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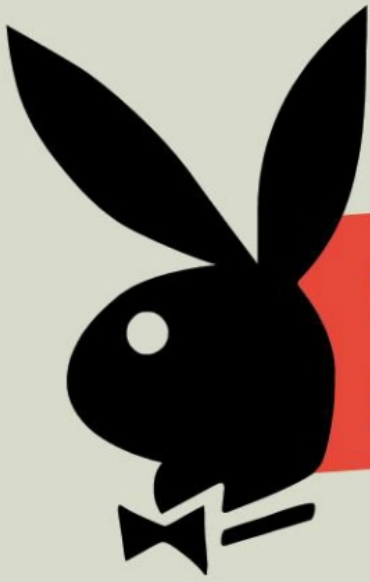
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PLAYBOY'S

GREATEST COVERS



PLAYBOY'S Greatest Covers

DAMON BROWN *Foreword by* PAMELA ANDERSON



For nearly 60 years, Playboy Magazine has made a splash with its mind-blowing covers. Now, for the first time, there is a book dedicated to this American icon.



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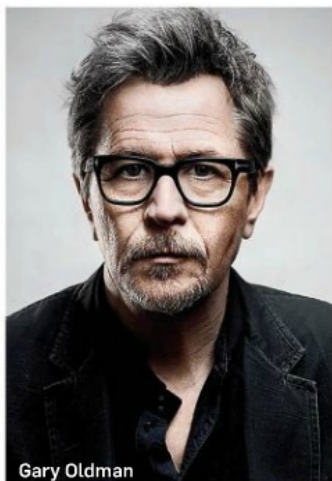
You just lost \$100,000 on two hands of baccarat. You stepped into an SUV carrying \$1 million in cash and marijuana. You took flight from the lip of a 40-foot dirt-bike jump. You opened your garage door to Will Ferrell, ready for his interview. What next? Our July/August double issue is a catalog of such brain-searing moments: encounters with the rich, famous and strange, as well as with fate, fortune and heart-stopping women. First we fly to Colorado, where (surprise, surprise) the newly legal weed industry in America's highest state is growing faster than kudzu. But without federal legality, banks refuse to accept pot-related cash. In *Chronic Insecurity*, **William Wheeler** enters the world of marijuana-asset protection, where the possibility of robbery and torture looms for the ex-special forces soldiers who protect overflowing dispensary coffers. James Bond is an endless source of fascination for both *PLAYBOY* and artist **Taryn Simon**, whose obsessive photography of the film franchise's cars, guns and girls is the subject of *Birds of the West Indies*; we present gorgeous selections of her work. What do daredevil **Travis Pastrana** and 007 have in common? An addiction to fine suits and fast vehicles. In *Free-style Fashion*, the motocross star indulges both in a gravity-defying photo shoot that splatters mud across Fashion Week's finest. **Gary Oldman** has no lack of politically incorrect opinions. For our *Playboy Interview*, the acerbic Englishman and respected screen actor accounts for his perfectionism, complains about the Hollywood power structure and explains why he feels he's losing control of his life story. For a lighter take on showbiz, see our *20Q* with comedian **Marc Maron**, a man full of quips and questions for guests of his *WTF* podcast. He talks about dating Frank Zappa's daughter, chronicling his life for the new season of *Maron* (his IFC show) and finally sobering up. In *Jubilee City*, veteran comic book writer and artist **David Lapham** takes us on a trip through the stoned 1970s youth of fine artist **Joe Andoe**. The Italian goddess gracing our cover is supermodel Bianca Balti—and we could settle for no less than world-renowned fashion photographer **Greg Lotus** to capture her in *Ciao, Bella!* We then return to where we began: You just lost \$100,000 in 45 seconds. What would **Phil Ivey** do? It's a drop in the bucket for the champion poker player, but as we discover in *Phil Ivey's New House of Cards*, every loss stings. Experience Vegas as only a millionaire can while Ivey strategizes the future of his poker empire. What next? Here's your chance to find out.



William Wheeler



Taryn Simon



Gary Oldman



Joe Andoe



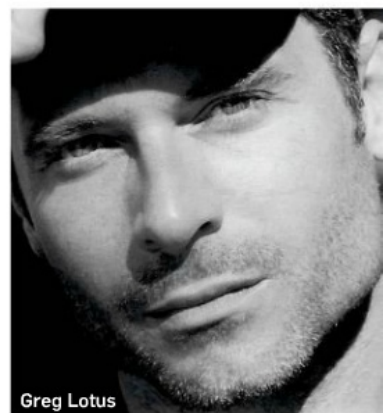
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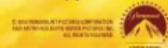
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KENNEDY SUMMERS: 2014 PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR

More than 40 Playmates, including 2013 PMOY Raquel Pomplun, were on hand at the Mansion to celebrate Kennedy Summers, our 60th anniversary PMOY. "I secretly suspected I look better naked than with clothing, so I feel validated right now," Kennedy joked. In addition to gracing our June cover, the blonde bombshell was awarded \$100,000, a one-year lease on a Mini Roadster and an Oris Artelier Date Diamonds watch set with 72 diamonds. Also in celebration of Kennedy's title, a limited run of PMOY T-shirts (bottom right) are available at playboystore.com. A portion of the proceeds will go to Wounded Wear (woundedwear.org), a charity Kennedy supports that provides clothing to injured veterans.



ARTIST DAVE CHOATE'S WISE CAREER MOVE

After seeing Kate Moss on the cover of our 60th anniversary issue, Dave Choate immediately put his interpretation of our images to canvas, painting for 12 hours straight. The result is the artwork above. "I saw the pictures and they really spoke to me," the artist says. "Now I have Playmates following me on social media. I might paint models from now on."



CELEBRITY CHEF JUDY JOO IN THE PLAYBOY CLUB KITCHEN

Judy Joo is the executive chef at the Playboy Club London, where her menu is almost as extensive as her media appearances (*Iron Chef UK*, *Iron Chef America*, *Shape* magazine). Our favorite bite is the Hef Burger: a "wagyu beef burger, rich in every way, with a choice of truffle ketchup or saffron aioli."

DEAR PLAYBOY

Justice and Injustice

The people of New York need to wake up. What happened in the Central Park Five case is just the saga of the status quo (*How the Central Park Five Still Haunt America*, April). The same kind of bureaucratic injustice and corruption has been the stock-in-trade on the East Coast for more than 50 years. Wrongly convicted citizens should be fully reinstated immediately and given compensation for their years served, at the very minimum. It is up to New Yorkers not just to vote in public officials but to see that they do their job. Hold them and the police officers under them responsible. Until New Yorkers take charge, any one of them could be subject to similar false imprisonment. These kinds of things happen only because they're allowed to happen. Don't let them happen anymore.

Bob Woodson
Bishop, California

After reading your article by Touré about the Central Park Five, I can only surmise that the author is nothing less than a racist to the fullest extreme. The article is riddled with jabs at the white race and implies that all blacks are tormented and crucified by whites with no



justification. Stop-and-frisk was one of the best things to ever happen. If you have nothing to hide, why should you care? PLAYBOY needs to stop playing the race card over and over again. While you are at it, go ahead and cancel my subscription.

Rick Steenhoven
Spokane, Washington
We won't miss you.

WHEN THE OTHER SHOE DROPS

An "associate" working in a Zappos warehouse earns an average of \$9.08 an hour, for a yearly salary of \$18,160. Meanwhile, Zappos chief executive Tony Hsieh (*Playboy Interview*, May) spends \$350 million in "personal pocket change" to create a nice neighborhood for his company headquarters. This wealth inequality would stagger even the patricians of ancient Rome. If Hsieh is serious about revitalizing more than just his personal block in downtown Las Vegas, he could start by giving his warehouse workers a raise. If he's serious about creating a "fun" place to work, he may consider employing warehouse workers who are unionized and have a voice in the workplace. Or he may want to demand that his suppliers in the Pacific Rim give a raise to the slave laborers who make the shoes he sells. An island of "fun" surrounded by an ocean of poverty does not create a sustainable economy. History has taught us this lesson repeatedly.

Curtis Martin
Franklin, Tennessee

PLACING BLAME

Sarah A. Topol's extraordinary article *From Russia With Code* (May) is the reason I'm writing my first letter to PLAYBOY.

I enjoyed the revelation that within America's honest and independent information business, only PLAYBOY has addressed how identity theft helps fund terrorism. Perversely, this white-collar crime is equally opportunistic: It affects the government, commerce and individual Americans. Topol's article opens our eyes to what leaders in Washington and on Wall Street inadvertently spin as facts when they blame the users of their financial systems for causing the very crime their vulnerable designs enable.

Harold Chanin
Boynton Beach, Florida

COVER ART

They say it's what's on the inside that counts, but your May 2014 cover is one of the most stylish and arresting I've seen in years. When I'm done appreciating the pages that follow, I may have to frame it.

Rick Barr
Columbus, Ohio

FIGHTING MATTERS

Eric Raskin does a great job of summarizing the current dreary state of heavyweight boxing ("Down for the Count," *Talk*, May). Where did the American heavyweights go? Some of them, including Ken Norton Jr. [son of former heavy-

weight champion Ken Norton Sr.], chose to channel their talents into the world of professional football instead. It's ironic that medical evidence now suggests that football, in addition to crippling your limbs, can also damage your brain. If boxing fans are lucky, some hungry young person is taking note of this and will someday put some excitement back into the sport's most lucrative weight division.

Paul Corning
Madison, Wisconsin

SECOND HELPING

I have two words to say about *Julie and the Warlord* by B.J. Novak (January/February) and the *Sheer Delight* cover story (March): That's all? Perhaps the funniest fiction and certainly the sexiest pictorial of the year, both over before they hardly even started. Let me offer two other words: More, please!

Dave Gorham
Houston, Texas

ALPHABET SOUP

The photography in the A to Z special edition (May) is, in traditional PLAYBOY fashion, magnificent. But I don't understand the purpose of many of the essays, a collection that, aside from its alphabetical organization, seems schizophrenic. If I want to read about someone discovering her pubic bush for the first time, I'll go online and read Jezebel.

Andy Dunker
Naperville, Illinois

ON THE SHOULDERS OF OLD MEDIA

As a daily visitor to one or more Gawker sites, I won't deny that Nick Denton (*Playboy Interview*, March) has a compelling product, but as an "expensive" newspaper journalist, I have to wonder what he thinks will replace us in the media food chain. What of the fact that the biggest story of 2013, the NSA-spying leaks, was broken by an insider (Edward Snowden) reaching out to a journalist (Glenn Greenwald) independent of his publication, *The Guardian*? That could be how things work, but how does Greenwald, who has since launched a website of his own, become an institution unto himself without first standing on the shoulders of old-fashioned, hide-bound institutions of the old media? I'm hoping my publishers figure out how to do something like what Denton is doing and that it generates enough money to hire even more journalists to send after even more stories.

Andy Grimm
Gary, Indiana



DIANE KRUGER

THE BRIDGE

DEMIAN BICHIR

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every border



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Afterhours

- JULY/AUGUST -
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BECOMING ATTRACTION

AUDRINA PATRIDGE

• "I ABSOLUTELY love being physical and pushed out of my comfort zone," says Audrina Patridge, the former reality-TV star who has since graduated to an adrenaline-pumping gig hosting NBC's *1st Look*. Whether rappelling down waterfalls in Maui or defying gravity at space camp, the beachy brunette tackles each challenge with aplomb. "Every time I conquer a fear, I feel wiser," she says. "This is me living life to the fullest."

Photography by MICHAEL EDWARDS/
MEINMYPLACE.COM

GAME CHANGERS

IT'S ALL GOOD FUN UNTIL SOMEONE BECOMES DELIRIOUS. INSIDE THE MIND-BENDING WORLD OF MARATHON GAMERS



Two days after Valentine's Day in 2013, cat psychiatrist and self-employed dog walker George Leutz found himself

approaching the Valley of Death. If that sounds like something out of a video game, it's because it is: The term refers to the hazy place marathon video game players reach during their third nonstop night of playing, and Leutz had been staring into the pixelated world of *Q*bert*, a 1982 arcade classic, for more than 60 hours. By 68 and a half hours he had finally broken the previous high score, a record that had stood for almost 30 years. He celebrated with a quick champagne toast, then returned to the game. By the time his last life was spent, the 38-year-old had played for 84 hours and 48 minutes in total.

His marathon session may sound crazy, but Leutz is one of a growing number of gamers who are exploring the outer edges of what's possible with a joystick, testing their gaming skills and bodily limits all at once.

Like Leutz, Victor Sandberg gained

notoriety in December with a 71-hour, 41-minute *Missile Command* streak. With more than 103 million points, he shattered his own previous record of 81.8 million. Marathon gaming messes with the mind, and Sandberg experienced a strange, sleep-deprived journey to the top. "Forty hours in, I thought the cities at the bottom of the screen had become female volleyball players," he says. "In my second marathon, I heard the sound of my computer change and began to think someone had hacked it to mess with the record attempt. Occasionally I've felt like someone is standing behind and spying on me."

Marathon gaming, popular throughout the 1980s and 1990s, is facing a resurgence mostly attributable to the 2007 documentary *The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters*, which follows Steve Wiebe's attempt to take the *Donkey Kong* high-score record from rival Billy Mitchell. "Many of the current marathoners were inspired by it," says Patrick Scott Patterson, a video game expert and commentator. "It made them re-aware of it, and they thought, Let me go try to take down a record."

Sandberg saw the film and wanted to

go for a record in *Donkey Kong* or *Pac-Man* but settled on *Missile Command*, the only machine he could find in his town ("conveniently placed in my living room so all the girls can see it," he jokes). Leutz chose *Q*bert* because he can eat while playing. Guinness World Records allots five minutes of rest per hour if a player can afford to lose lives as the game continues without him. On his fifth record attempt, Leutz played for nine hours, then slept for 45 minutes. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

Still, Sandberg remains insatiable. "I'm probably going to shoot for the magical 100-hour mark, but when that happens only time will tell," he says.

For now, each is happy with his achievements. Setting a marathon record is nothing less than draining. After his *Q*bert* odyssey, while answering questions from fans on a live stream, Leutz was asked what he would do next. "I'm going to Donkey Kong Country," the delirious man responded, donning a pair of novelty glasses with springy eyes he had saved for the occasion. But he was fading. A friend soon drove him home, where he passed out on a couch for 12 straight hours, Valley of Death be damned.—Noah Davis

ENTER INITIALS HERE

THE RECORDS THAT MATTER. TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT



Donkey Kong

Score: 1,138,600
By: Hank Chien

→ Only four men have held the record. Chien broke Steve Wiebe's mark in December 2010 and has improved on his own figure four times since then.



Frogger

Score: 970,440
By: Michael Smith

→ The more famous number is 896,980, posted by Pat Laffaye in 2010. It beat the 860,630 held by George Costanza on a *Seinfeld* episode.



Ms. Pac-Man

Score: 933,580
By: Abdner Ashman

→ Patterson claims that Ashman's record, set in 2006, will stand as long as players fear the game's randomness, such as the variable value of fruits.



Galaga

Score: 15,999,990
By: Stephen Krogman

→ The record for one of the most popular games ever has stood since 1989. Patterson awaits a worthy challenger. "That's the big pink elephant in the room."

LET THERE BE LIGHT

ARE LASERS THE KEY TO BIGGER ORGASMS FOR WOMEN? A FLORIDA DOCTOR STUMBLES ONTO THE NEXT BIG THING

D

Dr. Ralph Zipper had an orgasm problem, if you can call it that. Namely, patients who had been treated at the Florida urogynecologist's practice were reporting explosive orgasms. That feedback got the good doctor thinking.

"As scientists treating overactive bladder disease, we weren't expecting to hear about raging orgasms," explains Zipper with a laugh.

Curious about the cause of these orgasms, Zipper and his colleagues traced the source to clinical trials for his laser treatment procedure for overactive bladders. Photobiomodulation (using light to affect tissue) is useful in treating infections and reducing pain, and Zipper routinely uses lasers to stimulate blood flow and relax muscles in patients during treatment. Based on his patients' reports, Zipper realized he and his team had accidentally discovered laser Viagra.

While the little blue pill amplifies the amount of a blood-flow-increasing chemical called cGMP by blocking the body from breaking it down, pulsed infrared light increases the body's level of the same chemical by sending its production into overdrive right where you need it.

To put the science to use, Zipper spent three years engineering the Afterglow, the first laser-equipped sex toy. Okay, the Afterglow doesn't contain any actual lasers, but it uses internal near-infrared and visible blue and red light diodes—lesser versions of the deep-penetrating lasers its inventor uses in his practice. The \$249 silicone sex toy includes 15 different vibration modes and 85 unique wave combinations and is powered by a lithium-ion battery that can be charged through a USB port. But PulseWave O mode is what sets it apart. On this eight-minute setting, the Afterglow cycles through four distinct two-minute-long vibration patterns while pulsing the cGMP-inducing near-infrared light. The

key is patience. As precious seconds and minutes pass, blood flow, sensitivity and pleasure build exponentially. For a woman who can wait seven minutes to climax, which won't be easy, it's worth the payoff.

"Of course you can use it straight out of the box," Zipper says. "But if you want to have some real fun, you have to go slow."
—Caroline McLean

BEST SUMMER EVER

2014

ALL THE PARTIES,
DRINKS, EVENTS AND
RANDOM STUFF YOU
NEED TO KICK SUMMER
INTO HIGH GEAR

By Nora O'Donnell

1 SPORTS



WORLD CUP

June 12–July 13

• This summer, worship the world's greatest sport at its mecca. Brazil has more championships than any other country, so if its team loses, prepare for a riot of epic proportions. Expect an even bigger riot if Brazil wins. Either way, brace yourself for booze and *vuvuzelas* to last you until Russia hosts the games in 2018 (fifa.com/worldcup).

NO.2

Chrome Spring LTD Bag

• Outdoor fests are cracking down on bag size, so store your essentials (phone, wallet, name of a good lawyer) in this festival-approved weatherproof bag (\$85, chromeindustries.com). It can be worn around the chest or waist—though

the latter might edge into fanny-pack territory—and its reflective straps make you easier to spot at night. Bonus: The quick-release seatbelt-style buckle comes equipped with a bottle opener—perfect for making friends with the ladies next to you.





EXIT FESTIVAL

July 10–13

• Head to Serbia for the most acclaimed music festival in Europe at the bossiest of locations: an 18th century fortress on the Danube (\$160–\$362, exitfest.org). This year's headliners include Disclosure, Damon



Albarn (Blur, Gorillaz) and Jamiroquai, plus a slew of impressive DJ battles (Carl Cox vs. Danny Tenaglia, Afrojack vs. Quintino). Want more? Belgrade's buzzing club scene is just over an hour away.



MATTERS NOW | TALK



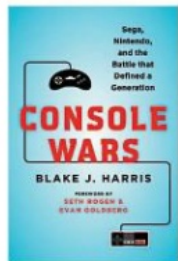
TECH

8

HTC ONE (M8)

• Meet your summer sidekick. The HTC One (M8) crafts an HD screen that's perfect for watching video during flight delays and enough power to tackle all your Instagramming into a brushed-metal casing that can survive any party (\$699, htc.com).

BOOK 4



CONSOLE WARS

• All this jet-setting calls for some in-flight reading. Geek out with Blake J. Harris's *Console Wars*, the true tale of how Sega, once a struggling arcade company, rose from the ashes to challenge Nintendo's monopolistic hold on the video game industry. A film version is already in the works, with Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg tapped to write and direct.

NO.5

Pitchfork Music Festival

July 18–20

• Lollapalooza's 2014 lineup is a big snooze. Opt for Pitchfork (\$60–\$130, pitchforkmusicfestival.com)—Chicago's smaller, hipper, cheaper festival—instead. We're far more pumped to see alternagod Beck (pictured), Detroit rapper Danny Brown, disco king Giorgio Moroder (fresh off Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories*) and the reunion of shoegazer legends Slowdive.



NO.6

Ancho Reyes Chile Liqueur

• Amp up your margarita with this spicy Mexican liqueur made from dried poblanos. Pour three-quarter ounce liqueur, 1.5 ounces silver tequila, one ounce fresh lime juice and half ounce agave nectar in a shaker. Add ice, shake and strain into glass.



JEFF KOONS EXHIBIT

June 27–October 19

• Never before has a museum dedicated a giant retrospective to Koons, and for good reason: His installations are too big and expensive. But New York City's Whitney Museum (whitney.org) is up to the task. His work will dominate the Breuer building and will mark the Whitney's last exhibit before it moves to its new home.

NO.9

Anantara Doha Island Resort & Spa

• Can't afford a private island? The next best thing may be the Anantara in Doha, Qatar. This luxury resort, which is accessed by speedboat (Bond, James Bond), comes equipped with plunge pools, wave

simulators, tennis courts, four restaurants, a movie theater, a bowling alley, a wellness center and a nine-hole putting course. As of press time, room prices were still TBA, but check anantara.com/doha for updates.



GAME OF THRONES TOURING EXHIBITION

August 16–September 1

• Thousands have died to sit on the Iron Throne, but all you have to do is wait in line at the final stop of the *GOT* exhibition in Vancouver (connect.hbo.com/events/game-thrones-exhibit). Take your seat on

the throne, check out set costumes and weapons, wave at Jaime Lannister's severed hand (and its gold replacement) and virtually "scale" the wall at Castle Black. Sadly, a recreation of Lord Baelish's brothels is not included.

JERKY BOYS

WITH QUALITY BEEF AND BOLD FLAVOR, JERKY IS BETTER THAN EVER

• Paleo warriors, urban cowboys and frequent fliers, rejoice: Beef jerky, that most manly and portable snack, is going the way of so much modern sustenance—which is to say, artisanally awesome. We're not talking the standard-issue, MSG-laden truck-stop strips of reformulated bovine foodstuffs. The best of this beefy boom is recognizably cut from a cow (often grass-fed), expertly seasoned and tasty enough that you'll want to eat it even when you're not on the road. Here are three brands worthy of your desk or dash.

HERE'S THE BEEF



Kings County

→ We love the range of bold flavors (including Sichuan ginger) and the jerky-of-the-month subscription. All grass-fed, all the time.

• kingscountyjerky.com



Jack Link's

→ Of course there's a limited-edition sriracha-flavored jerky, and these guys make it—as well as a complex and smoky Small Batch line.

• jacklinks.com



SlantShack

→ Customize your grass-fed beef online with unusual marinades such as pale ale, spicy or garlicky rubs and tangy or sweet glazes.

• slantshackjerky.com

STRIP TEASE

Kings County's exquisitely balanced flavors include classic cracked pepper and Korean barbecue.

THE CRISP REFRESHING TASTE OF BUD LIGHT.

**NEVER FILLING.
ALWAYS FULFILLING.**



**BUD
LIGHT**

SMOOTH &
REFRESHING
12 FL. OZ. BEER
A-B, ST. LOUIS, MO



ENJOY RESPONSIBLY
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JUST BREW IT

TOP-SHELF COFFEE COCKTAILS ARE SUMMER'S MOST ENERGIZING DRINKS

The coffee cocktail is a grown man's energy drink: It's spiked with caffeine without saying "fist pumping" or "skate park." At New York City's Eleven Madison Park, bar manager Leo Robitschek's delicious and energizing Anthora cocktail is named for New York's iconic Greek diner coffee and is far more refreshing. As Robitschek says, the combination of coffee, aquavit and Averna tastes like "candied orange with fennel and chocolate."

—Kyle Kramer

ANTHORA COCKTAIL

- ½ oz. simple syrup
- ½ oz. Krogstad aquavit
- ¾ oz. cold-brewed coffee or prebottled Stumptown
- ¾ oz. lemon juice
- ¾ oz. Carpano Punt e Mes vermouth
- 1 oz. Averna liqueur

→ Combine all ingredients over ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake vigorously. Serve in a pilsner or highball glass over crushed ice. Garnish with mint leaf and grapefruit wedge.

Photography by
CRAIG CUTLER



For the smoothest results, cold brew coffee with a Toddy system—or buy bottled Stumptown.





FOLLOW THE BUNNY



/playboy



@playboy



@playboy



playboy



+playboy

GO WITH THE FLOW

COME SUMMER, THE RULES OF HAIR CARE CHANGE DRASTICALLY. HERE, IN FLOWCHART FORM, IS HOW YOU CAN STYLISHLY BEAT THE HEAT

1

GO SHORT

• You want to spend more time enjoying the beach, sun and barbecues and less time sitting in a barber's chair. Plus, you want to stay cool. It's time to go short on the sides and a little (just a little) long on top. Tell your barber to trim the base of your hair with number-two-guard clippers, do a scissor fade on the sides and keep two to three inches on top. Also ask him to cut into the top and take out some of the weight. Do it right and this haircut can last from July 4 to Labor Day.



BE DONE WITH THE BUN

→ The man bun is on the rise, so we just have to say it: Unless you're Jared Leto, a samurai or a Sikh, you really don't have an excuse to wear one (which is basically an admission that long hair is impractical).



AND BALANCE THAT BEARD

→ We understand it took months to grow that big beard, but when you go short on top, it's best to go short on the bottom too. Unless, that is, you're James Harden of the Houston Rockets and have the skills to back up the swagger.

REACH THE BEACH

→ You know how your hair looks awesome after a dip in saltwater? Think of the ocean as Neptune's salon. Swim on a Saturday morning and rock that salty beach hair when you go out at night.



FIGHT THE FRIZZ

→ It's gonna get humid, and you don't want to look like you have a perm. Use Pilgrim's Classic Hair Tonic from Brooklyn Grooming, made with avocado and argan oil.

• Brooklyn Grooming Pilgrim's Classic Hair Tonic, \$29, brooklyngrooming.com

NOW DON'T WASH IT

2 We're not saying don't shower, but you should use shampoo only every other day. Otherwise, hot water—that's it. Every time you shampoo you strip out all the natural oils, which are basically nature's hair product. Once you embrace your natural self, you'll be surprised how little salon product you need.

But when you finally do wash it...



HOP TO IT

→ Go natural with this shampoo made with hops (the same ingredient that makes IPA beer so refreshingly bitter). Plus, it has coconut and olive oil to replenish the oil you just stripped out. Now you're all balanced again.

• Atlantic Farms hops shampoo, \$24, atlantic-farms.com



POOLSIDE

→ Lounging at a pool party has its perils: Hours of drinking in the sun exposes your hair and scalp to UV rays. Swimcap cream was designed for professional swimmers and contains SPF protection for your hair.

• Philip Kingsley Swimcap cream, \$35, philipkingsley.com

GET SLEEK CHIC

3 As your hair grows longer, you'll find you need more product to control it. Byrd pomade helps you slick the top down for a more tailored look when you're at the office and lets you comb it up for when you're going out at night.

• Byrd hair pomade, \$15, byrdhair.com





JUNGLE LOVE

GET SOME COLOR THIS SUMMER WITH TOUGH AND TROPICAL GRAPHIC PRINTS

• In the past few years superbright patterned clothes have become the madcap uniform of summer. We say leave the wackier stuff for the kids at the music festivals and Vegas pool parties, and wear something with a tropical jungle vibe. We're not talking baggy Hawaiian shirts but slimmed-down clothes like this lightweight bright linen camo shirt from LimoLand (\$290, shoplimoland.com). When going graphic, just be sure not to go head to toe with the look.



High Hat

→ Sometimes a baseball hat looks a little too sporty when you're hanging at the beach. This jungle bucket hat from Neff is crushable and packable and can be soaked in the water for low-tech AC.

• Neff jungle bucket hat, \$29, pacsun.com



Palm Squad

→ The Massachusetts company Penfield makes this zippable wallet, suitable for buying a round of drinks at any poolside bar—and for securing your cash and loose change should you get too tipsy.

• Lostville zip wallet, \$35, penfield.com



Get Shorty

→ These lightweight oxford cotton shorts from Gitman Vintage are loud and proud and made in the USA. With shorts this bold you should keep your shirt on the quiet side—as in a white tee.

• Bahia shorts, \$180, gitmanvintage.com

The coast of Puglia is dotted with blissfully untouristy fishing villages.

Polignano a Mare

Alberobello

Otranto

Santa Maria di Leuca

VIVA PUGLIA

VACATION LIKE AN ITALIAN IN THE RUGGED FAR SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY, WHERE THE WINE IS STRONG AND THE WATER IS FINE

If your idea of an Italian vacation means doing as the Romans do, then maybe it's time to turn your back on Tuscany and head down to the rugged coast of Puglia, Italy's boot heel. Although it clearly flickers on the Italophile radar, Puglia is, as of yet, an unspoiled Italian vacation destination where you can eat seafood pulled just hours earlier from the crystalline waters below, relax in outdoor bars and drive more than 500 miles of coastline road stretching along two seas. So catch a flight to Bari (Alitalia offers connecting flights through Milan and Rome), rent the Italian ride of your particular fantasy (budget allowing), whether it's a Lamborghini Aventador Roadster from Luxe of Italy or a Fiat 500 from Europcar, and get ready to experience life under a different Italian sun.



Flanked by two seas, Puglia always offers superfresh seafood.



1.

→ A road trip along the coast of Puglia starts, for all intents and purposes, in Polignano a Mare, an ancient fishing village perched high over the Adriatic Sea about 20 miles south of Bari. Feast on fried *triglie* (mullet)

the size of french fries at Il Bastione restaurant and take a leisurely afternoon swim with the locals at the town's public beach. Sleep like a caveman at the 25-room Hotel Grotta Palazzese (A), built into the limestone cliffs above the massive cave the town is famous for. Cars aren't necessary within Polignano's walls, so park your wheels outside and let your inner village dweller out.



A



B

2.

→ Enjoy the gently winding roads that twist through groves of Italy's oldest olive trees to the 14th century city of Alberobello. This UNESCO World Heritage site is known for its whitewashed, Hobbit-like houses called *trulli* (B), constructed using a prehistoric

mortarless building technique that was the original drywall. Head south and catch the Litoranea Salentina, or coast road, and make like an Italian film star as you cruise to Santa Maria di Leuca, the very tip of Italy's boot heel. The Pugliese call it *fine terra* ("end of the earth"), and they say that on a clear night you can see the lights of Greece across the water.

3.

GET PRIMITIVO

• Don't make the rookie mistake of ordering Chianti. The local hearty is the grapey red variety *primitivo*, which is the same as *zinfandel*.



→ After stopping for gelato in the ancient port city of Otranto, stretch your legs and your imagination on an hour-long walk deep into the magical Zinzulusa sea cave, one of the largest Italy has to offer. Enjoy a leisurely seafood lunch with the spray of the Adriatic kissing your face at the family-run Lo Scalo. In addition to delicious, simply prepared seafood, a gallery of framed photos on the restaurant's wall will prove you really are living the life of an Italian movie star. Too much wine? Lo Scalo also has apartments for rent. —Carolynn Carreño



TONIGHT WE
Tanqueray



PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
TANQUERAY LONDON DRY GIN. 100% GRAIN NEUTRAL SPIRITS. 47.3% ALC/VOL. ©2014 IMPORTED BY CHARLES TANQUERAY & CO., NORWALK, CT.



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OF ROYALTY EDWARD TANKERAY FOR GREETING FRIENDS WITH GENUINITY AND
THE KING'S TOES WITH FEROCITY



GIN JOINTS JUMP AGAIN

180 YEARS LATER AND TANQUERAY STILL
KICKS OFF THE NIGHT.



TONIGHT WE
Tanqueray



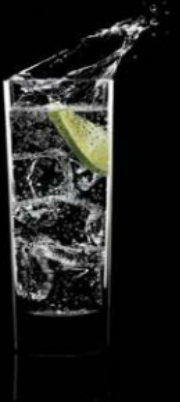
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OF HIS HIGHNESS EDWARD TANQUERAY



THE DISTILLERY BLENDED WITH PURITY AND
THE KING'S FAVORITE WITH FAVORITE

**180 YEARS LATER AND TANQUERAY IS STILL KICKING OFF
THE NIGHT RIGHT. GRAB A BOTTLE AND LET THE NIGHT ROLL
WITH THE TASTE OF THESE CLASSIC COCKTAILS.**



TANQUERAY & TONIC

THROW SOME ROCKS IN A HIGHBALL THEN SLICE A LIME AND PLACE ON TOP.
ADD 1.25 OZ OF TANQUERAY® LONDON DRY & 3 OZ OF TONIC.



TANQUERAY MARTINI

SPLASH 2-4 DASHES OF DRY VERMOUTH ON ICE AND STRAIN. THEN POUR
1.25 OZ OF TANQUERAY® LONDON DRY GIN ONTO ICE. STIR THEN DRAIN INTO
A GLASS AND DECK WITH AN OLIVE.



TANQUERAY NEGRONI

IN AN ICE-FILLED ROCKS GLASS, MIX 1 OZ TANQUERAY® LONDON DRY, .75 OZ
BITTER ITALIAN APERITIF, AND .75 OZ ITALIAN SWEET VERMOUTH. STIR IT UP
AND HANG AN ORANGE PEEL ON THE SIDE.



TANQUERAY WHITE LADY

MIX 1.25 OZ TANQUERAY® LONDON DRY, .5 OZ FRESH LEMON JUICE AND .5 OZ
ORANGE LIQUEUR IN A COCKTAIL SHAKER WITH ICE AND SHAKE. STRAIN INTO A
CHILLED COCKTAIL GLASS. SLIP IN A LEMON TWIST FOR GOOD MEASURE.

HEAD CASES

MOTORCYCLES ARE MARVELS OF ENGINEERING AND STYLE. HELMETS FINALLY CATCH UP

• Somewhere between the mid-1970s and today, motorcycle helmets crashed and burned. The classic designs that made helmets almost as enviable as the bikes themselves gave way to headwear that took more style cues from *Transformers* than Triumph Bonneville. Ditch those airbrushed dragons for one of these helmets and protect your skull and your sense of dignity.



1.
Suit Up

→ Paris-based Ruby built the Belvedere with a quilted interior, an articulated visor and enough style to compete with your favorite suit.

ateliersruby.com, \$1,200

2.
Lift Off

→ Denim company Diesel used helicopter-pilot gear as the inspiration for the AGV Hi-Jack's composite-fiber shell and flip-up visor.

agv.com, \$219

3.
New Classic

→ Want certified retro style? Modeled after the first helmet Bell produced in 1954, the Bullitt is updated with modern materials.

bellhelmets.com, \$400

4.
Built to Last

→ Biltwell makes quality helmets that ooze throw-back style. Swap out the visor on the Bonanza LE Spectrum to up the badass level.

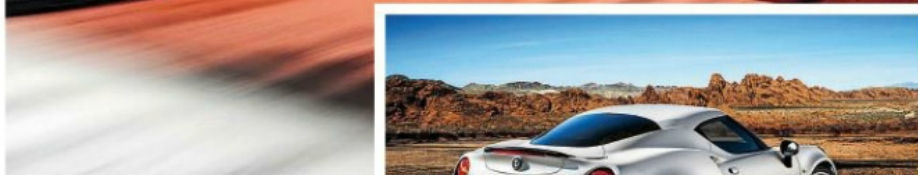
biltwellinc.com, \$130



ALFA DOG

THE FANTASTIC 4C CHARIOTS
ALFA ROMEO BACK INTO THE U.S.

Alfa Romeo enthusiasts (the “Alfisti”) have suffered years of rumors that the Italian company would return to our shores. Now, for the first time since leaving in 1995, the marque will be reborn here, and what a way to kick off the fun. The new 4C is everything a Euro sports car should be, with an emphasis on light weight and handling: two seats, a carbon-fiber frame that reduces overall heft to just 2,200 pounds, a midmounted 1.8-liter turbo four-cylinder and a body as sexy as a Milan fashion model. Pictured right: the racy two-spoke wheel and competition-inspired seats. Unveiled in New York in April, the 4C will be sold through select Chrysler dealerships, starting around \$55,000. Can it transcend the mediocrity that forced Alfa from the States 20 years ago? Count on it. Five hundred will come to the U.S. market starting this summer, and they’re going fast.



Stats

• Alfa Romeo 4C

Engine: 1.8-liter turbo I4

Horsepower: 240




Torque: 258 ft.-lbs.

Zero to 60: 4.5 sec.

MPG: TBD

Price: about \$55K (base)

WILD RIDE
THE RISE, FALL AND RESURRECTION OF ALFA ROMEO

1915	1930s	1967	1980s	2014
 Birth → Nicola Romeo takes over Milan car company Alfa, eventually adding his name.	Victory → Enzo Ferrari spearheads a 24 Hours of Le Mans dynasty, cementing Alfa's reputation in Europe.	 America → A Duetto Spider plays a supporting role in The Graduate; America falls in lust with Alfa Romeo.	Failure → Poor machinery (pictured: the Arna) sinks the company's reputation; Alfa pulls out in 1995.	 Triumphant Return → The 4C debuts in New York, with more models to follow.

SUMMERTIME ROLLS

AMERICA IS THE ULTIMATE PARAMOUR THIS TIME OF YEAR. ADORE IT ON THIS BUCKET LIST OF AMAZING ROADS



1. Pacific Coast Highway, California

Best vehicle
Porsche 911 Targa

→ Tackle Big Sur in the Targa, this season's hottest convertible. Stunning ocean vistas on one side, redwood forest on the other. Stop for a cheeseburger at the iconic Nepenthe—just don't let the seagulls snag your fries.

2. Blue Ridge Parkway, Virginia

Best vehicle
1935 Packard Twelve Roadster

→ Not only is this 469-mile parkway through the Appalachians in Virginia and

North Carolina breathtaking, it's also a trip back in time. Opened in the 1930s as a Works Progress Administration project under FDR, the scenery hasn't changed much. Drive it in a topless 1935 Packard for maximum effect.

3. Kancamagus Highway, New Hampshire

Best vehicle
2015 Subaru WRX STI

→ They love their Subarus in New England. But there's nothing crunchy about the 2015 WRX STI, the cheapest supercar performance money can buy (\$34,500). What a way to

wind through New Hampshire's White Mountains. Bonus: the famous Albany covered bridge.

4. Seward Highway, Alaska

Best vehicle
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG

→ Experience this byway through Alaska's Chugach National Forest with the 577-horsepower of Mercedes-Benz's newest AMG luxury performance sedan and you will have truly lived. The road is a series of bridges (with the Alaska Railroad winding beneath) and bends that beg for throttle. The drive ends in Anchorage, where a martini at

Sub Zero Bistro awaits.

5. Rubicon Trail, California

Best vehicle
Jeep Rubicon

→ This off-road mountain route just west of Lake Tahoe is so craggy, Jeep named its rugged Rubicon after it. Power through 22 legendary miles of rough Sierra Nevada trails and you are officially a badass.

6. Million Dollar Highway, Colorado

Best vehicle
McLaren P1

→ If ever there was a "killer" drive, this is it. Roar through this scenic mountain stretch from Montrose to

Silverton, winding along steep cliffs—no guardrails—in the supercar of the moment: the \$1.15 million, 217 mph hybrid P1. Breathtaking? For sure. Dangerous? Possibly, but it's worth it.

7. All Roads Leading to Sturgis, South Dakota

Best vehicle
Harley-Davidson Fat Bob

→ Of course Lynyrd Skynyrd will rock the 74th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally when the legendary biker bash runs from August 4 to 10. Glide up to the all-you-can-eat biker breakfast buffet in style on the new 103.1-cubic-inch Harley Fat Bob.



• As T.S. Eliot wrote, "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." Here we've compiled a short list of must-see roads, matched with the best machinery to explore them. Now get out of town!



SCHOOL OF ROCK

AN ACADEMY FOR ROCK-AND-ROLL TOUR BUS OPERATORS

→ Chip Huffman is the man behind Nashville's Celebrity Bus Drivers Academy, the first school of its kind. So, Chip, what's a day in the life of a rock-tour bus driver like? "Sleeping all day while the band and crew work and driving all night while they sleep. But driving is only 10 percent of the job. The rest is dealing with the personalities that come with this kind of work, handling maintenance and keeping the bus spick-and-span." Huffman says drivers earn from \$30,000 to more than \$100,000.

How do they handle the sex and drugs that go with life on the road? "The area behind the driver is the home of the passengers. As long as they're not damaging that home, leave 'em alone."

When asked about the craziest debauchery he's heard of on tour, Huffman recounts tales we cannot print here. Let's just say cleanup can require plenty of latex gloves.

More info at huffman-ricer.com.



MOVIE OF THE MONTH

DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

By Stephen Rebell

• In the postapocalyptic epic *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, the sequel to the 2011 hit *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, a pocket of human survivors searching for an electrical power source finds more than they bargained for in Muir Woods: a utopian simian society led by ape-revolution chief Caesar.

Set a decade after the action of the previous film and starring Gary Oldman (subject of this month's *Playboy Interview*), Jason Clarke, Judy Greer and Keri Russell, *Dawn* is a showcase for actor and motion-capture maestro Andy Serkis. "Caesar has managed to galvanize all the apes, and he now

leads them in an egalitarian way," says Serkis. "One of the joys and challenges of this movie is seeing all the different apes communicate in a common language in very specific and logical ways. It's only 10 years later, so we don't all chatter away philosophically. As actors we had to work out combinations of sign language, gestures and human speech. You know that the humans and apes are heading for massive conflict, but it's a story about empathy. It leaves us with a choice when it comes to survival. Either you're open to collaboration or you're closed to it—to the detriment of others. Ultimately you'll see some cause for optimism by the end of the movie."



▲ Courtney Palm

TEASE FRAME

→ Courtney Palm looks good enough to eat in the crime flick *Sushi Girl* (pictured). See her next in *The Purge: Anarchy*, in which all crime—including murder—is legal one night a year.

BLU-RAY OF THE MONTH

TWIN PEAKS: THE ENTIRE MYSTERY

By Robert B. DeSalvo

Fans of David Lynch and Mark Frost's cult TV series about a lumber town shattered after the murder of Laura Palmer can now buy both seasons and the theatrical prequel in one HD set. Follow agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) as he hunts Laura's killer in the supernatural town teeming with out-of-this-world characters and cherry pie. **Best extras:** 90 minutes of deleted scenes from *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* and new retrospectives. ★★★



MORE SUMMER CINEMA

SEVEN ADDITIONAL REASONS TO SIT IN A DARK THEATER AND KEEP YOUR COOL



Sex Tape

→ Things go haywire in this raunchy romp when Cameron Diaz and Jason Segel try to spice up their love life with a sex tape that goes viral.

Hercules

→ Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson stars as the mighty Greek demigod who goes head-to-head with mythological monsters.



Lucy

→ Scarlett Johansson plays a victimized drug mule who morphs into a superstrong avenger in this drama directed by Luc Besson.

REASONS TO STAY INSIDE THIS SUMMER

By Josef Adalian

WELCOME TO SWEDEN

• Boy meets girl, boy falls for girl, boy moves to Sweden to be with girl. Hilarity ensues? Maybe. Culture shock? Definitely. This half-hour comedy is from executive producer Amy Poehler and stars her brother Greg, on whose life the show is based. Bring on the Ikea jokes.



BOJACK HORSEMAN

Netflix

→ This 12-episode animated Hollywood satire turns Will Arnett into a washed-up 1990s sitcom star attempting a comeback. One more thing: He's a horse. Aaron Paul and Amy Sedaris also supply voices.



EXTANT

• Halle Berry plays an astronaut who returns to Earth after a year-long solo mission and discovers she may be carrying an alien baby. And since this is from the mind of Steven Spielberg, she also, of course, has a robot kid. Sounds cheesy, looks amazing.



SHARKNADO 2: THE SECOND ONE

Syfy

→ Ian Ziering and Tara Reid return to save the world from flying fish in the follow-up to last summer's camp spectacular. The premiere of the original *Sharknado* actually drew *meh* ratings, but the Twitter frenzy surrounding it turned the absolutely awful movie into a pop-culture phenomenon. Part deux features as many kitschy celeb cameos as a *Love Boat* episode, including Andy Dick, Judd Hirsch and Kelly Osbourne. Is it too much to hope for Charo too?



THE STRAIN

• Guillermo del Toro teams with *Lost*'s Carlton Cuse for an action thriller that mashes up two crowd-pleasing genres: vampires and killer viruses. Based on del Toro's books, the series stars Corey Stoll (*House of Cards*) as a Centers for Disease Control investigator trying to halt the epidemic before it turns Earth into a planet of bloodsuckers.



FX

THE HOTWIVES OF ORLANDO

Hulu Plus

→ If Bravo "reality" shows are your idea of hell on earth (and they should be), this Paul Scheer-produced send-up of the genre, starring *30 Rock*'s Kristen Schaal and *Happy Endings*'s Casey Wilson (pictured), should be comedy heaven.



THE '90S

• Rob Lowe narrates a three-part documentary looking back at the decade of Bill Clinton, Kurt Cobain and Kato Kaelin. Expect tons of clips strategically engineered to spark nostalgia, plus interviews with a slew of 1990s celebrities, including Vanilla Ice, Shannen Doherty, Arsenio Hall, Courtney Love and Roseanne Barr.



The Expendables 3

→ The action-stars reunion continues as Mel Gibson, Harrison Ford and Wesley Snipes join the gung-ho gang led by Sylvester Stallone.



Get On Up

→ Chadwick Boseman makes like a sex machine in the role of soul-music god and wild man James Brown in this biopic from the director of *The Help*.

Guardians of the Galaxy

→ Marvel's latest features an interstellar adventurer (Chris Pratt) who teams with a gun-slinging raccoon, a sentient tree and a slinky green alien.



Jupiter Ascending

→ Channing Tatum plays a genetically engineered assassin sent to kill janitor Mila Kunis in this sci-fi epic directed by the Wachowski siblings.

DAN AUERBACH TALKS

By Rob Tannenbaum

The Black Keys singer-guitarist on shorts, sports and what hell is like

Q: You usually wear a leather jacket and jeans. Do you ever wear shorts in the summer?

A: No, I'm in a rock-and-roll band, and you're not allowed to wear shorts—unless you're from L.A. and are in some kind of ska-metal band.

Q: Do you and drummer Patrick Carney have nicknames for each other?

A: Sometimes I refer to him as Depression Era Pat because he's so cheap. He'll buy a round at the bar—but only after he gets drunk. [Laughs]

Q: It seems like you hate to shave.

A: It's a pain in the ass if you're on tour. You never have a bathroom. You're

shaving with a broken beer bottle, inside a Port-A-Potty.

Q: You're from Akron. Will the Cleveland Browns win a Super Bowl in your lifetime?

A: With Cleveland sports you accept that it's never gonna happen. Our teams are a mirror on the lives of people in the city. You're born to lose, so you might as well enjoy it.

Q: On the title song of your new album, *Turn Blue*, you sing, "I really do hope you know/There could be hell below." What is hell for you?

A: First of all, it would resemble Gary, Indiana, and the only place to eat would be Rax Roast Beef.

Q: So you have a reason to stay out of hell.

A: Or Gary, Indiana. One or the other.



ALBUM OF THE MONTH

ARE WE THERE



• We don't have any inside dope on Sharon Van Etten's personal life, but based on *Are We There*, we'd be shocked to learn she's in a happy, loving relationship. Most of this New York singer's slow-moving fourth album seems to occur in the final, exhausted

moments of a breakup, which may be why her lyrics feel like private communications. (What could "Send in the owl" mean? Or "I washed your dishes, then I shit in your bathroom"?) Van Etten has a gift for dramatizing misery and stasis in her late-night ballads and can drag out the word *nothing* until it feels like a conversation that will never end. Her songs are soft but never gentle. **★★★★—R.T.**



GAME OF THE MONTH

WATCH DOGS

By Jason Buhrmester

• Finally, an outlet for our growing surveillance paranoia. With Chicago's technology—and people—under constant monitoring by the Central Operating System, hacker Aiden Pearce aims to take down the system. Use his

skills to access security cameras and cell phones or to manipulate trains and stoplights to aid your getaway. Multiplayer mode lets players hack into one another's games for added paranoia. (360, PC, PS3, PS4, Xbox One) **★★★★**

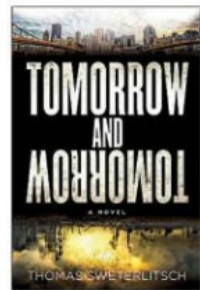
BOOK OF THE MONTH

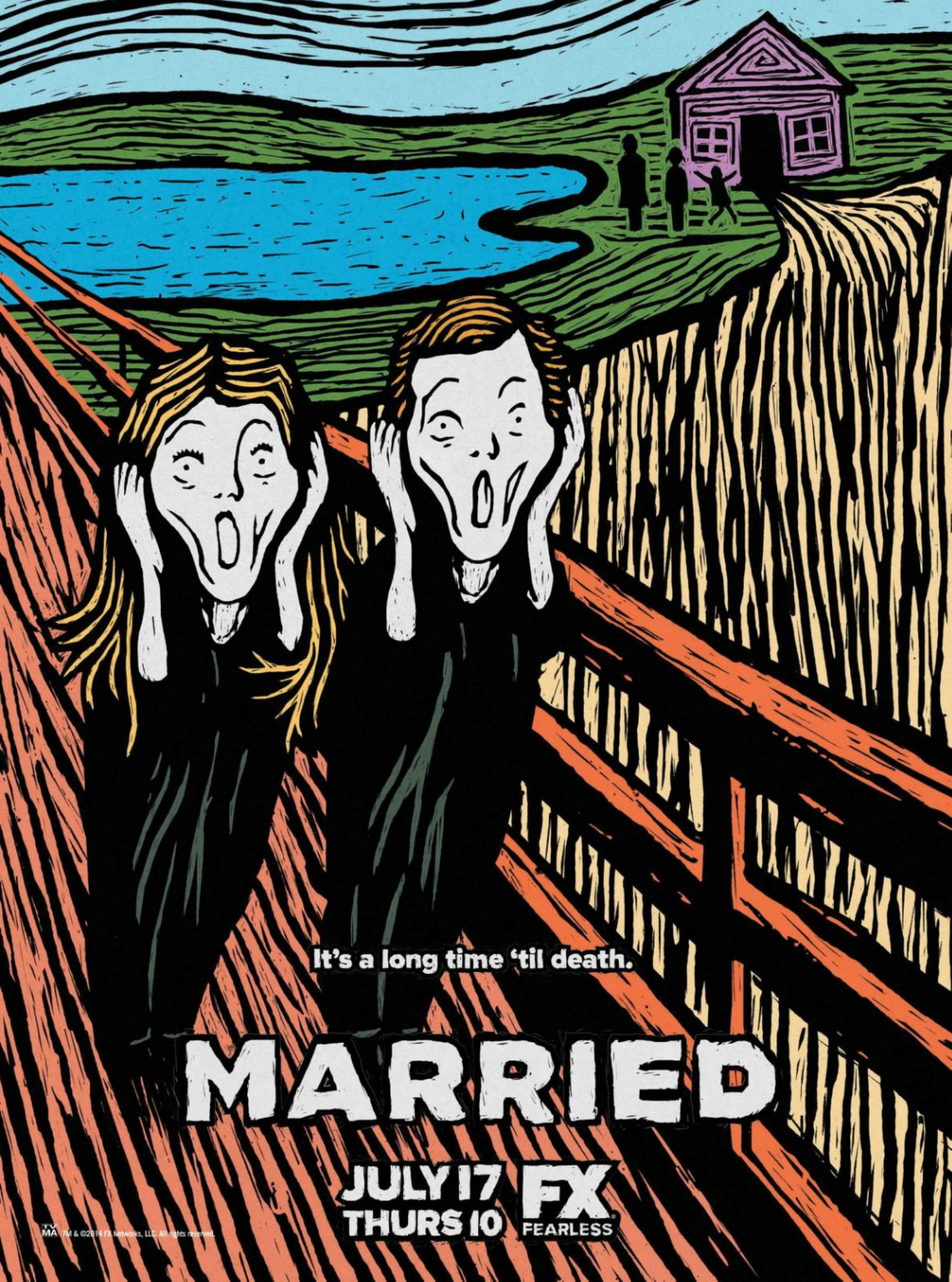
TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

By Cat Auer

Souls, like data, are easily corrupted. In Thomas Sweterlitsch's futuristic novel, marketers know what you want before you do. When the filthy-rich inventor of the Adware implant—think Google Brain instead of Glass—asks Dominic Blaxton for help, the disgraced insurance-claims investigator accepts. Tasked with finding out why all traces of a mysterious redhead are disappearing from the digital Archive, Blaxton uncovers evidence of brutal crimes that may involve his new boss. Before he realizes what he's gotten into, it becomes clear that he desperately needs to disconnect to save himself. The moral? Always read the user agreement.

★★★★½





It's a long time 'til death.

MARRIED

JULY 17
THURS 10

FX
FEARLESS

WORN OFF
FAIL

• One third of Americans who buy wearable gadgets stop using them within six months. 10% of American adults own some form of activity tracker. Half of them no longer use it.

7 YEARS

• Average length of time men keep a pair of underpants.



HACK-ONOMICS

- Average worth of a credit card number on the black market: **\$20-\$135**
- Average worth of social media credentials, such as on Facebook and Twitter: **\$16-\$325**, depending on the account.

\$39,050
• Median salary of an American athlete, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.



\$58,132
• Amount LeBron James earns for one quarter of a basketball game.

WHEEL COOL

• Percentage of women surveyed who said men who drive exotic sports cars are "show-offs":

56%

• Percentage of women who label these men as insecure:

17%

• Percentage of women who think men who drive trucks are better in bed:

8%

• Percentage of women who think men who drive sports cars are better in bed:

5%



GET HIP

• A study by the University of Leeds suggests that women with a hip span of **14.2 inches** or wider have more one-night stands. Women for whom one-night stands accounted for three out of every four sexual experiences had hips at least **0.8 inches** wider than those who had fewer one-night stands.



GOING DOWN

• **73% of men** and **60% of women** polled in a survey by Adam & Eve said they believe that giving and/or receiving oral sex is an important part of sex.

HOLY COW



• Percentage of U.S. adults who consider themselves "somewhat knowledgeable" about the Bible: **69%**

• Percentage of respondents who couldn't name the first five books of the Bible: **33%**



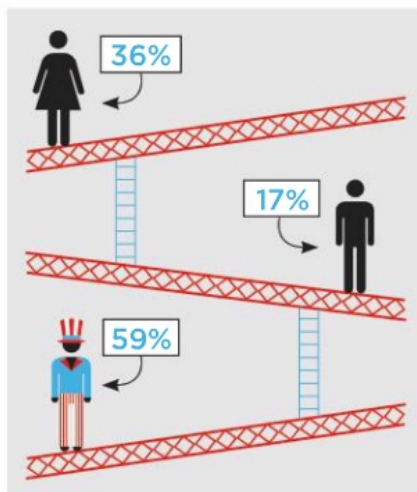
• Average acceptance rate for Ivy League schools in 2014: **8.9%**. Number of applicants for 600 jobs at a new Walmart location in Washington, D.C.: **23,000**, for an acceptance rate of **2.6%**.

