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THE MONTHLY

COLUMN

BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

DR. SPOOKENSTEIN'S FRIGHTMARE FUTURE FORETELLING!

(OR, UPDATED HALLOWEEN TRADITIONS FOR LIFE DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC)

This year's Halloween is going to be different than those in most preceding years, where there was not a global health event occurring. The blight known as COVID-19, AKA "coronavirus," AKA the "wu flu," AKA "dat 'rona," has persisted across the world and numbers continue to rise and fall, with the only thing predictable being the general uncertainty of it all. It's made society reevaluate the importance of in-person meetings, events and all manner of social occasions. Thus, it is only natural to expect that it will influence the execution of every sane* person's Halloween plans. Gone are the expectations of herding groups of festively-decorated children down dark, Autumn streets in search of candy and sweets. Missing are the Halloween parties for be-costumed adults in search of inebriation and sex. Absent are concerts and crowded public spectacles, such as the lighthearted and oft hilarious dunking of the elderly

in ram's blood.** Alas. However, given the flexibility we as a community have shown in the ways we integrate the "new normal" into the "actual normal," we have come to expect that innovation will save this Halloween, thanks to some quick thinking and a few alternative ways to carry on with our favorite October activities. Here's a brief list I've compiled, showing the substitutes to our usual traditions.

Trick-Or-Treat

On your typical Halloween, most of the occasion centers around youth in fancy outfits, out for sugar or blood, in a madcap dash around the neighborhood, knocking on doors and being rewarded with candy for their trouble. But, given the mandate of social distance, wherein one must keep a proper, plague-resistant space between one another, how can children expect to do their usual gangbang of

doorbells? The answer is simple: mechanical candy-hurling devices. The kids can stand on the curb and homeowners who would normally administer sweets by dropping them into sacks and pails can easily use some apparatus to fling the goods a suitable distance, that the eager bandits might catch it (or, at least, collect it off the street). An apparatus, you say? Why, yes! Ranging from a giant slingshot made of a coffee can and some surgical tubing between two posts, to elaborate pneumatic cannon, simple technology (most of which has been around since antiquity) can get the job of sugaring up the kids done from a safe, healthy distance. Bonus points if you build a trebuchet.

Bobbing For Apples

This humble activity, when children are encouraged to use their teeth to pluck a ripe apple out of a basin filled with

water, is clearly a no-go for pandemic times. Dat 'rona will be all up on those kids before they know what hit 'em, if they do it the usual way. So, born is the alternative: basically the same thing, but the basin is filled with wholesome, sterile rubbing alcohol—it kills the virus on contact. Kids will love the new, spicy version of the old classic, and if they don't, make them do it, anyhow. Come on...you're the adult here.

Carving Jack-O-Lanterns

You can still do this, but please do avoid the ever-popular tradition of everyone licking the pumpkins before they're carved.

Haunted House Attractions

It's difficult to get the ever-loving piss scared out of you by the diligent professionals*** who spend all year preparing for this, when anti-virus rules are in play.

This year, though, the scares will keep coming, but with certain precautions taken. For example, the traditional "room full of zombies who jump out and grope at you" will be replaced by a room full of one solitary zombie, who pokes at you from a distance with a toasting fork. The "lunatic asylum" room will be replaced with the "COVID-19 Cough-O-Caust" and the "chased by a maniac with a chainsaw" room will require a mask on the maniac. Though, this year, it's legal for them to actually leave the blade on the saw, as well as abolish background checks for employees, so the spookiness will still be intact!

Corn Maze

It's a tradition in many places where corn exists in its natural, unpicked state, to make a maze from rows and rows of cornstalks, which challenges all who enter to successfully navigate their way to the exit. Not a whole lot is different this time, but folks will be admitted in intervals of ten minutes,

as opposed to the more lackadaisical "come on in" methodology, to ensure that people have adequate time to get ahead before the next people are admitted. A wandering "corn warden" will direct stragglers and slow-in-the-minds toward an exit, as well as the subsequent stomach-punch for not mastering corn fast enough.

Halloween Parties

After the kids get theirs and pass out after crashing from their sugar rush, the adults typically go out in search of more sophisticated entertainment. This entertainment generally comes in the form of getting drunk and making moves on people whom you cannot see their actual appearance, leading to squirmy, makeup-covered, costume sex in the wee hours of the night. That's a no-go these days. This time, the Halloween parties will all be done via Zoom meetings. The Monster Mash will be played in the group conference, everyone will drink their own cache of liquor and people will get a private chat to organize adult freakiness. Uber and Lyft discounts can be applied to anyone who wants to link up one-on-one in order to lock legs and swap Halloween gravy.

So, there you have it—the modern world's solution to the restrictions imposed by disease and government. We wouldn't have been able to do half of this without the technological advances of the 21st century, as we'd all still be stuck, alone, in a funny outfit, masturbating next to a pile of pumpkin guts.

Happy Halloween, everyone.

-WSTM

Wombstretcha The Magnificent is a writer, ape suit collector, plague doctor, possible butthole surfer and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at Wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @Wombstretcha503 and on Facebook or MeWe (the not-shitty Facebook) as "Wombstretcha The Magnificent."

*Every sane person favors Halloween over Christmas. Fuck Christmas. Worst three months of the year. Just getting that out there.

**Well, we do it in Portland, anyhow. I dunno about the rest of you, but, if you don't, you're missing out.

***They are known as "haunters" and



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Editor
Ray McMillin

Copy Editor
Adam J. Burt

Production Manager
Shawna Stephens

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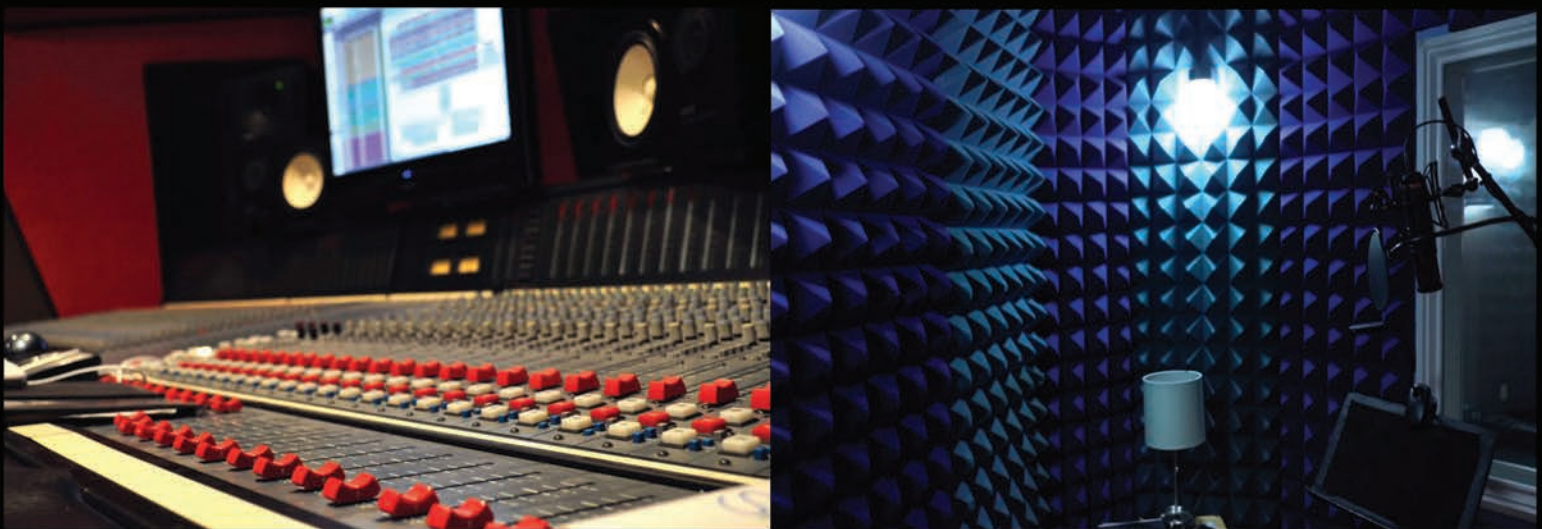


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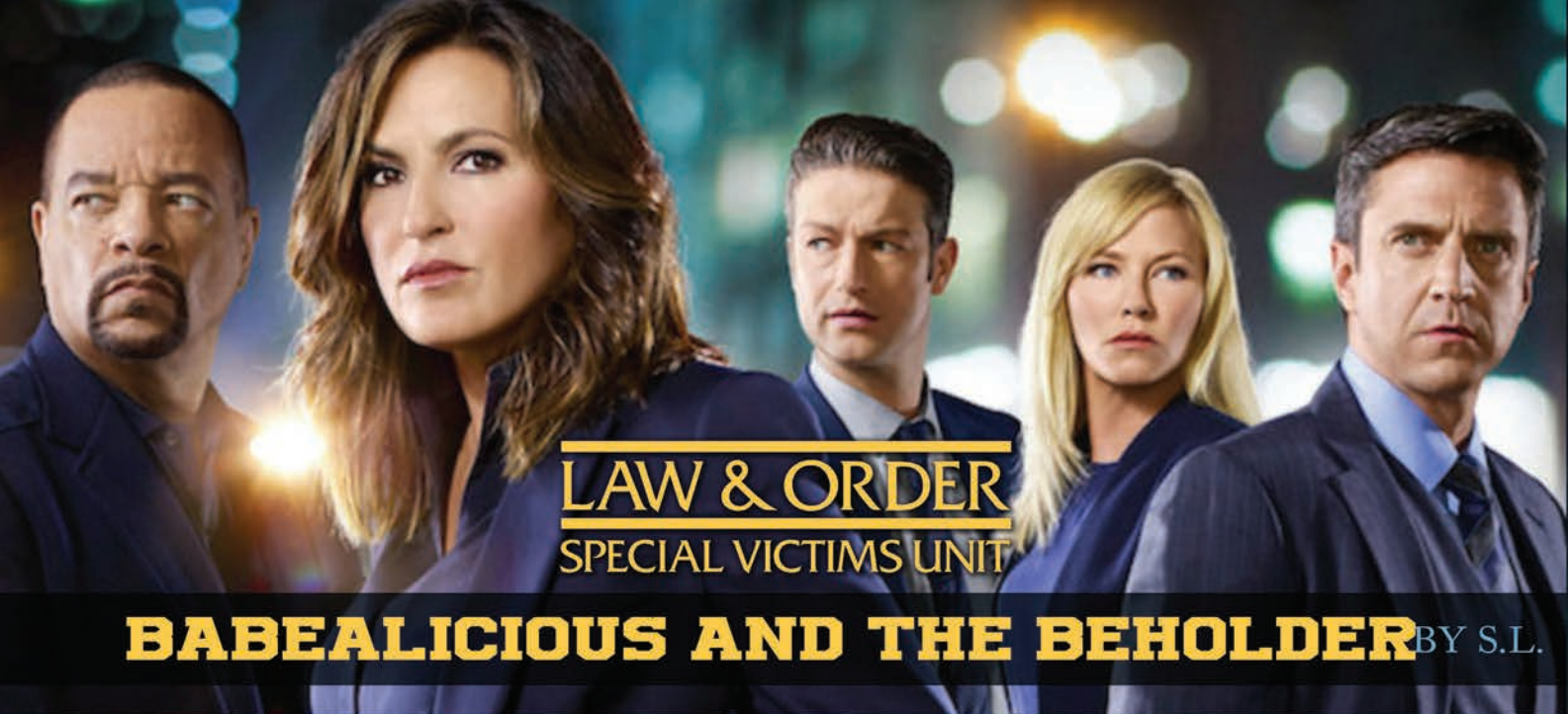


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LAW & ORDER

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In the criminal justice system, sexually based offenses are considered especially heinous. In New York City, the dedicated detectives who investigate these vicious felonies are members of an elite squad, known as the Special Victims Unit. These are their stories.
dun dun...

