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### MINUTIAE #7

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## DEPARTMENT OF SALUTATIONS



Hello, there. I am Greg F. Hapsner, Public Liaison Officer for Ridgecomm, the premier American telecommunications company. We are thrilled to be the new owners of Minutiae Publishing, following the collapse of Testing System at the hands of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. We hope the US Marshals bring their entire executive board back to the United States to stand trial, which is why we're so thrilled with this month's theme: **Reconciliation**. At the core, Ridgecomm is all about bringing people together, be it by offering exciting cable television packages, blazingly fast internet connectivity, or our affordable phone services.

Sometimes connecting with folks can be tough. One of the more infuriating aspects of telephony are lost signals, so we make sure to record every conversation on our lines in case a call ever drops. It's because we care. With all the cord cutting going on, modern telephony sometimes seems like more trouble than the convenience it offers. That's why exciting services like Signal-Locator allow your telephone to be tracked, no matter where you go, or even if the phone is off. All this and more in exciting packages like Super-Play, Web+SpeedBoost with NFL Playback, Local Anytime Rollover Premium Channels, 3D Web, Web+JetBoost with TBS Weekend Cavalry, Visual Radio+JetBoost Quad Play and FCC Required Low Income Web Access (still coming soon).

Ridgecomm began as Blueridge Telephony in 1886 before expanding West in 1912 to service the American Southwest as Redridge Telephonics & Humidifications, before becoming Ridge Communications in 1941. In 1982, the company was split up by the US Department of Justice into

Ridgecomm, Rockphony, Kreft!, and MOGAVO. Since then Ridgecomm has expanded into offering telephone, high definition television and high speed internet in exciting bundle packages like Ultratainment+SpeedBoost, Trips4Six, and Ring+Bling+Zing For Teens.

There's so much worry about internet censorship that Ridgecomm has introduced special services to ensure that you won't ever lose access to the online tools you love & depend on. Ridgecomm's Email Proofmaster reads, catalogs, and fixes your errors to ensure that you say what YOU want to say. Our Core6 cybersecurity team is constantly monitoring all web traffic for malicious viruses or copyrighted material that could harm your system or infect your children's minds. Additionally, our PetWatch web cam software keeps a 360° eye on your house whether you're home or not!

Ridgecomm will keep all of your services streaming at lightning fast speeds to your home or office with cutting-edge packages like Lights+SpeedBoost with CSPAN Music, Blogs+SliceBoost World Hotel Info Channels, Secret Neighborhood Web with OpenShare, and WatchingU for College Students. You must always stay connected with Ridgecomm! ♦

# Ridgecomm

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## AGENCY OF CÖRRESPONDENCES + COMMUNIQUEÉS

Gentlemen, I am a very wealthy recluse who lives atop this casino. I would like to invite you – both of you – up to my suite for light liqueurs, samba music, and a small tab of the designer hallucinogenic Quiver. This offer, much like the iced creme sundaes I sent over to you, is only on the table for the next five minutes.

*Ryneld B. Jackson*  
*Former Pfizer Executive*  
*Las Vegas, NV*

Gentlemen, I have to say that your *Minutiæ: Hot Air Balloonist Edition* was greatly appreciated by me and all the boys. We've been having problems reading magazines up there, and having the extra heavy pages really make reading easy.

*Frank Larendo*  
*Lead Pressure Man, Mid-Air Rescue Squadron*  
*Eugene, OR*

Gentlemen, I have recently discovered a rip in the fabric of the spacetime continuum and communicated with an interdimensional civilization. I hope you would be interested in interviewing me because the aliens and I started jamming and are putting out an album.

*Lucas Disterio*  
*Musician/Kinko's Cashier*  
*Hudson, NY*

Gentlemen, I absolutely love the *Minutiæ: 150 Years* CD-ROM. It's so jam-packed with anecdotes, pictures and history. One question: on level 4, in Warlock's Cove, is it possible to unlock the Pirate's Skull without solving the Invisible Puzzle? Thanks!

*Rickey Bashel*  
*General Studies, 7th Year*  
*Tempe, AZ*



"I tell you what: them dogs run Hollywood, and I'm letting them off easy."

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Bill Thesda** ("No Thank You," p. 31) is the author of three books on World War I and was briefly married to Joe DiMaggio.

**Jack Straton** ("I Just Called To Say I Mugged You," p. 40) is a staff writer and, in his spare time, a sculptor of small statues. He's able to make them tiny because he has adorable baby fingers.

**Janet Wong** ("A Billion Dollars a Day," p. 68) has never been kissed. I mean, she's been kissed. Just not really kissed. You know, with tongue.

**Steve Johnson** ("Lolita, pages 8 - 23," p. 94), a staff writer since 2004, completely forgot he had an article due so he sent in a chapter from the book he was currently reading.

**Gail Harrison** ("Afe Ttataag Bbbiita," p. 40) is the fastest typer on staff.

**Leon Parks** ("The Hat In The Cat," p. 42) is the only person to "win" the Presidential Fitness Challenge and won't let the office, or his fat son, forget it.

**Diane Charles** ("Sucker Punch," p. 47) is a longtime contributor to the New Yorker, or at least what she thinks is the New Yorker. Shhhhhh...

**Ben Krantz** ("Log Cabin Styles," p. 46) is the author of over sixteen different books. He has nineteen dogs, and one son who really looks like a daughter. We all saw Bully, but come on...

**Wanda LaRose** ("New Restaurants," p. 33) is one of the preëminent food writers in the country. She achieved this by eating all of the other food writers and absorbing their power, Highlander style.

**Mandy Monroe** ("Backyard Snooze," p. 52) is the third best looking woman in the office according to an informal, non-scientific survey of other

people in the office. She was number two until she got in that car accident.

**Gerry Connor** ("Can I Just Say Juan Thing?," p. 61) was a senior writer at this magazine until he was recently fired. Specifically, he found out he was fired by reading this blurb just now. Security, show Mr. Connor to the door. It's called 'karma', you racist bastard.

**Old Dusty** ("These Pants Are Loose," p. 70) is easily the wisest, most beloved writer on staff. He's the one we all go to for advice. Oh, Old Dusty, what would we do without you and your necklace of snakes?

**Rick Stubbens** ("One More Song," p. 63) is the author of the book "Writing Great One Sentence Bios for Magazine Contributors Lists," which is now out in paperback.

**Uncle Cliff** ("Treatise on Comfy Blankets" p. 78) said he only needed a place to stay for a couple nights, but that was six months ago. Someone needs to talk to him and see what's up. Word of warning: Dude was an ECW wrestler.

*Ed. Note: The above articles only appear behind the Minutiae paywall. Please drop a fifty dollar bill into the magazine and stick it in a mail box. Allow 4 - 6 weeks for processing.*



## HAPPENINGS IN THE CITY

### MUSIC

#### El Theater

May 5: Local indie rock bands come together for this show to play songs inspired by the Tom Wolfe novel "Bonfire of the Vanities." Most surprising act on the schedule: "The Mississippi Dingers String Band," a jam band made up of the entire St. Louis Cardinals baseball team.

#### Carpet District Arts Center

May 10: 80's New Wave hitmakers Grand Funk Metro Bus made a name for themselves by being the only band where all the members played keytars. Unfortunately, times have changed and, with GFMB aiming for a comeback, they've hired a normal guitar player. Will this new addition overshadow the original band members? Yes/No. Circle one, get in free.

#### Hewlett Packard Amphitheater

May 30: Rap rock pioneers Dr. Tip Top are back despite the fact that all five members died in a boat accident years ago. So who will be performing at this concert? A group of teenage boys cast from a modeling agency in Orlando, performing all new original songs as the band Destiny's Father.

### ART GALLERIES

**Cheng Liu:** After traveling the globe, this exhibit of the 19th century Chinese master's famed pencil drawings comes to the U.S. They are drawings of pencils, done with pencil, on the sharpened tips of pencils. Bring protective goggles for close viewing. (The Metropolitan, 3000 Reynolds Way, May 20-31)

**Clive Collins:** From 1984 to his death in 2010, Collins took thousands of photos of unsuspecting women changing in locker rooms. Some critics say he was a creep, while others insist he was a creep but the photos are kind of hot. Judge for yourself at this retrospective. You may even spot your wife. That's what happened to me. (Photo Forum, 322 W. Albert Ave., May 12-28)

**Life:** Look to your left. Now, look to your right. Both of those things are art. Also, everything in between – that was art, too. There's art all around you. You've just got to slow down and look. Pretty sweet, right? Now, take my hand, child, and I'll show you a world of wonder and whimsy. (Please Help me Find my Son, All The Time)

### THEATER

**How Did We What Now?:** Disney Channel star Lyra LeCoix writes and stars in this autobiographical melodrama about a 20 something living in New York who struggles to find herself. This is the same exact play as "He Did What Now?," they just change the name and updated the references. Opens May 10. (The Ham Playhouse, 155 River St.)

