

Lynn's Zen
By C. Lynn Perry

Weird Science

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Sure enough, Mom has to call and remind me that it's that time again! You know... when school starts back? You can take a relatively sane mother and put her in the throws of Going-Back-To-School-Mode, and suddenly she becomes a basket case. Just thinking about it causes me to want to fling myself from the nearest tall building. The lazy days of summer will soon come to an abrupt halt, and I will find myself once again acting like the Homework Gestapo and negotiating a peace treaty worthy of a UN Council meeting between two opposing soccer teams in the back of my mini van! Seems like it was only a few weeks ago that we were wrapping up another school year, and it was Science Project time again...

(X-Files typewriter sound) The Night Before Project is Due: 7:23 PM

Hannah: Mom! I forgot! My twelve week Science Project is due tomorrow! It's for the science fair! County-wide!

Me: &*\$&#. What project are you (I) doing?

Hannah: Insects.

Me: &*&@#! Bugs? Girl, how many times do I have to tell you to always pick something that can come out of the refrigerator at the last minute? Can't we make a volcano? You make it erupt with vinegar and baking soda or something. That's what I always used to do.

Hannah: No. The teacher said we'd fail if we made a crummy volcano.

Me: &*\$#! Ok. What do we (I) have to do?

Hannah: Here's the instructions. We need ten species of bugs. They even explain how to kill them before we mount them.

Me: Gross. Let's go see what we can find.

After a brief romp through the basement, we found cardboard on which to mount our prey, the glue gun, push pins, and a dead cockroach (one down, nine to go), we ran upstairs.

Hannah: What do we do next?

Me: Help me move the refrigerator. If the project can't come out of it, maybe it can come out from under it! There's gotta be something under here. Bingo! A dead silverfish, a dead bee, and a dead fly. Quick, Hannah, make the placards for 'em and glue 'em on while I check outside on the back deck. (Four down, six to go.)

Me: Score! A centipede and a flying-something-or-other (all previously deceased). (Ha! Over half-way there).

Hannah: What do we do now, Mom?

Me: You glue those suckers on and label 'em, and I'll look around some more.

Hannah: (Holding up the flying-something-or-other) What do I call this one?

Me: Whatever you like. Geese. Make something up for Christ sakes. Chances are the teacher's not gonna know anyhow, and if she does, did you think you're gonna make an "A" for a last minute effort?

I sprinted out onto the front porch, and began rummaging around the shrubbery. Yes! One granddaddy longlegs and some other spider-thingy that I suspected was poisonous. I was getting desperate. I had to "do" these myself according to the instructions. Ack. Two more to go, and I'd exhausted all possibilities. Darn.

(X-Files Typewriter Sound) The Night Before Project is Due: 8:07 PM

I pick up the phone and call Joan.

Joan: Hello?

Me: Quick! Do me a favor! Go out on your back porch and unscrew the porch light covering!

Joan: Oh! Ok, you've finally lost it!

Me: No! We've got a Science Project due tomorrow; Hannah's doing insects and I'm two bugs short. I've seen the condition of your back porch lights! You've got dead stuff in there and you know it! This is an emergency! Don't hold out on me now!

Joan: (Screaming) Colt! Do you have a science project due tomorrow? (background mumbling) @\$^%\$^! Hang on. (more background mumbling). Ok. I'll look, but do you know where I can get a Solar System tonight?

Me: Call you right back.

(X-Files Typewriter Sound) The Night Before Project is Due: 8:10 PM

I pick up the phone and call Barb.

Me: Barb! Science Projects are due tomorrow! Do you know where I can get a Solar System?

Barb: @\$#@##\$ Brooke?! Do you have a science project due tomorrow? (background mumbling) Hang on. (more background mumbling). Yeah. I've got an old Solar System in the basement somewhere, but do you know where I can get a project?

Me: On what?

Barb: She can't remember. Anything will do.

Me: Maybe Lydia's got something. Bennett's always getting awards and stuff.

