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FEATURES



SHITTY TOYS FOR KIDS

a holiday gift list for the little ones you hate
page 20
by wombstretcha the magnificent



SOLO: A CHRISTMAS STORY

a gift guide for the single, lonely and selfish
page 29
by esmeralda rupp-spangle



A GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE

a condensed summary of our simulated reality
page 46
words by w. bill czolgosz, art by sean simmans



MISS EXOTIC OREGON: ROAD TO THE FINALS!

highlights from rounds four through six
page 50
photos by hypnox

INSIDE STUFF

WRITE NAKED	PG. 22
GREEN ROOM DIARIES	PG. 24
EROTIC CITY	PG. 26
SPOTLIGHT OF EVENTS	PG. 27
STRIPPED IN PORNLAND	PG. 28
ASK A BARTENDER	PG. 30
PINUP CALENDAR	PG. 32
TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH	PG. 34
EXOTIC MAPS (PDX/OR/WA)	PG. 38
STRIP CLUB HOUNTED HOUSE REVIEW	PG. 42
ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS	PG. 44

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THE MONTHLY

COLUMN

BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

It's that time of year again. We're about halfway through the longest three months of the year: Christmas. It's probably about time to think about shopping. Most adults don't require gifts and fully understand if you get them nothing—realizing that you, too, are an adult with adult responsibilities, so there is no expectation of a gift. That said, there is a subset of awful adults, who still expect that you will provide a gift for their equally awful children. “Oh, well, it's no big deal,” you say, because apparently, you are unable to stand up for yourself when Brenda says “what” and not “if,” when asking about you bringing a present for little Madison. In this case, just say “it's a secret” and then get them something from this list.

Dr. Odorous Chemistry Set

Long abandoned by Xmas gifters for requiring an attention span beyond 30 seconds (and for coddling intellectual pursuits), the tried-and-true old chemistry set makes a reappearance this year. Unlike other chemistry sets, this one has little to do with learning and everything to do with fun—well, that's assuming that you consider “fun” to be “making a series of noxious smells,” which covers most kids. They'll delight in their ability to mix more-or-less safe and benign chemicals together, to make the rankest of house-filling odors. With a book of easy, step-by-step instructions and the cartoon Dr.

2019 GIFTS FOR CHILDREN

Odorous leading the way to greater and greater stench, it's a sure winner for any child whose parents you hate.

Lil' Squawky

A small, plush character somewhat akin to a Furby, but with more face tattoos, Lil' Squawky is a generic, fur-covered caricature of modern mumble rappers. Once you activate him, the fun never stops—literally. Powered by solar and a mechanism similar to an automatic watch, Lil' Squawky never needs batteries, nor has the ability to remove them. He spits unintelligible hip-hop phrases over and over, at any given time—but, especially if people are talking nearby.



Baby Poop Sluice

There is a storied history of dolls that mimic the features of a real baby (or, at least, soil themselves). This dates back to roughly the early 1930s, with the advent of the Dy-Dee and Betsy Wetsy dolls, both of which peed when given fluids (side note: those two dolls were caught up in a bizarre 1936 patent infringement lawsuit in New York, wherein it was ruled that drinking and urination, being “natural movements,” could not be patented—I guess New York was capable of making sense at some point in the past, but I digress...). Baby Poop Sluice is a unique doll, appearing very much like a realistic baby, and likewise, has real baby functions. You may feed Baby Poop Sluice any of the brightly colored foods she comes with (refills just \$4.99!) and, in a matter of minutes (but, without any forewarning), Baby Poop Sluice lets loose a foul tempest of brown, liquid baby diarrhea. Clean it up quick, kids, or it'll stain whatever it sits on for more than a couple minutes, including metal and porcelain.

Pet Nothing

Trying to out-do the infamous 1970s trend of the Pet Rock, Pet Nothing is just that: nothing. It's an elaborate box filled with shredded paper bedding and other trappings, but contains no pet whatsoever—animate or otherwise. That said, the box encourages you to not throw it away (reuse!), but it is of flimsy construction and quickly breaks down, requiring the purchase of another pet nothing. Once you buy Pet Nothing, you can't simply have...nothing. A whole line of replacement boxes and box accessories ensure

CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS YOU HATE

that parents will be buying additional things for their kids to slap on a cheap, cardboard box at \$14.95 each, for at least a year.

Somewhat Supernatural 7-Ball

Like the more well-known Magic 8-Ball®, the Somewhat Supernatural 7-Ball provides vague answers to yes-or-no questions, but takes forever to do so. In fact, it takes about 45 seconds, during which it plays the opening of “Hooked On A Feeling” (yes, the “ooga-chaka” part...for 45 whole seconds), before finally revealing that the reply is hazy and you must ask again. It’s fun for kids all day! It’s fun for adults for about 20 seconds!!!

Talking Fuzzy Slippers

Fuzzy slippers feel like a timeless gift, beloved by children and adults alike. Anywhere with chill mornings and cold floors seems like a prime environment for a pair of fuzzy slippers. These slippers come in a variety of fun shapes like lion, hippo, penguin, Stalin and herpes virus. They also talk! Yep, with every step, they say things like “Gee, it’s cold” and “Ow, you’re hurting me!” Every. Step.

Mr. Wonderful, The FUN Stranger

A very reasonably priced action figure, who comes with his own van and a comic book which illustrates the wonderful adventures kids can have when they get into cars with strangers. It’s like *The Magic School Bus*, but with less magic and more long, hard miles of pure adventure, as Mr. Wonderful puts distance between the car and the location where the kids got in. Mr.

Wonderful comes with his own, trimmable, scraggly facial hair and two plucky, young children from an affluent suburban neighborhood. Additional accessories are available, such as “tickets to Disneyland” and “magic candy that makes you see cartoons in real life.”

Heelys

I don’t feel that I need to elaborate on this, but turning an already poorly coordinated child into one with wheels in their sneakers is a guaranteed win for you and loss for the parent of your antipathy. Try to hide your amusement, when they tell



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you about the latest thing Liam has careened into and broken.

So, there you have it—the executive list of gifts to give children of parents you hate.

Happy whatever.

Wombstretcha The Magnificent is a writer, cook, hot sauce spokesman, chimpanzee debunker and retired rapper from Portland, Oregon. He can be found at Wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @Wombstretcha503 and on Facebook (and MeWe, the no-jail Facebook) as “Wombstretcha The Magnificent.”



THE BIBLIOPHILE

WRITE NAKED BY CLEMENTINE DARLING

Autumn came quickly to Portland this year—seemingly overnight, the city was beholden by fiery hues of red and orange. The treetops now gave the appearance of being warmly ablaze, a welcome heat to counter the chill that now nipped at her petite ears and bare fingertips.

The cool air and crisp leaves brought her comfort, an opportunity to indulge in the art of keeping cozy—hot ciders and clove, cocoa and dark coffee brimming with thick, sweet cream, mulled wine, over-sized sweaters, black swing coats and woolen stockings pulled taught and snug against the supple flesh of her milky thighs.

She was a creature of habit, asleep by 4am, awake by 10am. Fresh faced and bundled up, to make the trek to the cozy little coffee shop. She enjoyed solitude those mornings, accompanied only by the tinkle of Chopin's feather-light fingers on ivory keys or perhaps

Rachmaninov's heavy thrum resounding from her earbuds. Her breath formed in light, little clouds before her small wine-colored lips, dew clung to spiderwebs and what remained of the flowers, rosebud remnants from summertime, sweet with decay.

But, of course, the most delicious part of her ritual traverse was an excuse to peruse the contents of the Black Cat Bookstore. As she approached a case adorned beautifully in mahogany and leaded glass panes, her tender heart began to lilt and quicken. Her one true love in life, forever and ever—books.

Cracked spines and hardcovers, yellowed pages sweetly scented with the vanillin of age...even with her worn leather satchel already heavy with literature, she could never resist stopping to admire the contents of the curio... and, more often than not, would come away with a new volume tucked under her arm—the promise of soon-to-be

discovered adventures and friendships held tightly to her tender breast.

Little did she know, the curator of this particular bookstore, an older, handsome and refined gentlemen, had taken notice of her and now looked forward to her little visits to his collections of literate curiosities. He would often peer quietly from behind his heavy curtains and gaze—charmed and bemused—as this petite, wide-eyed, dark-haired little stranger so lovingly handled the treasures he had lain out to behold.

Upstairs, behind a heavy door, he kept an ultimate treasure—a private library, the span of an entire story, lined ceiling-to-floor with shelves upon shelves of the most beautiful, exotic, rare and even erotic, texts. He had pondered for some time and decided that the next time she ventured near, he would invite her in.

A few days went by and again, her soft steps penetrated the dewy grasses at his stair, as she approached the Black Cat Bookstore. The gentlemen crept out his back door and entered at the storefront, approaching audibly behind her, the sound of his black and shining boots heavy on the gleaming wood. She gave a little start and turned slowly, one earbud held aloft and met his gaze.

A shock of luminous dark hair atop his head, his musculature visible but not overbearing. His dark eyes gleamed and glittered as his lips turned into a soft smile, his demeanor was that of experience and a virile sensuality. "Anything good today...?" She felt a little pulse between her legs and her cheeks displayed a hot crimson blush, betraying her immediate attraction... she smiled shyly and peered at him through her thick brunette bangs... "Oh, it never disappoints..." He found her trepidation charming.

"There are a lot more where those came from in the library. If you'd like, I can show you." All of the warnings she'd recalled from childhood about accepting invitations from strangers swirled between her ears, but...in the end, the heat reverberating between her legs, the tingle in her nipples and the lightness in her belly, won over and she decided to follow the handsome stranger inside. He led her outside and up the mossy cement steps, through the heavy wooden door, into his warmly lit library. A fire blazed softly in the stove. She heard the lock click behind her. But, instead of fear, she felt only further arousal.

