



Epsilon Theory
Lucifer's Hammer

August 31, 2020



“The perversity of the Universe tends towards a maximum.”

“The gods do not protect fools. Fools are protected by more capable fools.”

“Ethics change with technology.”

Quotes by legendary science fiction author Larry Niven, none of which are from *Lucifer's Hammer*.

I was 14 years old when I read *Lucifer's Hammer*, the post-apocalyptic novel by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle about a comet hitting the Earth. It's pretty standard end-of-the-world fare, with mile-high tsunamis and volcanos emerging from earthquakes and billions dead and an intrepid community of surviving scientist/libertarians defeating the cannibal, faux-religious, statist army-remaindered horde that attacks without warning or honor.

It was one of those books that I read at just the right time, so I remember entire passages almost verbatim.

I remember how the odds of the comet hitting the Earth were minuscule at first, but every day would go up ever so slightly. I remember how smart people paid attention to that ... to a 1/100th of 1% chance moving to a 1/10th of 1% chance moving to a 1% chance, *when the probabilities are converging on the same event.*

I remember how the sentry's signal to the sniper that all was well was to raise his arms as if he were being held hostage, because of course that's the action that any would-be bad guy would forbid the sentry to take under any circumstances.

I remember how the battle with the cannibal, faux-religious, statist army-remaindered horde is ultimately won by getting them into a valley and them lobbing homebrew mustard gas canisters at them, and how the lung-destroyed survivors are dispatched by crossbow bolts so as not to waste any bullets.

I remember how the scientist hero saves the future of humanity by wrapping a full set of *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *The Way Things Work* in double-sealed plastic bags with mothballs, and then hiding them in a septic tank.

But most of all, I remember the voice of Ego whispering this in my ear:

"You know, this whole post-apocalyptic thing doesn't sound half bad!"

*Sure, I'd have to survive that initial strike. And sure, it's all quite sad that people I love (i.e., my parents) would have to die. But tbh, they had a good run, and I'm sure it would be a painless death. And this post-apocalyptic society ... why, it's a **meritocracy**, where my hidden genius and quiet courage and (very) untapped virility would finally be appreciated!*

Those whispers of Ego, those post-apocalyptic fantasies of a 14-year-old boy, have never left me.

I'm 56 years old, and I still fantasize about how I could take out a motorcycle gang assaulting the farm. I've figured out where to set up the enfilade line of fire, where to plant the IED and how big it would need to be to take out a half-track armored vehicle. I've spent many a pleasant hour figuring out how to construct a laser-guided RPG for when, you know, the cannibal, faux-religious, statist army-remaindered horde sends their helicopter out in support of the (now dead) motorcycle advance troops and half-track APC.

If I were a betting man - and I am - I would place a large wager that every first-world post-pubescent reader of this note similarly burdened with a y-chromosome harbors similar fantasies. Not just Harry Potter/Disney/comic book oh-I'm-a-special-orphan-destined-to-lead-a-grand-struggle fantasies, but "real" post-apocalyptic how-do-I-kill-the-motorcycle-gang fantasies.

NARRATOR: The world after the comet hits is not a meritocracy, but a brutal dictatorship without end, where boys like you are used as fodder and feed. And girls like your daughters are used as worse.

Death is pain incarnate, always and without exception. And yet there are worse pains that await you after the comet hits.

This is not a fucking game.

It has taken me a lifetime to hear the Narrator more loudly than the Ego.

It has taken me a lifetime to see clearly not only *what* deserves burning down but *how* to burn it down.

The What is the inequitable social structures of power in our normal, quotidian lives, both in the halls of secular mightiness and - even more so - in our own freakin' hearts.

The How is the unrelenting willingness [to Make, to Protect and to Teach](#) away from and in *resistance* to those inequitable social structures of power, creating a social movement that *ignores* the institutionally nudged and amplified whispers of Ego, that *turns the other cheek* as it builds and builds and builds a new nation of ... believers. Believers in the white-hot power of making, protecting and teaching to burn away the accumulated crud of decades of I-got-mine-jack sociopathy. Believers in the flamethrower of change that is political participation through community action, not just the sparkler of change that is political participation through voting once every four years.

Turning the other cheek doesn't mean you don't get angry. Trust me, I am SO angry! That's why I use angry words, like BITFD - Burn. It. The. Fuck. Down. - words intended to galvanize and shock, yes, and also words that embody the cold rage that first engulfed me during the Great Financial Crisis and has grown and grown with every moment of [the Long Now](#). But anger is not enough. In the history of social change, mere anger has *never* been enough.

Turning the other cheek - *which is just the OG phrase for nonviolent protest* - is a strategy for channeling our anger and weaponizing our voice.

It's a choice.

It's *choosing* the clear eyes needed to recognize that the institutions and the high-functioning sociopaths who wield today's inequitable social structures of power WANT you to strike back with

your fists rather than your words. It's *choosing* the full heart needed to take a hit for the Pack through nonviolent protests, sure, but nonviolent *actions* even more - unwavering, constant nonviolent actions of [exit, sacrifice, voice and mutual support from the bottom-up](#) - creating a decentralized epistemic Fight Club of citizens who make their way IN this fallen world without being OF this fallen world.

