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Derived From My Absurdist Novel, "In The Wind"

Verging on exhibiting a modicum of facial expression, Soon-Yi Chang asserts during her vlog, Chatting with Chang: "We have a very special guest with us today. Hard as it may be to believe, our Earth Mother has some of her kids not just paying tribute to her merely in lip service, but paying it forward with their outreach to Mom's world-family by way of their activism in spreading the word of her plight. My dear friend, and today's special guest, not only wrote a four hundred page polemic on the subject of this ongoing matricide, but lives every word through his life's ongoing campaign for her salvation. Enough of my lip service to this environmental hero, allow me to present, New York Times bestselling author, Rantin' Ray Richards!"

As she slides her laptop to include her guest's face, a voice is heard saying, "Thanks for the buildup, Soon-Yi. I do hope that I won't let you down."

Before Ray's smiling face joins hers on the screen, Soon-Yi mutters, "Never again, you two timing son of a bitch!" With their smiling faces together, she says, "Rantin' Ray, with all of the hell being let loose on our blessed planet, we Earth Mother lovers surely do need to hear the perspective of a bestselling, loudmouth environmentalist! Yes, someone like you, Ray."

"Someone 'like' me? Hey kiddo, why wait for an imitation to come along when the original is eyeball to eyeball with ya?"

"And with the covid partitions gone, this is so much more intimate, Ray!"

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Winking at her, Ray says, “So, since the whole world of your subscribers just may be watching, let’s try our best to keep this thing professional, kiddo.”

“Agreed, professional it is for the sake of my viewers. And stop it with that condescending ‘kiddo’ reference! As you just said, Ray: *‘Since the whole world of my subscribers just may be watching.’*”

“Really? Both of them?”

Following a long snowy moment, Soon-Yi’s and Ray’s faces return to the computer screen. From expressions ranging from a quivering smirk to a paralyzing stare, she says, “Ray, that was so fucking cold! I’ll say it again; let’s try to keep this interview professional!” Forcing a smile, she goes on to say, “Everything else aside, we are here to speak for our Earth Mother, social injustices and that’s it!”

“Okay, okay, Soon-Yi. As professionals, let’s stick to business.”

“Yes then, professional it is!” Upon reaching an appropriate interviewer expression, she says, “Sooo Rantin’ Ray, everyone in New America seems to be pointing their fingers and blaming one another while no one seems to be doing a damn thing to help save our environment. Everybody shrugs their shoulders and shirks their responsibilities while beloved Earth Mother seems to be flying off to Hell in a handbasket, woven by multiple generations of human indifference. More than ever, worldwide temperatures and sea levels are rising, storms are nearly two times their intensity and magnitude than they have been during Humankind’s fucked up history ... I mean, if the dinosaurs had dominated our predecessors and remained in charge, they’d be mega-lizards simply preoccupied

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with munching the veggies in front of them and leaving a loving ‘thank you’ fertilizer trail in their wake: Nature’s quid pro quo!”

“Thank you Soon-Yi for playing Captain Obvious: Is there a point here?”

“Touché! Since pointlessness is the point that Humankind always seems to be making, and you being the author of, “Eating One’s Tail Is How It Begins”, what do you see as our species’ end game?”

“Soon-Yi, besides the same obvious result of every mass suicide there has ever been, I’d rather take the high road and address Nature’s desperate cry for help that has gone unheeded for so many years.”

“As Rantin’ Ray, the renowned advocate for living in harmony with Nature, did you ever formulate a way to evaluate ... I mean, did you and other activists like yourself have a litmus test for human life-worthiness in order to coexist with our Earth Mother?”

“Damn right there was. And a chorus of environmental advocates were hitting their keyboards with me, pointing out ways to correct the self-destructive ways of Earth Mother’s ungrateful, suicidal bastards!”

“Care to name any one of those suicidal bastards in particular, Raymond?”

