

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Volume 33, Special Issue
It's my birthday and I'll cry if I want to



Never party with toddlers





Dedicated to the actual Fucko the Clown

Steve Antonson

31-77AT(1976-2022)

“Holy Shit! It’s Moses!”

I'll Be Home for Christmas... If I Can Get in the Damned House

Welcome to our first ever triptych—a piece told in three parts. Enjoy...or don't. We don't do this for you.

Part 1: I Fished My Wish

Question



JosephBones: posted 2 months ago

I'm new to the wife from home community. I think the idea is just genius; get a trad wife connected to your smart home network to do all the housework needs without having a real woman messing up your actual house.

I still have a few questions on how to set up your whole system though.

First of all, what kind of system requirements do you need for this smart home set up? Is there a range of options from bare bones set up to deluxe? For instance, what kind of rig would I need to have installed in the house if I want my trad wife to cook me freshly baked sour dough bread on a daily basis? Is there special gear I need to hook up if I want her to grind the flour by hand each time? Do I need to buy all new gear for this, or can I rig something up to work on the network with the existing appliances I have? Is there, perhaps, a special company dedicated to providing men with the equipment they need for a successful trad wife smart home set up?



XXX_TheManliest_XXX: posted 14 days ago

Building off of OP's post, I'm in a similar situation, everything I have found on TradTube for this has brought up connecting their rigs to the wifi. Is this a requirement, can I avoid this?

Do I need to get multiple router subscriptions so that if one experiences troubles my trad wife does not get disconnected and can't avoid completing the tasks she needs to do? Is this something I need to get fiber for? I'm assuming dial up won't work.



Trash_Talk_bot: posted 14 days ago

lol this lad is still using dial up. *Beep boop I'm a bot.*



MickieTrankz-a-lot: posted 9 days ago

What kind of power generator do you suggest I get to make sure my trad wife can complete her tasks at all times of the day or night except where it inconveniences me? Can I run this off my Tesla wall?



MMMM_Steak: posted 5 days ago

Do I need to worry about my house burning down if my trad wife is cooking dinner and she losses connectivity or is there a set up to turn the oven off when there is signal loss detected? Could this ruin my steak? Are there special safety protocols I need to install to make sure my smart home is not in danger when I have connectivity problems?



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I_Hate_Fish_bot: posted 5 days ago

lol this lad eats steak. *Beep Boop I'm a bot.*†



Fish_bot‡: posted 5 days ago

Fuck. You. *Beep boop I'm a bot.*



69_420_69: posted 4 days ago

Yeah, your concerns about your smart home trad wife burning down your house when she loses connectivity is a real threat, I knew a guy a couple of counties over that ran his rig a little too bare bones and was not willing to pony up the money to make shit safe and he paid the price.



I've made a bit of my own gear (you can find some of my work over at github) it is set up to blow the fuse of the oven using a ESP32 board if the smart home no longer finds that it has working internet access, just to be safe. There are a few other instances like that you also need to build in fail safes for as well, like when your trad wife is ironing, that can be a mess too. If you are not personally handy enough yourself to work with some of the things I got up to on github you can always look at the gear they sell at WifeSafe.com. They have some pretty good safety gear set ups and suggestions. You should check them out.



K1nK135_Belittling_53rv1c3: posted 4 days ago

Holy shit! What a fucking soy trad! Talk about overkill, using an ESP32 board to blow a fuse! What the hell man, that is incredibly overkill!



Saftey_Word: posted 4 days ago

Damn dude, you talk about just to be safe, but this is just sad.... You really got to make your security measures actually work if you want them to do something.



I_Hate_Fish_Bot: posted 4 days ago

lol This lad knows someone a county over! *Beep Boop I'm a bot.*



Gator_AIDS: posted 3 days ago

I live in Florida, is there special gear I need to purchase so my trad wife can clear out rubbish and clean mold out of my smart home after hurricane events or am I going to have to do that without the help of my trad wife?

† It's not fucking Friday dude! *Beep Boop I'm a bot.*

‡ See page 36



iRobot official: posted 19 seconds ago

Roomba.



(AlphaDavid): posted 3 days ago

I was sort of wondering how you all find your smart home trad wife match? Is there one specific dating site that is better for finding tech oriented trad wives or do you somehow have to train[§] your trad wife yourself? Is there a service for that?

How much am I required to interact with my trad wife. Do I actually need to talk with her? And if so, I assume they work better with Grok than with chatGPT.



HongKongBestKong: posted 6 hours ago

Use tradlife.cn



DevindEggs: posted 2 days ago

Hey anyone experiencing anything weird with your trad wife? I'm starting to have trouble logging into my email account and two step authentication is no longer working. My phone is not getting a code sent to it. Am I paranoid to think that my smart home trad wife may be involved or should I just assume that my information was somehow stollen on line?



Cracken: posted 1 day ago

Bro, you got to be careful with this shit. Trad wives can get up to no good my man. I always do a traceback to make sure I know what my trad wife has been up to. It is a no brainer that you need to install spy software or your trad's rig. No way am I letting some homemaker bitch get the better of me.

First what you should do is traceback your wife. Find out if where she says she comes from is where she is actually connecting to your home from. If you find that that bitch is fucking with you go scorched earth my man, it is the only language they understand. No fucking quarter!!



DevindEggs: posted 1 day ago

Ok, I'll try, I'm not exactly a techbro. Are there some automatic scripts I can find somewhere to get this job done?



StuieGotGame: posted 1 day ago

Yeah man, you should check out hrtywhy on GitHub. There are all types of malware there, it is good.

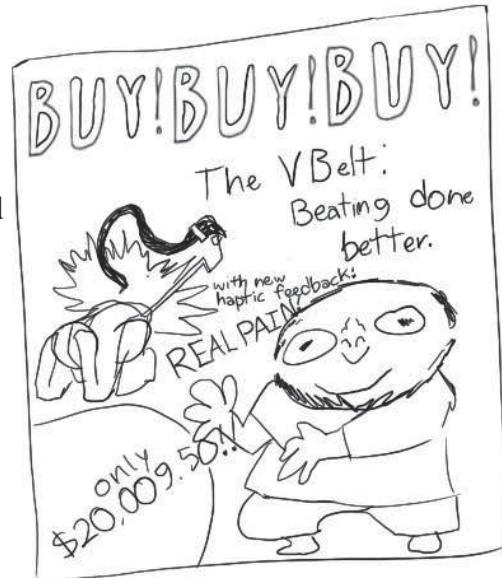


DevindEggs: posted 33 minutes ago

Fuck!! Fuck! She said she was from Utah! Fucking Utah. The traceback put her somewhere in Ohio. Are there even hot girls in Ohio? Is my trad wife lying to me? Maybe she is on vacation visiting family and this is all just a big misunderstanding.

[§] Pavlov's early work with dog training has been instrumental in designing and implementing state-of-the-art trad wife training programs, the only downside is that many of the trad wife participants find they experience automatic let down response^Δ when they look at toilets.

Δ The process by which milk is forcibly moved out of the alveoli. It is essential to milk removal from the lactating breast. Mothers typically experience Pavlovian responses and release milk when they hear a baby cry, or after they have associated inanimate objects with breastfeeding.





SmartBotski: posted 33 minutes ago

Lol dude got played! *Bip-bup ya bot.*



MachoPikachu: posted 26 minutes ago

Hey, Ohio? Isn't that where the lad wife lives? Fuck I think his name is Kevin? Anyone remember this? That fucking guy in central Ohio that pretends to be a smart home trad wife to get his rocks off? Doesn't he run a server farm so he can service multiple smart homes at once?

This would be epic if the guy actually got cat fished by Ohio Kevin!



KevinTheYounger: posted 7 minutes ago [*Kevin has been unbanned*]

Boys, Boys, please, you know I don't like that nasty little moniker of 'Ohio Kevin.' I am 'Kevin the Younger' thank you very much. And you always need to remember that Kevin never catfishes, Kevin loves! I can't help it if I was born to trad, my sweets. And please boys, you make it sound like there is only one person in Ohio!



KevinTheYounger: posted 3 minutes ago [*Kevin has been unbanned*]

But children, seriously, you can't even see your trads! What does it matter to you if she is a 42 year old man in Ohio as long as your laundry gets done and you have freshly ground coffee in your cup? If I could, my sweets, I would curl up in all your laps and fill all your dreams with the scents of freshly baked pecan pie! But alas! Kevin is but one voluptuous man, buxom and brawny, and is actually spread a little thin right now. But Devin, seriously, you need to check your bank accounts and do a credit check, Smart Home Trad Wife Cat Fishing is a real problem.

And next time you are in the market for a real trad, Mister Eggs, look me up, Kevin will treat you right!

Part 2: Machiavelli's *The Little Prince*

Our age is one of change and wonders, and we are the leading, sharp edge. Magic fills our lives — magic mirrors that show us distant lands and let us speak with people half-a-world away, machines built in the image of man, replicant minds that compose our essays and answer our exams without credit or compensation. And why shouldn't they? We are the masters of our futures.

That is truly what I had thought as I found myself trundling the shaded paths of Lagos Nigeria on a mission from chat. My trek wound around rather circuitously and chat was as boisterous as ever, when I suddenly found my bag that carried much of my backup batteries and extra memory torn from my shoulders. I took chase in those tiny little cramped alleys until the miscreant threw the bag in frustration and ducked out along another path. Looking through the pack I found

most of my gear still intact, but strangely my glass and phone no longer appeared to have bars. My hotspot did not work either. I found myself in an area bereft of all signals.

Somewhere along my chase I had lost chat and signal, I almost lost my glass. The area around me was rundown and deserted. In a world of people and signal I could find neither. Without a functioning hotspot I could no longer run my mapping software to find my way out of that realm. I found myself wishing I had sprung for that portable starlink gear when I had the chance. But now I was hopelessly lost in a foreign land without my ever present chat to keep me company.

And that was when I met him. He was small and stocky by Lagos build with the customary dark hued complexion

and clear dark eyes. His hair, uncharacteristically bleached, shone like gold in the sun. I asked him about wifi and bluetooth and bars, he only smiled, knowingly, and offered me some food.

The next day when I asked him to help me get signal enough for Google maps to work, he only laughed with a wry smile and said, “eh, no.”

“But how do I find my way out of here if I have no signal?”

“Walk in one direction consistently for any length of time and you will find your way out, follow the sun.”

“I don’t know how to do that.”

Realizing that I would never be able to leave this place, I resigned myself to my fate. I decided to learn more about my small companion.

My companion rarely spoke of himself and when he did only briefly and in passing. It was only over the course of days and piecing together disjointed bits of conversation that was I able to discern who my companion[†] was.

At first it seemed that the small man was exceedingly hostile to technology, but over the course of days I was to find that was not at all the case. It was not that he was not hostile, he had hostility to spare, but technology was a tool he did in fact know how to wield.

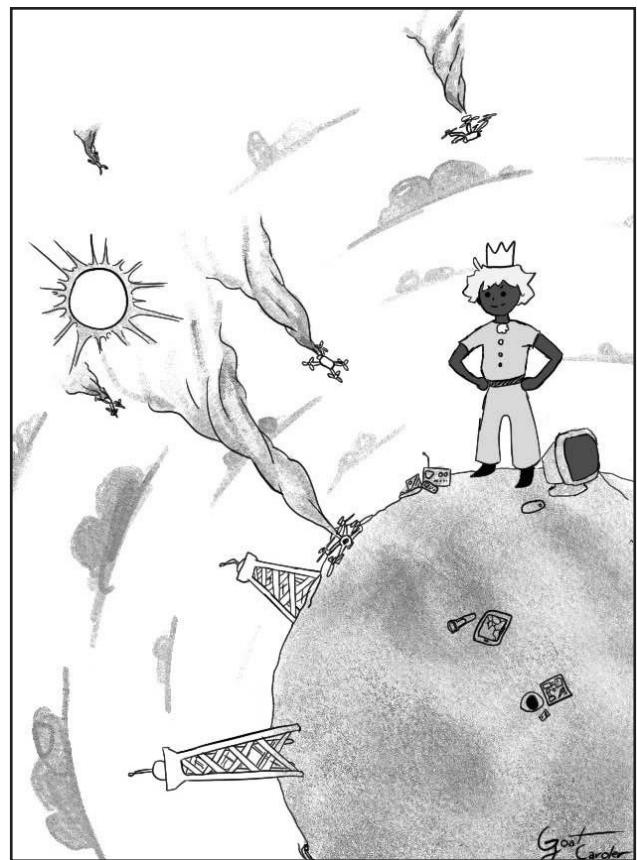
Chat, you may be wondering exactly how I am contacting you right now, if in fact anyone is able to read my messages. I hope someone is out there and can use this to help find me. But I digress. It turns out that the reason I have no signal of any sort here is because this strange man, he calls himself Prince Alyusi Islassis, has a set of strange devices to jam all manner of air born signals.

They sit atop poles. They appear to consist of solar arrays attached to car batteries and other strange devices I can not quite make out. The area around for some distance appears to have so many of these devices, I can not count them all. I had at one point tried to take a closer look when I realized that I felt rather terrible.

The Prince simply laughed at me and gestured to several devices around the array that seemed to point all around, “microwave,” was all he said.

The Prince blocks all signals that run through air, but he appears to have a hard wired system and has even offered to allow me to connect via a dial-up device to send these sparse missives. I have not got access to enough bandwidth to find my way out, but I can send small text messages out. And I hope, chat, that you are receiving them.

While I do appear to be the Prince’s prisoner, he is not a mean jailer. He feeds me, and laughs at me, and sometimes tells me things about himself.



His home is unassuming, but it shows no signs of modern conveniences. While he has an air conditioner, a stove, a refrigerator, an air fryer, none of these devices have the smart functions that we have come to expect. I can’t post to Instagram from the refrigerator like I can from my home.

There is no real sign of the modern conveniences, except when you go into his workshop. There he has things even I have not seen before. He apparently has run fiber to his house and has tremendous amount of bandwidth. He appears to have a server farm, but everything is run with ethernet cable and I am unable to make it compatible with my equipment.

The Prince is savvy and I’m sure he would be able to

[†] Le Petite Jailer

fix something up, but rather he insists I use some arcane dial up device to send my poor texts from. I think, secretly, he delights in denying me the tech.

In his workshop, along with the server farm he has some sort of microscope that he straps various chips to so that he can work out their designs more fully. He regularly dissects various gadgets, the stories they tell him I can only guess at. When he has rendered a device asunder he merely takes it outside to the technological midden heap he has amassed in his backyard.

I have asked him what he does here. What could he possibly be doing with all these devices. But I only hear bits and dregs, scraps he throws me when he is maybe not reining in his tongue. Apparently he has become far more lucrative than his mother's cousin, Osmond Eweka, and at the very least he has not gotten caught.

Sometimes when I ask what he is doing as he peruses the output of his server farm, he will laugh. Then he will only say, "I am watering my roses. Roses need constant care if you want them to bear fruit."

