

PLAYBOY

ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN

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COLLECTOR'S EDITION

THE DEVIL IN
MARGE
SIMPSON

VICTORIA'S SECRET
STUNNER
ALINA
PUSCAU

TERRIFYING
NEW WORK BY
STEPHEN
KING

BADLANDS
A PLAYBOY
DISPATCH
FROM THE
TEXAS
BORDER

OUR ANGEL
A TRIBUTE TO
FARRAH
FAWCETT

THE
MADNESS
OF TRACY
MORGAN

THE INTERVIEW
BENICIO DEL TORO

MATT GROENING



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TEEN TM

T

Alcohol Reference
Crude Humor
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org



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FRONT-IMPACT
CRASH SAFETY**



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El Paso and Juárez are twin cities divided by lines both real (the Rio Grande) and conceptual (the U.S.-Mexico border). You'd think being just a few hundred yards apart they'd share a vibe. And you'd be dead wrong. Or if you're on the Juárez side, maybe just plain dead. In *A Weird Calm at the Edge of the Abyss* **Luis Alberto Urrea** (author of *The Devil's Highway* and *Into the Beautiful North*) explores the politics and pathos of the border. Taking things in a lighter direction, **Aaron Sigmond** delivers stogie wisdom in *Burn After Reading*, a guide to how one of our favorite plants makes its way from the ground to your humididor. You'll find an exclusive special edition of Sigmond's forthcoming book *Playboy: The Complete Guide to Cigars* at fine tobacconists in November and in bookstores everywhere this spring. And now time for a riddle: How do you get one of the world's most beautiful supermodels to pose nude? Answer: Put her boyfriend behind the camera. It helps when that boyfriend is



Luis Alberto Urrea



Aaron Sigmond

Hollywood director **Brett Ratner**. See what ensues when he and **Alina Puscau** hit the studio, on page 92. After the riddle, a contradiction: the movie star who doesn't act like one. You won't find **Benicio Del Toro** in rehab or on TMZ; you'll just find him in some of the world's finest films—and in this month's interview, where he finally lays the Scarlett Johansson rumors to rest. Also laid to rest are **James Ellroy's** demons. This month sees the final installment of Big Dog's soul-scorching cycle *The Hilliker Curse*. And after beaming into our living rooms for the past 20 years, **Marge Simpson** finally gives America what it wants: a pictorial, courtesy of **Julius Preite's** illustrations. Then **Toni Bentley** gives us a lurid taste of the City of Lights in her sex column, *French Dish. Hmm*. What's missing in this issue? How about something terrifying—by **Stephen King**? In his narrative poem *The Bone Church* the horror master conjures Coleridge to spin a tale of jungle exploration and raw human fear. Anyone who worries King has abandoned the novel should relax, however. His new book, *Under the Dome*, hits stores this month.



Benicio Del Toro



James Ellroy



Julius Preite

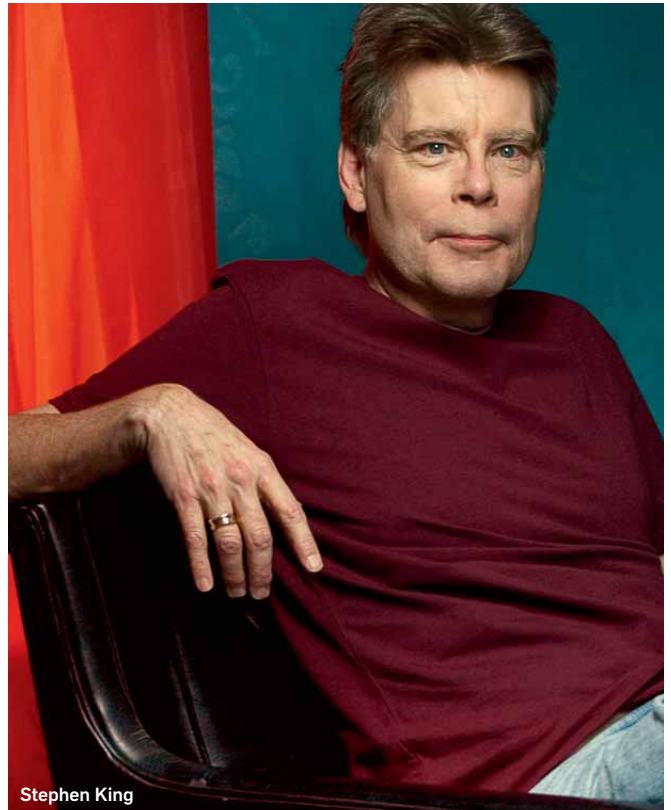


Toni Bentley

PLAYBILL



Brett Ratner and Alina Puscau



Stephen King

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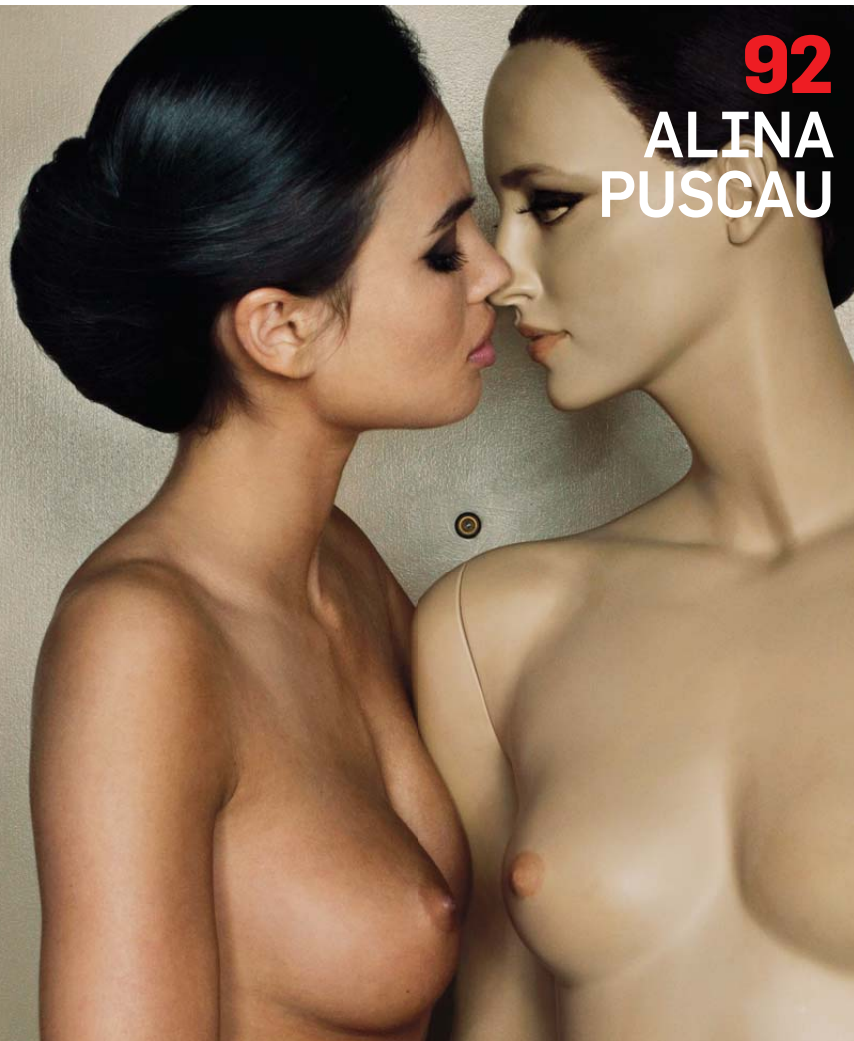


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A WEIRD CALM AT THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS



LUIS ALBERTO URREA stands over the Rio Grande, straddling heaven and hell. On one side sits El Paso, a classic American boomtown that's still flourishing. But a *pedra's* throw away is Juárez, where 326 people were murdered—in August.



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ALINA PUSCAU

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How **DR. DREW PINSKY** made his problem work for him.



COVER STORY

Can you believe the picture on our cover is of a body that carried three children? Marge Simpson, the hottest woman in Springfield, finally sheds her green dress for us and, with the help of illustrator Julius Preite, re-creates our October 1971 cover. The Rabbit Head chair is the other icon in the picture.

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COVER STORY

Alina Puscau is a lingerie model, the singer of “When You Leave” (the sultry version of “Numa Numa”) and the girlfriend of Brett Ratner, director of *X-Men: The Last Stand*. The two—well, three if you count Alina’s mannequin—show us that Helmut Newton’s world is still sexy. Our Rabbit is the hottest clip next to Alina’s music video.



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THIS MONTH ON PLAYBOY.COM

THE A-LIST Of all the tequila joints in all the world... We direct you to the best agave lounges.

FORUM: NEWSFRONT We help you sift through the spin in the political and societal news.

HEF'S HOUSE From humble beginnings: Take a video tour of Hef's childhood home, narrated by the Man.

STEWART COPELAND Remember when rock stars were quirky? The Police's drummer still is. He talks about his *Ben Hur* musical, playing polo and hanging with pygmies.

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A king once offered me a generous gift if I revealed my distillation process. But I thought, what am I going to do with Prussia?

John Jameson

JAMESON

TASTE ABOVE ALL ELSE



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THE WORLD OF PLAYBOY

HEF SIGHTINGS, MANSION FROLICS AND NIGHTLIFE NOTES



HEF AND HIS GIRLS AT HOLLY'S PEEPSHOW

Hef took three of his girls—Anna Berglund, Crystal Harris and Melissa Taylor—to Holly Madison's *Peepshow* in Las Vegas. Holly stars as Bo Peep, who finds her sexual self in the camp burlesque performance. This night Hef was the showstopper: The crowd went wild when he was invited onstage to be part of the performance.



HIS ANGELS HAVE A CENTERFOLD

Miss July Karissa and Miss August Kristina—the Shannon twins—enjoyed double exposure with two autograph sessions in Las Vegas for their July/August issue Centerfold. Hef attended the Playboy Store at the Palms' meet-and-greet to check on their penmanship.



HBO'S PLAYMATE COMEDY FETISH

HBO asked Playmates Kayla Collins, Alison Waite, Deanna Brooks, Tiffany Selby and Hope Dworaczyk to help promote its Comedy Fetish campaign. The girls turned down telling jokes while jumping on trampolines but were game for croquet and "Playmate Confessions." Alison's: "Some say size doesn't matter...but there is nothing I like more than huge misunderstandings."

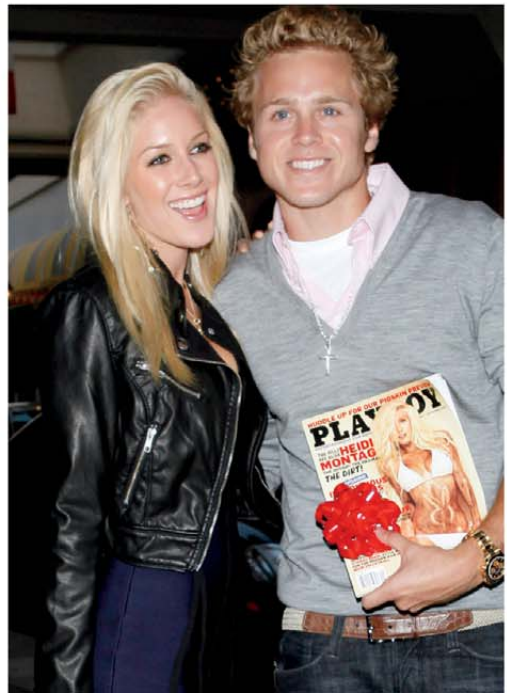


SUNDAY GODDESSES

Just another day in paradise for Hef. Here is a group shot of the girls who routinely attend Mansion pool parties held during summer Sundays. They swim, play volleyball and lie topless under the gorgeous California sun. You can spot the new gals by their tan lines.

OUR NEW PROMOTIONS DEPARTMENT

Heidi Montag and her husband, Spencer Pratt, were so pleased with her pictorial and their interview in the September issue that the couple was rarely seen without a copy after it hit newsstands. "I worked hard for this," Heidi says. "PLAYBOY had a vision—it's beautiful art." Why the bow? "It came out on his birthday," she says. "Happy birthday, honey!"



ACES AND ANGELS



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Hef has always been lucky in love, but this summer he tried his hand at poker. The Mansion turned into a giant card parlor for the third annual Sports Dream Celebrity Poker and Pool Party, held before the ESPY Awards. The Aces and Angels organization also anted up at PMW for its own celebrity poker tournament. (1) Hef with girlfriends Karissa and Kristina Shannon and Crystal Harris at the Sports Dream party. (2) A pair: twin NBA players Jason and Jarron Collins. (3) Adam Carolla with 24's Mary Lynn Rajskub. (4) The Pacers' Danny Granger. (5) Miss Universe Romania Bianca Elena Constantin can't keep her poker face next to Hef. (6) The Pussycat Dolls. (7) Former quarterback and "Bachelor" Jesse Palmer. (8) Kris and Bruce Jenner enter PMW for the Aces and Angels event. (9) Grammy winners All-4-One. (10) PLAYBOY cover model Kim Kardashian strikes a pose. (11) *Heroes*' James Kyson Lee. (12) Shannon Elizabeth with a stack of chips. (13) *Twilight*'s Billy Burke. (14) Dane Cook with Miss June 2004 Hiromi Oshima and PMOY 2002 Dalene Kurtis. He knows when to hold 'em.



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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Each fall I tear open the September issue to see how sports editor Gary Cole ranks the nation's top college football teams (*Playboy's Pigskin Preview*). As a die-hard Oklahoma fan, I am stoked to see he finally put us where we belong—at number one. Other fans tend to view the Sooners as overrated, but the truth is we have one of the most prolific programs in collegiate football history, right up there with glorified USC.

Tiffani Shipman
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

I'm sure you're getting tons of e-mail from fans arguing their team should be ranked higher, but seriously, how could you not include LSU in the top 25? Not only do you cite LSU as Florida's toughest road game this season, but you also rank Georgia Tech at number 14, after LSU badly embarrassed the Yellow Jackets 38-3 in the Chick-fil-A Bowl.

Michael Margiotta
Slidell, Louisiana

Thank you, PLAYBOY. The last time you omitted LSU from your rankings we won the national championship.

Carl Bell
Gonzales, Louisiana

CROWD FAVORITE

Olivia Munn ("Queen of Convergence," *Future Tense*, July/August) is the loveliest



Olivia Munn causes a ruckus at Comic-Con.

woman to appear in PLAYBOY since April 1990 Playmate Lisa Matthews.

Leo Doroschenko
West Orange, New Jersey

Olivia's many fans apparently agree, as you can see from the scene that resulted at Comic-Con when she began signing issues.

SETH MACFARLANE

No offense to the beautiful women featured in September, but Seth MacFarlane is the sexiest person in the issue (*Playboy Interview*). As Quagmire likes to say on *Family Guy*, "Giggity, giggity, giggity!" My only criticism is that the interview is far

DEAR PLAYBOY

After the Fall

As Frank Owen notes in *Apocalypse 2012* (September), I believe that within the next few years a shift in the magnetic poles will wipe out civilization. Most of the members of our 2012 Survival and Revival Group plan to escape into the mountains, where we will protect with our lives mankind's technological knowledge. Should that knowledge be lost, humanity will likely revert to barbarism and we will be in a worse situation than uncivilized peoples, who can more easily adapt to challenging circumstances. We, on the other hand, have become so cultured we find it difficult to live without comforts.

Patrick Geryl
Antwerp, Belgium
Geryl runs howtosurvive2012.com.



MARK HOLZMAN/PHOTO

too short. Seth, do you think we may be related? My great-uncle James, a love-'em-and-leave-'em type who deposited his seed far and wide, began his journey not far from your hometown in Connecticut.

Jean MacFarlane-Pieper
North Haven, Connecticut

Your interview reaffirms something I've believed for a long time: Behind every sex joke, fart remark and AIDS song heard on *Family Guy* is a lesson to be learned. It may be about accepting the lifestyles of others, not taking ourselves so seriously, understanding our mortality or even making sure to agree on a safety word before engaging in S&M. (Remember that episode? The safety word is *banana*.) I've spent a lot of time thinking through some of the substance behind the farts (*eww...*) on MacFarlane's shows. He's a hero of mine, and I'm glad to see PLAYBOY give him his due.

J. Jeremy Wisniewski
Oneonta, New York

*Wisniewski is a professor at Hartwick College and author of *Family Guy and Philosophy: A Cure for the Petarded*.*

I notice your interview does not offer any comparison of *Family Guy* with *South Park*, while *The Simpsons* is given almost as much space as MacFarlane's new show. I can only assume this is by design. Bravo—anything to rile the *South Park* boys is good for television.

Scott Gillespie
Richmond, California

HEARTBREAKER

In response to Maurine Truitt's letter in September about CPR being per-

formed to the 100-beats-per-minute tune of "Stayin' Alive" (as noted in the June *Raw Data*), Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust" is also 100 beats per minute. However, a heart-attack victim probably doesn't want to hear you singing that.

Scott Freeman
Suffolk, Virginia

GETS YOUR MOTOR RUNNING

Playmate Kimberly Phillips (*American Beauty*, September) is an absolute



We found Kimberly when she mailed us photos.

stunner. I may even airbrush her visage onto my motorcycle and/or my guitar. I also enjoy PLAYBOY's many fine articles and fiction; yours is truly a unique publication.

Douglas Rogers
Belleville, Illinois



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SAVE THE DATE

As a scientist who has spent most of my life studying the ancient Maya, I have for years been receiving e-mails from people who've read articles such as *Apocalypse 2012* and want my reassurance the world is not going to end on December 21, 2012. This widespread concern prompted me to write *The End of Time: The Maya Mystery of 2012*, which tells the Maya's side of the story based on archaeological records and documents written prior to the Spanish conquest. The fact is the Maya were far more interested in the past than the future. The rulers of one of history's most brilliant and enduring civilizations manipulated deep time to establish a historical foundation for their culture and, more

important, to reinforce their political legitimacy. (Mayan timekeepers and astronomers were amazing—without benefit of computers or telescopes they tracked Venus to an accuracy of one day in 500 years.) Do I think December 21, 2012 will usher in either a global blow-up or the dawning of a new consciousness? When I asked a Mayan shaman that question, he responded, "Only the cycle will end and a new one will begin." Face it: If there's a Mayan message it isn't intended for us. Our cultural narcissism, along with our fear and distrust of institutions and manipulation of statistics on disaster frequency, has driven us to mess with somebody else's time system to write our history. I find that warped. The life of our planet depends on the actions we take, not on secret messages from ancient earthlings.

Anthony Aveni
Hamilton, New York

Aveni is a professor of astronomy, anthropology and Native American studies at Colgate University.

The 2012 phenomenon is just another in a perpetual series of dubious end-of-the-world proclamations. As my boss, James Randi, notes in *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural*, the world was previously scheduled to end on October 3, 1186 (according to astrologer John of Toledo), October 3,

1533 (mathematician and theologian Michael Stifel), August 12, 1654 (physician Helisaeus Roeslin of Alsace), April 5, 1761 (religious fanatic and soldier William Bell, who was tossed into Bedlam on April 6), April 3, 1843 (William Miller, founder of the Millerite church) and July 1999 (Nostradamus, who wrote, "The year 1999, seven months/From the sky will come a great King of Terror"), among other dates. End-of-the-world predictions are entertaining but can also be dangerous. People embrace doomsday ideas because it makes them feel special. They are the chosen ones who have taken a leading role in their own mind movies. That can breed nihilism and make predic-

As a physician who specializes in nuclear medicine, I would like to clarify one point about the antiradiation pills (potassium iodide) survivalist Steve Pace showed your writer. These pills prevent absorption of radioactive iodide by the thyroid gland; they do not have any effect on other forms of ionizing irradiation. Anyone exposed to a high level of radiation will die with or without them.

Dr. Tony Vasquez
Redding, California

HEIDI AND SPENCER

After reading Spencer Pratt's interview with his wife, Heidi Montag (*The Hills Are Alive*, September), I now hope the world does end in 2012.

Adam Rank
Huntington Beach,
California

Montag claims to be a Christian but then ridicules her former *Hills* co-star Lauren Conrad. One can only hope karma bites her and Spencer in the ass. The one thing I did enjoy about the interview is how thoughtless it makes the couple sound with all their fist bumping, phone juggling and illusions about becoming anything more than reality-show stars.

Olivia Hawbs
Simi Valley,
California

Mr. and Mrs. Pratt are either geniuses of performance art or the founding members of Jerks for Jesus.

Christopher Reidy
Vinton, Virginia

tions self-fulfilling. In 2000, for example, the leaders of a heretical Christian group in Uganda poisoned or burned to death 778 followers who had become agitated after two end dates came and passed. As Friday, December 21, 2012 dawns, we plan to be at our desks just as we are on any other day, with plenty of work still to do. As Randi has written, "When the end doesn't come, resilient fans never discredit the notion; they merely redesign the details and settle back once more to confidently await doom."

Jeff Waggs
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

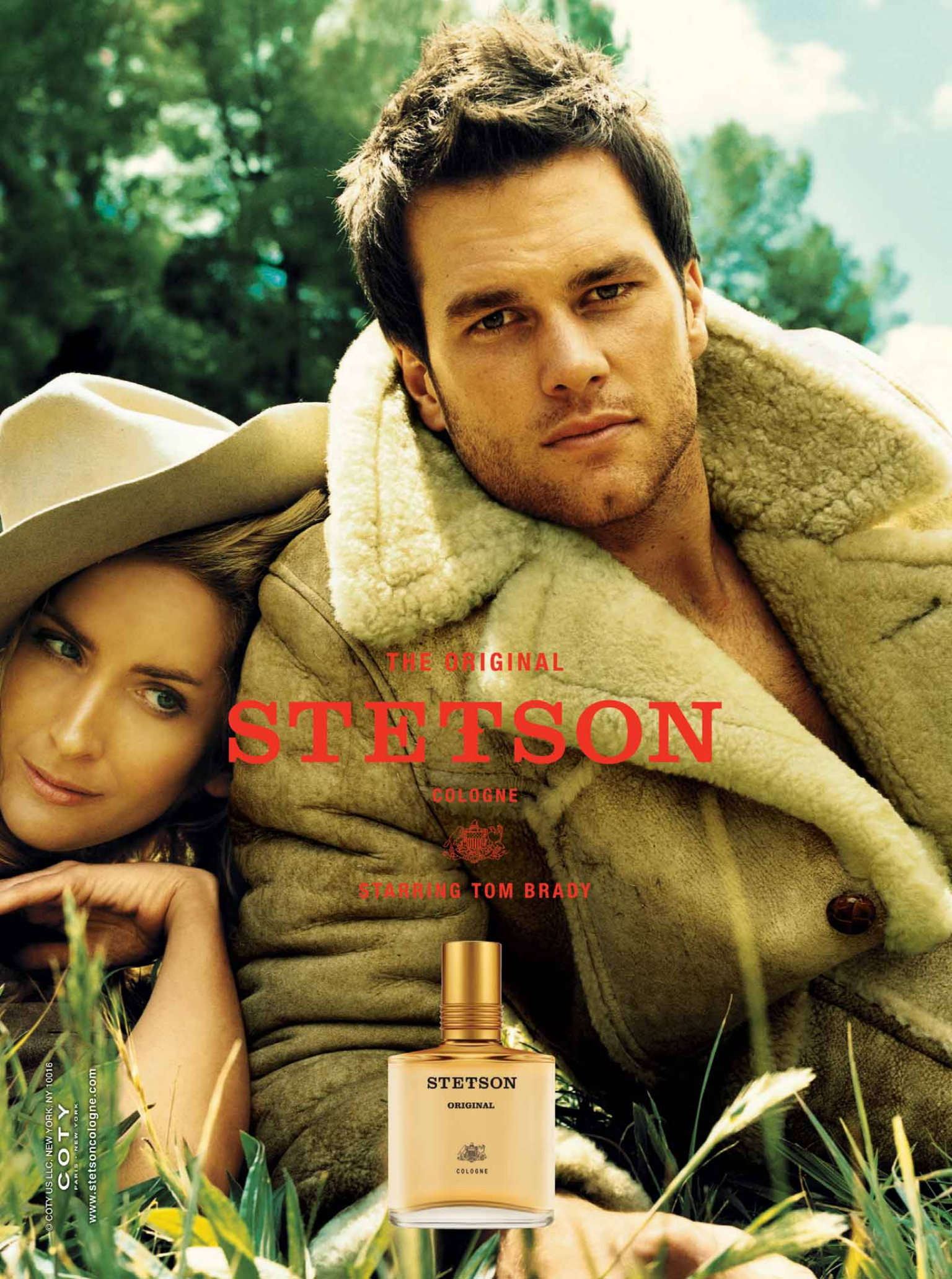
Waggs is communication manager for the James Randi Educational Foundation (randi.org).

SLUGGER'S PARADISE

In light of James Auld's letter in the September issue, here's a further thought on *Perfect Game: How to Fix Baseball* (May), in which Bill James argues the sport needs to be sped up: Why should we watch lengthy pitcher-batter duels when the batter loses 80 percent of the time? Instead, move the pitcher's mound back until you get a sufficiently entertaining on-base percentage. Then we can turn our attention to raising those sagging basketball rims. Remember when players had to jump to dunk?

Karl Kaiser
Altamonte Springs, Florida





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PLAYBOY AFTERHOURS

BECOMING ATTRACTION

Tegan Woodford

From the ubiquitous Hugh Jackman to delicious wine to an awesome modern architecture movement (google “Narveno Court”), Australia has lately been challenging the maxim that no history is ever made in the southern hemisphere. And then there are the women, gorgeous as the day is long. Up-and-coming model Tegan Woodford, born and bred on the Gold Coast, is one such natural resource. “Gold Coast girls are sexy,” she says. “We’re tan from all the time we spend on the beach.” Tegan has appeared in Australia’s major men’s mags—*Ralph*, *FHM* and *Nuts*—and is readying herself for an international spotlight. Hey, you saw her here first.

“All my bikinis are Brazilian bums and tiny tops.”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GLEN BOWDEN

Hot and Wet Chairman of the Board Shorts

Lightning Bolt, a Hawaii-based surfboard and apparel company that started in 1972 but later phased out its clothing in the United States, hits the beach again this fall with surfing legend Jonathan Paskowitz as the new boss. The iconic brand returns with a new line just as fellow retro-surfshorts makers Birdwell and Sundek are likewise making comebacks. It's a move away from below-the-knee, basketballshorts-length jams over to retro-cool low-riding nylons. And the surf-inspired bikinis don't look half bad either.

In Your Pocket LIVING THE iLIFE

Now almost three years old, the iPhone has become the most MacGyver-esque of all personal electronics, able to turn itself into an instant problem solver. Here are five iPhone apps we love: **(1) The Bad Decision Blocker:** It helps deactivate certain phone numbers so you don't drunk dial an ex. **(2) Email 'n Walk** (pictured): Uses the phone's camera as a radar to let you know if you're about to walk into something, so you can e-mail on the go. **(3) ATM Hunter:** You'll never stumble around hunting for a money machine again. **(4) Run Pee:** Find out the best time to go to the bathroom during a movie so you don't miss any big action or sex scene. **(5) RedLaser:** Scan bar codes in stores and instantly find out if there are better deals elsewhere.



IMPOSSIBLE DREAMS

Mr. PLAYBOY: A Life



"One does not start a magazine with no money and nothing but a dream and have it become the most influential magazine of its time. It's better than fiction." So says Hugh Hefner when asked about his new six-volume, 3,506-page autobiography, *Hugh Hefner's Playboy*, just out from Taschen. The labor of love includes excerpts from the 2,000 scrapbooks Hef has kept since childhood, documenting his life in astounding detail. The first volume covers his kid years, the second explores the launch and instant global success of PLAYBOY, and the final four take us through the sexual revolution and the wild times of the 1970s. Each \$1,300 six-volume set is numbered (only 1,500 copies will be produced), signed by the Man himself and housed in a Plexiglas case. It's the most intimate portrait of Mr. Playboy that exists by far. Care to sum it all up for us, Hef? "When you're young, you dream impossible dreams. Holding on to your dreams is what life is all about."



Shorts: \$50-\$54.
Near-naked
female: priceless.

Sex Machines ROBOT LOVE

We're finally getting close to the day when humans will be having sex with machines. Futurologist Ian Yeoman recently predicted that tourists will enjoy disease-free relations with robot prostitutes at artificial, indoor resorts by the year 2050. Can't wait that long? Henrik Christensen, director of the Center for Robotics and Intelligent Machines, says men will be boning primitive bots by 2011 ("vibration" and audio will be added to lifelike silicone sex dolls that already exist). For now, we're stuck having plain old sex with real humans. Or are we? See the future of human-robot lovemaking today in Playboy.com's Wanderlust video series at playboy.com/wanderlust.





Drink of the Month A Stop at the Bank

Prohibition-era cool never goes out of style when it comes to cocktail emporiums. The latest boozy bid to channel a 1920s speakeasy is Philadelphia's Franklin Mortgage & Investment Co. New but already generating national buzz, the subterranean haunt is named after the Philly-based front for underworld boss Max "Boo Boo" Hoff's bootlegging ring back in the day. The FMIC boasts burgundy leather banquettes, marble tabletops and vest-wearing bartenders who hand-carve chips from artisanal ice blocks and expertly pour more than 20 concoctions. Try the pirate's slave—it's truly a thing of booty.

Pirate's Slave

2 oz. J.M Rhum Agricole White
¾ oz. Punt e Mes
¼ oz. Campari
1 tsp. sugarcane molasses
2 dashes orange bitters
Flamed orange twist

Build ingredients in a glass with ice. Stir until chilled and strain into an old-fashioned glass with fresh ice. Garnish with flamed orange twist.

This cocktail was named in honor of Miguel de Cervantes, who, when not helping invent the Western novel, lost the use of his hand to a gunshot wound, battled Barbary pirates and was forced into slavery. With one hand left, he would've gripped this drink with pride.



SEE MORE OF AMBER JAY AT CLUB.PLAYBOY.COM.
APPLY TO BE AN EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AT PLAYBOY.COM/POSE.

Employee of the Month Amber Jay

PLAYBOY: That's quite an outfit. What do you wear to work?

AMBER: This.

PLAYBOY: Okay, what do you wear over that?

AMBER: No, this is my uniform. Almost, at least.

PLAYBOY: Huh?

AMBER: I work at Knotty Bodies Espresso. It's a coffee stand in Seattle where we wear lingerie and bikinis, and every Friday is costume day.

PLAYBOY: Costume day?

AMBER: On Knotty Fridays you get to put on outfits. I rock full-on thigh highs.

PLAYBOY: That made us perk right up.

AMBER: That's kind of the point. It's an awesome job. I love my customers.

PLAYBOY: We didn't think Seattle had year-round bikini weather.

AMBER: We have a space heater.

PLAYBOY: What's the hardest part of the job—picking out what to wear?

AMBER: No. It's either being on my feet all day or waking up at four in the morning and leaving my little black pug, Mia, in my bed.

PLAYBOY: We want to wake up to you every morning.

AMBER: I've heard that one a few times before.

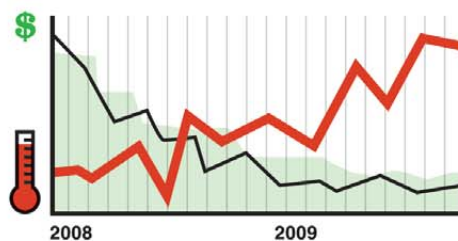
At Your Service

THE HOT WAITRESS INDEX

One upside to the stumbling economy: Waitresses are getting hotter. According to the Hot Waitress Index, during financially robust times, beautiful women get jobs that place a premium on attractiveness (modeling, PR work, etc.). When the economy nose-dives and those jobs dry up, argues "theorist" Hugo Lindgren, who dreamed up the index, even breathtaking babes have to consider less-glamorous gigs—such as waitressing. "How 'bout a meatball sandwich, a coke and your phone number?"

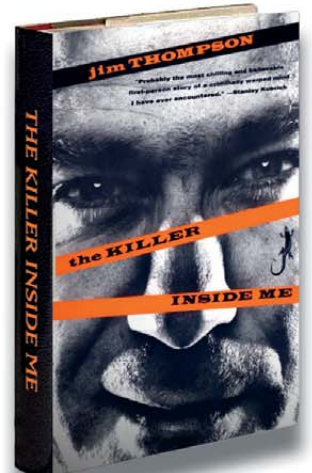


YUKO SHIMIZU



Book 'Em FIGHTING WORDS

Scorpions, the Boston-based anti-establishment book club that celebrates "hard-guy" books, has gotten a debate rolling on the web. Which are the best hard-guy books of all time? Tops on its list: Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. Here are our top 10 books worth their weight in blood: (1) **The Killer Inside Me** by Jim Thompson, (2) **To Have and Have Not** by Ernest Hemingway, (3) **Shoot the Piano Player** by David Goodis, (4) **Nobody Move** by Denis Johnson, (5) (of course) **Blood Meridian** by Cormac McCarthy, (6) **The Postman Always Rings Twice** by James Cain, (7) **Othello** by William Shakespeare, (8) **American Tabloid** by James Ellroy, (9) **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?** by Philip K. Dick and (10) **Beowulf** by unknown (the translation by Seamus Heaney).



Movie of the Month 2012

By Stephen Rebell

In 2012, cataclysmic earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tidal waves send John Cusack, Amanda Peet, Woody Harrelson and Thandie Newton racing across the globe toward a modern-day Noah's ark. Director Roland Emmerich says he was inspired by the ancient Mayan doomsday prophecy and other jittery theories as he prepared to go back to the future. "I'm glad every two years visual effects take a leap forward," says the disaster master. "But it all starts with a concept, not effects." And that concept is? "The characters have to get aboard a ship or they're dead. The government people all know what's happening and have moral discussions about whether they're doing the right thing. John Cusack plays one of the people who don't know,



and he views the disasters as a way to reconcile his life. Then there's Woody Harrelson, the crazy guy in the middle who thinks it's all about spaceships. There's a balance

between intimate scenes, action and laughs, and people who've seen it told me they cried. That balance doesn't work every time; this time it really does."

SHAPING YOUTH:

Author C.D. Payne struggled for years to get his 1993 novel, *Youth in Revolt*, into print before going the self-publishing route. The path to a movie version of the cult classic—about a smart, angst-ridden 14-year-old's bizarre life—was nearly as rocky. Fox filmed a 1996 TV pilot that went nowhere, and MTV did no better with a planned miniseries. Now a new film version—starring Michael Cera, Steve Buscemi, Justin Long and Zach Galifianakis—is finally reaching screens some 16 years after the book's first edition.

Tease Frame

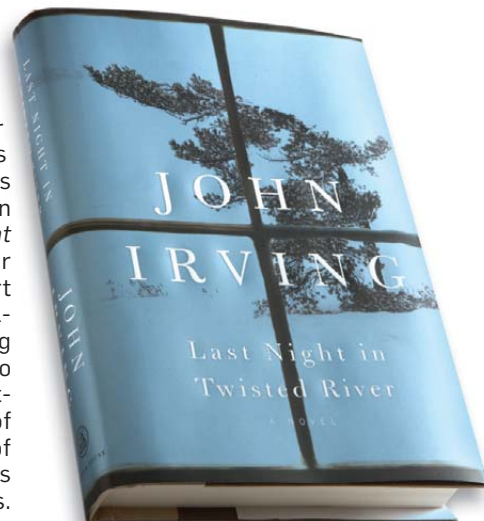
You probably haven't seen much of **Gillian Jacobs**, but we suspect now you'll want to see more. In the black comedy *Choke* (pictured), based on Chuck Palahniuk's novel, Jacobs plays a stripper who turns a sex addict on to domestic bliss. See her press more buttons—possibly even ones with mysterious magical powers—in the horror film *The Box* opposite Cameron Diaz and James Marsden.



Books

The World According to Irving

There are those authors who seem compelled to venture back upstream, to explore the same tributaries, to endlessly test the roiling crosscurrents of their own fiction and memory. This sense of revisionist adventurism is both subject and subtext in John Irving's epic 12th novel, *Last Night in Twisted River*. This particular journey gets off to a thrilling start with a vigorous burst of storytelling at a New Hampshire logging camp, then ranges from Boston to Iowa to Canada before finally settling down in the familiar land of Garp, Irving's oft-visited world of prep school wrestling, precocious young writers and symbolic bears. The young writer this time is Danny Baciagalupo, who with his chef father, Dominic, spends the majority of the book as a low-key fugitive slowly hunted by a homicidal, and incredibly patient, lawman. Under the pen name Danny Angel he writes books that have a striking resemblance to Irving's own (the fourth one makes him rich; the "abortion book" becomes an acclaimed movie) while his father works in a succession of restaurants.



They hide in pools of immigrants while larger-than-life women drop in on them, sometimes from the sky, and over 50 years and 550 pages they live in that distinctively Irving way, holding on for the next portentous tragicomic story. A World of Accidents, Irving calls it—big fate-seeking missiles that will follow the characters around for decades as they eddy back toward the beginning. ★★ ★★ —Jess Walter

►Read more at playboy.com/entertainment.

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DVD of the Month

Star Trek

A lot was riding on the reboot of the beloved *Star Trek* franchise—including big bucks and potential Trekkie outrage—but director J.J. Abrams and writers Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman delivered the warp speed that space-opera fans crave, not to mention one of 2009's most satisfying and profitable summer blockbusters. The best twist is having fiery young rebels James T. Kirk (Chris Pine) and Spock (Zachary Quinto) duke it out and then hug it out, allowing us to be sucked into a compelling origin story that just happens to have some kick-ass effects sequences. Kirk bedding a hot green-skinned babe and a clever plot twist that allows an appearance by original Spock Leonard Nimoy are brilliant bonuses. Beam us aboard for more,



CHRISTINA LING

J.J. **Best extra:** The Blu-ray version features the Starfleet Vessel Simulator, which allows you to plunge deep inside

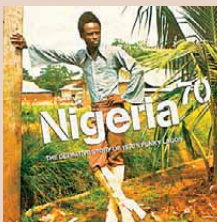
the *USS Enterprise* and the Romulan vessel *Narada*. It's like your own personal set visit. ★★★★★
—Bryan Reesman

Music

Return of the Mack

Swirling beats, jumpy guitars, howling horn sections and bursts of funky organ—no wonder interest in African music is booming. The latest sign? After an off-Broadway run got much love from such tastemakers as Jay-Z, Scarlett Johansson and Lou Reed, the musical *Fela!*—about Nigerian musician, political activist and all-around mack **Fela Kuti** (pictured bottom)—opens this month on the Great White Way. With his groundbreaking band Africa 70, Kuti created the blueprint for a pan-African funk by combining elements of styles from all over the continent and beyond. Afrobeat's resurgence animates new

bands like Vampire Weekend and Buraka Som Sistema, but perhaps the best outgrowth is a flood of recent compilations and reissues that exhume vintage West African sounds. Some of our favorites (below, from left): *Nigeria Disco Funk Special* from the Soundway label, *Nigeria 70* from Strut, *African Scream Contest* from Analog Africa and a lost 1973 LP by Pax Nicholas from Daptone. Not to worry: This stuff isn't world music; it was produced by locals to heat up dance floors in places like Benin, not by Westerners to make it palatable for New Age chicks in places like Bennington.



TV

Hot Alien Alert

There are certain holy-shit TV moments kids of the Reagan years will never forget: the first time Mr. T pitied a fool, the Super Bowl ad that introduced the Mac and the night alien space chick Diana (Jane Badler) ate that hamster on *V*. This month ABC brings back the lizard people via a slicked-up reinvention of that show. As with the recently ended *Battlestar Galactica* redux, ABC's *V* update could outshine its predecessor (the 1984 version is pictured here). The plot—aliens called the Visitors pretend to be our friends as they infiltrate the planet—hews closely to the original. But instead of allegories about the dangers of Nazism, the new show explores a society that becomes addicted to devotion (think Obamamania or Twitter lust). In addition to multiplex-worthy special effects, *V* boasts a strong cast, including *Lost* refugee Elizabeth Mitchell and the stunning Morena Baccarin. The pilot could use a few more action sequences, but overall *V* is thrilling television—and the best new fall show. ★★★★★ —Josef Adalian



RAW DATA

SIGNIFICA, INSIGNIFICA, STATS AND FACTS

THE PLAYBOY POLL

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF?

WHAT WE'RE THINKING:

BREAST MAN 26% PERSONALITY MAN 20% LEG MAN 7%
ASS MAN 26% VAGINA MAN 14% FOOT MAN 7%



NEXT UP: GO TO PLAYBOY.COM/WWT FOR NOVEMBER'S QUESTIONS, INCLUDING:

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF THANKSGIVING (ASIDE FROM FAMILY)?

TURKEY FIXIN'S BOOZE LONG WEEKEND FOOTBALL NAPS

ODD STAT OF THE MONTH

Tatiata Kozhevnikova, a 42-year-old Russian mom, holds the Guinness record for the world's strongest vagina, having used her poon to lift a 31-pound glass ball.



WHAT THEY'RE THINKING

ACCORDING TO CHATELAINE MAGAZINE, **11%** OF WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL BONDAGE.



45 ACCORDING TO ONE ECONOMIC RESEARCH FIRM, IF IT WEREN'T FOR REVENUE FROM OVERDRAFT FEES, **45%** OF BANKS AND CREDIT UNIONS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PROFITABLE LAST YEAR.



THE AVERAGE PERSON LIES 3 TIMES IN A 10-MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH A STRANGER.

FIFTY PERCENT OVER 50% OF MEN AND WOMEN REPORT HAVING TRIED TO **STEAL** A FRIEND'S **PARTNER.**

54% OF AMERICANS ARE SKEPTICAL OF EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION.



