

1979

## Excuse Me But. . .

Catherine Joseph  
*Grand Valley State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/amaranthus>

---

### Recommended Citation

Joseph, Catherine (1979) "Excuse Me But. . .," *Amaranthus*: Vol. 1979: Iss. 1, Article 21.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/amaranthus/vol1979/iss1/21>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Amaranthus by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gvsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gvsu.edu).

## EXCUSE ME, BUT YOUR HAT IS ON FIRE

He was amazingly handsome and seemingly intelligent (he had a Vonnegut book in one hand and the soundtrack to "Silent Running" in the other). Unfortunately for us both, he was either studying to be a comedian, handicapped by a peculiar and bizarre speech impediment that only allowed him to say that someone's hat was on fire, or just your average lunatic.

I ruled out the comedianship because no one was laughing. The speech impediment theory didn't hold up either because he had already asked the bus driver if this bus went to the airport. Therefore, sad to say, it seemed that this silver-screen-idol look-a-like had just escaped from the local sanatorium (which made me feel rather uneasy, since he was sitting in the seat right next to mine). I knew, of course, that he was a Grade-A loony because my hat wasn't on fire. Furthermore, I wasn't wearing a hat, so even if it were on fire it really wouldn't bother me. However, what did bother me was the thought of a raving lunatic sitting so close by (probably about to take out a .44 magnum and shoot me through the left nostril) screaming about my hat being on fire. Luckily I have a very sharp mind. I immediately came up with a retort I hoped would distract him.

"What?" I said, looking for an emergency exit.

"Your hat is on fire," he repeated, smiling rather strangely.

"Oh," I said, as calmly as my rising panic would allow.

In my mind I pointed at him and screamed frantically, "Here he is! Here he is! Get him the hell off of this goddam bus!"

But not one police officer bothered to look my way, except the one that leered and whistled in my direction. Chauvinist.

"Your hat's on fire," he said, staring into two glassy pools of light with his own equally glassy pools of light.

"Life's full of wonders," I replied, waiting for him to plunge a bejeweled dagger through my navel.

"Such is the thing that avacado preserves are made from," he said somberly as he tried to cut a large hole in my powder blue sneakers with the remains of a chicken salad sandwich.

"I've often heard that said," I said, wondering what, in my past incarnation, I had done to so royally screw up my Karma and cause this to happen to me in this lifetime.

"You know, I have always wondered what the world would look like from the inside of a mailbox, perched atop the Sears Tower, while fishing for peppermint danish off the coast of Tennessee," he said while shoving a man's briefcase out the window and humming a non-existent national anthem to a non-existent country.

"Me too," I said, wondering what to tell my analyst, if this loony decided to let me go in exchange for a wooden tire, complete with air hose.

"But then hallucination is the next best thing to being there," he said. Then he smiled and vanished into thin air without a trace, except for his shining white teeth which lingered on for a moment and then dissappeared.

Catherine Joseph