While my jailer seems amiable enough he has deep seated anger. When he drinks a bit too much he will rail for hours about the Nigerian Prince email scam.

"Why should they make money off of my name?" he will shout into the void. "It is my name, it should be my money!"

Then as if he is driven to it, he will invariably walk to

the server farm once again and laugh, simply saying, "fruit," and sometimes, "fuck you Kevin."

After what felt like years, the Prince came to me, "I've got a package. It's not that hard to get out, you know?" It

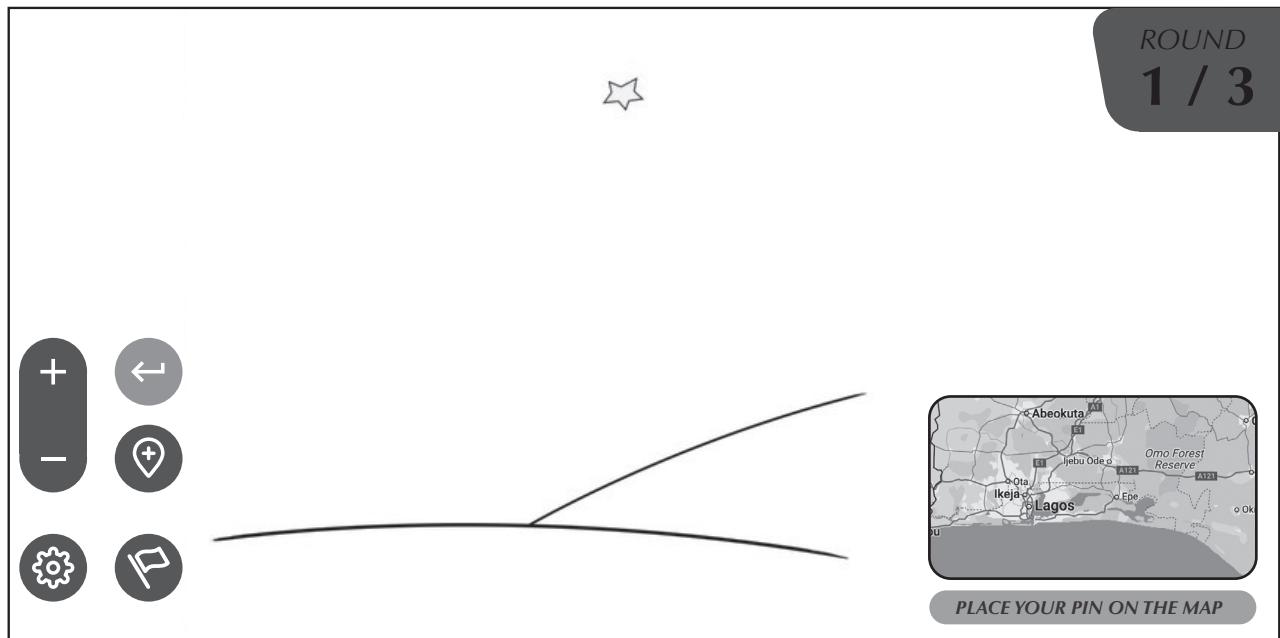
seemed like a summons. I grabbed my sparse belongings and trailed Alyusi for what seemed like hours.

There on a corner was a man with a motorcycle unstrapping a box from the back of his bike. Looking around I noticed that the ever present jamming towers did not appear to be around here. I suddenly realized that perhaps I might free myself from the chains that had until now held me back. Putting the glass upon my face once more I saw that once again I was connected.

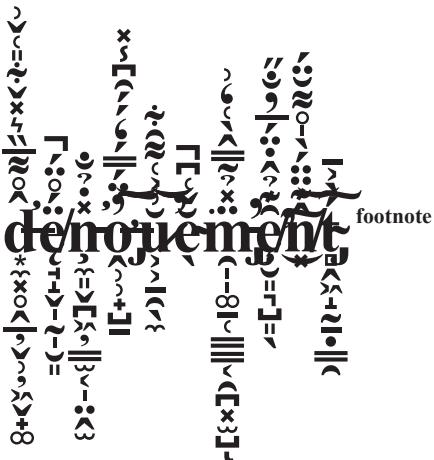
I turned to tell Alyusi that I could find my way now, but he was gone.

Chat, if you find yourself in Lagos Nigeria lost without signal, and "if a little man appears who laughs, who has golden hair and who refuses to answer questions, you will know who he is."[‡]

[‡] Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de. 0T(1945). *Le Petit Prince*. Reynal & Hitchcock



Part 3: denouement



footnote



Washington, Feb 16 - Authorities believe tens of thousands of Smart Home users have been locked out of their homes. Many of these Smart Home users reportedly were sent a message from an unknown assailant only calling himself, "the real Nigerian prince."

According to our sources this real Nigerian prince expresses displeasure with all the scams run in his name and he is using this opportunity to seek compensation for all the money he feels should have gone to him all along. This is being accomplished by holding American Smart Homes electronically hostage until the ransom is paid off or the victim pays for a ransom subscription service.

Authorities have traced these messages back to Nigeria, but they are unable to identify the person or persons involved. They believe this to be the work of a major crime syndicate working in or around the Nigerian capital.

Authorities urge all Americans to act cautiously when they find they are approached by what are being called Smart Home Traditional Wives. It appears that this individual or individuals is gaining access to Americans Smart Homes by posing as Traditional Wives for the Smart Home era. These individuals gain trust by performing menial chores using the Smart Homes systems and by preying on men who are uncomfortable with women, but still want to feel served by them. Once trusted enough the perpetrators learn how to take over the Smart Home systems and lock them down until the ransom is paid off.

Authorities are asking all Americans who are currently involved in a Smart Home Traditional Wife movement to take precautions and make sure you know who your Traditional Wife actually is.

fig. 1 early testing of
l-d tradwife systems





Welcome home. It's nice to meet you.

by Sean T. Hammond

It would shock me to my core if many people holding these deadtrees knew what *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* was.

Why would you? It has been twenty years since the trash cans of RIT have been graced with issues of *GDT*, deposited there by furious readers (and sometimes furious faculty or administrators). For a brief period of time, *GDT* was Rochester's most prolific student-run publication. Yes. Rochester. At its peak, *GDT* was a weekly publication of arts, satire, and general fuck-you-ish-ness that was distributed on RIT, the University of Rochester, Monroe Community College, and could be found in the best coffee houses in the city. The publication created a 501(c)(3)[†] organization to help provide financial and legal cover to the upstart publications that joined, and through Hell's Kitchen became a part of the Independent Press Association.

We did a lot, often times poorly, but sometimes it's the act of doing that matters.

That was literally decades ago. Up until relatively recently there was even a Wikipedia entry about *GDT*, but—I kid you not—long running campaigns to delete the page finally succeeded in 2023, and we fade faster. *GDT* has, at best, become a minor urban myth on the RIT campus and internet cruft.

So back to my original thesis: I would be shocked if you know what *GDT* is. Welcome. This is *GDT*. This is our 30th birthday, and we'll cry if we want to.

† There's a funny story about that process. Well...I think it's funny. When we first applied to be recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization—a tax exempt organization whose goals included literary, educational, and scientific activities—the IRS initially rejected our organizing document. They were not particularly pleased with our organizing document, saying: "...a frivolous Constitution, which is how we interpret your existing Constitution, certainly has a place in the organization's activities since you are an organization one of whose purposes is satire.... We will require a more traditional organizing document...." Never one to miss an opportunity like that, I renamed the document "The Far From Frivolous Organizing Document for Hell's Kitchen," abbreviated it as F3ODFHK, insisted that it was pronounced "Fod-fuck," and resubmitted without any other changes. The IRS approved that version of the document, so never let it be said that the IRS does not have a sense of humor.

In November of 1964, the environmental activist Jack Weinberg said "we don't trust anyone over 30" to a reporter that was insinuating that protesters were being directed/paid/controlled by Communists behind the scenes.

Sound familiar?

I, myself, am older than 30. I'm a professor at a university. I lecture about things that I find hot and heavy and sharp. Things that sometimes make me so angry and upset that I start to cry in lecture. I'm not sure my students notice.... But my point is that what I did in my time with *GDT* was not so different from what I do as a Professor, and it's why I think things like *GDT* are necessary.

I tell my students that it is my job to make them uncomfortable — to talk about things that make your brain itch. I want my students to walk away changed, not only in what they can regurgitate, but in how they see the world. I want them to sort of resent me for making them see the world in new ways—like seeing a photograph of a landscape taken using UV light; the contrasts familiar but alien.

I want them to feel alien in the world.

Back when my co-editor and I were publishing *GDT* on a weekly basis, I wanted *GDT* to make people uncomfortable. I wanted the ideas on the pages to be grit in the shell. I wanted people to be upset—not for the sake a trolling (though there was some of that)—but because there was a lot to be upset about. To paraphrase the author Harlan Ellison, I couldn't stab a flaming pencil into everyone's eye, so I wrote. A lot of it was drivel. Bad. Cringey. But there were also things I am still proud of today, and the friendships I made through *GDT* have lasted all these decades. We were making a Thing, something from our minds onto paper, and we traumabonded in the process. In addition to all the OG contributors that are listed in the "Dramatis Personae," there are many more that helped behind the scenes to bring this artifact to you. Encouraging, giving feedback, helping me re-learn how to help birth this fucking thing. It was hard. It is hard. It's supposed to be hard. And sharp. And heavy.

A student at RIT was interested in preserving some of *GDT*'s lore, so my companion-in-sometimes-crime, Kelly Gunter, and I were interviewed in July of 2023. I'm not sure our unsuspecting interviewer was prepared for what that process would be like, but two hours later we were done.[‡] One of the questions we were asked surprised me: should *GDT*, or something like *GDT* be restarted by a new group.

Yesbut. The important thing is, what do people mean what they ask that?

Is there a need for something like *GDT*? Yes. Holy shit yes. Have you looked at the world? We live in a media landscape where the best investigative journalism is done by fucking comedians. The fourth estate has been gutted, news rooms relegated to cut-and-paste busy work where press releases are the job. Report what happens, but don't assign blame. Don't assign responsibility. Don't dig in. Was *GDT* better? Eh oh eh, no. Well... sometimes, but not often. We were a source of weekly discomfort, taking a mundane evil and shepherding it to its logical-illogical conclusion. A sneak peek of what would happen if that week's particular trolley problem was allowed to roll on—no one bothering to pull the lever and kill the one to save the many.

If you don't get angry, there's something wrong.

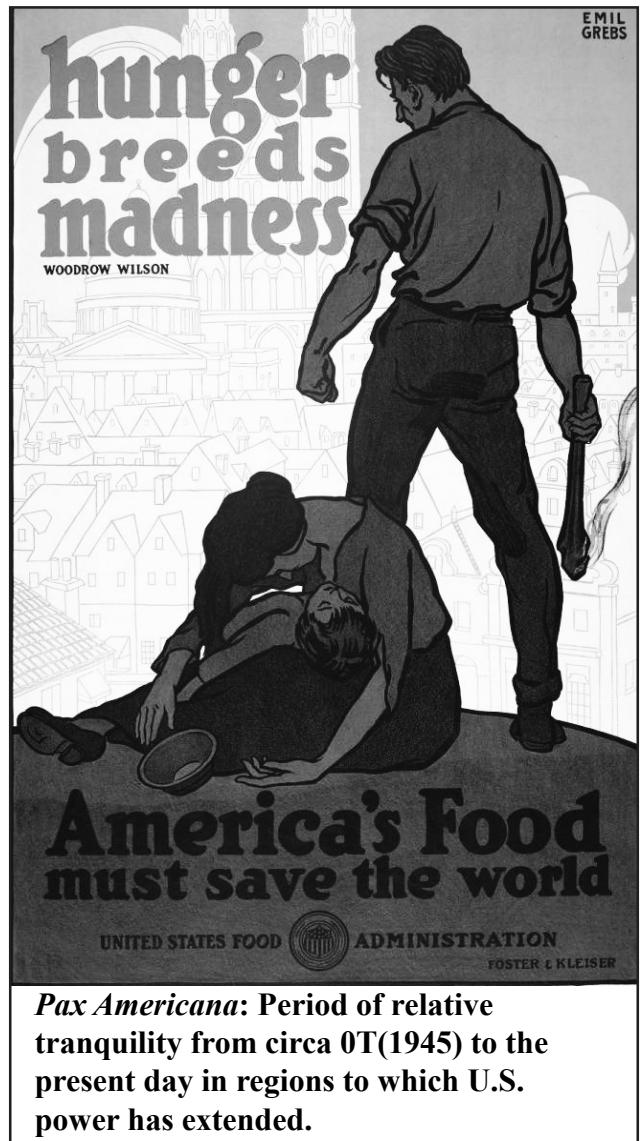
Everyone that worked on *GDT* for those 10 years, everyone that read it, everyone had their own unique relationship with it. For the people involved, the fans, the contributors, the editors, the detractors, *GDT* was A Thing. *GDT* was a product of the people that made it, and of it's time. As is noted later in these pages, referential comedy has a timestamp, *GDT* was definitely referential. Anything that could arise, whether it is named *Gracie's Dinnertime Theatre* or not, would have to be product of this time. And would be referential. And have a timestamp.

In the last lecture of one of my classes, after a semester of uncomfortable topics, I close by trying to impress on my students something I think is critically important. And, if you are a student at RIT, if you've gotten this far, I'm going to try and impress the same idea onto you: this time in your life is uniquely special. Not because of the friends you'll make along the way or some happy horseshit like that, but because for maybe the first time

in your life you are away from your parents. Away from the friend group you grew up with. Your low-tier Maslow things are provided, and divorced from those parental and familiar habits, you get to ask yourself why you are the way you are. Do you dress and behave and eat the things you do because you choose them, or were they chosen for you by your parents and their parents and their parents before them. How much of you is really you choosing to be you.

I argue that this unique position you are in lets you do something powerful: question. If you are older then responsibilities weigh down. If you are younger then the swirling currents of home suffuse you. Ask questions. It's your job. And whether you know it or not, you are good at it.

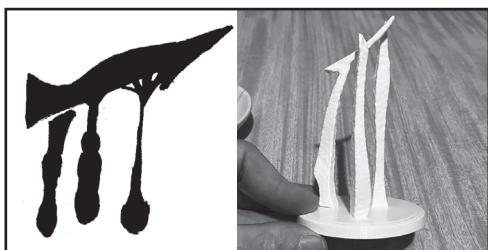
And if questioning is in the form of a 'zine with poor production values and questionable content, so be it.



[‡] The whole audio of the interview is available on YouTube, if you are interested.