Lydia's our friend that was married to a well-to-do attorney, that is, until he ran off with his 20-something legal secretary. We had to admit, though, for all his faults, he gave great project.

Barb: Oh, yeah! I'll trade you a Solar System for anything that Lydia's got! Hey, can you get me that one where Bennett proved that dinosaurs really couldn't exist on earth in its current orbital location due to the dinos mass and the fact that the gravitational force of earth couldn't support them? He won something for that one, didn't he?

Me: Um, I don't think you want to use that one.

Barb: Why? Do you think my kid's not smart enough to come up with that? Is that what you're saying?

Me: Um. No. That's not what I'm saying. Remember, they brought in all those PhDs from Georgia Tech to disprove his theory and they couldn't? In fact, they're still working on it. So, I'm just saying that, well, I think that they'll remember that one as not being Brookes?

Barb: Oh. Ok. Well, see if she's got something I could use.

Me: Call you right back

(X-Files Typewriter Sound) The Night Before Project is Due: 8:12 PM

I pick up the phone and call Lydia.

Me: Lyd, do you have any old Science Projects lying around?

Lydia: I've got an old Rocks and Minerals. Why do you ask?

Me: Science Projects are due tomorrow, and The Girls and I are one short. By the way, what's Bennett doing for his science project this year?

Lydia: A thoughtful experiment on Reverse Speech Patterns.

Me: Oh! What's that?

Lydia: Reverse Speech. You know, you record people saying stuff and when they play the tape backwards at different speeds supposedly the subconscious mind tells the truth. He's using recordings from OJ Simpson, Scott Peterson, and Martha Stewart. They confess if you play the tape backwards slowly enough.

Me: Kinda like that Beatles album "Paul is Dead" thing, right?

Lydia: Huh?

Me: Oh. Yeah. So, can I come by and get that Rocks and Minerals?

(X-Files Typewriter Sound) The Night Before Project is Due: 8:20 PM

I squeal into Lydia's driveway and pick up the Rocks and Minerals project. Then, I head to Barb's house to deliver Rocks and Minerals and pick up the Solar System.

Me: The Solar System has a black sun!

Barb: Well, it's been in the basement and it molded. Can I still have Rocks and Minerals?

Me: Sure.

(X-Files Typewriter Sound) The Night Before Project is Due: 8:24 PM

I squeal into Joan's driveway and deliver the Solar System with the black sun.

Joan: The sun is black!

Me: It's mold. What did you expect for a last minute project? Paint over it.

Joan: I don't have any yellow paint for Christ sakes! And it's too late to go to Home Depot and buy something....

Me: Well, try magic markers or have him write up something on black holes or dying suns or something. Oh! You could tell the teacher that he's color blind. That always works. You get the sympathy vote, too. Where's my bugs?

Joan: Well, I managed to fish out a mummified scorpion and a dead moth. Will that work?

Me: Oh, Yeah! You betcha!

(X-Files Typewriter Sound) Two weeks later at the County Science Fair: 7:30 PM

Hannah and I are walking out of the Science Fair into the parking lot at school...

Hannah: Mom, I can't believe I only made an "A-". That's not fair! I should have gotten an A+!

Me: What'd you expect for a last minute, hour and fifteen minute effort?

Hannah: Look, Mom! Why is Colt crying over there?

Me: Well, obviously, the teacher didn't buy into the color blind thing.

Hannah: Huh?

Me: Nothin' Baby. Hey, did you see who came in second, after Bennett?

Hannah: Yeah. Don't say I told you so.

Me: I won't. But that was some volcano, though, huh?

Hannah: Yup.

I kicked a rock and let out a long sigh.

Hannah: What's the matter Mom?

Me: I just don't remember science being so darn hard!

2:00 AM, in the wee hours after the County Science Fair

Hannah: Mom! Mom! Wake up! I just remembered! I have to go dressed as an adverb tomorrow! I have to modify Bobby Ray!

Me: You have to *what* Bobby Ray?

Hannah: Modify him!

Me: Geesh. What are they teaching kids in school these days?