

PLAYBOY

MARCH/APRIL 2018

THE

FUTURE

ISSUE

THE INTERVIEW: JOHN KRASINSKI • A POST-WEINSTEIN SYMPOSIUM • PROFILE:
STEVEN PINKER • 20Q: JESSE PLEMONS • CALIFORNIA'S WEED REVOLUTION •
KARLEY SCIORTINO, PROUD SLUT • PREDICTIONS FROM ESTHER PEREL, DAVID
GUETTA, KAMALA LOPEZ & MORE • NEW FICTION BY MICKEY SPILLANE



john va



arvatos

Rock is Dead. Long live Rock

Nick Jonas
New York, NY 2018

THE NEW FRAGRANCES FOR MEN AND WOMEN

GUESS DARE







PLAYBILL

THE GENDER REVOLUTION CONTRIBUTORS



Gregory Pardlo

In *Subject, Verb, Object*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet reflects on the consequences of the masculinity he learned from his father. A professor of creative writing at Rutgers University-Camden, Pardlo has a new book, *Air Traffic: A Memoir of Ambition and Manhood in America*, out April 10 from Knopf.



Sloane Crosley

With her signature blend of incisive wit and charm, Crosley returns to *PLAYBOY* for the first time in a decade with *Sorry Not Sorry*, an examination of the post-Weinstein deluge of male mea culpas. The *Vanity Fair* contributing editor's book of essays *Look Alive Out There* is out April 3 from Farrar, Straus & Giroux.



Julia Cooke

In *Pretty Hurts*, Cooke explores new shows that bend conventional rules of prime time with angry and beautiful female leads. She wrote *The Other Side of Paradise*, a nonfiction portrait of Cuba, and her byline has appeared in *The New York Times* and *Virginia Quarterly Review*, where she's a contributing editor.

Jessica P. Ogilvie

In *You Better Work*, L.A.-based contributing editor Ogilvie shines a light on the women forming grassroots alliances within government, media, technology and the service industries. Last year she batted in *PLAYBOY* features on VR porn, sex-work laws and the world of camming.



Edell Rodriguez

Over a career spanning more than two decades, Rodriguez has logged many artistic achievements, most recently winning the 2017 Cover of the Year award from the American Society of Magazine Editors. His bold illustrations accompany several pieces in the *Gender Revolution* package.



Mickey Rapkin

In *Help Wanted*, Rapkin, whose previous *PLAYBOY* contributions include reports on denim hunting and partying in Denmark, discovers a nontoxic male milieu: support groups. His first book, *Pitch Perfect*, about the world of college a cappella groups, inspired the hit film franchise.



Curtis C. Chen

A onetime Silicon Valley software engineer, Chen now lives in the Pacific Northwest, where he writes full time and runs a social gaming event called Puzzled Pint. Author of the novel *Waypoint Kangaroo*, about a superpowered secret agent in space, and its sequel, *Kangaroo Too*, Chen penned this issue's original short story *Go, Space Racer!*



Matthew Lyons

Hailing from the U.K., Lyons developed his 3-D geometric sensibilities at Loughborough University and quickly became an in-demand artist, with work appearing in *Wired*, *The New York Times*, *Popular Mechanics* and more. His distinctive retro-futuristic style is on full display in *The Playboy Pad of the Future*.



Sean Manning

A freelance writer and senior editor at Simon & Schuster, Manning is currently working on books about Bruce Lee, the movies of 1999 and Chicago gun violence. The Akron, Ohio native covered an Uruguayan horse race for us in 2014 and returns to the fold for this issue's *Playboy Interview* with actor-director John Krasinski.

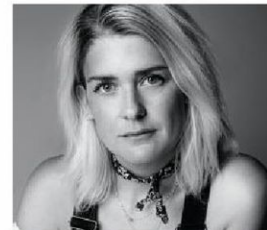
Bryan Rodner Carr

A photographer and film editor, Carr has collaborated with brands from Spotify to Beats by Dre, and his photos have been featured in publications including *Complex* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Most recently Carr met up with Shan Boodram in Los Angeles to snap the irrepressible YouTube sexologist for *Let's Play*.



Harper Smith

Celebrity photo shoots are old hat for Smith, whose masterly portraits of stars including Kate Bosworth and Rita Ora have earned her highly sought-after magazine covers. A Midwestern native, Smith is a transplant to Texas, making her the perfect person to shoot actor Jesse Plemons for our latest installment of 20Q.



Maurizio Di Iorio

A self-taught shutterbug whose lush still-lives go down as smoothly as the cocktails he regularly shoots for *PLAYBOY*, Di Iorio is a former law student and an ex-copywriter. For *Tongue Thai'd*, the Italy-based photographer captures Mekhong, the spiced spirit of Thailand. *Implications*, Di Iorio's self-published book, comes out this summer.



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ON THE COVER (AND OPPOSITE PAGE) Jenny Watwood, photographed by Derek Kettela.



PLAYBOY

HUGH M. HEFNER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
1953-2017

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WINIFRED ORMOND **COPY CHIEF**; SAMANTHA SAIYAVONGSA **RESEARCH EDITOR**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: STEPHEN REBELLO, JESSICA P. OGILVIE, ADAM SKOLNICK, DANIELLE BACHER, ERIC SPITZNAGEL

ART

CHRISTOPHER SALTZMAN **ART DIRECTOR**; AARON LUCAS **ART MANAGER**

PHOTOGRAPHY

EVAN SMITH **ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR**

SANDRA EVANS **PHOTO ASSISTANT**

CHRISTIE HARTMANN **SENIOR MANAGER, PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**

JOEY COOMBE **COORDINATOR, PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**

AMY KASTNER-DROWN **SENIOR DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST, PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**

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KARI JASPERSON **DIRECTOR, MARKETING AND ACTIVATION**

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DEAR PLAYBOY

CHEERS TO THAT

As a young woman I was always intrigued by the Playboy brand. I followed Hugh Hefner on *The Girls Next Door* years ago, but it wasn't until I watched the *American Playboy* series on Amazon last year that I decided to subscribe to the magazine. Of course I'd always heard the "I read PLAYBOY for the articles" comments, but as a 46-year-old single straight woman I can say that I wholeheartedly agree with that statement. To me, Playboy has never represented anything but a celebration of women's beauty. I congratulate Cooper Hefner on a visually stunning magazine. The articles keep me reading from cover to cover every time, in a way no other magazine does. Bravo and please keep up the great work.

Kathy Parker
Haverhill, Massachusetts

A TOAST TO THE HOST

I really enjoyed the November/December issue with the tribute to the late great Hugh Hefner (*A Man of His Time*), without whom none of this would have been possible. It's definitely a collector's issue and, fittingly, is full of beautiful women.

Rick Christensen
Santee, California

WOMEN WITH WISDOM

I've seen some subtle changes in the magazine recently. For instance, it's obvious to me that a woman is behind *Playboy Advisor*. It didn't used to be that way.

Joe Livo
San Diego, California

It might seem obvious because we print her name every issue—Bridget Phetasy. To be honest, we feel advice on proper cunnilingus is more credible coming from a woman than from a man.

THE TRUTH SHALL SET US FREE

Most cults begin with someone misinterpreting scripture. That's what David Koresh did, resulting in 76 members of his cult losing their lives. "This was someone who was really knowledgeable about the Bible and, in their minds, cracked codes they'd been trying to solve their entire lives," says Drew Dowdle



Poolside with Australian model Anthea Page is right where we want to be.

in Steve Palopoli's story *Among the Faithful* (January/February). The misinterpretation of what the scriptures are actually saying is why we have cults and different denominations. Koresh did not crack any codes; there are no secret codes in the Bible that need to be solved.

Melvin L. Beadles Sr.
Murrieta, California

ON THE SAME PAGE

I remember seeing Anthea Page in the June 2016 issue (*Cool Front*) and being awestruck by her beauty. It's fair to say I was pleasantly surprised to see her again in your most recent installment (*The Girl From Oz*, January/February). She has a natural beauty that leads me to suggest that her third-time charm could equate to Playmate status. Speaking of which,


please give my compliments to the lovely January Playmate Kayla Garvin and February Playmate Megan Samperi. What a beautiful start to the new year.

Jordon Scott Larson
Converse, Texas

MAKE IT RAIN

In the article on Rainey Qualley (*Let's Play*, November/December), she's referred to as a pop singer who has experimented with different music producers. I've seen an interview with her in the past when she was doing country music. Did she leave country music altogether? Other artists do several types of music, including country, pop, rock and pop country. I love country music, and I hope she's not another Taylor Swift. If you start out doing one type of

CREDITS: Cover, p. 6 and pp. 76–89 model Jenny Watwood at Lipps LA, photography by Derek Kettela, styling by Kelley Ash, hair by David Keough for Art Department, makeup by Simone Otis for Artists + Company, styling assistance by Laura Duncan. Photography by: p. 4 courtesy Bryan Rodner Carr, courtesy Julia Cooke, courtesy Maurizio Di Iorio, courtesy Matthew Lyons, courtesy Jessica P. Ogilvie, courtesy Harper Smith, Folly Blaine, Ilana Diamond, Deborah Feingold, Rachel Eliza Griffiths, Caitlin Mitchell, Sam Polcer; p. 16 Christopher von Steinbach for PLAYBOY Germany (2), Evan Woods; p. 17 courtesy Playboy (2), courtesy Time's Up, courtesy Joe Suzuki, Mathew Imaging, Daria Nagovitz; p. 20 Levon Muradian, Christopher von Steinbach; pp. 38–39 courtesy Hulu (2); p. 66 collage photos courtesy Amazon Studios, courtesy HBO, courtesy Netflix; p. 71 courtesy Gregory Pardlo; pp. 161–176 courtesy Playboy Archives. P. 20 illustration by Erin Rose Opperman. Pp. 112–116 *Killing Town* © 2018 Mickey Spillane Publications, LLC. P. 23 styling by Chloe Chippendale, hair by Kenya Alexander; pp. 34–35 styling by Kelley Ash, hair by Ashley Lynn Hall for Art Department, makeup by Daniele Piersons for Art Department; pp. 45–52 styling by Jessica Paster for Crosby Carter Management, wardrobe by Prada, grooming by Amy Komorowski for Art Department; pp. 54–59 model Elyse Taylor at IMG, produced by Rachel Gill; pp. 92–95 styling by Beth Hitchcock for Seaminx Artist Management, grooming by Erin Lee Smith for Atelier Management; pp. 104–111 model Sandra Kubicka at Next Models LA, styling by India Madonna, hair and makeup by Madeline North for Wilhelmina LA; pp. 118–132 model Nereyda Bird at Wilhelmina Miami; pp. 152–160 models Jessica Clarke at Supreme Management and Roxanna June, styling by Kelley Ash, makeup by Matisse Andrews.



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DEAR PLAYBOY

music and want to try others, you should continue to do what you started out doing once in a while. After all, that's the fan base that got you started in the first place.

*Eric Borgen
Kalkaska, Michigan*

While we too would welcome more rootsy Qualley tracks like "Me and Johnny Cash," we think it's perfectly fine for artists to reposition themselves. That's what we call an evolution, and that's exactly why Qualley is someone we're keeping an eye on.

FLAKING OUT

I have great respect for Jeff Flake and the political courage he showed in defying Donald Trump (*Senator Flake vs. the New Normal*, January/February), but I would have greater respect for him if he ran for reelection and stayed in the arena to continue the fight instead of just delivering a rabbit punch.

*G. Gideon Rojas
Santa Fe, New Mexico*

FULL STEAM AHEAD

I hadn't bought a PLAYBOY magazine for maybe 15 years. Out of curiosity I picked up the November/December issue. The models in the sauna photographs by Jennifer Stenglein (*Taylor, Sydney & Terra Jo*) are beautifully lit and posed in a challenging environment. That pictorial marked a sea change in style. I wondered if PLAYBOY could keep it up. Yes, you did. The photography by Dove Shore in the January/February issue (*On the Wing*) is stunning—soft, superbly back-lit, with January Playmate Kayla Garvin alluringly posed in elegant lingerie. It's obvious a lot of thought and planning went into setting up both of those sessions. The result is the epitome of class with natural, adorable-looking models. Keep it up and I'll keep buying.

*Peter Neumann
Ottawa, Ontario*

IRRESISTIBLE INES

Your November/December issue is superb. The best thing France ever sent us isn't champagne—it's November Playmate Ines Rau (*Enchanté, Mademoiselle Rau*).

*Peter Wicklein
Silver Spring, Maryland*

As your first transgender Playmate, French model Ines Rau has made history; from the looks of online comments, the decision has been extremely divisive among readers.



Did Senator Jeff Flake do the right thing?

Good. Change doesn't come easily, especially when dealing with a shift in our collective consciousness. I believe Playboy is firmly planted on the right side of history with this subject. However, if I may offer some fearless feedback, Ms. Rau's pictorial is so modest I momentarily thought I'd traveled back to the days of non-nude models in the magazine. In comparison to the other pictorials in the same issue, Ms. Rau might as well be wearing a parka. Treating one body differently than another on the pages of the magazine could subconsciously validate any perceived inequalities between these women, and I'm sure that is not the intent. Congratulations on the milestone and thank you. Playboy has always advocated for the LGBT community, and it's heartening to see a global brand go against the status quo and make a choice because it's the right thing to do. I can't wait to see what's next.

*Josh Fehrens
Toronto, Ontario*

SHE'S A CLASSIC

Thanks for letting us "re-Liv" one of PLAYBOY's all-time beauties, 1972 Playmate of the Year Liv Lindeland (*Heritage*, January/February).

*Tommy Malabo
Tucson, Arizona*

WRITERS' WRITERS

I wanted to reach out to say thank you. I love that the magazine has kept its integrity and poise through all the tumultuous battles. The magazine is still iconic, and the fiction remains strong; as a writer, I appreciate this. I read the whole thing every time.

*David M. Olsen
Pacific Grove, California*

VOTE LORENA

Lorena Medina (*Back at the Ranch*, January/February) is by far the sexiest woman you've featured in recent years. I don't know why she wasn't chosen to be a Playmate, but she definitely gets my vote.

*Timothy O'Brien
Boston, Massachusetts*

Dark-haired beauty Lorena Medina takes my breath away. Why doesn't she have the Playmate honor? I could get lost in those brown eyes. And thank you for adding the *Heritage* section. January 1971 Playmate Liv Lindeland is my new favorite Playmate.

*Paul Marini
Erie, Pennsylvania*

GLAD TO HAVE YOU

I ordered your November/December issue solely out of respect for Mr. Hefner. I haven't read PLAYBOY in recent years, but after finishing this issue, I was very impressed. You've recreated the classic magazine with a modern twist. I immediately subscribed and am looking forward to what's to come.

*Michael Bogdan
San Diego, California*

KIMBERLY CONFUSION

In our special tribute edition celebrating Hugh Hefner, we mistakenly credited September 2009 Playmate Kimberly Phillips with the tribute about the rabbit species named after Hef. The tribute was from October 2004 Playmate Kimberly Holland.

COVER STORY

We've seen the future and it sure looks bright with March Playmate Jenny Watwood. Mr. Rabbit has already armed himself for the epic journey.



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TOUCHDOWNS AND TURNTABLES

We got into the Super Bowl spirit on January 21 with Playmates Ashley Hobbs and Gia Marie at an exclusive event at West Hollywood's London hotel, where FanDuel's top fantasy players watched the Patriots and the Eagles win their championship games—and one lucky player won a trip for two to Super Bowl LII. The night before that historic contest, Snoop Dogg took to the turntables at our Big Game Weekend Party in Minneapolis. VIP guests enjoyed bottle service and bottomless spirits—gin and juice optional—not to mention Snoop's drop-it-like-it's-hot set.

From Germany, a Playboy First

Hundreds of beautiful women have been featured on the cover of PLAYBOY Germany, but February's cover girl bears a proud distinction: Twenty-one-year-old Giuliana Farfalla is the first transgender model to appear on the cover of any edition of PLAYBOY. Hugh Hefner would have approved the decision, says PLAYBOY Germany editor Florian Boitin, since Hef was "resolutely opposed to all forms of exclusion and intolerance." She's in good company: Last November Ines Rau made history as PLAYBOY's first trans Playmate, and in 1991 Caroline Cossey became the first trans model to have a full pictorial in the magazine.

Giuliana has walked the runway in Berlin, competed on the 12th season of *Germany's Next Topmodel* and can currently be seen on the German version of *I'm a Celebrity—Get Me Out of Here!* "I hope you enjoy the cover as much as I do," she said on Instagram. *Danke schön*, PLAYBOY Germany!



PARTY WITH PLAYBOY AT SXSW AND COACHELLA

Join us this March in Austin, Texas, the live-music capital of the world, for the SXSW Music Festival. A Playboy panel discussion will feature top names across entertainment and culture offering their insights into music, sex and more. In April, Playboy will host various events during the first weekend of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. Naked yoga? Check. Pool party? Pull on your floaties. Weed-infused dessert buffet? Get in line! Ain't no party like a Playboy party, and you're invited.