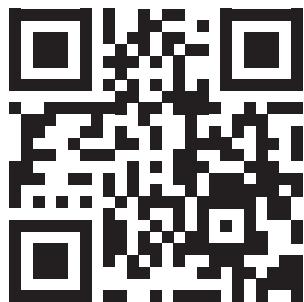
youtu.be/YmstcsemCAg?si=oShfhZVsbtCn18yv&t=0

3d Print Your Own GDT Logo

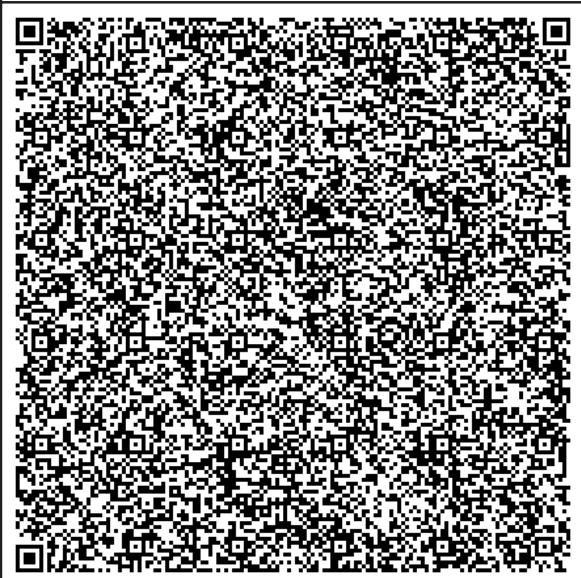
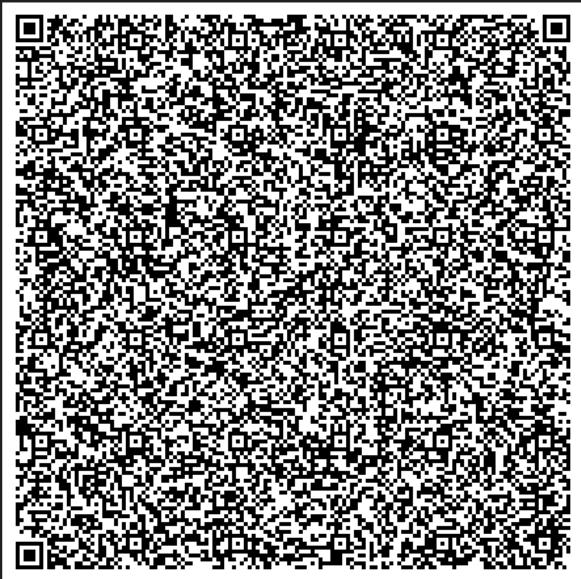
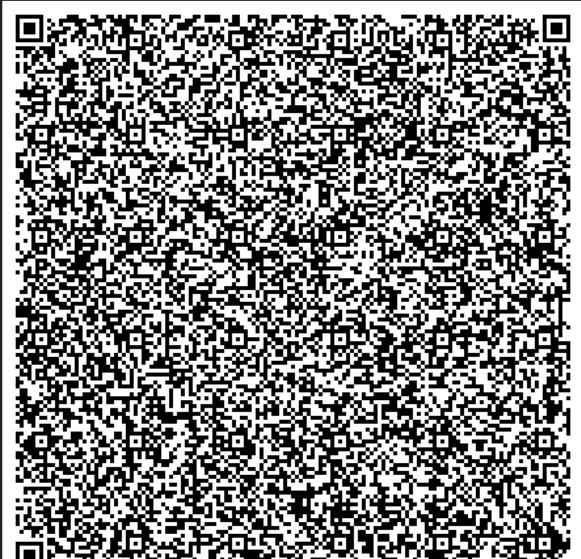


It is with quite a bit of glee that we offer you, our baffled new readers, the opportunity to 3d print your own *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* logo in-the-round. Having worked closely with Atramentor, one of Hell Inc's printer daemons, we're relatively sure the process is painless.

So go on. Do it. Coward.

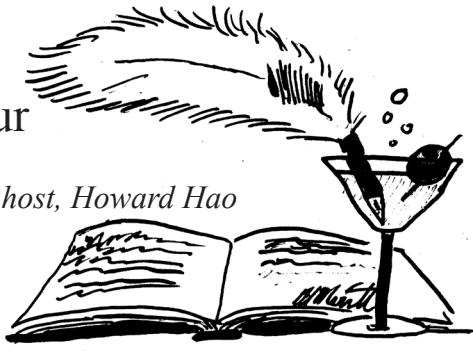


[hellskitchen.org/gdt/3d]



Howard's Happy Hour

with your host, Howard Hao



Your "Conservative" Lifestyle Is Bullshit or: The Selfish Do As They Please With No Repercussions

Invoking something
To shield your bad behavior
Take no ownership

Lying to oneself
Convinced it is but virtue
When you're the asshole

Stupid People Everywhere

Staying blind, closed mind
Shun experience; too bad
Missed life of richness

Real Life

Warm feeling surging
Burgeoning, intense, power
Release of tension

Another Generation

Not always easy
But richness beyond compare
For me: gentle hugs

Pessimism

How the fuck did we
Get here? Progress is moving
The wrong way; undone

Ranconteur

Come, have a sit with me
Warm yourself with a drop of tea
Have a listen to a word or three
As I weave some yarns for thee

Return to Saddle

Not that things were ever fully abandoned
But it had begun to crack
And wither
Was chipped
And feel into gentle disrepair
Over the kinetics of seconds.
For a while, it was
That other things had superiority
Life moves swiftly and you'll miss it
If you blink
But these occurrences, people
Also helped process
So there was no emergency.
But all was futile as the fuel of creativity
Stills hibernates within veins
Resides in aging capillaries
And all it needed was a gentle nudge
To start surging again

Optimism

However, as bleak
As is, this too shall move on
Swing the other way



Ask the Barefoot Girl Old Woman

by Kelly Gunter

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre fought many battles with then President Simone of RIT. The outcome of these was that Dr. Simone not only cut any funding that would help go to printing *GDT* but also disallowed us from using any campus resources for our publication; that is we were not allowed to print at the HUB, we were not allowed to use any on campus computers or printers, and even Computer Science House(CSH) was told they would not be allowed to give us any resources. Those taste like some pretty sour grapes.

On numerous occasions Dr. Simone was asked, especially in a public forum called “Ask Simone” why he was appearing to step on our First Amendment rights, and why he had gone to so much trouble to run us off of campus. Here is an excerpt of his answer to one of these questions posted on 10/07/2004.

“RIT’S PURPOSE IS TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREERS AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES. THE CONVERSATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN OCCURRING IN *GDT* OVER THE YEARS HAVE NO PLACE IN THE WORKPLACE OR IN THE HOME, AND THE SOONER THOSE RIT STUDENTS FOR WHOM THIS IS AN ISSUE LEARN THIS LESSON THE BETTER PREPARED THEY WILL BE.”†

Well now, it’s been a minute...or 30 years. Have I learned that these conversations have no place in the workplace or in the home? I will say I generally did not engage in conversations quite like this in the workplace to much of an extent, maybe breadcrumbs dropped here or there. But in the home, ah, the home is a different beast all together.

Many articles in this 30th anniversary were, in fact, penned by myself and my children—often working in tandem to complete them. These articles include the main article which actually came about as a conversation my eldest child and I had as we walked to-and-from the local grocery store to buy milk. The further introduction of the element of the Nigerian Prince scam to the story was brought in by my youngest child, as well as the illustrations for the main article. The article about bad pick up lines happened because one evening at dinner we were to discover that my youngest child had a penchant for creating them. He ended up teaching the strategy to me and my eldest child and in this way we were all able to contribute. A number of the definitions were also created by my children and I.

Is it good to have these conversations in the home? I will let you judge for yourself on that. What I have seen is that my children and I laugh more than any other family I know. We always enjoy talking to one another and, as we call it, ‘playing.’ We no more shy away from stupid conversations than we do from smart conversations. We are a family that is not afraid to say just about anything

to each other, and for that reason we do not shy away from the necessary and hard conversations as well.

My eldest child, when trying to help friends, has often asked, “have you tried talking with your parents about this?” And the answer is usually that that is an impossibility. But in my family no conversation is too hard, too easy, too silly, or too depraved to have. In this way my children know that they can always tell their parents anything and that they will always be heard.

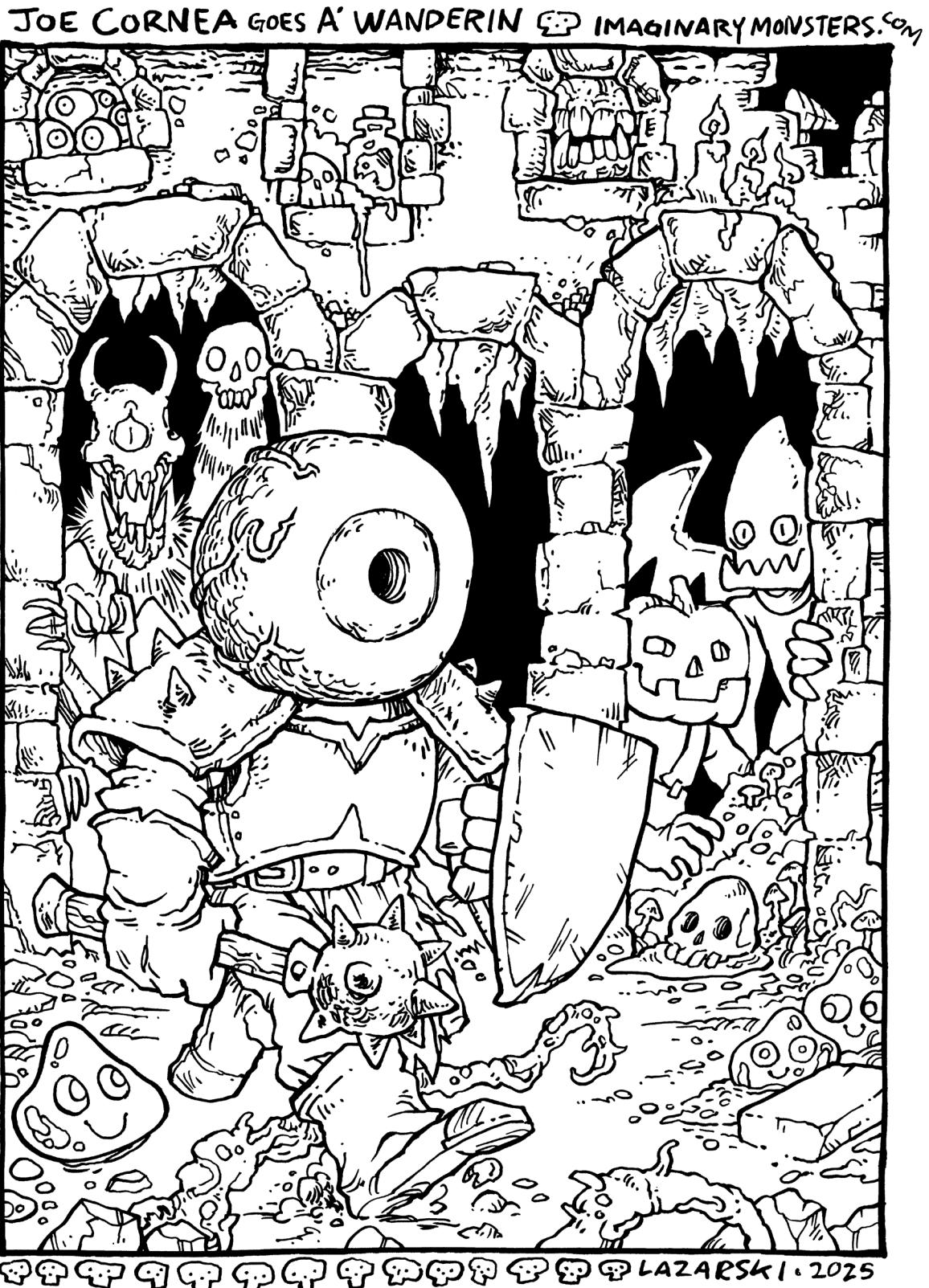


You can see for yourself how this works in the home. We recorded the process of working on and revising the main article in *GDT* so that others can try to recreate how this works. Generally we start with an idea, this idea may be something that is created by multiple people. Then usually one person writes up a rough draft of the idea. After that a group gets together, in this case it was my family, but in the past it was a random group of *GDT* writers. One person reads out the rough draft while the other people call out suggestions or sometimes sit down and write bits out. So if you ever wondered how we captured having the voice of a schizophrenic

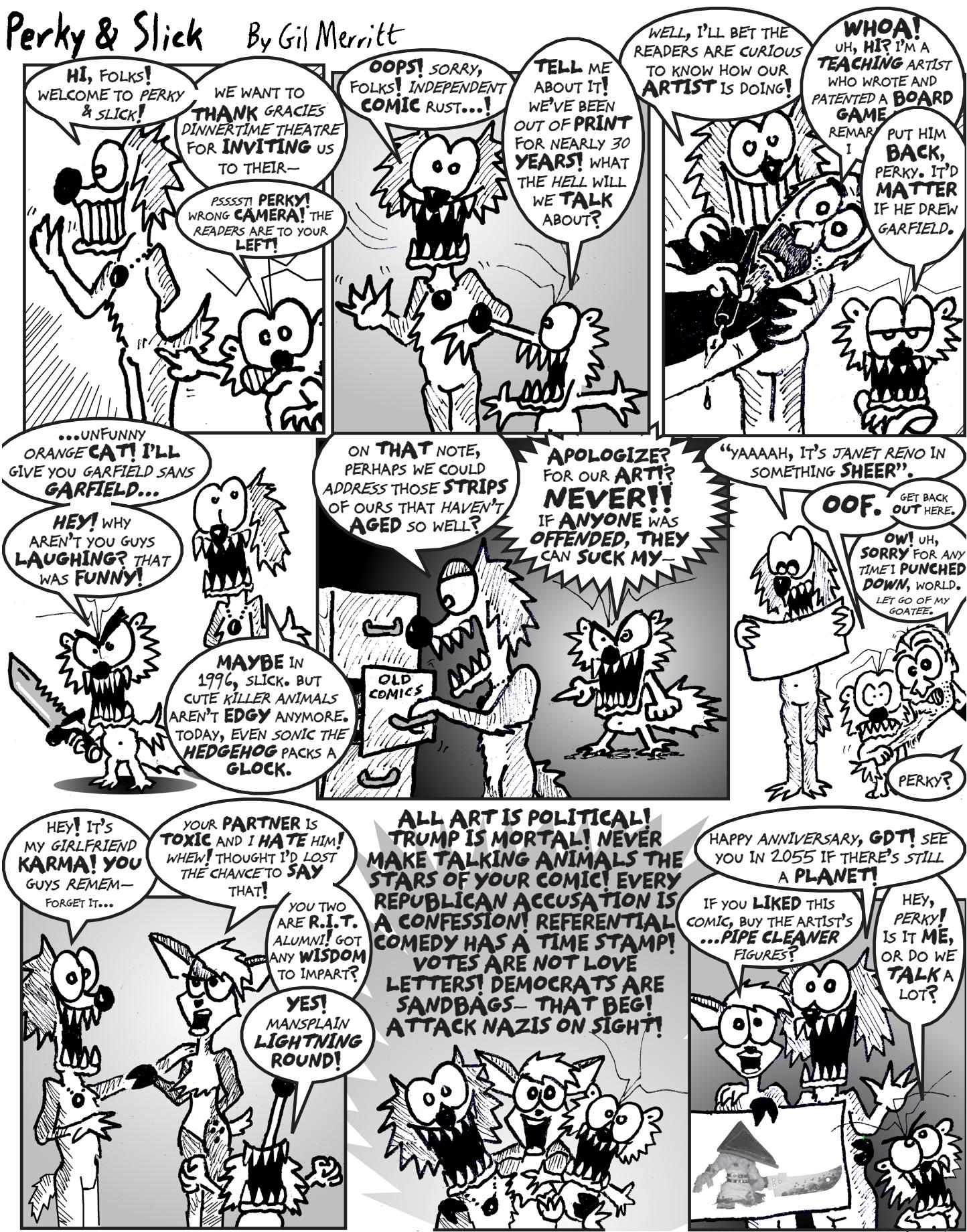
† “Ask Simone.” 2004. Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.5. RIT Digital Archive. web.archive.org/web/20220705192709/ <https://digitalarchive.rit.edu/xmlui/handle/1850/972>. Retrieved 13 July 2023.

quite so well, now you know. At any rate we recorded the process this time and you can hear not only how to get your friends together and create your own *GDT* main article, but also hear how it is my family gets along. You can find this recording on the *GDT* website along with many other things.^Δ

Does this truly not belong in the home? Well, my name may not be Ozymandias, but feel free to look upon my works (my children), ye mighty, and despair. I know I do.