**U.S. District Court
225 Cadman Plaza E.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
September 15, 2020**

"Order in the court...ORDER!"

"Goddamnit," she thinks. "My stripper cop costume shrunk in the dryer, riding up my crotch causing camel toe. A shiny, black PVC hat presses into my skull."

The room becomes silent.

"Your honor, if I may proceed..." The prosecuting attorney regains the room's attention. "I would like to call to the stand, the defendant, Scooter Scally-Wag."

A smut peddler and habitual offender, the owner and operator of Hubburb's Cum-torium—the XXX gateway for dorks—twice acquitted, Scooter was a shameful nerd-fetishist on the brink.

It wasn't the dusty hordes of obscure '90s Hentai VHS tapes or the carefully crafted Bronie fan-fiction 'zines, which initially triggered the FBI's finger. It was Mr Scally-Wag's publicized sexual preference for...homely... cartoon characters. The most gruesome imagery involved *The Mystery Gang* themselves—Scooby-Fuckin'-Doo.

Ice T predatorily stares at the defendant, while Olivia Benson eye-fucks the camera with a convincing, serious gaze.

The former rapper turns to his female partner and says, "I haven't seen a crime this sick and twisted since way back in the way-back. In the projects, we call this 'the junkyard slobber.' It's when a 'manager' falls for his ugly hoe, letting her turn him into a freak daddy."

The police raided the Cum-torium, like raccoons rifling through years of Mr Scally-Wag's inventory. In beams of grimy window light, they threw odd sex toys and cheesecake porn all over the basement floor, until they uncovered the sinister *Scooby Doo* filth.

The officers winced at photographs of Velma's crusty beaver—pools of vomit forming at their feet. Hacking into Scooter's laptop, they discovered a video featuring microscopic footage—a PTSD-inducing vignette of the aging hipster's gaping butthole, filled to the brim with scabies. Disgusted, the FBI vowed to take Scooter Scally-Wag down. After mind numbing deliberation, an agreement was reached and the case settled out of court.

The FBI continued to poke and prod. Scooter was forever on their shit list and the FBI eventually busted him with Daph-crimination.

In this deplorable form of bigotry, the guilty party assumes ride-or-die Daphne is an overrated bitch, like Mr. Withers' Amusement Park on the 4th Of July, thereby leaving socially inept Velma as the show's crown jewel.

The Daph-crimination charges were met with eye rolls from the skeptical jury. Again, Scooter was set free.

Finally, the government agency whipped up substantial allegations—cartoon porn as intellectual property theft.

Ice T ruminates, "I've seen many fools wrecked in the streets, preoccupied with intellectual property theft.

These young bucks always forget to cover their iCloud tracks.

OG bangers call it 'noggin' sprang-a-lick.' It's an illicit act, which guarantees a revolving door from the block to the pen."

dun dun...

"Your honor, investigators have uncovered new evidence of actus reus. The defendant, Scooter Scally-Wag, is in violation of intellectual property laws. This huckster's abuse of process exploits cartoon characters for economic gain. The court will see with due process, Mr Scally-Wag's motis operandi proves beyond a reasonable doubt, the sick, twisted nature of his mind."

"Does the prosecution expect me to use admonition for evidence, to take punitive matters? The prior cases were settled out of court. Their evidence is inadmissible in this proceeding."

Horrible taste isn't a crime—everyone knows this. I gaze at Olivia's orange pantsuit. She sits smugly, drowning the memories of her third divorce with Sweet-And-Low coffee.

"No, your honor. The defense has built a new case, focused solely on aforesaid allegations. The prejudicial effects of this testimony in no way outweigh its probative value."

"And, what is the defense's response to this addendum?"

"Thank you, your honor. The prosecution has made no attempt to provide the court with substantial evidence today. Their defense reveals a common scheme of slander—it simply demonstrates my client's propensity to behave badly and exposes ulterior motive. Scooter Scally-Wag was found innocent by a jury of his peers.

Nerd Fetishism is not a crime, your honor, and, frankly, I question the FBI's need to waste time and money on cases they can never win." Criss-crossing my legs, the cheap, polyester blend of my costume shows me who's boss. I am definitely getting a yeast in-FUCK-tion.

I look over my shoulder, the stand is empty.

"Where did Scooter go?"

A high-pitched, baby stripper voice calls out from the crowd, "He's smoking weed."

F.M.L.

"Court adjourned."
dun dun...

Brooklyn Bridge Park
334 Furman St.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
August 16, 2020

"Thanks for meeting us here on such short notice." The detectives huddle together for warmth, not sure what to expect from the flighty defendant.

Ice continues, "That was some stunt you pulled today in court."

Dark synths play in the background, Scooter begins, "Yeah, well..."

Ice steals the spotlight, per usual. "Look man, Velma is just another tweaker who can't put her pipe down long enough to get Lasik. She was picked up again last night, hustling in the Bowery. The police offered her a plea bargain to testify against you. Velma is a loose cannon."

Scooter looks bored. "That hall monitor bolts the second the scene becomes erratic, like Karen in a ghost pepper Muckbang. I'm not worried about Velma."

The former pimp retorts. "You gotta understand the Old Testament. A bird is a cat and a cat is a bird. It's the yin and yang that makes the world turn. In the Bronx, a genuine mack never forgets—keeping their sharp claws in a canary won't last. Known as the 'trick-a-dee shank,' this peacock in the me-cock can blind a tiger for life. Leaving him feral at the FBI's doorstep."

Olivia lays it on thick. "So whats this perversion d'jour all about? Dollars and cents? Control?"

Scooter ponders Olivia's question for a moment, "No. It's all about the love of the game."

Sick son-of-a...

Olivia dares to yank an unlit cigarette from Scooter's mouth.

His face changes form, while his cubic zirconia earring catches the key light. Unaware of the armpit puddles dampening his purple shirt, Scooter walks away—pride intact.

"If you want a lovable loser, get on Shaggy's dick."

Olivia and Ice turn towards each another in dismay.

The answer was hiding in plain sight...behind closed doors, that is.

dun dun...

U.S. District Court
225 Cadman Plaza E.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
August 17, 2020

Leaking Monistat onto a Maxi-pad, I slam my gavel.

The courtroom fills with people and the air is electric. Nerd fetishism is the spotlight of every news channel, as if COVID never happened.

Ice T and Olivia strike courageous poses in the back of the room, while a sickly pale defense attorney huddles over Scooter, like a mother bird.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the court, I would like to begin today's proceedings. Does the prosecution have an opening argument?"

"Thank you, your honor. Scooter Scally-Wag is a real-life 'chicken-or-egg' scenario. Was he born a classless monger or was he broken by years of sexploitation? Regardless, there is a dark, sinister underbelly at play here. This case is about the exploitation of copywritten material for financial gain. Thank you, your honor."

Scooter Scally-Wag's attorney stands to face the jury.

"Does society have to agree 100% the time? I can remember when it used to be okay for people to have different opinions—to jerk off to different material. One man's nerd fetish is another man's pup play."

"Consider this, ladies and gentleman of the jury...is the prosecution taking things a wee bit personal? These are fictional characters. This case is a no-brainer. It is filled with questionable evidence and has no ethical backbone."

"Today, I will present the jury with new evidence, that will set Mr Scally-Wag free. If I may draw the Jury's attention to Exhibit A."

Court interns wheel a large dry-erase board into the room, covered with pinup posters. At the top, "Playboy Magazine 1970-2010" is written in sloppy marker. The jury's eyes widen, bamboozled with T&A.

"What do these images have in common?"

The jury's faces look exceptionally blank, as they drool over the photographs.

"Do you see the models' skirts?" The defense attorney points to the minuscule fringe above one girl's extraordinary fanny. "Plaid."

Absorbing the tiny stretch of fabric clinging to another babes' monster tits, he asks, "What about this sweater? Do you see this emblem or this stack of books in the corner? Schoolgirls."

A pin drop echos. The jury is trapped in an inter-dimensional waiting room. Frustrated with the empty silence, Scooter's lawyer flips the dry erase board onto its other side.

With the flip of a switch, a film projector brings to life music video clips from MTV's better days. Aerosmith's "Crazy" turns into Billy Idol's "Cradle of Love," while Alice Cooper's "Hot For Teacher" belts through large, overhead speakers.

The jury's heads start to nod, as they regain lucidity.

"As you can see, the schoolgirl theme reached its peak in yesteryear. Venus was born nude. A classic muse...to pump your cum into. Finally, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I give you Exhibit B."

An enormous screen slowly descends from the ceiling.

Pulsating through an overhead projector, Scooter's lawyer flips through a collection of Scooby Doo imagery. Cherry-picked from Hubburb's Cum-torium, the photographs tease the viewer—leaving much to the imagination.

"Here is a photograph of Velma wearing a pair of knee socks and the same tiny skirt worn by the school girls in Exhibit A. Here is another image of Velma's white cotton panties. innocently greeting bystanders. Clearly, the modern day nerd-fetish is simply an adaptation of the classic schoolgirl fetish. Velma in Exhibit B features nothing more than the Jungian archetype. For this reason, charging Scooter Scally-Wag with intellectual property theft is preposterous. No one OWNS a muse. I demand the court to drop the charges, immediately!"

