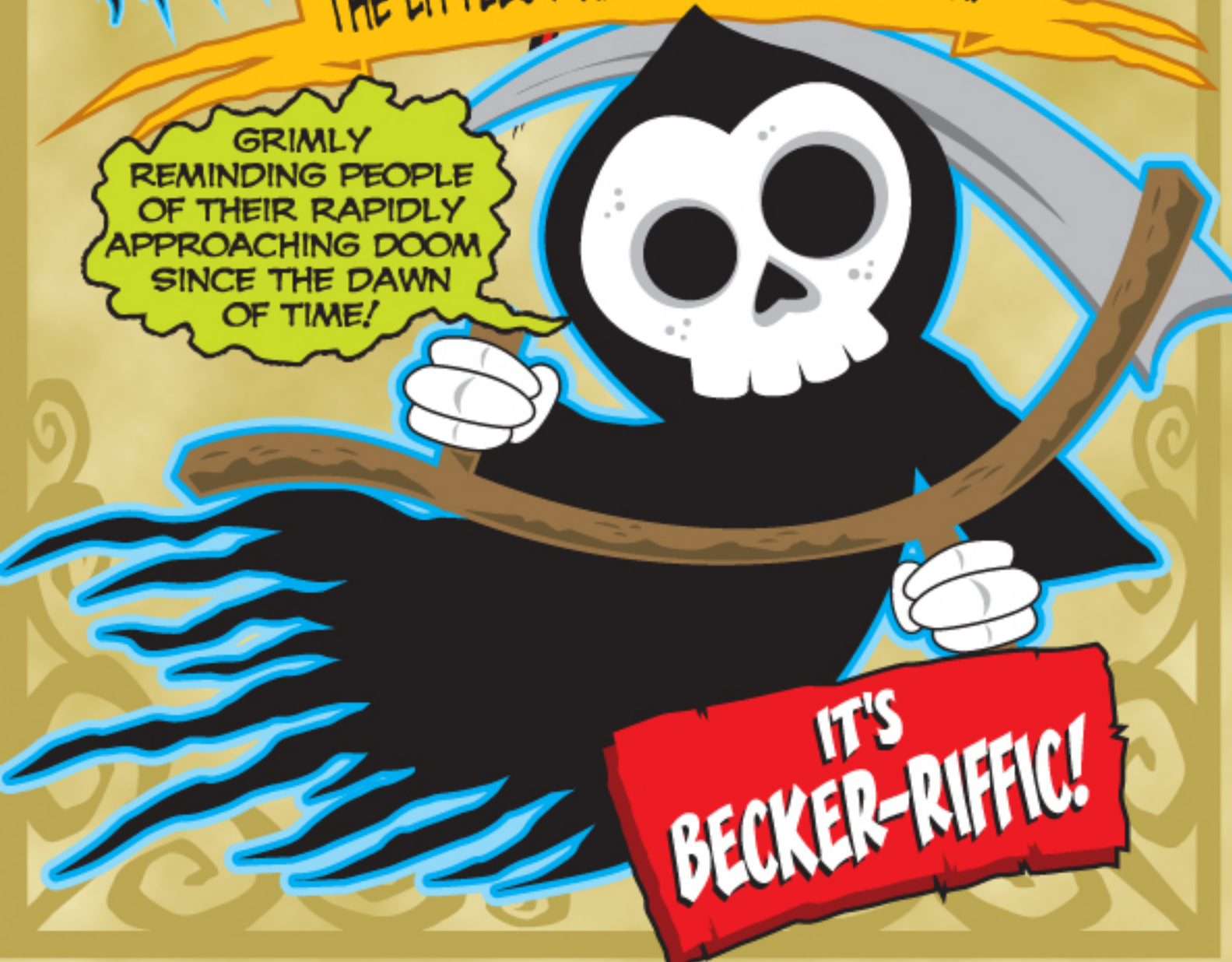


THE ERNEST BECKER FOUNDATION PRESENTS

READY

THE LITTLEST HARBINGER OF DEATH!

GRIMLY REMINDING PEOPLE OF THEIR RAPIDLY APPROACHING DOOM SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME!