His boots clicked heavily and methodically behind her—each step reverberating throughout her body and deepening the pulse between her thighs. She followed him up another flight of stairs and into a room filled with the most splendidly crafted books she had ever lain eyes on. Her heart jumped up into her throat, she inhaled deeply and the smell of antiqued paper filled her button nose. She turned to gaze

at the man, he nodded her onward "help yourself, kitten." She blushed and stepped lightly forward.

On tip-toe she stretched and ran her small hands along the spines of the many volumes bound beautifully in black, red and dark green leathers, scripted heavily with gold-leaf, her dress rose as she reached higher, exposing first a lace-trimmed stocking and then the backs of her smooth thighs. She could feel his eyes on her, burning into her—purposely, she allowed her dress to rise ever-so slightly, flirtatiously exposing the bottom of her bare, round, succulent ass. She could feel now, her heartbeat throbbing between her legs—growing wet and warm. She pulled a volume of vintage erotica from the shelf and turned to meet his gaze.



He sat comfortably on the leatheravenport, watching her, bemused—his dark eyes glistening, his lips whetted with arousal. He patted the seat next to him "Come, read to me." She obeyed, rapt by his command...gracefully she moved towards him and draped herself, belly down across his lap. She arched her back and as her dress rose above her bare ass and exposed her dewy labia, she began to read, softly, the enchantingly arousing words of Anaïs Nin. She felt his strong hand gently graze the elastic of her stocking, his finger slid along the edge and it gave a

little snap.

Her voice trembled as his fingers crept softly upwards, along her silky thighs, to the small of her back, down again he made little circles tracing the dimples above her ass...she could hardly breathe, let alone read. Her bare pussy dripped and flowed with warm, luminous, viscous fluid. As he drew his finger along her swollen outer-labia, she bowed her head and bit softly into the hard cover of the text...a soft moan escaped her mouth. The man responded with a low, satisfied growl.

She arched her back and pushed herself against his hand, her small feet dug fervently into the leather of the sofa, her body begging him to enter her. He slid his finger betwixt her soft, juicy lips and grazed her swollen clit. She writhed and whimpered with wanting. Never in her young life, had she felt so wild with wanting. She reached down between her legs and felt for the clasp of his belt, she slid off of his lap, to her knees and took his hard cock in her small mouth hungrily—his hand lost in her thick brown locks he pulled her hair hard, beckoning her upwards towards him. She struggled a little, winding and flicking her tongue from base to tip before succumbing to his grip.

He pulled her up by the hair, she met his eyes. She was wild, mad with desire—his other hand clasped tight on her firm little ass, his cock erect—she pulled him between her legs and with one graceful motion he entered, hard and fast and smooth into the hot, wet core of her body. Together, they inhaled and released, she shook with pleasure. Her body grew hot and flushed as she rode him frantically, harder and deeper with each thrust until her small body became so rapt with ecstasy she could no longer contain it and together, all at once, they released their pleasure in oceanic orgasm

IG: @WriteNakedPDX / @DarlingHasClaws



Sticky Icky Hypocrites

GREEN ROOM DIARIES BY STONED COLD SATIVA AWESOME

While taking a country drive to clear my head last weekend, I passed by an Oregon State Prison building that overlooks a valley—within eye shot of the prison, acres of hemp can be seen growing in the open (funnily enough, locals have been stealing the hemp, thinking it's weed...enjoy the headache, boys). A city bus passed me, with an advertisement for Organic Herbal Compassionate Remedy Resources (or whatever the hell it's called), reminding potential clients that Wednesdays and Fridays mean 20% off ounces of top-shelf strains. I was able to see the prisoners walking the yard of the prison, which means they were also able to see the same hemp fields in the distance and the advertisement for discounted weed on public transportation that I saw. Imagine for a second, how many of these prisoners are behind a fence, lined up like cattle and sleeping among rapists and murderers, because they sold some dirt weed to the wrong undercover cop a couple of decades ago. The question remains: why?

The cannabis industry is showing its true color—green. An entire industry (including publicly traded companies) has sprung up around weed and the people running it are basically the same bunch of kids that run Silicon Valley and are responsible for tripling the rent in whatever neighborhood you're currently living in. They spend tens of thousands of dollars perfecting the perfect vape pen, flying private jets to cannabis conventions and employ hundreds of budtenders, trimmers and farmers. Worse, states in which weed is legal make millions off of the tax dollars provided by this budding (sorry for the pun) industry, much of which is going to...police stations? Goddamnit, Oregon. There are still leftover hippies behind bars. Perhaps we should, ya know, pause for a second, before the entire crop gets moldy.

The first and most immediate thing that the cannabis industry needs to address—the stoned elephant in the middle of the grow op—is the release of any and all criminals currently jailed for cannabis-related crimes. Obviously, exceptions would be made for

rare cases (D.U.I. manslaughter, aggravated crimes involving violence, etc.). But, for most of the last century, being jailed for pot was not only a fuck up for the obvious reasons (you know, throwing people in a cell because they were in possession of a plant), but for more systemic, racial and class-related reasons as well—if you do the research, you will find that weed laws were basically an accepted form of Jim Crow racism. “Stop and frisk” laws in urban areas disproportionately affected (and still affect) young black men. Beyond race, the sentencing disparities between upper class, suburban teens and lower-to-middle class, rural or urban cannabis users, is almost insulting. To think that one of my uncles spent two years in jail for a joint, while at the same time, Hot Topic was selling weed-pattern clothing next to the “Tobacco Pipe” display at Warped Tour, is, well, pretty bammer.

Further, look at the prisoners who are already being released due to overcrowding and show me one group of criminals that poses less of a risk to society than former weed dealers and “got caught being black with a blunt” offenders. Jaywalkers? Tax evaders? Now, on the same tip, the great mental health asylum closure of the '70s and '80s means that, if you were/are hearing voices that tell you to kill strangers, you were/are free to walk the streets, as long as you didn't have a prior for weed. Beyond the institutional level, look at the compassion and exceptions we make for hard drug users. There are no “safe bong exchange” locations in any major city. Opiate addicts are (and, to be fair, should be) treated like a protected minority class in need of empathy—but not while Jamal has spent ten years sitting in an Idaho prison, because he has the wrong skin color and enjoys relaxing. If you apply for a concealed handgun permit, the form asks if you are “addicted to marijuana.” In theory, you'd be fine if you were a coke-addled, PCP-using, alcoholic junkie. Just keep the damn pot away from the bullets or violence may happen...right.

While I try to avoid politics in this column, it would be downright ignorant to avoid point-

ing out the fact that our current national dialogue is concerned mostly with politically correct speech, gender issues, climate change and immigration. And, don't get me wrong, I am all for assisting non-binary refugees who are in need of environmental awareness—but, let's take care of the people rotting in a local prison cell over a joint, before we go fixing the world. Wanna talk kids in cages? Start with the teens locked up for pot, before attempting the compassion dance in front of your voter base (I'm looking at you, Joe “gateway drug” Biden). What good is showing empathy to newcomers and marginalized demographics, if we're only inviting them to participate in a flawed system that condones legal slavery? Imagine escaping a war-torn, fascist hellhole and arriving in beautiful Idaho, only to get locked in a cement box, because you stepped on a pot seed in Colorado. How's that for freedom?

In addition to release of all cannabis criminals (at least in weed-legal states), it's also time to apply some of those bumper sticker mantras that we used to throw around before weed was legal. Remember the “paper and oil” argument that you used to use, back in the day when you were defending your pot use to a science teacher or cop? What about the “imagine the medical uses” argument? Last time I was in a hospital, I was given my choice among a buffet of painkillers—none of which contained cannabis. Thankfully, I threw my prescriptions for legal heroin in the trash, walked across the street and bought pot with a credit card, then filled up my tank with gasoline and put on my cotton-based jacked—what's up on that hemp, again? This is not the future the hippies and activists of yesteryear promised—if we simply put the same effort into reforming the cannabis legal system, actually pushing the hemp market and incorporating cannabis into the existing medical system, then perhaps we can justify the banana-flavored dab pens that attach to our iPhones. Until then, though, keep in mind that there are still people behind bars for pot.

Sorry to ruin your high.

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Happy holidays, everyone. Whatever you celebrate, I hope you're on your way to having a good one. And, if you're not the celebratory type, here's to icy roads, Portland drivers and the fantastic YouTube videos that are produced when these three ingredients combine. However, the real heroes of the freezing-to-our-bike-seats season are, of course, the Portland strippers. No other job requires minimal clothing and a warm attitude, like that required of the exotic dancer. They deal with drunks during the holidays, leave work at too-fucking-cold thirty, maneuver the smoking patio in heels and still find a way to spend time with their kids. This holiday season, remember to set aside at least a small percentage of your gift budget and pass it on to a freezing dancer at your favorite club. Remember—if you're cold, they're cold.

Ted Wheeler To Adult Entertainment Industry: "I'll Take Money From You People"

According to Aaron Mesh from *Willamette Week*, Portland's ironically beloved mayor, Ted Wheeler, is facing "criticism for his unsolicited pledge earlier this week to refuse donations from the adult entertainment industry." The *Week* article further clarified that Wheeler "(will) accept campaign contributions from sex workers, including strippers." This comes after fallout from a statement that Wheeler will not be accepting donations from "Pharma, oil, coal, firearms, tobacco, and adult entertainment." After the backlash, a spokesperson for Wheeler was quoted as stating he will not be "(taking) donations from the corporate side of the adult entertainment industry," but that he "(will) welcome contributions from ANY working person." Basically, he's cool with strippers, just not those other shady, illegal, immoral and/or unwanted sex workers...I mean, that's what he's implying, correct?