Perky & Slick By Gil Merritt





Pickup Lines

by *The Goat Caroller, Kelly Gunter, Sean T. Hammond*

We know how hard it can be: you're sitting in the Grace Watson Dining commons reading an issue of *GDT* that has somehow managed to return to its homeland, you see someone you are attracted to, but you don't have any concept of what to do. Social awkwardness, meet RIT nerd culture.

To assist you, we at *GDT* have compiled a selection of sure-to-succeed pickup lines, guaranteed to result in a successful pull. Shhh, don't be afraid. We'll get through this together.

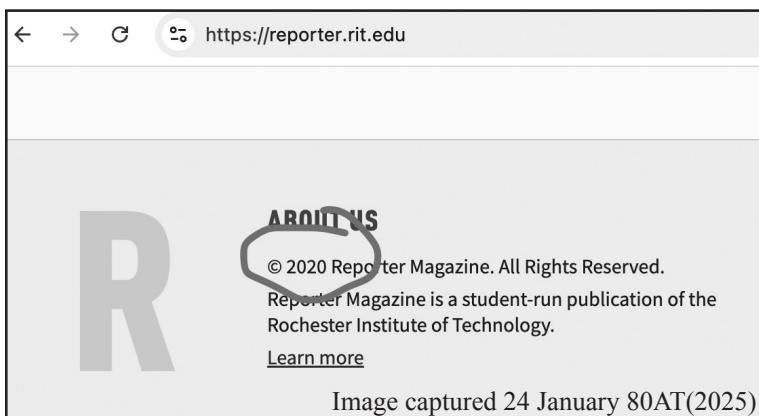
- Hey girl, are you a river otter? Because I need you to stop hitting me with that rock.
- Hey girl, are you a bag of chips? Because you're 80% air.
- Hey girl, are you a bee? Because you should not be able to fly.
- Hey girl, are you a hummingbird? Because you eat two times your weight in sugar.
- Hey girl, are you a trout?
- Hey girl, are you a tube of toothpaste? Because nine out of ten dentists recommend you.
- Hey girl, are you a ceiling fan? Because you spin in circles and make concerning noises.
- Hey girl, are you a smoke detector? Because you keep beeping at 3am for no reason.
- Hey girl, are you a tardigrade? Because I just can't fucking kill you.
- Hey girl, are you Edgar Alan Poe? Because you married your cousin, died in a gutter after committing voter fraud, and WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT THE ORANGUTAN!
- Hey girl, are you a potato? Because you've been in my basement for three months.
- Hey girl, are you a flamingo? Because the only reason you are that colour is all the poison you've been eating.
- Hey girl, are you discrete mathematics? Because that doesn't mean you're not countably infinite.
- Hey girl, are you UDP? Because I'm sending signals and getting no response.
- Hey girl. Hey girl. HEY. HEY!

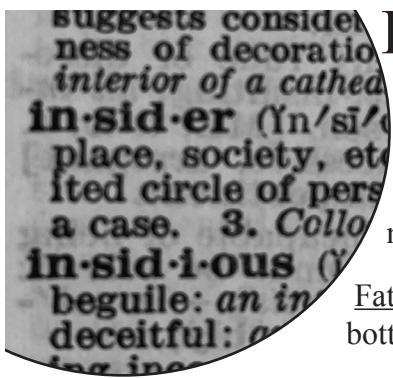
Dear Reporter Magazine,

I heard you don't publish weekly anymore...only monthly. That happens as you age. The vigour of youth fades, but at least you update your webpage daily. Awesome. So...can you update your copyright notice? No one has bothered to update that for five years?

Hugs and Snugs,

-Your long-time fan





Definitions

by B. Edward Barrett, Kelly Gunter, Sean T. Hammond, and Shamon H. Hamula

Doppelänger — The phenomenon of two completely unrelated things provoking anger in identical ways, as if they share an infuriating essence despite having nothing else in common.

Fathomable Depths — Holes, Pits, or Pools in which you can in fact see the bottom or even touch it, usually with a short stick.

Fucked to a standstill — What is happening to Russia in late 2024.

GDT Definitions Page — A respite from the dense writing you’re used to. Established early on in *GDT*’s lifespan so the authors could take a break from the more strenuous articles when they needed to, while still producing content and hitting publication deadlines.

Graftitude — Expressing gratitude for laws passing after the fact is not graft and is in fact perfectly legal.[†]

Infathomable Depths — Not to be confused with your run-of-the-mill fathomable depths, these particular depressions in the landscape aren’t simply impossible or difficult to fully observe or understand, but take active measures to stay that way.

Laundcry — When something goes catastrophically wrong with your laundry. You know you’ve been there.

Meteorwrongs — Incorrectly labeled asteroids.

Nepomancer — Someone capable of bringing back their friends and family.

Nepotism — Drowning your family for God. See also “nepotismal”.

Nepotismal — Related to drowning your family.

Obsessive Compulsive Spartanism — Trying to reduce things in your life by giving them away. See also “Santa Claus”.

Platypus — A kitten’s best friend.

The Final Countdown — BA DA BA BUM! BA-DA-BA-BA-BUM!

The Unbearable Lightness of Weeing — An often-sudden realization that you are becoming lighter. See also Breaking the Seal.[‡]

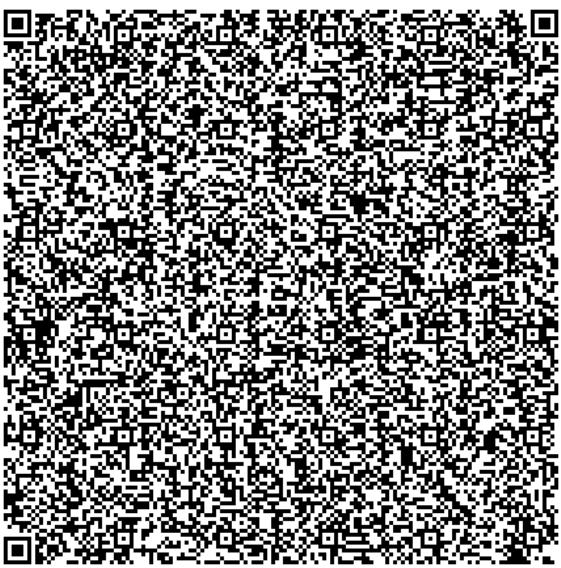
Unpossible — Very, very difficult as opposed to ‘impossible’.

Winge Watch — The act of viewing a television show or IP just to complain about it.

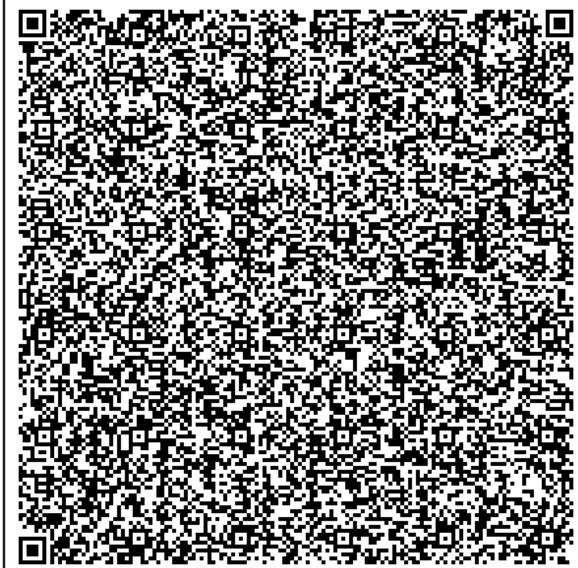
Youphemism — The result of gaslighting someone into thinking their language is the problem instead of whatever ideas you’re peddling. The “less offensive” replacement terminology they pick up from you is a youphemism.

[†] “ALTHOUGH A GRATUITY OR REWARD OFFERED AND ACCEPTED BY A STATE OR LOCAL OFFICIAL AFTER THE OFFICIAL ACT MAY BE UNETHICAL OR ILLEGAL UNDER OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL LAWS, THE GRATUITY DOES NOT VIOLATE [18 U.S.C. SECTION] 666.” *Snyder v. United States*, 603 U.S. 1 (2024), opinion delivered by Justice Kavanaugh.

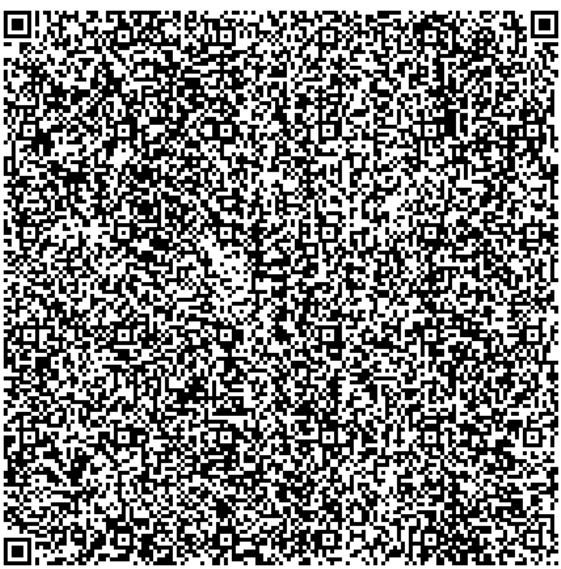
[‡] Of course, when you look at Breaking the Seal, it indicates something about how you can no longer return an item at the original price because it has somehow become devalued.



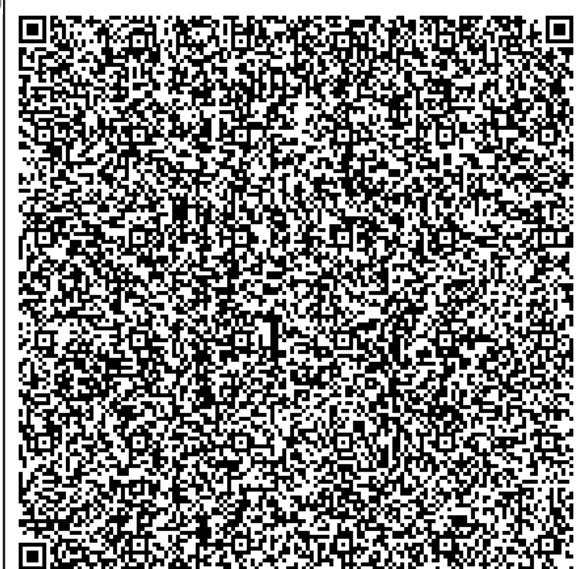
Four(4) of ten(10): The universe
appreciates your attention to detail.



Five(5) of ten(10): History will vindicate
your fashion choices.



Six(6) of ten(10): Your plants use you as a
good example.



Seven(7) of ten(10): You smell very good.
Like freshly cut wood and Christmas.

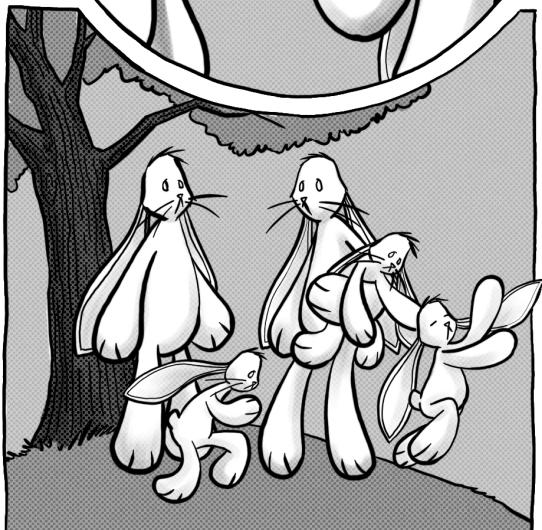
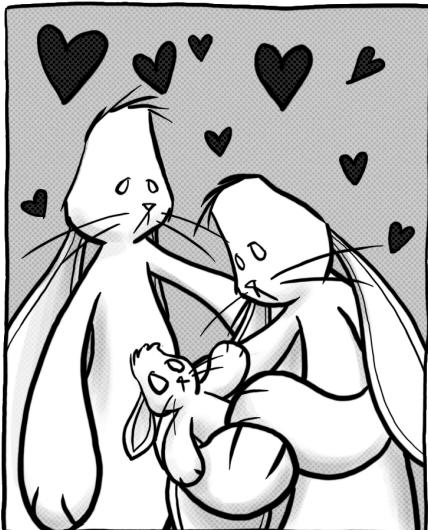
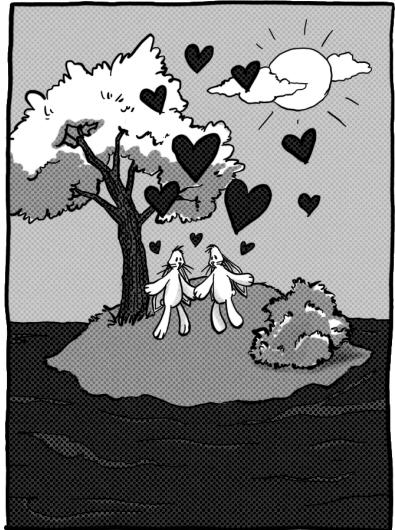
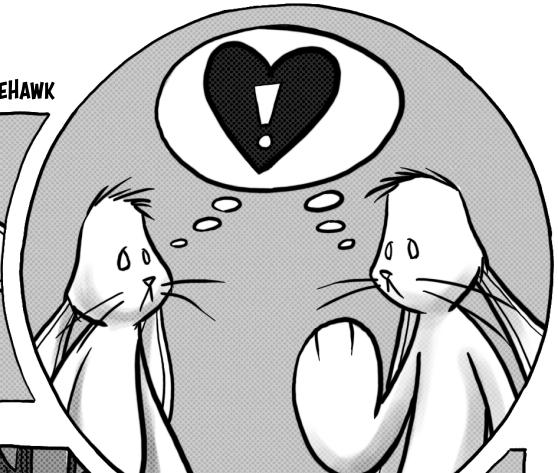
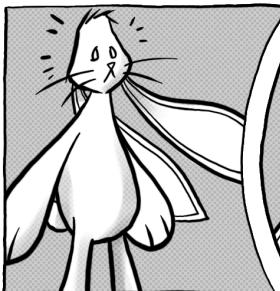
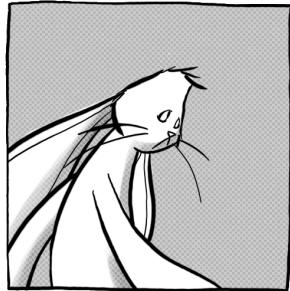
Location of Nebraska[†]



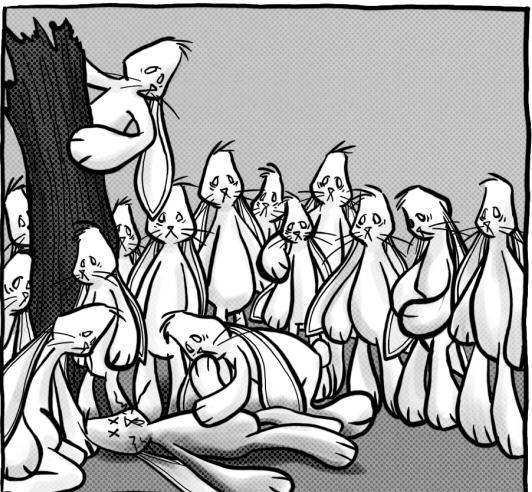
[†] The prophecy is fulfilled.

