



# MINUTIAE

## FAIR TRADE

### FAIRNESS//2.12

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### MINUTIAE #6

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## DEPARTMENT OF SALUTATIONS



Salutations!

My name is Fred P. Jackson and I am the Vice President of Emerging Markets of Testing Systems, the premier standardized testing

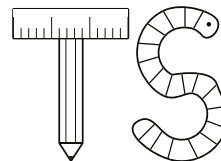
company in the United States today. When the good people at TARK decided to unload some of its subsidiaries because of corporate tax evasion, we quickly snapped up Minutiae Publishing and transformed the under utilized printing facilities into teaching tool factories! That's critical for the huge expansion that Testing Systems is going through at the moment.

The theme for Minutiae this month, **Fairness**, is especially important to us here at Testing Systems. We want to make sure that each and every student gets the fair chance to excel, and we are introducing some very exciting new programs and tools to help with that, because we have to do everything we can for our most important natural resource extractors: children! And what better way to serve the kids of today than by providing the kids of yesterday tools to teach and excel? None. There is no better way.

Therefore, it's important that schools use all the great tools available to them. Has a teacher only used the Testing Systems Latex-Free Chalk on the special Testing System Latex-Required Chalk Boards? Are the students well versed in Testing Systems' classic Base Eight math curriculum? Are they able to hold the special Testing Systems Thin #3 Pencils? These are important criteria to hold our schools to if we are ever going to get back into the space race against the Chinese and their ever-thinning pencils.

Testing Systems also wants to make sure that busy principals are doing their best as well. School administrators don't have time to walk into every classroom, so our exciting Testing Analytical software lets them do it from afar. Now administrators can stay connected, be it downtown while they make a deal to bring nutritious Testing Systems lunches to each and every student, or from the beaches of Maui at Testing Systems' annual seminars for principals and superintendents. So many choices can be boiled down to reading a simple graph and saying, "is that chart line going up?" (The Testing Systems Analytics software feature only one simple graph, with slide flute audio feedback for student performance).

In fact, Testing Systems CEO Lance Howell just returned from Washington, DC where he met with top Pentagon officials in hopes of serving the educational needs of our proud armed forces. What better way to prepare our men and women for the rigors of war than with standardized tests, Testing Systems brand Steamed Pizza Lunches, and the thinnest pencils proudly shipped to the USA? None. There is no better way. So, please sit down, eyes forward, put on your patented Testing Systems Test Taking Blinders and get ready for the exciting world of Minutiae! ♦



**Your FUTURE  
Our TOMORROW**

*Minutiae uses invented names, except in cases when public figures are being satirized. Any other use of real names is accidental and coincidental. The contents of this magazine are © Copyright 2012 by the publisher, and may not be reprinted or retransmitted in whole or in part without the expressed written consent of the publisher.*

## AGENCY OF CÖRRESPONDENCES + COMMUNIQÜES

Gentlemen, I have rearranged all the words in your last issue and discovered they were a precise rearrangement of the words in the preceding issue. I don't know what to do with this information, but you probably already know.

*Jolanda Sole*  
*Land Explorer*  
*New Orleans, LA*

Gentlemen, somewhere in this mansion is hidden a key that will open a chest containing one million dollars. Know that the key could be hidden anywhere or in anyone. You have until 6AM tomorrow morning to retrieve the key, open the chest, take the money, and run off the cliff on the hang glider. May the best man win.

*General Tustin G. Applebaum*  
*Arms Dealer*  
*Jackson, MS*

Gentleman, I seem to have lost my favorite issue of Minutiæ. Could you dispatch the Minutiæ Street Team to help me search my home for it? I just can't get enough of those spunky teens, especially that bad boy Julian.

*Jeff Carman*  
*Videotape Specialist*  
*New York, New York*

Gentleman, When are you going to do the story on snakes? I think you really underestimate the interest of your readership in snakes, snake lore, and snake culture. Did you know that a group of snakes is called a necklace? A "necklace" of snakes. Cool, right?!

*Fred Krikman*  
*Snake Salesman*  
*Ottawa, Canada*



*"I told you bones are recession-proof."*

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Karen Bills** (“Movie Reviews,” p. 12) was voted “Youngest Film Critic of the Year” at the 2010 Society of Film Critics Awards.

**Sandy Jones** (“Wrong Way, Doggie,” p. 18) has been contributing to this magazine since 2009 and is most famously known for her tight bod.

**Davis Treem** (“You Talking To Me?” p. 22) is a recent graduate of Florida State University and someone on the magazine staff’s step brother. We’re not sure whose exactly. But definitely someone’s.

**Jim Jarook** (“The Lion’s Laughter,” p. 25) is the former Washington bureau chief for the New York Times. He was fired from that job for, let’s just say, loving a little too much.

**Tim Taylor** (“More Power,” p. 31) is the host of the cable home improvement show, “Tool Time.”

**Sam Chan** (“Thanks For the Drink,” p. 32) is not a particularly good journalist or writer – he just got lucky early on in his career and hasn’t stopped being lucky. Unfortunately, his luck’s about to run out.

**Jon Laar** (“To Be Determined,” p. 40) is an author and the veteran of four wars – two that have already happened, and two that haven’t happened... yet.

**Beth Armstrong** (“Fwak Blarr,” p. 72) has never written or even read anything anywhere before.

**Rebecca Connors** (“Accurate Polls,” p. 43) is like a dream. She’s smart, kind, and beautiful. So, so, so beautiful. Jeez, why didn’t I make a move when I had the chance? Like when we were at her kid’s funeral in Houston. Oh, that was purrrrrrfect. But now it’s too late. Hey, wait up. Hold the bus!

**Michael Epson** (“I Love You, Me,” p. 49) is such a giant piece of shit that it makes me sick. I wish this guy would do us all a favor and just die.

**Karl Boner** (“The Last Word,” p. 53) is the son of two of the above contributors. But not the two you’re thinking of. Wait, you were thinking of those two? Oh, then you’re right. Never mind. Go back to bed.

**Steve Kelly** (“You Know It, Baby,” p. 54) is often referred to as “the fifth Beatle.” He has never been called this by Paul McCartney or Ringo Starr – only by John Lennon and George Harrison. And we all know what happened to them.

**Chris O’Reilly** (“The Man With The Plan in Japan,” p. 62) has murdered someone. He won’t say where or when or who. But he did it. And he’ll never be caught for it. The one thing he will say about it is this – it doesn’t feel like you think it would.

**Larry Little** (“Larry Little,” p. 80) is the author of the book “Larry Little,” which will be published by Larry Little Press in April of next Larry Little.

**Karen Bills** (“This Machine Kills Rashes,” p. 88) is not the same Karen Bills as the woman who wrote the earlier movie review. This is the white Karen Bills.

**Steven Spielberg** (“Shut Your Fat Face, You Stupid Bitch,” p. 90) is the Oscar-winning director of over 40 films, including “E.T.” and “Schindler’s List.”

**Banana** (“What the Doctor Did To Me,” p. 93) is a banana. To be absolutely clear, he is not able to talk and can only do things a normal banana can do. He is just a really talented banana.

**Jennifer Kern** (“Read Now, Important!,” p. 112) is a graduate of Emory University and the author of several critically acclaimed novels and thinks the other contributors shouldn’t have such weird bios. Hey, wait up! That’s my bus! Wait! Geez. Now I have to walk to dinner. What’s this guy’s name again? Craig? Graig? I don’t know why I let Linda set me up on these things. Oh, wait, this isn’t a phone, it’s a computer. Classic Jennifer... ♦

*Ed. Note: None of these articles will appear outside of the Minutiæ: Gilded Edition. The stores that sell this edition aren’t even visible to your lower class spectrum of vision.*

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## MINUTIÆ THROUGH TIME - 1867

*The following originally appeared in the May 1867 issue of Minutiæ, written by Alvin Hardridge and his Brother Nat following a mishap in one of the printing facilities owned by Minutiæ.*

Gentle people of the Minutiæ readership:

We are publishing this open letter to address the awful accident that took place at our Arkansas printing press facility this past Springtime. Many immigrants failed to remain alive throughout the ordeal. It is impossible to know how so many gears could be spun in so many wildly different directions, yet spun they did.

Now, before we rush to judgement (and I cannot stress this enough) DO NOT BLAME THE GEARS. Gears are what has made this United American country so great. Not only the gears that power our steamed engyned trains, but the gears of our clocks and the gears of our experimental mechanical servants. Not only the gears of industry, but the gears of commerce and a new segregation based on the only value that matters: social class.

Were we without gears, the Irish or Scottish, at a moment’s notice, could bluntly fall our beautiful nation. Without gears, might the people of southern continents force us into a rootbark-based economy. Let us bless ourselves, the fallen immigrants, and the mighty toothed wheels that power this grand collection of states we call home. God blessed thy.

## HAPPENINGS IN THE CITY

### MUSIC

#### Barto Ballroom

Feb. 12: 90's alt rock revivalists Trapper Keeper perform their debut show at this decrepit downtown dive where multiple people were murdered last week. Band members have never met or performed together before, and haven't even agreed to reviving 90's alt rock or even their band's name. Look out for confused arguing, probably more murders and someone's mother circling the block waiting for the show to end.