**The Hole's Too Big:** Retired professional athlete Bo Jackson writes and performs this light-hearted solo show where he touches on subjects of life, the universe, and why you should never give a baby a bagel. Previews begin May 12. (The Basement, 5466 W. 95th Ave.)

**TBD Musical:** With a budget exceeding \$250 million dollars, it's the most expensive musical ever mounted. But it doesn't have a cast, a script, songs, a theater, or even an idea to get started from. So where'd all the money go, you ask? Believe it or not: Joseph Kony. What a sleaze. (Kony's Kongo Kompound)

## MOVIES

Langley Cinema Society will be presenting a one-night retrospective of the films of 1970's Swedish auteur Sven Funkquist and his frequent star Alf Bjørnstrand. Unfortunately, Sven and Alf haven't spoken since Alf ran off with Sven's 19 year old daughter and Sven had an affair with Alf's 72 year old mother. The evening's drama will be filmed and screened the following evening, where it will be awarded Top Prizé. (May 30th, 8pm, \$18)

The Barnstow Community Center will screen "Gumbo," the legendary 310 minute avant garde film from artist-cum-prankster Frank Arbo that shows a pot of gumbo being gradually brought to a boil, then left to cool, then brought back to boil, being left to cool again, and on and on for five plus hours. At the end of the film, Arbo will come out and giggle for 310 minutes. (May 21st, 5pm, \$25)

## FOOD

**Soups Ahoy:** This two year old soup restaurant has recently won praise for expanding their menu to include chilis, stews, bisques, gumbos and flavored waters. The signature Soups Ahoy flat bowls are still in use. (32244 W. Morrow Ave.)

**The Law Office of Phillip J. Kendall:** Hungry pedestrians often mistake this for a diner, but it's actually a law office. There is no food at all, except for some peanuts in a little bowl and a Britta in the fridge. Reservations suggested. (9004 W. Eastmont., Suite 3000)

**Water Fest:** Aquafficiando Magazine sponsors the three day festival down at the marina. Artisanal Water Craftsmen will be pouring rare waters while thirsty crowds cheer until the fire department turns on their hoses and gets everyone real damp. (May 8-10th, 10 Water Dollars) ♦

## Calming Meadows



Juvenile Rehabilitation Center

Drug Use, Alchohol Abuse, Eating Disorders, Stealing Money (Teachers/Mothers), Staying Out Late, Hanging Out with Parentless Boys, Heavy Makeup, Navel & Etc. Piercings, Intolerable Music, Nontraditional Role Models, Fanfiction Writing/Reading, Ditching

Off Highway 314  
Ocala, Florida





# The Sesquicentennial





A century and a half ago a man and his brother, living in the long forgotten American state of Kanawha amidst a turbulent civil war, had dreams. They dreamt of a future of advanced transportation, medicine and culture. Now, we may not be curling up into balls to commute to hot tonic bathhouses or glamorous dog shows (where the dogs stand on their hind legs, wearing tutus and dancing the can-can) but part of their dream has come true: Minutiæ.

Alvin Hardridge and his brother Nat set out to create a legacy, and I, along with you, am part of it. Minutiæ has been there through the good, the bad, and the chocolatey center of the important 1960s. Minutiæ has gone to the moon and under the sea, traveled the ocean wide and sent countless reporters to their unfortunate kidnapping in the pursuit of one thing: A truth.

That legacy lives on with Minutiæ and its subsidiaries: Minutiæ Day Beds, Minutiæ Surgical Jams, 'Lil Minutie's Hardy Boil, Minutiæ Dog Bootie 3 Packs, and Minutiæ *Land of Alazgar* Fantasy Playing Cards. Yet, through it all, we've been there to report on the important stories that matter the most to the most important people that matter: the paying subscriber.

Please join us as we celebrate 150 years of Minutiæ.

- Bryce Dallas Hardridge

1899

As the lumbering hands of Big Ben lurch towards midnight, a growing number of Londoners have begun to make plans for Doomsday. Colloquially referred to as Y1.9K (as in the approaching year of Our Lord 1900), the prevailing fear is that, as the rusty old minute hand strikes twelfve to mark a new century, untold misfortunes will befall the technology that our moderne society has come to rely on. Possibly affected tools include pipes, latches, roaming canes, cylinders, and the belt. Have we seen the last of the belt?

Wheelbarrows, it is feared, will seize up, becoming nothing more than wide-mouthed buckets on stilts. According to the more fervent believers, hand pumps at wells will cease operations, throwing thirsty hordes back into the Dark Ages. Anything with a mechanical function is potentially at the whim of the Y1.9K cataclysm, including doors, some shoes, and – it is widely rumored – the horse, whose workaholic bodies have yet to be fully understood by moderne science. Have we seen the last of the horse?

The Y1.9K issue surrounds a plain-jane mathematical error in most moderne conveniences. Built on an Anglican math system that only supported digitry to the number 1899, it is believed that many current-tyme devices will stop working once the year 1900 is reached. Many here in Olde-Londone remain wary. “It is better to practice safety than to find oneself in a sorrowful state at a later time”, says Reynald Winston, as he piles up a few last minute bales of hay. Shovel while you can, Reynald. This may be the last we've seen of the pitchfork. ♦

1936

Revelers, well wishers, and old friends from the around the globe descended upon Hardridge Ranch in Buxom Hole, Montana, the adopted hometown of Minutiæ co-founder Alvin Hardridge. Hardridge, the media magnate and semi-perennial third party presidential candidate, died at the age of 94, surrounded by his wife Glenda, his four children and his brother Nat. The funeral was an all day affair, starting with a procession of exotic personal zoo animals, leading to the solid steel mausoleum, a gift from Hardridge's good friend Andrew Carnegie. “The Newsman,” an original song by Irving Berlin was sung by Lawrence Tibbett as 32 condors were released in an attempt to lift the mausoleum into the sky. Amongst the speakers were Jobyna Ralston, Emil Jannings, Douglas Fairbanks, Conrad Veidt and King Abdul-Aziz bin Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Alvin Hardridge's brother Nat, 92 & notoriously private, gave a very heartfelt and thought provoking speech: “Why are we here? I don't understand. Where is Avly?” At which point his brother Nat turned and started to pound at the door of Alvin's mausoleum. “Let me in, Avly, let me in! Don't leave me out here alone!” Nat was consoled by the Hardridge personal private security team, themselves former members of the Connaught Rangers.

As for Hardridge's beloved Minutiæ, the family vows to keep it a family business, and his four sons have promised “no infighting for control.” Minutiæ currently has an estimate cumulative circulation of 1.5 billion amongst it's morning and evening newspapers, monthly magazine, trolley pamphlets, and New York City private club newsletters. “We never foresee a day where Minutiæ's

readership, frequency of printing, or commitment to hard journalism wanes," says son Cooper Hardridge in a statement released by the family.

It was perhaps said best by film actor & good friend of Alvin Hardridge, Victor "Ozzie" Selvin: "I portrayed dozens of lives on the screen, but no man truly lived in the world like Alvin did."

His brother Nat could not stop crying. ♦

## 1942

In an agreement with the United States Department of War, Minutiæ magazine will now be written entirely in Navajo to assist in the Allied war efforts. Minutiæ's vast circulation and the uncrackable Navajo language will enable enhanced private communication amongst the branches of our proud armed forces.

In addition to classified messages, Minutiæ's award-winning news coverage, cultural pieces, and editorial columns will be in the Navajo language. "We could not be more proud that we have entered into this agreement with the United States Government," said Dallas Hardridge, publisher and sole owner of Minutiæ Publishing, "This is a completely amicable agreement that has nothing to do with Minutiæ's alleged currency forgeries, tax evasion, white slavery, mauve slavery, "and coal bundling." In a completely different matter, the Justice Department has dropped the charges of currency forgeries, tax evasion, white slavery, mauve slavery, and coal bundling.

