



POINTLESS PURSUIT

**MY YEAR OF PICARESQUE
PERSONAL ADS**

C. W. SHAIN

Free Excerpt

POINTLESS PURSUIT

MY YEAR OF
PICARESQUE
PERSONAL ADS

C. W. SHAIN

☞ Coelacanth Books, Massachusetts ☞

Copyright © 2012 C. W. Shain
All rights reserved.

Cover art & design R. E. Bartlett

Disclaimer: This is a work of parody and for entertainment purposes only. All references to public figures are intended as satire; any other resemblances to real persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental.

ISBN: 1478363657
ISBN-13: 978-1478363651

First Edition

To my mother, Ruthe, for everything.

To Rebekah, for everything else.

Contents

Preface.....	xi
A Note on the Book.....	xv
Given up looking for a Swiss Gentleman—hottie from Liechtenstein preferred.....	1
We've met: You're the one who put a Nervine in my tuna sandwich.....	2
Lyle Peskin, we never saw those Bar Mitzvah photos! ...	3
Waiting for my close-up with Mr. DeMille.....	3
Baroness needs help finding her Blitz spot.....	6
Once had a job lubricating Coltrane's sax.....	8
Absinthe on my French fries and Icelandic spar in my salad.....	10
No scarves! Tragedy rides in the sidecar of my family's destiny.....	12
I was the unwitting tool of Gamal Abdel Nasser	
Experienced haberdasher wanted: Forward references to Otto Witte.....	
Judge Crater is alive and well, so says Jacques Brel.....	
My puma would just love your Belgian Malinois, Weimaraner, or Chihuahua.....	

One-time honorary mayor of the Free State of
 Christiania.....

Lord Lucan is this year's recipient of Profiles in
 Courage.....

Lillian Hellman was a habitué of my water closet.....

Did you know? St. Pierre is a haven for fugitives from
 Vichy

Just finished replastering a cellar in Yekaterinburg.....

On Broadway with Peter Sauvoya.....

Adolphe Menjou, procurer of Horatio Alger novels
 for Stalin.....

Pete Best moonlights as a cantor in Hamburg.....

“Daddy, what did you do in the Soccer War?”

Before he was a pilot, Lindbergh was a mohel in St.
 Louis.....

Sipping vermouth, nibbling on a cheddar with
 Conchita Montenegro

Norton I and Lazarus will be sleeping in the Lincoln
 Bedroom.....

Jacques Cousteau, secret member of the ADL.....

Waiting in Nahwa for my asylum to come through.....

Seoul City Sue left Montavani broken hearted.....

Accused of selling carbon credits to an undercover FBI agent.....	
Waiting to be rescued off the cruiser <i>Murmansk</i>	
Just out of Max Jacobson’s rehab clinic, anxious to make up lost time	
Docking dirigibles at the Empire State Building.....	
How did Bernie Spindel know we talked, Hal?.....	
"S’CUSE ME, S’CUSE ME, I want to be upgraded to fellow traveler class!"	
Remnants of a Roman sun glaze on a plate of ratatouille.....	
The Index: Just the Facts.....	
Endnotes	

Preface

My dear friend Linda S. was my guide to Craigslist (CL). Before she told me of it, I did not know exactly what it provided or why it was becoming habitually referenced. Linda was quite taken by its offerings, from window blinds to potential marriages.

One evening, after a movie and dinner, she again started to extol the beauty and pageantry that was CL. So, when I got home—long after midnight and, typically at that hour, too wired to think of sleeping—I went online to take a look.

Even though I knew that Linda saw the world with a kind of high-pitched resonance, I found that she couldn't have been more low-key—downright banal even—when it came to this site. I was floored. For here was a meeting place of high-low culture, ostentation and tawdriness happily mixed. I became enamored of this stinky and clamorous world market.

And what attracted me the most were the personals: M-W, W-M, W-W, M-M, M-W-W, W-M-tricycles.

