

## The Year that Was and That's Gonna Be

The year ends, and brings with it the usual list of things undone. Mountains not climbed, books not dusted, loves not found.  
The weight not lost, the cigarettes you still might buy tomorrow if it's a really bad day.

Every year, it seems like the world has gotten worse.  
And this one was a doozy...  
Flooding, rioting, human misery,  
Followed by commercials for laxatives, stress medicine, girls going wild,  
Followed by more flooding, more rioting, more human misery.

And I think it's hard, being human.  
Dying might be hard, but knowing people who die is worse,  
And the older we get the more people we lose,  
And I'm pretty sure I'm getting older EVERY YEAR!  
(which seems excessive)

And how can there not be some sort of climax coming soon?  
How can the earth's attacks on us  
And the extremists' attacks on us  
And the government's attacks on us...  
How can they not point to something more important than another depressing year?

I hear I'm a cynic.

But even if I do think that life is mostly comprised of hopping back and forth between personal catastrophes and natural disasters, of trying to avoid at least some of the humiliation it has in store for you... I don't mean to say one should get depressed about it. It's a divine comedy, that's what I hear.

This year I personally lost giants... jerry and august jump to mind... and I saw some of my most mirthful friends struck with cancer... people I drank with once died mysteriously, and people I'd never met that had touched my friends' lives died in a war whose purpose baffles me.

We live in a culture of division, where honest debate has taken a backseat to ridicule and hatred. Whether it's Air America, who I generally agree with, or Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly, who I generally don't, it's all about the anger. When everyone has freedom of speech, it's all about who can scream the loudest. The only people who get truly heard above the din? The screamers. Did I say backseat. Reason really has seats in the trunk of modern discourse.

And what am I gonna do about it? My job. Try to be nice to people. Keep my volume down, and my reason high. Laugh whenever possible, because if you look deep enough, it's probably pretty funny. Forgive people for their mistakes, as I hope they'll forgive me mine.

And try to make sure that when I go, when it's my turn, that I can honestly say that every year, I did less damage than good; that I helped more people than I hindered; and that I loved more than I hated. And that I did my best to enjoy the ride.