

Gobs and Gobs of Greasy Grimy Ostrich Guts!

WARNING: The title is accurate. There are pictures of bloody ostrich bits below. Ye have been warned.

Skype Video Chat Conversation Leading Up to These Events:

Vyst: Yea, so they've got ostriches at this place here and--

Ant: Ostriches?! Ostriches are horrible, horrible creatures! EAT IT!

During my (rather unpleasant) stay at the Happy Hippy Hostel near the city of Kardjali, Bulgaria I had the honor of meeting my very first ostriches. Normally the thought of coming into contact with ostriches in Bulgaria would have caused me some confusion, but after having made it to Bulgaria in the first place I had become jaded with strange occurrences such as this. There's some British hippies with ostriches in Bulgaria. So what?

I'll leave the details of the total extent of my experience at this location, as that's enough for another story, and just focus on my interaction with the ostriches themselves. Before arriving, the only things I knew about ostriches were that they were really big and potentially dangerous birds. Oh, and Ant's family bought one to butcher when we were like 12, meaning I had experience with ostrich burgers.

Upon arriving I took some time to check out the immediate area, including walking over to the ostrich pen to get a closer look. There were just two of them: a male and a female. The male was colored in the stereotypical image that we have of ostriches: beautifully-arranged black and white feathers. The female was a uniform boring grey. When I approached the fence the male noticed me and came over somewhat menacingly. I wasn't too worried because he was behind the fence, and I figured he would just spend some time looking mean and show me his territory.



What's up, dude?

Suddenly he crashed down to the ground and started doing the most whacky-ass thing I could ever imagine coming from the animal kingdom. He spread out his wings and started waving them back and forth rhythmically (I would even say hypnotically or *seductively*) while *knocking his head against his body, then lifting it up to knock down again and drag it to the other side of his body*. I stared at him for a few seconds and asked, "What in the *tarnated fuck* are you doing?!" As if the action weren't weird enough, each time he would whack his head against his body it would make a hollow THOCK! sound. I would have been laughing my ass off if I wasn't so completely confused.

I eventually became bored with gawking and staring as the guy didn't seem like he was going to be letting up anytime soon. From the hollow THOCK! sound, it didn't seem like he had to worry about damaging an excess number of brain cells. I went back over to Dave and

Laura, the owners of the hostel, and asked them about it. I was informed that this is the ostrich's *war dance* and that he was trying to show me how tough he was and scare me off from his territory.

Coulda fuckin' fooled me. THAT's a war dance?!

Dave then told me that the ostrich's dance reminded him of the MC Hammer Slide. Laura noted that the ostrich always seemed dislike the male helpers more than females ones. Great.

As the days went by I started to get a feeling about the male ostrich's sentiments toward me. The first time this happened, I was taking a walk up the hill to see if I could get a good look at the surrounding landscape. After getting a fill of the gorgeous lakes, mountains, and cliffs and something I would describe as "natural terraces", I came back down the hill (it was getting cold and windy up there) to get back to the hostel. I passed a shepherd with his flock on the way with a rifle slung over his back that must have been five feet long. This disturbed me. Not that someone carrying a gun bothers me, but that the shepherd was probably carrying it to around to protect his flock from wolves. That meant there were wolves in the area. Great again.



View overlooking the hostel.

As I was turning the corner for the final stretch back to the hostel, I took a glance to my right in the direction of the ostrich pen and recoiled. The male was up against the fence staring right at me. His eyes were almost boring holes into me, and I could see clearly what he was thinking:

"Motherfucker, you watch it. YOU JUST FUCKING WATCH IT. If you make one mistake, just ONE MISTAKE, then I will FUCK. YOU. UP. You watch it buddy. You FUCKING WATCH IT."

I realized that he had been watching me the entire way down the hill-- following me around inside of his pen and only being stopped when he bumped into the fence itself. I began to move a little quicker and before I made it

back into the building, I heard behind me something that sounded like a combination between an owl and a foghorn:

*HOOM. HOOM.
HOOOOOOOM. HOOM.
HOOM. HOOOOOOOM.*

I was starting not to like this ostrich thing. The situation wasn't improved when I was informed that my first job as a helper was to repair the fences around the hostel, including the ostrich fence. Son of a bitch.