MR. SKIN RECENTLY RANKED THE TOP 100 NUDE SCENES OF ALL TIME. HERE ARE HIS TOP THREE:

3. SHARON STONE IN BASIC INSTINCT

2. ANGELINA JOLIE IN GIA

1. PHOEBE CATES IN FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH



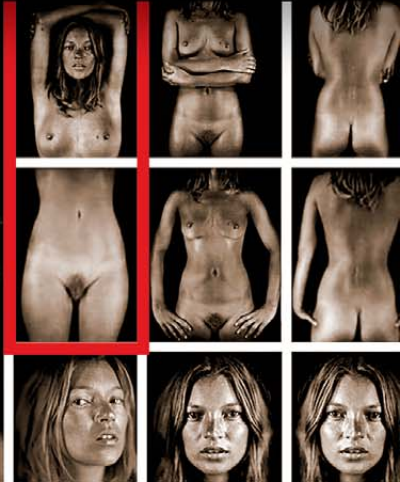
Since fertility clinics will pay up to **\$5,000** for human eggs but just **\$100** for sperm, one clinic in New Jersey has gotten calls from at least **100** men about donating their "eggs."



PRICE CHECK

Here are selections from Kate Moss's 2003 nude session with Chuck Close. The images highlighted in red recently sold at auction for:

\$15,403



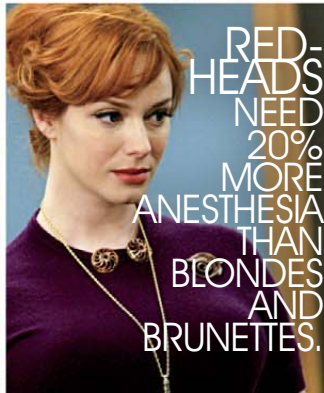
SALES OF LUBE ROSE

32%

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Silent But Deadly

Taking a fast, quiet spin on the latest green iron

A steady stream of tinkerers is trying to save the planet with vehicles that run on steam, vegetables, cow gas and sunshine. We think harnessing rainbows and smiles is next. We're all for alternative fuel. Give us a good set of batteries and get out of the way. Which is why we dig Zero Motorcycles. Achieving almost zero emissions and total coolness, where a Segway screams dork, the Zero S (\$9,950, zeromotorcycles.com) just screams (actually it whirs). The lithium-ion battery sparks a motor that instantly puts out 31 horsepower and 62 foot-pounds of torque. Blip the throttle and the bike is gone, getting up to 50 mph alarmingly quickly. Loud pipes may save lives, but the exhaust-free (and remarkably quiet) Zero saves planets. Note that with a 50-mile range the bike favors a disciplined rider with a regular commute. Power management is still something of a bitch: Ignore the bars on the instrument panel at your peril. If you run out of juice, you'll be stuck cadging a boost from any unguarded outlet available. It's like when your cell phone runs out of batteries—that is if your cell phone weighed 225 pounds. On our first ride, after achieving total exhilaration we ended up pushing the Zero back to the studio. That said, filling up means just plugging it in for four hours, which costs you less than a penny a mile.

Stand and Deliver

Shaving is a sacred dance between you, your face and a deadly blade. What happens in that 10 minutes is deeply personal, so relax—take your time, and for God's sake use the right tools. This Olive Wood Shaving Set (\$200, dwr.com) offers the perfect blend of style and minimalism. It's not making too big a fuss while also not letting the moment pass unnoticed.



Belt It Out

Reminiscent of early jazz and art deco, vintage microphones harken back to a time when objects were as beautiful as they were functional. Wearing one on your belt (\$375, blackcrowarts.com) shows you're a man of taste. Plus, now when she unbuckles your pants she'll have more than one reason to sing.



About Time

Teaming Ernst Benz with John Varvatos may seem odd given the stylistic gulf between Benz's utilitarian aviation-style designs and Varvatos's shabby, comfortable take on high fashion. But check the results. The Ernst Benz ChronoScope (\$6,800, johnvarvatos.com) marries the at-a-glance precision of a pilot's watch with the elegance of a classic timepiece. Well done, gentlemen.



Sculpt Your Sound

The guts of the AUX Classic (\$1,000 to \$1,500, auxout.com) were made by European concert audio wizard Outline, and the system delivers impeccable sound. But we like its looks, too. While it works fine as a unit clumped together (two speakers and a sub-woofer), the two stereo satellites can be placed at interesting angles that invite sonic and aesthetic experimentation. Hit play, then start playing.

Hack Your Life: Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is the idea of projecting items from cyberspace onto the real world. Many will get their first taste this fall when Sony's EyePet debuts on the PlayStation 3. Using the PS3's camera, it lets you play with a cuddly alien

creature as it cavorts on your coffee table. The iPhone 3GS enables on-the-go AR by using its GPS and compass to overlay data onto a picture of the real world. Example: Yelp.com's app lets you point your iPhone's camera at a restaurant, then have reviews and recommendations superimposed over your live view.

Plane to See

After taking a flight from the States and then a puddle-jumper hop to the tiny airport in Quepos, Costa Rica, the last place you want to be is on another plane. Unless we're talking about the 727 that doubles as the Hotel Costa Verde's most luxurious set of rooms (\$400 to \$500 a night, costaverde.com). Permanently parked 50 feet up in the jungle canopy, the two-bedroom suite offers views of both the ocean and the jungle, not to mention the chance to order room service to your deck chair atop one of its wings.



WHO SAYS
MEN CAN'T
MULTITASK?



PRESS TO PLAY

HOLLYWOOD PLAYBOY  NEW FRAGRANCE FOR MEN



She was sitting at the corner table. Red hair, green eyes, pale skin, pretty but somehow unfinished. I love corner tables. I don't like anyone behind me unless he's been cleared for the job. Chez Benoit is the kind of classic bistro you visit when you die and go to Paris: cozy red banquettes, waiters wearing long white tablecloths as aprons, walls of graying old mirrors.

It was May and we were in France, me and the guy, the lover of the moment—lucky bastard. The maître d' said we could have the table beside the redhead. Sure. Her long hair was loose and framing her face, which was buried in a book. As the waiter slid our table out for me to slip in beside her, I got a glimpse of crossed stockinged legs ending in ruby-red stilettos. Almost whorish but also sweet, with the book and all. *Tropic of Cancer*—a romantic.

The table was pressed back into place, and there we were, trapped side by side. My guy sat across from me and, because the space was so tight, sort of opposite her, too. The waiter arrived to take her order. Voilà! She was American and having trouble reading the menu, so I offered to help: *coq au vin, sole meunière...*

I could smell her perfume, one of those designer fragrances that hit you over the head and never let you go. Nothing made in the past 20 years is worth anything. Guerlain, Chanel, Balenciaga—they carry the history of all the lovers who wore it before you. But this girl was wearing a scent that was ahistoric. Perhaps she didn't have any history either.

We had dinner together, sharing two bottles of red wine. She was a mid-level executive for a Kansas electronics company and was in Paris attending a conference. All that wine, and tongues were loosened. Always gathering sexual information, I got hers: She was a good girl. She had a boyfriend in Wichita who had recently proposed and before him three other consecutive monogamies. She was going to marry the fourth dick she had ever known! I felt a Mother Teresa urge to save her.

My guy picked up the check and suggested we continue the evening elsewhere. He mentioned the Jacuzzi in the spa at our hotel, a converted monastery, a short walk away in the Marais. I thought the idea was a long shot, but I asked her anyway. Bingo.

It was midnight, and we had the place to ourselves. She and I went into the ladies' room and respectfully took off our clothes, not looking at each other. But I did see a black garter belt pass through the air. He was already sitting in the Jacuzzi when we came out, with tequilas thoughtfully placed along the

curved edge. I took off the hotel robe and plunged in, but she had an attack of shyness. We teased her, but nothing worked. She got into the hot tub wrapped in her white robe, which absorbed water and floated out as she lowered herself. Miss Kansas, naked in a Jacuzzi in a strange Paris hotel with two people she had known for only a few hours.

I felt a leg underwater. I vaguely apologized, but she ignored me and let her leg linger near mine. My guy's eyes were alert. Then it happened, but I'm not sure how. Once a connection is made those crucial crossover moments get lost. I was touching her arm underwater, sliding my hand down, when I reached her hand—pow! She grabbed hold. It was one of those I-don't-believe-this-is-happening moments that accompany the impossible manifesting. Miss four-lover, 100 percent heterosexual Kansas was clutching my hand with a kind of desperation, as if she was drowning and I was the rope.

I looked into her beautiful green eyes and leaned in to kiss her, which seemed the only decent thing to do. She tilted her head and whispered in my ear, "I don't want an ordinary life." Then she opened her lovely mouth wide. When I kissed her she gave me her tongue and started running her hands across my breasts. I had more than I could ever have imagined with her. A kiss would have been enough to make it one of those amazing Parisian nights. I slid my hand down her narrow little belly. I felt a few hairs on her pussy, very few, on a vertical strip. I didn't know they had runways in Kansas. The lower I touched the more she gripped and groaned.

I whispered to her that we should get out of the water. She was in a daze and thought whatever I suggested was a good idea. No wonder men like obedient women—so do I. I climbed out first, and she got a view of my body—ballet dancer, small Brunette triangle. I ushered her into the sauna, and moments later he arrived, tented towel around his waist. He sat across from us, leaning back.

The room was hot and small. I placed her facing me on the higher level, and I slid down in front of her, pinching her hard nipples—she had a tight petite body, like mine—and landed at the strip. I knelt on the lower bench, fitting myself between her thighs. Her perfume had faded and she smelled real, sweet. The redhead had found some history, and it wasn't looking too ordinary—at least from where I sat.

Later my guy and I relived the whole evening, every detail of her. We never saw her again. No point in ruining it with numbers and e-mails. The girl from Kansas had been to Oz and found the wizard was a woman.

FRENCH

DISH

BY HONI BEN-HAY

ONE OF AMERICA'S FINEST EROTIC WRITERS VISITS A PARISIAN BISTRO— AND FINDS A REDHEAD ON THE MENU

NEW!

AXE
SKIN CONTACT
SENSITIVE
SHOWER GEL

AXE
SKIN CONTACT

SENSITIVE

...MY
SKIN...

...IT'S
SOMEHOW...

...TRANSFORMING!

ALL
DONE?
NOW I'M
GONNA GET
READY...

LEAP!

THE MOMENT
OF TRUTH.
THEY TOUCH.

WHOOOSH!

HIS
SKIN...

...CAN'T
STOP...

...TOUCHING!

MAKE YOUR SKIN
IRRÉSISTIBLE TO TOUCH





When success first came calling, I said, “What the hell? Why me? What are you talking about?” In 1983 I was John Q. Medical Student and happy to be that. I was living in Pasadena, California, around the corner from an up-and-coming rock radio station called KROQ. It would become a giant force in radio, but back then it was barely a blip on anyone’s radar. Some friends of mine met a couple of DJs, who said, “All our callers want to talk about is relationships. Let’s bring in a medical guy. He’ll talk about sex but use big words.” That’s where I came in.

This was gonzo radio at the time. The FCC was on the station’s ass to do more community-service programming, so they stuck us on Monday morning from midnight till three A.M. The weekend before my first appearance, KROQ’s hosts promoted my debut. “Hey, everybody, we’re gonna have a real doctor answering real questions on Sunday night.” I thought, What have I gotten myself into now? But what else could I do? I dug out a bunch of gynecology and infectious-disease textbooks and headed over to the studio. I was freaked out.

Sure enough, I was immediately taken by the whole environment. People were asking amazing questions on FM radio in the middle of the night. I was practically a kid myself, so I knew what young people were up to. This was back when you had to line up at a drugstore and ask the pharmacist for a condom. Sex was considered something adults did and kids didn’t talk about. But people were starting to hear about something called AIDS, which changed everything.

As I look back, there seems to be no blueprint for my career. All I know is what I did: I worked hard. My ethos demanded I be the best doctor. When I started practicing medicine and for many years afterward, I told patients they could call me day or night. The same thing had happened in college: People started lying down on a bed at all hours to talk to me, and I would sit and listen to their frustrations. It wasn’t an interest of mine as much as a capacity I had. I think my pathology is I experience myself almost totally through other people. There’s another name for that: severe co-dependency. After years and years of working on myself I’ve been able to hone that into something I can turn on and off. But it is a pathology. Hey, if you can turn a pathology into a viable asset that involves helping people and generally doing good in the world, I say go for it.

But if you don’t watch it, a pathology can consume you. I tend toward workaholicism, and if somebody tells me to do something, I often do it at the expense of the rest of my life. Have I had lunch? Do I need to be with my family? Often it doesn’t matter; I just do it. It takes some

discipline on my part to say, “Oh, listen, I feel like shit here and need to take a break.” You have to be good to yourself, too. Even as my career expanded and I did *Loveline* and various TV shows and continued to see patients, I always worked out every day. I always had my priorities straight. Number one to me is my wife and family. I love to spend time with them, and I make sure that happens.

The key to being successful is practicing your skill. It doesn’t matter whether you’re a doctor or a fisherman. To be a successful fisherman, you have to go fishing every day. In medicine it’s the same. I still see patients and read four medical journals a week—otherwise I would lose my skill and relevance. You have to put in hours and hours, or you get nowhere in life. People have this vision that they will work hard and then get to lie on the beach. That’s not how success happens. You work, and you keep working. The trick is to make work creative so it becomes like play.

Not to get too highfalutin, but Aristotle was right on the money about this. He hypothesized that the meaning of life is the pursuit of *eudaimonia*, a state of happiness, and to get there you must have *technê*, or technical ability. The trouble for many people—and the trouble we’re seeing with our country right now—is they want happiness but aren’t willing to acquire the skills to set themselves apart. Or they focus on other things, like how much money they make. A bank account is like a phallus to a lot of guys: Bigger is somehow better. It’s funny, though. I’ve noticed that the guys calling in to *Loveline* who are obsessed with the size of their penis are inevitably the ones who hate their jobs, who don’t make money, who aren’t feeling good about themselves. That tells you something. Stop agonizing about stupid things, and start looking for meaning in your life.

You have to be careful not to listen too much to the negative chatter around you. One thing I find troubling is the doom-and-gloom attitude around us these days. I was on CNN a while back, and the host asked, “Do you think this is it, the end of America?” I thought, Wow! The country’s been through a hell of a lot worse than this. There’s great dynamism out there. We’ll find our way through but not by complaining about it.

Sure, we’re struggling as a country, but I expect we’ll look back in 10 years and say this was the time when we figured out what was important to us both as individuals and as a nation. The only way to get there is to refocus our attention on doing what’s right, figuring out what we’re good at and getting better at those things—acquiring skills, thinking outside the blueprint. That’s a lot more important than obsessing about the size of your penis.

MAKING YOUR PATHOLOGY PAY

HAVE A PROBLEM?
I DID, BUT I TURNED
MY SEVERE
CO-DEPENDENCY
INTO A CAREER

BY
DR. DREW PINSKY

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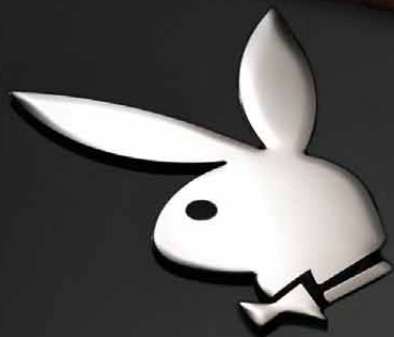
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PLAYBOY ADVISOR

Four years ago I moved in with my girlfriend, who was sharing a two-bedroom apartment with a female friend she has known since junior high. The three of us ate meals together and hung out. A few months ago my girlfriend took a job in New York. We both knew a long-distance relationship wouldn't work, so we broke up. She said it would be great if our roommate and I hooked up, and within a few weeks we had. Then things got complicated. My ex's dream job became a nightmare, and she moved back to the apartment. The first night we all got a little drunk. The women were laughing and crying together when my new girlfriend suggested my old girlfriend "borrow" me for the night. I remember thinking we were playing with fire, but I'm also a guy. The next morning I expected fireworks, but everything was cool. Now I switch back and forth. If anything, the arrangement has drawn the women closer. Are there any guidelines to make this last? They both ask me questions such as if I have a favorite and who is better in bed, to which I respond, "You know it's not wise to go there," or "I love this or that about you." I have deeper feelings for my girlfriend of four years, but the sex is more exciting with my girlfriend of a few months. Is honesty the best policy here? Is it ever?—A.J., Chicago, Illinois

Welcome to fantasy turned reality, a.k.a. the next day. The problem is the women are not equals in this ménage à trois (literally a household of three). Your first girlfriend fears you will become bored with the emotional; your new girlfriend fears you will become bored with the physical. It sounds as though you have so far managed to negotiate a challenging situation, and we like your diplomatic (though unsatisfying, as you've discovered) responses to their impertinent questions. But you may have to call a family meeting for everyone to air their insecurities before the jealousies become a lingering green cloud.

The meals and wines I enjoy tend to be on the pricey side, so when family or friends invite me to dinner I find myself ordering based on price rather than my appetite. As a result, I avoid going to dinner because I feel guilty about imposing my expensive tastes on others. What can I do?—K.L., Santa Ana, California

The key here is to make your own invitations and be a gracious host. Order what you

like. If you have your eye on an expensive bottle of wine, offer to buy it. "You have to try this wine. My treat." When the bill arrives, always offer to chip in. "I ordered a pricey dish tonight. Let me take care of the wine or the gratuity." If your companions decline,



My Southern Baptist wife of 17 years sings in our church choir. She also travels for work, and as Mr. Mom, I do the laundry. After the last few excursions, her plastic hotel laundry bag contained a pair of wet cotton thong panties. She tells me they are makeshift swimwear; for a top she borrows an undershirt. One of her co-workers e-mails me cellphone photos that show my wife smiling and talking poolside with various men. She is wearing her drenched translucent panties and a T-shirt, her nipples and areolae plainly visible and her pubic hair and labia barely muted. In one shot my wife is wearing mirrored sunglasses as she emerges from a pool with her panties partially pulled down. The co-worker adds notes: "The husband is always the last to know" or "Same church, different pew." When I open the files, I get an instant erection. Our sex is more passionate than ever since this started. Do you think this is an elaborate ploy, or is my wife double-dipping?—A.J., Birmingham, Alabama

It's a ploy. And it's working. She knows you well.

don't push it. Express your gratitude. It all works out in the end.

I am a 30-year-old woman who sometimes has an orgasm when peeing. I'm not unhappy about it, just curious why it happens. Can you explain?—A.M., Dover, Delaware

That's certainly motivation to stay well hydrated. This is unusual but not surprising, as the same major nerve feeds both the vagina and the bladder. As we discussed in the July/August issue in *The Case of the Missing G-Spot*, the sensitive erectile tissue of the clitoris extends into the body and surrounds the urethra, the tube through which urine travels toward the light. What may be happening is the expansion of the urethra as you pee is stimulating the clitoral tissue. You're far more sensitive than most; be careful about touching your G-spot or you may explode. This can also happen in men. In 2002 two Dutch scientists described a patient who had for the previous decade experienced the sensation of ejaculation (without producing semen) after defecation or forceful urination. Surgeons found one of the two ducts that feed seminal fluid into the urethra as it passes through the prostate gland was stuck open; once it was repaired his "defecation-induced orgasms" stopped. The researchers hypothesize that urine had backed up into structures that create semen, adjacent to the bladder. When released it produced a sensation similar to coming.

Is there any way to calculate the odds a marriage will last?—P.K., Portland, Oregon

You mean like a horse race? Social scientists have made a number of attempts to predict which couples will stay together. The most recent study tracked 2,482 married or cohabitating couples in Australia over six years. It found relationships are twice as likely to dissolve when the man is more than nine years older than the woman or younger than 25 when he marries or moves in. Couples who have a baby before they commit or who have children from previous relationships split more often. They tend to part ways if the woman wants a child more than the man, if the woman drinks more, if the man or woman smokes, if the partners are on a second or third marriage or if the man is unemployed. So much for better or for worse. One hypothesis, first presented in 1977, is that as long as

the partners have clear roles (e.g., wage earner, child rearer), they stay together, since specialization means you are more dependent on your better half. Psychologist John Gottman, who has observed more than 2,000 couples interact in his University of Washington lab, dismisses

the idea that money, sex and compatibility of beliefs reveal anything. Instead, he writes in *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, a successful union depends on the couple's ability to negotiate the inevitable fights that occur when any two humans occupy the same space. Another study suggests novelty is the secret—couples who share new experiences are more likely to view their partners with fresh eyes.

My husband and I have been married six years. As of last year we stopped giving anniversary gifts to each another. At first it was because we didn't need anything, then it was because of the economy, and now I'm not sure why. Is this normal?—T.B., San Luis Obispo, California

There is no normal, but you sound disappointed. There is one simple gift that is both unique to your spouse (we hope) and pays dividends. Yes, we're talking about hot, kinky sex. First, pick up a copy of *101 Sexy Dares* by Laura Corn, a series of sealed erotic challenges (with two contributions from the Advisor), half for the woman to execute, half for the man and one to share. Second, grab any or all three of the collections of scratch-off erotic lottery tickets published by Chronicle Books (*Sex Scratchers*, *Kinky Sex Scratchers*, *Love Lotto*). Your partner can use a fingernail to reveal which of his naughty itches will be scratched. As you may have guessed, every ticket is a winner, but don't ruin the surprise.

Why don't more beer bottles have twist-off caps?—K.L., Phoenix, Arizona

Twist-offs are less expensive to produce, but many microbrewers believe pry-offs provide a better seal. There's no evidence a pry-off keeps out enough oxygen to affect taste, but twist-offs have become associated with mass-market beers. Also, many beer drinkers have developed a special relationship with their church keys.

I am 30 and unable to reach orgasm, and I could care less. Unfortunately, my boyfriend says it's damaging to his ego. He also says it's weird I'm not the least bit curious, but it's hard to miss something you've never had. I don't masturbate, so I don't use the vibrators he's bought me. I also have a deformity; my inner lips hang longer than my outer lips. My boyfriend thinks my clitoris is buried too deep and I should have surgery, but I'd rather get a boob job. He says I care more about how I look than how I feel during sex, which is true. My question is, what percentage of women do you think would be willing to give up orgasms for the rest of their lives in exchange for their dream body?—R.T., Miami, Florida

The survey you suggest is not one we care to conduct, though marketers who asked 1,000 American women how long they would abstain from sex in exchange for a new wardrobe found the average to be 15 months. (We'd abstain for an hour for a new sports jacket.) While orgasm doesn't have to be the end-all of physical intimacy, we don't think you should be so dismissive of your boyfriend's concerns. He shouldn't see getting you off as a goal as long as you're enjoying yourself, but indifference isn't sexy. We suggest you take up masturbation for the

simple reason it's the best way to discover what turns you on. Because so much of a man's arousal is based on pleasing his partner, that's information he will devour. Your labia, by the way, are normal and beautiful. No trimming is necessary unless they are causing irritation.

Does height have anything to do with penis size? Do tall guys have proportionately larger dicks and dwarves smaller ones?—G.B., Centereach, New York

A few studies (including one of 1,500 men at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences and another of 325 Italian military conscripts) have found penis length and girth do correlate with height. The Iranians also documented a correlation with index-finger size, while a Canadian study found a weak connection to foot size. Notably, the Italian scientists found body weight to be inversely correlated to penis length—the heavier you are, the smaller your erection. This is likely because belly fat makes it more difficult to get an optimal measure. At the same time, there is no correlation between waist and erection circumference—because the penis contains no fat, it doesn't get wider as you do. More facts for your next dinner party: While the lengths of a flaccid and a hard penis are highly correlated, the difference between the two does not correlate with the flaccid length. That is, the size of a soft penis tells you little about its potential. Dwarves who have a genetic condition that affects the bones will have the same variation in erection size as any group of men, with an average of five to seven inches. However, dwarves who are affected by hormonal conditions may have smaller than average (but not necessarily dysfunctional) erections.

My father introduced me to scotch and milk. He says it was popular during the 1940s in Harlem jazz joints. Whenever I order it the bartender inevitably asks if I have stomach problems. Have you ever heard of this drink, and if so, what is its history?—H.W., New York, New York

Scotch and milk has long been associated with jazz and blues joints. Willie Mae's Scotch House in New Orleans, known for its fried chicken, took its name in 1957 after Willie Mae Seaton made it the house drink (she couldn't get a beer license). Milk can also be mixed with bourbon, gin, brandy and rum—add "milk punch" to the name of the booze and maybe some powdered sugar, nutmeg and/or vanilla extract. Alcoholics sometimes order scotch and milk with the idea that the milk will provide relief for their ulcers, when in fact it aggravates them.

I was giving my husband a blow job when he asked me to drag my teeth up the shaft. He also wanted me to bite his scrotum. I thought teeth were a no-no. Is he cheating, or is he a closet masochist?—K.R., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

He's not cheating, and a masochist would want to see bite marks. But the line between pleasure and pain is thin, and the "danger" this activity presents gives him an adrenaline rush. Another trick is to lightly scratch the

frenulum, the spot just under the head where the foreskin attaches (or used to).

Three years ago I met a woman at work, but she was fired and I haven't seen her since. The other day she sent me a text message, and we exchanged phone numbers. This morning she called to ask how I was, and I told her I was in bed with a hard-on and asked if she could take care of it. Tasteless, I know, but she's coming over tonight. Stupid question of the day: Do I treat this as a date, or do I offer her a drink, undress and fuck? We haven't had any deep conversations, partly because she's 22 and I'm 36. I would have fucked her before, but she was a virgin.—R.P., New Bern, North Carolina

Well, at least you have standards. It doesn't sound as though she's expecting flowers at the door, but at least tidy the place up.

If you commit a traffic offense, can an off-duty police officer pull you over? I started to pass in a no-passing zone, realized my error and pulled back into my lane. An officer driving behind me in his personal car motioned for me to pull over, flashed his badge and gave me a warning. Would I have been within my rights to ignore him and keep driving?—M.N., Chicago, Illinois

If you keep driving and your pursuer is not some nut job impersonating an officer (which happens more often than you'd think, even to off-duty cops), it's likely a marked car will show up. You could also call 911 or drive to the nearest police or fire station, or at least choose a public place to stop. Although an officer is never without the authority to issue a citation or make an arrest, at least in his jurisdiction, most departments instruct their officers not to intervene while off duty except in cases of imminent danger, e.g., someone is driving drunk. These policies are designed in part to avoid personal confrontations that could lead to civil suits.

Enough already from male readers complaining about bald vulvae—believe it or not, guys, it's not entirely about you. Pubic hair, like armpit hair, is in a tight, warm spot, so it gets aromatic. Long pubes snag in tight jeans or during vigorous activity; short hair can be itchy. If a woman accepts a date, even though she may not be a fan of your hair, car or shoes, be grateful you have an opportunity to get into her pants.—T.S., Chesapeake, Virginia

You said it. You don't like our sneakers?

All reasonable questions—from fashion, food and drink, stereos and sports cars to dating dilemmas, taste and etiquette—will be personally answered if the writer includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The most interesting, pertinent questions will be presented in these pages. Write the Playboy Advisor, 680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611, or send e-mail by visiting playboyadvisor.com. Our greatest-hits collection, *Dear Playboy Advisor*, is available in bookstores and online; listen to the Advisor each week on Sirius/XM 99.



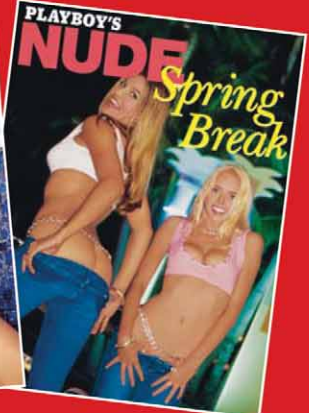


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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: BENICIO DEL TORO

A candid conversation with the intense, brooding star about conquering Hollywood, avoiding monogamy and dealing with cops and racial profiling

In 2004 the Internet went white-hot with rumors that Benicio Del Toro had shared an erotic encounter with Scarlett Johansson in an elevator at L.A.'s oasis of the cool, crazy and clandestine, the Chateau Marmont. Johansson has denied the story many times with a typically snappy dismissal. The not-snappy but more interesting Del Toro, who is 17 years older than Johansson, stumbled around his words. He said, "Did I ever have sex in an elevator with Scarlett Johansson after an awards show? I kind of, like, you know...well, I don't know. Let's leave that to somebody's imagination. Let's not promote it. I'm sure it's happened before. It might not be the last time either."

The only intriguing aspect of the brouhaha—which Del Toro now flatly denies in this interview—was its fleeting spotlight on the private life of the highly reticent Del Toro. His on-screen fearlessness and charisma earned him the 2001 best supporting actor Oscar for *Traffic*, a 2004 Oscar nomination for *21 Grams* and the 2008 Cannes best actor award for *Che*, but his personal life is more shaded, fiercely guarded and usually off limits—but not, apparently, because of a finger-wagging studio boss or controlling publicist. It seems this is who Del Toro is. And who he is has been working very nicely for him.

His 1995 breakout as the mumbling ex-con in *The Usual Suspects*, for instance, had crit-

ics and journalists wondering where the hulking Brando-esque enigma had been slouching. Right under their nose, it turns out. Del Toro had inched his way up in such miniseries as *Drug Wars: The Camarena Story* and on the big screen playing heavy-lidded and offbeat characters in *Big Top Pee-wee* and *Sean Penn's The Indian Runner*.

It seems inevitable that Del Toro would earn fame for playing outsiders. A native of Santurce, Puerto Rico, he has an older brother, and his parents were both lawyers. When Del Toro was nine, his mother, who had introduced him to poetry and painting, died of hepatitis at the age of 33. When he was 13 his now-remarried father relocated him and his brother to Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, where Del Toro, shy and speaking little English, dealt with culture shock while attending boarding school and high school.

Upon graduation he attended the University of California, San Diego, where he majored in business. He showed such promise performing in student stage productions, however, that he ditched college for New York to study at the Circle in the Square Theatre School and the Stella Adler Studio of Acting. In the late 1980s he moved to Los Angeles and slowly worked his way up to co-starring roles with Alicia Silverstone in *Excess Baggage* and in the Jack Nicholson drama *The Pledge*. He earned a rep for scary

dedication to his art—burning his arm with cigarettes and packing on 40 pounds for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*—and turned up on the lists of the world's most beautiful people and eligible bachelors. He even dated such beauties as Silverstone, Claire Forlani, Heather Graham, Valeria Golino and Chiara Mastroianni without becoming a tabloid fixture or nightlife casualty.

The ever-unpredictable Del Toro, 42, is staying true to himself by co-starring with Daniel Day-Lewis in director Martin Scorsese's *Silence*, a drama about missionaries in 17th century Japan. And this February he stars in a remake of the 1940s chiller *The Wolf Man*, co-starring Anthony Hopkins.

We sent contributing editor **Stephen Rebello** (who most recently interviewed Clive Owen for *PLAYBOY*) to speak with Del Toro in Los Angeles. He reports, "You don't figure on Del Toro's being straight line or average in any way, and he isn't. He meets questions with pauses, ellipses. He shifts in his seat and squints constantly. But his eccentricity isn't an interview dodge. After spending time with him, it's clear he's warm and generous hearted, with a mile-wide streak of movie geek."

PLAYBOY: As star and co-producer of a remake of the classic 1940s horror movie *The Wolf Man*, what can you tell



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"I've been profiled for being Puerto Rican or for looking a different way. It's happened to me in Italy, England, here at home. The worst thing—and any policeman will tell you—is a bad policeman."



"I remember liking girls in prekindergarten in Puerto Rico, when I was only three or four. I wasn't a 1,000 hitter or anything—I don't think anyone is—but I had a girlfriend all through high school, so that was kind of cool."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIZUNO

the Internet fanboys who have raised red flags about the film's four rescheduled release dates, its various reshoots and rumors of lots of CGI effects being added to punch it up?

DEL TORO: I'm sure there will be some CGI stuff for the werewolf-transformation scenes and all those other effects but not as much as the film could have had. The wolfman walks upright, as Lon Chaney Jr.'s wolfman does, but when he runs to gather real speed, he goes down on all fours. At this point I've seen only a rough version. We did some reshoots, so I have only an idea of what it's going to be like. But it's *The Wolfman*. Have fun with it. It's not *Hamlet* or anything.

PLAYBOY: When it was first announced you would play a werewolf, many media types said the casting was inevitable.

DEL TORO: I do get the tortured-soul roles. I'd like to play a romantic lead, but I don't necessarily get those offers coming my way. It's not like I've got a chip on my shoulder about it, though, because I've been lucky to have filmmakers and casting directors help me just find a freaking job, as well as let me explore good stories and characters. I can't complain if studio guys see me as the dark force. Whether it is because of skin color, thought, action, it doesn't matter.

PLAYBOY: Because you've made your mark in offbeat, risky movies that don't necessarily translate into big box office, some studio guys may see you as an idiosyn-

cratic actor, the way people saw Johnny Depp and Robert Downey Jr. before *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Iron Man*. Would you like to have a blockbuster on your résumé?

DEL TORO: To be in a position like that is definitely advantageous, especially if you use it right, as Johnny Depp did. The original is Jack Nicholson, of course, because he did the franchise thing but kept making independent movies with young directors. At the end of the day the goal is to do movies you want to see yourself.

PLAYBOY: Women especially seem to dig you in those tortured-soul roles, but you've also been suggested to star in a *Three Stooges* movie, with you playing the Moe character. Sean Penn was originally mentioned as Larry but dropped out and might be replaced by Paul Giamatti. Jim Carrey was an early front-runner as Curly. Have you ever met a woman who likes the Stooges?

DEL TORO: No. The Stooges are violent, always banging each other, and I think we can start with that as a reason women don't like them. Curly was the one who made me laugh most as a kid. Not only the things he did but even the sounds he made were funny. I don't know where the Stooges movie project is right now. Sean needed to take a break, and without him it's a different configuration. That original cast was too good.

PLAYBOY: Did anything about your child-

hood, such as losing your mother at an early age, predispose you to seek dark roles?

DEL TORO: At that age you accept things as fact. It takes time to deal with that hole, that pain, that abyss or whatever. I didn't get there in one straight shot. To tap into that loss for your work or your life, you have to face it and then get to a point where you've dealt with it. You never get over it. That pain is a motivator for many things. For me as an actor it can be a motivation for scenes in which I have to cry. But I think about things about my mom for other situations that aren't necessarily emotional.

PLAYBOY: What do you think happens after we die?

DEL TORO: I don't have any idea. I've got wishful thinking, though. There's a heaven, and it's a place where you can just...catch up. My wishful thinking doesn't necessarily mean you have to follow a particular religion. Heaven is a place for everybody and everything. But like I said, I don't know. Maybe heaven is just silence. You know, sometimes silence is not bad.

PLAYBOY: What if you're wrong?

DEL TORO: Here's the deal. All we know as the human race is what we know as of this month in 2009. Take the big bang theory of the origin of the universe. The big bang theory is like *Star Wars*, because it starts on Episode IV. But Episodes I through III are up for grabs. Until we as a planet or a people get all the information on Episode

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I and beyond, I don't feel totally naive having wishful thinking about heaven or anything else. If we at some point get to know what's in Episode I, then I may have to change my answer. But until then, whatever you say about heaven or the hereafter, I say, "Let it rip."

PLAYBOY: Growing up, when did you first figure out you didn't exactly send women running in the other direction?

DEL TORO: You know what? I don't know if I feel that to this day. For every girl you send away, another one sends you away. There's no escape without a scrape.

PLAYBOY: Nice reference to a great 1980s song by the Cars. So when were you first attracted to girls?

DEL TORO: I remember liking girls in pre-kindergarten in Puerto Rico, when I was only three or four. It goes all the way back. I wasn't a 1,000 hitter or anything—I don't think anyone is—but I had a girlfriend all through high school, so that was kind of cool. I was part of a couple, and I was having fun.

PLAYBOY: It sounds as if you've had a lot more fun since you hit Hollywood, considering your enviable track record of romantic involvements with Alicia Silverstone, Heather Graham, Claire Forlani and Sara Foster, among others. Is monogamy possible, especially in Hollywood?

DEL TORO: I don't think you're talking to the right person.

PLAYBOY: Fair enough, but what's your opinion?

DEL TORO: If you want a short answer, I'd have to say I don't know. But it's a good question. For monogamy to happen in a relationship, it has to be organic. I don't know what makes it organic, though.

PLAYBOY: Are you in a relationship?

DEL TORO: I'm seeing someone now. We're starting to hang out.

PLAYBOY: Does the fact that you've reportedly dated fellow actors make relationships especially challenging?

DEL TORO: It's difficult, definitely. I can't say it's impossible, because it has proven to be possible. You need a sense of maturity to handle that, and I don't know if I have it.

PLAYBOY: You and Halle Berry had emotionally intimate scenes in *Things We Lost in the Fire*. A lot of people find it hard to look past how gorgeous she is. Did you?

DEL TORO: She was completely absorbed by her role, so you had to respect that. I think she was quoted as saying I was fun on the set. Maybe I wanted to relax the situation by joking around as a way to get over that. Maybe I was nervous and that was one of the ways to deflect that other tension. I liked working with her. She's very serious about her work. She comes prepared. She's not where she is by being just a sexy, beautiful woman.

PLAYBOY: Aside from joking around with a beautiful co-star, how else do you handle the sexual tension that may arise?

DEL TORO: Take a cold shower.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying it's unwise to have anything but a working relationship

with a co-star?

DEL TORO: When I work with an actress, I see a collaborator. If you're working with attractive women on a movie set or in an office, it gets complicated if you start mixing that up. It happens a lot, or it can happen. But it's difficult to come away from a film set in a relationship and sustain it, then go separate ways.

PLAYBOY: You and Scarlett Johansson didn't co-star in a movie but were the focus of a lot of media attention for your alleged 2004 tryst in an elevator at the Chateau Marmont hotel in Los Angeles. What started the controversy?

DEL TORO: It was taken from a quote in which she was asked what the weirdest thing or rumor she had heard about herself was. They took only the first section of the quote—the part about the weirdest thing—and that's what started it. People around me laughed about it. People close to me were, like, "Oh my God." So there was a little element of embarrassment. But it was maybe more embarrassing for her.

PLAYBOY: So there was no truth to the infamous elevator story?

DEL TORO: No. It's pretty tight in there, and it's not that long of a ride.

PLAYBOY: When your father moved with you and your older brother from Puerto Rico to Pennsylvania when you were 13, were you still a virgin?

DEL TORO: I was about 13 when I lost my virginity, and that first experience was totally a nervous situation. It was in a house with someone I had known only a little bit. She was slightly older, and she'd done it before. It was good she and I weren't losing our virginity at the same time. We didn't want to get all overloaded.

PLAYBOY: Despite the nerves, did things work out in the homestretch?

DEL TORO: I wasn't exactly a natural, but it was good, yeah. I had wanted it to happen for a while. There was a bit of a courtship with this older girl, but it didn't continue with her because shortly after that I left for the States.

PLAYBOY: What was it like for you to transition from life in Puerto Rico to life in the U.S.?

DEL TORO: It was tough. I was mostly on



Actors don't have much control. I want to do more.

my own. I couldn't communicate that well. I spoke mostly Spanish. I had some family around, but I also looked into myself. I began to paint. Playing sports, basketball especially, was the bridge that helped keep me from becoming completely lonely. I played on the basketball team, so I had a small group of friends. Sports gave me a universal language. That's the essence of sports, in a way.

PLAYBOY: Lon Chaney Jr., star of the original *Wolf Man*, at first avoided acting so as not to compete with his silent-film superstar father, Lon Chaney, whose films include *The Phantom of the Opera*. Both your parents were successful lawyers. Is that why you avoided law?

DEL TORO: For a while it was like that. My father and my godmother, who was very present during my upbringing, were both unhappy when the acting thing started. At the time I couldn't see myself reading legal books and learning all that stuff. When I graduated from high school I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew being a lawyer wasn't it, even though I now enjoy talking with my family about legal cases. There's a lot of, not necessarily acting, but interpretation, storytelling and logic to law I can now see are kind of cool.

PLAYBOY: After graduating high school in Pennsylvania you studied business at the University of California, San Diego. Were



PEE-WEE'S CLUBHOUSE

BY ROCKY RAKOVIC

WHAT DO JAMES BROLIN, MILTON BERLE AND THESE STARS HAVE IN COMMON? THEY'RE ALL MEMBERS OF SHOWBIZ'S WACKIEST CLUB



THE WOLFMAN AS A PUP: BENICIO DEL TORO'S FIRST ON-SCREEN ROLE WAS AS DUKE THE DOG-FACED BOY IN *BIG TOP PEE-WEE*.



PRE-MORPHEUS AND *BOYZ N THE HOOD*, LAURENCE FISHBURNE PLAYED THE JHERI-CURLED COWBOY CURTIS ON *PEE-WEE'S PLAYHOUSE*.



S. EPATHA MERKERSON, THE LIEUTENANT ON *LAW AND ORDER* FOR THE PAST 18 YEARS, WAS REBA THE MAIL LADY ON *PLAYHOUSE*.



PHIL HARTMAN DEVELOPED THE PEE-WEE HERMAN CHARACTER WITH PAUL REUBENS, WROTE FOR THE SHOW AND PLAYED CAPTAIN CARL.



RECOGNIZE NATASHA LYONNE? SHE WAS OPAL ON *PLAYHOUSE* BEFORE BECOMING A LOOSE, WISE-CRACKING GIRL IN THE *AMERICAN PIE* MOVIES.

EXTRA CREDIT: ROB ZOMBIE AND JOHN SINGLETON ALSO WORKED ON *PLAYHOUSE*, AND *PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* WAS ONE OF DIRECTOR TIM BURTON'S FIRST FILMS.

you trying to show your family you were going to do something responsible?

DEL TORO: I didn't study business seriously because I was taking an acting class at UCSD and realized acting wasn't hit-or-miss and that there was a logic to it. I didn't know anything about acting at the time. I watched TV. I liked Eddie Murphy and Richard Gere movies when I was in high school.

PLAYBOY: Lots of guys gravitate toward acting because of the fine-looking women. Did you?

DEL TORO: Well, that was kind of fun too, and it only added to it. There were a lot of girls in my class, and the ratio was definitely to my advantage.

PLAYBOY: What kind of early jobs did you have before acting paid off?

DEL TORO: My first job was delivering newspapers in Puerto Rico. I also had summer jobs but nothing that prepares you for anything. After high school I didn't stay in college long because I decided to become an actor and break out from school. I was in New York for a bit, but it was tough living there. I came to L.A. and got a scholarship through Stella Adler. Part of the scholarship required that I help build a theater on the corner of Vine and Hollywood. It's now a subway entrance.

PLAYBOY: Can acting be taught?

