

Little Ol' Brother Man Angel

I got mauled in the face by a dog nearly two and a half years ago. He was a Rottweiler and lab named Winston and he weighed almost the same as me, about 92 lbs. Well maybe I'm 93 after a big hearty Thankstaking dinner.

I've never been hurt by an animal before, at least not the 4-legged variety anyway.

I love animals. I really love animals. I love my cats more than almost anyone in the world. They're my babies, "my babyses, babyses". I used to have 4: Angel, also known as Miss Angel Boonie, or Ms Boonkie Lee Jones; Brother, Baby Brother, or Bwuzie; Ol' Man and Little Girl. Don named them all, with a little help from the kids. And he taught me how to baby talk to them. Now I can't stop. Ol' Man and Baby Brother are still with me and they're old, especially Brother. Last year Brother Man, as Michael would call him, went to the vet and the vet said that he was the equivalent of 84 in people years. I said, "Oh my god, my child is the same age as my mother, how can that be?" Now he's surpassed her. He's 18 which is about 88, or more like 90 in people years. I give him blood pressure medicine every day and 150 CCs of subcutaneous fluids 3 times a week with these shaky hands, poor Brother. Sometimes the needle goes in the skin one place and out another, fluids spurting out, and then I have to

stick him again. I've gotta do something about these hands; I'm afraid the fluids are gonna come spurting out his ear or nose or eye one day. Steady girl, steady. But he's such a good sport about it, as long as I comb him while I'm doing it and give him treats after, so the experience isn't all bad. You know, he still has a lot of vitality left for certain things in life, like "tweatses" , and bwushing and especially butt-patting. Oh, I could butt-pat him all day long, as far as he's concerned. And I do because I figure the more I butt-pat him, the more he'll purr and the longer he'll want to stay alive. I butt-pat him and his lower body just contracts with pleasure, and he blows bubbles out the sides of his mouth. I say, "Bwuzie, you're all drooled up." And I have to wipe him off because otherwise he shakes his head and flings webs of drool all over himself. But then I have to start butt-patting again quickly because when I stop, he cries out, "Meow". We sing duets like that; we learned it from my sister's cat Mia. I butt-pat him and then when I stop he sings out "Meow". It goes like this: "Happy birthday to"... "Meow", "Happy birthday to"... "Meow", "Happy birthday dear"... "Meow", Happy birthday to"... "Meow"

We're gonna take it on the road. The only trouble is, he upstages me 'cause he sings better than me----free and uninhibited. I spent about \$10,000 for singing lessons one year and I still couldn't get that 3rd... you know... "Birth..." So I quit. \$10,000!

Now I just barter for butt-patting and study with Maestro Brrrother Man.

"Meow-----"

And there's Ol' Man with his squished in little Burmese face. He's so cute. He's like a little healer guy. When Don was sick, he hardly ever left him. The sicker Don got, the more he stayed with him. I called him the attending physician.

Oh, you think he just liked sleeping with that hot feverish body, huh? But I know better 'cause after Winston chewed up my face Ol' Man waited and he knew just exactly when my face was healed enough to take a little pressure, and from that day on, as soon as I'd lie down, he'd plop his little warm body against my cheek and stay there for hours and he'd just purr and purr and purr into my cheek.

Many months later, I read in a pet magazine that cats purr at a frequency of usually between 20 and 140 HZ, domestic cats generally between 20 and 50 HZ, the same frequency as ultrasound, which is healing for nerves, muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments, good for infection... To this day, whenever I lie down, Ol' Man plops his furry warm body against my cheek and his head in my hand and he just purrs and purrs. That's how we sleep. And Baby Brother finds another warm spot to sleep---on my chest or my puss.... "meow" "prrrr..."