Jazz Fest Turns 40

Musical greats Charles Lloyd and Lucinda Williams will headline the 40th Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl June 9 and 10. Other acts include the Ramsey Lewis Quartet and Daymé Arocena; longtime host George Lopez returns to emcee the event. Buy tickets at HollywoodBowl.com.



Artists Donate Rabbit-Inspired Pieces for Climate Benefit

That feeling when you just don't want to let go? We had it big-time this February when we auctioned off more than a dozen original artworks—including Joe Suzuki's *Happy Accident*, which he stopped by our office to sign (above)—to raise money for environmental initiatives. Each one-of-a-kind Playboy-inspired piece was generously donated by our Creatives for Climate artists, including Scott Campbell, Tristan Eaton, Ben Venom and January 1996 Playmate Victoria Fuller. The auction took place online and culminated in a party at the swanky 70th-floor OUE Skyspace in downtown L.A.



POST THESE BILLS

April 2017 Playmate Nina Daniele put on her Bunny ears and tail to promote our special tribute edition honoring PLAYBOY founder Hugh M. Hefner, wheat-pasting posters and visiting newsstands in Hollywood. "Hef was a progressive thinker, a proponent of sexual expression and an early and adamant advocate of civil rights," says Nina. "He changed the world for the better." How right she is. Limited copies of the special edition remain; buy yours at PlayboyShop.com.

Time to Take a Stand

In January, Playboy proudly donated \$5,000 to the Time's Up legal defense fund. "Encouraging women to have a voice at all tables will undoubtedly make the country and the world a far better place," said Cooper Hefner.



HELLO, 2018

As champagne flowed, our Playmates, Bunnies and guests rang in the new year in style with Chief Creative Officer Cooper Hefner, who gave Playboy's first toast of 2018. Revelers enjoyed dance performances and live music (plus fun with sparklers) before and after the big countdown. Here's to another sexy, sophisticated year!





JÖVAN

It's what attracts





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ONLINE-EXCLUSIVE GALLERIES

• Mia Khalifa, photographed by Levon Muradian.



BONUS MAGAZINE CONTENT

• Sex expert **Shan Boodram** is everything your high school sex-ed teacher wasn't. See more of the *Let's Play* subject in an extended photo gallery.

• **Graham Dunn** shows us a few more shots of author and sex-adventurer **Karley Sciortino**.

THE BEST OF OUR ARCHIVES

• Sensational accusations,

inquisitorial investigations, unfounded conclusions. As the #MeToo movement grows, so does the number of its critics. In January 1986, **Hugh Hefner** wrote about a similar sociosexual debate and the rise of what he termed "sexual McCarthyism."

• Revisit all our past March and April magazine covers. No doubt you'll find a favorite—and enjoy a little nostalgia too.

CULTURE, POLITICS & MORE

• We try out a "magical" wine-infused cannabis tour, a new trend in drug tourism.

• Where have all the male porn stars gone? **Eric Spitznagel** investigates.

• A black man in Louisiana called the Veterans Crisis Line for help. When sheriff's deputies responded, the vet ended up dead. **Ian Frisch** asks what went wrong.



Add a comment...



"The difference between alpha males and beta males is the way they behave—not what they think about feminism."



"As a feminist, I do not want women to have the power. I want the sexes to share it."



"My husband is a feminist. I would never marry a man who rejected equality. I find this resistance to gender equality baffling."



"Men will always pretend to agree with lots of things that women say, even stupid things, in order to get laid."

—comments on *The Myth of the Male Feminist* by Debra W. Soh

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Can a vibrator really replace a man? Playboy Advisor Bridget Phetasy has doubts (luckily).

Back in Black:
The New Face of
Luxury Watches
“...go black. Dark
and handsome
remains a classic
for a reason”
— Men's Journal



*“I’ve gotten many compliments on
this watch. The craftsmanship is
phenomenal and the watch is
simply pleasing to the eye.”*

—M., Irvine, CA

“GET THIS WATCH.”

—M., Wheeling, IL

I’LL TAKE MINE BLACK...NO SUGAR

In the early 1930s watch manufacturers took a clue from Henry Ford’s favorite quote concerning his automobiles, “You can have any color as long as it is black.” Black dialed watches became the rage especially with pilots and race drivers. Of course, since the black dial went well with a black tuxedo, the adventurer’s black dial watch easily moved from the airplane hangar to dancing at the nightclub. Now, Stauer brings back the “Noire”, a design based on an elegant timepiece built in 1936. Black dialed, complex automatics from the 1930s have recently hit new heights at auction. One was sold for in excess of \$600,000. We thought that you might like to have an affordable version that will be much more accurate than the original.

Basic black with a twist. Not only are the dial, hands and face vintage, but we used a 27-jeweled automatic movement. This is the kind of engineering desired by fine watch collectors worldwide. But since we design this classic movement on state of the art computer-controlled Swiss built machines, the accuracy is excellent. Three interior dials display day, month and date. We have priced the luxurious Stauer *Noire* at a price to keep you in the black... only 3 payments of \$33. So slip into the back of your black limousine, savor some rich tasting black coffee and look at your wrist knowing that you have some great times on your hands.



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LET'S PLAY

SHAN BOODRAM

Think of Shan Boodram as the Walmart greeter of sex and relationships. "I'm not trying to be back in aisle 12 with the butt plugs," says the 32-year-old clinical sexologist and host of the Facebook series *Make Up or Break Up*. "My goal is getting to the heart of intimacy. You don't have to have a shitty love life or sex life." Growing up in Toronto, Boodram was so sexually precocious that her parents banned her from stripping her Barbie dolls. But as she matured, a string of less than stellar sexual experiences left her baffled. "I was 19 and thought, This can't be it. There's no way all these movies were made about this thing that's awful," she says. After a summer spent reading sex books with "great info packaged in the most boring way," she found her niche: marrying erotic enticement with smart sex education. A book followed—a collection of first-person testimonies entitled *Laid*—and a YouTube presence bloomed. More than 20 million views later, "Shan Boody" is one of the most respected new sex-perts in the pop-psych sphere—but she's missing one staple of a millennial sex life. "I never get dick pics," she says a little wistfully. "I wouldn't mind getting some!"—*Rebecca Haithcoat*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BRYAN RODNER CARR

PLAYBOY PAD OF THE FUTURE

The year is 2039. The singularity hasn't arrived quite yet, but a number of new technologies have quietly revolutionized day-to-day life. For the sophisticated bachelor, this means key changes in how you work, watch and entertain at home.

BY **JOHN-CLARK LEVIN**

ILLUSTRATION BY **MATTHEW LYONS**

ON DEMAND

With drone delivery, there's no more need for the tank-size refrigerators of your ancestors. Same-day shipping is so common that even 3-D printers are seen as clunky and unnecessary home appliances.

MINI-MIXOLOGIST

A tabletop machine powered by materials science and loaded with chemical precursors can mix up just about any drink you can imagine, from an instantly aged single malt to cocktails of exotic flavors that didn't even exist in your parents' generation.

WASH ME

Your clothes have long since joined the "internet of things." They'll let you know when you should leave them out for your laundry service—and give you a polite reminder when it's time to have a shower.

PALM READING

Every trip to the bathroom doubles as a physical. Hold your hand up to a smart scanner to learn and track your vital signs. AI compares your data to millions of others' in order to detect illness early and offer personalized health guidance.

NOT FEELING IT

True, not every cutting-edge innovation survived the early aughts. VR-assisted haptic suits, seen by some as the future of sex, got a flaccid reception. Today's young adults prize the authenticity of the real thing.

SOBERING

Made a few trips to the mixology machine? You can pop a pill and rapidly regain sobriety. The late-night sloppiness and boozy judgment of yesteryear are all but extinct.

LET ME HEAR YOU ECHO

Digital assistants are ubiquitous, and they speak to almost every item in your pad—from your coffee maker to your closet. It's no longer weird to spend hours walking around your apartment, talking to the walls.

LIFE, AUGMENTED

Once upon a time, a game called Pokémon Go sparked an augmented-reality craze. Now you constantly wear AR lenses to get a heads-up display over your world. Just glance outside to see the weather forecast, use real-time translation to chat up that cute Parisienne or get a notification that you and the stranger you're sharing an autonomous car with have 33 friends in common and a mutual love of *Sharknado 15*. You can even leaf through digitized copies of the PLAYBOY archives.

SMART WINDOWS

Curtains? What are those? Your windows now contain electrically activated chemicals that allow them to go from clear to opaque—controlling the amount of natural light and reducing air-conditioning costs—in response to your voice commands.

METV

If you're not binge-watching season 51 of *The Simpsons* on a wall-size roll-up screen, you're watching zoomable 3-D footage of your friends' ski trips, bungee jumps and scuba adventures. Social media is now about sharing rich and immersive views of your experiences. Turn the FOMO up to 11!

LAB-GROWN LIVESTOCK

Enjoy your steak (or buffalo wings or salmon) secure in the knowledge that it was grown from scratch using (gasp!) stem cells—no animal cruelty, no forests razed for farmland, no methane emissions.

LIVE/WORK

You often work from home, but notice the absence of the traditional coffee-spattered desk. That's because holographic tech can conjure virtual keyboards and track pads out of thin air, so you can do your job in whatever room and whatever position are most comfortable.



DRINKS

TONGUE THAI'D

Mekhong, the Thai spiced spirit that's popping up at adventurous bars all over the country, will slap you in the face

BY MATT ZURAS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAURIZIO DI IORIO

If you're searching for a liquor to challenge both your palate and your home mixology skills, look no further than Mekhong, the so-called spirit of Thailand. Considering its dirt-cheapness and popularity among tourists in Thailand, you may have tried this sugarcane-and-rice-derived stuff en route to a full-moon party in Pattaya, and no one would blame you for not remembering its idiosyncratic flavor. But in recent years it has ventured abroad, becoming a powerful tool in the arsenals of inventive U.S. bartenders.

With a gingery-sweet kick that doesn't quite mask its chemical undertones, Mekhong is best avoided neat. "This is not a sipping whiskey," says Andy Ricker, chef and owner of Portland's lauded Pok Pok. Ricker first encountered the spirit at a Koh Phangan disco in 1987, and today he uses it in his restaurant's popular Khing & I cocktail (see his recipe at right).

After debuting in 1941 via a government-owned distillery, Mekhong quickly became the top tittle for Thais, only to be dethroned decades later with the emergence

of the higher-proof but equally affordable SangSom.

"Generally speaking, the Thai whiskeys can be described as vaguely medicinal," Ricker says of both spirits. "That diesel-y flavor you get from distilled rice spirits is in there, and that sweet flavor from the cane and lots of residual sugar and caramel coloring too."

In fact, Mekhong is not a whiskey at all, though it's often referred to as such. It's closer to a spiced rum, but it's not exactly that either. Mekhong is its own thing, and like a wedge of Stilton or a farmhouse cider, it has an assertive character that may take some getting used to. Fortunately, you're free to experiment without blacking out: Despite Mekhong's bold taste, its alcohol by volume measure is a relatively low 35 percent.

Ricker suggests following the Thai example and diluting Mekhong with water, seltzer or cola and enjoying over a long meal. Creative drinkers might substitute Mekhong into any cocktail that calls for spiced rum, such as a dark and stormy or a mai tai—or should we say a mai *Thai*?

GLOBAL TOASTING

Go global with this trio of brawny spirits representing three continents



● **Palinka:** A powerful brandy, palinka is beloved in Hungary, where locals make this legal moonshine from various fruits. Drink it straight or with soda, or try it in a pisco sour.



● **Aguardiente:** Colombia's version of "fire water" is strong on anise but light on alcohol, peaking around 29 percent ABV. Often consumed neat, aguardiente makes a respectable ersatz pastis in cocktails.



● **Boukha:** Depending on the brand, Tunisia's fig brandy can taste like either gasoline or an autumn orchard. Try Boukha Bokobsa, a lovely eau-de-vie that dates back to the 1880s and plays well in fruit-forward drinks.

Khing & I

Pair this piquant cocktail with your favorite Thai dish

3–4 thin slices of ginger, skin removed
1.5 oz. Mekhong
1.5 oz. fresh lime juice
1 oz. ginger simple syrup
Key lime wedge for garnish

Prepare

Muddle ginger slices in cocktail shaker. Add Mekhong, lime juice, syrup and ice. Shake and pour into rocks glass. Garnish with lime wedge.





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DRAWN DATA

EASY BEING GREEN 1962



first year the Chicago River was dyed green for St. Patrick's Day
25 POUNDS: amount of dye used to color the water today
45 MINUTES: time it takes to distribute the dye (which is orange) by motorboat
5 HOURS: duration of the river's bright green hue

Oscar at 90



MARCH 4, 2018: 90th anniversary of the Academy Awards
3,048: number of Oscar statuettes presented since the ceremony debuted in 1929

\$629: reported value of the 24-karat-gold-plated bronze statue
8.5 POUNDS: statue's weight
3 MONTHS: time required to manufacture 50 Oscars

LUCKY CHARMS



111,060: number of four-leaf clovers in the current Guinness world-record holder's collection
8 YEARS: time it took said record holder to amass his collection
1 IN 10,000: odds of finding a four-leaf clover, according to horticulture professor John Frett

GOOD CHILL HUNTING

501,000: number of Easter eggs in the largest hunt on record—collected by **9,753** children at the Cypress Gardens Adventure Park in Winter Haven, Florida in 2007

RABBIT Records



300: most rabbits ever pulled out of a magician's hat
4 FEET, 2 INCHES: length of Darius, the world's longest rabbit
9,360 POUNDS: weight of the world's largest chocolate bunny

GOLD DIGGERS



261,498,926.241: fine troy ounces of gold in the U.S. government's reserve as of October 2017
\$11,041,059,957.90: the gold's reported book value

TWITTER Lickin' GOOD!

1.3 MILLION: number of followers of KFC's Twitter account
11: number of accounts followed by KFC (five Spice Girls and six men named Herb—think about it)

SPRING BREAKERS

1938: year spring break took hold in the U.S.
1953: first official spring break in Fort Lauderdale
1960: year MGM released the break-spoilation film *Where the Boys Are*
50,000: coeds who spent spring break in Fort Lauderdale within a year of the film's release
1975: first commercial wet T-shirt contest
\$75 PURSE AWARDED TO WINNERS
1986: debut broadcast of MTV's *Spring Break*
\$1.8 BILLION: estimated amount spent by 2017 spring breakers

FAKE FOOLS

REAL APRIL 1 NEWS ITEMS MISTAKEN AS HOAXES:

2004: launch of Gmail
2014: reopening of Action Park, New Jersey's most dangerous water park

EXTRA!

APRIL FOOLS' HOAXES MISTAKEN FOR NEWS ITEMS:
1931: a *Los Angeles Times* "exclusive" about a German scientist who had discovered a "germ of health" called *Bacillus sanitatis*, declaring good health to be "contagious"
2017: a report on the YouTube channel UFOmania of an ancient city discovered beneath a valley in the Great Smoky Mountains

Quadruple RAINBOOOOW!

4: most rainbows ever caught together on camera
12: number of known rainbow varieties



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POLITICS

THE FUTURE OF THE DEMOCRATS

A lesson from Alabama: If the Democratic Party wants to dominate the midterms, it will need a serious attitude adjustment

The midterm election cycle is often a slam dunk for the minority party, but at press time the Democrats hadn't even settled on a strategy. If they want to see victories in 2018, here's a suggestion: Stop expecting to lose and start playing to win.

Consider Alabama's special election last December. Doug Jones's upset victory over Republican Roy Moore proved that even in traditionally conservative strongholds, the fate of the Democratic Party is not predestined. Of course, had the Republican been anyone but an extremist facing a sexual-assault scandal, Jones might not have prevailed. From early in the race, local pundits sensed that a Democrat could do well, but it's unlikely the Democratic National Committee or other progressives would have put the same resources into defeating a more moderate Republican.

Waiting on the GOP to nominate more abhorrent candidates isn't a winning strategy for the DNC in 2018, though Democrats will have plenty of opportunities to use that tactic: Republicans continue to present plausible targets in conservative states. In Texas, Representative Beto O'Rourke is mounting a grassroots Senate campaign to defeat right-wing theocrat Ted Cruz. In Arizona, Democrats are eyeing the seat opened by retiring senator Jeff Flake. Their candidate could potentially face either ex-Maricopa County sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was recently pardoned by President Trump, wiping away his criminal contempt-of-court conviction, or Kelli Ward, a former state senator and onetime Bannon Republican who drew backlash from her own party for calling on Senator John McCain to resign after his cancer diagnosis. Arizona is also the battleground to replace Representative Trent Franks, a Pat Buchanan-style Republican who resigned in December amid sexual-harassment claims; his seat may not be as safe for the GOP as anticipated.