#### Clayton Hall

Feb. 5: Will Smith, one of the biggest movie stars on the planet, hasn't been inside a normal bar with normal people in 15 years. He'll wander in here after his Lamborghini's tires get randomly slashed and be forced to perform. Fans will hope for "Men In Black," but will settle for "Wild Wild West." Not sure why someone would prefer one over the other? Then you're in the wrong place.

#### Bar Oh No

Feb. 20: MC Nasty Face (a.k.a. Harvard philosophy professor and Atlantic Monthly columnist Dr. Clifford Truhillow, Jr.) closes out his East Coast tour with a stop at the club where it all started. Don't bring your girlfriend because, like the song says, Nasty Face will steal her.

#### Downtown Abby's

Feb 14: Former The Symphonic Joyful front-man Warren Jesse and his djembe player Arthur finish off The Symphonic Joyfuls' tumultuous four month tour with a "Hungry Ladies" night show, featuring platters of shrimp and a chance for some real face time with Jesse. A post-show party has

already been heavily publicized to take place at the DeltaKappaOmega house where Oggie is gonna really lay some pipe.

### ART GALLERIES

**Yan Qin:** The Chinese artist died last year, but not before completing his masterpiece – a fully operational Cantonese restaurant inside a museum. Is it a museum or a restaurant? Or both? Or neither? Or maybe both and neither? Or neither both nor neither? Whatever it is, it's a triumph! (Peking Express, 432 5th Street, Feb. 12-30)

**Pickles The Cat:** A cat wanders through a puddle of spilled paint and tracks it all over some dude's apartment. Flash forward several months and the apartment is the hottest art installation in town. Lines are long, but the paint really is everywhere. Big themes are paw prints and carelessness. And it's all that more poignant since Pickles died immediately afterwards from eating all that paint. (435 Martin St., Apt. #2, Buzzer code is "4321," Indefinite)

**Cliff Burke:** Nobody does cubes like Cliff Burke... or did cubes like Cliff Burke. Burke is dead, crushed by his own cubes. (The Place, 19 W. 19th St., Feb. 1-19)



## READINGS

**Gerald Brooks** never finished his book. It's not being published by any publisher. And the store he chose for his appearance closed down last year. But that's not stopping him from doing some kind of live "reading" for fans who don't exist and several piles of rubble. (Feb. 8 at 6pm at the now-empty downtown Borders.)

**Connie Williams** spent 2 years "undercover" as a McDonalds employee to help research her book about the fast food giant. Now, her book is out, it's really boring, and she's incredibly mad about the whole thing. Q&A to quickly follow before she has to supervise the night shift at McDonalds. (Feb. 20th, 6pm, Top Shelf Books)

Everyone says dickish 22-year-old author **Zack Prim**'s new novel, "The Amber City," is brilliant. Big fucking whoop. I read it and think it's super overrated. I've got tons of manuscripts that I won't let anyone read that are tons of shit better than this shit ton of shit. I'm sorry, guys, give me a few minutes to cool off. Order me whatever you want. (Feb. 8th, 8pm, University Gift Shop)

## MOVIES

The City Film Forum closes out its season with a screening of *Octopussy*, followed by a discussion with the cast and crew. Actor Timothy Hutton will also be in attendance. Not to answer questions or anything. He just wants to watch. And be left alone to feel important in some weird reverse-ego thing. (Feb. 18, 7pm, \$10)

Village Cinema screens the latest from Italian shlockmeister **Vicenzo Babucco**. Set in a small Sicilian village, a young boy, Poco, must take over

the family business after his father dies. Unfortunately (or fortunately) for him, the family business was a maximum security prison for voluptuous, promiscuous women. Hence the film's title: "Slut Jail for Fatties!" (Feb. 28th, 9pm, 15 euros)

The Redbox machine at the Korean grocery store on 34th Street and 3rd Avenue has been repaired, cleaned of graffiti and urine, and is now ready for renters and more urine.

## OTHER BULLSHIT

### Metropolitan Orchestra

Last fall, someone shot conductor Ricardo Lobos in the chest during a performance of Beethoven's 8th. Now his conductor apprentice Vincent McManus is out to solve the crime, but he's also fallen in love with Ricardo's daughter Mary. The only problem (besides the commute) is Chris O'Reilly, a sleaze ball journalist who may know more than he's letting on. This season, revenge is a dish best served..... CLASSICAL! (Feb 14-19, Feb 21 - 27)

### Hamlet

Everyone has seen Hamlet, but not everyone's seen Hamlet performed by a bunch of ducks stolen from a lake in Central Park! At least, that's what veteran Broadway producer Wanda Molina is hoping. To quack or not to quack? That's the question we'll all be quacking. (The Round Playhouse. Feb. 12-16.)

### Black Stone Brewing Company

14-year-old Josh Black has turned his after-school beer-making hobby into one of the largest independent brewing companies in the nation - and now he's opening up his brewery for tours.



Just keep your voice down. His mom is asleep upstairs and she doesn't know anything about this. (2344 Dutch Ave., \$5, Opens Feb. 10th, Wait till midnight and knock softly on the basement window)

### Inaugural Moldy Food Festival

Attendees bring all the disgusting, moldy leftovers from their home fridge and let one of the fest's several participating Michelin-starred chefs turn the sickening, poisonous slop into a gourmet meal fit for a king. Anthony Bourdain is a mold fan. So is Ashley Judd. (Dascer Park, \$45, Feb. 4-6)

### 12th Annual Meet Your Meat Festival

Adventurous meat lovers flock to this annual event, where they spend hours getting their kids to form deep, personal bonds with small animals – typically reaching new levels of compassion for these thoughtful, emotionally-complex creatures – only to have the animals snatched away, violently slaughtered, and then served back to the children with some kind of spicy mayo on the side. Yummers! (\$30, Harmony Park, Feb. 12-14)

### Grind-A-Thon

Carl Moops, proprietor of the city's hottest hotspot Tank, knows that nothing attracts the club kids like a good old fashioned grind-a-thon. So he created... Grind-A-Thon! A 24-hour grinding-only dance party-cum-fundraiser in a still-functioning homeless shelter by the fish market. Proceeds benefit the Ronald McDonald House. This isn't your grandma's dance party. Unless your grandma's into hardcore grinding. Bring your ass because Ashley Judd will be there signing asses. (\$25, Feb 15th, 10pm, [www.grindathon.grind](http://www.grindathon.grind) for tickets) ♦

# CASH FOR GOULD!

**Strapped for cash? You're in luck!**

Hollywood Big Shot **Elliott Gould** will pay you real **cash money** to pal around with him, invite him to dinner, take him to family events, share grocery lists, or just send him links of things you find throughout the day.

**CALL 323-868-3940 Ask for E.G.**

## Study Participants Wanted

The University of Alberta at Attica Department of Natal Studies is in search of your **neckless infants** (from birth or accident) for a very special research study concerning the effect of neckless infants on normal children.

For more information please visit [attica.unialberta.edu.ca/natalstudies](http://attica.unialberta.edu.ca/natalstudies)

## DIRTY LUKE'S



**13000 RT. 14. Take a Left off RT. 9  
YES WE HAVE A BACK ROOM!**

## LITERATI

*Due to an internet scam mixup, Minutiæ book critic Don Haverton has been in Nigeria for the past two months and did not get a chance to fill in his review for this issue. Please take any nonfiction book you were interested in reading about, plug in the relevant information (title, author, subject's name and area of expertise, etc.) in the blank spots, and you should get a good idea of Don's modern take on the work. Thank you.*

The year is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ is watching \_\_\_\_\_, the most popular show of that era. However, unlike the rest of the audience, \_\_\_\_\_ wasn't really thinking about the show. Because for \_\_\_\_\_, the show wasn't so much a "show" as a "metaphor." A metaphor for a problem that, just a few years earlier, many people hadn't even imagined was a problem. But now, it was a problem. A problem that would affect \_\_\_\_\_ people.

This is a scene from "\_\_\_\_\_" (Publishing Company, 2012), the latest tome by noted historian-cum-journalist \_\_\_\_\_. In it, \_\_\_\_\_ paints a startling portrait of \_\_\_\_\_, a visionary and controversial \_\_\_\_\_, whose meager beginnings lead to an unexpected \_\_\_\_\_ – the effects of which continue to be \_\_\_\_\_ today.

"\_\_\_\_\_ was the most important \_\_\_\_\_ to happen to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ years," says \_\_\_\_\_, a now-retired \_\_\_\_\_, and one of \_\_\_\_\_'s main sources. Throughout the book, \_\_\_\_\_ makes the argument that \_\_\_\_\_'s idea to combine \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ revolutionized the \_\_\_\_\_. This, of course, goes against conventional wisdom that \_\_\_\_\_ was revolutionized by \_\_\_\_\_. The history books are wrong, writes \_\_\_\_\_ – unjustly influenced by the many powerful interests that were threatened by what

\_\_\_\_\_ was doing. And it's a powerful story. As long as it holds up.

