

QUIT SMOKING IN 17 DAYS,
if you truly wish to

by
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Quit Smoking in 17 Days

This little booklet is dedicated to anyone who is too intelligent to continue nursing a mindless and dangerous habit and intelligent enough to recognize the fact.



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Quit Smoking in 17 Days

Author's Note:

If you've been told that breaking the cigarette habit is impossible, you've been lied to. Undeniably, it can be a long and painful process, riddled with repeated failure, but I know that *if you truly wish to quit* nothing can prevent your success.

Here's how I know that:

I haven't smoked a cigarette in 18 years.

This booklet is an outline of what I did to accomplish that.

My Credentials: **A Tale of Pure Idiocy**

My adventure with cigarettes began while I was still of crawling age. As the story goes, one day my mother stuck me outside in a playpen under the ponderous limbs of the old bagworm tree. She came out a little later to find that several of the solid oak bars had been shattered, and I was nowhere in sight. But, she knew just where to find me, apparently I'd done it before. And sure enough, I was three doors down the street, sitting in a neighbor woman's lap, calmly eating cigarette butts.

My mother says that when she came upon us I was nestled up against that good woman just as happy as can be, shoving the foul things into my mouth with both fists. I like to imagine that I was using the more advanced, alternating hand technique. And, knowing me, I probably stepped up the pace when, at a distance, I spied my mother coming.

The kindly neighbor's name was Gladys Schoelein. Her husband was a long-haul truck driver; I think his name was Phil. That's about all I know. The rest is only what I've been told. But, I can tell you this much firsthand: it wasn't the tobacco that called me, gave me the strength to shatter oak prison bars, and filled me with the necessary resolve to crawl a hundred yards of gritty, glass-strewn, broken concrete sidewalk on my tender, puffy little hands and knees. It was Gladys. I'm told that I loved her dearly...and what's nice is that, by all accounts, she liked me too. She was always glad to see me, always offered me a lap and as many cigarette butts as I could eat.

Later, in college, I *smoked* cigarettes—but only while drinking, and, wisely, I only drank at night.

In those days I smoked Parliaments because my friend, Rick—a literary genius, whom I admired greatly—smoked Parliaments, and he smoked Parliaments because his mother—whom he admired greatly—had smoked them. I have no idea why she smoked Parliaments—without knowing the woman—but from what I've heard of her, she had admired no one more than herself.

When I was a small child, my father smoked Lucky Strikes for years, because his father—whom he admired greatly—smoked them. When his father died suddenly and the physician said it was due in large part to smoking, my father dropped cigarettes that very day. He has never smoked another cigarette since. Not one.

That was more than 60 years ago.

At any rate, after college, when I discovered that I had no real use for cigarettes in my life anymore—I wasn't drinking as much and had other things to do—I decided to quit. So, I went through the normal process; first, stopped buying the damned things, then stopped bumming them. Then, of course, things got a lot worse before it got any better. But, eventually, after a somewhat lengthy struggle, I finally stopped fishing the longest butts out of people's ashtrays, straightening them out and, with great dignity—in a gesture of pure elegance—nipping the burnt tip off with my fingers, before inserting the foul thing between my trembling lips and taking in that first desperate hit.

I think the entire quitting process—to be thoroughly free of the shameless habit—took over a year. After that, I didn't smoke a single cigarette, or even consider the idea, for more than 20 years. Then—you know how these things go—I fooled around and fell in love with a heavy smoker. She'd been smoking tobacco for **34 years** of her life.

Since I found the habit completely repulsive, but found the woman so attractive in so many other ways, I tried to get her to quit. I tried everything; I joked with her, I whined, I pleaded, I talked good sense, I talked nonsense, I begged her, I threatened to leave. Nothing worked. Stubborn as a mule, she would neither be led nor driven to quit smoking. Her excuse was that she knew, from *many* past attempts, that quitting was impossible. Nonetheless, I continued my noble campaign—harping about the monetary cost and the cost to her health—until, eventually, I was forced to finally accept the undeniable fact that that woman actually, literally and truly *did not want* to quit smoking.

