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# NEWSLETTER

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MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE BITS & PIECES OF THE WORLD  
DARK GLOVE I-HOUSE POETRY KENYANS HELP SAVE THE WORLD  
IT'S ABOUT TIME MY GOOD EXPERIENCE IN THE HOUSE  
THE WORLD IS YOUR CLASSROOM CALIFORNIA CLOSE-UP  
CREDITS

# My Life in a Suitcase

Hanne Pedersen

Two days before my departure to San Jose, I sat on my bed trying to figure out what to bring. The clothes had to be something I could stand for ten months. I remember my best friend said to me: "If I was you, I would have done this a long time ago, you have to be away for almost a year!" But I did not pay much attention to this statement before my honeymoon stage of cultural adjustment started to wear off (about a month after my arrival).

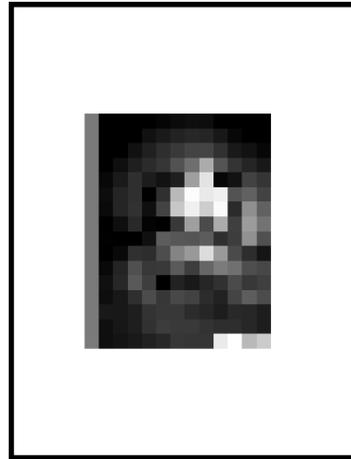
The only "long term" packing experience I had, was a two months au pair stay in London. Here I almost brought my whole wardrobe – "just in case" I said. But of the experience of not being able to bring everything back home (because of an exaggerated shopping), told me not to bring all of it. So I started to sort some of my clothes (I even sold some of it to my two sisters!), and put in two piles – possible things to bring, and what I absolutely would not take with me. My dad came to me: "Hanne, do not bring too much. You always buy a lot of clothes anyway, and you have to get it home somehow". I even called my boyfriend to ask what to put in my suitcase. He also said: "Do not bring too much. You have to carry the bag yourself; I am not going to carry it for you" - what a gentleman! Two wise men had spoken!

I made my decision of what to bring on the fact that the weather is much better in California, than it is in cold and rainy Denmark, and the two wise men in my life. Most of the clothes I brought were summer clothes, something similar to going to Costa del Sol for three weeks.

After a month when my culture shock started for real, I realized how much my clothes and things meant to me. I missed my boyfriend, my family, my friends, and all my things and clothes at home (damn, I should have listened to my girlfriend).

I came to a room less than 1/3 of the size that I was used to, in my own apartment in Copenhagen. And I had to share it. And I had to share a bathroom with 39 other girls. Where was I supposed to be myself? The shower was the only place I felt I could be myself for a while (not long if you want to preserve water!).

I had a hard time the first semester. I admit that. I often felt lonely, and I especially felt homesick. Yes, there were around 80 other people, probably having the same



feelings, but nobody knew me. Who could comfort me if they did not know what I liked, what I thought, and my innermost feelings? I felt I was living in a suitcase, and I felt my identity was in that suitcase. The things in this suitcase were what I

had chosen to bring from my life, into what I call my second life in San Jose. These things were my home, my identity. I missed the things that made me who I am. I am not materialistic, but I believe that we have things in our life, which we associate ourselves with. I did not bring these things. I did not bring a bracelet my boyfriend gave me for Christmas; I did not bring my best CD etc. I felt I had to start all over again. I felt that I lost everything in my life, and I had to build that up again, in total different surroundings, without my old identity. I felt that people did not know my real self. I was not the ever-happy person I used to be. I did not laugh anymore, and I did not dance my "being happy" dances anymore to extreme loud music (you have to know me very well if you want to experience this!).

Yes, I bought new clothing in hope of feeling better. However, I did not have a relationship to those. They were not a part of my real identity. I felt like a former resident said: "I buy clothes because I need it, but I really do not like it" (Jennifer Burnett, 2000). These clothes meant nothing to me.

Around Thanksgiving my life (if you can call what I had a life) started to turn around. It was the day when I did not notice that the buses look different from what they do in Denmark. It was the day when I did not notice that people looked different (always wearing white sneakers) and spoke another language (with and without accent). And when I started to accept the clothes they had here in the U.S.