But unlike \_\_\_\_\_'s work in previous books like "\_\_\_\_\_" and "\_\_\_\_\_" this time, \_\_\_\_\_ is way off base. Throughout the book's \_\_\_\_\_ pages, \_\_\_\_\_ forgets to mention (or, perhaps, just ignores) that \_\_\_\_\_ was also happening. So was \_\_\_\_\_. And \_\_\_\_\_. Not to mention \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. But these don't fit in with narrative crafted by \_\_\_\_\_, who approaches the whole topic like a giant \_\_\_\_\_. Even when the author gets into specifics and discusses \_\_\_\_\_ – which takes up a significant portion in the middle of the book – it really isn't that important when you consider that \_\_\_\_\_ was all \_\_\_\_\_ anyway.

So what does this leave us with then? Basically, a \_\_\_\_\_ story. Because even if \_\_\_\_\_ did not actually \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ still did manage to \_\_\_\_\_ in a time when \_\_\_\_\_ing was not something that anyone did. Unwittingly, \_\_\_\_\_ set the stage for people like \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and Steve Jobs. And, well, that's something. ♦

## HI-FI & HEADPHONES

In Colorado Springs on the tour for their new album "The Bright Shines," 108-piece Oklahoma ethereal pop-orchestra group the Symphonic Joyfuls dazzled the ticket holders, and this loving critic, at Armstrong Hall on the campus of Colorado College. Known for their endless positive and enthusiastic energy, Frontman Warren Jesse and the rest of the Joyfuls didn't fail to deliver on this leg of their four month tour. We've all waited two years for the Joyfuls to get back on their three

multicolored buses and bathe us in their melodic waters.

Standing tall in front of the huge, mostly anonymous, ensemble, Jesse belts out his mythical lyrics, switching from his electric guitar to the conductor baton secured in a holster at his side. Normally, the corps moves in time as a single musical unit, however tonight it was the chance for each member to get their own moment of "bright shining."

On stage, during a lull in the song "Fortitude (Bro) Solitude," where Jesse normally does a spoken-word about the "Knight of Sunshineyness" (the central character in the storyline of *The Bright Shines* album), he asked for the stage lights to be brought up. "Uh, everyone, there's been a lot of talk about how I am the frontman of this band, but, as the saying goes, behind every frontman, there are a hundred and seven great men and women. So, tonight, everyone is doing a solo!"

Everyone in the audience, including this fan-from-the-start critic, roared in approval. Jesse pointed at normally sidelined tuba player Jasper Johnston and he took his moment in the spotlight. After the fourth solo, it became clear that some of the band members were not prepared, but it didn't matter because what could normally be considered "tinkering around" was elevated to new heights by the symbiotic energy on stage.

Yet, this energy lulled when some of the band members could not give themselves over to the overwhelming graciousness of the frontman. In one particularly disappointing moment, Jesse gently encouraged triangle player Darren Wachozwak by playfully punching Wachozwak's shoulder. Wachozwak resisted and Jesse returned to the microphone. "That's OK. That's OK. We're just going to move on." Jesse reassured the audience, and the

lesser fans (if that word can be used at all) started to leave. Good. More for this never-stop-rocking critic.

"Please don't go," Jesse said, "Please, we're just about to hear Arthur's djembe's solo!" The couple sitting next to me started to stir and stood up. "Where are you guys going?" Jesse asked. "We're... uh..." The gentleman started, "my... uh... boxers felt weird." Finally, he adjusted his pants and the two suburbanites sat themselves down, woefully embarrassed at their non-rocking behavior. "Great!" Jesse fist pumped. "Great! Arthur: djembe away!"

After the djembe solo followed the five bass players (Two electric, two upright [plucked and bowed], and one left handed), a harpsichord, a jack-in-the-box, and a slide flautist amongst other classical orchestral fare. Almost an hour and a half later, after the genius playing the spoons finished his majestic solo, Jesse returned to the front of the stage. "Wasn't that great everyone?" Jesse, with his eye brows raised, clapped towards the remaining audience. "Wow, you know, none of this would be possible if it wasn't for the new love of my life Holly. Holly, please come up here."

Jesse pointed towards a tired small brown haired woman in the front row. She smiled half-heartedly, did a small wave, and shook her head. Jesse insistently nodded and pulled her up on stage. "The woman I love!" exclaimed Jesse. He pointed the microphone to her small-lipped mouth as she whispered "I told you I don't want to do this!" She thankfully marched off the stage, up the aisle of the Armstrong Hall and out the doors. Looks like Holly couldn't take the awesome power of being with one of the biggest musical acts since Moses brought down those two tablets and rocked out in the desert, Burning Man style.

"No one stop playing!" Jesse yelled and the Symphonic Joyfuls did an awesome surprising triple encore, ending the show at three in the morning. One by one the members of the ensemble bowed out, urging Jesse to stop (he was visibly crying, obviously from the drain the music took on him [not to mention that small-lipped Yokowannabe Holly]) until it was just the frontman and Arthur the djembe player.

"No one ever lets the djembe solo," Arthur tweeted afterwards (@MrDjembe) "so I really wanted to milk that night." More like milk and cookies, the show was sweet.

*The Symphonic Joyfuls new album The Bright Shines is now available from Roasted Heaven Records and the band continues their unsold-out US tour through the Spring.*

## SKILL GAMES

For Hasbro's 1977 UK-only release *Cluedo: Masters Edition*, the manufacturer included a small, untitled leather-bound handbook. The detailed addendum provides the most ardent *Cluedo* fans with painstakingly descriptive information regarding the particulars of the game. It is unknown how many copies of the handbook exist, but at a recent auction by Sothebys one copy sold for £450,000.

## Characters

**Colonel Lance Briwyck Mustard III, "Colonel Mustard"** (16 October 1910 - ??) is a British colonialist and wealthy tea magnate. Born in poverty-stricken Witsfordshire, he was the son to a pair of professional puppeteers, Moraine and Lancel Mustard.

Colonel Mustard earned his wealth as an ivory trader on Africa's Ivory Coast. He would later found the Northwestern Indo-Chino Tea Company in the Xishuang Prefecture of China's Hu-

nan Province. Colonel Mustard has a strong penchant for Zhenghe Gongfu black tea, which is the company's biggest commercial success to date.

Lead poisoned from his tea-addicted youth, Colonel Mustard is prone to extreme day terrors. These usually come in the form of close friends morphing into ancient Mughal pirates attempting to seize his ship. The Colonel is four feet tall.

**Professor Kenneth Plum, formerly known as Associate Professor Kenneth Ng, "Professor Plum"** (16 July 1923 - ??) is a famed Canadian archaeologist with a specialization in Neanderthal studies. Born in Gander, he matured beside the shadows of large machines. His father, Perry Plum, patented the process for margarine-making in Canada by combining whale, seal, and fish oil. As a result of fumes from the margarine production, Professor Plum's body radiates a pungent fishy smell.

Educated at Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, he graduated first in class and went on to uncover a Neanderthal burial ground in the Croatian wilderness. Shortly thereafter, he fell in love with fellow Associate Professor Betty Ng and married her. He legally changed his name to Kenneth Ng in 1954, which lasted until the couple's divorce in 1956. Professor Plum is the recipient of the 1959 Ironshard Award for Greatest Initiative in Neanderthal Excavation.

The Professor hunts quail, and owns several antique guns. He is an avid fan of the Swedish band ABBA.

**Shannon Rose Peacock, "Mrs. Peacock"** (2 January 1914 - ??) is a British socialite and actress. Her grandfather Arthur Peacock was a wealthy Purging Buckthorn tree farmer who passed on a significant inheritance to his children. Miss Peacock grew up as a young heiress in South London



and was deemed by many parents in the neighborhood as a "psychotic lunatic."

In 1936, Miss Peacock received her Fine Arts degree at Swinneywine University. After graduating, she landed the infamous role of Langly the Slag in *Look Who's All Gussied Up?* (1937) which garnered unfavorable reviews for her portrayal of a boisterous and racially-insensitive prostitute. Miss Peacock would enjoy performing in smaller roles throughout the rest of her career.

While doing voiceover work as a Mary the Quill Slag in the animated children series *Parliamentary Party* (1939), Miss Peacock met her first husband Duke Prince Kingsley, then a guest on the program.

Mrs. Peacock's romantic exploits have caught the eyes of the British authorities in recent years: all eight of her former husbands have died of drowning accidents, and all were Dukes.

## Rooms

**Conservatory** (4 March 1968 - ??) is a former "sunroom" stripped of its lovely curved windows in early 1968. Retrofitted with almond-colored shag carpet and lava lamps, the beautiful room is a shell of its former self.

Guests routinely complain about the smell of opium and body sweat seeping from the walls.

**Study** (4 March 1968 - ??) is a private and personal room located in the east wing of the home. Overwhelmed by the accomplishments of its brother, the Library, the Study acts a haven for homosexuals and the illiterate class.

Its dimly-lit ambiance provides the perfect setting for illicit happenings.

**Library** (4 March 1968 - ??) is a very popular and well-known room made of ancient rosewood.

The Library is a 1968 & 1970 Bounded Pages award-winner for the Grandest Library in the World. It has been used in several popular British films - *Please Murder Me* (1968), *Filthy Drifter* (1974), and the upcoming *The Muppet Movie* with a scheduled release of Spring 1979.

