



Supervolcanoes, Animal STDs & Briefcases Full of Money

ESQUIRE'S ANSWER FELLA believes that there are no stupid questions, just stupid people who don't ask questions, fearing they'll look stupid. So ask Answer Fella anything. If he doesn't know the answer, he'll find out who does or who has a guess that sounds right.

How much actual cash fits inside one of those drug-smuggler/kidnapper/hit-man-type metal briefcases you see in the movies?

Assuming tight bundles of crisp hundred-dollar bills—AF hopes you're not planning to impress that South Philly lap dancer by toting an aluminum attaché stuffed with crumpled ones and fives—and assuming your case dimensions are a fairly standard 13 inches by 18 inches by 5 inches, figure a maximum of \$1.2 million, says the estimable Skipp Porteous, founder and president of Sherlock Investigations and a licensed and bonded private eye AF hired back in 2003 to locate his lost dignity.

If you wish to woo the dancer—her stage name is Stormy, and she works weekends at La Vito Loca's on 12th Street—you can rent a slightly smaller metal case stuffed with a smooth half mil in C-notes for \$125 (plus a \$300 security deposit) at Abacadabra, a New York City shop that also sells \$10,000 bundles of hundreds for \$18 per.

Good luck. Just don't forget that those bills are as false as Stormy's cheating heart.

My father was American-born of full-blooded Russian descent. Whenever he was drinking something—usually coffee—he always left about a quarter inch in the glass and tossed it down the drain. When my Italian mother

once asked why, he replied, "Fossie," apparently an old-country custom he never did explain. Can AF help illuminate this?

Perhaps, but the real question is whether you can handle the truth. The crack AF research squad consulted three professors of Russian, two authors of books about the Russian language, and a Russian grandmother, and nobody could identify the word. The closest match was *gushche*—pronounced *goo-sheh*—which can mean "sediment" or "dregs." But unless your father suffered from a peculiar speech impediment, *goo* and *foo* don't sound the same.

That's the bad news. The other bad news is that your father may have been living an ethnic lie. According to Professor Nikolai Firtich of the Vassar College department of Russian studies, the word *fusy* is used in Poland "to describe the coffee 'mud' on the bottom of the cup that is not to be drunk but has to be disposed of." (If it's any consolation, Professor Firtich explains that a mix-up of this kind is common "because most of eastern Poland was part of the Russian empire until 1918, so the people were Russian in citizenship, but ethnically they were either Polish or Polish Jews.")

Dolores Cetlinsky, at the American Polish Assistance Association, confirms that *fusy* is the Polish word for "unwanted cof-

fee grounds.' It's an old expression—I'm seventy years old, so I grew up with the word."

Stay strong, my friend, and bear in mind that your pop simply may have been calling your mom a floozy.

So I'm watching some science-documentary show with my seven-year-old, and it says a massive volcanic eruption at Yellowstone Park that'll destroy the U.S. is both inevitable and overdue. Now my kid's totally freaked out, and I have no idea what to say to comfort him.

Tell him that TV lies. Tell him what Jake Lowenstern, scientist in charge at the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory, tells AF: "Overdue? I take exception to that. There will be lots of documentaries out there with quotes that scientists say it erupts every 600,000 years, but that's just a number pulled out of a hat that makes it sound scary."

It is true, says Lowenstern, that the Yellowstone volcano has produced three of the "grandest-scale eruptions that occurred on earth, 2.1 million years ago, 1.3 million years ago, and, most recently, 640,000 years ago," and that an encore "would devastate the economies of many of the states surrounding Yellowstone, and indeed the country as a whole," but he wants your son to know

he's keeping an eye on things.

"We will be able to watch the earthquakes happening as magma's rising toward the surface. As for *doing* anything about it, we monitor the systems closely."

On second thought, maybe you and the kid could start watching zombie movies.

Do animals get STDs?

According to Rob Knell, a biology professor at the University of London, "STDs are widely distributed throughout the animal kingdom." He adds, "There are even STDs of plants that are carried by pollinating insects."

Rest assured, however, that Mittens and Fido are in little danger. Dr. Margaret Root Kustritz, clinical specialist in small-animal reproduction at the University of Minnesota, says cats get no venereally transmitted diseases; dogs—most often wild dogs in tropical and subtropical regions—can suffer from an affliction called canine transmissible venereal tumor, but "you treat it with chemotherapy and it goes away."

Professor Knell notes that the cancerous cells that cause these tumors "all originated in the same animal, a wolf or an East Asian dog such as a husky," although he did not specifically rule out Stormy as a possible source.

Got a question? Send it to Answer Fella via esquire.com/talk.