So, if you're not at a college-level understanding of political science, this is called "spineless back-pedaling," which is what happens when an already shitty politician insults a large enough portion of their voter base, that they realize their job is suddenly on the line. For prior examples, take a look at Hillary Clinton's earlier stance on same-sex marriage, Obama's history of deportation, Bernie's bank account balance and Trump's history of outsourcing business—regardless of which side of the aisle you fall on, every party has, at one point, pretended to give a

fake fuck to get a vote. As far as Ted Wheeler, his use of the phrase "corporate side of the adult industry," fails to recognize that there is actually very little of that. There are local LLCs and a handful of webcam or porn sites that are owned by big corporations, but the adult entertainment industry is currently as independent and sex-worker-driven as it ever has been. I attended a few adult expos this summer and roughly 80% of the models in attendance were camming, live from the gig. The rest, including some more veteran names, were representing their own brand. Add to this, PayPal's recent departure from Pornhub (and, inevitably, future disassociation with other adult brands) and you have the deck stacked against sex workers like never before. What are they going to do, take Bitcoin?

For Ted Wheeler to assume that some dark, shady "adult entertainment" industry exists in the shadows alongside the makers of chemical poison, guns and coal, is an insult by itself—every industry is crooked. Welcome to capitalism and politics. I mean, the guy loves Adidas, right? Is he only taking donations from the Asian children that make the shoes, or what? And, again, I fucking love Adidas and know that they're a local company that gets misrepresented all the time, but that's my point—when folks try to play the "six degrees to something bad" game, it's always a loss. Vegan? Think of the mice that get slaughtered in the process of making your tofu shakes. Enjoy chicken? Violence or homophobia—those are your options if you don't want to settle for K.F.C. like a loser. Enjoy drinking water? Guess what—Hitler drank water, too. And, to top it all off, Donald Trump uses Twitter. Do you use Twitter? *Whose side are you on?!*

Simply put, to shun "the adult entertainment industry" while our city shits chemicals into the river, treats California refugees like third-world citizens and prides itself for excess alcohol consumption, well, that's not very progressive, Ted. Clarifying that you will, on the other hand, take money from strippers is just the icing on the shit cake. Want to take money from strippers? Buy a laptop and learn to DJ. And, if you want to make some real money from the adult industry, might I suggest you go fuck yourself, live on webcam?

Now, let's just say that Ted Wheeler was running unopposed. Fine—stick with the evil

you know. But, thankfully, there is opposition—candidate Sarah Iannarone is apparently accepting donations from strippers at \$8.74 per month...an oddly specific number, but either way, it's cool to know that she's open to taking donations from dancers. I'm sure there is some rationale to this number, but I'll leave it up to our readers to do their own research. *Willamette Week* has been doing a good job covering the story, so perhaps start there. Still, just know that a left-leaning candidate who doesn't hate you is running against someone who might. Iannarone is avidly supportive of strippers and other sex workers, with a platform that is seeking to decriminalize sex work of all types. Hell yes. Go Sarah!

Of note, neither myself, nor *Exotic*, actually endorse this candidate or ANY candidate (there's a reason we still have readers), but my personal policy is to at least show love to anyone who recognizes the legitimacy of sex work (which Iannarone is working to decriminalize). Are Sarah's other policy positions good? I have no idea—I don't trust any politician and usually vote based on whoever has the craziest and most outrageous platform (and no chance of winning). But, would I applaud even the worst politicians, if they did something good for our industry? You bet your ass I would! Now, what I can say is that myself (and, most likely some folks here at *Exotic*) fucking loathe Ted Wheeler. That, we *can* say. So, it's up to you how you cast your vote. Take that however you want.

Strip City Expands

Speaking of new entries into institutional markets, Portland's downtown strip club scene keeps on expanding. Thanks to currently established spots like Kit Kat Club, Mary's Club, Spyce Gentlemen's Club and Club Rouge keeping the bar high, after adding new spots like X Exotic Ultra Lounge and Club SinRock's new Burnside location, we are finally ready to start a fight with Vegas and call Atlanta a punk...okay, maybe that's not a good idea, but the fact that you can see more than one strip club while standing on the corner of 3rd and Burnside is heartwarming. I love how we have clubs on all corners of the metro map, but it's starting to look more and more like downtown will soon have a "strip" of strip clubs, in the strip club capital of the world. Here's a big shout-out and "Welcome to the club, club,"



eroticcity spotlight

**FRI 6 - REVEAL LOUNGE
NAUGHTY OR NICE HOLIDAY PARTY W/ RUBBER DOLL**

**FRI 12 - STARS CABARET (BRIDGEPORT)
ADULT FILM STAR JILLIAN JANSON**

**FRI 13 - BOSSANOVA BALLROOM - BOYEURISM
W/ BELLYDANCE SUPERSTAR RACHEL BRICE**

**FRI 13 - STARS CABARET (SALEM)
ADULT FILM STAR JILLIAN JANSON**

SAT 14 - DREAM ON - MISS O'S RETIREMENT PARTY

**SAT 14 - ROSE CITY STRIP
DJ DICK HENNESSY'S RED CUP PARTY**

**TUE 17 - LUCKY DEVIL
TINY TUESDAY FLANNEL PARTY**

**THU 19 - DANTE'S - TATAS FOR TOYS BENEFIT
W/ AARON ROSS & TOXIC**

**SAT 21 - CLUB 205, GUILTY PLEASURES,
SHIMMERS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB, STARS CABARET
(BRIDGEPORT & SALEM)
UGLY SWEATER & CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**SAT 21 - DESIRE - DJ DICK HENNESSY'S
WHITE CLAW WET PANTY CONTEST**

**SAT 21 - DREAM ON SALOON
UGLY XMAS SWEATER PARTY**

**SUN 22 - DEVILS POINT - BAD CHRISTMAS
SWEATER & MUSTACHE PARTY**

**WED 25 - SPYCE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB
DJ DICK HENNESSY'S UGLY SWEATER CONTEST**

**SAT 28 - XPOSE - DJ DICK HENNESSY'S
ROCKIN' NEW YEARS EVE PARTY**

**TUE 31 - CABARET, CHEETAH'S CABARET,
KIT KAT CLUB, SPYCE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB
NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY**

to the new spots open downtown (X and Sin-Rock) and a "Thank you for continuing to be awesome," to the established spots (Kit Kat, Mary's, Spyce, Rouge and Dante's). Soon, we will have more strip clubs downtown than we do gyro carts—that's at least a dozen pleasant women for every aggressive food cart owner. Balance is important.

'Tis The Season For Ugly Sweaters

On Saturday, December 21, Club 205, Guilty Pleasures, Shimmers Gentlemen's Club and Stars Cabaret (Bridgeport and Salem) will all be hosting Christmas-themed parties that encourage guests to wear ugly sweaters. At Stars, your cover charge is waived. At 205 and Guilty Pleasures, you can win cash. Check the ads in this issue for all the nitty gritty, but just remember that there are "Epstein Didn't Kill Himself" sweaters floating around out there, which you can wear all year long. The next day, Sunday, December 22, head on over to Devils Point for an ugly sweater party that also encourages mustaches! In addition to pre-Christmas weekend, on Wednesday, December 25 (that's Christmas), DJ Dick Hennessy will be hosting his own ugly sweater party at Spyce Gentlemen's club.

Just A Reminder, The Acropolis Is Still Open

And, to end things off with some good news for the new year, a friendly reminder that your favorite steakhouse is not closed and will not be closing. Apparently, when the local weekly papers ran a story about the club being temporarily closed, this started a(nother) rumor that the Acrop is closed. First it was the new MAX line paving over it. Then, it was something with the city. And, the rumors kept coming—none of them true. I spent some time there last month and the dancers are as hot as ever, the steak is still good and I believe the number of beers on tap is approaching 70. So, why not stop in and grab some steak bites with your lap dance?

Miss O Will Be Missed

Curator and head-O-in-charge, Miss O, of Dream On Saloon fame, will be retiring this month. Join her, the staff and a roster of wonderful dancers, Saturday, December 14 at Dream On Saloon to send her off with a smile. Miss O has been a Portland staple, an industry expert and an all-around awesome person for as long as I've been writing for this publication. Here's to her!

Stripped IN PORNLAND

FLASH FICTION INSPIRED BY REAL AND RUMORED EVENTS IN THE PORTLAND STRIP CLUB INDUSTRY

By Jaime Dunkle

The Suitcase

Leather jams my zipper. Water fills the trunk, as I sink deeper and deeper. At least the screams ceased. No more slaps, either. I prefer the bass thumps of the club. This foreign place reeks of decay—cadavers and rust. I already miss the invisible plumes of vanilla body spray that'll presumably never waft my way again, the cackling cadence of women connecting and the clicking of heels on concrete.

I long for the days when she stuffed me with spiked boots, nylons and corsets. Goopy thongs, pill bottles and wads of cash. Secrets, even—but this secret is too burdensome to bear. I hope it dies with me.

James kills the engine on the middle of the Burnside Bridge.

"How long have you been fucking him?"

"He's just a customer!"

Betty jerks her restrained arms, but fails in unbinding herself with the tug.

"You're a lying whore!"

James slaps Betty across the face with the back of his hand. His knuckles split the skin. Blood mixes with red lipstick. Motionless, she stares at the Willamette River. He circles to the passenger side and pulls her out of the car by her hair. Cars zoom past. No one stops. He pushes her down and her tailbone slams on the concrete sidewalk. Cyclists roll by the violence.

