

## Shopping in the Valley of the Shadow

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It's post-apocalyptic grocery shopping with flowers and flatulence and fear among the trackless tracklights: What can I buy that will keep me alive?

Organic is better, I tell myself, but you can settle for BST-free cheese if it comes from Wisconsin and not the glowing West Coast. Look for the No-BST symbol and the Master's Mark sign to make sure your kids are not getting that nasty radiation still leaking from Fukushima (except when they go out for pizza).

There's actually no fool proof that radiation is bad for you but it's hard that it's hard not to think about Sadako during dinner. Though you have to let up when you buy for a party: You don't want to come off like a lunatic. Those people eat that shit anyway, and so do you when you're at their house.

And you can eat what they call conventional avocados: most of the poisons don't get through their skins so much thicker than yours. You can sneak your fingers into the goopy green dip when you think no one is looking and lick it off Not even bothering to *think* about the lesion-and-hemorrhage-inducing Flavr-Savr Tomatoes with the anti-freeze flounder genes which have been mercifully discontinued because they killed the rats that ate 'em.

You do have to skip the tox-alicious chips unless you can peek at the bag for the organic label to avoid the extra layer of poison on the roundup-tolerant corn

- or the glu-FO-sinate-resistant corn
- or the GLY-pho-sate-resistant corn
- or the corn with the Bt bacteria built in—either
  - Cry-1-A.105 (MON89034),
  - Cry-I-Ab (MON810),
  - Cry-I-F (1507),
  - Cry-2-Ab (MON89034),
  - Cry-3-Bb1 (MON863 and MON88017),
  - Cry-34-Ab1 (59122),
  - Cry-35-Ab1 (59122),
  - Cry-3-A (MIR604),
  - or VIP-3-A (MIR162)

which is also in your lovely retro cotton dress (though that product too may be discontinued like unsuccessful apparel and dessicated lords because the pink bollworm and the Florida army worm are already resistant.

And the Bt killed some more rats. Or some others).

Othering is alive and well these days (*Hey!* Tom Philpott said  
the Obamas

and the Bushes

and the Clintons

and the Romneys

all secretly eat organic foods. Not certified: they wouldn't dare—  
In public, they say, "So, a few rats have died. Who wants rats  
eating our corn? Fuck 'em. Let 'em die like the rats they are."

Who says they have to inherit the earth? They're not the meek.

But back to the oil (in the chips—remember the chips?

Remember, *I told you*, you'd have to skip the chips?)

The oil in the chips might be GMO, so

it really is best to use your fingers when no one is looking .

There! A snack! And it's OK, you're not that hungry,

and there's organic micro-distilled bourbon and gin on hand.

Of course, the kids can't drink gin all the time,

even if it makes them smell nice, like Christmas,

So I'm standing as if in supplication, peering at the good old-fashioned ice cream:

is that you, there, churning with

- propylene glycol,
- ethyl acetate,
- yellow dye #5 , hold the vanilla, but not the vanillin—

A very good lice-killer, I'm told: vanillin: I scream. You scream. We all scream for—OK  
skip the ice cream, but pick up some whole or low-fat or skim or two-percent  
(just over a buck at Jewel, if you don't mind the GMO hormones that give the cows  
infections that require the antibiotics that are more useless every day)

I limit my personal angst to four horsemen: Jewel for cheaper bread and jam. **TJ's** for  
bananas, pasta, chips, and apples, (and the samples 'cause they taste so good).

**Caputo's** for produce—organic—I wish it were laced with coke like the watermelon  
they sold in the 90s. **WF** for the dry goods: no union but fewer poisons. Whole  
paycheck? Maybe—but you've got a choice:

~ Poorhouse or hospital? Rickets or cancer? ~

Twenty years from now, when we're all dying from a cell tower or silicon disease  
we don't know about yet, will it matter?

No, no one is pure. Not even

Barak, Michelle,

George, Laura,

Bill, Hilary,

Willard and Lenore,  
Nor little Casey Wessel—came down with leukemia today.