In the meantime—here's how far the volatile mixture of love and idiocy can carry a man like me—in order to demonstrate to her that quitting was possible, I started smoking again. My plan was to get hooked and then quit.

In a very short time I was matching her remarkable intake, cigarette-for-cigarette and, not surprisingly, found myself thoroughly addicted. I *craved* cigarettes... but in the most casual way of course. For a couple of years we sat on the back porch together, in the evenings, smoking cigarettes and just chatting away. And, I have to admit, I liked that. I didn't like smoking, but I needed tobacco.

At some point I began to wonder how I could possibly justify sitting out there in rapture, with the evening breeze upon my face, talking quietly under the stars, hearing the surf crash down there below on Moonlight Beach, while chain-smoking like a fiend. On one level, it was ridiculous. On another—our abalone shell ashtrays overflowing with crushed out cigarette butts—it was just plain *pathetic*. It made no sense. To sit out there purposefully, habitually, mindlessly inhaling carcinogens, with *no* consideration whatsoever for our hearts, our lungs, our own lives, simply made no sense. Why were we kicking Life in the teeth and working so diligently at creating our own misery?

When I told her it was time for both of us to quit, she only shrugged and said, “If you want to quit, go ahead; I have no interest in quitting.”

That statement only galvanized my determination to quit. So, surrounded with cigarettes, ashtrays brim-full of butts, and the utter indifference of some, I quit smoking (for the second time in my life). And, let me tell you, this time it was much MUCH **MUCH** more difficult.

Quitting cigarettes was, and still is, the most difficult task I have ever undertaken. It was a grueling and, at times, a seemingly-endless struggle, and one which—I am convinced—*cannot possibly be understood by anyone who has never been a smoker*. It was nearly-unbearable. For a very long time, stifling my desire to smoke was the primary focus of my life. The *need* for tobacco gnawed at me continually.

if you truly wish to

The very thought of a cigarette—flickering through my mind *for even the briefest moment*—triggered an intense craving. The slightest whiff of smoke or the sight of a cigarette being lit—even at a distance—was unspeakable torment.

But, because *I truly wished to quit*, I began to ask myself some serious questions. The first thing I wondered was if I had any brains. I mean, after all, look at what I was doing. Did I really consider myself to be an intelligent person? If so, why did I choose to continue to do something I knew was not only stupid but also dangerous—with no trace of self-respect in it anywhere—and what was I going to do to get myself out of that shameful mess?

I gave a lot of thought to that.

Then, I gave myself 30 days to find whatever dignity I might have left, and simply put an end to it.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

INTRODUCTION

The title of this booklet is “QUIT SMOKING in 17 DAYS, if you truly wish to”. Of course, it’s the second part of that title—*if you truly wish to*—that is really being tested. And that test begins right now.

At the bottom of this page there is a statement—“Today I decided to finally quit smoking”. **Print this page**, sign it, and scribble in today’s date. Do that knowing that if you still have a cigarette dangling from your lips after 17 days and you’re looking for someone to blame, you only have to look in a mirror. Do NOT bother to go any further until you have printed this page and signed that statement.

I see no reason for me not to admit that I am betting against you; I don’t think you can do it. I say that because cigarette smokers are weaklings. If you haven’t signed that statement yet, I’ve already won that bet, and have proven my point.

There seems to be some evidence as well that cigarette smokers are also stupid. To disprove that theory you only need to stop doing something that everyone knows—including yourself—is not only stupid, but dangerous.

SIGN HERE:

Today I decided to finally quit smoking:

signature

date

If your signature is worth anything, two weeks and three days from now you will no longer be a smoker. That date will mark your liberation. On that day, you will have proven yourself to *no longer be* either weak or stupid. In fact, you will have shown yourself to be both strong and intelligent. You will have taken that step on your own and, better yet, you will have come to recognize that you have what it takes to accomplish such a highly respectable task.

I am not suggesting that breaking your habit will be easy—I have been through it myself and I know that it is not. I am telling you that you have the capability to do it.

Smoking is largely a mindless activity, performed without any thought whatsoever. In order to break such a habit you need to do the opposite; you need to *consciously* consider what you are doing. You'll need to get engaged and to stay engaged throughout this quitting process.