Betty grinds her ass on Tyrone's lap in the private dance area lit with red runner lights on the floor and ceiling. The song ends and he pulls out four \$20 bills, for the four dances.

James orders a whiskey neat with a beer back, at the bar across the room. He slams one after the next while eyeballing Betty. They lock eyes and she plops on Tyrone's lap.

"Are you still painting?" Tyrone asks.

"I've got a showing this weekend at a coffee shop. You should come," she says.

"My buddy owns a gallery in the Pearl. I'll see if he can come with me," Tyrone says.

James stomps over. He snatches Betty by the arm.

"Time's up," he says to Tyrone. "Get dressed," he says to Betty. "Now."

Betty blows a kiss to Tyrone and lips *see you this weekend* to him. Daggers shoot from her eyes to James, then she mosies her way to the dressing room.

Betty throws on yoga pants and a tank top. She's alone in the dressing room until James busts in. He zip ties her hands, grabs her packed suitcase and drags her past the customers and coworkers in the strip club, out of the building through the parking lot, shoves her into his car and locks her suitcase in the trunk.

Everything inside of me is ruined. The leather, drenched. The shoes, waterlogged. I can't roll out of here. My wheels are broken. The darkness engulfs me as I drown. The river enters every part of me. Every crevice. Every pore. Every pocket. It fills me up with its toxicity. It pollutes me as I hit rock bottom. All that's untainted are the secrets she gave me. They guide my heart to the surface. The secrets give me buoyancy, but they don't resurrect. I'm dead inside.

Pedestrians oogle the sidewalk drama but only whisper to each other and keep moving.

James unlocks the trunk and extracts the valise.

"You skank! You'll never work in this town again!"

James kicks Betty and chucks the dancer bag into the river.

Betty rises to her feet with hands free. She headbutts James and suspends him over the rail.

"Please, don't! You're my love. My life. I'll never hurt you again."

Betty thrusts forward, pushing James over the edge even more. The river current picks up in synchronicity with the seemingly unrelated commotion on the bridge.

The suitcase floats to the water's surface and catches her attention.

Tyrone crosses the bridge and recognizes the disgruntled couple from the strip club now escalated to a full-blown horrorshow in broad daylight. He slams on his brakes and jumps out of his car on the bridge. His approach is fierce, but gentle. Swift, but slow.

"You gotta help me, man. She's crazy!"

Tyrone anchors his eyes into Betty's. She releases James, but Tyrone has a grip on him and reels him back over the rail to safety.

The switchblade Betty used to cut the zip tie clanks on the sidewalk and bounces over the edge into the river.

James cries on the concrete. The suitcase flows with the current, toward the shore.

"You'll never break me," Betty says, then she hops in the car with Tyrone. They drive west to the hills to his boyfriend's house.

Jaime Dunkle mixes the profound and the profane in her prose, with an altruism that stems from her tenure as an award-winning journalist. Her stories range from fiction to personal narrative and often blur between the two. "Stripped" is her forthcoming book that was chosen as a semifinalist on the YesYes-Books Open Reading For Fiction contest in 2019. For more info, go to JaimeDunkle.com. No creepers allowed.



ALL I WANT FOR

Christmas

by Blazer Sparrow

Dear Santa,

I know you don't really exist, but if you did, shame on you. Naughty girls and boys deserve toys on Christmas, too. Also, why do the rich kids get more presents than poor kids? And, what's your deal with the Jews? Anyhow, desperate times call for desperate measures. While I'm positive the letters I sent to you as a child ended up in my Dad's office shredder (and not some courtroom in a black-and-white movie), I am at a loss and think it is time to reach out again. Perhaps, writing letters to you is not just a modern rehash of a jumble of European folk traditions. Instead, it is a more symbolic ceremony of learning to not ask for material goods, but more lofty requests, like pieces of men and good will hunting on earth or something.

Just kidding—it's a way for the rich kids to ask their parents to buy them more toys. But, let's pretend it's the latter.

And, in pretending this letter finds you well, Sinterklass, whether you are reading it in front of a warm Dutch oven or you're having your trusty companion, Black Peter, read it for you (assuming he can read), let me request on this year's lovely Yuletide something not quite physical. Not a trinket or some other

impermanent present. Not a wooden pickle. Just like the Hallmark channel movies demand of rich Americans—who somehow still aren't satisfied in life during the holidays—I ask of you, Father Christmas, to bring a functioning music scene to Portland in 2020. One that will, perhaps, sustain all the losers who grew up (or moved) here to make a living of sorts in the performing arts.

If you've read any of my other columns in this here nudie mag, that I assume you're snagging from Krampus's coffee table (because a saintly fellow like you would never be caught dead with this smut), you probably know this is an ongoing gripe I have with this city (and, perhaps, the current local live music scene in general). Since I am trying to be less greedy, I only ask for you to sprinkle your solstice magic over this wet, little, dreary town, trying so desperately to be the Brooklyn of the Northwest. Sorry, I mean Silverlake...or Austin. Shoot.

It sounds like I'm hating, St. Nick, but I do love Portland and maybe the problems I have with it are simply a wider issue with the live music market in general. Still, I'm noticing a proof in the pudding—that Portland really isn't living up to its potential. The two proofs being that we really haven't produced a mainstream success story since Elliott Smith (who technically made it in L.A. and also wasn't from here) and a general malaise among the people living here—simply trying to have a moderately fulfilling music career in a city that prides itself on being supportive of the arts.



Mr. Kringle, it wouldn't be hard to make this happen. We have all the trappings of a thriving music community. Hell, if we tried harder, we could be the poor man's Seattle! Instead, we flounder as a joke that even Fred Armisen got bored of retelling. Plus, the town basically rejected his generous spotlighting of the city (offering locals national attention and whatnot).

It appears Portland wants to stay small. People born and raised here insist the town has changed for the worse, when really it's just artists moving here, because they're sick of the plastic insincerity of Los Angeles or

the unrealistic rent prices of San Francisco. It seems the big fish wanna keep the pond small. Maybe, there's nothing you can do, Mr. Claus, to make these bourgeois old heads stop acting like crabs in a bucket—bitching and moaning at the influx of musicians, who are literally doing what these old heads came here to do ten years prior.

I guess what makes Portland different than Brooklyn or Silver Lake is that those hipster cesspools are used to a constant rotation of young talent, for better or worse. The community just runs with it, pumping out a Silversun Pickups or Grizzly Bear every so often. Granted, it could just be the larger populations in these gentrified hellholes that allow for some actual breakthroughs.

Maybe, it's the actual money floating around. Still, Odin...I mean, Santa, I do believe Portland is just as capable of cranking out some darling hipster icons, if you just give us a little bit of holiday cheer and made us all get along. Those damn transplants from New Mexico can't be our last hurrah. Come on, Zack Braff! Come to Portland and pick up another band for one of your dumb movies!

Maybe, there's nothing you can do. One particular old head once told me that there are about ten thousand bands in Portland. That's one for every sixty people. BUT, the optimist in me says that if sixty people showed up to every one of those bands' shows and paid a five-dollar cover (and also purchased a shirt or two), well, what a wonderful little small pond this could be. Instead, it's just a

bucket full of crabs, nitpicking, gossiping and canceling each other into self-sabotaging puddles of woe.

Never mind, Santa. This is even too big a job for you, your abused animals and slave-labored factory.

Oh well. Happy Saturnalia, everyone! Tip your local musician.

Sincerely,

Beez

They say a bartender acts as a therapist. I decided to make it official. My only credentials are listening to hundreds upon hundreds of people's problems, over more years I can admit. Let me wipe the bar down for you, put down a fresh coaster, then pour you a drink. Pull up your stool and tell me all about it. Remember, I've heard it all. If you have a question, please write DiscountTherapist@Yahoo.com. You will remain anonymous. Also, you get what you pay for.

Slaying Emotional Vampires

I have two close friends. Lately, I've become closer to one, because the other is in what shedescribes as a terrible relationship. It's awkward, because she's the reason the other person and I even know each other—I am "the glue," so to speak. The problem is, every time we hang out, all she wants to talk about is how bad her relationship is. This has been going on for months now and she won't accept any help from us or accept any advice. She swings between wanting to leave—which we've offered her all the help in the world on that issue—to wanting to get pregnant. She won't let us meet him, so we only have one side of the story. How do you help a

friend in that mindset? It goes beyond that, as well. Now it's her job, home, etc. I love her so much, but every time I'm around her, it becomes all about listening to her talk about her problems, us listening, offering advice, her not listening, it going in one ear and out the other and the cycle continues. I don't want to cut her out of my life but how to I manage this burden?

-BFF4EVER

Dear BFF4EVER,

I have been in your position before. It's like *Twilight* out there—the emotional vampires. They somehow manage to target the most empathetic ones around—the most caring and loving—and, then, they turn those wonderful qualities against them. This person is leaning upon you and you've been allowing it. You need to decide how much of that you can take (or, are willing to). People in an abusive situation will tend to do this. The fact that she won't let you meet them is telling. Do you think your friend is in danger or being hurt? Are they being emotionally abused? Sometimes, when people are in a situation like that, they can feel scared, humiliated, intimidated, a combination of these or all three.

You and the other friend's first order of business is to find out what's going on with your friend—if you can. Present yourself as a safe space and ask leading questions. The fact she won't let you meet this guy is a massive red flag. Come from a place of zero judgment and try to find out what's going on behind closed doors—definitely easier said than done, but your friend could be in trouble and is too scared to ask for help.