“Any one? How about every goddamn one of them, categorically! Beginning with the goddamn land grabbers, corporate cannibals and their consumer slaves who’ve been sealing Earth Mother in the burial shroud of their excessiveness! How about their wash, rinse and repeat progeny who will go on to do the very same things that Mom, Pop and all of the puppets on the strings dancing to the tune of, more, more and then even

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more? How about your social media and what's left of this New America's uncensored broadcast television and radio telling them that they'll never be happy until they have more of what they never dreamed of working their asses off for in the first place? How about all of that bullshit!"

"Rant on, Rantin' Ray! Pullin' back the bowstring of what's on your mind, and then letting it rip, as always. Now that's the Rantin' Ray I ..."

"Okay, go on Soon-Yi! You what? What?"

"I love when your passion speaks for what your mind brings forth to the page or to the mic, that's all. You always spoke from the heart, that's why ..."

"Why? Why what?"

"Why, isn't there a litmus test for that kind of extra-human behavior?"

"So Soon-Yi, nothing's changed, has it?"

"What? What are you saying, Ray?"

"You're always falling an inch short of laying out how you really feel about things, or the people closest to you! And you wonder why you get shut out, just as becoming honest with yourself suddenly eludes you ... Sorry, we did get off track ... as always. Professional! Yeah, let's try to keep everything, pro!"

"Ray, I ...okay, keeping it professional, I had asked you if there is a litmus test for that kind of extra-human behavior. So tell us Rantin' Ray, is there one?"

"Spot on and right on, babe ... Yes! There is! A perfect example of all of this is a mere two miles away – right at your Richman Mall Office Park complex. Litmus test you ask? Back when I began my research, I went to its groundbreaking and monitored not only the construction process; but the devastation

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of parklands, forests and the diversion of rivers, streams and the underground aquifer systems. Together with a group of environmental scientists and other activists, we evaluated the Richman complex's impact on the various surrounding communities and their populations step by step, then I published it all in my first book."

"Did you give your results a name?"

"Yes, I called it The Paving Cap Theory."

"The what? That must have been before we... uh, so that was your first book? You always said that ..."

"And as always, you never listened!"

"Enough of that, Ray... Moving on! So, as a novice writer, what was your approach to taking on such a controversial subject, considering those times with such a large fan base of people living in their chase for excessiveness?"

"Knowing that a lone shout-out of truth, falling upon the ears of those who were too busy dancing the dance of 'who gives a shit' to listen, my words had to be the brick wall in their path of aimlessness. I would have to stop them mid-step and turn their heads to the light of day."

"How would you do that, Ray?"

"With the truthfulness of an oncoming freight train to the fuckin' face!"

"Or, as you once said; 'The truth of the ground coming at you, vis-a-vis the bullshit from the pilot who swore, '*Of course, there's plenty of gas*'. ' Yes! Hit 'em hard and hit 'em fast! I always liked that about you."

"Really? ... So anyway, mine had to be an objective, clinical observation. I couldn't come off as a crazed, liberal tree

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hugger. That's why I petitioned and worked with such an eclectic group of experts whom I listed in the book's credits."

"Okay, since that tree hugger term wasn't out there yet, how did you and your associates perceive yourselves?"

"When a doctor wants to find out if a body is diseased, he takes a sample and places it in a petri dish. Soon, the culture shows its true nature. Cheryl and I, together with the group, did the same thing studying the nature of land grabbers and consumer slaves prior to the development of the Richman Mall-Office Park."

"Cheryl? Hold on ..."

"Soon-Yi remember, we're talking about my pre-tree hugger days here! You met me long after that during ... Let's just get on with this, okay?"

"Okay, and let's remain professional. So, that's quite a large petri dish to fill during such a short time. What did the two of you conclude ... Before we met?"

"Again, I'll lay it all out for you, Soon-Yi. Draw your own conclusions."

Soon-Yi shouts, "That's great, Ray! Let's hear all about what went on ... '*before* we met' and keep in mind, I do know how to read a goddamn calendar!" Suddenly, the video monitors exhibit an unexpected snowstorm."

With video's return, Soon-Yi says, "Sorry for that, folks. Well, we seem to have straightened out our technical difficulties. Take it away, Rantin' Ray!"

"Okay people, join me on a journey to witness the gag of corruption and avarice, slowly placed over the mouth of Earth Mother as greed in the form of her progeny chooses momentary pleasure over everlasting sustenance, and its own survival.

