

Cow Tipping

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Eugene Olestra lived in a suburbia slowly being swallowed by the inner city, in a neighborhood peopled by those who cared just enough to get by. Houses hovering on the edge of respectability raised privacy fences against denuded lawns and no-doubt warped and curious neighbors. Eugene lived in one of the worst—his yard overgrown to thigh-height—but despite this he was no worse than any other American—a fact he never failed to point out to the Jehovah’s Witnesses who never learned to skip his door. He was also defiantly proud of his 500-pound girth, which rippled as he stepped outside. The concrete path that connected his warped front door to his mailbox was pocked with avoidable damage, but the odds were unfairly stacked against him. Anyone who needs 30 minutes of strenuous exertion to roll out of bed deserves at least a little kindness.

The armpits of his wife-beater already stained with that effort, he surveyed his upcoming trek with the suspicion that someone, somewhere, was mocking him, perhaps conspiring with the garden gnomes digging tunnels in his overgrown lawn. It was a common feeling for Eugene and, once again, he vowed that justice would be his. Whether the offender’s chest would be crushed beneath his flabby ass or his windpipe pried out and snapped between his teeth like a candy cane, Eugene would make his presence felt. His girth wasn’t his fault. It was a gland condition. Why couldn’t anyone respect that?

Eugene pulled the king-size bag of chips from his sweat-pants pocket and, upon finding only crumbs, crushed it in his meaty hand. Advertising was always a lie. The package said king-sized, but Eugene could eat four before he was close to being full, at which point he had to eat two frozen pizzas, also

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falsely called king-sized. The world was a piece of shit and he despaired of ever finding a product that lived up to its name. The exercise machine he’d bought—after getting tired of his sister’s incessant nagging—was not, in fact, easy to assemble. It still lay in pieces in his living room. Occasionally he used one of the crossbars to bat his magazines closer when he was too tired to get off the couch, which was also breaking down, but he’d had to wrench that small victory from the jaws of indifferent fate. For Eugene, it wasn’t a joke. The world was out to get him.

It figured, he thought. There were no clouds in the sky and the sweat pouring into his eyes magnified the glare from the path. His landlord had been bitching about the weeds growing everywhere—some were waist high—but the asshole knew he had back problems and that bending down could land him in the emergency room. The doctor had said it was unlikely, but that meant it *could* happen and if the landlord didn’t have enough decency to care about his health, then fuck him. It figured that this was the day that he’d picked for his new diet pills to be delivered. He’d picked it specifically because the 7-day forecast had said mostly cloudy with a chance of rain, so fuck the weatherman too.

Eugene had high hopes for this newest batch of diet pills. It, like all the others, promised effortless weight loss—You don’t even have to change what you eat!—but, unlike all the others, it had oxidation science behind it. According to the infomercial, it contained coenzymes—these little red triangles—that boosted antioxidant efficiency. And since antioxidants boosted metabolism, you could eat all you wanted and still lose weight. Eugene had bought several gallons of ice cream for the initial celebration, planned for the night when the pills arrived. If these also failed to live up to their word,

Eugene had half a mind (and twice an ass) to march right up to the company and demand double his money back. No. Triple! But first he had to get to the mailbox.

A sudden thirst assaulted Eugene and he was tempted to go back inside to refuel. The mini-fridge next to his couch was filled with cans of generic soda—his disability didn't go far these days, despite how often he called his Congressman—and the idea of carbonated bliss was almost too much for him to resist. He knew he shouldn't, but it was the caffeine's fault. It was extremely addictive, but also legal. The government had let him down again. His resolve wavered, and he was about to head back inside—did the goddamn steps on his porch have to be so goddamn high?—when a car pulled over next to his mailbox.

It was a 1980's 4-door hatchback, a barely distinguishable maroon caked in dust. Even the windows were opaque. The rear windshield sported a finger-drawn dick and one of the taillights was busted. Eugene stared at it from across his ratty lawn, unsure if he'd need to call the cops again. It would be the third time this week. Behind him, a piece of his house's siding gave up and crashed to the ground, exposing termite-riddled wood. The car revved its engine twice in challenge and inched towards his mailbox, as if the driver were going to steal his diet pills. Before Eugene could respond, the car backed up and the rear window rolled down. A skinny arm extended a package in plastic wrap.

“Hey, fatass,” the arm's owner yelled. “Want a twinkie?”

All Eugene knew was that he was going to get the sonofabitch.

