

TRAPPED IN A TOY MACHINE



The Associated Press
James Manges II swings inside a toy vending machine he apparently wiggled into at a Wal-Mart store in Elkhart, Ind., on Friday. The fire department was needed to help free the three-year-old.

Greeting cards for cheaters offer 'cozy, comforting' words

MISTY HARRIS
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

In the post-Hank Williams age of extramarital affairs, it's not your cheatin' heart, but your cheatin' cards that will tell on you.

Secret Lover Inc., launched this week at the National Stationery Show in New York, is the first greeting card company to turn out prose for sentimental philanderers. Whether trying to break up, make up or make out, men and women involved in forbidden flings can find words to match their emotions in the controversial new cards.

"Even though the industry touts itself as having cards for every type of relationship out there, they do not have anything for this," says Cathy Gallagher, the Maryland entrepreneur behind Secret Lover. "It's a taboo thing and people have been afraid to touch it."

Gallagher, who says she's never had an affair, came up with the idea after she and her husband talked about the extramarital relationships in their circle of friends.

"(Cheaters) are going through this inherent conflict and have all this deep emotional intensity and feelings that they can't express," she says. "I saw a huge market and just went for it."

One of Gallagher's holiday greetings reads: "As we each celebrate with our families, I will be thinking of you." A birthday greeting laments the star-crossed couple's inability to be together, presumably due to spousal

commitments. There's even a card to commemorate the anniversary of an affair.

Kim Blank, who teaches cultural studies at the University of Victoria, says the collection does its best to romanticize, commodify and to some extent normalize adultery.

"Most of the cards are cozy, comforting, and even caring," he says. "We don't have any that actually approximate the truth, like 'Wham, Bam, Thank you Ma'am,' or 'Sorry about last night — I was really drunk.'"

In the current climate, Blank says people are more surprised by fidelity in a marriage than an affair. Add that to the lure of forbidden fruit — a 2002 Ipsos-Reid survey revealed one in 10 Canadians admits to having cheated on a partner — and it's easy to see how Secret Lover's cards could hit paydirt.

"What we can't have, or are not supposed to have, is what we want," says Blank. "Make it illicit, illegal, or dangerous and they will come. That's why Anakin went to the Dark Side (in Star Wars)."

According to a spokeswoman for the Greeting Card Association, a trade organization representing the industry, Hallmark won't be opening an "infidelity" aisle anytime soon. But she

predicts Secret Lover's cards could support a strong niche market if the demand is there.

"Greeting cards have always reflected the social fabric of the nation," says Barbara Miller. "If indeed there is a (forbidden love) sentiment out there and people are seeking to express that sentiment, then these cards may be of great interest to people."

Barry Shank, a greeting card historian, says cards for extramarital romances have been around since the 1950s. The fundamental difference is that Secret Lover is the first to be explicit with its message.

"(Previous cards) didn't mention out loud they were for mistresses or affairs," says Shank, an associate professor of comparative studies at Ohio State University. "They would say things like, 'For my swinging lover.' It was in line with the rise of Playboy magazine and that kind of lifestyle."

Because the industry's future relies on reaching untapped audiences, he says a direct appeal to cheaters makes good business sense.

"They're going to have to continue to produce niche markets for smaller and more finely-focused sets of relationships not covered by the current market," says Shank. "That's the way the greeting card industry is going to continue to survive."



Cathy Gallagher

UN calls for inspection of Canadian jails

STEVEN EDWARDS
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
UNITED NATIONS

The UN pressured Canada Friday to take the first steps to allowing foreign inspections of Canadian jails to make sure prisoners are not being tortured.

The world body's Geneva-based committee against torture made the call in the latest of its periodic assessments of how well Canada is complying with the 1987 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The committee also criticized a Canadian law that grants immunity under the Canadian legal system to foreign governments accused of torture.

On the urging of a Canadian-based anti-torture group, the committee said Ottawa should scrap the law, which aims in part to dissuade retaliatory lawsuits against the government of Canada in overseas courts.

Canada is one of 139 countries that recognize the convention, which involves subjecting government officials to grillings every three to four years by the 10-person committee.

Canada has told the committee it is studying whether Canadian law is already sufficient to protect prisoners from torture, hence inspections would not be necessary.