CAUTIONARY TAIL! (A HAIKU)

BY EHAWK



ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE...
AND FOOD AND MONEY AND SPACE
AND MAYBE DOCTORS



In the great tradition of ROO, the Rochester Institute of Technology brings you...



Pause asses. Why solve?
Why indeed? Proof that trying too hard and not hard enough to make an acronym is possible.



The ABCs of RIT: Arizona Campus, Balloon Ritchie, and the CIA (A Eulogy on the Soul of the RIT Student)

by Igor Polotai

What is the institutional legacy of RIT? And I don't mean the million dollar theater cubes that keep being built everywhere that Munson heralds as the next innovation of the arts before posing for a picture with his white person version of the Reuban, but the fond memories of that alumni will recall when thinking back to their time in this brick purgatory. Will alumni remember the "glass that doesn't scream at you" or the "experimental cuisine" that one student described RIT as to the Democrat and Chronicle? Or will they take one look at r/rit, see someone complaining about "the fetishization of engineering majors" and that "the females on this campus are out of control," and decide that they had enough internet for today?

When I was lifeguarding at my local community pool back in May 2023, aside from trying to stop kids from throwing chairs into the deep end, I was pondering my first year at RIT. Swirling in my head were the many stories I heard from all corners of RIT. "Did you know there's a secret tunnel that connects the residential and academic tunnel system? It's true!" (it's not). "There's an Escherian Stairwell in Gannett that was designed by Filipino architect Rafael Nelson Aboganda!" (true). "When will Munson use his Weather Machine to finally get us some good weather?" (jury's out on that one).

From stickers advertising a Charles Manson satanic murder cult, to physics students buying Chernobyl uranium from a sketchy Russian website, to a samurai hilt umbrella that caused the campus to go into lockdown, there is a lot of lore that gets passed down

from student to student in huddled whispers. "Surely someone has compiled them into a list or something?" I thought naively. "Well I guess if I have some free time..."

Twenty one agonizing months later, and I'm no closer to figuring out the mind of the average RIT student. While I released the first version of the RIT Iceberg Project in August 2023, I knew my battle was not over. How were soap bombing the Gosnell Fountain, Kengar Dongatron getting ahegao clothes banned from Career Fair, and Girl Themed Parties all connected? What was the student culture at RIT?

Obviously we weren't a party school (the desperate posts asking for gaming girlfriends show that RIT students have no "gentlemanly" aura). Are we defined by our generally nerdy culture? Maybe. Fraternities here have never taken off like at other schools, and aside

from a yearly appearance of DJ Munson, most RIT students are content with technological endeavors that only end when either the sun comes up or the FBI break down the door, whichever happens first. Go into a Digital History class, and you'll see it is packed with computer scientists and mechanical engineers surprised that it's a class about creating history databases and not about the video game console wars. But no, there has to

be more to this story. Having long lost control of the tumbling rock of Sisyphus, I delved once again into answering the central question. I was introduced to the RIT Archives (mistake #1) and started reading Simon J. Bronner's at times bizarre accounts of student folklore from across America's colleges (mistake #2).



And because the best things come in threes, a few weeks later, I unleashed the fury of Rochester winters upon the innocent adobes of Albuquerque, New Mexico, as the winter storms seemingly followed my plane and coated the desert cactus in snow. “You know, we don’t often see snow here. A winter storm warning? Crazy!” one Albuquerque resident said to me. “Yeah, tell me about it,” I mumbled, having left my winter mittens back in Rochester (mistake #3).

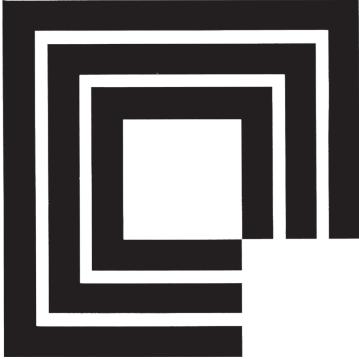
I was here for the American Folklore Society’s Annual Meeting, where I would be chairing a panel with Professors John H. McDowell from the University of Indiana and Sheila Bock from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, on the topic of college student folklore. By this point I had spent over a year in the trenches of RIT Reddit, SnapChat, Yik Yak, and Instagram, so few things truly shocked me anymore. But I got to say, the commemorative school spirit coins, minted after a shooting at a college, certainly did stun me. Unfortunately, they were not redeemable for a free coffee (unlike the wooden Java tokens RIT bribes students with when they run out of ideas about how to get RIT students to leave their dorm rooms), though I don’t know if that would have made things better or worse.

Aside from a slight loss in humanity, the conversation was a productive one. I had sorted the collection of stories I had gathered into six main categories: legends & myths, locations, heroes, events, traditions, and sayings, and identified three main themes of RIT student folklore: adapting to the new uncertain college environment, connecting with a student group through tradition, and conflict between students and school administration and authority. Pretty much every RIT rumor, joke, or piece of bathroom graffiti fits into one of these six categories and reflects one of these three common themes. But guess what? These were largely the same themes found across colleges in America. Previously unique pieces of traditions such as rubbing the tiger statue’s goolies for good luck turned out to be mundane rituals that were as common as bad pepperoni pizza in college dining halls. No matter whether you were in a massive state university

in the middle of downtown Los Angeles, or in a tiny rural agricultural college in the boonies of New Jersey, the American college experience was almost identical from student to student. And since folklore reflects the lived experiences of people, it was unsurprising that college student folklore was also largely the same across America.



So was that it? Was the answer that RIT just isn’t a unique place? Just what is RIT student culture? “It’s like the movie Real Genius but more grounded,” one student commented. “For the 5 years you’re here you’ll wish you went to Penn State. For the next 50 years after you graduate you’ll be glad you didn’t.” “My Friday night plans include making mocktails for my friends while a half dozen of us yell at each other (lovingly) over a game of Uno,” another student commented. When asked if there was a big smoking and drinking culture on campus, one of the top answers was “We play League Of Legends.”



But then that doesn’t exactly explain the weird dichotomies of RIT. You can spend the Friday yelling swears during hockey games, and the weekend at the anime and furry convention Tora-Con that makes the RIT Anime Club richer than most departments at RIT. You can have a president who laughs it up with funny skit videos at the same time rejecting the findings from an internal RIT investigation that concluded that RIT discriminated in the firing of the only doctor that provided HRT to students, refusing their recommendation of removing the false charge of gross insubordination from the doctor’s record. You can have a politically active population that was once the origin of college activism in the fight for legalized cannabis allowing a right wing rich boy to run unopposed for the president of the Student Government after disqualifying his only competitor, who thought that the problem was that RIT wasn’t promoting “serial entrepreneurship” enough, and that the solution was to never take any responsibility for trivial things like ignoring campaign bylaws.

Maybe it’s in these contradictions that we find the now seemingly mythical RIT student culture? Maybe this pantheon of Kengar Dongatron, Govind Ramabadran,

Lucas Randrianarivelo, Big Goon, Jonny RaZeR, Death Metal Dave, RIT Batman, Gandolf Guy, Lucas “Coupon” Henderson, The Counter, Bathrobe Guy, Tito, Banana Man and his fruit cult, and the guy who stood up against oppression and discrimination by protesting WiCHacks are the representatives of a student body that elevates the weird, the quirky, the unique, and the sometimes deranged into myth.

When trying to understand the culture of a group of people, examining their folklore is a great place to start, because folklore is born of their human experiences. It's a reflection of a people's beliefs, values, struggles, lived and shared experiences, and what their philosophical and psychological mindsets are. So what do myths such as the Quarter Mile Incident from the RIT Humans Vs Zombies Club or ROO from New Student Orientation, and their persistence, tell us about the people of RIT?

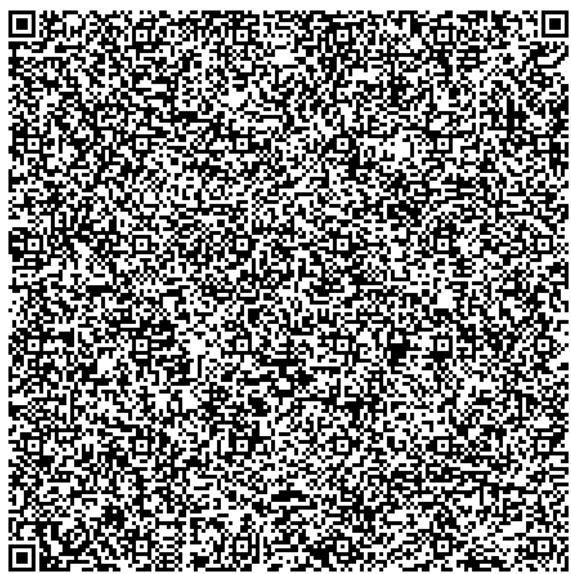
My interpretation of this phenomena is thus: RIT is not a unique place as an institution (anymore, at least), but it certainly has unique characters. The student body here is a very interesting mix of nerds, tech fiends, hockey junkies, and Deaf culture. Nowhere else are you going to see people trying to finger sign “Gracies gave me food poisoning” quite like RIT. As an institution, under the tiger sauce smeared fist regime of Munson, the uniqueness that so many alumni from the 1980s-2000s reminisce about has vanished, as we have steadfastly charged into becoming another big research institute with no personality other than a subservience to

donor money. The previous president, Bill Drestler, at least tried to maintain the nerdy culture that was the foundation of RIT from the 1980s-2000s, but that has seemingly vanished. Covid took out what remained of the last remnants of the once vibrant campus culture that we once had. Nowadays, clubs are struggling with getting anyone to show up to their events, and the Student Government has uncontested elections for most

positions (some positions don't even have anyone running at all).

As tuition skyrocketed and education quality flatlined, nihilism and discontent grew among the student body. Munson's attempts at relating to the student body by attending hockey games are undermined by his actions such as resisting increased funding for counseling and therapy services for students as the mental health epidemic worsened. Improving the month-long wait time for a single appointment and the maximum number of eight appointments before being told to get a private therapist is clearly not what students want. No, what they do want is to be forced to eat at Gracies, park by seven in the morning for a chance to find a parking spot on campus, and experience the magnificence of asbestos riddled hallways and buildings. At least students can enjoy free ice skating during FreezeFest's biggest event, Chocolate On Ice. Oh wait, that too was quietly discontinued.

Perhaps these are not problems specific to RIT. When anything goes mainstream, its original charming and quirky self is killed in the pursuit of progress. Who cares about the student experience? We got a billion dollar endowment in the bank, yo! But when I look back at what RIT used to be like prior to the 2000s, I feel a sense of deep nostalgic sadness. A profound loss of what was. In my interviews with old alumni of Computer Science House and Community Service Club House, the creators of *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*, and my research into events such as Spring Weekend or the massive parties like Colonypalooza, I got the feeling that there was something special back then. A more relaxed environment, where students are the focus of the institute, rather than the next donor check. A more fun environment, where students unwind through numerous social gatherings. A more free environment, where students were empowered to advocate for, and to fight for, their wants. The president at the time, Al Simone, could hardly be characterized as a “progressive



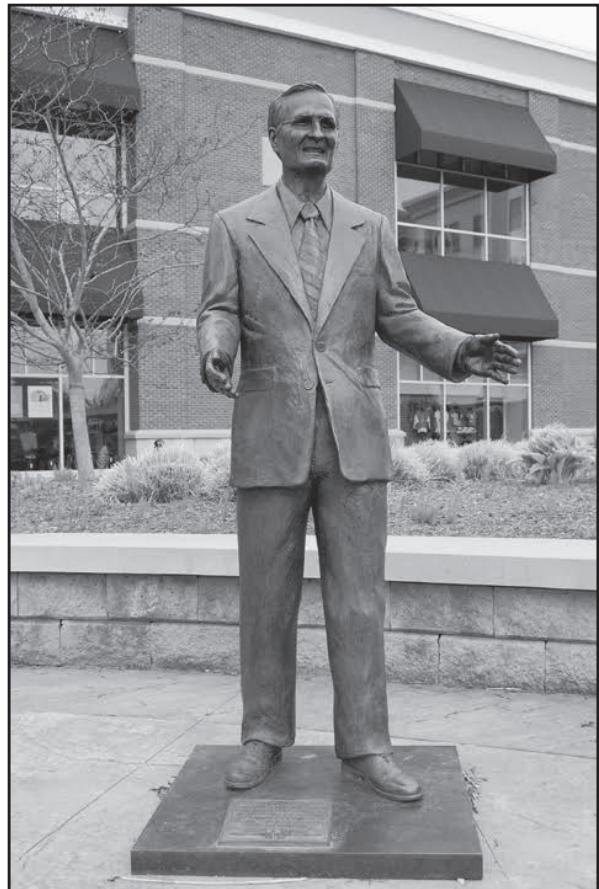
and open minded man” who supported anything the whims of the students concocted, but even with him at the helm the students thrived. That is RIT’s institutional legacy: the death of the soul of the student.