Suddenly, a police officer bursts through the courtroom door, rushing towards the prosecution, handing a messy folder to Scooter's lawyer. There is a low murmur in the room.

"Order!!! What is this interruption all about?"

"Your honor, the prosecution would like to call Velma to the stand."

The alleged schoolgirl waddles down the aisle, grinding her jaw.

With a one-way ticket to Tijuana in hand, Velma is ready

to push Scooter under a bus. She plops down into the witness stand, clicking her dentures in place with her tongue.

The glowing prosecuting attorney continues, "Velma please introduce yourself to the court."

With a high-pitched nasally gust, the child star whines, "Hi. I'm Velma. I was an actress on the television show, *Scooby Doo*."

The woman who appears before the court today is not a librarian or a champion chess player, but a DTF Tinder date—living in a parking lot RV. Velma is a character on a fictional TV show—she is not a reform school prep.

"How did you first meet Scooter Scally-Wag?"

"I responded to an ad on Craigslist. Scooter was hosting live sex shows at the Cum-torium."

"Oh, Mr. Scally-Wag paid you to put on an adult performance?"

"Is that a joke? No! Scooter never pays the talent. He takes 30% of our tips, on top of what he charges customers at the door."

"Could this be justified as an agency fee? Did the defendant spend time and money promoting your event?"

"No. I promoted myself through social media. My fans show up for shit."

"What about all of the photographs of you in Exhibit B...were you paid for those?"

"Um... no, those were considered TFP (time for print). WE signed an agreement saying WE could use the photographs however WE wanted."

"Who is the 'WE' you are referring to?"

"The photographs were taken by another cartoon actress. The two of us set up the entire shoot. Scooter sat in the corner, drinking scotch and checking his email."

"What does Mr Scally-Wag do besides profit off your existing popularity?"

Scooter screams, veins popping from his forehead. "OH YEAH, RIGHT!!! These Loserville cartoon broads wouldn't survive without me. They are fuggy bitches who don't know what sexy is. I let them know when they have gained five pounds or that they need to shave. Like anyone wants to see you in real life, Velma, wandering around in a bathrobe, buying Velveeta Cheese with her EBT card."

"Well, I think that about does it. I rest my case."

The jury glares at Scooter, finding him guilty of all intellectual property theft charges, while Velma laughs out loud.

Ice T shakes his head, "A player was warned."

These low-rent SVU hustlers never listen to his prophetic words of wisdom.

The schoolgirl is a siren in the fountain of youth, but Velma is a pregnant girl who takes third place in a Salton Sea bikini contest.

That trailer trash will break your dick—your mind and soul.

Motherfuckers need to start listening to Ice T.

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Howdy, kids. Are you ready for one more holiday during lockdown?

We Don't Die—We Multiply

The COVID era has been slowly coming to an end, just in time for the election. Isn't that an odd coincidence? It's almost as if public fear is being manipulated by all sides of the political aisle, in order to use a national (or, in this case, global) tragedy in order to usher in bipartisan fascism (or, at least infringe upon our personal freedoms, while destroying the economy). But, since I'm a horrible patriot and a weed smoker, I don't remember what happened after September 11 (hold on, let me check the FBI's website and look at my browser history) and am thus going along with the "new normal," because, hey, everyone else is doing it, right?

Put simply, business is not exactly booming for the entertainment industry and I'm getting the vibe that a lot of us who work among the clothing-impaired are itching to get back on the pole, into the DJ booth and/or behind the bar. Well, I come bringing good news for the hopeless—specifically, anyone who is wondering if their strip club will survive 2020.

Let me make this perfectly clear—while I cannot guarantee that every bar and restaurant will survive in a bad economy, I *can* ensure that, of the various types of bars and restaurants, strip clubs are much more likely to survive an economic crash than, well, literally any other type of watering hole. If given enough time, every non-sustainable bar, coffee shop, record store, vegan bike gallery and intersectional yoga studio slash taphouse slash at-risk puppy adoption center in the Portland area will become a strip club.

Don't believe me? Here's a story.

Back in 2008 (after the last economic crash), instead of buying Bitcoin, I invested in a pair of turntables and some karaoke equipment. Way to go, me, I guess? Anyhow, due to a recent plunge in the job market, my strip club DJ gig wasn't paying all the bills, as tipping customers were drying up. So, I took the first Craigslist job I could find that involved "DJ" in the description and ended up at an upscale "jazz club" near Lake Oswego. The owner wanted a regular (non-jazz) night with karaoke and "whatever the regulars want(ed) to hear" (mostly jazz). Fair enough.

While the skillset of a strip club DJ shares more in common with a radio DJ than a nightclub DJ, I've wasted enough of my adult life to develop "talent" in all of the above areas—however, at the time, I had absolutely zero experience with karaoke (and, as it stands today, I still have very little experience in this area). For one, I

can't sing. Secondly, if I have to "get up there and pretend to sing," it's gonna be gangsta rap. This was a bar full of old people, who were only there because they either knew the new owner or hated the previous one. And, to make things worse, this place had roughly four customers on a good night. The drink prices were through the roof. The food was typical bar fare, just re-branded with some parsley and fancy, expensive-looking plates. Worst (or best, depending on how bad the karaoke singer was) of all, the sound system was trash. Fun fact, if you didn't already know—even professional singers sound like shit when they're run through a cordless mic, into some cheap speakers and a "free" set of subs from that place in Gresham with the guy who screams in his ads (and, who is also surprisingly cool in real life, so give him some business next time he yells at you about tweeters).

So, having taken over "karaoke night" on...wait for it... Tuesday, my trek out of the industry was not looking promising. Sure, my girlfriend at the time wanted me to get a real job, but, I think she meant something in an office (or, at least a place with business). Either way, I pulled up before sundown on the slowest day of the week and set up my equipment (which ended up taking up all of the "stage," in addition to two tables near the bar), judged the crowd (Dean Martin, Sinatra and whatever country song is popular this week) and turned on the sound. "Hey DJ, can you keep it down until the game is over?" Sure thing, Bartender. "Hey DJ, please turn up the music." Sure thing, Owner.

Bartender is pissed.

"Do you have karaoke?" Yes, I do, first young customer of the night.

"Do you have 'Song That Came Out Today,' the remix?"

Sorry. I have Sweet Caroline and everything Bon Jovi ever wrote. Maybe some Coolio.

The lack of quotes on the above answers is intentional, by the way—I was communicating with my eyeballs and nothing else, because I knew that opening my mouth in this situation would lead to what normally happens when I open my mouth (mumbled profanity and/or off-color jokes).

So, this goes on for a few hours and I'm eventually asked where "my crowd" is. Here's something that every DJ who isn't already famous needs to realize: you don't have a "crowd." Your job is to *keep and develop* a crowd, at a specific venue, over time. It is the bar owner's job to plant this magical "crowd" seed (possibly by hiring a promoter) and your job is to water this seed. But, telling your Facebook friends to show up and sing "Livin' On A Prayer" to four uninterested,

geriatric and annoyed regulars isn't something that the next Skrillex should have to do. There's a difference between "paying dues" and "playing Santana in an empty jazz bar."

At some point, between trying to find a specific Patsy Cline song for a drunk regular and telling her granddaughter "sorry" for the fifth time, a handful of off-duty stripper friends of mine and a bouncer buddy came walking in.

"Hey Ray, we saw your post and thought we'd swing by. Here's twenty bucks, play some Snoop or something."

And, with this, I decided to play for "my crowd," who appeared to be ordering something other than Rolling Rock, which was making the bartender visibly happy. Also, the bartender liked the music and gave me a thumbs-up for the first time that night. Then, the owner came over and asked me why I was playing "filthy" music.

"Remember, this is a jazz bar," Owner Lady Whose Name I Forgot told me. "We need to keep the jazz and karaoke crowd, before anything else."

Welp, there goes the only money I brought in...unless Owner Lady was gonna be cool about it. I told her, "Actually, these are request songs. Those people over there are 'my crowd' and they're good spenders. Is it okay if I play rap music from twenty years ago? I doubt the Crips are gonna shoot this place up tonight." "I don't care. I hired you for karaoke. Why aren't they singing?" Good question, Owner Lady. Let's see what happens when Alyssa does some "Milkshake" in front of those two old dudes, who appear to have been included with the building and probably haven't seen a female under fifty since they were still employed, married and not day drinking on a "probably Tuesday."

As it turns out, Alyssa was quite the entertainment. Hell, Alyssa got Old Guy With The Red Hat to attempt his best Sammy Davis Jr. on the mic, before she came back up for "Cherry Pie" (twice—both versions).

At this point, the old guys were loving it, but, the owner was, well, being herself. "Ray. This is NOT a strip club. This will NEVER be a strip club. We're paying you for another hour and then you can go home. Obviously, no one is coming out tonight and the regulars are complaining."

"But, the regulars were not complaining and it wasn't even 10pm yet," the narrator says.

"Fine enough. I'm sure there's a better jazz-and-karaoke DJ out there, who would gladly take my possible-

tips-per-hour (minus tab) rate. Do you mind if my friends stick around and I'll give you this money back in exchange for shots and french fries?" The owner looked at my friends, then back to me, then back at my friends. "Ray," she said, "I will say it again. I don't like your 'crowd.' This will *never*, ever be a strip club."

Anyway, the place went broke and ended up selling the building. And, guess who eventually bought it? Stars Cabaret Bridgeport. So, it became a strip club.

That's right—a jazz bar, located in the only neighborhood outside of downtown fit for a jazz bar, immediately off the freeway and with plenty of parking, eventually became a strip club. And, a damn fine one, if you ask me—Stars is a local staple and I've never, ever had a bad steak at the place (plus, the DJ is allowed to play "filthy" music while sexy girls dance). But, my point is, that if anything will survive (and thrive) during a recession, it's the titty bar industry.

And, if you're a previous owner of this bar, no, I'm not talking about when you owned it. There were no less than ten different themes for this place, ranging from blues, to "just food," to "obvious front," throughout the years. Guess which one survived? The strip club. I hope it will never be anything *but* a strip club. Take that, Owner Lady Who Called Snoop Dogg "Filthy."