And you should have seen Little Girl with her feeding tube, poor thing. She got sick right before September 11th and died soon after. Her little body stayed in the freezer at the vet's for nearly a month till outside vehicles were allowed down

here and could take her away. Ironic, huh? Couldn't get cremated near ground zero. And there was my Angel. She was found in a gutter, almost going down the drain. It must have been the first day of her life because she was so tiny and her eyes were closed for about a week after. She was a fierce and intense little spirit girl, and when she came to us on Tracey's birthday, she just crawled into the nape of Don's neck and then right into my heart and never left, and she always knew just what I was thinking. I swear she did. One time, just after we moved back to the loft the first time, I was lying on the bed and Angel was asleep by my feet. I was really sad. I almost never cry, at least not for myself anyway, but this day I was really sad and I started crying. Angel got up immediately, really disturbed by the sound of my crying and she walked up my body to my face and looked at me and started gently licking my tears away. It was so sweet. We just held each other for a long time and comforted. That was my Angel. Some days later I was lying on the bed again and Angel was asleep by my feet. I was still really sad and I started crying again. Angel got up immediately, really upset by the sound of my crying and she walked up my body toward my face, and I thought she was going to lick my tears away again. But this time, I guess she just wanted to stop the sound of the sadness that was hurting me, so she quickly pounced on it and attacked my throat. She knew what to do though; it was perfect. I mean she didn't hurt me, she just surprised

me so much that I started laughing and I laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed, and I laughed everything out of me. And then Angel and I just held each other for the longest time and I whispered sweet nothings in her ear, and we loved each other way deeper than the sadness could ever go. That was my Angel. When she died I couldn't move. For a couple/few days I just lay there and moaned and moaned. And Baby Brother stayed with me the whole time on my chest with his little head up against my chin, his face up to mine, and we comforted each other.

It's funny, I've never had a dog, but I never miss smiling at all the dogs I pass on the street. I rarely notice who's on the other end of the leash, but I almost never miss greeting the dogs. Oh, they look so happy out on their walks, even the 3-legged ones. They remind me to be delighted by life. I love a lot of dogs.

Whenever I go to my sister's and K.T.'s house, as soon as I walk in the door, I've got to immediately lie down on the floor so their Yorkies can run all around on my chest and lick me all over the face. Oh we're so excited; Zoe's turning over for tummy rubs and Remy's running around in circles and peeing all over the floor, and I'm laughing so hard, I'm trying not to leak. Damn, wish I bought those Depends.

And it's the same when I go to my mom's house. Their little Yorkie, Liliana gets so excited to see someone she knows. Oh she's so cute. She runs in and turns

over on her back and stretches her body really long so I can rub her tummy. She has a very sensitive tummy; she throws up a lot. I mean her tummy is only this big, but her personality is enormous. So she stretches her body out and I rub that little tummy and she jumps up to reward me, licking me all over the nose and on the mouth. And I'm giggling so hard, I can't keep my mouth closed, and she slips her little tongue in there, giving me those French, I mean, Yorkshire kisses-----Especially good on throw-up days. But I don't mind. Those are their babies, and we love them so much.

And you should see the dogs when I go give massage treatments, like Wittgenstein. Elisabeth says, "Wittgy, Oil is coming." I'm Oil. And Wittgy and I get excited, and he knows before I even get out of the elevator. Wittgy is a silver wire-haired guy with a tongue as fast as a speeding bullet. And it's like that when I go to Pam's to work on her. She has 3 dogs too. The newest arrival in Pam's house is Murphy Brown. Murphy Brown was in an animal shelter in the Gulf Coast when the hurricanes hit, and that was her lucky day because when they finally figured out that they better save somebody, and when they finally got around to the animals that were still alive, Murphy Brown and a bunch of other dogs, (about 500), were brought to NYC for adoption, and all the dogs got adopted except Murphy Brown, so Pam just had to take her home, didn't she? And Murphy Brown says, "I'm scared of the city and I hate it, all the noise