Let's say it's not a situation like that. Let's say the dude checks out and everything is fine. Now, we have an emotional vampire situation—a person who needs constant attention from others and draws everyone's energy. That, too, is toxic. A friend is someone who will be there at your best and worst—someone who is your chosen family. If you feel personally drained by your time with a person and there's no reason for it, why keep them in your life?

Again, easier said than done—I know.

I'm sitting on the outside, so this is easy for me to say. The way I look at it, you have the following angles:

1) Your friend is in an abusive relationship and needs her friends more than ever. Please help her. Don't give up. Always have your phone on and make it known that you are a constant resource for her, no matter what. If you're not equipped to deal with that (most of us aren't), please refer to:

National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233

Call-To-Safety Portland: (888) 235-5333

Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence: (503) 203-1951

2). Your friend is wanting more from you than you can offer, whether her problems are very

real or imagined. Only you know whether or not you have the time and energy to devote to this. It's absolutely okay to decide that this is borrowing too much. You can forgive yourself for cutting someone out of your life. I know it's difficult, but, sometimes, you may have to let people go. Ask yourself if this friendship is serving you or if it is an obligation.

3). You continue on as is—you don't cut them out, but you set boundaries. If you can't meet the boyfriend, then let it be known that's just a subject you don't want to hear about. Especially if they are constantly complaining, but won't take your advice. Tell them so. Tell them you are their friend, but if you can't do anything for them, then it's best to leave you out of it. It's like if someone complained about being allergic to carrots, ate them every day, then complained to you about it. Stop eating fucking carrots! I can't help you, if you keep eating them. It's okay to hold people accountable.

Good luck, BFF4EVER

-DiscountTherapist

Three's Company

I've been in a three-year relationship and my girlfriend came to me—out of nowhere—to say she's seeing someone else and wants an open relationship. It's not

something I personally want to pursue, but we just signed a year lease on a new place. I love her, but I feel rejected and deceived. Is it possible to enter such an arrangement after three years of monogamy and still maintain some sort of relationship or is this her way of edging me out?

-Cuckold

Dear Cuckold,

I'm not sure if you can see it (because, you're in your situation), but every answer to your

problem lies within your question and in your own words. Can an open relationship work? Yes. Absolutely so—for some. When both people agree to it, discuss individual boundaries and expectations, there's nothing wrong with that sort of arrangement (if everyone is on board). The fact that this "arrangement" was made without your knowledge and you were thrust in to it is bullshit. Straight up.

Also, purely selfish.

You said you do not want this. That is VALID. Your feelings are valid. You don't want this. Is she edging you out? Sorry to say, she already edged you out... bypassing your feelings, your opinions and your relationship. She disrespected you and I can tell by the way you wrote your question, you feel so. You absolutely WERE deceived. She wants to have her cake and eat it too. She wants you, her comfort zone and something new and exciting, at the same time. Sorry, babe. That's not how life works. Where's your fucking cake?

Fuck your lease. Explain the situation to your landlord so they'll still give you a good reference and pay to break it—it's only money. Your dignity is worth so much more. If monogamy is

what you want, you deserve that. You don't have to share her with another person to make her

happy, if you don't like it. It's okay to be "old fashioned" and want a traditional, monogamous

relationship. I, personally, wouldn't want an open relationship—at all. I want to sit on the couch

with my person, watch Netflix in my underwear and I'm happy with that. It's not everyone's

fantasy, but that's what I want and I deserve that. If she wants an open relationship, she deserves that, too. But, it does not have to be with you, if you aren't willing. Sometimes you can love someone very much, but it just isn't right. Don't try to make this work, if it makes you feel bad or uncomfortable. Don't, for once, settle for anything less. Life is too fucking short.

-DiscountTherapist

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EXOTIC
PINUP DECEMBER
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TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH BY DJ HAZMATT



THE LAWYER

For more-than-obvious purposes, I have kept this story under wraps for over a decade. Of course, it deals with someone who is—well...was, but we will get to that—able to sue my ass for more than I've ever been worth. Further, the club in which this saga occurred is closed down now and the building is clearly not going to be re-opened as a club. So, let us return to The Bada Bing* for a holiday story that will go down as either the most depressing tale of the season or the best karmic justice ever served—depending on your take.

To provide some background, Bada Bing was a small cub, with one stage and a handful of regulars that kept the place open. Located between a working-class area and a more upscale part of town, the club was in no way "upscale" on its own, but it also wasn't a slum—think the bar from *Cheers* with strippers. Most of the dancers had more to offer in the way of personality and charm than they did pole skill or "wow" factor. Again, none of the girls were untalented or ugly, but they worked more as pretend girlfriends, than they did showgirls. This club was basically one step above a dive bar, but it was home for a lot of folks.

Enter John Doe*, a regular who I first met while he was dropping twenties on a girl, like they were nothing. I asked the bartender if he was a high roller and she told me that he was, in fact, a lawyer. So, being scummy myself, I asked him if I could play some song selections or do any favors...you know,

out of the goodness of my own heart. He asked me to play some of his favorite jams, reached for a tip and realized he was out of cash. "Shit," John said, "I gotta get back to my place and hope the wife isn't there. When I return, I'll buy you a beer." I paid the comment no mind and went on with my shift. A few hours later, John was back and he made good on his promise.

We developed a customer-DJ friendship, but as we did, it became clear that John was not quite the high roller he



claimed to be. For instance, he'd always start with a top-shelf shot and make a big deal out of it. But, as the night went on, he'd slowly switch to well vodka with no ice. Lap dances turned into promises to buy lap dances, which were rarely made good on. As far as

music selection, John always went out of his way to request the absolute newest jams, irrespective of genre. New Snoop Dogg song? He was on it. Brand new Nickelback? Play that, DJ. But, again pointing out the shadiness of this guy, every time I'd play yacht rock on break, John would lose his shit with happiness. It's almost as if he was hiding something. He did this, to constantly keep dancers on the brink of a financial windfall, which never came. You know that scene in *Idiocracy*, where the prostitute keeps telling her customer to wait, so he continues to pay her and says, "Oh baby, I can wait so hard," without ever getting laid? It was the opposite of that—when it was all said and done, I think John owed every stripper in the club about a grand. A lot of, "Oh, I didn't know this counted as a dance" and "I'm just standing at the rack, but I can move if a tipping customer comes in." What a guy.

Something else was up with John, outside of the club. I guessed this may have been the case, the first time John arrived at our door on foot (and not in his then-current-year BMW). "Oh, man, I had to walk here today, because my partner has the car." Spoiler alert: John was using the term "partner" to describe his wife, years before Portland made it trendy to do so, but at the time, I assumed he meant one of his lawyer partners from Smith, Smith, Goldstein & Doe. I pondered about why a law firm would be sharing cars, like it was a pizza delivery joint. Again with the spoilers, his wife had taken it. But, he barely brought her up, so I had no idea in what context he meant "taken."

John continued to come to the club earlier and earlier in the day, while staying until close. This shifted from weekends to weekdays and, eventually, nearly full time. One morning, after realizing that I had left my laptop charger at the club, I arrived when the club opened, to see that John was sleeping in a car—not the same car he used to have, but a beat-up, used model. I assumed he was drunk from the night before and paid it no mind. But, later that night, he informed me that his wife had kicked him out of the house. “Yeah, my kids are pretty pissed off at me,” John said.

“You have kids?” I asked. He had never mentioned them.

“Yeah, one’s your age.” John was only about fifteen years my senior, so there’s that.

I decided to switch up the conversation, because reminding a lawyer on a downward, alcoholic spiral of his soon-to-be-gone family during the holidays isn’t exactly selling a fantasy. Eventually, our chatting led to the topic of music. At the time, I was licensing a bunch of DJ mixes to various artists and needed some legal representation. John offered to help me out at no charge—all I had to do was buy him a beer or two and maybe loan him some money for tipping the girls. Fair enough, I thought and handed over some important legal stuff to John. Why not, right? It couldn’t hurt, could it?

Eventually, John’s world become visibly chaotic and we were all roped into his sob story. Every dancer, bartender and regular customer was hearing about how his family had disowned him, how his kids hated him, yadda yadda. Well, as it turns out, Jane Doe*, John’s “partner” a.k.a. wife, had *no idea* that her husband was spending every night at the strip club, with her money and their kid’s money. Yup. The show-off attorney, who had made our club his regular drinking hole, had been literally embezzling from his own family, during the holidays, to buy lap dances. Aside from the obvious piece-of-shitery that John was engaging in (“Sorry, kids, no

presents for you—daddy gave your money to Destiny..”), John was coming to *our* club (and not, ya know, at least traveling a mile or more from his front door, to a place where the lap dances are actually worth it). The balls on this guy were huge—I mean, if you’re going to steal from your family, so you can give money to half-rate dancers and spend the rest on warm shots, at least do it a few blocks away from your kids’ bus stop.

One day, John disappeared. Then, about a year later, my DJ mixes and beats ended up on several, random Chinese websites that were charging a pretty penny. Soon after I discovered this, I received a bill in the mail for, oh, \$50,000. This bill was attached to a law firm, so I called them and asked about the charges.

“Were you one of John’s clients?” a lady



asked.

“Yes, I was,” I told her.

“Okay, we’ll send you an email. Print it out and sign it, then you should be good.”

“Can I ask what happened here?”

“Well, sir,” the lady on the other end continued, “John was involved in some things and I’m not at liberty to...”

I interrupted her. “Just give me his first

and last name, please.” And, she did.