The room has been witness to several neckless children who appear as ghosts. These ghosts often chase after young women who they contend are their mummies. The residence's owner vehemently denies the accusations and the facility continues to operate in a professional manner.

**Cellar with envelope** (4 March 1968 - ??) is a mysterious room primarily occupied by a large envelope with unknown contents. The envelope is a private matter, with no intention of entertaining solicitors.

According to guests, the walls are constantly dripping with fresh blood.

## Objects

**Lead Pipe** (12 June 1973 - ??) is an object that transfers liquids and solids, and appears in such household items as sinks and tubs. The lead pipe was primarily used in the toilet of the residence until it was later disassembled.

At present day, the lead pipe resides in the Conservatory hidden amongst a pile of copper pipes.

**Rope** (6 August 1976 - ??) is a strand of fibers that are braided together to improve leverage and strength. The rope was manufactured in Middle Essex, England by the Monty Corporation.

Primarily used for sails, it is now used in conjunction with drapes in the Study.

**Dagger** (3 February 1970 - ??) is an ancient weapon with a sharp point and made of metal. It is used for stabbing and thrusting.

Until recently, it resided inside the envelope in the Cellar; however, its whereabouts are currently unknown.

**Candlestick** (1 March 1964 - ??) is a brass instrument designed to hold candles atop a mantelpiece or a dining table. It is less gaudy than its relative, the candelabra. The candlestick was first

purchased in a Dillard's department store in up-state Ohio in the 1960's, suffering at creation from a crooked base.

It is four inches tall. ♦



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## MINUTIAE THROUGH TIME - 1917

*The following was published in the June 1917 issue of Minutiae, which at time was the #1 dog bootie maga-zine in the country.*

Dear Victorious American Readers: At our converted Hamburg Printinghaus recently, faulty ventilation caused the death of thirty eight of our dirty-finger-nailed Jerry employees, and, I guess, we must address this.

Firstly, we must say that only the tiny hands of motherless children can mash pulp properly. Only that pulp, formed into paper, will hold the economical Turkish ink that we use to print Minutiae. We all make sacrifices to bring important news and reporting to the world. For instance, our editors log long hours holding their hands behind their backs, slowly nodding while peering out through windows overlooking the printing shoppe floors. Our layoutmen spend days on end shuffling around wooden bits of letters, wearing cumbersome leather aprons, goggles and gloves. Therefore, remember, it is not only the motherless children who submit themselves to servicing the greater good. As you read this I grow tired from leafing through the many contract pages required to have a historic riverfront mansion burned and converted into a world class brawling stage.

In this publicly-reported-upon instance, the pulping of paper occurred on a particularly chilling Winter day. To amass savings to pass along to you, the reader, we use the heat generated by the pulping process to warm our paper processing plants. If any heat escapes, then we lose those savings and must raise the price of our published materials. Wouldn't you agree, dear reader, that it is in the best interests to keep vents closed and the fume-ed heat held within? Exactly.

Again, we can only blame the vents for not being able to separate fumes from heat and we have tasked our Minutiae Science Laboratory (once they are done drawing up plans for a world-class brawling stage) with creating such a vent. Until then, pulping will continue with tiny and even more motherless children. Think of thy savings!

## THE MODERN CITIZEN

### GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

*Susan Alan-Wenswick is a prolific Life Specialist, working in the metro Miami area. She has written several books, including most recently The Marriage Train: From Caboose To Conductor*

**My boyfriend is nagging me all the time when we go antiquing or shopping, but I go to his hockey games with him and I never complain! What's wrong with him?**

It's important to compromise, it's only fair. Not everything has to be a an "us" occasion, but make sure to find those "we" events that you can share. Maybe it's ordering pizza on a Sunday night and getting through those Big Bang Theory DVDs or simply choosing one of the great new chick-flick/bro-medies like that hilarious Bridesmaids. (Rated version, please! My wonderful new boyfriend Chad liked it, but that one scene was a little much.)

**Wait, Chad's your boyfriend? I've seen him around town with another woman.**

Gosh, I knew this might come up, but it's all good. He told me the situation he has right now and it's all very tricky. He is in the process of figuring his life out, and I am there to support him. He's just going through a rough patch with his divorce.

**No, it looked like he was having a fun time with his wife and kids at the park. I think you might be his mistress.**

Modern romance is so hard to define these days. We've got kids being 16 & pregnant, and promise rings and marriage between a giraffe and a rhino. So what do these terms like "divorce" or "you can't stop by here" really mean? Really it's just putting labels on what is really the most important thing: a genuine connection between two consenting adults who are aware of each other's situation.

Yes, Chad is currently still married to a woman whom he appears happy with. And, yes, Chad does have two beautiful baby girls who I have run into once or twice and told them I am going to be their new mommy. But, Chad has explained to me that if the divorce lawyers or his wife or his kids find out that he is in love with me, a special "love clause" in divorce law could trigger a "bamboozle effect" and leave him penniless. And he needs all the money he can get for his dart board company idea. Chad is going to be the king of dart boards and I am going to be there just off to the side.

**I was going to ask about getting alone with my boyfriend when his roommate is always there, but I really think that you're not really recognizing what's going on with Chad.**

Jealousy is a strong emotion and can often rear it's rude head towards people in perfectly happy normal relationships. It's not out of the ordinary to quickly fall in love with the man who is spending a solo-staycation at the same Holiday Inn as you. It's only when you find love in yourself that you can truly love the rest of the world. Hint hint. ♦

# #OCCUPY

As another Corporate Winter thaws across the United States, the restless Occupy Movement returns to their posts in the parks and front lawns of city halls to continue their protests against the 1%. Still, the movement has yet to produce a unified voice, resulting in a mix of demands from each camp.

Below are each city's banner goals for 2012 and the years beyond.

Wealth equality between the middle-class 99% and the ruling elite 1%. If we could wrap this up by late summer, that'd be great. My friend Jody has gotten us all tickets to Bonaroo and I really don't want to let her down, you know?



**#NYC**

Bring back Arrested Development.



**#L.A.**

Give us three days with the treasury and we'll flip that cash for three, four times what it's worth. We got a cousin on the docks says if we buy in bulk, we can walk away with a whole ship full of futons at cost. Four or five hours on the avenue corners movin' hot futons, we'll ALL be the 1%.



**#PineTar,NJ**

Anyone with less than four bedrooms in their mansion receives a monetary stipend and the scalps of any dirty-finger-nailed street urchins who refuse to relocate to that damned hellhole: New Haven, CT



**#PROVIDENCE**

Let us riot. We love it.



**#OAKLAND**

Dirt fans. Somebody's gotta do something about all this dirt.



**#TerreHaute,IN**

Is The North Face a publicly traded company? No? We're good then.



**#DENVER**

Esto es tan injusto.



**#TIJUANA**



# ONE FOR ME, ONE FOR YOU =

Since 1959, The Equal Time Rule has insured that all candidates running for public offices receive equal time on the air. It's becoming increasingly difficult to provide equal airtime in today's broad media landscape.

Recently the FCC published a list of broadcast alternatives to one hour of concentrated air time.

## 1 HOUR CONCENTRATED NEWS AIR TIME IS EQUAL TO...



TOP 10 LIST PRESENTER ON LATE NIGHT SHOW (NETWORK )

MUSICAL GUEST ON LATE NIGHT SHOW (CABLE [SOLO, INCLUDING BACKING TRACK] )

GUEST HOST ON LATE NIGHT SHOW (HOMEMADE SHOW IN TEENAGER'S GARAGE)

SPECIAL JUDGE ON REALITY COMPETITION SHOW

COOKING SEGMENT ON MORNING NEWS SHOW

WALK ON APPEARANCE ON HIP CHILDREN'S SHOW (NOT IN COSTUME)

GUEST STARRING ROLE ON HIP CHILDREN'S SHOW (WEARING A COSTUME)

HOSTING A TBS RERUN MARATHON (FAMILY GUY OR GREATER)

ONLINE 'RAP SESH' CHAT WITH TEENS ABOUT EATING RIGHT WITH WIL.I.AM

PODCAST (SELF-SERVING COMEDY GENRE)

PODCAST (FEMININE GABBING GENRE)

BROADCASTING LED MESSAGE FROM THE SIDE OF A BLIMP (NOT TO EXCEED FIFTEEN MINUTES)

GPS VOICE PACK (EUROPE ONLY)

CHABAD TELETHON

SELF-TITLED FRAGRANCE

## SECOND THOUGHT

*The views expressed in Second Thought do not express the views of Minutiæ Publishing or any of its subsidiaries, including Minutiæ Day Beds, Minutiæ Dog Bootie 3 Packs, and Minutiæ Land of Alazgar Fantasy Playing Cards.*

Uh, yes, hello, hey, it's me, Common Sense. Yes, Thomas Paine's friend. Pardon me while I measure my austerity (pun included), but it's time for a **Second Thought**.