Analysts say there is resistance to inspections among some of the provinces, which oversee most of the prison system. Human rights activists add the pressure from the UN puts Canada in a bind because the government often argues when promoting human rights overseas is that it has signed all major human rights conventions.

"We will pay attention to what the committee says; you can't turn your back on an international body," said Patrick Charette, spokesman for the Department of Justice.

The campaign to have Canada scrap foreign-government immunity for tor-

ture was brought to the committee's attention by the International Coalition Against Torture.

The group was launched by Houshang Bouzari after Canadian courts threw out his 2001 attempt to seek compensation from Iran for allegedly torturing him in the 1990s.

By saying Canada should "ensure the provision of compensation through its civil jurisdiction to all" torture victims, the committee is effectively striking down the right to state immunity for torture internationally, some jurists say.

U.S. courts allow such claims if the accused government is designated by the U.S. State Department as a state sponsor of terrorism.

The protocol on prison inspections will become binding on countries that recognize it after ratification by 20 countries. So far 34 have signed on, but only eight have ratified it.

The committee also reprised old criticisms — including one that has taken on new relevancy in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

It is focused on a practice upheld in 2002 by the Canadian Supreme Court that the most dangerous foreign nationals can be deported if the threat of torture against them is substantially less than the threat they pose by remaining in Canada.

The committee says Canada should give such people "status as a protected person ... on account of the danger of torture."

Canada told the committee it would always err on the side of the individual, adding Friday in prepared remarks for the media that such a deportation has never occurred.

A separate UN body, the UN Human Rights Committee, disputes that, saying last year the 2002 deportation of Iranian intelligence agent Mansour Ahani was a potential example.

According to reports, however, there is no evidence he has been harmed.

Ottawa setting up visit by Palestinian leader Abbas

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
OTTAWA

The Liberal government was working behind the scenes Friday to arrange a possible visit to Ottawa next week by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

The preparations were proceeding with renewed vigour following Thursday night's narrow confidence-vote victory, as federal officials also worked on the details of a possible economic support package for the Palestinian Authority, that could be announced to coincide with Abbas's arrival in Ottawa.

"He wasn't going to come if we were

going to have an election on our hands," said Mazen Chouaib of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

Abbas is scheduled to arrive in the United States next Thursday for a three-day visit that is expected to culminate with a trip to U.S. President George W. Bush's Texas ranch.

Canadian and Palestinian officials are trying to arrange a half-day stop in Ottawa, likely at the end of Abbas's U.S. trip, said Chouaib.

Chouaib said Abbas would likely meet with Prime Minister Paul Martin, Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew and representatives of the Canadian Arab community.

FROM AI ATTACK: Residents shaken

"I've seen him around lots of times," Laybourne said. "I don't know his name, but we'd (talked) lots of times. It's just freaky. I've worked in a hospital, so you see stuff like that, but it's different when you see it happen right in front of you."

Robert Holt had stopped to grab a few groceries at the station store. He watched in disbelief as the man was shot, then instinctively started chasing the gunman.

"I was stupid enough to want to go after the guy," Holt said. "I wasn't thinking, I just reacted. Then I thought, 'This guy's got a gun, and I don't,' and I stopped."

Holt said the gunman was wearing a "pillowcase-type, homemade mask."

Calgary police Insp. Paul Manuel said that the incident was at first thought to be an armed robbery.

"Upon arrival, it was determined that a man seated in a motor vehicle parked at the gas pumps had been shot a number of times," Manuel said.

The male suspect ran along 8th Avenue between 44th Street and 45th Street, and escaped in a red car that may have been a Mazda.

Area residents lined the yellow police tape, asking each other what they

had seen, talking to police officers and worrying over the state of their neighbourhood. A Dickie Dee ice cream truck stopped by to offer his wares and ask what was going on. Children on bicycles weaved among the cars that slowed down for a look.

Seven-year-old Brandon Rohl was across the street when the shots were fired, and turned to see the gunman run away.

"I told the police man: 'the guy with the gun ran up the street,'" said the sombre little boy.

"It was really loud and scary, bang-bang-bang. I didn't know what it was."

His mother, Lori Kleben, was in her apartment, but also saw the man run away. She wasn't sure what she had just heard.

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