

# Sonova Quark

Brought to you by Steven Vincent Johnson and Darlene P. Coltrain, mailing address: 6666 Odana Road, #213, Madison, WI 53719. Email Steve: orionworks@charter.net. Email Darlene: dpcoltrain@gmail.com Web: <http://OrionWorks.com>. All material is Copyrighted © by Steven Vincent Johnson and Darlene P. Coltrain unless otherwise specified. Quark is brought to you by *OrionWorks* with occasional help from **Grasshopper Press** when I feel an inspirational mood overtake me. Final layout is assembled in InDesign CS5. Printing done on a HP Color Laserjet Pro MFP M277dw. Some might be asking how do you pronounce "Sonova Quark"? There isn't one.

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Completed somewhere around November 21, 2017

## Close Encounters of the Unwanted Kind Silent Penance

### Part 1

Five decades ago a McDonalds establishment slung twenty cent hamburgers at 3313 University Ave, Madison Wisconsin. I started working there at a dollar-thirty an hour - minimum wage for that time period. Several years later when I entered college I transferred to the Lake Street Station which was closer to my classes. By then I was making to 2.10/hour, about ten cents above minimum wage. I learned the financial responsibilities of trying to make ends meet at minimum wage. This was also where I first confronted a form of discrimination when a new Lake Street manager told me that if I wanted to continue working at his McDs establishment I'd have to shave off my mustache. For sanitary reasons, I was told. The real reason was that either the McDs corporate office, or perhaps just the new manager himself, wanted clean-shaven workers on display. The manager had plenty of cannon fodder to choose from, and I was disposable. Never the less, the ultimatum struck me as a load of horse shit and I didn't want to end up in his pocket with the rest of his balls. I promptly quit and was immediately hired on at Rocky Rococo, pan-style Pizza, located on State Street just a block away. Rocky's POV was that as long as I bussed tables and washed the dishes in an efficient manner, they didn't care about anyone's moustache, be it sprouted on a male or female employee. Incidentally, Wane and Roger, the original manager/owners of the Rocky Rococo's franchise, hosted excellent holiday parties for the benefit of their bohemian collection of employees.

But I'm getting distracted from what I really want to talk about. I want to go back to when I was still in high school, when I was 17 years old, and working at University Avenue location. An older male in his 30s (I'll call him "Jacob.") was hired on full-time to work the cash registers. He was noticeably older than the typical collection of high school and college students management could easily pick from. I wondered why someone in his 30s would choose to work at McDs where management paid minimum wage.

Jacob didn't seem to exhibit any of the obvious deficiencies in the employable department other than the fact that he didn't seem to possess much ambition. Despite my negative assessment, Jacob was friendly to everyone and seemed interested in striking up conversations with all the high school and college part-timers. We often talked as we worked the cash registers together. We laughed over topics such as what movies we loved or hated.

As another Friday evening came around, and as our shifts were about to end, Jacob extended an invitation to me to peruse through a collection of videos he had stashed away in his apartment. The offer struck me as an entertaining way to spend the rest of my Friday night. Jacob suggested we simplify transportation matters and go in his car. He told me he would drive me back to McDs afterwards where my own car remained parked. I accepted his offer and got in his car.

Driving to Jacob's apartment he started focusing his interest on me. It struck me as an unexpected change in Jacob's behavior. In the back of my head, I felt a twinge of discomfort of being singled out as *the* topic of interest. I shrugged it off as just something odd about Jacob.

Once in Jacob's apartment he pointed me to his video collection. He suggested I pick something out. This bothered me a bit since I thought we would collaborate on what to watch. I pulled out a few trying to entice him into the selection process. Again, he showed little interest in anything I suggested. I began feeling genuinely concerned at that point, wondering if Jacob might actually be interested in me in a sexual way. I did not want to think about the implications. I wasn't sure what I would or could do if my suspicions turned out to be correct. I hoped it was nothing more than an overactive imagination on my part.

I chose the cult film, *Little Shop of Horrors*, the original release starring Jack Nicholson. I kept an eye on Jacob's movements as I inserted the video into the player. I tried to alleviate my concerns by maneuvering conversations towards the subject of former girlfriends. Would he bring up stories of prior relationships possibly involving boys? I needed to find out. He brought up a single relationship with a young girl. How young, I asked. She was an under-age native American. What about the age-difference I pressed him. The age difference was irrelevant insofar as Jacob was concerned. He added it was a deep and special relationship, the kind that just had to be. I asked Jacob, what did his young girl friend think about the age difference. She knew what she was doing, Jacob replied matter of factly. What happened, I pressed. Their relationship abruptly ended when the close knit society he was living in uncovered the nature of the relationship. Jacob was immediately forced to leave the community, leaving his under-aged girlfriend behind. I tried to take comfort in the assumption that Jacob's account, while technically being illegal, at least implied that he shouldn't be interested in me, a male.

