

SPRING-SUMMER-FALL 2024

Uncle



UNCLE MAGAZINE

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SPRING-SUMMER-FALL 2024

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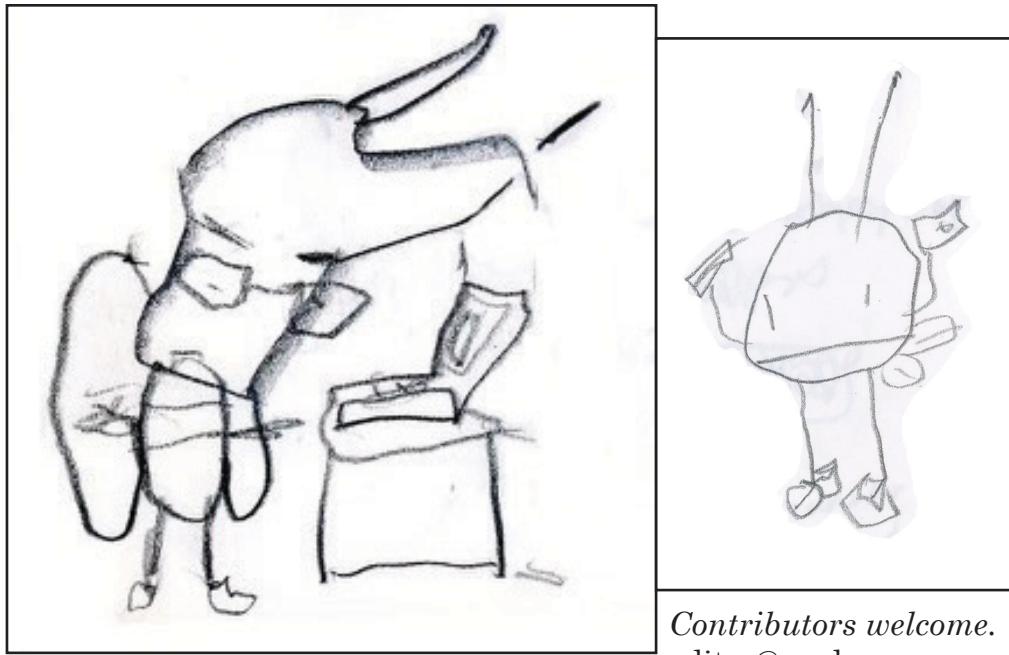
Word of the Month

Mum

Merchandise available at

SSYNSE.COM

(not the luxury retailer ssense.com)



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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

To our devoted readers,

Plenty has happened since last summer's issue. I got a stereo for Christmas and mono on my birthday. What's more, the mono was misdiagnosed as strep throat and I was prescribed amoxicillin. As you will all recall from doctor school, the combination of mononucleosis and amoxicillin gives the test subject very itchy full body hives. Doctor Charlie, if you're reading this, it's okay. We all make potentially lethal mistakes sometimes. Your secret's safe with me. Physician-patient privilege goes both ways.

When I walked into the E.R. (for the uninitIALIZED: that stands for *Ermgergency Room*), triage initially told me I might be patient zero for a cool new disease and so they held me in a room they kept referring to as the "Epicenter Chamber" for a few short days. The staff kept me at ease by slipping notes under the door such as "Don't worry, your our favourite mystery case!".

Mono is nicknamed the "kissing disease". My E.R. doctor eventually had the sense to ask me if I'd done any kissing lately. I told him about my very much completely voluntary celibacy. Then he said, "Well, actually, you can also get mono from doorknobs." Now I have not recently combed through either my medical or criminal records, but how exactly would my doctor know about the doorknobs I've been making out with in the privacy of my own neighbourhood?

Aside from that, I spent much of October in court. My lawyer said I'm not allowed to talk about it, strictly speaking—let's just say I'm the one that got away (relax, your honour—I'm never usually this guilty). Like I said, mum's the word.

