

# Me and My Army

*News of God's Army evokes feelings of inadequacy, dreams of possibilities*



I feel like such an underachiever. Here I am, 23 years old, and I'm not leading my own army. Hell, I haven't even got a small cadre of followers, other than the three I've got planting smoke bombs in pop machines across campus.

You may or may not have heard the stories of Johnny and Luther Htoo, the 12-year-old twins who lead God's Army, a bunch of rebels in Burma.

Johnny has effeminate features and a slightly dazed smile. Luther shaves the front of his head and smokes cigars while barking orders. Supposedly, the boys have mystical powers.

Most of their army is younger than 16. They number more than 200.

Granted, I don't have a twin brother, but don't I deserve my own God's Army? Surely God's got Armies to go around. We haven't had any crusades in centuries, so they've got to be just wasting time.

I can put 'em to a lot better use than those two kids can. I could've even when I was 12, although I suspect I would've been a little more ruthless than I am now.

"Cliff, gimme your lunch money, punk!" some kid would've yelled at me back then.

Two 14-year-olds immediately would have popped up at my sides, brandishing firearms or at least sharp, pointy sticks. "Want us to kill 'em, boss?"

"Do it quietly," I'd have replied. "I'm listening to the new R.E.M. album."

So, maybe that would not have been the wisest use of power but a legitimate one nonetheless. No one should be bothered when listening to "Green."

Junior high would have been a radically different experience. No kids stuffing me into lockers, no constant

teasing from all the girls about what a freaky kid I was.

The words "geek" and "nerd" would have been removed from the dictionary.

I guess I'd make some rules about not killing people in schools, just because having all that blood in the hallways would be hell on the janitors. That's me, always thinking of other people.

Still, you can't go soft on people. Just look at those eyes on Luther, that shaved forehead, that cigar hanging from his lip. Doesn't he just scare the piss out of you with that look alone? Many of the twins' followers have started shaving their own foreheads, hoping to cash in on Luther's look.

Give me my own army, and I'll be as rough as Johnny, even more so. I'll shave two stripes along the back of my head, so there'll be three bands of hair separated by two patches of shiny white. I can outdo this kid's haircut, no problem.

It's not too late for me to start now. Since I'm almost as old as the two of them combined, I should be twice as effective, right?

And just because I'm going soft on my classmates doesn't mean I'm not the kind of man who won't kill someone if it comes to it. Murder, theft, speaking badly of me, talking in too loud a voice while I've got U2 playing or committing suicide without my permission - I'll slay 'em left and right when I need to, dammit.

The Htoo twins say they basically just want to be left alone, but I say: What's the point in having an army if you're not going to use it?

God wants God's Army to just sit on their hands? I don't think so!

I'll take my army ... er, God's Army, excuse me ... and we'll kill all the used car salesmen first. I realize this won't meet with resistance, but you gotta start easy.

Next, we take Manhattan.

As an army, we're going to need a base of operations, and New York sounds like as good a place as any.

At least 40 of my God's Army will have to go out and spread The Gospel According To Cliff - "Love one another, respect one another and grant each other enough room so that Cliff doesn't



THE TWIN leaders of a Myanmar rebel group called God's Army, a splinter group of ethnic Karen rebels, are seen in this file photo from 1998 in Kama Plaw Camp, Burma.

Photo By Terry Falise/Newsmakers

have to cap your ass. He's invincible, don't you know?"

Did I forget to mention that? Rumor has it that the Htoo twins have mystical powers, which have prevented the constant bombings from connecting with the village they use as base camp. They're supposedly "invincible."

Well, if a pair of 12-year-old twins gets the ability to shield a small village, I suspect I should be putting a big red "S" on my chest and know what evil lurks in the hearts of men and women across the nation.

I want my own sidekick, too, as well as the superhuman ability to grow a beard like Fidel Castro.

I suppose I could be in a little bit of trouble because I don't believe in an interventionist God, but then again, messiahs often aren't believers when they start out with the gig.

The philosophy I stated earlier really isn't a great one for a messiah to espouse, though. Besides, I honestly don't want to become a dictator, just a

savage tyrant. Let's see if I can think of a better slogan.

"Live free or we kill you?" No, still too violent.

"There are no rules?" Too anarchist. Besides, if the rule is that there is no rule, it's paradoxical and makes me look like a twit, and we can't have that.

"The answer is internal?" Perfect! Cryptic, yet still capable of holding a few thousand interpretations.

Still, I have one major issue with the Htoo twins. For messiahs, they sure are granting a hell of a lot of interviews. Most modern messiahs tend to be very private individuals, shrouded in secrecy and mystery.