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Welcome to the Paving Cap Theory's results: Humankind's worldwide smothering of all that its mother has provided since the beginning of time itself, mythology or our ever-growing delusion of self-importance. So, here we are, where our collective absurdity has taken us: Nuclear weapons, the ongoing embellishment and redaction of all that is true, holy or just felt virtuous before our better instincts shut down in favor of petty greed, avarice and overindulgence. Now, where does that take us from here? Just climb aboard my flight of fancy, close your eyes and envision an overview of the typical office and mall complex, brought to you by the scrape an' rape earthmovers who came onto the scene with no introduction from the all-empowering land grabbers. Net result: A colossal stretch of terra firma bulldozed into oblivion, then plastered with endless stretches of earth-sealing white striped asphalt parking stalls surrounding palaces of commerce and consumerism, not counting the adjoining land that was hijacked then raped to create a network of life smothering roadways leading to them!

“Hah! Remember when good ol' New Jersey was called The Garden State? That would imply it might have had actual food gardens. Where once tomatoes, corn and peppers flourished in order to nourish its people, now 'house farms' and office towers grow massive profits to nourish habitat investors living and working within them. Goddamn cannibals! Any remaining dirt farms are now growing sod for chemically enriched lawns surrounding the mall sprawl. Love for the land? Sure as shit these opportunists love the land: Plant a cash windfall in a dirt farmer's pocket and by spring ya got yerself a crop of cookie cutter mansions for the scavengers to feed off. Farmers turn soil that once fed people into house farms while land grabbers turn

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politician's heads with campaign bribes so another 'Chickadee Suites' can grow in swampland filled with lethal chemical waste and the bodies of unknowing victims, slowly poisoned and then hurriedly cremated by the last generation of cannibals!

"Cannibals you may ask? We're damn right calling these vultures cannibals! In their quest for profit over principal, they habitually consume one another and Earth Mother. Look beyond the malls at all of the asphalt and concrete highways, parking lots, driveways and the endless buildings choking the skyline. Paving Cap you ask? Before all of this progress, when the rains fell, Earth Mother opened her thirsty mouth and water drenched the land and filled the aquifers below. Now, because of the paving cap, nature's polluted life blood flows off the roads, down the gutters, into the sewer systems and ultimately to the already poisoned oceans!

"Then there are the lawns spreading over two acre back yards, highway islands and corporate complexes. After the rain romances its way through the weed-n-feed and bug killers, it plants its poisonous kiss on what's left of our underground drinking water. Give Humankind enough time and, after they've eviscerated their earthly habitat through greed and ignorance, they'll export their ways of self-immolation to worlds beyond!

"Back to the petri dish: Watch how the mall queens get to the consumer palaces from the endless landscape of house farms: Like a symphony, one of four garage doors opens at each of the separate dwellings along each and every one of the paving cap's multitude of street furrows. Gas guzzling SUVs, luxury mini-vans and chauffeured limos fire up; loaded with catalogs and coupons from billions of reams of brochures printed on the pulp of trillions of unnecessarily murdered trees!

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“Then, the herd of perfumed, painted mall-minded cows stampede from their mommy-mobiles and rush to video dominated day care centers where their calves are heralded into a life of materialism, thanks to purple dinosaurs and yellow bug-eyed Munchmuggets, or whatever the hell they’re called this year! After the kids are placed in the hands of their rent-a-moms, credit cards in hand, the faithful swarm to concrete and glass cathedrals of consumerism, scurrying through marble hallowed halls lined with potted palm trees and benches, of course cleared of any undesirables, in hope of quenching an insatiable thirst for the latest version of what in hell they have too goddamn much of already!

“Meanwhile, their revenue generating significant others lock themselves away for hours on end in myriad petro-pharmaceutical research centers where they create endless lines of wonder drugs, which necessitated their own creation in order to treat consumer-slave patients for the side effects of an endless list of corporate concocted cure-alls that came before them!