**IT'S
BECKER-RIFFIC!**



HEY THERE, KIDS!
I'M REAPY, THE LITTLEST
REAPER! AND I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU
ON AN INFORMATIVE, ALBEIT MORBID,
JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF ERNEST
BECKER. IT'S GOING TO BE LOADS OF FUN,
AS LONG AS WE DON'T DIE BEFORE IT'S
OVER. I'M JUST SAYING, THESE
THINGS HAPPEN...

WHAT'S THAT? WHO'S
ERNEST BECKER? WELL,
I'M GLAD YOU ASKED. READ
ON, FRAGILE MORTALS!



HERE'S THE MAN
HIMSELF, **ERNEST
BECKER!** WE WILL
BE EXPLORING
SOME OF HIS
THEORIES ON WHY
WE DO WHAT WE
DO AND WHY WE
SOMETIMES ACT
LIKE **BIG, STUPID
JERKS!**



NOW, A LOT OF
THESE THEORIES
CAN BE FOUND IN
GREATER DETAIL
IN HIS GROUND-
BREAKING BOOK,
**THE DENIAL OF
DEATH,** AND IN A
DVD BASED ON
HIS THEORIES
CALLED **FLIGHT
FROM DEATH.**

THE BIG DEAL
ABOUT ERNEST
BECKER IS THAT
HE LOOKED AT
MANKIND WITH AN
**INTERDISCIPLIN-
ARY** EYE. THAT'S
IMPORTANT! YOU
SEE, WHERE OTHER
PEOPLE LOOKED
AT THE WORLD
FROM ONLY **ONE**
POINT OF VIEW,
BECKER STUDIED
EVERYTHING! AN-
THROPOLOGY,
PSYCHOLOGY,
THEOLOGY, PHI-
LOSOPHY, THE
ARTS AND HIS-
TORY. WITHOUT
THAT, IT'S LIKE
MAKING A PIZZA
OUT OF NOTHING
BUT CRUST.
BLEECH!

LET'S GO A
LITTLE DEEPER...



HERE'S FOUR THEMES FOUND IN BECKER'S PHILOSOPHY ON WHY WE COMMIT EVIL ACTS, OR IN OTHER WORDS, WHY WE SOMETIMES ACT LIKE BIG, FAT JERKS AND SCREW UP THE WORLD EVEN MORE THAN IT ALREADY IS!

1. THE WORLD IS *TERRIFYING!* (DUH!)

2. THE BASIC MOTIVATION FOR HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS THE NEED TO DENY OUR FEAR OF DEATH. (*THAT'S ME!*)

WAIT... IT GETS BETTER!

3. IN ORDER TO DENY DEATH, (A) EACH PERSON CREATES A CHARACTER THAT IS A DEFENSE AGAINST DESPAIR, AND (B) EACH SOCIETY PROVIDES A HERO SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS THE INDIVIDUAL TO BELIEVE THAT HE OR SHE MAY TRANSCEND DEATH BY MAKING A LASTING CONTRIBUTION TO LIFE.

4. OUR HEROIC PROJECTS AIMED AT DESTROYING EVIL HAVE THE PARADOXICAL EFFECT OF BRINGING MORE EVIL INTO THE WORLD.

CHEERFUL STUFF, EH?



TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO, WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT LIKE ANY ANIMAL, WE ARE EQUIPPED WITH A BUILT-IN DEFENSE SYSTEM. AND A BUNCH OF BRAINIACS EVENTUALLY ENDED UP CALLING IT "FIGHT OR FLIGHT". AND IT KIND OF WORKS LIKE THIS; WHENEVER WE FEEL THREATENED, WE DO ONE OF TWO THINGS...



FIGHT

YER CRUISIN' FER A BRUISIN', BUSTER!

PUT 'EM UP! PUT 'EM UP!



or FLIGHT

GOTTA GO, JOE!



NOW WE CAN LOOK AT A SERIES OF EXPERIMENTS, WHERE PEOPLE TOOK A SURVEY AND THEN WERE ASKED TO COMPLETE A SIMPLE TASK. BUT NOT EVERYONE GOT THE SAME SURVEY! HERE WE ARE INTRODUCED TO "DEATH REMINDERS"...