"It isn't until you have a race with a weak Republican candidate and a strong Democratic candidate that the DNC throws any substantial amount of money and support behind their own," says Cole Manders, a former insider and onetime rising star of the Alabama GOP. Liberals need to shift their mind-set if they intend to win over new voters, he says. "Elections, victories

and majorities are investments, not lotteries."

Democrats might be wise to take a cue from the GOP, which funds local-level races nationwide—races the Democratic Party seems inclined to ignore. During the Obama presidency, right-leaning organizations including the American Legislative Exchange Council and Americans for Prosperity poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the campaigns of regional candidates. The efforts paid big dividends: By the time Obama left office, the Republican Party had successfully taken more than 900 state-level seats across the country. That success put redistricting in the hands of GOP-controlled state legislatures. Through gerrymandering, the threshold for Democrats to win congressional elections became much harder to cross. It also gave Republicans a bullpen of recognizable candidates for federal elections.

"It was somewhat discouraging for us as young Democrats," says Miranda Joseph, a Democratic strategist in Alabama and two-time nominee for state office. "We lost a lot of good leaders." Alabama's state Democratic Party, it seemed, had been practically left for dead. Much of the ground game and support for Jones came from national organizations and progressives from other areas, making up for the lack of Democratic infrastructure in the state.

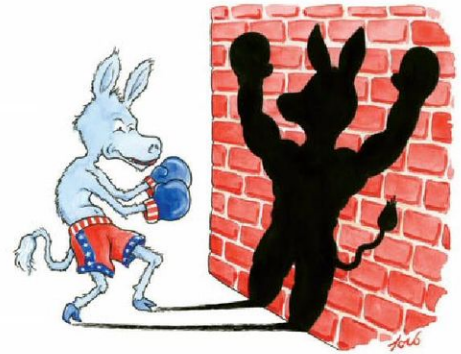
But Joseph points to improvements over the past year. "There are so many more small, successful groups now doing much more effective work than the state party is able to do as one large group," she says.

As Jones's victory proves, red seats can be flipped to blue. This midterm season, Democrats need to connect with moderate and independent-minded Republicans who don't identify with either the GOP's establishment faction or its alt-right-aligned branch. They must advance into the consistently deep red patches on the map and commit enough resources to win at the state and local levels. And they must show potential new voters that the party is fielding candidates who could be their neighbors and

friends, not the so-called liberal elites who hold drastically different values.

"I suspect the DNC may start investing in races that previously seemed out of reach," says Hiral Tipirneni, a Democrat campaigning to replace Representative Franks. "I've seen that Arizona Democrats are experiencing a new energy and enthusiasm, particularly at the local level, since Trump's election."

Democrats will need to channel that enthusiasm—along with funding—to earn victories in red districts. For Democrats, the concerns of average American voters will be another key to winning in 2018; a back-to-basics message will likely resonate even in the reddest of polling sites. According to recent Gallup polling, Americans are most concerned with



health care, race relations, immigration and the economy—but the biggest concern is dysfunctional, ineffective government. "I think Democrats nationally are standing in stark contrast to the corporate, ultra-wealthy priorities being promoted by the GOP in D.C.," Tipirneni says.

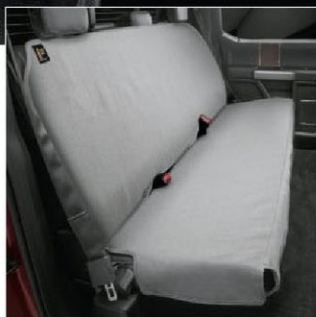
One more suggestion for Dems: Don't allow the focus of the midterms to be President Trump. That will be crucial for individual Democratic races, where candidates must fight on their own terms and not get baited into rhetorical, fear-based brawls. The future of the Democratic Party rests on whether its current incarnation can shut the door on past failures. To win, Democrats must first realize they can. ■

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Playboy Advisor

Columnist Bridget Phetasy on why the sexbot revolution shouldn't necessarily turn us on. Plus, a primer on strip-club etiquette and advice on exploring your kinks and fetishes online



Q: *With all the news about the proliferation of sexbots, I recently decided to check out *Ex Machina*, Alex Garland's 2015 AI thriller in which a programmer falls in love with a humanoid. It got me thinking: If scientists' obsession with AI continues and relations between humans and robots become normalized, will having sex with a robot while married someday be considered cheating?—T.C., New York, New York*

ILLUSTRATION BY NICHOLAS GUREWITCH



A: Almost every week I'm asked some form of "Is [blank] considered cheating?" The simple answer: If you're hiding something from your partner, you're engaging in a form of infidelity. But ultimately, what constitutes "cheating" is decided by the couple. A healthy relationship relies on honest communication about desires and boundaries. For some people, watching porn or getting happy endings isn't cheating, but camming or direct messaging hot people on Instagram is. Some couples have "don't ask, don't tell" agreements. As to your concerns about potential android infidelity, I can only offer this: A woman may not care if her significant other gets with a sexbot, but what if *her* sexbot ends up being the better lover? In that case, you'll have a problem, and you might not have the luxury of hitting restart and hoping for the best.

Q: *I'm a fan of lap dances. Recently, I was caught off-guard by a beautiful stripper who, after giving me a good dance, requested a tip. Since I go to the club with only \$20 bills and singles, I tipped \$2, as I would when paying for a drink at the bar. She faked a smile, took the money and ignored me for the rest of the night. I've never been asked by other dancers to tip. Is there etiquette to strip-club tipping? Personal dances at this specific club range from \$20 to \$100.—J.F., Palo Alto, California*

A: There absolutely is strip-club tipping etiquette. This is a service industry; the women are providing a service, and they work for tips. Depending on the club, dancers either pay a flat fee to work there or hand over a percentage of their lap-dance earnings. At the end of the night, many dancers have to split their tips with the DJ, security guard, bartender, manager and, sometimes, a "house mom." Most dancers need to make \$100 just to break even. As my stripper friend Mira says, "This is a proverbial Disneyland. Come in expecting to pay inflated prices. If you don't spend at least \$100 per hour on me, don't be surprised if I ignore you."

There is a scale too, which ranges from watching a dancer onstage to getting a lap dance to enjoying a VIP experience. If you're just watching, tip her whether or not she's reenacting a scene from Cirque du Soleil. According to stripper Kasey Koop, host of the podcast *Kasey's Freak Show*, "You should tip each girl on stage \$2 to \$5 minimum."

As for lap dances, Koop advises, "Two bucks is fine, but 20 percent makes sense." Many men I know buy "packages" for \$100; for instance, four dances at \$20 each, leaving the last Andrew Jackson as a tip. Regarding your

experience with this "beautiful stripper," Mira says, "I might never demand a tip—but we make everything on the floor, so we learn quickly whom we want to dance for and whom we don't."

Q: *My ex and I started pegging a few years ago. After we broke up, I, a man in my late 30s, developed an attraction to (some might call it a fetish for) transgender women. I hooked up a few times with a transgender woman I met, but she has since moved away. I've searched sites like Craigslist and Backpage, but most women on those are interested only in sex for pay. I want something more organic. Where can I meet transgender women or other women into pegging?—H.L., Columbus, Ohio*

A: Let's be clear: Men should not fetishize transgender women; those who do are often referred to as "chasers." (The antiquated term is *tranny chaser*, but nobody outside the trans community should be using it.) Trans women are not your sexual playthings, and you should pursue them only if you want to be in a relationship with them—or at least put yourself on the line for their rights and visibility.

More important, you seem to prioritize your own pleasure. Some trans women aren't interested in penetrating their partners. It may also depend on where they are in their transition. Finding partners who are simply into pegging—whether they're trans or cis-women—is easier. I recommend creating an account on FetLife.com, "the social network for the BDSM, fetish and kinky community." There, you can discuss your love for pegging up front and not have to wade through dates who aren't down.

Q: *I'm a guy who recently got dumped by a serial dater. In the time since we stopped talking, she has been in two relationships and I've stayed single, which has caused me to become insecure. How do you get over someone who obviously used you as a placeholder until the next guy came along?—F.M., Chicago, Illinois*

A: Whenever I've pined after a serial dater or a player or someone who just wasn't that into me, it has forced me to take a hard look at the piece of myself that was clinging to that person. Almost always, the problem is rooted in ego. It's human nature to want the people or things you can't have. Then there's the broken part of you that doesn't love yourself enough to just move on. I suggest looking at both your ego and your brokenness and asking yourself the hard questions we avoid after a breakup. Confront that dreaded *F* word: feelings. What's coming up for you? Abandonment? Jealousy? Unworthiness? Do you

have a pattern of dating emotionally unavailable women? When you work on your own self-esteem and identify the real root of your insecurities, you won't need to get over that serial dater; in all likelihood, your desire for her will have already faded away.

Q: *My wife has endometriosis, which makes vaginal sex for her incredibly painful. Any tips for making sex more pleasurable for her? Thank you, from both of us.—S.R., Midland, Texas*

A: I'm not a doctor, nor do I have endometriosis, so I reached out to some experts. Dr. Serena McKenzie, medical director at the Northwest Institute for Healthy Sexuality, says, "A woman suffering painful intercourse should first be evaluated by a pelvic floor physical therapist to improve likely pelvic floor dysfunction." This is reiterated by certified sex therapist Heather Davidson. "I have seen cases where the pelvic floor muscle dysfunction is actually causing most of the pain during penetrative sex—not the endometriosis," she says. "Luckily, pelvic floor muscle dysfunction can be successfully treated with physical therapy."

If you've concluded that the pain is related solely to endometriosis, you can experiment with the following:

1. Commit to foreplay and use plenty of lube. The more relaxed and aroused she is, the better the entire sexual experience.

2. Incorporate positions in which she can be in control, and go slow. "These may include side-to-side modified missionary (legs together) or spooning," Davidson says. "A simple tilt of the pelvis or slight change in the angle of your penis may make all of the difference."

3. Track the pain, which is commonly worst when a woman is ovulating and having her period, Davidson says. "You might have to avoid penetrative sex completely at these times."

4. Remember, penetrative sex is not your only option. Davidson says, "I often find that couples who face certain obstacles with sex end up having some of the most varied, healthy and happy sex lives. Couples can put too much focus on penetrative sex and neglect other fun, equally pleasurable sexual activities."

Once again, communication is everything. "As a sex therapist and woman with stage IV endometriosis since my late teens, I intimately understand the pain involved," says sex therapist Jennifer Wiessner. "Every woman who suffers from endometriosis will experience it individually." In other words, your wife is the best source of information about her body and pleasure, so take your cues from her.

Questions? E-mail advisor@playboy.com.

A full-page photograph of Karley Sciortino. She is a blonde woman with her hair slightly messy, wearing a blue denim jumpsuit with a large bow at the bust. She is standing outdoors with her arms raised behind her head, looking directly at the camera. In the background, the front of a classic, light-colored car is visible, along with some greenery and a building. The overall tone is warm and sunny.

SEXUAL HEALING

Slut-empire mastermind **Karley Sciortino** has built an empire around the fearless, joyous exploration of sexual fringes. Her new book could not have arrived at a better time

BY **SCOTT PORCH** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GRAHAM DUNN**



SEX

In the 1960s, George Plimpton talked his way onto an NFL team for his book *Paper Lion*. In the aughts, A.J. Jacobs followed the scriptures to the letter and wrote *The Year of Living Biblically*. More recently, Karley Sciortino spent about a year as a dominatrix and another as a sugar baby, documenting her experiences via her multiplatform personal brand Slutever.

If you're familiar with Sciortino, it's probably because you've seen the sex column she writes for *Vogue.com* or the video she made for *Vice* (31 million views and counting) in which she gets down with a male sex doll on camera or the decidedly NC-17 episode of the Netflix series *Easy* on which she plays a prostitute. Her work bridges memoir, performance art, investigative journalism, social activism—and an unwavering dedication to firsthand experience.

The 32-year-old New Yorker has leaned into the term *slut* in the decade or so that she's been writing about her sexual experiences—in a blog, in a web series, in a documentary show for *Vice*—and in a new book for Grand Central, all of which are called *Slutever*—the same way people have claimed pejoratives such as *bitch*, *queer* and *Obamacare* to free those terms from negative connotations.

"I like the idea that what I do is a mixture of journalism, personal curiosity, adventure and something like sexual anthropology," Sciortino says. "This idea that to be a journalist is to be a fly on the wall isn't always the case today.

I've never been good at sitting on the sidelines and watching things objectively. I want to document things from the inside."

By immersing herself in fringe cultures, she has ventured beyond societal and personal preconceptions, exploring kinks and rituals that would strike most people as deeply weird or even pathological. As a dominatrix's assistant, she whipped middle-aged investment bankers till they bled. She crouched naked over their faces and peed in their mouths.

"I ADMIRE THAT WILLINGNESS TO GO GET THE THING OTHER PEOPLE STIGMATIZE."

"When you encounter something different or strange," she says, "you're like, *What the fuck?* My impulse is to ask, What does that mean? Why are they like that? What's relatable about it?"

In her work, she argues that the reasons sexual promiscuity is societally shunned—because it lowers morals, ruins self-esteem, creates co-dependency and has all the other pernicious effects your mother warned you about—repeatedly fail to stand up to scrutiny. Her book cites a 2014 Cornell study that found students who engaged in casual sex generally reported lower levels of stress and depression than students who did not. She sees the sex-as-therapy model as an explanation for much of what today passes as deviance.

"If people have the desire to seek out a dominatrix or be kidnapped or go to sex parties or have many sexual partners, I kind of admire that willingness and ability to go get the thing other people stigmatize," Sciortino says. "So many of us *don't* have that ability. We can't even admit to ourselves what we want."

And while the path to greater understanding may require the kind of fearless and open-ended investigation Sciortino practices, the solution, in a certain light, is remarkably simple: "I think there are a whole lot of problems we could solve with a little more sex." ■

Dear Karley

From dating etiquette to polyamory, Sciortino weighs in on five burning questions

What's one common mistake men make on first dates?

Being indecisive. I hate when a guy half asks me out, like texting, "We should hang." It's like...*should we?* If you're going to ask someone on a date, go in 100 percent. It can be as simple as "Hey, I would love to hang with you. Are you free Friday for dinner?" Then choose a restaurant. To be honest, it's not rocket science.

Can a straight man be a "proud slut"?

Because *slut* is a word that has long been used to put down women, it feels awkward for a guy to define himself as one. It's like a straight girl calling herself a fag—it's just creepy. However, I absolutely think straight guys can be sexually exploratory and have multiple partners in a respectful and healthy way, just like anyone else.

What's the best setting for a date?

The idea of going on a first date that doesn't involve alcohol actually feels psychotic to me. Unless you relish social awkwardness and never want to have sex again, all dates should take place in a dimly lit bar after seven p.m. There's no need to reinvent the wheel.

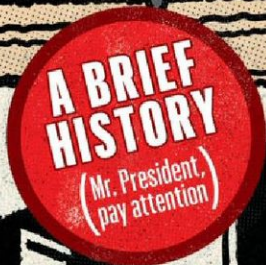
Is monogamy outdated?

I think as a culture we are beginning to open up to the idea of nonmonogamy as a viable option. Monogamy is really hard, but letting your partner be railed by someone else seems like actual torture for most people. So I think it will be a long time before monogamy becomes passé.

What's one thing every PLAYBOY reader should know about sex?

I think it would generally be helpful if everyone were taught (from a young age, if possible) that we should approach our sex lives the same way we approach all other aspects of our lives, from our careers to our hobbies: Essentially, it's something you have to invest time and effort into. You're going to fuck up; it will be discouraging and difficult at times, and you aren't entitled to anything. But in the end, if you work hard, it will be rewarding.





FAKE



2017 WAS THE YEAR OF FAKE NEWS:

Spurred by Russian meddling during the 2016 election and the freshly anointed president's contempt for much of the mainstream media, multiple dictionaries added the term to their pages, and its usage increased 365 percent between 2016 and 2017. Collins Dictionary deemed it 2017's "word of the year," beating out such formidable contenders as echo chamber, Antifa and cuffing season. Never to be outdone, President Trump capped off the year by claiming he had invented the term, which, in addition to appearing in American newspapers since 1890, has existed in various peripheral forms for about 500 years.

If 2017 was the year of fake news, 2018 will, we hope, be the year of fact-checking. And with digital giants from Facebook to Google announcing plans to add factual gatekeepers to their content systems, this is a good time to take the long view and clear up what's real about fake news.

1622

In God We Trust

Pope Gregory XV establishes the religious organization Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, or Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

1782

"The Substance Is Truth"

Seeking to drum up support for American independence, Benjamin Franklin creates a fake issue of a real Boston newspaper, *The Independent Chronicle*. One concocted story accuses British soldiers of hiring Native Americans to scalp colonial women, children and soldiers.