Cocaine distribution. Embezzlement. Contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Identity theft. The whole nine—this guy had a history that would make even the worst people look good in comparison. Suddenly, I no longer felt bad for the guy, and in a sick sort of way, was glad to find out (through mutual friends) that he had been locked up for some white-collar-type crimes, which also got him kicked out of his law firm.

Now, readers might be wondering, how the fuck is this a good story? Where is the moral? How does this fit into a holiday theme??? Well, my friends, we live in divisive times. Political polarization, gender warfare, economic and climate crises...hell, even Ducks and Beavers fans can’t agree on anything. But, when’s the last time you’ve heard

a good “lawyer gets destroyed” story? Perhaps I’m jaded, but it makes me extremely happy to know that every so often, we hear the type of riches-to-rags story that we can all take pleasure in knowing happened to, well, a lawyer. This guy scammed his family, our dancers, and to an extent, my fleeting DJ career. To know that he’s sleeping in a prison cell while the rest of us drink cocoa and look past our differences, well, that’s the Christmas spirit.

Happy holidays.

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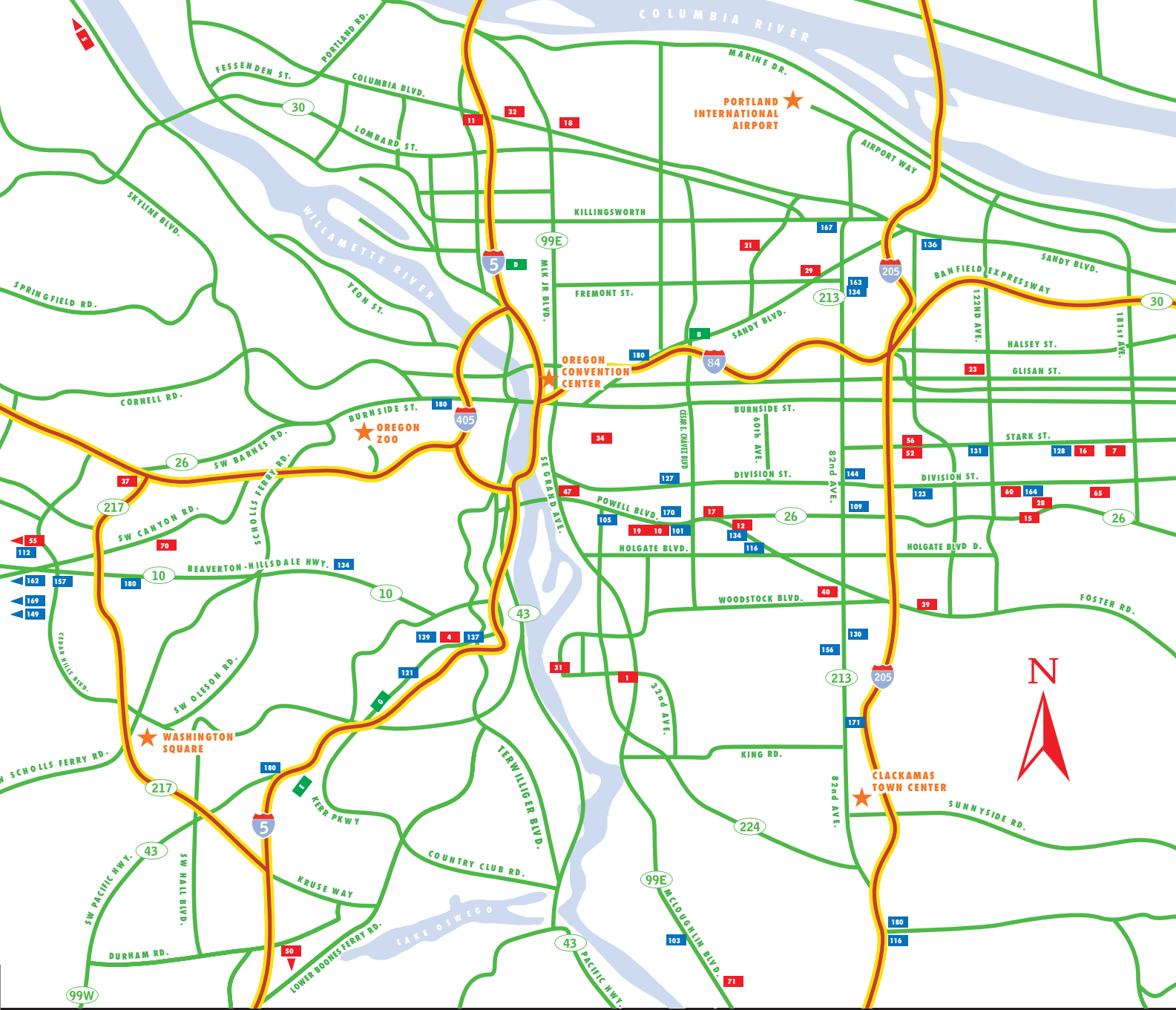
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REVIEW

MATT & DICK'S STRIP CLUB HAUNTED HOUSE

BY MAD MARQUIS

I'll admit, I wasn't sure what I expected from the Strip Club Haunted House, having not attended any of its four prior years, but it was definitely a fun experience. As a lover of Halloween and former paid haunter at many haunted houses over the years, I am always up for a new haunting experience. And, who doesn't love a little nudity added to their scares? For the inside take on the club component, I invited a long-time Portland dancer friend, who had also never gotten the chance to visit the attraction. We went the Monday before Halloween, to dodge the crowds.

For those not in the know, the Strip Club Haunted House is a collaboration between DJ Dick Hennessy and Spyce, one that's been operating during the scare season every year since 2015, providing a mix of terror and tantalizing glimpses of flesh (rotten and otherwise).

The 2019 edition of the event was themed around horror movies—mostly those of the '80s, with each room dedicated to a different one, such as Camp Crystal Lake from *Friday*

The 13th. The costuming and room decor were generally top-notch, with excellent makeup by Shashonna Knecht and Lyndsey Wiltshire, plus plenty of blind angles and surprise entrances for jump scares. The best portions of the haunting featured the dancers as predators, waiting to prey on our minds, bodies, souls and wallets (bring cash for tipping, it *is* a club). Our personal favorites were the cenobite-filled torture dungeon from *Hellraiser* and the *Exorcist* bedroom sequence.

The *Hellraiser* dungeon featured phenomenal makeup, with a pair of topless and disfigured cenobite ladies, plus a male demonic entity who had a look more reminiscent of GWAR's Oderus Urungus than anything from the Barker films, making for an interesting twist on the design choices. Although chained to the walls and ceiling, the ladies had ample reach in their bindings to engage with us directly, as they kept us detained for a brief series of innuendo-filled taunting and touching.

The *Exorcist* bedroom—presided over by a shouting priest and demonically possessed Regan—contained what turned out to be the only explicitly sexual section of the evening, as Regan was vigorously masturbating with a crucifix dildo. The priest cleverly worked this into his exhortations, including a warning about devilish squirting, as he splashed some “holy water” in our direction, which gave us a good laugh.

On that note, although there was some amount of casual toplessness, there was actually less nudity than I would have expected, with many of

the characters fully clothed—which did nothing to detract from the fun, but might disappoint those hungering for more skin. Luckily, the exit deposits you onto the main floor of Spyce, with plenty of dancers ready to cater to all your exotic needs.

That said, there were also several moments that lived up to the strip club portion of the name, including a dancer giving a lap dance to a mostly decomposed corpse. Also, possibly our favorite haunting room, hidden behind a purposely hard-to-open door, which rewarded the force needed to open it by leading to the “strip club dressing room,” for us to be screamed at by a uniformed security guard and an angry dancer, telling us that we had wandered out of the attraction, which may have been the cleverest scare of the night.

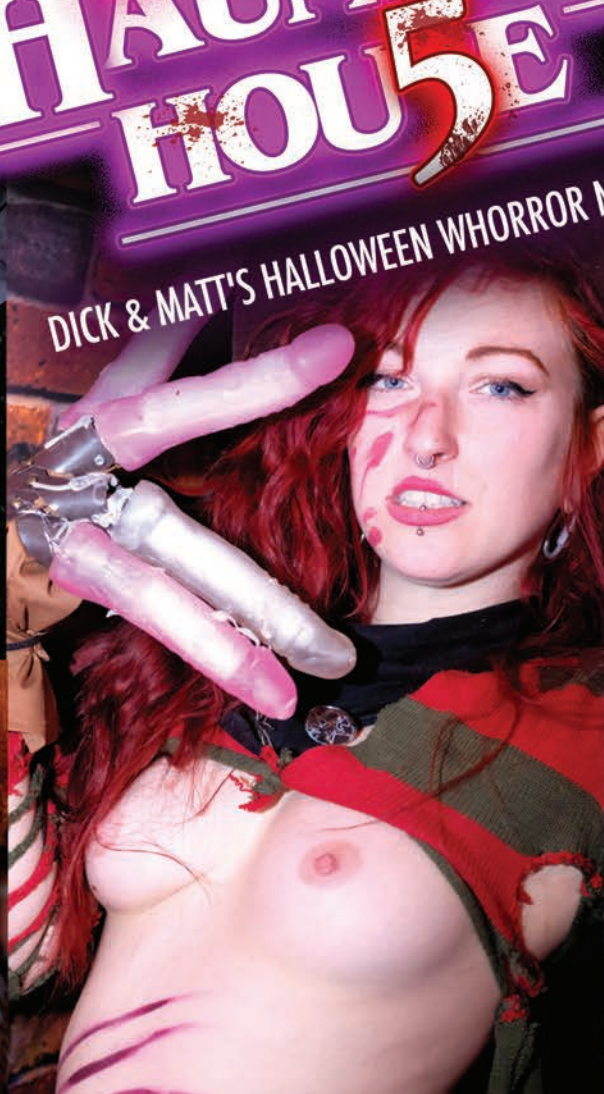
As I mentioned above, it is worth noting that this is a haunted house where contact by the haunters is allowed, with several of the dancers reaching out and grabbing us as we passed for both scares and touching us for intensity, such as the chattering cenobite who got her teeth right up on our faces, while her compatriot—in the guise of *Hellraiser's* Angelique—waxed poetic on the torments and temptations awaiting us.