Too much publicity and we'll have another Waco on our hands, and quite frankly, I don't want to have to go up against the FBI. It sounds like far too much work. While I'm sure we probably could beat them, given enough time and resources, I'd rather just avoid the whole mess entirely until we've taken over the whole nation.

In fact, this is the last time I'll mention my army publicly, so act now, new members are limited.

I'm thinking big and moving on up. Cliff's Army, coming to a conflict near you. Sign up now, and you can be granted a lieutenant position. Get 10 of your friends involved and be promoted to captain. One hundred people signed up equals the title of general.

Look out, Johnny; look out, Luther. Cliff's Army will be up and running in no time.

All we need is a few thousand machine guns and some willing volunteers.

I want you.

Or at least, that's what I'm telling you.

The urban media war against the masses continues even today.

The journalism guerrilla can be reached at [journalisticwarfare@hotmail.com](mailto:journalisticwarfare@hotmail.com). Be all that you might be able to be, just maybe, in His Army.

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# Rage against the Valentine's machine

*Love isn't about material things; Valentine's Day shouldn't be either*



Cupid, that fat little cherub, seems trustworthy enough. But in America, we don't trust anybody. Politicians lie to us, television panders to our lowest instincts and companies try to finagle as many dollars out of our wallets and purses as is humanly possible.

It only seems natural that Valentine's Day would be looked upon with the same mass of cynical scrutiny Americans heap on everything else. So what should we do on this beautiful Monday, the 14th of February? Should we spend our money enriching the corporate sector? Should we just ignore the day altogether?

**History of Valentine's Day**

Who the heck is St. Valentine, and why do we have a holiday named after him? Truthfully, I had no idea, so I did what any good college student would do. Ask a professor or go to the library? Of course not. I pulled out the laptop and took a journey to the History Channel's Web site to do some poking around.

It seems the origin of St. Valentine's Day is a bit mysterious. No one's really sure how it all started. One story links the origin of the day to a Roman priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. Allegedly, the emperor thought the reason his troops were performing badly on the battlefield was that they missed their wives and fiancées, so he voided all engagements.

The legend says Valentine became a champion of love, defied Claudius and married young couples in secret. Before he died around 270 A.D., Valentine even may have sent the first Valentine card. As the story goes, our heroic priest fell in love with the jailer's daughter while imprisoned for defying the emperor.

Legend has it before he died he sent a letter to his young love signed "From

your Valentine," hence the modern usage of the phrase.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, it was commonly believed that February 14th was the beginning of the mating season for birds. So I guess if it's good enough for birds, it's good enough for us. And bang! A holiday was born.

**Valentine's Day in America**  
As any the

campus cynics will tell you, we Americans have thrown the good ol' capitalistic curve ball on a religiously based holiday, much like we did with Christmas. In America, about one billion, that's billion with a "B," Valentines are sent each year. Eighty-five percent are purchased by women. As evidence, let's look at some sales slogans used by local merchants in a dastardly attempt to make money off our emotions.

A local jewelry store proclaims, "Only Cupid's arrow could make her love you more." As you can see, jewelry now has the magical power to make someone love you. This theme also appears in ads for a local day spa that declares, "She will love you for it!" Great, I don't even have to be a decent guy the other 364 days, as long as I take my Valentine to a day spa once a year. Yes!

How about the local television station that proclaims one should "show someone you love them with flowers, candy, candlelight dinner and a televised Valentine." Perfect. A televised Valentine, so everyone in the whole metro area will know I love my Valentine. Obviously it's not good enough that only she knows it.

Even our juggernaut of a college paper, the great DN you hold in your reverent fingers, gets into the act by

offering Valentines in print. Can Americans not really feel something if they don't spend money on it? Unfortunately, as H. L. Mencken said, "Cynics are right nine times out of 10."

**Do your own thing**

As self-proclaimed anti-cynic, I implore you to fight the negative aspects of Valentine's Day. Sure, St. Valentine's legacy is corrupt in the hearts of many, but we need not allow it to blacken ours. Think of the true spirit of the day before you act. Think of which qualities possessed by your significant other makes him or her valuable to your life and celebrate it.

If your Valentine will be offended by the absence of a token of your esteem, purchase one. But don't try to buy your way into your Valentine's heart. No matter what the stores say, it's just not possible. And don't let tokens speak for you - they have a limited vocabulary. All they can say is you remembered.

If you care about your significant other, do something out of the ordinary. Bundle up and take him or her on a walk around campus or through a park. Guys, talk to her about why you chose her above the plethora of other wonderful women around this campus. I hear that girls like that. Girls, I don't know, do girl stuff. We like most of that stuff, too. We just usually won't admit it in front of our friends.



Neal Obermeyer/DN

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