Ok, fine. It was a civil case—*Funko Pop v. Uncle Industries*. I had plans to produce a line of 'Funkle Pops', plastic dolls that looked like this prestigious publication's mascot (Groucho Marx, for the uninitialized). The plaintiffs accused us of intellectual property theft. I said I didn't realize there was anything intellectual about it. I had the case dismissed, shortly after I had been asked to leave the premises.

Anyway, I'd love to ask what's new with you, but it looks like we're all out of space. Ta ta!

Best Regards,

F. Guy J. Tombs

F. Guy J. Tombs, M.D.
Editor-in-Cheef, Uncle Magazine

Please include me in your will and send proof to:

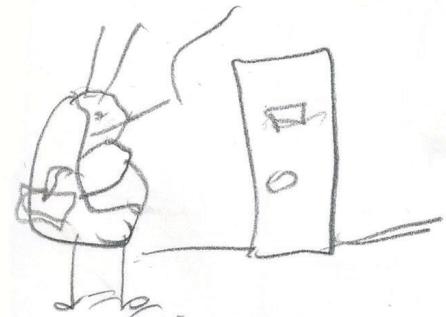
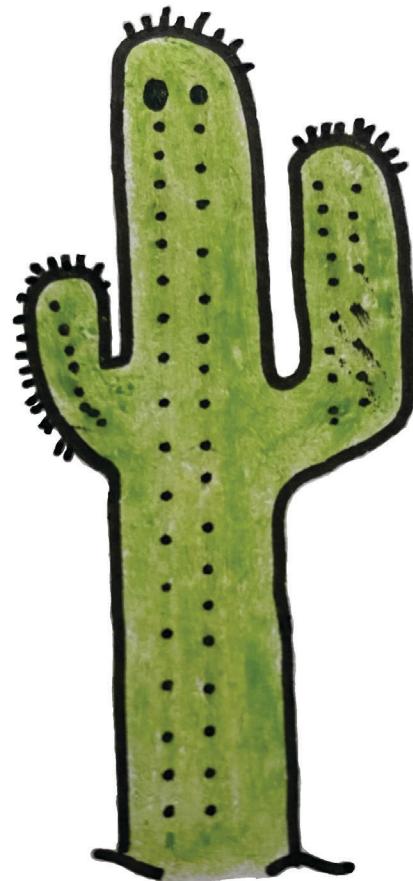
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PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

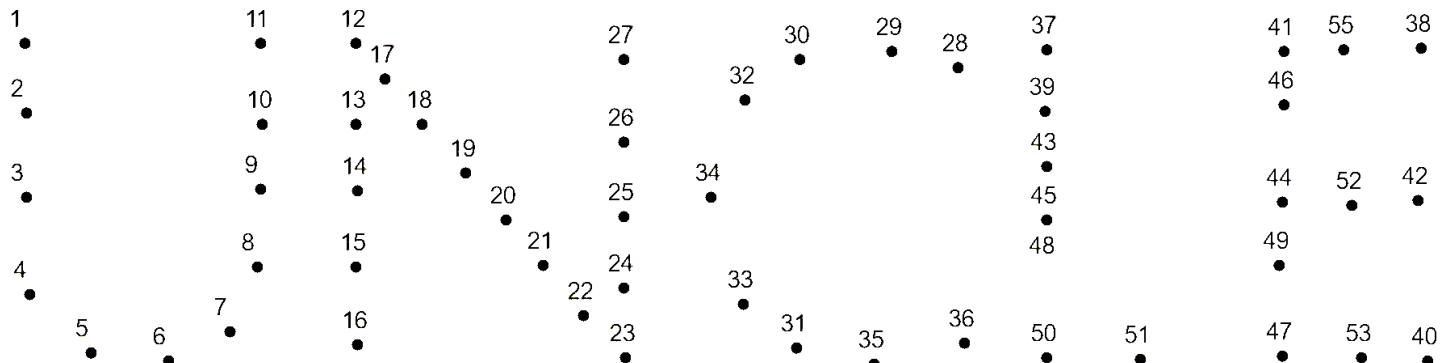
Send the photo that the guy on the front cover took to:

editor@unclemag.com.