and cars and people rushing past me... but now that I've got a home and a mom, I'm not going anywhere." Murphy Brown says, "Now that I've got me a mom, I'm not letting her out of my sight." So she has stuck herself to the side of Pam's body and she won't move. I have to massage around Murphy Brown, and give her a little tummy rub so she knows everything is still OK. And then there are Pam's 2 golden retrievers, and they're literally sprawled all over Pam and all over me while I'm trying to massage her, and they're both drooling. Now Mulligan is cool as long as he's got his stuffed hedgehog in his mouth, but as soon as McGregor hears the sound of the oil bottle opening, he starts licking the air wildly and looking for a limb to lick. And I put some oil on Pam, starting to work, and McGregor licks it off. And I put on some more oil and he licks that off. Then I put it right in my hand, under my hand so he can't see. See, I'm slick; superior human brain at work. Oooo, but it turns out, dogs have sensory tissues deep in the nasal cavity and about 220 million, (some breeds have 300 million), scent cells compared to humans' measly 5 million. Some canines can identify bladder cancer cells in urine, human melanoma lesions, lung and breast cancer just by scent. Their ability to distinguish scents is at least tens of thousands to maybe millions of times greater than humans. And I thought a little sleight of hand would do. Oooh, human chauvinism is something else. No, he'd locate the source of that essential oil in a split nano second and start licking all over my

hands, and then his tongue would slide under my hand to the proverbial oil well, and I'd try to continue working, but I'd find myself massaging on top of his tongue. And no matter how much oil I put on Pam, he'd lick and lick it all off, so the only lubrication left to work with were big pools of drool. I was giving tongue massage in pools of dog drool. They didn't quite prepare me for this in the very esoteric Alpha Massage School, Stevenson Method of Creative Healing, Isui Reiki or Ohashi Shiatsu schools, courses, books, manuals... OK, index: Large intestine pt. 4, gallbladder pt. 25, and small intestine, triple heater, lung, heart, heart constrictor, spleen, kidney, liver, conception vessel, governing vessel meridians and all the rest covered, and bones, nerves, muscles, joints, strains, sprains, dance and sports injuries, spinal adjustments, lymphatic drainage, cranial sacral therapy, cerebral spinal fluids, (fluids?--- now we're talking), connective tissue release, medial gastrocnemius massage and more... Sure, seems everything else is covered, cross-referenced, easily accessible to facilitate a professional therapeutic plan. But canine tongue treatment and diffuse dog drool, nowhere to be found---- I'm on my own. Oh, where's my guru, where's my mentor, where's my mother? But after 35 years I figured it out 'cause I'm a professional---- who can improvise. And besides, I'm not afraid of fluids anymore, (Steady girl, Steady). So I go in there barefooted and put my foot down, ready to dive in, and I hoist my stretchy little massage pant leg all the way

up to my hip and I get in position. And I lap that oil all over my foot and between my toes and my ankle and calf and shin and knee and quadriceps and hamstring, almost all the way up, but not quite to the groin, "prrr..." as I spy McGregor salivating to my side. And I lap on a little extra oil down the gallbladder meridian and stomach pt. 36 for proper digestion. And then I get ready and I----- Serve it up, to bide me some time. And he's licking, and I proceed with treatment in a more professional, legitimate manner on Pam's longissimus and latissimus dorsi, and I have to rub Murphy Brown's tummy so she knows everything's all right. Oh, but McGregor's fast, so I have to lap on some more oil, and he's licking and I'm leaning down the bladder meridian, and laughing, trying not to leak. "prrr..." Damn, wish I wore those Depends. And I've got to lap on some more oil and he's licking and I gotta rub Murphy Brown's tummy, meanwhile trying to perform some very serious advanced healing modalities. And I've got to lap on some more oil, and he's licking and I'm working the psoas, piriformis and sciatica. And I've got to lap on some more oil and he's licking, and I'm rubbing Murphy Brown's tummy while trying to release the scapula, trapezius and rhomboids, and meanwhile channel the Universal energy..."meow..."

...because they're her babies and she loves them, that's why, so I don't mind.

Besides they're funny and sweet and they always make us laugh and smile a lot.

So I don't mind. I really don't mind at all.

