water in order to shoot them for sport 2. an area to get away from your wife

**duck call** (n.) a device that emits the sound of a cat dying in a wood chipper

**encourage** (v.) support someone in their decision to do something you want them to do, and if they refuse you have the right to become physically violent with them

**entertainment** (n.) an activity to accompany beer drinking

**failure** (n) something we deal with every single day of our life [See: children]

**fear** (n.) a gateway emotion to violence, drinking and voting Republican

**fingernail clippers** (n) a device used in the MacGyver television series to help create a power generator to start a makeshift drill which made a hole in handcuffs allowing MacGyver to escape his captivity [See: teeth]

**French** (n) a group of people in Europe who hate freedom but love cancer

**gravel road** (n.) a path, covered with rocks. Driving on it most closely resembles driving on shifting, rocky quicksand. After hard rains, these roads show signs of erosion, especially in the middle

**hand-me-down** (n.) shit you don't want

**HBO** (n.) a television channel ranked by 11-year-olds as the number-one reason why they know there is a God

**health code** (n.) nonverbal communication, such as beating your chest or grasping your throat, meant to indicate you've about to die

**Homestead Act** (n.) a genocidal plot in 1862 that failed when the Coastal Yankee government underestimated how much worse things were in Europe and the inner cities than the American West

**hot chicks** (n.) girls who wouldn't give Rufus, or you for that matter, the time of day

**humility** (n.) definition unknown

**hunting** (n.) an activity men use to subtly torture young boys

**Husker fan** (n.) during a divorce proceeding, the one who forsakes everything for the season tickets

**individualism** (n.) conformity on your terms

**innocuous** (n.) the act of getting someone pregnant

**Jell-O** (n.) a precious monetary unit used in exchange of goods and services in South Dakota

**Judas** (n.) a Notre Dame ticket holder who sells his ticket v. Nebraska for upward of \$1,000

**kegger** (n) a weekly event where you drink until you puke, are naked or both

**Labrador retriever** (n.) man's best friend, sometimes man's only friend, that is the dumbest dog ever but incredibly loyal (see: Rufus)

**lighter** (n) a device used to set things from paper to carpet to fabric to people on fire

**limit** (n.) a dare challenging your manhood and rational thought process

**living shit** (n.) fecal mater that develops a mind of its own and gets a little jumpy in certain circumstances

**loser** (n.) a secret winner, according to your mom

**losing streak** (n.) that brown stain your woman, or most likely mom, finds in your underwear

**love** (v.) an unconditional affection, often shown through violence or a "lesson learned," that you have for another person who better show that emotion back to you if they don't want to be hated

**male ponytail** (n.) a suicide note affixed to your scalp

**memory** (n) the ability to recall events with varying degrees of accuracy depending on how the event related to you

**metal band** (n) a device used in Coastal areas to straighten teeth over an extended period of time

**meteorologist** (n.) 1. a liar 2. someone who has no idea what he or she is talking about 3. anal-retentive prophet who preaches for money

**meth lab** (n.) an abandoned farmhouse, a barn or your house that is used to produce small quantities of the drug crystal methamphetamine. The structure eventually burns down in an expected mishap

**Midwestern good looks** (n.) a trait denoting a person as generally unattractive but if you were stuck in the Midwest you would bang this person in a heartbeat

**mysophobia** (n.) "I am afraid"

**Nebraska** (n.) a place that is not near you

**point to the story** (n.) a topic that Nebraskans are in no rush to get to

**problem** (n.) a minor detail in the grand scheme of things blown up by the liberal media and embraced by conservative activists

**process [meat]** (v.) seriously, you don't want to know

**protégé** (n) similar to résumé, a word we don't know because it's not written in English you commie

**punishment** (n.) a test to make sure you're paying attention

**rare steak** (n.) a barely cooked strip of beef that makes a moo sound when you cut into it and makes you stronger if it doesn't kill you

**redneck** (adj.) an attribute given to people in the Midwest who aren't as sophisticated as those on the Coasts (n.) one of your relatives or possibly you

**reform** (v.) something you go through or that happens to you to make rich people feel safer

**Republican** (n.) person who upholds the values of the people of Nebraska; sometimes runs as a Democrat

**resourceful** (n.) poor [See: cheap]

**retard** (n.) once who makes the decision to be a complete jackass

**reward** (n.) a nugget thrown your way for persevering for someone else

**rite of passage** (n.) a pass to the tight end in a situation where everyone thought the team was going to run the ball during a University of Nebraska football game

**Rocky Mountain Oyster** (n.) portrayed as a Midwestern aphrodisiac, this inside joke of foods is found on menus in order to haze outsiders

**savings account** (n.) a mythical holding place where you would actually earn money (called interest) for letting the bank hold your money

**scream** (v.) the sound you make when you're too scared to piss your pants

**seceding** (v.) 1. doing very well at something 2. separating Richardson County from your state

**self-esteem** (n.) the vapors that rise from the ground when you piss on a very cold night

**sequin** (n.) the order of events in which you put crappy, reflective dots on your clothes and transform yourself into an idiot

**skip tracer** (n.) someone who looks for "missing" people but if not for this job, this someone would be one of the missing

**slop** (v.) the act of tossing food into a trough for pigs and Guantanamo detainees

**snipe** (n.) a mythical creature of varied size often hunted with a beer, a shovel and a pellet gun (v.) to shoot a person's ass with a pellet gun

**sport** (n.) an event where one tries to prove he is a man

**statistics** (n.) some numbers that mean something opposite of what you think they should mean

**storm chaser** (n.) bored, egoistic idiot with a death wish who only gets a rush when pushed to the brink of death or when ingesting methamphetamines or both

**subterfuge** (v.) double-flushing the toilet to make sure all traces of evidence are banished

**subway** (n.) a place where they make sandwiches

**tailgate** (n.) the act of consuming large quantities of alcohol between the hours of 5 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on given Saturdays and within 30 to 300 miles of the third-largest city in Nebraska

**Tennessee fat** (n.) the point of obesity at which even your parents start to distance themselves from you

**THC** (n.) although not a vitamin, per se, Rufus still recommends getting your 100% daily dose along with C, B12 and zinc ("All I need is my one-hitter and One-A-Day and I'm going strong all day long." Suggested slogan still pending approval, or even a response, really, from Wyeth Consumer Healthcare)

**tornado** (n.) a destructive mass of wind that, at a moment's notice, can destroy everything you have or have worked for (see: politician)

**tramp** (n.) one of the most popular people in town with enough support to defeat John Ashcroft in an election

**Twitter** (n.) a social networking method that lets you let everyone who gives two shits know what you're doing at any moment during your life

**twitter** (v.) that last sound your motivation in life makes before it dies  
**unfuckable** (adj.) being undesirable for sexual intercourse until your prospective partner reaches a 0.12 blood-alcohol level

**vacation** (n.) a trip you save up for and take in late December/early January to see a Nebraska football game.

**vote** (n.) a tally used to make a decision (v.) an action in which you choose one item over the other (n.) something that is totally wasted in Missouri and Florida.

**wake** (n.) an impromptu family reunion

**Wal-Mart** (n.) the store

**wallet** (n.) a small leather pouch that you use to hold your pictures, video club membership cards, receipts and expired coupons and when one opens it up, one usually cries

**weather** (n.) a form of punishment afflicted on you for the sin you bathe yourself in in everyday life

**wine** (n.) a potent drink made from something, sometimes grapes (v.) the act of talking about the weather

**wood pile** (n.) a blue-collar ladder

**zucchini** (n.) a gourd confused with gold by those infected with Coastal Geography