I Remember Halloween

Speaking of Stars Cabaret Bidgeport, they're having a party for Halloween, appropriately titled "A Nightmare On McEwan Street," on Saturday, October 31. Prizes for best costume (the lady and I got dibs on that gun-toting Boomer couple with the mustard stains and bad trigger discipline), good food, naked ladies and good music. Meanwhile, don't forget to swing by Salem (which is only a few exits down, for those of you heading out of town from Portland) for the Halloween party at Cheetahs XXX Cabaret. Up in Portland, The Gold Club will be opening at noon on Halloween for their party (all the more reason to have candy corn for breakfast before heading to the strip club, because YOLO), while Cabaret will be hosting their spooky celebration with four VIP rooms to choose from (this would make for a great makeshift haunted house with the right décor, jussayin...).

If my calculations are correct, these are the *only* Halloween parties going down on the entire west coast of our great country this year. So, while Bat Soup Flu can take our smiles, our streets, our storefronts and our "I wonder what it will be like in" 2020—in addition to our holidays—it cannot take our strip clubs (especially during a dress-up-and-consume-sugar themed festivity).

eroticcity spotlight

DAILY HAPPY HOURS:

**CABARET
HAPPY HOUR 11AM-5PM**

**DV8
HAPPY HOUR 4PM-7PM**

**GUILTY PLEASURES
HAPPY HOUR 1:30PM-5PM**

**LUST LOUNGE
HAPPY HOUR 2PM-7PM**

**SCARLET LOUNGE
HAPPY HOUR 10AM-4PM**

**STARS CABARET (SALEM)
1, 2, 3 & 4 HAPPY HOUR 4-6PM**

**HALLOWEEN PARTIES
SAT 31**

**CABARET
CHEETAHS XXX CABARET
THE GOLD CLUB
STARS CABARET (BRIDGEPORT)**

THE HORRORS OF BEING A STONER

GREEN ROOM DIARIES BY STONED COLD SATIVA AWESOME

It's not always easy being green. Whether the stench of a reggae festival, the smell of the tent you slept in at the reggae festival or the person you ended up taking home after the reggae festival, stoners have a wide array of threats to our safety and sanity. Our life is one big, haunted grow site. And, dry mouth and bad taste in décor aren't the biggest demons lurking in our bong water. Here is a short list of the five least-discussed horrors associated with cannabis consumption.

Forgetting A Lighter

This one may seem obvious and a little melodramatic, when taking into account how every convenience store and gas station sells lighters at the register. However, let's say you're camping, enjoying a walk or that every store within fifty miles is closed due to wildfire smoke caused by meth arson (as was the case in Oregon last month). This is when the problem of lighterlessness becomes a danger. And, it's especially frustrating, not being able to light a blunt while acres of

your state are burning "on accident."

Let's say you have matches. Well, there's usually a limited amount in a book, rain makes them useless and the big old glob of sulfur doesn't help with the taste. Okay, what about that foot-long barbecue lighter? Well, replace sulfur with gas in the previous example—it's even worse. Plus, on the off chance that you are able to keep a joint or bowl lit after it cherries, it becomes a race against the clock and/or a game of Operation, in terms of being extra careful how you hold it, pass it and inhale. And, if everything else fails, there's always a car lighter, right? False—car lighter scars are permanent and forever. A small, bowl-or-joint-shaped circle of weed ash will forever be embedded into the dash of your easily targeted-by-small-town-cops stonermobile, putting you at constant risk of a ticket (or, worse, a conversation with a small town cop in 2020).

Always carry a Bic. There's a reason no one ever steals a book of matches or a car lighter.

Being High In A Dispensary

This one makes no sense, until you've been there. Imagine, for a second, that you look into your weed closet (if you don't have a weed closet, stop reading this article). Shit—you just smoked your last bowl of top shelf nuggery, so it's off to the dispensary you go! Well, if you're older than 30 and remember "tops, mids and budget," you are preparing yourself for a world of emotional pain.

"Yeah, I'd like an indica-dominant hybrid. I'll take anything good." "Oh, well we have Dogslaughter, Granynkiller, Baby Jessica, Episode Three Of Roots Kush, Memories Of What Your Uncle Did To You In Grade School Cookies and Hitler Punch."

Modern cannabis dispensaries have become the equivalent of Dutch Bros carts, in terms of product names being tied to the actual product—but, only if Dutch Bros named all their drinks after serial

killers and acts of violence. I have no idea who decided that Jack The Ripper is a better strain name than Jack Herer, but I'm guessing they're not one of those "if only the anti-fa kids and the MAGA moms could smoke a joint, we'd have peace" types of stoner. Something tells me that the guy who grows Epstein Sunrise isn't a good person and we shouldn't be giving him our money (but, goddamn does he grow some good weed).

Realizing What Day It Is

We've all been there. Get up early around noon, take a "just splash my face and put on deodorant" shower and prepare for a long day of video games and social media. Then, it happens—our phone tells us that it's not yesterday, but, in fact, today. Shit. What were you supposed to do? Didn't you have something going on??? Isn't your article three days past deadline, during a quarantine in which you have zero excuse to lag on it?! Every day is Monday, if you get high and forget to set an alarm on your calendar app. Speaking of which, I'm pretty sure it's my girlfriend and I's anniversary today...be right back. Gotta go to Walgreen's and find a nice card.

Having "The Talk" With Your Kids

Alcohol, cocaine and cigarettes have a stigma and that means it's easy to tell your kids not to partake in them. But, weed? Well, weed is just fucking awesome. Weed is the reason I never beat up a classmate, joined the army or bought a house. So, weed is also the reason I'm not in jail, dead or underwater in debt. Weed is safer than alcohol, to the point that the biggest loss I've ever taken during a morning-after with

a girl I hooked up while stoned, was that she stole my "weed is safer than alcohol" shirt. Compare this to the gutter in which one wakes up after a night of blow and tequila. You know those mugshots of out-of-town protesters floating around Twitter? That's what you look like if you never get hooked on chronic during your middle school years (and, the same goes for the person you wake up next to after a long night of cocktails—whether vodka or Molotov in nature).

This is why it's so difficult to lie to kids and tell them that, while the fat

and organizing my life when I'm high. It's a good way to pretend that I still tend to my own needs and priorities, even though I'm over forty and the money I make from writing this column makes up a third of my income—retirement, here I come!

But, while cleaning out my closet, I recently discovered my old compact disc jacket from back in the day and...whoa boy...311? I *paid* for a 311 album??? That money could have fed a homeless person for a week. What is this, an Insane Clown Posse *tribute band*? What rap duo is banking on making it big, cov-



man who gives them free toys and lives on a diet of cookies *is* real, the plant that would allow this type of person to become a reality is inherently evil and dangerous. So, I just opt to tell the little ones the truth: no one has ever died from smoking too much weed. Snoop chose blunts and Amy chose heroin. 'Nuff said.

Finding Your Old CD Collection

Personally, I enjoy cleaning house

ering "I Stuck Her With My Wang" and "I Want My Shit?" And, what is this, stuck between a "True Lordz Of House Music" compilation and the soundtrack to *Queen Of The Damned*? An actual, real-life Steve Miller Band album??? It's a miracle that I ever became a DJ. Anyhow, um...I gotta go "throw away" this Tenuous D box set. I can't believe I ever liked this stuff.

Has anyone seen my Discman?

TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH BY DJ HAZMATT



It's been a while since I've actually shared stories in this column. So, this month, I'm publishing a story that I would have sent in years ago, but couldn't for obvious reasons. And, I will restate this one more time—I will always go out of my way to protect the real identities of people and places mentioned in my writing, but, well, the establishment that is involved in the following recount isn't exactly a current-year pillar of the adult industry and I'm not harming them by sharing said tidbits. Rather, I'm simply documenting what would be called "urban legend," if someone hadn't taken the time to verify the truth behind it. Here we go, with **Crypt Keeper voice** "Taaaaaahhhhhllllesssss...From The DJ BoOoOoOoThAhahahaha."

Otter's Inn

Portland has our institutions. Some are still thriving (Mary's Club, Dante's) some have passed away (Doc's, Safari, Doc's Back When It Was Safari) and a few have been reborn from the ashes (**fingers crossed** big money, big money, Jiggles, big money...).

Few, however, are legends. Such is the case with Otter's Inn*.

Formerly a double-wide trailer, this "mobile" (if that's not the most ironic term, I swear...) home had been spray-painted black and parked on the border of Sketchy 82nd Avenue and Not That Bad 82nd Avenue in Portland, a few blocks from the train tracks (on which sides of the neighborhood are judged

as such). I went in on a whim.

At the time, I wasn't even 21. But, I had a Portland State University identification card and was able to convince one out of three bartenders that you can't get into a master's program until you were four years out of high school (little did they know, it was a master's from Portland State, which you can currently get on Wish.com for seven bucks plus shipping). A dancer friend of mine, who was pushing fifty and was a visible smoker, if that makes sense (she was kind, but rough...like Tom Waits' voice, manifested in physical human female form), told me that, in her words, she was "finally the hottest girl at the club." I not-so-politely laughed and asked where that was. "Otter's," Nicole said. "Last week, it was me and the girl with one leg." I stopped and asked what a blue-haired womxn in 2020 would call a "problematic" question, "What fucking time do they open?"

Flash forward a few hours and I'm sitting in a gravel parking lot, next to a drug deal and a pimped out, purple Cadillac with a "D.A.R.E." sticker on the bumper, outside of Otter's Inn. I smoked up the courage to go inside and did so, walking up the fold-out trailer steps that anyone with a permanently unemployed uncle is familiar with. The place looked exactly like it does in your head. I imagine that Kid Rock's midget hypeman (R.I.P.) would have lived here and bragged about it on *Cribs*. It was like walking inside a mullet and finding a bar and a pole. The place was two fuzzy tiger posters short of

having a baby in a dirty wifebeater on the floor. And, to a college kid with a fake identification, it was paradise.

Before asking the bartender when Pegleg was coming up next, I had to make myself known and pretend to be a baller, so that the strippers would put up with whatever fell out of my mouth after a few bottles of "we don't have Guinness, but we do have" beers. I did something that was clearly out-of-the-norm and asked for twenty dollars in ones. "All ones," a bartender with a re-done Tweety Bird tattoo clarified, handing me a pile of the most terrified looking Washingtons I'd ever seen.

And, with this, the bartender said, "Be nice, by the way, she was in an accident a few years ago." Jackpot.



I sat down on what used to be a fold-out bed and placed a horrified George on the woodgrain-patterned plastic in front of me. On stage, to the tune of that "Click Click Boom" song that all the Vin Diesel movies use in their trailers (oh...I see what she was doing now, at least I

hope—that would be genius), appeared a woman with not one, but two legs. Shit. This wasn't the one. However, she did lean down and pull her pile of tips back to her...with a hook hand.