Well, I thought I would speak up about this Occupy Movement. Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Main Street, Occupy the Back Streets, The Front Streets and the side streets. Whoaw! Hold the phone, please, for just one sec, alright? I'm here to dish out some unfiltered, old fashioned big old heaping pile of me: Common Sense.

This imbalance of wealth is so incredibly silly. Taxes, shmaxes! We live in united states, not welfare states. Think about if we were to take 3% of the defense budget (minus VA proceeds) and trickle that through the Subsidies given to farmers below the Mason Dixon line, we'd have an overall (née cumulative) value of an exponential growth that, since the Harding administration, was since unheard of without the precipice of nightly shifts between German and Italian state bonds that can't, at least not without influence from the steel and dairy unions, begin to contemplate any kind of refinancing in schools for the deaf and blind should we find that, in the next three quarterly earning periods, a kind of facsimile of the US Constitution in the hands of every Congresswoman and man serving their second senior term.

Federal statutes? Pu-leeze. Give me a rest. France has done without a negative impact in five of their most defined sectors in the last decades and they have a seat at "the" table. Why can't we?

Let's just roll up our sleeves and dig in. It's a lot of hard work, especially with the DOJ breathing down the necks of every man, woman and child with a facsimile of the Bill of Rights in their hand, but come on! Let up on the hose, redefine our expectations of what it means to be "under duress," and let's fix this darn country of ours!

What do you do when the milk has gone sour? What do you do when there's mold on your bread? Do you duck your tail between your legs and rush out into the street, rip off your white picket fence and start a drum circle? When was the last time you stood up on your bed and cleaned the ceiling of your bedroom? How long as it been since you took a family portrait off the wall, turned it over, and read the latest headlines that are coming in over the wire? Because they're real, mister, they are, lady. The headlines are here and they're here to stay.

Oh well, maybe next time? Fat(ima) chance. Yours truly, Common Sense, and that's your **Second Thought**. ♦



## THE OUTFIT OF TOMORROW

A conveyor belt whirrs happily along, delivering futuristic fibers from end to end in this 13,000 square foot manufacturing facility just across the water from Boston's North End. The complex micro-weave (a distillation of the strongest and most breathable threads found in nature) will undergo no less than one-hundred-and-seventy individual processes over the next five hours, changing hands across sixty-five well-paid men and women.

Sparkling white surfaces abound, broken only by safety stickers or sunset posters meant to pique morale. Why, then, is everyone at Dynamics MetaLab so sad?

“It’s not the process“, says founder Bill Schwartz, from his well-appointed office above the manufacturing floor. “It’s not the pay, the hours, or even the product. Every single person down there is so excited to be a part of the solution. It’s the future that’s the problem.”

Dynamics MetaLab is at the forefront of post-apocalyptic survival wear, a burgeoning high-end market that caters to those among us with the means to overcome what will assuredly be the ultimate destruction of the human species. As each highly customizable suit is passed along the conveyor belt, it is outfitted with an array of safety features meant to protect only the most moneyed men and women once our very biosphere turns against us.

Each detail is pored over and scrutinized at the R & D level before ever even making it to the floor. At Dynamics MetaLab, tiny ball-bearings are encased in a glass iridium vacuum with only seven contact points between the suit and optional helmet (sold separately, of course). Each ball-bearing snap seal acts as its own swivel junction, creating a full 270° range of motion, which will surely come in handy when the inevitable sulfur-based creatures born from the boiling pits of our former fresh-water sources begin to attack en masse under an ash-darkened sky, leaving behind only a trail of human misery.

“The product is flawless“, continues Schwartz as he slowly moves along a tiled hallway. An empty break room floats by, a vending machine full of treats dusty from lack of use. “We’re already redefining a market that largely didn’t even exist four

years ago. It’s just that, unfortunately, it’s also a market that correctly assumes the end of humanity.” He pauses, needing one arm on a wall to steady himself.

Such inevitability has served them well. As a privately held company, Dynamics MetaLab is under no obligation to turn over their books, but did so willingly. The results found in the company’s tear-stained ledger are staggering: three-fold profitability quarter after quarter for more than a year, turning this former small venture into a billion-dollar enterprise, winning all the way to the same banks that will be the first to fall when the plebeian masses discover the horrific fate that awaits their dirty-finger-nailed lives.

“The whole thing drives me to drink,” says line worker Raul Ortiz. “I’ve made nearly \$200,000 this year, standing in this exact same spot. But it hurts to know that I won’t be able to spend any of it once our darkened skies begin dropping sulfur boulders on our major metropolitan centers.” What’s worse, Ortiz likely won’t even be able to save himself.

“I’ve got a payment plan set up right now to get my wife a suit before the End of Days, but there’s still my mother, my two daughters and basically all of my friends. I know, when the time comes – and it will – I’ll have to wave goodbye as the unlivable atmosphere curdles my blood and pulls the flesh from my bones. So much sulfur.”

Leona Cook, a broad woman with dark circles under her eyes, is part of a small team of anxious workers devoted entirely to reproducing the staggeringly popular biosuits for children. “It doesn’t make sense,” she mutters to herself no less than twenty times during our conversation. “If the children are our future, why is it taking us so long to engineer these tiny suits?” Despite Cook’s best

efforts – a tireless dedication that has brought her nearly \$35,000 in overtime since early 2010 – the suits are on pace to be fully functional nearly two months after the boiling seas begin to crash against our terrified shorelines. Even if that time-frame can be adjusted, they likely won't be able to outfit more than a few of the world's brightest and most fertile children, leaving roughly one billion more to stand helplessly in doorways as sinister wind storms carve sand into their faces like a trillion little knives.

"I blame myself," whispers a tearful Schwartz, sitting in his 1997 Acura. "For all of it."

The dashboard is worn and cracked from many long nights under the fruitless pounding of Schwartz's fist as he admonishes himself for his failings. A single dollar hangs limply from the tattered interior lining. "The only dollar I ever took out of this place," he says, and almost smiles. Almost. Then a whiff of sulfur moves across the parking lot from Boston Harbor, and Schwartz begins to weep and he hears the inevitable howls of the Sulfur Wolves. ♦

## **CIVIC LESSON**

*Below are published the remarks by Councilman Timothy Bezrake presented at the November 2011 meeting of the Prince George's County County Council.*

Hello all. There has been much talk (both in this room and in the media) in the past few months about the redistricting efforts this council is making for the upcoming election year. Alongside that, we are making what I would like to think of as Herculean strides in city management. An increase in revenue from red light cameras, along with a surge in business licenses (thanks to a sales tax exemption), has led us to be able to pass

what I consider to be a fair and balanced budget. Finally, and some might say most importantly, is the work I have been doing to kick Judy Loomis out of Prince George's County.

While there have been those who were dismissive of our efforts to enforce the red light cameras, I don't think anyone can doubt both the increase in generated revenue or the overall rise in public safety. And yes, we are working on new traffic plans for our business centers from New Carrollton to Upper Marlboro; the money spent in Prince George's County is staying in Prince George's County. Yet, one thing that simply can't stay in Prince George's County is Judy Loomis.

Not only is Judy Loomis one of the nosiest and most intrusive residents we have ever had, but we have been spending an inordinate amount of municipal time and money on her. She drains county resources over the smallest matters, and I know because I live next to her. I was having a barbecue once, and Ms. Loomis called the police! She called our own Prince George's County sheriffs on me for having a barbecue at 9:30pm on a Saturday night. Ladies and Gentlemen, every citizen is entitled to their fair share of county resources, such as the new late night basketball court lights we've installed in our parks, but Ms. Loomis deserves absolutely nothing.

At a recent gathering of friends at my house, Ms. Loomis suspected us of having an "illegal alien sex party" and called not only the police, but the Department of Homeland Security and INS. It's simple Ms. Loomis: you're not invited to my dinner parties anymore because the last time you came, you kept on asking for the chicken to be cooked longer, until you complained that it was "a little dry."