However, I survived. Thanks to Caroline Stenman who taught me to appreciate what I was going through, what I had learned already, and what I am going to learn. She comforted me, because she remembered what it was like to be away from home,



San Francisco



Napa Valley



Japanese Friendship Gardens



Winchester Mystery House



Monterey



Mission San Juan Batista

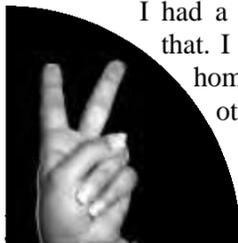


Photos by: Ed Cooper (Napa Grapes), Liz Kmetz (Monterey Marina & Winchester Mystery House and fountain), Hubert Lowman (Mission), and Uli Lutz (Golden Gate & Japanese Friendship Garden).

sea kayaking or whale watching, visit the Monterey Bay Aquarium, or roller blade on trails following the coastline. Monterey is also within an hour and a half of the I-5.

- The **Winchester Mystery House** is in San Jose. It is a beautiful Victorian mansion with many oddities. If you are looking for a ghost story, you might just find it here.
- The 21 **California Missions** were built between 1769 and 1823 along the coast, one day's walk apart. Each mission is distinct and architecturally beautiful. The mission pictured is Mission San Juan Bautista and is on the way to Monterey.
- Closest to home is the **Japanese Friendship Garden**. It can be reached by bike or by car and is a great place to go when you need to escape from your studies. Unlike the Mystery House, the Friendship Garden is free.

I hope you enjoy these places as much as I have!



# The World is Your Classroom

Carol Burns

They say we go to school to get an education, and often times we frown upon those who did not have the opportunity to go to college. We look at these people and expect them to know less than we do because we have been taught by the finest professors and with the proper materials. Yet, sitting in a classroom does not always guarantee that we will know all there is to know about everything. We walk away with a diploma and a bit of arrogance but we don't always walk away with life experiences and the kind of knowledge that you do not get from a textbook. A 4.0 GPA and honors cannot guarantee a person the gift of insight, tolerance, acceptance, and the simple awareness that comes from taking your everyday surroundings and absorbing everything there is to learn about life. The world is our classroom. We have all heard this before but have we all really thought about what it means? What does your world currently consist of? Mine of course consists of the classroom element and the work element, but also a special bonus element that has fed me with knowledge that I would never have received from a professor's lectures. By this May I will have spent three years of my life living in the I-House. In my time here I have been surrounded by cultures I may have never come in contact with outside the house. Hours of talking with friends and comparing family traditions, from Christmas activities to holiday dishes, or talking about wedding ceremonies and folk tales derived from a history

that is so much older than my own it is almost incomprehensible to me. These discussions, and sometimes debates, are lead in natural social situations, at times when we don't even realize that we are learning. Then there are the things learned not in conversations and comparisons, but from interacting with people on a daily basis. There are little nuances that we can see, provided we take the time to look, that separate people into cultural categories. These categories include simple things like how a question is answered, how direct a person can be, or how to approach a person with an idea or invitation. We also learn that stereotypes are more like urban legends and people don't always fit into perfect little categories like we hope they will. In this house you learn acceptance, tolerance, cooperation, awareness, and countless other traits that can only be taught in a situation like the one that exists at the I-House.

These traits are valuable and will carry us farther than any degree. The cultural knowledge gained here is added to our world knowledge and, in turn, to our life experiences. Because of this we will be rich and will hopefully teach others and always hunger to be around people unlike ourselves. So, as we've heard before: the world is our classroom. Please come in, class is in session.

## California Close-Up

Liz Kmetz

- **San Francisco**, famous for its Golden Gate Bridge, is only about an hour away from the International House. The beaches, Fisherman's Wharf, China Town, the cable cars, Little Italy, and Haight & Ashbury (where the Hippie Era began in the 60's) are all worth a visit.
- **Napa** is both a city and a valley. Napa Valley's beautiful countryside is dotted with wineries and outdoor activities, including hiking in the mountains or vineyards, swimming, and hot air ballooning. Napa is about an hour and a half away.
- **Monterey** was the home of John Steinbeck. Here you can go to the marina or the wharf, go

and remembered what it was like to have a boyfriend in another area code! She taught me that my stay here was not about getting a good grade, but about getting an experience for a lifetime. Thanks Caroline, I hope you will be my friend forever.

What did I learn? Girls, do not ever listen to men when packing your suitcase!!