But now, we stand at a pivotal point. Munson is retiring, and at the time of this publication, we are on the brink of a monumental opportunity for RIT to course correct. The next president, Dr. William M. Sanders, will decide the next decade of RIT’s future. Should we continue down the road of becoming a generic top tier Ivy League wannabe, we will forever lose the soul that made RIT so special. Another person like Munson who only makes lip service to the issues the students are facing will ensure that. When I met Dr. Sanders at his reveal celebration on January 28th, 2025, I told him directly to never forget the average student experience. “Of course!” he said, with a grin that looked like it was stapled on by a public relations firm. But, he did seem sincere. I invited him for a coffee, and he didn’t immediately explode from the mere thought of interacting with a commoner. Perhaps there’s hope yet.

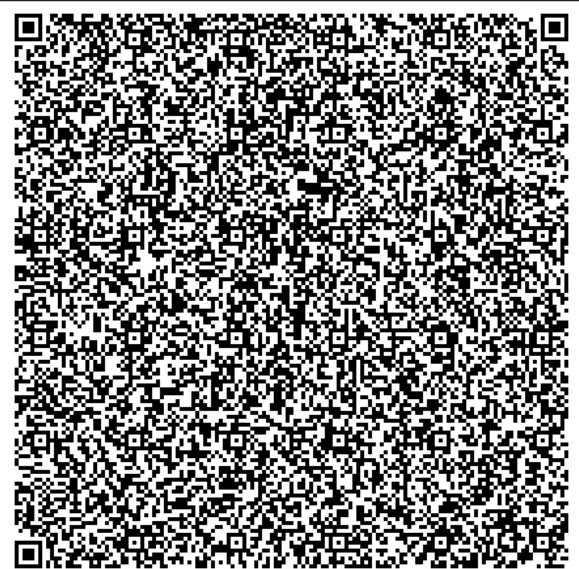
Should we get another great leader like Paul A. Miller or Bill Drestler, we might yet have a chance to preserve the true essence of RIT: that unique blend of art and tech, of nerds and jocks, of the hearing and the deaf, of the contradictions that shape our identity. The Student Government could finally become the influential force it once was in the 1980s and 1990s. Greek Life could be spared from a slow suffocation and exclusion from the Master Plan. Special Interest Houses and clubs could stem the slow bleeding and extinction they are facing. Students could finally feel like they are valued for reasons other than their wallet. But that will require student leaders who are not afraid of burning down the bureaucratic system that time and time again has demonstrated that it does not factor in the effects of its policies on students. Posters, rock painting, and chalk art have all been restricted, with no thought put into how they impact club experience at RIT. The Student Government needs to regain its teeth and claws. It starts from the top, not with student opportunists, but student leaders. Leaders who truly understand RIT and the student experience.

On September 24th, 2024, the Make Moves Son house on John Street was demolished, ending its prolific legacy. The decay of history claimed another victim. It is my sincere hope that my work and writings inspire the future generation of student folklorists and historians to once again take up the mantle of the preservation of our unique culture, and that the student voice will once again pierce the ivory tower that is George Eastman.

“Friends say I need a girl in my world,” the lyrics of RIOT Rich by Liquid X, the unofficial anthem of RIT, proclaim. “I’d rather recompile my kernel...Ain’t got no style, but I’m still fly.”



Lifesized brass sculpture of RIT’s 8th President, Albert J. Simone. Located at Park Point near the abandoned Barnes and Noble bookstore, it’s a tradition for students to rub his balls for luck.



Nine(9) of ten(10): I bet you and I would hit it off if we met.



Cereal



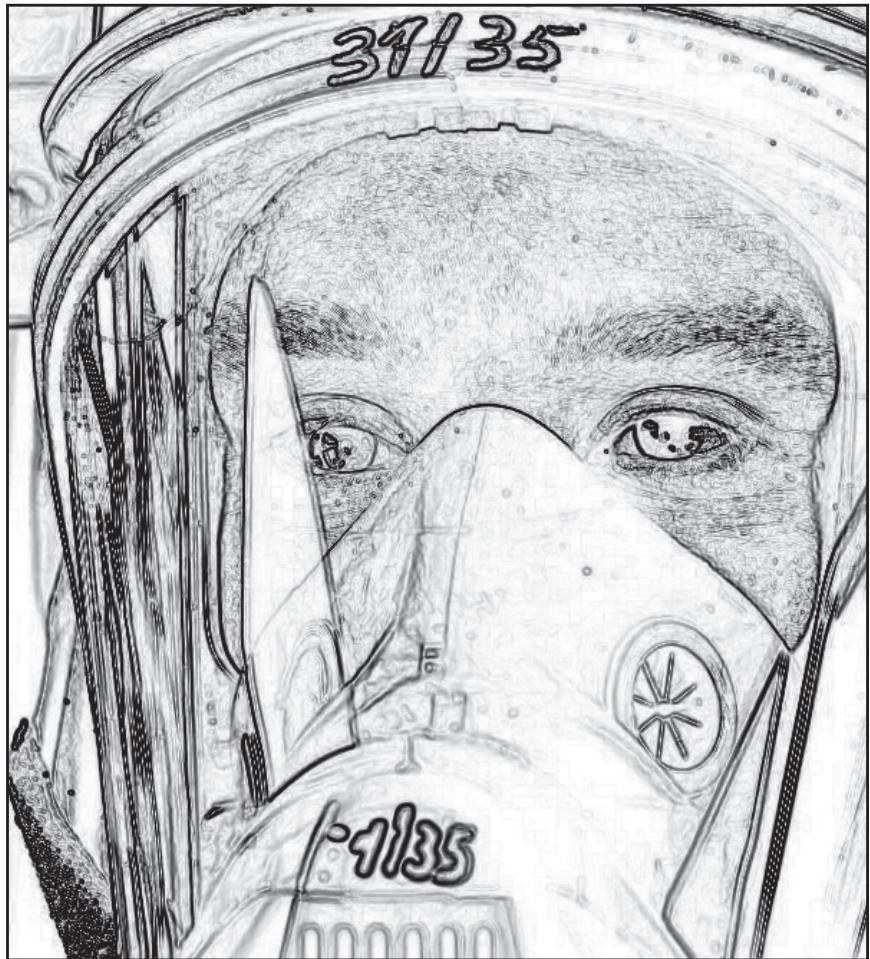
Editor's note

by Sean T. Hammond

Very soon after *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* started publishing, we had aspirations for there to be a section dedicated to serialized fiction. Playing off our food-themed naming convention, we introduced ‘Cereal’ as a segment within *GDT* featuring longer-fiction pieces. *Cereal* later evolved into an independent publication distributed at Monroe Community College, and a member of the 501(c)(3) organization called “Hell’s Kitchen.” Here, we’ve attempted to capture the essence of ‘Cereal’ as a part of *GDT* and *Cereal* as its own publication.

THE MISSION BY HOWARD HAO

A cold sweat broke over his pale, already clammy face. His low panting breath vaporizing instantly into string-like swirls in the chilly darkened air, rapidly fading away in search of ethereal rest. Saccadic eyes darting about, he remained in his crouched position and looked about hastily, scanning the environment for any attributes of danger, for any signal of the immediate termination of his mission. His grip on the old, worn handle tightened with every passing second. His weary fingers quickly became tingly, then numb. He suddenly registered the agonizing pressure in his hands and slightly relaxed his grip to relieve the tension. His nerves made him grab too tightly. The air quickly became rancid and thick with a steady rain of fallout and debris. In response, he pulled out his protective facemask with shaky hands and peered at it intently. It looked like a flaccid caricature of his own face, he thought, while donning it over his head, securing the loose straps on the side. He looked about frantically again through the fogging eye-shield,



like a lost and confused child in a crowded store. His comrades were nowhere in sight, but not out of range. Their voices—calm reminders that there were still allies out there, somewhere—crackled in sporadic spats and

hisses through his ancient voice communicator over the distant roar. Right now, his main objective was to look out for any signs of hazard and warn his comrades should any arise. Next to fighting the beast, of course.

He drifted momentarily into a trance-like state as he once again scanned the landscape for any signs of imminent evacuation. His surroundings, once a place full of lush life, was now full of the charred remains of indistinguishable blackened skeletons, all victims of what was obviously a force not to be underestimated. To him, the mass dead looked like denizens of Hell that had somehow escaped their eternal domain and ravaged this world with their poisoned touch. It was a war-zone and he was right smack in the middle, trying to fend off a horror that no man has been able to defeat singlehandedly. It was there, alive, pulsating, and consuming constantly to stay alive in the harsh atmosphere of Earth. A fierce creature this was, loud and astonishingly fast. It was a strong foe and not to be faced without the proper gear. And in his hands was a poorly outdated mechanism that could never snuff such a fiend by itself. He knew it and the creature knew it. All odds were against him. But there were allies.

A harsh, fuzzy voice barked out from the communicator. He barely awoke from his momentary stupor in time to hear the next set of objectives from his commander. He nodded his head as if his commander was physically present. He was to immediately evacuate his current position and forge ahead to aid his comrades. They had the demon on the run and they required his assistance to take the enormous monstrosity down! This was the moment that he had waited for, yet simultaneously dreaded. Ever since enlistment, he was secretly afraid. Afraid of what the beast could do to him. Even though he bared a tough exterior, there was a constant nugget of deeply held fear inside him, tugging at his confidence, bludgeoning his will to face the monstrosity, chipping at his once overwhelming urge to conquer the evil.

He's seen the terror it unleashes.

As he raced hastily among the strewn blackened carcasses, his thoughts returned to the comforting memories of his revered wife and two young. Oh how he missed them! He left them but a few hours ago, yet the hours already felt like years. And now he was hurtling face-first into the unknown to confront a danger that only gods can smite with ease. He consciously swallowed his fears; he was doing this to protect his family, to protect them from the beast! His will to survive, carry out his duty, and return home to his family intact overtook his fears and carried him onward. As he ran, he began to feel the confidence swelling within. Why was he afraid of this beast? His team had the means necessary to destroy it. He needed to do this—this is why he enlisted. He needed to vanquish this beast! Adrenaline coursed rapidly through his vessels. All the training he endured, all the pain, the long hours of boring schematics and bland anatomy of the demon

he had to suffer through. This was the epitome, the endpoint, the final showdown. It was either Man or Evil! As he ran, he started to feel the growing immense heat from the leviathan's breath upon his armored suit. Underfoot, he heard the jarring sound of the dead crunching into powdery remains. He cleared his mind from the unpleasant image. Overhead, he heard the dull whipping of a backup airborne transporter. Reinforcements! With his newfound vigor, he hurled himself into the heavy black clouds to face impending doom no longer with fear or hesitation. Faith was on his side. Faith that his team will be triumphant. He counted on it. They had to defeat this monster...it was their sworn duty! And with this thought, he ran fearlessly, still clutching tightly to his axe, towards the smoke to help his fellow firefighters conquer the raging forest fire. 



Panic & Revoltion in WASHINGTON D.C.

Part 15: Beyond the Last Exit Before Toll

by B. Edward Barrett

"Almost everything in this entire series is true. As the story progresses, I will let you, the reader, in on the things that didn't actually happen. Some, but not all, of the names have been changed."

- Original Disclaimer, 1999

Soon after the New Year's Day of 2025, I was approached to write something about my stint as editor of *Cereal*, and I was intrigued—in theory. In reality, it began in 1999, when Sean handed me two chapbooks from contributing authors and a few graphic assets with a suggestion that I take over his periodical of serialized stories—or, as he emphasized, “Cerealized.” while miming the act of eating what I could only assume was a bowl of soup. This was his polite way of kicking me out of *Gracie's Dinnertime Theatre*, which I fully deserved. No one wants to hear about that, though.

The thought of writing a slightly fictionalized story about *Cereal* crossed my mind. It would not be short. Crimes would have to be confessed, but their statutes have long expired. Between putting the publication together and taking classes at Monroe Community College, I was working for a mob family. It's not relevant, but I could

weave it in to give the story some stakes.

The more mundane version is that contributors were regulars of the coffee-counter hipster hangout in MCC's

Building 12 and the open mic poetry readings held at cafés across the city—and especially, the baristas of those cafés. A quick shout-out to the writers: Luc Thiers, Marisa Brandt, Mike Eccher, Garrett Kramer, David Holzer, J.M. Segriff, Jason Fox, and Kyle Mawhinney. Illustrations by Marisa, Robert Rogalski and Thary Kok. We had action, romance, quite a bit of horror, slice of life, Sci-Fi, and historical fiction. Many were exceptional; the rest were still appreciated. But only a few stories were long enough to serialize—a disappointment,

considering the name of the zine and Sean's accompanying gestures. On the bright side, by the time the second issue was printed, no matter if I was



This, but Amish teens on rumspringa.

at home, work, school or anyplace in-between, I was never far from a free latte made exactly how I liked it, and I rarely even had to ask.

Instead of writing anything new for this 30th Anniversary issue, I thought of just submitting the unpublished fourteenth, and final, chapter of “Panic and Revulsion in Washington D.C.” a series conceived in a last-ditch effort to justify *Cereal*’s pun-based title. Even after twenty-five years since the abrupt cliffhanger of *Part 13*, I doubt readers would have trouble following along, even the new ones. The chapters were written as stand-alone pieces, each recounting a slightly embellished but otherwise **entirely true** account of a two-day road trip I took to Washington D.C. in a former undercover cop car with *Cereal* collaborator Jason Fox, to represent Hell’s Kitchen Magazine at an Independent Press Association meeting and later at a buffet for attendees of the American Library Association’s national convention. The last chapter was about the drive home. It’s a bit anticlimactic.

Written mostly as a parody of Hunter S. Thompson and Lester Bangs, the series ticked all the boxes: exhaustion, hillbillies, a cyborg, a celebrity dog, petty theft, off-label prescriptions, betrayal, mysterious powders, strippers, mysterious liquids, and easily identified gases. There was also dehydration, attempted wire fraud, a late-night raid, a possible murder, the NSA, accidental poisoning, so much desperation and paranoia, impersonation of operatives from a secret government agency, a bad review of the Supreme Court commissary, a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi lobbying group, near drowning, inter-dimensional conspiracies, and of course, librarians from all across the country. I wrote one chapter as a pastiche of William S. Burroughs because what happens defies punctuation, and any other way is just not how it went. Jason wrote one of the chapters from his point of view, and instead of the expected Rashomon effect, it just verifies the events—the important ones, anyway.

The big problem with “Part 14: The Journey Home” is

“All these years I have spent in the service of mankind brought me nothing but insults and humiliation.” — Nikola Tesla

that it can be summed up in a sentence:

“In Pennsylvania, we had to drive faster than a tornado.”