Winner gets free pizza.



Connect the Dots



Ask Uncle Jim!

Jim is the proud “cool” uncle to two nieces and one nephew. He lives in the town of Upstate, New York with his dog, Buster, and his wife, Cheryll. He enjoys the company of his three nibblings and, occasionally, that of his children.

Hi Uncle Jim,

I’m having a deep existential crisis. I’m thinking about how we’re all living on a space rock, living, breathing, and SEEING one another. I’m thinking about how I literally only have one life to live, and suddenly 32 years have just flown by. I mean, isn’t that insane? Do you have any comforting words of wisdom?

Cheers,
Terry

Good afternoon, Terry!
I try not to think about that stuff too much.

Best,
Uncle Jim

Dear Uncle Jim,

My family is driving me crazy, and it’s wearing me down. My mom’s side believes in one political ideology, and my other mom’s side believes in the other. The particular details don’t matter; I just wonder how I can best navigate the situation. Everyone except my uncle Berry has some newsroom blaring on the teevee at all times, and I don’t know what to do.

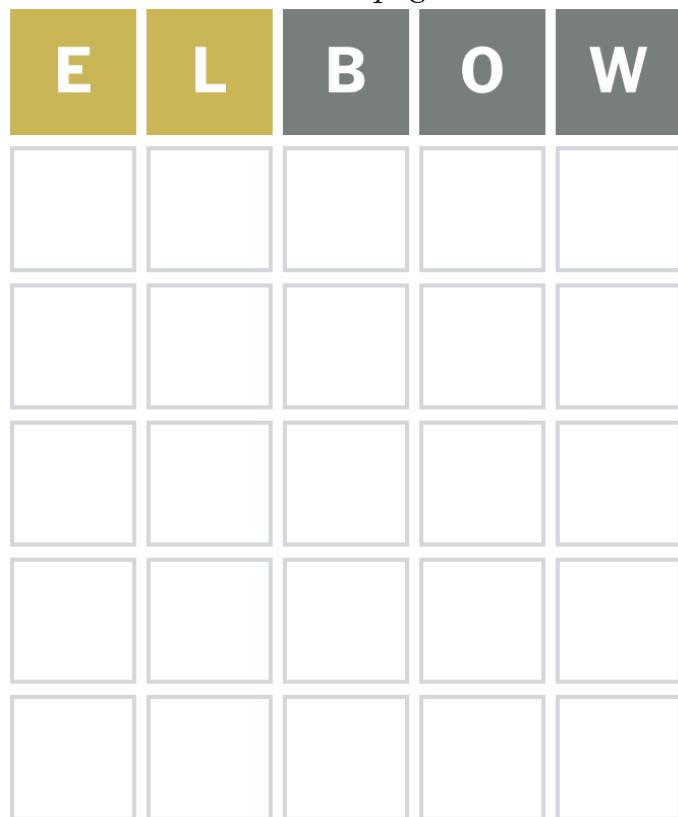
Ciao,
Bernice

Hey Bernice,
Personally, I try not to think about that stuff too much.

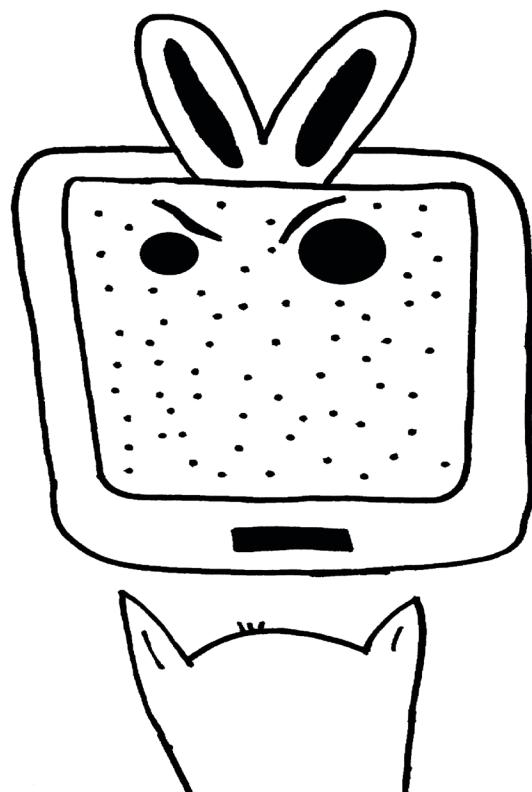
Warm regards,
Uncle Jim

Wordle

Answer on page 9.