Fuck. Yes.

Ever seen *Adventures In Babysitting*? Good, because that gives me a pass to say the following: people with hooks for hands are fucking horrifying. It's [current year] and we have prosthetic limbs. Hell, they had them in the '70s. This chick knew what she was doing. But, dear reader, you may not know what she was doing, so let me explain.

In the industry, we call this the "Buttplug Theory," which came about when a certain club in Portland featured a dancer with a buttplug. One dancer, one buttplug—as the Bible says it should be. But, buttplug girl took to social media to brag about her diamond butthole and it drew in one hell of a crowd. So, guess what? *Every other girl* in the club got a buttplug. Then, every girl at every other club got a buttplug. My friend started making custom buttplugs, they started showing up on television and the rest is history. Now, you can't even get an audition without at least three separate pieces of anal jewelry. Thanks, Buttplug Girl.

Basically, like any woman, strippers are constantly in competition with each other. The Buttplug Theory states that any alteration a dancer makes to their outfit, body or musical selection will start a mandatory trend, which, if not followed, will age-out the dancers who do not comply with said alteration. Dubstep, heel clacking, buttplugs, rinse and repeat. Next year, it will probably be pussy masks or toe piercings. Further, the trendsetters (i.e. the first girls to get buttplugs) often leave their home clubs, once conquered, only to venture out to virgin territory and preach the good word to new dancers—thus, spreading their message, while simultaneously asserting dominance and first-mover advantage in the market. I'm guessing

the first girl to get a buttplug was told to "Go shove it up your ass" by her previous employer, and thanks to her taking it literally, she's now a legend.

So, hook-for-a-hand probably took a gig at the club with Pegleg, because she wanted to raise the bar, when it came to "most disabled dancer in the double-wide." And, what better way to raise a bar than with a metal fucking hook for a hand? Just attach it to the bar, turn it on and wait.

Anyhow, as ol' Two Legs (excuse me, Hook Hand) performed, I just did what I do when I'm talking to people with massive sores or Nickelback shirts and ignored the glaring flaw—focusing instead on this chick's personality, dancer skills and...

confirmed. The legend of Otter's Inn was real.

Hook Hand leaned into me, putting her gorgeous breasts into my face. She smelled good and she was pretty. Goddamn. I wanted to say something, but the "hit on the crippled stripper because she's probably never been told she's beautiful before" game is a lame pick-up tactic and I'm better than that.

After flipping backwards and upside-down, so that her perfectly toned "this belongs at Stars Cabaret, not Otter's Inn" ass was on my chest, with her two (this was the disappointing part) legs wrapped over my shoulders. Then, she pulled herself up, holding my left ear close to her mouth, at which point she dropped the best joke I've ever heard...



"The other girl is missing a leg," Hook Hand said as she swung around the pole with her Skywalker arm—moving swiftly, like a garment being shuffled forward on a mechanical dry cleaner rack.

"Really?" I said with that "just trying to pretend the naked girl with a hook for a hand isn't pitching me on the other amputee in the trailer" tone we've all used before. My suspicion had been

"What's got three legs, three arms and a pussy in your face?"

"I give up," I told her ear, clit and part of her thigh, while wrapped up like an octopus that had just consumed a pirate.

"Day shift at our club." I went to the ATM immediately.

TalesFromTheDJBooth.com

Fenty & Havanna

FROM
GUILTY PLEASURES



EXOTIC
PINUP OCTOBER
2020



THE ABSOLUTE BEST WAYS TO MAKE YOURSELF OBNOXIOUS ON THE BUS

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE

As a long time public transport user, I've been doing extremely in-depth research on this topic for decades and have compiled my data into a series of handy bullet points, which I hope will bring you hours

per something so schizophrenic that there's no possible way they'll want to sit next to you any longer. "The cat pee rings at midnight" will do nicely.

what drug, as long as it mashes your consciousness down to a nub and leaves you a gibbering fool, indistinguishable from legitimate psychopathy. If so, you're doing just the right thing—something that will terrify everyone just enough to make them question the bounds of their own reality is what we're looking for.



of schadenfreude. Because, to ride public transportation is to suffer, and if you must suffer, so should everyone else (that, or be high enough to be oblivious).

Take Up As Many Seats As Possible

This is a classic. Spread your legs and stretch your arms out, to occupy at least two seats—three, if your technique is pro level. If you have bags, don't put them under your seat, as they can augment your territorial occupation and conquest. If someone asks to sit where your bags are, stare blankly at the would-be invader and menacingly whis-

Do All The Drugs

Do I mean all the drugs you *have* or all the drugs you can get? No, I mean *do all the drugs*. Can you still determine what's real and what's not? Keep trying. Do you have any sense of what's going on? Keep trying. Unless you're mumbling incoherently and gnawing at every exposed surface like it's nightmare gum, you're not doing enough. If you're 30 minutes away from a hysterical, substance-fueled psychosis, you're 30 minutes from where you need to be. If you have a destination or any sense of where you've come from, you're not ready. I don't care

Eat

...or carry the most odorous food you can find. In many countries, Durian is banned on public transportation. Fortunately for us, it's not restricted here. Ripe durians are notorious for exuding a stench fouler than a hobo with an aggressive skin infection, and are thus perfect to make everyone's ride just that much more miserable. Unluckily for the would-be bus pirate, they're difficult to track down. Things like Indian food, giant sloppy burritos or tuna fish sandwiches will all do nicely. See how much of them you can get away with eating, before the bus driver puts his foot down. Make sure to chew loudly and leave a mess!

Make Conversation With Everyone

Especially during commutes—no one wants to talk to strangers on the bus, which is exactly why you should aggressively force your banter on everyone that gets within ten feet of you. Find a seat near the front, make intense unwanted eye contact with someone and immediately start in on whatever conspiracy theory suits your fancy. The crazier, the better. 9/11 was orchestrated by lizard people, chemtrails and vaccines

are brainwashing us into subservience, the numerology of bus fare is real, etc. As soon as one person stops politely nodding and walks off, find a new target and start over.

Do Anything That Normally Requires Headphones, Without Headphones

Call with the gynecologist? Put it on speaker. New Justin Bieber song? Crank it up. Bus drivers are almost always too apathetic to do anything about these kinds of infractions, unless it's bothersome to them personally, so we recommend sitting near the back of the bus. This way, it will annoy the other passengers, but not the driver.

Just Don't Wear Pants

This seems like it would be difficult to pull off, but there are a couple great ways to make it something achievable. If your pants are sagging, it's so easy for them to slip down a bit further...a bit more...just a little more... and, voila, now everyone knows what your butt looks like. Alternately, a very long shirt, tube socks and a fanny pack are the perfect disguise. The driver won't notice, but when you bend over to sit down, everyone else will, and it will haunt their nightmares for years. Please note, I speak from being a personal witness to this one.

Cough On Everything

Talk about your trip to China and all the crazy shit you ate there, fan yourself and complain about how hot you are (it must be jet lag). Corona's all the rage now, so make the most of fanning the hysteria. Pretend to call your mom and rant about how everyone at the airport was sick, about how you saw some guy drop dead in the street and how you went to help him, but he just coughed all over you. Eat some chicken and lick your fingers, then touch as many people as you can. Be a close talker and then hack unexpectedly. If you really want to play it up, you can jog a bit before you get on, so you're nice and flushed. Spreading fear and hysteria is one of life's greatest joys, so don't let the opportunity to fan the flames of panic pass you by.

Cultivate Your Aroma

This one requires a level of dedication most people just don't have. It takes days—weeks, even—of stewing in your own filth, before you can build up the true potential of

your funk. This one is for professionals only, because only the most committed monsters (excluding the suicidal, depressed, legitimately schizophrenic, etc.) would be willing to go to this length, just to make others miserable. Alternately, a fun shortcut olfactory torment is tracking dog shit onto the bus intentionally. Wipe it off surreptitiously, making sure to spread the redolent bouquet as far and wide as possible.

Lastly, and the true classic of all misery-inducing, unwanted interactions...

Unwanted Flirting

In these modern times, this isn't even reserved for the male persuasion. Ladies, get in on the game. First, show some cleavage, make distressingly intense eye contact and then T.M.I. all over the poor guy. Talk about your exes, your intimate personal problems and how your mom will never approve of

you. Make sure to throw in fun facts about yourself, like how you collect realistic baby dolls or hair from celebrities. Guys, this one should be easy, but if you want to challenge yourself, flirt aggressively with clearly heterosexual men. You might get punched, but more than likely, you'll just haunt someone's dreams—and, who doesn't love making an impression?

All in all, there's no better way to get the most out of a ride on public transportation than by making it harder for other people. The whole planet is staring at their phones—it's up to you to shake things up and bring people back to the real world.

Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle is a dedicated bus-goblin, for whom making people uncomfortable is a life-long joy. She can be found on MeWe by name or the 'Gram as @EsmeraldaSilentCitadel.





THREE TRIBUTE BANDS PORTLAND NEEDS, BUT DOESN'T DESERVE

by Blazer Sparrow

So, I've done bad costumes and haunted house ideas...it's getting harder and harder to come up with clever Halloween ideas relating to music. Especially now that it seems Halloween (along with live music) is effectively canceled, until further notice. Why bother spewing some witty bullshit about our dead-er-than-usual scene? Just as I was about to give up, resign and go on another coke bender, I realized there is one obnoxious tradition that bands will sometimes do on this Hallowed Halloween's Eve—putting together a tribute band for one night only. Get it? Putting on the costume of another band? I said it was obnoxious, but hey, let's take what we can get in this never-ending lockdown. Now, just to be clear, I'm not condoning that these bands do a non-socially-distanced performance this Halloween (as we're probably not gonna be in the clear by then, with how our Dear Leadership has handled this debacle). However, these concepts absolutely should happen. I expect that, by next Halloween, they will be up-and-running, well-oiled machines for a badass Halloween Tribute Band Night at Lovecraft—if it still exists [ED: It does, but cancel culture finally caught up to the name and they changed it].

My partner, most of my friends and fellow musicians disapprove of tribute bands and I understand why. But, they are wrong. As cheesy as it is, it's fun to see a band play Radiohead songs in a venue the size of your living room. Also, if they don't suck and you close your eyes, you can pretend its Radiohead.