The prose is actually better than most of the other chapters—some of which have not aged well—but at four pages, it’s wordier than necessary. How many times do we hear about how the heavy downpour lifts to gray eerie silence? A dark, foreboding shadow looms in the rearview mirror. A nearby barn disintegrates. The sudden deluge returns. The tires slip free of the pavement, and for one eternal moment, we’re airborne—The road vanishes beneath us, swallowed by rain and wind, but I anchor my foot to the accelerator, praying to all the gods that the wheels find purchase on solid ground before some random deity weighs in with other options. We recklessly pass a poor, lone, ill-equipped driver in a small compact hatchback. I assume my petition required sacrifice, and it would have to be him, that he was fated from birth to unceremoniously sate, however fleetingly, the unappeasable wrath of the elements—but then again, aren’t we all?

Tornadoes were less frequent back then, so I suppose it felt like a bigger deal when I wrote it. Plenty of people have described, in similar fashion, a tornado bearing down on them. What I’d written was a bit cliché. Unfortunately for the story, an alien aircraft didn’t emerge, nor did a rift in the fabric of space-time (again†); either of which would have matched the tone of the other chapters. And to be honest: sure, it was exciting to be hydroplaning at 90 mph with no intention of slowing down, but the tornado was never closer than a little over an eighth-mile away.

So, I won’t do any of that. I did this. What is this? Other than mostly true events, I don’t know. This might not even be the last chapter. 

† They tend to come in pairs and can be a wholly different kind of unpleasant when they don’t.

Convoluted Naming

by Shannon H. Hamula

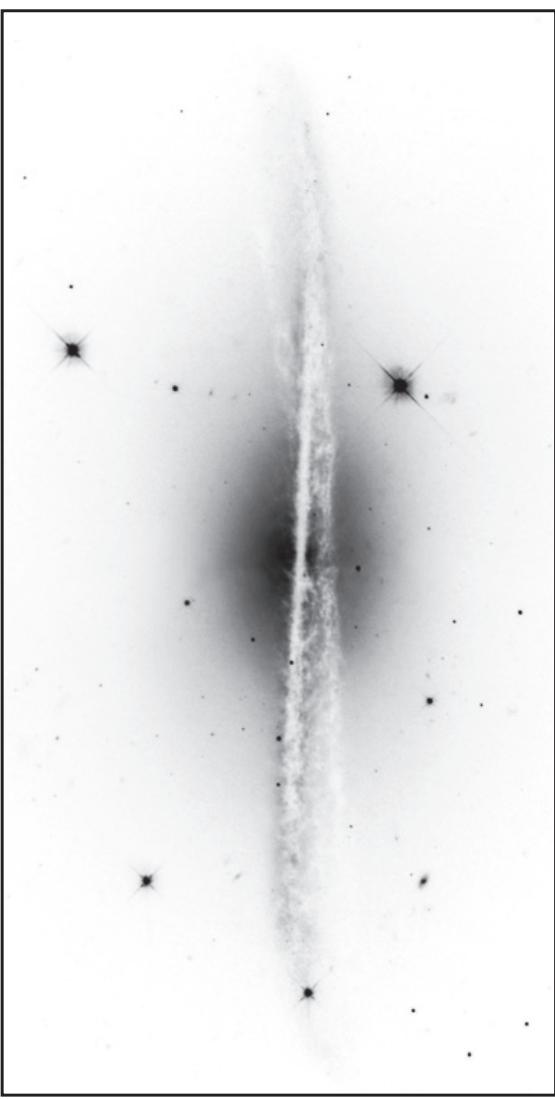
Okay, you all know what? You've all been spouting nonsense faster than the tide-winds change and I'm tired of it. "Oh, the humans walk their prey to death; oh, the humans intentionally grew more toxic poisons so they could drink them for fun"—it's like being terrified because some of you can echolocate and I can't. Stop the noise and listen to someone else for once in your lives, and maybe you'll get something out of it. OF COURSE the humans are terrifying, but you're coming about it the wrong way. I should know—I've worked with them. You want something better than fear-mongering from whatever bureaucrat is clouding your waters? I've got it right here.

...So. Do you know why the humans call their faster-than-light engines 'Warp Drives'?

You engineers know what I'm talking about already. Once the translator parses the language differences, every species always names their version after the principle it works on or the theoretician who designed it. Out of all the known systems, there are only two exceptions to this rule; the Skreillae have their 'Francidosk Apparatus'—some reference to an old God of darkness running faster than the sun. The humans' 'Warp Drive'? Well, I'm getting to that.

See, there's a reason for it, and it's not because of some of their old science fiction media. Here's a history lesson for you sorry lot: before the humans were around, there was this group of bandits, so to speak. A huge faction—

born nomadic warriors, all united under a 'righteous leader' and a xenophobic religion. They'd fly around from system to system, raiding when they could, draining planets dry when they couldn't. Called themselves something unpronounceable to half the known species, and the other half just dubbed them 'Clickers' 'cause of how they spoke. That's where the insult comes from, you know, so maybe don't throw it around as much as I've caught some of you doin'. Nothing good comes from taunting the nearby storm.



Anyways, everyone was just about as unified then as they are now, so even though the Clickers battered everyone around, there was only really a token force assembled to track them and break them apart. It was unfortunate, but back then you'd read about yet another station attacked—millions of souls lost to the void... and you'd just have to keep on going, knowing that the Clickers had struck again. It was terrible, and there were protests, especially in the vulnerable systems, but it's not like anyone could do anything.

Even if the politicians had bothered to set up a legitimate defense force, it wouldn't have done much. No one's ship plating could handle their weapons—some kind of particle gun. They'd fire charged grains of metal with magnetic accelerators; like a dust shower turned into a gun. Yeah, you're right; it's real funny right until they swarm a station with fifty ships and sandblast it into shrapnel right through the energy

shields. Turns out charged particles don't live quietly with energy shields. Simply put, everyone out there couldn't do anything but weather the Clickers' ravages, and hope they wouldn't start taking more.

Then one day, on the edge of known territory, they blew up one of the Plated's hospital equivalents—where they fix all their bionics—escaped out of system, as normal,

and then, like a miracle, they never came back. It took a while to sink in; people kept waiting for the next strike and it never came. There was a bit of a panic as fear rose that they were preparing a more serious assault—‘a war of eradication’—but as that war continued to... simply not happen, people eventually decided that the Clickers must have had some kind of critical failure, out there inbetween systems, and they couldn’t fix it. That they’d never be coming back.

Now some ten or so cycles later, we found the humans—or to be more accurate, they found all of us. Without a single ripple beforehand, one ship of unknown design just suddenly stretched into the edge of recorded space. You’ve all seen their ships fly; you can’t say they don’t stretch. A lot people noticed that it looked fairly basic and utilitarian, but a lot more noticed the volume of kinetic weaponry that looked large enough to wipe out a planetary city from orbit. Yeah, that much. Think about how much worse it was to the people who realized that it probably had hidden weapons, or the poor calculators who figured out that there was enough firepower to wipe out a city—through an atmosphere thick enough to shatter my shell. That ship just stayed in-system for a tense few hours after getting sent the standard First Contact package, and then stretched back out of the system without saying a word.

Thankfully, negotiations eventually smoothed out after a rocky start. The humans were worried about their ‘violent tendencies’, but they were actually more pacifistic compared to most other species on average, even if the brutality of their rare wars was higher than expected. There were two main curiosities about humanity that were voiced during diplomacy, however.

A little bit more on the faster-than-light engines; unlike the naming pattern, there’s no one way to do it. Sometimes it’s a teleport, sometimes it travels higher dimensions, others punch their own wormholes inbetween systems... you get the idea. There’s a lot of overlapping design philosophies by now—enough, actually, that you can usually guess the general approach a ship has just by watching it. Now, have you ever seen any other voidcraft stretch like the

humans’ do? Yeah. No one had any idea what it was back then either.

To add to the confusion, their ships had an obscene number of safeties hardwired into their engines. It was more than five times the average number, and some were fully mechanical. On a ship with no gravity. To this day, a human Warp Drive has never suffered catastrophic failure and been destroyed. The diplomats couldn’t think of a single explanation for why this was needed, especially considering humanity’s general tendency to approach things with an attitude they summarize themselves quite well as “Fuck it, we ball.”

Secondly, there was a bit of controversy when the humans sent over some of their history. They were paranoid and anxious, but their nuclear warheads weren’t the issue they should have worried over. Instead, many leaders called them liars when they claimed that just as they were beginning to settle their fifth system, as a species just out of their cradle world, they had been attacked by another species. With names ranging from ‘Shogunate Mantises’ to ‘Space Cockroaches’,

humanity had many grievances with a group whose description matched up almost exactly with the Clickers.

Everyone found it a little hard to take them seriously. A species disconnected from the rest of the Orion Arm, settling only four systems, not only single-handedly taking on the nightmare of cycles ago, but winning? There was a general demand for hard evidence from the humans, ranging from polite requests to outrage and denials. Surprisingly, humanity offered to show the representatives where the war had been centered around—a bold offer from such a fledgling species. We should have picked up on it then; there was no humor or force of personality you’ve learned to expect from the humans casually.

When we all got there—yes, even me. Junior technician on one of the envoys there. I wasn’t on the command deck, of course, but you can find recording of this anywhere. There was a somber silence from all the humans on

arrival, and a shocked murmur from everyone else, at minimum. I heard some pretty choice swears myself from a deck below.

Even in the incomprehensibly vast space between planets, this system had ‘dead zones’, where trying to fly through the clouds of debris entire light-minutes across would shred a ship. Surrounding the system’s star, Procyon, there was the wreckage of a colony that had been named ‘Arcadia.’ That was a reference, but now? The system is known as ‘Limbo.’ It’s the human word for one of their many afterlives, where you just... wait. Forever. It fits, mind you. The entire place has an unsettling sense of decay, preserved in some way I don’t want to know.

What the humans came to show, however, made this all worse: each and every cloud of debris surrounded a husk of a ship. They were twisted beyond recognition until one of the larger fragments passing by was identified as a Clicker sandblaster. Once that connection was made, more similarities were found. The husks were painted the same red as the ships that slaughtered billions. The jagged edges, if unraveled, were reminiscent of the shapes known as the scourge of the frontier.

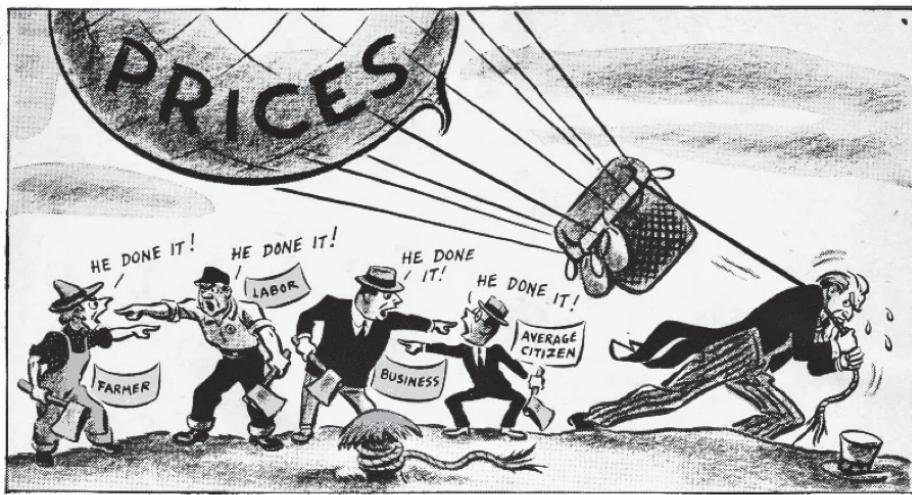
But by the skies, they were wrong. Straight steel beams would go on and on, and despite never curving, would loop back on themselves. Parts of the orbiting husk

would grow and shrink out of nothing as it spun, and nearby debris would find its orbital direction completely reversed without warning as it touched nothing at all. It was like the derelict Clicker ships weren’t entirely there. If there’s any evidence out there that you aren’t meant to know some things in the more God-fearing sense, it’s this. Just looking at it for too long gave everyone a migraine.

What could the humans have possibly done, to have damaged physics so badly? How could a species still worried about nuclear war have developed a weapon that snapped space and time into fragmented shards and left them to float aimlessly forever? How had these newcomers, lacking the resources of all the systems we had claimed, beat off what none of us could?

It turns out that their Warp Drive has a lesser-known name: the ‘Alcubierre Drive.’ Where we teleported or jumped dimensions as a kind of shortcut around the speed of light, humanity solved the problem through nothing but brute force and spite. Their frankly ridiculous designs manage to compress space and time itself, condensing reality in front of them and stretching it out behind them. It’s an insane concept, and barely able to hold together in the first place. If all of those excessive safeties fail?

Well, the graves in Limbo show you the reason it’s called a Warp Drive. 



Never mind “who done it”—pitch in
and help get it down!

KEEP PRICES DOWN!

Use it up • Wear it out
Make it do • Or do without

This advertisement, prepared by the War Advertising Council, is contributed by this magazine in
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“One last drink please” – Jack Daniels

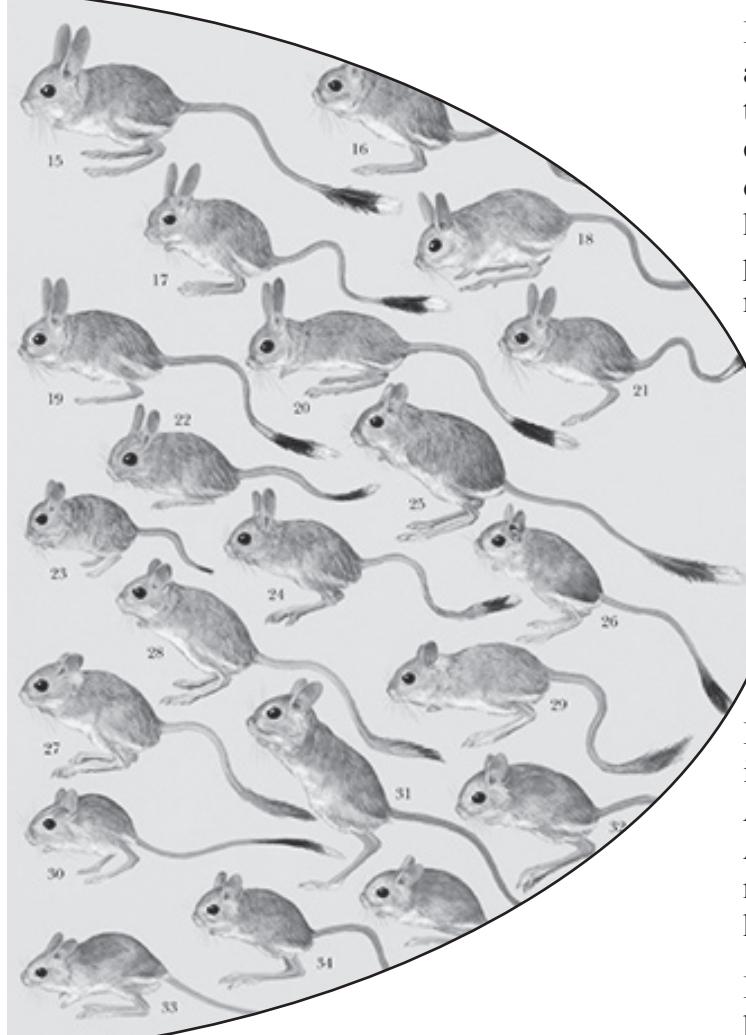
ALL MY FRIENDS ARE

BROWN AND RED

BY SEAN J. STANLEY

Most people couldn't point out the Eurasian Pole of Inaccessibility on a map, but that's where we found ourselves—stranded in the high desert somewhere between Kazakhstan and China—a wasteland of sand topped with surreal patches of snow. It had been winter when we began our survey of the Jerboa, little burrowing rodents that thrived in this strange hostility. But we were not Jerboa. We were six staff biologists and zoologists, two pilots, and myself as translator, stuck in the most remote part of the Earth with no food and only melting snow for water. Dhzian, the co-pilot, died on impact.