I settled in to Jacob's couch hoping my concerns had now been put to rest. He sat down next to me, where his proximity felt uncomfortably close. I deliberately ignored his nearness and focused my gaze on the TV screen as *Little Shop of Horrors* began. Jacob slowly began slumping in the couch next to me. I knew he was pretended to fall asleep. It was all an act. Slowly, Jacob began slumping down towards my body. Doing so would eventually bring his head down closer and closer eventually having it rest on my neck and shoulder. The process had to be executed slowly... innocently, presumably so as not to alarm me, which of course was precisely what his slow-motion act was doing. I tried not to clue him in that I was on to his strategy. I tried slowly easing away, trying to buy myself some time to figure out what to do. Sleeping people, faking it or not, I figured, would at least need to stay in character. He would have to remain passive and not risk breaking character. The problem for me was that I was already close to the end of the couch. There was only so much easing-away I could do before I was pinned. Jack Nicholson's amusing scene, as a masochist dental customer strapped in a dentist chair waiting for the delivery of pain, didn't give me much of a badly needed distraction.

Eventually, the video ended. I surmised it was time to make my move. I calculated that I could probably tell Jacob it was late enough in the evening that I really should be headed for home. I abruptly got out of the couch, deliberately so, jostling Jacob out of his sleeping act. I walked over to the video player and proceeded to rewind the cassette. Jacob acted as if he was waking up from a slumber. I told Jacob it was late in the evening and it was time

for him to drive me back to my car. Why, *now*? Jacob responded in surprise. Surely there was other kinds of entertainment we could do. I continued playing the role of an obstinate, clueless teenager, adamant that the evening was late. As my insistence persisted Jacob became sullen. His replies became occasionally laced with micro-outbursts expressing irritation and frustration with me. It was as if I had somehow done him wrong. I had never witnessed a 30-year-old sulk in such a manner before, and it unnerved me. I felt my best strategy was to continue my act. *It's time for you to take me back to my own car!* I didn't believe Jacob would get physical or deliberately try to physically restrain me. His inert-passive approach throughout the evening implied such actions were probably not in his skill set.

Eventually, sullenly, Jacob accepted the outcome. We got back in his car and he drove me back to McDonald's. As I closed the car door behind me, he remained silent and motionless. His hands gripped the steering wheel as he fixed a cold stare out his windshield. I saw the expression of a frustrated 12-year-old smoldering in silent rage over something he felt he was entitled to get, but hadn't. With no further words spoken, he drove away. Relief washed over me as Jacob's car faded into the darkness of night. I realized I had extricated myself from an unwanted encounter that could have gone down a lot worse for me. I got in my car and drove home, doing my best to forget about the whole disquieting affair.

Jacob and I didn't seem to have much to say to each other when we worked the cash registers together again.

A couple of Fridays later while working the cash registers during rush hour I noticed Jacob walk into the storefront with an off-duty McDonald employee. (I'll call him "Billy".) I watched the two of them file into a customer line. Over the rush hour noise I overheard Billy mentioning to the employee taking their order that they were going to see a movie. I watched them leave with their combined orders in the same bag. Billy, a high school kid was a year younger than me. I knew he was just clueless about what was likely to happen later in the evening. Should I mention my concerns to someone? Who? It was 1970. I knew of no reporting system set up where I could have reported my concerns. Neither did I want to reveal what had happened to me. I was conflicted. I tried not to think about it.

Several weeks later Jacob was no longer working at McDs. No official explanation given. A few days later, down in the basement break room I witnessed a group of employees snickering and making insinuating jokes. They laughed about how stupid it was that Billy had allowed himself to be taken advantage of. I came down in the middle of the interaction and had missed out on *who* had taken advantage of Billy. I didn't need to know. It was obvious. I watched a bunch of young teen age males my age making

fun of Billy. They weren't just snickering amongst themselves, they snickering in front of Billy. The only person who didn't see the humor was Billy. I watched him endure their mocking in silence, never finding the words to respond to his tormentors, his peers. I didn't know what to do or what to say. A part of me didn't want to end up possibly getting implicated and mocked by my peers as well.

And what of Jacob? Of all the unwanted sexual predators I have encountered I'd have to say that Jacob was the most incompetent of the lot. He was still learning how to "groom" his victims when he started working on me. His incompetence was probably a key factor in how I managed to escape without actually being *physically* molested. I watched a sexual predator bring a teenaged victim into the McDs storefront, *in front of former potential victim, ME*. Google "sexual predator grooming behaviors" ...bon apelet! One more thing: Sulking when you don't get your way is no way to win friends and influence people.

