



THE PARTIES ARE ADVISED TO CHILL

- Mattel v. MCA Records, 296 F.3d 894 (9th Cir. 2002)

SYSTEMS VS THE SYSTEM

By Placid Dingo

One of the most common expressions of frustration against the general trend of extremely horrible people doing extremely horrible things and making extremely large amounts of money as a result, is to rail against 'the system', often with phrases such as 'the system is corrupt', 'crush the system', 'f- the system' and so on. I have a feeling that this language, and the thought that accompanies it is tragically misguided, and I'm going to try to explain why here.

A good metaphor evokes images that help to make it easy to understand a concept. One metaphor used in the Discordian work 'Black Iron Prison' makes liberal use of the metaphor 'the machine.' In this metaphor we are all part of the machine; one cannot 'fight' the machine because we are the very cogs and gears that make it. Any attempt at change antagonistic to the machine will either be eliminated, subverted or accommodated cleanly.

For some reason, the metaphor of 'the system' doesn't hold the same nuance. We talk of the system almost as though it were on one side of the world and we were on the other, when of course, that is not true. Political hegemony is upheld by people WE vote for. The BP disaster saw the spill of oil WE needed for our cars, and globalization is fueled by our participation in the global economy; at any level.

Let's stretch the system metaphor. 'The system' is a name given to a collection (occultists might say 'an EGREGORE') of smaller systems that link up together. These systems are in constant flux. We are a component of the system, and the system is a part of us (we both influence and are influenced by Microsystems that make up The System).

We're not really going to deal with The System any more. We're going to talk about systems in general.

I personally have grown to dislike the idea of Random Acts of Kindness.

Why?

Because the things that are making the world worse, generally, are not random, but systematic.

Exploitation of the world's poor is possible BECAUSE it's done in the same way, day after day. Successes that cannot be made systematic are not meaningful. What I'm suggesting is a way of thinking of 'systems' as the tools for change, rather than 'fighting The System' as a method of change.

What sort of systems can or have produced change? Vegetarianism or Veganism present one example. World Heritage, Environmental Regulations, Animal Welfare and changes in marriage law are good examples for the same reason above; they are systematic changes, they have had an effect yesterday, are effective today, and will meet with success tomorrow. Compare this to any of the attempts by Adbusters to subvert or destroy Capitalism. A mighty struggle may be an exciting narrative, but it is not generally likely to get results.

Again, if metaphors can shape the thinking behind our action, maybe we need to lose the idea of 'fighting a battle' and expand on the concept of 'building a village'.

Counter-culture belongs to the first category, the battle allegory. It is parasitic, a reaction against the 'mainstream'. Instead of a focus on counterculture we should focus on 'culture,' building alternatives instead of struggling against the existing culture or system.

If you just skimmed it, here's the main idea;

The System is actually a collection of interrelated competing systems. If we want to cause change we should focus on supporting or building systems that can thrive within The System, thereby causing positive change.

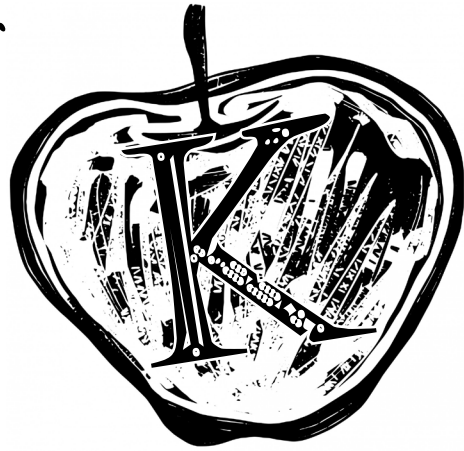


"FOR EVERY LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD, THERE'S 100 LITTLE ENGINES THAT COULDN'T, ALL OF WHOM ROLLED BACKWARDS DOWN THE HILL UNCONTROLLABLY, CRASHING AT THE BOTTOM AND SPILLING CARGO AND PASSENGERS ALL OVER THE LANDSCAPE LIKE GORY PILES OF SILLY STRING. FAILURE IS ALWAYS AN OPTION, EVEN WHEN IT'S NOT AN OPTION."

- TUCSON CODEX, 7:28

BLESSED *are the* TROUBLE MAKERS

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Have you heard of the Retail Cabal? It's every interesting person that works a boring retail job and made it into a living shrine to Our Lady Discord. When I worked for Lord Tayloron, I dedicated myself to writing FNORD on every single bill I could get my hands on. (FNORD YOUR ONES!) At a critical moment in an unrelated story, I'd get a FNORDed five-dollar bill as change. The handwriting was foreign, and there was no moustache on Washington, so it clearly wasn't mine. If you love your weirdness, let it go. It'll come back five fold.