DEL TORO: I had a chance to study and work with all three of the big ones—Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler—and the one I stayed with the longest was Stella. With teachers like Arthur Mendoza at Stella Adler Studio of Acting West there was a seriousness and intensity to the work that was fundamental. If you were late, there was a sense you had disrespected the class. That was good for me. There were techniques and exercises that forced you to open yourself.

PLAYBOY: Every actor struggles to land jobs once he or she starts auditioning for TV and movie roles. Did you encounter additional resistance because of your ethnicity?

DEL TORO: Inevitably Hollywood has become more universal and worldly in some ways, hiring directors from different ethnic backgrounds. There are more roles than ever for ethnics. When I started out as a working actor I was always told X, Y and Z about why they didn't hire me.

PLAYBOY: When you won the Oscar for *Traffic*, the media pointed out again and again that you were the first Puerto Rican actor to earn that award since José Ferrer for *Cyrano de Bergerac*—a non-Puerto Rican role—and Rita Moreno for *West Side Story*. If *West Side Story* influenced how certain generations view Puerto Ricans, is that a good or a bad thing?

DEL TORO: It's a great movie, and I don't look at it like, "Oh my God, what a disaster of stereotypes." Of course it has stereotypes, but I don't think it's a film other Puerto Ricans feel is typically stereotypical either. If it makes people see things a certain way, I wouldn't put it on the movie. It's like blaming crime on rock and roll. I don't

think my generation or the younger generation looks at Puerto Ricans like that.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever been racially profiled?

DEL TORO: Yeah, I've been profiled for being Puerto Rican, for having a different kind of last name or for looking a different way. It's happened to me in Italy, England, here at home, and it has even happened in Puerto Rico. But that doesn't mean I think all Italian, British, American and Puerto Rican people or cops are like that.

PLAYBOY: What happened?

DEL TORO: One time flying from London, they picked over my suitcase in Puerto Rico and went through it. Another time I was driving, my hair was long, I had on a leather jacket, I was blasting tunes, and I got pulled over. And the policeman said, "Is this your car?" and he ran me on his computer. I've had experiences with good policemen too. Sometimes things can get out of hand in those situations, though. The worst thing—and any policeman will tell you—is a bad policeman.

PLAYBOY: Did the incident between Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates and the Cambridge, Massachusetts police help or hurt the conversation about racial profiling?

DEL TORO: We know things can happen because of the color of your skin. I'm against that. My grandfather was a policeman, and I know a little about the paranoia and stress policemen are under working at night—what they have to deal with and what they see. Add to that whatever's going on in their personal lives. I wouldn't fight with a cop. You don't win. If it happens to me, I comply.

PLAYBOY: You've often been cast as an outsider. The character Chaney plays in the original 1941 *Wolf Man* is also an outsider and an especially sympathetic one. Did that make the project more appealing to you?

DEL TORO: I always loved the Universal horror movies of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and I remember meeting Francis Ford Coppola for a role in *Dracula*, but I never necessarily thought about remaking a horror movie. In the 1970s I had a classic scary black-and-white poster of Chaney as the wolfman on the wall of my room. I don't have the original poster anymore, but I found a copy in San Francisco, bought it right away and hung it in my house. My manager, Rick Yorn, saw it, and we talked about a remake. He suggested we go to Universal and propose the idea.

PLAYBOY: What was your earliest connection with old horror movies?

DEL TORO: The first time I saw *The Wolf Man* was in Puerto Rico on a home projector and an eight-millimeter movie from this company called Castle Films. It had *Bride of Frankenstein*—which is a masterpiece—*Frankenstein*, *Mighty Joe Young*. They were eight-minute versions of those movies, with all the monster stuff

(continued on page 108)

THE
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A WEIRD CALM AT THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RIO GRANDE SITS **JUÁREZ**, ONE OF THE MOST VIOLENT CITIES IN THE WORLD. A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, ACROSS A CONCRETE EMBANKMENT, IS **EL PASO**, ONE OF THE SAFEST CITIES IN THE U.S. WHAT MAKES ONE SIDE SO DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER?

BY **LUIS
ALBERTO URREA**





Every Sunday during the summer El Pasoans gather in Chamizal park, down by the river, where they dance late into the night at an event called Music Under the Stars. Tonight's entertainment is a reggae band called Border Roots. The crowd swells to 8,000 bodies in the waning heat. Moms drink Schlitz, and happily buzzed grandpas dance with five-year-old kids. Badass *vatos* with gang tattoos hug on their women; whites, Mexicans and blacks share blankets; and in the dance pit *mujeres muy calientes* do languid snake-hip dances before the stage.

Across the river, no more than half a mile away, the Mexicans have put up a giant Mexican flag—psychological warfare, really. You can see it from the park. It's so big it seems to flutter in slow motion in the darkness beyond the stage. Under that flag seven citizens of Juárez are murdered every day. This night, as we dance and drink in the park, narcos capture a young man and commence to mutilate him. They strip him naked, cut off his ear, then saw off his head. They wrap his corpse in sheets—being careful to mount the ear on his chest. His head, in a white plastic bag, is placed beside his corpse for maximum impact when people find him on the street in the morning. This all happens within earshot of the concert across the river. He might have died hearing the El Paso reggae fans chanting, "Love! Love! Love!"

As El Paso parties to its cerveza-loving border beat, the slaughter escalates in Juárez, where 25 people are murdered in the first three days of August, which will end up being the bloodiest month in Juárez's history. A day in early September will see 18 gunned down at a drug rehab center. Unaccompanied children at the outdoor concert swing cheap plastic lightsabers, and drunk dads piss in the bushes. In the entire crowd we don't hear one voice raised in anger.

"Juárez's worsening violence is El Paso's problem too. Some 2,500 Mexican soldiers and federal police were deployed to Juárez in March, but the violence has not abated. El Paso is a safe city, but residents are becoming anxious. The local hospital has been locked down twice while doctors treated Mexican police officers who had been wounded. They were worried that gangsters would burst in to finish the job, as has happened in Juárez. Even if the violence stays on the southern side of the river, it casts a shadow."—THE ECONOMIST

In the past 20 months in Juárez drug-related murders have reached 3,000. Thousands of black-clad Mexican soldiers prowl the streets in up-armed Humvees—the Mexican surge. As if this weren't enough, the virtually



BORDERLINE
(Clockwise from top left): It's a thin line that separates the perils of Juárez from the tranquility of El Paso; a Border Patrol agent does her paperwork; a seismic sensor at the border; a Mexican army soldier and a federal policeman check vehicles at the border; a group of Mexican soldiers gathers on the Santa Fe bridge across the Rio Grande.



ignored murders of women in Juárez (some estimate that more than 700 women have been tortured, mutilated and dumped in the desert) may or may not continue: So many people of both sexes have been wasted in the narco war that serial killers and organ-swiping satanists are becoming passé.

Nobody knows why El Paso is at peace. Everybody has a theory. And many El Pasoans fear that the mind-fucking terror just across the river will come for them. They can hear it rumbling like the thunder that kicks north during July monsoons. The week before the Border Roots gig, the Chamizal rocked to a girl band while in Juárez a 20-year-old El Paso woman named Solangie Medina was stoned to death and left facedown beside her Chevy TrailBlazer. Total murders in El Paso that same night: zero.

It's a weird peace, all right. The day I arrive in town I cross the river to poke around. My host, Bobby Byrd, is publisher of Cinco Puntos, the venerable El Paso press. Byrd first drives me along the border fence to the West Side. Outsiders tend to find the squalid barrios and industrial waste of Juárez to be hideous. Many El Pasoans, Byrd included, find the fence to be the eyesore. Pointing through the wire toward Mexico, he says, "The neighborhood on that hill is really neat. Good houses." It's the cracked and sun-beat jumble you can imagine.

The river, channeled by cement walls to a turgid green flow, nestles between the Mexican mountains and the hellacious ruins of the vast Asarco smelter. It's *Mad Max* scenery, with flows of black slag on the desolate cliffs of the American side and highways, fences, water and Border Patrol vehicles packing the middle. Beyond, the utterly barren canyons of outer-edge Juárez.

You cross the river here on a thin wooden bridge. Local historians cite this spot as a favorite haunt of the terrifying Mexican ghost La Llorona. The sound of screaming women in this valley may not simply be the cries of a wraith. Border Patrol guys warn you to be careful. It's wise to check with them before you traipse across the bridge, or you will be pursued.

The vagaries of the borderline dictate that the other side in this sector is still American. The border veers away where the wall stops—all border walls stop at some point. In this case the Mexican border is a staggered line of about 100 whitewashed boulders. That's it. Byrd drives over the bridge, and we hang a left on the dirt road and behold a bend in the river where it opens up under various overpasses. The water is jammed with scores of Mexicans. You can hear their voices bouncing off the hills—some are families, some are men standing waist-deep in the water, eyeing the Border Patrol (continued on page 100)

NARCOCORRIDOS

Shortly after playing a concert in Reynosa, Mexico, singer Valentín Elizalde was murdered by mercenaries working for the Gulf drug cartel. Elizalde had made enemies with his song "To My Enemies"—a seemingly jovial polka with a catchy tuba line—and on the night of November 25, 2006 these enemies took exception to his song.

Welcome to Mexico, where musicians find themselves caught in a deadly struggle over turf. The corrido, traditionally a song of the heroic poor man, has since been appropriated by *narcotraficantes* to praise their own exploits. Elizalde hailed from Sinaloa, home of drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. Dying proved to be a good career move for Elizalde—his record sales have increased, and he was nominated posthumously for a Grammy—but the current trend is to eliminate the musician altogether. Despite efforts by the Mexican government to ban such music, drug traffickers now create their own *narcocorridos* (with accompanying videos). For a variety of reasons, Mexican musicians—like Tupac and Biggie before them—are caught in the cross fire. As they used to say in Leadville: Please don't shoot the piano player. —Leopold Froehlich



"Porno films are disgusting...with all those men in them!"

A FAREWELL TO FARRAH

OUR FAVORITE
ANGEL WILL
LIVE ON
FOREVER



BY
GARY
COLE



I've worked with a lot of amazing women over the years. But out of all of them Farrah Fawcett was one of the most spectacular. She was a force of nature, and I'll always remember her feistiness. The negotiations for her first pictorial may be some of the most interesting I've been involved in during my 35 years as photography director of PLAYBOY. We had made many overtures to Farrah, and there was always a reason, commercial or personal, that prevented her from considering our offer.

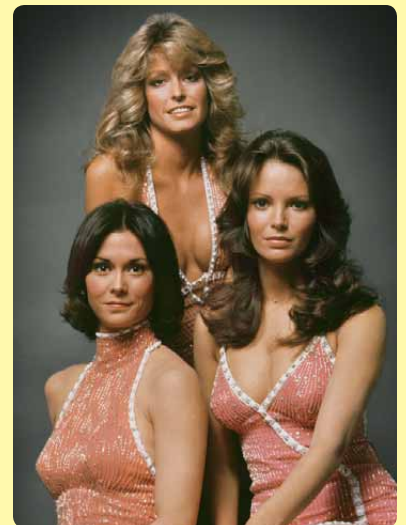
Then one day out of the blue her agent called and said Farrah might be interested in appearing in the magazine. And so our conversations began. Would she show any nudity? How much nudity? Who would be the photographer? Where would the shooting take place? Would she have picture approval? These were the usual points of negotiation in any celebrity pictorial agreement, but in Farrah's case the discussions dragged on and on. She changed her mind repeatedly about everything. Finally, a deal was struck. After considering every competent photographer in the western hemisphere, we agreed on Davis Factor, a celebrity shooter. And it was decided the session would take place in St. Barts, a favorite island haunt of the A-list. Stylists, makeup artists and assistants were all arranged. No Playboy representatives were permitted at the shooting. I began to receive phone calls from Factor detailing Farrah's demands, her reluctance to appear nude, her reluctance to get in front of the camera at all. But Factor was good. He cajoled. He got angry. He and Farrah took turns intimidating each other. The shooting was completed, and we had gotten what we needed.

From her December 1978 cover (left), PLAYBOY enjoyed a longstanding relationship with Farrah Fawcett. Farrah's swimsuit poster (above) sold more than 12 million copies. Her subsequent PLAYBOY pictorials, which appeared in December 1995 and July 1997, were also extraordinary successes.





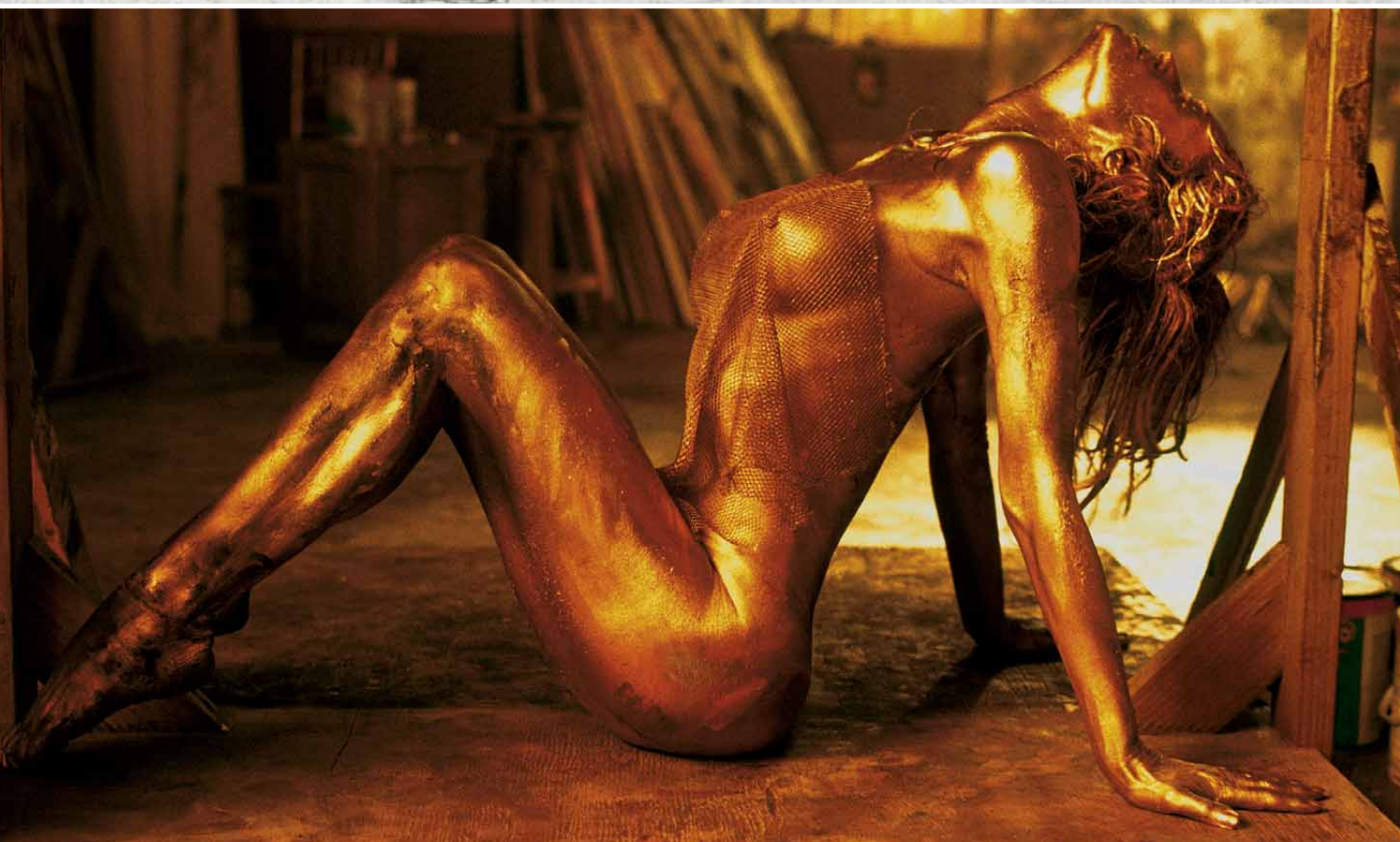
Next came the photo approvals. Our art director, Tom Staebler, undertook the task of obtaining them. Staebler is a charming fellow, a cross between Mick Jagger and Ringo Starr. Long hair, tight jeans, cowboy boots—he was right up Farrah's alley. He called me from her house. She had okayed the photos and was sitting on his lap. All was well. We did a beautiful 12-page layout and sent it to Hef for his approval. He thought it was too long and promptly took out two pages. We were on deadline. The revised layout went to the printer for our December 1995 issue. A couple of weeks later I got a call from Farrah. She had seen the layout. Where was that spread? I explained to her that we had taken it out. "What do you mean, took it out? Put it back," she said. I told her it was too late to put it back. She said, "The hell it is. I had photo approval." I told her yes, she did, but not layout approval. She started screaming obscenities into the phone, and I heard glass breaking. Then she calmed down and asked, "Do I really not have layout approval?" No, you don't. Silence on the phone. We didn't change the layout, but Farrah grew to love the pictorial so much that she did a second one for us. And she did a video as well. But that's a tale for another day. Later, one of Farrah's personal assistants and I were discussing my talk with her, and I asked about the sound of breaking glass. "Oh, Farrah was in her car, and she got so angry during the conversation that she kicked both side windows out with her feet," the assistant said. "No big deal." That was Farrah, and we'll always love her for it.



From Corpus Christi to *Charlie's Angels*: A captivating Farrah became the face of the 1970s. As a strong woman with the looks of an angel, Farrah was perfect for any decade.



Farrah Fawcett became the
face of the 1970s—angelic
but also voluptuous.





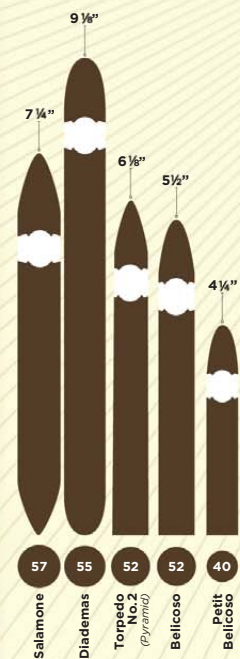
BURN AFTER READING

FROM THE EARTH
TO YOUR HAND,
HERE'S WHAT
MAKES A
CIGAR A CIGAR

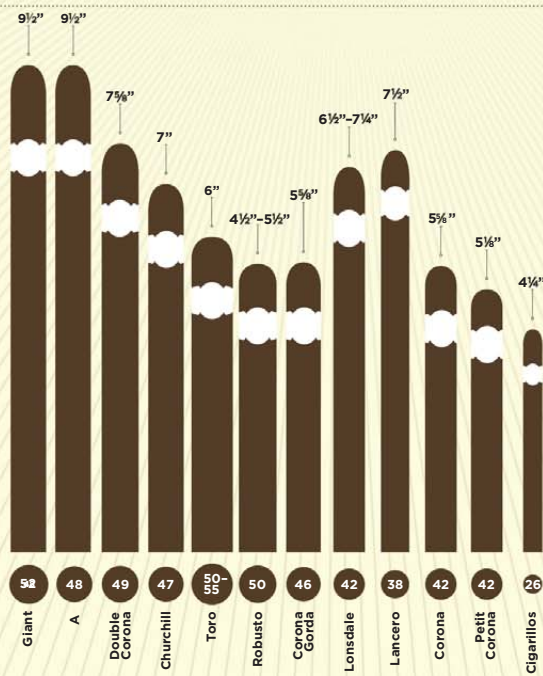
BY AARON SIGMOND

VITOLA: SIZES & SHAPES

FIGURADO SIZES



PAREJO SIZES



Some of the terms used to describe cigar shapes and sizes are confusing. If I say "I'll have a Monte two," that one word and number convey size, shape and brand (a Montecristo brand Torpedo No. 2—see size and shape in the chart at left). Let's clarify matters some more....

Length: In America the length of a cigar is cited in inches.

Diameter: The unit of measurement for a cigar's girth is the ring gauge, which is based on increments of one sixty-fourth of an inch. A standard *toro* size is six by 50, which means it is six inches long and fifty sixty-fourths of an inch thick.

Shape: All cigars can be divided into two categories: *parejos*, or straight-sided cigars, and *figurados*, or irregular-shaped cigars (torpedo shaped, etc.). The chart here shows the general widths and lengths of different cigars that various brands make.

Box pressed: *Parejos* start out round and straight. However, some are then made squarish and are known as box pressed. Rollers use several techniques to achieve this shape.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN SPANIER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY WARREN MASON
ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY NICK KOLAKOWSKI

DECONSTRUCTING THE CIGAR

Many cigar books have an impressive glossary of terms, but the fact is you will actually use only a few. Here are the basic phrases you need to be conversant.

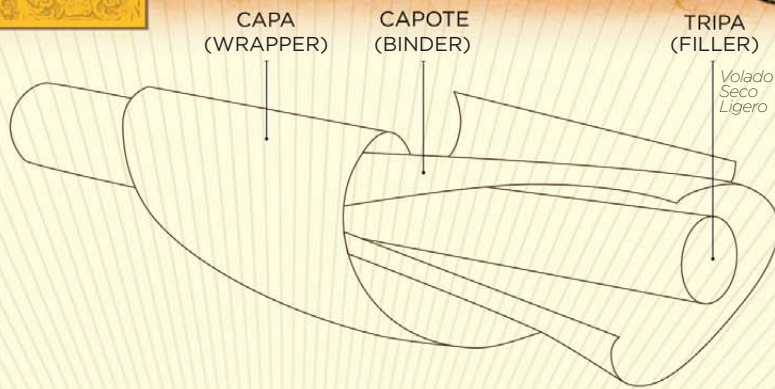
Blend: Cigars are blended artisanal products in the mode of champagnes or mixed spirits such as cognac. A cigar's blend is made up of the tobaccos selected for its three components: wrapper, binder and filler. All tobacco leaves contain natural oils that mix together over time. Coupled with the way it is rolled, these oils give a cigar its flavor.

Filler (*tripa*): the tobaccos bunched in the core of a cigar. These leaves form the basis of the blend and provide much of the flavor.

Volado, seco and ligero: the three basic types of filler tobacco. The lower leaves of sun-grown plants (*volado* in Spanish) are used for lighter-flavored fillers, while the middle leaves (*seco*) are used for medium-flavored fillers and the top leaves (*ligero*) for full-flavored.

Long filler (*tripa larga*): filler tobacco leaves that run the length of a cigar.

Short filler (*tripa corta*): filler composed of leaf trimmings and chopped tobacco rolled inside full-size binders and wrappers.



Binder (*capote*): the leaf, wrapped around the filler and beneath the wrapper, that binds a cigar together.

Wrapper (*capa*): the outside leaf of a cigar. The wrapper determines the color category and aesthetic of a cigar and is a huge component of its flavor and body. Opinions vary as to how much the *capa* actually contributes to these qualities, but estimates run in the 35 to 70 percent range.

Puro: Spanish for “pure,” in smoking parlance this is a cigar whose binder, filler and wrapper are all grown in the same country in which it’s rolled.

Body: The body—or strength—of a cigar is not tantamount to its flavor, though people often use the terms

interchangeably. You can have a flavorful but still light- or medium-bodied cigar; you can also smoke a bland cigar whose strength will nonetheless knock you on your ass. If someone says a cigar is full-bodied, it has a complex or flavorful blend.

Tobac in the box: This is not a term but rather a reference to how cigars come packaged. A tobacconist will offer you cigars in any number of ways: as individual sticks, in packs of three to five or in boxes, which traditionally hold 25 cigars each. An 8-9-8 box also holds 25 cigars, but instead of the 12-on-the-bottom, 13-on-the-top configuration of standard packaging, it has three sequential rows of eight, nine and eight. Cabinet boxes traditionally hold 50 unbanded cigars.

HIGH ROLLING

FILLER AND BINDER



These photos were taken at one of the world's largest hand-rolled premium cigar factories—Tabacalera de Garcia in La Romana, Dominican Republic. The morning sun has barely risen over the tropical hills, but already the workers' bicycles line the front of the factory like a chrome snake. Inside, the day is under way. A radio blares American and Latin pop. In the main rolling room, pairs of rollers sit at two-desk wooden tables with all the tools of their trade. Left: A roller starts by bunching the filler leaves before moving on to the binder leaf and mold. The cigars are then pressed. Right: The roller fixes the wrapper around the already-formed shape and size. Last, the cap is added. The tools of the rollers' trade are: *la tabla*, a wooden cutting board; *chaveta*, a crescent-shape metal cutter; and a hand guillotine (also known as a cigar cutter or tuck cutter), which ensures a clean-cut foot.

WRAPPER AND CAP





Springfield's Sexiest Celebrity Reveals All

the devil in. marge simpson

PLAYBOY: First Marilyn Monroe, then Madonna and now Marge Simpson. How does a nice girl from Springfield end up in *PLAYBOY*?

SIMPSON: A nice girl like me would never display her body if it weren't to raise money for charity. That's why I'm donating my hefty fee from this tasteful pictorial to SPHG—Saving and Preserving Historic Gazebos. Gazebos are disappearing, people, and they're not coming back!

PLAYBOY: You must have gotten some interesting reactions from friends and family. What did Homer say? Lisa? Bart?

SIMPSON: Homer said he was intrigued because he had never heard of your magazine. The notion of women posing in the buff was completely foreign to him. Wasn't it sweet of him to lie? When Lisa heard about this, she said it was empowering to see a woman in control of her own body. Wasn't it sweet of her to lie? Bart will never learn about this under any circumstance.

PLAYBOY: Why pose now? Is this something you would have considered when you were younger?

SIMPSON: Oh no. When I was young, I didn't have the wisdom and poise needed to allow myself to be photographed in my underpants, leaning against a jukebox.

PLAYBOY: Regular viewers of the show know you and Homer have always had a great marriage with a healthy sex life. What's your secret to relationship success?

SIMPSON: Homer and I have one rule that has worked incredibly well: Never go to bed hungry.

PLAYBOY: What advice do you give your daughters about men?

SIMPSON: I always tell my Lisa she should marry the man who loves her. It doesn't matter if he's losing his hair or is overweight or is at a bar every night...or if he forgets your birthday and anniversary.... All that matters is that nothing means anything to him but you.

PLAYBOY: What advice do you give Bart about the fairer sex?

SIMPSON: I say, "You won't meet any girls in prison, which is where you seem to be headed."

PLAYBOY: When did you first know Homer was the one?

SIMPSON: Well, when the doctor said I was pregnant, I heard a voice saying "That's the man you're going to marry." The voice was my mother's.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever thought about dyeing your hair blonde? Do blondes have less fun?

SIMPSON: I don't know about blondes, but I just found a few grays in my

blue. It's as though there's a civil war on top of my head.

PLAYBOY: As a stay-at-home mom, what do you pride yourself on doing around the house?

SIMPSON: Searching for your magazines and throwing them away.

PLAYBOY: In the bedroom?

SIMPSON: Yes, they're usually in the bedroom.

PLAYBOY: When you were Lisa's age, what did you think your adult life would be like? How does the reality measure up to your early expectations?

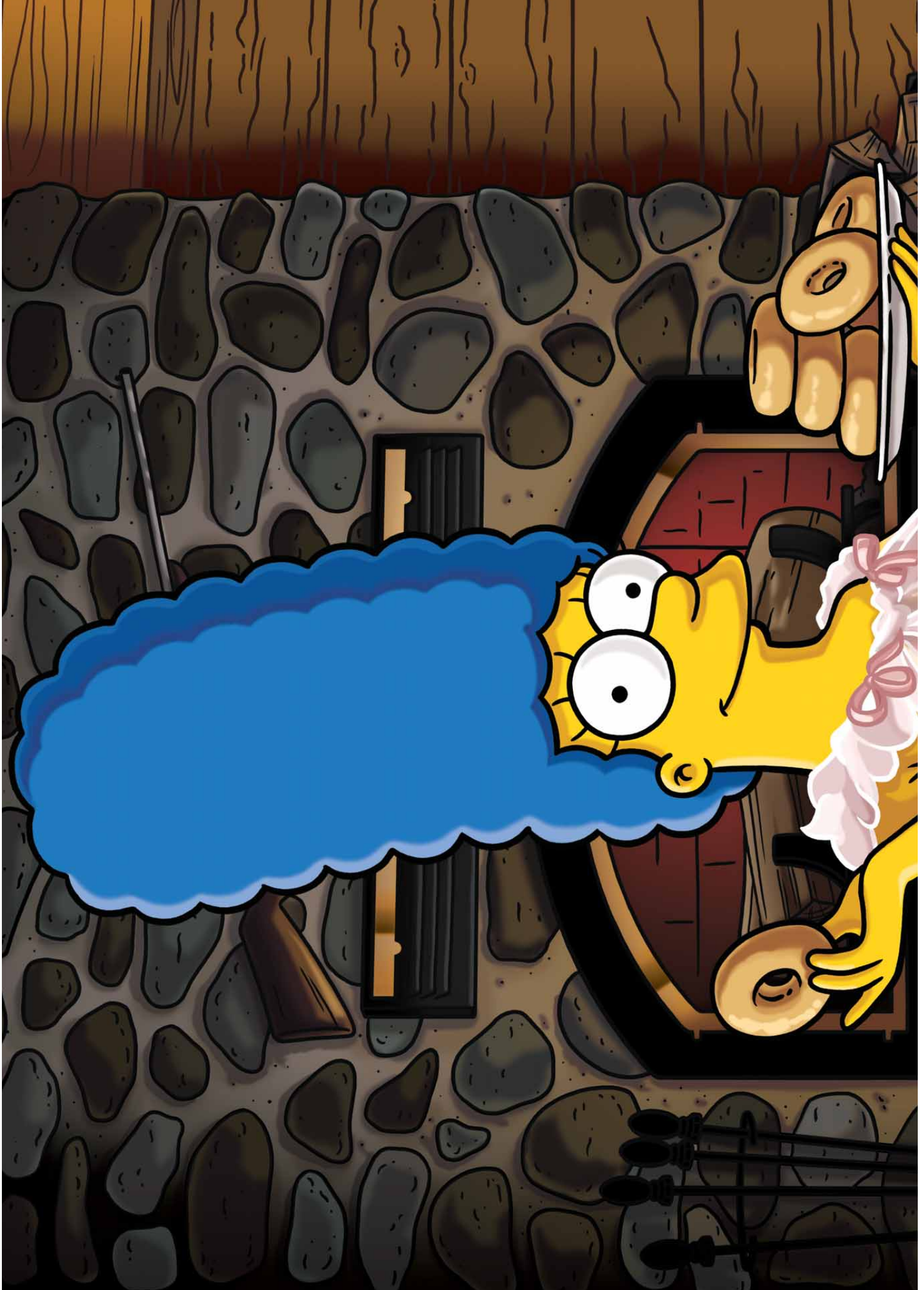
SIMPSON: When I was a little girl there were three men I wanted to marry: Elton John, Paul Lynde and Charles Nelson Reilly. But for some reason it never worked out.

PLAYBOY: Generally speaking, magazine covers are the purview of celebrities. Did you ever want to be famous? Do you enjoy this attention?

SIMPSON: I'm just happy to be a MILK—Mom I'd Like to Know.

For more provocative poses from Marge, watch the *Simpsons* episode "The Devil Wears Nada" Sunday, November 15 at eight P.M. (seven P.M. Central) on Fox.

Fitness comes easy for Marge. "Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Don't snack between meals. And talk, talk, talk."







MODEL DATA SHEET



NAME: Marge Simpson

BUST: 26 WAIST: 26 HIPS: 26

HEIGHT: 6'6" (with hair) WEIGHT: nosy!

BIRTH DATE: VERY nosy! BIRTHPLACE: Outside the aquarium. (Don't ask.)

AMBITIONS: Just one: To one day be president... of the Ladies Garden Club of East Springfield.

TURN-ON: Having enough saucers for your cups.

TURNOFFS: Slim men who work out regularly and take care of their bodies and whose oiled muscles gleam in the sun when they take off their shirts.

THREE TV SHOWS I NEVER MISS: I tape and watch all the nightly news shows so that none of the anchors feel left out.

BRUNCH OR LUNCH?: I would NEVER do brunch! That's like cheating on breakfast and lunch!

I HAVE A WEAKNESS FOR: Leap years. I feel like I'm getting a day for free!

WHAT I VALUE MOST IN LIFE: Our great country and the freedoms enshrined in its Constitution allowing you to print this Smut!



My first beehive.



Homer's high school honey.



Me with my clothes ON!



"Thank the Lord later! I'm freezing my ass off down here!"

THE BLOOD CHURCH BY STEPHEN KING

**WHEN TRAVELING
TO THE HEART
OF DARKNESS,**



**TERROR IS NOT
AN EMOTION—IT'S
A DESTINATION**

If you want to hear, buy me another drink.
(Ah, this is slop—slop, I tell you—but never mind; what isn't?)
There were thirty-two of us went into that greensore
and only three who rose above it.
We were thirty days in the green, and only one of us came out.
Three rose above the green, three made it to the top:

Manning and Revois and me. And what does that book say?

The famous one? "Only I am left to tell you."

I'll die in bed, as most obsessed whoresons do.

And do I mourn Manning? Balls! It was his money
put us there, his will that drove us on, death by death.

But did he die in bed? Not that one! I saw to it!

Now he worships in that bone church forever. Life is grand!

(What slop is this? Still—buy me another, do. Buy me two!

"Put another nickel in...the nickelodeon—"

In other words I'll talk for whiskey; if you want me
to shut up, switch me to champagne.

Talk is cheap, silence is dear, my dear.

What was I saying?)

Twenty-nine dead on the march, and one a woman.

Fine tits she had, but an ass like an English saddle!

We found her facedown in the dead fire one morning,
an ash-baby smoked at the cheeks and throat.

Never burnt; fire must have been cold when she went in.

She talked the whole voyage and died without a sound;

what's better than being human? Do you say so?

No? Then balls to you, and your mother, too;

if she'd had two she'd been a fucking king.







Anthropologist, arr, so she said. Didn't look like no anthropologist when we pulled 'er out of the ashes with char on her cheeks and the whites of her eyes dusted gray with soot. Not a mark on her otherwise. Dorrance said it might've been a stroke and he was as close to a doctor as we had, that pansy whore. For the love of God bring whiskey, for life's a trudge without it!

Every day the green did 'em down. Carson died of a stick in his boot. His foot swole up and when we cut away the goddam boot leather, his toesies were as black as the squid's ink that drove Manning's heart. Reston and Polgoy, they were stung by spiders big as your fist; Ackerman bit by a snake what dropped out of a tree where it hung like a lady's fur stole draped on a branch. Bit its poison into Ackerman's nose. How strong a throe, you ask? Try this: He ripped his own snoot clean off! Tore it away like a rotten peach off a branch and died spitin' his own dyin' face! Goddam life, I say, and if you can't laugh you might as well laugh anyway. It ain't a sad world unless you're sane, you know.

Javier fell off a plank bridge and when we hauled him out and he couldn't breathe so Dorrance tried to kiss him back to life and sucked from his throat a leech as big as a hothouse tomato. It popped free like a cork from a bottle and split between 'em; sprayed both with the claret we live on (for we're all alcoholics that way, if you see my figure) and when the Frenchman died raving, Manning said the leeches'd gone to his brain. As for me, I hold no opinion on that.

All I know is that goddam Javier's eyes wouldn't stay shut but went on bulging in and out even after he was an hour cold. Something in there, all right, arr, yes there was! And all the while the macaws screamed at the monkeys and the monkeys screamed at the macaws and both screamed for the blue sky they couldn't see, for it was buried in the goddam green. Is this whiskey or diarrhea in a glass? There was one of those suckers in the Frenchie's pants—did I tell you? You know what that one ate, don't you?

It was Dorrance himself who went next; we were climbing by then, but still in the green. He fell in a gorge and we could hear the snap. Broke his neck, twenty-six years of age, engaged to be married, case closed. Arr, ain't life grand? Life's a sucker in the throat,

life's the gorge we all fall in (or choke on), it's a soup and we all end up vegetables. Ain't I philosophical? Never mind. It's too late to count the dead, and I'm too drunk. In the end we got there. Just say that.

Climbed that high embankment out of all that sizzling green after we buried Rostoy, Timmons, the Texan—I forget his name—and Dorrance and a couple of others. In the end most went down of some fever that boiled their skin and turned it green. At the end it was only Manning, Revois and me. We got the fever too, but we got better; killed it before it killed us. Only I ain't never really got better. Now whiskey's my quinine, what I take for the shakes, so buy me another before I forget my manners and cut your fucking throat. I might even drink what comes out, so be wise, sonny, and trot it over, goddam your young cheeks.

There was a road we came to, even Manning agreed it was, and wide enough for elephants if the ivory hunters hadn't picked clean the plains and the jungles beyond 'em back when gas was still a nickel. ("Put another nickel in—" Arr, nevermind.) It bore up, that road, and we bore up with it on tilted slabs of stone a million years peeled free of mother earth, jumping one to another like frogs in the sun, Revois still burning with the fever and me—oh I was light! Like milkweed gauze on a breeze, you know—yet still I saw it all. My mind was as clear then as clean water, for I was as young then as horrid now—yes, I see how you look at me, but you needn't wince, for it's your own future you see on this side o' the table. We climbed above the birds and there was the end, a stone tongue poked straight into the blue.

Manning broke into a run and we ran after, Revois trotting a right smart, sick as he was. (But he wasn't sick long—hee!) We looked down and saw what we saw. Manning turned red at the sight, and why not? For greed's a fever, too. He grabbed me by the rag that was once a shirt

and asked if it was just a dream. When I said I saw what he saw, he turned to Revois. But before Revois could say aye or nay, we heard the thunder coming up from the greenroof we'd left behind, like a storm turned upside down. Or say

BALLS TO HIM! AND BALLS TO YOUR GRINNING FACE!

like all of earth had caught that fever that stalked us and was sick in its bowels. I asked Manning what he heard and Manning said nothing. He was too busy looking into that cleft, down a thousand feet of ancient air into the church below: a million years of bone and tusk, a whited sepulchre of eternity, a thrashpits of prongs such as you'd see if hell burned dry to the slag of its cauldron. Arr! Yes!

You expected to see bodies impaled on the ancient thorns of that sunny tomb. There were none, but the thunder was coming, rolling up the ground instead of down from the sky. The stones shook beneath our heels as they burst free of the green that took so many—Rostoy with his mouth harp, Dorrance who sang along, the anthropologist with the ass like an English saddle, twenty-six others. They came, those gaunt ghosts, and shook the greenroof

from their feet, and in a gray wave: elephants no zoo ever held stampeding sideways from the green cradle of time. Towering among 'em (believe what you want) were mammoths from the dead age when man was not, their tusks in corkscrews and their eyes as red as whips of sorrow; wrapped around their wrinkled legs were jungle vines. One come—yes!—with a flower stuck in a fold of his chest hide—like a boutonniere!

Revois screamed and put his hand over his eyes. Manning said "I don't see that." (He sounded like a man explaining to a fucking traffic cop.) I pulled 'em aside and we all three stumbled into a stony cunt near the edge. From there we watched 'em come: a tide in the face of reality that made you wish for blindness and glad for sight. They went past us and over us, never slowing, the ones behind driving the ones before, and down they went, trumpeting their way to suicide, crashing into the bones of their oblivion a dusty mile below. Hours it went on, those endless convulsions of tumbling death; trumpets all the way down, a brass orchestra,

diminishing. The dust and the smell of their shit near choked us, and in the end Revois fell mad. Stood up, whether to run away or to join 'em I never knew which, but join 'em he did, headfirst and down with his boot heels in the sky and all the nailheads winking. One arm waved. The other...one of those giant flat feet tore it off his body and the arm followed after, fingers waving: "Bye-bye!" and "Bye-bye!" and "So long, boys!" Har!

I leaned out to see and it was a sight to remember, all right, how he sprayed in pinwheels that hung in the air after he was gone, then turned pink and floated away on a breeze that smelled of rotten carnations. His bones with the others by now, and where's my drink? But not with a single new one; the only new bones were his.

Do you see what I say? Listen again, damn you: His, but no others. Nothing down there after the last of the giants had passed us except for the bone church, which was as it was, with one blot of red, and that was Revois. For that was a stampede of ghosts or memories, and who knows which haunts men the more? Manning got up trembling, said our fortunes were made (as if he didn't already have one). "And what about what you just saw?" I asked. "Would you bring others to see such a holy thing? Why, next thing you know the Pope himself will be pissin' holy water over the side!" But Manning only shook his head like a fool, and held up hands without a speck of dust on them—although not a minute past we'd been choking on it by the bale, and coated with it from top to toe.

Said it was hallucination we'd seen, brought on by fever and stinkwater. Said again that our fortunes were made, and laughed. The whoreson, that laugh was his undoing.

I saw that he was mad—or I was—and one of us would have to die. You know which one it was, since here I sit before you, drunk, with hair that once was black hanging in my eyes.

He said, "Don't you see, you fool——" And said no more, for the rest was just a scream. Balls to him! And balls to your grinning face!

I don't remember how I got back; it's a dream of green with dark faces in it, then a dream of blue with light faces in it, and now I wake in the night in this city where not one in ten dreams of what lies beyond their lives—for the eyes they use to dream with are shut, as Manning's were, until the end, when not all the bank accounts in hell or Switzerland (they may be the same) could save him.

I wake with my liver bellowing, and in the dark I hear the thunder of those great gray ghosts rising out of the greenroof like a storm set loose on the earth and I smell the dust and shit, and when they break free into the sky of their undoing, I see the ancient fans of their ears and the hooks of their tusks; I see their eyes and their eyes and their eyes. There's more to life than this; there are maps inside your maps and time beyond your time.

It's still there, the bone church, and I'd like to go back and find it again, so I could throw myself over and be done this comedy. Now turn away your sheep's face before I turn it away for you. Arr, it's a dirty place, this reality, and there's no religion in it, so buy me a drink, goddam you. We'll toast elephants that never were.



A close-up photograph of a hand with fingers spread, set against a grey brick wall. The hand is the central focus, with the fingers pointing outwards. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the skin and the individual bricks.