As the decades have gone by, I suspect Jacob has either ended up doing time in facilities where it would be wise of him to watch his back, or he has been awarded numerous entries in Sex Offender Registries across the United States. Perhaps he has managed to kill two birds with a single stone throw.

While many decades have passed for me, the memory of watching Billy endure his public ridicule in silence hasn't. I committed the sin of omission, a sin that was committed in Billy's presence. My penance is to never forget the fact that I wished I had had the courage to have confronted Billy's tormentors. I wish I had told all those snickering idiots, my peers, that he wasn't the only one.

It wasn't your fault, Billy.

Or

## Windycon 2017

On the weekend of November 10-12 Darlene and I attended Windycon 2017. I've been going habitually to Windycon for more than three decades, now. Back in 1997 the convention theme was related to the Roswell 50th anniversary, and I was invited to be the Artist Guest of Honor. I created an appropriate cover for the program book. This years theme focused on dystopia. Meh...

The convention has been held at the Westin Lombard Yorktown Center for several years. Hotel service is decent and the convention facilities adequate. The convention is located in a huge shopping center suffering, like many malls, numerous shuttered storefronts. Heavy remodeling was in full force everywhere. Fortunately, a thriving Target store was only a block away from the Westin. A good place to pick up food & supplies.

I displayed eight pieces in the art show. None of my pieces sold. While disappointed, it didn't surprise me. Not much discretionary cash laying around these days - not like it was back in the early 1980s. Darlene and I purchased three dealer tables, and I managed one of the tables where I did better, sales-wise, selling our greeting cards. See dealer room photos on the next page.

We hooked up with a number of long-distance friends. We dined with one dear friend at Harry Caray's Italian Steakhouse & bar, situated within the Westin. Except for some insufficiently rinsed gritty steamed kale, the food was excellent.



Windycon 1997 Program Book Cover  
© Steven Vincent Johnson, 2017



### Darlene's tables

On display: Hand painted silk scarves, lost wax cast jewelry, and bead work. Some hand painted silk ties too! Need one???

### Steve's table

Greeting cards displaying the art of Darlene P. Coltrain and Steven V. Johnson. In the forefront of the table you can see some new experimental fractal flame designs I was test marketing. They got a lot of attention. Most of them sold out.



### Bill Higgins: Fermilab Radiation Physicist

Posted by Rich on March 3rd, 2012 04:28 PM | Fermilab

William S. Higgins is a radiation safety physicist at Fermilab, where he has been involved with the transport of high-energy particle beams for over 33 years. He frequently speaks and writes about astronomy, spaceflight, and the history of science and technology. Bill is a former science columnist for the Lerner chain of newspapers and a volunteer in NASA's Solar System Ambassadors outreach program.



Bill Higgins: Fermilab

He is a member of the Naperville Astronomical Association. Recently he has written about Robert Cornog, a little-known Manhattan Project physicist; about the process by which antimatter, originating with physicists in the 1930s, became a plaything of science fiction in the 1940s; and about the final days of the Tevatron accelerator.

<https://www.astroleague.org/archive/ALCON2012/alcon2012.astroleague.org/bill-higgins-fermilab-radiation-physicist/index.html>

On the last day of Windycon, an acquaintance of ours, Bill Higgins, stopped by our tables for a quick catch-up. Bill is a popular fixture at Windycon. He gives wonderful slide shows on recent astronomical findings and participates on numerous science panels. Bill is a radiation physicist at Fermilab. I showed Bill some recent animations produced out of my on-going Orbital Mechanics research project. It pleased me that it seemed to capture Bill's interest. He asked me a number of questions and wanted to know what I planned to do with the results. I told Bill I was just beginning what is likely to turn out to be a long and drawn out process of placing my findings out on a website. It's likely to take me years before I conclude the project is complete. Bill told me he wanted to be kept in the loop. I plan to do so.

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Out of time and energy. Sorry about no comments.

Steve

Or

## Addendum

It's November 21, deadline day. It's also 6 AM in the morning and I'm wide awake in bed. I know the signs. A dream I had just woke up from made it pretty clear to me that it was time to get out of bed and work through a difficult decision having to do with my commitment to TURBO.