SHE'S GOT GAME

• According to a survey by the Entertainment Software Association, more women over **18 (36%)** play video games than men under **18 (17%)**.

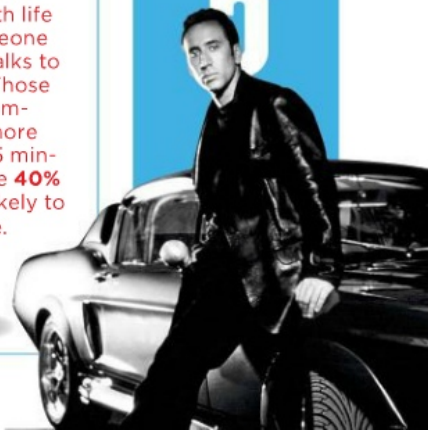
BONUS FACTS

- **59%** of Americans play video games.
- Average age of gamers: **31**.



ROAD TO NOWHERE

• Someone with a one-hour commute must earn **40%** more money to be as satisfied with life as someone who walks to work. Those who commute more than 45 minutes are **40%** more likely to divorce.



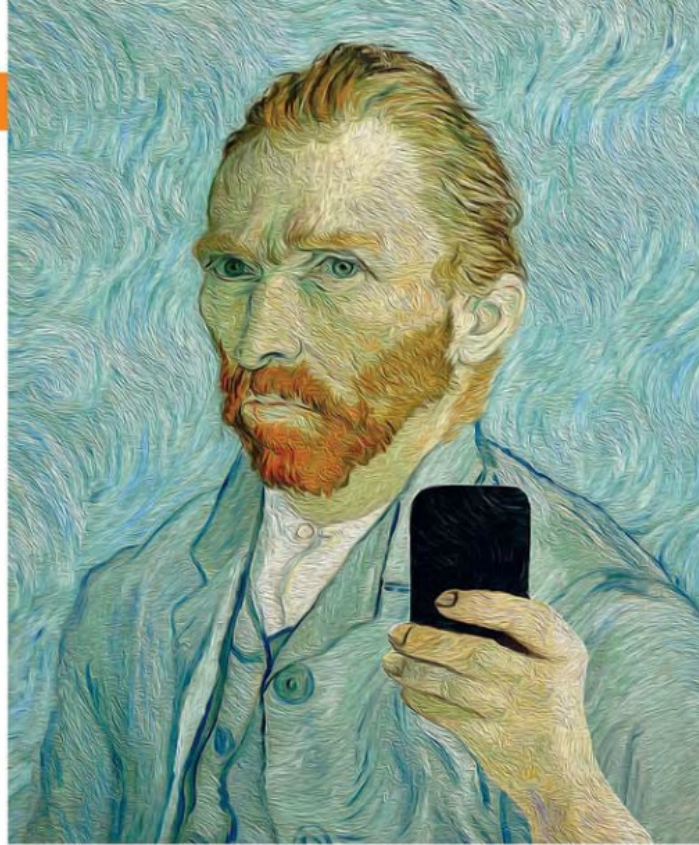
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NOT JUST
ANY GIRL
NEXT DOOR.

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NOT JUST ANY TEQUILA.





Since the camera was invented, all men have acted the same way about having their photos taken: annoyed. We're in the middle of hiking and our girlfriends make us stop to smile. Or we're at a stuffy restaurant that already makes us feel uncomfortable, and we have to pass the camera to the waiter so everyone can stare at us. The only time we ever want a picture of ourselves is during sex, and that's because we can make whatever face we want since it won't be in the frame.

Yet men—willingly, alone, without any pressure from women—are taking selfies. These were originally the bailiwick of club girls on Myspace: shot in the bathroom mirror, cleavage showing, head tilted, hand on hair, duck lips out. But now dudes are taking photos of themselves trying to look cool: sunglasses on, baseball cap askew, beer in hand. Or worse, at the gym. Or worse, in the bathroom mirror, shirtless.

Men are even taking selfies in front of other people, utterly unaware of the shame they should feel. A woman taking a selfie in public is inherently hot. She's telling the whole bar to look at her, signaling her confidence. It's why the ads for the latest *Grand Theft Auto* show a blonde in a red bikini taking a selfie in front of the Santa Monica Pier. After centuries of posing for male artists, that women can at last objectify themselves—presenting the image of themselves that they choose—is empowering. All of this is so layered and complex, I have no idea if I truly believe it or just want to encourage pretty girls to keep posting their Frisky Friday pictures on Twitter.

For a man, though, I am absolutely certain taking a selfie is a demonstration of insecurity. Because we have the luxury of not being constantly evaluated on our looks, it's pathetic to care too much. It's why the just-out-of-bed-hair look works so well for us. And facial scars. It's the reason no man has ever said, "Let me change into something more comfortable." Compared with women, we're already wearing something comfortable. If you walk into a woman's bathroom and she has hundreds of beauty products and a few photos of celebrities whose style she's copying, you accept it. If a woman walks into a guy's bathroom and it's teeming with products and photos of

Denmark at Nelson Mandela's funeral, while seated next to his wife. He did so many things wrong in that moment, Fox News almost exploded.

The reality for men is that the only people who want to see you staring into the lens are the same ones who wanted your class pictures: your parents, your grandparents and people who like to make fun of you.

According to a poll in the British newspaper *The Telegraph*, selfies are the most popular type of photograph. The third most popular tag on Instagram is #me. And men report taking more selfies than women. If men were meant to be looked at, we would have breasts.

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. You can take a selfie to capture yourself doing exceptionally manly activities. Catching a huge fish, killing a bear, liberating prisoners of war. The best selfies are of NFL players about to go into surgery. Yes, artists create self-portraits. But Vincent van Gogh didn't paint himself shirtless and flexing. He showed himself vulnerable and messed up. Though, honestly, his self-portraits would be a lot more interesting if he were holding up a giant marlin.

It's also fine to take selfies if you're gay, since you're doing it for other men. Gay men are indeed being constantly evaluated on their looks, so they're right to try to control their image. Yes, gay trends trickle down, like shaving your junk, wearing boxer briefs and being nice. But selfies should not be one of these trends.

Perhaps the most manly thing about me, other than my looks, is that I didn't own a camera until I was 32, when I got a phone that came with one. All my photos from high school until that point had been gifts from women. The urge to visually chronicle my own life seemed unheroic. A man looks forward, not backward. His memory is enough. When celebrities I interviewed asked if I wanted to pose with them, I turned them down because it felt too self-glorifying. Instead of celebrating myself, I let others celebrate me. None of them did, but at least I wasn't doing it myself.

So when websites ask me to include a photo of myself, they get the one from my driver's license. It shows how I really appear and requires no effort, and because it's nearly 10 years old I look great. See, we're all a little vain. The smart ones just try not to show it.

SELFIE MADNESS

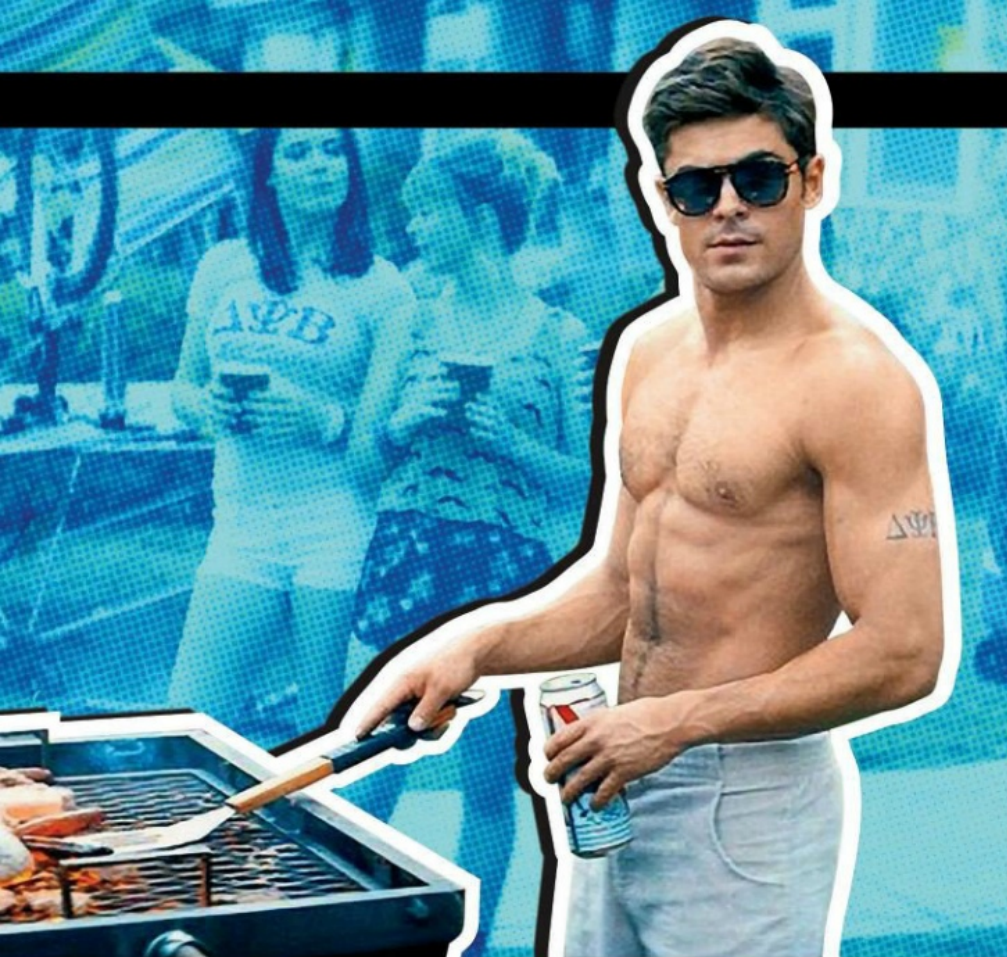
COME ON, GUYS. IS THERE ANYTHING LESS MANLY THAN POSTING A SELFIE?

BY JOEL STEIN

George Clooney's hair, she has a legal obligation to warn George Clooney.

In texts and on Snapchat men make the idiotic mistake of responding to a selfie with a selfie. The proper response to a woman sending you a sexy selfie is *not* a sexy selfie. The proper response is "You are an attractive woman. I would like to buy you dinner and shiny things."

A selfie is the modern equivalent of sitting for an oil portrait, which is done only by royalty, billionaire CEOs and conquerors. If Mark Zuckerberg's Instagram page is nothing but photos of him half-naked in the mirror, he's earned it. This, I have no doubt, is exactly what Vladimir Putin's page looks like. But the rest of us should put down the camera phone. The lowest point of Obama's presidency has been when he shot a selfie with the inexplicably hot prime minister of



GRILL POWER

BY HILARY WINSTON

SUMMER MEANS BARBECUE TIME, AND WHAT WOMAN DOESN'T CRAVE A CHANCE TO ENJOY HER TWO FAVORITE KINDS OF MEAT?

It's summer—the best season, because I get to see something unique, beautiful and rare, like a flawless diamond or a comet or the Mets winning a game. I get to see men in aprons. That's right, men in aprons. Standing over a hot grill. On a hot day. Bending meat to their will. It's awesome for multiple reasons: One, I don't have to do the cooking. Two, the cleanup is easy (just brush those dried chicken bits between the grill cracks). And three, it's extremely attractive.

It's the middle of summer and the height of barbecue season. Dips are being made. Lemonade is being stirred. Backyard charcoal fires are heating up. And men are bringing out the monogrammed grilling tools their moms gave them for Christmas. The sweet, simple beauty of the grill and its master. I don't know who came up with the name "grill master," but I bet it was a man; a lady might have valued different things and I'd be sitting here right now as a "laundry master" or "feed-the-cat master." But whoever came up with the name was masterful; to elevate the grilling role and make it acceptable for a man to mix a marinade 24 hours in advance and tie an apron around his waist was genius. I tip my sun hat to him. I love it. A man cooking meat he procured for you (prepackaged, with a coupon from the Sunday paper, but still...)—it's attraction on the most primitive level. I once hooked up with a guy just because he was the grill master at

a friend's party. Unfortunately, when that apron came off, so did the attraction. He was all apron, and the summer is only so long. Yet I didn't learn my lesson. That same summer I went to a barbecue held by a cute guy who was way too young for me. I couldn't help it; a chance to see him grill it up was enough of a draw. But when I got there he had just a small hibachi and a card table laden with generic-brand hot dogs and premade hamburger patties the other early-20-something guests had brought. There were slices of generic cheese, which offended my not very delicate Texas sensibilities. I think we both knew it was going nowhere when I pulled out what I'd brought to toss on the barbie: asparagus. Asparagus is an adult grill food. Corn on the cob could have bridged the age gap, but asparagus was a no-go. We were destined for different barbecues. Nevertheless, I refused to be discouraged. Watching a man grill is hot. Literally. The grill master is sweating, wearing flip-flops and sporting troll-rivaling toe hair. But it doesn't matter; he's passionate. And if you're nice he might even toast your bun.

When your guy is deep in that grill zone, it's a real turn-on. There's nothing you can't throw at him. Eggplant. Summer squash. That unidentified meat your hunter cousin brought. Your vegetarian friend's black-bean burger. He is unflappable. He is committed. And he puts just as much care into that fake-meat burger as he does his real-meat burger. For this reason I will bring him Fritos Scoops with the perfect amount of guacamole *and* salsa. I will dig out the best dill-pickle spear with my bare hands, undaunted by the looks I get from other guests. I will brave the

icy waters of the massive cooler to find his favorite beer with the perfect amount of chill, then put it in a cozy with his face on it (well, if I had one, I would use it). When the grill gets too hot and he takes off his shirt, I will apply sunscreen. And even reapply it. I will set up one of those water-spritzing fans and also fan him with a paper plate. The *good* kind. Nobody's putting his special burgers on a generic-brand paper plate. And I will ignore his sunglasses tan line. I won't make even one Guy Fieri look-alike comment. It's just something about that grill. Something about that apron. Something about that smoke. Maybe it's just the carcinogens, or maybe it's something else....

What if cavemen didn't just bring home the wild-boar bacon; what if they also cooked it? It makes sense that upon returning from a hunt, celebratory cavemen would have tossed their fleshy treasures on an open flame and basked in their meaty victory. Maybe when cooking moved indoors, women took that responsibility and made it part of the domestic domain. Changing gender roles robbed men of the natural conclusion to their role as hunters. You were robbed! I apologize on behalf of all women. And I'll personally lead the movement to give back this role. I mean, why should men stop after Labor Day? Men should take over fall roasts. Christmas hams. Spring chickens. Master the oven. The stove. The Crock-Pot. The sky—or the pie—is the limit. Men, unite! Take back the kitchen that was rightfully yours. Who knows? It might make you that much sexier. ■

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Your watch shouldn't cost more than your car. It should look and feel like a power tool and not a piece of bling. Wearing it shouldn't make you think twice about swinging a hammer or changing a tire. A real man's timepiece needs to be ready for anything. But that's just my opinion. If you agree, maybe you're ready for the *Stauer Centurion Hybrid*. Use your Exclusive Insider Promotional Code below and I'll send it to you today for **ONLY \$59**.

This watch doesn't do dainty. And neither do I. Call me old-fashioned, but I want my boots to be leather, my tires to be deep-tread monsters, and my steak thick and rare. Inspiration for a man's watch should come from things like fast cars, firefighters and power tools. And if you want to talk beauty, then let's discuss a 428 cubic inch V8.

Did I mention the \$59 price tag? This is a LOT of machine for not a lot of money. The *Stauer Centurion Hybrid* sports a heavy-duty alloy body, chromed and detailed with a rotating bezel that allows you to track direction. The luminous hour and minute hands mean you can keep working into the night. And the dual digital displays give this watch a hybrid ability. The LCD windows displays the time, day and date, includes a stopwatch function, and features a bright green electro-luminescent backlight. We previously offered the *Centurion* for \$199, but with the exclusive promotional code it's yours for **ONLY \$59!**

No matter what, this watch can keep up. Thanks to the Stauer 30-day Money Back Guarantee, you've got time to prove it. If you're not totally satisfied, return it for a full refund of the purchase price. You also get a 2-year replacement guarantee on both movements. But I have a feeling the only problem you'll have is deciding whether to keep the *Stauer Centurion* on your dresser or tucked inside your toolbox.



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PLAYBOY ADVISOR

I'm a 38-year-old married man with a very attractive wife who looks great in lingerie—which I enjoy buying for her. I recently ordered some thong panties, knowing they're not her favorite style but hoping she would wear them for me. When they arrived, she was less than appreciative. The topic later came up in front of my wife's mom, and to my shock, my mother-in-law said she would be happy to take them off my wife's hands. I was surprised at how turned on I became at the thought of my mother-in-law wearing the thongs I had picked out. (I should mention that my mother-in-law is a very youthful and attractive woman who looks 15 years younger than her 60 years.) It has gotten to the point that she now routinely invades my sexual fantasies, even when I'm having sex with my wife. Is it abnormal for me to think about my mother-in-law in this way, or is it simply a natural reaction to a woman who showcased herself in a sexual manner by talking with me about her choice of underwear?—J.P., New York, New York

Don't be so sure your mother-in-law took the panties from your wife to "showcase" herself to you, even on an unconscious level. If you had offered them to her and she'd taken them, that would have been weird. But the moment you gave them to your wife, it turned into a very different and totally common dynamic: a mother and daughter exchanging clothes. We're going to venture a guess at what's going on: You took your wife's rejection of what you thought was a sexy gift as essentially a rebuttal of your sexual desires. It's not surprising that when your mother-in-law took the panties from your wife, you started to think about her in a sexual light. Next time you want to buy lingerie for your wife, first ask her what she likes to wear to feel sexy. You might find that helps bring the spotlight back on your spouse.

I started doing yoga not only to get in better shape but also to make new friends—and meet women. But I'm finding it difficult to meet and get to know any of my female classmates, who usually outnumber the men 10 to one. As soon as class is over, everyone quickly gets changed and is out the door. On the other hand, the yoga instructors are always friendly and engaging before and after class, when they're checking people in. They are for the most part very attractive and are all ac-

tive, athletic people. However, I keep thinking that hitting on or asking one of the instructors out would not be the most appropriate thing to do.—J.A., Sacramento, California

Yoga is a fine thing, and yes, the male-to-female ratio can be seductive. But we wouldn't suggest treating the yoga studio as a place to meet women. The fact that the female students leave after class makes it clear they're there for the exercise. As for the inappropriateness of asking your yoga teacher out, you're absolutely right. Yoga teachers are in general a happy and



I recently started using an online dating service and have been going out with several women at the same time. Is it possible to effectively date while being 100 percent honest about seeing other women? I don't want to be an asshole, but I also don't want to commit to someone I hardly know and possibly miss opportunities with other women. For clarity, I'm talking about the first month, as in dates one through five.—D.O., Los Angeles, California

Of course you should be honest and clear that you're dating multiple women until "the one" reveals herself. Although it sounds as though you're in this to meet the right person, are you sure you aren't getting greedy and conflating dating with hooking up? Five dates in one month seems to be ample time to figure out if the chemistry is there. If you're in it for the hookups, say so. There's a strong possibility you're filling the same role for her.

professional lot, so don't make the mistake of interpreting their friendliness as romantic interest. If you're enjoying the health benefits, why mess with a good thing? If you ask a teacher or classmate out and are rejected, things could get awkward. One option is to take other group classes that are more social, such as aerobics or CrossFit, where students interact more naturally and which therefore present better opportunities to get to know other people.

As an avid beer drinker I occasionally encounter a bottle that is sealed with wax on the top. What is the purpose of this seal, and how does one remove it without looking like a monkey trying to open a coconut?—B.F., Chicago, Illinois

The purpose of the seal is simply aesthetic. A crown cap on its own seals a bottle just fine, but some premium craft beers are additionally dipped in wax to look fancy and presumably to justify some of the increased price of the beer. There's no need to remove the entire seal. Simply treat it as you would the foil or plastic on a wine bottle and score the wax with a knife or a wine opener's foil cutter just under the edge of the crown cap. A couple of passes around the neck in a circular motion should do the trick, just enough to cut evenly down to the glass. Then open it with a bottle opener as you would any bottle of beer, artisanal or not.

When is it acceptable to wear a trench coat? I'll be attending a funeral soon, and I'm not sure if it would be appropriate to wear one. Are dark trench coats acceptable, or does it depend on the occasion and the weather? And why are funeral fashions so elaborate?—J.B., Albuquerque, New Mexico

Only in mob movies are funeral fashions elaborate. Subdued and respectful should be your goal. Some people think funeral attire should always be black, but dark grays, blues and browns are now considered appropriate. We would usually say you should be able to wear a trench coat, dark or otherwise, anytime you want if it makes you feel good. But a funeral isn't the time to make a personal fashion statement. We say wear one only if it's cold, damp or threatening rain.

I'm 36 and have noticed lately that I don't get as hard as I once did. I can still get it up and have sex anytime, but I can tell my erections are a lot softer than they used to be. What would you recommend as the best and safest thing

for me to use to get as hard as I can?—R.R., Raleigh, North Carolina

The best thing you can do to get as hard as possible is to stay healthy. Your penis can be an indicator of general wellness, as its rise and fall is directly related to your vascular health. Smoking, eating fatty foods and doing anything else that's bad for your heart and circulation will be bad for your penis too, as the rigidity of an erection comes from increased blood flow. Stress and exhaustion can also affect the quality of an erection. If the softness is noticeable, you should see a doctor to be on the safe side and to make sure you don't have circulation issues or other underlying ailments.

My girlfriend and I have a long-standing argument, and we decided to turn to you to settle it. What is the proper pronunciation of GIF (as in “graphic interchange format”)? She says it's pronounced with a hard G, whereas I read that the inventor of the GIF says it's pronounced with a soft G. Forgive us for asking such a nerdy question in your otherwise extremely cool magazine.—A.F., Tustin, California

For the uninitiated, a GIF is a compressed digital image file format that is the foundation of those simple animations currently proliferating on the internet (the ones that look like a digital version of a flip book). Although the inventor of the GIF says the acronym is a shout-out to Jif peanut butter and should be pronounced with a soft G, we say he should stick to computer programming. GIF is an acronym, and the pronunciation of acronyms is typically determined by the pronunciation of the words they represent. Merriam-Webster (our in-house dictionary) prefers the hard G; the American Heritage dictionary prefers it soft. Call us old-fashioned, but at PLAYBOY we like it hard.

I've been with my boyfriend for two years. We get along very well, but we've both experienced jealousy when the other has texted with a friend of the opposite sex. We've worked this out, but now I'm having trouble. He recently reconnected with the girl he lost his virginity to 10 years ago. Apparently she didn't treat him well and he has had ill feelings toward her ever since. She contacted him regarding a wedding they're both participating in. He used the opportunity to confront her about the past. She apologized, and he found closure. Now they communicate on Facebook regularly, text frequently and talk on the phone a couple of times a week. It makes me sick to my stomach. My thought is that if I got to know her the threat would disappear, but I don't know if I will be able to attend the out-of-state wedding. After trying to work it out calmly and rationally, I got pretty upset. My boyfriend told me I was being self-absorbed and unattractive. Now I'm scared to say anything else. How can I get over this and move on? I would love to be indifferent to their reconnecting. I

do trust him. In your opinion, does he have any responsibility to set boundaries with her?—C.K., Dallas, Texas

This is one of those situations in which you need to listen to your gut. Literally. You say you're sick to your stomach and are afraid to continue being honest. Sickness and fear are powerful feelings that you shouldn't be trying to quash or “get over,” as you say. Of course he has a responsibility to set boundaries. How much he engages with her is up to him. And it's up to you to be clear that you find this unacceptable. Multiple phone calls, texts and e-mails each week seem excessive. That he continues to communicate with her so frequently despite the fact that it clearly upsets you could lead one to believe he values keeping his relationship with his ex-girlfriend more than he values his relationship with you. And despite what you say, it certainly doesn't sound as though he's found closure. It's possible that at the wedding he'll be able to close this chapter once and for all. You should do all you can to get to that wedding, where you can put your gut to the test again.

I recently lost a lot of weight—more than 85 pounds—and my plan is to be ripped by summer. I'm thinking of shaving my chest to show off my abs. I was wondering what the protocol is for manscaping. If you shave your chest, should you shave your legs and arms or leave them alone?—D.B., Seattle, Washington

We wouldn't recommend shaving only your chest. If you're going to go hairless, go all the way with your legs, arms, back, etc.—but only if you have the physique to back it up. If your chest and abs are ripped but your arms and legs are underdeveloped, you're just going to be calling attention to your deficits. Bodybuilders shave everything because they've spent years developing unsung muscles, such as the tibialis anterior and brachialis, that even the most dedicated gym rats tend to ignore.

My wife of 30 years recently passed away, and I miss her every day. I'm discovering a weird side effect, however. Women seem to really like widowers, and I'm getting laid a lot. I was mostly faithful to my wife, with a few indiscretions along the way. (I always had a weakness for babysitters.) My question is, how young is too young? I've heard the rule is to divide your age by two and then add seven. I'm 52 years old, and some of the girls who have been hitting on me are still in college. If I succumb to them, will I look like an idiot?—M.M., Boston, Massachusetts

We're sorry for your loss. What you're experiencing isn't uncommon among widowers. Your loss triggers empathy, which can lead to affection and eventually attraction. Some widowers have taken solace in the escape that a fling with a younger woman can provide. As for what is acceptable, as long as you know what you're getting into—which is likely to be something temporary and is by no means a substitute for going through the long process of grieving—who cares about age?

Both my marriage and my job have been difficult over the past few years, and my friendship with an attractive co-worker has been like a glass of ice water in hell. I think she finds me attractive as well, but she is also married and we maintain boundaries. She recently became pregnant with her third child and has more or less stopped all interaction with me. Casual conversation between us is practically nonexistent, and she avoids teaming with me to work on projects. She now seems content simply to check me out to the point of staring at me a few times a day when all I would like from her is a smile and five minutes of conversation. This may not seem like much of a problem, but it is literally keeping me awake at night. It's like someone took the sun away. What can I do?—J.L., Birmingham, Alabama

It sounds as though your co-worker is withdrawing, and you need to respect that. She's pregnant and needs to focus on the impending arrival of her child. You know the lack of sunshine in your life goes beyond this situation: It also applies to your marriage and your work. Distracting yourself by analyzing a work flirtation won't help with either of those issues. It's time to focus on improving the things that are truly central to your happiness.

This summer I'm traveling to Southeast Asia for a whirlwind tour of Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia and want to dive into the street-food scene with abandon. Anthony Bourdain and Andrew Zimmern are my heroes. What should I do to keep from getting a bad case of turista?—P.C., Portland, Oregon

First visit the Centers for Disease Control's travel vaccinations website to find out which inoculations it recommends for each of the countries you'll be visiting. Some vaccines will help guard against food-borne illnesses (such as hepatitis A and typhoid). When you're abroad, the safest thing to do is eat only fully cooked, piping-hot food and drink bottled water. But truly adventurous eaters can find these prohibitions hard to, ahem, stomach. We know one foodie who brings her own chopsticks with her and eats only at busy restaurants and food stalls with long lines of locals (the logic being these spots wouldn't be so popular if they were making people sick). We know of another who tries to keep his stomach as inhospitable to bacteria as possible by drinking alcohol throughout the day. (We can't vouch for this technique, but he swears by it.) One proven tactic is to take Pepto-Bismol continually, which can reduce the instance of turista by 60 percent.

For answers to reasonable questions relating to food and drink, fashion and taste, and sex and dating, write the Playboy Advisor, 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210, or e-mail advisor@playboy.com. The most interesting and pertinent questions will be presented in these pages each month.





A classic hate love relationship.

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Exercising in futility



PHYSICAL MALFITNESS

Attempting to atone for a lifetime of athletic misadventures

BY DONALD HALL

My trainer, Pam Sanborn, works me out Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. She's tiny and strong, four-foot-10 and a hundred pounds of muscle. If she had to, I'm sure she could carry my 200 pounds slung over her shoulders. For half an hour each session she has me do cardio on the treadmill, squat with five-pound weights, lift tenners above my head and out from my sides, stretch muscles, stand up no hands with a beach

I sit on my ass all day writing in longhand.

ball between my knees and do push-ups (as it were) standing against a wall. Exercise hurts, as well it might, since by choice and for my pleasure I didn't do it for 80 years. (Once, in my 50s, I walked four miles.) Pam is cute and loves to work out. When her marriage ended, she found a new companion through an internet site called Fitness Singles. At the moment, the two of them are bicycling through Italy. When I divorced, I looked for women who lazed around after poetry readings.

READER RESPONSE

DOULAS' DUE

Rachel R. White's "Born to Lose" (April) sheds light on the important work of doulas. Our birth culture is changing, and we are spending more time understanding what makes a woman's experience less painful and more joyous. Dou-las are a huge part of that. The work Isis Rising does in the prison system is amazing. It is insanely



intense, both physically and emotionally. A woman in labor, no matter where she is, who she is or how she came to be pregnant, should be treated with respect and dignity. Thank you to all the dou-las for their strength, compassion and knowledge. Keep recruiting, helping and teaching. I have pro-found respect for your work.

Erica Wulff
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

DOLLAR DOCTORS

Reading about residents who make \$50,000 a year while working alongside nurse practitioners and physician assistants who make double that amount ("The Doctor



READER RESPONSE

Is Out,” May) reminded me of my own internship. The other medical interns and I started out making \$4,400 a year, and after several months we got an \$800-per-year raise. I did the math: \$5,200 a year comes to \$100 a week. Our workweek was often 100 hours, which means that we, as physicians, were making a dollar an hour. I’ll grant you that I’m a codger and this happened in the late 1960s, but still, a buck an hour for a physician? As a resident I would sometimes moonlight at a local hospital as “house doctor,” on call for a 24-hour shift. By then we were making big bucks: \$8 an hour, or \$192 for a 24-hour workday. No one ever asked us if we were tired. It’s good to be retired.

John Elfmont
Redondo Beach, California

SELF-SUFFICIENCY 101

I’m glad Brendan DeBusk realizes now how vulnerable life in America can be (*Reader Response*, April). I’m an old hippie who grew up



in rural Oklahoma. I know how to raise and process animals for meat; I know how to raise a garden and preserve food. I can live off the land. I kid my city friends that if the grocery store ever shuts down, they’re going to be the first to starve to death. Most people don’t realize just how vulnerable their lives are—and when they do, they get scared.

Rodger Gibson
Tulsa, Oklahoma

PRIVACY PRACTICES

As an expert in identity theft, I suggest that before you begin

Exercise is boring. Everything is boring that does not happen in a chair (reading and writing) or in a bed. Sculptors and painters and musicians live longer than writers, who exercise only their fingers with a pen or on a keyboard. Sculptors chisel or weld or mold plaster. Painters work standing up. They drink quarts of cognac every night but return to physical activity the next morning. A tuba player holds a weighty object and breathes deeply. Even playing a harmonica requires more fitness than writing.

People have tried to encourage my mobility. My late wife Jane for years cherished cats. This house is full of Jane’s cat presents from friends—cat night-lights and cat doorstops and cat china dolls. In time she found herself mooning after dogs at the house of a writer friend. When she adopted Gus, Jane (who called me Perkins) invented an excuse: “It will get Perkins off his ass.” Thus for several years I walked 15 minutes a day. The husband of a friend, who went dog walking with me, swears I parked the car on a dirt road, let Gus out to walk alone and whistled him back. Then Jane died of leukemia, the dog’s hindquarters failed and my hindquarters failed. I sit

on my ass all day writing in longhand, which my assistant types up. Sometimes in a car I used to pass Pancake Road, two miles away, watching a man walk his collie, the dog stepping out on his forepaws, two wheels harnessed to his back. These days I no longer drive past Pancake Road or anywhere. I push wheels ahead of me instead of pulling them behind me like the dog. With my forepaws holding the handles of a four-wheeled roller, my buckling hindquarters slowly shove my carcass forward. I drool as I walk, and now and then I sniff a tree.

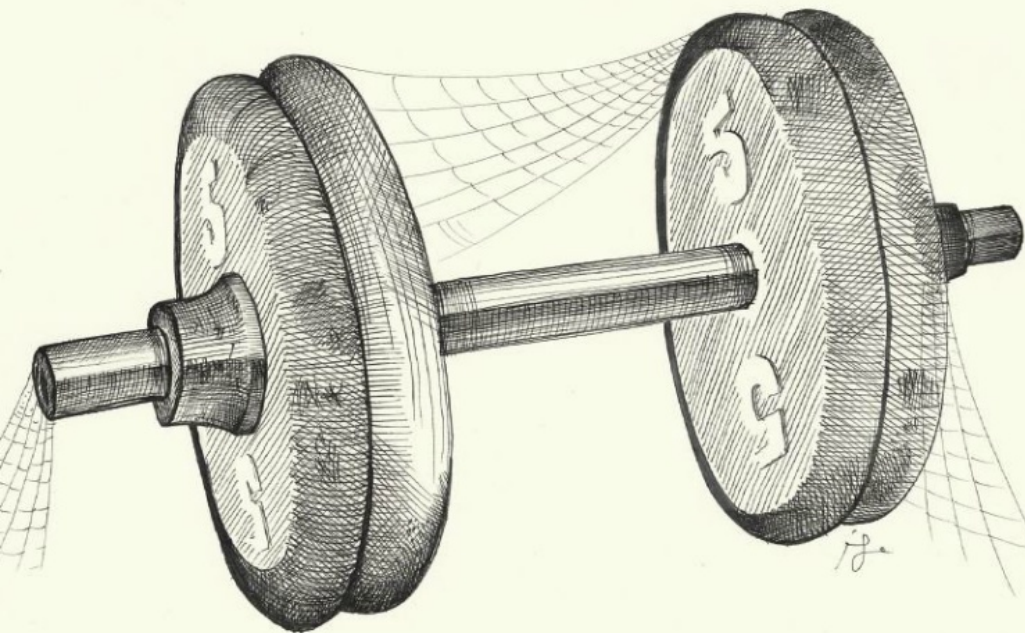
Mostly I missed or tapped the ball. I wasn’t any good at playing anything.

I have been told that as a baby I crawled up on a kitchen table and devoured a quarter pound of butter. I spewed it out quickly, and the mouth-memory has endured in my distaste for yellow milk fat. Because it was so athletic to climb the table, perhaps my misadventure also led to my athletic malfitness. Or

maybe it came from my mother, Lucy. On the farm where she was born, she didn’t chop trees or hay fields or haul ice from the pond. With her mother, Kate, she helped wash overalls, squeeze clothes through a mangle and hang them out to dry. She carried cans of corn and peas up from the root cellar to the kitchen. Otherwise she was not a muscular sort. Her mother mopped the hardwood kitchen floor every night while Lucy studied Latin for the mill-town high

THE AUTHOR PREFERS WOMEN WHO LAZE AROUND AFTER POETRY READINGS.





school. Later, both of them sat under an oil lamp while they knitted, tatted and darned socks. Everything my mother did was useful, and her hands were nimble, but nothing she did stretched a tendon, nothing firmed a muscle.

Upstairs in the back chamber, where everything goes when it dies—green chairs with broken rockers, long-dead long underwear, oil lamps retired after electricity—I found a pair of wooden skis with runners two inches thick, heavy as a hay load, on which, I was told, my mother slid down a slope. Her lift had to be a horse that trudged uphill as she clung to a rope. When I moved into the farmhouse in middle age, I decided to try cross-country. I bought a pair, and in a flat field next to the barn I stood up and fell down, stood up and fell down, stood up and fell down. I retired the cross-country skis to the back chamber. With snowshoes I didn't fall down so much, but it was harder getting up. Trying to ice-skate was ludicrous.

My father, on the other hand, remembered skating on January ponds, playing shortstop, even running sprints at school. He and I played catch on Greenway Street and I threw the baseball over his head. He trotted up the pavement to retrieve it. Trotted. We played Ping-Pong in the cellar, and it wasn't until he started shaking that I beat him two out of three games. Every Saturday morning he golfed with his foursome. He acquired his golfing passion when he caddied for spare change as a boy. As a grown-up he became a member of the New Haven Country Club and hired his own caddies. When my parents were first married, my

father tried to teach my mother golf. She found it hard to hit that little white ball with that long wooden stick. Once, when my father walked a few yards in front of her, my mother's golf ball flew up the fairway past him. He turned around, ecstatic, to congratulate her on her drive. She didn't tell him right away that she had thrown it.

I did not love golf. Sometimes on a family ride we would stop at a driving range. My mother would sit on a bench as my father bought two pails of exhausted golf balls and we stood at a rubber tee and swung away. Mostly I missed or tapped the ball three inches, but occasionally I caught it flush and it rose majestically into the air and landed 37 yards down the fairway. There was a target 200 yards farther on. I wasn't any good at playing anything. Back in Spring Glen Grammar School, a physical education instructor came on Tuesdays and brought two basketballs and set us into circles—one for people who had passed a basketball before, another for those who hadn't. I had touched a basketball

on a Saturday at the YMCA, so I stood in the Circle of Experience. After one or two rounds our instructor switched me to the Circle of Innocence. By the time I moved on to Hamden High School the war had started. Everyone expected to be drafted shortly after graduation, so Physical Education amped up its requirements. We boxed. My opponent was usually a quiet willowy guy and our fists mangled only the sweaty air of the gym. In spring we were required to run a quarter mile, which I mostly walked. Still, I lost my breath.

Doubtless that's why, when I switched

In spring we were required to run a quarter mile, which I mostly walked. Still, I lost my breath.

READER RESPONSE

the process of erasing yourself from the web by deleting all your accounts ("Turnoffs," April), ask yourself why you wish to "disappear" in the first place. Are you merely a private person who doesn't want your information online where the whole world can see it? Or do you feel threatened in some way (for example, by cyberstalking)? Reevaluate your reasons. After all, there are



other ways to ensure your privacy: You can create multiple e-mail accounts, for instance, with one strictly for business and another strictly for family. And when registering on social media sites or forum boards, you can use a pseudonym instead of your real name. If you still want to remove your identity from the web, be forewarned: There can be disadvantages. For example, you could lose any marketing presence you've built over time, which could affect your business.

Robert Siciliano
Boston, Massachusetts

Once, after I'd commented on a Facebook post, someone mined my and others' data and then posted our e-mail addresses, phone numbers and the e-mail addresses of our relatives online for all to see. It was humiliating. Another time, I was debating a blogger via e-mail and—without my knowledge—he posted my e-mails online. Today I'm smarter about social media. On Facebook



READER RESPONSE

I avoid trouble by commenting as a page instead of as myself when I'm outside my personal timeline, and on my blog and on Twitter I use a fake name. I rarely use LinkedIn (where there's no point in using a fake name) because I don't want to start flame wars that may hurt my reputation. Overall, I don't believe people take the online world as seriously as they take the off-line world. When we're online we're allowed to be different—ruder, blunter, even weirder. If you're going to censor yourself online, what's the point? Facebook is boring if all you do is share stupid pictures of pets and leave cute comments. I don't care if Mark Zuckerberg thinks Facebook is a social medium; I don't go online to talk to friends. I'm there to argue with strangers, advocate my politics, share my views and hopefully make money.

Gregory Smith
Chattanooga, Tennessee



Here are some more tips to assure privacy with online accounts: First, use a pseudonym. Never enter your real name when signing up, and never reveal your cell phone or landline number—or anything else that can be traced back to your real name. Second, write your e-mails with the idea that the person(s) you're talking about will read them. Better yet, imagine them sitting there while you type. If you do these things, you won't need to worry about privacy, because you won't need any.

Bill Horne
Sharon, Massachusetts

According to a 2013 Pew study, more than 85 percent of adults who use the internet try, through various methods, to protect their privacy while online.

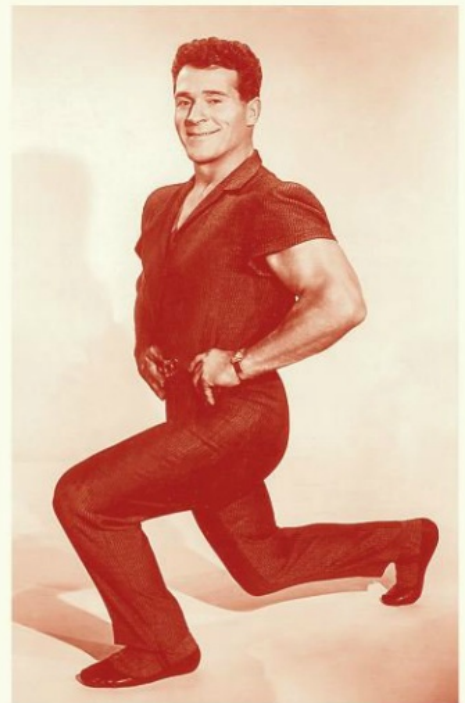
to Exeter after 10th grade, I went out for cross-country. As I did laps for endurance I heard my 80-year-old coach—the war had resurrected elderly faculty—murmur “truck horse.” My feelings were hurt. I worked on improving my style, but when I ran cross-country, agony rotated from my ribs on one side to the ribs on the other. I faked turning my ankle.

Summers on the farm I hayed with my grandfather. I milked cows badly and I was scared to pull eggs from underneath hens, but I liked haying. Mostly I liked sitting up front with my grandfather behind the slow old horse as we approached the hay field. Even more I loved the slower plod back to the barn. My grandfather told story after story with affection and humor. Sometimes he recited wonderful, terrible poems he had memorized for school. Loading the rack with hay took more muscle than sitting and listening to stories, but I tolerated the strain. My grandfather, as he approached and passed 70, stuck his pitchfork into a pile of hay and raised it over his head onto the hayrack, where I hauled it into place and trod it down so that interlocked forkfuls would not slide off while we plodded back home. The air inside the barn was intolerably hot and chaffy. My grandfather by himself pitched the load up to the lofts, where it would remain until winter brought the cattle inside. Meantime I rested in the cool of the living room.

When I was 16, I found a girlfriend and stopped haying. To pay for rum and Cokes at a teenage tavern I found a summer job that permitted me to sit down.

It was the wrist-skill of Ping-Pong that bugged me toward athletic triumph. At prep school I learned squash, where I could snap the ball with my table-tennis wrists. Although the playing space was large, the rackets reached long and I delayed between points to breathe. When I arrived at college I tried out for the freshman team. One by one the hackers were cut, often with generous words from the young coach. Then came my one athletic triumph: I was the last man cut from the freshman squash squad at Harvard.

In Ann Arbor, when I taught, I never lost cellar Ping-Pong games. My prowess went to my head, and when



JACK LALANNE STAYED IN SHAPE BY LUNGING. OUR WRITER PREFERS LOUNGING.

Then came my one athletic triumph: I was the last man cut from the freshman squash squad.

the Table Tennis Association printed a notice in the paper, I called and asked to join. “Are you a beginner or a moderate?” said a voice. I hemmed and hawed out of modesty and was told I was a beginner. We played on adjacent basketball courts where we could retreat

20 feet behind the table to retrieve a slam. I was a beginner. Baseball had always been my favorite sport to follow. I could never play it. I tried and tried. I arrived at the University of Michigan as an assistant professor without a graduate degree and 26 years old. *The Michigan Daily* told me the English Department softball team was playing against Physics at two P.M. on an intramural field.

Interested students or teachers might participate. I arrived among a host of grad students in their 20s. I was chosen—however skeptical the scholars-in-training—to play left field and bat ninth. In the second inning, before I had a chance to strike out, a fly ball approached me in the field. I kept a steady eye as I moved under it and poised my glove. The ball hit me straight on the skull. My teammates gathered round me until I staggered up and was replaced by a burly medievalist. When I collapsed on the bench, a woman approached me saying she was a nurse. If later I felt nauseous or had double vision, she advised me to hasten to an emergency room.

As I entered my mid-70s, my legs weakened and it became treacherous to walk on uneven ground. I decided that if I were to continue to survive, I should do something. I bought a stationary bike and set it up in front of the television. Watching Ken Burns's *Baseball* on tape, I managed to pump for seven minutes each day, until I fell trying to climb down from the machine, which in its turn fell on me and knocked out a tooth. I gave the bike away and bought a treadmill that was too big for the television room. In my bedroom I walked at two miles an hour listening to NPR. Each afternoon I did four minutes, sometimes even five, before sagging into bottomless boredom—in spite of NPR's daily schedule of rapes, murders and Bangladeshi disasters. It was my doctor who told me about the Hogan Sports Center at Colby-Sawyer College, only 15 minutes away, which was Pam's domain. Twice a week I parked outside, took an elevator upstairs to avoid climbing steps and delivered myself to Pam in a gym cluttered with barbells and exercise machines. Twice a week we walked together around a wooden track for cardio's 15 minutes. We talked. Then for another 15 minutes I attempted fitness and balance. Balance was a major problem. Pam showed me how to stand up after I fell down.

When I was 80 my second car wreck stopped my driving and I handed my license to a state trooper. At home when I'd caught my breath I telephoned Pam at the fitness center and told her weep-

ing that I could never see her again. Others could shop for me or take me to the doctor's, but who would drive me to the gym, hang around for half an hour and drive me back? Pam calmed me down, saying she would come to me. Thus Pam drives to my house twice a week at 3:30 P.M., bringing weights and straps and curved plastic platforms where I can practice losing balance. I accomplish 15 minutes on the treadmill. I stand up from the bed with a horse collar full of sand draped around my neck as we try to fend off the wheelchair. With Pam I am able to exercise without boredom because I love her and talk to her all the time. For 60 years I have been writing my autobiography in book after book, poetry and prose, but Pam does not read autobiographies, so I repeat all my stories. Sometimes I choose topics—Famous Writers I

Have Known, My Athletic Career—but mostly I remain chronological, beginning with stories of my parents, who met when they attended Bates College, through my birth, through infancy and eating butter, through childhood and grammar school. Often, when we have finished our workout, Pam takes notes on my daily achievements, then adds a reminder of where we are in the story. When she returns from Italy we will still be at Oxford in 1952, and I will tell her about sitting at my desk typing in the frigid January of Christ Church college. At the top of her notes she has written, "He cuts fingertip off glove." ■

*Donald Hall is the author of *Essays After Eighty*.*

*I moved under
it and poised
my glove. The
ball hit me
straight on the
skull.*



READER RESPONSE

Yet most users surveyed (59 percent) don't think it is possible to achieve complete online anonymity. In the era of the Heartbleed bug, weak and outdated privacy laws and a snoop-happy NSA, we have to agree.

THE PSILOCYBIN BLUES

Although many drugs, including psychedelics, can have benefits, they can create problems too ("Still Saying No," April). Remember: All things in moderation; too much of anything is dangerous. The drug evangelist Timothy Leary and other well-meaning hippies forgot this.



Their Brotherhood of Eternal Love at first sought to spread the love by dealing acid, but soon the enterprise devolved into a tawdry and dangerous drug trade. Maybe psilocybin can treat the blues, maybe not, but whatever you do, use wisely.

John Fremont
Minneapolis, Minnesota

FINISH LINE

I am 62 years old and a retired rancher and timber owner, and the world is so screwed up I want to buy the farm ("Buying the Farm" and *Reader Response*, January/February). We have become absolutely stupid—there is no other way to put it—about climate and the economy. But there is enough BS to make interesting articles for the rest of our lives.

George Cramer
Susanville, California

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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

GARY OLDMAN

A candid conversation with one of Hollywood's best actors about acting, political correctness and his defense of Mel Gibson and Alec Baldwin

When actors list other actors they deeply admire, Gary Oldman's name inevitably shoots to the top. *Sid Vicious*, *Dracula*, *Beethoven*, *Lee Harvey Oswald*, *The Dark Knight's* Commissioner Gordon, *Harry Potter's* Sirius Black—Oldman's range is so staggering, a video meme went around recently called "20 Gary Oldman Accents in 60 Seconds." Google it in awe. He's Meryl Streep for dudes.

Like all great character actors, the man is less familiar than the roles he plays, which makes sitting down with him intriguing. His films have grossed more than Leo's, Will's, Brad's or Denzel's, yet Oldman remains as blank as a stare from George Smiley, the "breathtakingly ordinary" British intelligence officer Oldman plays in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. That part earned him a 2012 Academy Award nomination for best actor. This July he leads the human resistance in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*.

Born Gary Leonard Oldman in London on March 21, 1958, he grew up working-class and dropped out of school at 16. His father abandoned the family when Gary was young, but the budding actor later won a scholarship to Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance. Acclaim on stage gave way to audacious movie roles, first in

the 1986 punk-rock biopic *Sid & Nancy* and, the following year, in *Prick Up Your Ears*, in which Oldman plays gay playwright Joe Orton. But it was portraying Oswald to newsreel precision in *Oliver Stone's* *JFK* in 1991 that had critics—and other actors—calling him Hollywood's best new talent. Life wasn't always rosy. Years of hard drinking, four marriages (including one to Uma Thurman) and a few behind-the-scenes controversies kept him lying low. Of being famous, Oldman, who has three children, once said, "I haven't got any energy for it."

Contributing Editor David Hochman, who last interviewed Jonah Hill, sat down with Oldman over two consecutive days in a suite at the L'Ermitage hotel in Beverly Hills, a venue that stirred certain unchaste memories for the actor (stay tuned). Hochman also discovered that hanging with Oldman is a two-fer. "Gary's longtime manager and producing partner, Douglas Urbanski, sat in with us and hung on our every word," Hochman says. "If the name sounds familiar, it's probably from hearing Urbanski on conservative talk radio, where he frequently fills in as a guest host for Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage. He also plays Harvard president Larry Summers in *The Social Network*. At first I worried

Urbanski might hog the spotlight, but Oldman clearly saw the interview as a rare opportunity to speak his mind like never before."

PLAYBOY: Let's begin with an impressive factoid. Based on lead and supporting roles, you are one of the highest-grossing actors in movie history, with films earning nearly \$10 billion at the box office worldwide. That must feel amazing.

OLDMAN: I suppose it should.

PLAYBOY: Any working actor would want a career like yours.

OLDMAN: Except me.

PLAYBOY: Wait. You're not happy with your career?

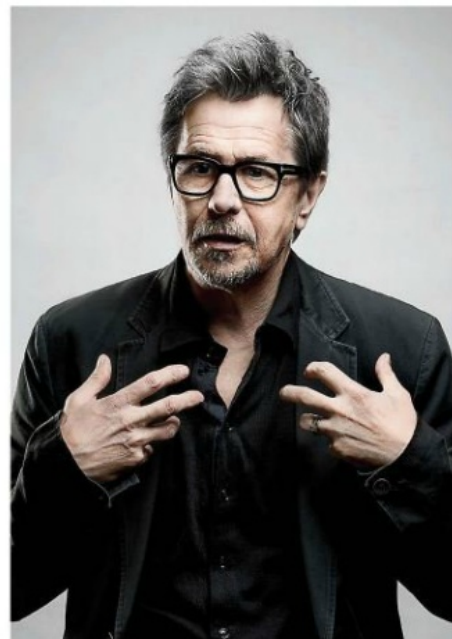
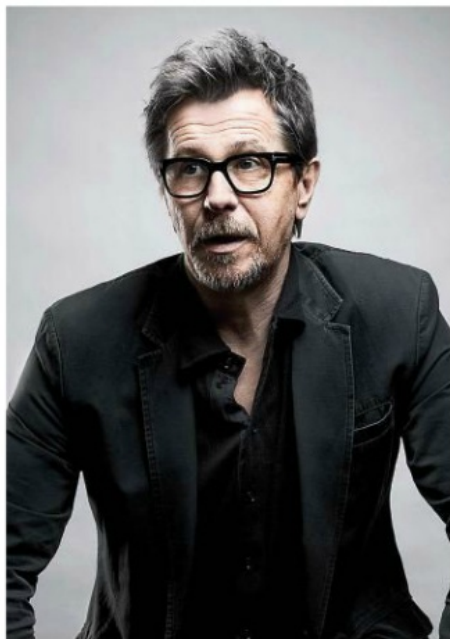
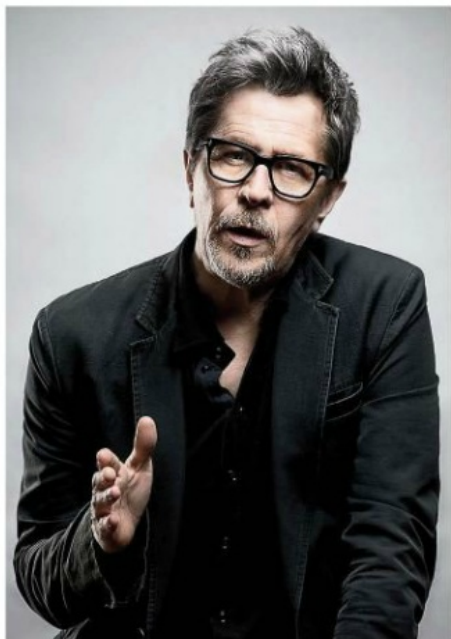
OLDMAN: It's not that so much as there's a perfectionism with me.

PLAYBOY: When you look back at your credits, what makes you say, "I could have done better"?

OLDMAN: Most of it.

PLAYBOY: Really? You don't like *Sid & Nancy*?

OLDMAN: I don't like myself in the movie, no. Frankly, I didn't want to make it in the first place. I was talked into it at the time. And now, if I flip through the channels and come upon it, it's "Fuck!



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIUS BUGGE

"If you've managed to work as long as I have, you understand that these roles everyone fusses over are your career; they're not your life. It's just a job, really. Honestly, I forget I'm an actor until I'm reminded."

"Look, relationships are very, very hard. They just are. I mean, [I've been married] four times! It's all been a bit of a disaster in that area. I have very good artistic instincts, often right on the money. Love, not so successful."

"Alec calling someone an F-A-G in the street while he's pissed off because they won't leave him alone. I don't blame him. Mel Gibson is in a town that's run by Jews. He's like an outcast, a leper. Shall I stop talking now?"

Sid & Nancy,” and off it goes. I don’t think I played Sid Vicious very well. I don’t like the way I look in *Prick Up Your Ears*. I wasn’t the right person to play Beethoven and turned it down half a dozen times.

PLAYBOY: *The Dark Knight? Harry Potter?*

OLDMAN: It was work.

PLAYBOY: Uh, *The Fifth Element?*

OLDMAN: Oh no. I can’t bear it.

PLAYBOY: You do realize you’re considered one of cinema’s all-time greats, right?

OLDMAN: It’s all so subjective, you know? I guess I shouldn’t complain. I’ve learned over the years that people get upset when they tell you something is their favorite movie and you go, “Really? You liked that piece of shit?” That’s the sort of thing Sean Penn would say. So I now tell people, “Thank you, that’s great,” and move on. But you know, I remember John Lennon saying that if he could, he’d go back and burn most of the work the Beatles did. He said he’d rerecord all the fucking songs, and I get that. Most of my work I would just stomp into the ground and start over again.