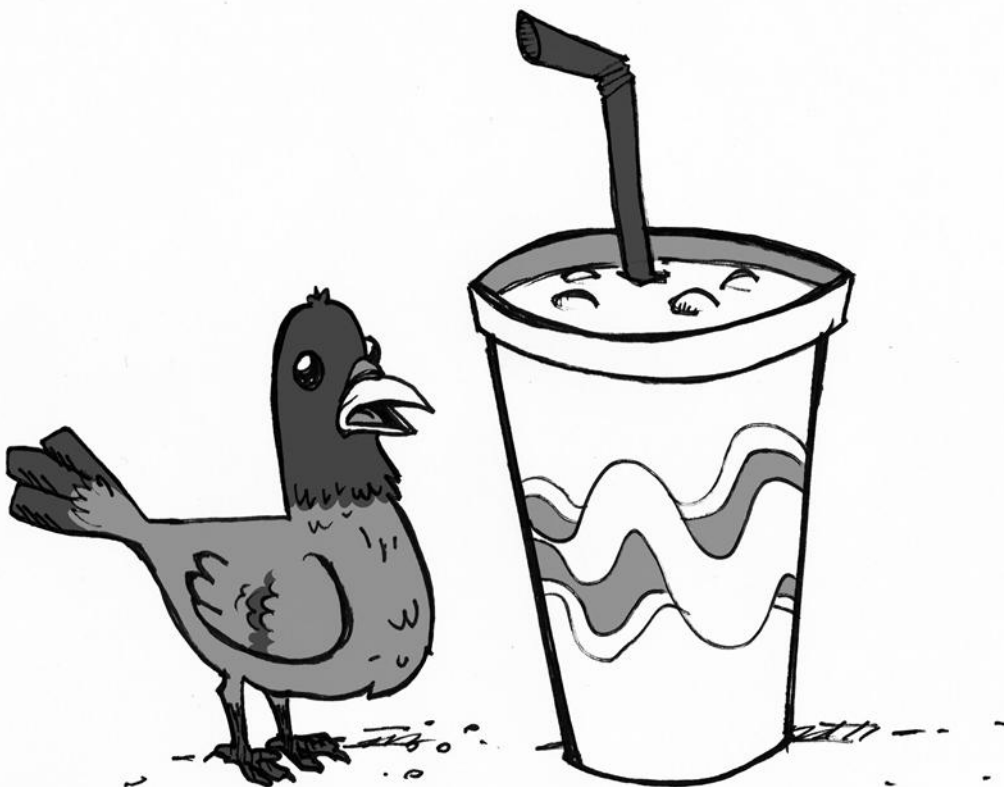
It may sound to some that I am being unduly harsh on Ms. Loomis, and that is understandable. There are other people in this community that are using more than their fair share of our county's resources. We shouldn't just kick out Judy Loomis. We should kick out the entire Loomis family.

The younger son, Hank Loomis, requires a private tutor, paid for by the county, because he was constantly being bullied at school for his pre-pubescent mustache. Her sister, Nancy Loomis, who is not even a tax paying resident of Prince George's County but has been visiting for what seems like ages, has taken it upon herself to keep Animal Control busy with "feral birds" she has spotted around town. Finally, to Larry Basker,

Judy's husband: I think the entire County Council would like to offer our heartfelt pity. (For Christ's sake, man, your kid has her last name! Grow a pair).

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen of the County Council, I would like to put the matter to a simple majority vote so that we may once and for all kick out Judy, Hank and Nancy Loomis from Prince George's County. Thank you. ♦

*The Prince George's County County Council passed resolution PGC-45 with a vote of 9-0. Judy, Hank and Nancy Loomis were stuck in a van and dumped out past county lines. Larry Basker now wears Old Navy clothes he proudly picks out himself.*




"Oho, would'st like it? Then so shall it be. Doff thy rags, and don these splendours, lad! It is a brief happiness, but will be not less keen for that. We will have it while we may, and change again before any come to molest."



# BEAUTY & THE PAGEANT BEAST

BY CHAD WOLLMAN





Turning left off of State Route 76, you'd be hard-pressed to find much of anything going on in the stoic fields and dusty back roads that surround Thurber, Nebraska, population 17,481. Cows graze lazily, single trees acting as sentinel among the otherwise uninterrupted wheat fields and ruddy plains.

After three miles of loose wire fencing and Old West reminders, Thurber and all of its relative big city charm expands from the horizon. There's the old gas station with the rusty Citgo sign dangling lifelessly by a few links of chain. There's Mama Dell's, the roadside diner where, for an extra \$2, Mama herself will throw any entrée on the menu into a pie crust and bake it until golden brown. There's Cadillac Jack's, a saloon-style drinkery complete with old wooden floorboards and an ace of spades playing card with a bullet hole through the center.

Thurber isn't just the most populous city in this open corner of northwestern Nebraska, it's also the Reynolds County seat. Political deals for agricultural subsidies are made over cups of coffee at Dink's Donuts. The American Red Cross operates the only blood bank for two hundred miles out of an old laundromat that sits on the town square. Voting happens here, at Fellowship Church, where mischievous kids like to sneak in and desecrate Jesus on the cross with trucker hats that read 'Got Er Done'. Parades chock full of tractors and smiling children scavenging for Tootsie Rolls come through town three or four times a year to celebrate this wheat harvest or that national holiday. Otherwise, things stay mostly quiet and mostly dusty, a thin film of which shellacs on to any beast or building in just a few days time.

Every spring, though, this rusty little hamlet has itself a *Pretty Woman* moment. The quiet desperation masquerading as whorish indifference disappears, replaced by illustrious affectations of pride with a newfound metropolitan air. This is Grain Days, a three-day spring fling of sorts, with an endless combination of fried foods, boardwalk lights, late nights and dancing under the moon. The daytime hours are fully loaded, with itineraries including crafting sessions, dairy competitions, a bucking bronco show and a demolition derby at sunset.

All of this farmland flourish is pretext for the main event: the Sunday night Grain Days Beauty Pageant, a whirlwind of cosmopolitan expectations, sadness, triumph and conspiracy theories. Hearts have been broken here, minds have been lost, and more than a few friendly neighbors have found themselves on opposite sides of a Grain Days pageant victory. It's not hard to see why this real life show is so popular; you'd need the full cable package to find any TV drama this compelling.

By Tuesday evening, young ladies from every stretch of the county glide into Thurber to prepare for beauty battle, bringing with them a small army of mothers and aunts to act as stylists, handlers and cheerleaders. Come Sunday night, the beastly masses of Reynolds County stand on rocking feet at the steps of the Muriel Perkins Memorial Library, the only building structurally sound enough to accommodate such a large crowd. It's also the most architecturally stylish building in an otherwise unmemorable town square, with tan bunting billowing from every available window frame. In short, it's the only place in all of Thurber decent enough to crown the Reynolds County Grain Girl in.

**It's also the only place in all of Thurber where pageant winner Darlene Moffitt has been murdered.**

Darlene never fit the profile of a true Grain Girl. Her shoulders weren't broad enough, her freckled cheeks too prominent. She couldn't hop a fence in farm boots and had a penchant for quoting Kurt Vonnegut novels. She'd take any opportunity to bring up her hometown of Manokifer, two hours east. "They've got a Denny's there," she'd smirk, before plunging in the small town dagger: "A Chili's, too."

Yet, last May, there was Darlene Moffitt, smiling comfortably alongside 49 other Grain Girl contestants. A few rounds of voting, then: 29 girls, then 14, then 9 other hopefuls. Darlene effortlessly maneuvered the growing stages and their matching crowds, shedding competition as she went. First the outdoor tent next to the butter churning booth, then the raised indoor platforms alongside the meat smokers belonging to Quizzy's BBQ, and eventually on to the luxuriously carpeted library stage. When the other contestants started sweating from the competition, Darlene would lean over and offer them a tissue, then pull one from her padded bra. The crowds went wild.

"She was a firecracker, that's for sure", says pageant judge Rick DiMeco. "You know, those little sticks of mini dynamite? Well, to borrow a metaphor, she was one of those. Tiny package, lots of bang. I guess nobody bothered to tell her that fireworks are illegal in Reynolds County. Heh. I'm sort of a comedian around here."

Her parents, Jennifer and Walter Moffitt, moved to Thurber after Walter took a regional sales position with Rifleman Range, a blossoming startup that offers a line of DIY home gun range kits. Even with such a natural 'in' in this rural township, business and friendships were equally hard to come by.

"I really think this Grain Girl thing became her way to make an impression", says Jennifer, fighting back tears. By August of that first year, Darlene had bought out the full supply of Taylor Swift calendars from the kiosk at the nearest mall and hung them interruptingly all over the Moffitt home. Three going up the staircase to the second floor, one next to the mirror in the downstairs bathroom, two more on either side of the fake fireplace and one that flipped open when you pulled on the refrigerator handle, meaning every time you wanted a glass of milk you had to be reminded - in a large red circle around the date - that Grain Days was coming up.

At Warrick Morris High School just beyond Stinker's Clunkers used car lot, the Grain Girl pageant is such a big and unswallowable topic that most of the girls choked on their words just thinking about what it. Only a few of the younger ones dared to dream about becoming the next great Girl, poring over well-worn photographs of legends like Patty Morton or Lucy Dimple. The older ones, the ones who knew they'd missed their shot, spent most of each spring cutting classes to hang out by the junkyard and smoke cloves. Even there, the aromatic smoke would eventually carry conversation of the pageant, tinged with talk of scandals and intrigue gone by.

There's the year that Tracy Winger faked a bloodborne pathogenic disease to win the sympathy vote. Or there's the time Cindy Grainger's mom chloroformed a judge and then stole her credentials to try to vote for her own daughter. Eventually the widening ripples of any pageant conspiracy theory conversation would wash ashore on one simple, whisperable truth: in the event of a reigning Grain Girl's death, the previous year's winner retains the title. Sure, Sue Blanchard had



gotten her arm ripped off in a wheat mill, but she didn't die so that doesn't count. But what if she had, leaving her precursor as the only two-year Grain Girl in Thurber history? How much would that mean to a young woman, steeped in the pageant tradition and desperate to hold on to her crown – at any cost?



Lacey Findle remembers well the day that Darlene announced her Grain Girl intentions to her classmates. “We were all shocked,” she says coolly. “You don’t just walk into NASA and decide to run for President Space Mayor, or whatever. That’s what it felt like.”