One thing I noted in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria was the usage of



concrete for everything, particularly fence posts. Clearly this was propagated during and leftover from communism, as I guess concrete was cheaper than traditional fencepost materials (although I would think transportation costs would be astronomical. Concrete isn't light). These concrete fence posts were connected with the most retarded-ass cheap chain-link excuse for fence material I've ever seen in my life--more memorabilia from communism, I'm sure. This fence material was made up of individually twisted wires that were weaved into each other. This meant that tension was required to create a proper "fence effect", and if tension was not



Sheep! My favorite!

applied the material would simple collapse into itself, often in a tangled heap. This was magnified by the fact that often a single twisted fence wire would not be properly laced into the rest of the fence, so it would stick out from the rest. To make matters worse, Dave and Laura were busy with other work and therefore I had to do the fence repair by myself. In order to create tension, one has to constantly pull on both sides of the fence material to keep it, *then* tie the fence into place. It was one of those damnable jobs that require three hands. This meant that as a one-man job it took about ten times longer than two people working together would have been able to do it. A wonderful recipe for fun, I assure you.

Repairing the ostrich fence itself turned out not to be so bad, because there were two parts to the pen and Laura would get the ostriches over to whichever side I wasn't repairing for the day. The part that scared the shit out of me was when I was repairing the fences that weren't part of the ostrich pen. There was one section of the fence that I would have to walk past between getting materials. It only had one horizontal wooden beam held up by wire--no actual fence material. Whenever I walked through the yard the male would follow me up and down the fence ("*You watch it! I told you to fucking watch it! Don't fuck something up!!!*"), bumping into it along the way*. When he came to this section of fence that just had the wooden beam, he would bump into it and the beam would lift up and the wires would creak. The fence always stopped him but I saw he barely applied a fraction of his power--if he had fallen on that beam the wires would have snapped like fishing line. I was additionally freaked out one time I was walking by this fence section and he decided to do his war dance for me, which as I described involves first crashing down to the ground. When he did this the first time next to this fence section I thought he was actually going to go *under* the fence to get me. My fear subsided when I realized he wasn't smart enough to figure this out (and it looked like he couldn't move unless he was standing). Nevertheless, it was not a comforting experience.

*I think he was more than strong enough to destroy those fences if he had been smart enough to figure out that he could.

This led to me running across the yard whenever I had to get something, in hopes that he would just run and chase me instead of bumping along the fence the entire way, potentially crashing down the weaker section. I even dusted off my parkour circuit and planned a route of escape up one of the shacks in the yard in the event an ostrichbreak.

Work continued on like this for a couple days. When I announced to Laura that I was finally finished, she announced that she wanted to fix the very section of fence that I had been worried about.

While this was indeed a great idea, I was a bit miffed that she had me do it in the very end. In any case, there was nothing I could do about it at that point and Laura began the process of getting the ostriches over to the other pen. It was especially important this time because I was going to have to go inside the pen in order to attach the fence material. Laura had me distract the male ostrich to follow me to the other pen. The female generally followed the male, and the plan was the lock them in as soon as she made it through. For whatever reason, the female wasn't interested in doing so this time and Laura closed the pen before the male realized she was a more readily available target than I was. I walked over to her and asked:

"Well, now what? How do we get the female over?"

"Nah." She said, "We don't need to. The female shouldn't bother you." *Shouldn't* bother me? Are you kidding?

"What? Are you sure?" I said, looking over at the 400-or-whatever-the-fuck pound feathered monstrosity across from us. *Shouldn't* didn't sound like very good odds to me.

"Yea, she's actually really sweet. There's nothing to worry about." She said.

I beg to differ. There's a significant mass of bird to worry about. She went on.

"Just make sure to pick up all the wire pieces you snip off. She'll eat them and it will kill her--we had something similar happen to an other ostrich before."

"Yea, okay." I said, looking over at the female who was picking at the grass. The male was giving me his standard I-will-fuck-you-up stare. "If you say so..."