1807

Thin Skins

"Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper," says President Thomas Jefferson, irritated that the press has taken a critical stance against him. Sound familiar?



1835

Shoot the Moon

The penny press—a breed of cheap broadsheets consisting of sensationalized opinion and gossip disguised as real news—surges in popularity. A highlight: the Great Moon Hoax, a story about an astronomer who reportedly observed unicorns on the moon.

1890

First Faker

A *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune* article entitled "Secretary Brunnell Declares Fake News About His People Is Being Telegraphed Over the Country" marks the first known appearance of the term *fake news* in print. (The hashtag will have to wait another 120 years or so.)

1938

Martian Mayhem

Orson Welles's radio adaptation of the H.G. Wells novel *The War of the Worlds* convinces some listeners that aliens have landed on Earth—causing widespread panic, two heart attacks and a national debate about the role of the Federal Communications Commission.



1960s

Just Kidding

Yuppies founding father Paul Krassner launches *The Realist*, a monthly magazine of real and fake news (or, more accurately, satire) written by the likes of Ken Kesey, Richard Pryor, Lenny Bruce, Norman Mailer and Robert Crumb.

1964

LBJ Lies

The United States ramps up its involvement in the Vietnam war after President Lyndon Johnson states on national television that unprovoked attacks have been made on U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. The story makes national headlines in both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, though it's later revealed that some of LBJ's remarks are false.

1975

Good Night, and Good Laughs

Chevy Chase hosts the first installment of the "Weekend Update" news parody, *Saturday Night Live*'s longest-running recurring sketch.





News

BY LIZ SUMAN & SAMANTHA SAIYAVONGSA

...IS OLD NEWS

1988

Tu Stultus Est

University of Wisconsin students Chris Johnson and Tim Keck found *The Onion*. A few of its satirical stories mistaken for real over the years: "Kim Jong-Un Named *The Onion's* Sexiest Man Alive for 2012," "Conspiracy Theorist Convinces Neil Armstrong Moon Landing Was Faked" and "Harry Potter Books Spark Rise in Satanism Among Children."

1991

Jennings & Lenin

On *ABC World News Tonight*, Peter Jennings reports that Soviet officials will auction off Vladimir Lenin's body for \$15 million in a "desperate move to raise foreign currency." The source? A satirical piece in a *Forbes* supplement. Other U.S. media outlets follow the false lead; Moscow is not amused.



1995

Fact Finders

David and Barbara Mikkelsen launch one of the world's first fact-checking websites. Today, Snopes.com continues to lead the brigade of 60-plus similar sites that have cropped up to keep pace with the spread of misinformation.



2003

Funny Fakers

Jon Stewart's late-night comedy series *The Daily Show* takes spoof news to a new level. In a "Bush vs. Bush" skit, a mock split-screen broadcast juxtaposes contradictory foreign-policy comments made by George W. Bush.

2016

MAY

Blue Bias

A former Facebook employee claims in a Gizmodo report that the curators of the social-networking site's "trending" sidebar team shun posts with conservative viewpoints.

NOVEMBER

Only the Pizza Is Real

A story accusing Hillary Clinton of running a child sex-trafficking ring in the basement of a Washington, D.C. pizza parlor goes viral—and continues into 2018.

DECEMBER

Truth Tactics

Facebook announces partnerships with third-party fact-checking organizations including the Poynter Institute and Snopes.com to combat "hoaxes and fake news."

2017

Tabloid Cloaking

Abusers of Google's AdSense platform drop fake-news ads onto the home pages of fact-checking websites including Snopes.com and PolitiFact. The clickbait, disguised as news stories from publications such as *Vogue* and *People*, tricks readers with such headlines as WHY MELANIA ISN'T STAYING AT THE WHITE HOUSE.



Elevating an Error

ABC News issues a "clarification" and suspends journalist Brian Ross for reporting that former national security advisor Michael Flynn agreed to testify that Donald Trump had instructed him to communicate with Russian officials while Trump was still a candidate. (In fact, Trump didn't make the request until he was president-elect.) "More Networks and 'papers' should do the same with their Fake News!" tweets Trump.

SEPTEMBER

Death of a Fake Newsmen

Paul Horner, prolific author of fake news items, dies at the age of 38. He claimed he was the reason Donald Trump was elected and also defended his work as "political satire."

OCTOBER

Heavy Meddle

Google, Facebook and Twitter face a Senate hearing after allowing Kremlin-linked propagandists to flood their platforms with false information designed to help Donald Trump win the 2016 presidential election.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DIEGO PATIÑO



TV



Apocalypse How?

British cop drama **Hard Sun** leads a wave of new takes on the end of the world.
Spoiler alert: It's not as bad as it seems

Since ancient times, humans have lusted for the ability to see the future. Our oracles and prophets, and even some of our modern-day psychics and star-gazers, are commonly characterized as gifted, blessed, touched by a greater power.

But what if knowing the future turned out to really, *really* suck?

Certainly the idea that such seers might have a steep price to pay stretches across world cultures, from Cassandra of Greek myth to Fiver in *Watership Down*. But the new “pre-apocalyptic” drama *Hard Sun*, a BBC series debuting stateside on Hulu, puts a modern spin on the clairvoyance curse that’s as shiny and

high-tech as it is archetypal. Two police detectives, Elaine Renko and Charlie Hicks, are investigating the death of a hacker when they come into possession of a flash drive at the center of the case. As bodies pile up around them, they realize what’s on the drive: incontrovertible evidence that the world is going to end in five years, the planet engulfed in an unstoppable cosmic event.

Suddenly they have a choice to make: Do they give in to the shadowy government forces that, fearing global chaos, want to keep the information from getting out at all costs? Or do they tell the world, even though there’s nothing anyone

can do to alter their fiery fate? Already constantly at odds with each other and now forced into an impossible situation, they face galactically steep odds.

And yet the man who created these characters, showrunner Neil Cross, doesn’t feel bad for them at all. Hell, Renko and Hicks have it easy; Cross has to write this story—his third television series after the similarly dark BBC drama *Luther* and NBC’s *Crossbones*—and keep these characters motivated in the face of extinction. How does he approach it?

“With fear and trepidation every morning,” says Cross. “I go to my computer frightened and feeling that the task ahead of me is

BY **STEVE
PALOPOLI**



insurmountable. But that's what makes me work hard."

Besides, isn't what *Hard Sun*'s main characters are facing just an extreme metaphor for what the rest of us go through every day?

"The truth is that we all have our personal Armageddon heading for us like a train through time," says Cross. "We're all going to die. We don't know when—it could be in 15 minutes, it could be next Tuesday, it could be in 25 years. So the dilemma that Renko and Hicks deal with, which is finding meaning and worth and value in the face of ultimate destruction, in fact is a choice we all make every morning."

Maybe that's why apocalyptic stories never go out of style. Far from making us worry about the real end of the world, the best of them make us feel as though there's no zombie takeover too ravenous, no denuded landscape too desolate, no flamethrowing-guitar battalion of War Boys too savage to snuff out the human will to live.

"Survival is given such value in that context—that's the thing," says Cross. "Life is something to fight for. I think all apocalyptic dramas essentially are reassuring. They're not really about destruction."

"People love to look at the apocalypse," says Kate Harwood, executive producer of *Hard Sun*, "in the way that we love to look at death—because we think we're always going to dodge it. And in some ways it makes you feel very alive, doesn't it? I mean, if you know everybody's going to die, you think, But it's a fiction. I'm alive! Let's celebrate that! Let's live for today."

If the addition of the apocalypse to the police-procedural genre makes *Hard Sun* an offbeat offering, it's not alone; this year will see a number of innovative takes on the eschatological epic.

One of the strangest postapocalyptic movies in recent memory, 2013's *Snowpiercer*, is getting a television series on TNT that, according to star Daveed Diggs, will delve further into the culture and politics of the train that carries the last surviving humans on a nonstop route around the earth after the arrival of a man-made Ice Age.

Robert Kirkman, creator of the original comic incarnation of *The Walking Dead*, is debuting a new title called *Oblivion Song*. It's set 10 years after a gigantic landmass from an alternate dimension has suddenly materialized in an American city. With a legion of monsters wiping out tens of thousands of people and a wall finally being constructed to protect survivors (in case you were starting to worry these stories were devoid of direct parallels to



Opposite page and above: Jim Sturgess and Agyness Deyn play *Hard Sun*'s haunted detectives.

our current political climate), Kirkman and collaborator Lorenzo De Felici ask: How does humanity recover from a catastrophic event it cannot even comprehend?

Wildest of all might be the Peter Jackson-produced *Mortal Engines*, coming later this year. Set thousands of years after the apocalypse, the film presents a future in which a motorized London-on-wheels rolls through the barren continents, devouring smaller mobile burbs like an obese house cat hunting field mice.

These are probably not visions of the future you'd want to foresee. Certainly the stars of *Hard Sun* struggle with that dilemma: If the world is indeed ending in five years, wouldn't they be better off not knowing?

Jim Sturgess, who plays Hicks, says he imagines that knowledge would give every element of life, every tiny detail, a heightened importance.

"Everything matters; everything has a point and a reason. There's a beauty in that, in a weird way," he says. "I would be disappointed if I missed that—if it just hit me and I wasn't prepared for it. You can really see the beauty of the world we live in when you know it's all going to disappear."

Agyness Deyn, who plays Renko, can even imagine a certain acceptance: "I try to live with

no regrets. I would just want to be around nature and family and friends. I think I'd be okay with it, when it came to it, if everyone's going."

And really, isn't all this end-of-the-world hand-wringing just a lot of human vanity anyway? Does our refusal to ever say die even matter, given that the universe existed long before mankind and will continue long after? Cross thought the same thing, until he had a conversation with Brian Cox—scientific advisor on *Hard Sun* and a physicist who has emerged as a sort of British Neil deGrasse Tyson.

"Brian said he's aware of a theory that, despite the vastness of space, the number of coincidences necessary in order for complex life to evolve on Earth are so extraordinary that even given the scale of the universe, it might have happened only once, and it might have happened only here," says Cross. "If that's the case, we are where meaning is. Meaning in the universe is with us, and if we're gone, all meaning disappears."

So whether or not a molten comet is hurtling toward us, whether or not we can ever learn our species' expiration date, you might consider investing a little extra energy into making each day count. No pressure. ■



A STONED SWAN SONG

Scenes from the last prohibition-era cannabis competition in California, where big weed is rising and growers are getting burnt

BY **ZACH SOKOL** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CARLOS CHAVARRÍA**



The skyline was filled with smoke for the first leg of the eight-hour drive from Los Angeles to Santa Rosa—home to the 2017 Emerald Cup. The forbidding view on the way up was the result of the now-historic Thomas Fire, but at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds a different sort of smoke would cloud both the sky and the craniums of an estimated 30,000 attendees, all of whom had come to celebrate northern California's finest sun-grown marijuana.

A month before the indoor-outdoor fairgrounds were converted into a cornucopia of cannabis for the early-December weekend, a reported 80-plus FEMA trailers dotted the site, housing local victims who'd lost their homes in another fire, which had hit right around peak harvest season. Once the festival

was in full burn, visitors were greeted by a jumbotron reading THANK YOU FIRST RESPONDERS!

Driving past the southern California wildfires was a fitting prelude to the Emerald Cup. Not only had the Sonoma County fires annihilated an estimated 140,000 acres of land, including a number of pot farms; they also highlighted the many legal and economic threats looming over the cannabis community in the countdown to near-total legalization in the Golden State. In this case, smoke signaled much more than fire.

...

Just over 80 years after the Marihuana Tax Act outlawed cannabis possession in the U.S., eight states plus Washington, D.C. boast legalized recreational cannabis use for adults 21 and older, and 29 states and the District

of Columbia have approved some form of medical-marijuana program. The global market for cannabis is expected to top \$30 billion a year by 2021, and industry research suggests that California alone will see nearly \$4 billion in legal sales in 2018. Meanwhile, a Gallup Poll from October 2017 found that 64 percent of Americans support legalization—the highest percentage in favor since the organization began asking the public about the topic in 1969—and for the first time, a majority of Republican respondents are onboard.

The mainstreaming of weed arrives hand in hand with the so-called "green rush," characterized by unfledged players and deep-pocketed corporations betting on bud. Some Silicon Valley execs are switching from tech jobs to the weed game, while others, such as

former Facebook president Sean Parker, have been quietly funneling millions into pro-legalization lobbying efforts. Alcohol monoliths Constellation Brands, Anheuser-Busch and others are investing in the space and even considering branding their own pot products.

But it isn't all smiley faces and peace signs. As legalization spreads and the green rush builds, mom-and-pop businesses face an existential threat. Due to California's new regulations for the adult-use market—plus federal restrictions that prevent safeguards and recourse against a myriad of vulnerabilities, wildfires included—the craft farmers who actually produce the crop are the most likely to get burned in the shift out of prohibition.

There is perhaps no better place to observe this end of an era than the folksy but increasingly Coachella-fied atmosphere of the Emerald Cup. At the 2017 event, people from all facets of the weed world were asking what will happen when their culture moves from outside the law to inside and if it will be recognizable by the end.

...

Cups showcase and judge the best marijuana, in all its consumable forms, from across the globe. They typically include expert lecturers and top 420-friendly talent, debut new innovations and brands, and offer aspiring cannabis entrepreneurs a platform to promote themselves to the industry and the public. Some events, such as the High Times Cannabis Cup, which started in Amsterdam in 1988 and has since expanded to several U.S. cities as well as Jamaica and Spain, function like a hybrid between a trade show and a big-box music festival.

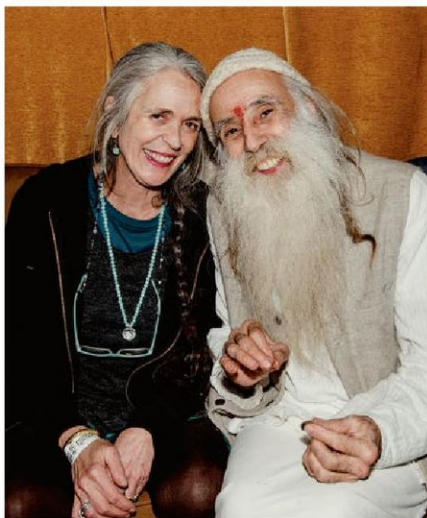
The Emerald Cup, for its part, is so respected by the inner cannabis community that other competitions seem like shake fests in comparison. Founder Tim Blake, a 60-year-old northern California native and self-described "old-school outlaw dealer," launched the event in 2003. The inaugural cup was held deep inside the Emerald Triangle: Mendocino, Humboldt and Trinity counties, the marijuana mecca known for producing the most cannabis in the U.S. Blake decked out the site with big altars and old couches for the few hundred people who came.

Back then, he says, the Emerald Cup was more a "celebration, a wild party and a friendly competition" among the couple dozen growers who entered their flowers to be judged by other regional cultivators. There were no vendors and few outsiders. "A lot of people came in masks; everyone was afraid we were going to get busted."

The organizers still aim to maintain the down-home feel that defined the competition in its salad days, but Blake concedes that the 2017 festival was a "whole different thing." For one, he partnered with music-and-event behemoth Red Light Management to produce it; hence performances by the Roots and Portugal. The Man. Tickets sold out, and Blake says his team received at least 2,000 applications for vendor booths. And with more than 500 entrants for the flower competition alone, it became clear that a new era was blooming, for better or worse.

...

Even outside the gates, the atmosphere was heady enough to spark a contact high. In the parking lot, dreaded white dudes scalped



Swami Select founders Nikki Lastreto and Swami Chaitanya.

tickets or hawked bootleg shatter. A passerby handed me a copy of the Hare Krishna tome *Beyond Birth and Death*. A barefoot man stood in front of the entrance queue, asking people to sign up for a psychedelic-mushroom advocacy initiative. Most were smoking joints before they had even passed security.

Once inside, attendees found hundreds of booths set up in hangar-size tents and walkways lined with customized stalls. The aesthetic skewed toward either a rustic vibe, with repurposed wood and eco-friendly materials, or gaudy getups staffed by packs of men in flat-brim hats, ever ready to ignite a blowtorch and offer a dab hit. I sampled everything from experimental cannabinoid extracts to THC-

infused salsa. There were even trained guard dogs for sale, fetching as much as \$45,000. (The feds restrict medical-marijuana cardholders from owning guns, despite the Emerald Triangle's high rate of violent crime. Guard dogs are one form of legal protection.)

I'd never seen so much pot—or so many cash transactions—*en plein air*, and numerous booths sported signs proclaiming POUNDS AVAILABLE. Clearly some of these businesses wanted to move weight and cash in before adult-use legalization and its new rules went into effect. By late afternoon, many of the ATMs scattered throughout the grounds were empty, which served as another reminder: Banks are hesitant to work with the cannabis industry, so buying and selling product is a cash-only affair. Once the sun went down, it was weird if your wallet wasn't empty—and you weren't the highest you'd ever been in public.