FRANCY

**30 ROCK'S MOST OUTRAGEOUS
STAR GETS SERIOUS ABOUT HIS
PAINFUL CHILDHOOD AND HIS
DRUG-DEALING PAST...THEN GETS
FUNNY ABOUT ANAL SEX AND
BREAKING PREGNANT WOMEN'S
WATER (HONEST)**

MORGAN

Q1

PLAYBOY: In your new memoir, *I Am the New Black*, you describe your childhood as being filled with poverty and violence. Was it really as horrible as it sounds?

MORGAN: When you grow up black in Brooklyn, in the ghetto, you see a lot of shit fast. I saw my first murder when I was six or seven years old. His body was laying out there all night, brains splattered on the sidewalk. People just fucking stood around looking at it. Motherfucker was dead, and everybody in the neighborhood knew who did it, but nobody said shit—because you could be next.

Q2

PLAYBOY: You write in the book that your sense of humor was a bulletproof vest. How did being funny keep you out of harm's way?

MORGAN: Kids in the schoolyard could be cruel. A lot of them were sociopaths. If you had a big brother, you could go get him and he could come out and fuck 'em up. But I couldn't do that because my older brother had cerebral palsy, so I had to develop a sense of humor, make motherfuckers laugh to keep 'em off my ass. That will protect you, but you gotta make it worthwhile for them.

Q3

PLAYBOY: You also suggest that you briefly sold drugs. Is it wrong (continued on page 117)



MY PURSUIT OF WOMEN

THE HILLIKER CURSE

BY

JAMES ELLROY

HE WISHED HIS MOTHER DEAD
50 YEARS AGO.

HE'S BEEN SEARCHING FOR
REDEMPTION EVER SINCE.

HELEN, JOAN, KAREN. THE WOMEN
IN HIS LIFE HAVE TORTURED HIM,
TEMPTED HIM, TAUGHT HIM. ABOVE
ALL THEY'VE SET HIM FREE.

THE DEMON DOG OF CRIME'S SEARING
FINAL INSTALLMENT OF CRIMINAL LOVE

She kissed me at Coit Tower. San Francisco was summer cold. I underdressed for the walk and didn't factor in high monuments and wind. The sun was up, the view was wide, tourists clucked and snapped photographs. I shivered. She rubbed my arms warm.

Joan. The prophecy revealed. The real her, 46 years later.

The kiss stunned me. I'd brain-scheduled it for the hotel later. Coit Tower rolled.

My nerves were still shot. I was seven months into my open-marriage deal and nine months dope-free. Joan had rough hands and a tendency to stride ahead of me. I walked faster. She noticed that it was rude and held my arm to correct her pace.

The kiss worked. A sun blast quashed my shivers. We found the fit and hit the right note of decorum. We disengaged simultaneous. Joan smiled to acknowledge it. She asked me if I was okay. I said, What do you mean? She said, It's your eyes. You can't tell if you're angry or hurt.

She was 38. Her gray hair and my smooth features subverted the age gap. My post-crack-up world looked garish. I was always tensed up to fight or run.

We walked down Telegraph Hill. The short steps messed with my long legs. Joan steadied me.

We knew our assignments already. We misread the cost at the start. My job was to fall. Her job was to catch me on the way down.

1.

My wife hated me. She suppressed it through my crack-up. I ran from the marriage and bled her solicitude dry. I slept and brooded my way through the move west. Helen did the shitwork. I voyeur-perved women and full-time fantasized. Dudley died of a heart attack. Helen held a candlelight vigil and bid his soul heaven-bound. I ran from the sight of our beloved dog dead and passed out.

Her fury was always checked by her love for me. My always-present self-absorption veered to vacancy. My insanity pushed

Helen to a crazed psychic state. She watched her brilliant husband squander his internal solvency. She put her career on hold to play wet nurse. Our new house symbolized the worst of it.

A beautiful thatched cottage in the Carmel hills. Allegedly Clark Gable's ex-pad. A big price tag. Big upgrade cash. A dream home cum life raft.

Nest, haven, safety zone. A road flare to mark resurrection.

Helen marshaled artisans and workmen. Two-story beams were glazed and reset. A river-rock fireplace was laid in, stone by stone. The kitchen featured a half-ton marble island. The master bedroom offered an ocean view. My office was two stories high and built on three levels. My desk was presidential size. The walls were festooned with framed book jackets and award scrolls.

I popped uppers and downers. Helen watched our bank balance evaporate. I eyeballed women at shopping malls. I stared at pictures of Anne Sexton and interdicted her suicide.

Jean Hilliker would have been 88 on our housewarming date. The Hilliker Curse was 45 years old.

XXXXX

Sobriety was no cure-all. I glibly assumed it would be. We didn't go broke. I pulled myself out of the shit again. God had more to do with it than I did. I believed it then and believe it more certainly now.

I was frayed, french fried and frazzled. I lost a bunch of dope-bloat pounds and started looking good once more. I perched at the door of whew-we're-okay-now. Helen would not let me in.

I thought my sober state would cancel all debts. Helen once quoted Clifford Odets and called me "a bullet with nothing but a future." I stood ready to resume my life's trajectory. The preceding two and a half years were largely blurry. Fall '03: Helen refills my memory bank.

You drove around Carmel in shit-stained trousers. My friends heard you jacking off upstairs. You were vile to my family. You peeped women while you walked Dudley. You went to a network pitch meeting, bombed. You'd dribbled ice cream on your shirt. An executive asked you to describe your TV pilot. You said it was about cops rousting fags and jigs. You ran your car off the 101 and came home bloody. You became someone else as I watched helplessly and came to hate myself and doubt my own sanity for having stayed with you.

My riposte was "I never cheated on you." Helen's riposte was "It doesn't matter—it's all in your head, anyway."

The dreamhouse and coastal rainstorms. Helen's hurt and rage. Helen's open-marriage offer. My antennae twitching—no, not just yet.

We got a new bull terrier and named her Margaret. She instantly swooned for Helen and evinced outrage for me. Margaret followed me through the pad, barking and growling. Margaret's outrage remains to this day.

I couldn't get past Helen's grief. Helen rebuffed my vows with shrugs. I drove around Carmel and blasted Beethoven. I sat in espresso joints and watched women. I hurled myself at my office couch every night. I prayed for

Helen and asked God for signs. I tried to will sleep.

'03 into '04. The dreamhouse, the separate lives, the feminist/separatist hound.

I wrote three novellas to fill out a collection. They were sadly comedic. They detailed a fucked-up cop in love with an actress. The cop narrated the stories from heaven. He was waiting for the woman, but he didn't want her to die.

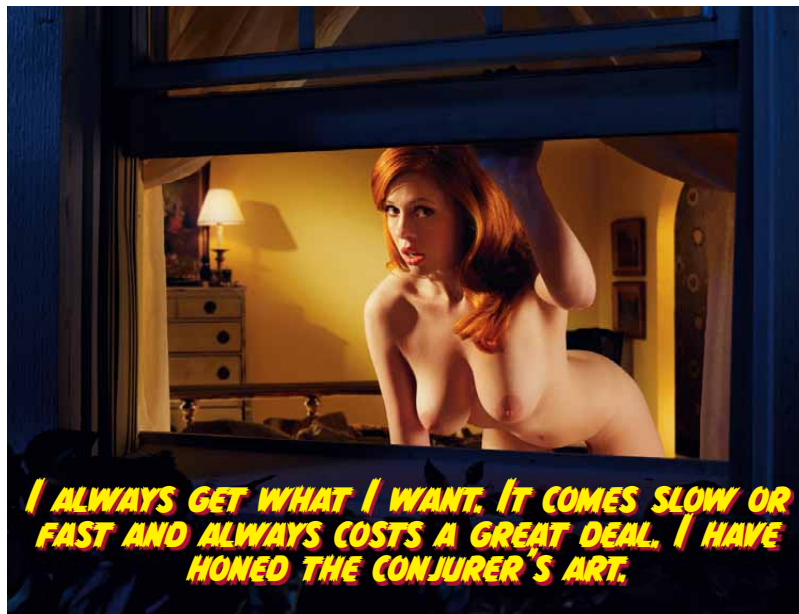
The big cosmic joke. My life's trajectory, retold for laffs.

I always get what I want. It comes slow or fast and always costs a great deal. I have honed the conjurer's art with an astonishingly single-minded precision.

A friend asked me to give a speech at Cal Davis. I knew She'd be there.

"You remind me of someone."

"Tell me about her."



"I never spoke to her."

"Why?"

"I was afraid to."

"Why?"

"I was a child. I was ashamed of the thoughts I'd been having."

"What was she like?"

"She was a fine person."

"How do you know that, if you never spoke to her?"

"I spent a lot of time watching her."

"Was that a common childhood practice of yours?"

"Yes."

"And it remains one?"

"Yes."

"What was the girl's name?"

"I don't know, but I named her Joan."

13.

The lectern was raised, the room was packed, I had a slay-the-audience view. She sat at the left rear. I caught her gray-streaked hair first. She expanded and filled my frame.

I read from *My Dark Places*. I brain-spoke to the woman at pause points. I described the wish-named Joan and stated the resemblance. The woman was skeptical—call her a college prof up for a fight.

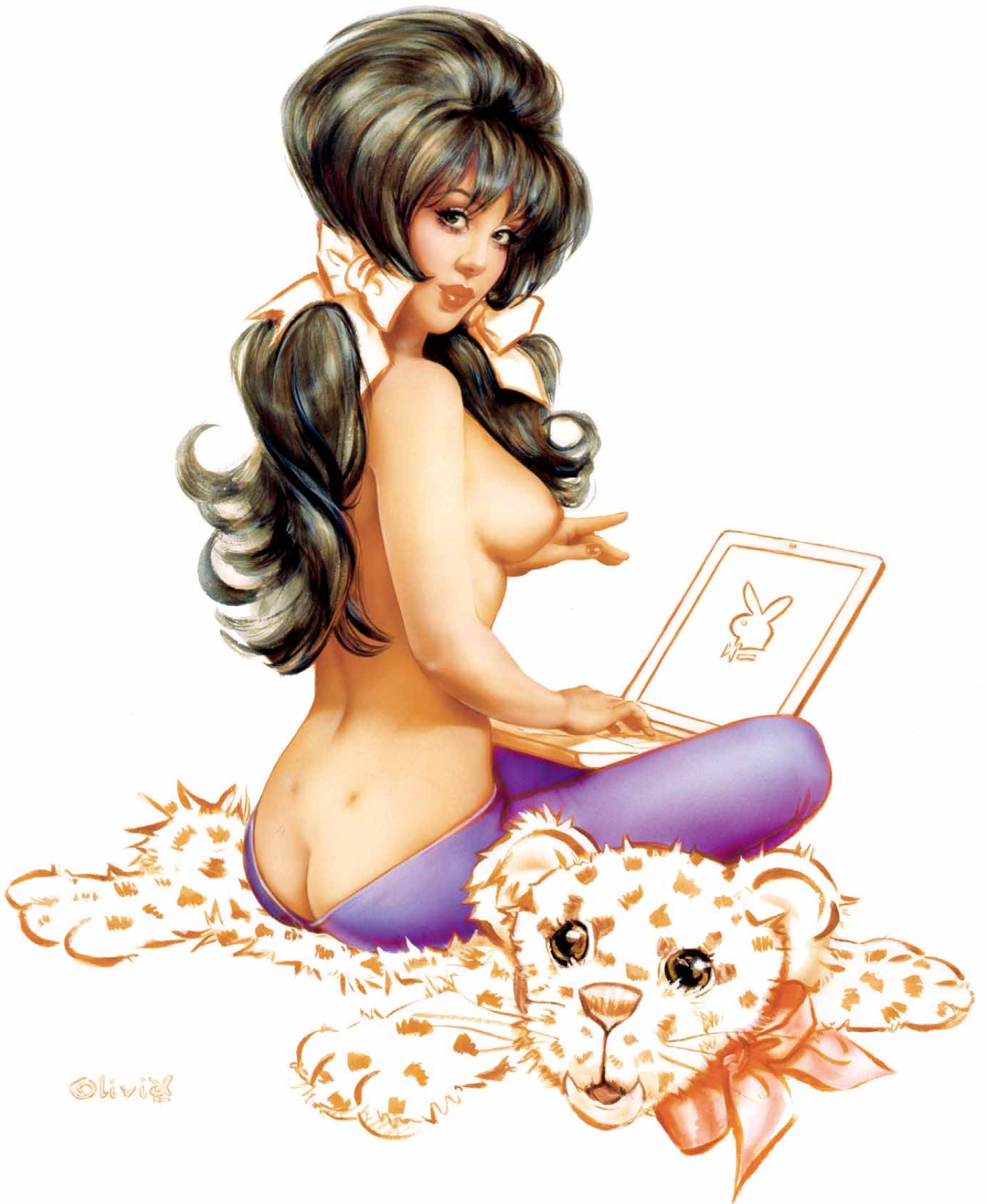
May 28, '04. Sacramento in a spring heat wave. The 6,000th public performance of my dead-mother act.

I was boffo. I read from pitch-perfect memory and laid down even eye contact. The woman was my pivot point. I eyeball-tracked the audience and clicked back to her. She had deep brown eyes. Her features were the wish-named Joan's, aged and age-askewed.

A Q&A session followed. Two hundred sociologists—a dead-mom-tour first. A man asked me how I stage-managed grief.

I cited repetition. I cited faith and a buoyant will that sometimes swerved to obsessiveness. The man called me glib. I brusquely rebuked him. I said she was my mother—not his. I said I'd paid the price—and he hadn't.

The exchange sparked a rumble. I eyeball-drilled the man. He shrugged and shut up. I looked directly at the woman. She looked directly back. She asked me what different forms my mother assumed. *(continued on page 110)*



"Did you want to use the computer or what...?"

LONE ★ STAR

THIS SWEET
TEXAN IS ONE
OF A KIND



Icried on the phone,” says Kelley Thompson about the day she learned she was on her way to becoming Miss November. A 21-year-old small-town beauty from Texas, Kelley was working as a bartender at the time. She had done some test shooting in Dallas, but she never thought.... Surely she wouldn’t.... A few days after the shoot, she says, she received a sign: A trio of cottontails had dug a bunny hole in her front yard. The next thing she knew, the phone call arrived, and she was headed to the airport, bound for Los Angeles, where paradise awaited. She had never been on an airplane before. “To get off my first plane ride and go directly to the Playboy Mansion was just surreal,” she says. Kelley has wanted to be a Playmate ever since she became a fan of *The Girls Next Door* four years ago. “I immediately fell in love with Hef and the girls on that show, and I was, like, Wow, it would be really awesome to experience something like that. It’d be like a dream.” So what has all this good fortune taught Miss November? “To live life to its fullest,” she says, “to not be afraid to go after something you want. Being from a small town I always knew there was so much more out there, and now I want to go everywhere and see everything. Life’s too short, so give all your dreams a shot.”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

ARNY FREYTAG









See more of Miss November
at club.playboy.com.



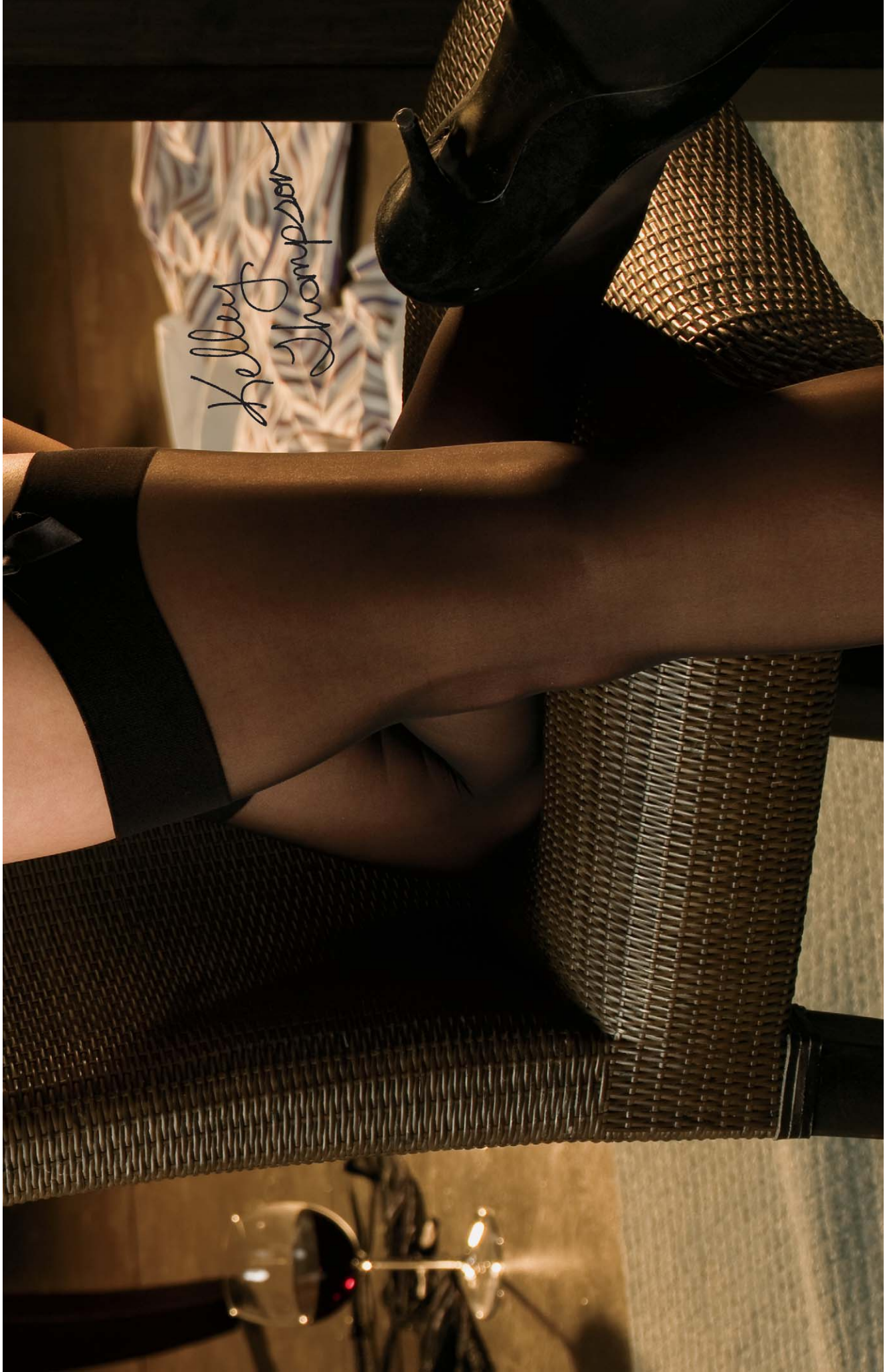
MISS NOVEMBER

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH





Kelley
Thompson



PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: Kelley Thompson
BUST: 34D WAIST: 25 HIPS: 34
HEIGHT: 5'6" WEIGHT: 115



BIRTH DATE: 12/08/87 BIRTHPLACE: Tyler, TX

AMBITIONS: To get my college degree, open an animal shelter + pursue modeling + acting!

TURN-ONS: A man with a great personality and smile who is soft, kindhearted + not afraid to show emotion.

TURNOFFS: Liars, bad manners, cheaters + arrogance.

SOMEONE I LOOK UP TO AND WHY: My mother. She is my angel, best friend and such a huge part of my life that I don't know what I would do without her.

MY FAVORITE BOOKS: Anything by Nicholas Sparks - I always appreciate a good love story.

MY ADORABLE PETS: Missy, my baby girl shih tzu, JC, my fun + wild Yorkie-poo, and last but not least, my big outside doggy, Daisy.

MY SECRET SKILL: I can touch my tongue to my nose (lol).



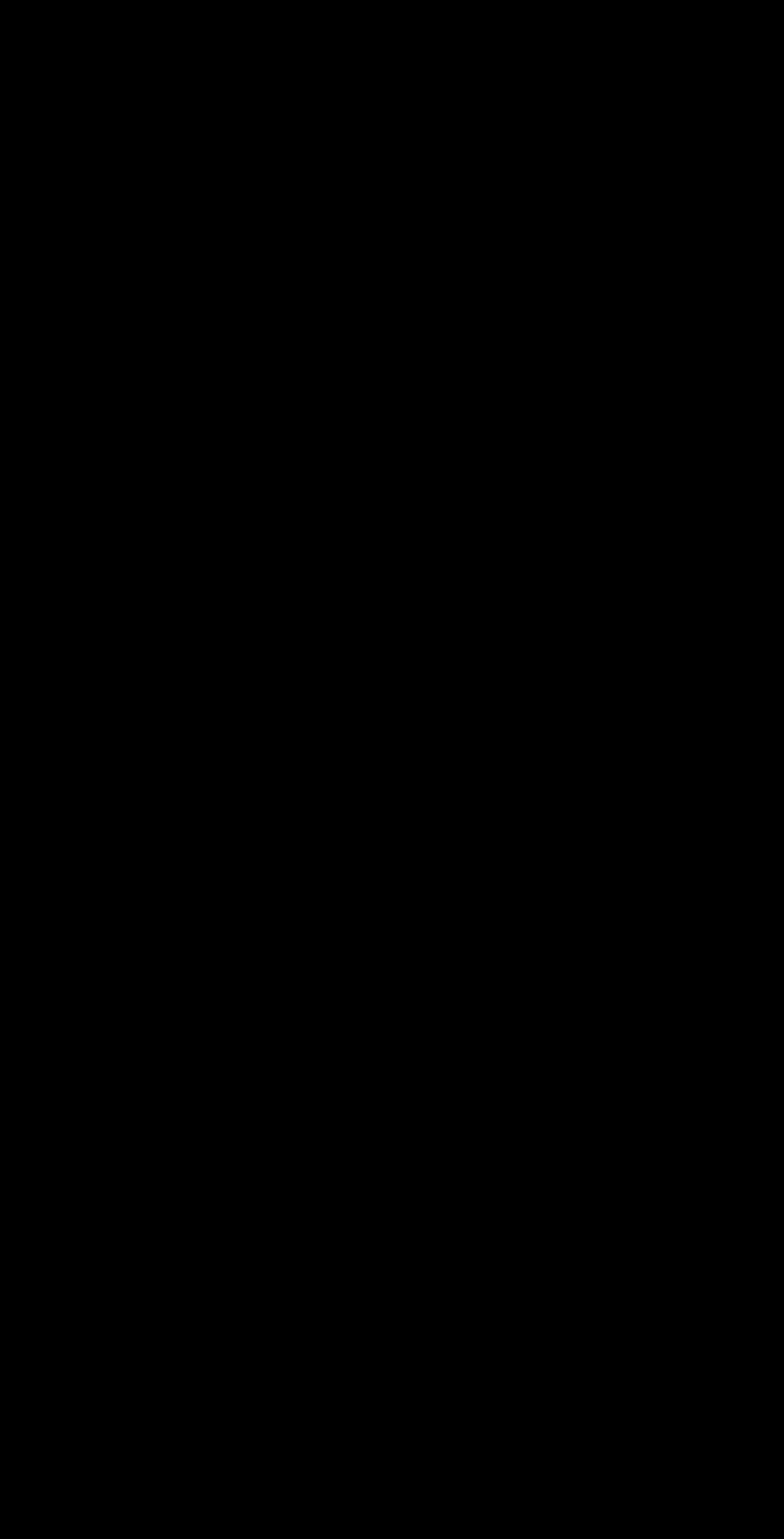
Sixth-grade school photo.



Eighth-grade cheerleading pic.



Just having fun, 18 years old. 😊



MISS NOVEMBER

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

*Kelley
Thompson*



PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

A lady at the grocery store was picking through the frozen turkeys but couldn't find one big enough for her family. She asked the stock boy, "Do these turkeys get any bigger?"

"No, ma'am," the stock boy answered. "They're dead."

Two women were talking over coffee in a diner. "Treavor moved to San Francisco," one of the women said. "Greg recently relocated with his job to Chicago, and Brendan uprooted to Providence years ago."

"Gee," the other said, "I don't know how you can keep all your ex-husbands straight."

"I can't," the first answered. "That's why Treavor went to San Francisco."



The best way to get over a girl is to get under a new one.

An inebriated man was stumbling down the street with one foot on the curb and one foot in the gutter. A police car pulled up, and the cop said, "I've got to take you in, pal. You're obviously drunk."

"Officer, are ya' absolutely sure I'm drunk?" the man asked.

"Yeah, buddy, I'm sure," said the copper. "Let's go."

"Thank goodness," the guy said. "I thought I was crippled."

Why are men like hardwood?

Lay them right the first time and you can walk on them for 20 years.

The difference between men and women is that a woman wants one man to satisfy her every need, and a man wants every woman to satisfy his one need.

Despite the old saying "Don't take your troubles to bed," many men still sleep with their wives.

A woman hailed a taxi, and when it pulled over in front of her apartment she realized she had no cash. She spread her legs and asked, "Can I pay with this?"

The driver asked, "Do you have anything smaller?"

What's this I hear about you breaking off your engagement?" a mother asked her daughter.

"Well," the daughter said, "though his diamond was of pretty good quality, his mounting left much to be desired."

A man was startled by his friend's nonchalance in dealing with his wife's indiscretion. "You say you love her, and yet you saw her with another man and you didn't deck him?" he asked.

"I'm waiting," the friend said.

"Waiting for what?" the man asked.

"I'm waiting," the friend answered, "to catch her with a smaller guy."

A national airline recently introduced a special recession rate for wives who accompany their husbands on business trips. Anticipating some valuable testimonials, the airline's publicity department sent letters to all the wives of businessmen who used the special rate, asking how they enjoyed their trip.

Responses poured in, mostly asking, "What trip?"



A little girl who was attending her first wedding asked her mother, "Why is the bride dressed in white?"

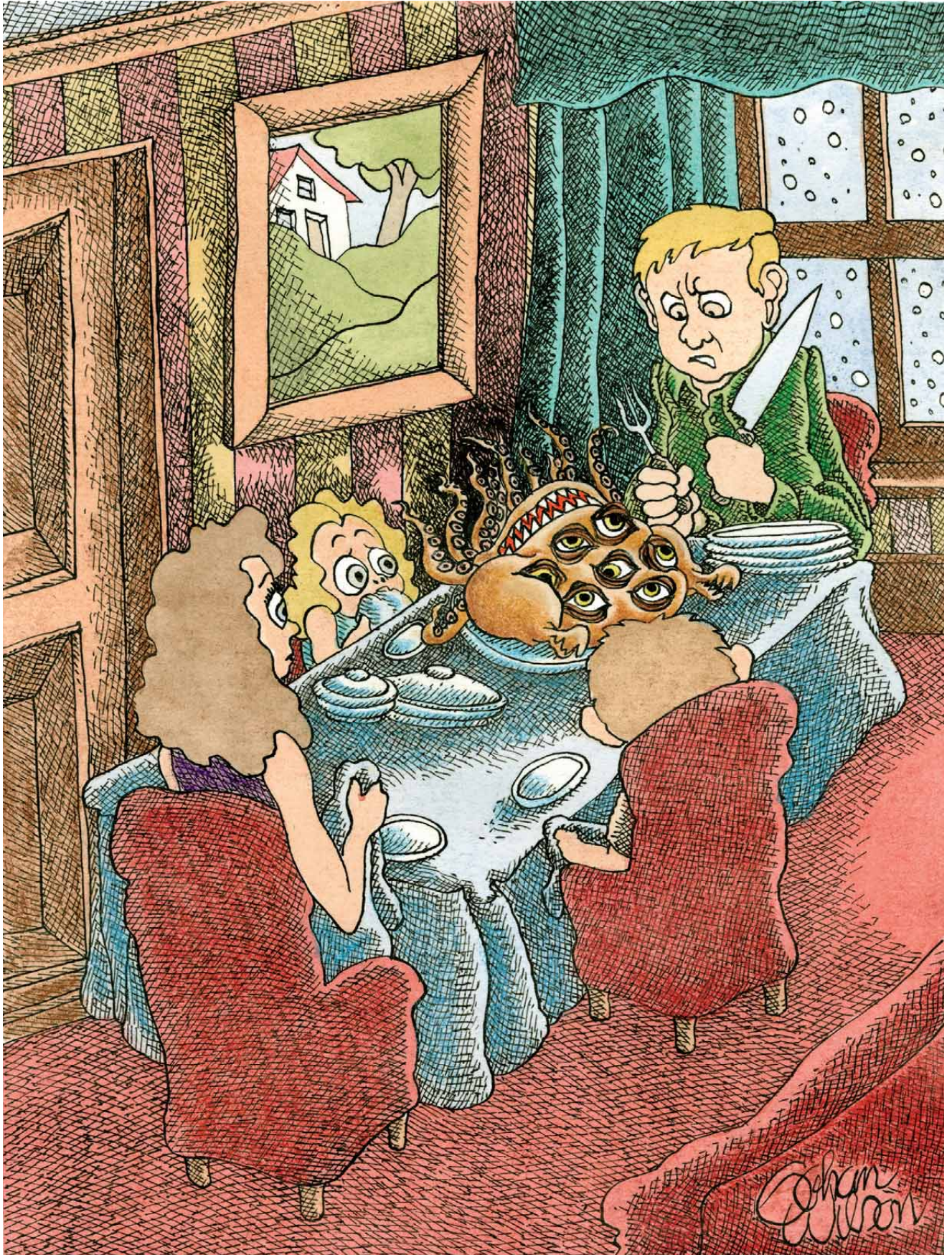
"Well, sweetheart, white is the color of joy, and today is the most joyful day of her life," her mother responded, not wanting to explain purity.

"Oh," the little girl said. Then looking around she asked, confused, "So why is the groom wearing black?"

How is sex like paintball?

You play hard for 30 minutes, get hot and sweaty, and when it's over you're glad you're not the one who got shot in the face.

Send your jokes to Party Jokes Editor, PLAYBOY, 680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611, or by e-mail through our website at jokes.playboy.com. PLAYBOY will pay \$100 to the contributors whose submissions are selected.



"I'm not sure these genetically altered turkeys are all that much of an improvement!"



Playing for HELL

BY SCOTT ALEXANDER

WHEN YOU'RE AN INDEPENDENT VIDEO-GAME DEVELOPER HELL-BENT ON CREATING THE MOST INNOVATIVE TITLE OF THE YEAR, YOU'D BETTER BE READY TO BET IT ALL. WELCOME TO THE BIG LEAGUES OF BIG FUN

It is July 13, 2009 in an unassuming office space in San Francisco. The 74 people in this room are supposed to complete a video game in approximately two weeks. They work for a company called Double Fine, and this is the second game they have made. The first took them five years; this one has taken four. Most people could create an amateurish photo or movie or book if they tried, but only a rare few can make a game. The people at Double Fine get to do what they do because they are some of the only people who can. Everyone here was the smartest person in his or her high school. It's a murderers' row of low-key experts in disciplines ranging from physics programming to sophisticated computer animation to fine art. They have done an immense amount of high-level work to get to this stage, sacrificing sunlight, sanity and social contact to participate in the high-stakes team sport that is big-time video-game making. And they are okay with that. They are doing the esoteric and difficult thing they love

in one of the few places in the world they can be rewarded for it, both creatively and financially. As one programmer puts it, "It's kicking my ass, and I'm loving every minute of it."

However, there is a problem. They are lost in the wilderness. Or rather, the random civilian testers their publisher has brought in to play the game have been getting lost in the wilderness. This is not good.

The people at Double Fine are making a game called *Brütal Legend*. It's an "open-world" game, the kind that has a plot but that also allows you to roam the landscape freely and get pleasurably lost driving your giant hot rod, the Deuce. One of the wonderful, confounding and defining facts of the games medium is that no two people ever have the same experience with the same game. Double Fine's gift is not that it makes great art but that it makes great worlds in which *you* can make great art, whether that's by jumping your car over hot chicks on motorcycles while listening to the Scorpions



or saving the world from the forces of hair metal. Or neither. Or both. Getting lost in *Brütal Legend*'s world is great, as long as you can get unlost again. And people are having a hard time getting unlost.

It started with the best intentions. Many games rely on a mini-map in a corner of the screen to help you navigate. It's artificial, but it works. *Brütal Legend*'s designers didn't want to constantly remind you that you're playing a game, and they came up with an elegant solution: make the Deuce's turn signals flash in the direction of your next objective, as the crow flies. And this works fine, unless there's a mountain or a chasm between you and your next objective. In that case the signals direct the player to turn into a rock wall or a ravine, and people get confused. If they don't stop being confused, they get frustrated, and if they stay frustrated they'll probably turn the game off. The people making this beautiful monster do not want that to happen. They want *Brütal Legend* to



Brütal Legend began as hand-drawn sketches.

circle retreated into a back room to come up with the most baroque and insane heavy-metal fantasies they could. "We tried to list everything that would look awesome on the cover of a heavy-metal album," says Schafer. "Rivers of blood, chrome volcanoes, cliffs made of speakers, trees made of weapons, laser panthers." How did Schafer justify spending his top talent's time indulging their goofy fantasies while the rest of the staff broke their backs? He wanted to keep them employed. If you want to make a game and don't have \$15 million to \$30 million, you need to get a deal from someone who does. And no one will give you a deal without a demo. So the demo for your next game had better be finished by the time your current game goes out

"PEOPLE GET SCARED THEY'RE GOING TO BET THEIR CAREERS ON SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T WORK."

be a nonstop party for your eyes, ears, fingers and brain, something that sweeps you away on a cloud of awesome that lasts as long as you can maintain consciousness. That is not happening right now. And it is far from the only problem they have.

A month ago they were sued by the biggest video-game publisher in the world to prevent *Brütal Legend* from ever coming out. They've also spent \$20 million of other people's money. Those other people are counting on the game being so amazing that millions buy it and the money is paid back. And Eddie can't cry anymore. The game will not be amazing if Eddie can't cry.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Brütal Legend began in 2005, a few months prior to the completion of Double Fine's previous game, *Psychonauts*. Another wildly original and highly ambitious game, *Psychonauts* nearly crashed the company. After four years of development its publisher pulled the plug, forcing Double Fine to scramble for cash to complete the game. It very nearly didn't. "We told the team that Wednesday was the last payroll," says Tim Schafer, the company's founder and lead creative. "My throat closed up and I couldn't get any more words out. It was the worst meeting we've ever had." Then an 11th-hour call from a willing publisher sparked a hasty deal, and work continued on what would become one of the decade's best games.

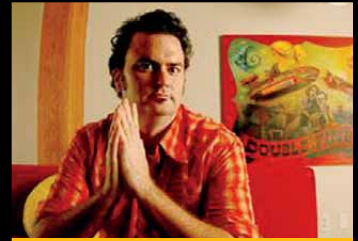


the door. If it isn't, the money will run out, your talent will start to scatter, and you will be ever so slightly completely fucked.

The game was to start with brawling and adventuring and then build toward epic battles in which the player commands legions of heavy-metal beasts (using real-time-strategy gameplay, or RTS). With the main concepts in place, the team's production designer, Scott Campbell, began conceiving visuals to define *Brütal Legend*'s look and feel. "We start with the world, then make the supporting cast and then create the main character last," says Campbell. "He needs to mesh with the world because he's a stand-in for the player." At the same time, lead designer Erik Robson started blocking out the basic ways characters would move and be controlled, using cubes and cylinders. Schafer then had the team's animators mock up a 30-second movie and took it around to the industry's top publishers to convince the suits to give him \$20 million to make a strange, funny, heavy-metal RTS game about a roadie transported to the distant past to lead a musical revolution against demons. His endeavor was only half as crazy as it sounds.

For one thing, Schafer has a 20-plus-year track record through seven games, most of them classics. Plus, he had entertainment powerhouse CAA on his side. Artist representation is new to game

ORIGINS OF A Brütal Legend



LONG BEFORE WORK STARTED ON *BRÜTAL LEGEND*, ITS COMPONENTS WERE ACCUMULATING IN TIM SCHAFFER'S MIND. HERE ARE SOME OF ITS KEY CONCEPTUAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

1 METAL In 1981 Schafer was 15. His older brother caught him listening to Supertramp and, disgusted, played him something else. "It was a scary thumping sound followed by this robot voice—the first few seconds of Black Sabbath's 'Iron Man.' It was weird and cool and terrifying."



2 TWAIN In college Schafer read *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and became obsessed with the idea of how effective he would be if he were sent back in time.

3 BRUTALITY In 1988 Schafer worked with a metalhead who overused the word *brutal*. Later at LucasArts—when trying to create a concept that would "out-fantasy fantasy"—he christened the never-made game *Brütal Legend*.

4 ROADIES At a party in 1992 Schafer met a roadie for Megadeth and became fascinated by his stories of heavy-metal touring. He loved that roadies were expected to fix anything.

5 REAL-TIME STRATEGY WITH CARS "I always wanted to make an RTS game with Big Daddy Roth characters and demons driving hot rods." Us too.

6 THE WHOLE PACKAGE In 2000 it hit him: "These could all be the same game. We could have demons driving hot rods, fighting against a roadie who's been pulled back in time. And it could be called *Brütal Legend*. It took me years to get up the nerve to tell anyone the idea."



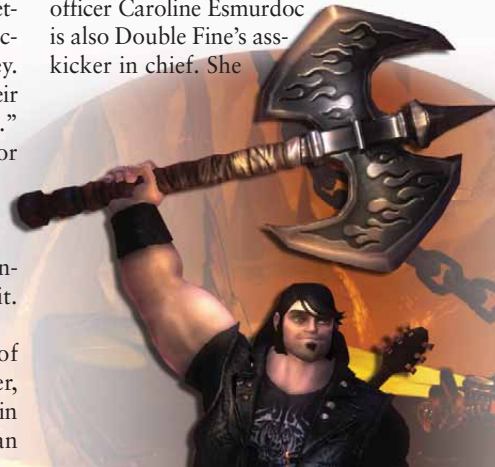
makers, and Seamus Blackley, Schafer's agent, is one of only a few available. "The clients we represent never had agents before," says Blackley. "And the studios haven't had representatives involved in these big game deals." Schafer admits, "It's really hard to say 'I am the best! I'm the king of games!' But Seamus can make people feel as though they're getting a special deal just by talking to me."

Still, the rejections were legion. "When a successful game designer wants to do something different, people who play games get incredibly excited. But the sales and marketing people can't come back with any projections for the business side," says Blackley. "People get scared they're going to bet their careers on something that doesn't work." Schafer had never done a multiplayer or RTS game before. "People were scared to death of it because it looked creative," says Schafer. "Every time they used the C word we knew we'd lost the pitch." Eventually, however, Sierra Entertainment bit. Double Fine had a deal.

Thus began a solid two-year run of calm at the studio. A few months later, Jack Black agreed to voice the game's main character, Eddie Riggs. "I was a huge fan

of *Psychonauts*," says Black, "and when Tim showed me some of the Frazetta-style artwork, the aesthetic really spoke to me." Black is arguably the biggest star to play the lead in a video game, and with him onboard Schafer was able to sign his personal metal idols Ozzie Osbourne, Rob Halford and Lemmy Kilmister. All that was left was making sure everyone didn't lose a year of their life to another epic crunch at the end. Which is why Double Fine has a Caroline.

Executive producer and chief operating officer Caroline Esmurdoc is also Double Fine's ass-kicker in chief. She



came to the company a year before *Psychonauts* was finished and told people they were toast unless they started sprinting. Though unafraid to get tough—asked what she does at Double Fine she replies, "I yell a lot"—she didn't want to eclipse people's personal lives again. To avoid that, she adopted the Scrum system of software development, by which an entire cross-disciplinary team works on small chunks of the game at the same time, finishing them before moving on. Using Scrum, the game is playable much earlier than with typical development methods, and there are fewer surprises at the end.

And so with their money and their vision and their new kick-ass production system, they dig in. And two years go by and massive progress is made and it's starting to look like a game in there. At which point, predictably, all hell breaks loose.

In mid-2008 game publisher Activision merged with Sierra's parent company, Vivendi Universal Games (owner of Blizzard, the maker of juggernaut cash cow *World of Warcraft*). The deal was estimated at \$18.9 billion and created the world's largest game company, Activision Blizzard. Any
(concluded on page 120)

Ophelia Lives: Birth of a Metal Goddess

BY SCOTT CAMPBELL, PRODUCTION DESIGNER, DOUBLE FINE

1 EARLY SKETCHES This is when we get as crazy as we can and try out as many different things as possible. The ripped striped stockings here ended up being her entire dress.



2 COMPLETED CONCEPT Once we're done brainstorming and know exactly what the character looks like, I do a finished version of the character's look so everyone knows what they're working with.



3 ANIMATION POSES To help the animators and modelers understand how the characters flex and bend, we draw them in motion—playing guitar, flying, running and so on.



4 ORTHOGRAPHICS These are the blueprints that show how the characters work structurally. We show multiple angles of every layer, with and without hair, makeup and clothes.



5 MODELING + TEXTURE Now the modelers build the characters in 3-D, almost like clay. Once the basic model is done, the materials artists apply the textures that make skin, eyeballs and clothing look realistic.



6 FINAL GAME GRAPHICS The animators add a posable skeleton inside the character so she can move, and the visual-effects folks add the smoke and lightning. Meet Ophelia. Now run!



THE COMFORT OF STRANGERS



AN AIR OF MENACE AND AN UNSPOKEN OBSESSION. IS IT A GAME OF CHESS OR OF CAT AND MOUSE? BLIND LOVE OR A ONE-NIGHT STAND? SET AT THE FABLED ROOSEVELT HOTEL IN HOLLYWOOD—AND STARRING *BROTHERS AND SISTERS*' GILLES MARINI—HERE'S A FASHION ROMANCE FEATURING MEN'S STYLE INSPIRED BY THE PAUL SCHRADER FILM. ROOM SERVICE!

FASHION BY **JENNIFER RYAN JONES**

PLAYBOY  FASHION

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TONY KELLY**

WOMEN'S STYLING BY **CHARLIE ANDERSON AT NAKEDARTISTS.COM**



OPPOSITE PAGE

JACKET, \$1,980, TURTLENECK, \$980, TROUSERS, \$620, BY BOTTEGA VENETA; LOAFERS BY SALVATORE FERRAGAMO; POCKET SQUARE, \$130, BY TOM FORD.
ON HER: VINTAGE DRESS FROM MERCHANT ARCHIVE; KNICKERS BY AGENT PROVOCATEUR; GARTER BELT BY MYLA; EARRINGS BY ERICKSON BEAMON.