Well, she said so, so I got to work. Laura went off to work on what she was doing before and I got my tools ready. I took one final consideration of the situation, sucked it up, and ducked under the beam of the fence section I was going to repair. The male was *not* happy with this turn of events.

While I was repairing the fence and paying special attention to my peripheral vision, the female got closer and closer to me. I was careful to pick up any wire pieces, as she was munching on grass right almost within arm's reach. It was an incredibly strange experience. The female, as Laura has promised me, was indeed very gentle both in movement and attitude. She was very curious about me and had immediately came over when I started working on the fence. At first I was okay with the distance, but she kept getting closer and soon was *well* within my bubble. Gentle or not, this was too much for me and I stood up from my work to face her, hoping this movement would push her back a little. It did no such thing and she just stared back at me, giving me a soft and slightly questioning look. I don't know if she thought I would give her something to eat or what, but she looked like she just wanted to be friends. Normally I'm really accepting of any type of thing I meet, be it sentient, animal, vegetation, or inanimate, but I just couldn't feel comfortable with this two-toed monster bird within hugging distance. I made my presence bigger, something I learned in Aikido, in hopes of pushing her back. I had a little success and she stepped outside of hugging distance, but she was still in my bubble.

Around this time I looked over to the other pen where the male had been pacing the length of the fence. He was *pissed*. Once again I could see his thoughts on his face:

"**DUDE. You fucked up! You FUCKED UP! I told you! I told you to watch it! I told you to watch it and now you have FUCKED UP. You have FUCKED UP now! I will fuck you up! I WILL FUCKING FUCK YOU UP!!!**" I never would have believed I would have been considered competition to an ostrich. Luckily the fence between the two pens was more structurally sound than the one I was repairing.

I turned my attention back to the female and was able to manage to get her to back off enough from me that I felt comfortable finishing the fence with my back half-turned. I finished up and walked (quickly) to the exit on the other side of the pen. The female followed me the whole way ("*Did you hear me over there?! YOUR DAYS ARE OVER, MOTHERFUCKER!!!*"). With the fence successfully repaired, I was able to turn in my immediate ostrich woes for other work, and the next few days continued a little less worrisome whenever I had to cross that damn fence section.

During my stay at the hostel, Dave had explained a lot to me about ostriches--scientifically,

economically, historically, and personally. As he had personal relevance to the subject he had been reading books and studying up on it. I was told that one of the main points of the ostriches were to be one of the Happy Hippy Hostel's attractions, and that the goal was to eventually train them to be rideable (I assumed he was referring to the females). Dave had started out with 11 ostriches and, through one mishap after another, the ostriches kept dying. All that were left were the two they had now. The whole proposition was turning out to be a big flop, and there was discussion whether or not the ostriches were worth keeping. The decision hung heavily on the ostriches mating prospects--Dave and Laura wanted new ostriches, which meant the ostriches were going to have to get busy. For some time now there had been no action going on between them, and Dave and Laura were getting concerned whether anything was going to happen at all.

Thus it was big news when I caught them in the act. I was on my way between finding supplies for repairing the fence when I noticed the male getting a little frisky, slowly chasing the female around the pen. I stopped to watch and eventually the female crashed to the ground (apparently the only way they can lie down is via crashing) and the male got on top. What proceeded to happen almost made me lose it. The male began waving his wings rhythmically and knocking and sliding his head against his body. He was doing the war dance. *The war dance was the same as the sex dance.* Ostriches had officially taken first place in my mind for dorkiest animal on earth.

The male finished up and got off the female, who herself got up and happily rustled her feathers. I turned to look over at the other side of the yard and saw Laura approaching me. We asked each other at the same time:

"Did you just see that?"

"The ostriches?" I asked.

"The stallion?" She said.

"...what?" We both said at each other. I was totally confused. Stallion? What was she talking about? I knew the horse they had there was a gelding, and I had assumed she had just witnessed the same ostrich act as I had. This clearly wasn't the case and some more confused communications went back and forth before things were finally cleared up. This is what happened.