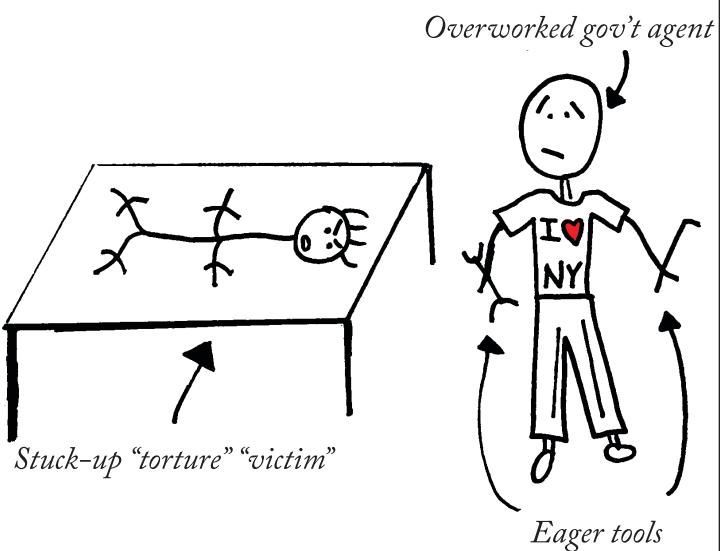


“Talk Show”



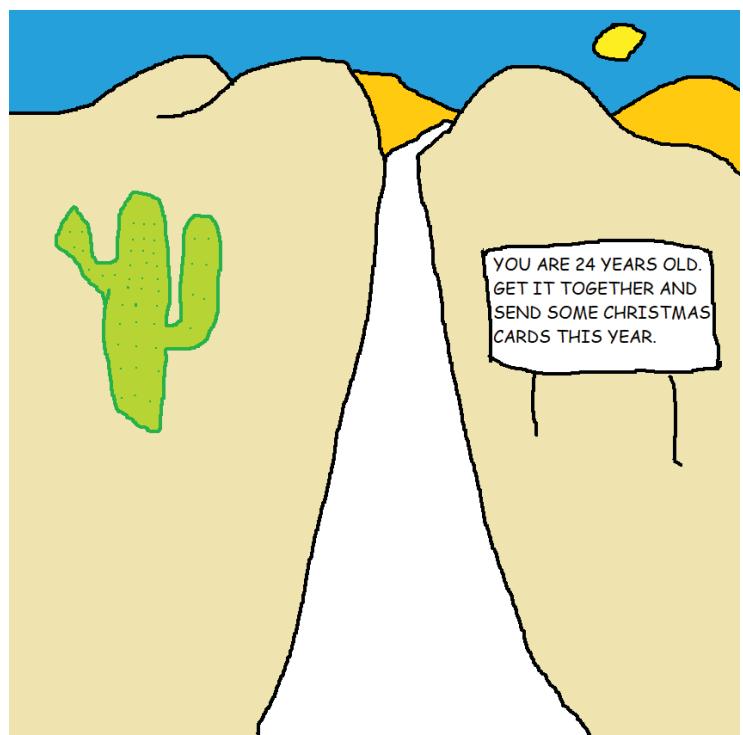
“500 channels and we’re watching ‘Finding Nemo’ on repeat?”

“Enhanced Interrogation”



“I’ve already told you, I don’t kiss and tell.”

“The Plea”





We didn't invent loving your nephew.

We just made it a little easier to show.

This is a T-shirt that does exactly what a T-shirt should do. It's simple, comfortable, and honest. It doesn't try to be something it's not. It's just cotton and thread, but somehow it says more than you ever could with that 10-minute speech you've been working on.