## Bits and Pieces of the World

Lina Ha

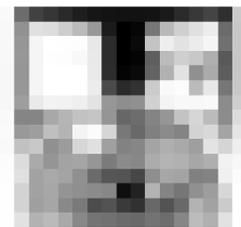
The ladies' bathroom in the I. House is the center of gossip, the place where we spill our triumphs, our fears and our annoyances. We sing duets together while we shower, laugh when we goof, and, in general, bond all during the course of our nightly rituals in the bathroom. These conversations are one of the things I will miss the most about the I-House.

If I had to pin down the essence of my college experience at SJSU, I would have to say that it all came from the I-House and its wonderful residents. They *never* sleep. You can find someone awake and ready to talk or party at anytime of day or night, and your resources for all of your classes are within shouting distance. I heard a resident asking another for help on his computer program the other night. We have several English tutors here who help proofread papers. We even have in-house artists. The residents are all like walking encyclopedias. I have learned that most French women *do* shave their legs and underarms, that Kenyans are crazy drivers, that most people in the world are not on American time but rather on French, and that any geographic knowledge I have of a resident's country is met with surprise and suspicion (since I'm an American and they rarely know anything about the rest of the world, which is generally true but there are some exceptions).

I can honestly say that these past two semesters have allowed me to grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally. Coming to California has allowed me to meld my Vietnamese, American and Greek heritages. Living among so many differences forces you to study your core, your inner

self, and come to terms with it. It can be frightening, but also freeing.

I now have friends scattered all over the globe who will gladly open their homes if I decide to visit. Whether you know a person for three seconds or ten years, he or she makes an impression on you. All of us walk around with bits and pieces of other people stuck to us, and the special ones leave the biggest chunks. I will leave the I-House with a colorful and vibrant collage of the special souls, places and moments that we shared. It has been an incredible experience. I hope the residents who follow in our footsteps feel a little of what each of us did. You will know that you have truly lived. *Carpe diem*. Remember, only the good die young.



## Dark Glove

Marcos Campillo

Have ever you lost your keys a couple of times when returning home late? Have you noticed how spoons or knives disappear from your kitchen? And have you felt, at night, some soft wind that whispers to you in a fearful way while walking through the living room? Let me tell you, my dear grandson Eddy, something like that happened a long ago, at a time in which computers dominated the whole world. And in the middle of the whole world ...The Computer Engineering Building had already closed its doors. No one could be seen walking down the street. The park behind it was green like always, but a green covered with fear, with dark, with cold...

Ahjmin was ready to get home. He had waited in the door of the building a couple of minutes, just the exact time to smoke a cigarette and think about tonight's plans. He was not sure about it. He didn't know what the chances of success were. But even with that he decided to take risks and get on with it. He would get paid, and that was the only important thing for him tonight. It was just before midnight, before the sky fell. As a cloud of fog descended upon the human sphere, Ahjmin started walking home. His house, a small apartment near downtown on Pasadena Avenue, was not what he would consider the perfect place for living a whole life. Not for him. That is why he needed to do it, because he could prove that he was able to do such things even living in that dwelling for "outsiders" like him.

As he passed the Library Building he heard a voice calling. "Hi, Monsieur, you dropped your glove." The boy standing there beside him took the glove and gave it to Ahjmin. They looked at each other but the latter forgot to thank him for it. He was so tense with his task, that he didn't want the boy to notice anything...

But how could a boy, a young guy, notice what he was going to do?...Ahjmin placed the glove in his pocket, and started home again. His figure, in the darkness, seemed to this young boy the figure of a murderer. One that was going to commit the most atrocious deed ever. One whom he should never see again.

As Ahjmin disappeared around the corner, the young guy started his way again. He was also going home. But he lived not far from there.

Just a couple of streets and he could reach home; "Home Sweet Home" he started singing while the only audience he had was the cold and the darkness of that nowhere-land.

He reached home. He inserted the key, and opened the front door slowly while he thought about what had happened some minutes ago. (- but how could a boy, a young guy, notice what he was going to do? - his figure, in the darkness, seemed to this young boy the figure of a murderer). When he turned on the lights of the hall he realized that the house was silent, empty. "Or it may be that everybody was sleeping" he thought. But one way or another, it was still strange to find it like that so early. The house was sometimes a full explosion of noise. He started calling in all directions, but he found no answer back. He went upstairs and examined all the rooms. Nobody there. It was really strange. Nobody in the house, nobody even sleeping!