While I was preoccupied in my disbelief that the ostrich war dance was the same as the ostrich sex dance, Laura had been on the other side of the yard with the horse when a *wild stallion jumped through the fence into the yard*, looked disappointed upon seeing the gelding, and ran off (going right behind me) to leap over the fence and continue up the hill. When Laura told me this I just stared at her, not understanding how the fuck a stallion fit into our conversation and how she hadn't noticed the ostriches. I couldn't grasp the situation until she pointed up to the hill and said:

"Look! There he is!"

Sure as shit there was a black wild stallion neighing and romping around on the hill. My brain started to compute the extreme unlikeliness of the order of events and I let out a laugh when I was able to put everything together. Once I had a grasp on reality I explained to Laura what happened with the ostriches. She was delighted to hear the news. That meant new ostriches! She went to tell Dave that "the ostriches were fucking!"

When things had calmed down, the stallion being out of sight, I had gone back to work to repair the fences. On my way through the yard I stopped. Wait a second, I thought. Wild Stallions? They have *wild stallions* here? So not only did I have to worry about marauding wolves and jealous ostrich boyfriends, I had to watch out for wild stallions? Holy fuck!

A few days later I woke up freezing like every other morning and began my morning ritual of swearing and putting as much scalding hot liquid inside me as possible. After breakfast I headed outside to find what I would describe as a "pile'o'ostrich" in the corner of the pen. The female was in a heap on the ground and definitely *dead*. This was the first time the male didn't come up to the fence to threaten me when I approached. He was pacing near the dead female, looking confused and a little scared. I started calculating just what this was going to mean in terms of work for the next few days

and my brain quickly put the solution out. I went back to Dave and Laura to check its accuracy.

"So, what are we going to do with it?" I asked Dave, "Chop it up and eat it?"

Dave had his hat off and was scratching his head. "Yea," he said, "There isn't much else we can do with it. If we just throw it away that's wasting like 400 pounds of meat. However, I'm going to have to get a hold of the neighbor first and talk to him about it." When Dave had invested in the ostriches, he had gone in half and half with his neighbor. I don't know what exactly there was to talk about, seeing as the ostrich was already dead, but I knew he was going to have to make an executive decision soon. The corpse wasn't going to do anything but rot. I also inquired to the cause of death, and it was guessed that the male was "chasing her around for a fuck" and she tripped and broke her leg, then proceeded to freeze to death out in the cold during the night.

After much swearing and bemoaning over the unfortunate timing of the death (right after the ostriches started mating) and the continuation of the flop of the ostrich idea, Dave decided to go ahead with the butchering. It was a day later, no one was able to get a hold of the neighbor, and there was nothing else we could do about the situation. Dave asked me if I had any experience butchering animals.

Well now, did I ever! I was practically a pro considering my current list of animals-butchered-to-date:

Vyst's Comprehensive List of Animals Butchered to Date:

- Chickens

An ostrich is basically just a big chicken, right? I readily agreed to help with the butchering process and we got down to business. The first matter was getting the massive amount of ostrich flesh near the house. We did this by pulling the dead female onto a tarp and dragging the tarp back to the house. We had to go into the pen with the male in order to do this, but male was still in a state of shock and he left us alone. Upon inspection, lo and behold we found a broken leg on the female; sharp edges of bone had even pierced her skin and were protruding out. The "death by attempted fucking" theory had gained some ground.

While we were dragging the ostrich over to the house, Dave told me to be really careful about not squishing the body in the mud. He explained that the feathers of an ostrich were really valuable and we were going to try to save as many of them as possible (many had already been ruined). He then told me about a book he had read about the history of ostriches' introduction to the European world. When ostriches were first discovered in Africa by white men, ostrich feathers became all the rage in fashion. Specifically for men in France for their "gay French hats", as Dave put it. A corporate kingdom grew up overnight in Africa based on raising ostriches only for their feathers to sell back in Europe. Manors owned by rich European investors surrounded by ostrich pens were worked on by the natives, who were generally poor and treated as slaves as most other colonial areas. The price for ostrich feathers became so astronomical that natives would go walking through the plains in hopes of finding a feather that had fallen off of a wild ostrich, as finding one feather was enough to change the native's economic and social condition.