Over succeeding nights, I continued to watch the ads scroll by...and one particular ad stood out like a plinth in a desert. In the “women seeking men” section, someone posted, reposted, and reposted—night after night—a desire to meet a Swiss gentleman.

Odd, but not the oddest to be found on CL, certainly—yet it became a buoy among all the others. And as this desperate quest continued to reappear, endlessly, people began to post mean and rude remarks at and to the author.

These remarks seemed so uncalled for that I posted my own response, defending her against the mounting onslaught. Others too came to her defense, in an old-fashioned battle royal.

Like some ocean undertow, “she” (assuming it was a she) continued to repost, but now began to append to her original post all the letters of support she had received (mine included).

There had been no communication directly from her, no acknowledgement or request to use my post. I was annoyed; I felt I had been treated like spam, used like spam. So my first personal ad was born: an act of petty revenge, a way to reclaim my own domain.

Yet the effect was electrifying. I sought nothing, expected nothing, but people emailed me, thanking me for my hilarious “ad.”

It kicked in. I became such a narcissist (likely, I am still), fed by these flowers thrown from the orchestra onto the stage...candy and more flowers awaiting me when I checked my email again the next morning.

Praise from intelligent, witty individuals spurred my creativity. In my brain, the doors holding back nonsense, string, and rubber balls had been opened and I began a ludicrous and year-long adventure of writing personals.

I posted the first half of my ads in Boston. Eventually, I was “banished” by ad-flaggers, and so moved on to New York. This great city—the online version of it—gave me access to the most funny, brilliant, and appreciative audience that gifts the world.

And the correspondence kept coming: my ads were byzantine, ridiculously obscure, slapstick. I was begged not to tire—or retire. Naturally, I fed off of this, developing in my mind a responsibility for an audience. I was offering a public service—laughter, distraction, repasts for a tired and beaten-down society. This was my contribution: a glistening ladle

of water, a smile and kind eyes for a dystopian planet's distraught denizens.

My personals, though nonsensical (where they are not true), are also ultimately and intimately personal—for they are laced with my own nostalgia for lost worlds, lost imagery, and lost people. Everything changes, and never are the things that are lost replaced by something better. The only guarantee of change is that in adapting to it, you must open yourself to painful awareness, sadness, and loss.

C. W. Shain

A Note on the Book

This book is a mix of fact and fancy. For those who would like to try their hand at identifying all of the factual references (also known as “trivia”), I have provided a simple listing at the end, in the section marked “The Index: Just the Facts.” For those not so inclined, I have provided some explanation of the more obscure references in the “Endnotes” section. Anything not in the endnotes and for which you desire more information can easily be found through an online search.

You are welcome to email me at cwshain@gmail.com with your comments, suggestions, or questions.

Given up looking for a Swiss Gentleman—hottie from Liechtenstein preferred

January 4, 7:30 PM

After weeks of posting ad nauseam for my own piece of heaven, I realize the closest I can get to feeling up a true Switzer is in the refrigerated section of Ole Foods.

I've decorated my condo with all things Swiss: cuckoo clocks, cuckoo clocks, cuckoo clocks, and finally cuckoo clocks...unfortunately, no man. I'm broadening my search to include any nice professional, eugenically superior individual from Liechtenstein.

Anyone who writes saying that they're from San Marino or Andorra...I say it now: F*** OFF, so as to avoid any potentially hurt or embarrassed feelings through not receiving a response. I just want someone from Liechtenstein. IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK FOR IN THIS WORLD???

Author's note: This is the one that started it all (see Preface).

We've met: You're the one who put a Nervine in my tuna sandwich

January 7, 11:05 AM

Remember we met on Pitcairn? I was stationed there, waiting for the expected wounded when the Japanese were to hit the beach. Unfortunately, contract talks fell through and kept the Japanese from the assault. Only New Zealanders were available to fill in at the pinch. While on the beach, you stepped on a rusty spike and it was only through my training in millinery that we were able to save your foot.