He then decided to go to the room in which he had a chaotic row of tables and computers. He decided to start working in his project for tonight (he actually had other plans for tonight, but the house was empty) when the images started to come to his mind (- "hi, Monsieur, you dropped your glove"). He would never forget the facial expression of that man. Francois could not forget it, nor forget that the house was empty. It was really strange...

The lights turned off suddenly, the computers shut down, and darkness invaded the room. He left immediately. He had not fully recovered when he heard a noise from the upstairs of the house. Not without being scared he decided to find out what was going on. He looked inside the rooms again but when he came downstairs, the piano in the corner seemed to be the only witness of the night. A witness that maybe could have told him why the window next to it was open. The wind was moving the curtains while entering the house in a silent but menacing way.

Francois heard the noise again. PUM PUM. But he was unable to assure where it came from.

The kitchen was empty like the rest of the house, and the dishes were still in the sink - the same way he found them yesterday - so he assumed that Taimine had not been there that morning (she could not stand seeing dirty dishes piled up). But something had been left on the floor.

There was a dark glove, the one that everybody used for cleaning. He took it from the floor.

## My Good Experience in the I-House

Panu Sirihongthong

When I first came to The U.S.A., everything was new to me. What I expected before I got here was so nice. However, my first frustrating problem was related to how I would properly use my English skills. I was not quite sure whether my English preparation before I came here was good enough or not. Nervousness lessened my confidence in the first few months, but I was willing to struggle through it. Honestly speaking, I felt homesick as much as feeling tired with school. I knew that unhappiness never lasts forever.

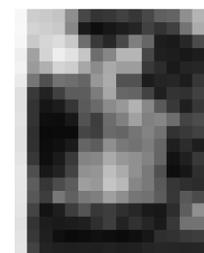
Luckily, I was destined to live in this International House. Here I can improve my English in different ways. For some time, it was agonizingly painful because of cultural shock and traditional differences. However, I have been improving my English little by little and I do not even realize how fast it is. I am able to communicate with a lot of people who belong to a wide variety of backgrounds. I have been accumulating words, idioms, and sentences from daily conversations with friends and teachers. To me, living in I-House gives me a higher and better chance to consistently improve my English.

Besides having that opportunity, I have been enjoying a lot of activities in the house. The mandatory activities for example, are the orientation meeting, multi-cultural simulations, and floor meetings. The optional activities, which allow residents to have more fun, are Pancake Breakfast, coffee night, pajamas party, movie night, car wash, etc. There are a lot of sports activities too. Guests are warmly welcome to the coffee night, which is normally held on every Tuesday night. It is basically during the night that guests and I-house residents get together, talk, relax, and exchange their own experiences. Everyone joining the coffee night can enjoy fresh-made cookies, coffee, and some special dishes of desert on occasion. One of the most promising fundraising activities in I-house is the car wash. It is just fun that residents dress how they do during summer time and stay outdoors for a sunny day or two to help get the cars washed. Guests are also welcome at the car wash if they want to help out.

Such enjoyable activities broaden residents' international perspective and enhance relationships among friends. I myself feel this warm atmos-

phere as well as the others. Especially when I felt tired and could not keep on studying, friends were always there and ready to hang out. In some situations, just talking with friends could help me laugh and feel relaxed.

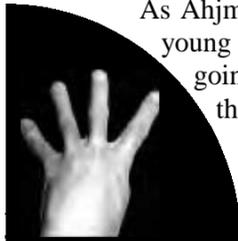
I sometimes want to find something different to do. Sports is my optional way of relaxing or spending my extra free-time. A lot of sports facilities are available on SJSU campus such as the swimming pool, badminton court, or even in I-house. The I-house basement is the place where the ping-pong table, foosball table, and pool table are located. At the opposite side of the room from where those tables are located, there is a formal study room. Since I am a pool lover, while I am studying in the study room and some people are playing pool, I am always distracted and tempted



to take a pool break. It helps me relax though.

On occasion, sports events are held in the house. Pool tournaments and foosball tournaments have been successfully held in the past. Winners got rewards such as a gift certificate or at least a posted recognition. I have participated in these events too.

