

## Our Implausible World

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 16 August 2012 10:47 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 August 2012 20:52

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Reality makes rubble of fiction.

Our implausible world can take almost any topic or subject, skewer it, spin it around in its rotisserie barbecue: give it a few and, voila! *Everything goes out a nice, golden brown.*

Just like Meals, Ready to Eat, or MREs -- field rations for military members in the familiar brown plastic packets, for example.

The meals are popular with survivalists, campers, hunters, and others away from their ranges-in-home, let alone from antelope playing near the 'fridge.

Wiki tells us the U.S. government requires the following information be printed on each MRE case: *U.S. Government Property, Commercial Resale is Unlawful.*

So, what's the implausibility here? *It's not true.*

There are no laws forbidding the resale of MREs. The military can try to discourage resale, but there are no laws on the books. However, military members *can* receive disciplinary action for making a *profit* on the resale of MREs, which *is* illegal.

MREs show up on eBay, among other places, so often that wags have nicknamed them, "Meals, Ready for eBay."

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As you might suspect, implausibilities abound in this world. Here are a bushel of them that we tripped over, on our way to somewhere else, other than where we landed, sprawled out here:

<> **No country** would use taxpayer funds to build a memorial to a convicted World War II war criminal, right? Actually, they would, and already have -- in Italy, in a village south of Rome.

The mausoleum and memorial park honors Field Marshall Rodolfo Graziani, Mussolini's military commander in Ethiopia and Libya, where he used chemical weapons and pressed massacres.

More implausible still? A representative from the Vatican attended Saturday's opening ceremony. A local newspaper reports about 100 people gathered for the opening, and that \$157,000 of public funds were used to construct the memorial.

<> **This is** the 21st Century, not the Dark Ages, so one might reasonably expect people to have shed some of their voodoo, hoodoo, or sundry superstitions by now -- except that we haven't. People still poach animals, killing them to get at small body parts used in traditional medicine, doing so for exorbitant profit, then abandon the carcass. Horrible enough -- but, what happens when the body parts are human?

There was an uproar a few years back when the granddaughter of Benito Mussolini, Italy's fascist dictator, made a chilling announcement: parts of her grandfather's brain, and some of his blood, had been stolen from a hospital and were for sale on eBay.

The starting bid was \$22-thousand bucks, although eBay removed the listing some hours after it was posted.

<> **Egyptians were** the first to mummify their dead. Wrong -- another "truth" bites the dust, so to speak. The Chinchorros, of the desert area between Chile and Peru, were first to that party, 7-thousand years ago.

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The area is so dry, the dead automatically and naturally turn into mummies.

<> **We normally** think of birds living and flying, not falling, dead -- but they fall all the time, from Arkansas to Sweden and back again. The latest incident is New Jersey's, where birds fell from those skies, apparently after consuming pesticides legally applied.

Other times, sudden, repeated loud noises at night can spook birds from their roosts, causing them to fly when they do not normally do so, flying blindly, crashing into objects.

<> **Some objects** fly away or are lifted or borrowed unexpectedly; this includes bits and pieces of saints, and other religious treasures.

In Ireland, earlier this year, officials at Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin, say their most precious relic was stolen: the 900-year-old preserved heart of the city's patron saint, St. Laurence O'Toole.

The heart had been contained in a wooden, heart-shaped box, inside an iron cage bolted to the wall. Other items -- such as candlesticks made of gold -- were not taken from the church.

Somehow, it is easier for us all to understand the nature of theft when goods easily turned into cash are involved -- when valuable items are stolen, but not the highly prized and valued. In the theft of religious artifacts having little or no cash value, one is left wondering -- why? What's the attraction?

<> **Some people** are attracted to sports cars. Back to Mussolini, once more: A classic he once owned -- a 1935, two-seater, Pescara Spyder -- was set on the auction block in 2008. It was later purchased for \$863,000, after the best auction offer it could muster was less than half of the \$1.2 million the owner had wanted.

Is it just that collectors will scoop up and collect anything, especially rare or one-of-a-kind

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items? Is it true, would you say, that the more money a collector has, the stranger the collections become? If so, what happens to the collector?

<> **One church** has its own one-of-a-kind item: a medieval communion chalice. It had been in the church for centuries, but not valued until 2009. Turned out, it was worth \$2.8 million.

It's being held for the church by the British Museum -- who wants to buy it -- until the church can sort out various legal issues, and then decide whether or not they'd like to sell.

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Fairly implausible, all of it. Welcome to this implausible, improbable world.

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MREs: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meal,\\_Ready-to-Eat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meal,_Ready-to-Eat)

Memorial: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19267099>

Mussolini's parts: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8371171.stm>

Chinchorros: <http://www.npr.org/2012/08/15/158790969/changing-climate-may-have-led-to-earliest-mummies>

Birds: <http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/weird/Dead-Birds-Fall-Sky-Millville-166137636.html>

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Birds, II:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/01/110106-birds-falling-from-sky-bird-deaths-ar-kansas-science/>

St. Laurence:

[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202\\_162-57390549/heart-of-dublins-patron-saint-stolen-from-church/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57390549/heart-of-dublins-patron-saint-stolen-from-church/)

...and again: <http://www.inquisitr.com/201112/the-900-year-old-heart-of-saint-laurence-otoole-stolen-from-irish-church/>

Mussolini's car: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/gloucestershire/7301255.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/gloucestershire/7301255.stm)

Chalice: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/wiltshire/hi/people\\_and\\_places/religion\\_and\\_ethics/newsid\\_8280000/8280117.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/wiltshire/hi/people_and_places/religion_and_ethics/newsid_8280000/8280117.stm)