Here's what is expected of you.

Each day, read one page of this booklet—*and one page only*—and then consider what you've read. For the remainder of the day, from time to time, think about what you've read. Then, *before* you turn to the next day's page, return to the previous page and read it again. That is all that is expected of you. Read and consider.

(If you wish to make notes, there's plenty of room for that.)

The real question of course—underlying whatever else you may face on any of those pages—is this:
Have you honestly decided to kick this habit?

if you truly wish to

Breaking any habit is merely a matter of *not doing* that thing which has a hold on you. That may sound overly simplistic, but getting you to *not do* what you're doing is the goal of **every** habit-breaking method, technique, scheme and scam ever invented.

Whether magical or medical, physical or psychological, fear-based or reward-based, the aim is always the same: getting the addict to no longer do that thing. It's a simple goal, but with a much simpler flaw. Every approach to breaking any addiction is easily defeated by *excuses*.

Lucky for you though, you've already cleared that hurdle. **Excuses are no longer available to you.** When you put your signature at the bottom of page 11—expressing your genuine desire to quit smoking cigarettes—you gave up your right to any and all excuses.

So, with no excuses to fall back on, you might as well get started, and you might as well start right this minute.

We all know that smoking is stupid and dangerous. And, the question underlying that basic, undeniable fact demands an answer. So, we'll start with that.

If you think the longer you wait the easier it's going to be, you're wrong. Turn the page and begin to prove yourself.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY ONE

ARE YOU INTELLIGENT?

That's the first question.

Do you consider yourself to be intelligent?

Are you an intelligent person?

It's an important question, because to accomplish any task the correct tool is always helpful and, from past experience, you probably already know which tools don't work. You probably already know that will power is not the right tool for breaking this habit, substitution is not the right tool, and drugs are not the right tool. The correct tool for breaking the smoking habit is your intelligence. A couple of other tools you may want to have handy are self-respect and dignity... if you can find them.

If you *don't* consider yourself to be intelligent, consider this. If you are intelligent enough to recognize that you are addicted, and clear thinking enough to want to free yourself, you are intelligent enough and clear thinking enough to accomplish that task.

In short, whether you consider yourself an intelligent person or not, you have what's required to break this habit.

So, please read that question again, and begin to consider it. It's a simple question: Are you intelligent? Think about it throughout the day, whenever it occurs to you. Think about it one more time, tomorrow, before turning to DAY TWO.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY TWO

WHAT WOULD ANY REASONABLE PERSON DO IF HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS CONTINUALLY PUTTING HIMSELF IN DANGER?

This is a serious question. It may seem simple—maybe even too simple—but it demands a serious answer. And, we both know that you are intelligent enough and clear thinking enough to answer that simple question honestly.

No reasonable person would knowingly, continually put himself in danger.* As an intelligent and reasonable person, you recognize that smoking is a dangerous pastime and you know what you must do.

You also know when to begin.
Begin right this minute.

Please read that question again, and consider it. Think about it throughout the day, whenever it occurs to you. Think about it one more time, tomorrow, before turning to DAY THREE.

*Exceptionally, a reasonable person might knowingly put himself in danger in order to save another person from harm. That would be a heroic act. But there is *nothing* heroic about smoking; it is selfish and it is stupid, and it places other people in danger. It is, in fact, the opposite of a heroic act.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY THREE

IF YOU QUIT SMOKING, HOW ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO EXPRESS YOUR UTTER DISDAIN FOR THE NEARLY-UNBEARABLE SENSELESSNESS OF YOUR LIFE?

If we define smoking as the purposeful and habitual inhaling of a wide variety of well-known carcinogens and toxins with no consideration whatsoever for the results, for no discernible reason and no apparent benefit—then *the act of smoking* can only be one of two things. It is either an open declaration of the smoker's indifference to Life, or a protest against *Life's indifference* toward the smoker. Of course, there are saner ways to express your utter disdain for the meaninglessness of it all, and there are quicker, more effective ways to put an end to such misery.