I have been enjoying participating in this second "home" while studying towards my degree at SJSU. The other residents and I are lucky living and having fun together. It would not be so great a happiness if each person did things alone. I enjoy what I am doing at school and in the house, and I appreciate the effort that all of you have made in sharing with me the activities of The House.



find myself thinking. It does not happen often, so I'm a bit scared. I have always feared that passive comfort of the I-House could lead to claustrophobic isolation, anomie and complacent inertia, but I was wrong. What the I-House really does is stopping time. Better, yet, it prolongs the length of experiences and annihilates past, present and future. It erases history. I might sound paranoid, believe that the mysterious disappearance of the *Fall 2000 History Book* was all but accidental. Time in the I-House is conflated, deflated, imploded. Time – if there is such a thing as time, at this point I really doubt it – seems to have cyclical, not linear, nature. Being here I feel like Benjamin Button, the hero of the Fitzgerald's story that grows younger... Have you ever wished time would stop, so that the inevitability of progress, and its immovable corollaries, decline and decay, could be averted? Come to the I-House and you'll see that happening. In real time.

Maybe time is an emotion, rather than a motion. "A repeatable emotion", as the copy from that old Sony ad ran. The I-House, just like the mansion is Buñuel's "Exterminating Angel" and the chateau in Resnais' "Last Year in Marienbad" has a magical, almost mystical nature. At the I-House, the Sisyphean rituals dictated by the multicultural imperative, the repetitive and constant introductions, the polite acceptance of invitations, and the perpetuation of self-indulgent parties, coffee nights and celebrations remind me of the tragicomic social routines performed by Buñuel's characters. The I-house is a temple devoted to the cult of time.

It's thirteen past six now as I look at the pictures – visual epitaphs, maybe? – of former residents on the walls and think about the ephemerality of the present, the mysteries of (im)mutability, the longings created by distant memories and projected nostalgia. The international house is absolutely post-modern in the sense that it effaces time. Jameson (1983) said it better: "The disappearance of history, the way in which our entire contemporary system has little begun to love its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions." Resistance is futile. Besides, all of your base are belong to us.

So here I am, again. In the stinky kitchen. Me, myself and my perfect moka pot. Yes, I am making coffee. Perfect coffee in

<http://www.jokeaholics.com/cartoon/toon9803.htm>



the stinky kitchen, what an oxymoron. It feels like I have always been here. It's 6 AM in the morning and the rest of the house is asleep. Don't get me wrong, I don't have a fancy, expensive home brewing station equipped with a timer and a grinder. All I have is just my humble Bialetti stove-top moka pot that I brought from Milan.

And this is all I need.

"That's weird," he thought, "the other one is not here." He didn't find it in the drawer, which, mysteriously, was also open with all the knives messed up. But the kitchen was so chaotically organized that he didn't pay much attention to it – Why should he waste his time playing detective? Not now that something weird was happening in his house.

On his way back he noticed that the computer was still shut down. Besides, next to that room, a small dwelling which had been built for a kind of study room emanated a frightening sound of nothingness.

Everything was silent then for a moment. Francois remembered the drawer, the knives, the open window... His full body started to quiver. He decided to go out and noticed that the office at the entrance of the building was closed, though the door was not totally locked. "Señorita," as Mrs Dylan was affectionately known by the residents, must have forgotten it.

Francois made an attempt to enter the office that was totally dark, when a noise was then heard

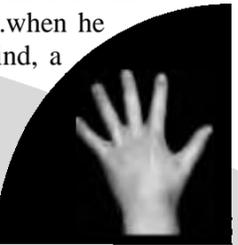
behind him. He hurried towards the room next to him, but he could only find, on the floor, the glove that had been missing from the kitchen.

His mind started to mix up things and images; the glove, the knives, the open window, "your glove, Monsieur," "how could a young boy," the noise, the computer...

No. Francois couldn't believe it, but the glove that was missing minutes ago, and that he had between his hands now was the one he had taken from the floor for that man... ("Monsieur, your glove").

Everything was confusing. His head started to get blocked up. He hurried towards the office again to reach the phone and call the police – what the hell had happened to the people in the house? Why was it dark? Who was that man?

The sweat started to flow down his forehead when he reached the door. Panic was all over the place, he tried to turn on the lights... when he felt a hand on his shoulder from behind, a hand covered with a dark glove!!