Why not just tell your nephew how much you care?

Well, you could do that. You could sit him down and explain just how much he means to you, recounting stories from when he was little and reminding him of all the times you've been there for him. You could do that. But let's be honest, it'll probably get awkward. He'll get fidgety. You'll run out of things to say. And in the end, he might not even remember most of it.

This T-shirt? He'll remember it.

It's not just a T-shirt. It's a conversation starter.

Okay, we lied a little. It's actually a bit more than just a T-shirt. It's a declaration, a message to the world. It says, "I'm proud of my nephew." It says, "This kid means something to me." It says, "Look, I'm not afraid to express love in a world where that's often considered uncool."

Plus, it's a great way to get people talking. Strangers will stop you on the street and ask, "What's so great about your nephew?" And you'll have the perfect chance to tell them. Maybe it's his sense of humour or how he always remembers his own birthday.

But the real payoff? The smile on your nephew's face when he sees you wearing it. The knowing nod from other aunts and uncles who just... get it.

Not everyone will understand.

That's okay. Some people might think you're being cheesy. Some might roll their eyes. But you're not wearing this shirt for them. You're wearing it because it means something to you, and more importantly, it means something to your nephew.

It's not for everyone.

But neither is being an awesome aunt or uncle. You already know the role comes with its own set of challenges—navigating family dynamics, figuring out the perfect gift, always being there for the big moments (and some of the little ones too). This T-shirt is for those who take that role seriously—just not too seriously. This one's for you.

Because at the end of the day, it's all about love. And that's something worth showing off.

Available exclusively at SSYNSE.COM (not the luxury retailer ssense.com)

so you want to be an

uncle?



Fifteen Bugs

The Metamorphoses

by A.A. Aaron

The Deep Press

999 pp.



What if you awoke one morning from uneasy dreams and found yourself seriously considering transforming into a big bug, for environmental reasons? This is the Kafkaesque world presented in A.A. Aaron's latest novel, *The Metamorphoses*.

The story introduces technology that enables an affordable, one-way transformation from human into cockroach. Set in a 'not-too-distant present', on a bleak, rapidly warming Earth, the novel is a wholehearted attempt at reinventing the gratuitously long epic novel.

At nearly a thousand pages, this book tackles more themes than a Party City franchisee. The sheer number of characters introduced and the depth of each one's arc is astounding. This is the story of fifteen bugs and how they learned to take it easy. This is the story

of the first Bug President and the first Bug First Lady. This is the story of a guy who wanted to turn into a bug because he kept on being told he looked like Ed Sheeran, only to transform into the same type of bug Ed Sheeran changed into¹. If that sounds scattered, it's because it is.

The concept is, of course, derivative—seen time and time again in films such as *Downsizing* (Alexander Payne, 2017, haven't seen it, presumably Kafkaesque), Disney's *Honey I Shrunk the Kids* (1989—a compelling body horror, but decidedly not Kafkaesque) and its sequels, and *The Fly* (1986—probably as Kafkaesque as Jeff Goldblum can get). The book's title itself is also reminiscent of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), which, to some, might itself be considered Kafkaesque. In spite of the plethora of parallel plots, Aaron's novel differentiates itself through the ingenious use of long, boring exposition and self-contained monologues by short-lived characters, and by the long timespan covered in the novel, during which human-to-bug technology advances.

In the first few decades, change comes in the form of more insect options becoming available. As the centuries roll on, the science improves to the point that the need for elective transformations into small bugs becomes, in theory,

¹ See Chapter 4, "Ed Sheerant"

obsolete, as one can simply live one's previous life as a miniature human, with no need to become a bug at all.

