

# Why Not A Parrot?

*Susan Kirvan*

We are all in the basement at Bill's house, waiting for life as we know it to end. It won't be long now, according to Bill and his wife, Sarah. Fortunately, we are well prepared for life as we know it to end. To that effect, we have stocked up on all sorts of canned foods, cereals, dried fruits, fresh fruits, soda pop, beer, champagne (in case there's anything to celebrate) flashlights, toilet paper, cat food, dog biscuits (in case there's any wild dogs that have to be mollified), onions, toothpaste, non electric can openers, and just tons of other stuff that Bill and Sarah think we'll need when life as we know it ends. I don't know enough about all that computer stuff to understand it all, but I trust Bill completely. Well, almost completely. Rebecca reminded me a little while ago about that whole Paul McCartney thing. Oh yeah, that's when Bill told us that Paul McCartney was dead, but the Beatles just weren't ready to tell their public about it so they gave us little clues to follow so as to let us down easy. Rebecca never did forgive Bill for wrecking her favorite album. When Bill tried to play it backwards by turning it counter-clockwise with his finger, he accidentally scratched it all the way across. After that, Rebecca had to play it with a nickel taped to the needle holder, and it never sounded quite as good. Of course, I reminded Rebecca that that was years ago, in high school, and she really ought to be over it by now.

Personally, I'm glad that Bill keeps up with all the new stuff that goes on in the world. Rebecca and I are kind of isolated from the rest of the world in our little art studio, and neither one of us have ever felt the need to explore the computer fad. Of course, our kids, Jasmine and Skye, used to tease us about how old-fashioned we are, and I think there are times that Rebecca wishes that we had kept up with things going on, but now that the kids are off to college, and we've settled back down into our old way of life, well, I'm happy with life just the way it is.

Of course, that all might change now, according to Bill. "Everything's run by computers now," he tells us. "Unfortunately, when they programmed the computers they failed to look ahead to the year 2000, so they didn't plan for the extra digit in the built in calendar, or something. So, what that means is that everything that runs by computers will stop working at exactly midnight, New Year's Eve, 1999."

I still don't know why that means that life as we know it will end, because we don't even own a computer, but Rebecca keeps elbowing me to pass the joint, quit bogarting it, she says, so I've lost track of what Bill was saying.

"Think about it, Bob," he says to me. "No electricity, no businesses that depend on the stock market, the entire military system in the whole world. We might even have bombs pointed at us as we sit here, ready to go off the moment the computers break down." He takes a long toke on the joint and passes it to Sarah. I can hardly take in what he's saying; it's so heavy. Besides that, I'm thinking that if Jim, who has the munchies real bad, doesn't stop eating all the

dried fruit, we won't have any left for when the end comes. I don't say anything to Jim, however. He's never been right in his mind since his little brother died from eating a Fizzy, and quite frankly, I'm a little bit afraid of him.

Sarah and Rebecca have brought out the Ouija board, and now they have their eyes closed, and they're asking it questions. Bill rolls another joint and hands it to me. "You don't think that they actually still believe in that stupid thing, do you," he asks me.

"No, they're just doing it for fun," I answer him. I light up the joint while Bill moves to the television and turns it on. "Just a couple of more minutes and the big crystal ball is going to come down." Bill has got the basement fixed up real nice, and I'm thinking that I wouldn't even mind it if we did have to spend a few days down here, or even a week. The girls put the Ouija board away, and come and join Bill and I in front of the TV. Jim has stopped eating the dried fruit, which I'm glad of, but now he has moved on to the cheese popcorn. I guess I don't really care about that, when I think of how poor Jim doesn't have anyone to share the New Year with. Then I remember about the y-toucan thing, and I realize that there might not be a new year for any of us. I pull Rebecca closer to me, and she lays her head on my shoulder.

"Heh, does anybody want to watch "2001, A Space Odyssey?" Bill says. "I rented it last night, and it doesn't have to go back until tomorrow."

"Uh, Bill," says Sarah. "Aren't you forgetting something?"

"Oh yeah, you like to watch the big ball come down over Times Square, I forgot."

"Well duh," she says, but then she smiles at him to show that she's only teasing him. It's hard to tell with those two, they don't always get along that well. There's only one minute until the new year. They're starting to count down on the TV set, and so Bill crawls over to the refrigerator and gets everyone a beer. "I thought we were saving those just in case," I ask him, but Bill shrugs his shoulders. "You never know, and besides that, we've still got the champagne."

Jim sits down next to me and wipes his orange hands on his shirt. He lifts the beer to his mouth and when he gets done drinking, the beer can is empty. "I've always liked you Bob," he says. We all start counting down the remaining seconds.

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.....For a brief moment, the lights flicker off and on and there is complete silence. Then Jim burps, and the lights come back on. The clock on the VCR is flashing off and on and Bill and Sarah are kissing. "Heh, you two, knock it off for a minute, will you?" I say. "Does anybody know how to re-program this VCR?"

Bill, Jim and Sarah all shake their heads no, but Rebecca gets up off of the floor and walks over to Bill's stereo. "Oh who wants to watch an old movie?" she says. "I've got something better, here." She sits back down next to me, and I pass her the joint. Jim is munching on an apple now, and the rest of us sit back against the couch while the music plays.

*"I am the egg man, I am the walrus, koo koo koochoo koo koo koo".....*