It's the smart play.

[**As wise as serpents. As harmless as doves.**](#)

2,000 years ago, this was pretty good advice for changing the world when the wolves of powerful, entrenched interests were looking for any excuse to rip your throat out, and it's pretty good advice today.

And yes, this is how we change the world. This is how we BITFD. For real. For good.

Unfortunately, we believers have a problem. That problem is that no one gives a damn about burning down the *systems* of control and nudge when their actual house and their actual car are actually burning.

But that's the comet that's speeding our way, a comet of endemic urban violence.

And for so many people - especially young men with the voice of Ego now *shouting* in their heads as the whispers are turned up to 11 by the amps of party and media - they think that sounds just dandy.

This has all happened before.

Back in the day, when I was a young pup of a poli sci professor at NYU, actual Marxists roamed the Earth. In my experience, Marxists are infallibly delightful conversationalists, and at an academic dinner I got to talking with two of these ancient dinosaurs (one of whom remains an avowed Marxist to this day and the other who had forsworn his faith) about the 1968 riots in Paris. They had both been there, manning the barricades! The Mother of All Protests! A national uprising against the police powers of a far rightwing President hellbent on reshaping the French republic!

I asked them to describe their experience. What was it like to be a part of *May 1968*, a student-led protest that mobilized the working class and shut down the entire country of France? That forced de Gaulle to (briefly) flee the country?

The old Marxist looked at his friend, the now disavowed Marxist.

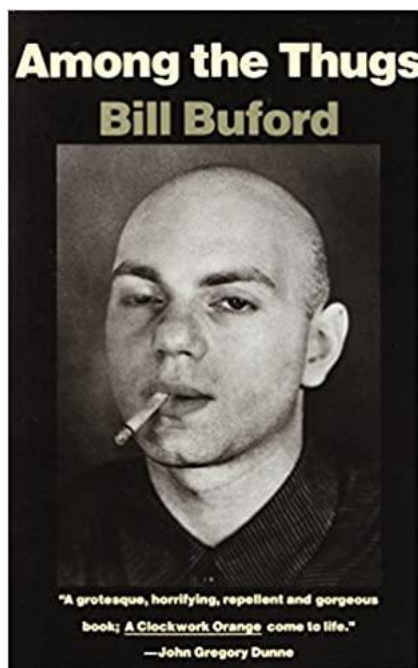
"Well, I remember I got laid a lot."

"Yes," said his friend with a wink, "it was quite a lot of fun."



And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen, the dirty little secret of every riot and protest and looting that ever existed in the history of mankind ... **IT'S FUN.**

And not to be outdone, here's the dirty little secret of every counterprotest and posse and vigilante group and "militia" that ever existed in the history of mankind ... **IT'S FUN.**



"I felt weightless. I felt that nothing would happen to me. I felt that anything might happen to me. I was looking straight ahead, running, trying to keep up, and things were occurring along the dark peripheries of my vision: there would be a bright light and then darkness again and the sound, constantly, of something else breaking, and of movement, of objects being thrown and of people falling."

"I had not expected the violence to be so pleasurable."

That's Bill Buford, literary editor and SJW, who started off writing an anthropological study of Man United "hooligans", only to be embraced as part of the crew and to discover the atavistic joys of a good rumble.

Among the Thugs is the best book you'll ever read about the human nature of riots and group violence.

Know who's having fun tonight? Know who's running on adrenaline and endorphins and the rush of cops and robbers? Know who simultaneously believes that *nothing* can happen to them and that *everything* could happen to them? All of the BLM "organizers" and all of the Antifa "cadres" and all of the Proud/Boogaloo "boys" and all of the MAGA militia "soldiers", that's who.

Man, they're all having a blast.

All with the voice of Ego running through their minds, [all secure in the knowledge that they matter and will be recognized for their meritorious service to this mighty cause.](#)



How do we stop the violence and the carnage of these bullshit and criminal "fiery but mostly peaceful" night time waves of destruction, and - increasingly - the bullshit and criminal confrontations between rival ~~English soccer team~~ political supporters?

How do we stop burning down the wrong things so we can get started on burning down the right things?

We change the narrative that these burners and looters and counter-burners and counter-looters *tell themselves*. We make it *not fun*, for the burners and looters as well as for the counter-burners and counter-looters.

We change the narrative by removing the oppositional foil of the rioting and looting story arc - we make it impossible to believe that the criminals are part of an unrequited struggle against The Man and his inexorable injustice - so that all that is left is the petty (and not so petty) criminal behavior which cannot be excused. We accomplish this with accommodation. Not by agreeing to "demands" ... usually there are no demands by daylight nonviolent protesters ... but by elected leaders resigning and/or establishing new elections/plebiscites so that there is a clear and meaningful alternative outlet for nonviolent protesters' voices.