All in all, Strip Club Haunted House is a fun mix of sexy and scary, aimed at an adult crowd with a taste for guts, gore and gals. I recommend the event and will definitely make an effort to see it next year. So should you! Just make sure to bring plenty of dollars for tipping and your jumpiest friend for some extra fun.



Strip Club
HAUNTED HOUSE

DICK & MATT'S HALLOWEEN WHORROR NIGHTS



SPYCE
-GENTLEMEN'S CLUB-

TABOO

PHOTOS BY BREE BARILE



CHRISTMAS FOR ONE: CELEBRATING SELFISHNESS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE

They say the holidays are all about family and friends, generosity and selfless giving. Reminding us that this time of year, we should think of others—not ourselves—coming together to celebrate the ties of community and biological connection. To this, I say, “Fuck that nonsense.” Treat *yourself* this Christmas and get everyone else a \$5 7-11 gift card—you’ve spent enough of your life looking out for them. Embrace selfishness and let your nephew’s expectation for a new video game be someone else’s problem.

In the spirit of what I like to call self-care (but, is really just shameless self-indulgence), here are my most recommended ways to piss away a holiday budget on yourself:

TV B Gone

Possibly the greatest invention of all time, this ingenious universal remote has a single function; to switch off any television in your vicinity. How many times have you gone into a bar and been mind raped by the shrieking assault harpies of various political causes? Every time, you say? Then this keychain-attachable button is for you. Roommate fell asleep drunk but left his television on top volume? Incipient alcoholism driving you into a sports pub, but you hate sports? Just want to convince someone their TV is haunted? TV B Gone has you covered.

A Trap Door

Home improvements are expensive. But, if you’re not splurging on fancy perfume for Aunt Janice, that means you can use your Christmas bonus on something for you—that something being a fake welcome mat, that gives way when the doorbell is pushed and leads to a spider-infested oubliette. Religious and political canvassers will be a thing of the past—your only problem will be the police.

The Perfect Murder

Look, I know you’ve thought about it for years. I know you could get away with it, you know you could get away with it, you’ve

considered every angle and every pitfall. You know your target, you know the how, the why and the when. You know how to get rid of the evidence—the corpse. You know your alibi. This holiday season, treat yourself to the one thing you’ve always secretly dreamed of: watching the uncomprehending look of terror on the face of your nemesis as their life drains away and they slip this mortal coil. Is it the guy who tailgated you last week? Your high school ex? That one guy at the post office, who just stands behind a counter with the “next window please” sign up? I’m not going to ask and I’m not going to tell, I’m just here to say, “treat yourself.”

One Free Ignore Xmas Pass

This year, let me personally give you permission to ignore the observation of the most invasive, obnoxious time of year. As the kids these days are saying, “just don’t.” Tune out the music, don’t decorate, disregard all questions regarding your observation of lack thereof. Just settle in and allow the cold, vacant loneliness to envelop you.

The Joy Of Obligating Someone To Something Awful

“Schadenfreude” is a word that refers to the pleasure that you feel watching someone you don’t care for suffer. This season, may I make the humble recommendation to buy something dreadful for someone you dislike. Perhaps, your stepmother Susan or your uncle Joe? A mounted singing fish, an over-sized Minions plush doll that spews catchphrases at you at alarming volume if you get too close or one of the terrible rugs with wolves and skulls on them that they display on the corner? Make sure that every time you visit whomever you’ve subjected your “gift” to, you ask where it is and monitor that it’s still obtrusive enough to satisfy you. Constantly suggest a more central location, if it’s too out-of-the-way to be aggressively annoying.

That Exotic Pet You Always Wanted

To hell with dogs and cats—they’re far

too pedestrian. You always drunkenly proclaimed you’d get a tiger one day—I say go for it. It may mean future-you is going to be filling out a lot of paperwork. But, if you’re going to indulge, go big or go home. Alligators, monkeys, man-eating snakes, Komodo dragons or even a fountain filled with Irukandji jellyfish. Dare your friends to take a dip and see how long it takes before the paramedics are called. This one is fun now and trouble later, but despite his rapeyness, Sparkles The Gorilla is still my best pal.

The Skills Of A Savvy Electrician/Hacker

Every damn day, on your brutal commute to a job you barely tolerate, with people you more *endure* than like, you are stuck in the horrific grind of traffic. Exactly how hard can it possibly be to remotely access the Bluetooth devices of those nearby and let loose your mighty, expletive-laced reviews of their driving ability? Hollering out the window only satisfies so much of your need to tell them to turn their fucking signals on or ask rhetorically, how far their gear shifter is stuck up their asses. Perhaps enlisting the skills of your friend from high school, who got suspended for broadcasting porn on the intercom system, is in order. Bradley’s not even on parole anymore—I bet if you waved a couple bills under his nose, he’d be all about it.

In conclusion, I recommend a Christmas filled with joy for number one. Do the thing that brings you joy and everyone else be damned. Have you always wanted your own Killdozer? Tricked out party-tank? Trip on the Vomit Comet? Self-changing toilet paper roll holder? Trip to Bangkok to indulge your deviant wants with ladyboys and gilded bananas? Budget, plan and make it happen.

For those of you who actually get joy from giving to others? Buzz off, weirdos.

Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle is an artist, writer, spiritual advisor, financial dom and gorilla keeper. She can be found on MeWe by name, Instagram at @EsmeraldaSilentCitadel or Facebook under Esmeralda Marina. She’d really rather not be bothered, though.

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UNIVERSE SIMULATION FOR REGULAR FOLKS & NPCs

WORDS BY W. BILL CZOLGOSZ // ART BY SEAN SIMMANS

It was Nick Bostrom, from Sweden, who really exploded the idea that we're all living in a computer simulation. The idea—that the space we live in isn't what we think it is—might be older than writing. We may be a dream, swirling in the mouth of god. We may be characters in a storybook. We may be residing in *The Matrix* alongside Keanu...

Anyway, I've solved the whole thing. I know where we are. I know what we are. I know precisely what's going on. I'm standing on the shoulders of everyone who came before—the Bostroms, the Musks, the Vonneguts, the Wachowskis, et al.—and, I better win a Nobel Prize for all this grand excellence.

I'm going to make it easy for you. You will understand, at the end, even if you are stupid.

None of this is sourced. Take me at my word, because I'm at least as smart as Wile E. Coyote, super genius. Alternately, you can utilize the WWW to connect the dots in the same way I did.

The Flat Earth

The Earth is NOT flat—it is a sphere. This planet is an oblate spheroid. Everything in our reality gathers or bursts in circles or spheres. A drop of water, on the table, splays out in a circular form. A heap of matter, in space, attracted by mutual gravity, eventually collects into something that resembles a volleyball. The solar system is like a dish. It's all spheres. There's no Flat Earth. But, don't worry about arguing with me, because it hardly matters. Things are spheres, because that's how the game was coded. It could have been coded with squares and cubes, probably—but, the writers chose spheres, because their universe is spheres and they relate to those.

Super Mario Bros.

I rarely play video games, so my vernacular is limited (I may not even recall the specifics correctly—I may even be conflating multiple game titles into just one, but don't worry about it). My kids had an N64 in the 1990s and played an expansive Mario game. I believe it was the first time I ever saw Ma-

rio run around in a 3-D environment, rather than merely from left to right. Mario ran and ran and jumped and spun and ran...and, he could keep going and going. It seemed like he could run forever. Eventually, however, the further he ventured away from his core mission, the fewer things existed. He could run in a straight line forever, it seemed, but, eventually, there was nothing to see or interact with, because the programmers hadn't put anything there. It was all empty coding. There was nothing to see, because Mario wasn't really supposed to be there. It was

himself. Neptune may be made of methane, candies or papier mâché, but it's still there, coded in its place, doing whatever the developers programmed it to do. We simply aren't meant to go there and find out (I don't think so, at least), which may be why the writers stopped there.

Area 51

People keep getting abducted by aliens, it seems. This shit really started rolling after the Roswell flying saucer incident. Over seven decades, we've created a pop cultural idea of



expected that he would turn back and go to where the action was happening.

The Garbage Universe

If you look out past Neptune, at Pluto and the Kuiper Belt, you're looking at a whole bunch of flotsam that drifts around the periphery of our existence. It's just undeveloped trash. That doesn't mean it isn't real. It's certainly real to the characters—us—who inhabit this program. Which is to say, when Mario is being attacked by a mushroom, that mushroom may look like a blob of imaginary pixels to the N64 gamer, but it's very real to Mario

what an alien looks like. He's got a big head, giant black eyes and a slit for a mouth. He comes from Zeta Reticulae (probably) and likes to sneak into bedrooms to perform painless-yet-invasive surgery on weirdos. Some folks call these creatures Little Greys, while some folks call them Little Doctors. Smart people have decided that these aliens don't really exist and that the people who believe they've been abducted may actually be suffering from delusions, sleep paralysis, secret hypnosis or what-the-fuck-ever. The bottom line, according to these smart people, is that the classical alien face bears a striking resemblance to how a newborn infant would

see its mother—bad vision, with big, blurry eyes looming in. Don't fret. We'll come back to this.