“A mile away along Earth Mother’s asphalt shroud, legal eagles are perched atop sixty story towers, plotting and scheming various ways they can market their ability to plot and scheme to usurp anything remaining beyond the mall sprawl so it can be another piece of land grabbed up and buried beneath the paving-cap. The barrister predators swoop down, kill and masticate their victims then drop juicy tidbits into the mouths of a real estate cartel’s hungry chicks on the other side of their hi-rise nest. After these birds of prey digest another piece of Earth Mother’s carcass, they regurgitate a plan promising insider’s prices on something that’ll become just one more goddamn, Pleasant Valleyview Estates. Before the new house farm is

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populated with consumer slaves, scrape and rape developers pepper the landscape with more strip malls, office towers and subterranean fuel reservoirs for all the gas-and-go quickie-marts!

“After draining more wetlands to their demise, they plop down row after row of self-storage sheds for the house farm residents to put all the crap they’ll be needing for the coming of the six or more car garage McMansions, with a few tomato plants and horses in the yard, which allows them to take an agricultural write-off and pay squat for taxes while laying that burden on a poor dude from the housing projects, who’s working a third job pumping gas at the quickie-mart!

“You think this bullshit is limited to the silver-spoon crowd? Think again! Take that poor dude working at the quickie-mart, cursing out a mall cow in a stretched SUV after she pulverized his patched up ’78 Civic while gabbing away on her rhinestone spangled cellphone. Day after day, the dude gives half his pay back to the quickie-mart for two six packs of Bud, a carton of Generic Lights and, with what’s left; he gets a few strips of Lotto tickets hoping to win and buy the ten car garage castle across the way from the mall-cow in the SUV who did him in!

“And then, there’s the rest of the world that sees New America’s paving cap’s exponential mall sprawl, McMansion procreation and ten lane superhighway systems as mankind’s crowning achievements. The paving cap is like a breeder reactor, replicating itself ad-infinitem. Soon, ubiquitous paving caps will link like thumbs to Earth Mother’s throat, while she spins and suffocates around the Sun with her long dead sibling, Mars!”

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Soon-Yi cocks her head left, then right and says, “Rantin’ Ray, you’ve sure as hell earned the right to use every one of those exclamation points! So, grab another handful of those little mind daggers and rant on! My god, perhaps the Neanderthals would have been so much more considerate of their habitat than our homo-sapien ancestors. By now, they might have advanced to clay pots, thatched roofs and air and water worthy of consumption. It would sure as hell beat Earth smothering paving-caps any time. Thank you Raymond for laying it all out for us.”

“Can I go now, Soon Yi?”

“Oh! I thought you might like to stick around for an interview another commentator and I have coming up with some guy from a radical right wing anti-immigrant group, following a news blurb.”

“Okay, but can I also ask him some questions?”

“Ray, since when do you need permission to open your mouth?”

“Hey, you do know me.”

“I’m learning more and more shit about you every day! So stick around and have your mouth ready to roll. As if Rantin’ Ray needs permission to speak.”

“Cool!”

After a fadeout, followed by an immediate fade in, Soon-Yi announces: “In today’s other news, Edmond Running Dear of the Kanawi Nation, indigenous Canadians of the Eastern Provinces, is placing the support of his people to the embattled USA’s Great Plains, Chiniwa: By the way he is a vlogging colleague of mine. This brings the entirety of the indigenous

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nations of the USA, Mexico and now Canada in support the Chiniwa people. As we discussed in last night's vlog, The Chiniwa have recently come under attack from Rising Fist, an anti-immigrant, English only political action group whose goal is to force them to surrender their right to their ancient western tribal lands, and to renounce the legitimacy of the use of their native language."

Ray's face pops up on the monitor covering Soon-Yi's image as he asks, "Mister Running Dear, language use aside, does this Rising Fist group feel that they have a legitimate lawful challenge to the Chiniwa's rights to the land of their forefathers?"

"Hey, pardon the wobble of that slapped together tripod thingy for my camera, it is a bit windy up here and please call me Ed. To answer your question Ray, Rising Fist's contention has been: *'Those lands were lawfully seized by US forces during the state of a declared war. Since the Chiniwa continue to refuse to agree with Rising Fist's contention that their ancestors had surrendered, and must submit to total control by the New America régime, they should be considered as an adversarial occupation force.'* One can only imagine how lawyers on both sides are hunkering down for this one!"