THIS PAGE

SUIT, \$7,490, SHIRT, \$545, TIE, \$220, POCKET SQUARE, \$130, SHOES, \$1,740, BY TOM FORD; CUFF LINKS, \$230, BY CHARLES TYRWHITT. ON HER:
VINTAGE DRESS; NIPPLE TASSELS BY AGENT PROVOCATEUR; BLINDFOLD BY ATSUKO KUDO; SHOES BY CHARLOTTE OLYMPIA.



"WHEN YOU ARE A KID IN FRANCE YOU HEAR THAT MEN HAVE A WIFE, A DOG AND A MISTRESS. LET SEX BE SEX. THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANYTHING SHOCKING ABOUT IT. IN FRANCE IT IS OPEN. HERE IN AMERICA IT'S A BIT LIKE *PLAYBOY*. EVERYBODY LOOKS AT IT, BUT NOBODY SAYS THEY DO." —GILLES MARINI



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT

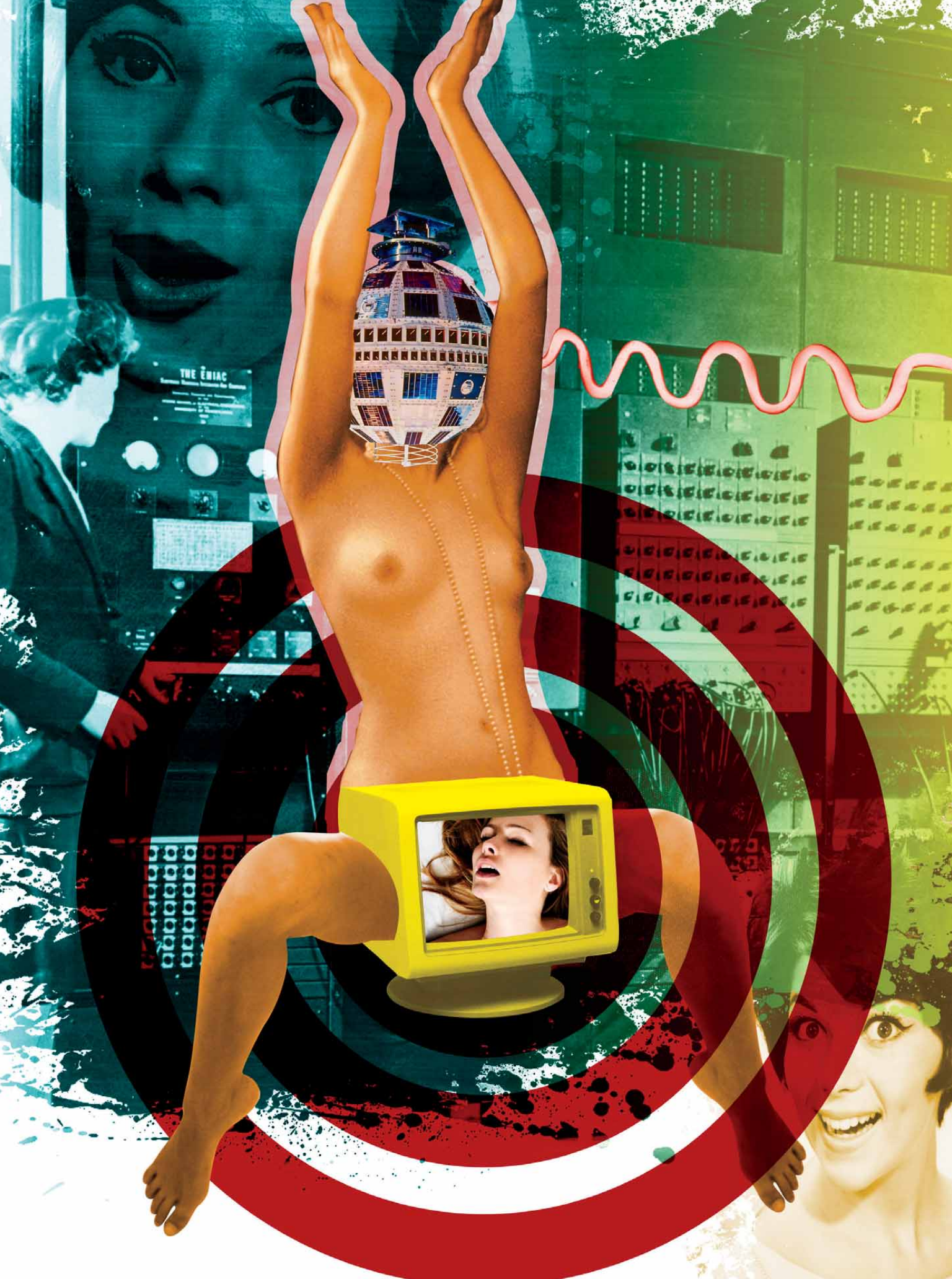
SUIT, \$2,595, SHIRT, \$295, TIE, \$170, BY ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA. ON HER: BLOUSE BY BRYCE D'ANISE AIMÉ; LATEX GARTER BELT, KNICKERS AND STOCKINGS BY HOUSE OF HARLOT; SHOES BY CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP RIGHT

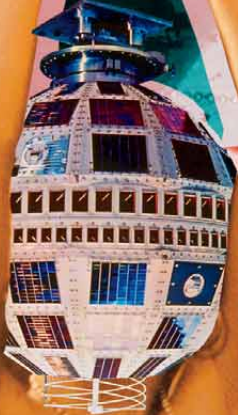
SUIT, \$4,290, SHIRT, \$395, TIE, \$295, BELT, \$320, BY ISAIA. ON HER: SHOES BY MANOLO BLAHNIK.

THIS PAGE

SUIT, \$2,150, SHIRT, \$400, SCARF, \$400, BELT, \$290, LOAFERS BY SALVATORE FERRAGAMO; DUFFEL, \$3,980, BY BOTTEGA VENETA. ON HER: BLOUSE BY JITROIS; BRA AND KNICKERS BY LA PERLA BLACK LABEL; SHOES BY MÉCHANTE OF LONDON.



THE ENIAC
Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator



ONE OF THE WORLD'S
FOREMOST SEX RESEARCHERS
MEETS THE FEMALE
SPECIMEN OF A LIFETIME

THE WOMAN WHO COULD THINK HERSELF OFF

When Traci's hand rises up from under the white hospital blanket, one of the scientists spots it and calls out, "Orgasm!"

This is completely unexpected for many reasons. Traci is waist deep in an MRI machine at the Center for Advanced Imaging at Rutgers-Newark University. The room is cold. She's encased in a kind of high-tech plastic hockey mask that helps center the MRI's magnetic scan. She's already been in the MRI machine for almost an hour as researchers map the parts of her brain that light up when she thinks about her toes and fingers, and also the parts that light up when they touch her toes and fingers with a dull plastic knife. She's wearing earplugs and headphones, and her head is wrapped with memory foam to keep it as still as possible, a technique Dr. Barry Komisaruk—distinguished professor of psychology at Rutgers and lead author of the definitive scholarly study *The Science of Orgasm*—finds more workable than making his volunteers clamp their teeth on a fixed bar. On top of that, a group of complete strangers is watching her every move through a big glass window: the lab technician in his white coat, the Ph.D. candidate making

notes in her loose-leaf binder, the reporter with his tape recorder, the undergraduate research assistant who just announced an intense craving for cashews.

But here's the biggest reason Traci's orgasm is a surprise: There was no apparent cause—or at least no *physical* cause. She was merely thinking.

Komisaruk leans toward the microphone. At 68, with a balding dome ringed by professorial tufts of hair, he has a gentle and fatherly manner. "You had an orgasm, Traci?"

"A little bit."

"Just right toward the end, right?"

"Yeah."

"Were you thinking of tapping your clitoris yourself or having it tapped by someone else?" (*Tapping* is Komisaruk's attempt at a neutral alternative to words like *caressing*.)

She laughs. "I don't know."

"Okay, that's fine. Nonspecific."

He nods to the Ph.D. candidate, who has been tracking the movement of Traci's signaling hand in 10-minute increments and charting each signal to the exact minute and second. She makes a note on her clipboard that the orgasm lasted for the final eight seconds of this 10-minute session.

BY
**JOHN H.
RICHARDSON**

"I'd say six seconds or so," says the research assistant.

"But she had a thinking orgasm," Komisaruk says, smiling.

Says the Ph.D. candidate, visibly impressed, "She sure did."

These are exciting times in the study of excitement. Not long ago John Steinbeck could say the typical American man knew "more about the Ford coil than the clitoris." Now, recent advances in brain imaging are helping scientists draw the schematic that links the clitoris to the biggest sex organ of all: the brain. Komisaruk is at the forefront of that research. Born and raised in the Bronx, the son of Eastern European immigrants who ran a humble Harlem pharmacy, he received a doctorate in neuroscience at Rutgers and began his career studying the pleasure centers of rats at UCLA's Brain Research Institute.

When he became a professor at Rutgers, Komisaruk noticed an odd thing: Horny rats don't appear to feel pain. He decided to see if the same was true of horny humans—but he ran into fierce resistance from opponents who thought that kind of research would damage the university's reputation. About the same time, in 1982, Komisaruk's wife died from cancer. "It was a very, very difficult year," he remembers. "She was in the hospital in terrible pain, and I felt like a dummy just standing there not being able to do anything for her."

Freshly determined to make pain relief his mission, Komisaruk finally received the university's permission and began the first series of human tests to explore the neurology of orgasm. Working with a grad student named Beverly Whipple (now one of the world's foremost researchers on the science of sex), he quickly established that vaginal stimulation in women increased pain thresholds by 50 percent. Orgasm was the ultimate painkiller, raising the threshold to 100 percent—but not for men. Despite the powerful effect orgasm had on women, it had no effect on male pain. Komisaruk and Whipple learned this was because male orgasm is carried exclusively through the pudendal nerve (which doesn't carry inhibitors for pain), while female orgasm also travels through the pel-



Dr. Barry Komisaruk looks at brain scans of Traci's "thinking orgasms" at the Rutgers-Newark University Center for Advanced Imaging.

vic nerve (which does). They even discovered that a specific peptide produced by the pelvic nerve creates the pain-blocking effect, which Komisaruk was able to simplify and patent. Then he began focusing on orgasms in women with spinal cord injuries. Since their pudendal nerves were usually severed, these women provided him a clear picture of which nerve pathways sexual information rides on its way to the female brain.

With the data from this research,

**"INCREDIBLE,"
DR. KOMISARUK
SAYS. "I'VE NEVER
SEEN A WOMAN
LIKE THIS!"**

Komisaruk was able to produce the first detailed map of the female sexual response system, proof of what folk wisdom has said all along: Men are simple, and women are freakin' complicated. "We now know there are three different nerves, each of which can by itself activate an orgasm in women," he says. "We also know that the more nerves that are stimulated, the more complex and intense the orgasm becomes. Clitoral seems more external and localized, and vaginal or cervical feels deeper and incorporates the whole body. In other words, they're additive."

The final step was to chart the stimulated parts of the brain with brain scan imagery, a technique that became available only five years ago. The orgasm centers turned out to be the nucleus accumbens (which also plays a role in laughter, addiction and fear), the amygdala (which

tells the adrenal gland to produce adrenaline), the insular cortex (which translates sensations into emotions such as happiness and disgust) and the hypothalamic region (which plays an important role in childbirth and produces the mysterious hormone oxytocin). Again, all the evidence confirmed folk wisdom: At the level of brain chemistry, women really do feel a connection between love and sex.

The implications go beyond science to metaphysics. Why do pain and pleasure light up the same part of the brain? Why are the same facial

expressions and sounds associated with pain and pleasure? Are the same neurons firing in different ways? Can we learn to harness them? In some distant future could we learn to write the neural code of pleasure and edit the language of pain?

These are the questions that drive Komisaruk to the lab every morning. And because researchers find that the study of abnormalities sheds the brightest light on the normal, he has turned to subjects who are hyper-orgasmic—the superstars of sexual response.

Now it's time to measure Traci's response to physical stimulation, the better to compare and contrast with her thinking orgasms.

"Start clitoral tapping," Komisaruk says.

For 25 seconds, Traci's hand moves under the blankets. The countdown is the responsibility of the Ph.D. candidate, Nan Wise.

"Five, four, three, two, one...."

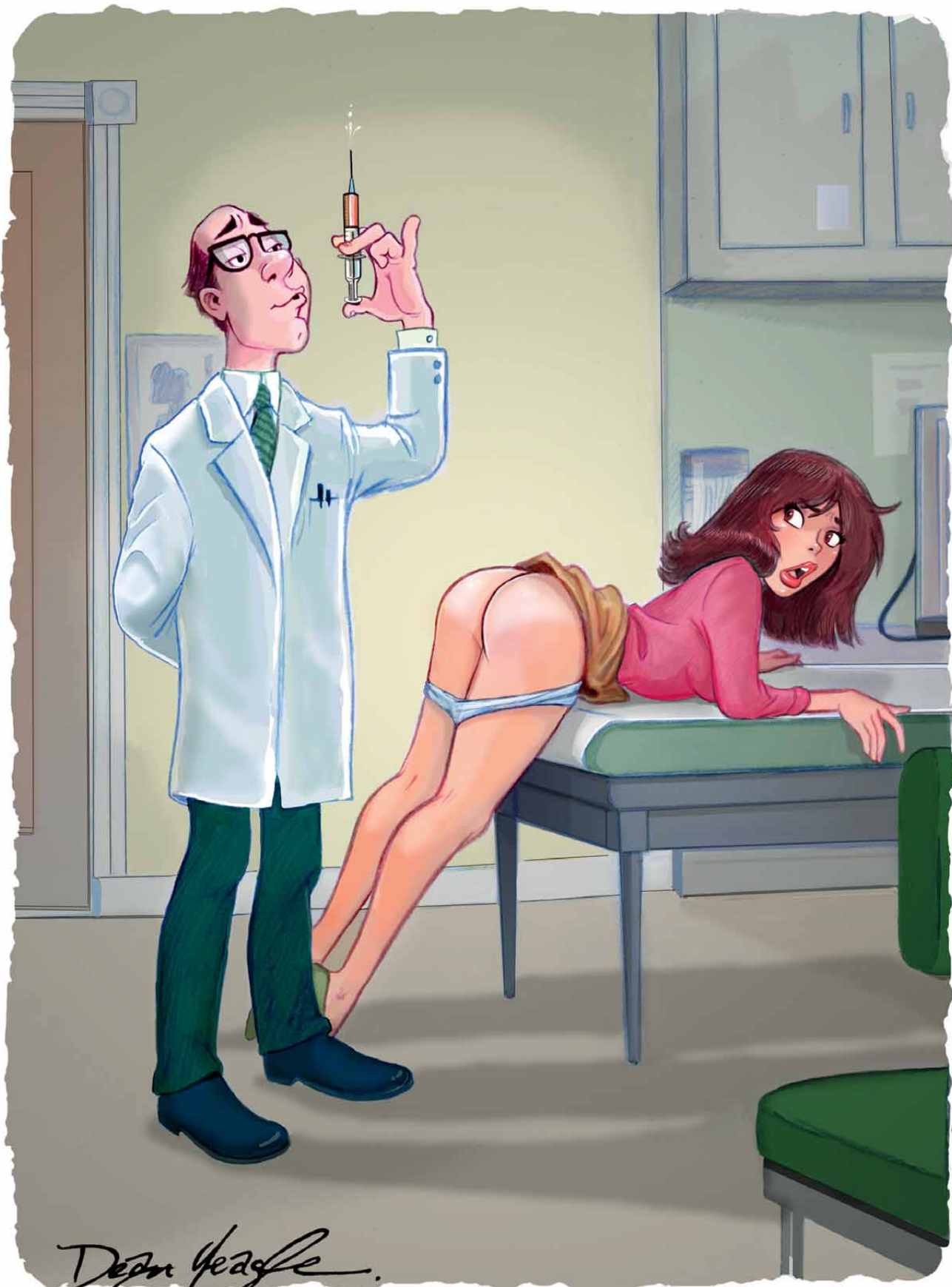
"Rest," Komisaruk says into the mike.

The rests are part of the routine, enabling the researchers to compare Traci's brain activity at rest with the data during stimulation. They call this the "boxcar" because that's how it looks on a graph: flat lines alternating with spikes and plateaus.

"Start clitoral tapping," Komisaruk says.

After a few passes it's clear the clitoral tapping does nothing for Traci. They move on to G-spot stimulation, which requires a curved glass implement and some K-Y jelly. When she's ready, Komisaruk leans into the microphone. "Okay, the first 30 seconds is rest."

Slowly the *(continued on page 106)*



Dean Yeagle.

"Well, you're the doctor, but I'm pretty sure you usually get flu shots in the arm!"

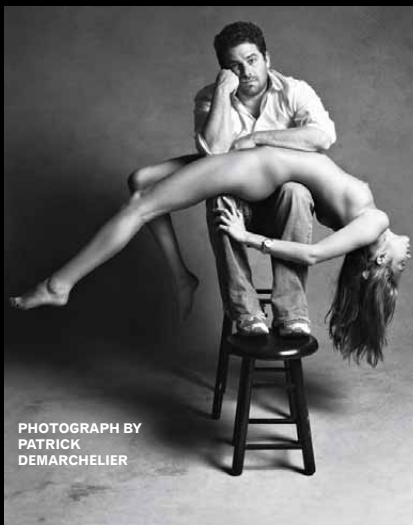
ALINA PUSCAU

SITS WITH HER PLASTIC PARAMOUR INSIDE NEW YORK'S HÔTEL PLAZA ATHÉNÉE. SHE IS NUDE & SHE IS HOLDING A CIGARETTE LIKE A POSTCOITAL PROP.

A PHOTOGRAPHER IS SNAPPING SHOTS A FEW FEET AWAY, BUT ALINA IS A PRO. IT'S AS IF THE CAMERA DOES NOT EXIST. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LENS IS BRETT RATNER, THE PHOTOGRAPHER, LIVING OUT A FANTASY. YOU MIGHT SAY THEY BOTH ARE.

"IT'S LIKE SEEING INSIDE A SEXY,

Hollywood director
BRETT RATNER
shoots his



PHOTOGRAPH BY
PATRICK
DEMARCHELIER

ELEGANT WORLD YOU WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED INTO," SAYS RATNER, WHOSE DAY JOB IS A-LIST HOLLYWOOD FILM DIRECTOR. "A PLACE THAT'S UNATTAINABLE." THAT'S IRONIC, GIVEN THAT ALINA IS HIS STUNNING 27-YEAR-OLD MODEL GIRLFRIEND. AND THE MANNEQUIN? RATNER SAYS THE IDEA

Victoria's Secret
model girlfriend,
ALINA PUSCAU







“IT’S THAT FANTASY OF CREATING YOUR OWN DREAM GIRL.”

came from movies such as 1985’s *Weird Science*. “It’s that fantasy of creating your own dream girl,” he says. “Who doesn’t imagine their perfect girl? It’s very cinematic.” After the shoot he showed Polaroids to friends, who asked about the identity of the second girl. “I’ll get you her number and hook you up,” Ratner promised.

If the cool sensuality and powerful feminine mystique of these photographs seem both familiar and timeless, there’s good reason: Ratner was emulating the ultimate provocateur. “This shoot is an homage to Helmut Newton,” says Ratner, “who was a close personal friend.” The German photographer died five years ago at the age of 83 after a car crash outside Hollywood’s Chateau Marmont. Newton was known for his imperious women who wore stilettos and little else. He shot numerous *PLAYBOY* pictorials over nearly 30 years.

As for Ratner, he’s best known for directing such action movies as *X-Men: The Last Stand* and the *Rush Hour* series and music videos for Jay-Z and Mariah Carey. (He has also signed on to direct the Hugh Hefner biopic with Universal Pictures.) Ratner has been photographing models professionally for years. He has shot Heidi Klum and Jessica Simpson, among others.

Alina is a Victoria’s Secret model and has also posed for Ralph Lauren and Gap ads, as well as in fashion shoots for *Vogue* and *Elle* magazines. Last year she recorded her

first single, “When You Leave (Numa Numa),” which has performed well on the charts. Not surprisingly, Ratner shot the video. The director and the model first crossed paths five years ago at a party. “When I met him, I asked, ‘Who is this guy anyway?’” says Alina, whose sultry Eastern European accent (she’s from Bucharest) and dark looks beg for a role as a Bond girl. “But we had an immediate chemistry and connection.”

“Alina is a natural beauty and reminds me of a Helmut model. She has total confidence in her own skin,” Ratner says. “And yet she’s also a bit of the girl next door. The best shots tell a story and evoke some kind of emotion or feeling. Helmut was great at manipulating his models, micromanaging to evoke an exact emotion.”

“Brett drives everyone on the set crazy,” says Alina, laughing. “He’s a total perfectionist.” Indeed, this shoot lasted from eight A.M. until midnight.

Newton almost shot Alina once, but at the time she wouldn’t take off her clothes, so she was sent home. Similarly, Ratner missed several previous opportunities to shoot for *PLAYBOY*. This entire affair has the whiff of kismet.

“I had dinner with Helmut the night before he died, and I took the last picture of him alive,” says Ratner. “I almost feel as if Helmut passed along a gift to me. This shoot was meant to be.”

—Jason Harper







“ALINA IS A
NATURAL BEAUTY
AND REMINDS ME
OF A HELMUT
NEWTON MODEL.”



EDGE OF THE ABYSS

(continued from page 42)

trucks on the other bank. Agents call it the “Mexican water park.” A few feet behind this bucolic scene a beat-up white car idles, three men in it seeming to watch the bathers.

A USBP truck is between us and Border Monument No. 1. This historical site is where Francisco Madero made his first revolutionary stand, forming a new government and crossing into the U.S. The agents watch us get out and frolic like tourists. There used to be adobe huts where the monument now stands, but there is nothing now, not even lizards. Red dirt, alarming cliffs spiking into a flat 104-degree sky. We sit on the monument, and the agents wave and drive away. They round the bend and are immediately gone from sight. It doesn't seem scary at all.

Then the white car from the riverbank creeps up almost silently. Byrd sees them first, the three men eyeballing us, and says, “Walk back to the car. Just walk.” The men ease their vehicle into a stand of salt cedars and slowly rise, standing in their open car doors, scowling and starting forward. “I don't want to be paranoid,” says Byrd, “but we need to get out of here.”

What kind of city can dance a hundred yards from Armageddon? It's a city that loves Pancho Villa's trigger finger. The finger is mounted on a board in the window of Dave's Pawn Shop in the heart of downtown El Paso, and it's for sale for \$9,500. Back in the 1990s you could have had it for \$350. Consider the missed opportunity. Someone allegedly hacked it off after Villa was murdered in Chihuahua. It might have snuck in through one of the hundreds of smuggling tunnels said to honeycomb the city's substrata. The finger is black and twisted—it looks like an old Slim Jim with a fingernail stuck on the end. It's pointing north.

Just around the corner, dating from the days when El Paso was known as the gunfight capital of the world, sits the Elite Confectionery Company. It's a former cowboy ice-cream parlor where Villa ate vanilla sundaes and is rumored to lurk in spirit, possibly looking for his finger. Who am I kidding? Everything in El Paso is haunted—every high school, every municipal building, even the sullied Rio Grande. There's a local radio show in the Art Bell mold, where you'll find out about those tunnels, that Bigfoot (the Desert Ape!) hangs in the blasted hills, that pterodactyls freak out miners in the Mexican mountains visible from any part of the city and that most Toys R Us stores in town have naughty spirits. There is also lost Spanish gold in the hills above the city.

Not only did Villa and Madero strut around El Paso, but spies, other Mexican revolutionaries, Chinese illegal immigrants, psychopathic gunmen and indigenous saints also swarmed the

streets. Even outlaws like John Dillinger and Cormac McCarthy brought the dark mojo. That was in the old days. Compared with the fear just a hundred yards across the Rio Grande (known on its southern banks as Rio Bravo), El Paso is now border heaven.

“The potential consequences [of Mexico becoming a failed state] for the United States are very serious, much more serious than anything likely to happen in Afghanistan or Iraq. The violence has already started to spill over the border, and it is only a matter of time before an American police officer or Border Patrol agent or judge is beheaded. The even greater danger is massive refugee flows, inundating the Southwest with unprecedented numbers of Mexicans fleeing violence, few of whom would likely return, regardless of changed conditions at home.”—NATIONAL REVIEW

One dude at the Take II bar muttered, “Juárez? Damn.” That seems about right: In 2008 the city saw 1,650 murders out of roughly 1.5 million citizens. Last year El Paso—with a population of 750,000—had 18 murders. This year Juárez is breaking all records: 248 murders in the month of July alone; 326 in August. There are so many appalling deaths—the newspaper lists such box scores as beheadings, mutilations and double-tap back-of-the-head executions—that the city is becoming a ghost town. Every month more people find it wise to stay inside and keep the lights off.

In contrast, El Paso relaxes. Fueled by funk and ferocious civic loyalty, poor yet unbowed, it is relentlessly upbeat. El Paso knows it's funny, but it refuses to be mocked. In Dave's Pawn—among World War II Nazi memorabilia, a shrunken human head and a mummified *chupacabra* corpse—is a mural painted by local maestro Luis Villegas: *Venus on the Half-Taco*. El Paso knows itself and likes what it knows. It's the redheaded stepchild of the Republic of Texas. Situated in the farthest western corner of the state, it was originally intended to be part of New Mexico. It is in an interesting geographical as well as cultural position. For example, El Paso is about the same distance from Los Angeles as it is from Houston. It's the same distance from Mexico City as it is from New Orleans.

From Dave's Pawn you can hop on I-10 at Cotton, where the Flowers Baking Co. unleashes white-bread-scented effluent, and a giant three-dimensional loaf levitates magically over Border Patrol-haunted freight yards full of grunting locomotives. It's a short hop to Concordia Cemetery, also allegedly haunted by cavalry ghosts and giggling children dead from a smallpox epidemic. In Concordia you will find the grave of gunslinger John Wesley Hardin. Wes, as he's known in Texas, lies inside a recently built cage of black iron bars to keep grave robbers from hijacking his bones. Bobby Byrd stands in the massive heat and addresses

Hardin. “Well, John,” he says, grabbing the bars, “I guess you're in prison now.”

Byrd and his family seem central to the El Paso mystery. They are a white family that came to town in 1978, and they live in a Mexican barrio (what neighborhood in El Paso is not a Mexican barrio?) in a house where vinegaroons clank in the basement like noxious Jurassic tractors. Byrd's daughter is in local politics, and they are all fiercely loyal to the city they love.

The whole boneyard entourage adjourns to one of the most remarkable examples of North American signage you'll ever see. The sign acknowledges Concordia history—Butterfield stagecoaches passed through here, and the original Fort Bliss lay hereabouts. As an addendum, the bottom of the sign informs visitors that on AUGUST 6, 1993—LATEST NITELY MURDER HAPPENED HERE WITH THESE ROCKS. A helpful arrow points to the murder weapons, still there in the sun, with lizards scurrying around them. Maybe El Paso has only recently become blissed out. The rocks still look splotchy; that can't be blood on there, can it? Nobody touches them. One of the Byrds says, “I don't think they'd be good in your garden.”

“Rosario Reta was 13 when he was recruited by the Zetas, the infamous assassins of the Gulf cartel, law enforcement officials say. He was one of a group of American teenagers from the impoverished streets of Laredo who was lured into the drug wars across the Rio Grande in Mexico with promises of high pay, fancy cars and sexy women. After a short apprenticeship, the young men lived in an expensive house in Texas, available to kill whenever called on. The Gulf cartel was engaged in a turf war with the Sinaloa cartel over the Interstate 35 corridor, the north-south highway that connects Laredo to Dallas and beyond, and is, according to law enforcement officials, one of the most important arteries for drug smuggling in the Americas. The young men all paid a heavy price. Jesus Gonzalez III was beaten and knifed to death in a Mexican jail at 23. Mr. Reta, now 19, and his boyhood friend, Gabriel Cardona, 22, are serving what amounts to life sentences in prisons in the U.S.”—THE NEW YORK TIMES

If you want to understand the El Paso Peace, you have to understand El Paso itself. The city welcomes outsiders while keeping a close watch on their receptivity and demeanor. El Pasoans have immense pride in the fact that they can walk any street in the city at night in relative safety. (Though overall burglaries are up 12 percent this year, boosters will point out that these are crimes against property, not persons.) You do have to pass a few tests. City council members like Byrd's daughter, Susannah Mississippi Byrd, will tell you that you have to love Chico's Tacos or you will be escorted out of town. That's a start.

Deadheads and hippies boast there is lithium in the water. This bit of urban legendry has historical roots. In 1971



"Do you mind...it helps me open up."

Time magazine revealed a study that found higher levels of natural lithium in El Pasoans' urine, which a scientist attributed to the city's deep water wells. No convulsions in El Paso, and a general chill prevails. But there is clearly more to the city than municipal bongwater. If there is lithium in Juárez's water, for example, it's not working.

When you leave the small and tidy El Paso airport, you will find the largest bronze equestrian statue in the world, a rampantly heroic colossus of the Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate. He and his steed are the discoverers of El Paso del Norte (the pass of the north, where the river makes its way through brutal mountains). Entering the record as the discoverer of a place is easy if you write the record yourself and happen to kill many of the people who already live there. (The tribes of El Paso were the Mansos, the Tiguas, the Apaches and the Comanches; now there are more blacks than Native Americans, more whites than blacks and more Mexicans than anybody else.) The statue of Oñate was supposed to be downtown, not far from Pancho Villa's ice cream emporium. But some El Pasoans raised such a stink about Oñate's genocidal proclivities, it was deported to a traffic island by the airport.

Music is big in El Paso. The local Spanish-language radio stations may give the impression the border is doing a brisker trade in accordions and tubas than in cocaine. These stations will teach you that El Paso exists in a paradigm-busting evolutionary zone where multilingual aplomb is the rule. In one car commercial the entire history of assimilation is represented linguistically, from Spanish to Spanglish to English, in 15 seconds: "Tu carro! Tu troka! Your SUV!" It isn't just words; we witness the piquant melding of concepts: A popular singer on the radio promises to sneak his dick under your miniskirt like a surfacing submarine, then pleads that you not hate him for liking Coldplay. Then you hear five men were found in an SUV on the outskirts of Juárez. One had been decapitated, and the assassins mounted his head on the vehicle like a bloody hood ornament.

Radio towers blink atop the imposing Franklin Mountains, which divide the city. (They're home to the rumored gold mines and a ghost monk who perambulates around with a phantasmal donkey.) The Franklins are bony and severe, and the police academy is up there just off the city's lovers' lane, where locals listen to cops shooting rounds into the cliffs and prom dates gaze upon the sparkling diamonds of late-night Juárez and ponder the slaughter. The Franklins preside over three main sectors of the city: West Side, Central and East Side. The locals' sentimental favorite has to be the historic Central district. After all, that's where Villa's ghost hangs out. That's where you'll find Segundo Barrio—birthplace of the Mexican Revolution—and the famous Tap Bar, where they serve baked potatoes with their Mexican dinners.

"Central, that's El Paso," Bobby Byrd says. "The West Side, the East Side, those

are just America," meaning that shopping malls and middle-class housing can be found there. The West Side and the East Side are not *rascuache*. Not, you know, funky, *rascuache* being, in true El Paso style, a kind of insult aimed at the lower classes that has become a term of pride and authenticity. Woe to anyone or anything that seems pretentious or arriviste.

Start by learning some of the language. And I don't necessarily mean English. Talk border, *ese*. Mexican slang dictates that words with *s* sounds in them reduce to words with *ch* sounds. So El Paso becomes *Pacho*, which becomes *Pachuco*, which becomes *Chuco*, which is as *rascuache* and funky as you can get—imagine a city in a zoot suit. *Chuco* is what you need to say, and if you wear one of the popular I HEART EL CHUCO shirts, you're in. And the people aren't really called El Pasoans—they're *paseños*.

"On March 25, CNN's Anderson Cooper 360° rolled into El Paso to report on Mexican drug-cartel violence. Cooper was one more in a recent wave of national news heavy hitters to parachute in, scare the pants off millions of viewers, then jet off to the next headline destination. Dressed

Nobody pays attention when Jose Israel Solis Aldama is decapitated in Juárez, but they really sit up when a man is assassinated next door to the police chief's house in El Paso.

in military green, Cooper furrowed his brow and squinted solemnly into the camera as the lights of the international border checkpoint glimmered behind him. Guest Fred Burton, identified as a terrorism and security expert with Stratfor Global Intelligence, was beamed in from a studio in Austin to paint a menacing picture of Mexican cartels invading U.S. city streets. 'It's just a matter of time before it really spills over into the United States unless we shore up the border as best we can,' Burton warned."—THE TEXAS OBSERVER

The haunted singer-songwriter and occasional movie actor Tom Russell lives outside El Paso, beyond the imposing mountain known as Cristo Rey, a mystical spot where three states (Texas, New Mexico, Chihuahua) meet. Cristo Rey, which upthrusts wildly from Border Monument No. 1, was once called Muleskinner Mountain because wagon trains from Mexico navigated by its peak. Today it features a great white Christ statue at the top that futilely calls Juárez to peace. Like everything in this river-bisected region, Russell has seemingly contradictory sides. Most people don't know that along with being a balladeer he is also a trained criminologist. "El Paso," he says. "The weird calm is probably because if it erupted in El Paso, we'd send in the

Army, and the narcos don't want to disrupt the flow of 2,000 guns a day going across the border."

Russell, like many *paseños*, is sick of the apocalypse. "Most Americans," he says, "have no clue about this thing in El Paso. Anderson Cooper came down here with CNN and stared through the fence like he was in Baghdad and in danger. Nobody is capable of seeing any kind of picture."

Interestingly, a supervisory agent of the Border Patrol agrees. American peace is the only way the Mexican crime wave can prosper. If they bring the madness here, they will be destroyed. (Still, Gloria Huerta Marmolejo vanished from her sweet East Side home and was discovered murdered days later in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, not far from the BP's dirt roads. Eerie tones of Juárez poisoning the land. Nobody pays attention when Jose Israel Solis Aldama is decapitated in Juárez—what, another?—but they really sit up and stare when a man is assassinated next door to the police chief's house in El Paso—at least eight bullets. The peace is not broken yet, but the cracks are groaning.)

"I would say, 'Go to Ardovino's Desert Crossing,'" Russell suggests. "Answers will appear."

"Quietly but systematically, the Bush administration is advancing the plan to build a huge NAFTA Superhighway, four football fields wide, through the heart of the U.S. along Interstate 35, from the Mexican border at Laredo, Texas to the Canadian border north of Duluth, Minnesota. Once complete, the new road will allow containers from the Far East to enter the United States through the Mexican port of Lázaro Cárdenas, bypassing the Longshoreman's Union in the process. The Mexican trucks, without the involvement of the Teamsters Union, will drive on what will be the nation's most modern highway straight into the heart of America. The American public is largely asleep to this key piece of the coming North American Union that government planners in the new trilateral region of the United States, Canada and Mexico are about to drive into reality."—JEROME CORSI, HUMANEVENTS.COM

Ardovino's Desert Crossing sits on the Russell side of Cristo Rey. It is perhaps the perfect paradigm for the modern border. It is a fancy Italian restaurant with a nice bar, an excellent maître d' and staff, a tasteful outdoor garden and a stage for light jazz. The food is definitely not *rascuache*, nor is the service. (It offers a fine Chianti and excellent calamari, which would seem hard to come by in the desert.) The restaurant sits on a stony outcropping about one eighth of a mile from the Mexican border and maybe a quarter mile from the village of Anapra and the extremely violent Juárez suburb of Lomas de Poleo. Lomas is a paranoid's dream: It seems a terminal for the often rumored NAFTA Superhighway that midnight radio shows decay and the federal government denies is being built in the Lomas-Anapra region. And the landgrab by the terminal's developers is rumored to be behind the torture, murder and civic violence in those Mexican hills. (Thugs in pickups are said to have torn the small Catholic church apart.)

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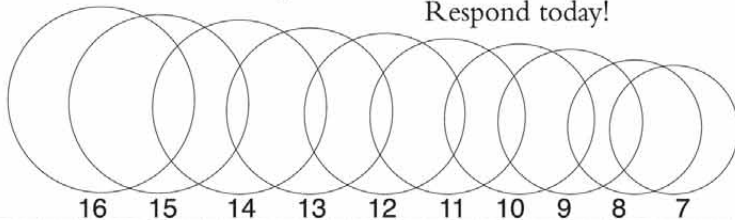
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Ardivino's is also a family compound. The Ardivino clan lives like pioneers out in the daunting desert in handsome Southwestern homes and shiny vintage silver Airstream trailers. Border Patrol agents skulk around the *ristorante* looking for illegals who are largely no longer there. Crossings are down in double digits along the entire border. As a sidelight, the nearby Santa Teresa station used to maintain a force of 30 agents. Since Homeland Security took over, the station has been flooded with 300 new recruits.

"We had 75 to 80 crossers a night," one agent points out. "But the numbers were dropping long before the recession hit. Now we are lucky if we get 75 a week. Or a month." In an unguarded moment he confesses, "The biggest threat to the Border Patrol now is boredom." And narcotics. As the number of crossers falls, the percentage of hardcase criminals rises and cross-border violence follows. That same week, an agent in San Diego is murdered and his pistol stolen. "All that being said," our agent notes, "for the first time in our history, the border is nearly secure. It's working."

In the pitch-dark of Ardivino's, a hot black wind is gusting. An alarmingly loud westbound freight train grinds around the back of Cristo Rey, above the parking lot. A single Border Patrol truck lights up the cars with a spotlight as they pass. When the train is gone, the agent drives onto the tracks and shines his light up shadowy arroyos. All you can see are his taillights and his white spotlight beam. He looks as though he's piloting a UFO in the dark. Then he sees something, parks, gets out and goes up the mountain. The only thing visible now is the small bead of light that is his flashlight. Hundreds of miles of black dread surround him. You can almost hear his big brass balls clanking.

"We have doubled the number of DHS agents collaborating on looking for and apprehending violent criminal aliens, and we have, as you know, ramped up southbound inspections to search for illegal weapons and cash, adding mobile X-ray machines, license plate readers, more Border Patrol agents and K-9 detection teams to that effort. For the first time we have begun inspecting all southbound rail shipments into Mexico. We've seized just in the past few months \$69 million in cash, 2.4 million pounds of drugs, more than 95,000 rounds of ammunition, more than 500 assault rifles and handguns—and that is an increase of over \$34 million in seizures, 400,000 kilos in drugs and more than 57,000 rounds of ammunition. In other words, it's not just that we're seizing, but we're seizing materially more than we did at this point last year."—DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY JANET NAPOLITANO

"People said the strangest things to me," says homegrown novelist Benjamin Alire Sáenz, who is also a professor at the University of Texas at El Paso. "They told me to lock my car because El Paso had the highest car theft rates in America. Then the local paper printed a study that said El Paso in fact had the *lowest* car theft rate in America." (El Paso actually had the 17th-highest

car theft rate in America in 2008.) It is a pattern of anti-immigrant propaganda, he suggests. With a family that has lived in the area for many decades, Sáenz says, "I am hardly an immigrant." In his elegant apartment decorated with paintings and sculptures, humming softly with jazz, he lights candles and says, "It is part of the discourse making the border a frightening place."

Jaime Esparza, the city's district attorney and a friend of Sáenz, says the peace in El Paso is due to cohesion. "We have cultural, familial and neighborhood cohesion," he says. "We share responsibility for our city and the culture of our city. In spite of what some media will tell you, Hispanic and immigrant neighborhoods show a decrease in violence and crime, not an increase."

Sáenz offers another thought. "How many gay bars are there in Santa Fe?" he asks. "Zero. How many gay bars are there in Albuquerque? Two. Do you know how many there are in El Paso? Ten!" Stanton Street, the gay part of town, is by several accounts about to explode in its civic impact. "Gay culture," Sáenz says, "is any city's creative class."

Time to go to Stanton Street. John Dillinger stayed at a hotel around the corner from the bars. The Briar Patch is mellow and inviting; the Tool Box, maybe not so much. Susie Byrd, you might recall, is on the city council and is the daughter of Bobby. Her best friend, Veronica Escobar, is a county commissioner. They blow into the Briar Patch for a birthday party. People play pool in the main room, and out in the patio area handsome young El Paso businessmen and students from Juárez sip beers with mixed couples. The young man whose birthday we toast says, "We're a tolerant city. That's the secret of El Paso. It's live and let live. The gay community is strong here—look, we're not going to have big gay pride parades, all right? You know why? This is El Paso! We don't have parades for anything."

"It's the lithium," notes Commissioner Escobar.

Susie Byrd announces, "Midnight. Time for Chico's!"

In Chico's Tacos it is evident that nothing flusters *paseños*. A dwarf in a jumpsuit goes from booth to booth, yelling, "High five!" to deadily tattooed *vatos* who slap hands. Nobody even looks. A single order is three tacos floating in sauce and buried in about six pounds of cheese. A double order is a clearly fatal dose of six. "The secret of Chico's," Susie Byrd says, "is I think that this might be government cheese!" Escobar adds, "It's that good welfare flavor." The black security guard stationed beside the jukebox has a name tag that says A BLACK.

Meanwhile, in Juárez the Fear continues. A nine-year-old boy is shot on his porch. Six gunmen enter Bull's billiards hall and shoot five men and one woman to death. Two men are shot to death in front of a disco on Avenida Abraham Lincoln.

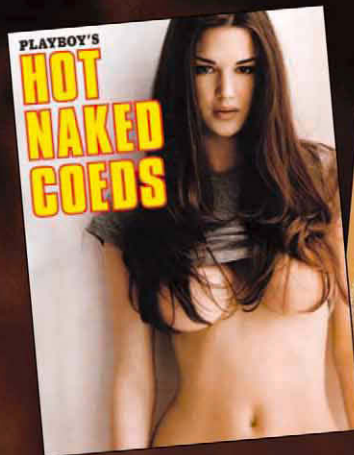
The Spanish-language paper reports museum attendance in Juárez is down by 90 percent and suggests this is due to more Mexicans going on summer



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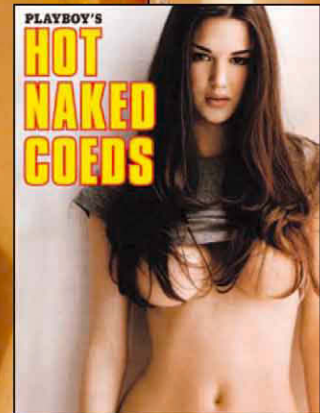
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vacation. The Mexicans have figured out the U.S. will allow museum-hating shooting victims to come into the country in screaming Mexican ambulances. They have delivered 23 shooting victims to the University Medical Center this year. Fifty of these visitors cost the county-owned hospital \$1.4 million in 2008.