PLAYBOY: Come on. Even *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*?

OLDMAN: Look, I think there’s been some really good work along the way, good moments. I can look at certain movies and think, That scene was good, or, *There’s* something I was trying to get at. It was the most thrilling experience watching myself for the first time in *JFK*, for example, because I couldn’t believe I was in it—Oliver Stone at the very height of his powers, the sheer energy of it all, his commitment. When I saw the finished product I had to pinch myself. I thought, Wow, I’m in this movie. This is terrific. Or to do a role like Smiley in *Tinker Tailor* and to work with someone like John Hurt, who had been such a towering figure from my younger days. Every day I was like a fanboy. I fainted at his feet.

But I’m 56 now, and if you’ve managed to work as long as I have, you understand that these roles everyone fusses over are your career; they’re not your life. It’s just a job, really. You have financial responsibilities, you have children, you have all those things all the regular people have. Honestly, I forget I’m an actor until I’m reminded.

PLAYBOY: You’re probably not hurting for movie offers. What made you do *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*?

OLDMAN: I love the franchise. I was a fan, as we all were, of the original films. I thought the script was very good.

PLAYBOY: And it was a big payday, no doubt.

OLDMAN: Yes, but other big paydays come my way and I go, “Would I want to be part of that? No, thank you.” This one had a pedigree.

PLAYBOY: What’s it like working with a bunch of damn dirty apes?

OLDMAN: Well, it’s hard being around the apes, because they’re basically just actors

in weird diving suits with dots on their faces and cameras on their heads. Their mannerisms and facial expressions were ape-like, which was fun to watch. But the finished look comes later, through rendering and special effects. When I did *Dracula* and *Hannibal* I spent hours each morning having the makeup glued and strapped to my face. On *Dracula* the hair alone was a major tribulation. But making *Planet of the Apes* I had no idea what my co-stars actually looked like. I mean, Charlton Heston was filming with the apes. I used to love those behind-the-scenes pictures where you’d see an ape with a great big cigarette holder or a bottle of Coca-Cola in his hand—that old-time movie magic. It’s not like that now.

PLAYBOY: What’s this sequel about?

OLDMAN: We are 10 or 15 years on from the last movie. The simian flu has pretty much taken care of the world’s population except those who were immune to it. Those who did survive are facing chaos and complete societal breakdown.

It’s like the old saying: The mediocre are always at their best. They never let you down.

It’s apocalyptic. I’m a designated leader in the small community of humans trying to reestablish some kind of order to life as it was, having experienced my own personal tragedy in it. It’s a fragile peace between man and ape, and my character is hoping the two factions can co-exist. It’s like putting life back together after Hiroshima or something.

PLAYBOY: It sounds pretty bleak.

OLDMAN: The ultimate message is more hopeful, but yeah, it’s a rather dark view of the future.

PLAYBOY: What’s your view of the future? Are you optimistic about where society is heading?

OLDMAN: [Pauses] You’re asking Gary?

PLAYBOY: Yes.

OLDMAN: I think we’re up shit creek without a paddle or a compass.

PLAYBOY: How so?

OLDMAN: Culturally, politically, everywhere you look. I look at the world, I look at our leadership and I look at every aspect of our culture and wonder

what will make it better. I have no idea. Any night of the week you only need to turn on one of these news channels and watch for half an hour. Read the newspaper. Go online. Our world has gone to hell. I listen to the radio and hear about these lawsuits and about people like this high school volleyball coach who took it upon herself to get two students to go undercover to do a marijuana bust. You’re a fucking *volleyball coach!* This is not *21 Jump Street*.

Or these helicopter parents who overschedule their children. There’s never any unsupervised play to develop skills or learn about hierarchy in a group or how to share. The kids honestly believe they are the center of the fucking universe. But then they get out into the real world and it’s like, “Shit, maybe it’s not all about me,” and that leads to narcissism, depression and anxiety. These are just tiny examples, grains of sand in a vast desert of what’s fucked-up in our world right now. As for the people who pass for heroes in entertainment today, don’t even get me started.

PLAYBOY: Well, since you started.

OLDMAN: It’s like the old saying about mediocrity: The mediocre are always at their best. They never let you down. Reality TV to me is the museum of social decay. And what passes for music—it’s all on that plateau. Who’s the hero for young people today? Some idiot who can’t fucking sing or write or who’s shaking her ass and twerking in front of 11-year-olds.

I have two teenage sons and they occasionally turn me on to stuff—Arcade Fire, hip-hop or whatever. I go, “Wow, that’s interesting.” And I do watch television. I’m a huge fan of long-form TV. *Mad Men*. I loved *True Detective*; Matthew McConaughey gets better and better. *Boardwalk Empire*, *The Americans*, *House of Cards*—oh God, I loved it. It makes me want to create a show and sit back and get all that mailbox money.

I’m trying to give my sons an education about movies as well. You sit there and watch a comedy, let’s say *Meet the Fockers*, and it’s Robert De Niro. You tell them this guy was at one time considered the greatest living actor. My boys look at me and say, “Really? This guy? He’s a middle-aged dad.” So what I’ve tried to do recently is introduce them one by one to the great movies of the 1970s—*The Godfather*, *Mean Streets*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, the work of Lindsay Anderson, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Gene Hackman, Al Pacino, John Cazale, Peter Sellers. I try to give them a sense of what cinema used to be like rather than just these tentpole movies that come and go on demand within five minutes. Don’t get me wrong; there are directors I would still want to work with—Wes Anderson, Paul Thomas Anderson. I’ve never worked with Todd Haynes. I love John Sayles. I’ve never worked with Scorsese.

A great director is a great artist. I felt that way with Alfonso Cuarón on *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. You could just tell being around him that he's a master, partly because he isn't afraid to say, "I fucked myself up over here." I remember a scene where he was scratching his head for two days, figuring out eye lines on 11 characters. "So we've got Harry and Hermione looking that way, and now we've got Snape, we've got Ron, we've got Sirius." Plus he had to match the movements to the mechanical set, which had walls that were moving and breathing. He was never embarrassed to say, "Christ, I've really got myself in a pickle here." And he worked it out. I love it when a director says, "I really don't know the answer to that." The thing you don't want a director to say is "Oh, it's exactly how I imagined it."

The best directors are geniuses. I looked up the *Playboy Interview* with Stanley Kubrick, and it's remarkable how much knowledge that man had at his fingertips. You need a Ph.D. to understand it. His access to the memory of names—not only could he talk about a theory, but he could talk about what institute the person who devised the theory was from. It's a great read for a student of cinema like me.

PLAYBOY: Which movie first grabbed your attention?

OLDMAN: To me it was about the actors. It was Malcolm McDowell, Richard Harris, Albert Finney, Alan Bates, Peter Sellers. And Tom Courtenay in films like *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. But probably the first movie to inspire me was a film directed by Bryan Forbes called *The Raging Moon*. Malcolm McDowell plays a sort of Cock o' the North character, a sporting guy, a bit of a lad with the ladies. And he comes down with a paralyzing disease; it may have been polio. He loses the use of his legs and is confined to a wheelchair and gets shunted off to one of those homes where they look after the disabled. I had never been in a school play, but watching that performance was a sort of moment of spiritual awakening when I thought, I want to do that.

PLAYBOY: How did you get into acting?

OLDMAN: We didn't have any money, but I would generate things. I wanted to learn the piano, so I saved my pocket money and bought a cheap secondhand piano and took lessons. I wanted a guitar, so I saved my pocket money and bought a guitar. I sometimes wish my boys were more like that. Maybe it's a generational thing. I was interested in performing, so I inquired at school. My math teacher told me about a local youth theater, and I went and met the artistic director. I told him I had this sort of ambition to be an actor, and he said, "Well, you would have to go to drama school, and you would have to have some pieces to audition." So that would have been

the first time I ever really thought about a character. Oddly, it was a Joe Orton character. I didn't know a thing about him, but I found a speech from *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. I was very good at just getting out there. Nothing was handed to me, that's for sure. My mother did everything she could for me, but I knew I had to do it on my own. I had to escape.

PLAYBOY: What about your father?

OLDMAN: I mean, just google it; it says, "Gary Oldman, son of welder." When I first arrived in America to promote *Sid & Nancy* I made the mistake of being overly forthcoming in interviews. I had no rule book. I was so naive. I was very happy where I was in the theater and thought doing a movie would be just a one-off thing. I should have just said, "I don't talk about family. Next question." Now, because of the internet and all that, people just go to the fucking morgue, open the drawer and write, "Son of welder, once married to Uma Thurman." I'm so tired of it. I sometimes fantasize about sitting

I made the mistake of being overly forthcoming in interviews. I had no rule book.

down in a situation like this and actually saying, "You know, it was all made up. You will never know who my real father was. He wasn't a fucking welder. I was just having a lark with you all."

PLAYBOY: Is there something wrong with being the son of a welder?

OLDMAN: It's not so much that. It's that your life story is out of your control. [*in a nasal voice*] "We read many stories after you directed your first film, *Nil by Mouth*, that said it was autobiographical and that your father used to beat your mother."

PLAYBOY: And that's not true?

OLDMAN: No, it's not true! You're hearing it from the horse's mouth. That character is not my dad. My mother never got beat up. That character was a composite—partly fiction and partly a kid I knew at school. It's not my personal story, but that's what the media wanted. Sorry, I get a little angry about these things.

PLAYBOY: Your characters are always screaming their heads off. Is rage an is-

sue for you in real life? Are you the guy shouting at the waiter when the food doesn't come fast enough?

OLDMAN: I know what it means to do a job. I was a sales assistant in several places. I was a stockroom boy and did a lot of sweeping up. I worked in a factory. I respect people in the service industry. What irritates me more is when people aren't respectful. There's a lot of nonsense behavior, especially in a place like Hollywood. The money, the power, they create little monsters.

PLAYBOY: If nothing else, you've found a profession that lets you channel anger through your characters. The scene in *Léon: The Professional* of you screaming, "Bring me *everyone!*" is a classic.

OLDMAN: Again, I could take it or leave it personally. What's funny is that the line was a joke and now it's become iconic. I just did it one take to make the director, Luc Besson, laugh. The previous takes, I'd just gone, "Bring me everyone," in a regular voice. But then I cued the sound guy to slip off his headphones, and I shouted as loud as I could. That's the one they kept in the movie. When people approach me on the street, that's the line they most often say. It's either that or something from *True Romance*.

PLAYBOY: Another amazing performance. You play Drexel Spivey, a dreadlocked pimp who's been called the coolest drug dealer in movie history. Please say you enjoyed that role.

OLDMAN: It's a nice little turn.

PLAYBOY: How did you transform into a white Rasta thug?

OLDMAN: As soon as they told me, "Okay, there's this white guy who thinks he's black, and on top of that, he's a pimp," I thought, Yeah, I'd like to do that. When you add the matted hair and the eye and the fake teeth, it all comes pouring out. The Drexel voice came to me in New York one day. I heard a kid talking outside my trailer and literally pulled him in from the street and said, "Read this dialogue and tell me what you think." He read a couple of lines and said, "That's good, but it don't fly. I wouldn't say that." I said, "What would you say?" and he helped authenticate it so I could show up and become that character.

PLAYBOY: Do people come up and say, "Get off my plane," like Harrison Ford says to you in *Air Force One*?

OLDMAN: More than a few times. That movie had some enjoyable moments. I remember the flight deck was on a sound stage and there was a big sign that said NO DRINKING, NO SMOKING AND NO EATING ON SET. At one point I looked over and Harrison was in the doorway beneath the sign with a burrito, a cigar and a cup of coffee, which I thought was hilarious. I could never get the image out of my head. Nowadays we would take out an iPhone and post something like that on Instagram.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about directors. How does someone like Francis Ford

Coppola, who directed you in *Dracula*, differ from Christopher Nolan from the *Dark Knight* trilogy?

OLDMAN: Well, Francis is a hero of mine. He's arguably the best American director but also a brilliant writer. Many people forget he won an Academy Award for the screenplay for *Patton*. I recently watched *The Conversation* again and couldn't believe how it stands up. I always tell students who want to be writers or directors that first on their list of what to watch should be *The Godfather: Part II*, because in terms of camera, lighting, cinematography, composition, production design, costume, storytelling, writing and acting, it's flawless. It's a master class in filmmaking from soup to nuts.

We didn't always see eye to eye on *Dracula*, but I have enormous respect for him. He's very forceful and lets you know exactly what he thinks. Chris Nolan is more about giving you really good notes. On *The Dark Knight* he'd do a take and then say something like "There's a little more at stake." Francis will shout at you during the take, "There's more at stake! You love her! No! Love her *more* than that!" He's like D.W. Griffith.

PLAYBOY: Goth chicks must have been banging down your door after that movie.

OLDMAN: It's funny. I used to have this little office on Melrose, and people would come and try to find me. An attractive young woman came in one day with a tattoo of *Dracula* on her breast and wanted my signature over it. Then she went and had my autograph tattooed. I was cool with that.

PLAYBOY: Have you enjoyed your fair share of groupies?

OLDMAN: I've had some wild nights in this hotel, actually. All sorts of goings-on here when I was younger. Hef would be proud of me. I've probably had fewer than others but more than some, I suppose. I don't get the whole autograph thing, though, or taking selfies with somebody. But so be it. People say nice things, though I don't always particularly believe it. I guess I wish I could enjoy it more. I look in the mirror and think, God, how did I ever fucking make a movie? But there were definitely some wild times.

PLAYBOY: Give us one.

OLDMAN: There's an amusing story about a trip up to San Francisco fueled largely by vodka and timed perfectly to the big 1989 earthquake. We were literally at the epicenter. Afterward it was like, "Well, was it good for you, darling? Because the earth definitely moved for me."

Just like anyone out here, anybody in this industry, you're working with attractive people, you're young, and one thing leads to another. Few are immune to it. I remember being at a dinner many years ago in New York with Arthur Miller. I was sitting next to him. After we loosened up with a few glasses of vino, I turned to him and said, "Do you ever walk down

the street and just stop and go, 'Fuck, I was married to Marilyn Monroe?'" He went, "Yeah."

PLAYBOY: Were you loaded on some films more than others?

OLDMAN: It wasn't that I was at the bar every single night or drinking on set. I always took the work seriously. I always showed up on time. I'm prepared, I know my lines, and I'm shocked when other people don't. But there was one movie toward the end, *The Scarlet Letter*, when I was in a dodgy place. And I was pretty good in it too. I have hardly any memory of making it, though.

PLAYBOY: Your co-star Demi Moore called you out on your addiction, right?

OLDMAN: Yes, Demi, lovely Demi. I remain grateful. This past March was 17 years since I last had a drink.

PLAYBOY: What's the secret to sobriety?

OLDMAN: The secret is you have to want to stop. They talk about 12 steps if you go through the program, but the only one you have to do perfectly is the first,

*You have to cut
half of what I've
said, because
it's going to
make me sound
like a bigot.*

which is to acknowledge that you have a problem and that your life is unmanageable. It's a horrible thing to be in what people call "the disease."

PLAYBOY: What's your take on legalizing marijuana?

OLDMAN: It's silly to me. I'm not for it. Drugs were never my bag. I mean, I tried it once and it wasn't for me, though, unlike Bill Clinton, I did inhale. To me, the problem is driving. People in Colorado are driving high and getting DUIs. That's what I worry about. Listen, if you want to do cocaine, heroin, smoke marijuana, that's fine by me. It's just that I worry about kids behind the wheel of a car more than anything.

PLAYBOY: Is there any way the film community could have intervened to save Philip Seymour Hoffman?

OLDMAN: You can try, but you can't stop someone, no. You have to want to do it for yourself. That's the only way. I had heard he had run-ins with heroin and booze and things, so it wasn't a total

surprise. Tony Scott committing suicide knocked me sideways. That floored me, as did Heath Ledger. All those ridiculous stories about him being so in the character of the Joker was certainly not the person I knew. That's sort of ludicrous, people blurring the lines and not understanding. There's a lot of rubbish talked about acting, and it's often propagated by practitioners of it. You just want to say, "Oh, shut up."

Even when you're working closely with people, you don't really know what they're like at home. On the outside someone like Philip Seymour Hoffman appeared to be happy professionally. He had kids; he was working with interesting people. But one never really knows. What eventually happens is you put the drink or the drug before everything else. There's no argument about how good he was, but who knows what was going on inside? I don't mean this disrespectfully, but maybe he looked in the mirror and always saw that very pale sort of fat kid. It's a real tragedy for his family.

PLAYBOY: You've been married four times, including, as you mentioned, to Uma Thurman. What have you learned in the process?

OLDMAN: [Groans] Look, relationships are very, very hard. They just are. I mean, four times! I'm not proud to say it. One of them was for 10 minutes. I don't think it meant very much to either of us. What can I say about marriage? I don't know. It's all been a bit of a disaster in that area. I have very good artistic instincts, often right on the money. Love, not so successful. But you know, if someone says, "Here's a script. Now you're Beethoven," that I can do.

PLAYBOY: That was hard work too. You actually played piano for those scenes, right? How did you manage that?

OLDMAN: Well, I do play piano and they showed me playing only certain parts. But yes, I had to learn to play the cadenza to the "Emperor" Concerto, for instance. Just learning that took five hours a day for six weeks. That was the research for the movie, basically—me chained to a Steinway. Whether it's Beethoven or Lee Harvey Oswald or anyone else from real life, you can't become the character no matter what anyone says, but with work and research you can go for the spirit.

PLAYBOY: Are you as exacting in other aspects of your life? Is everything color-coded in your closets at home?

OLDMAN: I have very neat closets, yes.

PLAYBOY: Are you meticulous about your car?

OLDMAN: Yeah. It's part of my curse. I have a Porsche Beck 550 Spyder replica that I look after quite well. The original was made in 1955; mine's from 1976. And I have a collection of vintage posters. If I get something framed, I can take it back three times to get rid of a little fluff under the glass. I have one of those eyes that *(continued on page 194)*

FROM ACCLAIMED DIRECTOR **GUILLERMO DEL TORO** AND THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF *LOST* **CARLTON CUSE**



THE STRAIN

JULY 13
SUNDAYS 10

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FEARLESS

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POT ROW

INSECURITY

PB070814

COLORADO IS IN THE MIDDLE OF A MARIJUANA-INDUCED BANKING CRISIS. AS THE CASH AND DRUGS PILE UP, THOSE ON THE FRONT LINES WORRY THAT LEGALIZED POT IS ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE AN EPIC COMEDOWN

From behind the wheel of an SUV, Ryan watches the rear of a nondescript office building in the Denver suburbs, waiting for his partner to emerge. Tall and well-built at 48, he sports a neatly trimmed goatee, and tattoos peek out from beneath his shirtsleeves. Dog tags dangle from the rear-view mirror, and a combat medic's kit hangs off the back of his headrest. I'm seated in back, beside a black tactical vest loaded

with six 30-round ammo clips (no longer legal to purchase in Colorado, they're relics of his career as a cop). There's also an extra bulletproof vest—for me, in case of an ambush. "If shit goes bad," Ryan tells me over his shoulder, "you'll come with me. We'll leave Phil to deal with the threat."

When Phil appears, Ryan backs the truck as close as he can to the exit: Less distance for his partner to cover means less time to draw unwanted attention.



Page Fifty-Seven

BY WILLIAM WHITFIELD

Like Ryan, Phil wears a navy blue polo shirt stretched over a Kevlar vest, which he tugs down to hide the Glock 21 on his hip. He pops the hatch and slides a long black soft case forward until it's inches from my ankle. It contains an AR-15 rifle positioned upside down, its forward grip sticking out of the open case, in easy reach from the front seat.

"You'll notice it doesn't say WEED DELIVERY on the side of our vehicle," Ryan says. "Our pedigrees are high, but we're very discreet." An employee of Blue Line Protection Group, a firm of former law enforcement and military personnel hired to secure big shipments of cash and "product" for Colorado's legal marijuana industry, Ryan knows that clients value his discretion. "The government spent millions of dollars training us. Now we're taking

that training to the marijuana industry."

While Ryan takes us down a side street and onto a main boulevard, Phil monitors the side mirrors to make sure we're not being followed. Because they've been here only a few weeks, and because BLPG uses a dummy address on its website, they assume no one yet knows where to find them. But it's part of an effort to stay sharp, Phil explains, and not get complacent.

The list of who might be following us runs the gamut from organized crime to street-level opportunists. In the worst-case scenario, it's a cartel. Mexico has plenty of military-trained professionals, Ryan tells me. "It would be almost our counterpart they might send to make a statement—to

attack us and say, 'Hey, you're taking away part of our business. We're gonna do something about it.'" Armored transports are robbed all the time by lesser adversaries such as thugs and career criminals, and on any given run, Ryan and Phil may be transporting as much as \$1 million in



1. Elan Nelson with tagged buds at Medicine Man's grow facility. 2. Workers trim buds inside the trim room. 3. Dried marijuana is prepared for processing in the drying and curing room. 4. Inside the grow facility at Medicine Man.



"IF SOMEONE GETS KILLED, THE PEOPLE TO POINT THE FINGER AT ARE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS IGNORING THIS PROBLEM."





1. Blue Line Protection Group founder Ted Daniels (middle) poses with two employees outside the company's newly acquired armored van. 2. Tactical vest and weapons used by BLPG employees, many of whom are former military and law enforcement personnel.



cash and weed stuffed into bags piled so tall it's hard to see out the back window. The odds of an eventual violent confrontation, says Phil, are "extremely likely."

"Anything can happen," he says. "We just always assume that today is the day. It's the same as when we were cops."

That was at the Jefferson County sheriff's office, where the pair worked together for years on the Special Operations Response Team. They received SWAT training, executive-protection training from the U.S. Marshals Service and the Secret Service, and hostage-rescue and vehicle-assault training—generally not a transferable skill set in the civilian

economy. But since Ryan left the sheriff's office last year to invest with others in BLPG, it's a skill set they've found a use for.

Their clients were, understandably, a bit edgy at first, unaccustomed to mixing casually with agents of the law. But Ryan, who smoked pot as a teenager on the beaches of southern California, was more than at ease. He talks about the parallels between the present moment and the end of Prohibition—he recently watched a Ken Burns documentary on the subject. "This is a unique time in Colorado and the nation. Now you've given back to the people something the government had taken away."

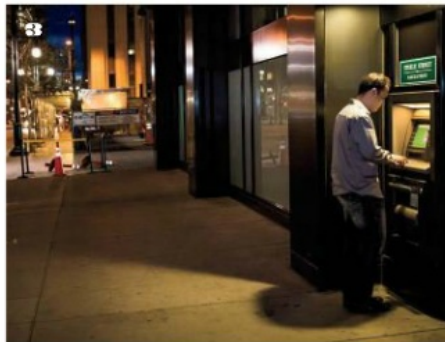
Before he became a cop, Ryan served

five years of active duty with the Air Force military police before joining the reserves. "I've been to Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, all over the desert," he says. "I've done some good things over there, and I've seen a lot of bad things over there." Deployed to the mountains of southern Afghanistan in 2005, he began to feel that politicians were not allowing him to do his job. "I'm thinking to myself, Okay, what is my life worth out here in this environment? What am I actually doing here?"

It's a common thread at BLPG: disillusionment and an attendant desire to tap into their inner entrepreneur. Phil explains it more succinctly. He loved his first four years as a cop but hated the last four. "It wears on you after a while," he says.

Phil had been around pot in high school and college but never tried it. When he began working at BLPG, a client mused that it must be surreal for Phil to find himself on the other side of the drug war. It didn't feel strange until a month later, when he took \$22,000 in cash to pick up 10 pounds wholesale for a client. "I had my surreal moment," he tells me. "I felt like I was in *Scarface*."

About 90 minutes outside the city, through pure cowboy country, Ryan turns onto a weathered blacktop of patched-up potholes and slows to a crawl. "Everything



1. Luke Ramirez bundles cash that he will deposit into a series of bank ATMs. 2. Brian Nowak of La Conte's dispensary prepares a deposit. 3. Ramirez makes small ATM deposits to avoid attention. 4. Colorado residents over the age of 21 are allowed to purchase an ounce of pot at a time.

clear?" he asks. The most vulnerable point along their route is just ahead, inside the grow operation, a confined space that affords no easy escape, where he worries most about getting hit. But the road is empty, and Phil nods him onward.

At the entrance to the compound, a rancher type with a short gray beard and a denim shirt tucked into his jeans emerges. He waves at us and slowly swings open the gate. Ryan pulls forward into a cluster of about a dozen hangar-like tents. Each looks big enough to house three small Cessnas and is outfitted with industrial-size fans churning at the rear. Phil cracks the door, letting in a potent, disorienting breeze of skunky sweet tang.

Ryan waits behind the wheel while a hefty middle-aged worker in blue overalls and a ball cap greets Phil and leads us inside. A small forest of potted marijuana plants blankets one side of the room like

a Christmas tree lot. On the other side nearly a dozen workers are busy separating buds from leaves into big cardboard boxes. The 1970 classic rock track "All Right Now" blares from a stereo.

We make our way to a row of wheeled baker's racks. Each holds six shelves, and each shelf is covered with giant bags filled with weed. Nearby, the industrial-size fans are blowing a mountain breeze off the Hindu Kush through the tent. The big man kneels down and begins to hand up bags to Phil. He explains how he tries to keep each bag as flat as possible, with the weed evenly distributed, so it doesn't bunch up and lose the identifying sticker slapped on top—part of the state's effort to track every marijuana plant from "seed to sale." The bags contain strains such as Sour D, F Place, Space Queen and Flo.

"I don't know where they get the names for this stuff," the man says, flashing me a smile as he pinches his finger and thumb around an imaginary joint and takes a hit.

Any debate over legalizing marijuana quickly becomes a discussion about many things: crime, cultural values, failed policies, science, public health and safety, black markets, supply and demand. In this part of Colorado, much of that discussion centers on a more basic component: jobs.

"We got people working here who are allergic to marijuana, breaking out in all sorts of

(continued on page 174)



"Sure he's a two-timer. But with a little work, I hope to get him up to a three or four."



TERRY RICHARDSON'S

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

JOIN US AS WE TAKE A SCINTILLATING SNEAK PEEK AT OUR UPCOMING
SPECIAL EDITION WITH THE LEGENDARY FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER

Terry Richardson has photographed hundreds of the world's most beautiful women (Kate Upton, Rihanna and Miley Cyrus among them). And now you can add Playmates Audrey Aleen Allen, Alyssa Arce, Pamela Horton and Jaclyn Swedberg to that lovely list. Here's an exclusive preview of our upcoming special edition *California*

Dreamin', in which we turn Richardson and the Playmates loose in iconic southern California locations, from Joshua Tree to the Chateau Marmont. The results are by turns sun-dappled, sassy, languorous and, most of all, revealing in the very best way. Look for the complete 100-page special edition on newsstands in all its dreamy glory starting September 2.













PHIL

IVEY'S

NEW HOUSE



THE MAN THEY CALL THE BEST POKER PLAYER IN HISTORY IS BACK IN THE PUBLIC EYE. BUT NOW IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WINNING MONEY. IT'S ABOUT BUILDING AN EMPIRE

BY MICHAEL KAPLAN

OF CARDS

ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD KINSELLA

Phil Ivey is on a cooler. The world's greatest poker player can't do anything right. He has been contending with bad beats, bad cards and bad luck at the 2013 World Series of Poker in Las Vegas. Thus far, the closest he's come to winning is a 14th-place finish in one of the 61 lesser tournaments that lead up to the World Series of Poker Main Event, which decides a world champion of no-limit Texas Hold'em.

For most poker players, the cash, gold bracelet and prestige that come with finishing first in any tournament at the WSOP are their own reward. But not for Ivey, 37, who has already won nine bracelets, poker's equivalent of Super Bowl rings. To make the tournaments and their multimillion-dollar purses more interesting, he has initiated a series of side wagers known as "bracelet bets" that total in the seven figures. If he wins a tournament, any tournament, at the

“
**MONEY GETS
 ME INTO THE
 BIGGEST GAME
 IN THE WORLD.
 WHEREVER THE
 BIGGEST GAME IS,
 THAT'S WHERE
 I WANT TO BE.**
 ”

World Series, he collects a windfall from a consortium of high-stakes gamblers. If Ivey fails, he loses significant money, much more than the buy-in for the tourney.

With just seven tournaments left to play, Ivey finds himself pressed to produce as he keeps from getting bogged down in his losses, which include some \$300,000 in entry fees alone. "Time is running out," he admits as the year's series of tournaments nears its end. "But when you play these things, you can't think about yesterday. Even though I'm disappointed with how it's going, I bring no baggage to the poker table. I live in the moment. And when I win, we'll have a nice little celebration."

By the time I catch up with Ivey inside a ballroom in the Rio Hotel, where the World Series of Poker takes place, he's



1. "I bring no baggage to the poker table," says Ivey. "I live in the moment." **2.** With Tiger Woods in Las Vegas last year. **3.** Ivey after winning his sixth World Series of Poker gold bracelet in the \$2,500 2-7 Draw Lowball (no-limit) event in 2009.

playing tournament number 56, low on chips and holding on for dear life.

The hangar-size room is wall-to-wall felt-topped tables. Poker celebrity Daniel Negreanu kibitzes with fans. Johnny Chan, a two-time World Series champ who had a show-stealing cameo in the movie *Rounders*, rehashes a past hand. Male model turned high-stakes gambling millionaire Patrik Antonius poses for pictures with a couple of nervous-looking girls. But Ivey, a cipher at the table, remains oblivious. He's hunkered down and playing hard, having no fun at all. A pair of white Beats

by Dre headphones sandwiches his head and rap blasts into his ears. His eyes dart around suspiciously, sponging drops of information from opponents. Baggy jeans hang loose, and he sports a sweatshirt fronted by the Coca-Cola logo. ("Are you getting paid to wear it?" "No. I think it's funny.") His feet, shod in gray leather Nikes, are pulled back under his seat. His six-foot-two frame sits mostly erect, but from the shoulders down he spreads out to occupy as much of the table's real estate as possible.

After Ivey pushes in all his chips and busts out of another event, his only show of emotion is a tight grin and raised eyebrows. His life has been devoted to taking money from other people in what resembles a mug-or-be-mugged environment, (continued on page 190)



"I consider it a victimless crime, but if you want to be a victim, that's fine with me."

与毛义

In The FORBIDDEN CITY

A MYSTERIOUS WRITER PUBLISHED THE MOST POPULAR
EROTICA BOOK IN HONG KONG AND PULLED BACK THE COVERS ON
CHINA'S SEXUAL UNDERGROUND. THE AUTHOR REMAINS HIDDEN,
BUT THE QUESTIONS HE RAISED ABOUT SEX IN CHINA DO NOT

It all started with a post on the popular Hong Kong message board Golden Forum in 2011. The 25,000-word story, sarcastically dubbed an “epic prostitution report,” details the anonymous writer’s sexual adventures at a fictional brothel in Dongguan, an industrial town in southern China’s Pearl River Delta. There the writer liberates himself from a frustrating relationship with his girlfriend, a Hong Kong woman with little interest in sex. The story was titled “Dongguan Wood,” a poke at Japanese author Haruki Murakami’s classic novel *Norwegian Wood*. In another wink to the famous author, the mysterious writer called himself Xiang Xi Haruki Murakami.

Loaded with self-deprecating jokes and funny anecdotes, the story resonated

with those in the know in Hong Kong. Outsiders—including many women—devoured the detailed descriptions of Dongguan’s prostitution scene and the hilarious story of an awkward young man seeking sex from a prostitute for the first time. “Dongguan Wood” quickly earned a following as it went viral and circulated among netizens in Hong Kong, a city where sex is still considered dirty and taboo and certainly not something to be discussed publicly.

As links to the story spread across social media, it caught the attention of Idea Publishing, which compiled “Dongguan Wood” and Xiang Xi’s other short stories into a book titled *Due West*. Despite its content having been widely available on the internet, the book sold

BY VIVIENNE CHOW

Photograph by
CHARLIE LANGELLA



more than 70,000 copies in Hong Kong, where an average book sells 2,000 copies and anything between 10,000 and 20,000 is considered a huge success.

"The story is really a satire mocking the tensed-up Hong Kong-China relationship but dressed as erotica," says Idea Publishing's chief editor, Jim Yu, who published *Due West*. "Initially I wanted those who didn't visit that internet forum to read it, but it became the talk of the town after the book was published and attracted a movie deal. People called it a miracle."

In 2012 Hong Kong film com-

time, but on another level works as scathing satire, albeit in an extremely entertaining and sexy package."

Throughout the epic run of "Dongguan Wood," from anonymous online post to best-selling book and blockbuster film, writer Xiang Xi never stepped forward. Not for the announcement of the book deal or the film deal. Not for interviews, promotional appearances or red-carpet premieres. Not for the recent announcement of an upcoming sequel. Three years after "Dongguan Wood" appeared online, only questions remain: Who is Xiang Xi Haruki

THREE YEARS AFTER "DONGGUAN WOOD" APPEARED ONLINE, ONLY QUESTIONS REMAIN: WHO IS XIANG XI? AND WHAT DOES HIS STORY SAY ABOUT SEX IN CHINA?

pany China 3D Digital Entertainment released a film version, *Due West: Our Sex Journey*. Entertainment publications covered the film's release on their front pages. The movie, a mash-up of 1980s sex romps and *The Hangover* loaded with explicit sex scenes shot in 3-D, raked in \$2.48 million, making it the sixth-top-grossing local film in Hong Kong in 2012 despite being banned in mainland China, where films undergo rigorous censorship by the central government. Noted Hong Kong critic Shek Kei praised the film's "vivid yet hilarious portrayal of a young man's evolution from the boy-next-door to a prostitution customer in mainland China." Website Twitch Film called the movie "a very funny, perverted good

Murakami? And what does the popularity of his story say about sex in China?

Shawn and Michael don't know each other, but they have the same views on sex. Mainly, they don't feel guilty about paying for it and have no plans to leave their partners. Both swear that paying for sex is a way to balance their married lives.

"We have this saying, 'A wife is not as good as a concubine, a concubine can't compare with cheating, and cheating is not as good as an unattainable woman.' It's like the thrill from carrying out some dirty deed behind your mother's back," says 39-year-old Shawn, who has been married for nearly a decade and agrees to talk only if his real name isn't



★ DUE WEST ★

*An Excerpt From
Xiang Xi Haruki
Murakami's Novel,
Translated*



I followed James to the fourth floor, where the receptionist asked if we had made any appointments. I told her we had scheduled a booking with the club's manager, Ah Chak, who was already standing by the reception area, waiting for us. There wasn't anything special about Ah Chak. He was just a very friendly Cantonese man.

Ah Chak greeted us and gave us a briefing about the club. It turned out that right at that hour in the evening there was an event called "Hundred Flowers Bloom," which meant all the girls who had no bookings would gather in the center of the hall, waiting to be picked by customers—as if they were goods sitting on the shelves in supermarkets for shoppers to choose freely.

I was thrilled upon hearing the words *Hundred Flowers Bloom*. I clapped my hands in excitement and said, "Hundred Flowers Bloom! Wasn't it derived from the poem, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom/Let a hundred schools of thoughts contend'? Wasn't it the spirit that Mao Tse-tung advocated in the 1950s? He advocated for freedom of independent thinking in the areas of literature, arts and science, the freedom to debate and freedom for creation and criticism. Everyone should have the freedom to express their opinions, sustain their opinions and reserve their opinions. So under such 'freedom,' it's perfect to allow customers to choose a 'technician' freely! And the club's name, Washington, carries the symbolic meaning of American freedom. Your branding strategy is brilliant!"

Ah Chak didn't seem impressed. On the contrary, he looked a bit awkward, mumbling, "Yes...err...yes." James simply ignored me.

We arrived at the hall for Hundred Flowers Bloom. About 30 “technicians” sat on an enormous U-shaped sofa, greeting customers like us. I was too nervous to pay attention to their faces, but I could see that some were in black see-through dresses. A few wore sailor costumes or tube tops in leopard prints. Two of them were in my favorite flight attendant uniforms. There were a couple wearing cheerleader outfits. There wasn’t any unified standard to what they should be wearing at work.

Ah Chak told us to chillax and take our time. He led us to a smaller couch about 10 feet away from the U-shaped sofa. All the girls’ eyes were on James and me, because we were much younger compared with the rest of the customers at their “uncle age.” I couldn’t bring myself to make direct eye contact with the girls. I lit a menthol Marlboro. As I exhaled, a thin layer of smoke cut between my vision and the girls on the sofa. My vision was blurred by the smoke, but this mysterious feeling of the unknown turned out to be a comfort. And now I could study their faces one by one.

After close inspection, I concluded leopard print is not my taste. Perhaps it was just my prejudice. Leopard print could never arouse my sexual desire. I always thought only those tasteless young girls hanging out in the crowded district of Mong Kok would wear leopard print. It wouldn’t be a good feeling to fuck a chick in leopard print—it would probably be like fucking Fred from *The Flintstones*.

“There’s something special about you.”
That line coming from Siu Sze was a surprise. Before making my trip to Dongguan, I studied a very educational

*Her dress was very thin,
and I could feel her
panties. I couldn’t help
giving her bouncy, peachy
bum a squeeze.*

article for newbies like me entitled “A Guide to What Chinese Whores Mean by What They Say,” which listed all the lines commonly used among these young prostitutes and their true meanings.

“You must have great fortune (fat). You are mature (bald). You are well-mannered (bespectacled). You are a successful man (entrepreneur). You are a macho man (Triad). You are handsome (applicable to anyone age 35 or below). You are kind-hearted (pathetic, you are useless).”

I thought I was a handsome man, but I was hoping to hear her compliment me as a macho man. In the end, all I got was, “There’s something special about you.” This line was not listed, so I couldn’t decode it.

“What’s special? Am I especially ugly?”



Opposite: Actress Wang Li Dan in the movie *Due West: Our Sex Journey*.
Above: Poor sex education leaves Frankie, the main character of the book and film, fumbling through sex as an adult. **Left:** Behind the scenes during the making of the film version of *Due West*.

published. He is a policeman. “You can’t find gentleness from your wife. The kind of services you can get in Dongguan make you feel as if you are an emperor,” he says.

Dongguan’s rise to sexual prominence began roughly 60 miles away, in Hong Kong. As a special administrative region in the south of China, Hong Kong retains political and legal systems that date back to the 156 years it spent as a colony of the British Empire. When the British went home after their 99-year lease ended in 1997, arrangements were put in place between London and Beijing to keep the thriving financial center’s capitalist system and relatively high levels of freedom for at least 50 years. One of the freedoms Hong Kongers enjoy—and mainland Chinese do not—is the right to work as prostitutes and the right to pay for sex services. Although the act of selling sex remains legal, various activities around prostitution are banned, including soliciting sex, pimping or running a brothel. But even those restrictions are virtually ignored in notorious Hong Kong red-light districts such as Wan Chai, a favorite of visiting American sailors, where girls, often from Thailand or the Philippines, lure men behind the red satin curtains of clubs with names that only hint at what goes on inside.

The picture outside Hong Kong could not be more different. Prostitution was legal throughout Chinese history until Chairman Mao Tse-tung’s Communist Party seized power in 1949 and put a stop to it. Beijing’s sex workers were rounded up and sent to euphemistically named “reeducation” camps, where the curriculum contained only one lesson: Don’t sell sex. By the mid-1960s prostitution was all but gone—at least on the surface. China’s underground sex trade never ceased but instead settled in half a dozen “boomtowns” along the Pearl River Delta. With 8 million people, the boomtown of Dongguan is best known for the New South China Mall, the world’s biggest, though nearly empty, shopping center: a sign of the hubris that has gripped China’s developers as the country’s economy has boomed.

Dongguan’s strength lies in its proximity to Hong Kong and its prices for sex, which are much cheaper than in Hong Kong and Macao, a former Portuguese colony that has become Asia’s answer to Las Vegas. Dongguan regulars praise the “Guan style” service whereby men are treated as kings with a full menu of bathing, oral sex, intercourse, fetishes and assorted dirty games. This reputation has turned Dongguan into a local sex capital, with roughly 250,000 workers generating what analysts estimate to be \$8 billion in business annually, with no signs of slowing down.

“Everyone knows Hong Kong men are regulars in Dongguan. It’s cheaper to go there [to visit prostitutes] compared with



Clockwise from top: In February authorities stormed 16 Chinese cities in the largest ever raid on the sex trade; police in Dongguan arrest suspects during the crackdown, in which more than 6,500 police officers swarmed nearly 2,000 venues; employees line up during a police raid.

Hong Kong and Macao, and it's less than two hours away by train," says Michael, a 40-year-old wedding photographer. "It's still convenient, even though we need to cross the Hong Kong-mainland border."

Michael loves his wife but claims he cannot stand her checking up on his whereabouts. "I'm a photographer. I'm out on jobs all the time, and I can't always answer phone calls. Sometimes my wife exhausts me," he says. "Men want to be respected, and at these places, somehow you find the kind of respect you want. It's true it is just a service that you pay for, but it's worth the money. They are so gentle to you. It feels like a first date each time with a new girl."

Before the rise of Dongguan, southern China was populated with "hair salons." For men in the 1980s, going to "get their hair washed" was Hong Kong code for a quick sex service. That's where Shawn first learned about prostitution when he was still a teenager.

"A friend opened a hair salon and asked me to go get my hair washed. I thought that was weird. My hair is very clean. But my friend bugged me and kept asking me to go. So I went," Shawn recalls. "I

lay down on my back in that long soft chair, leaving my head in the sink as I got my hair washed. The girl massaged my head as she began washing my hair, then she massaged my shoulders, which I thought was nice. Then something weird happened: The massage went farther and farther, and eventually it went all the way down there." Shawn laughs out loud as he looks back. "I was so shocked, I jumped out of the chair."

Now a Dongguan regular, Shawn has seen it all, from "evil massage" (local slang for a "happy ending") to mega-nightclubs offering 200 to 300 women. "Regular clubs

THE REPUTATION HAS TURNED DONGGUAN INTO A LOCAL SEX CAPITAL.

have 60 to 70 technicians—that's how we refer to them. Large nightclubs have 200 to 300 girls in all kinds of styles and physiques one can imagine," says Shawn.

Service charges are usually divided into three categories. "For 500 yuan [\$81.45], you can get a girl to sit at your table for two to three hours," says Shawn. "The most you can (continued on page 184)

"Ha-ha...no, not ugly. Just special."

She'd already climbed on my body as soon as she finished the sentence. She was all over me. It had been a long while since I experienced that kind of pressure from a female body—except taking the underground during rush hour. Even though I called it pressure, there was nothing negative about it. Judging from her position, she was holding down a male, signifying her challenge to the Chinese patriarchal society and the awakening of female independence. I should've revolted against it, but I was enjoying every moment. I enjoyed the feeling of being held down by a woman. I could feel the curves of her breasts pressing on my chest, and she could feel my penis that had been aroused by her

She started panting. Her cherry lips were half open and her breathing became more and more distinctive.

provocative call to fight.

Our faces were close. I turned away to escape getting caught in her eyes. I looked down and saw her breasts pressing on my chest. I wanted to touch her, but I had to struggle from that position. I lifted my arms and searched for her waist. There was no extra fat. I could feel the beautiful curve of her tiny waist. She didn't respond to my action. Then I searched farther down and reached her butt. Her dress was very thin, and I could feel her panties. I couldn't help giving her bouncy, peachy bum a squeeze as her body warmth sent me this heavenly sensation. I held her tight and pressed her bum toward my crotch so my penis could have a taste of the body held in my arms.

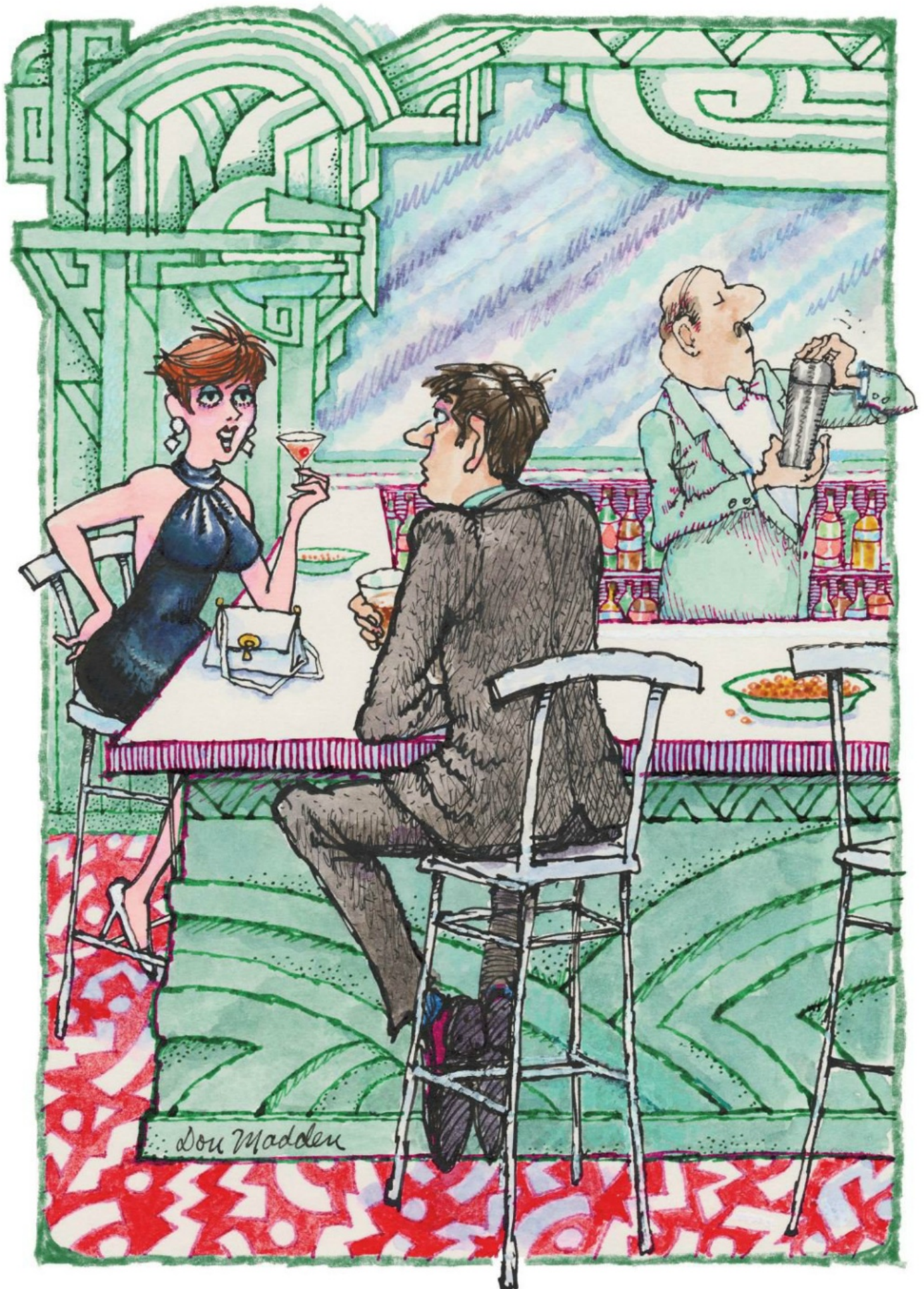
She started panting. Her cherry lips were half open and her breathing became more and more distinctive. Staring at her pretty face in such a seductive expression, I wanted to kiss her. But just before I was about to make my move, she dropped this line: "Just lie in bed. Let me blow you first."

That—a blow job—was something most women were not willing to do. Siu Sze and I had a chat for only a few minutes and she offered to suck my dick! One Hong Kong lawmaker had claimed that 10 out of 10 women were prostitutes. I wished it were true.

She sat on me and started unbuttoning my shirt. I got up so my face could be closer to hers and she could undress me from an easier position.

"You just lie there. Let me take off your pants."

From the beginning to the end, she was the boss who ran the show. I had no objection and let her be in charge. I fell back onto the bed. ■



"When you say you're looking for an 'independent girl who's a real self-starter,' does that mean you don't believe in foreplay?"




SWEET



*Photography by
Tony Kelly*





*The centuries-old practice of yoga
has never been more popular—
nor has it ever looked so beautiful*

The benefits of yoga are many: It strengthens the body, increases flexibility and calms the mind. And when practiced at its highest level, it is one of the most impressive and graceful pursuits to observe. Only in recent years has this 2,000-year-old art become mainstream in the United States, with everyone from business executives to NBA and NFL players joining the ranks of modern-day yogis. Several months ago it reentered the public debate with particular vigor when photographs of model and yoga practitioner Luba Shumeyko demonstrating poses in the nude surfaced on the internet. Reddit, the Huffington Post and message boards for numerous magazines lit up: Were her poses executed correctly? Did the photos misrepresent this sometimes spiritual practice? We'll leave the technical niceties to the experts. As for the sheer strength and power of the images, let's just say we couldn't get enough, so we approached Luba to pose for us. Here she is again, demonstrating advanced poses in all her flexible glory.

SARVANGASANA

• Translated from Sanskrit, this position is known as "whole body pose" (*asana* means "posture"). It falls into the category of inversions, or upside-down poses. As blood flows to the brain the results are simultaneously calming and energizing.

2

VASISTHASANA

• Also called side plank pose, this position increases balance and strengthens the wrists, arms, shoulders and abs. This version, with the leg raised perpendicular to the floor, is clearly for experts only.



3.
**UTTHITA
ARDHA
DHANURASANA**

• Standing half bow pose strengthens and increases flexibility in the spine, tones the abdominal and thigh muscles and improves balance.

4.
**URDHVA
PADMASANA**

• The classic lotus pose is combined with a shoulder stand in this position that stretches and strengthens the abdominal muscles.

5.
SIRSASANA

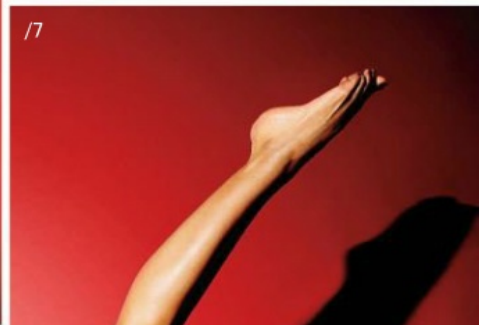
• This variation on the headstand works core muscles and strengthens the legs and glutes.

6.
DHANURASANA

• Also called bow pose, this position expands the chest, strengthens the spine and is said to alleviate lower-back pain and increase appetite.

7.
HAMSASANA

• This impressive pose strengthens the wrists, shoulders, abs and back. Its English translation is, aptly, "swan pose."



TARYN SIMON'S

Birds of the West Indies

IN HER LATEST PROJECT, ACCLAIMED
CONCEPTUAL ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER TARYN SIMON
TRAINS HER LENS ON THE JAMES BOND FRANCHISE

A few facts to consider: A “bird” in the snappy slang of swinging London is a babe. The real-life James Bond—an actual flesh-and-blood man whose name Ian Fleming lifted for the spy 007—was an ornithologist and the author of *Birds of the West Indies*, a book published in 1936 that exhaustively catalogs more than 400 species of birds in the Caribbean. Every installment of the James Bond franchise since 1962’s *Dr. No* has included three elements without which a Bond film would not be a Bond film: a hot babe, a cool car and stylish weaponry. Most also include glimpses of actual birds aflutter in the distance.

All these facts inform artist Taryn Simon’s ambitious new photographic installation, *Birds of the West Indies*, images from which are included on these pages. Simon is best known for her documentary photo series *The Innocents* and *Contraband*, which portray, respectively, wrongly convicted former inmates

and illegal goods seized at JFK airport. For *Birds of the West Indies* she set out to catalog all the women, weapons and vehicles in the Bond universe—and to photograph every on-screen bird sighting.

Why? Perhaps because, as Simon’s work shows,

James Bond has always existed somewhere between fantasy and reality, with interchangeable parts that vary from one film to the next yet somehow always add up to a recognizable whole. In retrospect, the women (photographed in their own clothes as they are today), the weapons and the vehicles represent more than 50 years of us—our culture’s desires, fears and dreams about the technological future.

Seeing these strangely familiar women and props out of context in Simon’s stark but glamorous images

sometimes leaves you shaken—remember the knotted rope thwacking Daniel Craig’s bare balls in *Casino Royale*?—but more often leaves you stirred.



The original *Birds of the West Indies* inspired the cover design of the book that accompanies Simon’s exhibit.