Well, I fell for you like masticated food falls into the stomach cavity. I was never able to look at another extra quite the same again. You know who you are, so let's stop playing coy and finally give in to these, our deepest yearnings! Please respond now, as I'm afraid that I can't hold out much longer against the incessant stares of the fiberglass steers at the Hilltop.*

**See the endnotes at the back for an explanation of the more obscure references in this book.*

Lyle Peskin, we never saw those Bar Mitzvah photos!

January 11, 12:30 AM

Another lovely day in the Hub...we're blessed, fellow Brahmins, with being in the greatest city since Eusapia. It's about time we reward these days.

Here's the rub:

On the one hand, lying in a hammock on the deck of my condo, staring at contrails, is living life at its peak...wouldn't you agree?

And on the other, mixing a cocktail of bath salts and vogelbeer, and then trying to drive my Lada sans brakes, is living life at its peak...wouldn't you agree?

I need an intervention: Let's you and I celebrate these beautiful days together with browsing, hopping, cavorting, and slumming. Flaneurs at heart, we'll derive simple joys from a stroll through the museums, the bookstores, and our two or three canyons of steel. Other pursuits will follow: reading, drawing, drinking, and mercilessly whipping the obstinacy out of my Bobo the Clown.

Do so today, write!

Waiting for my close-up with Mr. DeMille

January 13, 9:39 PM

About me. I'm immersed deeply within the hinterlands of the exotic. I have a pet coelacanth that I call J. Edgar. I collect stamps that came from King Farouk's collection. I've added a tumbrel that once carried Marie Antoinette and placed it alongside a folly in my asparagus garden. When I'm in Berlin, I don my dom getup and recite the Treaty of Versailles in whatever club offers an open mike. I own an ocelot that particularly enjoys burgers smothered in Nubian goat cheese from Bartley's. I like my Angus from Manchuria as I do my zombie admirers.

My tastes are simple yet alas, unmet. I need someone highly refined—someone that I can tear off with to enjoy slurping down a très fine double malt on the Red Line at midnight. Eating escargot—making wishes on the shells and throwing them over our shoulders—while we're watching a movie at the Coolidge.

I want someone who will call me up on the fly and say, “There’s a new exhibit of Warhol at the MFA, what color of spray paint do you think would do justice to his Marilyn portraits?”

That’s the companion I need, crave!

Baroness needs help finding her Blitz spot

January 22, 10:40 AM

I am a scion from a minor royal house in Germany. I'm presently in Boston staying at the Madison while negotiating with several well-known auction houses to execute the sale of a small yet august collection of paintings and porcelains that have been in my family for several generations.

I possess a marvelous education. I attended many fine lycées in Vichy France, then returned to the fatherland to take a degree in watercolor painting, which I attained with advanced standing. I have been fortunate to travel and practice my craft in Poland, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Paraguay.

I lived for a time in the former Soviet Union but found the winters were too harsh; I never could seem to obtain enough warm clothes to make my visit there more pleasant.

In my travels, I've also made a short journey to Scotland, though much cannot be said of

it...Unfortunately, due to a malfunction of the aircraft, the trip was aborted.

Some of my likes: torchlit parades, marching bands festooned with flags, highly agitated speeches, and German Shepherds.

I am looking for a young, sensitive, yet boorish raconteur who has a gift for uncouth drollery and reconstructing the carburetors of old BMWs. Extra points if you've ever been to Leningrad.

Once had a job lubricating Coltrane's sax

February 2, 1:15 AM

Me, I'm originally from Fiume. Legend in my family has it that my grandmother was the love child of Gabriele d'Annunzio and Florence Harding. Luck has always since followed. For a while, I managed to carve out an idyllic, even bucolic existence right in the middle of downtown Manhattan, regularly attending the New York Symphony and visiting MOMA and the Guggenheim. I even ran a highly successful squeegee business in Times Square.

These days, my work is based in the arts and compels me to travel regularly. I serve as an advisor, even curator in the upkeep of collections specializing in Delft tiles from the 17th century and Portuguese tiles from the 17th through 19th centuries. While relaxing, I can be seen walking through Central Park exercising my borzois or whippets. I usually bring rabbits along on these jaunts to give the dogs an opportunity to socialize with other animals.