Juárez wants you to think there is hope. The mayor of the city dreams of creating a safe area for American tourists—a closed-off green zone with direct border access so armed guards and walls can keep visitors alive and nobody will have to see actual Mexicans in the street. You could drive right in, shop and get the hell out. When he takes El Chuco politicians to the area, armed guards with machine guns check every doorway and every corner.

Radio La Chusma rocks hard. It is a polyglot collective that plays rock reggae Afrobeat cumbia music. The members are fiercely *paseño*. Led by dreadlocked prophet Ernie Tinajero, they preach border love and Chuco-Rasta uplift. Ernie, however, is not above interrupting his ecstasies to dedicate songs to “that lady with the big booty right there.” He dances his guitar around, high stepping like a wizardly sex tarantula. After the gig, Ernie exudes the peace of a ganja Sufi. “We could only happen in El Paso,” he says, “in the cultural richness of our border. The border is collaborative, full of creation. When two huge forces like our two nations meet, great energies are unleashed. Something beautiful erupts.”

It must be said that in spite of all this, El Paso is no New Age mecca. There are plenty of billiard halls where men wear derringers on their belts and locals say “You don’t want to go in there.” There is a baddest of the badass gang in town called the Barrio Azteca. The Barrio Aztecas are so bad that when one is transferred from court to, say, jail, snipers line the roofs and FBI agents stand on corners. The South Side has heroin, and the Devil’s Triangle in the northeast has crack. There are any number of excellent places in El Paso to get your ass stomped into the hardpan. Still, the city abounds in scenes like this: 100-degree heat. Freeway underpass. Anglo homeless guy with the obligatory cardboard sign. A pickup full of burly Mexicans speeds up and slams on its brakes. The driver hands the panhandler a burrito and drives away.

“As many as 75,000 people will move to El Paso in the next three years because of growth at Fort Bliss, military officers estimated Thursday. Counting soldiers, their relatives, civilian employees, military contractors and retirees, 125,000 to 150,000 people will be added to the region through an expansion that started in 2005, said Colonel John Rossi, the post’s chief of staff. About half of them have arrived, and they are already figured in El Paso County’s estimated population of 742,000. Most of the newcomers will not be bilingual.”—EL PASO TIMES

On our last drive through the city, Susie Byrd knows every street, every

building of every neighborhood. She knows which hotels rent rooms by the hour, which nudie bars are servicing men with blow-job-augmented lap dances in the back rooms, which neighborhood has what school, park, diner or community program. Stats fly off the top of her head like bats in strong wind.

We drive late at night into the Devil’s Triangle, the hood that scares people because of its crack and hookers. The streets are bracketed by apartment buildings with enclosed courtyards, shadowy crime gardens. But it’s also here that the city maintains a midnight basketball league in the brightly lit Nolan Richardson Recreation Center. Kids from the barrio play b-ball till midnight. Moms of every color gather in the bleachers to shout for their boys. “C’mon, Blue! Hustle! Show ‘em what you got!” Outside, bad boys smoke. As you pass, they mumble, “Good night.”

Susie says the great worry in El Paso now is not the narcos or the alleged immigrant influx or even the drug culture. What the city is worrying about right now is Fort Bliss. The great military base on the Northeast Side has brought in much money, created housing developments and accelerated the multicultural aspects of the city. Asians and African Americans are found in greater numbers near the base. All this is good. Even the nightclubs and titty bars aren’t too bad. The traffic, the fights, the drunk driving, the motorcycle crashes are problems.

But what worries the *paseños* most are the 33,000 new troops scheduled to come in soon. Thirty-three thousand outsiders, strangers who don’t get the Chuco vibe at all, who will bring in big-city violence

and Iraq war anger and strange new military gangs and unwelcome *otherness*. That’s what scares El Paso.

Music Under the Stars. It has been brutally hot, and *paseños* hustle in the dark into Chamizal. Lots of cold beer is flowing. Nice desert breezes carry echoes of music into the darkness of Juárez. The funky Border Roots play tight reggae grooves over the blissed-out thousands at their feet. Little bats zoom in and out of the spotlights like nervous comets. Maybe it’s the reggae. Across the river the homeboys have bent to their work, sawing away with big butcher knives.

Cops sit at side streets with their lights throbbing—it’s a free light show in sync with the Roots jam. Bodies crowd in everywhere. A high school girl stretches back across the belly of her girlfriend; the girlfriend grabs her breasts. She slaps the hands away and their gay boyfriend laughs. Dancers. The Byrd family. Barrio Aztecas. Off-duty Border Patrol guys in giant shorts and flip-flops. Narcos taking a break from exterminating the population of Juárez. High school kids. Grandmothers in lawn chairs.

The towering singer of Border Roots looks out at the crowd.

Someone says, “That’s the tallest Mexican on earth.”

He gazes at us. He raises his arms. He might levitate.

He shouts, “Border love! All is peace!”

For a moment, those of us on this side of the river believe him.



“No, seriously...Indians!”

THE WOMAN

(continued from page 90)

30 seconds of the rest period tick off.

"Start G-spot tapping," Komisaruk says.

This time 24 seconds go by.

"Orgasm!"

Then things start happening fast. Traci starts again, and Wise calls off the countdown. Almost instantly Wise calls out, "Up!"

Traci's hand stays up until Komisaruk calls rest.

"She came for the whole 30 seconds,"

Wise says.

"So much for the impossibility of vaginal orgasm," Komisaruk says.

Four seconds after the next stimulation period starts, Traci's hand goes up again.

"She's coming."

It stays up until rest.

An incredulous expression crosses Komisaruk's face. "So she stops having an orgasm every time I tell her to rest?"

"I guess so," Wise says. "She's on cue."

"This is incredible. We're going to have great data!"

If you were to glance at Traci on the street, you'd never suspect how easily her brain lights up. Thirty years old, she's pretty in a quiet way that suggests libraries and camping trips. She has long straight hair and is wearing wire-rimmed glasses and a colorful Indian dress with hand embroidery. She works in children's media. She has a master's degree in cognitive studies, so she had her brain wired up for neuroscience once before, but it still took a couple of weeks for her to make up her mind to volunteer for this study. She felt shy, she

says. She was afraid it would be embarrassing. But she knew she had something unusual to offer, and she can pinpoint the exact moment she discovered it: July 19, 2004. That was the night the frustration of her deteriorating marriage boiled over into a midnight confession on her password-protected blog: "I am hornier than I ever thought possible. I think if someone touched my arm right now, I would come."

An hour later a male friend responded. "Well, I have an AdultCheck ID if you want some of the most mediocre non-free porn on the web."

"That's tempting," she responded, "but right now I just really crave real human beings and human contact."

For the next few minutes, as her friend began to describe some of the forms that human contact might take, she felt the urge to touch herself. But she was still married and cybersex would feel too much like cheating. Then she announced a startling development. "Holy fuck! I don't even have to touch myself. I am honestly coming just from reading your words."

That was at 2:11 A.M. Her friend offered some more encouragement, and two minutes later Traci responded again:

"OH. MY. GOD."

Ten minutes later her friend asked how many times she had come.

"The question is, 'How long have I been coming?' Like 20 minutes straight at least. Since the 2:11 time stamp above."

A minute later she added, "I'm still convulsing. I can't stop."

Shortly after that discovery, Traci's marriage fell apart for good and she began having orgasms in more standard ways, so she didn't explore her unusual ability much at the time—or even give it much thought. "I know I usually have

the stamina to keep going after I'm with somebody and they're finished. If I let myself keep thinking about it, I can—I guess they call them aftershocks—keep going like that for a while."

Komisaruk and Whipple published their first paper on the thinking orgasm in 1992. Although the existing literature suggested it was very rare—Alfred Kinsey found only two percent of women could do it—they easily found 10 volunteers and hooked them up to the biometric tools available at the time.

When he began using brain scans a decade later Komisaruk spent the first few years mapping the activity in the brain during physically stimulated orgasms. Then he realized sensory input from hand movement might compromise his data, and the idea bulb turned on. If a subject could climax without touching herself or even moving her hands, the orgasm itself could be completely isolated and the event could be examined in its purest form.

The next step will be "think G-spot," Komisaruk says, reminding Traci to keep her head still.

Wise begins the countdown: "Five, four, three, two, one..."

"Think G-spot stimulation," Komisaruk says.

Again things start happening so fast the researchers have a hard time keeping track. Traci is not moving at all, but her orgasms go off like a string of firecrackers, not stopping until the doctor says "rest."

That's the last boxcar. Now it's time for freestyle: a full-steam session of go-for-an-orgasm masturbation without any pauses or annoying interruptions. Usually they do this because it's so hard for the subjects to get a full orgasm during the boxcar sessions. In Traci's case, it's pure scientific curiosity.

"Which do you prefer, clitoral or vaginal?" asks Komisaruk.

"Uh, clitoral, I guess."

"If you like, Nan can bring you the G-spot stimulator."

"Okay, that would probably be good."

Wise gives the countdown. When Komisaruk says "Start clitoral stimulation," Traci's hand goes up—and stays up until the next rest period. Komisaruk marvels. "If her head is still, we may be able to make a movie—*Orgasm: The Movie*."

Up at three minutes, 52 seconds; down at three minutes, 30 seconds; up at two minutes, 54 seconds; down at two minutes, 30 seconds. This has gone from the land of the unusual to the empire of the stunningly unexpected.

"Oh man, this is great," Komisaruk gushes. "Traci, how are you doing? You're really terrific. Did your orgasms really stop when I told you to rest?"

"Yeah, pretty much."

"You're fantastic."

He pauses for a quick consult with his team, then gets on the microphone. "Traci,



"Miss Wilcox, are you familiar with the phrase 'sucking up to the boss'?"

you're so terrific, really, that we're wondering if.... Could you just do that again?"

No problem, she says.

The countdown begins. Five, four, three, two, one....

"Incredible," Komisaruk says as Traci's hand shoots up. "I've never seen a woman like this!"

And so it continues, over and over, punctuated by a few "wows" from the audience. "I feel we should buy her dinner afterward," Wise jokes.

"She's resting now."

"She should rest."

When Traci finally gets out of the MRI and comes into the observation room, Komisaruk says, "What a trouper! You went for extra innings! Let's hear it for Traci. We may make a movie of your brain activity," he says.

"Damn," she says.

"You have a very nice-looking brain."

Later, back at home, Traci gives her boyfriend a modest report: "They were very pleased with the data I gave them."

Two weeks later Komisaruk gathers his team in a small computer lab at Rutgers to begin analyzing Traci's data. A somber physicist named Wen-Ching Liu adjusts the computer until he sees orange spots festooned across her brain like Christmas

lights. Komisaruk leans in close.

"So what are we looking at?" Liu asks.

"We're looking at 'think finger tap,'" says Komisaruk.

"Is she thinking about her right hand or left hand?"

"We just told her to think finger tap."

There's activity in the supplementary motor area, Komisaruk says. That's interesting. But wait—there's also activity in the thalamus! They've seen this before, but they weren't sure if they could believe it. According to her brain scan, finger tap was occurring even though it was not. Neuroscientists have seen lots of evidence they call "centrifugal control of sensory input," which means the brain can instruct the body to respond to a stimulation that's not really there. For example, one study showed that schizophrenics who heard voices also showed brain response to those voices under MRI, meaning the auditory input was indistinguishable from a real voice. Maybe the old line about "seeing is believing" has it backward: For someone like Traci, maybe believing is seeing.

Excited, they move on to "think nipple."

"This is really weird," Komisaruk says.

Traci's thinking about stimulating her nipple, and the part of the brain that represents both her hand and her nip-

ple lights up. "She's just thinking about it." And here she is doing clit think; the orange lights glow in her brain's clitoral area and hand area. She must have been thinking of touching her clitoris with her hand. Same with think G-spot. "This is so strong," Liu says, surprised.

"She was having orgasms."

"Oh, no wonder. That explains it."

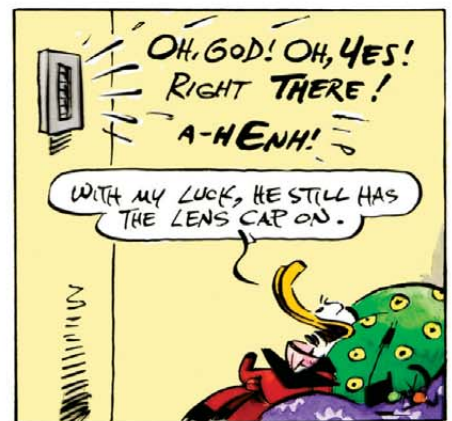
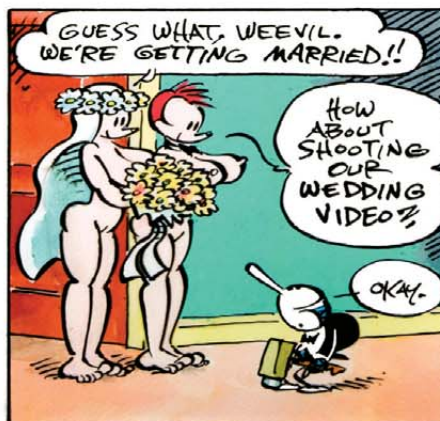
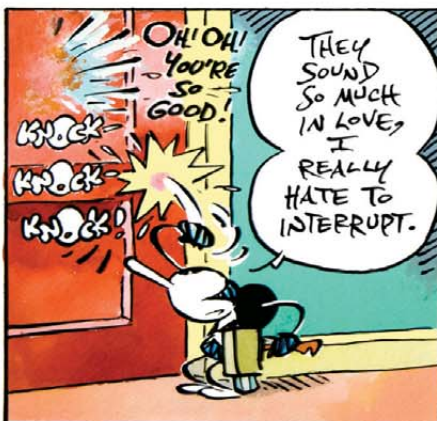
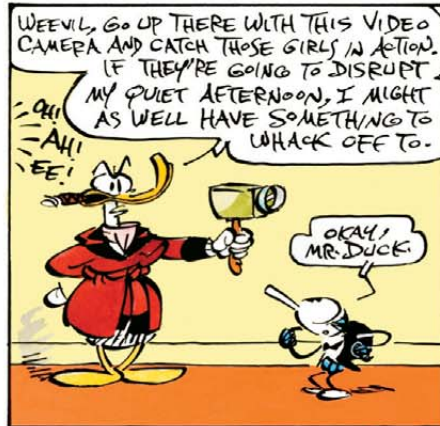
Traci's astonishing orgasmic abilities pose tantalizing questions about the connections between the mind and body. Like the spine-damaged women who helped Komisaruk map orgasm's pathway of nerves, Traci's brain may offer clues that will help scientists solve the greatest neuro-metaphysical mystery of all: "If we can see our brain activity directly, will that help us control it?" asks Komisaruk. "Will it give us a handle on controlling our feelings?"

Two weeks later a volunteer named Kathryn arrives at the lab. She's 30, with red hair and glasses, a software designer with a degree from Columbia University. She gets onto the MRI platform and slides under the magnet, and soon Komisaruk goes back to work. "Okay, Kathy, I want you to think of touching your left nipple."

The work of Team O continues.



Dirty Duck by Bobby London



BENICIO DEL TORO

(continued from page 38)

put right in there. As a kid that was our version of VHS. I later saw the whole *Wolf Man* on TV and watched *Dracula* with Bela Lugosi, who put the fear in me. I got panicky and remember going to the bathroom as it was on and just staying there awhile. But my movie was *Creature From the Black Lagoon*.

PLAYBOY: Why that one?

DEL TORO: It seemed as though *Wolf Man* and *Frankenstein* were taking place more in the north country, but the *Creature From the Black Lagoon* could have been happening in Puerto Rico because of the heat, the water, the tropical atmosphere. I have an original poster for *Creature From the Black Lagoon* in my house.

PLAYBOY: Did you simply dig these movies, or did they get to you at some other level?

DEL TORO: I liked Batman and Spider-Man and those guys, but monsters were bigger, and I enjoyed them more, the way I enjoyed dinosaurs. Now if I go to someone's house for a party and I don't know anyone, and they have a poster of *King Kong*, it makes me feel at home. It's an opener. I'm at ease. Even today, if I see a picture of Boris Karloff, it's like, "There's my uncle." I was always in love with those monsters. They're misunderstood. Why are people coming at them with torches? Why are they shooting

at them? The idea was to make *The Wolfman* as a throwback to the monster movies that were my first contact with film and to make it faithful to the original 1941 version about a decent man who is cursed.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of cursed, didn't you lose the original director on *The Wolfman* when you were about to begin filming?

DEL TORO: The movie did have a bump in the making of it. When we started it was going to be directed by Mark Romanek, who directed *One Hour Photo*. I was involved in his vision, which included making my character a more grayish guy—not the good guy he is in the original movie. In some ways we introduced elements of *The Curse of the Werewolf*, which starred Oliver Reed in the 1960s. Mark and I believed we would collaborate to the end, but when the new director, Joe Johnston, came on, he took it in another direction, making the character a good guy.

PLAYBOY: Did you move easily in that new direction?

DEL TORO: I may have been fighting it. At some point you have to say, "Well, this is what we've got. Let's make that better." It's probably fine to make my character a good guy who happens to have bad luck, as in the original film. The idea of being truthful to the original movie remained, setting it in 1800s England, not modernizing it with cell phones, staying true to the folklore, the

silver bullet, the makeup. There are some differences, but the essence of it is a true remake of the original.

PLAYBOY: Oscar-winning special effects makeup artist Rick Baker has said, referring to altering your normal features to those of a wolfman, "Where do you go from there? He's practically there as it is."

DEL TORO: It took around four hours putting it all on—the makeup and the body suit—when we started. He really knows what he's doing. He's incredible, and his team got better doing it over and over, so it got faster. But the bitch is not putting it on; the bitch is taking it off, because by then everybody is going home, and they're done, but you're not. Wearing that suit, you have to exaggerate every movement. It was a workout having that thing on for, like, 12 hours. It was hot. A couple of times we had to change my shirt five, six, seven times. Every time you want to talk you have to take off the teeth, but if you're wearing [prosthetic] hands, you can't do that without throwing up a sign for someone to come over and help you. To deal with all of it, you've got to be mentally prepared in a Zen way. It made me think of how tough it must have been back in the day for actors like Boris Karloff. I have so much respect for what he went through to play *The Mummy* and *Frankenstein* and what Lon Chaney had to do for *The Wolf Man* and, oh my God, what Lon Chaney Sr. did for *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

PLAYBOY: You're known for seriously researching and preparing for your roles. We've heard you even listen to specific music to capture a spirit and mood. What music helped you become a lycanthrope?

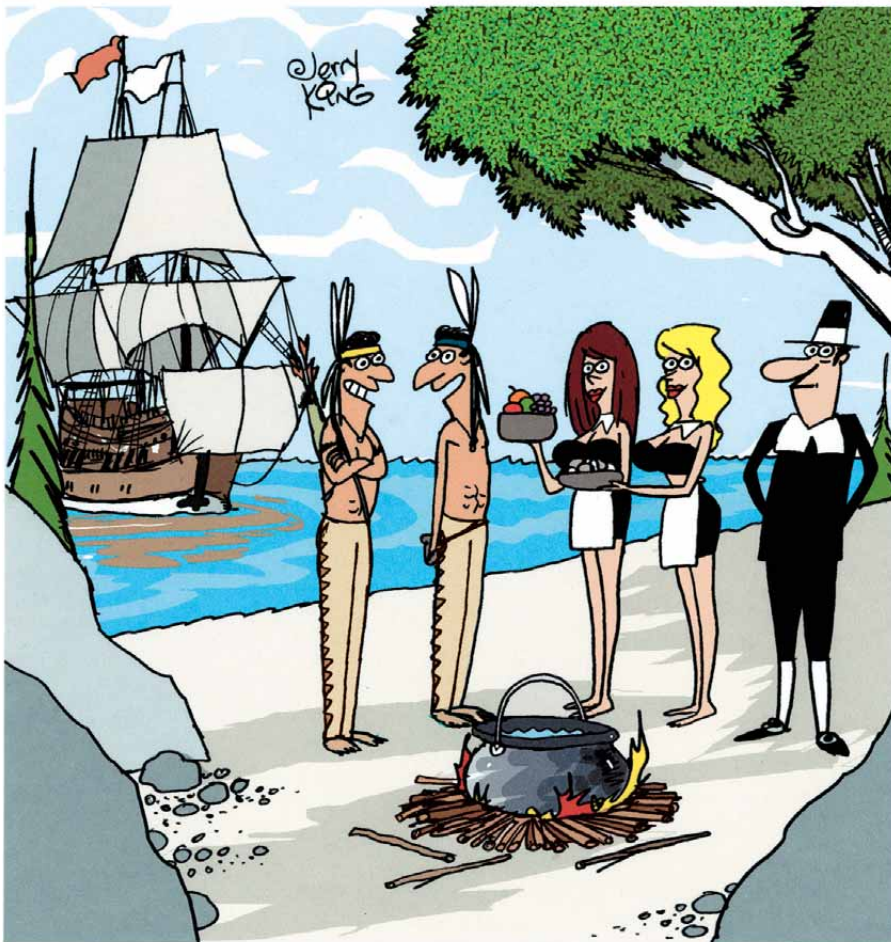
DEL TORO: I didn't make a playlist thinking, Oh, let me get some specific songs for *The Wolfman*. My experience making that movie and a lot of other movies gets marked by the CDs I buy at the time or that I buy earlier and finally get around to listening to. For sitting in the makeup chair a really long time we played Nick Cave's album *Dig, Lazarus, Dig!!!* all the time, and also Fleet Foxes. We filmed in England, so I thought it would be good to revisit the Who's *Quadrophenia*, and it was like listening to something brand-new, it's so great. I played a lot of Bon Iver's *For Emma, Forever Ago* too. That one's a great soundtrack for life, so intense and melancholic—not that I know what *that* means. [laughs]

PLAYBOY: Aside from being a big music fan, you've been known to haunt a DVD store or two to look for classic films from the 1950s and earlier. Other than CDs and DVDs, what else makes you whip out the credit card?

DEL TORO: I like photography and bought a digital camera, so I spent money on that. I recently got a new pair of running sneakers because I feel as though now I have to get up and actually do it. With DVDs I often want a movie that deals with the subject of a film I'm about to do. Other times I want it just for my collection. If you're a lawyer, you have to know cases; if you're making movies, you have to know movies. I like movies. It's my job, but it's also my passion.

PLAYBOY: You're obviously not one of those actors who have trouble getting behind a movie that's made in black and white.

DEL TORO: I remember watching *Citizen*



"They came bearing gifts. I'll take the blonde one."

Kane the first time, and I was, like, “Well, that’s okay, I guess.” It took me years to fully realize what a masterpiece it is. When I started watching silent movies, the music bugged me, but then I realized the music was part of the mood. You start learning. When I started listening to jazz, it all sounded the same. I never thought I would get to a point where I could tell the difference between a piece by Charles Mingus and one by Thelonious Monk. Little by little you develop that taste.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever experienced a piece of music, a movie, a book or a painting in which you’d like to live?

DEL TORO: That happens when I see photographs like Walker Evans’s of Mississippi in 1936, where I want to take that corner, make a left and keep walking. I don’t get that feeling as much with films, but then there’s *Midnight Cowboy*, *Papillon*—you want to just throw yourself in there. Even in your dreams you go there. I don’t know if there’s a name for it, but I call it the *ghost*—that ghost pulls you in and makes you want to travel through time to someplace else.

PLAYBOY: Do you hang art on your walls, or do you prefer them blank?

DEL TORO: I’ve been putting things up on my walls since I was a kid, including pictures of basketball players such as Dr. J and Bill Walton. Then it was music. If a poster came inside an album—boom!—it went up on my wall, like that great Milton Glaser artwork of Bob Dylan in *Bob Dylan’s Greatest Hits*. I still have that. Another poster I had up came in *The Concert for Bangladesh*; it was a photo shot from behind Dylan and George Harrison. As time goes by there can be so many things on a wall that you’re not even paying attention to them, so I like to keep things minimal too. Music, art, photography, they’re all part of movies to me.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean?

DEL TORO: When you make films, all the arts come crashing into it. And life comes into it, the things that happen to us every day. That’s why actors fall into painting, photography or something else in the arts. I’m still into painting, which I started a long time ago. If you begin learning about movies and their history, you realize movies include all the arts.

PLAYBOY: What do you do between movie projects?

DEL TORO: I’ve been talking to a friend about going to see the white shark. I tried surfing. It’s a tough sport, and if you don’t put in the time to learn it, you can’t pick it up. I’m always doing something. I like to read. I’m trying to write a story. Would I go and drive a fast car? It’s not at the top of my list, and maybe if I was in one of those races, I’d be puking by the third lap.

PLAYBOY: Some actors won’t seek psychological counseling because they worry it may mess with their work.

DEL TORO: I haven’t gone, at least not routinely. I respect it, but it has nothing to do with acting.

PLAYBOY: How do you keep your ego in check in the face of fame, praise, perks, women?

DEL TORO: I don’t believe what I read, I don’t believe what I hear, and I believe only half of what I see. [*laughs*] That’s Lou Reed, I think, with a little Marvin Gaye. It helps that when I started getting attention for my

acting, I was already in my 30s. I had gone through the actor’s ringer of auditioning, being told you’re too this, you’re not enough that, then getting known. I see all this attention as just some sort of mirage. You’re up now, down tomorrow. I’ve always looked at acting as a combination of work and building something. I don’t think what I do is any different from making a suit.

PLAYBOY: Tailors don’t do magazine interviews or get photographed by the paparazzi, and people don’t idolize, stalk or nominate them for Oscars.

DEL TORO: What I’m saying is I’m affected up to a point. Looking at movies as a job keeps it in check for me. When a movie comes out, people may say good or bad things, but I don’t dwell on that. But sometimes I feel as though I have to defend a film people are attacking.

PLAYBOY: *Che* was obviously a labor of love. You helped develop it for years. You co-produced and starred in it, and the filming was apparently so tough that director Steven Soderbergh said he’d wake up months later and think, “At least I’m not doing that today.” How did you feel when the movie didn’t connect with audiences the way you had hoped?

DEL TORO: It was not a success per se here in the States. It was successful in Spain, Japan and to an extent France. Some people will find it on video, and some people will never find it. The same thing happened with *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, a movie I liked very much. It found its own audience. I’m not getting bogged down by the fact that *Che* was difficult to make. Everybody involved gave it 100 percent. Yeah, you get, “Damn, I wish everybody could walk out of the theater floating,” but the work is the work.

PLAYBOY: How enthused are you about co-starring with Daniel Day-Lewis in Martin Scorsese’s movie version of *Silence*, Shusaku Endo’s novel about two Jesuit priests facing violent resistance when they try to bring Christianity to 17th century Japan?

DEL TORO: Working with Scorsese will be like going to film school. I’ve met with him about it, and it’ll be great.

PLAYBOY: How satisfied are you right now with your career?

DEL TORO: I’m satisfied to an extent and unsatisfied in other ways. Actors as a rule don’t have much control, and I’ve gotten to a place where I have a little more control and can be more than just an actor. I want to do more—produce more and, down the line, direct.

PLAYBOY: You came close to directing the movie version of *The Rum Diary* by Hunter S. Thompson, but Johnny Depp is starring in the movie version directed by Bruce Robinson.

DEL TORO: I don’t think I’m ready to direct right this minute, but I definitely want to try it. That could be a long-term goal. Things don’t always happen in the order you want them to, but if you don’t set goals, they sometimes don’t happen.

PLAYBOY: What’s the nicest thing people can say about you?

DEL TORO: He surprised me.



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THE HILLIKER CURSE

(continued from page 66)

I swooned a little. In that moment, I *knew*.

I pointed to heaven and back down to earth. I said she's there and I'm here. I said other women had been known to intercede and fuck with my head.

The woman laughed. A few chuckles drifted out. I ended the gig with an elegiac Dylan Thomas quote. The folks clapped and lined up to get their books signed.

The woman stood behind them and moved toward me in small steps. She eclipsed the prophecy. Her features became *hers* alone. I thanked her for her question and asked her her name.

She said Joan and stated her surname. My legs shook. I asked her if she'd like to have a drink tonight. She said, "Assuredly, yes."

XXXXX

Sacramento was the first Joan Zone. It was three hours northeast of Carmel and always swamp hot. I got to the lobby bar early. People booze-effused and walked through with cocktails. They were dog-dent crashers. I was tensed up to fight or run. First-date portent: I must contain Joan within a public place.

She showed on time. She'd changed clothes: summer dress to skirt-boots ensemble. Her arms were bare. She had a tattoo on her right bicep. First-date apostasy: I fucking *dug* it.

We arranged chairs beside a table. It was semiprivate. I guzzled coffee as Joan sipped scotch. She left lipstick prints on her tumbler. It should have instilled a preacher's-kid fury. It didn't. First-date apostasy #2.

She'd read my books and knew some of my story. I supplanted it and laid in a first-date rationale. My wife and I were headed for Splitsville. Divorce was a *fait accompli*. Helen and I had our deal in the meantime.

I was disingenuous, verging on mendacious. My relationship with Helen was tortuous and open-ended. My life was a daily process of atonement. I could not conceive of a life without Helen Knode. I started double-dealing Joan at the outset. I wanted Helen for companionship and the long shot of sex resurrected. I wanted Joan for her flaming expression of selfhood.

We talked. I got Joan a second scotch. She barely touched it. Not a juicehead—good.

Monologues followed. Joan went first. She was from New York City. Her bloodline was left-wing/Jewish. Mom and Dad were divorced. Dad was a college professor and Mom was a shrink. She was partially raised in a commune. She had a brother in San Francisco. She had two master's degrees. She was teaching at Cal Davis and was earning her doctorate.

She'd knocked around a lot. She'd pitched some left-wing woo-woo. She'd spent time in the radical women's movement and the punk-rock scene.

I asked her what punk rock meant—that shit had slid by me. Joan called it a rebuttal to Ronald Reagan. I said I disliked rock and roll and greatly admired Reagan.

It was a test. Joan more than passed it.

She smiled and said, "That's okay." She picked up my left hand and dropped it in her lap. She laced up our fingers and contained me.

My monologue followed. I mentioned the crack-up and fresh sobriety. Joan bluntly stated that open-union deals don't work—she'd been through it.

Her jaw was wide. Her mouth connoted harshness and determination. Her smile cut through a seething grievance. A wiseass aspect simmered. She knew when to deploy it. She inhabited moments intensely and performed and observed them in concurrence. She was the most stunning woman I had ever seen.

I moved my hand to her knee. I floated someplace. We exchanged phone numbers and addresses. We had some silent spells.

I thanked God for bringing Joan to me. I counted the runs in her black stockings.

XXXXX

The ride home was swervy. Parachute car: I zoomed south and whooshed north with equal force. I sent Joan flowers and a note en route.

Helen was out. Margaret growled and retreated to Helen's bedroom. I checked my office phone machine. Joan's name was on the display.

Her message began, "Hey, it's Joan." She continued and thanked me for the flowers. Her voice was softer than it was last night. I caught some Brooklyn in her vowels. She invited me to call her.

I played the message 30-odd times. I memorized every word and inflection. I don't know how long I cried. It was bright daylight when I started and full night when I stopped.

XXXXX

The Joan Zone, the Knode Abode, three hours between.

It began with phone calls and letters. The house was large and permitted privacy. I snagged the mail every day. My office was sealed off. I conducted the courtship sans disruption and overt lies.

It felt exhilarating and wrong. It was a second-to-second Joan-to-Helen parlay. I wanted to regain Helen's respect. I wanted to know who Joan was and what she portended. Joan was new and I was a seasoned opportunist. Opportunists ruthlessly cling to new imagery and people. Joan was wildly vivid. My loyalty tipped *toward* her. It made me queasy, despite the deal. I fawned around the dreamhouse in redress. Helen barely acknowledged my efforts. *I wasn't who I said I was*. I sensed that I could never regain my stature.

Opportunists move on. My task was to create credibility with Joan. Written words and phone calls were my *métier* once more.

Her letters were brief. They expressed her attraction to me and ridiculed the Knode-Ellroy contract. My letters described the forthcoming dissolution of the marriage. It was preposterous. I had spent a total of two hours in Joan's presence. I was having it both ways. I was mending fences I intended to jump. Two women got the Ellroy troika: seduce, apologize and explain.

It was a tough climb. Joan was a tough woman. I struggled for handholds as she

pried at my grip. It was exhilarating. Joan made me work. Written praise sent me summit-bound. Rebuke kicked me back to earth. I *lived* for her voice in the dark.

Helen and Margaret retired early. My nerves were *still* shot. Sleep came late, if at all. Panic attacks *still* zapped me daily. Joan and I talked most nights. Her implied rule was *I'll call when I call*. I was breathless with the forfeit of male control and mindful of it as a means of seduction. I doused the lights at nine P.M. Darkness held me. I heard crickets and the waves on Carmel beach. The phone rang when it rang—and almost always at 10:30.

She always said, "Hey, it's Joan." Her voice carried a husk and registered as mid-range contralto. I'd ask her if her hair was up or down and whether or not she was wearing her glasses. She'd say up or down and yes or no with a swoopy inflection. It always pulled tears out of me. I never told her this. I was grateful for every small kindness she showed me. My gratitude was there at the start. My gratitude remains in Joan's long-standing absence.

She was left-wing, I was right-wing. She was Jewish, I was gentle. She was an atheist, I was a believer. Her cultural influences bored me. Her punk-rock shit was jejune. Our conversations fractured and rebuilt around desire. We flabbergasted each other. She possessed a surpassing personal power. I told her this. Joan told me that my power leveled her. She hinted at a roundelay of role reversals. We always got there as we said good night. I always put the phone down, trembling.

XXXXX

I felt loyal to both women. I assessed Helen and Joan sans a decision-making process. I came to this: They were the only two women who had ever *astounded* me. They were big women suffused with big ideas. Helen and I had 13 years together. She still had the power to move me, jazz me, fuel me. I had squandered sex with her. It felt irretrievable. Joan was the prospect of sex as constant astonishment. Joan represented dialogue to spark enormous change. She had described moments of childhood horror that left me eviscerated. Her sporadic softness engendered my full-time softness. All my praying and brooding buttressed my love for both women. My addiction to woman imagery and the force of The Curse pushed me toward Joan.

XXXXX

Summer courtship, '04. The prelude extends.

Joan invited me to Sacto for Independence Day. It's a long weekend. Get a room at the Sheraton—it's near my place.

A film-director colleague lived close by. That provided my alibi. I drove up in an ever-present heat wave. I checked in at the hotel and walked to Joan's pad.

She wore a white blouse and jeans. Her hair was down and she wore her glasses. I smiled at that. Joan said "Down" and "Yes" and kissed my cheek. She put the flowers in a vase. I checked out her bookshelves. The only shit I recognized was three of my own novels. The other tomes: labor history, commie tracts, gender polemics.

Window units barely kept the heat out.

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Sweat seeped through my shirt. My pulse raced and produced more wetness. Joan served a roast chicken and salad dinner. I hardly touched it. Talk was difficult. I wanted to tell her everything I'd never revealed to a woman. Joan chatted up her teaching load and a barbecue tomorrow. Some friends were throwing a bash. I was invited.

All I had was expressions of love and alone-in-the-dark perceptions. They seemed precipitous and untimely. Declarations of chivalry bubbled up and almost choked out. Joan mentioned her atheism. My chivalry pitch cited God as a primary resource. I kept my mouth shut. I got tensed up to fight or run.

We sat down on the couch. Joan smiled. Some lipstick was stuck to her teeth. I wiped it off with my shirttail. Joan asked me what I was afraid of. I said, "You." I asked her what she was afraid of. She pointed to me.

We kissed. We fell into the meld and stayed there. Joan held my face. I kissed her gray streaks. Joan pushed the coffee table back to make room for my legs.

I started to lay out my declarations. Joan touched my lips and shushed me. My heart rate went haywire. Joan sensed something wrong and held me. My shirt was halfway off. Joan removed it. I unbuttoned her blouse. I saw her breasts and started sobbing.

She let it be for a while. She said things like "Hey, now." She saw that it wasn't about to stop. She eased me up, got me to the door and told me she'd see me tomorrow.

XXXXX

The barbecue was above Sacramento, near the UC campus. Joan had a VW stamped with pro-labor stickers. We crossed a drawbridge and hit a greenbelt. Joan said, "Last night was all right, you know." I touched her hand on the steering wheel. She curled a finger around my wrist.

The shindig was outdoors. The crowd was 30ish academics. Joan introduced me around. She kept a hand on my arm to indicate that we were a couple. It was stunningly decorous. She said James and left off the Ellroy. I felt weightless without my hot-shit surname. Joan caught it and touched me that much more.

Sunstroke heat and bad chow. Weightlessness and sleeplessness. The vertigo that Joan always inspired.

XXXXX

My hotel was near the statehouse. We watched a fireworks display from my room.

Joan sat on the window ledge. I sat on the bed. The show produced a sputtery soundtrack. Joan's silence was a roar. I started to tell a trademark story. Joan said, "I've read your books, you know."

The fireworks crescendoed and died. I smelled gunpowder through the AC vents. Joan walked to the door. I got up and followed her. She touched my cheek and told me not to worry.

XXXXX

She walked out the door and took my body with her. I checked my mouth for malignant bumps and my arms for seeping melanomas. I went from the bed to the bathroom

mirror all night. I conjured Joan's face. The process tore at my fear. Every Joan image invoked Helen. Every Helen image returned me to Joan.

Dawn came up. I forced myself to shave and shower. I bolted half a bagel and coffee. I was tensed up to fight or run. There was no one to fight—so I ran.

I drove to Joan's place and rang the bell. Joan opened up and saw me. She sat me down and let me find breath. I got light-headed words out. "I love you," "I'm scared" and "I've got to go home" are all I remember.

XXXXX

The dreamhouse was empty. Margaret was kenneled up. Helen was back in K.C. with her mother. I gobbled food out of the refrigerator and fell down on the couch. I woke up at midnight. I ran to my

phone machine. The number 0 glowed.

Four days went by. I called Helen in K.C. and reveled in her family minutiae. I worked on a TV pilot and played raging Beethoven. I wondered when I'd get my body back. I saw her face every few seconds. It wasn't a conjuring. She was omniscient.

The doorbell rang. Thursday, mid-afternoon, FedEx for sure.

Take note of what you are seeking, for it is—

She looked grave and sweet, all bollixed up some new way. She said "Hi" with her swoopy inflection.

I kissed her gray streaks. I said, "I'll never run away again."

14.

But I did.

But not far.

But not for long.



"Vincent always was a shy man."

I was the amnesiac. She was the black-clad woman with the answers.

Joan raided my image bank. It was a yippie prank. The Red Goddess decreed that all women should look like her and that I should seek only her revised portrait. She gave herself to me and eluded me. She gave me the knowledge that all women *were* her and that any runs away were just preludes to runs back.

Every partial resemblance dispersed into pixelated dots. No woman could ever be Her. No face could ever connote what She gave me and what She withheld. I stopped looking. There was Her and nobody else.

My nerves were *still* shot. Sleep remained problematic. I juiced my original cover lie to explain my weekends away. I relinquished myself to romantic fixation and built bridges at home. I was sober, I made money. Helen researched her new novel and made a bevy of friends. I wondered if she sought male action and decided *c'est la guerre*. I got smug. We had an agreement. Helen sensed my preoccupation as a return to form. He's back, he's less crazy, he's off per always in his head.

Joan. The power of name. Strong-willed lovers Sturm und Drang'd.

XXXXX

Our time apart was my monk's retreat, shot through with phone sex. Our time together was a passion play with an often dissonant chorus.

Joan took me *everywhere*. Sex was an unending surprise and an ever-replenishing joy. Talk was enlightenment and vexation. My theme was You Must Change Me and

I Must Protect You. It was highly specious and unassailably tender. It allowed me to hear shit that I didn't want to hear and stay in the fight.

Joan's atheism killed me. I eschewed Christian text and laid on a soupçon of deistic jive. I *listened*. My code was tolerance does not equal approval and should not be construed as censure. Joan's leftist-anarchist shit bugged me. I *listened*. I fucking *tried*. Joan loved me for it. I loved her for loving me. Every acknowledgement of my flowering heart gut-shot me with gratitude. We told each other sex stories. Joan chortled at my previous exploits. I portrayed them as buffoonish, to spare her pain and allay jealousy. We did not achieve parity here. Joan described good pre-Ellroy sex in wild-ass detail. It enraged me and moved me. The black-clad woman has the answers. She is your seditious sister. The easy answer is She is you and you are She. The Christian answer is judge not, lest ye be judged. The hard answer is acceptance means loss of control.

The Hilliker Curse, a vital bylaw: You must protect *all* the women you love.

Helen never questioned my time away and always welcomed me back. I left my body and my design for conquest and surrender three hours northeast. I returned to Helen in all her goodness and unique brilliance. I assumed the role of companion-husband sans bedroom access. I crashed—just a little. The roar of Joan subsided—just a *touch*.

I flew to a Mexican book fair. I told Joan I'd call en route. I didn't. I felt unequal to her weight. I felt soul-frail. I abdicated. I

vowed survival in apostasy's name.

Misalliance, folie à deux, obsession. I mistakenly defined us as all that.

"You look the same."

"So do you."

"It hasn't been that long."

"You haven't asked me for an explanation."

"I don't need one. It got to be too much for you. I would have done the same thing if you hadn't."

"You would have done it more gracefully."

"I'm not sure."

"I am. You were always more gracious than me."

"I was surprised that you didn't return my calls. The phone was always your guiltiest pleasure."

"I didn't want to be tempted. I was afraid I'd go crazy with it all over again."