...

After hours of mingling with dab bros, New Agey types, Cliven Bundy individualists and northern California lifers who started harvesting herb during the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s, I made my way to the Swami Select booth, run by established growers Nikki Lastreto and Swami Chaitanya. [Editor's note: The author has worked with Swami Select on a column for the weed-focused web outlet Merry Jane.] The couple has lived in Mendocino County since the late 1990s, and they've been judges at the Emerald Cup every year since its inception. That day, Chaitanya serenely rolled a cigar-size joint packed with their homegrown Durban Sherbet; his long white beard hung dangerously close to the ground-up weed as he explained the process of in vivo marijuana judging. Later, over several phone calls, Lastreto describes the overwhelming feeling at the cup as "fear of the loss of our community."

"We've always worked closely together, but right now it's dividing up in a certain way," Lastreto says. We're talking about the raft of "emergency" regulations the state government passed in November 2017—a move that left growers with a pathetically small window if they wished to be fully compliant by January. The result: a dichotomy forming between "the people who have the permit and the people who don't have the permit," she says.

"Now that we're in the mainstream market, you know how this world works," echoes Tim Blake. "There's only going to be so many Apples or IBMs." Like everyone else I spoke with, Blake believes the farmers who stalled on building a brand and going legit will be the first to get



boxed out. The impending competition, combined with both federal and state regulations—which are often at odds with one another—will “signal an end to the real outlaw, black-market culture up here over the next few years,” Blake says. Most of these small operations are used to working outside the law, but if legal pressures force them to stay there, they have a slim chance of survival.

Blake was hesitant to vote for Proposition 64, also known as the Adult Use of Marijuana Act, but supported the ballot measure in hopes that the state “would actually do an orderly rollout and not wipe out small farmers.” Now that it’s here, he must embrace the idea that the cannabis industry will “become part of every mainstream society we have in this country and this world.” Plus, he knows it will mean “huge, huge business. Imagine what it’s going to be.”

...

To be fully compliant with California’s legalization regulations, growers need to apply for the appropriate licenses and adhere to a number of stipulations that could be at odds with how they run their farms. Insiders predict that only a fraction of the entire grower population will receive licenses in 2018 and that the new rules could put moneyed operations at an advantage, allowing Big Weed to swallow the craft farmer whole.

For example, the California Department of Food and Agriculture did not set a cap on the total acreage a single grower, or licensee, can have, nor did it limit the number of small-farm licenses that a single entity can hold. “Marlboro can go put up a thousand-fucking-acre grow if they want to,” says Chris Anderson, founder of Redwood Roots, a southern Humboldt County–based collective of 37 farms that prides itself on being a multigeneration-farmer “family.” (At the cup, its booth featured a glass jar with three forearm-size buds jutting out of it.)

Local jurisdictions can implement limits on grow operations, but the lack of a statewide mandate gives well-funded farmers (and corporations) an implicit leg up—especially when the price per pound drops, as it has in recent years, in response to greater supply than demand. Not to mention the new expenses legitimized farms will have to bear, such as required track-and-trace systems and annual operating-license fees that can range from three to six figures.

“It’s double fucking us—it’s triple fucking us,” says Anderson of the convoluted and ethically murky state regulations. The combination of bureaucratic intransigence and corporate privilege could quickly lead to big business “intentionally trying to starve out the

small craft cannabis farmer, which is the whole reason this industry even exists anyway.”

Plus, even though California has gone green, there’s still the federal government to deal with. In early 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions revoked the Cole Memo, an Obama-era federal policy of noninterference in states that have legalized adult-use cannabis. Now prosecutors can more freely enforce federal law on the weed industry, even here.

Federal restrictions have already made things difficult for canna-businesses. On top of banking roadblocks, insurance options are all but nonexistent—a big problem when your livelihood could literally go up in smoke with the next wildfire—and the federal tax code prevents pot-



He wasn’t the only cup attendee wearing a two-piece weed suit.

related companies from claiming credits and deductions on their income, resulting in astronomical tax rates. And if canna-businesses do face financial ruin, the feds prevent them from declaring bankruptcy. To a multigeneration grower who has been operating outside the law forever, it feels as though there’s no winning.

...

While everyone at the cup wondered who would survive the next calendar year, some see hope in the burgeoning connoisseur’s market. Comparisons to the wine industry abound. “It used to be for 100 bucks you could get a good bottle of wine,” Blake says. “Now for 20 bucks you can get a \$100 bottle of wine.” He adds, “It’s going to be the same with cannabis. As long as you

make a great flower, you won’t get big bucks, but you’ll still have a real good market for it.”

No one is worried about Brandon Scott Parker, a third-generation grower, fourth-generation Mendocino native and undeniable pot prodigy. Parker has won top awards at the Emerald Cup the past five years, allowing him to position his business in a way that all but guarantees longevity. His company, Third Gen/Dying Breed Seeds, has leveraged its story—premium, single sourced, family farmed—and consumers go out of their way to try his “Holy Grail” strains.

Although there’s no established appellation system for cannabis as there is for, say, Champagne, that could change through the efforts of the Mendocino Appellations Project and other groups. If the industry does adopt official titles that define a strain’s terroir and agricultural heritage, as well as its cultivation requirements, small-scale farmers could potentially protect themselves through their botanical intellectual property, or at least make themselves stand out in the marketplace.

Until then, says Parker, it comes down to the consumer. Only an educated toker has the power to bolster the connoisseur’s market and distinguish it from mass-produced weed. And once you go from Two Buck Chuck to Diamond Creek, it’s hard to turn back.

But not everyone is a marijuana maestro, so Parker outlines other ways small operators can get through the first year in California’s legal market—assuming they’re willing to go legit. Like other top growers I interviewed, he suggests diversifying product lines, forming strategic partnerships with trustworthy green rushers and upping the ante on packaging and labeling. Still, he says, “not everyone is going to be left after the battle is over.”

The Emerald Cup will almost certainly stick around, and Blake thinks it will be even bigger, but many of the boutique businesses I met—whose sublime herb melted my face off—won’t. The regulations might even prevent all but licensed retailers such as dispensaries from selling product at future competitions. Would it even be the Emerald Cup if you couldn’t sesh with the growers themselves?

Nothing is set in stone, and it’s unlikely that the multigenerational farmers will give up their way of life without a fight. “Cannabis farmers are very good at improvising, and they’re resilient people,” Chris Anderson of Redwood Roots says. “We will always find a way, no matter what. That’s who we are, that’s what we are, and that’s who we’ll always be.” ■

This way to the after party



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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

JOHN KRASINSKI

A candid conversation with America's favorite office drone on how he outlived his defining role and ended up directing himself (and his wife) in a stylish and highly allegorical horror film

In the fall of 2003, 23-year-old John Krasinski called his mother back home in Newton, Massachusetts and told her he was sticking to their deal: He was quitting. Upon graduating from Brown University with a degree in English, he set off for New York City to be an actor. His parents had been supportive. They always were to their three boys, of whom John was the youngest (and, at six-foot-three, the shortest). He'd already lived in New York a few summers earlier when he interned for *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. But if he didn't have some decent prospects after three years, his mom had said, he should rethink things. Well, almost three years had passed, and what did Krasinski have to show for it? An off-off-Broadway play, a walk-on part on an episode of *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, a failed TV pilot. Sure, he'd done a commercial for DeWalt power tools with

NASCAR driver Matt Kenseth, but he still had to wait tables, one of the thousands of anonymous actors hustling to survive the slaughterhouse of small-town dreams that is Manhattan. Nope, he told his mom, he was done. "At least ride out the year," she said. Three weeks later, Krasinski got a call to audition for another TV pilot: a remake of a pseudo-documentary British comedy series.

The Office would run on NBC for nine seasons, receive more than 40 Emmy nominations and make Krasinski a star. (It would do the same for his Newton South High School classmate B.J. Novak.) His character, Scranton, Pennsylvania paper salesman Jim Halpert, is a refreshing outlier among the angst-ridden, id-fueled male TV characters so celebrated at the time: the Tony Sopranos and Walter Whites and Don Drapers. A nice, relatable guy.

Krasinski would be similarly cast in his early film roles, including the comedies *License to Wed* with Robin Williams, *Leatherheads* with George Clooney and *It's Complicated* with Alec Baldwin and Meryl Streep. Yet like Jim Halpert, Krasinski was more complex than he seemed and eager to challenge himself, and in the following years he avoided the pigeonholed fate that befalls so many actors who play beloved television characters. He adapted and directed a film version of the David Foster Wallace book *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men*, got ripped to play a military contractor in Michael Bay's controversial Benghazi film *13 Hours*, worked with acclaimed directors Sam Mendes and Cameron Crowe, starred in and co-wrote with Matt Damon the fracking thriller *Promised Land*, and directed a second feature, *The Hollars*, with a cast that includes



"The moment I got *The Office*, I asked my business manager how much money I had, and I offered that exact amount to David Foster Wallace's agent."



"This is a much bigger movement than just sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is the by-product of a system that failed women a long time ago."



"The fans saved us. I remember walking through New York and some guy was like, 'Hey, man, you're on my iPod.' I was like, 'First off, what's an iPod?'"

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAKE CHESSUM



Anna Kendrick, Richard Jenkins and Mary Elizabeth Winstead.

Krasinski's career has become one of the most enjoyably unpredictable in modern Hollywood, and this year that capriciousness continues with two very different projects: He's reprising Tom Clancy's famous CIA agent Jack Ryan in an Amazon series of the same name, and co-writing, directing and starring in *A Quiet Place*, a horror film about a family who must live in silence lest they arouse a monstrous entity. His wife in the film is portrayed by his real-life spouse of eight years, actress Emily Blunt, with whom he has two children, both girls. It marks their first time working together.

Krasinski, now 38, took a break from editing *A Quiet Place* to speak with PLAYBOY contributor and Simon & Schuster senior editor Sean Manning on the West Side of Manhattan. "I'd read several interviews in which he referred to himself as 'winning the lottery,'" Manning says, "and he was just as humble and self-effacing in person. Apparently he'd fucked up his leg shooting an action scene for *Jack Ryan*, but he never grimaced or expressed discomfort. I didn't know about the injury till the end of our session, when he got up and I noticed his limp. But there's more: Our conversation kept turning to moments when he had operated 'purely on emotion,' whether he was directing his first feature or rescuing a complete stranger from a rip-tide. Beneath the affable exterior lies a deeply instinctual mind—one that defaults to bravery and human kindness when things get scary. Fitting, then, that the whole thing should start with horror."

PLAYBOY: You'd talked for some time about doing a project with your wife. You always said it would probably be a play. Instead, here you are doing a horror movie together. How the hell did that happen?

KRASINSKI: You know, we didn't want the story of our marriage to supersede the story of the movie, and that can easily happen. So I think, on first look, we thought doing a play together would keep it contained and about something that was once in a lifetime. Then I got the part for *Jack Ryan*, and the producers on that film, who are Michael Bay's producers, asked, "Would you ever be in a genre film?" I told them, "The hook would have to be something interesting. I don't want to just run around and get butchered." And they said, "Well, there's this really cool spec script that we got." We'd just had our second daughter and, you know, I'm a super sensitive, emotional person, so I think I was probably wide-open when I read the script. The idea really triggered something inside me about protection and parenting, and I just thought maybe I could make it a metaphor

for parenthood: the fact that no matter what, there will come a time when you don't have control over what your kids do, what they say, what they think, and you just hope that the preparation was enough to get them through and they survive. There was something so beautiful about putting a family in a situation where—without giving too much away, this is the one family in the world that needs to talk and can't. They're going through something they should really be talking about with each other and a therapist, and they can't. We not only thought the story was so unique and different that there was no way our marriage could supersede it, but that, weirdly, our marriage fit right in.

PLAYBOY: Were you a fan of horror movies growing up?

KRASINSKI: The complete opposite. I remember once, I want to say I was eight, and my brothers and I were all hanging out at the house of

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this neighborhood kid who'd gotten his hands on *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. I was debating how to get out of there, and my oldest brother said, "John's too young. I'm going to take him home." When we got back home, my brother was like, "I didn't want to see that either." He was terrified too, and he used me as an out! Ever since then, I've felt much more comfortable just saying I can't watch that. That's not to say I don't love the more classic genre movies. *Jaws* is one of my favorites. And *Let the Right One In* is one of the best movies I've seen—the original. So I can do it. There's just a threshold that I can't cross.

PLAYBOY: It seems in the past few years we've seen a real renaissance for horror movies that also function as societal commentary. There was *It Follows* and slut shaming, *Green Room* and white supremacy, and of course *Get Out*—

KRASINSKI: Yeah, *Get Out* and *Don't Breathe* and all that stuff. I saw all those movies when I was researching for *A Quiet Place*. They're

much more elevated and say so much more than just "Where do you put the camera to scare the person the most?"

PLAYBOY: You just said *A Quiet Place* is a metaphor for parenthood, but I wonder if you might also be making a statement about how deadly silence can be, how you can't be quiet and say nothing and hope the monster goes away; you have to speak out and confront the thing.

KRASINSKI: That's exactly it. I think in our political situation, that's what's going on now: You can close your eyes and stick your head in the sand, or you can try to participate in whatever's going on. I think that's what *Jaws* was for me. That character was scared to be a cop in New York, so he ran away from his fears to an island. The one thing he never wanted was a scary situation, and it's now surrounding him. That's kind of where I was coming from.

PLAYBOY: So then, shifting to politics—

KRASINSKI: Oh God.

PLAYBOY: In Trump's comments about shithole countries, one of those he cited was El Salvador. Just before you went to college, you spent a few months teaching English in Central America, in Costa Rica. What was that experience like for you and what was your reaction to what the president said?

KRASINSKI: That experience changed my life completely. I was 17 years old. I'd graduated early from high school because of my birth date and had gotten into Brown mid-year, so I had to go six months later, in January. And I decided to go down to Costa Rica. My dad didn't tell me until I got back that he and my mom were terrified I was going. The family I stayed with forced me to speak only Spanish, so it was anything but a cool, *pura vida* Costa Rica experience.

I went there to teach English at a Spanish-speaking school. I was volunteering, but they literally didn't have enough work for me to do, so they very politely fired me and I had to scramble to get a new job. I ended up at an English-speaking high school, teaching seniors all the stuff I'd just learned. I asked my mom to send down my books from school, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Canterbury Tales* and all that stuff. I was teaching from the notes in the margins of my books. I never told them how old I was. They would ask, "How old are you?" and I was like, "How old do you *think* I am?" They would say, "Twenty-seven?" and I was like, "Perfect." But all these things were happening when I was 17 years old.

I also traveled by myself. One of the places I went was this amazing beach called Manuel Antonio that I didn't realize had an insane rip-tide. While I was swimming there—this is a story I've never told anybody—this Costa Rican girl and an American guy were swimming right



next to me, and we were knee-deep. I went underwater for a second, and when I came back up he was screaming at the top of his lungs. Literally in three seconds the girl had been swept 150 yards out.

PLAYBOY: Holy shit.

KRASINSKI: My mom was a lifeguard and taught us to swim very early. In that moment, I didn't ask anyone. There was no one to help me. I just went out and tried to save her. And then of course when I got out there, I was in a crosscurrent with her. It was one of those moments of "Oh my God, you just made a poor choice and it might cost you your life." But I didn't think about it like that. It was just this survival instinct. It was really weird—like the girl was asking me to let her die. But I got her back. When I got within 20 yards or so of the shore, some surfers came out. Granted, not everybody needs to have life-or-death experiences, but that changed my entire life. All of a sudden I grew up.

When I got to Brown, I remember kids calling their parents and saying, "I miss home" and "I'm lonely," which I totally get, but I was so far beyond that. Whereas college should have been my defining moment, Costa Rica was. It just ripped all the protective layers apart and allowed me to get hurt. And you know, not to keep circling back to *A Quiet Place*, but there is something about that—at some point you have to let your kids get hurt. That's very palpable in my life right now with my girls. I hope I'm brave enough to be as good as my parents were.

PLAYBOY: I think traveling is one of the most important things anyone can do. From afar, anything looks scary, but then you get there and it's like, "Oh shit, I had no clue."

KRASINSKI: Absolutely. And to me, what was overwhelming and a religious or spiritual moment in my life was seeing joy in abject poverty. Seeing true happiness, not just survival. You know, we look at it from the outside and say, "My God, these people are living on dirt floors." And they have more joy than a lot of people I know. I was moved at the power of what was able to be achieved in the category of happiness with nothing.

PLAYBOY: Different priorities.

KRASINSKI: So different—things like family and a lot of the ideals that I know we still have in America. In my opinion, the whole idea of

making America great again is so much more on us than anybody else. Wherever you stand politically, I don't think "Make America Great Again" is supposed to be up to our politicians. It needs to be on us. You go down there and realize they're making their country great by living every single day.