Aaron (a pseudonym intended to make the book appear first alphabetically in a bookstore's fiction section) was voted "Most likely to self-publish their own sci-fi epic" in high school. This



is not their first attempt: mention must be made of Aaron's first book, *Two Weeks Notice: an Unofficial Fortnite Novel*, a burnout's bible disguised as an anti-capitalist manifesto that made it to #147 on Amazon's Best Sellers in Video Games & Strategy Guides. Aaron's greatest strength continues to be the genre bait-and-switch. *Two Weeks* was self-described as "a step forward for leftist

literature”, but the reviews are filled with pained pinkos asking for their money back. They wanted *The Big Short* but got a spiritual sequel to *The Big Lebowski*. The wordle word is “uncle”.

This time, Aaron switches central themes not once, not thrice, but twice.

The first switch comes in the portrayal of a massive psychological operation (psyop for short) designed to maximize

it) “out-sized” grips what remained of the culture, thanks to a misinformation campaign meant to give the impression that those who went along with mini-fication regretted it. The world of *The Metamorphoses* features psychological warfare on an unprecedented scale. Countries try to bankrupt each other’s citizens² and exhaust each other’s resources by recruiting influencers and running targeted ad campaigns (on social media network *TicTalk*) promoting the most expensive and wasteful metamorphoses to the right demographic.

After definitely reading every word of the whopping 999 pages, the tome feels less like a piece of modern eco-criticism and more like a critique of American light truck emissions policy. Following the 1973-1974 Arab Oil Embargo and the ensuing oil crisis, the U.S. Congress enacted fuel economy regulations to reduce national fuel consumption. However, cars and light trucks (the latter being defined as trucks, vans, and SUVs) were given separate average fuel economy standards, with light trucks being given more lenient targets. That, along with the increased profit associated with selling pickups and SUVs, has led to the domination of these types of vehicles on our roads, bridges, and tunnels. Admittedly, this reviewer may be reading too much into allegory and seeing things that aren’t there.³

2 See *The Metamorphoses* Chapter 11, “Chapter 11”

3 See Chapter 87, “The 1973-1974 Arab Oil Embargo”

Keep in mind, I don’t want to spoil any part of the book, not even the chapter titles. That being said, the story ends with a new society of gigantic grasshoppers going to war with other bug factions of varying stature. Despite losing most of human knowledge due to their diminutive scale, they still manage to devastate the planet. As promised, I won’t reveal how⁴, but it’s pretty good.

Aaron’s book is an ambitious first attempt at an epic novel, which still has some bugs to iron out and some cockroaches to nuke. It will not be received as the literary achievement it so clearly aspires to be, but finishing it is a monumental achievement in patience, attention span, and lack of anything better to do.

All in all, one small step for man, one giant hop for bug-kind. Crawl to your nearest bookstore and lay some eggs in a copy, why don’t cha. I give it three grouchos.



consumption following the immediate popularity of downsizing. A decrease in consumption leads to economic shrinkage, creating the risk of a ‘last-man-standing’ dilemma wherein the holdouts—the remaining full-sized human population—doesn’t have anyone their own size left to exploit.

That distinctly American fear of being (as the book puts

4 See Chapter 211, “Hoppenheimer”.

SAY UNCLE

BY CHUCK L. DALY

It's a cold day in central Halifax, but clear. The air is still, carrying only the faintest hint of ocean breath. I assume so, at least; my nose is red and stuffy, the victim of February sniffles. Not the only cross I'm bearing. The sky stretches wide and blue, offering little protection from the bright onslaught of sunlight. The fresh white snow amplifies its power back to me in full force. It's a good thing I brought my sunglasses.

I trudge down the slushy, salt-laced sidewalk, the drag of my boots carving a continuous path. The right one has a hole forming in the heel, and has recently started to make a squeak with each step. It reminds me of a familiar yellow cartoon character that my nephew used to love... when he was younger.

My stomach grumbles.

The distant sound of children playing reaches my ears as I round the corner. The schoolyard up ahead is in the full chaos of recess. Screams, laughter, and the thud of boots of snow-slurried asphalt form the cacophony. I always walk by here at lunchtime.

I make my way past the schoolyard, the chain-link fence guiding the way. Normally I would have crossed to the far side of the road; I prefer to keep my distance. Today the snow banks tell me that I have to stay on the path. As I near the border, I see three boys in the far corner of the yard, hidden behind some trees. I slow my pace.