## 'Yet to be Titled'

Alouette A. Cervantes

I'm not going to miss the clogged up toilets.  
But I will miss the bathroom talks  
And the beautiful melodic voices jumping out of  
the showers.

I'm not going to miss the bagels and fatty donuts  
But I will miss morning conversations  
And the wonderful hot breakfasts that always  
helped me feel warm inside.

I'm not going to miss the exams and last minute  
papers  
But I will miss late night study breaks  
And the unforgettable conversations that took  
place at all hours.

I'm not going to miss our kitchen  
But I will miss the interesting dishes  
And creations discovered as things were put to-  
gether when hungry enough.

I'm not going to miss the house payments  
But I will miss the sense of family, friendship  
And the making of priceless memories that surpass  
the amount of my checks.

I'm not going to miss all the meetings  
But I will miss the opportunities provided  
And the things that are yet to be achieved, as long  
as people put their hearts and souls into it.

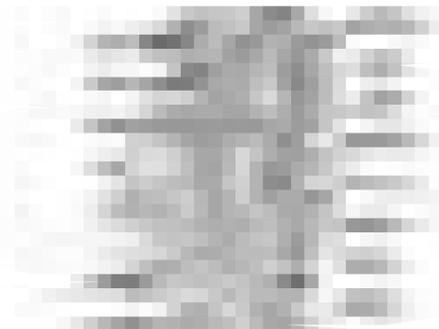
Actually, I'm going to miss a lot of things.  
Things that only those living in the I-House can  
understand.  
It's kind of cool like that.



## [TITLE]

Mariam Al-Burise

With any other language, when translating  
a poem to a different language, it will lose its  
meaning; therefore, I will try to mention the mean-  
ing of the poem and I hope it will make sense to  
you ☺  
Here we go.....



When the journey has lasted too long  
The patience fades for one who waits  
In my eyes, my longing for my beloved ages  
Reconsider, the glowing charcoal you left  
in my palm  
Whose warmth still burns in my heart  
Give me news of my beloved, their vision  
appears  
Yet bares no trace of them  
These feelings haunt me  
My heart quickly pounds; I melt at the mention of  
my beloved's name  
All night I lay awake with dry tearless eyes  
that won't weep these feelings out  
Day and month we live once and though  
we are surrounded by  
People, my heart belongs for that absent one!

achieve maximum viscosity. You have to turn off  
the machine before its liquid content becomes ob-  
streperous. That means just about now. The intense  
aroma starts to fill my nostrils. My mouth is sali-  
vating. I feel like I'm a Pavlov dog. I start barking.

You see, espresso is more than a beverage. It's  
both a blessing and a curse, a seduction and viola-  
tion, a passion and an addiction. I only drink Illy  
espresso, by the way. I would not settle for any-  
thing less. What did you say? Lavazza? Give me a  
break. Yes, I'm brand loyal, what the heck, it's not  
a disease. I linger in the fanciest food boutiques of  
Los Altos, Los Gatos and Palo Alto just to find it. I  
traveled the world and the seven seas, everybody is  
looking for Illy. After all, we're talking about  
100% Arabica beans - nine varieties scrupulously  
selected from around the world and combined into  
a single mind-boggling espresso blend. To really  
appreciate its quality you have to put side by side  
other types of coffee. You know, if you want a  
contest, you need some context. Ultimately, tasting  
is nothing more than comparing *und* contrasting.  
The ancients believed that the world was made up  
of four elements; air, water, fire and earth. Coffee  
is about four essentials as well: Aroma. Acidity.  
Viscosity. And flavor. Believe me, espresso is  
more than a beverage.

Let me start with the most important one,  
aroma. If the aroma is less than inspiring, then  
your espresso is doomed. As a matter of fact, a sig-  
nificant part of our sense of taste actually comes  
from our sense of smell. Which explains why cof-  
fee can taste so orgasmic and transcendent. If I  
don't have my espresso, I get into a coma. A kar-  
macoma. I need my Jamaican aroma.

I really do.

Now, acidity doesn't mean sour or bitter. *Au  
contraire*, it is a vigorous, pungent, piquant, pal-  
ate-cleansing property, ranging from low to high.  
Think of the range from still water to sparkling  
water, from low-key *Acquafina* to the upscale *San  
Pellegrino* and you'll start to get the picture.