These tribute bands, however, are a necessary evil that I think the Portland live music scene desperately needs. For each pitch, I'll give my indisputable facts and annotated research as to why, and if you disagree with me, you're wrong.

PDX Musicians...make these projects happen!



The Queensmen

As embarrassing as it may seem, the biggest hit to come out of this city—nay, this STATE—is from a dorky little garage band, covering black folks' songs in the early sixties. Why not pay homage to Portland's rock and roll beginnings, as well as its current, ultra queer vibe, with a Chippendales-esque, guitar-clad,

quintet tribute?! Ditch the preppy suits for nothing but a bowtie and a jock-strap. Keep the high and tight quaffs. The members would ideally be buff and oily, but I suppose I shouldn't be a body-shamer. I think this idea works best with a more old-fashioned, posters-of-Montgomery-Clift-and-James-Dean-on-the-wall-of-your-bedroom gay, as opposed to full-on drag queen. Since no one knows any other songs besides their cover of "Louie Louie," I see no reason why performances can't just be half-hour-to-hour performances of this fun, little college frat party diddy—with lyrics changed to be wildly homoerotic. You can't understand the lyrics in The Kingsmen's version anyway, so you might as well go hog wild with buttsex daisy chain imagery.

If You Like Anal Cunt, You Fucking Suck

See now, this would just be a straight cover band. I think Portland is the only city that needs this kind of tribute, because it's the only city where such a band would work. This city is so high-strung to be triggered by any un-woke infractions, that it would be a crime against humanity NOT to do an Anal Cunt tribute band here. Because, at the end of the day, the people that get it will get it—and, the people that don't will clutch their pearls so hard they'll shit oysters. Then, they'll run to Twitter and berate this noisy, racist, sexist, etc. band for being the worst thing ever, in all of history—blaming the patriarchy, capitalism and blah blah blah, not real-

izing that they are literally taking part in the grand meta art project that is doing a tribute to this little grindcore outfit from Newton, MA, in the first place. It would be so goddamned easy, too! You literally only need a blast beat drummer, a guitarist who owns a boss metal zone pedal and a portly dude with long hair, who can scream his head off. You don't even need to learn any songs. It's so easy! Don't get mad at the social justice warriors—get Anal Cunt tribute band at them!

Beachie Boys

This one isn't really Portland-specific. This is (probably) something that needs to happen for the good of humanity. Imagine the stage lighting up to three bad brothers you know so well. You'd most likely boo and jeer, if this was the first thing you saw, as Portland already has a fantastic Beastie Boys tribute band (Grand Royale). You would be right to jeer, but I ask you to at least give them a song. The needle drops to a slogging, '80s-style scratch intro, before syncing up to an overused 808 beat, and then...

Ad-Rock: Wouldn't it be

All: NICE

Mike D: If we were older!



MCA: Then we wouldn't

All: HAVE

Ad-Rock: To wait so...loooooong

Fuck you, if you don't think this tribute band would be a money-printing machine. A cheesy, white, b-boy, hip hop version of "I Get Around" or "Barbara Ann?" Who doesn't want to hear that? Nobody, that's who! Trade five-part harmonies for three-part rapping. Someone pay me for this idea. Seriously. I'm honestly surprised it hasn't happened yet.

You're welcome, Portland. And, Happy Fucking Halloween!

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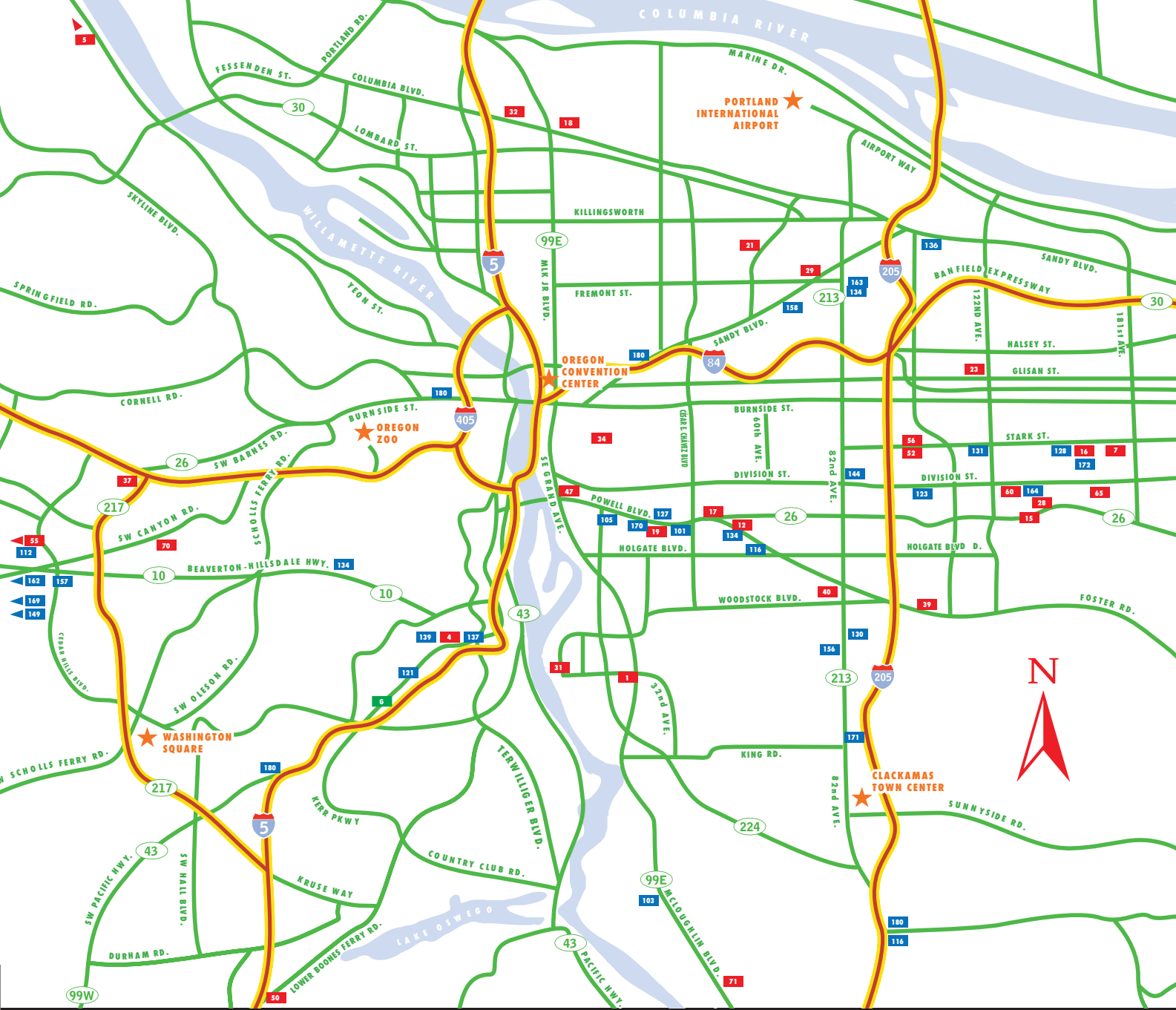
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It Happened To Me: I Faked The Funk On A Nasty Dunk

by Shaquille O'Neal

Hi, everyone. It's me. The Diesel. Shaq Daddy. Master of Shaq-Fu. King Of The Court. Destroyer of backboards. Shaquille. Most of you know me. I'm Superman's number one fan. Fuck Jerry Seinfeld. I'm the one, baby. I have way more memorabilia than him. I have a storage unit as big as his apartment, filled with Superstuff. He has, what...the one little statue? Get out of here with that, Jerry Seinfeld. But, I digress. What you may not know, is that there was a time (and it pains me to admit this) that I actually *did* fake the funk on a nasty dunk. It fills me with shame and dread, just to think back and recall. But, I think it's time I get this out in the open and put it all behind us...

The date was February 7, 1993. You may well recall the famous incident in Phoenix, Arizona, wherein one baby Shaq Lalane, just a rookie, took down an entire basketball hoop. I guess in the NBA, you would call it an apparatus. Those things are wild, man! They have hydraulics and everything. It's a far cry from Nerf over the waste basket, I'll tell you that much. AnyShaq, yeah, Shaqadocious here caused a twenty-five-minute delay for messing up that apparatus. Or, so I heard! Time was a foreign concept to me during the entire Shaquation. I think I was in Shaq. What nobody knew, and what I am here to admit to you today, is that I faked the funk.

Crazy, right? Who would have ever

thought this honorary member of the Fu-Schnickens had an unreal bone in his enormous, almost comically oversized body? I am here to tell you that, yes, much like my favorite Junior Boys record, "It's All True." Your main man, Shaq-a-toa, doubted himself for just a split second. That was all it took! I had the funk in my mind, but I did not have the funk in my heart.

As I rose above Phoenix center Mark West, I wondered if, perhaps, they were going to ding me for an over-the-back offensive foul. I couldn't get into foul trouble that early, and I knew it would affect my aggressiveness for the rest of the game, if they called me for one. Bam. Funk faked. I thought my life was over. Lost sponsorships and trade rumors flooded my mind, but nobody knew! Not one person in the entire sold-out America West Arena had any clue at all!!! I was safe. Or, so I thought. Turns out, I couldn't hide from the truth. Which is why I am writing to you here, today.

I know a lot of people look up to me, which is why I think it's important that everyone knows the reality of the situation. I'm human, too. I may be superhuman, like Superman, but "human" is right there in the title. So, you see how I can be larger than life, yet also capable of mistakes. This one mistake in particular had me scared, because I knew the team was counting on me to be real with the funk. I couldn't let on, in that

moment, that anything of an ill nature had transpired. I had to muster all the Shaq within myself that I could. Sometimes, the harsh reality of being a leader is knowing you still have to follow yourself. Wow. That's deep! I'm putting that one in my new Shaq-help book, *Love Shaq: How I'm Learning To Be 52 & Feel 25 Again (& How You Can Too)*.

What I want people to understand is that you can fake the funk and still live a fulfilling life. Look at me! I went on to be Kobe Bryant's best friend!!! It's true what they say—time heals all wounds. And, wouldn't you know it—time also healed that basketball apparatus. We all went on to have a fun time playing against each other, and now every member of the 1992-93 Phoenix Suns and 1992-93 Orlando Magic and I get together every February 7 to break gingerbread backboards and share our feelings. Because, that's what life and professional athletics are all about—personal growth.

Be true to yourself—don't worry about the funk. The funk will be right there when you need it. And, if every once in a while, you slip up and have to fake it, the funk will understand.