Then fashion changed, the feathers became worthless, and the entire empire crashed and vanished into the voids of history. I don't know how accurate the book was or how accurately Dave was relating its contents to me, but the message was clear: save as many feathers as possible.

We got the ostrich to the stop in front of the building where Dave wanted it and he went to get the necessary equipment. This included a two small knives, a hatchet, two buckets full of warm water, a big rock, some plastic black garbage bags, and some old school posters showing step-by-step pictures how to stretch. The hostel building was originally a school built during communism and Dave had inherited some of its memorabilia when he bought it. The posters were to act as our table to keep the ostrich out of the mud. They were thick material and water proof, but were rather slippery and we used

the rock to make sure the carcass didn't slide around.

The first order of business was de-feathering. This took awhile—it's not like we could just boil up a pot of water and dunk the bird into it. Plus we were trying to be careful not to destroy the feathers. When that was finished we moved on to removing the head and the lower half of the legs. Dave took care of the head with the hatchet and we both did the legs, working carefully to cut them off at the joints. There isn't any meat worth keeping on these parts, but Dave said the bones could be used to make tool handles, so he threw them on the shed roof to keep them out of reach from the dogs. The next task was to get the upper legs off. I picked up one of the knives and got started. I didn't really know what to expect, so all joking aside I just treated it like a big chicken.



Just start hacking away.



So you want a leg or a breast?

The chicken assumption turned out to be rather effective, as I was soon slicing my way through skin, fascia, fat, sinews, and muscle like a pro. Dave joined in on the fun and we make short work of getting the thighs off. We hung them up



Are we having fun, yet???





Can you imagine one of these kicking you?

from the roof of the entrance to the tool shed to get them out of the way while we carved up the rest of the carcass. Each leg was so heavy that it took both me and Dave to lift them up.

The work became more difficult as the lines of muscles became less apparent. We had to be careful not to make a hatchet-job of the meat as we removed the skin and cut out the muscles in pieces.

Slow and steady, slab after slab of meat was carved off the torso. Eventually I found the section the female must have fallen on when she died. It was a pulped gory mess.



Gobs and gobs of...

The entire time this was going on, the cat and the three dogs were hovering around like vultures. We would throw them bits of skin, useless muscle, and organs to keep them happy (I was really amused to watch one of the dogs swallow the windpipe whole, as it was too tough to chew). Eventually the horse (which I forgot the name of, but Dave always referred to him as "Brutus", so I



Greasy grimy ostrich guts!!



Et tu, Brutus?

will do the same) meandered around the corner. Now, I have heard that horses are generally skittish about blood and gore, but Brutus was so curious he looked like he was going to come up and start nibbling on the cadaver himself.

Work continued and we opened up the



Yes we tried to feed him ostrich pieces and no, he didn't eat them.



Surgeon at work.

ribcage and got access to the organs. Among the pile of kidneys, liver, stomach, gizzard, and everything else you find in your standard ostrich we found the eggs the female had been developing. There were dozens of them! From the size of a pea all the way up to the huge ovals that ostrich eggs are famous for being, and every size in between. They were all sorts of different colors and it looked like we had found a model of the solar system. As Dave and I were up to our elbows in gore, Laura had been taking the pictures. She was a vegetarian and a bit squeamish about the whole process and promptly made herself scarce when we got to the organs, so unfortunately there aren't any pictures of the eggs. We took some time to bemoan the fact that these were probably eggs with live embryos and that they had all been killed with the death of the mother, but as nothing could be done, we got back to work.

Dave and I went through the organs one at a time, choosing which to toss and

which to keep. The kidneys and liver were kept and most everything else was tossed into the organs-to-be-composted pile. When I had learned to butcher chickens back in Melk, I found to my pleasant surprise that the stomach muscle of the chicken is the tastiest chunk of meat in the whole bird. Until now I felt like I had just been working on a large chicken, so I figured that a similar set of rules would apply and that the stomach muscle would be one of the better parts of the ostrich. I told my intention to Dave and he told me I was nuts to spend so much time for an organ. I told him he was nuts and that it wasn't an organ, it was a muscle and thus a piece of meat like every other part we had chopped up until then—and a tasty muscle at that. He looked like he didn't believe me, but told me that if I wanted to do it that it was no problem.