But perhaps the most striking one is Laurie and Lou's dog Lola Belle. Lola Belle

is a very complex codified organism of differentiated intricate antenna, ever

vigilant. She's very intelligent. Lola Belle is a rat terrier, made to burrow into

dark tunnels, looking for rats. Laurie says that Lola knows that I know that she's

really a cat. That's why she likes to come downstairs to my loft and eat cat food.

She especially likes the Nutro brand dry ones in the shape of tiny cat heads. Ol'

Man and Brother jump to the counter and cringe as she crunches tiny cat head

after cat head after cat head. "Meow, Meow, Meow" You know, it doesn't

matter how long it's been since Lola Belle and I have seen each other. It might

be a really long time and we might even be outside on the street, on opposite

sides of Canal Street, but when we spy each other we get so excited, and Lola

Belle starts pulling her leash and dragging her dog-walker into the street. And I

have to shout, "Lola Belle, I'm coming", and somehow I have to traverse the 160

feet across treacherous Canal Street with cars whizzing by and 70-foot semi

trucks barreling along illegally, and I have to get to Lola Belle in one piece

because when I get anywhere close, she has flung herself upside down on the

street or sidewalk so I can rub her tummy, and I massage that tummy and then

she jumps up and licks me all over the nose and mouth, and I'm giggling so hard. And then before you know it, quick as a flash, Lola Belle dives with her tongue straight up my nose-----Looking for rats. Oh, I know you're saying, "that's disgusting, get her off, just get her out of there." But no, when Lola Belle dives up my nose, I somehow just have to surrender----- because it's an experience you just don't want to miss. I mean, you have no idea how high up your sinuses go until Lola Belle shoots her tongue up your nose. She's like a fast little motor, roto router, spinning, cleaning out-----little rodents I guess. I know she's gonna hit the brain one day and I'm gonna have a true savant experience: advanced mathematical equations, symphonies, that hidden coloratura...

Michael and I went to a Sherman Alexie reading at a bookstore in Tempe, Arizona and he ran into Sandee and Spencer who I'd never met and who he hadn't seen for years and years, since he was in graduate school in Wisconsin. It must have been like a lot of places where all the Indigenous students get to know each other, especially the ones who grew up on reservations, and then they find themselves in some strange city. And when they'd get together and tell stories about their communities and families, they'd feel a little more at home; it didn't matter what nation or where they were from. Anyway Sandee and Spencer would come over whenever we'd have pot luck gatherings, which was starting to be really often, and we'd invite Michael's relatives who'd moved

down to Arizona from North Dakota, and his friends/colleagues, you know the other Native professors. Most of them were Ph.Ds and I figured I'd be right at home----you know, ADHD and all, (or whatever this mess is.) And they were nice, like Angela. She was Dakota from Minnesota. You know, it didn't matter one bit that Arikaras and Dakotas used to be ancestral enemies---- not anymore--- that kind of paled in the face of the enormity of the real monstrous enemy. Yeah, Angela was like a younger sister to Michael and her kids would clamor around him calling, "Duckshee, Duckshee", ("Uncle" in Dakota); they just loved him, like most everyone did. So Angela, Scott and their kids Autumn, Talon and Sage would always come, and the kids would have a ball with Michael's cousin Doreen's kids. Doreen and Kenny had a son named Talon too. Kenny was Apache from Arizona and they had one daughter Chrissy and 7 boys, and the whole family would perform together. Doreen was a champion fancy shawl dancer when she was younger, and now the whole family performed traditional songs and dances, and Doreen was still so beautiful and graceful---- even after 8 children. They'd travel and perform. A couple of their older boys were champion hoop dancers and even the younger boys were starting to hoop dance. But the cutest one of all was the granddaughter, Chrissy's little baby, Summer. She was only about a year old, but really independent, on the move, and so cute. They'd dress her up in her little buckskin regalia, and she had these

big black eyes. And it didn't matter how sophisticated were the hoop formations of the older boys, ever-changing hoop designs and patterns, balls opening up to worlds, changing to eagles; beautiful hoop dancing. The one you couldn't keep your eyes off of was the little baby, Summer with her big black eyes and one or two little hoops.