Above all else, smoking is a public demonstration of the fact that *you don't need anyone to tell you what to do*. But whatever your motivation—no matter how profound—everyone who sees you with a cigarette dangling from your lips knows one thing instantly: that you are a weakling. That is what smoking proclaims publicly about you.

Quitting is your chance to prove otherwise; it is a chance to really put that fierce independence to work for something other than self-destruction. If you haven't already done so, it's time to devise *your plan* and to lay out *your schedule* for quitting. If you've already done that, good work. Either way, you have 14 days left.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY FOUR

WHAT WOULD ANY REASONABLE PERSON DO TO PREPARE FOR AN INSURMOUNTABLE TASK?

Let's just agree that there is no such thing as an easy way to quit smoking. If you've laid out an easy plan to quit, you're wasting your time; you might as well admit defeat right now. Additionally, if you've made only one *realistic* plan for quitting, I would like to suggest laying out at least two more; a near-impossible plan, and an undeniably-impossible plan. Then begin with the most difficult one.

Here's my thinking on that: if your plan is to run a mile, train by running three. If instead you choose an easy way—then later find it more difficult than you thought it would be—you've only set yourself up for certain failure.

Above all, you need tenacity. You need to prepare yourself for a prolonged battle that will require fierce determination and unwavering dedication. So, take that first brave step by confronting the challenge head-on.

Whatever your plan, keep up the good work and don't look back. Take this very good advice from downhill skiing: don't look where you're going, look where you want to go.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY FIVE

HOW MUCH OF *THE ACT OF SMOKING* IS AN ACT, AND WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Back in the Sixties, when I was in college, someone once observed that war protests were not so much about ending the War in Vietnam as they were about (pardon me, ladies) ‘getting laid’. It was a brilliant observation and, from what I was able to determine on my own, absolutely true.

Smoking is not so much about your addiction to tobacco as it is about your addiction to *the act of smoking*. The addiction is undeniable (of course), but the real need—perhaps the most fulfilling aspect of smoking—may be the act itself. It says so much about you, but at what cost? It is the main prop supporting the illusions of elegance, casual indifference, decadent gratification and mental reserve. Still, the act would be more convincing without that prop. And, there are saner ways to demonstrate your unique intelligence, and more effective ways to separate yourself out from the sheepish herd.

You have only 12 days left; it’s time to quit acting. If your desire is to free yourself, it’s time to start acting like it. I’ll paraphrase Mark Twain here and say, “It is better to have people think *you might be* an idiot than to light up a cigarette and erase all doubt.” Think about how much of your addiction is an act, and why that act is important to you. Consider it for a while now, and think about it again tomorrow, before turning to DAY SIX.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY SIX

WHO IS THE ONLY PERSON ON EARTH WHO TRULY UNDERSTANDS YOU ENOUGH TO HELP YOU QUIT?

If you're still hoping this booklet will provide you with an easy answer or a miracle, you've misunderstood everything that's been said so far. The days of looking for someone else to help you quit are over. My mother said it best: "You got yourself into this mess and now it's up to you to get yourself out."

The days of whining, "I can't stop myself," are over. Because—in fact, in deed, and in every other possible way—you are the only person who *can* stop you.

Think about that, next time you light up.

And consider it, from time to time, throughout today.

You have 11 days remaining to test and to prove yourself.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY SEVEN

WHAT IS THE ROOT OF YOUR PROBLEM? AND, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CIRCULAR SAWS?

In order to break any habit, you must get to the root of the problem. And you've done that. The root of *your* problem is that *you* allow *yourself* to keep smoking. Fortunately, you also know the solution to *that* problem, and by now, you probably also have a pretty good sense of whether you're going to make it or not. From the beginning, you've known the consequences if you don't.

I was a carpenter for about a dozen years, and during that time I never once—not one single time—*ever* picked up a circular saw (or put my thumb on the switch of a table saw) without first stopping and *consciously* reminding myself of the danger of what I was about to do. I *consciously* told myself to focus strictly on what I was doing, and reminded myself not to allow anything to distract me while using that saw. Consequently, I still have all my limbs and digits.