“I mean, you could smell trouble three fields away. Real trouble, too. Not just horse shit on a light breeze.”

If anybody should know, it’s Findle. In a classic ‘Hometown Girl Makes Good’ headline, she became last year’s Grain Girl after most of the town told her she was past her pageant prime. Born and raised in Thurber, Findle flunked out of her senior year of high school three times, believing that being enrolled in school was a qualification for acceptance. Halfway through her fourth

year at Warrick Morris, with a D- in Typing and an F+ in Kinesiology, Findle was finally appraised of the rules: there are no academic restrictions whatsoever on the Grain Girl competition. You don’t even have to graduate at all.

From that moment on, Findle carried herself (tucked into her signature halter top) with an air of grace and an attitude of superiority that coasted her to last year’s crowning. She cried, she smiled, but most of all, she knew how hard she’d worked to get there.

“It really becomes a lifestyle, not just a title. I can go down to Dixie’s and get a scoop of pecan flavored ice cream any time I want, free. On. The. House.” Sitting in Dink’s, her fingers wrapped around a cup of coffee, the 22-year old high school dropout and pageant winner is all neck and eyeliner, with a little less grace and a lot more of that superiority. “Some people think they’re ready for the pressure, but they ain’t. There’s a lot more to this than just cutting the ribbon on a few new feed stores.”

It’s 9am, but as we sit, tucked into a plastic booth, her winning sash drapes across her chest. It’s backdated by one year, of course. Since Darlene Moffitt died in hers, splayed out on the floor in the reference section of the Muriel Perkins Library, it didn’t seem right to pass it back to Findle.

Besides, the less confusion the better. It was already more than enough that the dumpster speculations had proven to be true: with Darlene Moffitt dead and buried, Lacey Findle is this year’s – and last year’s – Grain Girl.

She smiles, her fingers bouncing around the ceramic mug, treading water in this blissful fact.

Tell me about Darlene, I say. After all, her death is the reason you’re still wearing that sash. Her fingers freeze.



In 1997 an enraged thoroughbred in downtown Thurber broke free of its harness and pushed Marvin Lerner in front of a grain truck. Witnesses say the mare had murder in her saucer-plate eyes, and even let out a little whinny when the deed was done. (They gave that horse the chair.) More than a decade later, there remains an old photo of the horse hanging over the bar at Cadillac Jack's, and the old-timers swear on cold nights you can still hear that whinny.

Less than one year after her grizzly Grain Girl murder, there are no photographs of Darlene Moffitt. Not in the Grain Days flyer, not dangling inside some tacky frame at the library. To know anything about what happened that night, you'll have to dig. Into people's lives, into the dark underworld of competitive pageantry, through stacks and stacks of receipts, notes, diaries and interview transcripts. Though her body was returned to Manokifer, Darlene Moffitt's life is buried in Thurber.

"It's hard to know what happened; there's so much going on backstage. The ten finalists alone fill up most of the Creative Non-Fiction aisle." Rick DiMeco was one of three pageant judges that night, alongside schoolteacher Margie Ritenaur and Mayor Pat Lerner. He is a machinist by trade, milling out small cogs for old threshers or sometimes doing small engine repair to make a few ex-

tra bucks. DiMeco doesn't exactly have the flair for pageantry that one might assume in a Grain Girl judge. Instead, he won his seat, like one third of every Grain Days judging panel since it began, by filling out a raffle ticket.

"When you're in the library, you think it's so big that there's no way you could fill it up with people. But come showtime, it's packed in like an elevator. Contestants, make up artists, show runners. You'd never notice if a single girl went missing in there, even if she had just won the crown. It's standing room only from Zilgarian to you-can-kiss-my-Asimov. Heh. There I go again, tellin' jokes."

A single photograph from that night corroborates DiMeco's tale of sardine conditions. It's one of those all-and-nothing shots, where there's no central focus and the framing is awful. Some heads are cropped clean in half, others blurry from motion; only one man is looking directly at the camera. Dark suit, one hand in a trouser pocket, he stares straight ahead, into the lens, a perplexing expression of bland contentedness amidst a room full of revelry. In the upper right-hand corner, Darlene Moffitt is mid-step, forever lurching towards the corner of the picture amidst a row of books.

It's her last photograph, and she doesn't even know it.

Over dinner at Mama Dell's, I ask DiMeco who the intensely gazing man in the suit is, and he almost chokes on his Salisbury steak pie. He says he doesn't know. Later, after attendance records don't provide a name and a few other witnesses come up dry, I drop in to DiMeco's machine shop, where the din of whirring blades and crunching metal seems to afford him some level of security from upturned ears.

"You won't find his real name, because no one knows it," says DiMeco, while aimlessly pushing a belt sander across some old copper piping. All anyone listening in would catch is the shrill grind of metal on metal. "He's a 'Ringding', has been for years. I venture the only reason he's backstage is because he lost a lot of money."

All across America, 'Ringdings' is popular parlance for pageant show ringers, brazen men with the skills and desire to rig shows no different than the Grain Girl pageant. These smoky, back room tellurians have become as much a part of the pageant experience as the talent portion or the blind-folded thresher reassembly. Every year the girls are different, but in Thurber, the Ringdings (and their motives) always remain the same. Stakes are placed on the final ten contestants, and come show time the men find themselves tucked inside the library just like everyone else, waiting for the biggest moment in Reynolds County since they inadvertently got redistricted into Wyoming in the 1926 census.

The whole thing is a lot like horse racing, really. Money changes hands as fates rise and fall throughout the evening, but one thing is constant: the Ringdings all came here to win, often up to \$30,000 for each beautiful specimen trotting around in front of the crowd. The average betting spectator might get lucky and pick the right long shot, but the house always wins the real money. Especially when there's an inside girl.

"I got in deep with the Ringdings last year after I put down some money I didn't have on the surefire winner," he says as we transition to the high rattle of a 4,000 rpm steel saw.

Lacey Findle, I say. No. Another girl.

"The only reason Lacey ever won is because the Ringdings fixed the whole shebang. The mo-

ment she put on that sash, I knew the pageant was a fraud, and I knew I was in a lot of trouble."

The M.O. of any pageant fixer is roughly the same: do whatever it takes to alter the outcome favorably, take everyone's money and move on. Sometimes that means bribing a contestant to take a fall, other times... heavier... methods can be applied to judges and influential pageant members. Whatever happened at the annual Grain Days Pageant last year, it didn't go well for the Ringdings.

Within days, DiMeco says he was contacted by the man in the photograph about his outstanding debts. Cries of an unfair betting disadvantage fell on deaf ears, and when he woke up one morning with a mower blade stuck in his front door, he decided to strike a deal to wipe out the unpaid debt in exchange for a seat at the judges table in the next year's Grain Girls pageant. The raffle would be rigged for him to win, and all he had to do was vote the way they wanted him to. Simple as that.

An ego-driven Lacey Findle. A desperate Rick DiMeco. A faceless, money-hungry group of pageant fixers. Darlene Moffitt never stood a chance.



In any investigation, you learn pretty quickly that even though they can't talk, paper receipts tell one hell of a story themselves. In a dusty manila folder (everything is dusty in this town, even when it's kept indoors), Darlene Moffitt's receipts read

like a walking transcript of her final days leading up to the Grain Days Pageant.

February 9th: A workout DVD titled "Fit It or Quit It.", \$14.99

March 17th: Three bottles of hair coloring, dark brown. \$29.15

March 29th: Fake eyelashes, \$8.72

April 7th: A two-hour session at Lee Nails in Dekalb Junction, \$32.18

April 7th: A cheesy Gordita, two soft tacos and Diet Coke, \$5.27

April 11th: Camouflage four-inch pumps, \$98.99

April 19th: Brute For Men cologne, \$7.17

April 20th: Store credit for a bottle of Brute For Men Cologne, \$7.17

April 20th: Brute For Women: Cologne For Women, \$7.17

As the red-circled calendar date nears, the receipts become anomalous.

April 27th: A slice of spaghetti and meatball pie from Mama Dell's, \$8.13

And later that same night:

April 27th: A root beer float, \$4.25

Barbara Gargle was waitressing the night of April 27th, and recalls seeing Darlene come in once with some friends for a pasta snack, and then again later that night with a tall man she didn't recognize. Dark suit, one hand in his trouser pocket, a quiet stare. He ordered black coffee (receipt unavailable) and talked without moving his hands, while Darlene mostly sat and listened. Whatever it was that man was offering, Gargle recalls, Darlene wasn't interested. Then, she stood up, walked to the door and left.

Five days later, and two weeks before the pageant, another receipt crops up:

May 1st: Nightlight, \$6.16

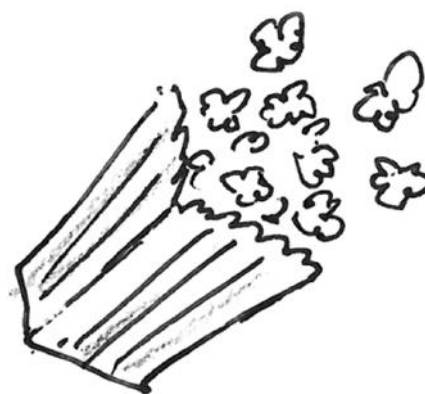
Two days later:

May 3rd: Maglite flashlight, \$39.99

Three days later:

May 6th: Horse-Strength Mace, \$41.40

Less than fourteen days before the biggest night of her life, Darlene Moffitt spent \$87.55 trying to protect herself from someone. Or some thing.