Body is the weight or thickness of the espresso  
beverage on your tongue. Body can range from  
light to full. Just like a lover needs love, a body  
needs a soul. And this is where flavor comes in.  
Flavor is the all important melding of aroma, acid-  
ity, and body that creates an unforgettable drinking  
experience. "Am I trapped inside a time loop? Is  
there a glitch in the matrix" I ask myself while  
drinking my espresso. The answer comes from

MTV: "Same as it ever was", Talking Heads is  
singing. This is what I call "home entertainment."

It is indispensable to use freshly ground coffee.  
The arch enemies of coffee are oxygen, light, heat,  
and moisture. This is why I store my supply in the  
elegant red and black airtight Illy container and  
keep it at room temperature. Some people store  
coffee in the refrigerator or freezer for daily use.  
This is blasphemous. I don't believe in capital pun-  
ishment, yet when I hear this, I get very cynical  
about the human race. I wish I could grind fresh  
beans each time I brew, so that the aromas, oils  
and flavors would be fully preserved. Additionally,  
I would enjoy the freshness as the grinder releases  
the ecstatic aromas inside the bean. This, in turns,  
would trigger a chemical reaction in my brain  
whose outcome consists in incommensurable, for-  
bidden pleasures. My brain is bean-shaped. Coffee  
gives me euphoria. Coffee makes the anxiety go  
away. Coffee gives me joyous intensities. I want  
coffee. You want coffee. Everybody wants coffee.  
Even the Giant Mechanical Puppet does.

As I sip my rich, smooth, bold cup of coffee  
and admire the perfect design of my moka pot, cre-  
ated by the legendary Aldo Rossi, I realize that I-  
House is a transitory place where everybody be-  
longs and, at the same time, no one really belongs.  
It's an agean timeless nonplace. The residents, all  
the residents, are either lost children or lost adults.  
I guess I'm I belong to the second category. On the  
way to maturity I got distracted and missed the  
stop. I'm still enjoying the ride. I drink coffee.

I resist unespresso-ed blends. As Andrea Illy,  
33 told *Wallpaper* magazine (April, 2001),  
"Making coffee is an art. The Italian barista is an  
artist." Andrea Illy knows better. I worship this  
guy. After all, a cup of espresso is a shortcut to ec-  
stasy.

As I sip the remains of my first cup, I realize  
with a sudden epiphany that the reason why I came  
to the I-House was to make espresso, for me and  
my friends, because this is the only way I can ex-  
press/espresso myself. After all, drinking coffee is  
an aesthetic sensory experience with its own set of  
rituals that can be shared collectively or savored  
privately. Oh espresso, of thee I sing, profits, lives,  
loves, passions, all this for thou, oh, brother, oh,  
the pathos of coffee making, oh muse, oh goddess,  
oh holy, sacred beans, oh dark rich aromatic  
espresso. Oh.

As I start preparing a second cup, I

methods right the wrongs of this careless time, and rid this land of waste and woe. 'T is not might that gives to us will to heed to nature's cry; but heroes we are, and so shall we save our helpless land.

## It's About Time

Matteo Bittanti

*"I feel like we're always been here  
I feel the same way.  
And we'll always been here."  
(from Exterminating Angel, 1962)*

*"I feel like a thousand year have passed.  
I'm younger than I used to be  
I feel like world is my home at last  
I know everyone that I meet"  
(Massive Attack, Sly)*

So here I am, again. In the stinky kitchen. Me, myself and my perfect moka pot. Yes, I am making coffee. Perfect coffee in the stinky kitchen, what an oxymoron. It feels like I have always been here. It's 6 AM in the morning and the rest of the house is asleep. Don't get me wrong, I don't have a fancy, expensive home brewing station equipped with a timer and a grinder. All I have is just my humble Bialetti stove-top moka pot that I brought from Milan.

This is really all I need

To make a great coffee you need great water, since coffee – just like the human body - is essentially made of water. I recommend Evian, but it's really up to you. It is also crucial to use the right proportion of coffee to water. I usually put three tablespoons of Illy coffee (approximately 15 grams) for each six fluid ounces (180 milliliters if you believe in the metric system) of water. Keep in mind that water and coffee get in direct contact for about five minutes. I like to think of it as a quick, yet life-changing sexual encounter. When it comes to espresso, one plus one makes actually three. Quick recap: Put the Evian water at the bottom, add a few scoops of Illy coffee in the center, and close the Pandora's box with a clockwise motion. Be punctilious. Turn on the stove and wait a few minutes.