PLAYBOY: I covered the 2016 Republican National Convention for Playboy.com, and I was in Quicken Loans Arena the night two of the contractors who survived Benghazi, Mark Geist and John Tiegen, gave a speech. Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz were also referencing *13 Hours*

where someone was in trouble, and these guys—sure, they were contractors in that moment, but they had long ago given their oaths to the military. They have to help that person. We have deleted that part of the story from the narrative. You take out the idea of these six men going in and trying to do things that we can't comprehend. You take that out and you go, "Yeah, that was amazing—but look how horrible all this political stuff is from the fallout." The reason I did the movie is because I felt that was wrong. I felt it was wrong to have any political conversation. It was purely about telling the story of these men I looked up to and still look up to.

You know, I grew up in a big military family. That was always really important to me. I think, to be honest, it may be one of the most important movies I've done or experiences I've ever had in my career. I remember a woman came up to me and said, "Thank you for making that movie. That was about my husband." I said, "Oh, where was your husband? Was he CIA, or was he in Benghazi?" And she said, "No, he died in Iraq 12 years ago, but that's his story too." Again, I'm very sensitive, so I'll tear up just talking about it, but that stuff changes your life. We knew it was a hot-button issue while we were shooting it. We certainly knew it was a hot-button issue as the campaigns fired up. And I think it was actually just before opening when Trump rented out the theater. This has nothing to do with politics. This has something to do with the universality of the idea that the military should never be politicized. This is a universal thing we should all get behind no matter who you are, because you are living in

the country these people allowed you to live in. Literally, they've allowed you to live here because of what they did. So that is why I was so bummed—not because of any specific political reason but more because we knew that was going to change the narrative of our movie.

PLAYBOY: With *Jack Ryan*, you're once again in the world of the military and the CIA. I assume that when you researched for the part you talked to people in that sphere. Did you get a sense of how they're feeling within the current administration?

KRASINSKI: We went to the CIA to have our first meeting the same week Trump was bashing the CIA and saying it's—I'm



on the campaign trail, and Trump rented out a theater in Iowa to screen it for free. After all that and then the outcome of the election, did you have any misgivings about doing the film?

KRASINSKI: I didn't have any misgivings; I had real sadness. I felt maybe the system had done those men a disservice, because this was going to be such an awesome awakening for people to get to hear the true story. Who the hell knows that story? I didn't know anything about Benghazi. You know, it was a word in a headline, which I think put me among the large majority of people who thought they knew what Benghazi was but had absolutely no clue. There were no politics that night. That was a situation



paraphrasing—sort of null and void and we don't need them and they're a bunch of jok-ers. So that certainly wasn't a great vibe. But I don't think anybody in the CIA would tell you they're a Democrat or a Republican. I'm sure a whole lot of people at the CIA are Republicans, and I'm sure a whole lot of people at the CIA are Democrats. I think they'd tell you there's no politics in that building. And they basically said as much: that they have dedicated their lives to saving other people, to trying to thwart bad things.

PLAYBOY: Tom Clancy created the Jack Ryan franchise, but you seem to have more literary tastes. You've worked with the novelist Dave Eggers on *Awake We Go* and *Promised Land*, and you adapted and directed David Foster Wallace's novel *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men*. How did you end up doing that project?

KRASINSKI: That's a really interesting story. Reading that book was the moment I realized what acting really was.

PLAYBOY: How old were you when you read it?

KRASINSKI: I was in college. I went to Brown thinking I was going to be an English teacher. I even had very foggy ideas of playing basketball there. When I got there and realized I wouldn't play basketball because I wasn't good enough and it wasn't a life I wanted to dedicate myself to, I had no idea what to do. I was bizarrely shy, and I joined this sketch-comedy group because I loved *Saturday Night Live* and wanted to be a part of the community. At that point, the smartest, most free-thinking, open, engaging, interesting people were in theater. Chris Hayes, who's on MSNBC now, was a director at Brown back then, and he came up to me one day and said, "Listen, I'm going to do this thing called *Brief Interviews*. It's interviews with guys. Would you do one?" And I said, "Yeah, absolutely, no problem." I was so insecure at the time that I was thrilled to be chosen; it was still that thing of being picked for the team. I think we were supposed to do only one or maybe two nights, and I would say maybe 90 to 100 people could fit in the room where we were doing it. Two hundred and fifty people showed up and about 200 of them got turned away. I remember walking through campus and a teacher came up to me and said, "That was one of the greatest things I've ever seen at the student theater." And another teacher, on the exact same day, said, "I thought that was offensive and grotesque." Getting someone to react is powerful; that was the first example for me. You could make an impact. You could change people's lives. I mean, people in the audience were crying. They'd gone through very specific things that we were talking about, which if you know the book, you

know there's some really dark stuff in there. And to have people connect to that dark stuff, that changed my whole outlook.

The moment I got *The Office*, I asked my business manager how much money I had, and I offered that exact amount to David Foster Wallace's agent. I remember very clearly she said no. And I said, "Can I come out and talk to you about it?" So I flew out to Los Angeles and talked to her about it.

PLAYBOY: Damn, how ballsy and—

KRASINSKI: Stupid. [laughs] I think it gets back to that whole Costa Rica thing. I just didn't understand why you wouldn't do it. Because if I don't do it, then no one else is going to do it. So it was ignorance. Directing it was the exact same thing. I was looking for a director forever, and it was Rainn Wilson who said, "You should direct it." So I went and directed it, and it was like walking through a minefield

I went underwater for a second, and when I came back up he was screaming at the top of his lungs.

that you have no idea is a minefield. At the end, I remember my director of photography said, "Congratulations, that was really good." And I said, "Yeah, it was fun. It was easy." And he was like, "It was anything but easy," and then showed me all the things that could have gone wrong. I was going purely on emotion.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever meet Wallace? Did he offer you any suggestions on adapting the book? And did he get to see any of the footage before he died?

KRASINSKI: I spoke to David only once, on the phone. I was nervous as hell. Then I was blown away by how incredibly gentle he was. So kind. So generous. We discussed his discomfort with having any of his work made into a movie. He said something to the effect that he writes books with the understanding that once they're published, that's it. That is their life. It felt strange to him to have something he thought he was done with taken to a new medium. And I got that. That said, he was incredibly

supportive and generous about my making the movie. I remember he said he wasn't sure if he wanted to hear about the screenplay and what I had done to the story. And then he said he let temptation get the best of him and asked me to tell him. I did. He was very kind about it. He remembered one of our writers on *The Office*—the great Mike Schur, who had invited him to Harvard for an award while Mike was a student there. I remember asking David if he would ever like to come visit Mike and me on set. He asked me where we shot. When I told him the studio was in Van Nuys, a ways from where he taught, at Pomona, he simply replied, "No, that's okay. I'm not a big fan of driving." I always loved that. Sadly, he passed during the sound mix of the movie, only weeks before we went to Sundance, and never saw a frame.

PLAYBOY: The common perception of artists is that they're these existentially tormented, emotionally fragile people. In his *Playboy Interview*, Jon Hamm, who lost both his parents by the time he was 20 years old, said, "I think anybody who chooses any kind of career in the arts...comes from a place of being a little bit unmoored. If I had grown up in a two-parent household and had parents telling me what to do, I'm sure their first piece of advice would not have been 'You should be an actor. You should move to L.A. with no money. That sounds like the best plan.'" And yet that's pretty much what happened with you.

KRASINSKI: Yeah, exactly.

PLAYBOY: So do you not have any demons?

KRASINSKI: Oh, I'm sure I have demons, and I'm sure I have dark-nesses and insecurities and all those things. Absolutely. I'm lucky enough to be surrounded by incred-

ible friends and family who keep me on track and don't let me spin out into my own universe for too long—namely, and most important, my wife. I think my wife gets me. Not just to sound adorable, but the truth is she gets me more than anyone else has ever gotten me. And so she allows me to, for lack of a better term, bottom out for a second and get really scared. Like right now in the editing process, some stuff works amazing and some stuff doesn't. And when it doesn't, I get really nervous, like, "Will I ever get to this place?" And she says, "Yeah, just keep at it. One step at a time." But to Jon Hamm's quote, I totally understand that I'm an anomaly, but I'm completely unmoored in the artistic sense. I wasn't trained. One of my dear friends, Billy Crudup, went to New York University, arguably one of the best schools you can go to for acting, and he came out and completely dominated everything he did. I just saw him in this one-man show, and it blew my mind to watch this guy do hairpin turns between







drama and comedy and timing and 11 different characters. I guarantee you, if you gave me 64 years, I could never do that. So maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there is something about having all that training. But I feel lucky that I wasn't trained. Sam Mendes said, "I love working with you as an actor, because I've never worked with someone who runs 150 miles an hour at a wall when I tell them to, and when you hit it and I was wrong, you turn around and I give you another wall, and you run 150 miles an hour into that wall too."

On *13 Hours*, I teared up almost every day on set. I felt I was a part of something. I felt I was in a moment of incredible power, rather than "Okay, this is great and I love talking to Navy SEALs, but I've got to go in this dark corner and light a candle, and I've got to 'red leather, yellow leather.'" I also know that about my wife. My wife didn't train. There's something unbridled about her that feels really organic, and it's what makes her such a powerful actress.

PLAYBOY: Was it surreal when you first started dating? By that point she'd already been in a bunch of films, including *The Devil Wears Prada*, and had won a Golden Globe.

KRASINSKI: Yeah, when we first started dating, that was weird. I remember she'd done this *Vanity Fair* cover with Amy Adams, Jessica Biel and a couple of other people—"young up-and-coming hot Hollywood" or whatever—and that issue was in my living room when we first started dating. I don't think she had *Boston* magazine with me on the front wearing Celtics, Red Sox and Bruins stuff. I don't think she had that in her living room.

PLAYBOY: She had your Matt Kenseth commercial queued up.

KRASINSKI: Yeah, exactly. I was definitely aware of it, probably in a way that could have been extremely unhealthy if it wasn't for how insanely down-to-earth she was. I remember being at my house and saying to her, "So I just want to have this really honest conversation. I think you're one of the best act—" I didn't even get out "actress." She went, "No, no, no, no!" Very loud. We didn't have that conversation again for a really long time, and it saved our relationship. We got to have a very removed existence, because we just looked at it as though we were two people who had fallen in love, rather than two Hollywood celebrities who'd met each other. I remember people saying, "Wow, for Hollywood you guys have been together forever." And I was like, "What does that mean?" I mean, I would say nine years is average for most people. I'm a son of two people who have been married for—man, is it going to be 45 years this year?

PLAYBOY: Okay, so that leads us to the sex questions. This being **PLAYBOY**, you knew they were coming.

KRASINSKI: Sex questions. I'm terrible at these, but let's do it. Here comes the mask.

PLAYBOY: You've said in previous interviews that you weren't much of a ladies' man in high school.

KRASINSKI: Yep. I wanted to be.

PLAYBOY: You said that you would adore girls from afar and they would just end up asking you to sign their yearbook.

KRASINSKI: Yep.

PLAYBOY: But B.J. Novak once told **PLAYBOY**, "John was popular and smart, and if he liked a girl, he would just ask her out."

KRASINSKI: That is completely false.

PLAYBOY: Who is telling the truth here?

KRASINSKI: Hey, listen, I will take his lens over mine any day. I don't think I dated anyone in high school, to be honest. I think dating for me was something I was so nervous to do. I had a nerdy version of relationships. I really wanted to be married from a young age, because my parents were really happily married and that seemed really cool: having a partner, having a best friend. The idea of one-night stands felt much less cool to me and much more rife with anxiety.

PLAYBOY: Did you get any scandalous fan mail while you were on *The Office*? Were there Jim Halpert groupies?

KRASINSKI: Girls were really nervous to meet me because they felt they had gone through a relationship with me. You know, everybody says, "Well, you're in their home. That's the difference with television." I remember rolling my eyes at that. But then when I was doing *Leatherheads* with George Clooney, he said, "No, it's a real thing. If I walked down a street and Brad Pitt walked down a street, they would point and go, 'Oh my God, that's Brad Pitt.' And then one of them would run up and punch me in the arm and go, 'Dr. Ross!'" Because they know you and they've had their own relationship with you. So that's what I experienced. But as much of that as you get from girls, more of it's from the dudes. A lot of dudes just want to buy you a beer, which I'll take any day.

PLAYBOY: Whenever people talk about the golden age of TV in the 2000s, they're always quick to mention *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Wire*—

KRASINSKI: *The Office*.

PLAYBOY: Well, that was my question.

KRASINSKI: Come on, man, *The Office* was fourth? Jesus.

PLAYBOY: When people talk about this sort of golden age, *The Sopranos*—

KRASINSKI: I remember being a waiter at Sushisamba, down on Seventh Avenue. I was a waiter everywhere. I think I was fired from nine jobs, because as soon as you go for an audition, they say, "If you walk out this door, don't ever come back." And I'd say okay. But at Sushisamba, I remember Sunday nights up until 8:15 it would be packed. And then at nine P.M., zero people. That was back in the day when people ran home to see *The Sopranos*.

PLAYBOY: Yeah, there was no HBO Go then.

KRASINSKI: No, and who wants to watch that on VHS or whatever?

PLAYBOY: But when people list those golden-age shows, they rarely include the really amazing comedies of that time—*The Office*, *Arrested Development*, *30 Rock*. Do you think comedy still gets the shaft compared with drama?

KRASINSKI: That depends on what crew you're in. When I was growing up, Jim Carrey, Chris Farley—those were my heroes. In New York I would go to comedy clubs. I was going down to Upright Citizens Brigade and watching all these geniuses. One of the biggest influences on me, period, was Conan O'Brien. What he did on that show, especially the 12:30 slot, was mind-blowingly wild. It was instinctual. It was funny. He was taking chances. And I got to be his intern and learned a lot there. Amy Poehler was a day player on *Conan* whenever he needed that character of his little sister or something. And Matt Walsh and all those people. So I was huge into the comedy nerdism of it. I remember when *Arrested Development* came on, I was like, "I can't believe there's something this crazy on a national network." I thought it was the best thing I'd ever seen. The fact that they would call jokes back from six episodes ago, and if you didn't get it, they didn't care. That was bold to me. Then the original British version of *The Office* came out. Someone I knew had that black DVD box set and was like, "You've got to watch this." I remember thinking, "That's it? They did only 13 episodes? That's got to be something special."

What *The Sopranos* did that led to *The Wire* and then to *Mad Men*, that was already happening in comedy. I also knew that what we were doing on *The Office* was groundbreaking. I think the first episode was "Diversity Day," and I remember reading that script and being uncomfortable, thinking, "If I'm uncomfortable and this is on NBC, this is a moment. I don't think we'll do many of these. I truly thought we were going to get canceled, and we were threatened with cancellation all the time. Because nobody got it. You know, we legitimately owe everything to our fans, because it was the moment of iTunes. Because of the fact that people were paying \$1.99 to see a show they could see for free on Thursdays, I think very begrudgingly NBC was like, "Fine," and picked us up. The fans saved us. I remember walking through New York and some guy was like, "Hey, man, you're on my iPod." I was like, "First off, what's an iPod?" And second, I was like, "That's my face on a two-inch screen. What is happening?" That was a weird one.

PLAYBOY: Somewhat related to that idea of being out of your comfort zone: What was the scariest thing about working with your wife?

KRASINSKI: I think the scariest thing is that I didn't want to let her down. I was so moved when she said, "You can't let anybody else do



this movie. I have to do it.” It really was the best compliment of my career. I respect her and her choices and her class and her taste. That sounds like heady actor babble, but it’s true. I remember she got this script, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, when we were together. She said, “I really like this script.” I think I said to her, “*Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*? You can’t get a better title than that?” And she said, “It’s really special. It’s something really cool.” I told her, “Well, pitch it to me.” And she said, “Well, it’s about this guy who’s trying to start salmon fishing in Yemen because it’s meditative.” And I was like, “Not getting any better.” She was definitely in that rising-star moment, but she knew this script was what she wanted to do. And that showed me strength and conviction and taste in a way I certainly didn’t have.

I was sort of like, “Oh God, I’ve got to stay relevant and stay working.” You know, I was just doing whatever movie I could do. I got very lucky having some of my first movies be *Leatherheads* and *Away We Go*. I worked with great directors on great material. But I was still just doing whatever I could get. I would have done anything. Emily was much more measured, much more specific, much more confident. I remember referencing that to her, and she didn’t get it. She was like, “What do you mean? It’s just good.” And I was like, “Yeah, but it’s so much more tempting to just do whatever it takes to...you know, when your agent is like, ‘This is a hot script.’” And she was like, “I don’t do hot scripts. I do what I like.” So, working with her on *A Quiet Place*, I didn’t want to get to the end and be like, “Whoops, I duffed that one.” It was just a constant awareness and making sure the movie was as good for her, if not better, than it was for me.