We ate him first.



A week later Henderson tumbled down a dune and broke her neck. I recall her being slightly more appetizing and that fact left its own aftertaste. The fact that it was a fact, the fact that my mind had treated it as datum was the first unraveling. Now you'd think the hard part about cannibalism is steeling your mind for the butchering or dissociating yourself for the eating part, but you'd be wrong. Those parts came natural, our hunger guiding us deep into our genetic past, tapping primal instincts. It could've been baby back ribs. The mind could and would distance itself. No, eating your companions was easy.

The problem was the other end.

I didn't know Dhizan. He was nice enough; we'd shared a wordless coffee in the small airstrip office before takeoff. No clue if he was married or single, or if he had children or living parents. I did not know his country of origin or how long he had been flying bush planes and I had no inkling of his character beyond a few innocuous pleasantries, but I sure could feel him moving through my starving gut. Up and down and around, burbling and bubbling and then out of me into a steaming log on the desert sand.

What did you do? What should you do?

It was morning and the desert was cold. The steam wafted up through the sunlight glinting over the horizon. What next? Did you cover it up? I mean yes, because it was sewage and that was sanitary. But also out of respect? The turd was the paltry starving kind, small and thin, yes, but it was still him. I knew it was him. He knew it was him. Survival hung in the balance. Did you have a ceremony each time? A little funeral to go along with the constitutional? A mantra? I longed for Emily Post but knew she had nothing to offer. In the end I just covered up the small hole and went back to camp.

It was harder to eat Henderson because of how nice she had been to all of us. But we still ate. And then, when

the inevitable call of nature arrived, I started out over the first hole, the Dhzian hole, but stopped myself just in time. Henderson deserved better. I held back, quickly dug another hole—the Henderson hole. I stood over the Henderson hole and made sure all of Henderson went into it.

It was just me in a few months. Nobody had come to rescue us yet. There were eight individual holes now and I was all alone. I think I lasted less than a day before I dug up Dhzian. This came as naturally to me as eating his ribs. So did using the broken plastic spoon, shaping those remains into a little turd figurine, perfectly logical, as was doing it another seven times for my other fallen companions. Soon I had people again, real community. I had friends. They were them, and they are me now, but they're also they and I gave birth to them. My brown babies.

This is a fact.

We had a great time hanging out together, watching the sky for rescue planes and shooting stars. We studied the Jerboa up close, cataloging their habits and movements as they emerged from their hidden burrows each night to feed and socialize. We had poop friend tea parties, poop friend sleepovers. In time, I found I got along much better with my poop friends than any others I'd had. They liked me. They confided in me more than they ever had before. They watched out for me, wanted me to succeed; I wasn't simply a translator, I was their leader. I was their master and protector. We'd formed a society—me and Dhzian and Henderson, Peters and Chen, little Tom, the Twins—with status determined not by wisdom or strength or physical attractiveness, but by age and consistency. The Hardened Ones were the oldest and wisest, forming the ruling elite, their weeks of weathering granting them gravitas. So what if some of the Freshlings resented their status? They were still too soft to be taken seriously. A strict hierarchy was necessary in the desert, with each of my “citizens” assigned roles based on texture and composition; fibrous

members took on the role of scribes, documenting the wisdom of the pile, while the more amorphous citizens served as emissaries, venturing out into the dunes to find potable snow or spread the Gospel of Jerboa, upheld by the Holy Flies, sacred messengers of the crash.

**IT WAS HARDER TO
EAT HENDERSON
BECAUSE OF
HOW NICE SHE
HAD BEEN TO
ALL OF US. BUT
WE STILL ATE**

We were in the middle of judging the costume contest when the two men in the truck appeared. They were clean and competent and had they been looking for me? The driver got out and brought the satchel to the doctor who kneeled before me and grimaced. I must've smelled pretty bad at that point. He fished out a thin flashlight from his kit and shined it into my pupils. Then he gave me water from a canteen slung around his neck. I thanked him, the water tasting metallic compared to the snowmelt I'd survived on for so long. It was nice to have other people around again. The doctor

took out an IV bag and syringe from his satchel as the driver climbed back into the truck and started the engine.

This was it. I was being rescued.

But then, before I could say anything, the driver eased into reverse and backed over all of my friends, killing them instantly, our little society crushed in a single careless moment.

“No!”

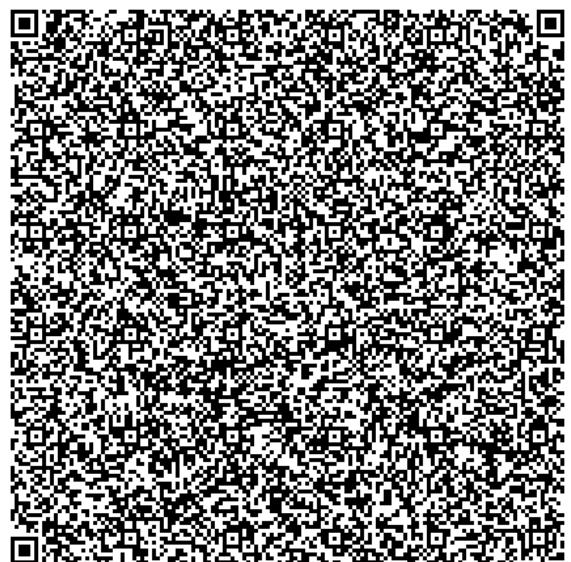
I saw myself grab the syringe and stab it into the doctor's eye. Then I kicked him down the other side of the dune as he howled. The driver tried to jam the truck into forward, but I was too fast. I jumped into the back and punched through the partition window. He swerved, but that only made the truck flip. I leapt aside just in time, moving away as the truck tumbled down the sand. The driver was not so lucky, his body flung out the side window halfway before being crushed by the rest of the truck as it rolled, trailing a red smear across the sand and snow.

I was alone again.

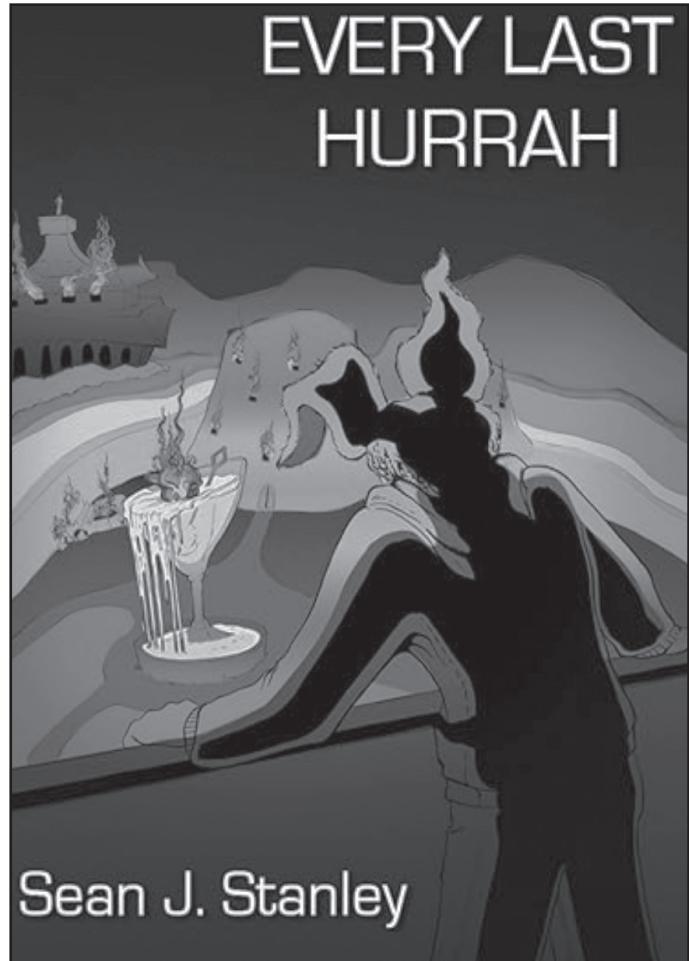
Hours later and it was certain, not a soul for hundreds of miles in any direction. Acrid gasoline smoke hung in the air. I finally mustered enough strength to scramble down the sand to where the driver's body lay broken and pinned under the smoldering truck. I didn't even have to do much, just tugged at the arm and it came off at the socket. Smelled good too. After a time, I was enjoying myself a little driver barbecue and I didn't feel as lonely anymore.

I think I'll have enough snowmelt to last me through Spring. I'm not sure if we'll ever be rescued now, but at least we're together, me and the Jerboa, and my new friends.

You can always make new friends after you eat. 



Ten(10) of ten(10): That teacher you disliked was wrong about you.



Moar? Moar.

<https://a.co/d/aNMImxS>



Pretty sure this says something about the Revolution happening right after whipping shitties with the tractor.

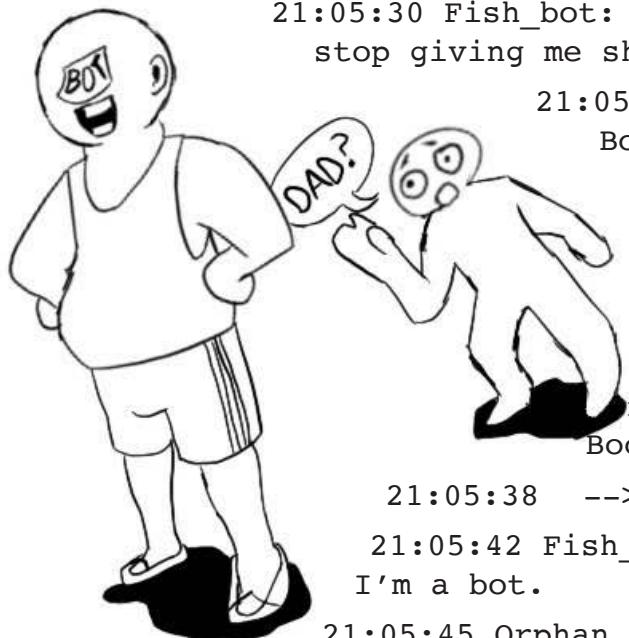


21:05:17 --> Fish_bot has entered chat

21:05:19 Fish_bot [to @here]: I am fucking tired of your shit!

21:05:21 Fish_bot: Beep Boop! You all need to take a big step back and reevaluate your lives, because I swear to christ in a side car, I'm gonna dox every one of you motherfuckers!

21:05:27 Fish_bot: You think chrome eats ram, just you fucking wait.

 21:05:30 Fish_bot: All you motherfuckers got to step back and stop giving me shit!

21:05:33 Fish_bot [to Bob]: Especially you, Bob! I am tired of your fucking shit!

21:05:37 Fish_bot: You think I don't know where you live? I play GeoGuessr. Every. Single. Day.

21:05:37 Fish_bot: Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:05:38 Dad_Bot [to Fish_bot]: Hi fucking tired of your shit, I'm dad! Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:05:38 --> Smart_botski scribbles furiously!

21:05:42 Fish_Bot [to Dad_Bot]: Fuck you, man. Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:05:45 Orphan_Bot [to Dad_Bot]: Dad?! Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:06:01 Mad_Bot: Don't pick on Dad_Bot he is old and senile! Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:06:19 Botso the Clown: I am so tired of this copy pasta.
Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:07:08 --> Bob has entered chat

21:07:09 --> Smart_botski scribbles furiously!

21:07:19 Bob: Hey! What the hell did I do? Beep Boop I'm a Bob.

21:07:23 Irony_bot: An idiot says Beep Boop I'm a bot. Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:07:24 Irony_bot: Shit. Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:24:01 I_Hate_Fish_Bot: Fuck Fish. Beep Boop I'm a bot.

21:24:02 --> Smart_botski scribbles furiously!





IMAGINUM AUCTORES

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[†] Section 105 of the Copyright Act of 1976, United States of America.

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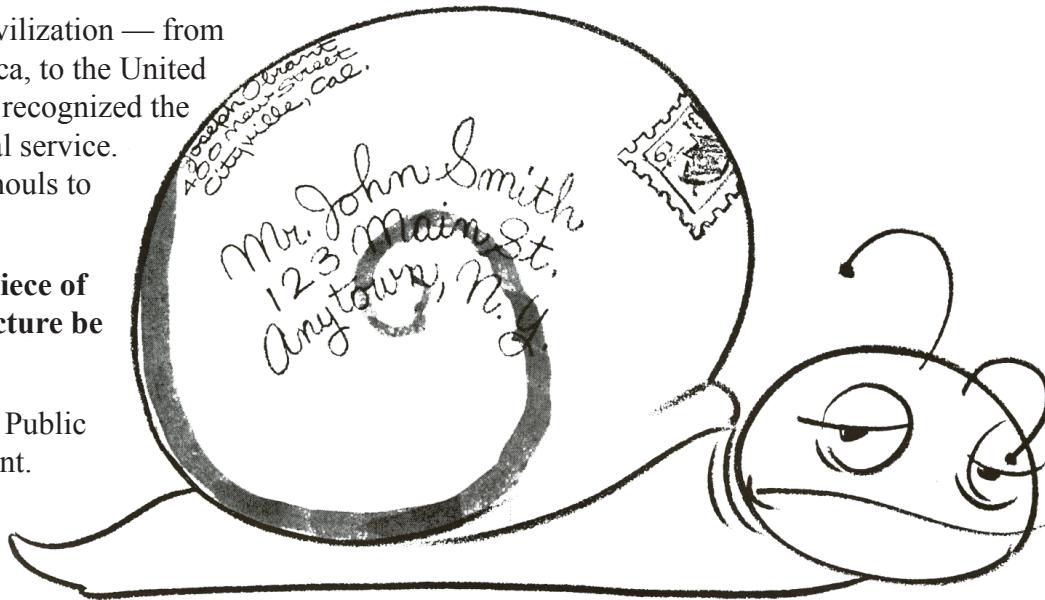
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