"Worse-case scenario; what happens if Rising Fist wins in court?"

"Good question, Soon-Yi. Unless the Chiniwa agree to the loss of their land and forced social assimilation, considering the prevailing ultra-nationalist mood in your country, they could become classified as illegal immigrants! As we know, illegal immigrants can be lawfully removed forcefully by your ICE."

"And if the Chiniwa refuse to be removed?"

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“Ray, we could be back to where Custer left off with Sitting Bull.”

“Well Ed, we surely do hope that it doesn’t come to that. So, let’s consider a hypothetical situation: If they’re successful, what does Rising Fist hope to do with the land, after stripping the Chiniwa of their entitlements?”

“Another good question, Soon-Yi. According to Grandy Pruitt, Rising Fist’s founder and coordinator of this initiative, your Department of The Interior will take custody of those Indians who resist and confine them to holding pens prior to relocation. After the reservation is cleared of the so-called ‘unlawful trespassers’, another New America Casino And Theme Park, that has already been approved by The Department of The Interior, will be built on that land. As always, The George Armstrong Custer Foundation has been chosen as it’s the primary contractor and managing agency of yet one more New America park. Just to throw some more gasoline on the fire, the buffalo will remain to graze and breed in their habitat in tribute to the free roaming landscape of pre-Columbus America!”

Ray turns to Soon-Yi and says, “That’s just un-fucking believable! Imagine, Native Americans declared to be immigrants by the descendants of land grabbing invaders and shipped out while the goddamn buffalo take over their homeland as a fucking petting zoo? This latest abomination really sucks!”

Ed says, “Well, the buffalo won’t really be taking over as a zoo. In fact, The New American Experience Nature Preserve folks plan to breed them and feature them as live targets for their new “Shoot-Skin-Grill-And Share,” family eatery.”

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“Damn, an entire buffalo sure is a lot of meat even for a family of ten, Ed!

“Well Soon-Yi, there will be other families firing away from the busses. Of course, assault weapons will not be permitted, or so I hear.”

“What the fuck? I’ve heard enough! Soon-Yi, sign off. We’re outta here!”

“Not so fast, Ray. Tell him, Soon-Yi.”

“Yeah Ray, aside from Grandy Pruitt shutting the interview down if an Indian quizzes him, there’s this binding performance contract I signed with a fifty dollar penalty. Ray, I did mention all of this to you, didn’t I?”

“So damn typical of you, Soon-Yi. There have been so many things that you just fail to mention’!”

“Okay, guys, I’ll be turning the Pruitt interview part over to you and Soon-Yi in just a little bit.”

After Ray nods to the affirmative, Soon-Yi adjusts her expression then asks, “Ed, if Rising Fist is successful and all of what you mentioned takes place, and The Chiniwa are given their walking papers, where do they plan to send these displaced Native American ‘Immigrants’?”

Ed looks at his watch, and then responds: “Well, okay Soon-Yi, Ray! Now you can ask Grandy Pruitt that very question. I have to take a meeting. See ya!”

After a fadeaway and a few long snowy moments an elderly gray haired man sitting on a white rocking chair amidst a herd of buffalo against a brilliant morning sky, on a fruited plain appears on the screen. A lone crow sits on a wooden sign reading, ‘USA—Love It or Leave It’ above an iPad Pro taped to its supporting two-by-four. Soon-Yi asks, “Mister Pruitt, we

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understand that Rising Fist and The George Armstrong Custer Foundation are proposing legislation to classify The Chiniwa Nation as illegal immigrants and, therefore, subject to deportation. In an earlier interview, you said this should apply to all other groups in America who cling to other languages and traditions. Is this correct?”

“It sure as shootin’ is, Missy Chopsticks: New America for real Americans!”

“I beg your pardon; my name is Soon-Yi! And for your information, I’m proudly literate in four languages. And stop it with your anti-Asian, demeaning references!”

“Ain’t no anti-anythin’ reference! Everyone calls y’all Chopsticks, ‘cause ya keep criss-crossin’ them bony gams; like chopsticks snappin’ at a piece o’ meat!”