Cease and desist?
Who do these assholes think they are?
I'd sooner desist breathing!

* Bitch *

Your enemy will not challenge you.

Your enemy appreciates your complacency, your arrogance and self-involvement.

Your enemy does not want you to think.

Your enemy wants you to burrow deeper into the comforts of echo chambers, of sub-sub-cultures and entertainment, fantasy and other self-inflicted wounds.

Your enemy does not want you to reexamine your beliefs.

Your enemy wants you to SHUT UP
But it will settle for you screeching constantly about
ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING BUT
the problem.

Your enemy loves it when you get butthurt.

You think your friends should be the ones who treat you nicely and never make you uncomfortable, but

THOSE ARE NOT FRIENDS.

It's not that the world doesn't understand me. I am not sixteen and this is not shitty goth poetry night. Whether or not anyone can truly communicate their "deep inner life" is inconsequential to the problem at hand. When people try to whitewash me, especially people who are not strangers, I am terrified that they are taking away something precious from me. That somehow, if they remove my awareness of the wrongs I've done, I will be damned. They point out all the good that I've done, or make blanket statements about the inherent worth of life and humanity and it's all the wrong thing.

*T*hey tell me I will be okay, that I am okay. That there is such a thing as "good enough." Like empathy makes me incapable of malice or failure. Like there's some magical amount of not terrible that will save me. Like if I do enough good in the world it will make up for the bad. Like someone can do that calculus and my heart will be lighter than the feather.

I left catholicism when I was young, but I still have that running tab of all the bad things I've done and am continuing to do. I had to accept myself as a terrible person, not throw myself before a god I abandoned, but to take stock myself and accept who I was. If I pretended that I was "good enough" then I could lie to myself about being saved anyway. That I could still get a pass to the magical sky castle without all the churchiness. But that wouldn't really be leaving, now would it? I still would have one foot in the door, still convinced I would receive all the benefits from a lifetime of faith without doing the hard part. They could have sucked me back in.

I'm gone. I'm not saved. I'm not going to party with you after we all rot. Whatever happens, I am on a different trajectory now. I don't need your god or any god to come down and forgive me for my sins anymore. They are my sins. They are my weight. Jesus can carry everybody else, I'm gonna do me. And leaving broke more hearts and added more weight and I literally do not give a fuck because it's what I needed to save myself. I am here, I am breathing. That's enough.

I'm not coming back. I'm okay with being terrible.



On Being Terrible



Sometimes I feel the need to demonstrate to people what a terrible person I am. More often than not, their response is to downplay my awfulness. "You're not that bad!" "You're really a kind person, I can tell."

First off, if you just met me you can't tell you're just guessing, and you're guessing is disproportionately informed by the fact that I am female and passably conventionally attractive, which is bullshit because women are completely capable of being evil and so are pretty people but you don't even know what the halo effect is or why it's the only thing relevant to the garbage streaming out of your mouth. "You don't look like a terrorist" shut the fuck up you ignorant twit.

But sometimes it comes from a person who knows me at least well enough that I can't shrug off their attempts at comforting me with wikipedia references, and it bugs me more. Clearly you don't know me all that well, if you're still arguing that I'm a nice person. But [REDACTED], you care about people and stuff! Like that's some kind of measure of goodness, like it negates the bad things that live in my head that are still me whether you call them "demons" or "depression" or "brain weasels." Still me. Still my responsibility. I am not so broken that I cannot be bad.

And I wonder why it bothers me so much that people don't believe that I'm terrible, and why they feel the need to assure me that I'm not. And I think it comes down to religion. Because I know I'm terrible. I can catalog for you every time I have been needlessly cruel to someone, every time I was manipulative, every time I didn't give a shit, or enough of a shit, about things that mattered. All the things I failed to do. It's there and it's real and don't you dare try to pretend that none of that mattered because I did that. It's mine. It belongs to me. It may not be pretty or nice or even not-terrible, but it's all that I have. It's my shitty life and you can't take it away from me for editing and rewrites.

They are cabbages and they are tricking you into putting on a uniform and turning off your brain before those dangerous thoughts in your head infect someone else. Your friends are the ones who tell you that you're acting like a fucking moron. Your friends know every flavor of bullshit you're selling and remind you not to eat the menu while you're at it. Sometimes, your friends are

* NOT NICE AT ALL *

Because the world isn't nice, babycakes. And you, you who have chosen to take on the most powerful people in the world specifically because they are too powerful, you crumple at the slightest criticism? You who should be embracing every moment of battle experience before the big fight, you let your identity override your mission? You, who should be terrible and awesome, who should eat and shit hate like a goddamned aphid, absorbing so little into yourself that the output could be bottled for resale, you whimper at cusses?