Reality

Yes. We are still real, for all intents and purposes. Whatever this substrate is—atoms, code or fairy dust—it's as real to us, as mushrooms are to Mario. Everything is everything. Just because we might be thoughts in a storybook, doesn't mean the rent isn't due on or before the first of the month.

Evolution

Within the boundaries of whatever this is, there's an embedded history. Things either happened over billions of years or were written as though they had happened over billions of years—neither one affects our present situation. Dinosaurs either roamed Earth, once upon a time, or the programmers wrote their fossils into the geology of all this nonsense. Mostly, they did a good job—some of the code writers got sloppy (and, we'll get to that, too). We humans believe that we descended from great apes—gibbons, maybe, but who gives a shit, since we don't seem to have the pieces necessary to connect it all? And, as we look backward, wondering about that oddly absent missing link, we also gaze toward the future, wondering what we might become...

Time Travel

Some people have wondered if the pilots in the flying saucers aren't Little Greys from Zeta Reticulae, but are actually humans from our far-flung future. "Maybe they are the evolved version of us, from 100,000 years hence and they can travel backwards in time in order to look at us," some dope fiend once said. This dope fiend is a little bit wrong, but he gets points for setting off in the right direction. Good work, dummy!

Semantics

When Bostrom (or, whomever) talks about a computer simulation, we aren't talking about "computer" or "simulation" in the way we currently understand those words. Whatever it is, it's so fucking advanced, that we don't even have a term for it. Just like how the ancient Romans (if they actually existed) had no Latin word for the "internet." How could they? That would be silly.

God

He doesn't factor into this, I don't think. It's all okay. You can still believe in all that, if you like. Do you have a soul? That's tough to answer. It does seem that your consciousness,

within the simulation, equates somewhat with the notion of a soul. Can the programmers upload you into a thumb drive and pull you out of the game? Absolutely! Back in the 1960s, certain fringe theorists were already convinced our consciousnesses were uploading into the I-ther (think cloud) on a daily basis. The *Matrix* movies were based on the whole I-ther thing. That's cool. Too bad those films were 66% feces.

Ancestors

Bostrom thinks we could be the cogs in an Ancestor Simulation. That is to say, a future version of ourselves created this program, in order to see what we may have been like. It's like if we had a clearer idea of that aforementioned Missing Link between gibbons and humans, gave it a name—say, "Gerry"—and, then, created an online *Sim* game that we could all tune into, in order to watch Gerry try to catch a salmon, plant a peach tree or have a nice wank before bed. It would be like *Pokemon Go*, maybe, but less worthless (I told you, I don't know video games...is *Pokemon* a *Sim* game?). But, there would be millions of Gerrys—all living Gerrys—live and interacting, in an artificial world that seems very real to Gerry.

Evolution

Evolution, as we understand it, is not a tangible thing. It's not a process guided by a system or Unmoved Mover. This thing called nature cannot decide what a species needs or does not need. Nature is not a mind. Nature does not decide anything. It's a bit like imagining that the wind could choose to go south, instead of north. There are no choices. It's just chaos, chance and mutation. If an animal develops gills and survives long enough to mate, that animal will birth offspring who may also have gills. If this animal is a land-based creature, he will not survive long enough to mate...and, fuck him right out the window! That's all evolution is. There are no planners and engineers involved—not within the parameters of the story we currently believe we're existing within, at least.

Consciousness

Well, I'm conscious. That's about all I know, or think I know, a la Descartes. I don't know



about you. I'm going to assume you're conscious, since you're reading this. How many of us are there? Are we individual lines of code, special and unique like snowflakes and frog cocks? Or, are we mass market archetypes, base models, that only become personal and unique as we progress through the simulation? Even in the current, real world, as we understand it, this is called "nature vs nurture." Were you You, from the outset, or did you only become You over time? Fuck if I know.

Death

People who have near-death experiences gush about a blast of glowing light, love and calm. Scientists say this dying process is an evolutionary gift, to help ease us through death. And that would be fine...except that no one in our history has ever mated AFTER dying. That is to say, if the pleasing dopamine-juiced death process is a beneficial mutation—as it works to ease the organism into a comfortable demise—how the fuck was it ever passed on?

Relativity

I figured this one out at a young age. That doesn't mean I'm smart—it only means I really enjoyed carbonated beverages. I like

bubbles. I wish milk had bubbles, so I could drink more of it. But, I counted three seconds, once, for a particular bubble to rise from the bottom of the Sprite bottle to the top. Three seconds is not very long, but everything is relative. If you were tiny enough to live in a galaxy within that particular bubble, three seconds would be an eternity. Smoke a joint and work this out. You don't need math.

Non-Playable Characters (NPCs)

The ancestor simulation is about studying humans, so humans are the only sentient beings in it. Every other living thing, from spiders to dolphins, is a lifeless speck of coding. That's why dogs and cats all pretty much behave the same. Yes, of course, YOUR cat is different from other cats. But, no, it isn't. Among humans, everyone's in the game, it seems, except for the ones who aren't. A contingent of us are mere NPCs, designed to keep the game moving in this direction, or that. But, don't go thinking Carlos at the gas station is one of the NPCs, simply because he works at a shitty job. Your core NPCs probably exist at the other end—as your capitalists, politicians, leaders, businessmen and influencers. Really, politicians behave so ridiculously and so predictably, that they could only be NPCs. If you are fretting that you may be an NPC, keep in mind that an NPC couldn't possibly fret about being one, any more than a pencil can contemplate being a pencil—so, you're okay.

The Saucer People

So, yes, we are in an ancestor simulation, but the people who built and programmed it are not the future versions of us. Rather, we are a fictionalized and speculative notion of who the Little Greys believe they may have been. That's sort of the same, but it's completely different. It's not quite the same as saying human beings will eventually evolve into Greys, at some ridiculous future point. Instead, Greys got to wondering whence they originated—what missing link they evolved out of—and, so, they created this simulation to

try to work it out. They built this whole thing, just to see what we do inside of it. And one of them said, "Make them different colors, too, so that there will be senseless racism, because that will be hilarious, at least to us." Being that the Greys seem to be uniformly grey, they probably don't get to experience mel-

day. Who knows? I don't. Everything before 1916 was coded into the program as buried, artificial history. The Little Greys did a fantastic job. They laid in Romans, Voyageurs, Huns, Magyars, cannibals, Samurai, King Louis XIV and gave every group of people a complex back story. They dicked around a bit, too. They

popped in Easter eggs, such as impossible pyramids, mysterious architecture, anachronistic tools and precise joints in granite, from 2000 years back, which could only have been cut with modern diamond blades. That's fine. We weren't supposed to think too hard about these things. At any rate, it's all fiction. We are here, NOW, in a tiny soda bubble—burbling up through an artificial universe, all so that Greys can look at how we communicate and interact, so they can have a better idea of what they may have been in the past.

Big Events

Everything seems like a conspiracy, because everything is a conspiracy, technically. 9/11 wasn't orchestrated by the Bush & Cheney clans—it was written into the story by the programmers just to see how we reacted to it. There was a Little Grey, maybe, who wagered, "If 3,000 people die in NYC, I'm wagering that the President will use it as an excuse to plunder Iraq's oil and that 'Architects For 9/11 Truth' will be a thing that oozes into existence." That guy won two cases of beer, because it turned out he was right. The Little Doctors concoct amazing dramas, in order to gauge how we, their hypothetical ancestors, will come together and react to them. Consider

the nasty fucker who said, "Let's have more bullet holes than bullets at this JFK thing and see how they rationalize that. Also, give one of the NPCs an umbrella and another a babushka. That will confuse everything even further."

Phantoms & Anal Probes

There was a Stephen King story where a character, trapped in a dark room, thought she saw an apparition and she screamed, "You aren't real—you're only made of moonlight!" (I read that book—it was okay, for the most



1916

anin-based prejudice in their real lives. Perhaps their species' bigotry is rooted in height, or head-size—I'm just guessing, though.

It's a great Motorhead album, but it's also an important point in The Great War. It's also the year I'm choosing to begin at. It's very arbitrary. I think anyone born before that date is dead now, so why not start there? I'm positing, for the sake of illustration, that our simulation began at that date, from our point of view. It also may have begun just last Satur-

part). People who see ghosts are merely witnessing broken loops of past (fictional) events, almost like a sketch that you half erase in order to adjust, but you can still see faint traces of the original lines. It's nothing but a broken or discarded video stream, playing where it shouldn't be...like when you are trying to watch *The Lion King* and *D.P. Me 3*, simultaneously, on your computer (but, the latter is sort of minimized and tucked away, in case your boss walks in). Don't be afraid of ghosts—they're just garbage. But, when the Little Grey doctors beam you up (or come to abduct you from your bed in order to put instruments in your brain and asshole), that shit is real—at least from our perspective, it is. Why is this happening? What is the meaning of this?

Interactivity

Indeed, all alien, extraterrestrial and U.F.O. encounters are moments when the Little Greys attempt to touch, interact with and adjust this program. You are NOT being harvested for body parts. You are just lines of code (like Mario) and the Greys are having one-on-one time with you. It's like when you change an avatar's costume, give him a fancy wig or swap his red hat for a blue one. If you find yourself being abducted, you are participating in the ultimate payoff of the ancestor simulation. You are, in a very real sense, seeing outside of the game environment that you were coded into. Hooray for you!

That's all. That's the whole thing. This universe is nothing but a story bubble inside of an ancestor simulation and The Programmers check in from time to time—and less so, it seems, as things drag on—the way you gradually lost interest in your Tamagotchi, so many years ago.

Have fun out there. You aren't real. You aren't even made of moonlight.





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