Four horsemen—and still no meat to be had.

But go straight to the farm and inspect it yourself, unless you want one of those USDA self-inspected chickens—racing chickens—speeding along the production line at 175 birds per minute  
3 per second

like “We don’t need no stinkin’ inspections.”

Or—direct from *60 Minutes*, compromised but still kickin’—

- The fish we get “from China” (in four-point type).  
It feeds directly from the chicken’s ass:  
Their crates, arranged in a tiny Chinese Alcatraz,  
suspended over a man-made pond.

Yeah, its gross to you and me, but think of it  
from the Dante-fish point of view:  
Manna rains down, still warm, from poultry purgatory up above.

- And the garlic grown in sewage.
- And the cold medicine full of fecal bacteria.
- Silks and that are are fresh from chemical baths. . . .

Just. Like. You:

Your sweet little a carcinogenic soup starring formaldehyde  
(29 names for formaldehyde, and gee she looks well preserved).

And don’t forget *A-ZO-di-car-BON-amide—get it while you sleep!*  
*Yes, you heard right: A-ZO-di-car-BON-amide—get it while you sleep!*

And wait, there’s more! You can now get it free in your food:

That foam in your mattress so comfy you can eat it up, now featured at

- Subway.
- McDonald’s.
- Arby’s.
- Starbucks (except in Europe & Australia, where its not even allowed even in their yoga mats or shoes Whatta they afraid of? A little asthma don’t often kill ya.

This the poor can't afford to know. But *you* know,  
and you're getting poorer by the minute.

And it's on to Cassandra's problem, and Eve's: How can you un-know it?

Ignore the Caen of cancers in rats? It was, after all, retracted by the journal, which is run by no other than Richard Goodman *nee* Monsanto.

They said it: "No definitive conclusions can be reached." No one can really know, they say.

The rich though, make it their business to know. Their patron, Pandora makes 'em kill the rat. Or maybe they get the scoop from Hades—who yeah, was a kidnapper and rapist but really did love her, Persephone, our sister the resister.

It's time we became resistant, too—followed suit instead of suits. It might be enough to eat rarely and spare:

meat once a week,  
fish once a month,  
rice rarely to sidestep the arsenic still in the soil,  
fruit to avoid the acrylamide baked into our  
chips,  
cookies,  
crackers,  
cereal,  
fries.

Another list, but at least this time we know the words.

Better, maybe, if the chips are organic (so they only have one kind of poison, or two?  
Better if the fish swim in fecal farms, or wild and free off the hot coast of Japan? )

- Organic's got pesticide drift, curable only if you by a driftcatcher—opposite of a dream catcher—catches garbage where you stand.
- Cassava's got cyanogenic glucosides.
- Acorns can be toxic in large quantities.
- A pound of greens three times a day means kidney stones and a sluggish thyroid.
- & anyone ever eat too many beans?

I know: we're human and we're all doomed anyway.

But it's still gross

When Tom's sinuses swell up  
from too much of the weird-ass big-protein in the wheat we invented in '71.

When Zak throws up  
after fish from China and the vomit takes the finish off the hardwood floor.

When you develop an allergy to eggplant,  
which you love so much you eat it anyway—and you're only allergic when the  
eggplant's non-organic.

That *you* was me. Here I am again. I know now I can buy three things. And still I shop  
in the valley of the shadow. I could thank you,

- Monsanto/Syngenta/Pioneer/Dow/BASF/Bayer.
- And AquaBounty/ArborGlen/ArcadiaBioSciences/Mendel/Targeted Growth.
- And City of Wood Dale, thank you more, for spraying right inside our summer-  
night windows.
- Thank you Mom, for the color-coded meals, the DDT-laced meat (Grade A: you  
tried so hard! But I wish I never wished I were an Oscar Meyer Wiener).

Thank you thank you —there are more—but I'm running out of time. As are you.  
Thank you for making it here to the Post-apocalypse. Thank you all for sticking around  
so we can all go down together, all get fat & happy till the sores set in.

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