And there was James and Ida who would come with whichever of their 3 kids were around. James was Pawnee from Oklahoma and he came from a big joking family, and Ida was Santa Anna Pueblo from New Mexico. She was kind of quiet, and pretty. We got to visit them at her family's in New Mexico one time, and her old mother gave us a medicinal plant for tea. I was so excited. Everyone else preferred coffee and cake, and were clearly more impressed with her fiery hot beef chili stew.

One time we took Michael's little granddaughters, Hunter and Devon, (little Hunter and Dev; I miss them), to Oklahoma for the Pawnee Home Coming and we camped out with James and Ida and all James' relatives. Have you ever been there in the summer? It was so hot and sticky, and there's no ocean---- none at all. It felt like the air had never ever moved, from the beginning of time. They didn't start the pow wows until long after sundown each night, wouldn't even think about dancing until way after dark, it was so hot. But that didn't stop James' family from joking and laughing around all day, and eating hot stuff and

drinking lots of soda. What a fun family. You know, James and Ida's children really loved each other. When their oldest, Maylynn had a birthday, her 13 year old brother Willie had a teddy bear made for her, and when she pressed its wrist you heard Willie's voice say, "I love you, I miss you, Come home soon." Can you imagine a teenage boy not afraid to say he loved his sister, out loud, in public, and recorded for evidence? I never heard of such a thing. Yeah they had a really nice, balanced family. James was a Ph.D., Ida was a letter carrier, and their oldest son Kevin was a champion amateur boxer. When I was recuperating from Winston's mauling, I tried to go with Michael to see one of Kevin's matches, but I spent the whole bout under my chair, taking every blow all too personally. After that I just stayed home under the covers, where Ol' Man (Lewis) and Baby Brother (Ali) could protect me.

And oh, Michael's niece Maggie and Brian and their 4-year old, Aleesha would come, and Joaquim was still cooking inside Maggie's tummy. Maggie was named after her Grandma Maggie, Michael's mom, his Mother Magdalene. She was kind of like a saint, blessed mother of 15, (Michael said "There was nothing immaculate in that house though, but don't tell anybody.") His mom was so nice. You know, she came from a direct line of ancestral chiefs, like Michael's father's line too. And almost everyone in the family was really smart and talented and intense. Magdalene, with fifteen intemperate offspring, hadn't lost

her mind. That's 'cause she prayed all the time for everyone, and she kept angels around her. She just loved angels of all kinds--- well, all except for the ones I sent her from New York. I thought they'd be perfect----beautiful hand-painted brown-skinned, hand-carved wooden Balinese angels. I didn't notice they were naked. I wasn't looking for that. The store was dark. I just didn't notice until Nelrene said their mom hid them in the drawer, in the back, under things. I thought about sending some Barbie clothes to cover them up, but I wasn't sure the perky t... you know, or those high heels or go-go boots would quite fit. She didn't hold it against me though. She wasn't like that, she was really nice. Besides, she was used to forgiving. She had to practice all her life. Maggie. From a chief's line. Magdelene. Oh those missionaries sure got around. Do know that they would divvy up people on the reservations and assign them churches and religions, I mean, within the same family? They'd say, "You, you're a Catholic; O.K., you're Mormon; We'll take you, you're Methodist; and we've got you, Protestant..." To this day you'll still see grown siblings with all different denominations. Funny system, this organized religion. Maybe I didn't miss anything after all.