PLAYBOY: Look at it from her perspective. Here’s this guy who has co-written a screenplay with Academy Award-winning screenwriter Matt Damon, who was the lead actor in one of the most popular TV series of all time, who premiered the two previous films he directed at Sundance. Who else would she want to work with?

KRASINSKI: She was lucky! Yeah, that’s the way I’m going to go with it.

PLAYBOY: Seriously, though, maybe being too humble is your demon.

KRASINSKI: There is a very similar background to being from Boston and being from London. In London, Emily says, it’s called “tall poppy syndrome.” Which is, as a society, you celebrate everyone, and if you get too tall as a poppy they knock you down so that you’re the same level as everybody else. And there’s something about that with Boston too. Everybody loves celebrating when you do well in Boston,

but no one wants to hear you say you’re the best. If Tom Brady today was like, “I am the greatest of all time,” they’d be like, “Get out of here, Brady!” To be honest, and it probably sounds super—what’s the word?—conceited, but one of my favorite things is when people in articles or on Twitter say, “He seems like a really good guy.” That was kind of the directive from my parents: Just be a good person. That to me is so much of a compliment, as much as people saying, “Wow, man, amazing performance.” Just being a good person, I think in this day and age, is really all we should be striving for, because that’s how anything will get done.

PLAYBOY: Which is a good transition to the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements. Having a spouse who has worked in the entertainment industry for a while, were you aware of any of this horrible stuff? Had you two talked about it?

Just being a good person is really all we should be striving for, because that’s how anything will get done.

KRASINSKI: No. We definitely had the conversation once it blew up to the level that it did. I felt terrible and borderline embarrassed that I hadn’t asked her about it. I was like, “Have you ever had a bad experience?” I think she said in *Vanity Fair*, like, “I’ve had my bum pinched a couple times, but....” First of all, I believe I can’t add anything to the conversation. There’s so much that has been said and is continuing to be said, and all the things that need to be said are at least out there and on the table now. What we actually piece through and hold on to in that conversation, I think, is the most important now.

This is a much bigger movement than just sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is the by-product of a system that failed women a long time ago. I remember when we had our first daughter, we read this article somewhere. I think they interviewed a hundred girls who had graduated college and gotten, quote, “good jobs,” whatever that means. They asked them about the relationship between their

father and their mother. Ninety-six percent of the girls had had fathers present. And there was this weird statistic—I’m probably getting it completely wrong—but there was some version of 86 percent of love and affection comes from the mother and 93 percent of confidence and conviction comes from the father. Meaning no matter how loving the mothers were, in this study, somehow these girls knew that if they did something great, they looked to their father and said, “Wasn’t that a great game?” or “Didn’t I do well on that test?” To me it meant there is something subconscious from the moment women are born that they have to fight an uphill battle that men don’t.

The sexual-harassment stuff is the disgusting by-product that is shaking people up and making people awake, but I hope we don’t stop there. I hope we have 50 percent women in the workplace in power positions. I think it’s a conversation about power more than anything else. To me, that’s what’s so palpably powerful. It’s not as a father of two daughters or the husband of a wife who’s a strong feminist woman in the business. It’s as a human being. I think it’s a human-being level that we should all be talking about. I hope this is just the pulling back of the curtain, and once we see the wizard, we get to dismantle him and rebuild it and live in the kingdom we want to live in. The problem is the system is very old, so the dismantling process is going to take a while.

PLAYBOY: So what can men do to help make that happen? What should they do?

KRASINSKI: Well, if you’re a male CEO and you don’t harass people, don’t pat yourself on the back. Get

other people to be more like you. I will say, I was raised in a very old ideal of America. Like, my dad told me to help your neighbor no matter what. You don’t hold a vig against them. You just help if you can. I held doors for women. I called my father-in-law before I married Emily. It wasn’t a decision for me. It was a foregone conclusion. I think more people need to have the foregone-conclusion version of treating women equally. Women are treated equally rather than women *should* be treated equally. I just read an article where some woman—it might have been [Wonder Woman director] Patty Jenkins—got an award, and they said, “You’re the first woman to blah-blah-blah. How does that feel?” And she said, “It feels weird because you’re still singling out that I’m a woman.” I think that’s the best answer you can have. I hope really soon that we get to the place where you just directed a good movie, you just ran a great company, you’re a perfect candidate politically. No division, you know what I mean? We really should have been here a long time ago. ■



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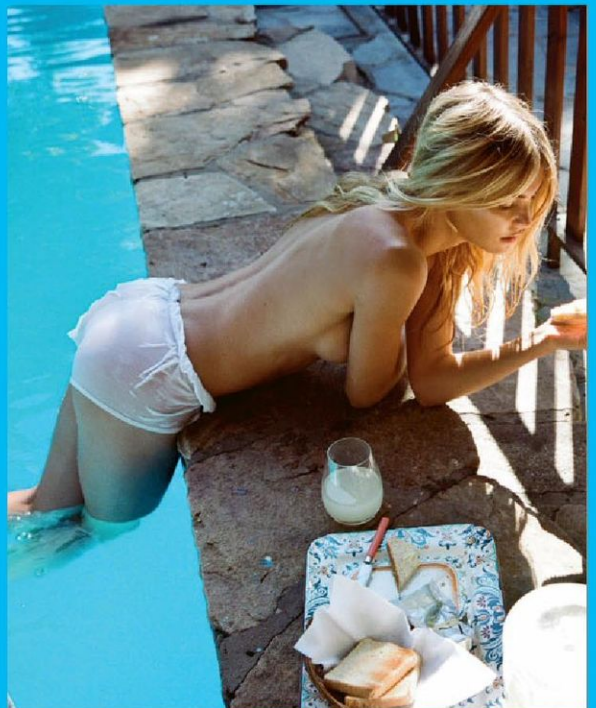
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SHE'S A RAINBOW

Australian siren **Elyse Taylor** follows the sun to Buenos Aires, and the colors of nature erupt in prismatic applause. Sunglasses optional

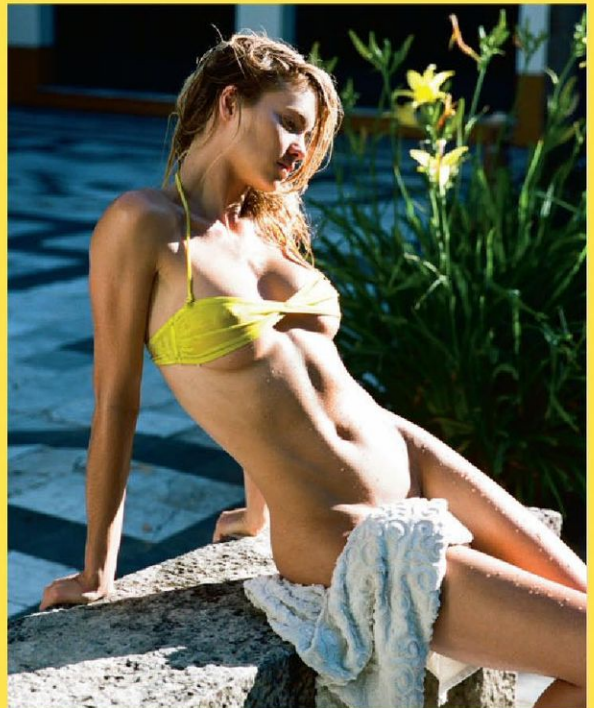
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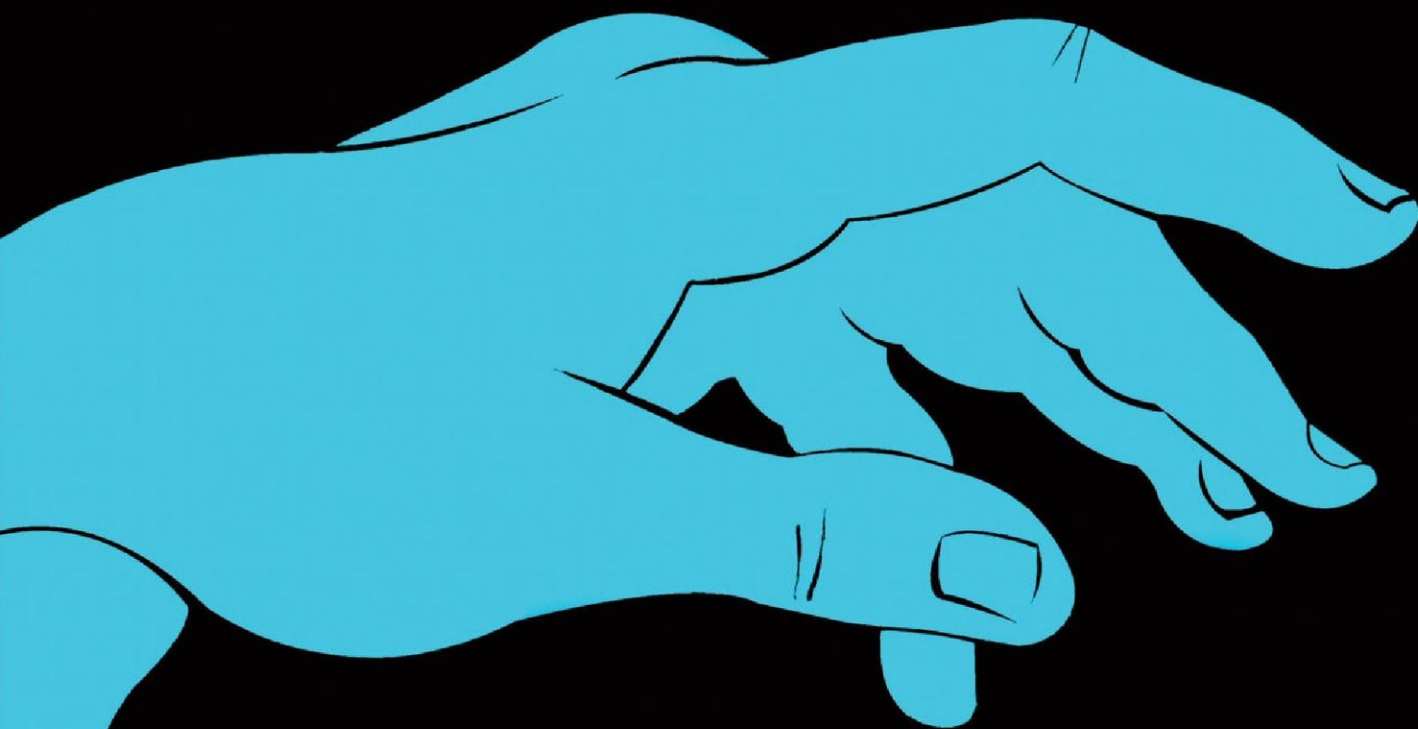








A KALEIDOSCOPIC LOOK AT ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND



THE GENDER

CULTURAL UPHEAVALS IN MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY



REVOLUTION

ILLUSTRATION BY EDEL RODRIGUEZ



Chief Creative Officer Cooper Hefner draws a line between sexism and sex while discussing the need for men to consciously evolve

Two weeks before Harvey Weinstein started dominating news cycles around the world, I authored an article for Playboy.com that explored the state of masculinity and manhood. In the piece, which you'll find on the following page, I insisted that men encourage one another to have challenging and long-overdue conversations about what it means to be a man and how we can continue to evolve into the best versions of ourselves—not just for one another but, equally important, for our female counterparts. My motivation: I had stepped into senior management at an organization that has played a crucial role in defining what it means to be a man, as well as what it means to be a woman, in Western society. But as the women's movement evolves from #MeToo to Time's Up and beyond, the need for an unfiltered conversation about masculinity is more urgent than ever.

There's an important distinction to make, especially here in the pages of PLAYBOY. When it comes to Harvey Weinstein and others like him, many people read headlines and jump to the

dangerous conclusion that sex and men's desires are the problem, when in reality that is not the case for most. The gross abuse of power and the use of sex with self-serving objectives in mind are the issues at hand. The actions of Weinstein and many others in positions of power are simply immoral, but in order to have a conversation with the rational man—an individual who behaves with decency and respect, even if his sexual appetites are unique—it is important that a clear line is drawn between sexism and sex. In simplest terms, the line assists in clearly showing that the abuse of power is wrong, and when exploring Weinstein's situation, we find that sex was used as a weapon—one that kept consent out of the picture he was painting.

Although the world has changed since Playboy's inception, many in the United States and abroad still vilify sexual expression, especially when it's coming from a woman. We see heterosexual men own their sexuality unapologetically (if unconsciously, as I discuss in the piece to the right), while women struggle to

achieve traditional career success and are also scrutinized for attempting to own *their* sexuality, or any other form of independence. The unequal status of women in the workplace and in society is directly connected to masculinity in more ways than men often acknowledge.

The domino effect following Weinstein's fall reminds us that the mistreatment of women and the abuse of power in social and professional situations have been an epidemic for far too long—one that many men have not recognized to its full extent, but that all of us have witnessed throughout our lives, whether we choose to admit it or not. Sadly, most women have not only seen this but have fallen victim to it in one sense or another.

It is my hope that the conversation continues between men and women and that offering a seat at the table to both sexes will help us participate in a needed moral awakening—one that guides us not to the vilification of sex, but to a moment when unjust behavior toward women no longer exists.



The PLAYBOY PHILOSOPHY

Installment IV: Masculinity and Manhood

Since the dawn of human consciousness we've explored what it means to be men much more than we've permitted our counterparts to explore what it means to be women. Historically in America, whether a woman was setting her sights on an executive role or simply had a desire to own her sexuality, she has been set up to fail based on a simple truth: Critics, both male and female, have a tendency to come out of the woodwork whenever women try to steer their own destiny.

Although times have undoubtedly changed over the past century, this fight continues today, with feminists and female influencers breaking barriers and continuing to define what it means to be a woman. Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and other leaders who guided the second-wave feminist movement seem more relevant now than ever before. Writers like Roxane Gay and political figures like Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren are just a few who are picking up the baton and continuing to fight for liberation and an equal playing field.

As women continue to define their personhood and drive their evolution, quiet and often

unspoken murmurs from the other side plague the minds of men. At some point, our evolution as men, or at least the conversation and constructive debate around it, faltered. And so a few questions arise, ones without simple answers: What does it mean to be a man in America today? How does one healthily own his masculinity?

Polarizing figures have had a tendency to dictate how men view themselves. Throughout the second half of the 20th and early part of the 21st century, my father played a key role in this exploration. Today, we have new characters defining manhood, one of whom claims to "grab 'em by the pussy" and boasts that he can get away with it because of his celebrity. This individual is now the leader of the free world. When I think about past remarks, I find myself saddened to recall the reflections of a former U.S. president: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." Abraham Lincoln's words not only suggest a method that provides a compass for good morals; they also outline the defining characteristics that

make a good man. They stand true more than 150 years after his passing.

Today, men like Dan Bilzerian garner tens of millions of followers on social-media platforms by projecting a masculine lifestyle whose material excesses seem gratifying on the outside. While the overindulgence is fascinating for millions to watch, what really intrigues most of the boys and men following Bilzerian comes from a desire to answer the same questions: What does it mean to be a man in America today, and how does one healthily own his masculinity?

In some ways, Bilzerian's life mirrors that of my father—a man who chose to walk a particular path in the late 1990s and early 2000s, portraying certain qualities of manhood that Bilzerian and others follow without delving deeper. It is crucial to keep going, to explore how men define masculinity and how those definitions, and those people we've anointed as their representatives, define us.

Today, masculinity is often connected to violence, a quality I don't believe most men truly want to promote. Many men love to romanticize violence, yet very few if any actually enjoy its extremes. Sexuality also defines masculinity, but sexuality has always been labeled either healthy or deviant, depending on how its various forms were viewed by society at a given point in history. Sexuality should be presented in a way that promotes a level of respect for one's self and one's partners, while also accepting men who choose to live outside conventional boundaries that define gender roles. The world around us often says a gay man isn't "manly." This belief, which continues to plague American culture, has to do with our dated interpretation of masculinity. For those who fall on the extreme conservative side of the social-policy spectrum: Remind yourself that acceptance is not the same as encouragement.

We are long overdue for an era in which men give themselves the same permission to evolve manhood as women have given themselves to redefine womanhood. Failing to do so will allow the pussy grabbers to continue telling the country what it means to be a man—something none of us should be comfortable with as we continue walking toward our future. ■



ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE BAILIE





SORRY NOT SORRY

Wading through the wave of men's apologies that continue to wash ashore in Weinstein's wake

When I was a kid, I used to steal from my sister on a regular basis. Cassette tapes, dirty novels, hair clips, Game Boy cartridges. Every time she caught me—which was most of the time; I have all the cat-burgling skills of a dog—I'd apologize. And every time, she'd issue the same clarification: "You're only sorry you got caught." Fair point. It's not like I felt guilty while I was pawing for bodice rippers under her bed. I only felt inconvenient upon discovering that my actions had consequences. But I did learn that not all apologies are equal. So much so that in 2015 I wrote an op-ed for *The New York Times* about why women should stop apologizing for themselves so much. The piece went viral enough to land me on *CBS This Morning*, where I was interviewed by Charlie Rose, whose lack of interest in the subject no longer seems like a reflection of my ability to articulate it. You can see it in the clip: Every time the camera cuts to him, he's picking sleep out of his eye. I mean, he's really getting in there.