TEXT BY KEVIN WEST



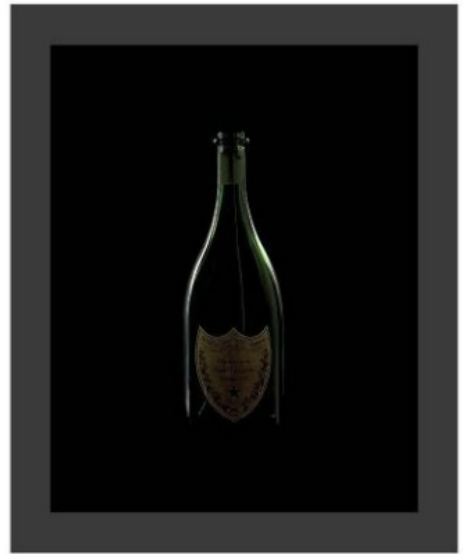
B.20 *Golden Gun*, 1974



A.64 *Sévérine* (Bérénice Marlohe), 2012



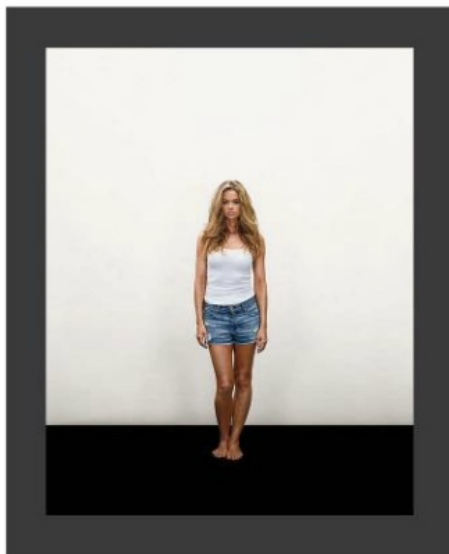
C.40 2006 *Aston Martin DBS* (with roll damage), 2006



B.1 *Dom Pérignon*, 1962



C.14 1977 *Lotus Esprit S1 'Wet Nellie'*, 1977



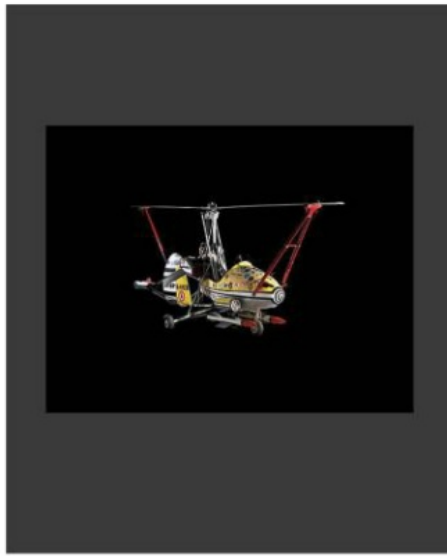
A.52 *Dr. Christmas Jones* (Denise Richards), 1999



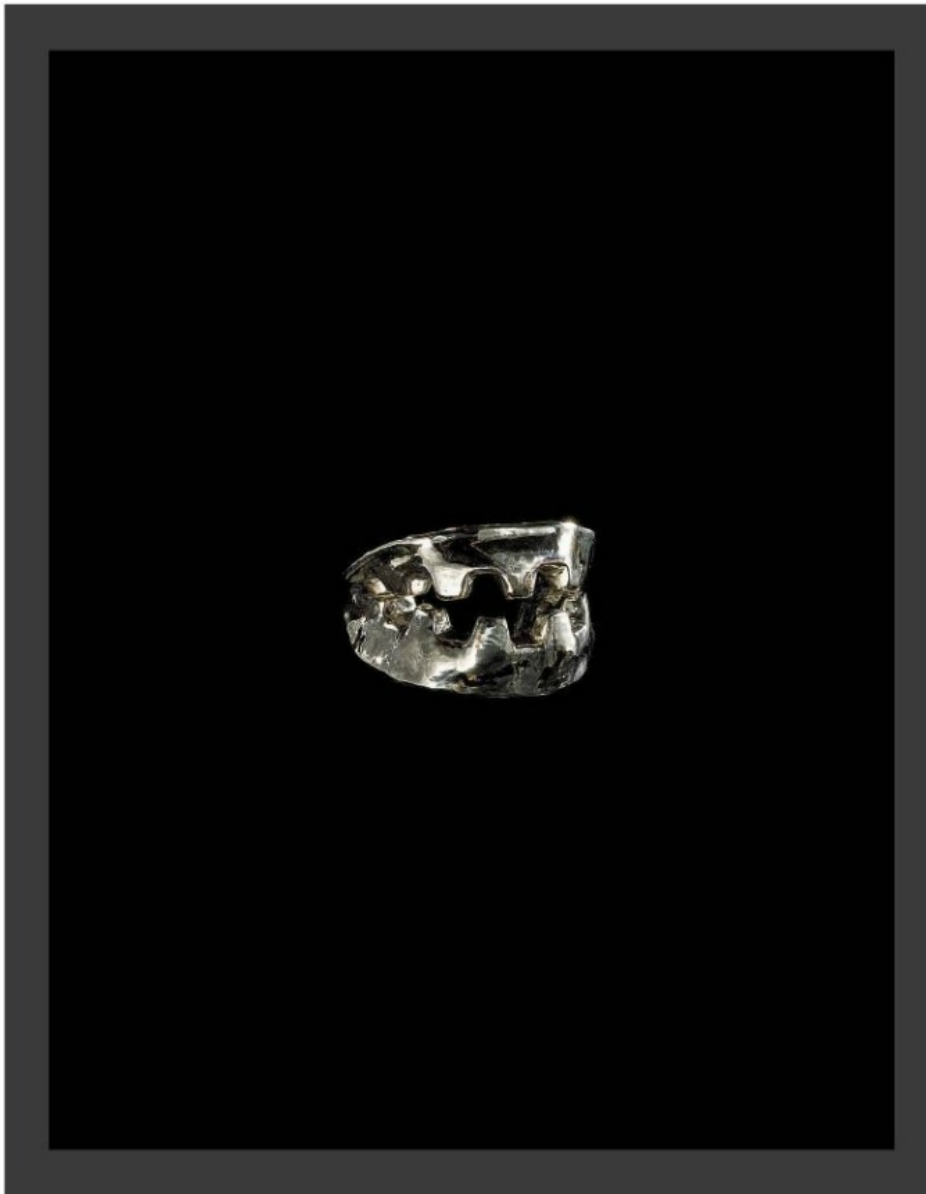
B.68 *Bikini Hip Knife*, 2002



A.6 *Pussy Galore* (Honor Blackman), 1964



C.7 1967 *Wallis Autogyros WA-116 'Little Nellie,'* 1967



B.22 *Steel Teeth*, 1977

Q&A

WITH
TARYN
SIMON

THE ARTIST DISCUSSES THE MASSIVE UNDERTAKING BEHIND HER LATEST WORK

Q: *There are approximately 2,900 minutes, or about 48 hours' worth, of James Bond movies. What was your strategy for watching them? How many times did you have to watch the films to feel confident you'd spotted all the birds?*

A: The films were watched chronologically in a binge and then reviewed again and again. The entire studio was involved. At times there were specks we weren't certain were birds. We'd all gather round and discuss dust on a negative versus a living creature. It required training the eye to look away from the seductive action and seek the invisible, fleeting and noncentral players that inhabit the margins. This stood as a metaphor for my other work.

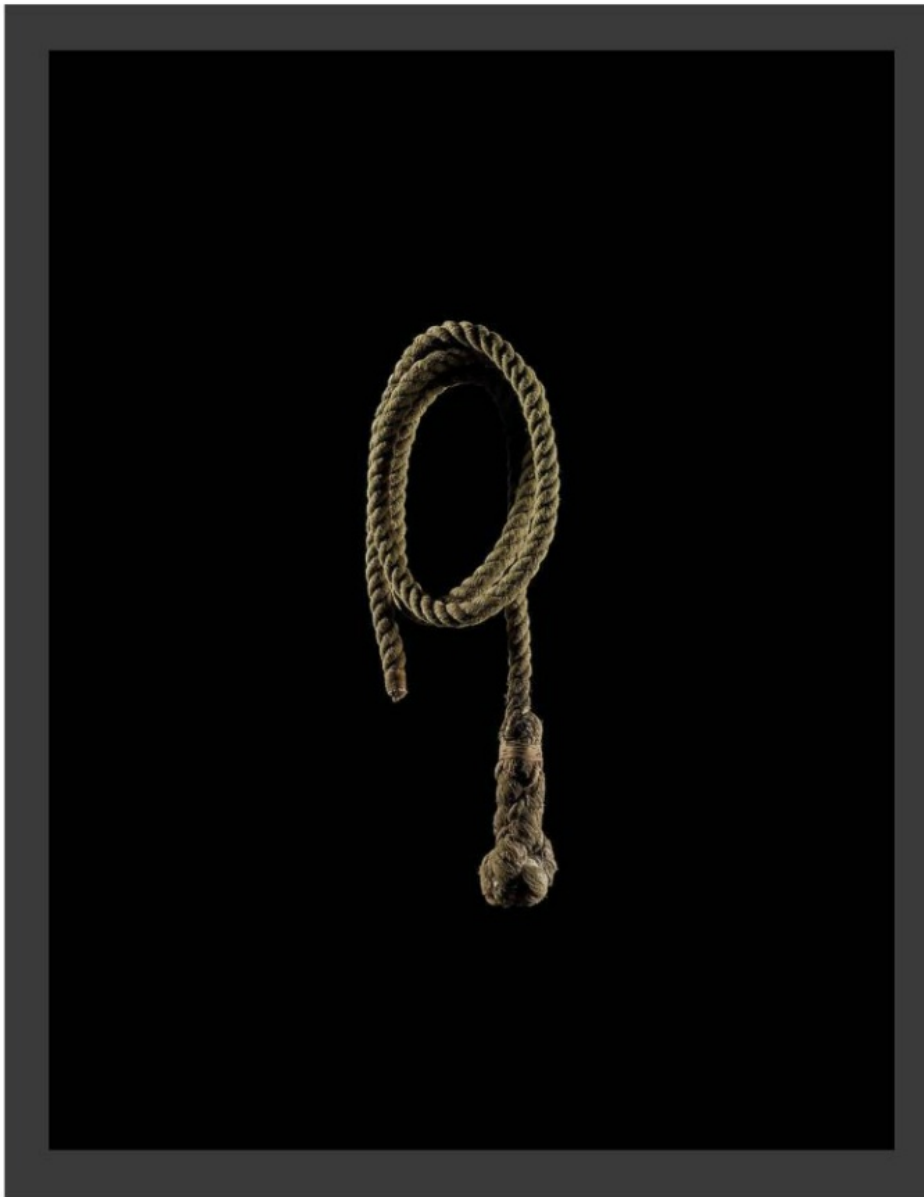
Q: *How did you manage to locate the weapons and vehicles?*

A: They came from different sites throughout Europe and America: the official Bond archive, auction houses, private collectors, museums. The earlier items presented more obstacles because the value of the franchise had not yet been established and elements of the films weren't preserved as they are today. I'm always interested in archives that develop before value is established and how they mutate once it is recognized—the collision of low and high art.

Q: *What was the hardest prop to photograph?*

A: Cars are never easy; nor are boats—big, shiny reflective surfaces that demand a lot of control. It's difficult when you need a crew to carefully move a precious collectible.

Q: *Inevitably a few of the props take on a life of their own as quasi-independent objects—some as cool fetishes of consumer desire (the 1963 Aston Martin DB5 from *Goldfinger*), some as goofy misguided predictions about the future (the Bath-O-Sub from *Diamonds Are Forever*) and some as brilliantly iconic design statements (the golden gun from *The Man With the Golden Gun*). Does any one prop stand out as being particularly loaded with meaning for the entire Bond franchise?*



B.74 Knotted Rope Whip, 2006



C.23 1962 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II, 1985



B.7 Razor-Edged Bowler Hat, 1964

A: I always liked the Hasselblad camera signature gun from *License to Kill* as a metaphor in which a camera is a weapon of death.

Q: *A few of the actresses declined to be photographed—including, of course, Ursula Andress. Did you think at any point that their absence would prevent you from completing the project, especially since it is essentially completist in its approach? Why did you then decide to register their absence with blank images?*

A: When Ursula declined to participate, I was sure the project was in jeopardy of failure. She is *the* Bond girl. I became obsessed with getting her image and her history, and in that process I discovered that the voice of her character in *Dr. No* was dubbed by an uncredited English woman named Nikki van der Zyl. Ursula's character, Honey Ryder, is a fragmented

creation, pieced together to compel. In the end Ursula's absence was a blessing. I created a film in which Nikki, who had always been invisible in the Bond universe, reads the complete lines of Ursula's character—and becomes visible.

Nikki was the most prolific agent of substitution in the Bond franchise. From 1962 to 1979 she provided voice dubs for more than a dozen major and minor characters throughout nine Bond films. For me she underscores the interplay of substitution and repetition in the preservation of myth and the construction of fantasy.

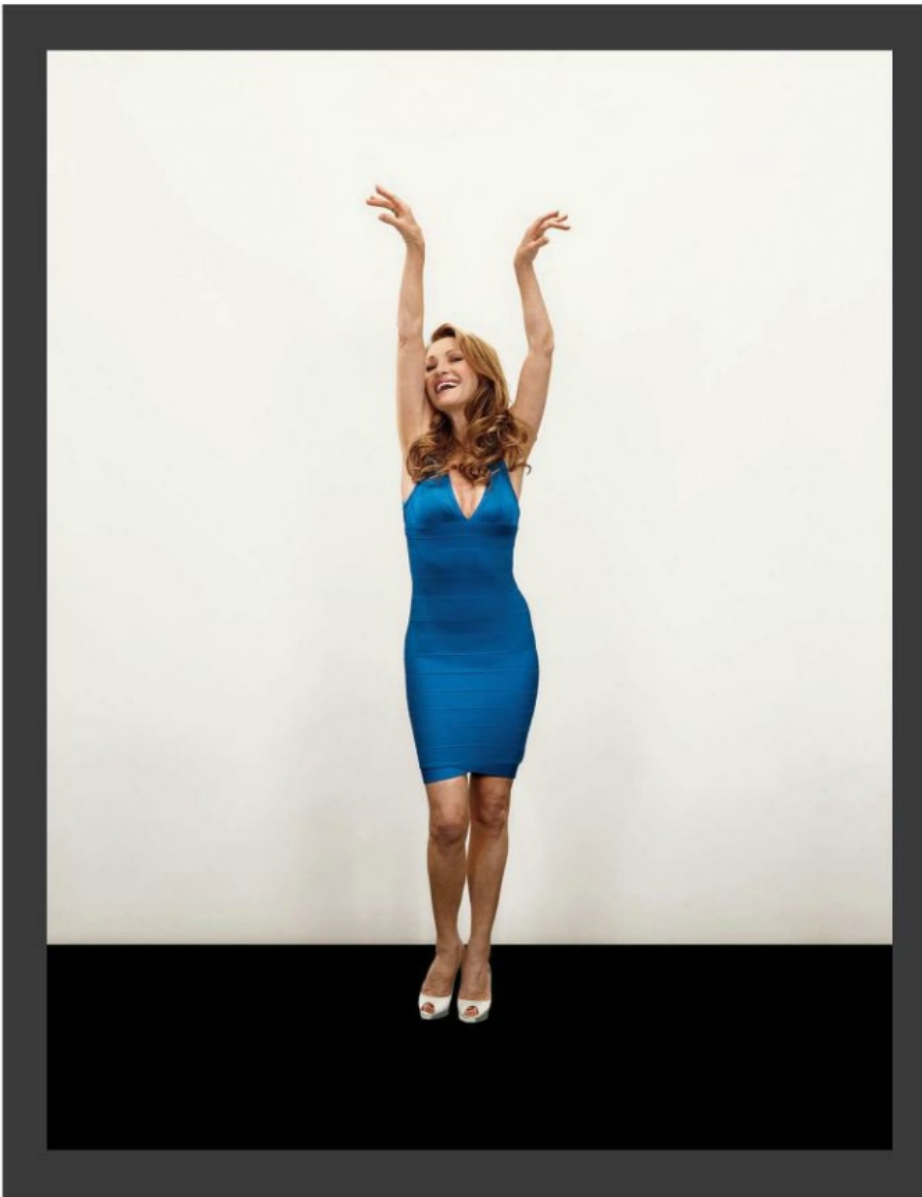
The empty portraits disrupt the archive and present obstacles I couldn't transcend. In my work I'm often associated with access to difficult and complex areas and subjects. I assumed this project would be a break from those difficulties. Surprisingly, it was even more difficult. Ten of the 57 women I approached to be part of *Birds of the West Indies* declined to

participate. Their reasons included pregnancy, not wanting to distort the memory of their fictional character and avoiding any further association with the Bond formula.

Q: *Why did you decide to ask the women to style themselves and choose their own poses for the portraits?*

A: I see the women's portraits as existing in this strange liminal space between reality and fiction, or a space where both reality and fiction disappear and a third space that is neither opens up. The mark of a Bond girl is so indelible, there is often no room for another reality or identity. Their poses and clothing play a part in that push-pull.

Q: *How did your understanding of Bond and the Bond franchise change during the*



A.23 *Solitaire* (Jane Seymour), 1973



B.2 *Tarantula*, 1962



C.12 1973 *Glastron Carlson GT-150*, 1973

course of watching and rewatching all the films for this project?

A: The films journey through economics, race, gender politics, weapons development and proliferation, branding, identity, global politics and aesthetics in such a radical form. They truly stand as a powerful record of culture's role in all these categories.

Interestingly I was told that MI6 at one point looked to Bond for weapons-development ideas, as opposed to the other way around. Perhaps that's the way it goes: imagination and fantasy first.

Q: *Will you be in the audience for the next installment of James Bond?*

A: Of course! I eagerly await every iteration until I die, and then some. ■



Playing the role of the ornithologist James Bond, Taryn Simon cataloged every bird in every James Bond film. The details above come from a piece that features bird appearances in scenes filmed in Istanbul, Turkey.

By
RACHEL
R. WHITE

TRINE NEW WORLD

FUELED BY THE INTERNET,
THE RAVE SCENE
IS **BEING REBORN** IN A
MIND-ALTERING
COLLISION OF
ELECTRONIC MUSIC,
DIGITAL ART AND
DESIGNER DRUGS.
BUT WILL ANYONE LOG
OFF LONG ENOUGH TO
SHOW UP?

PHOTO BY DARREN TIESTE

The It girl epitomizes the very moment, but she's rarely on time. In a downtown Los Angeles warehouse, the Kawaii Twerk Rave is filling with bodies, but internet club kid Itzel Xoco, whom I am here to meet, is nowhere to be found through the blunt smoke and laser lights. Young women near the stage grind and twerk. Tonight's lineup of DJs and rappers are all women, and the floor percolates with a feeling of female camaraderie. The environment has one schoolgirl-skirted partygoer so immersed as she dances, mini backpack tipped to the ceiling, that she doesn't notice the man with a video camera zooming in on a patch of her underwear, which glows under the black light.

When Itzel finally appears it is the following day, and she brings a bottle of champagne. "The entire world was so *turnt up* last night," she offers by way of apology. Itzel pours champagne into a Solo cup as she walks down Santa Monica Boulevard, going over the previous evening the way you do when a night is so good there's nothing to do the next day but talk about it. There was an art event that her friend deejayed, which led to a suite at the Standard and a private afterparty where everyone got naked in the Jacuzzi. It's another story for Itzel's collection—a good one, which seems to please her.





2.

Zoo, which packaged the look and the music with an overdose of spring-break culture and made millions. Attendance at the five largest EDM festivals grew 41 percent between 2007 and 2012, and festival producer SFX Entertainment recently received a \$1.1 billion valuation on Wall Street.

The new generation of club kids were not among those buying in. The bigger EDM grew in the mainstream, the deeper the DIY rave scene buried itself underground. Even finding an event in the new rave scene is a task: You must know whom to follow on social media and when to find a flyer on Instagram or receive one via a direct message on Twitter. In Los (continued on page 172)

More important, there are photos ready to garner “likes” online. At 21, Itzel doesn’t remember life without the internet or the internet without her life splashed across it. She had plush, internet-enabled Neopets as a kid, Myspace in middle school, Facebook in high school and now Instagram, where she publishes her artwork—glossy collages of corporate logos, internet symbols and Sims

inevitably affect what gets posted. “If you post body shots, you get ‘likes,’” she says. “It’s all about the ‘likes.’” Being a millennial, sometimes it feels as though you keep staying alive just for that affirmation.”

Accordingly, in the dressing room at an American Apparel store, Itzel has determined that if photos are to be taken for possible use in this story, then she will have the “sluttiest” shots of everyone. “I want to be perfect online,” she says. “I want to look like my avatars. We are not all avatars yet, but it sometimes seems as though we don’t have personalities anymore, just brands.

We’re turning ourselves into products we can sell. We’re no longer the consumers but the products.” Later, she’ll dip into a pool, bikini-clad, champagne in hand, photo-ready. It’s an image she will put

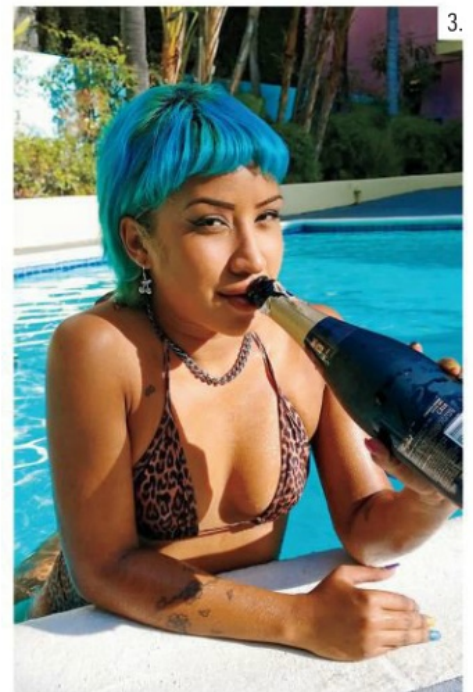
“PEOPLE HERE NEED HELP INTELLECTUALIZING THEIR HEDONISM.”

girls customized with wi-fi tattoos. They are viewed by thousands of followers who are all part of this new rave scene, either in real life or merely virtually. The pieces are part diary, part personal philosophy, complete with digitized avatars as stand-ins for Itzel. “Soon we will all be avatars,” she explains. “People are already becoming less human, the internet is so much a part of us. Even the little meals we make we upload to Instagram.”

There are no brunch photos on Itzel’s Instagram feed, but there are plenty of selfies and nude body shots—as Itzel points out, it’s hard not to feel controlled by the “likes,” which

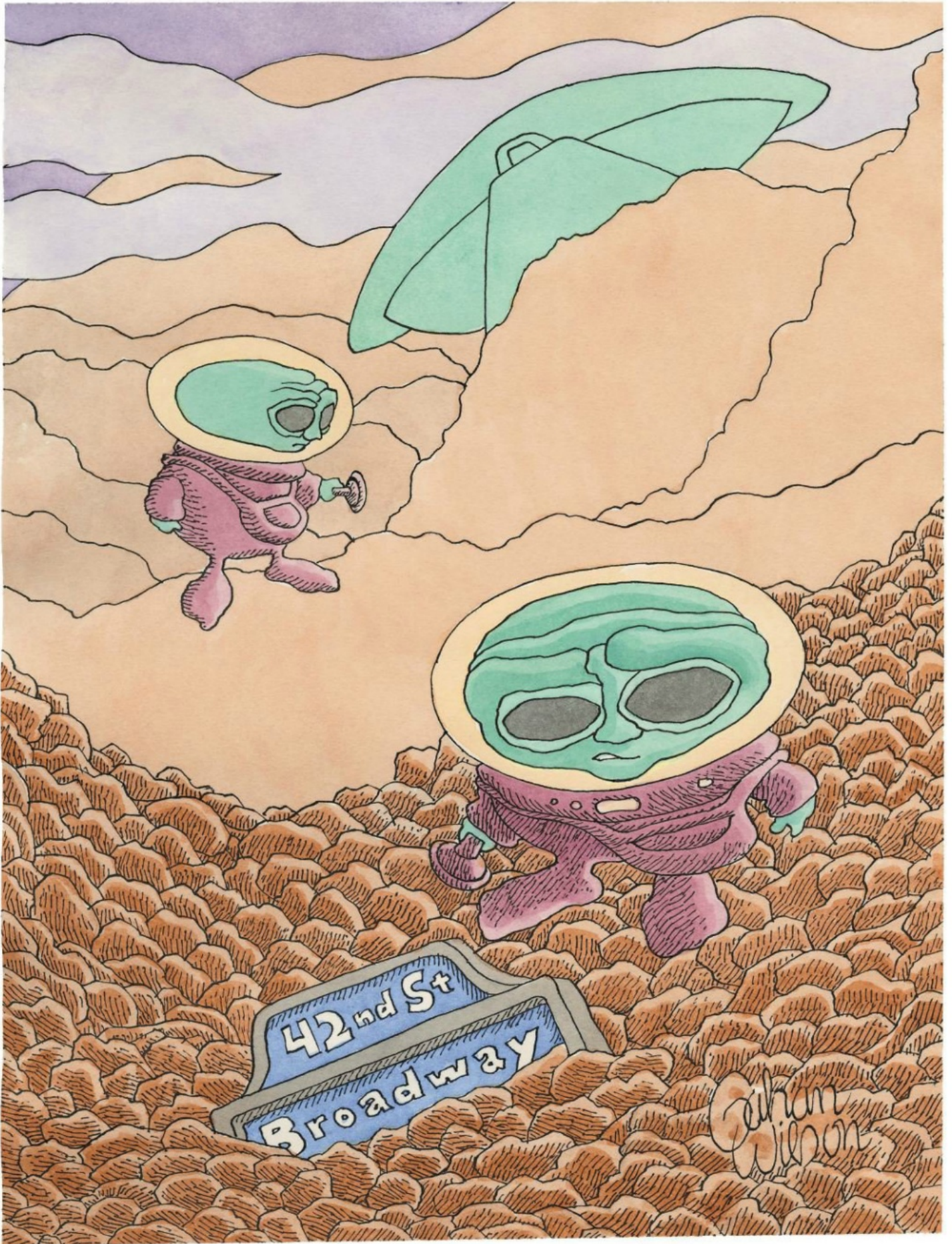
on Instagram for her followers to envy and, more important, “like.”

When the U.S. first imported rave culture from the U.K. in the pre-internet days of the early 1990s, attending a rave meant finding a flyer in the street, picking up tickets at a record store, calling a number to get an address and hoping the whole thing wasn’t shut down by the authorities before you got there. Over the next 20 years, rave became EDM, ecstasy became molly and Wall Street took over. DIY raves were replaced by mega-festivals such as Electric Daisy Carnival and Electric



3.

1. The scene in Los Angeles at the Kawaii Twerk Rave, one of a growing number of underground raves. 2. More than 10,000 people follow club kid Chanel Castaneda’s Instagram feed. 3. Rave scene It girl Itzel Xoco relaxes after an epic night out in L.A.



"This might be something."



SURVIVING HUNTER S. THOMPSON

Looking back at 35 years of a drug-fueled, dangerous friendship with the gonzo legend

BY CRAIG VETTER

Doing the *Playboy Interview* is often something of a rat scramble, but getting the Hunter S. Thompson interview to print was a long, punishing chase after a full moon of a human being. It evolved into a 35-year friendship that was by turns high fun and withering, all-night deadline panic.

I lived in Aspen for about three years after we finished the interview, and during that time we were together often. After I moved away we saw each other

half a dozen times for pieces we worked on together, and between those visits he called every few months just to talk. Usually around 3:22 in the dead of night.

“What? You’re not sleeping, are you?”

“The bats are asleep around here, Hunter.”

The morning I found out he’d shot himself with his .357, I remember thinking, No more phone calls.

But that hasn’t turned out to be exactly true. In the nine years since his death I’ve dreamed about the old bastard four times. In the dead middle of the

night. The last time he haunted his way into my sleep, I decided to dig out the six hours of raw interview tapes. There was a melancholy to the exercise, but listening again to the staccato rumble of his voice, the violent humor, slashing vocabulary and rough intelligence kicked loose a storm of memories of our long, wonderfully twisted friendship.

We'd met three or four times before *PLAYBOY* asked me to see if he'd do the interview. It was February 1974, a hard winter in the Rockies. I called him at Owl Farm, his old ranch house in Woody Creek, a few miles from Aspen.

"Tell 'em we can't do it up to our ankles in the goddamn snow," he said. "We'll need a couple of weeks in Cozumel to do it right."

Some of the editors were not thrilled at the prospect of turning Hunter loose with an expense account in Mexico. I was the magazine's staff writer at the time, and I lobbied hard for the trip.

"If we get it, it will be cheap at any price," I told the editors. "If we don't, it's on me."

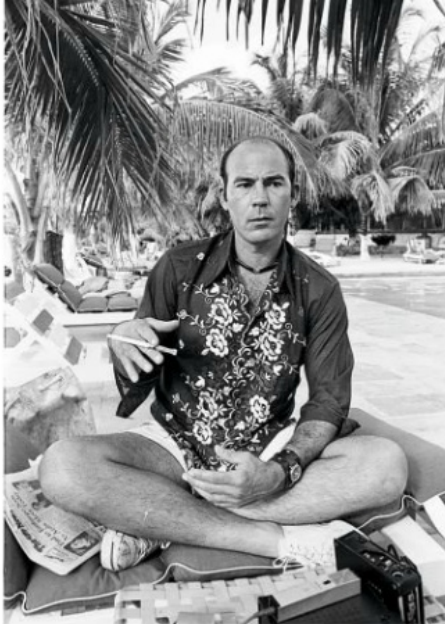
Before the enterprise finished, it would take us from Mexico to Washington, D.C. and finally, in the wake of Richard Nixon's resignation, to a grisly all-nighter in Chicago.

Cozumel is a small island that sits in bright Caribbean waters off the coast of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Thirty miles long and flat as a map from one end to another, it has seen a healthy tourist swarm since the early 1960s, when Jacques Cousteau declared it among the world's best scuba destinations.

Hunter had been there twice before. The first time was with his wife, Sandy, for what was supposed to be a relaxed couple of weeks on the clean, soft sands of the island's long white beaches. Three days into the trip, during a scuba dive on Palancar Reef, he claimed, he was caught in a rip current 90 feet down, out of air, and was forced to surface so quickly he suffered a case of the bends that put him in a Miami Beach hyperbaric chamber for 19 days. It was a typically melodramatic Hunter story, but it was hard for me to believe he could have gone even 19 hours alone in a steel tube without his usual relish tray of drugs, whiskey and other entertainments.

Not long after he got back to Colorado from that trip, *PLAYBOY* offered him an assignment covering a sport-fishing tournament that would send him back to Cozumel, which was ideal, he wrote,

Photographer Al Satterwhite flew to Mexico to shoot Thompson during his *Playboy* interview sessions. The photos on this page are part of Satterwhite's new book, *The Cozumel Diary*.



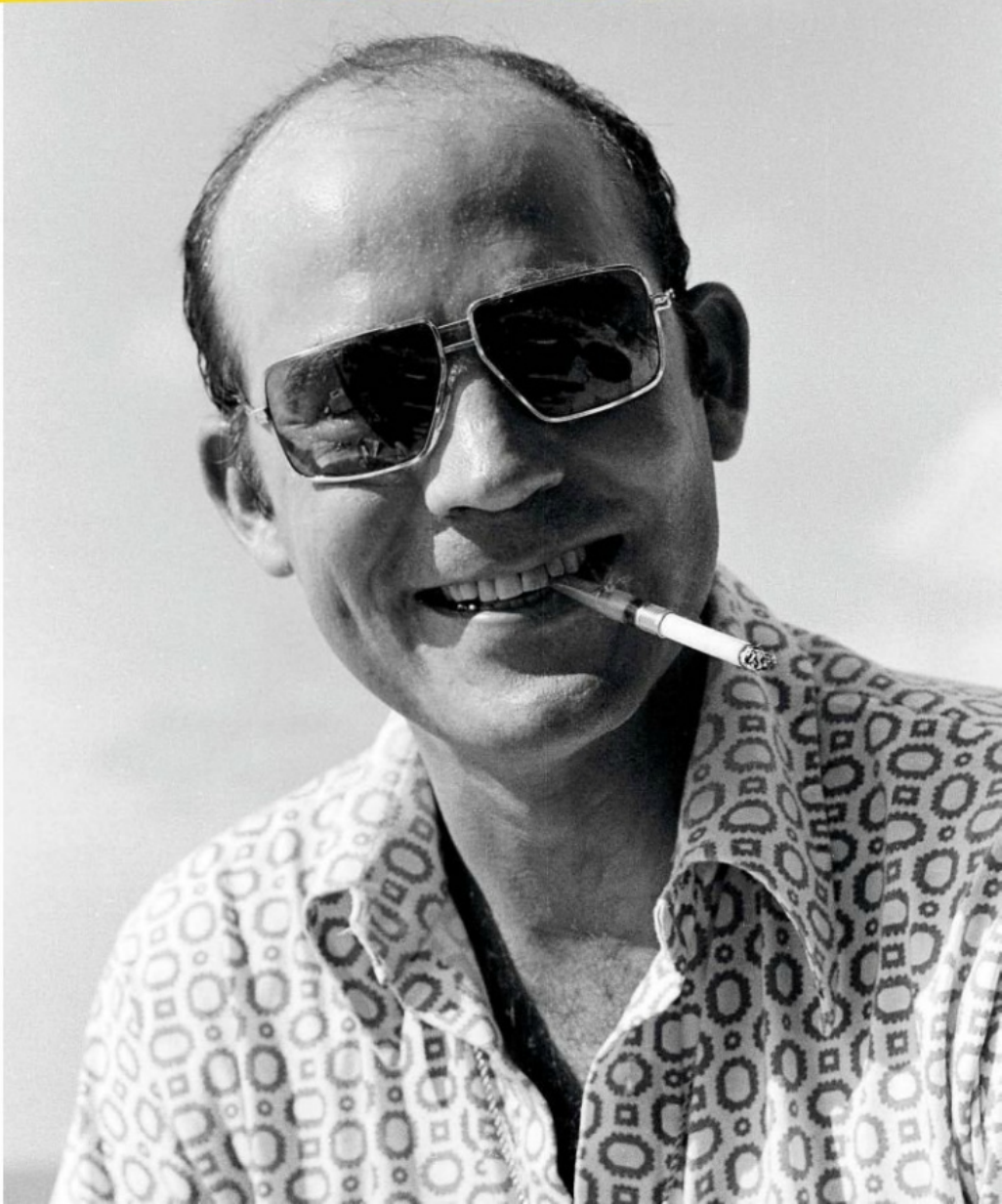
because his lifesaving flight to Miami had forced him to stash 50 units of the speedy hallucinogen MDA in the wall of the shark pool at the island aquarium, and this trip would give him a chance to retrieve it.

The story he wrote was a rambling gonzo romp that wandered through a blizzard of drugs over a mostly fictional landscape that had little to do with the fishing tournament. *PLAYBOY* initially rejected the piece, but I agreed to edit it and Hunter did some rewriting. The magazine published it as *The Great Shark Hunt*.

I knew our trip to Cozumel was going to be a goat dance on a thin ridge, but I didn't expect it to collapse as it almost did after four days of empty-promise heel-dragging that turned out to be a Thompson signature.

We met in (continued on page 180)

After dinner on the terrace, we drank beer and margaritas and snorted cocaine.





GRENO

"You can't fire him, Mr. Cole. He doesn't work here."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY KELLY

AFTER HOURS

NEED AN OFFICE ASSISTANT? MISS JULY IS AT YOUR SERVICE

People often ask what it's like inside the *PLAYBOY* editorial offices in Beverly Hills. So this month, we tried something unusual: photographing Miss July Emily Agnes of the U.K. in our digs and fashioning her as a hot office babe. Has meta-journalism ever been this sexy? "Last night I was naked over there on that desk," says Emily the day after the shoot, "and in that conference room, and in front of the refrigerator. I even hung off the *PLAYBOY* sign out front. Holding on for dear life, I thought, Damn it, I'm hanging off the building of my dreams!" Give this girl a raise. Miss July's trajectory is a success story of the internet age. In 2012 the young model from Surrey—who had paid her dues pouring pints in pubs—hit a fashionable London party in an outrageously revealing gown "with half the front missing,"

as she puts it. Pictures of her in the gown quickly went viral and were picked up by the London tabloids, including *The Sun* and *Daily Mail*. Time to think bigger, she told herself. Soon enough—thanks to an introduction by our Irish photographer Tony Kelly—Emily was in our offices channeling the personal assistant of every man's fantasies. It's a role she enjoyed. "I loved playing the sexy secretary," she says. "And I'm really good at massages, so I'd give my boss plenty of neck rubs." A wicked smile blossoms on this English rose's face. "A well-groomed man in a suit, with a bit of power? Oh yeah, that can be awfully nice. I would definitely work after hours for him."

PLAYMATES.COM/EMILY-AGNES



RS



GROTTO ROOM









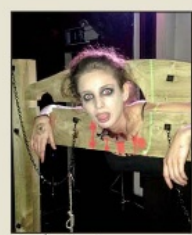
MISS JULY

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

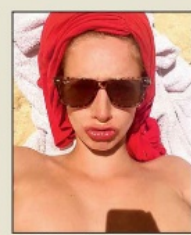


PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

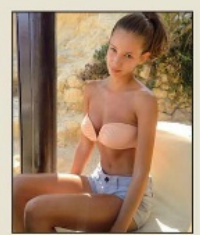
NAME: Emily Agnes
 BUST: 34DD WAIST: 22" HIPS: 32"
 HEIGHT: 5'8" WEIGHT: 105 lbs
 BIRTH DATE: 7/7/1993 BIRTHPLACE: Windsorham, Surrey, UK
 AMBITIONS: To represent as a Playmate the beauty, poise and class British girls have to offer on a global scale.
 TURN-ONS: Men in suits are great, but I have a secret thing for builders and workmen. I love a lad who's rough and ready !!
 TURNOFFS: I cannot stand flashy, arrogant geezers who think that they are God's gift to women. CHILL OUT, MATE!
 BRITS DO IT BEST: British gangster films are my ideal entertainment. Let me suggest a few to catch: I love Danny Dyer in Vendetta, Guy Ritchie's RocknRolla and Jason Statham in Snatch. See, I told you I fancy the rugged type.
 SUMMER HOLIDAY: This summer I would love to travel to Thailand and relax in paradise.
 NY PHILOSOPHY: Never worry about what others think. You only live once, and you're probably never going to see them again.



A ghoul at heart.



Brits burn easily...



... but tan beautifully. ♡

MISS JULY

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH



PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Hypothesis: If women are bad at parking, it could be because for their entire adult lives men have lied to them about the true length of eight inches.

A little boy went up to his mother and asked, "Mom, where did my intelligence come from?"

The mother replied, "Well, son, you must have gotten it from your father, because I still have mine."

An IT worker was trying to fix the boss's computer when he shouted out, "Windows 8 can suck my dick!"

"Wow," the boss replied, "I can't believe how far technology has come."



An average-looking guy and Christina Hendricks were the only survivors of a shipwreck, and they found themselves washed up on a deserted island. At first Christina wanted nothing to do with the fellow, but after a while they became friends and then finally lovers. One day the man asked Christina to dress in his clothes and meet him on the other side of the island. She was taken aback by the request but eventually agreed. She waited for him on the beach, and he soon arrived. He ran up to her and excitedly said, "You'll never believe who I've been screwing!"

What do people who speak Greek yell instead of "motherfucker"?

"Oedipus!"

A CEO was scheduled to speak at an important convention, so he asked one of his employees to write him a punchy 20-minute speech.

When the executive returned from the big event, he was furious. "Why did you write me an hour-long speech?" he screamed. "Half the audience walked out before I finished!"

The employee was baffled. "I wrote you a 20-minute speech," he replied. "I also gave you two extra copies."

Two nuns were riding their bicycles back to their convent. "I've never come this way before," said the first.

"Me neither," said the second. "I think it's the cobblestones."

What did Rob Ford get on his IQ test?
Molson Canadian.

What do walking a tightrope and getting a blow job from an older woman have in common?

You don't look down.

A man had three beautiful girlfriends but didn't know which one to marry. As a test, he decided to give each woman \$5,000 to see how they would spend it.

The first girlfriend went out and got herself a complete makeover. She told him, "I spent the money so I could look pretty for you because I love you so much."

The second went shopping and bought the man new golf clubs, an iPad and an 80-inch flatscreen television. She said, "I bought these gifts for you because I love you so much."

The third woman took the \$5,000 and invested it in the stock market, doubled her investment, returned \$5,000 to the man and reinvested the rest. She said, "I am investing the rest of the money for our future because I love you so much."

The man thought long and hard about how each of his girlfriends had spent the money, and then he decided to marry the one with the biggest tits.



A man came home one day and was greeted by his wife dressed in stunningly sexy lingerie. "Tie me up," she purred, "and you can do anything you want." So he bound her to a chair and went to the ball game.

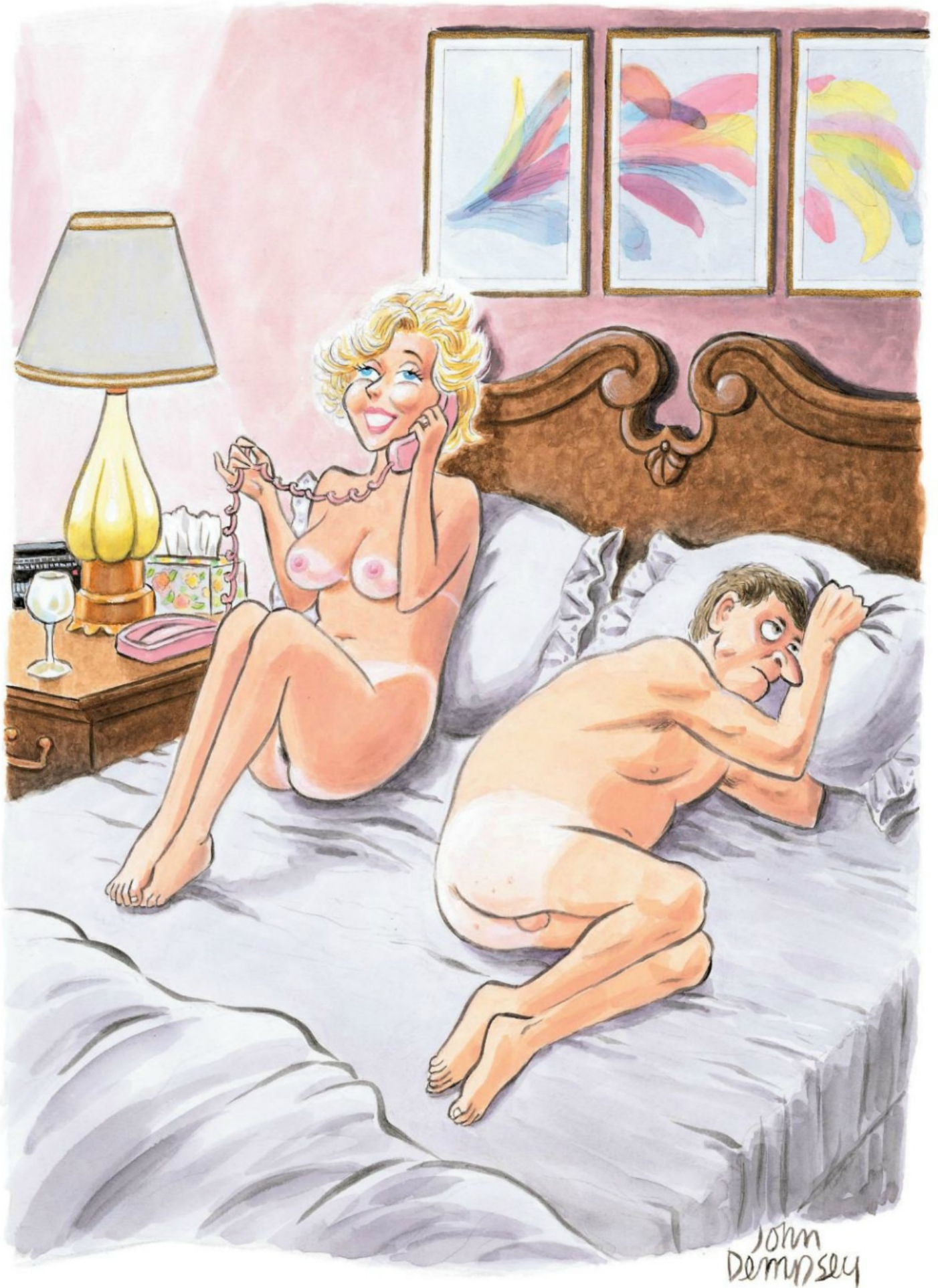
Why did God create the orgasm?

So women can moan even when they're happy.

PLAYBOY CLASSIC: Our Unabashed Dictionary defines *same-sex marriage* as what you get when homosexual lovers exchange wedding vows.

Our Unabashed Dictionary defines *some-sex marriage* as what you get when heterosexual lovers exchange wedding vows.

Send your jokes to *Playboy Party Jokes*, 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210, or by e-mail to jokes@playboy.com. PLAYBOY will pay \$100 to the contributors whose submissions are selected.



"Oh, no, Mother, you're not keeping us from anything. Bob's lost his erection."

20





MARC MARON

THE EDGIEST
COMIC WORK-
ING DOESN'T
LIKE MOM,
DATES MOON
ZAPPA AND
REMEMBERS
SAM KINISON

By
ERIC SPITZNAGEL

Photography by
MATT HOYLE

Q1

PLAYBOY: You play a character named Marc Maron on the IFC series *Maron*. Is he based literally on you, or is he a caricature of you?

MARON: I don't really know. At least in the first season I was insistent that everything come directly from my own experiences. This season we were a little more flexible. I'm not as obsessed with everything being true, but it's still a struggle for me. I've always been envious of comics who can be caricatures of themselves. They create these fabricated, heightened versions of who they are. I can never do that. I just never thought a comedian's responsibility was to entertain.

Q2

PLAYBOY: It's not? Isn't that like saying a NASCAR driver doesn't have to drive fast?

MARON: I don't know why, but I never thought it was. With the comics I respected, guys like George Carlin and Bill Hicks, it always seemed to be more about sharing a point of view. A lot of times when I'm doing stand-up or my podcast, I'm not sure what the fuck is going to come out of my mouth. And nothing feels more alive than that. That's the excitement of having a moment that can never happen again. That's way more compelling to me than getting a laugh.

Q3

PLAYBOY: There's a great scene in the new season of *Maron* when you and your



brother are talking about your parents, and he says, "I love Mom," and you think about it and say, "Eh, I'm on the fence." Is that actually how you feel?

MARON: It's hard for me to see my parents as parents, because they were so young and were both struggling with their own horrendous insecurities. I see them as these people I grew up with. Parenting did not come naturally to them. There wasn't a lot of nurturing. There was a lot of panic and worry and using me and my brother to make themselves feel better. When I say I'm on the fence, I mean I don't quite register them as parents. If I were in trouble and could make only one phone call, they wouldn't be at the top of the list.

Q4

PLAYBOY: You've claimed that being able to make your dad laugh was part of the reason you became a comic.

MARON: In a way, sure. It was my way of communicating with him. He was very erratic, mood-wise. He'd fluctuate from rage to depression to complete detachment. When he was at his worst, I was able to lighten the load a little and provide some relief for him. I did weird things like that to have a connection with him. My dad was a doctor and also a hypochondriac, so I became a hypochondriac too. If I said, "I think I'm sick," he'd be like, "Let's have a look." On some level, it was asking for emotional attention and comfort that I don't think were present in my childhood.

Q5

PLAYBOY: Judd Hirsch plays your dad on *Maron*. Has your father seen the show? Does he think it's a fair portrayal?

MARON: My father was a little upset, not just with the show but also with my book *Attempting Normal*, where I wrote some things about our relationship. For me to identify him as bipolar and talk about some of the struggles in our family because of that, to him was a betrayal. Being incredibly self-centered and slightly delusional, he took it very personally and thought he had been outed in some way. It was

sort of surprising, because I thought this was something everyone in my family knew and that maybe he had some perspective on it. When you do autobiographical work, sometimes the people in your life take a hit.

I just never thought a comedian's responsibility was to entertain. It always seemed to be more about sharing a point of view.

Q6

PLAYBOY: On your podcast, *WTF With Marc Maron*, you've interviewed hundreds of comedians, actors and musicians. Have you ever been intimidated or starstruck by any of them?

MARON: I don't usually get intimi-

dated, but some people are truly bigger than life. Will Ferrell was kind of weird. I don't know Will, and he couldn't have been a nicer guy, but it was surreal having him in my garage. Bryan Cranston was intimidating because I had so much invested in Walter White [from *Breaking Bad*]. I just couldn't separate him from the character. But the biggest one for me, the guy who really made me nervous when I knew he was coming over, was Iggy Pop. I'm a huge fan, and he's this strange force of nature.

Q7

PLAYBOY: Did he live up to your expectations?

MARON: Immediately. The first thing he did was take off his shirt. I was like, Oh, okay. Well, I guess he's ready to talk now. [laughs]

Q8

PLAYBOY: Your grandfather owned a hardware store, and as a kid you'd eavesdrop on (continued on page 195)



FRANCINE'S REALTY

SALES
AGENT
On Duty



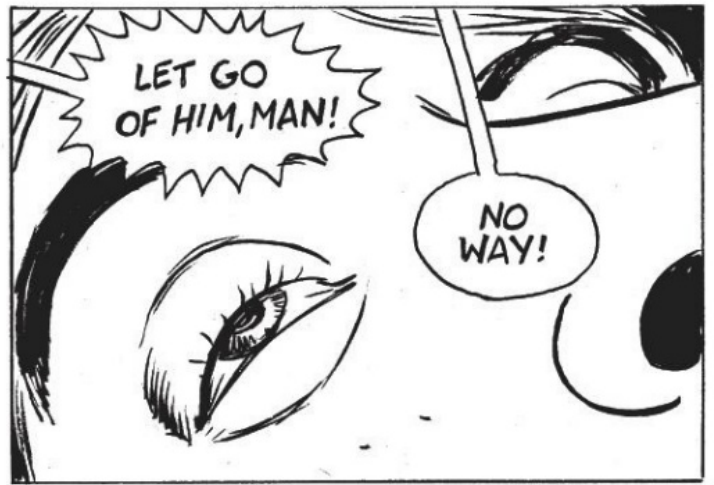
"You've got it this time, Begley. Location, location, location."

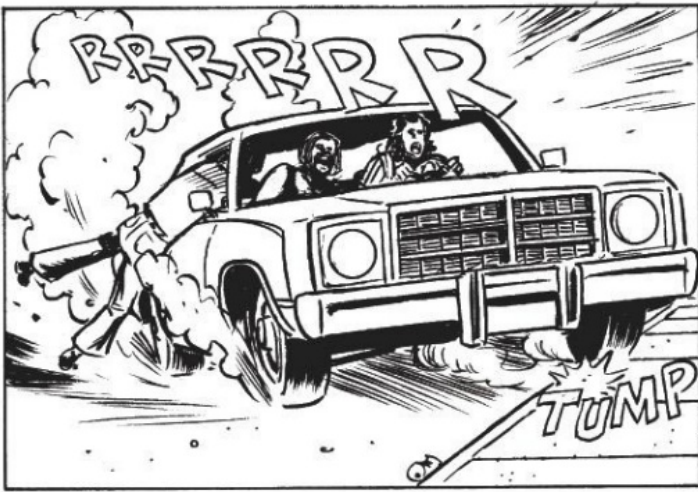
JUBILEE CITY

ARTIST JOE ANDOE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY, JUBILEE CITY, TRACES HIS JOURNEY FROM HELL-RAISING IN 1970s TULSA TO HAVING HIS WORK DISPLAYED IN THE WHITNEY AND THE MET. CARTOONIST DAVID LAPHAM PRESENTS AN ILLUSTRATED SNAPSHOT OF ANDOE'S WILD RIDE....













THE END...



Beyond the Sea

A CLASSIC BOAT PLUS A CLASSIC BEAUTY EQUALS DELICIOUS INTRIGUE
ON THE HIGH SEAS. MEET YOUR FIRST MATE, MISS AUGUST

Maggie May is the type of character F. Scott Fitzgerald would create if he were alive today. She comes from the humblest of Kansas beginnings, but “I thought there was something better for me than just conforming,” she says. So she moved to Miami to re-create herself. Signed to an international modeling agency, she appeared in glossy fashion magazines around the world. Along the way she picked up a burning passion for art, architecture and luxurious travel. These days she feels most at home in such exclusive beachy enclaves as the Hamptons, St. Barts, Tulum and the isle of Ibiza. “I know money doesn’t buy happiness,” she says, “but I do

like the finer things.” Maggie is drawn to all things oceanic, so we photographed her on a private cruise in a distinctly Gatsbyesque setting—aboard a vintage Chris-Craft on the sun-kissed waters off California. “I think my ancestors were mermaids, because even though I’m from Kansas, I feel totally from the sea,” she says. “I’m a serious sun worshipper, and I hope to end up living on a yacht or sailboat. On a boat there’s a sense of freedom that you can go anywhere, anytime.” Like the Chris-Craft, Maggie is a classic beauty. Her poise and radiance paid off in front of the camera, especially after a glass of fine wine loosened her up. “I found it liberating to be just like, Fuck it and get naked,” says Miss August. “I totally admire girls who are like that.” So do we.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH RYAN

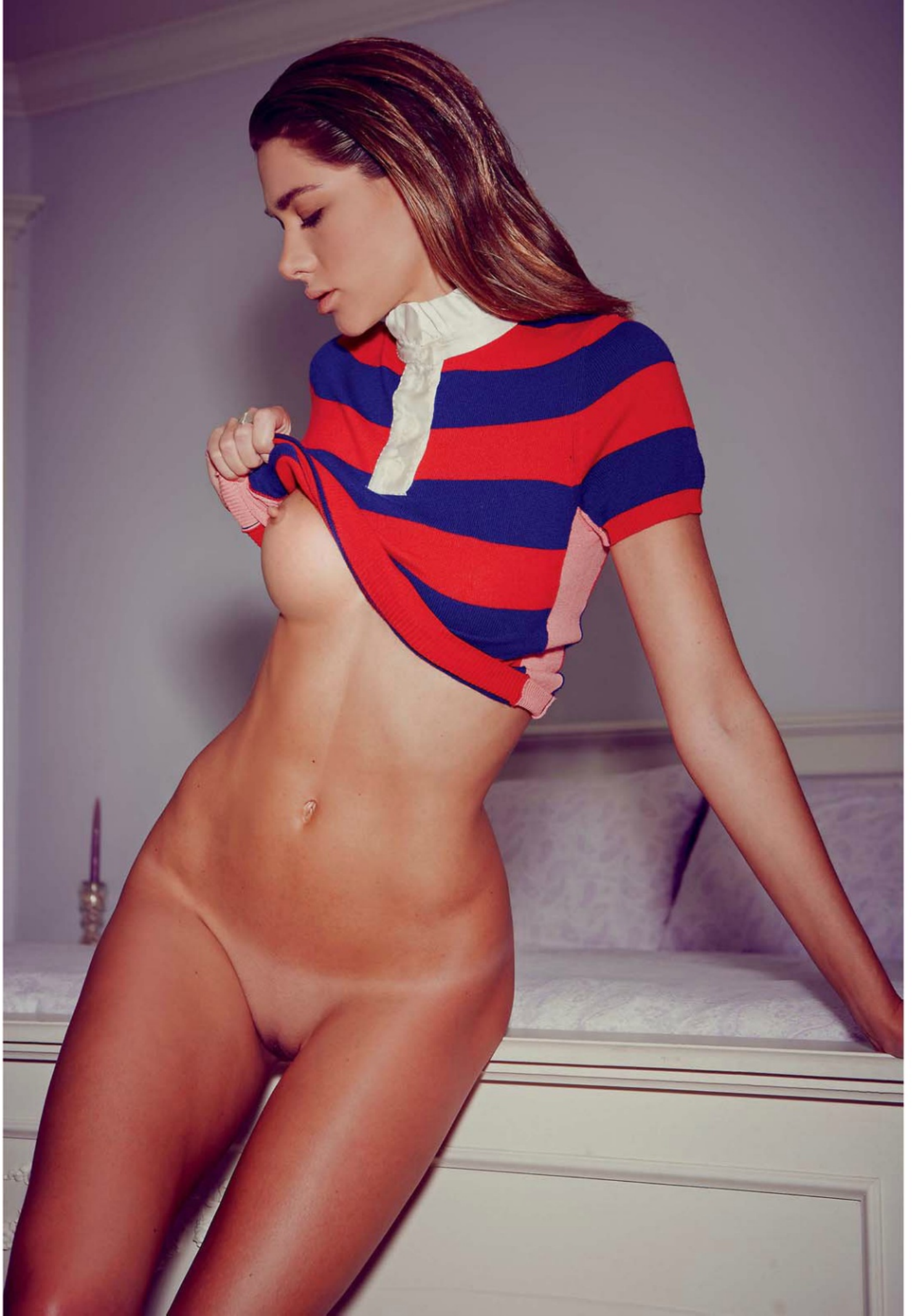
PLAYMATES.COM/MAGGIE-MAY













Maggie May

34C 25" 35"

5'11" 125 lbs.