General Marshall of the Department of War spoke from Washington, DC on the importance of recruiting Navajo marines to work on the magazine. "We are looking for young proud Native men who are looking to fight and die for their country here and abroad in dangerous trenches and close quarter hand to hand combat. Plus, if these men

can string together some sentences, I know Minutiæ is looking for a few of those boys to hammer out the occasional war story."

Minutiæ's commitment to journalistic excellence is a top priority to the War Department, and new military-themed content will be added to the magazine, including mess hall schedules, sweet ration sweepstakes, and a new column titled "Death Toll with Commander Devers." ♦

**ABLE MEN**

**Join MINUTIÆ! – Travel and experience EXOTIC wonders of a COUNTRY DVIDIED – DEEP Breaths – Literature – Newsilition – CANINE FOOT Coverings – Carve the FUTURE of America with the PEN!!! – DESECRATE your foes with the written words – Fair WAGES and MEALS –**

Minutiæ Publications & Homestead Company-Towne  
Alvin Hardridge and his Brother Nat, Editors  
Est. 1863

*Published during the Civil War, the above advertisement drew many men westward. Along with Alvin Hardridge & His Brother Nat, the men lived and worked tirelessly in a company town in the Dakota Territory, helping to grow Minutiæ in the process.*



## BUREAU OF TELEGRAPHONY

Gentlemen, I am sure you have had countless submissions for the "Minutiæ Dream Makeover First Lady of the United States Contesnt," but I would like to throw my sunhat in the ring. At little about myself: I am the First Lady of the United States, a staunch social activist, and keep my teeth to a high shine with silver polish. Thank you for your consideration.

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

*First Lady of the United States.*

*The White House*

1943

Santa, I wish for only one thing this Chrystmastime: a new rocking horse and perhaps two pieces of hard candy. I ever so wish for this to be my grandest Chrystmastime in all of the times I have ever had a time of present reception.

*Love,*

*Ned Kelly*

*Bruised Kneed Child*

*Victoria, Australia*

1867

Gentlemen, I am writing in response to your article "The Magicians of Kittyhawk," where you praise those devilish Wright brothers. Let me be the first to say that everyone in our town knows these boys are meddling with the Devil's powers. There is only one man that ought to fly and that is Jesus (Christ).

*Bedelia Grant*

*Meddler*

*Kittyhawk, SC*

1903

Gentlemen, I think Minutiæ should report on the ongoing struggles in Rwanda between the Hutu and Tutsi. Make sure to include an opening paragraph and at least three primary sources.

*Moe Sanders*

*7th Grade, St. Louis, MO*

1997

Gentlemen, I have the activation codes for the Crutchfield Device. I plan to release the toxin on the opening day of the Panama Canal, marring relationships amongst the Americas. Do not doubt my power.

*Dr. Orcus*

*Acid Face Victim*

*Deep Underground, Borneo*

1914

Gentlemen, Once again I have the activation codes for the Crutchfield Device. It's a little dusty, but can still release a nasty toxin. I plan on releasing it on the opening day of the Gateway Arch, further marring relationships between St. Louis and East St. Louis. Do not doubt my somewhat diminished power.

*Dr. Orcus*

*Acid Face Victim*

*Aboveground Greensfield Retirement Community, Flagstaff*

1956

Gentelmen, Falcon Bravo Yukon Rebar Simplebutt Klinky Falcon Falcon Mister Misty Mysterious Reymisteriojr

*Sergeant Stephen Slaga*

*First Brigade*

*United States Airforce*

1942

### Dogbone Cook-Off

Early bird catches the leavin's, so plan ahead to get out to Old Stone Alley for the third annual Dogbone Cook-Off. Top local cheffs will be rumblin' for first in three categories: presentation, sucklin' taste, and type of dog. Winner gets 20 free minutes at the Fleischmann's Meat Counter to ogle the steaks. (Old Stone Alley, May 22nd)

### Post-Scavenger Hunt Smelting Party

Once the fun dies down from the late night scrap metal scavenger hunt, the morning is going to be filled with the sweet smell of molten nickel. The event is BYOB (Barrel), but with plenty of kindlin' for families and those smelting alone, a great time is practically guaranteed. (Westerfield / Harmony, June 9th, 8am)

### Bootlegging Basics

Ricky Duquesne isn't just any old rum runner, he's the biggest name in the illicit trade of small quantities of alcohol across international lines. Join him for a one-night tutorial that should cover

everything from distinguishing clean Irish from dirty Irish, invoicing crime syndicates and staying motivated. (Location withheld, June 11th, 7pm)

### Current West Reenactment

Horses, men in leather chaps, incredible feats of roping - all of which is currently happening west of the Mighty Mississip. Watch as James Feller uses timely techniques to shoot out paper targets and uncover cattle rustlin' operations, just like he was actually doing two months ago. They're not trends if they last forever. (Heckinsberg Park, June 27th, 10am)

### Fixed Baseball Game

Stare helplessly as the facially-groomed elite predetermines the outcome of a weekend double-header between the Philadelphia Athletics and the Boston Braves. Those fans relegated to the outfield bench seating can expect a sunny afternoon of uninspired play on the field and the familiar waft of burning money coming from the enclosed bleachers behind home plate. (DuPont Field, July 5th, 12:30pm)



## The Minutiæ Record of the Month Club

This month featuring  
Men Named Robin • Pajama Beat  
Arlene Montgomery • The Lady Lads  
Farry Halls & His Loyal Sons  
UK Gold (UK) • The Scoops • The Tips  
Fucked Up Tribe • Gibson's Gang  
and more of your favorites!

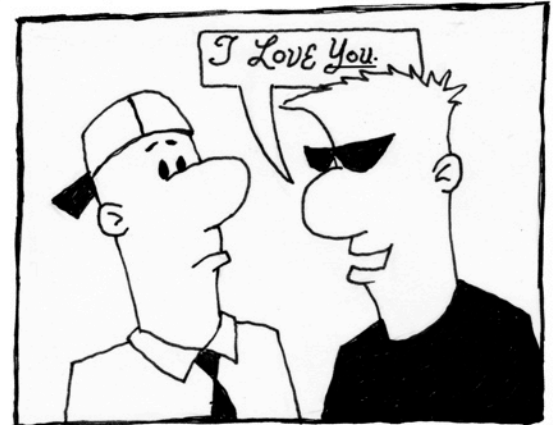
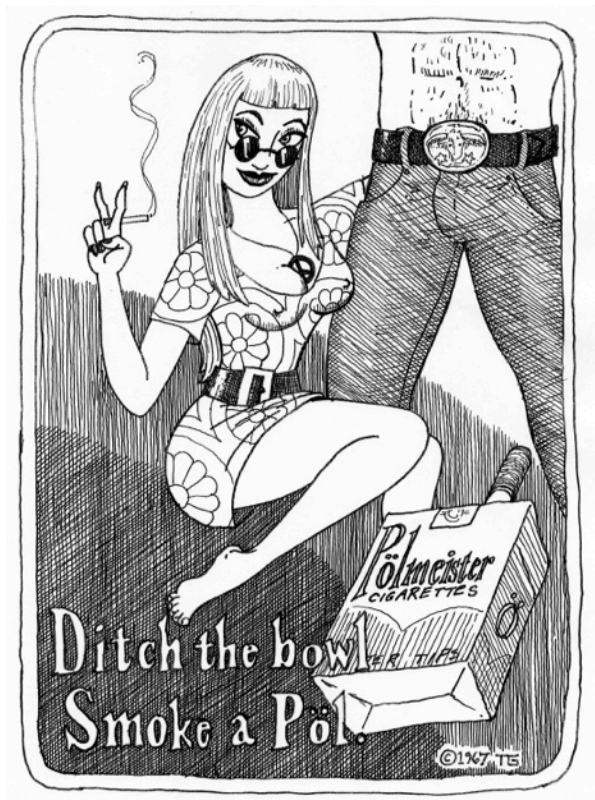
©1973 Minutiæ

In 1997, following several years of worldwide success, Minutiæ's comic strip *Pudgy & Ralph* shocked readers when the character Pudgy became the first openly gay cartoon character to appear in print. The strip was subsequently banned in the United Arab Emirates and across libraries in the United States, but celebrated in Ireland, for some reason.

Following the banning, the strip's creator Jim Warren came out of the closet himself. It became clear *Pudgy & Ralph* was based on his life, with many of the famous *Pudgy & Ralph* story lines, including when Ralph worked as a discrete chauffeur for elite politicians, Ralph's eating of pizza, and Pudgy's constant wearing of sunglasses to mask the sadness and isolation from being scared to present his true self to the world.