Thanks for reading. I hope you can forgive me. What's truly important, though, is that I have forgiven myself. Peace, love and Shaq Time.

-Shaq



WORK & YOU

A PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

BY HANNAH ONE CUP

I'm just going to get right into it—none of this should really require any explanation. But, I will give one anyway, just in case you've not been part of the party that's been happening the last few months. For those of you who *have* been away from it, here is where the rest of us have been lately, as we fall into one of two categories:

A) Working from home, in which case we still get to chatter a bit, long-distance, with the two co-workers we can stand and make dirty jokes with.

Or,

B) Unemployed. We've been receiving weekly checks, which the bigwigs think we're using to boost the economy. Everyone knows what we're really using it on: booze, GrubHub takeout, sexy Trojan condoms and fancy lubes.

The following back-to-work shopping list is meant for both categories A and B, since preparing for the eventual return to—and, given the length of time you've been out of—the physical workplace, you could all use some touch-ups and restocking of the new, necessary supplies for your daily work routine. Yes, times are a changing and so can you!

On a more relatable note, you know you're all looking forward to seeing

those dead, lifeless eyes of your should-be-retired boss and saying things like "Mondays, am I right?" (and, Stacy, who always seems to act like one of those robots programmed to not understand sarcasm or any human emotion other than joy). So, let's get the week started off right, by coming in prepared and dressing to impress!

CLOTHING

Hats

Required only if you went through that "I'm going to do something different" phase and it didn't end well. You know it didn't end well, so just find a damn hat.

Blouse/Button-Down Shirt

Make sure that these items don't hold last night's taco stains on them or show signs of "wear and tear" (as in, do not wear the shirt you wore to your summer fling's house the night before, when you both saw that Trojan condom ad and decided to get jiggy with it, which then turned into a heated bout of seeing who can eat tacos the fastest after making whoopie).

Pants

I say pants loosely—anything that can cover your massive lockdown-beer-and-taco-gut...something without stains.

The department store Ross is full of various fancy, mild-priced "jeggings," to almost make you look like you're wearing nice slacks or jeans. Almost.

Socks

Please just buy some new socks. We all know if I'm having to give directions on what to wear when returning to work and you, the reader, have come this far, you **MUST** purchase new socks. Yours have probably been worn enough around the house to be considered "feet thongs." Just buy new socks.

Shoes

You know, as long as your current shoes still fit (unlike the rest of your attire), I say just put on whatever you have laying out. If that's flip flops, wear a nice, new pair of black socks, to make it look like you're wearing shoes. If those shoes have holes, wear a nice, new pair of socks of the same color, so that no one will know the difference. It's amazing what people won't notice.

Mask

Oh, yeah...almost forgot this one. Make sure it's something really profane. Like the time-old phrase, "this is my happy face" or a picture of moose lips—something like that.

DESK ITEMS

Hand Sanitizer

...of course. Stacy might be a robot, but who knows where her dirty robot hands have been? Don't shake Stacy's hand.

Smelly Disinfectant Spray

To keep out all of your co-workers. Who wants to walk into a room smelling like Febreze? Really...I'll wait for an answer.

Coffee Cup

To use for the whiskey you wave a pot of coffee over.

Soda Of Choice

For after the coffee hours of the day are over and you still haven't polished off that whiskey.

Alcohol Of Choice

I say alcohol of choice, but I really mean whatever your wallet can afford at this point, so that you can stave off the shakes from all that practice you had, being a binge-drinking alcoholic during lockdown. So, if it's bottom-shelf whiskey or vodka—as long as it's 80 proof—you're good. I suppose White Claw could work, as well, if you put them in a 7-Up bottle. Just make sure you bring a six pack (at the least).

Laptop

Don't show up to work forgetting your work. That's a good way to have your alcohol levels tell on you. If you do manage to screw this up, just go to your closest convenience store—mask on—grab a ream of printer paper and some notebooks, make them look a little used up and run into the office, like you just had some brilliant idea while on the bus. Then, forget to share this idea with your cohorts (bonus points if you run into the convenience store with mask AND sunglasses, grab your ream of paper and run out of there, as well).

All in all, this is about the gist of it, when it comes to what to bring to work on your first day back. If pens, pencils and Kleenex were supposed to be brought by you, you aren't working in the right field (and should find a new place, immediately, that can budget those types of supplies, while also being able to pay you a salary of sorts).

Just keep in mind, today is the beginning of the rest of your life, back in the wheels of the workforce. You weren't necessary in the beginning, but damnit, you're necessary now! And, so appreciated for all the hard work you'll be putting in!

So, eat those stashed-away cupcakes you forgot that you had in your desk several months ago (they're probably still okay), drink that alcohol like your life depended on it (I hear studies

say there is something to this...) and, please, just make sure to take off your nice, clean pair of socks and blouse prior to having whoopie with your fling, who you are pretty sure is becoming a bit clingy by now...sorry Ted, no more drunken taco-sex-nights with my clothes on.

Welcome back to work! Have a wonderful day and cheers to the new normal!

Hannah is an Oregon native, known for her plethora of odd, state-specific facts. She has been known to write down page-long lists of reasons to not do things, smokes only the driest of tobacco and drinks her fair share of bottom-shelf whiskey, whilst judging the general public from her second-story studio apartment. She can be found online, but don't bother.





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DEAD LEAVES IN THE SUN: PART 4 BY CM BROWN

On the third day in town, J took some new turns around the neighborhood—the early autumn leaves swirling in the wind and crunching under his feet. The houses huddled in the shelter of trees and shrubs, afterthoughts to the landscape, rather than the focus. He imagined himself living in the homes as he walked by them, in another life, with things like dogs and kids. Maybe a broken swing hanging from a tree. Laughing relatives and holidays. A modest car, from which there was constant unloading; brown bags of groceries about to spill, bright pink plastic mall bags full of presents, squirming toddlers, as the alarm chirp and the doors click shut from a hands-full hip bump. Home from work, home from school, home from vacation. Porches designed for orange summer evenings, silence and crickets. An amber light humming from the windows. Sweet dreams. Paper trash collected against the wire fences and wrin-

kled ivory ringed with a light brown of rot twisted among it. He couldn't help but note the weak locks, open deadbolts and ancient windows set in crumbling wood as he walked past. Points of entry that would let out a little yelp at the moment of violation, the squeaks and scrapes of breaking and entering. First an arm or leg, silently, through the opening he had created, then the rest of his body, crouched among the ticking of clocks and humming of appliances, knuckles popping and blood thundering in his ears. Cool, smooth wood or soft carpet under his palms. The slow nudge of unlocked doors and light nasal breathing of sleepers on the other side—bagging outlines of items in the dark, while really robbing what could never be replaced, stealing their peace and owning their sense of quiet. Sometimes, leaving the door ajar as he left, so as to trouble their sleep in nights to come. He ducked into a basement driveway

and swung his bag down. Kneeling on his haunches, he pulled out the pint of Old Crow and his kit, deftly working up a fix while taking a long, hot pull from the bottle. As that fire settled into his chest and abdomen, he shot up. And, for a moment, there was a straight line out of the corners of his eyes, where each thought slid into place, as if he had removed the one piece that didn't quite wedge with the others. Then, he was watching himself, looking back from a distant point and considering the path that had brought him here. A memory listing along the edges of sleep. He nodded off against a trashcan. The cold jolted him up and he stood, stamping his feet in the dark, balling his fists deep in his pockets, before fumbling out a cigarette and looking over his shoulders. His head swam for a few seconds, as he lit up and small, sallow orbs of light danced in the smoke, before settling in as street lamps. A light rain began to mist and

a breeze blew the leaves around him. He puffed while gathering his things and started walking, as if he had a destination. Long strides and shoulders hunched against the chill. As the night settled in, he accommodated himself to it, making himself either unseen or not worth looking at. He drifted through the dirt alleys and emerged occasionally onto the main road with a rhythm that placed him always out of the corner of the eye and on the tip of the tongue—only a vague description merely imagined in the first place. He noted the length and width of shadows and the muffled echoes of his steps. Faint voices joined in, as he approached the block of downtown. Coughs and laughs hung in the cold air like clouds of breath under the street lamps and he pulled a dirty red baseball cap onto his head before turning the corner into public. A slight buzz lingered, but he felt the need for something else—a high that had to be obtained, rather than one he could fix himself. Several hours later (with pockets full of other people's money), J found his way to the bus station and bought a ticket to the next city—settling himself in the very back seat, where the rank smell of urine from the tiny bathroom kept all other passengers at bay. He lay back and put his feet up, staring out the window at nothing that mattered, as the bus carried him somewhere else.*

The business park was the perfect level of unassuming. Built several years prior, during the mania of economic growth, it was all sprawling cement walkways, glistening steel hand rails, castrated commissioned sculptures in iron and plaster in baffling poses, meant to reflect an Idea now degraded by rounds of approval into mere objects. Ghosts of projected clients walked hand-in-hand with the specters of potential office

tenants. In the whole compound, J estimated perhaps three businesses held day-to-day activity here. Too big to start over, with just enough revenue to keep it operating. It was on the outside of town, far enough away that graffiti hadn't crept in and attracted fences.

was prone to do when his minimum of needs were met. Fed, watered and with sunshine in a bag, he was surfing the first high of the day, when he found that his surroundings had shifted on him. The dust and pallid light of the highway had given way to a concrete tundra, fresh white



There were four four-story buildings in the complex. His camp was just a few blocks away, off the side of a desolate, two-lane highway, tucked out of sight, behind a crumbling cement divider. He had stumbled upon the complex while wandering, as he

parking lines and angled curbs opening on the four buildings spaced in an odd jigsaw pattern. He stopped, looking around and squinting in the bright cleanliness. He became aware of a new kind of silence and realized that it was the absence of crows.

Slowly drawing out his pouch of tobacco, he rolled a cigarette, licking it shut and lighting it contemplatively. Somewhere distant, a car rolled by, unobtrusive and temporary. Some insects clicked. He decided to try the far building first and crossed over the black-and-white of the parking lot.

Two frosted glass doors made up the only entrance. Several rounds of the exterior yielded no other points of entry. J stood at the doors for a good minute, waiting for someone in a uniform to appear. No one did. He pulled open a door and stepped inside. Filtered air tickled his nostrils and skin. Thin commercial carpet in a deep blue stretched across the floor, where it met a lighter shade of blue in the painted walls. Across the room, a painting in a red frame hung in the center of the only door. J crossed to it. It was a simple picture looking down on a koi pond, with a single redfish encircled in the cen-

ter, slender fins wisping away into the edges and fading into nothing. He tried the door. It was unlocked. He turned around and went back the way he came.