11-15-87 Wamego, Kansas

I'm all over the place. I'd be as happy being an architect as I would an actress, mom, boat captain or beach bum.

A sense of humor - make me laugh and you're in. A funny, intelligent, self-made man is hot as f-k.

An overinflated ego, sense of entitlement, narcissism, poor grammar and selfish lovers with small hands.

I grew up quite the jock, playing almost every sport year-round. I now wish I learned to play the guitar and violin and was a ballerina who spoke multiple languages. Oh well... maybe in the next life.

Tom Robbins, the most brilliant man on acid.

Live by the beach with dogs, horses and babies... who will grow up working in my garden and cruising around on our yacht. :-)



The masks we wear.



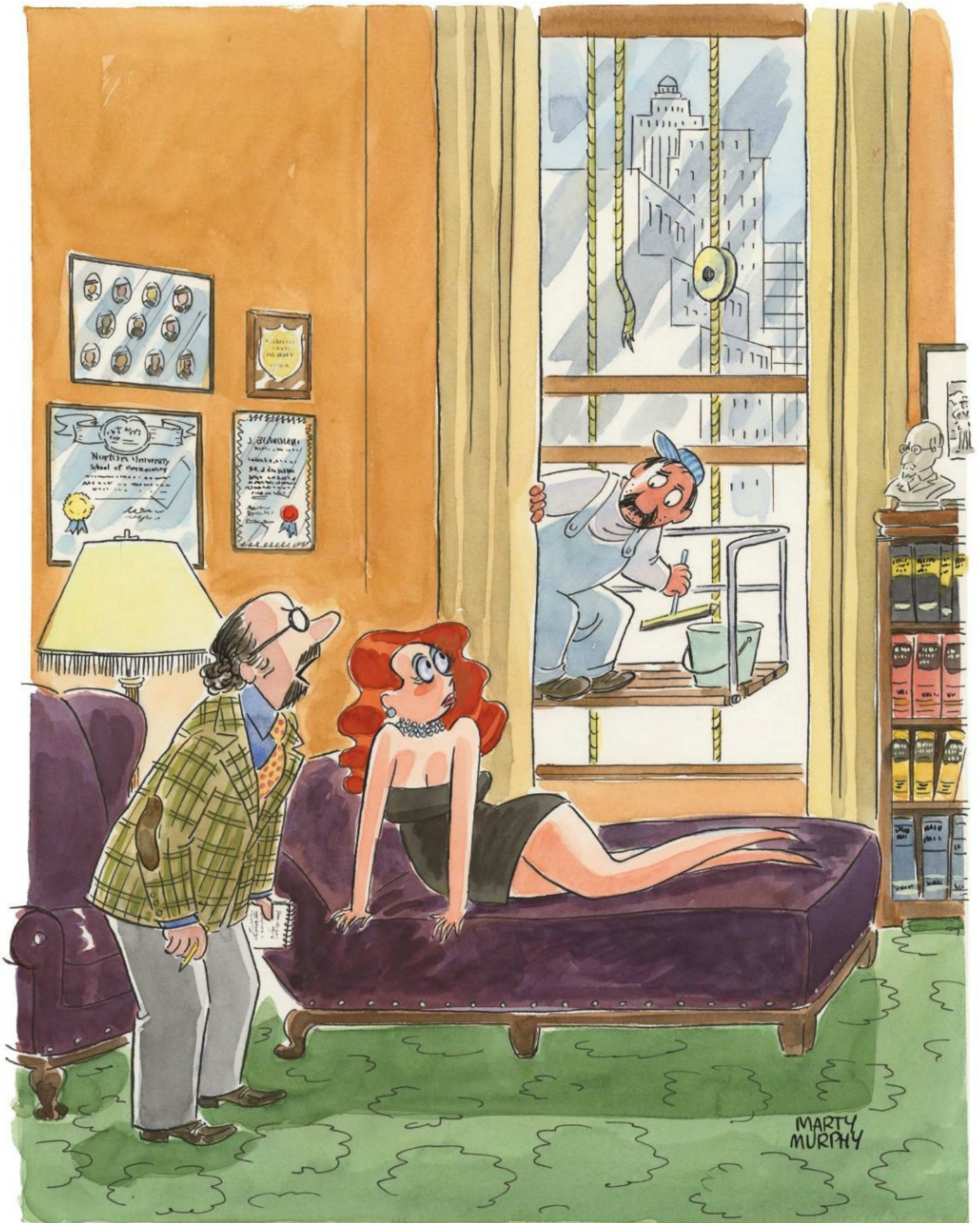
I love deer, don't you?



Traffic jam selfie.







"Hey, if the lady wants to have sex with her psychiatrist, who are you to tell her she's crazy?!"



FICTION

EXTREME

IT'S ONE THING TO HAVE A BILLION DOLLARS.
IT'S ANOTHER TO BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH IT

PART

3

ESCAPE (N.) 1: AN ACT OF BREAKING FREE FROM CONFINEMENT OR CONTROL 2: AN ACT OF SUCCESSFULLY AVOIDING SOMETHING DANGEROUS, UNPLEASANT OR UNWELCOME 3: A MEANS OF ESCAPING FROM SOMEWHERE 4: A TEMPORARY DISTRACTION FROM REALITY OR ROUTINE.



xecution is meaningless without escape.

There's no point getting something if you can't get *away* with it.

In this case, Kurt, Paige and associates have executed the removal of a billion dollars from a Russian arms dealer (the get) and now

they're trying to live to enjoy it (the *getaway*). So they're "successfully" (well, hopefully) "avoiding something dangerous, unpleasant or unwelcome," that is, getting shot to pieces—which, absent a suicidal urge, is all three.

The money itself, the cash, is already escaping in trucks to a laundry in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Paige, Kurt and Crazy Isaiah (one of the aforementioned associates) are now trying to surf their way in through a very big wave known as the Banzai Pipeline East to make it to shore at Cabo Blanco, Peru.

This is not easy.

(If escaping were easy, everyone would do it. See Thoreau, Henry David, "Lives of quiet desperation, most men.")

Big-wave surfing is not easy.

(If big-wave surfing were easy, everyone...no, they wouldn't.)

Kurt and Paige are doing it.

They're on the edge, the lip, the blade of the ax of a very big wave blown up by a local wind known as *el virazón*.

(It's been my experience that anytime anything is titled *el* instead of *the*, it's a bad motherfucker. This is especially true of drug traffickers, but that's literally another story.)

Ol' *el virazón* has whipped this wave up to a little over 40 feet.

Not the biggest wave ever ridden, by any means, but consider this—

It weighs 500 tons and it's moving at 70 miles per hour.

So if you wipe out, fall off that board coming down the face, you're going to smack into the water at 70, and then a million pounds of water are going to come down on top of you—dangerous, unpleasant and unwelcome.

**BY DON
WINSLOW**

Repeatedly, if this is the first of, say, a four-wave set.

That's if you're even alive after the washing machine has rolled you, bent you, bounced you, slammed you, burst your eardrums and/or ripped your joints out of your sockets. That's if you're even "lucky" enough to make it to the surface at all to let the next 500 tons crash on you, if you haven't drowned already or become so disoriented (the eardrum thing) that you dive down instead of up.

But say you do make it to the surface.

Now you're in something cheerfully called "the impact zone." And no, this is not like "the splash zone" at SeaWorld, where they give you a plastic poncho and you get all wet when the whale smacks its tail into the water and everyone screams and laughs.

This is where, normally, someone would be risking his or her life to zoom in on a Zodiac and get you the hell out of there before the next wave comes down on both of you.

This is the problem for Kurt, Paige and Isaiah.

There is nobody in a Zodiac to pull them out of the impact zone. This is going to be strictly YOYO.

You're On Your Own.

You vs. the Ocean.

And here's the thing that every waterman does or should know:

The ocean *does not care*.

Anthropomorphisms aside, the ocean is going to do what it is going to do without regard or concern for you, your life, your life story, your concerns, your hopes, wishes, dreams or needs. You are a nothing, a cipher, a zero, an insignificant speck to even the smallest wave, never mind one of these mackers.

Even if it could care, it wouldn't, it doesn't.

This is what Kurt has always liked about waves—or for that matter mountains or sky—what he likes about physics.

Totally objective.

Now he glances at Paige, about to go over the top.

Hesitation kills.

The only thing worse than going over the edge of a wave like this is going over late. A slice of a second too late and you can't get set on your board, you'll pitch over forward and then you're in for the whole tumble down the face from which you probably won't be able to recover.

So Kurt's relieved when he sees her launch.

Then he goes.

A wave is energy.

Literally. That's what it is.

And a big wave is a lot of energy, and Paige feels it thrumming under her board as she makes the drop.

You have to survive the drop.

Survive that first almost vertical plunge and you can find a sweet spot in the wave, this one a big left-hander. Paige turns in to it, toward the curve of the barrel, and jets down at a diagonal, cutting a white line through the angry green water. The wave bounces under her, tries to throw her off, but this woman has balance from years of skiing, confidence that she can stay upright. Surfing is not her best thing—running,

"I TRUST TWO THINGS IN LIFE. MYSELF AND MY DOG. UNLESS I HAVE A BONE IN MY HAND, THEN I TRUST MYSELF."

climbing and skiing are—but she is a world-class ultra-athlete and her body is usually going to do what she demands of it and now she demands that it stay on that board, and it does and then—

It doesn't.

She hits a bump, an arbitrarily cruel ruffle that at 70 per is enough, and suddenly she's not in the water, she's in the air.

Kurt makes the drop.

Now he's not thinking about Paige.

Let's be honest here.

He's thinking about survival.

His own.

He's not even really thinking, he's reacting. His muscles and nerves are working together to feel that wave under him and stay on it, and years of surfing, climbing and running have given him the strength to do it as—

The wave curls over him and he's in the—

Famous tube, the greenroom, the barrel—

He reaches out his back hand to touch the water and then—

The water envelops him.

This is where a surfer can just disappear. A big wave swallows him (Jonah meets whale) and never spits him back out, at least not alive. If you're watching from the outside, the surfer is just gone, that's all, all you see is water and all you can do is wait and hope, and now—

The wave shoots him out the tube, fast and hard, and he stays on until it's all white water, jumps off and turns to try to see Paige and Isaiah.

Isaiah he sees, wading in, all six-seven of him hard to miss.

He doesn't see Paige.

Look, if stealing a billion bucks were easy, everyone would do it, not just Wall Street cocksuckers and Congress.

(You steal a mere billion in lower

Manhattan or D.C., you a small-change chump, Charlie.)

So in addition to the wave issue, Kurt, Paige and Crazy Isaiah have another problem—a go-fast boat with three angry and armed Russians (one of them being Yegor Chubaiv, former owner of said billion dollars) coming their way at speed from the 535-foot yacht that used to contain the cash.

Yegor is pissed.

(a) It's his money.

(b) He believes his stepson Lev was in on it.

(c) He further believes that what's his is his and what's yours is his. (See above, Wall Street cocksuckers and Congress.)

The go-fast is bouncing like goofy crazy and Yegor doesn't figure it's going to catch the miscreants, because they left (escaped, if you will) in his helicopter, adding the proverbial insult to the proverbial injury, not to mention another hundred mil to the tally.

Then he sees his helicopter.

Well, remnants of it.

Busted up, floating on the swell.

As are random \$100 bills.

This makes Yegor even angrier.

What cheers him up a little is that he also sees a corpse, in a life jacket, and the last time he saw this man, the man was flying his helicopter off the deck. So this is justice of a sort, but it's also very bad news because the chopper was carrying—

(a) The thieves that Yegor wanted to kill himself.

(b) His stepson, allegedly as a hostage, though Yegor doesn't believe it for a second, but nevertheless it is going to play hell with his sex life when he has to inform stepson's mother.

(c) Worse, much worse, the billion dollars in cash, which is now sinking into very deep water in a very strong current.

Good that the bastards have received their just deserts, bad that they've taken his unjust deserts with them.

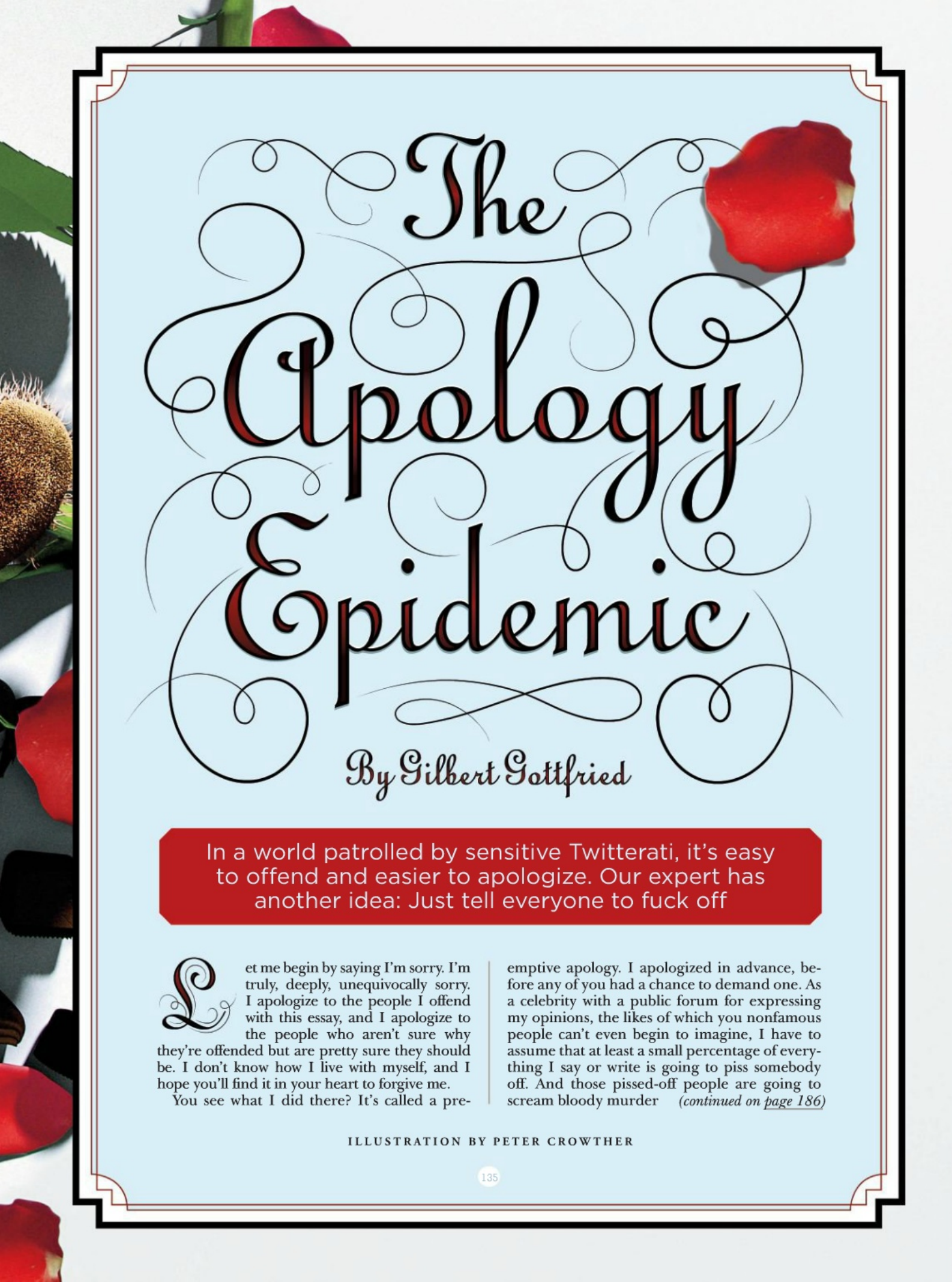
Yegor is very rich, but every little billion counts. (continued on page 162)



"This is Troy. He's been sentenced to 100 hours of community service. Do you guys want him after me?"



Please Forgive Me



The Apology Epidemic

By Gilbert Gottfried

In a world patrolled by sensitive Twitterati, it's easy to offend and easier to apologize. Our expert has another idea: Just tell everyone to fuck off

Let me begin by saying I'm sorry. I'm truly, deeply, unequivocally sorry. I apologize to the people I offend with this essay, and I apologize to the people who aren't sure why they're offended but are pretty sure they should be. I don't know how I live with myself, and I hope you'll find it in your heart to forgive me.

You see what I did there? It's called a pre-

emptive apology. I apologized in advance, before any of you had a chance to demand one. As a celebrity with a public forum for expressing my opinions, the likes of which you nonfamous people can't even begin to imagine, I have to assume that at least a small percentage of everything I say or write is going to piss somebody off. And those pissed-off people are going to scream bloody murder *(continued on page 186)*

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER CROWTHER



▲ THE MOVE:
Wheel Stand
THE CLOTHES:
suit, \$198, and shirt,
\$70, by Express;
pocket square, \$8,
by the Tie Bar;
vintage Evel Knievel
slip-ons, by Vans,
stylist's own.

Freestyle



FRESHION

with

**Travis
PASTRANA**

**THE ACTION
SPORTS
LEGEND
WEARS
THE FINEST
SUMMER
CLOTHES
WITH
EXTREME
STYLE**

When you read the words *Travis Pastrana* and *style*, clothes are the absolute last thing that comes to mind. For the 30-year-old action sports legend, style is something he usually expresses on two to four wheels, at high velocity. Pastrana started his domination of freestyle motocross at the age of 14, and he was the first guy to backflip a bike into the Grand Canyon. He rally races for Red Bull, took NASCAR for a spin and hosts *Nitro Circus*, the action sports variety show on MTV. So if exhibiting control, power and grace while looking damn good are the hallmarks of masculine style, then Pastrana is the most stylish man on the planet. As for Pastrana's thoughts on the matter, he says, "I've been pretty similar since I was a kid: flashy and reckless on the track but conservative with a little hint of redneck when the helmet is off." We visited him at his home base and training compound in Annapolis, Maryland, tricked him out in the coolest summer clothes and let him loose on the track.

Fashion by **Jennifer Ryan Jones** Photography by **Garin Bond** Styling by **Michael Nash**



▲
THE MOVE:
Superman

THE CLOTHES:
star and stripes sweater,
\$790, by *Givenchy*;
biker jeans, \$1,200,
by *Balmain*; **boots,**
by *Pastrana's own*.

▶
THE MOVE:
Tearing Up the Berm

THE CLOTHES:
metallic biker jacket,
\$1,198, by *Marc
Jacobs*; **vintage T-shirt,**
from *Melet Mercantile*;
biker jeans, \$1,200, by
Balmain; **shate shoes,**
\$75, by *DC Shoes*.







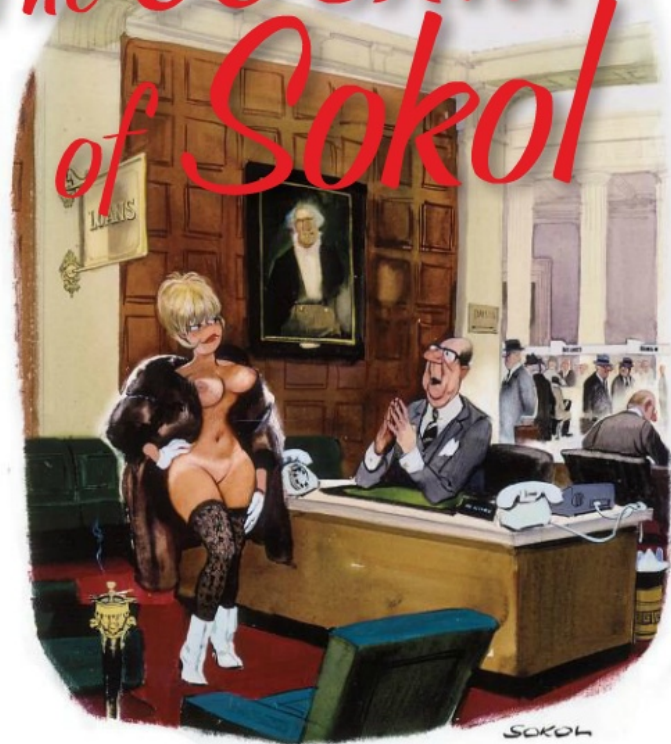
◀ THE MOVE:
Can Can

THE CLOTHES:
zip cardigan, \$975, by Michael Bastian; **T-shirt**, \$110, by Innerscity Raiders; **plaid shirt**, \$258, by Mark McNairy; **cargo pants**, \$83, by Shades of Grey.

▼ THE MOVE:
Roosted

THE CLOTHES:
suit, \$198, by Express; **Americana shirt**, \$50, by INC International Concepts; **pocket square**, \$8, by the Tie Bar; **sunglasses**, \$80, by Smith Optics.

The World of Sokol



"We recognize your assets, Miss Brainbridge, but we don't regard them as collateral."



"Fresh!"



"He can't go out tonight—he's being punished!"



"Whoever designed this course sure put in some groovy traps."



*"You're not fooling anyone, Rafferty.
Put Miss Hoskins down and get back to work!"*



*"Did I ever tell you what happened one
night when I wore that?"*



*"Golly! You do have the quickest
hands of any receiver in pro football!"*



*"You didn't think the truck drivers all
stop here for this slop, did you?"*

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TRUE

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TELL HER A STORY

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A "NEXT TIME" ...



I LIVE FOR...



THE UNEXPECTED

THE PREDICTABLE

**GREAT BEER
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FORTUNE FOLLOWS...



WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS...



EVERYBODY

THE BOLD



KNOCK BACK

ESCAPE THROUGH THE BACK DOOR

HEADS OR TAILS?



YOU MIGHT CHOOSE A REGULAR BEER, BUT THEN YOU MIGHT GET A REGULAR NIGHT.

#YOURFORTUNEAWAITS

BAR LIST



BY THE EDITORS OF PLAYBOY

OUR FAVORITE BARS IN AMERICA LIKE TO PLAY HARD TO GET. HERE ARE THE TOP CLANDESTINE WATERING HOLES, NEO-SPEAKEASIES AND STEALTH GIN MILLS

I

If you asked us five years ago whether we thought the whole speakeasy revival was going to last, we would have told you heck no. And we would have been dead wrong. Today every major city has not one but often several bars that are hidden behind secret doors, down back alleys, in converted storefronts or within other bars. Since these spots are generally on the small side, the focus can be on the quality of the drinks and the overall experience. And the best of the lot are breaking away from speakeasy clichés: Not all the bartenders have waxed handlebar mustaches, not every drink has 50 ingredients, and they're better than ever. We can drink to that.



NAUTICAL BY NATURE

ZZ'S CLAM BAR / NEW YORK

♦ Eating while drinking is usually just a good idea, but at ZZ's Clam Bar it's a necessity. To taste the fine tiki-inspired cocktails at this jewel box of a spot, you have to make a dinner reservation. When the menu is from the guys behind the

restaurants Carbone, Torrisi Italian Specialties and Parm, we're happy to settle in for a couple of hours. The seafood is smartly prepared, and the cardamom cocktail tastes like something the Buddha would have served had he gone to bartending school.



BAR FOODIE

• *Chianina beef, caviar and sea urchin star in one of ZZ's aquatic carpaccios.*



CLEANING UP

LAUNDRY ROOM / LAS VEGAS

♦ The whole bigger-is-better formula is deliciously destroyed at this

tiny civilized bar within another bar in downtown Las Vegas (which, if you haven't heard,

is the hot new neighborhood to hang and party like a Zappos exec or a casino chef on his night off). There's no blaring music on the sound system, photography isn't allowed, and the drinks are textbook renditions of classics from the first golden age of the cocktail. Visit Laundry Room's Facebook or Yelp page to get the number to make a reservation. If it's booked solid, have a consolation drink outside at Commonwealth.



GET DOWN

Punch House / Chicago

This subterranean bar from the guys behind Chicago's revered Longman & Eagle is our kind of kitsch. If you're going to drink in a basement, you could do worse than this exquisitely rendered version of a 1970s rec-room bar (think wood paneling, an aquarium and a taxidermied trophy fish). Instead of Dad's kegerator, there are eight punches on draft, from old-school versions to modern variations, including one made with curried pisco. Soak it all up with a braised beef cheek sandwich on house-made challah.



TEXTOLOGY

THE NOBLE EXPERIMENT / SAN DIEGO

◆ Leave behind the touristy throngs of San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter at this delightfully inaccessible bar

inside Neighborhood restaurant. To gain access, not only must you text a reservation request in advance (give yourself a week

if you're heading there on a Friday or Saturday night), but you also have to locate the darn entrance (it's behind that stack of beer kegs by the restroom). Inside you'll find the cocktail palace of your dreams: White tufted banquettes,

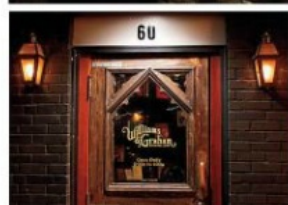
a wall of skulls and a crystal chandelier are the dramatic backdrop for some serious mixology. If you don't know your oleo saccharum from your orgeat syrup, put yourself in the hands of one of the staff and ask for the bartender's choice.



BOOKED SOLID

WILLIAMS & GRAHAM / DENVER

◆ The front for this drinking establishment is a tiny faux bookstore, but that's where the gimmickry stops. The convivial neighborhood bar it hides serves a host of seriously crafted cocktails but without being too serious about it. Case in point: the names of the drinks. There's the white drank, a cocktail made with silver tequila and white wine, and the rye-based sexual chocolate, made with a dash of chocolaty mole bitters. Like many of the other bars that made our list this year, Williams & Graham also serves excellent food designed to stand up to the full-flavored cocktails. Braised duck potpie and house-made beer nuts spiced with Aleppo pepper and sriracha are our idea of bar food.



FIRE IT UP

◆ Complicated classic cocktails such as the incendiary blue blazer are on the menu.



DISCO AND A DRINK

HONEYCUT / LOS ANGELES

♦ Not all mixologically inclined cocktail menus are served in monastic quarters by overly serious bartenders in suspenders and professorial facial hair circa 1893. At Honeycut in downtown Los Angeles things get

funky in the very best way. Yes, the drinks are well-crafted, but when one of the menu categories is “classy as fuck,” you know the establishment doesn’t take itself too seriously. Unlike many of the other spots on our list, this is not a place to come for a quiet drink. But that’s a good thing at Honeycut. The flashing multicolored checkerboard of a dance floor straight out of *Saturday Night Fever* and a rotating roster of DJs keep the place hopping. Be warned: You’ll need to walk down an alley to find it, and it’s slammed on weekends. Tuesday is the new Friday, but you already knew that.



SPEAK EASIER

MIDNIGHT COWBOY / AUSTIN

♦ Any bar housed in a former massage parlor gets our attention—especially when the name hasn’t changed. (Don’t worry: Everything on the inside has.) Still, there’s something a little brothel-like about being able to book a private booth for two hours, and we like that. We especially like that Midnight Cowboy’s house rules

request that patrons keep their voices at a reasonable volume and that they refrain from using their phones. We also like that you need to press a buzzer marked HARRY CRADDOCK to get in. Craddock is the author of *The Savoy Cocktail Book*, the seminal drinks manual from the 1930s, which every good bartender has committed to memory.

THAI ONE ON

Patpong Road / Miami Beach

• On the real Patpong Road in Bangkok some serious *Hangover*-level debauchery takes place. Here, above Miami Beach’s Khong River House, you can expect a more refined but appropriately raucous experience. The bar serves its signature rum-based laid-ee cocktail in a plastic bag, an homage to the bagged drinks sold on the streets in Southeast Asia.





BIG ON JAPAN

Bar Jackalope / Los Angeles



- You used to have to head to the top of the Park Hyatt in Shinjuku to get your Suntory time on. But now, with more Japanese whiskeys making their way to the States, you can get your fix at Jackalope, a tiny bar within a bar at the back of whiskey-focused Seven Grand. Insider tip: Go earlier in the week to avoid the weekend masses. That way you can focus on the subtle differences between a Hibiki and a Yamazaki.



TIKI TAKEOVER

HALE PELE, PORTLAND

♦ Of all the towns in need of some tropical relief, sun-deprived Portland just may be the most deserving. That plus the local handcrafted ethos go a long way toward explaining the success of

Hale Pele. Here the tiki drinks are artisanal (including superfresh juices and top-shelf rum) and the staff wisely limits the high-octane zombie cocktail to two per customer. Book the private

Chieftain's Hut in advance if you have a big party, and settle in for the evening. Soak it all up with bites from the pupu menu, which—this being Portland—includes a kale salad.

LET'S GET LOST

THE MYSTERY ROOM / PHOENIX

♦ The Arizona Biltmore is a grand example of 1920s architecture: The sprawling deco resort looks like a set straight out of Baz Luhrmann's *Gatsby*. On Sunday nights the hotel resurrects its past (it opened during Prohibition) with the Mystery Room, a tiny secret bar that requires a password for entry. Although it may seem late to the game, the venue is a rare example of a speakeasy-revival bar that was once actually a speakeasy.



THE WRITE STUFF

Local Edition / San Francisco

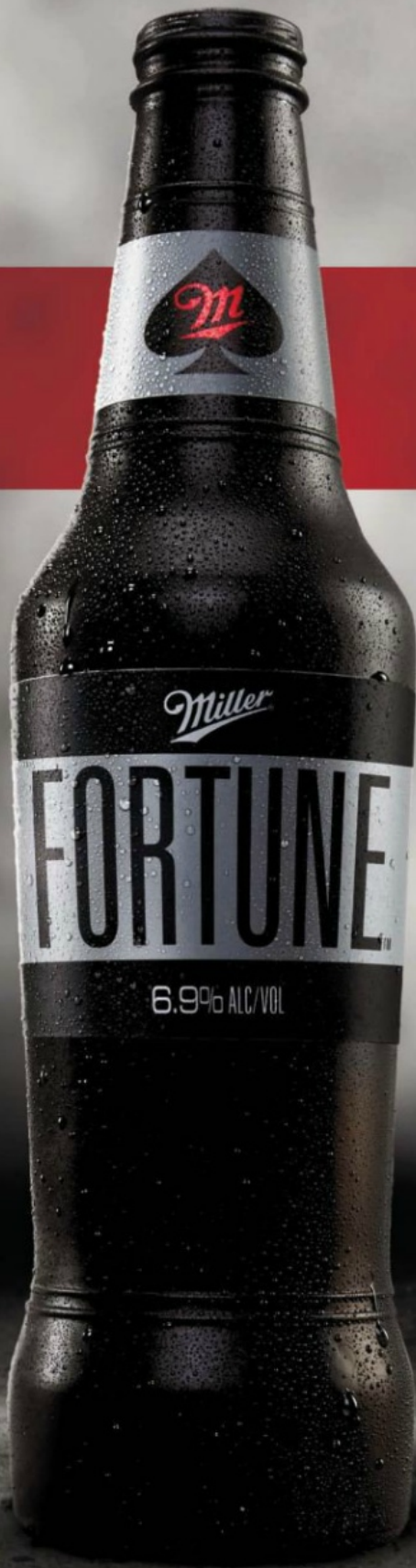
- The perfect pairing of drinking and journalism is celebrated at Local Edition, a subterranean bar (yes, it's a trend) in the basement of the Hearst Building in the Embarcadero. Vintage typewriters, old newspapers and printing-press components celebrate the power of the printed word, as young tech executives toast this bygone era with 1950s-inspired cocktails such as the brass knuckle, made with Japanese whiskey and spiced blood-orange liqueur.



Miller

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Ciao, Bella!

ESCAPE TO THE PACIFIC COASTLINE FOR A PRIVATE AFFAIR WITH ITALIAN SUPERMODEL **BIANCA BALTI**, WHOSE BEAUTY CAPTIVATES THE WORLD FROM MILAN TO MALIBU

Born in the bucolic town of Lodi in northern Italy—home to medieval castles and cathedrals and a landscape carved by the waters of the Po River—Bianca Balti is an Italian flower plucked from the dreams of all men. The blue-eyed beauty was discovered in a supermarket at the age of 20 and, eager to share herself with the world, immediately left the countryside for brighter lights. “Lodi was too quiet for me,” she says. “I went to Milan as soon as I was able.” She has since walked the runway for Chanel, done print campaigns for Dolce & Gabbana and Christian Dior, appeared in the pages of *Vogue Italia* and, at last, posed for *PLAYBOY*. “There is no value in not showing my body,” she says. “A naked body is a beautiful thing. Even God thinks so. When I’m

naked, I feel angelic.” We photographed Bianca in a remote area of Malibu against a majestic backdrop of mountains and sea, a worthy paradise that encapsulates the peace and serenity she identifies as the root of happiness. “When I was a child, my dreams were always of the water, the sand, the beach,” she says, “but I’ve learned to be a soldier of life, to accept the unexpected, to fight and grow.” Marked by the passion and romanticism that have defined the women of her country for centuries, Bianca speaks about love unabashedly. “The real value of my body is that I truly give it only to the man in my life,” she says. “A man who makes me feel loved and respected, who lets me dream in his arms and the warmth of my own bed, who makes me feel sexy and thus confident, and who knows only he can make me feel that way.”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG LOTUS





















EXTREME (PART 3)

Continued from page 132

The go-fast boat pulls up.

"You think there are any survivors?" he asks his guys.

"In these seas?" one of them answers. He wants to go back to the 535-foot yacht because, fuck it, it's not *his* money.

"Sons of bitches," Yegor says.

Lev doesn't ride a wave, he rides a billion dollars.

In the back of one of Alvaro's trucks headed for one of Alvaro's tame banks.

This is not because Lev is a coward or a shirker—quite the opposite—but because he has a task to perform before hooking back up with Paige and Kurt: Make sure that Alvaro (a.k.a. Señor Clean) sends the billion electronically around the world a few times and then home again.

For the fee of five percent of a billion, which is....

Which is....

(Ah, fuck it, you work it out; if I'd majored in math I wouldn't be doing this.)

In line with this objective, Army Ranger (retired) Woody Barnes sits in the front seat of the lead truck beside Alvaro with a Remington shotgun pointed at Alvaro's neck. If anything goes wrong, the first thing to blow will be Alvaro's head.

Off his shoulders.

It's not a matter of trusting Alvaro—you'd have to have the collective IQ of a Westboro Church executive board meeting to trust Alvaro—but as Woody puts it—

"I trust two things in life. Myself and my dog. Unless I have a bone in my hand, then I trust myself."

Well said, Woody.

Everything so far has gone pretty much according to plan. Oh, there have been a few wrinkles, but what's life without a few distractions from reality or routine?

There are also a few things Lev doesn't know.

He doesn't know, for instance, that their pilot, Dave Davids, was killed while fake crashing the chopper into the ocean.

And he doesn't know that Kurt and Crazy Isaiah have plunged back into said ocean (having just escaped it) in a desperate attempt to get Paige out.

Deep."

All respect and love to a great singer, but Adele doesn't know dick about rolling in the deep.

No one knows about rolling in the deep until a 40-foot wave actually rolls you in the deep and won't let you up, and then you don't care about your boyfriend dumping you or the scars of his love, none of that matters, you just want a breath.

A breath.

Not a lot to ask, but a lot to receive when you're 15 feet under 500 tons of water.

Rolling.

Paige knows about it. There's that old expression about "not knowing up from down"? She doesn't. How could she when she's been rolling at high speed for 200 yards? Then the rolling stops so she can start to find her way up to the surface. The question is, which way is up?

What you can't do in this situation is what your body wants to do.

Panic.

You panic here, your heartbeat accelerates and burns up oxygen your lungs desperately need. Panic here and make one bad decision and you're dead.

Paige doesn't panic.

You could put that on a T-shirt or a bumper sticker and shorten it up if you want—"Paige Don't Panic"—not in a free fall, not on a cliff face, not running in Death freaking Valley and starting to burn up from the inside.

Paige Don't Panic.

What she does is grab her leash.

The leash is a cord Velcro'd around her ankle and attached to the board, and there's one thing that Paige is sure of—the board will always eventually go up, not down.

(Ah, physics.)

So Paige pulls herself up (otherwise she'd be *pushing*, no?) on the cord, knowing that the surfboard is by now bobbing on the surface. Her lungs feel like they're going to explode, but she's trained all her life to ignore feelings and then she plunges through and grabs.

That breath.

That lovely, lovely breath she's going to need because she sees—

The next wave coming down on top of her.

Paige grabs another breath and dives under.

Kurt sees her headstone.

This is not as morbid as it sounds—a headstone in this context is the top of a surfboard bobbing above the water.

It's not a bad sign or for that matter a good one. It could mean that the leash snapped and Paige could be anywhere. It could also mean that she's unconscious under the board.

But it's the only chance he has, so he swims toward it.

So does CI, a much stronger swimmer and waterman.

Problem is, by the time they can fight their way into the white water, it's washed

the board away and they have to start looking again.

Three more times.

Waves crash on Paige and she goes under.

The board lurches and takes her on a ride, and she thinks of trying to bend forward—a sit-up against tons of rushing water—and unhook herself, as the board is now a possible blessing or a curse. It's dragging her around, but it's also her orientation to "up," and it could be seen by her friends, if indeed *they* made it to shore.

Three times she takes as much air into her lungs as she can and goes under, knowing she's going to be under for a long time. The last time she doesn't think she's going to make it—the board takes her for a sled ride and then she feels the damndest thing on her back.

Sand.

Paige gets her feet under her and forces herself up.

Stands in knee-deep white water, doubles over, gasps for air, then straightens up to find Kurt and CI.

Sees them out in the water, looking for her.

Paige waves her arms and yells.

"Guys! I'm on the beach!"

Beautiful words.

Always.

If you're on the beach.

Out of the water.

And people are after you.

Even if you've given them reason to believe you're dead.

There's only one thing to do.

Run.

They take a few minutes to get their breath, then drag their boards into the brush near the beach. This is a hot surf spot, especially when the waves are up, so no one is going to think anything of it.

Then they walk up the beach until they come to the place where they'd tucked the equipment away. One sat phone. Running shoes. Running packs. Shorts. Shirts. Hats. Energy gel. Water.

A lot of water.

They strip out of their wet suits, change and take off.

Well, not Crazy Isaiah.

CI has this thing about getting too far from the ocean, like more than a few thousand yards. He wasn't on the yacht, no one saw him, and if they do launch a search, it will concentrate on Isla Puná, where a plane took off and didn't return. So he's going to hang out for a day, catch a few waves, just another surf bum, then fly back to Kauai.

"We'll send your share when it's clean,"

Kurt says.

"I'm not worried."

"You're going to be one very rich *kanaka*."

"I already am one very rich *kanaka*,"

CI says. He has the ocean, food to eat, a place to sleep.



"Have pity on the poor girl, sir. You are her first can't-get-it-up."

Crazy Isaiah might be the sanest person you'll ever meet.
 Now he wishes them aloha. "Take good care. I don't want to do a paddle-out for you."
 He walks away.
 They start to run.

Paige takes the lead.

The pacesetter.
 Off the beach, through the strip of scrub brush and then into the Sechura Desert, the northernmost section of the Atacama, the driest place on earth.

They've run desert before, the Badwater Ultramarathon in Death Valley. This is nothing like that. The temps at the Badwater spike at 120—in the Sechura, the highest temp is going to be about 100, but in the morning coastal fog it's only 75.

But they have the same distance to go—130 miles to cross before they hit the Andean foothills.

Right—that's five marathons.
 Which is, like, crazy.
 But that's the point.
 They go cross-country to stay away from roads, so anyone chasing them is going to have to do it on foot.
 Which they won't.
 And if they would, they couldn't.

That's the point of being an elite ultra-athlete.

Simply put, you can do things that other people can't.
 If Paige and Kurt get across this band of the Sechura into the foothills, they will have simply disappeared. Then they'll be open-field runners in a very big field (the world) and ain't no one going to identify them, much less catch them.

So they run.
 Paige has long been of the belief that the secret to life is very simple and can be

summed up in two words—
 Left, right.
 One foot after the other.
 Take the next necessary step.
 Left, right, left, right.
 This most basic of human activities—running, walking—balances not only the body but the mind and spirit. Paige read that running has become a treatment for PTSD and depression, that the repetitive bipedal activity cuts new neuroplastic grooves in the brain, rewrites the cortical maps, centers the mind in the balance of left and right—the sensorimotor rhythm that produces calming alpha waves.

A biophysicist, Paige knows the chemistry—when you run, your body releases phenylalanine, dopamine and serotonin, which all make you feel good.
 Run long enough, you go into the zone.
 A higher state of consciousness.
 You get insights, even visions.
 Bliss.
 Euphoria.
 She's not there yet.
 Not even close.
 Her problem right now is another chemical.
 Adrenaline.
 More specifically, adrenaline dump.

Within the last few hours, Paige has wingsuited from an airplane into a cold ocean, swum to a boat—where she killed a man who was trying to kill her—then survived a big-wave wipeout.

Her adrenaline surged to freakish levels to allow her to do (survive) all that, but now that adrenaline is saying, "Enough is enough." (The logic behind this bromide is irrefutable—if enough weren't enough, it wouldn't be *enough*.)

The human body is designed to respond to a threat or crisis—the cliché mother lifting the truck off her child—but then it's designed to
Crash

Hard.
 Not run five marathons across a desert.
 So the chemicals coursing through her body are telling her to lie down, the chemicals in her brain urging her to keep going.
 Yup—mind over matter.
 Left, right, left, right.
 She does what she's always done—
 Take the next necessary step.
 Kurt, fighting the same battle, in rhythm behind her.
 Left, right, left, right.
 The secret to life.

While Paige and Kurt are running,
 The money is zooming.
 Digitally racing around the world, switching currencies like dozens of Supermans changing in multiple phone booths (Remember them? And where does Clark Kent change now?), shape-shifting from real estate to stocks to cash, splitting apart and coming together amoeba-like, ending up in numbered accounts in several locations around the world—minus, of course, Alvaro's five points—and he does all this sitting at a computer in the back room of a Guayaquil bank.

Alvaro gives Lev some code numbers and says, "Try it."

Lev tries it.
 And gets access to \$10 mil in Zurich.
 "Another," Alvaro insists.
 Twenty mil in Paraguay.
 "Now you change the codes," Alvaro tells Lev. "I don't want to know them and be accused of unethical behaviors."

He sniffs at Woody.
 Woody's share comes to \$100 mil, divided into five accounts. Half of that is going to find its way to paralyzed veterans.

Lev, coming as he does from a Russian family of dubious economic means, is no slouch himself when it comes to the money-moving business, does his thing.

He and Woody say good-bye in the street.
 Woody is on his way to the airport. Fly to L.A., then to Chicago, then to Denver before he heads back to his cabin in the mountains just to make sure his track is clean.

"You sure," he asks, "you don't want me to come with you?"
 Lev shakes his head. "There is nothing to do now but run."
 Words to live by.

Or die by, if you're running in the desert.
 No, we're not going to do the whole running-out-of-water, staggering-toward-the-mirage-of-a-lake thing, don't worry.

Water is an issue, of course.
 Paige and Kurt "hydrated" before they started their run, not making the mistake that a lot of desert crossers do—ration their water and drop from dehydration with water in their canteens.

The Sechura is crossed by thousands of little streams, seasonally dry but now refreshed by *el virazón*. Kurt has a water purifier in his pack so they can suck the life-sustaining fluid from the shallow beds and get a drink every 20 or so miles.

The sun could kill them.
 It's 90 now, the sun is unrelenting, but



"How did you get this number?"

they find shade under the occasional carob tree or sloping rock, and they're smart enough to stop, rest and let their body temperatures lower.

Take off their shoes, treat the blisters, bandage the raw, bloodied soles of their feet. They knew this was a danger, going straight from saltwater into the desert run—not so bad if it were your basic triathlon—but now the salt on their skin is starting to burn and crack on their feet, their faces, their lips.

Getting their shoes back on hurts like hell.

Getting up to run again hurts worse.

But they do it.

Left, right, left, right.

They run across this desert of grays and dunes because the essential difference between elite athletes and the others is not always physical but mental.

There are some billionaires who are morons (see Babies, Trust Fund) and this is mostly a matter of ankle-deep genetic pools, but Yegor Chubaiv is not one of these. He's a self-made oligarch who came up the hard way (in the armaments trade there is no soft way), and now as he sits on his boat being unceremoniously towed into Guayaquil, Yegor doesn't waste a lot of time or energy brooding about his lost billion and his son-of-a-bitch, no-good, stinking ingrate of a stepson—he *thinks* about them instead.

Some helicopter wreckage.

One body.

Some money floating on the water.

And he plays the game beloved of dreamers, screenwriters and self-made billionaires—

What if?

What if the helicopter didn't really crash?

What if the thieves made it to shore with my money?

What if I could track the bastards down?

Being of a practical bent, Yegor's next questions focus on the question—

How?

To answer this, he goes through the same process that the robbers did, identifying problems and then solving them. He looks at charts and maps and then—

Irena interrupts.

Forty-eight hours, she says, before the robbers release Lev.

"Lev's not coming back," Yegor says.

"How can you say such a thing?" Irena screams.

"Lev is not coming back," Yegor repeats to irritate her, "because Lev was in on it."

"In on what?"

It's lucky for her she's very good in bed. "On the robbery."

"How can you think that?"

Then again, no one is *that* good. "Please go away now, I'm working."

She does and he goes back at it. By the time they're tying his crippled yacht up to the dock, Yegor has an answer.

Kurt and Paige stop late afternoon of the first day.

Eat a couple of protein bars and sleep for three hours under a shelf of rock. Then they get up, suck down energy gels and more water, strap on their headlamps and

run in the cool dark.

With the sleep and the absence of sun, it feels like a new life.

They run all night and through the relative cool of the morning, then find shade again and rest.

This is what most desert animals do, and it works for them.

Lev gets on a bus.

That wends its way from Guayaquil into the Andes.

East to El Tambo, where he changes buses for the southern route.

To Azogues, then Cuenca and Saraguro.

The mountains to his left are tantalizing as he heads for Loja.

To meet Paige and Kurt.

Pain is a great teacher.

What it mostly teaches is that pain is bad.

There are nobler lessons—perseverance, change (to avoid cause of said pain), compassion—but mostly what it teaches is that if you can do things to avoid, lessen or eliminate pain, it's the better idea.

Most human progress is, in fact, based on the avoidance, lessening or elimination of pain.

Here's Alvaro's problem.

He can't give up code he doesn't know.

He can't say where Lev has headed because he doesn't know that either. (Which brings us to the old "ignorance is bliss" bromide—yeah, not necessarily.) So Alvaro's getting an education in pain, but there isn't anything he can do to escape it.

We're not going to get into details on what kind of pain he's in because this isn't "torture porn," and what's the point?

Suffice to say that Yegor knows how to hurt people, Alvaro wants him to stop, but all he can do is point down the street (with his thumb) and say, "He went that-a-way."

Which may or may not be enough.

On the topic of pain.

Paige and Kurt are in it.

A world-class male ultramarathoner finishes the Badwater in about 25 hours, the best women in about 30.

But that's with a support crew supplying them with water, food, medical treatment, encouragement and guidance.

Not out there basically alone, after having already been through an ordeal. So Kurt and Paige aren't making—aren't even trying to make—that kind of time.

They run for two days.

With breaks for sleep and to avoid the worst of the heat.

Coming into the 40 hours, they are *hurting*.

Feet blistered, raw and sore, legs aching, lips cracked, skin peeling, their whole bodies bone weary.

A part of Kurt wants to quit.

Give up and die.

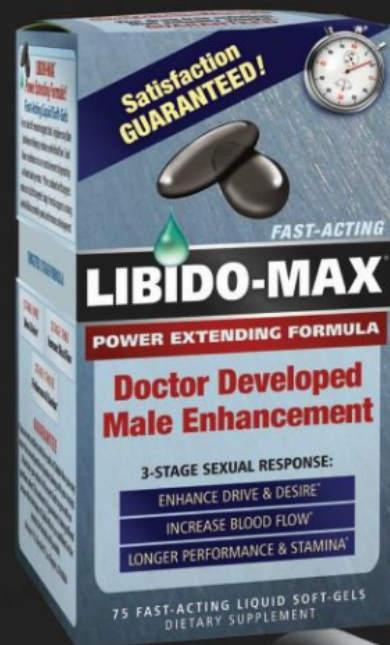
Paige won't let him.

Makes him take the lead.

Gets in behind him, foot for foot and chants her mantra.

Left, right.

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Left, right.
 One foot after the other.
 Take the necessary step,
 Then the next one.
 But now you're past the zone,
 Past the realm of insight and higher consciousness into the world of
 Lower consciousness.
 Near your lizard brain, it's no wonder
 So many religions have emerged from
 the desert, the landscape of sere rock and
 sun, of stillness, of vision and hallucination.
 Left, right, left, right.
 Left, right, left, right.
 Sun gods.

In this quiet, in this space, you hear and
 see things that aren't there but are, either
 out there or in your head and then there's
 no difference anyway.

Left, right.
 Left, right.
 There's only pain and perseverance,
 The cry of a bird, the rustle of a lizard.
 You know what it means to be one with
 nature.

It means you're dead,
 In the earth.
 Left, right.
 Left, right.
 And then for Kurt there is only sun and sky,
 And then only sun.
 It calls to him,
 Like a god.
 Like God.
 And he wants to go,
 Fade upward,
 Skyward,
 Toward the sun.
 Toward his life and death.
 And then Kurt sees green.
 The green of grass and trees and water
 and life.
 Left, right.
 Left, right.
 He hears Paige laugh.

Guayaquil is a big city—2 million people—
 but there are only so many ways in and out.

Yegor has the people and connections to
 run them all down.

Lev didn't take a flight out.
 Ditto train.

Which means he's still in the city (doubtful)
 or he drove, or he took a bus. At the bus
 station, a clerk remembers someone
 matching his description buying a ticket to
 El Tambo. In El Tambo they confirm that
 he got on another bus to—

Loja sits in a valley.

The valley of Cuxibamba, which Paige
 thinks is exotic and pretty.

So different from the desert, this cloud
 forest and jungle, jumping-off point for the
 conquistadors into the Amazon basin.

It makes Kurt almost green-sick, this
 sudden lushness, this altitude over a mile
 high. And civilization, a city with a quar-
 ter million people, two universities, parks,
 museums, theaters, cathedrals.

Out of the desert now, life seems more
 like life.

But it takes a little adjustment.

Lev was safely in Loja waiting for them in
 an out-of-the-way hotel bar. They sit down to
 beers, and Kurt tells him about Dave's death.

"It's a shame," Lev says. "I was very
 much hoping..."

"I know," Kurt says. "What should we do
 with his share?"

"There's a daughter, isn't there?" Lev
 asks. "From one of the marriages?"

Paige asks, "What are we going to do? Just
 go up to her and give her \$100 million?"

"We could start a trust fund," Lev says.
 "Something about her father's insurance.
 Inject money into it a little at a time."

"Something like that," Kurt says.
 "They must have known he led a danger-
 ous life," Lev says.

"And that's it?" Paige asks. "We raise a
 beer to him and say 'So long'?"

"What else do you want to do?" Kurt asks.
 What else is there to do?

They're much too tired to make love.

Kurt and Paige lie in the cool sheets in their
 room, after their third shower of the day, and
 try to go to sleep. You would think it would

*The money's
 in the bank(s)
 and he's free
 to do anything
 he wants for as
 long as he lives.*

be easy, given their exhaustion, but it isn't.

Finally, Paige gets to it. "I killed someone."

"He was going to kill you."

"I put us into the situation."

"Not by yourself."

"That doesn't change it," Paige says. "At all."

"Let it go, Paige."

"Fuck you."

They lie there in silence and sleep fitfully
 with dreams that aren't nightmares but nei-
 ther are they sweet. Wake up before dawn
 with the realization they have bought wealth
 at too high a price, and that they were freer
 before, and all their escapes will be but tem-
 porary distractions from that reality.

"Where are you going to go now?" Paige asks
 as she watches him get dressed. They'd had
 clothes and equipment shipped to this hotel.

"I thought we were a *we*," Kurt answers.

"I don't know that we can be together
 after this."

"I'm going to Chimborazo," Kurt answers.

Before Everest was discovered, it was
 thought to be the highest mountain in the
 world. At 20,702 feet, given the equatorial

bulge, its summit is the farthest point from
 the center of the earth.

The farthest point from the center of the
 earth.

That's extreme.

"I thought we were going to do that only
 if we were being chased," Paige says.

The final exigency plan. If they didn't
 shake the pursuit in the ocean or the desert,
 run to the most extreme of terrains, drag
 the chasers into territory that you can
 handle and they can't.

Kurt shrugs. "We're here. Lev and I
 thought we'd give it a try. You're coming
 with us, right?"

"I don't know now."

"There's a lot you don't know all of a
 sudden," Kurt snaps.

"I'm starting to think there's a lot you've
 never known."

"Clever."

"Well, I'm the smart girl."

He sits on the bed and pulls on his boots.
 "I'm going downstairs to have breakfast.
 We're leaving in two hours from out front.
 I hope you're there. If not, it's been great,
 Paige. The best part of my life."

She says nothing as he walks out.

It was the best part of my life too, she thinks.
 Asshole.

Kurt's legs hurt as he goes down the stairs.
 Life without Paige?

It's surreal.

As is the idea that they

Got away with it.

The money's in the bank(s), there's been
 no pursuit, and he's free to do anything he
 wants for as long as he lives.

Freedom.

It's unreal.

Well, fuck yes, it is.

Lev is pressed against the wall of his room.
 By three of his stepfather's men.

"The codes to the bank accounts," Yegor
 says.

"No."

"And I want your friends."

"Again, no."

"You have no idea," Yegor says, "the
 pain we can inflict."

"You sound like bad cinema," Lev an-
 swers. "So let me match it: I can take any-
 thing you dish out."

Yegor asks, "Perhaps, but can that
 tedious slut who bore you?"

In *Hamlet*, his mother Gertrude does get
 killed.

But it wasn't Hamlet who did it.

Kurt piles equipment into the old truck.

Paige hasn't shown up, but neither has Lev.

The first no-show surprises Kurt, the
 second doesn't.

Lev is what they used to call a ladies' man,
 what they now call a player (or *playuh*), and
 has doubtless hooked up and will soon
 come tumbling out the door, hopping on
 one foot (agreed, one rarely hops on two)
 while putting his shoe on the other.

Kurt has often thought that what will kill

Lev is not a hand slipping off a rock face but a vitamin E deficiency, that he'll simply drop dead one day staggering out of a hotel room in postcoital stupefaction.

So he's sure Lev is going to show up eventually.