It's five past six now. The silver pot is the only shining object in this slatternly place. The water is reaching its boiling point. In a few seconds, the auburn water will makes its noisy appearance in the upper compartment of my Bialetti coffee maker. I just know it. Some people call it faith. Others call it thermodynamics.

All I know is that the journey from the bottom to the top of the pot allowed this elixir of life to

## Kenyans Help Save the World

Peter Gikandi

Actually, that title should read "Kenyans – the World's Superheroes". Granted, we East Africans never fly under oceans, through volcanoes, around the moon, whatever, in blue tights and red capes, ridding the world of other costumed conniving psychos out to do no good. Think about the word 'superhero' though; cram that overly descriptive sentence into eight words and you have the explicit definition: superheroes save the world of its worst perils. That's it. All that caped nonsense just adds some mystery and grace to the fireman, the peace-maker, the biblical hero (fine, they wore capes anyway), even the environmentalist, whenever they do get something accomplished. And that is exactly what we Kenyans are; environmentalists with such love for our green earth that we preserve her every single day without even knowing it. That's love; giving without giving a damn. So what is it we do? We conserve fuel and the forest, we reuse and recycle, and we use environmentally friendly substances widely; sure, that's what everyone sings about, but how Kenyans make this work is the 'unique' part.

There are many ways to conserve fuels, and thus pollute less, that people don't know of, that Kenyans invented, though not always successfully. You have probably heard about notions like walking or riding a bike to work, or using certain types of fuel that never give your car that 'oomphh' you need on a good stretch of straight road. And you know we need some road rage to keep all those 'bigger' cops out of donut shops. The hilly regions of Kenya have come up with a solution: They still use that same nasty fuel but driving down the hill, the clutch is depressed to let the car 'roll quietly' down, and they will drive on the inner part of the corners, whichever lane that is, they don't care. These are mostly overloaded public transport minivans. They usually make it. The guys who do not make it are those who drive a bus on the treacherous Mombasa-Nairobi highway close behind another bus, with the headlights turned off at night, making every turn their 'guide bus' makes. For this, there have been consequences and repercussions – all for saving battery power.

I guess someone once tried to pull off that 'gliding downhill to save gas' stunt on a plane. In August 2000, on a 50-minute local flight to Nai-

robi from Mombasa, the 737 sank below the cloud ceiling only 30 minutes into the flight; following was a surprise announcement from the pilot that they were about to land in Nairobi in 10 minutes. Sure enough, he was wrong and the turbines kicked in with a relieving whine as they pulled the airplane back above the clouds.

On a smaller scale, everyone saves battery power, in safer ways than groping around in the dark on a bus doing 65 miles an hour. For example, the energizer battery may last as long as the intrusive rude but cool pink bunny says it does, but once it's gone, nothing like freezing it or chewing it a couple of times to bring it back with a new 'kick' to it. How it works? Who cares? It does. Try it. We don't recommend sucking on it, though; leaking battery fluid can give you a really bad day.

We also conserve the forest by not tearing it down for space or materials to build houses or other major structures every time. That is what a developing country is; still slowly developing. When we do build structures, we use stone, not straw or wood. You may be familiar with a fairy tale about three little pigs that built their little houses, one of straw, one of sticks and one of stone. Then this annoying wolf would huff and puff and blow the straw and stick houses down, but eventually trashed his lungs trying to blow down the stone house. Well, we learned; just replace the wolf with a hyena and you have a Kenyan child's bedtime story. We leave the forest as it is. Any scrap of wood left over from building small structures is reused as heating or cooking fuel and in cheap furniture. I know that Kenyans reuse a number of other things, some of which I won't mention to save face (I know, too late). A common one is soda bottles, which we trade in for a full bottle of Coca Cola, for example, in addition to the purchase price. The empty bottles we give the store will be collected, thoroughly cleaned in the factory and then refilled with soda. No littering of cans. What hazardous chemicals does the factory use? Beats us. We do *our* part.

That's not true. Kenyans do care about using chemicals and materials that are harmless to the environment, substances that can biodegrade and rejoin mother earth with ease. Take our roads for example. Just add water.

Thus, Kenyans save not themselves, but our world, in heroic gestures of self-disregard. Though strange and crude, our