"That might very well happen."

"I'll risk it."

"You say that now."

"I want to try again."

"Why?"

"There's no one but you."

15.

January '05 was a dreamscape. Coastal storms indoor-contained me. Joan called twice. I ignored her swoopy inflections and erased the messages. I brooded away hours. The Red Goddess appeared at least once per minute. She showed up, conjured *and* unbidden. Her image ban on other women remained in effect. I could think of no one else.

I was overdue to write a new novel. Film and TV work bored me. I got a bug up my ass to write *GIANT* fiction. I had plot points, characters and historical flow brain-prepped. Helen urged me to create a less rigorous style and shape it with greater emotion. The crack-up had deadened my soul. My soul was astir now. I had an armored-car heist, black-militant shit, the late-'60s zeitgeist. I had protagonists, connective tissue, history writ small. I had a title: *Blood's A Rover*. I did not have the guts of the novel. A rainy-night brood session provided it.

Joan.

The Red Goddess as the unifying force of four years of History.

Our clash of wills, our war of belief, that astonishing woman's immensity exploded and *contained*.

I waited for the phone to ring. I played the *Hammerklavier Adagio* in summons. I waited three weeks. She didn't call. She sent me a card instead.

It included birthday wishes and concluded with a poem. It ended with the word *prayer*.

She came that far. She honored our separateness that deeply. She assured my eternal love.

XXXXX

Rain pounded San Francisco. My call: drinks at the Tonga Room.

A tiki bar with a barge sunk in chlorinated water. Wall torches and carved god masks. The barge band played oldie covers. We imbibed the usual: scotch and coffee.

Joan was pensive. I was full of grand declaration. Joan's quiet gaze doused the volume.



"Damn! It's my father—Mr. Coitus Interruptus!"

I felt bombastic. I demanded the world in every moment. Joan looked exhausted. I saw what I had cost her so far.

The corny music was a godsend. Our talk floated in sync. We chitchatted and got to it. The All Souls Retreat meets the Workers' Collective. Commie cell minutes and Lutheran call-and-response.

My bullshit open marriage, her abrupt moods, our temperaments that no lover had ever withstood. My delusional expectations. Her debilitating brusqueness. Our incomprehensibly different worlds.

My controlling nature. Her controlling nature. Our amalgam of white-and-red flags aswirl.

Our big hurt. Our dear love.

We let it trail off. We watched fat tourists dance. Our eyes found each other. We both nodded yes.

XXXXX

Winter courtship, '05. The process *re-*extends. Chaste weekends in Sacramento. Sex postponed and reinvented. A chastened rapport and a precommitment plunge.

I stayed at a hotel near Joan's place. My cover lies became more convoluted. "My colleague" in Sacto—epic falsehood now. The re-courtship softened Joan. I started to think marriage, daughter, dog. I wanted to rebuild a dreamhouse in the Red Goddess's name and reconsecrate the sacrament of marriage. Joan was planning a move to San Francisco. I dream-built our love shack by the bay.

I told Helen that I'd met a woman. She winced and said, I know. She cried a little. I inquired about *her* action. She laughed and refused to tell.

I continued with TV and film work. I compiled notes for my novel. I never told Joan *This book is you*. I wanted to debombasticize. I wanted to reseal the union in a clarified state.

Joan always knew how to play me. It wasn't guile. She understood that her best weapon was the truth.

The word *divorce* ratched me. I wanted it both ways. I tend to err on the side of high cost and risk. I felt it coming here.

Spring into summer. Weekends in San Francisco and dinners with Joan's friends. Late lessons in etiquette and the merging of lives. Lessons rewarded with Joan's bright eyes and light touch.

We spent the Fourth of July in Frisco.

We had drinks at the Tonga Room and walked back to our hotel. The suite was red-walled and sconce-lit. Joan plugged in a CD player and performed a torrid dance. Her movements were stunning and shocking. Her black garments fell just out of my reach.

Lover, goddess, redeemer. Possessed eyes that went swoopy the instant the music stopped.

XXXXX

Dawn hit early. I cracked the drapes for some light. I circled the bed and watched Joan from different angles. I saw a dozen sides of her with every tuck and stretch.

So be it. Whatever it costs, whatever it takes.

We said good-bye a few hours later. Joan drove home to Sacto and I drove home to

rarely knew when I acted from drama or from a viable truth.

So women will love me. So I get what I want. There is no other truth.

I moved into a nearby apartment. Helen and I put the dreamhouse on the market and retained divorce lawyers. My lawyer found my largesse unnerving and financially unsound. I told her tough shit.

Joan moved to San Francisco. I helped her pack and unpack boxes and do the shitwork. The relocation felt right. Frisco became the new Joan Zone. Carmel was less than two hours south.

We orbited closer. I resisted an impulse to crowd Joan. I wanted to hover near Helen for a bit.

The divorce went forward. The house went unsold. Joan and I spent weekends

in her town and mine. I described her transit of History in my novel. The wish-named Joan to the real Joan to the fictive Red Goddess named Joan Rosen Klein. Joan said she felt honored. She took my hand and placed it over her heart.

Helen and I formed a friendship pact. It predicted a future partnership of great importance. Helen dismissed Joan as an older man's folly. She never questioned my loyalty. She critiqued my eagerness to live in puerile fixation. She cited a single source: *Jean Hilliker*.

I had to keep Helen safe. I had to make Joan safe. We started discussing the possibility of a child. We both wanted a daughter. Joan loved the name Ruth. It rolled off the tongue and was resoundingly Jewish.

I liked the name. It complemented Ellroy and sealed our Judeo-Christian pact. Joan nixed Ellroy and her own surname. She suggested Hilliker for our daughter.

It was like that. The Red Goddess went that deep. How could it go wrong?

XXXXX

The apartment came furnished. It reeked of transience. It vibed fuck pad and divorce stopgap. I settled in. I started to go breathless and squirrely.

I got a script deal and goosed the Ellroy-Knode bank account. I fretted about Helen. Our years together lodged as a sob. I lived for weekends with Joan. I sat in the dark and ached for weeknight phone calls. The dreamhouse sat on the market. The cash split and alimony contract meant

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Carmel. I told Helen then. We both cried. I fished for reassurance and got it. Yes, it was inevitable. Yes, it has to be. Yes, it's the right thing.

We cut our financial deal there in the kitchen. I was grandiosely generous. I told Helen I'd always take care of her. She said, I know you will.

We debriefed a 14-year marriage. Blame got spread bilaterally. The talk did not relieve me. I felt shallow and cruel.

Helen had tea. I cued up Joan images and felt my brain-screen lurch. I saw Jean Hilliker. I calculated her current age as 90. I recalled March of '58, the day I inflicted The Curse.

16.

Joan was scared. She told me why. She

big workloads forever. I creamed for the macho-maimed struggle. My nerves started shearing. My sleep vaporized. Those melanomas kept popping up on my arms. Brain-scrolls of Joan wiped the cancer cells out.

I gave a stage performance in L.A. Big room, packed house. I read a 20-minute monologue and nailed it heaven-bound. Big applause erupted. I blew Joan a kiss. All eyes were on me—except hers. I hobnobbed with the audience after the show. A tall woman approached me. She was strong-featured and wore crooked glasses. We talked. She came forward in laughter and nearly gasped in retreat. She was the woman from my 1980 rainy-night dream.

Joan hovered. I never got the woman's name. Joan and I walked to my car.

I willed the dream woman away. She recurred sporadically, in new dreams.

Joan and I had soft spells and harsh spells. An edgy momentum carried us. She ducked her head into me and said, "You." She laid on top of me during panic attacks and anchored me to the world. I told her I'd always take care of her. She told me I didn't have to say it so much.

We went to Japan for Joan's 40th birthday. Travel delighted her. Travel bored and angered me. I wanted to contain Joan within hotel rooms and hot-spring baths. I was immune to the beauty around us. We flew back to San Francisco, drained and tense. Jet lag sent my world spinning. I poured sweat and took jagged breaths.

Joan suggested a walk. We trekked through Bernal Park and petted dogs as they loped through. I got that sob out. I said If you let me protect you, you'd be protecting me. Then you wouldn't have to be so harsh and I wouldn't have to be so driven.

It was a ground-zero moment. Joan said nothing.

Fall '05. I live for the Red Goddess that much more.

We had our weekends and weekday phone calls. I had my time alone. Dark rooms held me and drove me insane.

I saw Joan dancing with strange men. She repeated the sensuous movements that

she'd devised for me. I saw her fucking her old lovers. I saw her surfing the Internet for donkey-dicked dudes. The loop endlessly repeated. It would not abate, it would not diminish, it would not cease.

Fight/run, fight/run, fight/run. No one to fight, no haven with Helen, just Joan to run to.

My phone pleas deadened her. My demands for softness sickened her. I saw that she had always found me intimidating and pathetic. Her love for me flourished somewhere in between.

We went forward.

We tried.

We knew no quit.

November brought rain. We discussed my potential move to Frisco. We had Thanksgiving dinner with a group of Joan's friends. It was a slow and gracious evening. The people delighted me. I was much older, much taller, not Jewish or left-wing. We celebrated our differences. Joan sat beside me and kept a hand on my knee.

Do it. She'll say yes or no.

I asked Joan to marry me the next morning. She said, "Yeah." We held each other until our arms ached.

XXXXX

Helen thought it was nuts. Ditto all my friends. The divorce finalized on April 20. We set our wedding date for May 13. Winter '06: Everyone thought he *craazy*.

It was sweet anomaly. I performed and tried to do the right thing.

I moved to Frisco at New Year's. I got a new transition pad near Joan's place. I drifted in and out of most moments. All my moments were screechy-nerved. A new troika raged: wed, impregnate, contain.

We marshaled a horrible will and pushed toward it. I saw Joan ratchet internally. I read her mind: misalliance, folie à deux, obsession. He's intimidating, he's pathetic. His only answer is *ME*.

My nerves and sleep imploded. The tape show spun. She's dancing, she's fucking black guys, she's seeking monster meat. I could not stop the tapes outside of Joan's presence. I wanted more, more, more and *MORE* of her.

Joan engaged a therapist to walk us through our shit. The woman liked her and loathed me. Wednesday afternoons under a microscope.

I got brusque and outright fucked-up with people. I eyeball-strafed street fools and dared them to *GO*. The tapes spun. I seized up around Joan and hovered wordless. My inner scream was *Love me and save me and let me love and save you*. I saw Joan veer toward the word *NO*.

She ran.

I don't think I ever could have. She always saw me at a sane lover's distance. She was black-clad and had the answer now.

We had a horrible blowup. It explicated all our divisions.

She made me leave her apartment. I came back and threw myself at her door. She found a soft voice. She told me to go home and rest.

I did it. She called me three days later and said we were done.

17.

Home again.

Cut your losses.

Ghost of a chance.

I looped back to L.A. Twenty-five years, two divorces, one crack-up. The shadow of Helen and Joan.

The dream woman lived there. I didn't know her name. I knew where she worked.

I pondered destinations in my post-Joan fugue state. The dream woman nudged me. I thought, *Why the fuck not?*

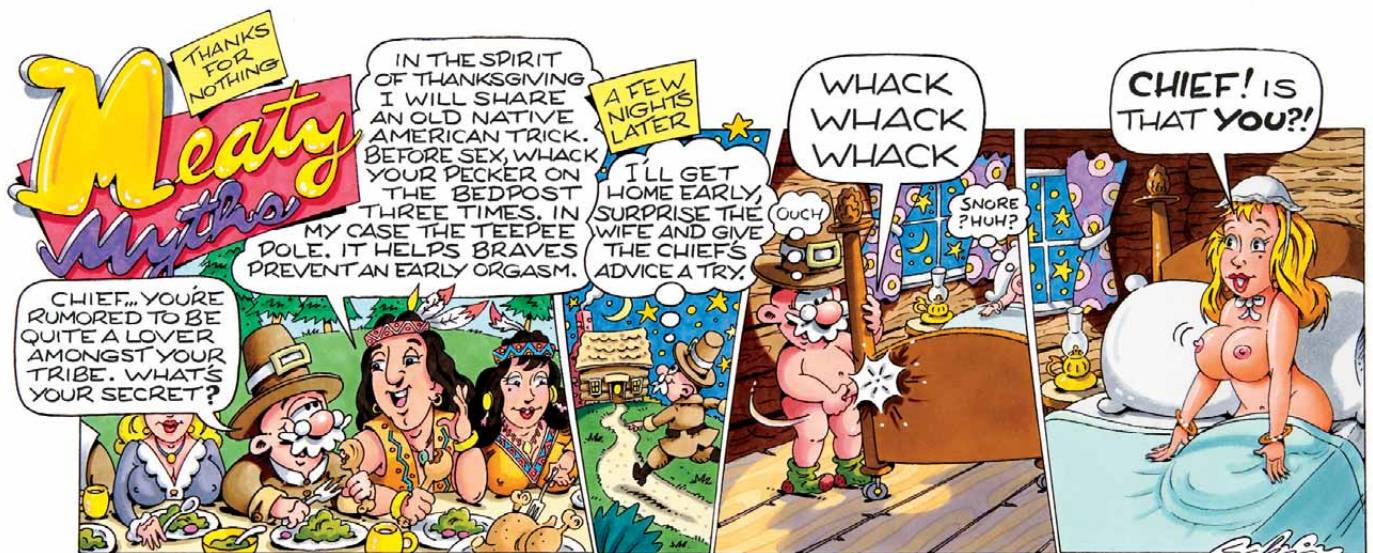
The dreamhouse sold. Helen and I split a bundle.

Home again.

I dumped transition pad #2 and bought a groovy Porsche. Joan and I had a final good-bye. We held each other and almost collapsed a kitchen chair. We vowed to stay in touch.

I told her she'd always be my fourth or fifth thought. I underestimated that part of the vow.

My shot nerves and sleep realigned through movement. I rented an apartment and had it decorated. The building



adjoined my old peeper turf. The girls' houses stood nearby.

The facades had changed. The faces and floor plans were still vivid.

L.A. was powder blue and bright-light translucent. I sensed opportunity. L.A. looked like it did the day Jean Hilliker died.

I called the dream woman's place of employment. I threw out a blithe offer to an arts czar. The film version of *The Black Dahlia* was nearing release. Would you like me to do a benefit gig?

And, by the way, I recently met a colleague of yours. She was tall and wore crooked glasses. She came forward in laughter and nearly gasped in retreat.

Oh, that was Karen. She's married and has a young family. She returned to academia.

A legally wedded professor. The double whammy from jump. A vision, a conundrum, a name.

What the fu—

I'll do the gig. I'm eager to help out. The film opens around Labor Day.

The name fit the woman. Her kids had to be girls.

XXXXX

The pad was a work space/dog den. I installed a phone and hung a portrait of Beethoven above the bed. I placed a picture of Helen on my desk and a picture of Joan on my nightstand. The place was deep-hued and dimly lit. I kept the lights off after dusk. Dark rooms bid calls from women. This is sacred text.

Helen and I talked frequently. I called her more than she called me. My solicitude engorged the phone lines. Joan and I talked intermittently. Her implied rule: *I'll call when I call.* I declined dinner invitations and waited in the dark.

Joan's calls played out in three acts. They ran chitchat, the relationship recalled, future career plans.

Softness started creeping in. It frightened me. My solitude felt safe. Joan felt like nothing but hurt. I started wanting her all over again. I fought a compensating war of containment. Limit Joan to phone calls. Extol Joan in the novel. Don't go crazy again. Deliver Joan to History and expunge your own history of reckless need.

The war raged. My old jealousies resurfaced. Three consecutive sleepless nights ditzed me. I wrote Joan a horrible note.

I overstated my religiousness and banished her forever. I said I was free-falling and had to save myself. I told her I would pray for her and see her in heaven.

The note worked. It terminated all future contact. The note failed. Joan remained my every second or third thought. The note worked. I stayed sane. The note failed. I still waited for her calls. The note worked. The Red Goddess gave me the throbbing heart of historical fiction. The note failed. Joan still lives inside me, undiminished.

XXXXX

The Black Dahlia was a critical turkey and a box-office lox. I didn't care—it sold boocoo books. I did that promised gig. I got to the venue early. Karen and I ran to each other.

We caught our breath and beamed. We recalled our first meeting. I told Karen that I schemed the gig to see her again. She laughed and mentioned the kiss I blew to the woman. *I pretended that you blew me the kiss. What happened to the woman? She was quite lovely.*

She dumped my mangy ass six months ago. How's your marriage?

Karen went *comme ci, comme ça*. I sniffed opportunity. The emcee called me to the lectern. Karen sat in the first row. I gave my speech and H-bombed the room. Karen locked eyes with me. I blew her the kiss I blew Joan last year. She placed her hand on her heart.

XXXXX

I didn't think she'd call me. I tagged it as a flirt-and-run. I was life-sentenced to the Joan Zone. Karen was married and had two little girls. I was repentance-wrapped with my ex-wife.

Karen buzzed me. The call required Valium and sour mash. She became my third great love.

We met at the Pacific Dining Car. Our lunch ran three hours. We discussed *everything*.

Her New York roots. Her Ivy League years. Her historian's focus and the exigent bullshit of the academy. Her marriage and family were inviolate. She strongly stressed that. I thought, Yeah, sure.

I left the Dining Car, reeling. Lunch #2 was scheduled for the next week. I wrote a song called "Karen Girl." The first line was "Some men were born hungry, some men were born dead—but I was born just to give you head." Karen *looooooovved* it. She was a shit-talker with a Yale Ph.D. We deconstructed history and ragged vile cultural trends. Karen had a Tory streak. Karen had insomnia and Ellrovian nerves. Karen was *streeeeetched thiiiiiiiiin*. She bombed between her teaching duties and full-time motherhood. She was a task-assigned, duty-driven fucker.

Her marriage and family were inviolate. I thought, Yeah, sure.

Lunch #3 followed a week later. We talked ourselves out fast and laced hands. The gist was let's become lovers. Karen stressed: I'm not leaving my husband. I thought, Yeah, sure.

XXXXX

Adultery.

Adultery with a woman you love.

Adultery: the moral *mishigas* and murky metaphysic.

The relationship was restricted to my pad. I understood that Karen's girls came first and drew that line in the sand. We went forward on *her* terms. Her commitments demanded it. Karen described her marriage as passionless from the get-go. She justified our union via that fact.

We talked, we made love, we became deep friends. Karen joined Joan in my evolving novel. The Red Goddess and her comrade Karen Sifakis. A Quaker pacifist, a mother, an adulteress. Divergent fictions tailored to Karen's real-life persona. Names claimed and reborn. My first portent that my life and work were veering toward matriarchy.



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I called Helen every night. I yearned for Joan nonstop. I brought Joan-yearning to Karen and Karen-lust overflow to Joan. My multiwoman dreamscape was joyful and unimpeded by hierarchy and monogamy. Karen and I shared a single nervous system. We were tall, thin and brain-broiled. We could not tamp down, sleep or halt our continuous assessment of meaning. We phone-talked every night. We met at my love crib twice a week. I mauled Karen with my marry-me mantra. Karen taught me about family.

I'd never had one. That killed Karen. She described her daughters' lives and her maternal duties. She ignored my autopsy of her marriage and spun stories of her girls. They became my long-sought children. It was an imaginative construction formed by pillow talk and phone talk. I mythologized two children I had never met. Karen and I riffed off their established personalities and gave them gleeful fantasy lives. They were the henchbabies of dope dealers and sold black-market nukes. They robbed pharmacies and peddled pills to their nursery-school chums. Karen and I laughed our fucking asses off.

We had fun. I left Karen raucous phone messages. Hey, baby—LAPD's surveilling your hubby. I've got my minions out to frame him for a crime he didn't commit. He's cruising gay bars. He's been to the Manhole, the Cockpit, the Rump Room and Boys R' Us. Karen loved this shit. Karen howled and roared. I kept up my marry-me mantra. Karen said no, no, *NO*.

It got to me. I wanted more. I had to protect Karen and her daughters. I wanted all of her.

I begged, pleaded, scrutinized, impertuned, cajoled and dissected. I hit a wall at Christmas, '06.

Karen went back East with her family. I drove to Carmel and crashed in Helen's garage.

I went through a week of moans-in-the-night. I sat down to start the outline for my novel. The themes and characters jumped out, boldfaced.

Lost mothers, lost children, Karen Sifakis and Joan Klein. Helen's edict to write more from the heart. History as redeeming fire. The great male urge to atone for misdeeds. Women as payoff and grail.

I called Karen back East. I marry-me

mantra'd her to the point of screams. She said no, no, *NO*. I calmed down. I said, Let's segue into a no-sex friendship. She said, Please don't bail on me. I said, Not a chance.

XXXXX

Karen didn't bail. I didn't bail. We spoke every night. We had coffee, lunch or dinner twice a week.

We talked funny shit and profound shit. We changed each other in discernible ways and helped each other survive. Most moments were freighted with lust and longing. Every other moment implicitly implied irony.

I'd ask Karen, "Do you love me?"

She'd say, "I'll think about it."

I'd get frustrated. I'd say, "Divorce your fruit husband and marry me."

She'd say, "You don't understand family. All you've got is your audience and your prey."

Helen contends that I write to get at the truth and that I get there eventually. Praterfalls in the real world often countermand the act. It's my inner war of pathology versus morality. It's my fruitless search for family. Family means women and women mean family.

I wrote my familial vision in the novel. It was the heartbreak of utopia lost. I had a string of dumb-ass romantic adventures. I hurt splendid women and came to hate myself.

I knew I had to change. I sensed that I *could* change. I had to hurl my God-sense and word-self at The Curse.

It came to me in the dark. The revelation occurred between phone calls with Helen and Karen. A flow of faces followed. Jean Hilliker morphed out of them. I had just thought about Joan.

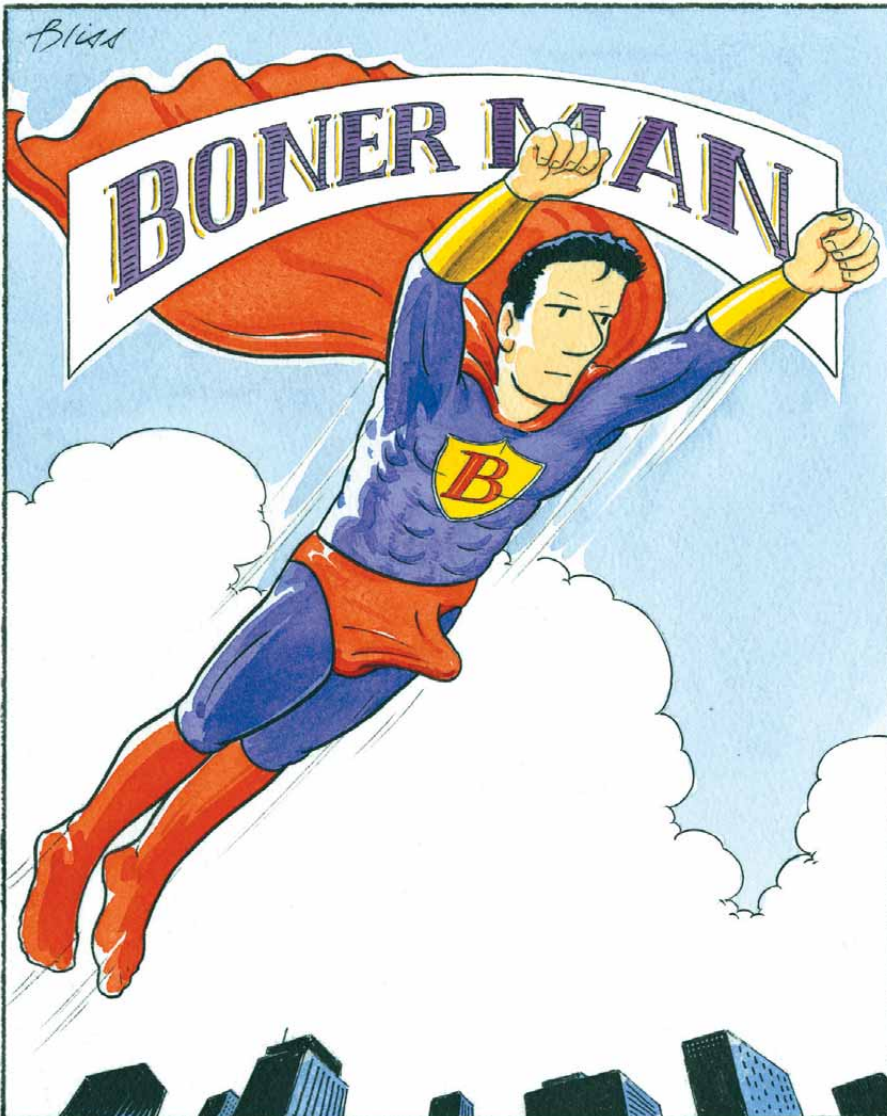
18.

Jean Hilliker would be 94 now. The Curse is 51 years old. I have spent five decades in search of one woman to eclipse a myth. That myth was self-created and speciously defined. I imposed a narrative to ensure my survival. It levied blame to suppress grief and vouchsafe my own crazy passion. The Curse was half a blessing. I've survived just fine.

So women will love me.

It's a fine *raison d'être*. It's kept me hungry and hardworking. I am predisposed to rash acts in love's name. This memoir will help me to interdict the practice. I require strict boundaries. They serve to curtail my ardor and grandiosity. The inward gaze has always pushed me outward toward Them. I'm 61 and in no way slowing down. My life is more often than not a felicitous state.

I have now set a bar that will mandate circumspection. The dominant story line of my life will dissolve on the last page I write here. The preceding pages have been me in address of Her and Them. It's time to put down my pen and live from Their sole perspective. I must sit attentively alone in the dark. They must come to me sans conjuring or images recalled and transposed. They may say nothing. They may tell me I have always possessed a complex and unfathomable fate. God speaks to me through women. My task has always been



to bring women to God. This pursuit has pushed me toward self-serving error. They have slowly and persistently revealed the cost of my actions. They have formed a sisterhood within me. I am steeled for Their rebukes and open-armed for any messengers They may send me.

I'm happier than I've ever been. I live in astonishment. I'm fit, healthy and full of fight. I'm surrounded by women, real and imagined. I'm beginning to tell the difference between Them. I'm starting to see the dovetailing terrors of rapacity and monogamy.

I exist in a patriarchy. I'm the lost boy cut loose and rescued by strong women. I outgrew him as I told his story. I always write my way through to the truth. I believe it because Helen Knode said it.

I've retained two photos of Jean Hilliker. The years are '36 and '39. She's in a deck chair, reading a book. She's sitting on a fence post in jodhpurs.

I will never let Her go. I will always write about Her. I will always ponder who She was and what She means.

I talk to Helen and Karen every night. Helen just moved to Austin, Texas. Margaret barks at me long distance. Karen's still married. I still think it's wrong. We've kept it clean for some time now. Karen remains the dream woman. She comes forward in laughter and nearly gasps in retreat.

Joan had a child last year. I've heard conflicting reports of the kid's gender. I suspect it's a boy and hope it's a girl. I'm clueless over the patrimony. I want it to remain that way. Joan remains my every third or fourth thought. History is the smallest of the many gifts she gave me. She earned her prominence and paid for it dearly. I will never relinquish her. I cannot douse that flame.

Joan never calls me. Other women do. I have a friend named Julia. She's 29, she's brilliant and decorous, she's a lesbian. We look alike. She's my spiritual daughter. We have dinner and talk profound shit about women. Restaurant people assume my patrimony. It's heartbreaking.

The messenger arrived 12 weeks ago. It pains me to state that she's also married and has two daughters. We're deeply in love. We are bound in blood and unto the death. We were torn from each other's flesh and soul and recently restored through God's grace. Skeptics may doubt this assertion and point to these pages as proof. My response is *fuck you*.

It won't be easy. That's perfectly fine. I am not looking for ease in this lifetime. I want the truth and will pay for it—whatever it costs, whatever it takes. I will not get off the hook easy. They will not let me, nor will She.

I'm transcendent. I'm Beethoven with the late quartets and his hearing restored. I've engaged a new set of variations on my life's theme:

So women will love me.

James Ellroy's new novel, *Blood's A Rover*, is available in bookstores now.



MORGAN

(continued from page 63)

to imagine you as the funniest drug dealer ever?

MORGAN: I was, man. As a matter of fact, my dealing partner—my best friend, God bless him—was murdered a month to the day after my son was born. We used to chop that crack, bag that shit up at three o'clock in the morning, and I'd make that motherfucker laugh. And he was like, "Yo, Tray, why the fuck you doin' this, man? You should be at the fucking Apollo or something." I'd tell him "Shut the fuck up." He got killed, and I went into comedy. He's guiding me right now. He's probably sitting here next to us, him and my father and my grandmother. All of them are with me every day, every second of the day, leading me in the right direction.

Q4

PLAYBOY: *I Am the New Black* details some painful memories from your life. Was there anything you were reluctant to share?

MORGAN: I was a little worried talking about my father's death. That cuts deep. He got AIDS, and he went from about 200 pounds all the way down to maybe 90 pounds. He didn't even look like my father anymore; he looked like a skeleton. When I was in the 12th grade I came home from football practice one day, and he was sitting outside our building. I said, "Dad, what you doin' out here?" He looked so fragile, no teeth in his mouth, and he said, "I had to get out of the house, get some sun." I picked him up, took him upstairs in my arms. We got to the door, and he started crying, blood coming out of his eyes. I said, "Dad, what you crying for?" And he said, "I remember when I carried



"Will you be long? I want to put in the roast."

you up here when you was a baby." Two, three weeks later, he was dead.

Q5

PLAYBOY: You play a character on *30 Rock* named Tracy Jordan who is more than loosely based on you. When Tina Fey pitched the show to you, did you ever wonder, Wait, is she making fun of me?

MORGAN: Tina is my baby girl. She's my sister from another mother of a different color. I'd do 25 to life for her. She is down like four flat tires. She pitched the show to me like, "Yo, this is *your* personality. It's *your* alter ego." She always says, "Keep the cameras rolling and let Tracy do what he do." I love that about her.

Q6

PLAYBOY: Where does Tracy Morgan end and Tracy Jordan begin?

MORGAN: Tracy Jordan is a part of Tracy Morgan, but Tracy Morgan is *not* a part of Tracy Jordan. Tracy Jordan is a figment of my imagination. He's a character I do when I go to work. When I'm not at work, Tracy Morgan is much more interesting and far-out than Tracy Jordan could ever be.

Q7

PLAYBOY: You've repeatedly insisted that Tracy Jordan isn't based on Martin Lawrence, yet there are some glaring similarities. Are you sure there isn't a little of Martin Lawrence in that character?

MORGAN: Martin Lawrence didn't corner the market on doing crazy shit. You got Dave Chappelle, you got *me*, you got all kinds of crazy motherfuckers out there. Everybody does something bizarre in his or her life. It's just that black entertainers stick out. When we do something crazy, they go, "Oh shit!" Mike Tyson ain't the first motherfucker to put a tattoo on his face.

Q8

PLAYBOY: So when Tracy Jordan stripped down to his underwear on an episode of *30 Rock* and ran through traffic, that was pure imagination?

MORGAN: That was based on my uncle Fat Mike. He ran down the street in his underwear with a lightsaber—several times. He was way crazy. He was Tracy Jordan to the fifth power.

Q9

PLAYBOY: Last year you told David Letterman that your hobbies include “doing karate and trying to get females pregnant.” Now that you’re older and wiser, have your hobbies changed?

MORGAN: I’ve got my third-degree black belt and I’ve gotten several women pregnant, so I’ve moved on to other things. These days I’m into bike riding and breaking water. I like breaking women’s water. If you’re pregnant and you need your water broken, you need your labor induced, give me a call and I’ll ride my bike over and take care of it.

Q10

PLAYBOY: You claim you had your first sexual experience when you were eight years old. How is that even possible?

MORGAN: I didn’t know what I was doing. I didn’t say I was *effective*. I didn’t knock the bottom out of the pussy or nothing. She was 14, babysitting me and my brother. She was in the tub, and she told us, “Come do it to me.” So we did it to her. I didn’t start getting busy for real until around 15, maybe less than that. There was one time when I was maybe 19 years old, I was selling crack, and I gave this girl five or six cracks for some pussy. She had a fat ass, I mean a fucking bubble-butt Kim Kardashian to the third power *ass*. But she looked like a mule had kicked in her face, so I made her put a brown paper bag over her head. I cut out holes for the eyes and a smile and put a cigarette in the mouth hole. It was like fucking the Unknown Comic.

Q11

PLAYBOY: Your stand-up includes a lot of jokes about anal sex. Are you talking about it just for shock value, or are you really a butt fiend?

MORGAN: I like fucking ass! Ain’t nothin’ like the butthole. The ass is a delicacy, goddamn it. I’d put hot sauce on it. When you eat the brown hole, that’s when her toes do this. [*sticks legs out and curls toes*] You got to be willing to do anything to please your woman, to satisfy her. I didn’t invent it. You think I was the first one to think of having anal sex with a girl? Hell, no. I’m quite sure Adam fucked Eve in the ass. In the Garden of Eden he tore her ass up, and she was screaming like a motherfucker.

Q12

PLAYBOY: In November you’re performing at Carnegie Hall as part of the New York Comedy Festival. After so much time on closed studio sets for TV, is it weird to get back in front of a live audience?

MORGAN: No, it’s not weird, because I’m not

funny just when I’m onstage. I’m funny when I’m in the elevator, I’m funny when I’m in the shower, I’m funny when I’m pumping gas, I’m funny in the barbershop. I’m not a motherfucker who needs to be onstage to be funny.

Q13

PLAYBOY: You’ve said you joined *Saturday Night Live* “as a puppy and left as a man.” How does working on a comedy-sketch show turn somebody into a man?

MORGAN: I’ve seen *Saturday Night Live* break people. If you can survive that, you can survive anything in show business. Anything. *SNL* makes you fucking tough as steel because when you get your sketch cut, there is no explanation. You just take that loss. There were plenty of nights when I appeared only to say good-bye at the end of the show.

Q14

PLAYBOY: Your best *SNL* characters, such as Brian Fellow and Astronaut Jones, were happy idiots. Do you think ignorance is sometimes bliss?

MORGAN: Ignorance is definitely bliss. It is *always* better not to know. I take that approach whenever I do stand-up. I think not having too much knowledge keeps you on your toes. I may have an idea of what I’m going to talk about onstage, but I don’t plan it out. That’s the beauty of it. Sometimes I surprise myself.

Q15

PLAYBOY: You frequently refer to *SNL* producer Lorne Michaels as your Obi-Wan Kenobi. Does he have special powers we don’t know about?

MORGAN: Yeah. Motherfucker took me out of the ghetto. That’s my dude, man. He’s been like a dad to me. I remember when I was on *Saturday Night Live* my first year and I wasn’t getting much. I was down; I was ready to quit. It was three o’clock in the morning, man, I’ll never forget. Makes me want to cry sometimes when I think about it. I love that man. I love that man. [*long pause; starts to cry*] I’m sorry, man. Excuse me. [*another long pause*] Son of a bitch... motherfucker’s good. I remember one time Lorne took me to his office, and he said, “Tracy, you are here not because you’re black. You’re here because you’re fucking *funny*, man.” [*bursts into tears again; wipes face with shirt*] Changed my whole perspective. I wasn’t so guarded anymore. I knew white people weren’t so fucked-up. I could’ve fallen into some dark shit, but he wouldn’t let me. I left his office, and I was crying for, like, two hours. It made all the difference to me, not just for my career but for my *life*. They say every Jewish man is supposed to love one black motherfucker in this life. I’m glad Lorne Michaels chose me.

Q16

PLAYBOY: A lot of *SNL* alumni try to take their characters to the big screen, not always successfully. Will we ever see *Astronaut Jones: The Movie*?

MORGAN: I’d never do a movie about any of the characters I did on *SNL*. That’s just not me. You should see the comedy that’s in my head. I’m gonna put Blanket in my

movie, Michael Jackson’s son. I want to do a movie about Blanket as an older man. Your father named you *Blanket*, what the fuck you gonna do? That’s why motherfuckers grow up and start gangbang. Motherfuckers in your neighborhood saying, “Yo, Blanket, what’s happening?” He’s 17 years old, what’s he going to say? “Yo, I told you my name’s *Derrick*!” He’s got a hard road to climb. Talk about baggage.

Q17

PLAYBOY: When *30 Rock* won a Golden Globe, you went onstage and called yourself the face of postracial America. Do you really believe in a postracial America?

MORGAN: We’ve come a long way from step-pin’ and fetchin’, “Here come the judge,” that kind of thing. I think progress is being made. Who do you think is buying hip-hop? Black kids? That’s white kids, man. I see more interracial couples now than ever. But we have a long way to go.

Q18

PLAYBOY: Sometimes the funniest comics are also the most quiet and reserved in their private lives. Do you resent it when fans expect you always to be on?

MORGAN: Comedians are the monkeys of show business. You go to the zoo, and everybody likes to see the monkeys, right? Because they jerk off, they play with their own shit, that kind of thing. Some people actually believe that when they turn off their TV, I just lie down in the box. The other day it started raining, and this young boy yelled at me, “Tracy Morgan, what you doin’ out in the rain?” Motherfucker, life hits me in the face just like it does you.

Q19

PLAYBOY: You’re clean and sober after a very public battle with alcoholism. Do you ever worry you won’t be as funny or outrageous without the booze?

MORGAN: Never. I’ve always been funny. Why do I have to be drunk to be funny? Because John Belushi and Chris Farley put that stigma on funny people, that we all gotta be high or drunk to be funny? That’s fucked-up.

Q20

PLAYBOY: After two drunk-driving arrests, you received a court order to wear an ankle bracelet that monitored your alcohol intake. Was that enough to scare you straight?

MORGAN: The bracelet made me feel like a slave. Some days I wanted to cut my foot off just to get rid of that shit. But that wasn’t rock bottom for me. Rock bottom came when I was sitting in my house and my oldest son came downstairs, and he looked at my foot like this. [*shakes head*] He was disgusted with me. I felt like an asshole. I felt like a jerk. That was the end of my drinking. The *end* of it, right then and there. We’re working on our relationship right now. He comes over from time to time and cooks me dinner. The last time he was here, he said, “Yo, Dad, you know what it feels like? I feel like this is the happy ending we always wanted. It ain’t perfect, but it’s a happy ending.”



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Playing

(continued from page 83)

time two companies of that size merge, you can count on some carnage.

Suddenly Double Fine's formerly enthusiastic publishing partners turned silent. And the monthly checks that kept their lights on stopped arriving. "I knew we were screwed when I heard about the merger," says Schafer. "Activision was one of the publishers that initially passed on the game."

It looked as though Double Fine had been dropped. Again. Only this time the company sort of didn't care. When *Psychonauts* had been kicked to the curb, it was in shambles, a mess of disconnected (albeit brilliant) pieces without much polish. Thanks to the Scrum method, however, *Brütal Legend* was not just a working game; large portions of it were almost finished. "The game looked cool, and it had Jack Black and all this flashy action. We just inherently felt more confident," says Schafer. Sure enough, the fish weren't just biting, they were jumping into the boat and filleting themselves. Within weeks of being cancelled, Double Fine had a new deal with EA Partners, a division of Electronic Arts, the second-biggest game company in the world.

EA Partners is somewhat unique in gaming—an extremely well-funded studio that's willing to take risks and back even its strangest bets with tall marketing dollars. Most game companies favor safe choices over interesting ones. Did your space-marine game move a lot of units? Change a few guns, add some new enemies and call it *Space Marines 2*. The game business is littered with the corpses of once-innovative franchises that met with success and were then milked to death by cheap repetition. Electronic Arts is not immune to this. In fact, entire wings of the company do quite well cranking out innovation-light unit shifters. It is precisely the stability of that business that allows EA to have studio-within-a-studio EA Partners, whose goal is to find the developers who are dreaming the biggest and pay them to dream even bigger. This is not altruism or public funding for the arts. EAP sees innovation and creativity as a sound strategy for making a great deal of money. "For a time, the focus at EA was too much on engineering profits instead of creating great entertainment experiences," says David DiMartini, senior vice president and general manager of EA Partners. "If you start with game quality, the sales will come."

But once again, things at Double Fine were a tad too rosy for the gods of gaming. In June 2009, almost a full year after being dropped, the company received word that Activision Blizzard was suing it to prevent *Brütal Legend* from coming out, claiming it had never dropped the game. Double Fine barely flinched. The team put the final polish on the game, and EA started flexing its focus-group muscles—which is the source of the data that have upset the applecart today, the 13th of July 2009, here at Double Fine's offices. People

are getting lost, you see. Lost in the heavy-metal wasteland.

Then there's Eddie's inability to cry, discovered when Schafer, Erik Robson and art director Lee Petty go to EA's offices to record a promotional video. When Eddie is moved to tears (well, to one tear anyway) by the plight of exploited headbangers, the tear is nowhere to be found, robbing the scene of its emotional heft. Eddie isn't sad. Everyone else is. To lighten the mood, Devin Bennett, an EA publicist, reads them the countersuit against Activision Blizzard, which has just come in on his BlackBerry. Filed that afternoon, its wording is defiant and combative and contains a zinger about Activision's aversion to new titles. This provokes several high fives, but it still does not make Eddie cry.

The man responsible for making Eddie weep is technical artist Drew Skillman. A typical Double Fine employee, he's young, geeky, brilliant and deeply in love with his job. "This company is like a giant brain," he says. "All the incredible artists and writers are the right side, then all these gifted programmers and technical people are the left side. And they're all working on this combined technical and artistic challenge." Skillman is part of Double Fine's corpus callosum, the interface between the two sides that takes the artist's dreams and marries them with the programmer's capabilities. Eddie's emotional problems have to do with a concept called "occlusion," which regulates how each of the game's objects cover up other objects. Eddie's tear has been there the whole time, but it's hidden inside his eyeball. It takes Skillman half an

hour at his workstation to figure out how to make the big burly roadie well up.

