

Warnings

by David Allen Sullivan

A can of self-defense pepper spray says it may
irritate the eyes, while a bathroom heater says it's
not to be used in bathrooms. I collect warnings
the way I used to collect philosophy quotes.

Wittgenstein's *There's no such thing
as clear milk* rubs shoulders with a box
of rat poison which *has been found
to cause cancer in laboratory mice*.

Levinas' *Language is a battering ram—
a sign that says the very fact of saying*,
is as inscrutable as the laser pointer's advice:
Do not look into laser with remaining eye.

Last week I boxed up the solemn row
of philosophy tomes and carted them down
to the used bookstore. The dolly read:
Not to be used to transport humans.

Did lawyers insist that the 13-inch wheel
on the wheelbarrow proclaim it's
not intended for highway use? Or that the
Curling iron is for external use only?



Abram says that realists *render material*
to give the reader the illusion of the ordinary.
What would he make of *Shin pads cannot protect*
any part of the body they do not cover?

I load boxes of books onto the counter. Flip
to a yellow-highlighted passage in Aristotle:
Whiteness which lasts for a long time is no whiter
than whiteness which lasts only a day.

A.A.'ers talk about the blinding glare
of the obvious: *Objects in the mirror*
are actually behind you, Electric cattle prod
only to be used on animals, Warning: Knives are sharp.

What would I have done without: *Remove infant*
before folding for storage, Do not use hair dryer
while sleeping, Eating pet rocks may lead to broken
teeth, Do not use deodorant intimately?

Goodbye to all those sentences that sought
to puncture the illusory world-like the warning
on the polyester Halloween outfit for my son:
Batman costume will not enable you to fly.

Patience

by Kay Ryan

Patience is
wider than one
once envisioned,
with ribbons
of rivers
and distant
ranges and
tasks undertaken
and finished
with modest
relish by
natives in their
native dress.

Who would
have guessed
it possible
that waiting
is sustainable—
a place with
its own harvests.

Or that in
time's fullness
the diamonds
of patience
couldn't be
distinguished
from the genuine
in brilliance
or hardness.

*Patience is its
own reward*

Patience = delayed gratification

WEDNESDAY, 22 AUGUST, 2007

Poem: "Earl" by Louis Jenkins, from *North of the Cities*.

Earl

In Sitka, because they are fond of them,
People have named the seals. Every seal
is named Earl because they are killed one
after another by the orca, the killer
whale; seal bodies tossed left and right
into the air. "At least he didn't get
Earl," someone says. And sure enough,
after a time, that same friendly,
bewhiskered face bobs to the surface.
It's Earl again. Well, how else are you
to live except by denial, by some
palatable fiction, some little song to
sing while the inevitable, the black and
white blindsiding fact, comes hurtling
toward you out of the deep?

- Truthfulness
Be true to self.

Optimism

by Jane Hirshfield

-Perseverance
-Could connect to
science.

More and more I have come to admire resilience.

Not the simple resistance of a pillow, whose foam returns over
and

over to the same shape, but the sinuous tenacity of a tree: finding
the

light newly blocked on one side,
it turns in another.

A blind intelligence, true.

But out of such persistence arose turtles, rivers, mitochondria,
figs—

all this resinous, unretractable earth.