Portland mayor Ted Wheeler, who refuses to defund the police in the way that Portland protesters mean the word (i.e. abolish), should resign. AND he should run in the special election called to replace him. AND the Portland protesters should put up their own candidate who will, in fact, defund the police to oblivion. Then vote. Let's do this next week. Let's see who the people of Portland put into office. Either the dog catches the car or the car runs over the dog. Either way, the story arc of this particular protest narrative ends there.

We make it not fun by removing the thrill of the chase and the thrill of the fight - we contain the rioters and the night time looters - so that all that is left is the boredom of walking around and yelling into the wind all night. We accomplish this with numbers and curfews. We request the assistance of the National Guard - *of course we request the assistance of the National Guard!* - so that we have the sheer numbers of trained personnel to contain the bullshit looters and keep out the bullshit "militias".

That's how we work our way through this.

We accommodate protester voice through new elections/plebiscites, and we contain criminal tag-alongs with sheer numbers of trained public safety officers.

Together, these actions change the story that we tell each other about the crimes that are committed in the name of a just struggle, AND these actions change the story that the wannabe and the confirmed criminals are able to tell themselves.

That's exactly how the May 1968 riots in France were defused.

De Gaulle, under pressure from his #2, Georges Pompidou, finally *accommodated* demands for government change by agreeing to new elections. At the same time, the Parisian police, backed by the French military, *contained* the protesting students by avoiding pitched conflict and preventing the takeover of government buildings.

But that's not going to happen in 2020 America. In fact, the opposite of this is going to happen. Why?

Because it's not just the Antifa/MAGA Militia goonies who are positively giddy with excitement at the prospects of this post-apocalyptic world. It's not just these clowns and criminals and wannabe culture war heroes. It's also every media organization that covers the night time "protests". It's also the Republican party AND the Democratic party, both their elected officials AND their party apparatchiks, who are intentionally amplifying the Ego whispers to their proxies through their MSM and social media platforms for a perceived electoral advantage.

It's not the Russians or the Chinese doing this to us.

We're doing this to ourselves.

Four years ago, [when I wrote that I thought Trump would defeat Clinton](#), I said that Trump breaks us by turning every one of our domestic political games from a coordination game - where cooperation in the national interest is at least possible - into a pure competition game where that potential cooperation is impossible. He did. That's exactly what happened.

So today, neither the Trump campaign nor the Biden campaign can see the United States through anything other than the lens of a pure competition game.

Neither campaign or party will take the necessary steps to defuse the growing violence in American cities, like Biden calling for Democratic mayors to request National Guard support or like Trump doing *anything* to accommodate the voices of nonviolent protesters, because they both think that to do so would place them at a competitive disadvantage in the November election.

Neither campaign or party is appropriately afraid of this comet hitting the United States, because they both think that they'll do just fine in a post-comet world. They both think that they can handle the aftermath of this comet strike after November 4th. They both are listening to their institutional Ego rather than to the Narrator.

They are both sowing the wind.

And they will both reap the whirlwind.

Neither the Democratic party nor the Republican party survives a defeat this November in anything close to their current form. I think several people are starting to think about that.

But here's what's also true:

Neither the Democratic party nor the Republican party survives a *victory* this November.

And no one is thinking about that.

Oh, and a quick post script. In case you were wondering about that snap election that de Gaulle called in May 1968, the election that the Socialists expected to win in a walk given the initial popularity of the student protests and the early ham-handed reactions by de Gaulle and his "Law and Order" / "France First" party ... it was, in fact, a landslide.

For de Gaulle.

DISCLOSURES

This commentary is being provided to you as general information only and should not be taken as investment advice. The opinions expressed in these materials represent the personal views of the author(s). It is not investment research or a research recommendation, as it does not constitute substantive research or analysis. Any action that you take as a result of information contained in this document is ultimately your responsibility. Epsilon Theory will not accept liability for any loss or damage, including without limitation to any loss of profit, which may arise directly or indirectly from use of or reliance on such information. Consult your investment advisor before making any investment decisions. It must be noted, that no one can accurately predict the future of the market with certainty or guarantee future investment performance. Past performance is not a guarantee of future results.

Statements in this communication are forward-looking statements.

The forward-looking statements and other views expressed herein are as of the date of this publication. Actual future results or occurrences may differ significantly from those anticipated in any forward-looking statements, and there is no guarantee that any predictions will come to pass. The views expressed herein are subject to change at any time, due to numerous market and other factors. Epsilon Theory disclaims any obligation to update publicly or revise any forward-looking statements or views expressed herein.

This information is neither an offer to sell nor a solicitation of any offer to buy any securities.

This commentary has been prepared without regard to the individual financial circumstances and objectives of persons who receive it. Epsilon Theory recommends that investors independently evaluate particular investments and strategies, and encourages investors to seek the advice of a financial advisor. The appropriateness of a particular investment or strategy will depend on an investor's individual circumstances and objectives.