Standing at the train stop, he contemplated the complex. He smoked and contemplated some more. As he thought deeply about things, he saw a man crossing the vast parking lot toward him.

As he came closer, J saw that he was surprisingly tall, like a highway sign up close. His suit was black with red pinstripes and his derby hat sat pulled over his forehead, a half grin unfolding from the shadow. He ambled toward J at an easy pace, with a patience as if the turn of the earth would bring him to wherever he wanted to go eventually. The autumn sun was bright, cold and seemed to grow more so with each of the man's steps. When he finally arrived, he

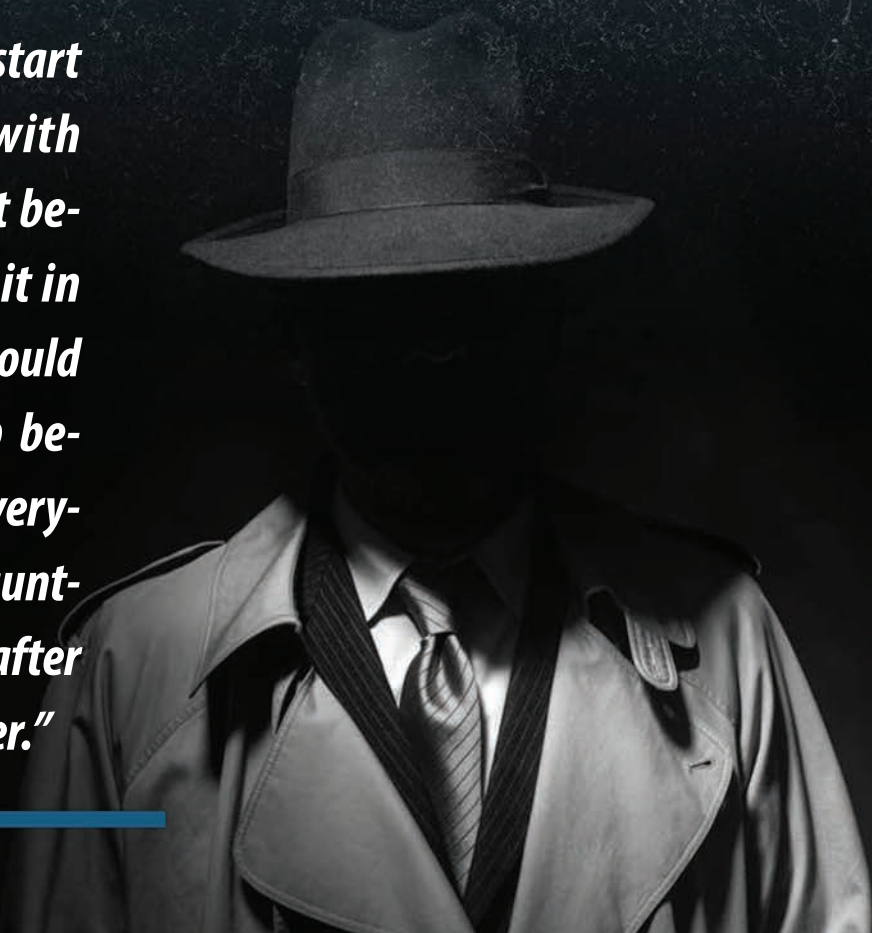
cocked his head and looked at J sideways, smiling.

"Smoke?" he asked.

J's usual snide replies to the question all seemed juvenile. He handed the man a cigarette and flicked his lighter for him. The man took the cigarette in pale, bony fingers with long, pristine nails filed at the ends and leaned forward toward the flame. He took a drag and nodded a "thank you," as he exhaled smoke through his nostrils. Then he straightened and peered off at the stretch of paved nothingness, squinting his eyes and quietly smoking. J felt he should neither move along nor stay put and began to grow aware that this was one of those moments to which he should pay close attention. The man took a few drags and turned his gaze back on J.

"I don't usually smoke," he said.

"Eventually, passengers would start stepping on and stepping off, with no notion of who sat in their seat before they boarded or who will sit in it after they disembark. There could have been a dragon at the stop before them. Perhaps, that's why everyone on metro trains have that haunted look, relieved but skeptical, after sharing their space with a monster."



J nodded.

"You should probably get on a train, seeing as you're waiting here."

J looked at the ground and then at the "arrival and departure" sign. He looked at the man in red and black and at the sky without birds. A train was in fact arriving in one minute. The man flicked the last of his cigarette into the wind and looked at J, nodding his thanks before jumping down onto the tracks and crossing, just in time for the train to miss him. J watched him fade into the horizon through the passing windows of the subway train coming to a stop.

The subway stopped several miles from the complex at the end of the line, its doors gliding open on nothing, neither welcoming nor dropping passengers off. J wondered if the train itself were conducted remote-



ly and when he boarded, he was the only soul within miles. The route had

wound underneath snaking freeway overpasses and through barbed wire construction zones, castles of cement with rivers of sand and gravel dug out beneath, the building projects never finished, workers digging trenches for the next shift to fill in again. Eventually, passengers would start stepping on and stepping off, with no notion of who sat in their seat before they boarded or who will sit in it after they disembark. There could have been a dragon at the stop before them. Perhaps, that's why everyone on metro trains have that haunted look, relieved but skeptical, after sharing their space with a monster. This train could have been empty two stops ago, the train running its route with or without passengers, anyway—according to schedule. J walked away from the terminal and started his hunt for a train that was more his style, given a choice.

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TALES FROM BEHIND THE BAR

BY MISS TINI

A bartender sees a lot of shit, both figuratively and sometimes literally. You should see the “biohazard kit” I put together, for when the bathroom is out of order. You’d be impressed. You’d also be impressed with the crazy people I deal with. Here are a few stories...

Christmas Guy

My bar used to have one of those internet jukeboxes. I’m not sure if you know what fresh hell it takes to work with one of these things. The drunk people pick the music and set the vibe for the bar and it’s usually terrible—correction, ALWAYS terrible. They pull pranks, like putting in a bunch of garbage to make their friends laugh, while you just have to sit in the trenches and live in it. Paying customers get up and leave, because they’ve heard Sublime for the third time in a row. They’ll pump it full of money—just like every other drunk person in the bar—and demand their money back when they don’t hear their

song in two minutes, as they are taking their Jager shots. Guess who has to listen to all that trash for the rest of the night, after they leave? I’ve never wanted to beat any object with a baseball bat more, until I met this thing. Screeching voices, terrible music, me tethered behind a bar while sober, dealing with it on top of everything else...fun.

This man started showing up and I had never seen him before. He would exclusively (and, only) play the song “Grandma Got Ran Over by a Reindeer.” On a loop. Now, when I talk about this jukebox, I should mention that it is LOUD. For the customer’s buck, it absolutely blares about two times the volume of how we play the house music. Imagine that, as far as atmosphere and vibe in the business (as well as your own damned sanity). We eventually pulled him aside and confronted him. We explained to him that we couldn’t descend into this

drainage swirl of madness, day after day. He could not understand what the problem was. He said it was his favorite song, that it was very special to him and reminded him of his deceased grandmother. Yep, you read that right. That’s when the battle began.

Reindeer guy was not going down easy. He came back every day and played the hell out of that song. Sometimes, upwards of 20 times in a row. We would ask him to stop it and he said it was his right to play whatever he wanted. He wasn’t wrong. With that cursed object in the bar, you CAN play anything you want. If I had to make a list of any song I never want to hear again, that would be on the short list—perhaps number one on that list. *This* grandma will run your ass over with a reindeer. Oh, and he was a pain in the ass, too. He would come up to the bar constantly, while I was serv-

ing other customers and try to talk to me about the song. He would stand on the bar furniture, sing and hold court about how this was the greatest song in the world. When we 86'd him, he verbally fought me on it. He couldn't understand why he couldn't just listen to his song. The implement was there. I tried to explain why, but it fell on deaf ears. Later, I mentioned him to a bartender friend working at The Florida Room. They had one of those same jukeboxes. They knew exactly who I was talking about and they 86'd him for the same exact thing. Apparently, Christmas time is here...all over North Portland.

Nudity

One of the things that keeps Portland weird is our policy on nakedness. We have wonderful, female-positive strip clubs and a big naked bike ride. Being nude here is not illegal. If you want to sunbathe in your birthday suit on your lawn, you can! If you want to walk around with no shirt on, you can! It's a weird, gray area of this city that outsiders and newcomers don't understand.



I was working one night. We had a DJ playing. That was not normal for our



bar. To describe the bar's vibe, imagine a dive with a bow tie on. Not dirty, not fancy. Most customers were either blue collar or service industry. The DJ playing was 57 years old. He has good taste in music, don't get me wrong. And, he brought in a significant crowd. Fantastic for me, slinging simple drinks like wine and beers. Dream shift...at first. The thing about the older crowd is they do have money to spend, but they have a lower alcohol tolerance. Things got weird, quickly. There were a bunch of over-50-year olds dancing their asses off all around my bar and grinding on each other. I mean, I was there for it, but it was getting out of hand. Broken glasses, lost items, me worrying about slips and falls. I'll spare you the details of the bathroom situation.

Among all this chaos, I'm still bartending to my usual regulars, who are looking on in wonder. News flash—bar regulars do not like special events in their watering hole. Hell, they get mad when one of us swaps our schedule and there's a different one of us pouring their beer on a Tuesday. So, there I am, trying to placate my cranky regulars among a massive dance party that they are pissed about. Suddenly, one of my customers whips them out.

A woman dancing in the crowd takes her top off and begins doing a drunken cha cha with no shirt or bra. I mean, she looked great. Seriously. Envious boobs. The problem for me, is I have to work a busy shift and make sure that the naked woman is protected. Liability. Also, safety. She was definitely living her best life at that moment and she was the dancing queen. My male regulars were running their creepy eyes all over her. You know, the same ones they'd been running over me for years. So, what is one to do? I let her do it. I wanted to take my top off too, in solidarity, honestly.



She ended up meeting another silver fox on the dance floor and they hit it off. By "hit it off," they shoved their glasses onto the floor off the table top and made out on it. She, still topless, while many looked on. I just let it fly. At that point in my life, I was single and I just wanted to join the party. Instead, I had to go clean puke out of the bathroom and run a rack of dishes.



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