

He tripped over a box of rusty sprockets on his way to answer the door. Everything was a mess, it was true. But he didn't mind. Really. "Messes are the vortex of creation," he would say. There's heat there! Whereas orderliness gave him the creeps—orderly people especially. He always suspected that tidy exteriors concealed the most appalling conditions.

"A sterility of soul," he mumbled under his breath, eyeing through the frosted glass the nervously clean-cut man who had knocked on the door. And sure enough, it turned out to be a Christian who was now offering to save him.

"Don't you want to live forever?" the man asked, smiling with false friendliness.

Grady found it hard enough to trust a man who tucked in his sleeved shirt—but T-shirts? Come on! A little tyke like this who wore a white belt cinched around his jeans surely harbored some kind of deep-seated neurosis. Wouldn't cha think?

"Look at me. Do I really look like I want to live forever? I can hardly deal with the consequences of living 'til next Monday. Christsakes—what a chore. All that laundry!" Grady swore lavishly and then covered his laughing mouth with a hand in embarrassment.

The man frowned, flushed, and shifted uncomfortably.

So, out of pity, he was polite. "Hey, I'm a hopeless hypocrite—you can see that all right. And I'm sure I'm beyond saving, but we can talk about it some if you'd like. Here. Want some Pepsi?" He tried to be nice, but still the man went away clutching his Bible like a brick.

Behind the closed door Grady hooted and rolled his eyes. Holy rollers, I just met the Tidy-Bowl Man. I'd rather go to hell than end up looking like that. He hooted again and slapped himself with enjoyment...Ho-ho! Here comes Mr. Clean. Captain Ajax! And with a whistle, he cheerfully resumed what he had been doing which was unbending crooked bicycle spokes, one by one.