But what were we talking about? Oh the pot lucks, yeah, the pot lucks were nice. Everybody would bring food, except for Sandee and Spencer somehow. They'd just bring their younger son and his girlfriend sometimes. People would

bring a lot of big fat meat and sugar, just in case there wasn't enough diabetes to go around. And I'd make a lot of really healthy vegetarian, mostly organic food. "Ummm. Ummm. Ummm." It went over real big, especially with the men and kids. Kind of like with my family and Don's too. Eventually I resorted to dumping in a few pounds of pork at the end. It wasn't for me, mind you. It's just my black eyed peas really wanted to please. My savory spicy beans needed to blend. Yeah, my pintos really wanted a prize. So they modified. But my wild rice: "No, no, no, no, no, no." My wild rice frankly didn't give a shit. It felt fine, as it was, of the earth, wild, unrefined and uncompromised.

Anyway the pot lucks were nice and delicious. Michael would be out back grilling, surrounded by family and friends who loved him, everyone eating, joking, talking, gesticulating, bones in hand-----Devouring ribs, pulling legs, telling tales. Always astute, stimulating conversations. OK, occasionally academics professing----- It kind of comes, inherent with the territory----- You know, scholars, Ph.Ds deconstructing the criticality of the discourse to decolonize and interrogate the underlying erroneous premise, vehemently opposing protracted postulates and parochial, implacable paradigms, subverting the dominant domain, while penetrating the primary purpose, determined and dynamically defending their sovereign nations, or was it their dissertations? ssss... Oh, it's just a joke----Just a jealous joke from someone who

thought going to school was the same as being institutionalized. It's just a joke. I learned it from James' sister in Pawnee-----Maybe. That or the one about her sister and the big vibrator in the tent. Oh, was I glad another woman, (and a married one), told that joke, especially after the fatal slip from my loose little lascivious lips about the ladder and all the positions, inviting I don't know what with that "inappropriate innuendo, no self-respect... rrrrr... wild rice of a..."

Sorry.

Oh those missionaries sure did get around. And they went around me.

But the gatherings were good----- People laughing and visiting, also serious and committed, discussing vital issues and writings, teachings, projects, initiatives, always working to lift their communities from the grip of hopeless tragedy, to build on the enormous intelligence and strength within. Really dedicated people, challenging the demeaning big-nosed, red skinned mascots and manageable romantic myth of the single dimensional, solely supra-spiritual, feathered, beaded Indian beauties riding off into ancient sunsets with fearless fierce warriors charging off to Afghanistan and Iraq in Black Hawk and Tomahawk cruise missiles to murder other Indigenous peoples in the name of the United Nemesis, (or to feed their families, more likely.) Michael was always intent on displacing armored tanks for Indigenous Critical Think Tanks on every

reservation to utilize the resources of the untapped talents and minds of the people, for the sake of the children.

And the beautiful children were swimming and playing, laughing and running around for hours, having a ball. They were so sweet and cute and adorable and energetic and loving. It was such a joy to watch them, as they were getting closer and closer each time, becoming like one big family. It was starting to almost be like, sort of, kind of like being part of a community, could it be? Like that time Doreen picked my name for the Secret Santa, and she actually had a shawl made especially for me since she knew what I really most wanted was to learn to fancy shawl dance, if only someone would teach me---- because it looks so beautiful and joyful and freeing, like flying...

If only someone would teach me.

Then one day Sandee and Spencer invited Michael and I to go out to lunch with them, and Sandee invited us to go over to their place after, so I could meet their dog, Winston, since she knew I loved animals, and so that Spencer could show Michael around the Pima Reservation where he grew up. I figured their dog Winston must have been like a family member, either that or a very impressive canine prodigy, judging from how prominently his name was printed right near the top of their family business card. Sandee would send me emails, with subject: "A cute cuddly dog". And there'd be a picture of Winston with the