Paige?

Could go either way.

She's stubborn.

Her moral code carved in marble.

Kurt is not without feeling. In fact, he feels terrible that he put her in a situation where she had to violate that code. He knows she's hurting, knows she's going to hurt for a long time.

But he's also a realist who believes that you live in the present or not at all.

You spend too much time looking back at your mistakes, you're not looking at what's in front of you, and in his world of extreme sports that—

Can get you killed.

He's also a great conservator of energy.

Energy is valuable and finite.

It should be applied to the challenge at hand.

Not wasted on regrets.

Apparently Paige has come to the same conclusion, because now she strides out the front door with a duffel bag of equipment slung over her shoulder. She tosses the bag into the truck and gets behind the wheel.

"Where's Lev?" she asks.

Kurt's look is one of inquiry.

"I'm as far away from the center of my emotional earth as I can be," Paige explains. "Maybe if I go there in actuality, it's the way back."

It's a metaphysical explanation, Kurt thinks.

But an explanation.

A few minutes later Lev emerges from the hotel.

Hopping on one foot.

They drive to 15,000 feet and hike the next 1,000 up to the base shelter.

Chimborazo has four summits, but they're only interested (of course) in summing the highest.

Whymper Peak.

The plan is to leave at 10 P.M. and take the southwest route through El Corredor (which sounds more ominous than the Corridor, no?) past Castle Rock, then summit by 10 A.M.

The timing has to do with weather. Typically, it gets warmer in the late morning, the sun starts to melt snow and ice, sending huge rocks tumbling down the slope, especially from the Castle, which, Paige observes, is exactly what people in castles used to do when they were under siege.

So it behooves you to be out of the rock zone before this happens.

The climb to the summit is no joke.

("A minister, a priest and a rabbi decide to go up Chimborazo. And the minister says...")

The route is extremely steep, cold, windy, covered in various depths of wet snow, and El Corredor is often covered with black ice, which is not good because it's a narrow little corridor with a 1,000-foot straight drop on either side.

So slipping is not a good idea.

They have the necessary equipment and now they unpack it. They check and double-check it.

The key to clothing is layers.

Outdoor Research wicking T-shirts, long-sleeve base layers and thin insulating layers; Ferrosi soft-shell jacket and a down jacket with a hood. Schoeller climbing pants, WinterTrek fleece hats with Ninja-clava hoodies; StormTracker liner gloves under OR heavy gloves, Koflach climbing boots, SmartWool socks, Petzl Snowwalker ice axes, Black Diamond crampons, Ecrin Roc helmets, Julbo sun goggles, Tikka XP headlamps, Trango Piranha knives.

Lev takes something else out of his bag.

An HK MP5-N machine pistol.

Kurt stares at it.

"I have to tell you something," Lev says.

The plan is to kill them on the climb to the summit. Lev was supposed to go along with it, escort Kurt and Paige up the trail,

which has been a graveyard for many others, where the bodies will never be found.

Get Kurt and Paige on the slope, silhouetted against the mountain where they'll be perfect targets.

"Of course they will kill me too," Lev says. "They just haven't said as much."

Kurt asks about the money.

"Dummy files," Lev answers. "When he opens them, he'll think they're real at first. Actually, they will open up flak—thousands of false files that will crash the system. The money is safe."

Living to access it is the issue.

"This isn't all that different from what we planned," Kurt says, "as a worst-case scenario. Drag them into territory where they can't stay with us."

"I told you," Lev says, "these men fought in Chechnya."

"And?"

"Do you know what Chechnya is?"

"The Caucasus," Paige answers. "Mountains."



Paige would kick ass on *Jeopardy*.

She would kick some serious Trebek ass.

Yegor is former Spetsnaz, special forces, Lev says. The men coming with him were all trained at Hatsavita, the special forces mountain school, and fought in the Caucasus.

They're mountain troops.

"These guys *can* stay with us," Paige says.

"We'll see," says Kurt.

Confidence has never been Kurt's problem. (Its kissing cousin, arrogance, has.)

But he thinks that's what being the best is about.

There are no degrees of best.

Either you are, or you aren't.

Finding out in a life-or-death situation is about as extreme a test as it gets.

They finish packing their gear.

Lev leads.

He's the best mountaineer of the three.

Paige in the middle.

Kurt behind.

The left-right of mountain trekking is different from the left-right of desert running. You can't let your mind go somewhere else—you have to carefully watch where you put each foot.

They're climbing up a glacier, and that glacier is rife with crevasses, deep cracks that are hard if not impossible to see at night, even under a full moon. Fall into a crevasse and you might never be seen again. Hope that the fall kills you because there is no way to get you out, and dying of cold, exposure, broken bones and smashed internal organs is a bad way to go out.

It's beautiful out there, though.

Paige looks up at the summit, glowing silver now.

The Ice Throne of God.

What the locals call Chimborazo.

Paige wonders if she'll meet God there.

And, if so, what She'll say.

Another problem is altitude.

By the time they got to base camp, they were already at high altitude, anything above 11,500 feet. Now they're at the level classified very high altitude, 11,500 to 18,000 feet.

A scientist, Paige knows the biochemistry.

In this range, arterial oxygen saturation drops below 90 percent and inspiratory oxygen pressure decreases. Which is a fancy way of saying that as you climb higher, the oxygen needed to sustain mental and physical alertness decreases. The problem is exacerbated by the rate of ascent and the amount of aforementioned physical activity you're doing.

And they're climbing fast and hard.

A race to the summit, because if they can get up and over before the Russians can catch up with them, they have a chance to survive.

But now they're starting to suffer from hypoxemia—low blood oxygen—which increases the rate of breathing and makes you use your chest and stomach muscles to breathe at all.

In short, it wears you out.

You feel breathless.

Even superbly conditioned athletes feel the effects in this range. The only good

news is that the Russians feel it too.

And now they're pushing toward the 18,000-foot mark.

The so-called *altitude barrier*.

A.k.a. *extreme altitude*.

Humans just aren't designed to live up here. There has never been permanent human dwelling above 19,000 feet.

For good reason.

Above the altitude barrier, bad things happen.

The hypoxemia gets worse, further dropping blood oxygen levels, which makes you start to hyperventilate. The hyperventilation leads to hypocapnia, reducing carbon dioxide in the blood, which constricts the blood vessels in the brain, which leads to two more bad things.

Alkalosis—that feeling of pins and needles in the extremities—i.e., those feet you need to keep you from falling off the slope or into crevasses. Then you get muscle cramps, not particularly helpful trying to climb up a mountain at speed.

But worse is cerebral edema.

It starts with a headache you can't get rid of.

Your gait becomes unsteady—something

*No time for
ease of any
kind. Only time
for effort. Get
up and over the
ice wall.*

you really don't want on an already slippery slope.

Then you get a retinal hemorrhage.

Yeah, it's what it sounds like—you start bleeding from the eyes.

That's okay, though, because you won't feel it for long. You gradually lose consciousness, then black out.

Then die.

This is why people do not live up here.

This is why people shouldn't even go up here.

Most people, Paige considers, think climbing a mountain is a metaphor, a matter of willpower.

She knows that it's a matter of biology.

Some people's systems can handle it, to varying degrees.

Others' can't.

A biochemical crapshoot.

Speaking of shooting, she looks down and sees them coming.

Kurt sees them too.

Eight men, strung out in a line, weapons slung over shoulders, maybe 2,000 feet below.

And gaining.

Lev is basically trying to kill his stepfather.

Heart attack, hypoxemia, cerebral edema.

Pick your poison.

Welcome to the death zone.

With this in mind, Lev picks up the pace.

Paige is starting to feel what they softly call woozy.

Kurt, behind her, can see it in her footsteps.

Unsteady gait.

He reaches out and steadies her. Looks behind to see that the Russians have closed to 500 yards.

Bad time or good time—depending on what transpires—to reach El Corredor.

Lev picks it up to a jog, then a trot, then a run.

Paige keeps pace, but even with the crampons, her feet are slippery on the ice. She tells herself not to look at the 1,000-foot drops on either side, just focus on what's ahead.

It's just 90 feet across.

80, 70, 60....

She slips at 30.

Kurt grabs her by the straps of her pack.

And pulls.

Tottering on the edge, muscles straining, he fights for strength and balance.

Bends his legs and thrusts up.

They sway for a second together.

Either they both make it or they both don't.

Could go either way.

Then she finds her feet, plants, they make it across El Corredor.

Not everyone does.

Third Russian in line, his feet go out from under him.

It would be a comic pratfall if he didn't grab the guy in front of him and they both slide off the edge.

Screaming in the wind.

Two down, Lev thinks.

He leads them across a broad snowfield.

The snow in this field masks crevasses.

Lev jumps over them, points them out to Paige and Kurt.

The Russian in the lead misses the cue.

Plunges into one of them.

None of the others pause to see if they can help him.

Mission-driven, these boys.

They keep coming.

Three down, Lev thinks.

But they're gaining.

He has to change it up.

Lev leads them off the trail.

The God of Sun meets the God of Ice as they head up the final 2,000 feet.

WTF, Kurt thinks as Lev deviates from the route.

Then he sees the ice wall ahead of them.

Already exhausted, it's excruciating work. Dig in the toes of the crampons, reach up and swing the ax, hope to get it bitten in good and then pull up. If the ax doesn't have a true grip, you're going to slide down or, worse, fall off backward.

They climb.

One hundred feet.

Two hundred.

Dig in, hold with one ax, swing with the other, pull up. Dig in, hold with one ax, swing with the other, pull up.

Kurt's arms burn, his lungs burn, leg muscles cramp, head throbs. He's not the scientist that Paige is, but he knows that it's alkalosis setting in. Feels the pins and needles in his feet.

Dizziness.

What's next?

The manuals talk about malaise setting in.

Malaise.

From the French "bad ease."

Fuck the French.

No time for bad ease now, no time for ease of any kind, good or bad. Only time for effort. Good effort. Successful effort. Get up and over the ice wall.

Toward the summit.

Always the summit.

The top.

The extreme.

Kurt looks down.

The Russians are at 300 yards and closing.

Almost within firing range.

Even with the thin air and tortured breathing, these men are trained in biathlon. They'll control their breath and get off accurate shots.

He reaches the top wall.

To see Paige's butt disappear over it ahead of him.

Looks back.

The Russians are coming.

A rock wall is next.

Free-climbing.

Actually solo climbing.

Look, Ma, no ropes.

Paige follows Lev's route.

Lev the solo climber, flash climber, speed climber, jazz climber. Heavy gloves off now, trade warmth for grip, but not a lot of time because you can't trade grip for frostbite either.

Self-defeating behavior, that.

Hand grip, foothold. Hand grip, foothold.

First and last rule of solo climbing—three points of contact on the rock. A hand and two feet, two hands and a foot, doesn't matter. Plant three and then move one. Find a ledge and grab it with a hand. Stabilize. Find a crack and stick your foot in it. Then reach out with a hand, find the next ledge.

Five hundred feet of rock wall and she knows it's Lev's desperate attempt to shake the pursuit. Few mountain climbers are solo climbers. Few want to go up a rock face with no ropes, belays, pitons, nothing but balance, skill, confidence, faith and hope.

Come on up if you have it in you.

If not, good-bye.

Lev gets lucky and Paige sees it.

A long, narrow vertical crack.

Lev wedges (good word in solo climbing,

wedge is) a foot in and crabs up sideways, presses his spine against one side of the crack, one foot wedged against the other, goes up like an elevator on a construction site and she follows.

Kurt below her, struggling, his bulk a disadvantage now but his strength a compensation. Strong arms, strong hands that have gripped her so many times now grip cold unforgiving rock. He makes it into the wedge and now they're stacked there.

Paige risks a look down.

The Russians are at the base, unloading ropes.

The leader sets out.

He'll hammer in the pitons, set the ropes, create the belays.

They're coming.

She looks back up.

Lev has come to the top of the vertical crack to a problem.

An overhanging ledge.

This is the trouble with jazz climbing.

It calls for improvisation.

This is Coltrane.

This is Bird, Dizzy and Prez.

No easy riff this ledge.

Sticks out a good 10 feet and the trouble is

You can't reach it and keep three points of contact with the rock.

Or two.

Or even one.

You have to push off with your feet.

Backward.

Jump.

Reach forward.

And grab.

Not ideal.

They've reached that point where they can't go up, they can't go down, and they can't stay where they are.

Yegor sees it.

And laughs.

Even though it costs him most of the breath he has left.

Truth is, he's past exhaustion. Truth is, he shouldn't have come. Larger truth is, he couldn't help himself.

Ego.

And the inability to delegate.

And the suspicion that his trusted men might cut some sort of side deal with his devious stepson.

So Yegor has willingly walked into the death zone.

Climbed (to be fair, with some assistance) up an ice wall and now has the satisfaction of seeing Lev and his little friends trapped 500 feet up a rock face with nowhere to go.

Then—

Lev flies.

No other word for it, sorry.

He pushes off from the rock, slanting backward, gets air, reaches out and grabs the rock shelf with the fingertips of his left hand.

Paige watches him dangle.

For a second.

Then,



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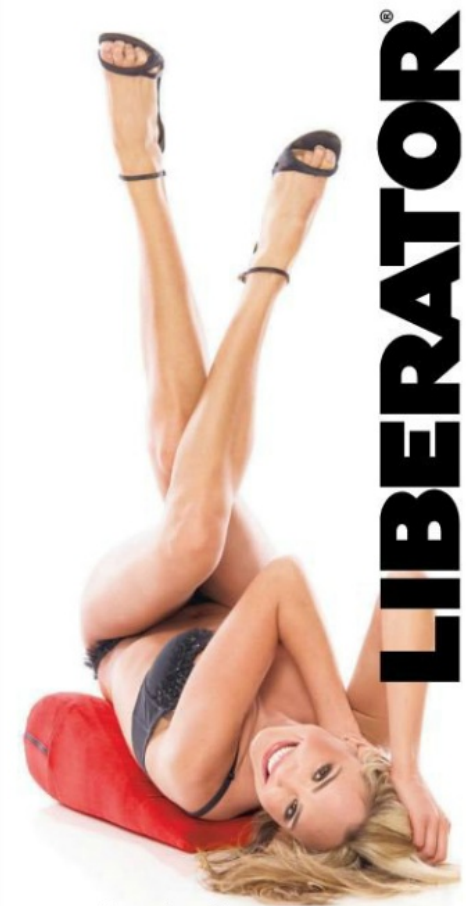
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Slowly,
Slowly,
Pull himself up.

He disappears for a second and the next thing she sees is his hand reaching down and she hears the very frightening words: "I'll catch you!"

Yeah.

This ain't one of those corporate retreat bullshit trust exercises where you fall backward into a reluctant colleague's arms.

This is 500 feet in the air.

Frigid air.

And if he doesn't catch you, you don't take an embarrassing flop to the ground, you fall to your death.

No re-dos.

On the other hand (so to speak),

What else are you going to do?

Live in a crack the rest of your short life?

Freeze to death there?

Wait for people to come shoot you?

The menu is not an attractive one, so Paige launches.

Springs.

Reaches up where

Lev's hand grabs her and—

He used to annoy the shit out of her, sitting in bars all the time squeezing a hard rubber ball, but now she thanks God for all those aggravating hours as his hand grips hers like the cliché vise and he lifts her onto the shelf.

From where she shouts down to Kurt.

"We'll catch you!"

Yegor can't believe what he just saw.

Thinks it's maybe a hypoxemic hallucination.

But he just saw three people fly.

He yells to his men, with no notable originality, "Get them!"

Exhausted, they lie on the shelf and peek over.

Don't want to believe what they're seeing.

The five remaining Russians moving up the rock face like a machine. A beautifully coordinated climbing team, efficiently setting belays and moving up, rotating the lead climber.

It's almost admirable.

Yegor, played out, is at the end of the rope, as it were. The others set and then haul him up.

"We'll catch a breath and go," Kurt croaks.

A long spine leads the final 1,000 feet to the summit. It's futile, but there's nothing else to do. The Russians will make the rock face and chase them to the top.

Where it's endgame.

They've trudged 100 yards when Kurt feels that something is wrong behind him. Well, a *lot* is wrong behind him, but specifically, he sees Lev, rifle unslung, heading back toward the rock face.

Kurt hollers, "No!"

It echoes.

Yegor turns and waves.

A good-bye.

Then carries on.

"We can't let him," Paige whispers.

It's as much breath as she has for speech.

"We can't stop him either," Kurt says.

He turns her around and they start for the top.

Lev means lion in Russian.

It fits.

Heart of a lion.

He makes it back just as his countrymen get to the shelf, elegantly solving the problem with a series of pitons and belays that force them to edge backward along the bottom surface of the shelf.

Problem is, he can't get a shot.

Tries, but there's no angle.

The men are under the shelf or pressed too tight against the rock. And now they're efficiently hauling Yegor up.

Lev sees his chance.

He steps to the edge of the shelf.

And dives.

Like you'd swan dive into the water.

Off a cliff in Acapulco.

And he aims for the section of rope holding his unbeloved stepfather.

Years of wingsuiting have prepared Lev for this. He dives now like a hawk on its prey.

From 100 feet the impact is horrific.

*This ain't one of
those corporate
retreat bullshit
trust exercises.
This is 500 feet
in the air.*

Bones shatter,

Blood bursts into the sky,

But Lev grabs the rope above Yegor and

Holds on and twists,

Spins,

Fouling himself and Yegor in the line.

Lev wraps one forearm around Yegor's neck and with the other hand grabs the knife at his belt.

Does what the Russians above know they have to do anyway.

Lev smiles at Yegor, reaches up,

And cuts the line.

There are a lot of forces you can buy off with multibillions.

But

Gravity ain't one of them.

Yegor falls like anyone else, which surprises him.

As for Lev,

He's not happy to die.

But if he has to,

He'd die on a mountain,

Taking an evil with him.

There is no such thing as a clean death,

But some are cleaner than others.

To die in a world of white is about all you can ask for, after all.

In a cold, clean world of white

Kurt and Paige stagger up the mountain because this is all they know to do.

His eyes bleed, his chest heaves.

It has all caught up with them now.

The efforts, the exertions, the exhaustion.

She is so sleepy.

To fall into a bed of pure white snow

Would be a warm soft death.

With the wind whistling a song,

To die on a mountain

Closest to the sun.

As close to the sun as a

Person can walk.

There are worse deaths, far worse.

They stagger on.

Stagger up.

And then they are on the summit.

Close to the sun.

Kurt looks back.

Through red eyes he sees

Four men coming,

Black forms against white.

Death coming steadily in black.

They're trapped now.

It is said that when you've reached the summit, there's nowhere left to go.

"Paige," Kurt says.

"Yes?"

"I'm not ready yet."

"Neither am I."

If we die tomorrow, we will have lived today.

If we die today, we have lived.

They drop their packs, open them and take out their wingsuits. An enormous, envying effort, just to get into them, but they do, barely heeding the bullets that zip past them in the crisp air, the sound crackling against the mountain.

Here, at the farthest point from the center of the earth,

But closest to the sun,

The extreme,

They hold hands, walk to the edge and jump.

There are hawks that mate for life.

Because they love to fly only with each other.

Kurt and Paige.

Free-fall in love.

Flying into a blue sky,

Through shafts of golden light.

With the whole world in front of them,

Open sky,

They don't know what's out there,

Beyond or below them.

They don't know

Where,

Or if,

They'll land.

They only know

They are together and they are together free.



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RAVE NEW WORLD

Continued from page 90

Angeles, events with names like Fade to Mind and Body High unfold in dank downtown buildings where kids dressed like Tumblr GIFs vibrate on uppers; in New York, parties such as Club Shade and Ghe20G0th1k start after midnight in Brooklyn warehouses where bass shakes the decrepit walls and windows. Electric Daisy Carnival this is not.

In Brooklyn, Jubilee and Star Eyes, two veteran female DJs, discuss this rave revival over sake. Although the scene may be off the radar for now, each weekend the parties fill with more and more Manhattanites, bankers and bank managers. The internet, it seems, is a powerful tool for bringing people together, but it isn't selective about who they are.

"The internet brings access. Even if you can't find the address for a party, you can still read about it on a blog," explains Star Eyes. "We aren't trying so hard to be counterculture anymore." Besides, she says, it's inevitable that sooner or later the scene's best DJs "get booked at Lollapalooza, where you see frat boys and finance dudes taking ecstasy and hugging it out."

Jubilee nods. "There are still levels of underground," she explains.

There are, in fact, countless levels of underground, all of them fueled by the shifting aesthetics of the new rave world's fickle internet microgenres—kawaii grunge, seapunk, soft ghetto, ghetto gothic, sad acid, lolita grunge, tropical, soft grunge, pagan grunge, pastel goth, nu witch, icepunk. This, Jubilee and Star Eyes lament, is possibly why the new generation of club kids seem less engaged: When parties cater to online life, they can end up being more about the image of having gone to a rave than about actually going to one. Club kids invite Facebook friends, come to take a few photos, stare at their phones and leave.

"What's cool about the internet club kids and the It girls on Tumblr is that they are almost like the graffiti on commercial billboards. They are commodifying themselves before they can be commodified," says Star Eyes. "The original club kids were doing that too, but now there are more tools. But that can be a prison where you become controlled by the 'likes' and comments, where you are defined by your own consumption."

Those "likes" don't come just from other members of the scene but from thousands of voyeurs who want a peek into the daily life

of modern club kids. "The internet opened the door for the rest of the world to have an appreciation for club kids," says Ladyfag, a promoter and nightlife personality who throws Shade in New York. "People who might not actually go clubbing can discover these amazing creatures and follow their art form on the web."

While the web gives club kids a platform to exist outside the party, it also blurs the line between the person and the persona. The Museum of Arts and Design in Manhattan hosted the FUN Conference to explore nightlife as social-practice art, a form of performance art that uses social engagement as a medium. "People talk about their art practices, but in nightlife you live your practice," explains Ladyfag, who spoke at the conference. "Nightlife is an art show, and everyone plays a part. The energy is full of living art pieces, though it's tossed aside as hedonism and highly undervalued." The museum even finances a yearly grant for "nightlife artists," providing unrestricted funds for projects to unfold, whether in a gallery or in the nightlife space. It's an official recognition of the club kid as a valid form of artistic practice.

In Los Angeles, Chanel Castaneda, sprightly model and club kid, is getting ready for a night out with the guys behind Fade to Mind, an electronic-music label whose warehouse parties loom large. In her apartment, she and fellow pastel-haired It girl Sina pose for photos. They decide that Itzel will not have the sluttiest photos in this story—not if Chanel can help it. After a series of outfit changes, she decides on a mini white skort, white Nike top and matching white Nike visor with long pink extensions tucked beneath, a sleek signature look she describes as "cyber-*cholita*-princess." If the club kid is indeed a valid form of art, then Chanel's medium of choice is Instagram, where she posts a steady stream of selfies to her 10,000 followers.

"I just want people to be real on Instagram and the internet, which is hard, because the internet is like this fantasy space," she says, white iPhone in hand. "Some people pretend to live this luxurious life, and when you go to their house, they live in a trailer. It can become so fabricated and manipulated. I mean, there is beauty in being real. There is beauty in barely surviving but making your outfit work."

With a background in art, modeling and musical theater, Chanel sees being a creative person as a lifestyle; when you're an artist, everything you do becomes art. "It's about how you view everything, and so everything you make is going to be art," she says. "I feel every selfie is art, in a way. There are two types of people: people who are artists and people who aren't."

In a cab on the way to the club, Chanel talks about her recent Instagram trauma: She lost her account when an ex-boyfriend hacked and deleted her page. "It felt like losing my diary," she says. "I mean, I used to just go and look at my page anytime I was bored and remember, like, Oh, that night was fun."

"So are you guys headed to a party tonight?" the driver asks from the front seat. No one looks up from the glow of their phones.

At the club, Chanel and her posse are ushered past a velvet rope and up a spiral staircase to an empty VIP section overlooking the dance floor. They perch on huge sofas, slightly bobbing to TeeFlii's "This D"—"She want this dick./She gon' get this dick./Yea, I give her this dick." The club is loud, but the conversation about Instagram continues. "I just feel if you take yourself too seriously, you end up looking like a fool," Chanel offers, her voice high-pitched over the music.

"There was this interesting article on Jezebel about how selfies are bad for women," Ms. Fitz, a party promoter and artist, says in a Brooklyn loft filled with women getting ready for a party. A collective groan rises from the group. "I know, but it made all these interesting points about feminism and how our body image and self-esteem are linked to selfies," she continues.

"But selfies get the most 'likes,'" says Angelina Dreem, an artist and musician.

"That's so true," says Molly Soda, a Tumblr It girl and internet artist who uses the selfie as her primary medium. There is double-chin Molly, pet-rat-kissing Molly, naked-on-the-toilet Molly. "No one 'likes' my other pictures," she laments.

Molly is a rising star in the digital art world. She was named one of *Complex* magazine's most important artists of 2013 after making blogosphere headlines for being one of the first to sell a digital piece at an art auction: a video of her reading her entire Tumblr in-box, a feat of endurance that took more than eight hours. She's enough of an art celebrity that when a stranger found a box of her discarded photographs in a Chicago Dumpster and presented them, without her consent, in a small gallery as found art, the internet identified the images almost immediately. (In a strange twist, the man curating the exhibition of "found, anonymous" images later copped to knowing they were Molly's.)

"You were flown here tonight for this, right?" asks Genevieve Belleveau, an internet performance artist.

Molly nods. She lives in Detroit and was, in fact, flown out to deejay tonight's party, her first set ever. "That's the attention currency," Genevieve says. "It's as if your real-life presence doesn't hold as much clout as your online one. The online 'likes' are almost an economic system."

The discussion moves to how the nightclub was once a space where artists had to go to meet, to the point that mega art stars became completely associated with clubs: Andy Warhol at Studio 54, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat at the Mudd Club, Ryan McGinley and Dash Snow at Max Fish. Someone asks how Molly and Genevieve met, and soon everyone realizes they met online even though they go to the same parties. "I feel like the internet is a club," Genevieve says. "It's...*da club*."

The women walk in a pack to the club.

"How are we going to monetize this is the biggest question," says Ms. Fitz, who is wearing an American flag swimsuit beneath her coat. "We do all this work online, but how do you take it into real life? Is real life where we meet the glass ceiling?"

"I've been struggling with that for so long. Everything I do is free," says Molly.

"There is this thing of our work on the internet being free labor, and especially free labor by females," says Genevieve, passing a bottle of vodka as she walks. "We're creating our own pornographic avatars for free."

The event is a birthday party for net artist Amanda Schmidt, who is known mostly for a project for which she wore only new, mall-purchased Abercrombie & Fitch clothing for an entire year. The space is a Latin nightclub in Bushwick, two pitch-black stories with spinning lasers, bass and artificial fog. The girls dance and drink vodka from the smuggled bottle as the conversation returns to the selfie debate.

"There is this idea that the artist and the art should remain separate," Genevieve says, "but the artist and the art have always been entwined. Think of Dalí."

"That's such a bro's view, that they should be separate," Ms. Fitz says. "I like to think that what we do is challenge the idea of female beauty and needing male

attention. There's always a subversive twist, like me wearing full makeup and drawn-on facial hair, or Molly being a cute girl with armpit hair."

Molly, who just uploaded a nude photo of herself with chicken nuggets covering her nipples, cackles.

"I've always been interested in the idea that individuals exist with the awareness of someone watching them," says Genevieve. "It's almost a religious idea, and the internet has now manifested it."

Tonight in Los Angeles, Fate Morgana, a self-proclaimed art hacker, is going to a party thrown by people who hate her. She received a Twitter direct-message screenshot of the invite (in Echo Park, RSVPs listed) as a warning. Entering the party alone, in false lashes and an oversize sports jersey, Fate waves to someone who has publicly denigrated her online. The girl looks back at Fate, horrified, before turning away. "Everyone hates everyone, and whenever anyone enters a party, they talk about how lame it is," Fate says with a sigh.

Fate jokes that she can intellectualize anything as performance art, and this is one manifestation: a manipulation of social practices and expectations that she considers "social hacking," defined as making

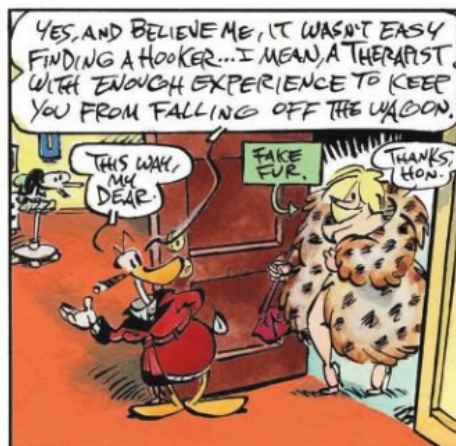
it a goal to gain admittance into a group or subculture by camouflaging yourself in that group's tropes. With the right appearance, anyone can be an artist or internet-famous club kid.

This is what prompted Fate to relocate to Los Angeles from Las Vegas. "I can do something with this. This is like clay to me," she says, waving a hand. "People here need help intellectualizing their hedonism." Years earlier, Fate made a name for herself in New York City as a teenage fashion blogger and muse to indie bands, under the pseudonym Bebe Zeva. She inspired the eccentric novelist Tao Lin to make a documentary about her, which in turn prompted *The New York Times* to publish a profile on Fate's overwhelming It-ness. Now she plans to wean herself from fashion associations and perform Fate Morgana full-time.

"We are artists without art," Fate says, laughing, and references net artist Brad Troemel's observation that we look at each other's Facebook pages more than we do each other's art. "We have killed the object; now there is only subject."

From a private balcony she gestures to the people on the dance floor, who watch themselves on camera. This is Boiler Room, an event with a live video component: Partygoers are projected onto a large screen

Dirty Duck by Bobby London



above the crowd and simultaneously on the internet, where global audiences watch.

"Everyone here is existing to be looked at, which is what art does," says Fate. The crowd on the dance floor, clad in Nike, Adidas and Under Armour, moves limply. This aesthetic, looking "alternative" while dressed in sportswear, may read as standard hipster irony—what's been termed normcore, or dressing like a normal—but in the balcony there's discussion about whether the look is a political reaction to an eroding middle class, maybe a response to Occupy Wall Street and the failures of that movement's DIY ethos. "Sportswear represents leisure time. I think there's something very aspirational about it," says Fate. Of course, the slick new aesthetic also brought new drugs. "Everyone is on meth," she says. "Well, people are." She takes a drag from a pink vaporizer pen, a stealth cannabis pipe she's named Tiffany. "I tried it a few weeks ago. I have no complaints."

When Fate met Itzel for the first time—in real life—they both screamed, then began grinding and twerking on the dance floor until Chanel slipped behind Itzel to hiss, "Don't dance with her!" All the internet It girls know one another, and everyone follows everyone, even if it's out of spite. "It's all about how other people see you," says Fate. "We're all trying to maintain how relevant we appear and not how relevant we really are."

Fate talks around the drama when Chanel is brought up, turning the discussion to the "art of existence." What elevates a personality to an art form? Is Chanel—whose Instagram page is a stream of selfies—also an artist? "Maybe girls like Chanel think they're inspiring young women by loving themselves, but I feel that kind of relentless self-love is narcissistic," says Fate. "It reminds me of Stockholm syndrome, how affectionate we are about being owned by Twitter and Facebook."

Fate ultimately decides not to go behind the camera at Boiler Room, rationalizing that this is probably because she is with a group of men, and straight men seem to have less need for that kind of instant affirmation. "In order to exist at that party," she says, "you have to go behind the camera, but when you're behind it, you can't see yourself. All you see is a camera, but you know you're being watched."

The effect is, in essence, a feedback loop: a rave full of people posting photos to the social media feeds of their club-kid personas while an audience at home watches a video feed or refreshes an Instagram feed of the event. Everyone is taking part, even if their participation means uploading content to the web for someone somewhere to consume, "like" and validate.

Fate calls me weeks later. "There was something interesting last night," she says. The night before, Fate, feeling a little down, left a warehouse party early and was struck to see a "prominent member" of the scene also leaving early. "I asked him why, and he was like, 'I'm already logged on to the internet. Why would I need to be here?'"



CHRONIC INSECURITY

Continued from page 60

problems," draws the large man in the blue overalls, tracing a hand up and down his forearm. "But there's hardly no work around here. We had the coal mines, but they closed 'em because they say it's dirty energy."

As the big man hands over each bag, Phil places it on a red bucket atop a scale to weigh it. A patina of professionalism coats the legal marijuana business. Old-school dispensary owners refer to marijuana as "medicine." Industry professionals use the term *cannabis*. The Blue Line Protection Group calls it "product." Phil scribbles a note on his clipboard after weighing the product and lays it flat in a black hockey bag on the floor. They quickly fill two bags and resort to using garbage bags for the remainder of the shipment, about 50 pounds—nearly \$500,000 worth—in all.

The profitable niche that Blue Line Protection Group and its competitors are exploiting is the result of a rift between federal and state drug laws that emerged in 1996, when California first voted to legalize marijuana for medical use. Other states soon followed California's lead, including Colorado in 2000.

Although 21 states and the District of Columbia have since legalized marijuana for medical use, the federal government still considers it illegal. In fact, the Controlled Substances Act classifies marijuana as a Schedule I drug, along with heroin, LSD and ecstasy.

That didn't stop Colorado and Washington from voting to legalize recreational marijuana use, with hopes of bringing a surge in business and tax revenue. In 2012 Colorado voters passed Amendment 64 with 55 percent of the vote, and as of January it is legal for Colorado residents over the age of 21 to purchase up to an ounce of marijuana (out-of-state buyers are limited to a quarter ounce) and grow up to six pot plants in their homes. Smoking is restricted to private residences, and motorists with more than five nanograms of THC in their system can be ticketed for impaired driving.

With state legislatures forging ahead, the Obama administration was pushed to act, and last summer it began issuing a series of memos and guidelines to address the situation. In August one memo from the Department of Justice announced it would not try to block the state laws as long as states establish regulatory systems in line with recommended marijuana-enforcement priorities. But the nebulous legal rift persists, particularly when it comes to money.

Under federal law, banks are barred from handling drug money. Because banks fear punishment for breaking federal regulations—most important, regarding money laundering—they have largely refused to provide services to marijuana businesses, even if those businesses are legal under state laws. Credit card processing services have been similarly reluctant, making it difficult for dispensaries to accept debit or credit cards, so the entire system operates mostly in cash: Dispensaries take cash from customers; owners use that cash to pay taxes and employees and to purchase product from growers, who in turn use cash to pay their expenses.

But carrying tens of thousands of dollars around for these purposes invites a high-level security risk. (As a *New York Times* editorial put it, "where there are piles of cash, there's armed robbery.") So in January, members of Colorado's congressional delegation sent a letter to the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Justice, requesting that they expedite federal guidance on the banking issue. The next month, those agencies responded with a memo that only added to the confusion.

The memo purports to "enhance the availability of financial services for... marijuana-related businesses." But the next line reminds financial institutions that marijuana is, in fact, illegal. The memo goes on to spell out a complicated prescription of due diligence measures that a bank would have to undertake to ensure that any business it wants to take on as a client is not violating the Department of Justice's recommended priorities for marijuana enforcement, including contributing to drugged driving, use by minors or on federal property, funding criminal enterprises, being used as a front or to divert marijuana to other states, mixing guns and weed, or growing on public lands.

Bankers were underwhelmed by the news. On the heels of the announcement, Don Childears, president of the Colorado Bankers Association, fired off a press release complaining that "after a series of red lights, we expected this guidance to be a yellow one. This isn't close to that. At best, this amounts to 'serve these customers at your own risk' and it emphasizes all of the risks. This light is red.... No bank can comply."

A tall, hulking figure, Blue Line Protection Group founder Ted Daniels carries himself with the air of a man accustomed to always being the largest in the room. He's seated behind his desk, wearing a blue T-shirt with a red pullover, on the third floor of the company's headquarters, the precise location of which he would prefer remained a secret. On the walls are framed diplomas and commendations documenting his career in the service of law and order, as well as certification for his training for a task force on clandestine drug labs in Baltimore; certification as a police instructor in the use of force, handcuff techniques, batons and risk management in undercover operations; and certification from Top Gun: Undercover Drug Investigation Training ("There's a three-year waiting list to get in there," he says). A Baltimore policeman's nightstick is mounted on the



wall—an instrument that his brother, a former officer of the year in Havre de Grace, Maryland, was notorious for using to clear drug dealers off street corners. (“There were guys on the corner who used to call him Stick Time,” he says. “Somebody would get in his personal space in a threatening manner—boom. He’d get dropped.”)

Daniels’s career as an antinarcotics supercop followed a football career cut short by a (future Super Bowl MVP) Ray Lewis blitz. Daniels was a starting guard at West Virginia when Lewis charged his left gap, taking Daniels’s arm with him. He heard a sound like bubble wrap twisting. It was an injury from which he never fully recovered.

He wanted to join the Marines, but his torn shoulder prevented him, so he went through the police academy instead. His police days are characterized by wild stories from the front lines of the drug war: staking out a suspected crack den from a van disguised as a plumber’s and sifting through the trash for coke straws, pipes or plastic bags to justify a warrant.

In 2011 Daniels pulled an unlikely career change, enlisting as an Army infantryman. He was on his way out of a marriage—his second—and had been suspended as deputy police chief of Minersville, Pennsylvania for 60 days after he and other officers clashed with the boss. He was eager for a change.

At 35 he was too old for the Marines. But he nailed the aptitude test, and an Army recruiter said he could have his pick of career paths—bomb tech, military police, intelligence, whatever he wanted.

Daniels wanted to be an infantry grunt. “He looked at me like I was crazy,” he recalls. But Daniels wanted to be able to stick his chest out. “The code for infantry in the army is 11B. A friend of mine told me there are two jobs in the Army: 11B and 11 wannabe.”

Deployed to Afghanistan, he was drawn into a firefight that turned him into a viral internet phenomenon. He opens his laptop to show me the helmet-cam video, which has been viewed more than 27 million times on YouTube and covered extensively by the media since he uploaded it in 2012. In the footage, Daniels exchanges fire with an unseen enemy, tumbles down a hillside and has his rifle shot out of his hand. He caught a round off his helmet, half a round in his thigh, half a round in his ass and other bits of shrapnel in his jaw, elbows, knees, forearms and shoulder. He shows me a pea-size lump beneath the skin of his knuckle and pulls down a sock to show me where a big piece recently emerged from his shin. He also broke his foot. Convalescing stateside in July 2012, he was rear-ended by a minivan in standstill traffic on the highway—the final straw in his military career.

A year later, on his way out of the military, he saw on the news that a marijuana dispensary had been robbed. It was a lightbulb moment. While some of his buddies wanted to team up and go after contracts to provide security at bars, Daniels knew he wanted to work with marijuana. “I told people when you think of marijuana security, I want it to be right on the tip of their tongue, Blue Line Protection Group. That’s what I want.” Friends told him the fledgling industry would never

pan out. Others thought the national market was too big to capture, his plans too grandiose.

He went at it full time, printing up flyers in his Manitou Springs apartment and going door-to-door to pitch his services. He quickly landed so many contracts that he found himself working 100-hour weeks and struggling to catch up. In January he joined forces with Dan Sullivan, a sometime cop turned real estate broker who had started a competing company.

“We’re still putting drug dealers out of business,” he says. “We’re just doing it in a different way now. We’re here to support and help the legal industry. And every dispensary that opens puts at least 10 street dealers out of business.”

It is cop’s logic artfully framed in the service of public order. And Daniels, who gets

about 30 résumés a day and recently had to turn away a “full-bird colonel” from the Marine Corps, has found a wealth of experienced applicants eager to embrace it. Before long we’re joined by one of them, Donald, who sits across the table from Daniels, wearing a suit and tie and displaying a slightly obsequious smile.

Asked what he knows about the company, Donald says BLPG is probably the premier security group in marijuana—a niche made all the more essential by the failure of the federal government to reassure bankers they won’t be prosecuted for doing business with what’s still, federally, a criminal industry. “So RICO laws,” he continues, referring to the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, “are scaring the pants off of anybody in the banking industry.”



“Of course those clouds remind you of oral sex. Everything reminds you of oral sex.”

Daniels tells his prospective hire that BLPG is working on that, trying to create a compliance division that would verify whether dispensaries are operating in accordance with the conditions spelled out in the federal memos, an ambitious plan to become the indispensable agent for banking marijuana. They're working with lawyers to patent their compliance measures now. They've brought in outside investors. They have "boots on the ground" in various states. One of their partners is in California, purchasing armored trucks. He's had requests to come to Spain and Canada as an advisor. "We just started up in September, and we have a higher growth rate than Apple Computer did when it started," Daniels says. "Look at my desk. It has been crazy."

Donald explains he spent 20 years as a Green Beret. He also worked for eight years as an "industrial contractor," he says cryptically, nodding in my direction. "We can talk a little bit more on that one-on-one if you don't mind. You quite probably, I would think, ran across our organization when you were over in Afghanistan. The pictures I saw of you were at some of our current active bases over there."

Daniels nods, impressed.

Donald sees alarming similarities between BLPG and one of the companies his organization contracted with while he was interim country manager in Iraq: Explosive growth can attract the type of personnel who may ruin a company's reputation. (Here I'm reminded of the CIA-linked security firm formerly known as Blackwater, whose personnel were involved in, among other incidents, a 2007 shooting spree at a Baghdad intersection that killed 14 Iraqi civilians; and DynCorp International, involved for years in training Afghanistan's notoriously corrupt police force,

whose personal security detail to Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai made waves for drinking and whoring.) "I saw some real buffoonery, especially in Iraq," Donald says. "Let's face it, there are people out there, probably like in the illegal elements of the drug world, who want to see this experiment fail."

"Exactly," Daniels responds. "A lot of people out there want to see it fail."

"So that means these people are looking for an opportunity to do something that is going to make—let's just say at some point in time you're probably going to make headlines. And it won't be for a magazine article," he says. "I watched a company that had more potential than anything I've ever seen in my life—and probably ever will again—flush itself down the toilet through arrogance, bad management and bad decisions." Hence the importance of hiring the right people for the job up front. He's practically reciting Daniels's own sales pitch. And Daniels is loving it.

"How do you think you would fit in a counterintelligence position?"

"That's something I have a very strong background in," Donald replies. "Surveillance, countersurveillance, intelligence, counterintelligence—that's something we did a lot of."

Then Daniels has another idea and asks if Donald would be interested in sales (prospective clients are always impressed with Special Forces types). Donald, who is currently a regional manager for a chain of high-end dealerships out of state, is very happy he asked. "It is clearly one of my strong suits," he says. "Obviously working in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq, I am a road warrior. Getting on a plane doesn't bother me in the least."

"We're talking about Nevada, Washington, California, Utah, Oregon," says Daniels. "Even New York is going to be coming

online soon. So is Florida, and I want to get established and get a foothold in every single state that is at least medicinal right now." BLPG has been working with investors from New York who have advised him "to take it by storm," he explains. "They said you've got to invade a state like Normandy Beach. Go in there and take it."

An hour later, seated in the front passenger seat of his Porsche Cayenne en route to a dispensary, Daniels gushes about his new hire to the driver, Mikey, a 21-year-old who went knocking on doors with Daniels when he launched the business. "That guy from today, he's definitely coming on," Daniels tells him. After Donald's decade with the Special Forces, he worked for "a large three-letter government agency," Daniels explains. "Let's put it this way: He pulled out three passports with three different identities."

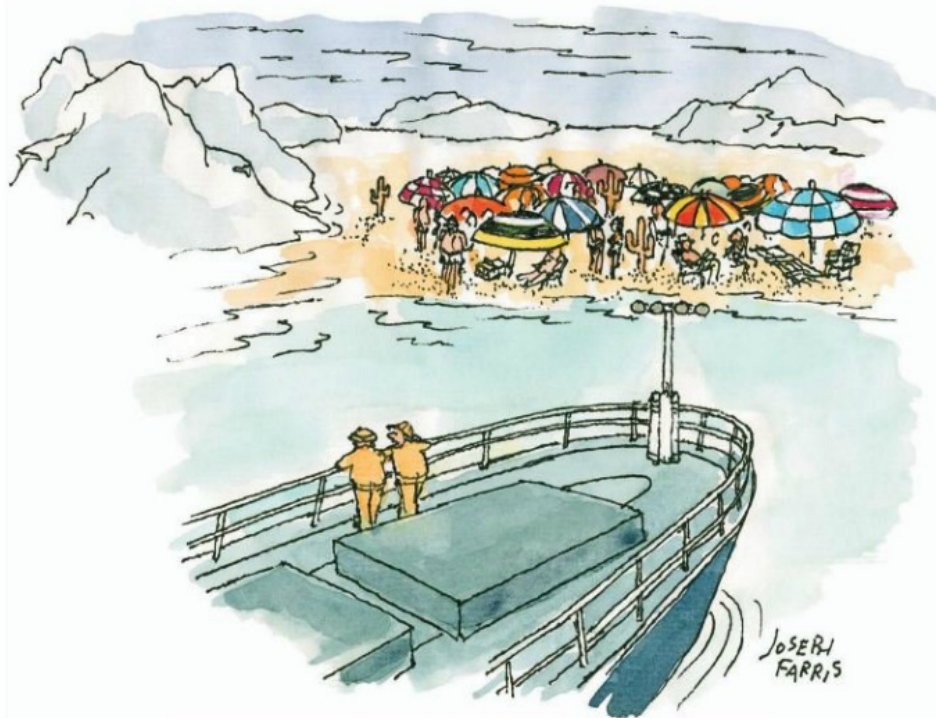
The "green rush" in legal marijuana has also created a new ecology of competition, attracting a cast of what seem to be relatively clean-cut, rule-abiding, taxpaying professionals who stand to rake in millions...as long as the sneaky Scumbag Steves of the industry don't screw it up for everyone else.

One of the most successful of this new generation of marijuana professionals is Andy Williams, owner of Medicine Man, a Denver dispensary. Williams has brown hair, glassy eyes and a baked expression when he meets me one Sunday morning for a tour of his massive on-site grow operation and retail dispensary. With him is Elan Nelson, an attractive redhead in charge of Medicine Man's business strategy and development. She opens the door to "the Green Mile," an industrial garden containing a sea of neon-green potted plants that contains about 70 different marijuana strains. She explains that each plant is tagged with a chip—blue for recreational, yellow for medical (same product, different tax rates)—that allows state inspectors to automatically register how many are in the room.

A former Army scout, Williams bounced between corporate jobs as an industrial engineer until 2009, when he and his brother Pete, a stoner horticulturist who ran a successful tile-flooring business while making six figures legally growing medical marijuana on the side, decided "to go big" and convinced their mom to loan them \$150,000. Now they have secured \$1.3 million in angel investments and are doubling the size of their 20,000-square-foot grow operation into a shiny new wing designed to resemble an Apple store.

Medicine Man is expanding into Illinois and probably Nevada and New York after that. Williams has given tours to Coors, he says, and has more than a dozen of the biggest beer brewers coming for a tour in a few weeks. "That will be interesting, because these are the guys who, when it comes time, will be buying up companies like mine."

But success has its downsides. Having so much cash around makes Williams nervous for his family and employees. Earlier, Dan Williams (no relation), owner of Canna Security America, a security firm that aims to become the Pinkerton agency of the



"Looks like the ice caps really are melting."



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marijuana business, showed me a series of security-camera clips of break-ins at several clients' dispensaries, mostly inside jobs in the middle of the night. But does the pot industry's banking issue translate into a physical threat for anyone?

When I ask Andy Williams about this, he spells out the scenario he fears most: Somebody thinks he has a trove of cash, follows him home, tragedy ensues. "Like that guy in California who got his penis cut off," he says.

Wait, what?

"One of his employees believed he had a stash of cash buried out in the desert or whatever. He got a couple of henchmen, and they took him, tortured him with a blowtorch and other things and then cut off his penis, only to find out he didn't have any buried cash." (According to press accounts, the victim survived, but his attackers took his severed penis with them so it could not be reattached.) Was it related to heroin trafficking? Cocaine? The cartels?

"Marijuana," says Williams.

Opinions diverge on whether banks could be doing more to take on marijuana clients at this point. Aaron Smith of the National Cannabis Industry Association says he sees the federal memos as "a road map to banking marijuana." And though he can understand why some might see a yellow light, he feels CBA president Don Childears's claim that they are a red light is "absurd." (Childears declined my requests for an interview.)

But Smith's assessment seems uniquely optimistic. A source working on the issue at a big out-of-state bank tells me the memo does not go anywhere near as far as it would have to go to convince bankers (risk-averse bean counters by nature). Multiple federal agencies are already involved in regulating banks, and banks are "so used to being reamed by the government" that a memo from any one agency would not provide much reassurance. The amount of liability the memo puts on banks for due diligence of marijuana customers is "almost laughable," he says.

Most people I spoke to in Colorado say they can see why the banks would consider them too much of a risk. Michael Elliott, executive director of the Marijuana Industry Group, is one of them. He represents 24 owners with a total of about 200 licenses for retail and growing. "The problem here is the banks now have more of a burden to affirmatively report this, to admit they're breaking the law," he says. "Our number one biggest outstanding issue is banking. We've tried to fix banking here, but we're really seeing that the solution is a federal solution." Elliott wants to see action from Congress or, failing that, from President Barack Obama. But on the legislative front, there has been little traction on a bill introduced in the House last July by Colorado's Ed Perlmutter and Washington's Denny Heck (both Democrats) that would allow banks to do business with marijuana firms in states where it's legal.

For the legalization movement, the battle is largely over perception. "Cash-dominant industries are not known for paying all their taxes," says Elliott. Marijuana activists worry about the industry becoming associated with

narratives of violence, tax evasion or money laundering—the very enforcement priorities the Department of Justice is focused on.

A few years ago, Elliott says, things were easier. Marijuana businesses routinely used big national security companies such as ADT, contracted merchant-services companies to process credit card transactions and hired armored transport companies such as Brink's, Dunbar and Loomis. Then, nearly simultaneously in several states, those companies began to drop their marijuana clients. "There was no formal position put out there, but all the whispering and people talking off the record to employees of these companies basically said the same thing—that they got calls and threats from the DEA," he says. "When you put it all together it looks like they want a cash-only industry that can't protect itself. That's part of their game plan—to make our businesses unsafe, to basically terrorize us and create public safety issues that they then try to blame on us. But if someone gets killed here, which is going to happen, the people to point the finger at are the federal government, which is ignoring this problem."

"This is the last free market for legal marijuana that will ever occur. Come one, come all."

ADT, Brink's, Dunbar and Loomis declined to comment or referred me to the DEA. A DEA spokesman, Lawrence Payne, told me the agency never "ordered" companies not to deal with the marijuana industry. He referred me to a statement that the DEA had issued, stating the agency "conducted voluntary meetings with concerned businesses" on the matter. When I asked if the agency had reached out proactively, sending letters or making calls to any businesses that had not sought their advice, Payne said he'd look into it and get back to me, but he never did.

In the meantime, Elliott says, there is some hope that banks might open up of their own accord. "If a bank does open up, something tells me you're not going to know about it," he says. "I think some banks have been open to doing business with us; they just haven't wanted to talk about it. As soon as somebody finds out about it, it's done. As soon as you say it out loud, it's no longer true."

Near the corner of Broadway and Asbury sits Walking Raven, a quaint turquoise storefront that resembles a music store. The sun

has just set behind the Rockies, casting a thin band of gold against the purpling sky. Inside, co-owner Luke Ramirez stands behind the counter, riffling through a three-inch-thick stack of \$100 bills. He wears sunglasses pushed back into his short black hair. The walls are decorated with posters of local bands, a Native American motif and the testing results of his signature Hong Kong Diesel (maximum cannabinoids: a whopping 31.38 percent). Ramirez tells me his customers come for the product, not the aesthetic. "We're the best mom-and-pop shop in the state," he says. "We keep it true to the people."

He counts his money quickly, his fingers a fluttering blur—a sign he has handled his share of cash. Ramirez sorts the smaller bills into two stacks totaling \$3,000 and \$5,000—part of an elaborate nightly ritual to help him skirt reporting requirements for two branches where he has managed to secure an account as an "alternative retail store," even though his banker knows it's a marijuana business. The remaining \$8,690 from his safe goes into three stacks of no more than 40 bills, all of which he plans to feed into an ATM where he has deposited more than \$1.3 million in 40-bill increments so far. After he's done, he checks to make sure the bills all face the same direction, which shows "you don't really mess around with your money"—an important trick he learned as a black-market drug dealer—before counting through the whole sum once again. Directly above the counter are the watchful eyes of the authorities—an overhead camera that feeds to the Marijuana Enforcement Division.

Ramirez strikes me as friendly and honest to the point of self-incrimination. I like him immediately. He was 21 when he started this shop in 2009, and he thought it was cool to be surrounded by cash. "It's not! It's scary and it's dangerous," he says. "I've known people who would shoot you for \$5,000, let alone \$30,000." One of his friends just laid out \$250,000 in cash to his supplier the other day. The same guy was recently robbed by "professionals" who blasted the hinges off his safe with an explosive charge, he says.

Walking Raven had a theft the other night when someone broke into the safe and stole nearly four pounds of weed. "It could have been a lot worse, of course," he says. He goes through the stacks again, taking out the crinkled bills and flattening them on the counter.

"We have to be so careful because we of course want to avoid money-laundering charges." He chuckles nervously. "When you flat-out lie to a bank to conceal funds made from selling a controlled substance on the Schedule I drug, that's a serious crime. I mean, by the letter of the law, you can be staring down the barrel of 20, 25 years for that. We know we're breaking the law. It's just that we're trying to do it in such an honest way that if shit hits the fan, we'd have some sort of defense."

The state's legal codes and marijuana-tracking system are decent, he says, and much better than the anarchy that existed here in years past or today in California—"the Wild Wild West," he says. But the system still has holes. For instance, even though the state requires each plant to be tagged in order to track it from seed to sale, there is a

loophole: Some of the product is lost when the plant dries, shedding water weight—a percentage that varies. “I could just say, ‘I lost half a pound. Sorry, I suck! My growers suck! I’m terrible! You know...oops!’”

Ramirez suspects that people are using this loophole to sell out of the back door to dealers who move the product out of state. “That was one of the ugly things in the medical market that people didn’t want to talk about. But we did cater to people who resold our product and made a living off it. If we didn’t cater to them, we would have to go out of business.” He was glad to see a lot of those people priced out of the market by the higher cost of recreational marijuana (though one of his clients, a black-market dealer, threatened Ramirez’s life when his prices doubled). It works the other way too, with dispensary owners buying their supply from the cheaper black market even though it means losing their license if they’re caught.