*Pudgy & Ralph* ended three months later with three panels: Pudgy looking in a mirror. Pudgy removing his sunglasses to reveal tears. Pudgy stepping out his window and soaring into the sky like an angel.

Warren later sued Tony Kushner.



In May of 1967, the Pölmesteir Tobacco Corporation, nervous over the growing proliferation of marijuana use amongst youth, enlisted Minutiæ cartoonist T. Apollo Gasley to create a series of advertisements portraying cigarettes in a positive light. In a rush, the racy illustration was blindly approved and published. The version you see to the left has been modified to add clothing, except in Ireland.



After a thorough reading of Upton Sinclair's confusingly popular *The Jungle*, you may well end up thinking the very same thing I, Franklin Earnest Armour, did while sipping café au lait in our Hyde Park arboretum last Saturday: What? Digging through the chapters, it is abundantly clear that Sinclair's Socialist agenda is nothing more than vocal praise for a lazy immigrant majority.

At least that is what my father says. I don't quite understand it.

As the sole heir to the Armour Meats empire, it is my duty to spend several hours a month learning about the family business, which I like because I get candies. Oftentimes, there are these befuddling unions or women's rights groups saying mean things about my family. In most cases, nothing more is needed in this civilized Chicago society than to pen off a nasty missive. As for Upton Sinclair, my father says that man is simply a "pseudo-journalist cad." He's always telling me to stiffen up, my father, but with entire rooms in our Lake Michigan mansion dedicated to exotic feather pillows, I would rather lie down. For his sake, and the sake of Armour Meats and their fine line of Meat and Meat-Lite products, I shall try.

The *Jungle* follows the perplexing life of Jurgis Rudkus, a "Lithuanian" immigrant who earns gainful employment at one of Chicago's premiere meat packing plants. Despite a fair wage and all the suet trimmings he could hope to pilfer, Rudkus finds himself shamed out of a job while his dirty children run rampant in the streets, hawking papers. At one point, a half-crazed nouveau riche man unthinkably gives Rudkus carriage fare – a \$100 bill! – but the poor man manages to lose it, his wife and his children all within about thirty pages. How gauche.

According to my father, the animal byproduct magnate Philip Danforth Armour, Rudkus' tale of losing everything – despite the continued hand-outs given to him – is a frighteningly common affair. Most immigrant men cannot help themselves but to drown in the 'fire water', or manage to work themselves so slowly that they fall asleep while on the factory floor. Many men have indeed tumbled into rendering vats, but due only to their sleepiness and general proclivities to want too much, too fast. Each man is given a ration of pork rendering for his daily sup, yet every year a glut of boat rats (my father's nickname for the immigrants) find their way into the bottom of a bubbling cauldron of pork after-parts. Gauche indeed!

What Sinclair fails to mention in any of the wordy pages of *The Jungle* is the plight of the packing baron. Whereas the average immigrant must only provide for sixteen or seventeen children, a single wealthy business owner like my father spends countless pennies a day having men shine his shoes, hold spittoons and act as man-bridges over puddles of excrement. It's no easy feat to be a father to the city of Chicago, Papa Armour is quick to remind. I weep thinking of my poor father spending a single dime to keep another immigrant employed for three weeks. If only the lower classes would choose to make more money!

While I fail to see what all the 'fuss' is about concerning Upton Sinclair's imaginative work *The Jungle*, it has caused a bit of a stir in local politics. I know because future Mayor Busse came to dinner last night! He is a boisterous man who enjoys brandy. Indeed, society may be changing (We recently have been having much fun with our new Victrola!), but one thing will almost certainly remain clear: this book is absolute, untrustworthy sensationalist rubbish. Just ask my father. ♦

**HI-FI & HEADPHONES**

When Squirsh, the quintessential American jam-band, broke up in August of 2001, a piece of the American musical landscape was lost. Now, over a decade later, the members of Squirsh have returned with "Morning Muses," a new studio album, and a massive summer tour, starting with an epic three night run at the ALLTEL Pavilion in Raleigh. Guitarist and frontman Lend Hardy, along with Bersh Crampton on bass, Claph Macardley on piano and Sam Stimpson on percussion were all back to pick up where they left off eleven years ago, and their fans are along for the ride. Folks from as far away as Washington State and even Brazil filled the Pavilion to hear their favorite band return.

"This is awesome, right? The fact that they're back is enough for me," said Greg Lindsey, a "taper" or someone who trades cassettes of Squirsh shows. "I was there, at their last show in Redrocks. I was~ dear lord, I was 19..." Greg looks down for a moment before looking up with a fierce determination to cheer on Squirsh as they played "Hold Down the Meadowlark" featuring Stimpson playing a marimba of old soda cans.

After a roaring eighteen minute rendition of "Bersh's Melody," Squirsh played "Tea on Sundays," the single off of "Morning Muses," which was received well by the loving audience. "This is good. This is good," said long time fan Dale Bruster, "I mean, it'd probably be better if I was high, but I can't do that anymore. My day job does random drug tests."

"I remember in 1995 I drove around the country one summer following them. It was the best summer of my life," said restaurant manager Kyle Kevins, who was at the show with his wife,

Cynthia, a first time Squirsh concert goer. "I don't like the long songs, but I liked that Tea on Sundays song," said Cynthia. "That's not really what they're known for," said Kyle. "Hey, I'm here aren't I?" said Cynthia. "You're right," said Kyle.

Squirsh ended the night with their legendary "Holly's Holiday," but forewent the expected classic guitar solo because the crowd was starting to make it's way out. Greg Lindsey, the taper, said that the show "was like seeing a teenage friend once you've grown up," and as to his trading the cassette of last night's performance, he says that he'll just go download the MP3 set from LiveSquirsh.com when he gets home. (As of this printing, Lindsey has yet to download the show)

Squirsh continues their welcome back tour throughout the summer at the Westside Stadium in East Troy, WI; The Wreck Room in Burlington, VT; and The Old Cider Mill in Butte, MT. Tickets are still available on LiveSquirsh.com. ♦

**TELECASTATION**

Snappy dialogue is no stand-in for substance, a fact that remains elusive to the so-called masterminds behind The Evening News, airing nightly at 5:30pm on ABC. It doesn't take a crippling fear of the outdoors to see that things don't add up in the hyper-stylized world of interacting people that the show's writers present. But for this shut-in viewer, it certainly doesn't hurt.

Set in small-town Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the Channel 7 nightly news is a lumpy sofa with one arm torn off: hard to sit through and with no end in sight. Range Dockweiler plays the strong male lead, opposite Rosslyn Compacho, a fiery brunette of unknown heritage who favors drab pantsuits and large gold necklaces. Together, they

are the Action News team, set with the ostensible task of bringing global dramatics into the rickety, trash-filled home of this and every other nightly viewer.

Dockweiler provides an air of strength to the screen, frequently shooting off smiles and coy nods to the disheveled audience. He is, however, an imperfect leading man. The crisp attempts at witty desk banter come off as banal, self-assured nonsense, only occasionally punctuated by the nasally, hollow laugh of Compacho. Having shied away from human interaction for nearly six years, it's still hard to imagine that this drivel is what passes for conversation in the world beyond the cluttered living room.

For her part, Compacho relies too heavily on make-up and not enough on emotional dialogue, often drowning out the dirty viewer and his cats with a barrage of facts when a few moments of innuendo would more than suffice. If this viewer wanted nothing but facts, maybe they'd open the front door once in a while. No thanks!

As this season drags on, the unanswered question seems to be: will they or won't they? Dockweiler's arresting good looks make him an obvious candidate for Compacho's bedroom eyes, but every time things begin to turn towards what the viewer must assume human contact to be like, a cutaway or screen graphic breaks the affair to pieces. And if you're waiting for these moments to add up to something substantially more, you're likely to be sorely disappointed. After 270 consecutive episodes of the evening news, the most arousing moment for this viewer came during a PSA for a cat shelter. Meow, indeed.

Beyond the brokedown romance, what's left is a series of ever-changing cutaways to field reporters in terrifyingly open spaces, and video pieces

that highlight the sort of moving traffic / shopping experiences / public discussions that no audience in their right mind could connect with. Precious few are the moments back at the news desk, safe in an office chair and with all the world's newsy moments at a comfortable distance. Only the opening visuals – a sweeping mélange of gold and navy-blue shapes that haphazardly shoot towards the frightened and largely immobile viewer, before magically forming the number 7 inside of a circle – seem to be a hit with the feral cat crowd, whose screen-pawing and occasional urinations show off their satisfaction. This is just about the only highlight to the evening's viewing experience.