Did you not get the memo? We're the bad guys. Good guys do as their told and toe the line and gulp down propaganda like greedy orphans and ask for more. Good guys sit down and shut up. We are not the heroes. We are the **FUCKING RESISTANCE**.

We are the malcontents, the unstable ones, the blight upon humanity. We are the **ASSHOLES**.

Good guys don't make history.

Nothing to Fear

We will never be imprisoned
We are the ones who will be shot on sight
They will invent new execution tools if they have to.

We will never be captured
We are not the ones they want in a cell
They will string us up in the square unannounced.

We will never be tortured
We are the ones interrogators fear
They will scream to drown out our hideous laughter.

We will never be converted
We are the ones who corrupt all we touch
They will cut out our tongues before we can speak.

We will never be imprisoned
We are the ones who die upright
They will be afraid long after we are gone.

*I shall be the villain
of my own story*



BLESSED ARE THE
TERRIBLE, FOR THEY ARE
CAPABLE OF GOOD ON
A SCALE THAT THOSE
WHO ARE CONFIDENT
IN THEIR OWN VIRTUE
MAY NEVER ACHIEVE.

SOMETHING is here.

SOMETHING is dangerous.

You cannot see anything but the shaft of light.

You are not alone.

You stand in the corner and you breathe, because you are not dead yet and as long as you can breathe you will be okay.

You breathe and you tell yourself "I am the scariest thing in this room."

You tell yourself "I am the scariest thing in this room."

And suddenly it's true.

You see by the light of the chimney, the brick walls and the worn flagstones. The open gate and the odd remnants of paint.

You stand and you wait for your meal to arrive.

Someday you will leave this place. Someday you will get back on the ferry and everyone will come home and everything will go back to normal. Someday this will just be a thing that you did, a story for parties. Someday people will laugh with you and think "how delightfully eccentric" and pretend that they would do the same if they only had the time.

But they won't.

They do not walk into dark rooms. They do not look into the mirror when there is nothing to see.

You are the scariest thing in this room.

THE DARK ROOM

You take the ferry to the island.

You take the ferry to the island alone because there is no one to go with you, and you are unmoored and without responsibility, and it is a wild and terrible feeling.

You pay your fifteen dollars and you take the ferry to the island.

On the ferry a man talks to you. He is from Peru and he is hitting on you but not so much that you mind. He gives you his business card, but you will never call. This is your first and last conversation, and even though it means something you will never remember the details or his name. It is cloudy but the sun will come out later.

He gives you a keychain. It's gold colored metal and it's a tiny replica of an Incan sacrificial knife. It has the word "PERU" stamped on one side. You give him your soapstone necklace.

You never see him again.

You step off onto the island.

You step off onto the island and into the fort. You pass under the chalk-white stalactites forming from the old concrete, calcium leeching from the building in the rain over centuries.

Someday this will all be dust.

You walk over the dry moat and through the reinforced wooden doors, past the tightly turning granite staircase that goes nowhere now but used to lead to the overpass for dropping shit on the invaders that never came. The yard is in front of you. The sun has come out.

The yard is green and bright and someone is flying a kite but no one picnics here because it's forbidden. The horse chestnut trees are to your right, with the warning sign that says "DO NOT EAT THE CHESTNUTS." You walk across the lawn.

Cannons line the walls above you. Stagnant pools occupy the spaces once held by the enormous weapons that faced out into the open water. The weapons that searched for U-boats. New concrete on old concrete on granite blocks.

This place is haunted.

No women died on this island, at least none that we know of. Two men, deserters, were shot in the 1860s, but no women.

There was no desperate wife who stole the uniform of her enemies and made her way to the kindest and gentlest of all the Civil War prisons, she was not caught and was not hanged in an oversized black robe. The stories exist to scare children.

But she was seen.

You walk across the lawn, past the bakery where you sat on a windowsill and sang to the nothing in the dry moat below. Past the narrow way you explored blindly as a child, at once relieved and disappointed when it deposited you right back where you began. Past the old shells sitting on the lawn, never to be fired.

You walk under the arch, and into the dark hallway. You put your left hand on the wall, cool with condensation even in the summer months. You can see the end of the hallway faintly, but it is not your destination.

You walk along the uneven flagstones. No flashlights, no cell phones.

Your left hand reaches the corner you cannot see, and you turn.

There is a metal gate at the end of this narrow passage that is locked up when school tours are on the island. No one wants to lose a kid in the dark room. It is not locked today.

The room is dark. A single shaft of light falls from the ceiling, a few bricks removed for a chimney. You cannot see the walls.

There is only a small shaft of light, too faint to see by.

You keep your hand to the wall and walk yourself along the far side until you reach the back of the room. The sides are curved, and you worry about hitting your head.

You stand in the corner, facing the light.

You stand alone in the dark.

It doesn't take long for the nameless fear to sink in.