

Lights and Shadows

Volume 32 *Lights and Shadows* Volume 32

Article 14

1988

Japery

Robert Jones

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.una.edu/lightsandshadows>



Part of the [Nonfiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jones, R. (1988). Japery. *Lights and Shadows*, 32 (1). Retrieved from <https://ir.una.edu/lightsandshadows/vol32/iss1/14>

This Prose is brought to you for free and open access by UNA Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Lights and Shadows* by an authorized editor of UNA Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact jpate1@una.edu.

Japery

Robert Jones

First Place Essay

They say lightning never strikes twice in the same place, but don't count on it. It would be much safer to say: Fate laughs at the confident. Or, maybe: He who builds his house upon the rock had better check for dynamite.

The state of blissful cynicism cannot be achieved overnight. Years of intense training may be required. For the benefit of those afflicted with optimism, I will describe some of the steps leading from the quagmire of hopefulness to the summit of skepticism.

The first step is the hard one: expect the worst. This is a bitter pill to swallow, but once it is down, the others go easier. An optimist will give you the old saw about the glass that's half empty or half full, but don't believe it. What does it matter whether it's half empty or half full when there's a cyanide capsule slowly dissolving in the bottom?

The second step is also tough: *never* count on anyone else. If someone tells you, "No problem, I'll take care of it," you can bet that it *will* be a problem, and he'll call you in the middle of the night, saying, "Sorry about that." For example, making the statement "he couldn't *possibly* lose the rings" will inevitably lead to the best man standing at the altar with his pockets turned inside out, apologizing to the stunned, optimistic bride and groom. Even more to the point: if you're the bride, find yourself a strong agile best man who will help get the groom to the altar. If you're the groom, have the bride's sister on standby, just in case. Don't learn the hard way.

The third step must be learned from experience: on those rare occasions when you do get lucky, for God's sake don't be smug about it. If the Fates smile at you, fall to your knees and thank them—this may be your last meeting with them. If the rattlesnake misses your foot, don't put that same foot into a bear trap. At least take time to appreciate your good fortune before you blunder into your next disaster.

The fourth step is accepting the idea that it *can* happen to you. In the back of our minds, we all harbor at least one tiny spark of optimism, or belief in luck. To illustrate the need for finding and extinguishing that last spark, I submit the following:

Richard M. Nixon

Walter Mitty and Ulgine Barrows

The *Titanic*

Mrs. O'Leary

Gary Hart

Wile E. Coyote

Jim and Tammy Bakker

These four steps can prepare you, the student of cynicism, for a rewarding career of missed opportunities and dashed hopes. They can provide the mortar with which you lay the blocks of experience into the unbreachable wall of skepticism. And, who knows? They may even allow you to laugh occasionally. □

'What does it matter whether it's half empty or half full when...'