



# THE BULLSHEET

bullsheet@denison.edu • @dubullsheet • denisonbullsheet.com

The Bullsheet, a forum for news, humor, and community dialogue, is funded by DCGA, recycles, and is printed each day that classes are in session. Submissions must be sent before our editors shamble into the office for next day publication via e-mail to: bullsheet@denison.edu. Submissions herein solely reflect the opinions of the authors.

Edited last night by: Mick, Blythe, and Betsy

Delivered this morning by: Micah

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April 5, 2023

“GRANVILLE’S COOLEST DAILY PUBLICATION”

Vol. LXIX, No. 122

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## *Balthazar and the Pyramid*

Balthazar,  
The Seer

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My readers, I come to you with the next installment of my odyssey. When last I left you, I had been summoned to an astrology convention accessed only through the Dream World, that is, by lucid dreaming. Upon entering this Dream World, I discovered it was no astrology convention, but a multilevel marketing scheme! As I tried to escape, I was cornered by two guards who presented to me a challenge: In order to escape the realm, I would have to complete three labors. At the onset of my first labor, I found myself at the base of the Aerobic Pyramid with two poorly wrapped parcels. We continue from here.

I had to first unveil the contents of my parcels. The heavier, but smaller, parcel was opened to reveal two five pound ankle weights. From the package also slipped a scroll explaining I must don both the ankle weights and the athletic leggings from the second package, which, to my dismay, I found to be a youth large, when I usually wear an adult medium. I excused myself from the prying eyes of my guards to change behind a cartoonish looking tree. I was surprised to find the leggings fit alright, and the ankle weights were not too cumbersome.

Once I began my ascent, however, my conditions changed. With every lift of my legs, my weights seemed to grow heavier. The steps of the pyramid seemed to be carved from the very same marble that graces the counter of the Tuscan-themed kitchens of the late aughts. My feet rose from them at first with great ease, but quickly I discovered them pulling away from each step as though a heavy, viscous goo were locking my feet to the surface - most likely a side effect of the ankle weights. With the increasing effort of the steps also came an increase of sweat, and with the sweat, my youth large leggings began to slip down my adult medium legs. In this way, I found myself not only coaxing my weighted feet from their positions, but also fighting to hold my leggings upon my waist.

Everytime I stopped to readjust the waistband of my too small Athleta imprisonment, my guards, who remained faithfully at their posts at the base of the pyramid, chimed up at me with gratingly inspiring quotes, such as, “She believed she could, so she did!” and, “Never dream for it harder than you work for it!” If this was a motivation tactic, it failed. If it was to keep me from retreating back down the steps and into their saccharine encouragement, it met its goal with great success. Largely out of spite, I submitted the mound. Atop it, I discovered a great chalice containing a thickly brown, foul smelling concoction. I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder, and instructions were projected into my mind via telekinesis. But this is a tale for another day.

I leave us here. Until we meet next, remember: The buzzards are not what they seem. Prepare: They can still see you.

For eons, survivors have warned that hope stings more than the sharpest sword ever has. A recent conversation with my lovely upperclassmen Noah and my involvement in a certain game of Survivor on campus led me to think about hope for a little while. Specifically, using the examples from *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel to ponder over if hope causes pain.

The first case arises when one hopes for something and then receives that thing. No pain is experienced, so hope doesn't lead to pain in this case.

The second case occurs when one loses hope and never gets what they're hoping for. Situations like these are obviously painful, but an examination reveals that hope isn't causing this pain. For example, the moment Pi realizes that his family is alive is immensely painful. However, it should be noted that hope is clearly not the culprit behind this pain, but the realization that his family is dead. At some point Pi will inevitably feel the full brunt of grief over his family's death. This means that hope simply postponed that feeling of grief, which is likely what I'm doing when I hope to win this season of Survivor even though it's not statistically probable.

The third case occurs when one never loses hope but never gets what they're hoping for. Left to its own devices in this situation, hope, itself, doesn't lead to any pain. However, it would be foolish to neglect a condition that swarms outside the borders of hope's realm. This twisted outsider is known as denial. Denial prevents one from moving forward with their life, damages relationships, and causes continual pain because what one desires isn't the reality. Hope and denial can seem to go hand in hand at first glance, but there is a stark difference between the two. Hope exists amidst slim odds and denial amidst impossible ones. Denial happens when clear evidence, reasoning, or knowledge points to something contrary to what one desires. For example, if Pi believed that the oil tanker would rescue him, even days after the ship had passed by him and Richard Parker he would be in denial. Hope, on the other hand, occurs when evidence, reasoning, or knowledge merely suggests that what one desires is unlikely to happen. This can be seen when shortly after an oil tanker passes by Pi and Richard Parker and Pi exclaims that they'll make it to land. In short, hope involves wishing for a fantasy whilst denial means refusing to accept that reality isn't a fantasy. Me playing snake instead of tetris during the Survivor immunity challenge is denial, but me hoping that snake will be a future challenge is hope. This is summed up nicely by something Pi said, "To look out with idle hope is tantamount to dreaming one's life away".

When it comes down to it, hope doesn't change the amount of pain over a loss, just the experience and time it takes to get there. The loss of hope or recognition of reality is actually what instigates the pain frequently associated with hope. That doesn't mean hope has no impact on misery, far from it in fact. If hope is a ship, then the actions inspired by hope are the wind carrying it across the ocean of pain. The ship won't always reach dream's shores, but without hope it wouldn't be possible at all. This is because, as Pi points out, you die in hopelessness.



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