This turned out to be a much more difficult venture than I had imagined. The first difficulty was separating the gizzard from the stomach—an organ which was so huge it was border-lining a small backpack. I didn't do the best job in the world and ended up cutting off a chunk of the stomach muscle with the gizzard. However, when I finally cut it off, holding the stomach in my hands was incredible. A rosey-red double-domed object with shiny sides that refracted the light in all sorts of different colors. It must have weighed at least 10 pounds—heavier than a whole chicken.

After my reverie I picked my knife back up and sliced it open the same way I had learned to do with chickens: cut through just enough that you can open the stomach like a book and peel out the actual organ from the inside, leaving just the muscle. With a chicken this entails digging out half-digested food and various rocks it had also eaten to help it digest that food before you could get at the stomach lining, and with the ostrich stomach it was the same story. However, unlike with chickens, the ostrich's stomach lining ripped and shredded apart each time I tried to peel it off. This turned out to be such a pain in the ass it must have taken me another 30 or 45 minutes just to get the stomach lining out.

When I was done I took a few moments to jubilate my relief. The ostrich body was almost completely carved up, and Dave took a picture of some of the nicer cuts:



With the body carved up and the organs dealt with, we turned our attention to the huge legs hanging off the roof behind us. Dave wanted the skins all in one piece, so we were careful and took our time to make a single slice all the way down the legs and slowly separate the skin from the fascia with the tips of our knives. This was tricky, but it was nice to be able to stand and work.



Dave kicked my ass at the skinning race.

With the legs done we started cleaning up and getting the meat into the kitchen. It was lined up on top of the freezers like it was on display.

That led us near to the end of the day and after adequately packing up the meat, we called it quits. The bird may have been chopped up but there was still a day's worth of work to do.

After my morning swearing-ritual, I was put to work separating out the feathers. Anyone who



The demon produce aisle!



"Ack! What are you doing?! You can't put the A.z2 feather in the B.qx7 pile!"

has ever worked with me will know I was the perfect person for the job—organizing things is what I do. The initial process was separating the ruined feathers from the still-good ones, then I

started creating categories of quality, size, and aesthetics. This took most of the day and by the end I had nicely organized piles of ostrich feathers all lined up on the table.

While I was doing this, Dave decided he was going to make *biltong*. I mentioned at the beginning that Dave and Laura were British. While this is technically true because Dave was born in England, he actually grew up in South Africa. Biltong is basically the South African equivalent to jerky, except they don't fuck around in South Africa (or at least Dave wasn't fucking around in Bulgaria). The meat was cut into huge slabs, rolled in spices, then hung in a drying rack which Dave had spent the day making.



Can you guess all the spices?



Ready and waiting to make some biltong.

The slabs of biltong were hung up in the rack using paper clips and the rack was closed up and turned on. However, I never got a chance to try them out. Dave told me that they would take about a week before they were ready and I was long gone before that.



This was near the end of the day and we called it quits once again. However, there was still one more job to do: boiling down the fat. My experience as a chemist landed me this job real quick, and I was more than happy at the idea of being able to spend some time in a kitchen where it was remotely warm. Dave told me that ostrich fat is incredibly

valuable*, especially in the cosmetics industry. For whatever reason ostrich fat is immediately absorbed by your skin, and thus won't leave that annoying residue that most creams leave on your skin. This meant that I was to be exceptionally careful when cutting the fat off the meat, as every fat cell was like a nugget of gold. While I agreed in principal I didn't really appreciate the way it had been addressed to me. Whatever. I wanted to cook me some fat!



*If all the information that Dave told me about ostriches is true, then these things are like walking gold mines. Too bad they're hideous devil birds.