It's a shame that Channel 7 and the figureheads surrounding The Evening News can't seem to put together a relevant television program, instead relying on outlandish tales of war, crime and other social detritus that is enough to scare common citizens into a world of outright fear at what's beyond the front door. What's more, there are pitiful few moments of realism that would allow the viewer to connect with the show. Where is the struggle to find a clean spoon with which to eat cold oatmeal? Or the joys of discovering an old box of Christmas ornaments in the damp basement? Any mention of the thrill of discovering a throw blanket that perfectly covers the living room window? Sadly, there are none.

Until major overhauls are given to this long-running series, it's as impossible as unlocking the front door to give The Evening News a passing grade. From concept to execution, the Action News team needs an overhaul. Until then, this viewer might just channel surf a bit. Now, to find the remote under all of these mannequin parts! ♦



## LITERATI

Never turn a corner. That seems to be the biggest take away from Mark Rugland's latest dream-turned-nightmare novel *Bountiful*, which chronicles one woman's return to the world of high-end calligraphy after burning her hands. The initial heartbreak of the novel is almost immediately and incessantly overcome by the pure emotions of success in the face of insurmountable powerlessness. That is, until the last page.

Like all of Rugland's prior works, *Bountiful* suffers from what amounts to author stage fright. The tales themselves are always competently laid out and exquisitely written. Each is a testament to the strength of human endurance: *Coveralls* teaches that mute farmworkers have rights, *Abby's Wife* outlines the nuances of secret love in war-torn Angola, and *Chablinsky* tells of a single man's fondness for isolation after society has crumbled. Yet each comes with a particularly emphatic exclamation point that has become Rugland's well-known trademark: no one escapes alive, or happy.

Liza Bilson, the handicapped heroine of *Bountiful*, leads a life of extremes. As a rising star in the world of super-detailed calligraphy, she is a sought after commodity for her steady hand. But when she burns her hands saving her mother from a fire, Bilson is left to momentarily question her life. Yet, for all that trauma, she is universally and immediately accepted back into one of the most notoriously fickle calligraphy cliques, eventually rising to the top. The warm, rosy language employed by Rugland allows Bilson to flow ever upward in her quest, before a sharp turn into an open manhole kills her succinctly. So much so, in fact, that her final-chapter death and immediate loss of all she had worked for comes as not only a surprise to the reader, it's practically an affront.

Rugland himself doesn't dismiss the growing cacophony of frustrated fans that find themselves run through with immediate feelings of loss and pain after each unhappy ending. Instead, he need only to point to *Cordova*, which spent a scant 30 pages laying the groundwork for Isabella Dorre, possibly the most beloved main character of the past 30 years, before bludgeoning her in a senseless (and uninvestigated) street mugging. The next 176 pages of *Cordova* are dedicated to the unending darkness that Dorre experiences in death, and the profound sadness her family endures. Then, with two pages remaining, her entire family is blown sky high when a gas tanker on the side of their trailer explodes. The end.

"I used to write happier material", says Rugland from his largely unfurnished Newark, New Jersey apartment. As a former staff writer for *Highlights for Kids*, this is indeed true. Rugland spent an enjoyable five years polishing stories about sleuthing raccoons or spy mice, burrowing in for the winter with their contented families. But after a round of layoffs in 2006, Rugland found himself a man with a smile, and no one returning the favor.

"For two years, I sent out the same piece about the lifelong mating habits of African wombats and how, even in death, the mates would remain with each other." It was poignant material, but apparently no fit for the publications he'd submitted to. After 153 rejection letters from *Harper's* and *Mother Jones* to *Ivory Magazine*, a hungry Rugland hastily rewrote the piece with an alternate ending. The wombats, laying together for what may be the last time, are swallowed whole by a previously unmentioned lion, which is in turn felled by a mystery big game hunter who doesn't even bother with the carcass. The story *Wilder Than* sold to *The New Yorker* in four days for nearly \$70,000.

Rugland sits on the floor, tinkering with his laptop and opening expansive Word documents, all of which have largely gone unread. "This story about an old man who learns to ride a bike so that he can cross China to reach the love of his life has been returned to me unopened over sixty times. The only publishing house that actually opened the envelope burned the manuscript and mailed back the ashes."

For now, the isolated author will continue to write what works. His current project, loosely titled *Andronicus*, involves a trapeze artist with a broken past, whose life literally hangs in the balance. And while Rugland assures me that his main character will overcome these obstacles, there's no denying him a merciless ending. "Who knows", says Rugland, as he lay down on the bare floor with a sigh. "Maybe I'll just have him shoot himself in the face." ♦



## INSTITUTIONALIZED

At Washington, DC's National Zoo, getting Mei Xiang and Tian Tian the Giant Pandas to mate is a top priority for zookeepers Carl Mastley and Nina Pipper. "Officially we have to call it mating," Mastley says, "but I call it moving too fast." Mastley and Pipper both express pain at their jobs of getting two pandas to mate. "I am not entirely comfortable with this," Pipper says, longingly watching Mastley comb Mei Xiang, "there is a mutliyear process where a male and female slowly get to know each other and then, after months of dating, will finally have inter~ inter~... be together."

National Zoo Director Dennis Kelly explains that "this is an historic moment for our zoo as well as Mei Xiang and Tian Tian. I want those two to get together so we can all stop wondering if it's ever going to happen." Kelly smirks at Mastley and Pipper sitting together in the cafeteria, then adds "and I'm not talking about the pandas."

The urgency to mate the pandas comes from the small window in which the female is ovulating. "We are forced by so called 'science' to say 'this has to happen then' and 'do this now' when, really, maybe sometimes things just take time," Mastley says, "maybe - and think about this - maybe if we were to let these pandas comes together when they're both ready it would all be better. I don't think Tian Tian has ever been with a girl panda before. He's probably scared and wondering which is the pee hole and which is the go hole."

Both Mastley and Pipper are working overtime, staying late on Friday nights, to ensure that the mating takes place. Surveillance video of the zookeepers show them painstakingly trying to entice Mei Xiang, while at the same time adorably fumbling around each other.

Oscar Neundez, the chief zookeeper at the bat house, doesn't envy the panda handler's intense work. "Oh, yeah, it's tough work, those pandas should be extinct, y'know, but I bet Tian Tian launches into that go hole long before Carl makes a move on Nina. They were both rabbits for Halloween. I mean, come on."

"Maybe Mei Xiang's been hurt or has trust issues." says Pipper, who claims to have a boyfriend on a long ocean voyage. "It's not uncommon for pandas to have performance anxiety surrounding inter~ inter~, uh, go holing." She excuses herself to playfully push Mastley and call him a "total dork." Everyone rolls their eyes at the same time. ♦

# BIG PAYOUT

The proverbial dust is just starting to settle on BP's Deepwater Horizon explosion. Beyond the environmental and cultural fallout, the explosion set off a flurry of litigation amongst all those involved. This March, BP agreed to settle for \$7.8 billion, with an additional \$20 billion in fines.

Intimate crawfish social mixers  
to promote population  
**\$1.2 BILLION**

Treme Box Sets  
**\$60 MILLION**

Free 'Ask me about my  
battered aquifer' t-shirts  
**\$1 MILLION**

Halliburton dead  
Afghani-shaped key chains  
**\$3 MILLION**

Costal clean up performed by  
really hot 20 somethings in jean cut offs,  
hiking boots, and bandanas  
**\$6 MILLION**

Studio time and CD pressing for  
Charity Single 'Slick, Don't Quit'  
**\$64 MILLION**

4,000 cabana tents along the  
Gulf Coast with bossa nova guitarists  
**\$6 MILLION**

Transocean Men-in-Black  
memory wiping pens  
**\$4.04 BILLION**

Lego Deepwater Horizion kits  
**\$320 MILLION**

Society of underwater  
roboslaves to aid in clean up  
**\$10.1 BILLION**

Research Grants to study how to  
destroy the roboslaves when they  
take over the ocean floor  
**\$6.1 BILLION**

'Underwater Railroad' for  
Roboslaves Salvation  
to 'Underwater North'  
**\$3.5 BILLION**

Underwater  
Robo-Frederick Douglass  
Prototype  
**\$2.3 BILLION**



## **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 Who Needs 'Em: The Man Dilemma.*

**I recently started dating a single father and I'm having trouble connecting with his teenager. Any suggestions?**

Teenagers might seem like a handful, but don't get discouraged! Here are a few tips to get them to warm up to you: friend connect them on Facebook, or tag them on Twitter. Better yet, you can make up for any lost time with your teen by taking them out for a night at the movies. Hint hint: it might just be fun for you too!