“He’s not wrong about that, Soon-Yi. I told you about squats and leg curls.”

“Fuck you, Ray!”

“Hey Chopsticks, if folks like youse people wants ta speak perfanity an’ yer other languages, then ya should do it in the privacy of yer own homes. Folks like my people fought yer Japan’ yer Mexican kinfolk, so even youse can have private homes here where ya can do the kinda stuff people like y’all do. Hell, it should be anti-American ta talk in another lingo around us plain, regular folk, ‘specially on this newfangled television thingy o’ yers that we’re goin’ back an’ forth on.”

“Sir, I do believe we inadvertently segued into unrelated topics.”

“Ya see? There ya go! Now talk English an’ jest ask your damn question! That’s ‘nother thing. English! When they talk,

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we can't understand them foreigner fairies neither. Our lingo should be called American! Okay, go ahead Chopsticks."

"Back to the Indians. If you're successful, where would you send them?"

"Well Missy, everyone knows, long ago they came ta our blessed nation across a land bridge from Russia. Bridge is gone now, so's Russia. Now, real Americans can pretty much do what we want, an' when we wanna do it. Maybe we can send them Injuns back on ferry boats er somethin'."

"Mister Pruitt there still is a Russia. It's The Soviet Union that's gone."

"Yeah, so? Same difference there, Chopsticks."

"Mister Pruitt, by your own timeline accounting, you have placed Native Americans here long before any other people arrived. Putting things into a historical perspective, exactly who are the immigrants?"

"There ya go again! Now talk regular American ..."

As the 'Chatting with Chang' logo suddenly announces the end of the telecast, her clenched fist nearly penetrates a wall before she shuts her laptop and screams; "Now I fucking heard it all! The goddamn white man rips the land away from the Indians, who've been here since The Ice Age, and then connives a way to declare them to be immigrants? It's preposterous ..."

Ray interrupts to say, "Soon-Yi, think about what you just called them ... Indians? If my people were here since the Ice Age, why would I allow anyone to refer to us by the name the White man gave to oppressed civilizations on the other side of their world?"

"Raymond, you can thank Columbus for branding them as Indians."

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“Screw Columbus! These people had a name of their own long before that colonialist, mercenary war monger came sailing across the dragon filled sea and stole their identity. Then that self-righteous ‘goon for royalty’ manages to tag them forever with the name of a totally unrelated people? I mean, the egomaniacal fool was so sure his voyage would land him in India, he declared them to be Indians!”

“Yeah right on with that, Raymond! Imagine if he assured Ferdinand and Isabella that his voyage would lead to discovering a shortcut to Poland?”

“All kidding aside, it’s like saying, ‘You’re not from where we are, so all of you must be lumped together into the land of Elsewhere.’”

“Raymond, are you telling me I should be calling them Native Americans? That’s just as insulting as calling them Indians. Either way, it’s not their name. It’s the White man’s branding of an entire population with the name of a medieval European map maker. With all of the indigenous nations that were here before Columbus, you would think that the colonialists might have at least picked the tribal name of one of the native people to cover everyone.”

“Yeah, and right on! Fuckin’ xenophobic bullshit! Since their forefathers were here since the woolly mammoth, they should demand to be called what they call themselves; Sioux, Seminole or Chiniwa! Those are sovereign, nations that deserve the same level of respect as any in the White man’s world! First those fuckin’ Eurocentric bullies rip off their land, now they want to call its aboriginal people immigrants? Actually, I’ve heard e-fuckin-nuff for today, Soon-Yi! You see! It’s totally screwed up out there! The whole goddamn world is on its dumb-

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ass hypocritical head. One deceitful group screws over the next at the expense of a third, while putting the high hard one up its own ass!”

“Ray, hypocrisy is the only constant of Humankind’s universe ... Dinner?”

“Do ya think I do interview bullshit for nothing? Anything in particular?”

“Don’t flip out on me Ray, but all of this craziness today really got my juices flowing for a buffalo steak and fries!”

“Great! I’ll make reservations at the Prairie House Barbeque in The Mall.”