Some of my interests include cooking—I have been told that I'm as handy in the kitchen as Sylvia Plath.

I swim—even credited with inventing the Woolf paddle. And I'm a pilot—I attended the Exupery flight school in Nice. I'm also quite the outdoors-woman; I hunt truffle pigs and have bagged many in flagrante delicto.

Unusual life choices have brought me to such specializations. I have my share of unfulfilled dreams, mind you...dreams of running my own cock-fighting emporium in Mexico and reconstituting the Flying Wallendas, but as world-class touring canasta players.

These days, I've found that Boston has a far more approachable population of tabbies than New York. Reason enough to set my roots down here.

Absinthe on my French fries and Icelandic spar in my salad

February 10, 9:27 AM

I'm a native of the island of Pantelleria. Presently, I'm a graduate student in Cambridge, concluding a Ph.D. in ossuary aestheticism in post-modern Sikkimese cinema. To keep busy even in what little off-time I have (and to subsidize my living expenses), I help in the upkeep of a small local museum devoted to keeping the memory of sprinter Stella Walsh alive. I'm also a cosmetic representative at NM for the perfume “?” by Christine Jorgenson.

When time permits, I love to go out on the town to enjoy a multitude of cultural events. I regularly attend the lecture series at BU given by Eli Wiesel and Bob Denard. Love the MFA...I could spend hours admiring their collection of repoussé silver and wolfing down their two-day old crème brûlée.

Occasionally, I go to the Gardner Museum, though with no other purpose in mind but to laugh over their lost pictures. I think the stolen paintings “split” their time between the ladies room at Pinocchio's pizza shop in Harvard Square and the Saudi Embassy in D.C.

I adore playing games, especially four-card monte on Boston Common and chess in Harvard Square—and I love “battleship,” but alas, I will always cheat.

Why I’m here: I’m looking for a soigné yet louche chap who has a propensity for leaving obscene images behind in his sitzmarks.

No scarves! Tragedy rides in the sidecar of my family's destiny

February 29, 11:44 AM

Early in the 20th century, my family established a gentlemanly chauffeur service for a unique and most auspicious clientele. But what for others was a singular yet essential service proved to be a deluge of debacles for my family.

A series of high-profile clients have had some inopportune moments while under my family's care...Carlos II of Portugal, Francis Ferdinand, Alexander of Yugoslavia, Rafael Trujillo. Unfairly, these happenstance occurrences have blotted what was an otherwise impeccably besotted business.

With such unfortunate blemishes cast upon their great name, my family was compelled to leave the chauffeuring business altogether to try running a driving school. This they accomplished in Monaco in the early '80s and Paris in the late '90s...though this venture too would come to grief.

Our legacy has not begot wealth—indeed, our modest holdings have been impaired by these unappeased siroccos that persistently follow us. Unhappily, the next venture the family went into was advertising, only to be laid low through the oddest of concurrences. They engaged famous would-be detractors of air travel so that flying could be “sold” to the masses. Their roster of esteemed spokesmen included Will Rogers, Carole Lombard, and Leslie Howard—I leave it to you to be as stupefied as I by these insidious coincidences.

It’s fallen to me to bring a resurgence of luck and fortune back within the family fold. This is why I’m in Boston. I am here looking for investments to start up an Anton Karras skiffle school and a home for wayward Rhodesian Ridgebacks.

I am looking for a fellow dreamer, someone who can take that leap of faith alongside me. Inspire me! AND make sure that when we walk through the Public Garden, I should be so careful as to not trip on any dog leashes. (Mind your step, Jerome!)

** Here ends this excerpt of POINTLESS PURSUIT. **

Like to read more?

- Kindle e-book edition: <http://tinyurl.com/pp-amazon>
- Other e-book editions (multiple formats): <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/213159>
- Paperback edition will be available September 2012 at online retailers and booksellers