At some point during that fateful night, under the bright lights in the front hall of the Muriel Perkins Memorial Library, things went from bad to irreversible for Darlene Moffitt. Those who were there recall Lacey Findle pacing just off stage, gripping her Grain Girl sash and tiara tightly, as if they'd fly off her body the moment she loosened her grip. After begrudgingly crowning Darlene Moffitt the champion, she disappeared out a side door, which is why she doesn't show up in the lone backstage photograph. Though she had her motives, Lacey Findle did not kill Darlene Moffitt.

Over a clamoring sheet metal riveter in his greasy machine shop, Rick DiMeco unwinds his version of the tale. He was told by the Ringdings to throw the votes to Tracy Lamiken, an unassuming puffy-faced pageant girl whose long odds made her the perfect candidate for the fixers to cash in big. All they needed was for Darlene Moffitt to

fall. And when they couldn't bribe her, they tried to use Rick DiMeco.

Yet, through it all, Darlene remained a charmed girl, largely unaffected by the magnitude of the forces surrounding her. She had her morals, she had her fan base, and most importantly she had the Grain Girl spirit. All night long Rick DiMeco threw low scores at Darlene, but it was never enough to break her. By all accounts, she demolished the competition with a dance routine to "Baby Likes to Rock It" by The Tractors that moved Tracy Lamiken to tears. The audience cheered and roses were thrown and, for a brief moment in the universe, Darlene Moffitt was Thurber's own Grain Girl, and no one could take that away from her.

"I thought the Ringdings were going to kill me," whispers Rick while a spot welder arcs loudly behind us. "You don't lose that much money in one night and let the inside man live to tell about it." In a desperate bid to save his own life, Rick agreed to take Darlene's, a one-time hit man for hire on behalf of the Ringdings in their quest for retribution. He's quiet as soon as the words pass his lips. Resigned to the idea of murder.

The man in the photograph, dark suit with one hand in a trouser pocket, was simply waiting for the deed to be done. A little nod from Rick, emerging from the book stacks, to indicate that the grizzly crime had been accomplished and all of his debts were paid. A moment that would never come.

The police found Darlene Moffitt in the Science Fiction section, clutching a Kurt Vonnegut hardback open to a page containing only the words "So it goes". No knife wounds, strangulation bruises or bullet entry wounds, just a trampled body covered in horseshoe prints. The escape

route, littered with hay, led to a shattered back door. By the time witnesses traced the route back to the broken door frame, all that could be heard through the cold air was the faint galloping of horse hooves. The old timers down at Cadillac Jack's were right all along.

Darlene Moffitt's murder is one year older now, and though there are no photographs of her in the Grain Days flyers or the library, someone down at Cadillac Jack's has started a tally next to that photo of the horse. Two checked off - Marvin Lerner and Darlene Moffitt - and room for more.

Lacey Findle has relinquished her two-year tiara. Rick DiMeco's machine shop still whirrs on into the night. At a pageant in the deep South, or perhaps out West, a quiet man in a dark suit stands patiently, waiting to count his money. And somewhere out beyond the Thurber county line, crisscrossing the fields near Route 76, a ghost horse roams free, murder in its saucerplate eyes, seeking random revenge for a death penalty sentence from years past.

So it goes. ♦



# FROM THE PUBLISHER

It recently came to light that conditions in our off shore Korean printing facility were less than humane. Jolly whistleblowers, undercover bloggers and biased union-izers uncovered the facilities that our contract workers were producing Minutiæ (and the all new Minutiæ Day Beds) under. These reports cite several grievances including elevators that tipped over, leaking light bulbs and a general lack of suitable flooring. And, of course, we were astonished that such horrificies saw the light of day.

We blame the one man who we entrusted with the health and safety of our Korean contract workers. This man we only knew as 론 울프 아이 (The Lone Wolf Eye) and he disappeared shortly after the terrifying conditions were reported in the media. While there were several red flags that should've indicated his untrustworthiness (his constant lighting matches off his cobra skin boots, his leaning back in chairs and looking at the ceiling to dismiss concerns, and his frequent inquiries to if we enjoyed "salty tastes"), we were being urged by stock holders (many of whom are no longer American citizens) to sign the agreement for him to look over our Korean printing facility.

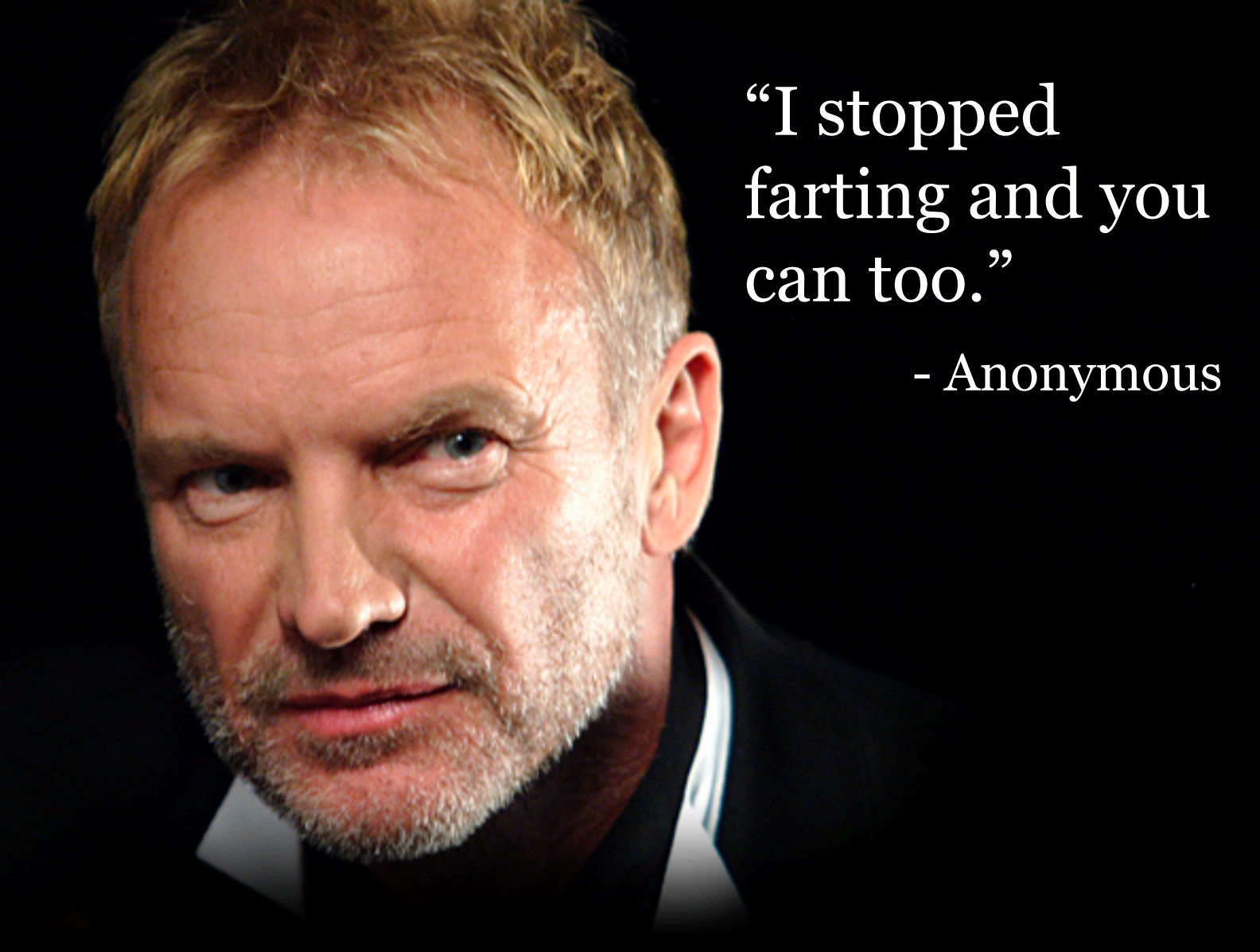
We want to make it clear that Minutiæ prides itself on appearing to hold ourselves to the highest of working conditions. From our publishing team's Cold Stone Creamery gift cards down to the Minutiæ measuring tapes given in lieu of holiday parties, Minutiæ has stated we are committed to a high standard and we will continue to state that we are committed to such a high standard. If anyone sees 론 울프 아이 in a Southern state, please tell him to get in touch with us as we are still eagerly awaiting the arrival of the first shipment of Minutiæ Day Beds.

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*Ed. Note - The following words are leftovers that did not make it into the issue:*

*Martin, Gina, Hypeup, Juiced, Curveback, Torch Baby.*





“I stopped  
farting and you  
can too.”

- Anonymous

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# FAIRNESS