DO YOU LIKE APPLES?

YES
 NO

GROUP A

DO YOU LIKE APPLES?
(OH, BY THE WAY, YOU'RE GONNA DIE.)

YES
 NO

GROUP B

GROUP A TOOK A NORMAL SURVEY, GROUP B RECEIVED SUBTLE "DEATH REMINDERS" AND THEIR REACTIONS TO THE FOLLOWING TASKS WERE SURPRISING! LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT A FEW...



THE FIRST EXPERIMENT INVOLVES A COUPLE OF JUDGES AND A... UM... "LADY OF NEGOTIABLE AFFECTIONS" (THAT MEANS HOOKER!)



HIYA, SAILORS!

THE JUDGES ALL TOOK A SURVEY, AGAIN, GROUP A TAKING THE NORMAL SURVEY AND GROUP B RECEIVING THE "DEATH REMINDERS". THEN THEY WERE ASKED TO SET THE BAIL AMOUNT FOR A COMMON CRIME, SOLICITATION (THAT MEANS BEING A HOOKER). GROUP A SET THE BAIL AT THE USUAL AMOUNT, BUT GROUP B, AFTER BEING INDUCED TO FEEL THREATENED, SET THE AMOUNTS *MUCH HIGHER!* WHY? THE LADY OF THE NIGHT DIDN'T REMIND HIM OF HIS IMPENDING DOOM, BUT SHE GOT PUNISHED FOR IT ANYWAY.

OH, GOLLY, LET'S SAY... HMMM... \$25.



GROUP A

WHY, THIS IS AN OUTRAGE! FINE SET AT ONE GAZILLION DOLLARS!



GROUP B

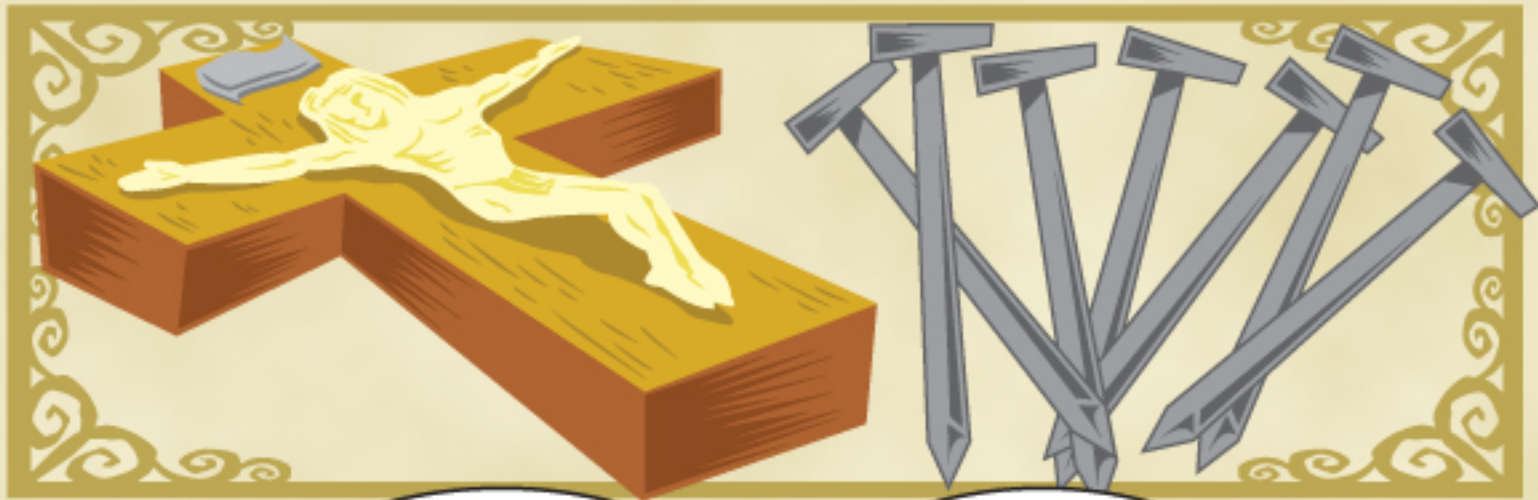
IN THE NEXT EXPERIMENT, AFTER TAKING THE SURVEYS, BOTH GROUPS WERE ASSIGNED THE TASK OF SIFTING DIRT OUT OF AN INK-FILLED GLASS OF WATER BUT WERE GIVEN NOTHING BUT AN **AMERICAN FLAG**. THE ONLY WAY TO SUCCEED IN THE TASK WAS TO USE THE FLAG AS A FILTER, THUS MAKING IT A DIRTY INKY MESS, AND THIS PLAYED ON PEOPLES' SENSE OF **PATRIOTISM AND SYMBOLISM**. THE REACTIONS WERE **GREATLY VARIED**, AS YOU CAN SEE...