caption, "Our lil' black dog, Winston, our baby, being a UW-Madison Badgers fan." And there'd be the dog Winston surrounded by red and white Badger's balls and pom poms, red megaphones, red jerseys, all that red, bloody red, and red banners.... (that should have been a red flag), and there'd be Winston---- uhhh ---- tired from cheering I suppose. ---- uhhh ---- So we went out to lunch with them and then went over to their place after, so I could meet their dog, Winston. And when we got there, I did what I always do when I first meet a new animal. I go to bed with him... I mean, I petted him and hugged him and talked to him, "Hey, Winston, How are you doing, man? Hi Winston." Sandee went into the other room to do something and Spencer started showing Michael around. First him showed him a picture of his family there. There must have been a hundred people in that photo. You see, Spencer came from a really big Pima family, and let me tell you, there were some really big Pimas. So they went off to look around and I was just hanging out down there with Winston, petting him and gently resting my arm over him. I thought we were getting on really well. Everything seemed fine for a minute. Then all of a sudden Winston turned and quickly dug his teeth deep into my face and started shaking my head in his mouth like he did his toys-----Or so I'm told. I mean, I can remember the feeling of his teeth sinking into my face, but then after that I just got really quiet, and surrendered. I learned that when I was a little girl, and I got to practice a whole

bunch of times, when somebody was doing something really bad to my body, I'd just leave and go inside myself where it was safe and they couldn't hurt me, and I wouldn't come out till it was over-----if ever.

Anyway, it's a good thing that Sandee came out when she did and called Winston off, or who knows what would have been left of me. I was no match for old Winston. Michael said I was lucky he didn't go straight for the juggler. He'd already fractured the bridge of my nose and bit all through the cartilage in the bottom of my nose and bit just a centimeter below the eye. My glasses were all broken up, but they saved my eye. And he bit deep into the left cheek. I lost my nerve there and then. My face was twisted all the way over to the right, where I still had working muscles, for a really long time.

Michael went into emergency mode and they got cold wet towels and put them all over my face to stop my breathing; oh, did I mean the bleeding? And they rushed me to the hospital closest the reservation. In the car Sandee and Spencer seemed so upset; they said they were so sorry their dog mauled me so bad. I didn't want them to be upset, I was trying to comfort them. I kept saying, "Don't worry, I'm OK. Don't worry, everything's going to be OK. Don't worry, it was my fault anyway. I probably got too close, too fast, like I always do." They didn't let me forget the part about it being my fault.

When we got to the hospital, Michael led me into the emergency room and the ER doctors examined me and then left the room briefly. Then one came back looking really discouraged and worried. She asked, "Do you have any kind of health insurance because otherwise it's going to be really hard to find someone to come." It was Sunday early evening. But fortunately I'd had a really strong feeling that I needed to get health insurance-----Not an easy thing to find and afford in this country if you're freelance self-employed. But it had been such a strong persistent feeling that I had to follow it, and I got some. And it had gone into effect just 3 weeks before. So now there were only 45,799,999 uninsured Americans, but not me. So I pulled out my gold card, or rather my blue cross. "Fyoo." It almost didn't do me any good though because I was there with one Sahnish/Hidatsa, one Oneida/Menominee, and one big dark Pima. And who could even tell, (or care) what I was-----probably just another bloody Indian. So the plastic surgeon on call refused to come. He said, "Ah, just stitch her up and send her to my office tomorrow."

But the ER doctors knew they'd have a Lady Frankenstein on their conscience if they tried to patch up this mess themselves, so one of them persevered on the phone a little longer. And she found a young Iranian plastic surgeon, Dr. Mehdi Mazaheri, fresh out of medical school; he hadn't passed his plastic surgery boards yet, and he'd been at another hospital since 7: AM waiting to go into

surgery; he just finished a hand surgery, but he agreed to come anyway.

“Bahamdi ‘llah ki”.

I guess a bloody Indian didn’t look all that different from a bloody Iranian, or Romanian for that matter, to his heart. And I was moved, inspired to make mental note to check out his holy book, (library records and FBI files notwithstanding.)

So Dr. Mazaheri came right over to the hospital and examined me.

