

## memo

Thursday, March 25, 2004

To: Know when to hold 'em

From: Know when to fold 'em

Re: "That's the other side of paranoia, or the other side of antiparanoia. Somewhere in between. It's the middle way, to embrace the fear." —Spalding Gray, "Rivkala's Ring"

And maybe it's because I've started taking antidepressants—not because I'm depressed, though Lord knows I have been before, but because I want—I think I want to quit smoking. Oh shit.

The idea is to take the help-you-quit-smoking antidepressant for a couple of weeks, let it do its thing to your body (Which is what? The drug was designed to help depressed people not be depressed anymore. It just so happens that it also helps curb the desire to smoke. Or so they say. So what does it mean for a non-depressed person to take antidepressants? There's nothing for the drug to fix, so what does it do? Of course, one of the listed side-effects is *depression* . . . this antidepressant may make you depressed . . . and of course the big question is what is it doing to me? Well, I feel funny: kinda loopy, kinda tingly, kinda like my body has been filled with helium (but I'm wearing lead shoes like Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein*), kinda sad, kinda nervous, kinda grouchy. But who's to say that any of those things is an effect of the drug? For as much as I might sometimes like it to be, my life isn't a scientific experiment, there's no control (group). There are too goddam many variables, and no clean lines from column A to column B. Those unclean lines, in fact, get all muddled and twisty, creating—oh, and here's a well-worn metaphor—a web in which we are trapped like flies, from which we cannot escape, cannot get an overview blah blah blah blah blah.) and *then* stop smoking. Supposedly, at the end of the two introductory weeks, you won't want to smoke anymore anyway. But who wants to take any chances? I'm going to put the patch on too. I'm going to let this drug do its thing. I'm going to put the patch on. I'm going to give all of my cigarettes away. I'm going to banish my ashtrays to cleanliness and a drawer somewhere. And I'm going to go absolutely fucking crazy . . .

Needless to say, I'm scared to death: I'm taking purple pills; I'm afraid they're making me feel funny; And I'm going to say goodbye to a friend I've known for a long long time (it's true of course that said friend has been stabbing me on a regular basis, but we can't let a few flesh wounds come between friends, can we?).

Oh shit. Which way was the middle one again?