THE NEXT EXPERIMENT GOES FURTHER THAN PATRIOTISM AND TACKLES **RELIGION!** AFTER EACH GROUP TOOK THEIR SURVEY (GROUP B RECEIVING THEIR **DEATH REMINDERS**, OF COURSE) EACH GROUP NATURALLY REACTED TO THE SIMPLE TASK OF NAILING NAILS INTO A WALL (WITH NO HAMMER NEARBY, BUT A HANDY **CRUCIFIX**) WITH WIDELY DIFFERENT RESULTS.

GROUP A APPROACHED THE TASK LIKE IT WAS JUST ANOTHER DAY OF MINOR HOME REPAIRS, BUT YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT GROUP B MAY HAVE WORRIED ABOUT WHO MAY BE UP THERE, **WATCHING THEM**. NOTHING LIKE A **DEATH REMINDER** TO BRING YOU CLOSER TO **GOD**, EH?



NO HAMMER? NO PROBLEM! THANK GOD I HAVE THIS WEIRD CROSS-SHAPED THING!



GROUP A

I MUST HAMMER THIS NAIL AND ALL I HAVE IS THIS SYMBOL OF THE LORD! IS IT WORTH AN ETERNAL DOOM IN HELL?!



GROUP B

6



MOVING ON, WE COME TO THE FINAL EXPERIMENT...

THIS ONE IS A HOOT, BECAUSE IT'S LIKE A PRACTICAL JOKE. WE ALL LIKE THOSE, DON'T WE? WELL, DEPENDS WHICH END YOU'RE ON!

THIS ONE INVOLVED PEOPLE POURING THE AMOUNT OF **HOT SAUCE** THAT THEY WOULD MAKE A FRIEND DRINK AS A GAG (OR TO MAKE THEM GAG). AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, GROUP **A** WAS A LOT NICER THAN GROUP **B** AFTER THEY RECEIVED THEIR DEATH REMINDERS!



NOW WOULD BE A GREAT TIME FOR SOME PERSONAL INTROSPECTION. THINK ABOUT IT FOR A SECOND, HOW MUCH HOT SAUCE WOULD YOU POUR FOR A LAUGH? WHAT IF YOU FELT THREATENED? WHAT IF YOU WERE FEELING ATTACKED? HMMM...



ANYWAY, GETTING BACK TO OUR EXPERIMENT, I'M GUESSING THAT BY NOW YOU'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD FEEL FOR HOW THINGS TURNED OUT! THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS A BASIS FOR ERNEST BECKER'S THEORIES. WHEN YOU ARE REMINDED OF JUST HOW **MORTAL** YOU ARE, THE WAY YOU WOULD NORMALLY HANDLE A SIMPLE TASK IS **ALTERED**. YOU'LL WANT TO TEACH HARSHER LESSONS, LIKE HOW THE GROUP **B** JUDGES HANDLED THINGS, OR YOU MAY CLING TO SOMETHING LARGER, LIKE PATRIOTISM OR SUDDEN ATTACKS OF RELIGIOUS FERVOR, AND YOU MAY EVEN WANT A SIMPLE PRANK TO MAKE A LASTING IMPRESSION... ON YOUR FRIEND'S SCORCHED AND BURNING TONGUE.