Motashakkeram. Salam aleikom. And he said that the bites in the left cheek especially were very deep. He said the buccal branch of the facial nerve on the left side was severed, and he said that it’d be like finding a needle in a haystack to locate that nerve. But then when he flapped back my cheek, he sounded so surprised and excited. He said, “There it is” ---- And he got out a little magnifying loop to put on his glasses so he could try to catch the end with one stitch to reconnect it, hoping the nerve would grow back in time. I was told by a plastic surgeon nearly a year later that they should have rushed me right into surgery with something a lot more powerful than a little magnifying loop. But beggars can’t be choosers, can we? And dear Dr. Mazaheri really did wonders with what he had at his disposal:

that loop, those hands and that heart. “Bi-hamdi ‘llah ta’ al. Salam aleikom.”

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Dr. Mazaheri do an exercise in preparation for working, to energize or steady his hands, and I mentally promised Baby Brother that if I got out of this one, I'd learn that exercise for his fluids. Steady girl, steady. And though my blood pressure was soaring, I actually felt very quiet inside and felt like I was really being taken care of. The first thing Dr. Mazaheri did was start to shoot me full of lidocaine all over my face, to numb me and make me more comfortable for the deep stitching. And all I could think of were the little babies and children with the big black eyes in... Iraq. And how, for those 12 long years of sanctions, (when a million and a half Iraqis died), and the new U.S. invasion, about 5 months into it at that time, and how for all those years there had been practically no medicine to treat them or save their little lives, let alone any lidocaine to make them comfortable, if their little faces got blown off. And I became acutely aware of my relative privilege, and though inordinately grateful for the care and reconstruction, somehow not all that numb or altogether comfortable with the disparity, despite my luck, and the lidocaine, (soon to be followed by an abundance of morphine).

As time went on, the skillfully executed stitches and the scars began to heal and disappear incredibly. But the thoughts of the babies stayed in my head. I'd lost my nerve, but I was really much more frightened for the little children. I just kept thinking of them, and reflecting on and reflecting on, and rather reflected the

problem; it became a part of me. I mean I came to utterly embody the imbalance. At first I just wished that my smile would become symmetrical and open enough so that I wouldn't look like a monster and frighten little children when they saw me---- Arizonians, Afghans, Iraqis, Palestinians, Iranians, Romanians, and all others. That was my first goal. Then after nearly a year when the palsy plateaued and vanity veered near my ugly head, I mean veered it's ugly head, and I went hightailing it to the facial microsurgery expert in Virginia who said an 18 hour surgery could help... Oops, out of Blue Cross network, Sorry... Surgery? Oh, about a \$150,000 "Aoww!" Or perhaps electric shock therapy is in order. "Aoww!" I mean electric nerve pulse stimulation, physical therapy 3 times a week, with massage, myofascia release, daily exercise, hot compresses, biofeedback and especially ultrasound... purr... "Ol' Man" --- Physical therapy three times a week for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 months, and on and on, long after insurance benefits ran out. "Aoww"

OK, anything to mitigate the monster. But as I looked in the mirror more, I finally came to realize that the monster was really much bigger than me. I saw that this was really a reflection... of my responsibility. And I realized that if I wanted to repair the picture, I was going to have to face it fully: the frightening face or force of inequity, the basis of the bias, and address the wounds wisely with a remedy, a progressive plan to harness the energy of community to help to

heal humanity humanely, immediately. I saw that I was going to have to work really hard, every day, probably for the rest of my life, to summon the strength and reenergize all my nerve, courageously collectively. I knew that I was going to have to exercise with effort, day in and day out, exercise initiative... on the left. I was going to have to muster the movement from the ground, the grass, the roots, the core, what's more, the collective conscience, to make manifest the movement, find the fight, the might to motivate the muscles, the momentum, a powerful massive movement... on the left... to overcome the dominant right that was so drastically and grotesquely distorting the whole picture into an inhuman despicable display of disparity, to everyone's detriment---- a mauling, a mauling, a monstrous mauling of morality, the mirror of morbidity. I was going to have to fight with might to elevate, uplift the intention toward a world of warmth and welcoming reflection spreading out with symmetry equally everywhere ----- so the babies won't have to be frightened of the mirror of the monster any more.