Two of them have their backs facing me, and are blocking the view of the third. As I take a few more steps forward, he comes into view. His back is up against a tree, looking directly at the other boys. I see his face. Something is wrong.

"I'm not going to say it again, you cow-handed afternoon farmer. Get on the ground, and do the donkey dance."

I am close enough that I hear this from one of the two boys with their backs to me. They are both small, certainly no more than twelve years old, but they are taller than the third boy.

All three seem unaware of my presence, and I inch closer.

Suddenly, one of them steps forward and grabs the boy by his collar. He is pushed and falls to his knees.

"Dance, donkey."

The boy begins to shuffle back and forth, his knees on the snowy gravel. He imitates a donkey sound with his voice, eyes cast down to the ground.

My chest tightens. I am about to walk past so I turn my gaze down to my feet. I am not here.

I hear more scuffle and a groan of pain. "You had enough yet, donkey boy?"

A muffled yelp stings my ears. I feel a pit in my stomach. I am almost clear of them, but I know I have to say something. I turn my gaze back up to face them and the scene has changed. The victim now has his face against the ground, with one of the others kneeling on his back. He has his arm pulled up and twisted behind him.

A helpless whimper comes from the ground.

"Say uncle," says the other boy, who is standing tall above. I can see his face in profile, and he is wearing a sick smirk.

"UNCLE!" — a muffled shout from the ground.

An eternity passes in the span of a few seconds. Finally, I break my paralysis.

"HEY!" I say to them sternly, with as much force as I can muster. "Don't... don't do that!". In the moment, these are the only words I can find... pathetic.

The leader turns slowly towards me, forced to acknowledge my presence, yet he seems completely unsurprised, as if he knew I was there all along. His accomplice looks up at me, loosening his grip slightly but still maintaining position over his victim.

"Keep walking, man." says the leader coldly. He is looking right at me, without an ounce of fear.

"Let go of him." I say with a bit more authority. There is a moment of pause. I realize I can threaten to call the teacher over, and am about to open my mouth when I hear a loud clanging of metal.

The second boy lets go and stands up. Saved by the bell.

"You got lucky today, milksop." says the leader to the kid on the ground. He then turns back to me, staring me down. Grinning, no less.

"Hey, the 2000s called, and Mark McGrath of Sugar Ray wants his sunglasses back," he says.

And just like that, the two boys are running towards the building, leaving their target behind to pick himself up off the wet ground. He turns to me and I see his face once again, covered in dirt on the left side. I look into his eyes. He looks back but can only see my sunglasses.

He picks up his hat and starts walking towards the building. I see dozens of other children running and screaming as they line up to enter the school.

The door to my apartment opens with a squeak, and I am greeted by the warm heat of home. I wipe the salt off of my boots and undo the velcro.

I can hear the sound of Madden being played through the crack in the door to Michael's room. He likely hasn't moved an inch since I left to grab lunch. He doesn't acknowledge my return. After eight years as roommates, there are some things we just don't need to do anymore.

