

The Nattering Gnat

By Dennis Knight

I thought I was giving a treat, assigning a topic that would allow us each to unshackle our minds from reason and write flowingly of utter nonsense. As I began applying my own imagination, however, I realized the difficulty of the task, and I am sorry. Lewis Carroll and J.K. Rowling have already used up all the nonsense available. They have squandered it, really, on trivialities like *Alice in Wonderland* and *Harry Potter*.

Sure, there was a time when things like Flash Gordon shooting through space seemed to be nonsense, but humans have since walked on the moon and armed themselves with lasers. Dick Tracy's imaginary two-way wrist radio is now a telephone, a global positioning device, a personal assistant and a camera. And while we still hear fantastic reports of a big hairy monster who sasquatches Washington, I'm pretty sure we'll get pictures soon and he, too will be removed from the rolls of impossibilities.

I was sitting out on the lanai last night, weighing the unlikely challenge of finding nonsense in the twenty-first century, when I brushed aside a gnat. He was a persistent bugger and I finally snatched him out of his seventh orbit around my cranium.

Being a little deaf these days to higher frequencies, I wouldn't have heard him had he spoken in a voice consistent with his size, but it was a bellowing, "Watch it, buddy," that tickled my palm and triggered my fist to open. He returned to his infernal orbit.

"Can't you see I'm busy?" I asked.

"I'm the one that's busy, Mac. You don't seem to be doing much of anything worthwhile."

"I'm thinking, Gnat. I've got a big project to finish."

"Oh, we can all see that, Mac. You've been oozing thought balloons for the last forty-seven minutes. They're floating all over the neighborhood, interfering with our flight patterns, and they're all empty. I've been sent to investigate."

"Okay, then you try it, Gnat. Think me up some utter nonsense to write about - something totally impossible."

I could hear a little sputter as he buzzed past my right ear, the good one. He sputtered some more and his orbit became jerky and irregular. I thought I could see tiny thought balloons in his wake, but let's face it, that would be ridiculous. He's a gnat.

Finally, he landed on the back of my hand and looked up at me.

"Okay, you've got me at a disadvantage buddy. I was hatched in an original edition of *The Power of Positive Thinking*. I read every word of Norman Vincent Peale on the way out and I can say unequivocally that nothing is impossible."

"Now I've got to buzz off. They're sending me to the political conventions down south to check out more empty thought balloons. It's utter nonsense!"