

TOOLKIT IN PARADISE

Seems I find myself an Ultracrepidarian.

Don't run away, I had to look it up, too. I just needed a label for this tendency of mine to sometimes operate away from my area of expertise. The word means: "a person out of his or her element." I'm by no means a consummate Ultracrep; I do know my limits in most things. But, I wrote the Ultracrepidarian Bible when it comes to one field of endeavor: the Mr. Fix-It home front.

For this outing only, we will cover excerpts from Genesis & Prophecies:

In the beginning, Man created machines and machine parts. And the machines ran smoothly until they broke, and the machine parts were called upon to fill the void, and this is where I got into trouble.

And Man said: "Let there be a connection between machines and machine parts," and I've been looking for it ever since.

And the partner of Man said: "Honey, don't bother about that old lawnmower, it's time to replace it, anyway." And Man said: "What, are you kidding? I can fix that."

And the Man's partner rolled her eyes and became mute and dark, smug in her unspoken prediction.

And on the second day, cast out from the lawn and garden, the lurching, smoking, three-wheeled grasscutter was brought forth to the scrap metal pile in the Garden of Landfill as prophesized by the partner's silent treatment, followed by a gathering together of Man & partner in the Land of Outdoor Tools in Eastern Wal-Mart. Amen.

This is not all my fault.

I am equipped with the temperamental curve of a scientific poet, one who at once believes the mysteries of tree rings and bone structures can be finite blueprints, while sump pumps sometimes require exorcism along with priming. Hence the limping, spitting lawn machine that, despite my earnest tinkering with recycled sinktrap parts, became a pouting recluse

in a combustible cave.

Now, hold on, I'm not dumb to the nomenclature and workings of machines; I'm just stuck with this idea that nothing mechanical works entirely right without a dash of body English and a pinch of "Go baby go!" Conversely, feeling blue must have some roots in a dysfunctional thyroid. The mathematics of freshly baked bread. The tantrums of my truck transmission.

This dooms me to forever suffer from two infernal conclusions:

1. The exact same amount of flour, sugar, oil, salt and yeast mixed, kneaded, risen, greased and baked in the exact same pans, oven and temperature will always yield slightly different loaves.

2. Pounding a steering wheel will sometimes start a cold engine.

And lo, the shivering crankcase brought forth the hissy fit parallelogram, which begat the incontinent sinktrap, which begat the asymmetrical tulip bed, which begat the bipolar lawnmower.

And Man looked ahead and said, "Let us move past the numerology of Beltane into the endless dogs of summer."

And Man's partner said, "Woe be unto us, should the toilet water rise or the bread collapse."

And it was good.

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