The next day before work, while I slurping down cup after cup of rooibos tea (which I hate, by the way. It was the only hot thing quickly available), Laura came in all pissed off. She told us the problem: the male ostrich had been attacked by dogs the night before and had a broken wing to show for it. She knew it was dogs because it had recently snowed and she could see the tracks coming and going from the pen. A discussion immediately began over what should be done about the remaining male, and butchering was the only plausible answer with which they could come up. Even before the death of the female there had been talk of getting rid of the ostriches, and the male's value to the world resided solely on his ability to knock up his girlfriend. Now there was no girlfriend *and* he was injured. His death sentence seemed nigh. However, there was still the problem of the neighbor, and Dave went to try to contact him again.

Holy shit, I thought. I was going to have to butcher two ostriches in one week. I was still relaxing at finally finishing up the last one, but a quick *kiai* told me that I would be able to summon the energy and focus to do it again. Bring it on!

Having been an uchi deshi, multiple simultaneous stressful situations are nothing new to me. I figured I would hear about the ultimate decision when it arrived and I got to work with boiling the fat. There was enough to fill two huge pots. After some time of cutting fat off of meat and skin then chopping it up into cubes, I threw it all into the pots and started the burners up. I had to spend time at first stirring the fat to make sure the bottoms of the pots didn't burn, but as the cells began to break and fill the pots up with liquid, they soon became fluid enough to keep themselves moving from convection. It was safe to leave them alone and I went off to do other work.

Part of this other work was realizing that the unwanted ostrich parts had never been properly disposed of. Laura asked me if I would tromp on through the snow to the back yard, where there was a big blue barrel full of various nasty and rotting things, and throw the ostrich parts in. I reluctantly agreed and while I was equipping myself to go outside, I noticed a guy in a camo coat walk past the window in the direction of the ostrich pen with a shotgun slung over his shoulder. Apparently there had been successful contact with the neighbor. I went outside to get the bucket of guts and made my way through the snow over to the barrel. While I was figuring out the contraption that held the lid to the barrel, I suddenly heard BAM!! It was gunfire and it was close enough for me to duck and swear.

“Holy shit! I hope you know what you're aiming at, motherfucker!” I shouted at no one in particular.

I got over my initial shock and realized the obvious: the neighbor had shot the ostrich and I wasn't in any danger. However, I was still annoyed that no one had warned me that guns were going to be fired in the vicinity. I dumped the bucket into the barrel of sludge (which was more dangerous than the gunfire—I really didn't want to splash anything on me) and tromped my way back to the house. I saw the neighbor in the camo jacket and who I presumed to be his wife kneeling over the obvious inside the pen. I swore quietly once again and went inside.

I was told that, because Dave and Laura had taken the previous ostrich, they were just letting the neighbor have the other one, along with the hassle of butchering it. I'm glad someone took the time to explain it to me before firing guns, motherfuckers. Grumble grumble.

A few hours later the fat had finished boiling. The fat cells looked like hollow wraiths of their former glory floating in a beautiful golden soup. That meant time to do the final work of butchering the ostrich. Laura told me where I could find clean jars and lids, and after getting them I assembled what I thought would be the necessary filters and funnels. I put the fat through a strainer to separate out the fat cells, then put everything on top of the freezers where I started organizing my thoughts on the most economical way of transferring the fat to the jars. Dave was right next to me doing something with the

ostrich meat and we discussed it for a minute. I came to an idea and started with it when Laura walked in. I knew she didn't understand exactly what I was doing, and I was really irritated when she chastised me because “the fat was so valuable and it's really important that I didn't waste any” (as if I didn't already know that from Dave's ostrich lessons) and told me to do it in another method. This was nearing the end of my time here, as I had already planned my trip to Turkey, so I just bit my tongue and did it her way.

The result was jars full of beautiful yellow ostrich fat, smooth and pure.



I wonder how much this stuff was worth.

All in all, I found my experience at the Happy Hippy Hostel to be pretty miserable and aggravating (I tried not to let that come out too much when I wrote this). However, I'm glad to have gone there just to have the opportunity to **butcher me an ostrich!**

Dylan Lawrence Moore
July, 2012
Vienna, Austria



Beautiful!



Can't touch this!