**My son just got his drivers license and now begs for the car all the time. How do I manage a new driver in the family?**

As kids hit their late teens, they are yearning for some independence behind the wheel of that car. It's important to set boundaries such as paying for gas, no loud music and no leaving the state. Start with letting your child drive to school or the movies, and maybe ask that they give you a call to let you know they're ok. But not while driving!

**Was that you and your daughter screaming at each other in the grocery store last week?**

I think what you probably saw was some much-needed mother-daughter bonding time happening in the produce section. Samantha is readjusting to everyday life after a nine-month stay at a lovely facility in Ocala, Florida, and it's only natural that she would be excited to be out and about

outside the walls of Calming Meadows. It's so hard to even remember what we were discussing. Was it getting ready for school or maybe about the fun vacation we're going to take to see her grandmother this summer? So many exciting plans!

**She kept on screaming about wanting to see Derek. Who's Derek?**

Well. Derek is the boy that Samantha was "friends" with before she went to Calming Meadows. Sometimes, as a parent, we have to help our kids see the difference between bad influences and good influences. For example, just last night Samantha went to a teen mixer at the community center.

**I saw her hanging out with Derek last night.**

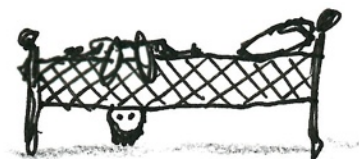
I truly find that hard to believe. I even spoke to the chaperon at the community center and ~ No. That's not possible. She knows she's not allowed to see Derek.

Samatha!?! Get down here right now. Where were you last night? Just answer the question, where were you last night? Oh, really? You were? I know I spoke to the chaperone, but I am starting to think that Harry Phack is not a real person.

No, I won't "lay off," little lady. I want to know where you were last night.

Do not. Do not walk out that door. I cannot afford to send you back to Calming Meadows with what I pay your father in alimony. Come back!

Ow! That's my bad elbow! ♦



IT'S  
NEVER  
GONNA  
HAPPEN

1.

SCOTT FARMER IS AN IDEALIST.  
A ROMANTIC, EVEN.  
WHICH MAKES THIS STORY HARDER TO TELL...

Scott and Katie, both seniors at Glen J. Davis High School outside of Columbus, OH, had been going out for three months prior to their senior prom. It was one of those deep-seeded friendships that blossomed into romance as the end of high school approached. Katie admired everything about Scott: his position as editor of *The Draconian* (the school newspaper), his starring role in the Spring production of *Anything Goes*, and his calming smile. While the rest of the class was asleep during the Honor Roll Lock-In, the young couple snuck away to make out in a corner of the gymnasium. They were an item everyone in school talked about.

Prom was held in the large banquet hall of the downtown Columbus Marriott. Teachers and administrators ensured that the evening's festivities stayed PG, but six blocks away, the La Quinta Inn was booked solid for the night, overflowing with senior after-parties. The topic of getting a room had come up between Scott and Katie. Perhaps it was the social pressure or the young romanticism that pushed Scott to make a reservation using his friend Mitchell's credit card.

"His mom just remarried so they gave him a credit card", says Scott. He and Mitchell drove two towns over to buy condoms, fearing they'd be seen. They kept the prophylactics in crumpled Wendy's bags in their bedrooms. Like thousands of high schoolers every year, Scott and Katie fully expected to let the excitement of senior prom sweep them into losing their virginity.

As the final slow dance ended in the basement of the Marriott, Scott and Katie walked the six blocks to the La Quinta Inn and up to their rented room. Almost immediately, the ravenous teens started making out, removing their clothes, and lying together in bed.

Yet, an hour later, they were still lying together in bed, still a pair of virgins.

Through the thin walls, Scott and Katie listened to Mitchell and his date moan. "Do you want to?" asked Scott. Katie said yes. Reaching inside the greasy and stale Wendy's bag, Scott pulled out the condom and slid it on.

Scott asked Katie three more times, just to make sure. Each time she said yes: She wanted to have sex. And then Scott did nothing.

He kept on trying to form new sentences or words as he worked through it all in his head. Is this right? Am I doing this only because it's prom night? Is she the one? Without a word, Scott removed the condom. The moment was over. They stayed up all night, just talking about the summer and college. After the sun rose, and they got breakfast with their group of friends, Scott took Katie home.

Almost 20 years later, Scott is still a virgin.

## 2.

I first heard about Scott Farmer, the 36-year old virgin, eight months ago. My boyfriend the caricature artist had just broken up with me; I was heartbroken and confused. We were on *The Track*. We had met each other's parents, taken trips together, and even moved into a condo with a shared lease. When it all fell apart, I found myself sleeping on the couch of a friend who worked with Scott's sister. In the midst of a back rub and 'things aren't so bad' pep talk, Scott was brought up as a prime example of how much worse things could be.

I was surprised that Scott agreed to let me interview him, but I soon found out that his virginity is fairly common knowledge. "I don't really tell people, but anyone who talks to Peter or my sister



finds out pretty quickly. It's kind of like saying I'm HIV positive, like 'keep your eye out,' but I don't know if this is worse... I bet people who are HIV positive are happier than I am".

He stares into space for a moment. "I don't mean that", he says, unconvincingly.

Scott works from home as a copy editor for a blog network that he didn't want named. Suffice it to say, Scott spends his days correcting punctuation and fact checking snark-laden posts intended for Brooklynites, women who like "look books," geeks, aviation dweebs and homeschooling mothers. His dream is to publish a series of novels about a hard nose detective named Chantilly Rose. A few pages into one draft and its abundantly clear: Chantilly Rose is the anti-Scott. Despite the name, Chantilly is confident, self-assured, even egotistical. "I used to deny Chantilly had any relation to me, but I mean, it's so clear. Women throw themselves at him, and after a while they're gunned down so he can move on to the next one."

Scott began writing fiction a week after prom. He tried to keep in touch with Katie that summer, but she left for Venice with some friends and returned in no mood to deal with "high school boys." Just before heading off to the University of Wisconsin in the fall, Scott learned that his best friend Mitchell had slept with Katie. Worse, they were going to make it work long distance. He hasn't spoken more than a few cursory words to either of them since, and declined a monogrammed invitation to their destination wedding

when the coworker he'd been courting backed out. "I kept on joking that we were going as an item, and eventually it weirded her out. That's when i started working from home."

He arrived in Madison in the fall of 1993. Tucked amongst the sessions at college orientation was a frank discussion by SASE (Students And Sexual Equality), an on-campus wellness group that, among other things, hammers down the agreed upon definition of rape and consent. At the end of the talk, condoms and stern handshakes are handed out in abundance.

Scott's response was fear. "I kept on hearing things about consent, unwanted sexual advancements. It felt like if I made any gesture towards a girl at all, I would be kicked out of school. So, you have to be confident, but you can't be pushy. I still feel trapped." Despite his fear of becoming a sexual predator, Scott quickly fell in with Laura, a coed who shared his dorm floor and a statistics class. They gushed over the recently released August and

Everything After by the Counting Crows. They saw A Bronx Tale during a Saturday matinee and made out a little in the back row. A week before Thanksgiving break, only one unanswered question remained: when were they going to have sex? Reuniting in December to resume classes, the question still hung cold in the Wisconsin air. Laura, for her part, was trying to answer it: soon.

On nights when Laura would stay over, Scott would feign headaches or tiredness before rolling onto his side for the night. One night he acciden-

I BET PEOPLE WHO  
ARE HIV POSITIVE  
ARE HAPPIER THAN  
I AM

tally knocked Laura off the bed, bruising her butt. As winter break neared, Laura assumed Scott's lack of sex drive more about being uninterested in her, not just emotionally unprepared. The night before Laura was to return to Milwaukee for Christmas, the unanswered question fell out into the open.

"She asked why I didn't want to have sex with her," says Scott, "I knew I was going to lose her, so I tried to go for it." After some over-the-sweater heavy petting, the two landed in bed together, with Scott reaching for one his orientation condoms. He stared at it the shiny wrapper, so easy to peel open. Except, to reach the condom inside, you'd have to rip the word CONSENT right down the middle. He stared a moment longer, then dropped the condom back into the drawer of his nightstand.