On July 30 an L.A. Superior Court judge issues a tentative ruling on the lawsuit, leaning toward Double Fine's side. By the time the actual court date arrives a week after that, Activision Blizzard agrees to a no-harm, no-foul settlement. Another week after that, the Double Finers put a bow on their game, including a modified navigation system that still uses turn signals to show you where to go but also contains most of the intelligence of your real-life car's nav system. Eddie's tear is flowing on command. A month later the game has gone through its EA, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 approvals and been pressed onto discs and shipped to stores. If millions of marketing dollars have been spent correctly, you should already have heard how great it is.

Where does Double Fine go from here? Much of that will be determined by how well *Brütal Legend* fulfills EA Partners' vision of quality begetting sales. But given the relentless dictates of independent game development (i.e., the need to get your next demo done before your current project is out the door), we have to assume that in a back room somewhere a small group of strange, sweet and driven people is dreaming up its next set of insane, unexpected and emotionally resonant possibilities for you to explore. Which is to say, let's hope this thing sells so Double Fine can once again earn the privilege of suffering for our art.



"I was going to show you how to plant corn, but what the heck, we'll do that next time."



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MISS PLAYBOY CLUB JULY

CALENDAR GIRL DATA SHEET

Name: Harmony Moniz • Las Vegas
Bust: 34C Waist: 24 Hips: 34
Height: 5'8" Weight: 110
Birth Date: August 8, 1986
Turn-ons: nice smile, great abs, ambition,
unique style, good hygiene and intelligence
Turn-offs: cockiness, laziness, liars,
jealousy and racism



MISS PLAYBOY CLUB JUNE

CALENDAR GIRL DATA SHEET

Name: Heidi Jo Wheeler • Las Vegas
Bust: 34C Waist: 24 Hips: 35
Height: 5'6" Weight: 120
Birth Date: October 16, 1980
Turn-ons: sense of humor, white teeth,
and someone who is adventurous
Turn-offs: bad attitude, conceitedness,
and lack of ambition

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PLAYMATE NEWS



SHAKING UP THE REALITY DATING WORLD

Miss May 2002 Christi Shake is adding sizzle to VH1's *My Antonio*. During the first episode Christi says, "I'm looking for my Romeo, who is hopefully Antonio!" The reality dating show pits 13 women against one another to win the heart of soap star Antonio Sabato Jr. There is more to worry about than just the other bachelorettes—Sabato's mother and ex-wife are also around.



JAYDE AND HER LETTUCE WRAP SHUT DOWN CAPITOL HILL

Free lunch can lure politicians out of their offices, but you should have seen the mass exodus when word spread around Capitol Hill that PMOY 2008 Jayde Nicole was handing it out wearing nothing but a lettuce wrap. Jayde hosted PETA's Annual Capitol Hill Veggie Dog Lunch outside the Rayburn House Office Building. She encouraged staffers to go veg while they got a mouthful of meatless dogs and an eyeful of what a vegetarian body looks like. "In my business, looks can make you or break you—and nothing has helped me stay fit, trim and energetic more than kicking the meat habit," she said. "The best

way to safeguard your health, reduce your carbon footprint, save animals' lives and look your very best is to go vegetarian." (Editor's note: To clarify, while we adore and support Jayde and animals, we also love a good steak.)

FLASHBACK



Thirty years ago this month we met the lovely Miss November 1979 **Sylvie Garant**. After becoming a Playmate the Canadian went back to civilian modeling for a bit and then dropped out of the public eye to start a family. This summer, like a vision, the still-stunning Sylvie appeared at Chicago's Glamourcon, to the excitement of fans. And then? She slipped back into her life. After all, on her *Data Sheet* she told us her dream was "to be on a deserted island with my favorite man."

Want to SEE MORE PLAYMATES—or more of these Playmates? Check out the Club at club .playboy.com, access the mobile-optimized site from your phone and read more news on playboy.com.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Miss February 1990 **Pamela Anderson** says, "How good I look is directly related to the amount of sex I'm getting."

Miss August 2001 **Jennifer Walcott** co-hosts a local advice show in Arizona called *Mom Time TV*.

Who handed PMOY 2008 **Jayde Nicole** her first issue of PLAYBOY? Her mother, who also first suggested she pose.



Miss May 2007 **Shannon James** (@shannon_james) is flirty and funny on Twitter—we believe the British call it *cheeky*. She writes, “I’m great in bed...I can sleep for days. Ha-ha, just waking up.”

MY FAVORITE PLAYMATE

BY SUGAR RAY LEONARD JR. —boxer



“My favorite Playmate is **Nicole Narain**. I met her at a boxing event at the Playboy Mansion, and she was very down-to-earth. She had a great personality that matched her beauty. I remember reading her article—or looking at her layout—and saying, ‘Damn! I didn’t know they made brown sugar in Chicago.’”



PAINTER LADY

Miss December 1985 Carol Ficatier has always been an interesting subject. What strikes us most about our photos of the brunette from Auxerre, France are the twin messages her eyes send. The first is “I am almost supernaturally sultry” and the other is “I know how to pose for this picture because I have an artist’s eye.” Lately Carol’s been honing her skills in Europe, painting her own interesting subjects. Her work can be seen at caroldebeaufort.com. Right: *Transubstantiation: Leaving the Old for the New*. Below: *Alfa-Omega: To Be on One’s Way*.



IS THERE A NEW GEEK GODDESS IN OUR RANKS?

PMOY 2007 Sara Jean Underwood filled in for July/August cover girl Olivia Munn on *Attack of the Show* this summer. She co-hosted the techy G4 program with Chris Hardwick. We thought she did great, but check the nerds: According to a poll on G4tv.com, 50 percent of viewers said “Hey, yeah!” and only 17 percent answered “Meh.” That’s good. We think.

Even in this market PMOY 2004 **Carmella DeCesare** was able to sell her three-story L.A. home for \$2.5 million.

OUT AND ABOUT WITH...

Miss January 1996 **Victoria Fuller** co-hosted the Stars and Stripes benefit at the Playboy Mansion on Armed Forces Day. The sexy night of patriotism featured hot go-go dancers, beautiful Painted Ladies and gorgeous Playmates. Military professionals from every branch of the service were also in attendance, as was David Hasselhoff. Proceeds from the party and silent auctions held during the festivities went to the Wounded Warrior Project, a charity that helps men and women who have served in the military.... Miss July 2008 **Laura Croft** walked the red carpet on her way into the Playboy Club in the Palms for a Vegas party hosted by Usher.... Miss June 2009 **Candice Cassidy** kicked her heels up at the Boston Playboy Golf Party, where



she ran into baseball legend Wade Boggs. Here she is with him and Playboy Golf’s Ajay Pathak at the Greatest Bar. It sounds as if the owners knew when they named it that this would be a joint where Playmates and Hall of Famers would one day bend elbows together.... PMOY 2006 **Kara Monaco**, Miss April 2009 **Hope Dworaczyk** and Miss March 2003 **Pennelope Jimenez** look smoking at the International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retailers Association convention. The



triumvirate of beauts traveled to New Orleans with Macanudo Cigars to help promote Macanudo’s Win a Million Sweepstakes.

Always popular, PMOY 2005 **Tiffany Fallon** was homecoming queen and senior class president in high school.

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PLAYBOY FORUM

UNTRUE CONFESSIONS

WHY CONFESS TO A CRIME YOU DIDN'T COMMIT?

BY JOSHUA TEPFER

On September 7, 1988 Marty Tankleff woke up in his Belle Terre, New York home to discover his mother was dead and his father was unconscious but alive. The police were suspicious of Tankleff's emotionless response to the crimes, and the 17-year-old became the prime suspect. He was interrogated for hours by the Suffolk County police. The police discounted his persistent denials, telling him they knew he had committed the murders (his father died a month later without regaining consciousness). Still getting nowhere, the lead investigator fabricated a story, telling Tankleff that his father, shot up with adrenaline in the hospital, had briefly regained consciousness and had implicated him. Knowing his father wouldn't lie and believing law enforcement wouldn't deceive him, Tankleff began to question himself despite knowing he had nothing to do with the crime. In a desperate attempt to escape the hostile interrogation, Tankleff used the facts police fed him to confess to the murders. He was subsequently convicted of two charges of murder and sentenced to 50 years to life. It was not until 17 years later—after an appellate court could not ignore defense witnesses who implicated suspects connected to a former business partner of Tankleff's father—that Tankleff's conviction was vacated.

We're familiar with true confessions, but false confessions like Tankleff's are probably foreign to many of us. The term itself is contradictory. How can a confession—defined as an admission of truth—be false? But false confessions to horrific crimes are a reality, as recently acknowledged by our nation's highest court. In an examination of the first 234 cases in which postconviction DNA testing exonerated wrongfully convicted individuals, 38 of them had confessed falsely to rapes and murders. In March 2004 authors Steven Drizin and Richard Leo analyzed 125 cases of indisputably false confessions—that is, cases in which evidence proved the confessor couldn't have committed the crime. For various reasons—not the least of which is that DNA and other dispositive evidence is rarely available—these cases represent the tip of the iceberg.

Why would anyone confess to a crime he or she did not commit? There are three types of false confessions: The first, a *voluntary* false confession, is made by a person who seeks fame for a notorious crime. An example of a voluntary false confessor is John Mark Karr, who three years ago claimed responsibility for the still-unsolved Jon-Benet Ramsey murder. These confessions generally come

from people with a psychological disorder. The second and third types, known as *internalized* and *compliant* false confessions, are pressure-induced, often through interrogation. Police can effect an internalized false confession by making a suspect doubt his memory and persuading him he may have done the crime. By contrast, a compliant false confessor never believes he committed the offense but confesses to stop his accusers' relentless interrogation.

An interrogator's aim is to persuade a suspect that it's in his interest to confess. The police do this by conveying hopelessness—that is, by convincing a suspect that the police are already certain of his guilt,

they have enough evidence to convict him and his confession is the only way to mitigate the situation. Police are encouraged to lie about the type and strength of the evidence—which is legal—and to reject the suspect's denials.

Because of the limitations of these techniques, police are cautioned against interrogating a suspect unless they're certain he committed the crime. Therein lies the problem: Police too often use these tactics without possessing any evidence of guilt and are then unable to differentiate between truthful and false denials. When this occurs, false confessions may result. Vulnerable populations, including juveniles, are particularly susceptible, which is

why they make up a disproportionate number of false-confession cases. The Supreme Court has recognized the irrefutable research that shows children are different from adults. Youths often make ill-considered decisions. They're more influenced by external pressures and may be unable to comprehend the long-term consequences of their confessions. What's more, kids are taught at an early age to trust police and turn to them when in trouble. Although interrogations can elicit false confessions, they can also elicit true ones. To minimize the risk, police shouldn't use these techniques on suggestible populations—including the mentally retarded, the mentally ill or the young. Interrogations should be electronically recorded so an arbitrator can analyze a confession's reliability. Recordings can also help the police counter false claims of coercion. Without a full recording to help prove his innocence, Tankleff needed extraordinary counsel and a good deal of luck—assistance and luck that many others don't have. And that's a problem for everybody.

Joshua Tepfer is staff attorney at the Northwestern University School of Law's Center on Wrongful Convictions of Youth.



NO PHOTOS ALLOWED

WHO WILL PROTECT US FROM THE PROTECTORS?

BY TIM MOHR

With the power to enforce the law comes an obligation never to live above the law. Unfortunately, police routinely break this societal bargain, so much so that we shrink at the notion of questioning the authority of cops for fear of arbitrary arrest. That speaks volumes about the state of American law enforcement today.

Take the recent arrest of Pepin Tuma, a 33-year-old white lawyer in Washington, D.C. Tuma had been discussing the Henry Louis Gates kerfuffle with friends and, apparently impassioned after the conversation, chanted “I hate the police” when he happened upon a traffic stop in the tony northwest section of the city on the way home. The police response to his use of freedom of speech? “Who do you think you are talking to?” according to Tuma. Another witness says the cop continued, “Who do you think you are to think you can talk to a police officer like that?” When Tuma—again, a lawyer—replied that it was legal to express his opinion, the officer allegedly shoved him into a utility box and called him a faggot. The next series of events is established beyond mere allegations: Tuma was cuffed, charged with disorderly conduct and taken to a holding cell. This is a disorderly conduct charge being used as a gag order against complaining about the government.

When it comes to stifling free expression, perhaps even more chilling is police treatment of photographers. It’s important first to clarify that it is legal to photograph anything that can be viewed in or from a public space—and certainly that includes (and damn well should include) public officials. But as a practical matter, police are loath to be captured on film, and this sometimes spills into harassment of those taking pictures. One person who knows this is Carlos Miller, who started a website—headlined PHOTOGRAPHY IS NOT A CRIME—to compile news on crackdowns against photographers after he had a run-in with the Miami police while taking pictures on a public street in 2007. After a lengthy process Miller was eventually found guilty in 2008 of resisting arrest, prompting the Society of Professional Journalists to release a statement: “The fact that Mr. Miller

was arrested for taking pictures in a public place was the first violation of his First Amendment rights. Those rights were violated again when Mr. Miller’s statements in his blog became factors in his sentence.”

Ordinary police are not the only culprits, and sometimes the orders apparently come from on high—from the very top even. When Michelle Obama went to get a burger and onion rings at Washington, D.C.’s Good Stuff Eatery this past summer, Secret Service agents entered and confiscated camera phones from other patrons so no photos could be taken of her visit. No wonder the National Press Photographers Association took issue with Homeland Security secretary Janet Napolitano in July when she urged Americans to report to

the police “someone continually taking photographs” as a potential terrorist.

This attitude is apparently so ubiquitous among New York City law enforcement personnel that the NYPD issued an “operations order” earlier this year on the subject, alerting the force that not all photography is terrorism. It explains to rank-and-file cops that “members of the service may not demand to view photographs taken by a person absent consent or exigent circumstances,” that “a person who has taken pictures should not be directed to delete or destroy images stored within a device” and that subway and commuter

rail regulations “expressly permit photography and video recording.” The dissemination of that order followed not long after an off-duty subway worker was arrested for taking pictures of a train despite citing to the arresting officers the specific paragraph of the transit authority code that permits photography.

The point of our system of government and the documents that established it was to avoid this sad state of affairs, to make clear that the government’s power and legitimacy derive solely from the citizenry and, with the Fourth Amendment, to ensure clarity on that issue at the individual level. In frequently and arbitrarily harassing, tasing and arresting fellow citizens over petty slights (though the same would be true no matter how great the slight), for personal or departmental convenience (such as obscuring their own missteps)



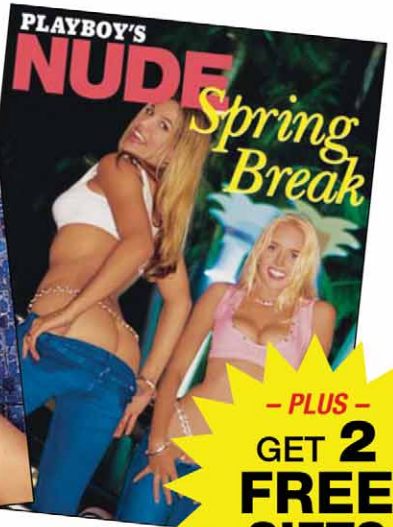
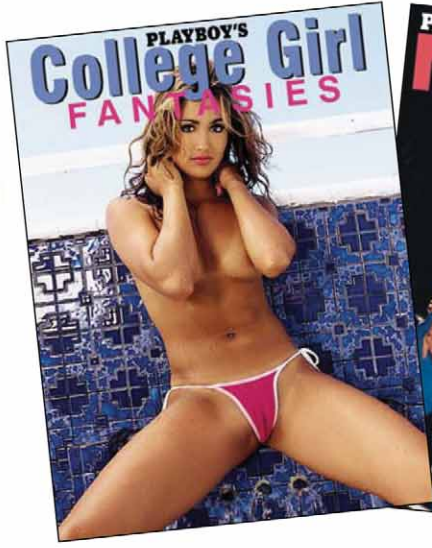
A Miami policeman threatens a journalist for coming too close to the scene of an arrest in Little Havana.



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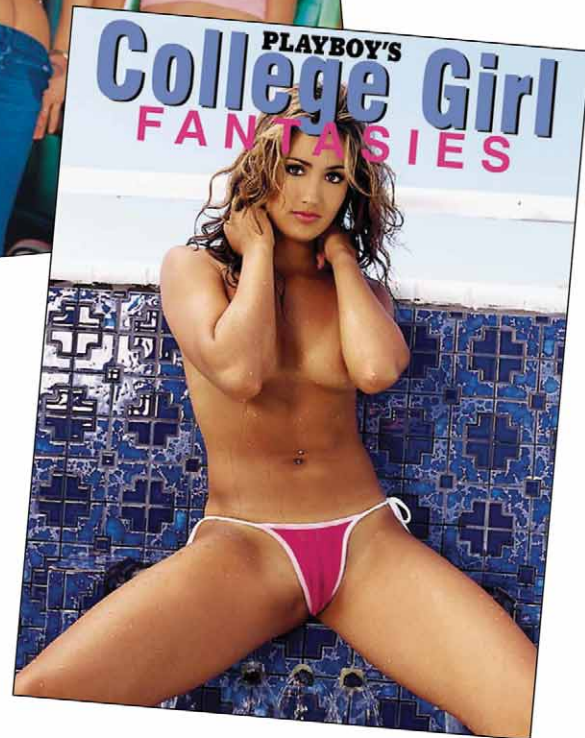
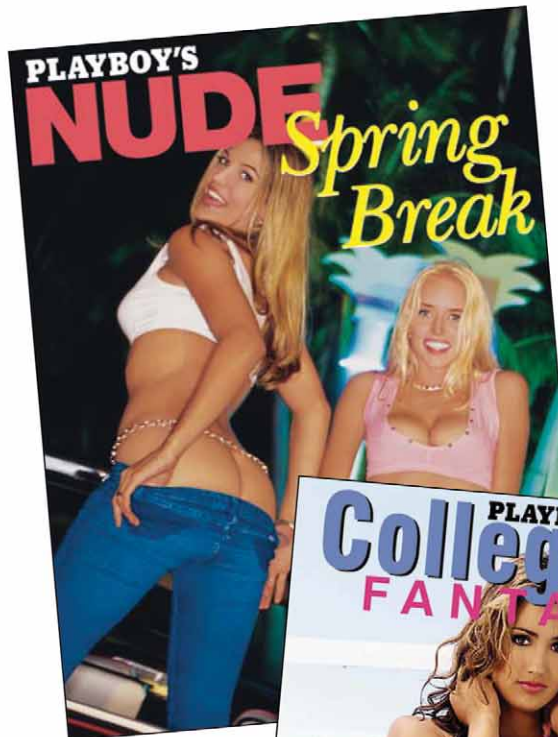


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Miami cops (left) bust Carlos Miller for taking their photo without permission. When police shot and killed Oscar Grant on an Oakland train platform (right), citizens documented the scene. In Philadelphia (below), police stop photographers from taking video of a questioning.



or on grounds tangential to enforcing the spirit or letter of any law, the police do more than muddle this arrangement; they subvert it at the most fundamental level.

The founding fathers did not frame their arguments with the same austerity Ice Cube did while writing rhymes for N.W.A, but it is not ahistorical or inaccurate to say their

thinking, formed against the backdrop of the arbitrary exercise of power by the British crown and its agents, was the same when it came to defending freedom from overreaching government representatives. It's time to reverse the current trend and force law enforcement agents to uphold—or at least comply with—our ideals.

CONTEMPT OF COP

It's not a good idea to mouth off to the police, but it shouldn't be against the law

Strip away the layers behind the Henry Louis Gates incident and you are left with this core: a citizen being arrested for voicing displeasure with a government agent—that is, engaging in explicitly political speech—in his own house. Ignore the media hype. As far as we're concerned, the lesson to be learned from this is unambiguous, but it has nothing to do with race (or class, for that matter). It is a textbook example of the authoritarian mentality behind much of today's law enforcement—a classic case of police abusing the law to arrest someone for "contempt of cop." Massachusetts dis-



orderly conduct laws used to criminalize "abusive language" and "unreasonable noise or offensively coarse utterance, gesture or display." But the state courts found that unconstitutional: Mouthing off to a police officer—or any fellow citizen—is protected by the First Amendment, uniform and sidearm be damned. Yet cops in Massachusetts and across the country continue to bust out disorderly conduct charges whenever they please. Being unpleasant or erratic is not a crime, and we must demand that police stop dealing with insults and inconveniences with force and arrest.

READER RESPONSE

GO TRUCK YOURSELF

In response to Kenneth Powell's letter in the September *Reader Response*, I have been in the trucking industry for more than 40 years, and yes, unions have caused some businesses to fail. But without union representation workers are at a company's mercy. Trucking companies lean on their drivers to go out in



Without unions, truckers get the shaft.

unsafe vehicles, falsify their logbooks and circumvent regulation. Then, when the Department of Transportation catches them, the companies say drivers should have known better and leave them to take the blame. A company always passes the responsibility on to its drivers. A lot of trucking companies are motivated only by money—at anyone's cost.

Donald Uken
Piscataway, New Jersey

Contrary to what Powell writes, people have been giving bosses an "honest day's work for an honest day's pay" for years—more than an honest day's work in most cases. Unions are the only thing forcing companies to provide such benefits as health insurance, vacations and safe working conditions. Unions are not the reason businesses are going under. They are the scapegoats for problems caused by overcompensation of CEOs, CFOs and other corporate executives and board members.

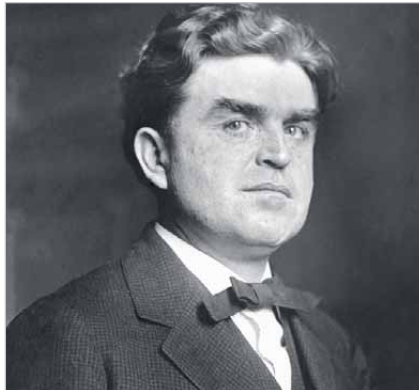
Christopher Kidwell
Aberdeen, Maryland

The two letters in September voicing naive notions about the Employee Free Choice Act and unions in general

demonstrate why American workers are in the trouble they are in, with real wages stagnant or declining for the past 20 years. What has harmed unionized industries is nonunion workers' acceptance of the notion that if you give your boss an honest day's worth of work for an honest day's worth of pay, everything will be just fine. It's all about the money, guys. Nonunion trucking and manufacturing companies are simply part of management's cost cutting in its never-ending quest for more profits. What will Powell say about his nonunion trucking-industry job when Mexican companies start operating on American roads with their vehicles and their drivers—what will constitute honest work for honest pay then? What nonunion workers fail to acknowledge is that unionized workers have set the standards that define an honest day's work and an honest day's pay. Lack of collective bargaining only hastens the decline of all workers' pay and benefits. Workers who are anti-union are sad proof that suckers will always be with us.

Bob Markowski
St. Louis, Missouri

As we consider the current economy (and recent magazine articles), we spend most of our time looking for



John L. Lewis fought for all workers.

someone else to point a finger at. I am amazed by the number of companies that don't want to believe their problems are caused by internal issues. Sometimes the issues are so basic it's unbelievable. For example, many bosses keep workers around who are fun and who make them feel good. When a cut needs to be made they

will let go of their hardest-working employees because they aren't as much fun, and then company executives wonder why productivity drops. It's time we stop pointing fingers and start looking at what we are doing to fix the problem.

Robert Bauer
Fort Collins, Colorado

GRAY MATTER

In "The End of the Affair" (July/August) not once does John Gray mention Canada, which is the United



Are you optimistic about your future?

States' biggest trading partner. Many Americans think Canada is insignificant, but in fact both countries rely on each other a lot. In an article about trade, government and general diplomacy, I think your neighbors to the north deserve a little credit.

Ira Geres-Codd
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Gray is a British, not an American, intellectual. The British always seem to offer the bleakest outlook for the American future. They have done it numerous times in the past and continue to do so. Are we in a full-blown crisis? Yes, of course. Is the sky falling? Probably not.

Jason Wahl
Indianapolis, Indiana

Gray is the same thinker who made the dumb assertion that 9/11 signaled the end of globalization. He would be a good choice as economic advisor to the next Republican administration.

Richard Mable
Boston, Massachusetts

E-mail via the web at letters.playboy.com.
Or write: 680 North Lake Shore Drive,
Chicago, IL 60611.

NEWSFRONT

**Above the Law**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Though *change* was a buzzword of Barack Obama's campaign, President Obama's on-the-job behavior has sometimes followed George W. Bush's lead. The latest area in which the status quo has prevailed involves President Bush's radical interpretation of executive powers. Bush became infamous for his prolific use of signing statements, addenda penned on already-passed legislation in which he asserted his right to ignore portions of the new law. Since the Constitution contains no provision for such statements, and since Bush's statements consistently suggested executive power trumped congressional authority, Obama vowed to end the practice when in office. He has not. In fact, top Democrats in the House even sent Obama a letter of rebuke, saying, "During the previous administration, all of us were critical of the president's assertion that he could pick and choose which aspects of congressional statutes he was required to enforce. We were therefore chagrined to see you appear to express a similar attitude."

Rocky Mountain High

DENVER—Although a state ballot initiative legalized medical-marijuana dispensaries in Colorado in 2000, the facilities recently began to ramp up. The number of registered medical-marijuana users in the state jumped by 2,000 in July, to a total of 9,000—that's a 29 percent increase in the span of a single month. Approximately 60 dispensaries now operate in the state of Colorado.

**Homeland Insecurity**

LONDON—The British government's annual Interception of Communications report admits that U.K. police and intelligence services asked for access to pri-

vate phone and e-mail data more than 500,000 times in 2008, a rate equivalent to 1,400 requests a day. While the government claims this offers assurance that its powers were being used appropriately, critics say it shows the country has become a surveillance state. As Chris Huhne of the Liberal Democrat party said, "It cannot be a justified response to the problems we face in this country that the state is spying on half a million people a year. The government forgets that George Orwell's *1984* was a warning and not a blueprint."

Slippery Slope

OLYMPIA—Political activists in the state of Washington forced the release of e-mails that appear to reveal the military engaged in domestic spying, surveillance and infiltration of local peace groups. Such activity is specifically banned by U.S. law, and the new evidence adds weight to calls for a full-scale investiga-

tion of government overreach in intelligence operations.

Freedom Not on the March

BAGHDAD—Six years after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the ostensibly democratic U.S.-backed government of Iraq is enacting measures to censor books and curtail access to the Internet. The justification, as explained by Iraq deputy cultural minister Taher Naser al-Hmood, sounds familiar: "It is not easy to balance security and democracy. It is like being a tight-rope walker." Or as another official put it, "We are living in such a dangerous time that we need to control things."





Hold On to Your Hat!

How did MIRANDA KERR lose her top? We have no idea if it was windy in the Caribbean during her Victoria's Secret swimsuit shoot—but it sure was nippy. Or maybe this is part of the company's new recession promotion: half off.



Where Are Their Life Jackets?

Not exactly the first thing you thought of, is it? Here RHIAN SUGDEN, LOUISE CLIFFE, KATIE DOWNES and IMOGEN GRAY rely on the buddy system to keep them safe at sea. As for you, wait one hour after devouring this picture before you go for a swim—or stand up.

SPLASH NEWS

Cheeky Ali

So, some kids glued pennies to the sidewalk on Sunset Boulevard, and struggling actress ALI LARTER bent down to...

Okay, the star of *Heroes*, *Obsessed* and the *Resident Evil* franchise was fishing for change in her bag when the paparazzi got more than they bargained for. If you'd like to help the girl afford a pair of panties or, better yet, support her fashion choice, buy a ticket to *Resident Evil: Afterlife*.

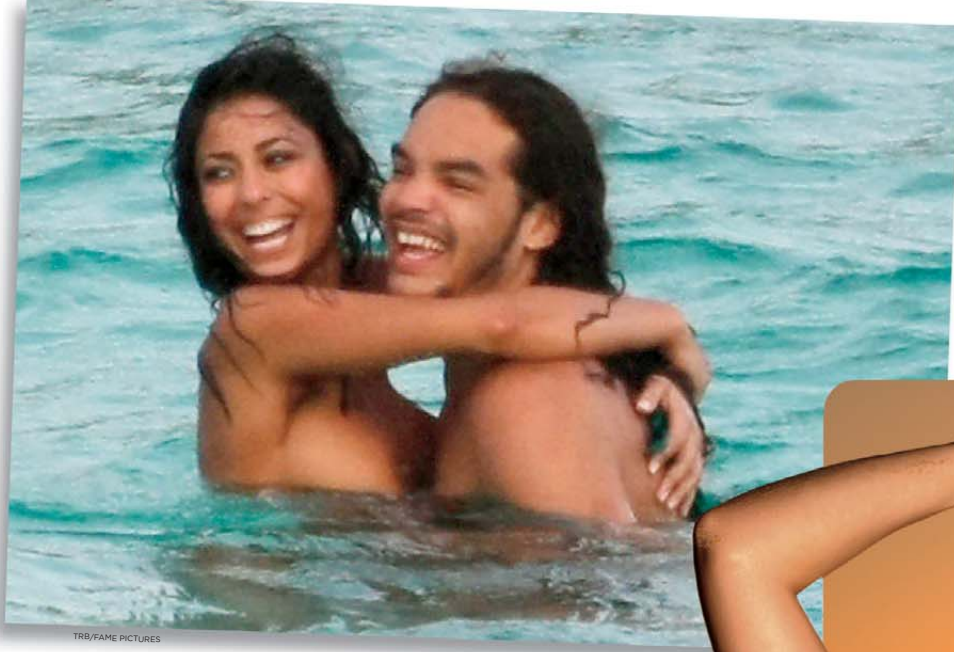


SPLASH NEWS (2)



Snog
AISLEYNE HORGAN-WALLACE was on *Snog Marry Avoid?*—a British TV show that exposes stars' real lives and then has you decide if you would snog (shag), marry or avoid them.

MATT CHRISTIE

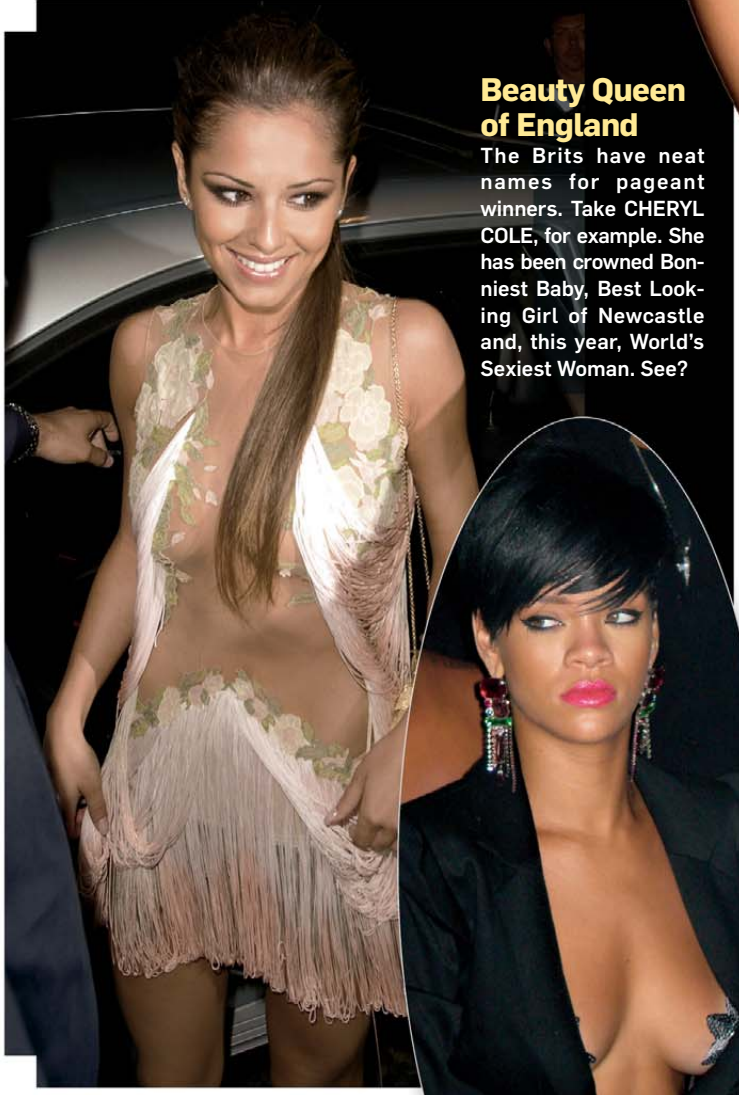


TRB/FAME PICTURES

Breaststroke

The Bulls and Celtics had one of the most grueling play-off series in NBA history, after which the Bulls' JOAKIM NOAH rebounded in St. Barts. Noah is the offspring of French tennis player Yannick Noah and Miss Sweden 1978 Cecilia Rodhe. He was born in New York City, but two years ago he became a citizen of France (where they call this risqué and tricky aquatic maneuver "swimming").

POPSTARIPICTURES.CO.UK/GETTY IMAGES



Beauty Queen of England

The Brits have neat names for pageant winners. Take CHERYL COLE, for example. She has been crowned Bonniest Baby, Best Looking Girl of Newcastle and, this year, World's Sexiest Woman. See?

WENN.COM



One-Dimensional Model

In the age of model-actress-singers, LUCY PINDER gets by just fine as a model-model—and she makes us want to create 3-D magazines.

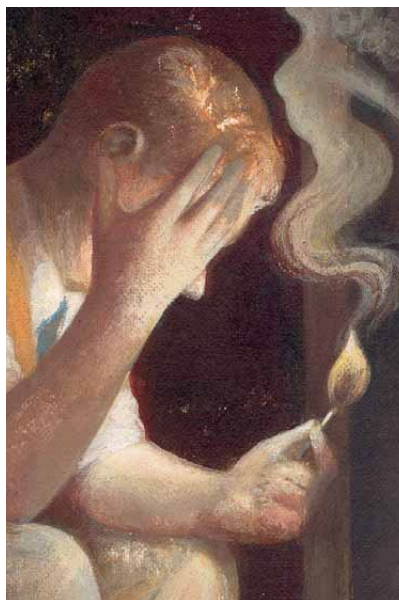
We're Seeing Stars

Pictures like this prove RIHANNA still glitters in the spotlight. On Independence Day the "good girl gone bad" showed up adorned with stars at a Las Vegas club with Jay-Z and Jamie Foxx. How patriotic!

EXCLUSIVE PIX BY FLYNET ©2009



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NEXT MONTH



RAMPAGE: IF YOU LIVED HERE, YOU'D BE KNOCKED OUT BY NOW.



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RANKIN'S CHEEKY—WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TELL ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST PROVOCATIVE PHOTOGRAPHERS TO SURPRISE YOU? NEXT MONTH'S PICTORIAL FROM EROTIC PHOTOGRAPHY LEGEND **RANKIN**.

CHELSEA HANDLER—OUR FAVORITE LATE-NIGHT HOST OFFERS CRUCIAL HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING TIPS AND A MEDITATION ON HOW TO PAPER OVER YOUR MYRIAD MISTAKES WITH VODKA.

WOMEN OF VIDEO GAMES—*PLAYBOY*'S ANNUAL LOOK AT THE YEAR'S HOTTEST VIDEO VIXENS RETURNS WITH ALIENS, GANGSTERS AND GREEK GODDESSES WITH THEIR PIXELS ON FULL DISPLAY.

THE ORIGINAL OF LAURA—FOR 30 YEARS **VLADIMIR NABOKOV**'S FINAL NOVEL HAS BEEN SAFEGUARDED IN A VAULT IN SWITZERLAND. IN A BLOCKBUSTER EXCLUSIVE, YOU'LL GET A FIRST LOOK AT THE AUTHOR'S LAST WORDS, AVAILABLE ONLY IN OUR PAGES.

DOPE WARS—WHEN DOES THE WAR ON DRUGS BECOME A WAR ON PEOPLE? **T.J. ENGLISH** TAKES AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE SORDID TALE OF DEA AGENT LEE LUCAS, A NARCO SUPERSTAR WHO FELL FROM GRACE, ALLEGEDLY DESTROYING INNOCENT LIVES ALONG THE WAY.

FAMILY FUNCTION—WHEN YOU'RE AMERICA'S GREATEST POLEMICIST, YOUR THANKSGIVING DINNERS ARE INTERESTING. **GORE VIDAL** GIVES US A SURPRISING AND SCABROUS ACCOUNT OF HIS

RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS WILDLY INTELLIGENT (AND DEEPLY CONSERVATIVE) STEPBROTHER, BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBIN OLDS.

QUINTON "RAMPAGE" JACKSON—ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS FIGHTERS ON THE PLANET SITS DOWN WITH **JASON BUHRMESTER** FOR A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE UFC AND *THE ULTIMATE FIGHTER*. SPOILER: BUHRMESTER LIVES.

THE GREAT FLORIDA SNAKE HUNT—THE EVERGLADES ARE HOME TO 100,000 PYTHONS, SOME AS BIG AS 250 POUNDS. NOW GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE HIRED HUNTERS TO GO IN AND KILL THEM ALL. INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER **PAT JORDAN** HEADS INTO THE SWAMP WITH HIS BOOTS ON.

SEX IN CINEMA—ONCE AGAIN WE PAY TRIBUTE TO THE SEXIEST FILMS, HOTTEST CELEBS AND STEAMIEST SCENES OF THE YEAR.

TIP-OFF '10—AS COLLEGE BASKETBALL TIPS OFF, WE TIP YOU OFF TO THE SEASON'S STORY LINES: JOHN CALIPARI TAKES OVER IN KENTUCKY, HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING THE GAME ON AND OFF THE COURT AND MORE.

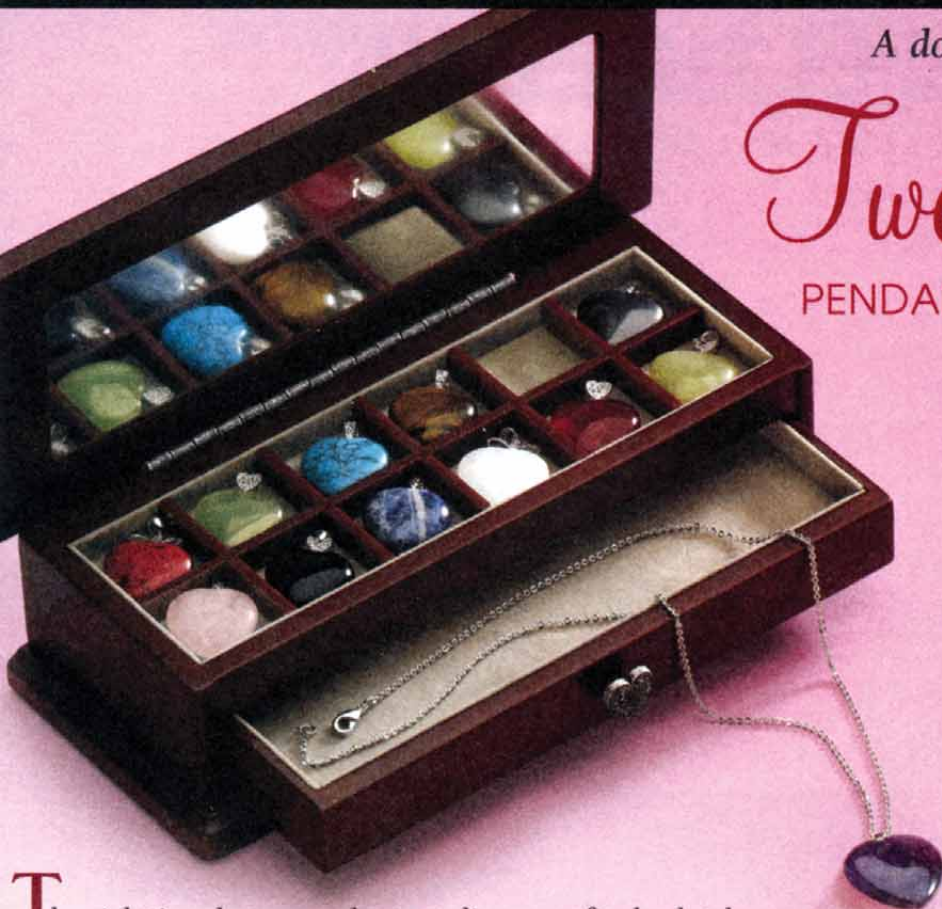
PLUS—**PAULO COELHO** (*THE ALCHEMIST*) ON LIBRARIES, LENDING AND LITERARY LUST, PLAYMATE **CRYSTAL HARRIS**, **THOMAS FRANK** ON THE RISE OF THE CONSERVATIVE UNDERGROUND AND, OF COURSE, OUR ANNUAL GIFT GUIDE.

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Supplement to Playboy Magazine

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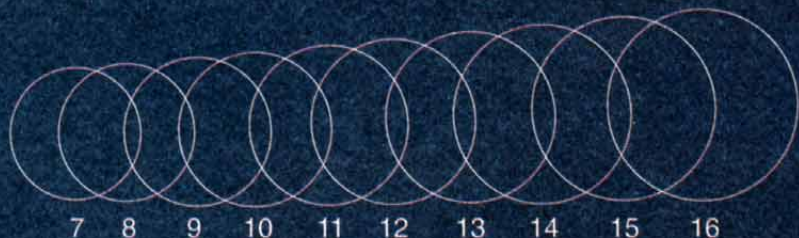


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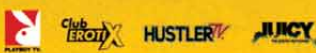


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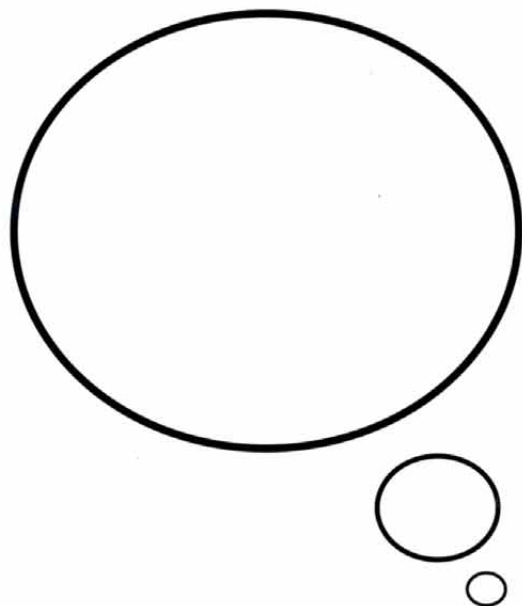
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