The first obstacle between him and vengeance was the treacherous concrete pathway. Because of a malfunction in

the sprinkler system and the slope of his lawn, water pooled under each section, making the ground extremely soggy on one side. Despite the sheer amount of umbrage left on their answering machine, Eugene could not seem to make the so-called ‘lawn-care specialists’ understand that normal business hours did not work for him. Eugene was ordinarily careful to stay in the center of the path, but today, goaded to rage, he barreled slowly towards the demon car. Not too stable on his feet to begin with, Eugene pounded the left side of the fourth tile from the sidewalk and it tilted under his weight, the opposite edge rising two feet into the air.

The unexpected change in elevation threw him headlong into the weeds where he rolled over several garden gnomes. For a moment Eugene lay on his back like an upturned beetle, his limbs quivering with berserk fury. A high-pitched, primal shout wrenched itself free from his wattled throat and enjoyed a glorious second of freedom before the exertion left Eugene gurgling for breath. Seizing apoplectically, Eugene managed to twitch to his side and within a few minutes was back on his feet, lumbering towards the maroon car.

It wasn't even about the twinkie at first. Eugene merely wanted to catch the bastards and force an apology. There was simply no excuse for this kind of disrespect. But as his heavy stride devoured the asphalt yards like Sisyphus rolling a giant Milk Dud up a mountain of E-Z-Cheeze, his plans for revenge escalated. He would rip the motherf---er's arm right off and jam it up his ass. After liberating the twinkie, of course.

He would chew that up, spit it out, and force the mess down the driver's throat. While he gagged on the cream filling, Eugene would jump on his chest and the f---er would explode in a shower of cake and guts. Sitting in the middle of the bloody shower like a conquering god, Eugene would

laugh a laugh only dreamed of by mad scientists.

Fuelling his fantasies, the arm's owner yelled encouragement. "You can do it! Feel the burn!"

No one knows how long this overweight, modern-day Tantalus suffered under the blazing, 76-degree sun. When Eugene stopped, the car stopped. When Eugene gave chase, the car belched exhaust in his face and moved on, always taunting, always snide. When Eugene stopped again, the car shifted into reverse and tried to run him over. But neither the callously mocking smiley face on the rear windshield, nor the hideous chafing on his inner thighs, could grate away his resolve. That Twinkie was Eugene's destiny, manifest not three feet away. No one had ever suffered as much as he and it was his turn to demand recompense.

The asthma attack/aneurysm/heart attack/stroke hit with surprising subtlety and grace. Freed from the weight of self-absorbed failure, Eugene's full five-hundred pounds floated effortlessly. The Twinkie, embodiment of everything the world owed him—everything he deserved—beckoned him onward. Golden and glorious, it was the gateway to a better world. One where fat melted away like ice in June and sexy, available women with low standards sold marshmallow pies, a dozen for 99¢. Angelic choirs erupted in triumph as respect, dignity, and success showered down like candy from a piñata. For a brief moment, it was not only attainable—it was his!

Then, unable to control the momentum of futility, Eugene took three unconscious steps forward before toppling to the ground. He slid, leaving a fleshy skid mark in the middle of the street to complement the one in his pants. The fall broke his skull against a curb, and rivulets of boiling blood gurgled into the gutter. A five-year-old boy who liked

to shit in Eugene's yard gave him the stink eye as he glided past, then returned to stacking mud-pies in his sister's dollhouse. Eugene Olestra, to his death no worse than any other American, died as he lived, eyes furiously glaring and chubby fingers grasping nothing but air.

The teens in the maroon hatchback, discussing the matter while driving off, decided against calling 911 on the off-chance their call would be traced. No one wanted to get sued or arrested. Besides, the fat f--- had brought it on himself and it wasn't their fault he hadn't exercised since the Stone Age.

No one else noticed the mountainous presence of death until the neighborhood kids started yelling. They'd managed to jam five sticks into his corpse by the time the ruckus annoyed an adult willing to step outside to see what was going on. 911 was called, but there was little the paramedics could do except wonder aloud how long it had been since Eugene had taken a bath. It took five of them to roll him onto the stretcher, and they opted to cover him with a sheet—their body bags wouldn't fit—and make half-hearted attempts to chase away those taking pictures with cell phones. Half an hour later, a van from Channel 6 News—"Keeping Your Interests at Heart"—arrived, but the piece was deemed too macabre for weird news and too disgusting for a human interest story.