Laura stormed out and the two didn't speak over the holidays. When winter session resumed, the two avoided each other in the hallways. Eventually, Laura transferred to another dorm. "I mean, we never officially broke up, so... y'know..." Even now, Scott wonders aloud if he should "maybe call her again?"

"I was worried we were moving too fast, that I wouldn't be good at it, that I wasn't ready, that it wasn't special enough," says Scott. He pauses, as if he's had an epiphany. "I guess I've always wanted it to be special and romantic. Not in some dorm room while my roommate Duane sleeps in the bunk below us."

Scott spent the remainder of his college years primarily alone, aside from his volunteer work with the campus' SASE Walk program, where he would spend his Friday and Saturday evenings escorting groups of girls safely across campus. "I admit that I thought I'd meet some cute girl who fell

in love with how courageous I was being." Mostly, Scott met much taller, drunk women that he'd lend pizza money to.

"I have this philosophy that if I am good and stay quiet, people will give me things," says Scott, "But that's not how life works. It's why I don't like video games. At some point you have to be proactive and go after the bad guy or the reward, and I'd rather cheat at solitaire."

Scott graduated quietly in four years. He declined to walk during the final ceremony and left Madison shortly after. He doesn't speak with anyone from college, which isn't surprising when you see the stack of manuscripts on his bedroom floor. During the golden years of most people's lives, Scott completed three novels: "Chantilly Rose: Framed for Regicide", "Chantilly Rose: Doomed from the Chart" and "Chantilly Rose: Bullets & The Mayor."

### 3.

Peter Leslie is a bartender and Scott Farmer's closest friend. He's funny, exceedingly charming and almost defiantly confident, thanks to his handsome good looks and an over-abundance of muscles. When I contacted him, he asked that we talk as he did some grocery shopping.

"When I see a woman, the only thing I have on my mind is sex. Nothing before or after," Peter tells me as he checks melon ripeness. "When Scott sees a woman, he thinks about how to talk to her, their first date, when they're going to have sex, what happens afterwards, what if they get married, whose house they go to for the holidays, what brand of laundry detergent they'll use. He's doing too much math when it's all very carnal." Peter holds up a melon to compare to my breasts. "Nice."



The unlikely pair first hit it off when Scott was in Peter's bar with a date. Peter noticed Scott's social failings and tried to throw him a line or two from over the bar. At the end of the night, the date left with Peter; he and Scott have remained close ever since. "I've tried to get him laid," says Peter, "I have sent the skankiest girls after him. I've persuaded the sweetest, most innocent girls, too. He is incapable of closing. I did everything short of having a girl force herself on him. Hell, if I could get him to leave his apartment and go to Vegas, I'd even try that."

Peter confides in me that he's hopeful Scott's detective novels become successful and maybe get optioned into a film franchise. Of course, Peter himself would get cast as the star. "I am Chantilly Rose. I've got the build and the attitude." Listen to this, he says, before assuming a smoky air. "Listen, darling, you hear anything, you give me a call. My name? Oh, it's Chantilly Rose." He drops the character, clearly pleased with his performance. "See? Nailed it." Peter may not have the chops to play a leading man, but he is the absolute definition of a ladies man. I was almost taken in by his offer to 'lay it on [me]' at his bar, but the mystique wore off once I began to hear all of his sordid tales for myself. "I actually wanted to challenge myself," says Peter, over a late lunch. "I wanted to see if I could tell you exactly how I operate and still have you go home with me. Oh well." Within ten minutes, he's talked our single-mother waitress into a date.

"Peter is amazing. He's incredible." I'm with Scott at Peter's bar, watching him operate on the female clientele while serving drinks. "I wish I could have one moment in my entire life where I wasn't afraid to proposition a girl...Like, propose something...Not propose to her, but, like, make an offer for her...I mean... y'know?" Scott exhales and takes a sip of his free vodka Coke, courtesy of the man behind the bar who just snorted a Jell-O shot off of a blonde's chest. "I wish I had one moment where I wasn't afraid of women."

Scott opens his wallet and pulls out a dry, cracked square of plastic. Stamped across the front, in all caps, is the word CONSENT. He tells me that he's been holding onto the same condom since college not only as a reminder, but to use victoriously when the time comes. He'll be vindicated, he says. When I point out that it's expired, he crumples.

At my tipsy suggestion, Scott and I go to Walgreens to get condoms, which he has never actually purchased himself. Back in high school, it was Mitchell at the register; in college, he never moved past the handful that he was given at orientation. To Scott, the entire process is overwhelming. It takes four minutes to enter the condom aisle, and another six to get him in front of the display.

"I hate condoms. Not like that. I look at them and they're just staring back at me saying 'not for you, you don't need us.' It's like an illiterate person browsing books. They're insulting me."





#### 4.

A year and a half ago, Scott was miserable. After a two-week relationship with a friend of his sister's that included (in order) coffee, lunch, dinner and the movie "For Colored Girls", she had stopped responding to his text messages.

"I know she knew my situation when she agreed to go out with me, and it didn't bother her. I think she could tell that I kept on wondering if she was the girl it was finally going to happen with, and the whole thing just turned her off. They can all tell. I've been out with six women since college, and it doesn't matter if they know about my situation or not, they can all tell that's what I'm thinking. Women already know that guys are always walking around, thinking about sex, but with the added layer of being a virgin, it's just too much."

Feeling "rejected by the entire world," Scott didn't leave his house for two weeks. He resigned himself to the notion that not only would he never have sex, he would never be with anyone in any romantic capacity. "I'd rather be alone than be with a woman who doesn't want me. And I don't think I'll be able to get a woman to want me because I come off as such a loser." When Scott finally emerged from his emotional cocoon, he left his house in a chocolate stained pair of Hanes Beefy sweatpants. Scott believed he had hit rock bottom. Yet, for him, there was one more step to go.

After 36 years as a virgin, Scott knew that all of his relationships had teetered on the notion of sex. All of its questions and presumptions made

everything so complicated. Was it going to happen? When? How? Would he do it right? How long should parts stay wet for? It was too much for him to handle, and he decided to seek help from a professional.

Across town at the La Quinta Inn, Scott arranged for a female escort. In the room, with the money on the nightstand, Scott dove into the details. "I wanted to know how many times... 'it' ... could happen, because I figured I would need a few times to figure it out", he tells me later. He paid up front for two hours, unlimited "times". Yet, despite the business-like nature of the evening, Scott began to shut down. The escort, sensing

Scott's struggle, took it upon herself to get things started. She stripped and lay her naked body over the bed. Across the room, Scott sat in the desk chair in his boxers, looking at her, wide-eyed. She suggested he have a drink, but didn't want his first time to be "under the influence". After ten minutes of slow, silent gyrating,

the escort turned on TNT and began an episode of Law & Order. One hour later and Scott had not so much as swiveled in his chair. Half of his time was gone. Part of him wanted it all to be over, wishing he could just get drunk and finish the 'solution' he had paid for. But the other part of him, the big, burning part of him, was scared.

"I waited so long, built it up so much, that it just couldn't end that way. It was like I drove my virginity out into the woods and was going to shoot it in the back of the head. I didn't want to execute my virginity, I wanted to set it free."

I WISH I HAD ONE  
MOMENT WHERE I  
WAS NOT AFRAID  
OF WOMEN

Eventually, the escort left. Scott waited around for a few more minutes, provided his own solution, then headed out. A few days later a \$45 charge appeared on his credit card from the hotel for sheet cleaning and accessing one of the 'premium' video options. Scott hasn't been on a date, flirted, or been with a woman since. He has resigned himself to the notion that he will always be a virgin.