Ramirez puts one of the stacks of cash in each of two clear plastic bank deposit bags and writes his banking info on them. Then he folds them meticulously, places them in a locked black briefcase and stuffs the thick wads of remaining cash into his pockets. “Okay, this is probably the most dangerous part of the entire thing,” he says, closing up shop. “If anyone were to follow me and hit me, it would be now as I am leaving the store.” He leans over a desktop computer screen by the door, carefully scrutinizing the honeycomb of exterior security-camera angles before heading to his car.

As soon as he slides behind the wheel, he locks the car doors. Along a two-block stretch of Broadway, we pass about a dozen (mostly medicinal) marijuana dispensaries with names

like Little Green Pharmacy, Evergreen Apothecary and Ganja Gourmet. (“Back before the regulations you could go into Ganja Gourmet and get a piece of medicated pizza and eat it there,” he says. “That was their business model.”) Today, regulations prohibit opening a dispensary within 1,000 feet of another. But these were grandfathered in. Locals call the neighborhood “Broadsterdam.” (I also heard the owner of a dispensary situated elsewhere refer to it as “Retard Row.”)

As Ramirez turns the car toward the upscale neighborhood where his banks are, he tells me that the first time he smoked pot, something clicked. His friend had a connection, and they went in on an ounce together to sell. It was a rough learning curve. “I’ve always said I was a really good drug dealer”—a people person—“but a really bad criminal. I’m good doing business with people most other people are scared to do business with. But I’m not good at thinking about who is going to maybe do something mean to me or lie to me.” Like that one time during the dry season—midsummer, before the California outdoor is harvested and there is a severe shortage in the market—when he desperately called everyone he knew for two pounds of weed, essentially begging to be set up and robbed...which then happened.

Still, he was undeterred. He knew marijuana would be legal one day. He knew it, no matter what his parents or anyone else tried to tell him. Not that he didn’t lose faith. By 2007 Ramirez was burned out on living as a criminal. At his peak he was making \$2,000 to \$3,000 a day, but he grew tired of carrying a gun and feeling his heart race every time he saw a cop in his rearview. He stopped selling marijuana and started selling insurance.

Then, in 2009, with \$6,000, he launched what he believes was Denver’s first dispensary with a license to sell medicinal marijuana. The barriers to entry were low, and the market was soon flooded. In 2011 the market bottomed out, with a pound of marijuana selling for \$2,200 wholesale, \$3,200 retail. There were months when he did only about \$8,000 in total sales.

But when Amendment 64 passed, Ramirez was granted a limited monopoly. “I have one of the 80 licenses to sell marijuana,” he says. “I mean, it’s macroeconomics. The demand is off the charts. The supply is just trying to get there.” Today a pound retails for \$8,500, and Ramirez clears about \$10,000 a day. (He, like others, is quick to point out that with \$50,000 a month to maintain his grow operations, almost \$50,000 a month in taxes, plus rent, the public perception does not equal the reality.) But today, in contrast to the lean early days, his business is “killing it.”

As things stand, recreational-marijuana dispensaries are required to be vertically integrated—that is, to grow what they sell. That will end in October, and Ramirez expects to see the entry of wholesale dealers who will eventually bring the market equilibrium down to a lower price again—a two-year consolidation that will leave only those with the best quality, best branding and most efficient process standing.

He also expects legalization to spread. Activists normally push legalization measures during presidential elections, when a higher percentage of young people and minorities turn out to vote. But Alaska will be voting on it this November—an off election year and not even the right month, and they are going to crush it.” He expects Florida to follow in November and, hopefully by 2016, California. He expects to see recreational marijuana legal in more than a dozen states and possibly legal at a federal level in a decade.

Still, Ramirez sees what’s happening in Colorado as unique—before all the guys with deep pockets and serious political connections corner the market on licenses. “This is the last free market for legal marijuana that will ever occur,” he says. “Come one, come all. If you have the courage to do it, do it. If you have the best product to sell for cheaper than your neighbor, it’s capitalism. Let’s go.”

He turns the car into an empty parking lot and drifts to a stop. The banker who helped Ramirez land his account here gave him two rules: Never step foot inside the bank and never deposit more than \$5,000 at a time. That’s why he’s here at night, under cover of darkness, and about to drive to another branch to make another deposit. The lot is empty, but Ramirez locks the doors behind us anyway. I watch him cross the secure perimeter of white light illuminating the pavement. He’s already relaxing, eager to pass the money—a burden he carries at physical risk—to the bank, which, with plausible deniability, assumes a legal risk. It takes only a second. He pulls out the clear plastic bag of cash, feeds it into the chute and watches it disappear. Then he hurries toward the car without looking back.



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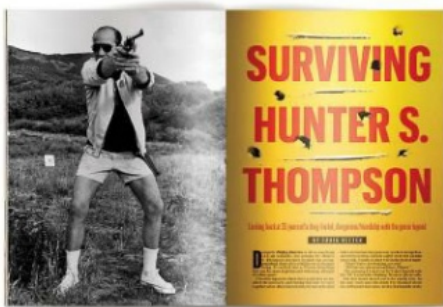
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SURVIVING HUNTER S. THOMPSON

Continued from page 94

Mexico City, where the first disaster was the humidity turning Hunter's cocaine into a lumpy paste that had to be blown back to powder with a hair dryer. The next morning, on the flight to Cozumel, he produced about a hundred hits of LSD called Mr. Natural, a sheet of blotter acid stamped with drawings of the R. Crumb character and perforated so a single man could be easily separated into four small squares.

He leaned over from the seat next to me. "You want a quarter of a man?" he said. "I usually start with half a man, which just speeds you up. Takes a man and a half to get psychedelic."

Here we go, I thought. I'd used marijuana and cocaine and was a heavy drinker. I'd taken acid several times, always in hallucinogenic doses, and had never had a bad time with it. I was hesitant to start what was going to be a hardworking trip by eating a variety I'd never seen, but refusing to share Hunter's satchel pharmacy wasn't going to work either. I took a quarter, which finally hit me something like two espressos.

On the island we rented two open-top Volkswagens that looked like small Nazi staff cars, then checked into El Presidente, a state-owned beachfront hotel just south of the town center.

After dinner on the terrace, we drank beer and margaritas and snorted cocaine till I staggered away in the early morning after getting an agreement that we would meet for lunch and begin the long conversation I had outlined for us.

A little after noon the next day Hunter ordered breakfast at the round glass table beside the pool: huevos rancheros, hash browns, tortillas, a whole grapefruit, two bloody marys and two Dos Equis, which he reordered when he'd finished the eggs.

I put the tape recorder on the table.

"Not yet," he said. "I have to wake up."

Fair enough, I thought as I watched him dig into the coke bottle and load his nose, then put a Dunhill into his TarGard cigarette holder and light it.

Given the long alcohol-and-drug soak of the night before, a small delay seemed to make sense. But that was because I didn't yet know I was being drawn into the first step of a hateful tango he would play out on every one of the half dozen projects we would eventually work on together: No matter what, he wouldn't start any project for any reason until he was slammed against a hard wall. This was not going to be a small delay.

"And we must get some black coral," he added after that first lunch.

We'd been gathered up at the airport by an enthusiastic local with a Mayan face named Carlos, who introduced himself as our anything-you-want guy. He rode with us to a line of open-air stalls, where he found a group of young black-coral divers. Black-coral divers don't generally get to be old, because the beautiful ebony branches they hunt grow only at perilous depths of around 200 feet. Through Carlos, the divers told us stories of dead and crippled friends who had stayed too long harvesting the trees, which can be plucked as easily as garden weeds if you sneak up on them, but if they sense your presence, they tense and have to be laboriously taken with a hacksaw. Which turned out to be a bit like getting Hunter to answer questions.

The island is famous for jewelry and knickknacks carved from the coral pieces. Hunter had bought a bunch on his last trip and now ordered more: coke spoons, skulls, roach holders and the double-thumbed fist that was his personal icon.

Before we left Carlos, Hunter asked him to set up a scuba dive for the next afternoon. I protested that we needed to start recording.

"Jesus," he said. "Relax, we've got two weeks. I wrote the second half of the Hells Angels book in four days."

Which was true. When I left Aspen he gave me the heavy old IBM Selectric he'd used to write the book. Taped across the front of the machine were the words *It's later than you think*.

The next afternoon, we were checked out on scuba gear at a dive shop not far from our hotel, then took a small boat a mile offshore to clear water where the fish gathered and flashed as if they were being paid. Half an hour into the dive I was about 30 feet down when Hunter went thrashing past me on a panicked swim to the surface. When I reached him on top he had torn his mask off and was screaming, "You trying to kill me? You bastards—I ran out of air, goddamn it."

I tried to calm him. It didn't work, and by the time we were back on the boat the young crewmen were literally cowering. One of them pointed to the small switch at the top of the tank. "*La reserva*," he said.

"You had 15 minutes of reserve air if you'd hit the switch behind your head," I told him.

"Bullshit," he yelled. "The motherfuckers tried to drown me."

Hunter took the rest of the afternoon and early evening to recover from the attempted murder with margaritas, beer, cocaine and Mr. Natural. That night Carlos took us to a garishly lit outdoor beachside disco that was packed shoulder to shoulder with a hundred or so young tourists and locals dancing to "I Shot the Sheriff" and "Get Up, Stand Up."

Carlos had told his friend the owner that we were holding acid, and not long after we arrived he asked if Hunter would sell him some.

"I've never sold drugs in my life," Hunter said, which was absolutely true as long as I knew him. "I'll give you some," he told the owner. He took out the blotter

sheet of Mr. Natural and passed the owner one man, four hits.

Things were heating up when Carlos took both of us by the arm to tell us that someone had called the cops, saying that LSD was being sold at the disco.

Without saying a word, Hunter and I walked quickly to our cars. "Follow me," he said, and we took off at reckless speed down the coastal highway. He threw a dirt plume behind a sliding left turn onto an empty two-lane road that we followed through a pitch-black landscape until we reached the wild east coast of the island, where he skidded to a sideways stop on the edge of a small cliff.

No matter where he was Hunter drove like an angry moonshiner. "I'm more proud of my driving than I am of my writing," he told me once.

We sat for a while under a vivid starscape while I waited for police headlights to come screaming out of the dark. When they didn't, I tried to talk Hunter down toward the business we'd signed up for.

I told him that we had to get a grip, that it would be difficult to make our tape recordings in the murderous chaos of a Mexican jail. We can still have our fun, I told him. All we have to do is two good hours a day. But we have to start tomorrow. He agreed. I didn't believe him.

Of all the nights of booze and coke and weed we spent together over the years, I rarely saw Hunter show any but the smallest signs of drunkenness. He seemed to have the capacity of a fighting bull. There were exceptions, however. Around the third day of any sleepless binge, he became angry and erratic, and you wanted to be out of there. Especially if he began to play with one of his many guns, which he often did.

That night I let him go his own way. I drove back to the hotel and slept.

Early the next morning I was awakened by a heavy knock on the glass door that faced the beach. It was Hunter with a big smile on his face, looking like a hobo with his clothes in a bundle hanging from a driftwood stick. He was completely naked.

Overnight he'd gotten his jeep stuck in the sand four miles from the hotel and needed my car to pull it out. He'd been swimming, he said, didn't have a bathing suit and decided to walk back nude. Said he'd met a few folks, made some friends.

We yanked his car out of the deep sand with the help of an old fisherman. Hunter had been up all night and said he needed sleep.

"Tomorrow," he said. "For sure."

The next morning the first thing I heard was Hunter's voice from the room next door, yelling, "*Aieeeee dentalis*."

He had a toothache. Carlos found him a dentist, and he returned full of Novocain and painkillers. We couldn't possibly start that day, he said.

I spent the afternoon fighting despair. He joined me for dinner at a patio table. He was in good spirits. I wasn't. We finished eating. He took out the coke, and when I didn't take any, he asked what was wrong. I called him an asshole, told him I was throwing it in, going back to Chicago while the damage was still small enough that my reputation wouldn't be completely trashed.

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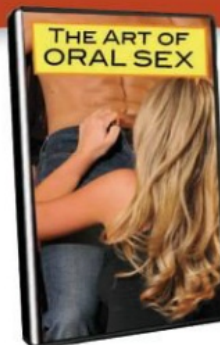
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"I told you we'd start tomorrow," he said. "I don't believe you," I told him. "But if you mean it, we'll have to meet right here at eight o'clock, because I have a reservation on the morning flight tomorrow."

We stayed up drinking and snorting cocaine late enough that I fully expected to be on the morning plane.

My phone rang at seven A.M. It was Hunter calling from the hotel restaurant. "Get up," he said. "Let's go to work."

When I recently listened to the old tapes, they took me back to the seawall where we sat when we began recording. It took about five minutes for my ear to tune back in to the broken lilt of his mumble. Words shot out of his mouth so fast that even if you were used to the runaway rhythm he was often nearly unintelligible.

Appropriately enough, the first sound on the tape was a long, powerful snort of cocaine. It was a sound that would punctuate pretty much all six hours of our recordings.

Shortly after we started I asked him why you damn near had to hold his head underwater to get him to start work.

"I can't work till the pressure is on," he said. "I think I'm addicted to my own adrenaline, and I can't function until something happens to call it up. Production people hate me, but I can't work until the pressure gets really intense."

Of the many times I went with him into the pressure bubble he needed to write, I particularly remember Chicago in January 1986. He'd come to town to cover the Super Bowl for a regular column he had in *The San Francisco Examiner*. The Bears were playing the New England Patriots in New Orleans, and he wanted to be in

Chicago for the aftermath, win or lose. He loved football—no particular team—because of the betting action it offered. He spent many football Sundays in Aspen with a small group at Jack Nicholson's house, where the wagering was furious.

He had a fearful connection with Chicago that reached back to 1968, when a cop had worked him over with a billy club. The police beating stuck with him. While we were in town, there was a moment when we crossed Michigan Avenue and a traffic cop shouted for us to hurry up. Hunter made an instinctive skip step and jumped to the curb. It was a quick fear I'd never seen in him before.

His deadline for the Super Bowl column, about 700 words, was Thursday at five P.M. Pacific time. I showed up in his hotel room Friday afternoon to find him entertaining friends, wearing out room service, worrying out loud about losing the column if he didn't get his piece in that night.

By eight o'clock it was just the two of us kicking around ideas for his lede. Hunter liked to work with sidemen when he wrote. At times it felt as though I were playing guitar for Mick Jagger.

Hunter was a very precise writer when he got down to it. He loved words, especially violent words.

"You string 12 words together and crack somebody like hitting them with a chain," he said.

Desmond Tutu was in Chicago that January day, and Hunter had seen him on the street. He decided to go with a lede that suggested the famous South African bishop had told him to bet on the Bears. Three hours into the writing, the coke was overtaken by the booze, and he took a black beauty, a powerful amphetamine capsule, out of a stash he'd been saving for years.

He was handing me pages to read as he finished them. About four in the morning I looked over, and he was sitting straight up, hands on the typewriter keys, dead asleep. I tiptoed out of the room as the sun came up.

Some years later, as I sweated and yelled to get him going on a shared project, I told him I didn't think his adrenaline-addiction theory was the whole story. "I think you're just afraid to be bad," I said.

"Aren't you?" he said.

He finished his Super Bowl column and sent it off around noon on Saturday. It wasn't bad.

With island parrots screeching in the background, we talked on tape through a grand sweep of his life and career, including the birth of gonzo, his savage beating at the hands of the Hells Angels, his run for sheriff of Pitkin County, his time in Washington, D.C. covering the 1972 presidential campaign and the limousine ride he took with Richard Nixon.

When I asked him about his prodigious drug use, he rattled off a knee-buckling menu.

"Almost any day, if I'm around anything you don't have to shoot, I'll take it. Or any combination unless I'm working. There have been days when I used hash, speed, coke, mushrooms, acid, mescaline, booze, crack, Wild Turkey, wine, beer, coffee, cigarettes for four days in a row."

The next time I heard something like the same list from him he was jumping up and down like Rumpelstiltskin, yelling ugly things at me.

It was a year later, and I was living in Aspen. Hunter was on assignment for *Rolling Stone* in Vietnam to cover the last days of U.S. occupation. He'd had a bad time of it in the war zone. He fled to Bali, without filing a story, before the final evacuation of Saigon.

When Sandy found out he was tucked into a beachside hut and wanted to stay awhile, she decided to join him. She asked me and my girlfriend Liz to stay at Owl Farm, where they lived with their 10-year-old son, Juan, a Doberman named Lazlo, a pen full of peacocks and a mynah bird.

Juan loved to fool with electrical things, and one night while I was away he rigged the bedroom light switch to play a tape-recorded wolf howl that would scare Liz when she got into bed to read. The wolf howled, and power to the entire house went down. Juan, who went on to become a professional IT wizard, found the circuit breaker and got the power back.

About a week later we began to smell something like a rotting corpse. I tracked it to a huge basement freezer that hadn't come back on when the power was restored. When I opened it, the smell almost knocked me down. There, floating in blood, was a survivalist's stock of beef roasts, turkeys, hams, frozen juice and 30 or 40 tightly wrapped aluminum-foil packages. I got a mask and a shop vacuum and over several hours filled three garbage cans with the thawed and dripping mess.

I was angry when Hunter and Sandy finally returned. They arrived seven days later than expected, delaying my trip to San Francisco on assignment.



DON
OREHEK

"We're still looking for our balls!"

Nevertheless, the homecoming was warm until I mentioned I'd been forced to trash the bloody contents of the basement freezer. Hunter went apoplectic.

"What? You did what?" he shouted.

"We lost power and the freezer didn't come back on," I said. "Everything thawed into a tub of blood."

He began to dance as if somebody were shooting at his feet. "Mother of the sweating Jesus, you have no idea what you've done."

"I dumped a monstrous supply of meat and juices. Took me half a day."

"What about the tin-foil packages?"

"Gone," I said.

"Fucking God, man. You just threw out the last organic mescaline on earth, a hundred black beauties and golden pyramid acid, which you can't get anymore, along with an ounce of cocaine, a pound of mushrooms and 50 hits of MDA. You might as well have burned the Smithsonian."

He looked as if he might cry. I was laughing. So was Sandy.

Over seven days in Cozumel we recorded for about six and a half hours. I left Hunter behind on the island and flew to Chicago, where transcribers began to work on the tapes. I turned in the expenses, which were met with only quibbles. I spent a week at the hard work of culling the tapes for the interview. We closed it in July, and it was scheduled to run in the November issue.

That August the two of us were in Washington on separate assignments for *Rolling Stone*: Hunter was covering Nixon's last days in the Watergate bunker, and I was chasing a Jesuit priest named John McLaughlin, a White House speechwriter who had become famous defending Nixon's dirty mouth on the Oval Office tapes and who later shed his robes and presided for several years over a mean-spirited television show called *The McLaughlin Group*. The White House was stonewalling the press, and though I'd chased the priest relentlessly and interviewed half the people in D.C. who knew him, it became clear he wasn't going to talk to me.

We were staying at the Hilton. Somewhere around 11 o'clock on the night of August 7, Hunter came by my room in a bathing suit and said, "Let's go swimming."

"The pool closes at 10 o'clock," I told him.

"How do you close a hole in the ground with water in it?" he asked.

He loved to swim. It was as close to a Zen exercise as he got: a slow, quiet, elementary backstroke that made him look like a long, pale salamander that liked to stare at the stars.

I sat poolside as he did his laps. After about 15 minutes, a Latino pool man set his equipment on the coping and shouted that the pool was closed. Hunter ignored him. The pool man told him again that he had to leave. Hunter kept swimming.

I watched in horror as the pool man picked up a canister of powdered chlorine, walked to the deep end and dumped it in as Hunter approached. It was an evil thing to do. Concentrated chlorine can be lethal. I yelled as Hunter swam into the intense white cloud and came up screaming.

He was choking as I pulled him out, and he was blind. I looked for a hose to wash his eyes, but the pool man had run with it.

He was in searing pain as I led him by the hand to his room, then shoved him in the shower and turned it on. He ran water in his bloodred eyes for half an hour. I asked him if he wanted a doctor. He said no and collapsed onto his bed.

"That's how you close a hole in the ground with water in it," I told him before I left.

Around noon the next day there was a surprise announcement that Richard Nixon was going on TV to resign that evening. I ran to Hunter's room and pounded on the door, yelling, "They got him; he's finished." When he finally made it to the door, his eyes were still the color of ripe tomatoes and he was having trouble seeing.

"We have to go to the Watergate," he said. "I was there during the break-in." He gathered the small battery-powered TV he took to his table by the pool every day, and we caught a cab to the infamous apartment complex, where we set up at a cocktail table in a nearly empty ground-floor bar.

We waited. This was going to be a very big

*Hunter "didn't
always have his
facts right, but
he got the truth
better than
anyone."*

moment for Hunter. As he'd said on tape in Cozumel, "For my entire life Nixon has been a bogeyman. I can't remember a time when he wasn't around, always horrible, always ugly, and covering his demise is something I have to do. I've been through 15 or 20 years with this son of a bitch fucking people over, and to see this wonderful turnaround...you can almost hear the *swack* of the hammer as the nails go through his palms."

Around five o'clock Hunter asked the piano player to stop. Richard Nixon appeared on the little TV screen with a short, self-serving good-bye.

When it was over, Hunter was quiet. His great nemesis had been torn from office after months of criminal revelations, hearings and the threat of impeachment. It was hard to believe it had actually happened, and it was going to leave a void for Hunter that depressed him for the rest of his life. Never again did he cover politics with the same hammer and tongs.

The resignation meant we would have to change large chunks of the interview. Hunter flew to Chicago, where we holed up against a vicious storm to record the

material that would be plugged into the piece. As we finished, Sandy joined us, and I took the two of them to the Playboy Mansion, which was then on State Parkway.

Hef was in Los Angeles, and the house was quiet. When I showed them the basement pool, we decided to have a swim. In the water, as Hunter began his backstroke, Sandy, a petite blonde with a sunny face, reached up to touch one of the flowers that festooned the rough rock wall along the length of the pool.

"Oh my God," she said. "Hunter, *the flowers are plastic.*" She pulled an orchid out of the rock, then swam along the wall, laughing, yanking the flowers out one by one and throwing them in the water.

Hunter implored her to stop—"Sandy, please stop"—as he swam behind her, picking up the flowers and sticking them back in the rock. She giggled her way the length of the wall, flinging flowers and watching her husband of 14 years rushing to clean up after *her* wild behavior for a change.

A week later, the editors and I finished the revised interview. It ran in the November 1974 issue.

In August 2005, exactly six months after Hunter's suicide, a lavish memorial was held at Owl Farm. More than 200 friends, including many luminaries, ate and drank and listened as a number of people told stories of their friendship. George McGovern said that no matter where he went in the world, someone would approach him to sign a copy of Hunter's *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*.

"He didn't always have his facts right," said the former presidential candidate, "but he got the truth better than anyone."

Johnny Depp had paid a rumored \$2.5 million for the celebration. He and Hunter had become friends when Depp lived in a basement room at Owl Farm for a month before making *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and it was said he'd been bitten by a brown recluse spider while there. At the party I told him he was lucky if that was the worst that happened to him during four weeks in Hunter's basement.

As the night wore on, everyone moved out of the tent to surround a tall steel cylinder with a huge double-thumbed fist at the top. "Going up to the spirit in the sky" boomed across the property as Hunter's ashes were exploded skyward among spectacular fireworks.

As fiery plumes filled the Woody Creek sky, I half remembered something Hunter had said in Cozumel that hadn't made it into the interview. When I listened to the tapes again, I found it.

"I am the prototype, the perfect American. Half out of control, violent, drunk, high on drugs, carrying a .44 Magnum. Rather than being strange, I may be the embodiment of the national character... all the twisted notions that have made this country the beast it is."

I miss him.





SEX IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY

Continued from page 76

get is probably a hand job in the karaoke room. For 700 yuan [\$114.03], you can get sex, but you have to leave afterward. For 1,100 yuan [\$179.19], you can get an overnight service. You just need to say the magic phrase 5-7-11 [500 yuan, 700 yuan, 1,100 yuan] and the managers immediately know what you're looking for."

Shawn makes the overnight expedition to Dongguan in a group of four or five, like students heading off for a weekend camping trip. The routine begins like this: The men meet around three P.M. at Sheung Shui train station in northern Hong Kong, just two stops from the Hong Kong-mainland border, in order to arrive at Dongguan before six P.M. "We must get there before six because that's when the girls start working," Shawn says.

The clubs are more glitzy karaoke bar than strip club, and after settling in Shawn and his friends shower and then wait for the manager to bring out the girls. The girls, wearing numbered tags, turn up as their best possible selves in skimpy outfits in hopes of finding a boss for the night. This will include drinks and a karaoke party until about 11 P.M., when customers bring their girls back to rooms. After splitting the money with the club, a girl can make \$1,100 to \$1,300 a month. "Some better-looking girls make \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month," Shawn says, compared with a factory worker's salary of \$250 a month or less.

From hair salons to nightclubs, Shawn says, there is a vibrant underground sex scene in China, one that "Dongguan Wood" has now exposed. He has read "Dongguan Wood" and calls himself a fan, saying the story is a reflection of his experiences. "Think about it," he says. "If men didn't have such a desire for sex, these adult-entertainment venues wouldn't have existed in the first place."

That desire for sex services appears to be growing among Chinese men. One theory behind the surge is that Hong Kong women are increasingly perceived as unattainable and hard to please. The latest government statistics show that in Hong Kong, where the median monthly income is \$1,548, the number of women making more than \$3,870 a month has gone up by a staggering 83 percent over the past decade. The number of men at the same income level increased by only 43 percent. That abrupt

change in income has wreaked havoc on traditional gender roles in Hong Kong, empowering women and leaving men feeling emasculated and in search of a cure, albeit a temporary one.

Psychotherapist and sexologist Lien Zun Rene Pius says he has clients who are regulars in Dongguan. "To them it is entertainment, just like playing golf over the weekend. Some want to have sex, but some just want to have an outing with friends. Some just want a girl to sit next to them and listen to them talk."

He regularly counsels couples suffering from dysfunctional relationships because they can't compromise in bed. Although cases of men tiring of sexually dull wives are not uncommon, he says, sometimes things happen the other way around. "Men might demand that their wives or partners perform some sexual acts such as oral sex or positions they do not enjoy. Their refusal prompts the man to seek satisfaction somewhere else," says Lien. "But women also complain about their sex partners for failing to bring any excitement. Complaints from men and women are at a ratio of 50-50."

As a result, Hong Kong men aren't the only ones seeking sex in the mainland because they feel sexually dissatisfied. Although Hong Kong women are still perceived to be conservative, Lien says some of his female clients visit male prostitutes regularly. Many of them are not looking for sex. "To them, sex is not a must. Certainly some women want sex because their partners can't satisfy them. Others are just upset that their partners don't care about them," he says.

More than anything, Lien sees a connection between the thriving sex industry and the city's poor sex education. "Teachers are still showing students [anatomical figures] at schools, even though students can see anything they want on the internet," Lien says. The lack of open discussion makes sex a mystery, and the less it is discussed in public, the more it becomes taboo, and that is a worrying trend, he says.

"It's not just the biological facts but also the value and perspective of sex that need to be taught," he says. "Why do parents sleep next to each other? Why do parents kiss? Those are signs of love, and young people need to learn that. The articulation of sex is very poor in Hong Kong. They should talk about sex like talking about sports."

No one talks about sex with Frankie, the protagonist of "Dongguan Wood." The main character of Xiang Xi's story receives little sex education at home or at school. Sex is dirty and not to be discussed, particularly not in front of Frankie's well-educated middle-class parents. Frankie's unsatisfied curiosity about sex leaves him stunted—sexually and emotionally. He is a giggling juvenile from adolescence to adulthood, when he learns about sex through adult videos and internet forums where brothel regulars share their sexual adventures.

"Chinese people don't talk about sex,

even if they're doing it every day," says *Due West* producer Stephen Shiu. A history graduate who emerged from the Hong Kong television industry's golden era in the 1970s before venturing into the film business in the 1980s, Shiu won best screenplay at the 1991 Hong Kong Film Awards for *To Be Number One*, a biopic of infamous drug king Ng Shek-ho. Shiu also wrote an important chapter of Hong Kong erotic film history—*Sex and Zen*. Starring 1990s bombshell Amy Yip, the costume drama is a loose adaptation of author Li Yu's 17th century Chinese erotic novel *The Carnal Prayer Mat*. It tells the story of a libidinous scholar who learns his lesson after a series of sexual adventures damages his health and turns his virginal wife into a prostitute. The movie raked in more than \$2.32 million, becoming the top-grossing category III (similar to an NC-17 rating) film, a record it held for nearly two decades.

In 2011 he made a comeback with his son Stephen Shiu Jr. and co-produced *3D Sex and Zen: Extreme Ecstasy*, a much hyped remake of the 1991 classic that is branded as the world's first erotic film shot in 3-D. Despite criticism about its flimsy story and overhyped 3-D that focuses more on flying daggers than sex acts, the movie grossed \$5.41 million in Hong Kong—the city's second-top-grossing category III movie ever—and took in more than \$10.31 million worldwide. Because it was banned in mainland China, tourists flooded into Hong Kong to catch it in theaters. The movie ran for nearly a year as large buses hauled in tourists for screenings.

The Shiu father-and-son team returned in 2012 with *Due West: Our Sex Journey*, which Shiu sees as a reflection of the "hypocritical attitude" behind Hong Kong's conservative views of sex. Now a political commentator and cultural critic, Shiu thinks both men and women in Hong Kong live under tremendous sexual pressure, and the emergence of erotic comedies such as *Due West*—which Shiu feels have plots and not just "acrobat actions like Japanese adult videos"—is a tension release for Hong Kong's sexually frustrated. "Under the influence of Confucianism, any desire for sex needs to be suppressed," he says. "Our society never looks at the issue."

I finally track down an e-mail address for Xiang Xi through his publisher, and after some prodding the elusive writer agrees to an interview—but strictly via e-mail. This is his only form of communication with the media in an effort to conceal his identity, which he argues gives him more freedom to write. He is 28 years old and works as a marketing and sales officer at a Taiwanese company based in Hong Kong. He is still trying to understand the success of "Dongguan Wood." "I didn't have any history of writing or publishing anything in the past," he says. "Before publishing 'Dongguan Wood' in Golden Forum, I didn't even use Xiang Xi Haruki Murakami as my user name. I created that pseudonym only when I posted 'Dongguan Wood.'"

The pen name, he explains, is based on

Xiangxi Village—the infamous “Mistress Village” located in Shenzhen, another southern Chinese boomtown that grew up just across the border from Hong Kong. The combination of *Xiangxi* and the Japanese novelist’s name worked since Xiang Xi mimicked his writing style, but also because the first kanji (a Japanese character derived from the Chinese writing system) of the name *Murakami* means “village” in Chinese. Placed together, the name reads “Xiangxi Village,” or “Mistress Village.”

“Most of the reports on prostitution on the mainland were all the same,” he explains. “That was why I decided to try a different take and try to write something that was playful and stood out from other standardized, boring entries in Golden Forum. I based it on my first sex adventure in Dongguan.”

Like most people who grew up in Hong Kong, Xiang Xi says he received little sex education when he was young. “I learned only a little when I was in the final year of primary school. The schoolteacher told us about the differences between the male and female genitals and how our bodies would change as we go through puberty—that boys would experience nocturnal emissions and girls would begin their menstrual cycle. We were taught nothing about sex, sex life or the correct attitude toward sex,” says Xiang Xi. “Sex education? I think I learned most of it from movies and television.”

Still trying to understand the success of “Dongguan Wood,” Xiang Xi does understand why Hong Kong men are willing to pay for sex. “It’s true that paying for sex service is disrespectful to your partner, but the damage is limited to the physical level. If you have an affair with another woman, you are betraying your partner both physically and emotionally,” he says. “This is why internet websites for those looking for extramarital-affair partners are not as popular as those with sex-service listings. Visiting prostitutes on the mainland is an even better way to cut off the emotional ties from having sex behind their partner’s back, as there’s a physical distance involved. Of course, you might say I’m simply trying to justify the need for prostitution.”

Unfortunately for Xiang Xi and his readers, the party in Dongguan may be over. The attention being paid to China’s sex capital finally caught up to it, and on February 9 authorities staged the largest-ever raid in the region. More than 6,500 policemen stormed 1,948 locations, including 220 saunas, 672 massage parlors, 362 karaoke nightclubs and 694 other “entertainment venues.”

The crackdown on vice came after a detailed report on the thriving underground sex trade aired the same morning on CCTV, mainland China’s state-run national TV station. As a result of the raids, 67 people—men and women—were arrested. The lucky ones who escaped reportedly fled across China within hours of the raid. According to a data map by China’s search engine Baidu, based on captures of smartphone users’ log-in locations, the largest number went to Hong Kong, where the

mainland Chinese police have no authority. Ironically, they were making the reverse journey of many of their customers.

In Hong Kong, Michael’s heart pounds as he realizes how close he was to taking one of his regular trips to the sex capital of China’s southern Guangdong province. Michael agreed to fill in for another photographer at the last minute; otherwise he would have joined his gang of comrades on the journey from the former British colony to the industrial city across the border.

“It was so close,” recalls Michael. “When I read about the news the following day, I thought, Jesus, what could’ve happened if I was caught? How was I going to explain to my wife? She would have known that everything I’d told her about my cross-border jobs in Guangdong were big fat lies, that in reality I had been visiting prostitutes in Dongguan.”

After the Dongguan crackdown, Michael and Shawn need a new place to release their tension. So do the makers of *Due West*. “Hong Kong men now have one less destination for their guilty pleasure,” says Xiang Xi. “The raid will inevitably cause disappointment and even despair among some Hong Kong men. After all, Dongguan has been the set for all sexual adventures.”

Due West director Mark Wu has already moved on from Dongguan. He envisions Thailand as the backdrop for the sequel to *Due West*, which he hopes will commence production by the end of this year. Xiang Xi won’t be writing the full script for the sequel but will play a major role in building the story and contributing to the script development.

“In the suburbs of Bangkok there are bungalows that look ordinary from the outside but are in fact bars and discos in disguise,” says Wu, talking excitedly about his research on Thailand’s underground sex scene. “There are pole-dancing performances, bands jamming and DJs spinning, a swimming pool crowded with models and university students who are working as prostitutes, and you can have sex anywhere.”

The sequel has not yet been written, but regardless of where it is set, Hong Kong men’s obsession with sex services will remain the central plot, because to a certain extent, it’s the reality.

“Men need sex, and naturally they will keep paying for it if they are not satisfied in their relationships,” Wu tells me. “It’s the only way out.”



“But there are 235 positions in this book. There must be one you’d like to try.”



THE APOLOGY EPIDEMIC

Continued from page 135

and demand my head on a spike, or at least an apology. My policy is, why wait?

If you want to survive as a public figure in 2014, you have to treat the entire world as if it's your wife or girlfriend. Everything you do is probably wrong. If you wake up in the morning and she says, "We're out of eggs," don't even think about asking, "What does that have to do with me?" Your only response should be, "I'm terribly sorry. I am a horrible, soulless person. In the middle of the night, I must have been sleepwalking, made a 12-egg omelet and eaten it on the floor. I am a monster." It's your fault. Even if it's not your fault, it's your fault. Don't try to explain or defend yourself. Just accept culpability and hope she lets you fuck her again tomorrow.

Now, when I say "the entire world," I mean of course the internet. That's where all the outrage is happening these days. You could slap somebody hard in the face and they'd say, "Well, that was weird. Can we discuss this further?" But tell a joke on Twitter that somebody doesn't find funny and they'll howl for your blood. The internet makes me sentimental for old-time lynch mobs. Back then, if people wanted to punish you, they had to leave the house and get their hands dirty. Now it's all done on the internet. It's the modern equivalent of ringing someone's doorbell and running away. We're more vindictive than we've ever been, but we're also cowards.

The internet gives everybody the illusion of power. Everyone's a commentator, everyone's a writer, everyone's a movie critic, everyone's a moral activist. And as a result, everyone is a fucking idiot.

I know this from personal experience. I was on the receiving end of a Twitter crucifixion. For about a decade I was the voice of a duck on commercials for Aflac, an insurance company. I had one line—"Aflac!"—so it was hard to screw it up. It was a good gig. But then in 2011 a tsunami happened in Japan, and I made some jokes on Twitter the next day. "Japan is really advanced," I wrote. "They don't go to the beach. The beach comes to them." And then I wrote this: "I asked a girl in Japan to have sex with me. She said, 'Okay, but you'll have to sleep in the wet spot.'" And then this: "I was talking to my Japanese real estate agent. I said, 'Is there a school in this area?' She said, 'Not now, but just wait.'" I was on a roll.

For the next three days, every crazy person on the internet came out to punish me. They called me hateful names, screamed for my public execution, all because they didn't like a joke. People were telling me, "Aren't you aware of the tragedy and loss of life?" Yeah, I'm aware, and that's where the joke comes from. Comedy and tragedy are roommates. Some people also claimed it was "too soon" to be making jokes. There's this old saying: Tragedy plus time equals comedy. But I never understood why waiting makes a difference. A year later, I saw TV weathermen making jokes. "We've got lots of rain in the forecast. Tomorrow looks like a regular tsunami." I was like, Oh, okay, I guess after a year a joke is a joke and no longer a crime against humanity.

I didn't want to apologize, but I was persuaded that it might be a smart career move. So somebody typed one up for me. Here's what it said: "I sincerely apologize to anyone who was offended by my attempt at humor regarding the tragedy in Japan. I meant no disrespect, and my thoughts are with the victims and their families."

Notice it doesn't say "I'm sorry my jokes were so offensive and horrible." It says, essentially, "I'm sorry *you* were offended, because you are apparently incapable of distinguishing between the real world and the ironic fantasy world of comedy." I also liked the "my attempt at humor" line. Nothing calms an angry mob like false modesty.

I did make one small editorial change. The original apology said "my prayers are with the victims," but I decided to make it "my thoughts." Nobody is going to believe I said "my prayers" are with the victims. Who am I, Pope Gilbert?

The apology went out, and the tidal waves of fury for the most part subsided. A couple of months later, I tweeted my actual apology, which I wrote myself and was much more honest. It read: "Sorry for joking about dead people, but as the necrophiliac once said, 'Fuck the dead.'" It flew under the radar, which is probably lucky for me.

Neither the fake apology nor the real one made any difference. I still got fired by Aflac. I found out about it on the internet. It was being reported on news sites. No one from Aflac had bothered to tell me. By the time they called my agent, it was old news. It was in many ways a convenient outrage. It worked out pretty well for the company. Aflac fired me, got loads of free publicity and then hired a new guy to imitate me for less money, thus bringing closure to a horrible tragedy.

I did learn something from this. I learned that Twitter is a terribly expensive hobby. I haven't stopped making inappropriate jokes on social media. Now I just apologize constantly. Made a lesbian joke? "I apologize to Ellen Page." Made a Thanksgiving joke? "I apologize to stuffing." Made a snowman joke? "I deeply apologize to snow testicles." I've made Twitter apologies to Bert and Ernie, circus tents, feathers, midget airlines, the undead, terrorists and Anne Hathaway's vagina.

I also learned that Twitter is not necessarily the world's moral barometer. Not long ago, I was doing stand-up at a com-

edy club and an Asian woman in sunglasses came up to me after my set. She said, "I'm Japanese and I'm blind, and you did jokes about both of those things tonight, and I want to give you a hug for making me laugh." This actually happened! I'm not making it up. Here was a Japanese woman telling me how much she enjoyed my jokes about her nationality. I mean, I'm pretty sure she was Japanese. She might have been Chinese or Korean and just pretending to be Japanese. You never know with those Asians; they're a sneaky people.

(I apologize for that last joke. It was racially insensitive, and I am a horrible cretin for having written it. I deeply apologize to anyone who is Asian or wore Asian makeup in one of those early Charlie Chan movies. Note to editor: This might be a good place to include a random photo of a girl showing her tits. You have any of those? Maybe an old one of Marilyn Monroe. Or an Asian. Kill two birds with one stone.)

Let me be clear about something. I'm not suggesting that apologies aren't occasionally necessary. If you've actually done something wrong, you should apologize. If you've ever taken performance-enhancing drugs, been blown in the White House or in a car on Sunset Boulevard, taken an award away from Taylor Swift or slapped around Rihanna, you owe an apology to someone. Hitler? A simple "my bad" would have gone a long way.

But as a nation we've gotten apology crazy lately. Anything that even slightly upsets our gentle sensibilities is grounds for demanding amends. We want famous people to apologize for being famous. Remember when Alec Baldwin left that nasty message on his teenage daughter's voice mail, and then the message leaked? If you take Alec Baldwin's name out of this story, what you're left with is "Guy is tired of his daughter's attitude." Or how about when ESPN sportscaster Brent Musburger got into trouble for pointing out during a football game that a girl in the stands, a beauty queen and the girlfriend of a quarterback, was beautiful? That's literally what he said. He had the audacity to claim that a beauty contest winner was "beautiful." He also called her a "lovely lady" and joked that quarterbacks "get all the good-looking women." Twitter went nuts. He was accused of being creepy and sexist. ESPN apologized on his behalf—he "went too far"—but Musburger stayed out of it. Personally, I think he should have apologized. He should have released a statement saying, "I'm sorry I was born with a dick and saw a hot piece of ass and used the most innocuous, noncreepy words in the universe to describe her instead of saying the disgusting things that I and every other heterosexual male in the universe were thinking at that exact moment."

It's not just happening on the internet. Comedy clubs aren't the safe havens they once were. It used to be, if you went to a club, there was an expectation that anything could happen. It might be an evening of inoffensive comedy. Or a comic might make a joke about gang-raping an audience member. (Hello, Daniel Tosh!) Maybe there'd be gags about in-laws and

how blacks and whites are totally different. Or maybe a former sitcom star would start screaming racial slurs for no apparent reason. (Michael Richards, I'm looking at you.) It was all okay, and that's what made it exciting. If a joke crossed a line, you'd cover your face while laughing, like normal people do when they're trying to conceal their true emotions. Nobody complained to the manager or screamed for apologies. If you want good taste, stay at home and watch PBS. You don't go to a baseball game and complain about foul balls. If you're sitting in the stands, you're well aware that a ball might come flying toward your face at 120 miles an hour.

Imagine if the most brilliant comedians in history were working today. They'd never stop apologizing. Charlie Chaplin would have to apologize to all the homeless people he belittled with his Little Tramp character. W.C. Fields and Dean Martin would both have to apologize to alcoholics. The Marx brothers would have to apologize to Italians, mutes and uptight British ladies. Comedy has been around for a long, long time, and there have been a lot of impolite, unpleasant and jaw-droppingly politically incorrect jokes. Blacks were shuffling slaves, Italians were gangsters, Jews were cheap, gays were queens, white people couldn't dance and fat people didn't have dignity. You went up there as a comic and joked about it all and nothing was off-limits. And to this day, nobody has died from a single joke.

You didn't have to be a comic to tell inappropriate jokes. In 1986, after the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded, everybody was making tasteless jokes around the watercooler. Poor Christa McAuliffe, the schoolteacher on that flight, got the worst of it. "Did you know Christa McAuliffe was blue-eyed? One blew left and one blew right." There were also terrific jokes about serial killer Ed Gein. "What is Ed Gein's favorite cookie? Ladyfingers." And my favorite, this brilliant limerick: "There once was a fellow named Ed/Who liked to take women to bed./When he wanted to diddle/He'd cut out their middle/And hang up the rest in the shed." Everybody told those jokes. But these days, if a tragedy happens and you joke about it on Twitter, you will be persecuted and chastised as if you *were* Ed Gein. Last December, a PR exec was getting on a flight and made a joke on Twitter about AIDS. She was fired before she landed. *One* joke! You kids today have no idea how safe the world was for comedy before Twitter.

There's a part of me that understands the obsession with apologies. I'm a Jew. Apologizing is part of our cultural heritage. We have entire holidays devoted to feeling bad and apologizing. When I was born, the first thing I did was apologize to my mother. "That must have been dreadful for you," I told her as they were cutting the umbilical cord. I apologized for peeing in my diapers. I apologized for growing too quickly and requiring new clothes. As a Jewish child, I learned very early to take the blame for everything. If somebody grumbles that it's raining out-

side, as a Jew you have to say, "I'm sorry. That was wrong of me." I went to school and they told me the dinosaurs had died, and I felt responsible. It must have been my fault somehow. I told my teachers, "I'm sorry about the dinosaurs. I wish I could take it back." Everything bad that ever happened in human history, I took the weight on my shoulders.

But there's a big difference between apologizing as a Jew and apologizing as a comic. Jews apologize by instinct; it's hardwired into our DNA. But a comic apologizing for a joke is like a ballet dancer apologizing for a pirouette.

Back in the 1980s, I was hired to open for pop singer Belinda Carlisle on her tour. Before the show, the stage manager warned me, "Don't do anything dirty, because there'll be a lot of little girls sitting in the audience with their mothers." I pride myself on being the sort of comic who can go at least five minutes before using the word *cunt*. And on that first night, opening for Carlisle, I think I made it to seven minutes. That's a personal record for me.

The next day, I got a call from my agent. He used the classic line "Everybody on the Carlisle tour loves you," which is showbiz talk for "You've just been fired." I guess I

could see their point. I wasn't a perfect fit. I don't do jokes designed to make mothers and daughters giggle. I do jokes about cunts. Excellent cunt jokes, if I may say so in all modesty.

It happened again in 1991 when I was a presenter at the Emmy Awards. They didn't give me a script; they just said, "Go out there and have fun." And I figured, What's more fun than masturbation? This was around the time Pee-wee Herman was busted for playing with his pee-wee in a porn theater. I said, "If masturbation's a crime, I should be on death row. To think that by age 14 I was already Al Capone. My right hand is like Superman. I could grab a piece of charcoal and squeeze it into a diamond." Again, this is what I do. Being comedically graphic is part of my job description. You tell me, "Have fun," this is how I interpret it.

There were complaints. Ham-fisted editorials. One critic called it a "sneak attack" on the American public who might have been watching with their families. A spokesman for the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences said the academy was "taken by surprise and shocked." Because I guess they forgot to call Belinda Carlisle or see my stand-up. But I never apologized.



"...And how many ports of entry will I have access to?"

Never begged for forgiveness, never promised not to do it again. And then I went back to my day job, doing the voice of a parrot in the animated film *Aladdin*. (Back in those days you could be in a Disney film and be a vocal masturbation enthusiast.)

And then there's my most famous non-apology. It was 2001, and I was part of the New York Friars Club roast of Hugh Hefner. (Maybe you've heard of him?) This was mere weeks after the September 11 attacks, so I thought, Hey, everybody's ready for some terrorist jokes, right? I came out and said, "I have to leave early tonight. I have to fly out to L.A. I couldn't get a direct flight; I have to make a stop at the Empire State Building." The whole audience gasped. Then they started booing, and one guy shouted, "Too soon!" I thought he meant I took too long between the setup and the punch line.

So I switched gears. I went immediately into the aristocrats, which is an old inside joke among comedians. It involves parents fucking their kids, a dog's asshole being fingered and a staggering amount of shit and piss and cum. It's that kind of joke. The audience roared with laughter and gave me a standing ovation.

Sometimes, in lieu of apologizing, you just have to find the offensive joke that's less offensive than the other offensive joke you were telling. Not amused by jokes about terrorist attacks? No problem. Can I interest you in some bestiality?

My latest joke scandal—though there will probably be another before this thing gets published—happened just a few months ago, in April. I was performing at a Friars Club event, doing my usual non-family-friendly stuff, and I must have said something that offended Shecky Greene, who was in the audience, because he stormed out in the middle of my act and announced later that he was quitting the Friars. That shocked me, because I didn't know Shecky Greene was able to get up from his chair. If my material's good enough to get Shecky walking on his own, imagine what I could do for Stephen Hawking.

Shecky apparently didn't like my language. He said he'd been in the Navy and had never heard talk like that. If that's the case, I'm sincerely worried about

our military. If our armed forces hear so much as a slightly risqué limerick, they'll throw their rifles down and surrender. I haven't apologized to Shecky. I just assumed he forgot everything the moment he left the building. He is Moses old. He probably doesn't even remember that his name is Shecky. And speaking of, if anybody is owed an apology, it's the American public, for being forced to pretend all these years that *Shecky* is a real name. If Shecky does need a formal apology from me, let's do it right here and now. I'm terribly sorry that I deeply offended the moral fiber of someone who spent a lifetime drinking and fucking hookers in Vegas. (I don't know for a fact that he was having sex with hookers, but if he wasn't, he's an idiot.)

By now I'm sure you're probably a little confused and angry with me. You're like, What exactly is his position on apologies? Is he for them or against them? First he says he apologizes all the time, and now he never apologizes. He's all over the map! Let me be clear on this. An apology is fine now and again, as long as it's written in advance by a team of professional apologists, comes with a copyright by the PR agency and sounds completely insincere and fabricated. A truly great apology should make people mutter, "What the hell? He clearly didn't write this. I'd be surprised if he read it." An apology should always leave people with a bad taste in their mouth and with the undeniable feeling that you're not in any way sorry.

I wish we lived in a world where people treated every joke as if it were said by Don Rickles. I remember when Rickles was part of a tribute to Shirley MacLaine a couple of years ago and he made a joke about the president. "Obama is a personal friend of mine," he said. "He was over to the house yesterday, but the mop broke." Some people grumbled that the joke was offensive, but most agreed it was harmless. Why? Because that's what Don Rickles does. Nobody gets angry at Don Rickles, because we all innately understand that Don Rickles means no harm. In other words, he's just like every other comic on the planet. But the younger comics following in Rickles's footsteps aren't getting the same pass. I

guarantee you that if Daniel Tosh ever made a joke about Obama being a janitor, he would be chased by an angry torch-waving mob.

It's kind of useless to argue that people, comics or otherwise, should stop apologizing. You know what's a better solution? Comedy audiences, whether on Twitter or in comedy clubs or in your living room, should be more like Pamela Anderson.

Wait, hear me out.

I did the David Hasselhoff *Comedy Central Roast* in 2010, and before the show somebody involved in running the thing told me that Anderson had agreed to take part at the last second. "So go a little easy on her," they said, which is the worst thing you can ever say to me. Ninety percent of my speech was devoted to making jokes about Anderson's vagina and whether it would ever be tight again. I'm not going to go into specifics, but let's just say the punch line involved a genie from a magic lamp screaming, "There's nothing that can be done about Pamela Anderson's pussy!"

Afterward, when the show was over and everybody was shaking hands and pretending not to be pissed off, Anderson gave me a hug and whispered in my ear, "I hate you." That's all she said. She didn't demand an apology or tell me she was going to ruin my career. All she said was "I hate you." And that was the end of it.

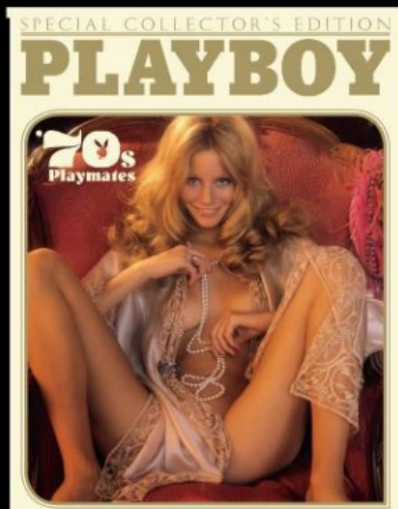
The next time you hear a joke that offends your gentle sensibilities, I want you to ask yourself this simple question: What would Pamela Anderson do? Do you have the same emotional maturity as somebody with gigantic fake breasts whose main cultural contribution is running in slow motion on the beach? Can you take a joke better than, or at least as well as, Pamela Anderson?

In closing, I'd like to reiterate that I'm sincerely sorry for this entire article, and I hope it hasn't been too damaging to your psyche. Thank you for reading this far, and again, I apologize for everything you had to endure because of my Neanderthal attempts at humor. And also, no, I'm really not sorry at all. Go fuck yourself.

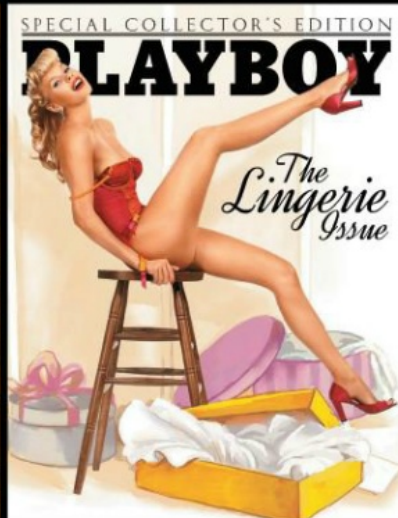
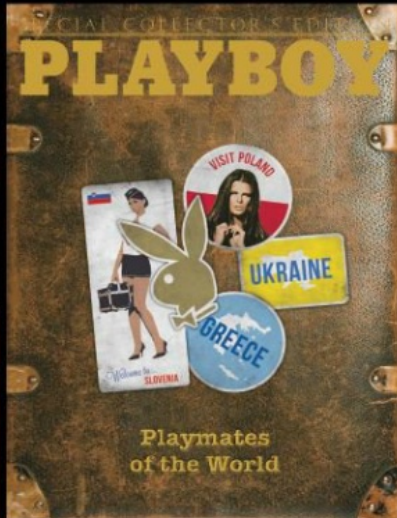
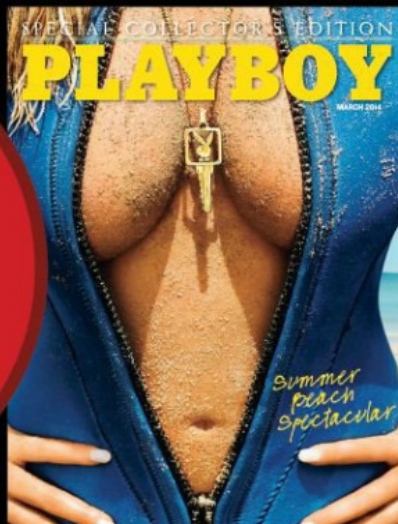


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PHIL IVEY'S NEW HOUSE OF CARDS

Continued from page 70

so Ivey views poker, cash and the inevitable beatings in a way that softer men cannot.

Money, he decided a long time ago, is a thing to be deployed, not savored when it's won or mourned when it's gone. The summer he was 23, Ivey says, he started with a \$200,000 cushion of poker winnings. "It was the largest bankroll I'd ever had up until that point. By the end of the summer, though, I'd lost all of it playing poker." Told that he must have been devastated, Ivey looks uncomprehending. "I didn't view it as money lost," he says. "I saw it as money used to play bigger games. I thought it was worth playing in those games. Now I see money as what gets me into the biggest game in the world. Wherever the biggest game is, that's where I want to be."