For the next ten days, when you put a cigarette to your lips, stop—take a second to reflect—*consciously* remind yourself of the danger of what you are about to do. That way, you might come out of this in one piece.

Of course, I needed to use those saws in order to make a living, but you don't need cigarettes for any reason. From now on, whenever you pick up a cigarette, take a moment and think about how dangerous circular saws can be.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY EIGHT

HOW IS YOUR PLAN WORKING OUT?

It's been a week. So, now the question is: How *are* you doing? How is it working out?

Let's review:

Have you shown yourself to be intelligent? Have you done what any reasonable person would do if he realized he was continually putting himself in danger?

Have you found a saner way to express your utter disdain for the meaninglessness of it all, or a quicker, more effective way to put an end to your misery? When tempted to give up, have you at least considered trying the tools of self-respect or dignity?

Did you make a plan or two or more? Did you give the clearly-impossible plan the first shot?

Did you discover what *the act* of smoking means to you and why it's important to you?

Did you think about who got you into this mess and demand that that same person get you out?

In brief, over the last seven days, have you proven yourself intelligent enough and clear thinking enough to take the necessary steps toward breaking that sordid habit?

Whenever it occurs to you, think about how you're doing.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY NINE

WHO IS THE *ONLY PERSON ON EARTH WHO TRULY UNDERSTANDS WHAT YOU'RE STILL GOING THROUGH?*

Quitting cigarettes is one of the most difficult tasks anyone could ever undertake. Anyone who hasn't been addicted to tobacco can never understand the relentless craving, the nagging *need* that gnaws at you, or how overwhelming the struggle becomes at the merest whiff of tobacco or a glimpse of another addict lighting up.

There is *only one person* who can possibly understand what you are going through, and that person is you.

It's a lonely battle. There is no doubt about that.

The only question is: Can you count on that person to help you in your time of need?

Or, will that person let you down?

Think about that for a bit.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY TEN

ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE IT? AND HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO CIRCULAR SAWS?

At this point, you probably know if you're going to make it, or not. And, since you've come this far, having proven your genuine desire to quit, the answer is probably 'Yes'. At this point, it would be foolish to think that anything can stop you. Think about that.

And, congratulations, I owe you an apology.
I was wrong to bet against you.

If, on the other hand, you feel like *you're not quite there yet*, you still have a week to make this miracle happen.

You've already come much further than you have to go.
Consider that for a moment.

Ten days ago you signed a statement saying that you had decided to finally quit smoking. Since then, you've devised a plan and you've shown real tenacity by following through on your commitment. The odds are definitely in your favor.

Day Seventeen is not that far off. So, dig in. Keep up the good work. On that day you will no longer be a smoker.

Think about how far you've come for a while.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY ELEVEN

HAVE YOU BEGUN TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE?

For some reason, right now, I'm reminded of a time in college (many many years ago), when the girl I was with left the room and I took the opportunity to slip quickly out of my clothes. When she returned, she looked at me, smiled a lovely little, slightly-crooked, smile and, eyes nicely averted, asked, with measured nonchalance, "What are you doing naked?"

I said, "Oh, uh, I thought it was...uh...you know... time." "It's not," she said.

I may have jumped the gun just a little bit.

But, you're not jumping the gun if you think it's time for you to get ready for many new and delightful experiences. Your timing is perfect. So, get ready.

Free of tobacco's tyranny, everything is better.

Think about what's to come for a while.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY TWELVE

IF YOU'RE NOT A SMOKER, WHAT ARE YOU?

When you were a cigarette smoker you were continually surrounded with people who were not. As far as you could see, those people were not superior to you in any way—neither smarter nor stronger than you—so, you decided to prove it by quitting smoking.

Now, you're somewhere in between—not really a smoker, not yet a non-smoker. So, what exactly are you?

Let me point out something. Non-smokers don't think of themselves as 'non-smokers'. They don't define themselves in terms that have anything at all to do with smoking. Smoking simply has no place in their lives. That is their secret. Maybe you should do that too. Stop defining yourself in terms of smoking. Give that a try. Then ask yourself, if you're *not* a smoker, what are you?

