



Nancy Ford Dugan

## Here's Why I'm a Horrible Person

When all the world is facing chemical warfare, I have the sheer unmitigated gall to say my crust-infested eye hurts.

To the procreating women of gentrified Brooklyn, I want to ask, "What's with the clogs?" Do they signify a desire to dance? Farm? Mine?

Although I should disclose that a newly hired young executive is a crook, I consider the whole whistle-blower thing way too exhausting.

When a kind sibling gives up his precious time to drive me around bucolic New England, patiently joining me in cutesy shops where there is nothing he cares about, I find his hovering and strange whistling sounds both irritating and distracting.

When the volcano first erupted in Hawaii and molten lava poured through the land, my first reaction was "Oh, those poor people," immediately followed by "Will this in any way negatively impact my 'once in a lifetime' vacation scheduled for later this year?"

I'm infuriated by the ubiquitous sight of Apple iPods squiggling out of the ear canals of almost everyone on the street. I have to restrain myself from yanking them out. I believe for the sake of the species, this has to stop. Not only do they minimize daydreaming and the possibility of real social grace and interaction, they resemble:

- an alarmingly white piece of Good & Plenty candy hanging out of one of our least attractive appendages;
- the sprouting of another form of teeth coming out of yet another orifice, this one with a generous dental plan that provides whitening services. And why do they have to be so blazingly white? Did anyone consider flesh tones?

When I want to mess with someone who is bothering me and in my face, I hum a few bars of Hall and Oates. Any of their songs will do. But usually I stick with "Maneater," knowing it will be unwelcome and relentlessly burrow into the recipient's brain for a minimum of six weeks.

I interrupted a kind work colleague to take a conference call in the midst of his discussion about his newfound interest in the tenets of Buddhism to achieve calm in the face of loss. He stood at my desk, hands in his pant pockets, as I apologized I had to join the call. He seemed shattered and reluctantly turned away. So much for calm in the face of loss. I agree it is tough. Unlike Tina Turner, who has practiced Buddhism since long before she had her kidney replaced, I believe in maximizing and dramatizing *my* sense of loss at every opportunity.

I used a "tone" when the Midwestern hotelier made an error in the three-room reservation I had to make over the phone since the enforced online categories did not cover my family's reservation situation.

I held up the snaking line at the post office to exclaim at the counter over the new Gregory Hines *Forever* stamp.

When a friend sent me huge chocolate-covered strawberries at work for my birthday, I foisted them on coworkers. They were the size of a pie and came in a box the size of a drawer. Due to limited refrigeration space (both at work and at home), I just couldn't eat

all of them before they turned bad, even though my friend must have spent a small fortune.

I resent when family members schedule non-urgent medical procedures on my birthday.

I am flummoxed when friends insist they do not watch television after telling me they just sat on their couch and binged on *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* or some series on Netflix. I tell them: It may not have commercials, but you are still paying for it. It's still television; you are still at home when you watch it. Go to a movie theater. Spread out. See a real movie. Get popcorn. Enjoy.

I want no part of audience participation theater. I paid good money for a ticket. I want to sit passively in my expensive seat and have others do all the work.

While vacationing with friends who salivated at the sight of an Eileen Fisher outlet store, I was grateful it was closed. While I respect their right to consider shapeless, waist-less, expensive clothing as stylish and charming for women of a certain age, I believe they are misinformed.

Upon running into a former yoga co-student on the street, I rushed the conversation along so I could get home to enjoy a just-purchased warm Financier Le Vegetarian sandwich before it turned cold.

I sneer at colleagues who are too weather-averse to dash to the corner to grab lunch, yet have no qualms when the immigrant delivery guy gets drenched bringing their food to them.

I took pleasure in silently mocking napping male coworkers in aisle seats across from me on a crowded USAir plane after an excruciating long day attending a "Trust" seminar. Our tall admin slept upright, skull tilted at the top of his chair cushion. The VP had his chin on his upper chest and drooled. The British manager slept arms crossed, straight on, facing the seat in front of him. I felt momentarily and inaccurately powerful as the sole alert member of our team. I did not take photos, which would have moved me from horrible status to reprehensible.

Ultimately, I would really prefer to sit on the sofa (or a sibling's deck) and read rather than contribute a thing to society.

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*Nancy Ford Dugan has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in over 25 publications, including Blue Lake Review, Limestone, Crack The Spine, Cimarron Review, Passages North, The Minnesota Review, The Alembic, Euphony, The MacGuffin, Epiphany, Delmarva Review, The Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review, Lowestoft Chronicle, Superstition Review, and Tin House's Open Bar. She lives in New York City.*