Dave, an ex-cop turned bodyguard, slinks into the Rio's poker room and locks step alongside Ivey. Together they purposefully walk toward a side exit, thus avoiding autograph seekers who would besiege him if he left through the front door. Ivey passes service staffers and cocktail waitresses loading up on drinks. He looks amused after he asks one of the waitresses for a water and is denied, told that it's only for players. Deep inside a world where he reigns as a superstar who routinely gets what he wants, Ivey seems to appreciate a powerless woman standing her ground—even if it's because she doesn't know who he is.

Then he steps out into blinding desert sunlight. His driver, a muscled-up, tank-top-wearing friend known as A.P., waits alongside a black Range Rover. Ivey climbs into the front seat and doesn't need to say he's going to the Bellagio.

Ivey's adeptness at cards has earned him an unwieldy nickname: the Tiger Woods of Poker. That moniker underscores something that goes beyond Ivey's winning ways. Like Woods, he's an anomaly, a black man who dominates a game largely played by whites. But because the biggest games take place publicly, in casinos, they're open to anyone with enough money to afford the buy-in—black, white, Middle Eastern, Asian, nobody cares.

So, unlike the way it might be in golf or tennis, being black in poker has never stopped Ivey from competing at the highest levels. Although he has encountered his share of racism—including the enmity of a grizzled gambler who would refer to Ivey,

behind his back, as "the nigger"—prejudice provides just one more way for Ivey to take advantage of people. If opponents choose to play him differently because he's black, he capitalizes on that. He plays those opponents in ways that exploit their prejudices.

Personally, he says, "it's a nonissue. What do I care what somebody at the poker table thinks or if they're prejudiced? I worry about myself. In poker, either you have the money to buy in or you don't. Either you can play or you can't. Those are the only things that matter."

Ivey has the money. He competes at stakes so high that a bad night at the table could easily cost him \$1 million. And his penchant for financial risk is not limited to poker.

He once won \$200,000 by landing a single, seemingly impossible shot on a golf course in Aruba. Ivey once bet \$1 million that he could go vegetarian for 12 months. Last August, he initiated a similar bet that forbade him to drink alcohol. So prodigious is Ivey's gambling at craps that the Bellagio has been known to fly him on its private jet. Ivey earns the wherewithal for this by being more cut-throat, more aggressive and cagier than anyone else in the casino. Everyone aims to win, but as the son of a struggling prizefighter, Ivey has more of the killer instinct flowing through his blood than the average poker pro does. He maintains a street-smart edge to everything he does. It bubbles below a persona that has been carefully polished to be warm and polite when it serves his purposes, but whatever the circumstances, Phil Ivey rarely allows himself to have the worst of it.

That said, Ivey acknowledges it's tough for many of his better-heeled opponents to really compete against him. Unlike a lot of them, Ivey knows what it means to ride a bus to casinos, to go broke gambling, to go hungry and spend nights sleeping under the Atlantic City Boardwalk because he couldn't afford a motel room. "I'll never forget the smell of those gas fumes on the bus. It's why I'll never ride a bus again," says Ivey, who more recently was mistaken for Jay Z while getting off a helicopter to attend a Coldplay concert at Wembley Stadium. "People who come in wealthy can never get that good at poker. When you have to win if you want to eat, you play your ass off and go after every pot. If all your money is on the table and you're hungry, you figure out ways to win. It's a different kind of motivation when you're playing with money that doesn't mean so much to you." Because of what he has gone through on the way up, says Ivey, "I know what it takes to win, and I know how to bear down and do it."

These days, Ivey's balance sheet reads more like that of a tight, privately held corporation than that of a gambler who has developed a reckless image. Beyond the untold millions he has won in cash games, Ivey has raked in some \$20 million in tournaments and netted in excess of \$19 million playing online since 2007. He grossed \$8 million in 2008 alone. This past February, Ivey took home more than \$3.5 million from a single tournament in Australia. He has put an estimated \$1 million to \$1.5 million of his own money into bankrolling Ivey Poker, a Facebook app

through which you can play no-limit Texas Hold'em for fun and watch instructional videos from a coterie of top pros, known as Team Ivey, who also compete at the tables.

But that investment is dwarfed by the nearly \$22 million he managed to win during gaming sessions at Crockfords, the most venerable casino in England, and Atlantic City's posh Borgata. Ivey won that combined sum by playing baccarat and punto banco, a variant of baccarat; both games are based purely on luck and favor the house. According to statements from the casinos, Ivey and a female accomplice achieved their winning sessions by recognizing subtle patterns on the backs of cards. They never touched or marked the cards but supposedly used those patterns to identify cards that had been dealt. Spokespeople from Crockfords and the Borgata maintain that Ivey took unfair advantage; Ivey leaves the impression he did what any smart player would do. At the moment, \$12 million from Crockfords sits in escrow, and the Borgata is taking legal action to try to recoup its \$9.6 million.

The incidents underscore Ivey's win-at-any-cost mentality—many poker players would just as soon avoid negative publicity and bad blood with well-known casinos—though the allegations don't seem to cramp his style. And they shouldn't: Ivey did nothing illegal. You can easily argue that his ploy falls into the gray area known as angle-shooting, the equivalent of, say, intentionally sitting at a blackjack table with a dealer who has a habit of unwittingly exposing his cards. However, despite what actually went down in the casinos and the legality of Ivey's actions, you need to wonder how much these claims will tarnish the reputation of a gold-standard poker player in the process of promoting a play-for-fun poker site, which may one day become an actual online-gambling destination. On the other hand, of course, casino gamblers who've been hosed by the house games at any stakes consider Ivey a hero who should get his money without a hassle.

Inside the Bellagio, Ivey leads the way to a sleekly designed Japanese restaurant called Yellowtail. The pretty waitresses and hostesses all know the poker mogul notorious for over-the-top tipping. He asks if a particular girl is working tonight and grimaces good-naturedly upon being told she isn't. While we're still looking at the menus, a lanky Wall Street stockbroker turned golf gambler named Jimmy Arvanetes bounds over. A buddy of Ivey's, he wears white Bermuda shorts and sneakers. His hair is thick and carefully groomed. A perm-smile plasters his face.

Ivey has chosen a table on the restaurant's perimeter, which provides an open view of the casino. He opted to sit here for a reason that trumps the privacy of a spot in back. When a good-looking brunette strolls by, obviously fresh from a shopping spree, Ivey shouts to her, "I'm a part-time bellhop. I can help you with your bags." It's not the worst pickup line in the world, but she keeps on walking.

Soon after, though, the same woman enters Yellowtail and sits down solo at the bar. Ivey signals the hostess. "Tell her

that whatever she wants”—he points to Arvanetes—“it’s on him.” The hostess walks off. Arvanetes balks at potentially getting stuck with a big tab. Ivey lets him fret for a few minutes, watching him squirm and keeping up the heat. Then Ivey smiles tightly and says he’ll pay the bill if the woman agrees, and he gives Arvanetes four-to-one odds that she will. Assuaged, Arvanetes takes the bet for \$100.

Satisfied with what seems like a can’t-lose proposition, Arvanetes recounts meeting Ivey for the first time. “It was the greatest. Phil asked if I wanted to go to dinner. We flew on a private jet to L.A. and ate at Phil’s favorite sushi place. Then we went to a club, and Phil had the best pickup line: ‘You want to get on my jet, fly to Las Vegas and party in the number one villa at Bellagio?’ Sure enough, some of the girls there did.”

Arvanetes recalls that the only downside came the next morning when he needed to get his date back to Los Angeles. Those at the table make jokes about Arvanetes providing her with cab fare to the Vegas airport. “I’ll never forget that night,” he says with legitimate wistfulness. “It was the best night of my life.”

Ivey looks up from a plate of salmon. He matter-of-factly says, “I don’t even remember it.”

Meanwhile, the hostess approaches the shopping-bag brunette at the bar. She gestures toward our table, and a brief conversation ensues. A minute later, looking a little sheepish, the hostess comes back to tell Ivey his offer was rejected. It’s in line with how things have been going at the Rio. Ivey, who seems to be cooled everywhere these days, takes a wad of hundreds out of his pocket, peels off four and slides them toward Arvanetes as carelessly as someone buying a Hershey bar. I get the impression Ivey got off easy, that with a flusher friend the bet could have been for \$1,000 or even \$10,000.

A couple of days after Yellowtail, Ivey summons me to his home, which occupies a full floor of a luxury high-rise in one of the affluent suburbs that radiate from the Vegas Strip. More mansion in the sky than mere apartment, it boasts a screening room, wood paneling, designer furniture and many bedrooms. The chef, who normally heads the kitchen at M Resort, a sharp casino-hotel south of the Strip, whips up breakfast. Ivey’s personal trainer, a petite but muscular Argentine blonde named Regina, waits to work him out.

Working on Ivey right now is a stocky barber in a red T-shirt with a glittery straight razor and scissors across the front. He runs an electric buzzer along Ivey’s head. At first I feel a little sad for Ivey. I heard he got his hair cut a couple of times each week in the luxurious salon at Bellagio. Now he has this joker with a goofy T-shirt and a suitcase full of barbering tools. A.P. later tells me the guy is actually the master barber at Bellagio and makes house calls for Ivey and company. “You want a haircut?” he asks. “We’ll put it on the house account.”

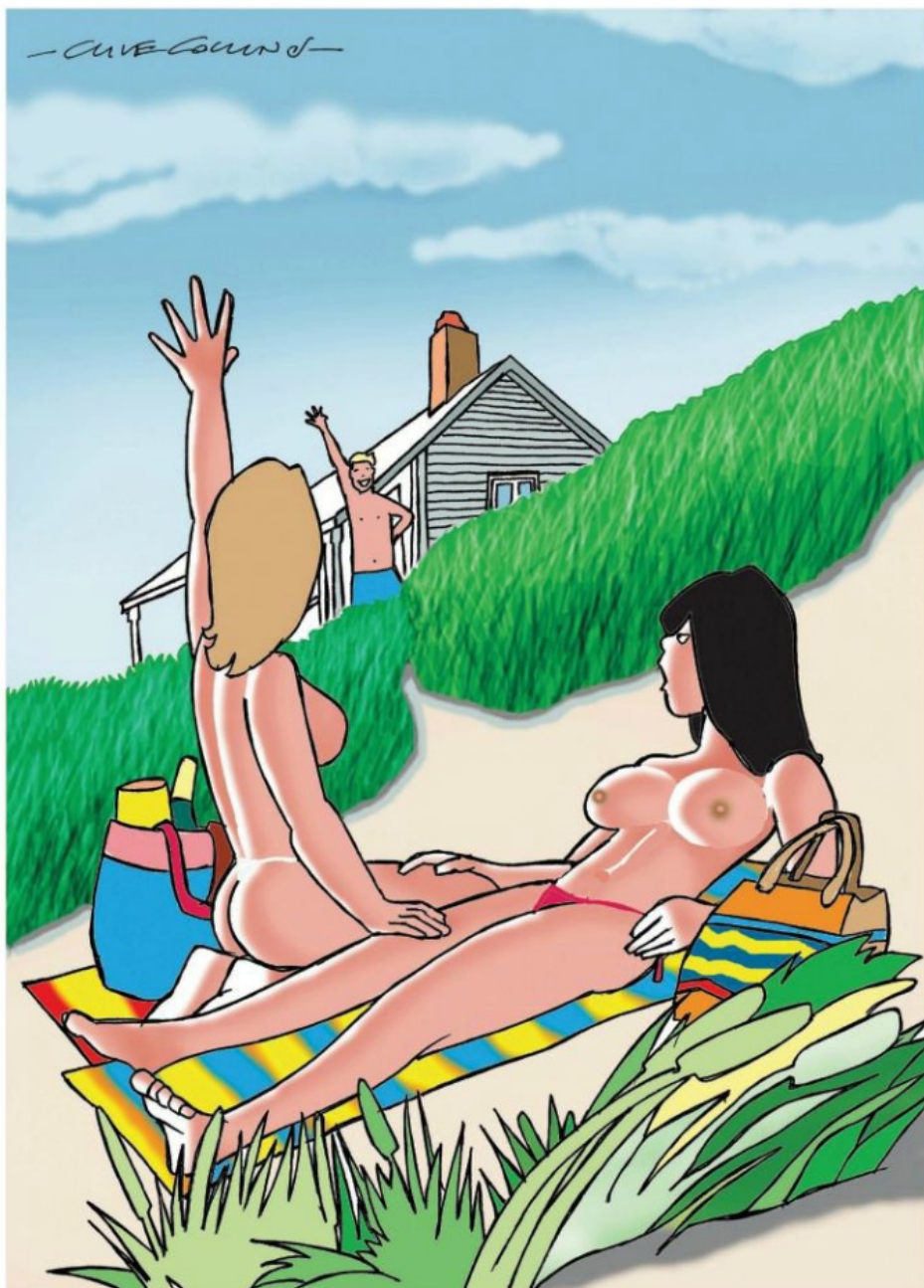
Over scrambled eggs, I ask Regina if she minds hanging around. “It’s my job,” she

says brightly, explaining that she met Ivey in Barcelona, where she trained him while he waited for a poker tournament there. “Then he told me I should move to Las Vegas. I told him I had no clients there. Now I’m here and he is my only client.” Ivey pays Regina what she’d make with a full roster of people, but he keeps her under his control: She must be available whenever he wants to work out. Sometimes that means sitting around, eating eggs and toast, watching him get a haircut.

Done, Ivey takes me on a quick tour of the place, proudly showing off his well-stocked wine cellar, the screening room and a terrace large enough to live on. Downstairs in a private garage he has a Rolls-Royce, the Range Rover and a gorgeous Aston Martin. One of the guys involved with Ivey Poker marvels at

Ivey’s propensity to loan out his six-figure autos as if they were clunkers. Ivey shrugs them off, insisting they’re holdovers from a different time in his life, maybe a time when he was still coming to terms with the person he had been, the person he was becoming and the person he now hopes to be. Although Ivey is good friends with a number of black athletes, rappers and actors, it’s no coincidence he eschews the bling they embrace.

As a poker player, he recognizes that advertising your success does not necessarily help you in life. As a man who routinely wins and loses millions, he’s learned that the pleasures of shiny things can be fleeting. “You buy a \$100,000 car and it makes you happy for three days,” he tells me, settling into a little sitting area with a view of his cellar loaded with wine that somebody was hired to pick



“Oh, Charlie’s okay. He talks the talk and walks the walk, but he can’t screw the screw.”

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out and procure for him. "I bought plenty of cool wristwatches—Patek Philippe, Audemars Piguet—but they did absolutely nothing for me. I saw people around me getting them and thought they were cool at the time."

Ivey has clearly been through a lot recently: divorced four and a half years ago from his high school sweetheart, who'd kept him in cash during his early days as a frequently broke poker player (she later unsuccessfully accused him of paying off the judge with political contributions); accused of cheating by Crockfords and the Borgata; stiffed on countless wagers; thrown into the center of a controversy involving the website Full Tilt Poker. (Ivey had been the highest-profile sponsored pro on the site, which went under in 2011 owing some \$150 million to American players.) It has all caused him to suddenly grow up.

That last event seems to have cut the deepest. "I had absolutely nothing to do with what happened at Full Tilt," Ivey says, speaking of an incident that has since been resolved, with most of the poker players getting what they were owed. "But because my name was splashed all over the site, people thought I did, and I felt terrible about it. I was up day and night, trying to find an investor who could save the company. When I couldn't, I decided not to play in the World Series of Poker that year. In fact, I was literally on my way to the tournament when I turned around and drove back home. I thought of how I would feel if I was a young player with all my money on the site. My heart wasn't in it after what happened. I didn't want to play in the World Series when so many other people couldn't because of what happened with Full Tilt."

In fact, he spent much of that period, between 2011 and 2012, lying low, hanging out in his Cabo San Lucas villa and making forays to Macao, which has grown into the hub for so-called nosebleed games of poker. To give some perspective on how much can be won or lost, during a single hand there Ivey took down nearly \$1.3 million when the king he needed materialized.

Later, on the same day as my tour of Ivey's apartment, as I wander around a Rio tournament room trying to find Ivey's table, I get a text from A.P.: "Come to Caesars, Mike." Ivey, I learn, is in the high-limit room, the chandelier-lit wagering spot where you go to gamble for thousands of dollars at games such as blackjack, baccarat and roulette. I race out of the Rio and into Caesars Palace, giant legal pad in hand—I thought I'd be taking notes at the tournament. Immediately I spot A.P. Twenty feet away, Ivey sits alone at a baccarat table with about \$200,000 in chips.

"Go up to him," A.P. tells me.

But I don't want to spook the guy, so I hang back a little until Ivey notices me, resignedly waves a hand and says, "Come on over, buddy."

I step toward the table and slip into the seat next to his. Ivey sees the giant notepad. "This fucking place goes on high alert when I come in to play," he says, alluding to the controversy surrounding his big wins at Crockfords. (The Borgata issue had not yet gone public.) "You can't take notes."

I stash the pad behind an empty black-jack table. Ivey pushes forward a \$50,000 bet. The dealer slides him two cards. Ivey squeezes them into visibility: an ace and a picture card. "Blackjack," Ivey says with disgust. "Terrible in baccarat."

He loses and puts another \$50,000 into the betting circle. This next hand is a dog as well. One hundred thousand dollars quickly gets vaporized. As annoyed as I've ever seen him, Ivey stands up, clearly done playing. He negotiates some paperwork with the casino, then turns to me and suddenly explodes: "I don't like people fucking with my mojo. I thought A.P. was sending you to the Rio." He shoots a withering glance at his driver and goes on: "I had won a couple of hands and was thinking of leaving. Then, all of a sudden, out of the corner of my eye I see you!"

I apologize and tell him I didn't mean to mess him up, that I just wanted to watch him gambling high. "Look," he says, "I'm not so fucking stupid that I think you...." His voice trails off, but I think he means to say he understands I didn't jinx him. "I just don't like fucking surprises," he says. Then, suddenly, he softens in an almost physical way, as if he's trying not to be this kind of guy. "Look, don't worry about it. It was only \$100,000."

He's definitely not being sarcastic; that really is a modest swing for Ivey. While he finishes sorting things out with the marker people, A.P. comes over with a warning. "Don't let Phil think you're a black cat," he advises. "Phil thinks his uncle is a black cat. Now Unk is not allowed to go anywhere near where Phil is gambling or playing poker."

It's not quite the level of action Ivey saw when he was exposed to his first card game at the age of eight. That took place in the back room of a New Jersey barbershop. The scene piqued young Phil's curiosity and led his grandfather to teach him the rudiments of poker. As a deterrent, Granddad cheated, never allowing Ivey to win and hoping to keep him away from gambling. His father, who turned to construction when boxing failed to work out, wasn't crazy about Phil playing poker, and neither was his mom, who worked in an insurance office.

But they held little sway on young Phil. Growing up in the lower-middle-class town of Roselle, New Jersey, the California-born Ivey had gambling all around him. He didn't bother much with school, spent lots of time playing basketball in the park and regularly shot dice with his friends. "We played craps and a game called cello, which uses three dice," remembers Ivey. "I'd been around all that for a long time and always liked being in action. It was just there, right out on the street."

Ivey began playing poker with his friends at the age of 15. A year later he was busing down to Atlantic City with a fake ID. After squeaking through high school, he got a job as a telemarketer and was so good he was made a manager and might have had a future in sales. "To be honest with you, I never thought about what I wanted to do with my life. I didn't have a plan,"

Ivey says, insisting he never had a fallback to gambling. "I liked to play poker and figured I'd give it a shot. I knew I didn't want to be a telemarketer."

Slowly, he ascended from the cheapest seven-card-stud games in Atlantic City to the highest. During long sessions at the casinos there, becoming adept at other poker variations as well, he evolved from loser to winner. "The aha moment comes when you sit down to play against a player who others think is great; he's been doing it for a long time and has won a lot of money," reflects Ivey. "Suddenly you realize that you can play with that person. Then you see yourself beating that person. It happens and you recognize that you can do well at poker."

What allows Ivey to be so good and why he evolved into the game's most gifted player is difficult to quantify. It's a little like parsing what makes Michael Phelps better than the second-best Olympic swimmer. Ivey chalks it up to simply paying attention. Barry Greenstein, who's known Ivey as long as any of the other top pros, goes deeper: "Phil thought about poker all the time and asked a ton of questions. Phil has the ability to quickly recognize what his opponents are doing and to play against that. It's soul reading. Then, by the time they shift their style, Phil has already anticipated what they will do next and made the necessary adjustments. Phil beats people into submission. He plays them until they give up." Erik Seidel, a gifted games player and options trader turned poker champion, looks toward Ivey's sister for a hint. "The key to Ivey is that he's got a sister who speaks six languages," says Seidel, referring to Cheyanne Ivey, who was put through law school by her brother. "She didn't have any special training for learning them, but she's managed to pick them up. Phil has that same kind of intelligence, but he applies it to poker."

Besides just playing the game, Ivey has had some success investing in, or "backing," other players. At one point he bankrolled the pros in a gargantuan poker game that was put on by Larry Flynt. Sometimes things have gotten out of control. At various times, Ivey backed so many players simultaneously he couldn't keep track. "He had to have [pro player] David Williams functioning as bookkeeper," says Greenstein. "One time Phil was backing a player by the name of Nenad Medic. He won the tournament for nearly \$800,000, and people were congratulating Phil. After about the 10th person, Phil asked, 'Why is everybody telling me he won it?' Phil knew Medic only by his online nickname—Serb—and wasn't even paying attention to the tournament."

Although Greenstein points out that the only way Ivey can go broke is by investing in things outside poker, that hasn't stopped him. With the help of Jeff Fried, a Washington, D.C. attorney, he has put money into restaurants, real estate and the stock market. But his current obsession is Ivey Poker. Ivey says he personally bankrolled it to prevent a repeat of the Full Tilt folly. Now he has final say, with no layers of management above him (though a former

banking executive runs the enterprise on a day-to-day basis). Putting up the money and putting his name on the site combine to place Ivey at an inflection point. The poker pro who has made a living by being opaque is now discussing strategies online.

In Vegas, on the day his app launches, Team Ivey is invited to the boss's apartment for a cocktail party. Laptops pop out, tequila and wine flow, and pros dominate the Ivey Poker tables. Online, players freak out and comment like crazy. I manage to get a virtual seat next to Ivey and luckily win a bunch of chips off him. "I really am running bad," he mutters, creating the impression that even losing play money leaves a nasty taste in his mouth.

As the hours progress, laptops disappear, Ivey's chef turns up and starts to lay out a feast, booze flows harder and hot-looking girls in sexy outfits begin to replace the poker players. Earlier in the day Ivey tipped me off that we'd probably be hitting a club tonight. He punctuated it by promising lots of girls, "all eight or better."

He wasn't kidding. Girls outnumber guys three to one, and they're all gorgeous,

"Look, don't worry about it. It was only \$100,000," says Ivey.

with gym-toned bodies and hair that seems to have been coiffed 20 minutes ago. When Ivey spots me checking one out, he comes over and razzes me, saying, "You are a sick fucking guy. I know what you're thinking, and it's fucking sick." Then he laughs.

While mentally writing it off as Ivey's way of being funny and maintaining the upper hand in our relationship—not caring what I think and treating the experience as another poker pot he wants to scoop—I protest, and it gets even worse. He turns to one of the women, points to me and says, "This guy told me he's not going to need YouPorn for at least a month."

It's as if I tried to raise him at the poker table and he suddenly shoved all-in.

Before I can refute things, the woman smiles and replies, "At least he's honest."

By the time we get to the club, transported in Ivey's luxury fleet, he plays consummate host, leading his group to a pair of prime tables at Hakkasan, the hottest, glitziest nightclub in town. While superstar DJ Tiësto keeps the crowd going, Ivey maintains an endless stream of Patrón and Dom Pérignon. When he sees my glass empty, he

taunts, "You drink like a pussy," and presses me to do a shot with him. This time it sounds like friendly ball-busting banter, the kind of thing Jersey guys do to one another. Anytime I'm alone and looking awkward, a hot girl materializes at my side, flirtatious as can be and sent there, no doubt, by Ivey.

Which is the real Ivey and which is the bluff? Is it the guy who goes out of his way to embarrass me or the one who spoon-feeds me good-looking women? I'll never know, but his actions are whipsawing and in line with how he treats A.P. as well as his other friends and hangers-on. Maybe he can't figure out how he wants to be. Or maybe it's the privilege you take when you bankroll everybody around you.

The next afternoon, Ivey is in good spirits. Regina works him out in his building's gym, pushing him hard with resistance training. He's groaning and improvising profane lyrics to the romantic pop songs playing on the gym's sound system. He claims he feels good about the next two tournaments, which represent his final chances to win those millions in wagers, take home another bracelet and get a step closer to the immortality he now desires. "Last night," Ivey says, "was just what I needed."

Besides the bets, which motivate him to play tournaments, I wonder what is driving Ivey in that direction. After all, high-stakes cash games are where the consistently serious money gets won, so much so that some pros actually left the WSOP and flew to Macao when the big games heated up there. In past years Ivey would have been on the plane with them. But his priorities have shifted. He likes the idea of focusing on the more publicly recognized world of tournament poker. If the money isn't the same, he'll make it close enough with his bracelet bets. "As I get older, I think about my place in poker history," he says, pointing out that he'd like to eventually become player of the year, a designation for poker's most consistent tournament winner. "It would be nice to have the greatest number of World Series of Poker bracelets. I have the potential, so why not focus on that and go after it?"

He won't get closer today. Ivey unceremoniously busts out in the afternoon. In the Main Event, the longest-shot tournament of the entire World Series, he fares no better. But before losing all his chips, he makes clear that he'll be working hard to leverage the next year into his big season. At one point he turns to Erick Lindgren, a fellow poker pro who is known for betting on just about anything.

Ivey tells Lindgren that in 2014 he'll shoot for player of the year. He wants to know what kind of odds Lindgren will give him on making it. Knowing Ivey and his desire to always have the best of it, Lindgren quickly responds, "Whatever you think it is, just cut the number in half and that's probably about right."

For the first time since I've been with him, I see Phil Ivey crack a smile at the poker table.





GARY OLDMAN

Continued from page 54

I can walk into a room, as I did with my contractor recently, and see the slight-est irregularity in a bookcase. I told him, "Yeah, it's fantastic, but it's slightly off up there on the left side." He went, "No, it's not." But it was, by something like a sixteenth of an inch. He said, "Fucking hell, how can you see that?"

PLAYBOY: What do you do to relax?

OLDMAN: I couldn't relax if I tried. I always have to do something. That's why in my downtime I'm either learning an instrument or doing photography. [holds up hands] I have silver nitrate on my hands because I've been working with an old camera I just acquired off eBay—a Dallmeyer plate camera from 1865. I built a little darkroom in the basement, and it keeps me occupied. Keeps me off the streets.

PLAYBOY: How are you with money? Do you micromanage your investments?

OLDMAN: Not really, no. I don't have a portfolio. I probably have less money than most people think I do.

PLAYBOY: So you're not seeing much of that \$10 billion?

OLDMAN: I mean, I do fine. I once parked my Porsche in George Clooney's garage while I was away. I said thank you and he said, "It's no inconvenience. It always makes me look good if I have two Porsches." You know, that's what they pay you for. But I'm not getting *The Dark Knight* or *Harry Potter* money, certainly. Daniel Radcliffe, now *he's* got fuck-you money.

PLAYBOY: What would you do with fuck-you money?

OLDMAN: Well, I sometimes joke that I would just slip away to Palm Springs or someplace and close the gates, find refuge behind the hedges. Right now, for instance, just financing a film, getting studios to part with their money and the sorts of things studios are doing, it's just a crazy, crazy time. I have a script I've written called *Flying Horse*. It's about Eadweard Muybridge, the 19th century photographer who arguably invented cinema and had a very interesting life. It's been nearly two years trying to get money. I have my cast pretty much, but the funding isn't there. Partly it's the subject. If it had zombies and Leonardo DiCaprio in it, people would be falling over me.

If you haven't seen *Seduced and Abandoned*, you should. It's a documentary with Alec Baldwin about raising money at the Cannes Film Festival. They try to finance a fictional movie that's a little like *Last Tango in Paris*. You see how insane these people are. One guy actually turns to Alec and says, "You were great in that submarine movie. Do you think you could have a scene in this

one that takes place on a submarine?" I can understand why someone like Mel, for instance, would finance his own movies now, because it has all become so crazy.

PLAYBOY: Mel Gibson?

OLDMAN: Yeah.

PLAYBOY: What do you think about what he's gone through these past few years?

OLDMAN: [Fidgets in his seat] I just think political correctness is crap. That's what I think about it. I think it's like, take a fucking joke. Get over it. I heard about a science teacher who was teaching that God made the earth and God made everything and that if you believe anything else you're stupid. A Buddhist kid in the class got very upset about this, so the parents went in and are *suing the school!* The school is changing its curriculum! I thought, All right, go to the school and complain about it and then that's the end of it. But they're going to sue! No one can take a joke anymore.

I don't know about Mel. He got drunk and said a few things, but we've all said those things. We're all fucking hypocrites. That's what I think about it. The policeman who arrested him has never used the word *nigger* or *that fucking Jew*? I'm being brutally honest here. It's the hypocrisy of it that drives me crazy. Or maybe I should strike that and say "the *N* word" and "the *F* word," though there are two *F* words now.

PLAYBOY: The three-letter one?

OLDMAN: Alec calling someone an F-A-G in the street while he's pissed off coming out of his building because they won't leave him alone. I don't blame him. So they persecute. Mel Gibson is in a town that's run by Jews and he said the wrong thing because he's actually bitten the hand that I guess has fed him—and doesn't need to feed him anymore because he's got enough dough. He's like an outcast, a leper, you know? But some Jewish guy in his office somewhere hasn't turned and said, "That fucking kraut" or "Fuck those Germans," whatever it is? We all hide and try to be so politically correct. That's what gets me. It's just the sheer hypocrisy of everyone, that we all stand on this thing going, "Isn't that shocking?" [smiles wryly] All right. Shall I stop talking now? What else can we discuss?

PLAYBOY: What do you think of the pope?

OLDMAN: Oh, fuck the pope! [laughs and puts head in hands] So this interview has gone very badly. You have to edit and cut half of what I've said, because it's going to make me sound like a bigot.

PLAYBOY: You're not a bigot?

OLDMAN: No, but I'm defending all the wrong people. I'm saying Mel's all right, Alec's a good guy. So how do I come across? Angry?

PLAYBOY: Passionate, certainly. Readers will have to form their own opinions.

OLDMAN: It's dishonesty that frustrates me most. I can't bear double standards. It gets under my skin more than anything.

PLAYBOY: Who speaks the truth in this culture, in your opinion?

OLDMAN: There are a number of people. A voice I particularly like is Charles Krauthammer. I think he's incredibly smart. I think he's fair, very savvy and politically

insightful, so I enjoy watching him. There are artists as well, like David Bowie, where there's an autonomy. He recorded his most recent album and didn't even announce he was doing it. He was in a position where he thought, Listen, I haven't produced anything for 10 years. If this is no good, then I can just put it in a cupboard and no one need ever know. But he wrote the songs, picked the cover. I've always admired David. I've known him about 30 years. We're friends. And David can constantly reinvent himself because he's so talented. He has a point of view.

One of my sons wants to be a photographer. I said to him, "Why do you want to rob the bank when it's already been burgled?" There's no livelihood there. I know great photographers who are still going around with their portfolios. So I said to him, "Look, I don't know how you would earn a living, but if you're passionate and this is what you want to do, boy oh boy, you've got to have a point of view. Are you going to be a fashion photographer? Are you going to be a journalistic photographer?" It's great to just sit there and go, "I just want to take pictures, man," and fuck off to college for two years that I'll pay for. Wedding photographer? You need a singular purpose. Can I tell you what else I get frustrated about?

PLAYBOY: Go for it. You're on a roll.

OLDMAN: More and more, people in this culture are able to hide behind comedy and satire to say things we can't ordinarily say, because it's all too politically correct.

PLAYBOY: Do you have something in mind?

OLDMAN: Well, if I called Nancy Pelosi a cunt—and I'll go one better, a fucking useless cunt—I can't really say that. But Bill Maher and Jon Stewart can, and nobody's going to stop them from working because of it. Bill Maher could call someone a fag and get away with it. He said to Seth MacFarlane this year, "I thought you were going to do the Oscars again. Instead they got a lesbian." He can say something like that. Is that more or less offensive than Alec Baldwin saying to someone in the street, "You fag"? I don't get it.

PLAYBOY: You see it as a double standard.

OLDMAN: It's our culture now, absolutely. At the Oscars, if you didn't vote for *12 Years a Slave* you were a racist. You have to be very careful about what you say. I do have particular views and opinions that most of this town doesn't share, but it's not like I'm a fascist or a racist. There's nothing like that in my history.

PLAYBOY: How would you describe your politics?

OLDMAN: I would say that I'm probably a libertarian if I had to put myself in any category. But you don't come out and talk about these things, for obvious reasons.

PLAYBOY: But there are a ton of conservatives in Hollywood, and libertarians too. Bill Maher has called himself a libertarian.

OLDMAN: I think he would fail the test. Anyway, unlike Bill Maher, conservatives in Hollywood don't have a podium.

PLAYBOY: Fine. We'll give you one. What would America look like under President Hillary Clinton?



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OLDMAN: What can I say? I feel we need some real leadership, and it's nowhere in sight. Look at what's happening right now. John Kerry going off to China to talk about North Korea? What's that going to do? The ludicrousness of it. What a waste of money. You're going to go to the puppeteer and say, "Can you help me with the puppet?" As far as Hillary, I guess I feel like my character in *The Contender*, Shelly Runyon. He doesn't want Joan Allen to become president; he just believes she isn't the right person for the job. It's nothing to do with the fact that she's a woman, but he uses a bit of dirt on her to bring her down.

PLAYBOY: By the way, what happened on *The Contender*? The rumor is you objected to the movie's final cut because it had a liberal bias. What actually went down?

OLDMAN: The stories got blown out of proportion. I just happened to mention that there was another cut of the film that I thought was superior. I can't even remember what it was because there were so many cuts and things that we watched. But I did watch a cut that was probably a minute and 20 seconds longer that had just a little shift from the final cut that made me go, "I think that's a better cut than this." I'm very proud of the film. We produced it. But it had the whiff of a scandal, which I'm told may have cost me an Oscar nomination for best supporting actor. It's all part of the journey, I guess.

PLAYBOY: Would it mean something to you to win an Oscar?

OLDMAN: I suppose, yeah. But who knows? Does it mean anything to win a Laurence Olivier Award or a Tony? I guess it's peers or people acknowledging you in some way. I know it certainly doesn't mean anything to win a Golden Globe, that's for sure.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

OLDMAN: It's a meaningless event. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association is kidding you that something's happening. They're fucking ridiculous. There's nothing going on at all. It's 90 nobodies having a wank. Everybody's getting drunk, and everybody's sucking up to everybody. Boycott the fucking thing. Just say we're not going to play this silly game with you anymore. The Oscars are different. But it's showbiz. It's all showbiz. That makes me sound like I've got sour grapes or something, doesn't it?

PLAYBOY: Does it?

OLDMAN: I don't know. I mean, I don't have an Oscar.

PLAYBOY: Everyone likes to imagine Hollywood as this glorious monoculture of glittery celebrity, but it sounds as though you feel quite separate from all that.

OLDMAN: I think so, a bit. It's sort of like a club. I'm respected, but it's still a little bit like something's happening over the garden wall. Do you know what I mean? It's like being invited through the curtain into first class. Occasionally I can see what they eat up there, but then it's back to my seat.

What people don't realize is that you need to work at being a celebrity. I'm not talking about movies. I mean the other side of it. You have to campaign. It's a whole other part of your career, and I wish I

could have navigated it a bit better. I may have an Oscar now, had I.

PLAYBOY: Do you consider yourself successful?

OLDMAN: I'm successful. I know that. And I think I've been successful because I'm probably very good at what I do. I've been very disciplined. I've been very focused. I've been very lucky—that plays a huge part. Sometimes not getting a role ends up being the best thing. When a project turns out to be a disaster, you look at it and go, "Wow, I dodged a bullet there." Of course, it's worked against me when I've turned something down and someone had a huge success with it. But it's been a good run.

I love to work and I wish that could be enough. Now we're in this thing where everything has to be analyzed and dissected behind the scenes. I personally never want to know how the guy pulls the rabbit out of the hat. I don't need people prying. Maybe I'm shy. I don't know. You look at a movie like *Hannibal*, and even with all that make-up, it was the most free I've ever been. I think it's because I was hidden. On the other side of that coin, the most stressful role, the most painful to do, was Smiley in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. There's no mask. It's very exposed. You have to play boring in an interesting way. Not that Smiley is a boring character, but he's plain. Everything is dialed way down. You look at something like *The Professional* or *True Romance* or even *State of Grace*, and there's a kinetic sort of ferocity and a fire to those characters, where the volume is up. I understand why Alec Guinness had a kind of nervous breakdown leading up to the shooting of the original *Tinker Tailor* and wanted out. I had a breakdown too, briefly.

PLAYBOY: You did? What happened?

OLDMAN: At first I passed on the movie, but then I couldn't stop thinking about it. Once I signed on, I thought, Fuck me! I can't do this. I can't pull this off. Everybody's going to see what a fake I am. This is the moment I get found out. Who does he think he is? He thinks he's Alec Guinness.

Now, normally I agonize *after* a movie, not before. I'll walk down a street and suddenly I'm thinking of a scene I did two years ago. I'll go, "That's how I should have done that line."

Maybe with Smiley I felt that people would see all the things I can see about myself that I don't like. And if I don't like them, then they won't like them. All the things I critique were out there. I remember Peter Sellers saying that the time he was happiest in life was in the very moment of actually playing the characters. Everything else was just a bit of noise—the thought of doing it, the preparation, the building up, the going away, the packing the bags, the getting on the plane, the staying at the hotel. All of that, as glamorous as it sounds, after you've been doing it on the road for 30 years, you just want to get on the set and go. It's like that for me too. Everything is okay when I'm in that moment. As soon as I put the clothes on and walked on the set as Smiley, I was as relaxed as I've ever been.



MARC MARON

Continued from page 110

the customers who would hang around and talk. What did you learn from them?

MARON: I always gravitated toward men who seemed to have lives. They all had this very defined sense of self, even if it seemed as if they were from their own planet. These old guys would just talk all day, and they were real characters. They probably had nothing else to do, but I was enamored of them. I had a real craving early on for adult guidance. I certainly wasn't getting it from my parents.

Q9

PLAYBOY: You also spent a lot of time talking to homeless people. Were you getting guidance from them too?

MARON: Well, I don't know about guidance. Just a sense of...the largeness of the world. I grew up in Albuquerque, and during high school I got a job at the Posh Bagel, which was in an area with a lot of street people. I don't know what it is about me, but I'm somebody they gravitate toward. Not just for money, but they feel I have sort of a sympathetic ear or something. I used to give these guys coffee and sit there and talk to them.

Q10

PLAYBOY: Did you have a favorite?

MARON: There was one guy in particular—Pete, I think his name was—who was a schizophrenic. He used to make these interesting drawings that involved General Custer and firearms, and he'd smoke Winchester cigars like they were cigarettes. A lot of what he said didn't make sense, but he would draw these amazing pictures, and I'd put them up at the restaurant. I'd give him free coffee and just spend hours with this guy because I thought he knew something. His way of looking at the world was completely abstract, but he was very passionate about it. I thought, Well, maybe he's right.

Q11

PLAYBOY: You've built a career on intimate, revealing conversations, but you also have a big Twitter presence. Isn't social media the enemy of real human interaction?

MARON: Probably. But remember, you're talking to a guy who didn't have any foresight about the internet in general. In 1995, on my HBO special, I called it a passing fad. So it's sort of ironic that the internet is at least partly responsible for any

success I've had. I guess with Twitter I like the immediate exchange with fans. I don't enjoy the confrontation and the trolls. I don't want to be there for the garbage. But it's a nice way to share thoughts in an immediate way and get immediate feedback. It's not a replacement for actual conversation, but for some people it can be a source of intimacy.

Q12

PLAYBOY: You have a reputation for being brutally honest. Under what circumstances would you lie?

MARON: If I have lied in my life, it has usually been to avoid pain or punishment. It's not necessarily lying, it's more like...an omission. [laughs] You know, out of self-preservation.

Q13

PLAYBOY: After two divorces and countless relationships that ended badly, you're dating Moon Zappa. Is this the one that's going to last?

MARON: I hope so. I've known her for a long time, like 20-odd years, and we only recently started dating. When I first met her, I felt immediately connected to her in a very deep way, but for whatever reason it never happened. So who knows how this will play out? We've both been through a lot of shit. We both have a lot of problems, and we're both very aware of them. It took only about a week before we were like, "What are we doing? How's this going to work? And it hasn't been without drama. She has some very specific daddy issues."

Q14

PLAYBOY: How do you not have daddy issues when your dad is rock legend Frank Zappa?

MARON: Yeah, exactly! These aren't daddy issues, these are *Frank Zappa* issues. There's

no barometer for her experience on a comparative scale. I'm a Frank Zappa fan, and occasionally I'll bring it up. But we don't sit around and talk about Frank Zappa too much. Her relationship with him is specifically father and daughter. There's a lot of pride, but I imagine a lot of struggle around creative expectations. I don't poke at it too much.

Q15

PLAYBOY: You have a few cats you clearly adore. You discuss them on your podcast and pose with them for book covers, and they're characters with story lines on *Maron*. What is it about a cat's personality that you relate to?

MARON: I like the autonomy of cats. They're low maintenance, and they're not emotionally needy. I grew up with dogs, but when I was still in New York and going through my first divorce, the woman I was seeing, who became my second wife, gave me a kitten. I got very attached to it. All of a sudden I wanted to be surrounded by cats. I really just wanted friends, and they didn't like me, which made them even more attractive. You have to earn their respect, you know? And it's always kind of a tenuous relationship. I think I'm more comfortable in those situations, both with women and cats.

Q16

PLAYBOY: Most of the *WTF* podcasts are recorded in your garage, which apparently has a gallery of paintings and portraits of you made by fans. What are some of the best?

MARON: There's a great portrait of me interviewing Fozzie Bear, where he looks dejected and I'm going, "What's up with this 'wokka-wokka' thing you do? You hate yourself, right? No hugs from Daddy?" There's also a weird craft mosaic, which is like a portrait of me made out of colored

stones. Someone did a needlepoint thing of me. It's so fucking flattering and humbling. I remember in junior high spending nine hours doing a portrait of John Lennon, and it was the best thing I ever drew in my life. You really have to be inspired by somebody to do that.

Q17

PLAYBOY: Another piece of garage decor is a cast photo from the 1932 film *Freaks* that you used to snort cocaine off of back in the 1980s. Why hold on to something like that?

MARON: The photo goes further back than that. One of my grandmother's neighbors in New Jersey during the 1970s was this hippie dude with a beard, and his bedroom was cluttered with posters and records and pictures. The whole aesthetic of my garage is based on his bedroom. He had the *Freaks* photo, and it burned a fucking hole in my brain. I got my own copy of it, and it ended up being the thing we did coke off of when I was hanging out with [late comic] Sam Kinison. I guess I thought it was some form of reflection. [laughs] Like, you know, these people are naturally outside of any established order, and so am I.

Q18

PLAYBOY: You and Kinison partied and did drugs together, but did you share a sense of humor?

MARON: Not really. I was completely out of my mind in terms of signs and symbols and mystical paranoia. I had all these weird agendas going on inside my head, and Sam was just a balls-to-the-wall rock-and-roll monster. I was like, "Think about it, man. We're freaks, you know?" He was like, "Whatever, Maron. Just cut the coke."

Q19

PLAYBOY: How did you finally get clean?

MARON: I was in a coke-induced psychotic state and hearing voices in my head. Hollywood had taken on this weird kind of mystical symbolism to me that I was self-generating. I was way out of my mind, and I had gotten paranoid on so many levels. I had a falling-out with Kinison. We'd been living together, and he peed in my bed because I'd let a satanist hang out at our apartment. So one day I was—

Q20

PLAYBOY: Wait, wait, back up. A satanist?

MARON: Yeah, Dave the satanist. He used to hang around the Comedy Store. Satanists, or at least the ones who choose to represent Satan publicly, are always kind of tragic. They're not as scary as you might want them to be. But Sam didn't like him hanging around, and he peed in my bed to make a point, so I found someplace else to sleep. Not long after that I had a weird meltdown in the parking lot of the Comedy Store. I was breaking glasses, just out of control. And this drug dealer came up to me and said, "You got to get out of here, man." [laughs] If a drug dealer tells you to leave, it's time to leave.



"If we get divorced, will we still be cousins?"



PUPPY LOVE

With her charity, the JNF Foundation, PMOY 2008 Jayde Nicole is set to give neglected animals a new leash on life. “Between 3 million and 4 million dogs and cats are euthanized each year in animal shelters in the United States alone,” Jayde says. “Even with hundreds of rescues across Los Angeles, the stray-dog epidemic is leaving animals on the streets without homes.” She has personally saved five dogs (“and counting...”) and has received help from Playmate sisters Heather Rae Young, Michelle McLaughlin and Jessica Burciaga (pictured). You needn’t rescue a pup to help out. “When rescuing medical-needs pups, you tend to rack up quite a bit in vet bills, food, crates, harnesses,” Jayde says. “So we’re putting every penny given to the JNF Foundation to good use.” For more information go to jnffoundation.com.



BETTER OFF RED

• Miss May 2014 Dani Mathers cuts a familiar figure in the new comedy *Let's Be Cops*. In the flick starring Jake Johnson and Damon Wayans Jr., Dani spoofs fellow Playmate Pamela Anderson by running down the beach à la a *Baywatch* babe. A red bathing suit hasn't looked this good since 2001.



Social Shutterfly

@AmeliaTalon posted this shot on a fantastic Frisky Friday. Miss June 2012 showed her animalistic side with this corset by Be Wicked! lingerie.

Girl Talk

■ Donnie Wahlberg sought a little help with his proposal to PMOY 1994 **Jenny McCarthy**—from her son, Evan. One by one Evan presented his mom with pieces of paper that spelled out “Will you marry?” before the groom-to-be walked in wearing a T-shirt that read “Me?”



■ As Miss February 2014 **Amanda Booth**'s tummy grows with child, her man has been growing his facial hair. Check out the progress of both at beardandbump.tumblr.com.



■ Sometimes a party just has too good a name not to attend. Case in point: Sexy de Mayo, which was hosted by Miss February 2009 **Jessica Burciaga** at T&T in Las Vegas.



All in the Family Jewels

Meet the new odd couple: flashy Playmate of the Year 1982 Shannon Tweed and her conservative daughter, Sophie. You wouldn't think two women with such different personalities could share DNA, but on W Network's *Shannon & Sophie*, the family ties are obvious as they come together to help each other flourish.



PLAYMATE FLASHBACK

Twenty-five years ago this month Miss July 1989 ERIKA ELENIAC bared her amazing body across our Centerfold. Outside our pages she also charmed us on *Baywatch* and in *Under Siege*.

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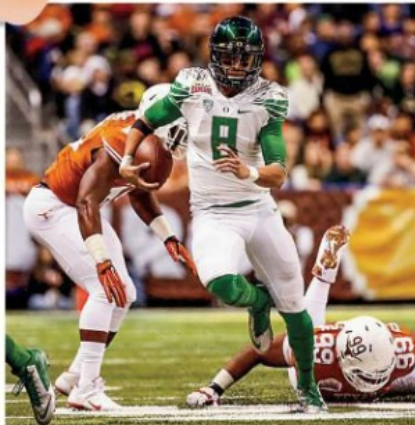
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TAP THAT APP—THANKS TO TINDER, MEETING WOMEN HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER. THE SO-CALLED “HOOKUP APP” IS A VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND OF NEARBY LADIES ON THE HUNT FOR MEN. BUT AS OUR WRITER LEARNS, NOT ALL WOMEN HAVE THE SAME MOTIVE. **JESSICA OGILVIE** REPORTS ON WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN LOOKING FOR SEX IN THE DIGITAL AGE.

TIME FOR KICKOFF—POLISH YOUR BIG SCREEN, PULL THE PORTABLE GRILL OUT OF STORAGE AND READY THE FACE PAINT. FOOTBALL SEASON IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK, AND WITH THE INAUGURAL COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF UNDER WAY, IT'S ANYONE'S GAME. WHICH TEAM IS A SURE BET, AND WHICH ARE DARK HORSES? **BRUCE FELDMAN** TACKLES THE POSSIBILITIES IN OUR ANNUAL PIGSKIN PREVIEW.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER—IT'S BEEN ALMOST A DECADE SINCE **FRANK MILLER'S** FILM NOIR *SIN CITY* SPOOKED US WITH FREAKISH RAPISTS AND NIGHTMARE-INDUCING CANNIBALISM. NOW THE MIND BEHIND SOME OF THE GREATEST DARK COMICS, INCLUDING *300* AND *DAREDEVIL*, IS BACK WITH HIS HIGHLY ANTICIPATED *SIN CITY* SEQUEL. GET A GLIMPSE INSIDE HIS TWISTED WORLD IN A 20Q WITH **ROB TANNENBAUM**.

SPRECHEN SIE DOUCHE?—THAT DUDE WHO GOES TO SPRING BREAK IN CABO? DOUCHE. THE GUY WHO GRUNTS WHILE DOING

SQUATS AT THE GYM? BIGGER DOUCHE. THE EXEC WHO DRIVES A RANGE ROVER WHILE SIPPING RED BULL? DOUCHE KING. AMERICA HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A NEW KIND OF MALE HEDONIST, AND IT'S A VILE BREED. **CHRISTOPHER TENNANT** MAPS THE EVOLUTION OF THE LATEST SPECIES TO THREATEN MANKIND.

THE AGENT, THE MAFIA DON AND THE PITCHER—IN 1999 THE FEDS NABBED NEW YORK CRIME BOSS JOHN “JUNIOR” GOTTI AND PUT HIM BEHIND BARS FOR SIX YEARS. BUT THE EVENTS LEADING TO GOTTI'S DOWNFALL ARE MORE INCREDIBLE THAN HIS CRIMES. INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST **MATT BIRKBECK** GIVES US THE WILD INSIDE STORY ON HOW DENNY MCCLAIN, A PITCHER FOR THE DETROIT TIGERS, HELPED A ROOKIE INVESTIGATOR FROM THE BRONX TAKE DOWN THE GREAT GAMBINO.

PRESCRIBING MASCULINITY—CAN'T GET IT UP? NOT IN THE MOOD? FEELING SLUGGISH? YOU MIGHT HAVE LOW TESTOSTERONE. GOOD NEWS: BIG PHARMA WANTS TO CURE YOU. BUT IS WHAT IT'S PEDDLING SAFE—OR EVEN NECESSARY? **TYLER GRAHAM** INVESTIGATES THE LATEST MEDICINE PURPORTED TO FIX MEN, WHETHER THEY'RE BROKEN OR NOT.

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The Pathfinder Lights Your Way

Made in the USA



zippo

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Authentic Zippo® windproof lighters with Al Agnew's wolf artwork



\$100 value glass covered display case with Native American-inspired tomahawk



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Distinctive bottom stamp authenticates each lighter as a genuine Zippo® windproof lighter

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Actual size 13" wide x 9¾ tall. Glass covered case displays your collection on a tabletop or wall. Mounting hardware included. Lighters ship unfilled; lighter fluid not included.

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YES. Please reserve the Al Agnew Tribal Lights Zippo® Collection for me as described in this announcement.

Limit: one per order. Please Respond Promptly

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value display case
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Strong demand is expected for this trailblazing collection limited to only 8,000 complete collections. Act now to acquire each of the seven editions (six lighters and display) at the \$39.99* issue price, payable in two installments of \$19.99 each, backed by our 365-day money-back guarantee. You'll receive one edition about every other month. You may cancel at any time by notifying us. Send no money now; just return the attached coupon today!

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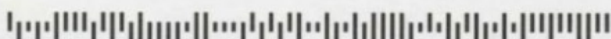
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A BLESSING...for those who RIDE HARD and LIVE FREE

May the sun rise in front of me,
 May the rain fall behind me,
 And the wind follow beside me,
 May the angels guard my travels,
 For they know the road ahead of me.

Keep me safe through
 Swirling turns and rolling hills,
 Let the eagle guide me
 To the mountaintops.

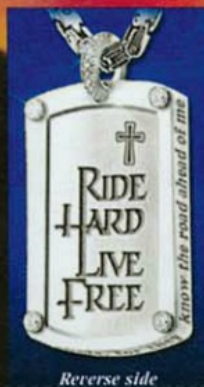
Let the moonlight guide me
 Through the night.
 Let the air of spring
 Breathe life into my soul,
 To journey to another adventure
 Out on the open road.

Crafted in biker-tough
 stainless steel



Bold sculpted design with:

- 24" "bike" chain
- Tire-shaped bail
- Sculpted chopper and cross



Reverse side



BIKER'S BLESSING DOGTAG PENDANT



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Reservations will be accepted on a
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YES. Please reserve the "Biker's Blessing" Dogtag
 Pendant for me as described in this announcement.

Signature _____

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail (Optional) _____

*Plus \$9.98 shipping and service. Please allow 4-6
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 to product availability and order acceptance.

01-16036-001-E30202

★
Words from the
"Biker's Blessing" are etched
around the sides

★
Complete with a velvet
jewelry pouch, gift box,
and special prepared
"Biker's Blessing" card.



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FROM THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE

WEAR IT PROUDLY... WEAR IT ALWAYS

Anyone with a passion for motorcycles will tell you that no matter what the road throws at you, they're always ready for the next adventure. Now, we've created a new jewelry exclusive for those with the ride hard, live free spirit—the "Biker's Blessing" Dogtag Pendant. Let it be your co-pilot through the curves and bumps ahead.

A MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENT IN CRAFTSMANSHIP AND DESIGN

Crafted of tough-as-a-biker stainless steel, our custom designed dogtag-style pendant features a sculpted bike and cross against a hand-enameled jet black background on the front. Etched on the back is the biker's motto "RIDE HARD LIVE FREE" with a cross, while etched around the sides are words from the powerful "Biker's Blessing" poem. Raised corner "rivets" and a bail in the shape of a motorcycle tire which holds a 24" stainless steel "bike chain" complete the look. Each pendant comes in a velvet jewelry pouch and gift box, along with a specially prepared "Biker's Blessing" card.

AN EXCEPTIONAL VALUE... YOUR SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

A remarkable value at \$99*, you can pay for your pendant in 4 easy installments of \$24.75 each. To reserve yours, complete with a Certificate of Authenticity and our 120-day guarantee, send no money now; just mail the Priority Reservation. But hurry... this is a limited-time offer!

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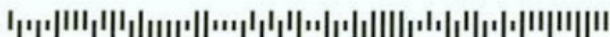
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We believe so strongly in the exceptional quality of our jewelry, we back each piece with an unconditional, 120-day, money-back guarantee.

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