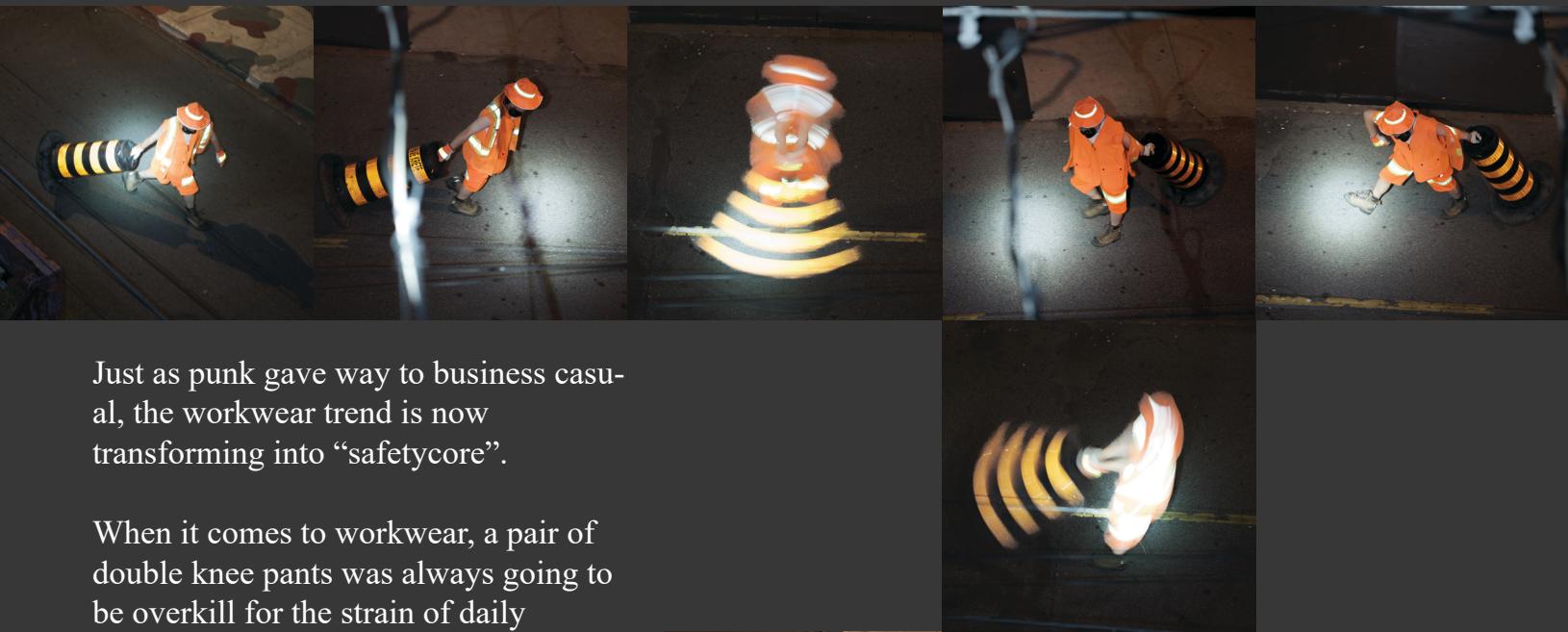
I grab a plate from the kitchen, and into my room I go, sitting down at the desk in front of my computer. I fight with the knot keeping the plastic bag closed, and slowly unwrap my shawarma. I inhale what can only be described fairly as a stench, but a familiar one. The first bite is heaven, and for a moment nothing else exists. My stomach gurgles in approval.

I become aware of some sauce on my face, and reach for a napkin to wipe it off. I prepare to take a second bite when I see my sunglasses on the desk, and pause, suddenly brought back to the moment with those kids on the playground.

Then, it occurs to me: "how the heck did that kid know Sugar Ray?"

SSYNSE .com (not the luxury facshion retailer ssense.com) PRESENTS SAFETYCORE

Enter a trend that merges the gritty roots of workwear with the neon-bright urgency of modern safety gear.



Just as punk gave way to business casual, the workwear trend is now transforming into “safetycore”.

When it comes to workwear, a pair of double knee pants was always going to be overkill for the strain of daily life as a 26-year-old software engineer living in Jersey City.

No number of living room DIY projects can cure those terminally smooth hands.

The workwear trend carries an air of stolen valour, much like wearing camouflage without any military service. And no, building a hammock for your neighbours doesn't a collar blue dye.



In contrast, SAFETYCORE is authentic and brings tangible benefits. It's about practical functionality and high-vis safety. Helping your friends safely cross the street on a night out in the era of decreasing pedestrian safety. It's a return to functionality—you may not have known what the hammer loop on your pants was for, but you don't have any doubts about the use of the reflective coating on your new vest. Sneak to the heights of any roof on any building (clipboard not included) or explore the deepest, most pungent sewer.

Brands like *Carhartt* and *Dickies* have paved the way for *Uline* to become the hottest designer in the vintage clothing space.

