

# As Is

By Erin FAGAN

"Everyone will automatically assume that I'm a raging egomaniac and that I put you up to it (the interview)."

Jeremy Livingston, after suggesting that he is only a "modest egomaniac," continues to peel the label off his plastic juice bottle ("I hear there's more lemons in Pledge than in Country Time lemonade," my associate Brodie MacRae observes).

It is an early, muggy Saturday evening. The three of us are sitting at a table that is situated halfway between the interior of Café Diem and the external patio that extends into Victoria Row. I am happily digging into my mandatory weekly consumption of cheesecake (caramel chocolate cheesecake, at the moment) alongside a large black coffee. Jeremy, a fourth-year honours student seeking a "Major-Major" in Philosophy and a "Major-Minor" in English, fiddles with the bottle while Brodie follows my cue and seeks another slice of decadence.

You have probably seen Jeremy around Charlottetown. Last summer, he could often be found sitting on a picnic blanket in the Victoria Row-Province House orbit, reading philosophy texts and proudly wearing the now tragically lost "I Belong In The Zoo" button pin. You may have heard him laughing heartily in a Main Building corridor. He is actually renowned for laughing for sixty minutes straight in high school after Jeff Coll uttered what would become Jeremy's yearbook quote, "Fly, Monkeys, Fly!!!"

After watching a yellow Volkswagen Beetle drive the wrong way down the presumably pedestrian-only street, Jeremy shows us the book he has just bought at the newly opened Indigo bookstore. It is titled *The Lucifer Principle*, its central argument being that evil is intrinsically ingrained in human biology.

Jeremy is actually a card-carrying Satanist, although any fears as to what this entails should be wiped from

your mind immediately. He explains it all in philosophically clear terms (or is that an oxymoron?):

"I usually make stuff up. . . so that people will stop asking questions. . . principles not dogma. . . contrarian. . . secular antinomian," he lists, explaining his belief that there is no such thing as normal, aside from statistics. Also: "It's against my religion to proselytize."

At first, Livingston finds it hard to describe himself, but then manages to find some words: "Calm. . . easily amused (It's a virtue), practical idealist. I think I might be a perfectionist, which kind of worries me because perfectionists tend to become cynics," he explains, shuddering for emphasis.

His favourite things are oatmeal, Christmas lights, philosophy, trees, and the beach on dark, windy nights. Jeremy's "litmus test of coolness" is to ask people which they prefer: The Munsters or The Addams Family? (The latter being the preferred choice.)

"It's (the original The Addams Family series) something I've grown to appreciate. . . I think I've got a little bit of gothic personality deep down inside."

He claims at first that there's not a lot that pisses him off, corrects himself, and then includes "people who don't even try to listen. . . who pretend that they already know it all."

On the topic of UPEI itself, Jeremy would love to see the Philosophy department receive a bigger budget so that the faculty can hire more assistants and spend less time on time-consuming administrative stuff. When Brodie asks him whether the main function of a university should be to teach or research, Livingston emphatically replies that they go hand in hand.

"(The ideal professor) . . . should have the discipline of a scholar and the zeal of a rabbi. . . no not that. . . the zest of a rabbi. . . the moxy."

"Scholarship is leisure,"

Jeremy adds, explaining that it will be good when the scholars are not bogged down with too many other things. He also believes that there are far too many courses cross-listed in the department calendar, and that this adds more responsibility for professors.

Talking about scholarship and careers inevitably drifts to the topic of Prince Edward Island and our future upon it.

"I love it (PEI). At the same time, in the past year I've come to the awareness that I have to move away at a specific time. Every street has a memory. I resent it now. . . I'll have to leave it all. You have to train yourself not to like it anymore." If he could live in any other time period in history, however, he adds that Revolutionary France would be it (as a spectator, reader, writer, and not royalty).

When I ask him, in the end, to rate me on my first non-news related interview, he tells a story from his days doing a radio show for CIMN with the now-Ottawa residing Alex Mann. A standard ending question became, "So, how do you feel about doing this interview in the nude?" (It being radio). The best response, he says, came from Bif Naked, who at first said, "It's great. . . because I'm Bif Naked." Out of nowhere, she also added, "And ladies, these guys are hung like horses, and there's nothing like 3 lbs. of horse cock before a big show." Jaws dropped, I'm told. (Since this interview is A) in a very public place, B) witnessed by my boyfriend, and so C) fully clothed, I cannot comment. . . although, ladies, Jeremy has an untested theory that he's "unseduceable.").



Anybody else smell smoke?