## 5.

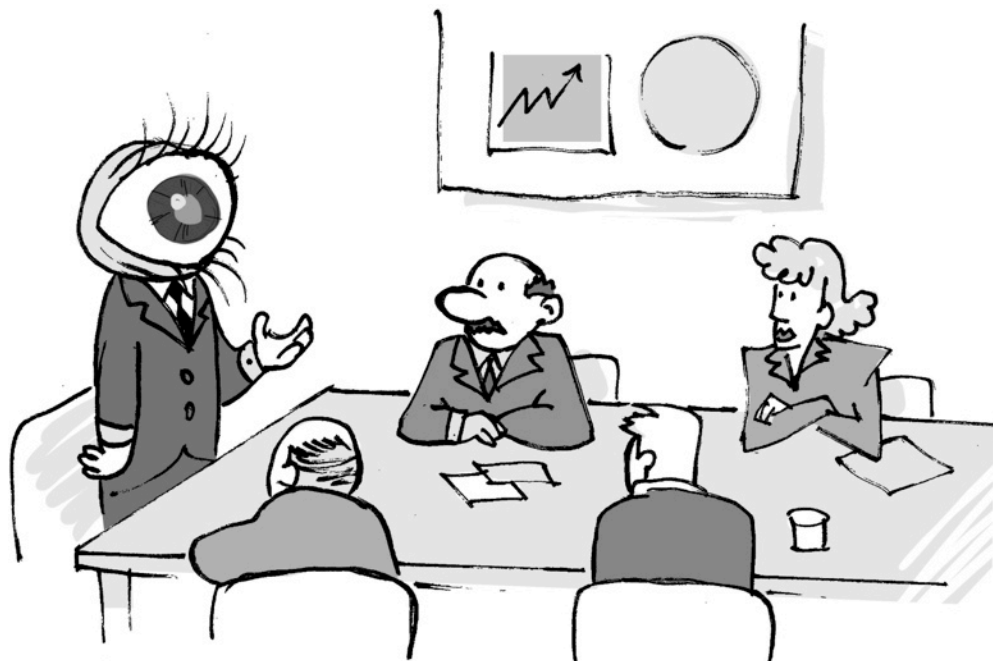
Back in the condom aisle, I finally help Scott purchase a 3 pack of name brand condoms. A little tipsy from the vodka Coke, he expounds on what a waste of money it is for him to have condoms, which only worsens his mood. I help Scott back to his apartment, and he lazily lets me in. I was curious to see how a 36 year old single man decorates, and I was surprised. There weren't superhero figurines or movie posters everywhere. Scott explained everything is from a single page in a Crate & Barrel catalog. He wanted the apartment to look nice to any girl that may come back,

but he never uses any of it, no one ever comes over but Peter. Scott's bedroom is sparse: A bed in the corner with a single pillow. "All I do in there is sleep. What?"

I go through Scott's DVD collection while he stumbles back and forth. "I cannot imagine any scenario in the next fifty years of my life where I will be really happy," says Scott. "I have fleeting moments of happiness, and then I remember this huge hole in my life where I should have someone's love."

After some digging, he pulls out a manuscript and begins to read from 'Chantilly Rose: Dames & Doom'. It's his latest draft, where the detective, after a passionate night with a widow, implies that they'll never meet again, despite the fact that he's inseminated her.

"This guy, he doesn't care. He doesn't want a wife and a family, and I want it all. I want to make breakfast for people who love me. I want to book plane tickets for a family and wake up in the middle of the night because someone had a nightmare. And I'll never have it because, God fucking



*"Well, Chad's not here anymore. I'm Barry,  
and this is the way Barry does things."*

damn it, I can't even make whoopie with a hooker!"

It occurs to me, sitting on a couch that was purchased for the implicit illusion of maturity, that I haven't had sex in over six months. This living, breathing story, Scott Farmer, so consumed my post-break up life that half a year passed and I hadn't so much as sat on a working dryer for the thrills. Listening to Scott say "whoopie" grates on me. I'm slightly irritated, a little drunk, suddenly horny, and staring at a 36 year old intoxicated virgin rambling on about wanting a family. I make a move.

Looking back on it now, I guess I wanted to snuff out the torch that Scott had been holding up to the ideals of romance for nearly two decades. I thought, if anything, I could help him move forward. But, most of all, for me, it had been six months.

## 6.

It's been three weeks since my night with Scott. In the morning, I woke to a full chocolate chip pancake breakfast, with a wedge of grapefruit and a glass of milk. I wore one of his Oxford shirts, but not because it happened to be laying around. It was folded over the headrest of the only chair in his bedroom, freshly pressed and with a note pinned to the sleeve that read "for you". As I made my way into the living room, it became apparent that my detached, journalistic curiosity was no match for my pure desire to not talk about what happened. I dressed, he kissed me on the cheek, and I left. We talked on the phone that night, but we kept pausing intermittently and then falling all over each other's words to fill the empty space. Eventually, I stopped answering his calls or returning his text messages asking to see me again.

I CANNOT IMAGINE ANY  
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Sex is not a test. Rather, it's an expression of oneself, like dancing or painting or drawing those big-headed caricatures on the boardwalk. We all have the potential to be great at expressing our emotions, but it takes many failures for that greatness to show up. The first time you have sex, it's special, but not as satisfying or important as once you figure out how to dance beautifully or paint like a master or really nail that delicate forehead on one of your caricature drawings.

Scott waited too long to fail at sex. Like adult braces, it's something that should've been taken care of long ago. Eventually, the fear of failure steamrolled his every romantic move. Scott Farmer is a 36 year old former virgin, but romantically, he's still 17.

The last communication I ever received from Scott came in the form of a Facebook message:

"I haven't been able to stop thinking about our night, and I realized that I must've done something wrong. Please let me know what I did wrong and I will fix it. Whatever you want done differently, I will do it. We never officially split up, so I really think we can make this work. I think we could be something very special. I can change whatever I did wrong, if you just tell me."

Two hours later, he asked to add me as his girlfriend on Facebook.

Then I deactivated my account. ♦



## BURNING MAC

Stop me if you've heard this one: 300 Def Jam comics walk into a Shell gas station in Baker, Nevada. No? Well listen up, then.

Now in its fourth year, the annual Burning Mac Festival brings together a collection of some of the country's best Def Jam-style stand up comedians in the high Nevada desert to reconvene with nature, come together as a community, and honor one of their fallen: Bernie Mac, one of the Original Kings of Comedy.

Since 2008, a growing number of fast-talking, confident black comedians arrive in caravans of ten stretching ten or more Escalades, with all manner of supplies overflowing through the sunroof. Tents, mattresses, fedoras, oversized shiny suits with shoulder pads, alligator shoes, baggy multi-patterned fluorescent shirts; every conceivable necessity is carted to the outskirts of Baker in early May. Within hours, impromptu streets and unofficial merchants pop up in the vast desert, creating a village of like-minded individuals looking for a communal experience.

The stage is always the first structure to be erected, serving as the focal point for nearly all Burning Mac activities, many of which run through the night and into the early morning. You'll always find someone on the stage, charging back and forth across the wooden planks with a microphone in their hands expounding on topics ranging from "child..." to "foolishness." There are wide, uneven flat patches highlighting ambitious physical joke tellers that have tried The Worm and a six-inch wide hole where three hundred consecutive comics ended their sets by dropping the mic and walking off. There is always at least one audi-

ence member to soak in all this mayhem. Deep into the starry night you'll find a lone patron of the Def Jam arts, jumping out of his seat, clapping wildly after each aggressive punchline. Often times, he points at and high fives another audience member who isn't even really there.

Above all, Burning Mac is about support for an alternative lifestyle. The atmosphere beyond the two arched pimp canes is that of a simple maxim: share, experience, and "give your ladies the dick." No money changes hands during the festival. Instead, necessities and niceties are given as gifts among the performers, with the simple expectation of reciprocation. On one dark

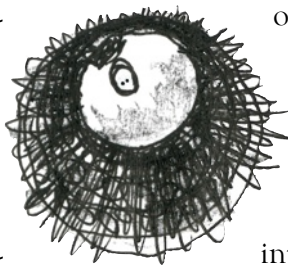
Wednesday evening, as storm clouds threatened on the horizon, Lavelle Crawford swapped

his only poncho for a pair of rimless sunglasses with a deep purple lens tint.

Hours later, as pounding rain transformed the main Bernie Mac Boulevard into a mud pit, Crawford stood on stage in a

cheetah yellow dinner jacket and green felt pants, eyes shining brightly through his new purple lenses. Crawford dazzled fellow revelers with thirty minutes on his wife's sister always coming around.

During the final evening, all the comics convene at the stage to watch Mr. 3000, speaking along with the film's dialogue. Yet, as the final credits end and the screen fades to black, so does the festival. The last of the last set fire to the stage, congratulating themselves on another year spent celebrating their craft, their community, and honoring the loss of one of their own. The final caravan pulls into the Shell gas station to fill up on road snacks for the long trips home. And with one "kick it!", another Burning Mac comes to a close as all get ready for the autumn's Steve Harviest Festival. ♦







# RECONCILIATION

