

[back...](#)[back to Crux Intro](#)

The Crux

February 2003

SiXteen

When you're making people laugh, you're invincible. If you hide everything you say in jokes, you gain an audience, you get to say whatever you want, and you can deflect any criticism with more jokes. The problem is, a lot of people can't tell when you're kidding.

Unfortunately, honest and straightforward writing is often boring, whiny, and delightfully attackable. In my experience, teenagers are usually most responsive to writing that is peppered with naughty words.

So we are faced with a dilemma. Do we write something funny and entertaining, but potentially confusing and offensive to our audience? Or do we sacrifice the potential humor, and make sure that no one gets pissed off?

And look at the audience! 1,500 people locked in a building at an ungodly hour, most of whom don't especially want to be here, many of whom hate being here, and some of whom spend every second of every school day wishing that they would somehow suddenly get struck by lightning. It's hard to make people like that laugh. Even if you tickle them, they just get grumpy.

Are you laughing? Some people say that jokes don't have to be offensive, that there are lots of funny things to say that don't ridicule anyone. This isn't true. The people who say this are snobby, wishy-washy, self-righteous idiots who think that it's okay for anyone to get offended but them. And the joke that I made about praying to be miraculously struck by lightning while in class? Funny to you, but that joke was really about suicidal people. Is it funny to them? I hope it is.

And what about people who have lost close relatives to accidents involving lightning, or perhaps other forms of electrocution? Am I going to get hate mail from someone whose mother was struck? I doubt it. They'll either wince, skip the section (god forbid the whole issue!), or simply laugh with the rest of us.

A good friend of mine says that I need to stop being so self-deprecating all the time. She says that if I made my views clear more often, there wouldn't be so many people out there who hate me. But who wants to listen to someone preach all the time? I always thought that you had to hide your messages, or no one would listen. It's the same principle that applies when you hide your dog's medication in its biscuits.

A younger me would have made a date rape joke there, instead. See? I am maturing.

And if I had made the more offensive joke, would people say that I promote date rape? Do I actually have to come out and say that I don't? Or do I have to come out and defend myself against charges of racism and homophobia? I don't know how revealing I want to be, you know? What if I completely bare my soul, and everybody boos? And who wants to watch someone

But of course they are met with much suspicion and misdirected anger, which makes sense, considering there aren't very many good people out there. It doesn't help that everyone is always looking for a new bad guy, though. Especially around here.

So I'll try to find a balance between humor and honesty that protects the feelings of more students and faculty, and that ensures my own personal safety. Speaking of feelings.

I am so mad that I can't see straight. I can't deal with this anymore. I can't stand to see people greeting each other by asking if the homework was really hard, or what they did over the weekend, or when that essay is due. I want to grab these people and shake them, and scream into their faces. I want them to wake up. So wake up, everybody! Everybody take the batteries out of your remote controls and chew them up and spit the acid in the world's eyes. If you aren't going to be a spitter, and if you like things the way they are, then you can be a receiver. And the world can't close its eyelids because it'll melt through those, too.

See, sometimes I think that I might have a serious problem with misdirected anger, that maybe I'm just really pissed off at my parents, and I'm just taking it out on the world. In the above paragraph, I wrote that when people ask each other what they did over the weekend, it makes me want to grab them and scream something into their faces about revenge against the whole world. I understand that that's an insane thing to say, and that I do have some problems with anger. But look:

Human beings waking up before they're done sleeping to go to a place where they get talked down to and need written permission to go to the bathroom, complaining about the fact that there's no open campus lunch. Meanwhile, boys and girls plummet into deep depressions as they hit puberty, and cut themselves and contemplate death. While they're doing that, people are kidnapping little children and selling them to pimps, who then go and find those happy customers who will ruin lives to fulfill their fantasies. And then over in D.C., President Bush is getting everyone revved up for a good old fashioned war. In one hundred years, all of these people will be dead.

So what matters? All of it. Open campus lunch does matter, so does teen suicide, so does child prostitution, so does the war. And if you look at all of these problems and you ask the hall monitors and the counselors and the cops and the government why so many people are dying and hurting, and they say, "I don't know, I'm doing my job, though." Well, STOP. Someone has to stop doing their job the way

bare their soul in some stupid, heartfelt essay? That sounds boring to me.

The idea of coming out and trying to convince anyone that I'm a good guy really makes me cringe. This is making me cringe.

I think the reason that some artists have so much anger directed at them is that they expect you to already know that they're not the bad guy, and they want you to take everything they say as if they were a good friend of yours, making a joke in your living room

that they're doing. If everything's all laid out, and the gears of the world are moving fluidly, and it's this crappy, then we have to change some things. Some people are going to have to get fired, or embarrassed, or arrested.

One of our jobs as students is to keep feelings like these to ourselves. This is so that it will be easier for the rest of the world to ignore us, and make money and live well at our expense.

I quit.

Three Important Things to Think About

1. Jamie Stewart! Come on, man! Get a haircut, wear some makeup, do whatever it takes, just stop looking so funny! Watch some MTV, read a little Seventeen, figure out what you should look like, and seize the day! And Jamie? Two words: Pay-Less.

2. Now, James. It would be awfully childish of you to retaliate to these insults. You know that, right? It would be especially immature to insult my writing abilities. It would be even more infantile if you used The Graphic as a springboard for your attack. What would be really lame is if you did it tomorrow.

Yep, a man has to grow up and learn how to take a shot, without fighting back.

Anyways, I hope you do fight back. You know I can't sleep at night unless I've been in a newspaper within the last week. Tuck me in, Jamie.

3. Dad! Mr. Crafts! So much petty bickering in the Bulletin! Mr. Crafts, you shouldn't call my dad's writing mature: the rough draft of his letter was littered with childish insults, but the folks at the Bulletin kindly edited them out for him.

And don't call my writing immature, either, because it's not. Butt-brain.