AW, JEEPERS!
ONE GOOD DROP
SHOULD PUT SOME
PEP IN HIS STEP!
HYUK! HYUK!



MORE! I
NEED MORE!
MUA-HA-
HAHAHAHA-HA-HA-
HAAAAA!!!



THY ENEMIES
SHALL FEEL THE
SCORCHING OF A
THOUSAND HELLS!
BURN, BABY,
BURN!!!

BURN!!!

JEEZE! THAT
GUY NEEDS
TO CHILL!

ANYWAY,
LET'S TAKE
THIS LITTLE
CHAT ONE
STEP FUTHER
BEFORE IT'S
ALL SAID AND
DONE...



SO ASK YOURSELF, "WHEN I FEEL **THREATENED**, WHEN I'M FEELING **ATTACKED**, WHEN I'M REMINDED, HOWEVER SLIGHTLY, THAT I AM **MORTAL** AND MY LIFE, ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE IT WILL BE, WILL MOSTLY BE **BRIEF**, HOW WILL I REACT?" LOOK AT THE EVERYDAY SITUATIONS BELOW. WHAT WOULD YOUR KNEE-JERK REACTION BE? WOULD YOU LASH BACK? WILL YOU SPREAD THE EVIL? NOW, **BE HONEST!**

MILLENIUM HAND AND SHRIMP!

GIMME A DOLLAR! NARGLE FLARB!

I GOTTA SAY, YOUR WIFE'S GOTTA GREAT RACK!

STAND UP STRAIGHT! YOU LOOK LIKE A SLOB!

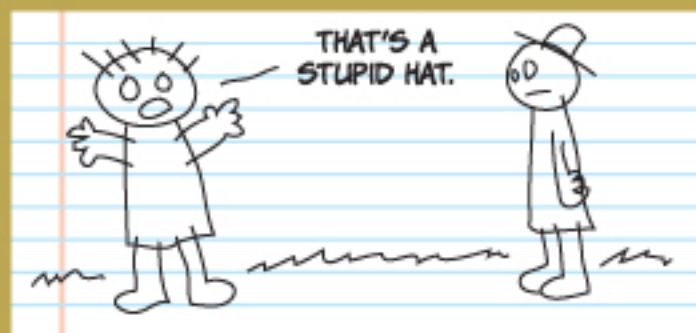
WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE YOUR BROTHER?

'SUP, DUDE...

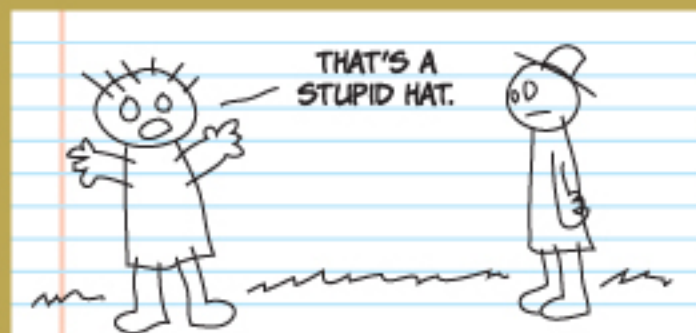
SO, YER DAUGHTER HOME?



ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS THINK ABOUT A MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU'VE FELT THREATENED OR ATTACKED, AND FOR SOME REASON YOU ACTED LIKE A BIG CRAZY WACKO!



THEN YOU CAN THINK ABOUT IT AND DRAW A COMIC ABOUT HOW YOU COULD HAVE HANDLE IT IN A THOUGHTFUL, LESS KNEE-JERK KIND OF WAY...



WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU AND SEEING YOUR COMICS! DON'T BE AFRAID, TELL YOUR STORY! WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE AND WE'LL ALL BE THERE AGAIN, BUT THE CLOSER WE LOOK AT OURSELVES AND THE MORE HONEST WE CAN BE, THEN THE BETTER WE WILL UNDERSTAND OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER.

THANKS FOR READING AND GOOD LUCK OUT THERE!

THE END!