Whatever else you may be, you're a *champion*, and in the truest sense of the word. You've taken on a formidable enemy and, shortly, you will have defeated that enemy. In a few days—after slaying a particularly odious monster—you will turn your back on all that and simply walk away. That's the very definition of a champion.

Think about that for a while. It's an important realization.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY THIRTEEN

AFTER YOU'VE QUIT SMOKING, WHAT'S NEXT?

After you conquer tobacco, what's next? You've probably already begun to consider much better ways to spend your time and money than on cigarettes. So, what are your plans for *using* the intrepid determination that has now become such a part of your daily life?

That's something to think about.

Whatever you do, don't let that bravery slip away on you. Continue to think about your actions. Stay engaged.

Remember the admonition:

Don't look where you're going, look *where you want to go*.

Consider what's next for a while. Think about it throughout the day, whenever it occurs to you. Think about it one more time, tomorrow, before turning to DAY FOURTEEN.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY FOURTEEN

THE DECISIVE BLOW

IF YOU WERE KILLING A POISONOUS SNAKE, WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO DRAG THAT EVENT OUT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, OR WOULD YOU SIMPLY CUT OFF THE DAMNED THING'S HEAD AND BE DONE WITH IT?

Of course that's a loaded question, and maybe just a bit unfair, since I have no idea what your plan was for dragging this process out further. But we both know that, if you've come this far, you've got what it takes to wrap it up today—if only because 'I quit in two weeks' sounds better than 'It took me 17 days'. There's no reason to drag it out.

When I quit smoking, I set a 30 day trajectory for myself, but found that after the first two weeks I was really just making things more painful by prolonging the process. Two more weeks of torture weren't going to help me in any way that I could see. In fact, they could only make things worse. I had growing doubts that I could even make it through another two weeks. At that point, two weeks to go looked like an eternity—and in that time I was bound to create many opportunities to fail.

Realizing that, I just to put an end to it. I put an end to the speculation; put an end to the looming possibility of failure; put an end to the foolishness, put an end to the entire thing; just put it all immediately behind me, and claimed success.

DAY FIFTEEN

WHAT WOULD AN INTELLIGENT PERSON DO IF HE REALIZED THAT HE HAD JUST DODGED A BULLET AND FREED HIMSELF FROM DANGER?

You've just put an end to a particularly nasty, senseless, and dangerous habit. That's a great thing that you have done, and no small accomplishment.

You should take a little time today to thank the *only person who really understood what you were going through; that person who helped you every step of the way* to accomplish that task. Conveniently, you only have to look in a mirror to find that person.

Think about that. Think about it throughout the days to come. And, don't ever doubt your capabilities again.

Good work, by the way.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

if you truly wish to

DAY SIXTEEN

The title of this booklet is “QUIT SMOKING in 17 DAYS, if you truly wish to”. The second part of that title—*if you truly wish to*—has been thoroughly tested. It’s been 16 days and you have passed that test.

You have proven yourself to be both strong and reasonable. You have taken a large and admirable step forward. You have engaged every aspect of your strength of character to accomplish a nearly insurmountable task by using the tools of mind and tenacity.

AND you did it in a remarkably short time.

Here’s what is expected of you from now on:

Enjoy the ride.

Quit Smoking in 17 Days

DAY SEVENTEEN

A FINAL WORD OF ADVICE:

Don't gloat.

When you see a smoker on the street, try to have some compassion for that poor soul. Cigarette smokers simply cannot help themselves. Or, as you've discovered, *the only person who can help them is standing in their clothes.*

On the other hand, maybe *you* can help them after all.

If the plan you devised for quitting really worked for you—putting a quick end to a nasty, stupid and dangerous habit—write a little booklet about it. Then, make that booklet available to those poor lost souls.

Alternatively, simply give them a copy of this one.

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LOST IN THE DIN: Why Your Opinion on Politics and Religion Means NOTHING, and Mine Means Even Less by Henry Edward Fool Concerning politics as seen from an a-political POV

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EARWIG, also includes Jack Nicholson IS Santa Claus (both adapted from screenplays) by Darryl Mockridge