Let me start with my dream. For some damn idiotic reason that never was adequately explained to me I was no longer retired. I was being apprenticed at some nondescript IT company where I was becoming familiar with the firm's computer systems. I knew the systems would be challenging to master, and in the back of my head I wasn't sure I would really like doing the work assigned to me... not at this particular private firm. I was also in my underwear. Fortunately, I was wearing a long T-shirt and I was doing my best to make a miniskirt out of it. Fortunately, no one seemed to be noticing my sense of vulnerability... or perhaps they were just being polite. Suddenly, a manager comes over and politely informs me of the company's dress code. That's when noticed everyone is wearing suits and ties.

What does any of this have to do with how I feel about TURBO? There is no easy explanation. All I know is that characters in my dream tend to be aspects of my own personality. All these externalized characterizations of my own psyche do their best to reveal something about me: about my dreams, my desires, my fears, my own prejudices.

It's difficult to parse it all out, but I'll give it my best shot: For many years I participated in a men's group. Being a part of this group was one of the best things I did for myself, for my own salvation. Many years later, the next best thing I did for myself, for my own salvation, was realizing it was time to leave it and go off on my own. While I participated I saw broken men who were learning how to be vulnerable. They were learning how to share in the nature of their injuries with members of their own peers. I was no different, nor were my injuries. It isn't easy learning how to risk talking candidly about ourselves, about our self-injurious behaviors. It's even harder acknowledging how those self-injuries and can result in us acquiring additional behaviors (defenses) that needlessly cause injury to others. We learned it takes a bastard to know another bastard, and no one gets a free Get-Out-Of-Jail card. I learned how important it was to be open to my peers about my vulnerabilities, my faults. I think one of the most important things the group, as a whole, received was learning how not to pass judgement on each other - and ourselves. A man once uttered something to the effect of: *Do unto others as you would have them do to yourself*. Unfortunately, this Golden Rule accomplishes little in the world if one has been judged unworthy by both one's peers and by one's self. In the end, all that is required of anyone is to do better for one's Self and for Others. It's the only path of redemption that I'm aware of.

For reasons of my own it doesn't sit well with me that some members seemed either to be relieved or willing to come back on to TURBO when it became clear that Jim Frenkel was gone. Jim screwed up. I believe Jim screwed up royally. There is profound tragedy in the fact that there are a lot of people who loved or at least appreciated Jim and all the literary work he has done for the science fiction community. But now, many feel justifiably betrayed. They are justifiably angry about disclosures that have come to light concerning actions Jim has been accused of having done. I use the word "accused" not because there's a part of me that wants to believe that Jim might be innocent. I use the word in another context, a more personal context: I came to a realization that I'm not comfortable with being a part of what personally feels to me to be a tribal ostracizing, the shunning of Jim Frenkel.

I believe Jim needs to find a way to atone for his past discretions. Only Jim can make the decision to seek such atonement, and it probably won't be fun. But beginning the difficult journey

of finding atonement becomes increasingly more difficult to achieve when more and more of one's peers shun him. I realize others might disagree with some of my views on the matter. So be it.

I realize that had Jim stayed it's conceivable that TURBO may have been dealt a final death blow. It's been my experience dealing with the reality of life's karmas day in and day out often feels as if the universe doesn't run in perfect balance. Nevertheless, Newton's third law states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. It is my way of suggesting that we, *our very consciousness* is just as much a part of the interplay of what I believe is a living physical universe. It's my way of saying that what makes up our living consciousness meticulously follows the same rules as defined by Newton's third law. It's my way of saying karma has a long memory. The books will eventually be balanced. Our consciousness will see to the bookkeeping

Some might perceive my reasoning as tainted in too much flowery metaphysical metaphor. If some find that reasoning unsatisfactory I'll add that right now I feel a need to focus more diligently on my on-going Orbital Mechanics Research Project. Therefore, for now, I'm removing myself from TURBO's membership.

I need to do better for myself and for others.

Steve

Or

## TAGALONG

### by Darlene P. Coltrain

I would stay. I would stay on if Jim is not staying. I would stay if Jim stayed and was willing to make amends. If he stayed and was not willing to make amends I would have to think about it.

I have second thoughts about banishing/shunning someone because they have a horrid complex problem. My impulse is to advise for council, therapy and a supportive community. That's not happening here but in any case, Turbo is a good place even though we might not agree on how to deal with this particular problem. Yes I am an idealistic artist bleeding heart liberal.

Staying on without Steve to do the heavy lifting is another matter. He is the one with the computer and the printer... and the software (which, I am told, is very important). He is willing to print my contributions.

Since I am uncomfortable with writing much, and much less with writing an essay every month, I have thought about dredging up my little (short, actually) pieces of Discworld fan fic... and or doing a drawing each month..... and possibly some actual mail bag responses (I think about responding each month but somehow manage not to).

If this is acceptable, I would like to continue as TAGALONG. Nervous, but willing to give it a try....

Thanks, Darlene