Now Rose, along with dozens of high-profile men including Matt Lauer, Al Franken and Louis C.K., have been forced to apologize to the point that the famous man's mea culpa has become a burgeoning genre in itself—the Sexual Harasser's Lament. Why, there's even a "Watch the birdie!" subgenre in which men like Mario "the Cinnamon Roll" Batali and Kevin "I'm Gay!" Spacey toss red herrings at the problem. But for the most part the blame deflection is more deeply seated. Rose views his time in the hot seat as a personal boot camp, stressing what he's "learned" and that "all of us...have come to a profound new respect for women and their lives." Who, us? I have long had the perfect blend of respect and disrespect for my own life. Lauer is "humbled" and "blessed," as though he's about to lift up a statuette and thank God. Like Rose, he has spun the personal pain and professional set-

backs of women into a teaching moment for himself. "The last two days have forced me to take a very hard look at my own troubling flaws," he mused. I have a full-time job taking a hard look at my troubling flaws, and I didn't have to touch anyone to get it. Louis C.K.'s apology, perhaps the best intentioned, is nonetheless missing the magic word. Harvey Weinstein, who seems driven to be the best at everything, including being the worst, is in conversation less with his victims than with the NRA, to which he plans on devoting his "full attention."

Apologies, by their nature, are imperfect because they're delivered by people imperfect enough to warrant contrition. After centuries of apologizing for being bumped into, women are highly trained—like Liam Neeson very-particular-set-of-skills trained—in the art of the apology. But as bittersweet as the advantage we have in this department is, it's still astounding how men can be so piss-poor at it. The phrase *mea culpa* literally means "through my fault," meaning every grievous act passes through a single portal. There is no "I'm sorry you feel that way," which puts the onus on the victim, or "consider the context," which puts it on society, or "I have brought shame upon my family," which...I don't know what that is. We don't live in feudal Japan. A pure apology is one rooted in accountability for yourself and regret for others, not the other way around.

If I empathize with these men at all, I empathize with them as writers. I certainly wouldn't want this gig. No words are available to fix what's been done, and even the acknowledgment of that futility is grating. Plus, direct admission of a crime is legally inadvisable, which means the center drops out of half these pronouncements before they begin. Still, the apologies come laced with the pompousness of the

newly moral or with the brazen demand that we see their authors as wounded. Or else they blink at us with Bambi eyes, their tone reminiscent of a teenage shoplifter claiming not to know one has to pay for things in a store.

And yet, apologize they must! To have no comment is to tacitly admit their guilt or else expose their hope that if everyone stays very still, the storm will pass. It's hard not to sense these men's reliance on America's short-term memory. I don't blame them. But we do make exceptions. Ask Monica Lewinsky. We're in the midst of a vital and exciting uprising of women's voices and a long overdue shift in the power structure. But that's not why this moment has staying power. It's because once every handful of years, the same news story that graces the cover of *Us Weekly* also graces the front page of *The New York Times*. Which means it's easy to follow. If you haven't been keeping tabs on the Syrian civil war, it can feel prohibitively confusing to dive in now. But widespread sexual misconduct across every industry enables us to discuss a salacious topic at length, with authority and without guilt. It's locked in.

So to the men penning these public apologies: It's not that your words are falling on deaf ears. Oh, we're listening all right. But what is meant to extricate you from the mess you've created and distance you from the damage you've caused only feeds the beast. And that's good. It's a good beast. It's not out to get men or scare them into thinking they can't make a dirty joke or have a crush on a woman at work ever again. It's so much bigger than that. It's a beast that has come to realign the world for our children, who have to grow up in it. It has been taking shape for decades—centuries, depending on how you clock it. And as your apologies keep coming, they make a dull buzzing sound around the beast's ears. Like flies. Small. Manifold. Frantic. Irrelevant. ■

OPPOSITE: THE 100 MOST-USED WORDS (EXCLUDING ARTICLES AND MINOR PREPOSITIONS) FROM 50+ PLUS MEN'S RESPONSES TO SEXUAL-MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS.

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH A. KING



PRETTY HURTS

Television has long upheld an unspoken rule: A female character may be beautiful or angry, but never both. A handful of new shows prove that rules were made to be broken

BY **JULIA COOKE**



Shapely limbs swollen and wavering under water, lipstick wiped off a pale mouth with a yellow sponge, blonde bangs caught in the zipper of a body bag: Kristy Guevara-Flanagan's 2016 short film *What Happened to Her* collects images of dead women in a 15-minute montage culled mostly from crime-based television dramas. Throughout, men stand murmuring over beautiful young white corpses. "You ever see something like this?" a voice draws.

Conventional female beauty on crime shows has usually been treated more or less like this—even when a woman doesn't end up dead, she's a plot point that serves a man with a motivation. But these days, a lot of beautiful women on television are getting angry instead of getting killed. Anger is no longer an exclusively male emotion or a flaw for a female character to overcome before finding her happy ending with a handsome man. Several recent series are proving that a woman's anger can be her own plot point, a source of strength, a galvanizing force.

Shows starring angry heroines range from arty to commercial, realistic to fantastical,

longer dependent on men to be effective."

These days, injustice—often linked to the tangled ramifications of a heroine's beauty—gives women license to take all sorts of juicy actions that are far more interesting than killing. On Marvel's *Jessica Jones*, it's fury at being raped and manipulated by the evil Kilgrave that spurs the protagonist to become the righteously bitchy superhero she's meant to be. When her husband dumps her for his secretary, Midge Maisel on *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*—a woman who spent four years waking up before her husband to put her face on—funnels her rage into a coarse and hilarious act as she pursues a career in stand-up comedy, a double no-no for a 1950s mother of two. On the Netflix/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation series *Alias Grace*, the titular character may or may not have helped kill her male employer, but the show's true pull is how the 19th century domestic servant twists and revises tales of daily abasement and violence for the psychiatrist who hopes to understand and possibly exonerate her. We see the anger

Woodley's Jane runs hard and fast, flashing back to scenes of her rape and packing a gun in her purse to meet with a man who might be the perpetrator. Their anger is nuanced, caused by a range of situations, and on-screen they struggle to tame it into something else: self-defense, loyalty, grudges, power, career.

The shift in representation aligns with the increasing number of women behind cameras in Hollywood. Harron points out that the executives who greenlit *Alias Grace* at both Netflix and the CBC were women. Witherspoon, Dern and co-star Nicole Kidman all recently launched production companies. Last year marked the first time three women were nominated for a best director Emmy—one of whom, Reed Morano, won for *The Handmaid's Tale*.

And if these shows conjured a zeitgeist throughout 2017, now, in the post-Harvey Weinstein moment, they look not only cathartic but prophetic. Anger, when expressed by such a range of female characters, amplifies the point that reacting to injustice doesn't make a woman crazy, no matter what she looks like. On-screen,

"The thing about angry women is they're just talking about it: 'This is what was done to me.'"

and they're set in the past, present and future. And they're garnering ratings, reviews and awards—HBO's *Big Little Lies* and Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* took every major drama trophy offered at last year's Emmys except best lead and supporting actor. Add in Amazon's *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, starring another angry woman, and the three shows dominated the Golden Globes too. The list goes on: *Alias Grace*, *Jessica Jones*, *Insecure*, *Top of the Lake*, *The Crown*.

Historically speaking, women on-screen chose between anger and conventional physical beauty, and anger made beautiful women crazy. Consider the snappy Carla from *Cheers* or the intimidating Dr. Miranda Bailey on early *Grey's Anatomy*, as opposed to the statuesque women of *Melrose Place*, acting on their fury in lusciously insane ways. Columbia University film professor Hilary Brougher points out that *MASH*'s Major Margaret Houlihan became "pretty" within the show only in later seasons, when her anger was no longer a plot point.

"We're beginning to see angry women in a range of modalities—angry TV heroines can be strategic, passive-aggressive, revolutionary or compassionate," says Brougher. "And while they may have male allies, they're no

shimmering beneath her placid expression, her milky skin and blue eyes. If she did commit the crime, would we blame her?"

"I didn't think of anger as a motivating force, probably because I think women are always angry women," says *Alias Grace* director Mary Harron, whose previous films include *American Psycho* and *I Shot Andy Warhol*. "It's a normal response to circumstances."

It's that very normalcy that makes the current surge of angry women on television so remarkable. Even when anger is not the point of a plot or a character's central trait, even when realism is cut by fantasy, on-screen women face situations that the average female viewer will recognize immediately. On *Insecure* high-powered attorney Molly discovers that her white male colleague makes a whole lot more money than she does. *Big Little Lies*, last year's most visible conflagration of entirely normal female anger, cuts between the competitive moms of Monterey, California. Reese Witherspoon's Madeline seems to live in a highlighter-bright shimmer of barbed quips lit by her frustration and uncertainty. Laura Dern's fierce Renata Klein, the doyenne of the working moms, throws her phone into the pool when cracks appear in her finely cultivated all-ness. Shailene

as in life, anger is a powerful energy that can begin the change by which one moves through the world as agent rather than victim.

Their lessons spiral outside the TV universe in strange and interesting ways. The second season of *Jessica Jones* will be helmed exclusively by female directors, and women—black women in particular—have reported negotiating pay raises after watching Molly do so on *Insecure*. The cycle continues: women in positions of power putting complex female characters on-screen, encouraging more women to claim more power.

The lesson, pertinent to men and women, is that the way toward change is through and not over anger. But there's more to it than that.

"The thing about angry women is they're just talking about it," says Harron of the current moment in Hollywood. "Are they talking about it in extraordinary ways? No. They're just talking about it. 'This is what was done to me.' People think, Oh, it's women with pitchforks. No, they're just saying, 'This happened.'"

Sometimes what's labeled as anger, when it comes from the fairer sex, isn't anger at all; it's just women asking to be heard, asking to narrate their own stories, to shift *What Happened to Her* to "what happened to me." ■

PHOTO COLLAGE BY GLUEKIT



I turn in to the parking lot shortly before seven P.M., though I'm still not sure this is the place. It's been dark for hours and the air is crisp for a December night outside Los Angeles. Finally a text comes through: "Where are you?" That's when I spot them: nine men alone in a public park, standing in a circle.

This may not be Fight Club, but there are definitely rules. First things first: Don't call them "guys." These are not dudes, homeboys or someone's brother from another mother. They're men. The second rule of not-Fight Club: Whatever happens in the park stays in the park. Participants may share lessons learned here with friends outside the circle, but any personal secrets the team members reveal tonight must remain confidential.

Right, *team*. That's the third rule. "There is a negative connotation to the term *support group*," says Jason (who asked me not to use his real name). "A support group is a bunch of men making each other feel better. We don't do that. We believe life is better lived as a team

on time, as we continue to learn that many of our heroes (and Matt Lauer) have been taking their dicks out at work.

MDI's teams host philanthropic events and participate in the occasional overnight retreat, but the weekly team meetings are the organization's *raison d'être*. Support groups for men to (*gulp*) talk about their feelings certainly aren't new. Meetup.com, an online platform for finding people with similar interests, lists 360 groups in the United States dedicated to men's support, according to a company spokesperson. That number doesn't include groups such as City Dads that offer camaraderie for men but don't label themselves specifically as support groups. Other organizations where men can hug it out include the ManKind Project, a nonprofit founded in 1984 that claims more than 900 groups across 22 countries. (MDI and groups like it, with their focus on personal growth and respect for all, are a world apart from the so-called men's rights outfits that frequently

November to raise awareness of prostate cancer, testicular cancer and men's health. Because the only thing worse than walking around with a mustache is having to talk about your butthole.

It may seem obvious that men don't like to ask for help, but the problem is so systemic and perplexing that a landmark 2003 study on masculinity and self-help was convened. What two Ph.D.'s determined was that men basically have to be *tricked* into seeking help by changing "the services to fit the 'average' man." In a way, that's what MDI has been doing. Men may see joining a support group as a sign of weakness, but joining a *team*? Good talk, coach.

...

And so, here I am in a parking lot chasing a half-deflated volleyball into the bushes. All MDI team meetings start with a half-hour activity referred to as Fun & Physical. Tonight, these men are playing a modified game of volleyball with wacky rules (you can spike only with your non-dominant hand) and a "net" made from a row of folding chairs. This

HELP WANTED

How a growing network of men's support groups is pushing back against the tide of toxic masculinity

sport. We're here to help you do everything you say you want to do." Perhaps he's splitting (receding) hairs, but over the next three hours I'll witness grown men confronting some of their ugliest fears and worst memories. Some will cry. One will reveal a personal secret so dark it feels like an episode of HBO's *Room 104*.

But first, some context.

These guys—sorry, *men*—are members of MDI, a nonprofit organization whose stated mission is "to cause greatness by mentoring men to live with excellence and, as mature masculine leaders, create successful families, careers and communities." The credo may be clunky, but the underlying message apparently resonates. MDI (which stands for "Mentor, Discover, Inspire") claims more than 1,000 members across North America, with 101 teams concentrated in major cities including Seattle, San Francisco, Toronto and New York. The organization was founded in the late 1990s, but its mission feels right

spout misogyny and often fall on the alt-right end of the spectrum.)

Despite a proliferation of available options, men remain unlikely to seek help. Last February, *Psychology Today* reported on the "silent crisis in men's mental health"—the suicide rate for men is four times higher than for women. The problem has long been culturally entrenched. Fredric Rabinowitz, psychology professor and author of *Deepening Psychotherapy With Men*, tells me in a phone call, "Men have internal shame for not living up to whatever ideals they imagine they should have achieved—whether it's having enough money, being further along in their careers, providing for their family. Because men mask their emotions, they feel isolated. One of the benefits of the men's group is the relief of finding out you're not the only one who feels shame." Participating in a larger community may explain the popularity of the Movember movement, in which millions of men grow mustaches every

particular game is called Bro Ball, which is maybe the most embarrassing thing I'll hear tonight, but the rationale tracks. As Abe Moore, a 52-year-old IT specialist, says between rotations, "Fun & Physical allows men to get out of their heads. When you come to a meeting, you're not in a space to open your heart and be present."

I should admit that I came to this story with my own bias. I half suspected the group might be a cult. (Moore says he wondered the same thing at first.) Or that these meetings were for losers who were still sleeping on their moms' couches. Or, worse, that MDI was a place for misguided good ol' boys to talk about how they're the real victims in this whole #MeToo thing. But pretty quickly the men challenged my assumptions.

At 50, Gregor (not his real name) is still boyishly handsome, a successful music producer who has worked alongside Grammy-winning musicians. He isn't someone who looks like

ILLUSTRATION BY EDEL RODRIGUEZ





he needs a support group. (See? Bias at work.) Gregor came to his first team meeting nearly 10 years ago, he tells me, at the invitation of a dad from his kid's school. He recalls playing soccer that night and admits to some initial misgivings. But he soon discovered something unexpected: The men weren't being coddled. They were being challenged. Gregor was surprised to find himself talking—a lot—about a problem he had at work: He'd promised to collaborate with a friend on a project but no longer had the time, yet his ego wouldn't let him walk away. "There was all this made-up stuff in my head about not letting my friend down," Gregor says. "Within 20 minutes, I had a clear path forward. These men helped me get out of my own way."

I saw similar exchanges at the meeting I attended—exchanges that are best described as men publicly calling each other out on their bullshit. (This approach may be what separates MDI from more traditional support groups.) I can't reveal details of their discussion, but imagine how it might feel to watch a man admit he hadn't had sex with his wife in months, only to have the team grill him about it.

MDI president Geoff Tomlinson later explains that this technique is intentional. "If you got fired, you'd blame it on your boss being a dick. You'd get a beer with your buddies and they'd pat you on the back and say, 'You'll get a better job tomorrow!' But at your team meeting, you get the opposite experience. If you say you lost your job, they'll say, 'We're sorry that happened, but what part of this core relationship with your boss do you have to own? Let's get to the bottom of this, or you'll be back here in two years.'" It seems to be effective, if not exactly polite. It's been a long time since a fistfight has broken out at an MDI meeting, Tomlinson says, but it has happened. "If someone gets pissed off," he says, "that'll intensify the men coming at him because it's touched a nerve."

Tomlinson should know; he's not only the president of MDI, he's also a client. He joined his first team in Toronto some 20 years ago at the urging of his boss, who suggested the meetings might help him understand why he kept getting passed over for promotions at work. "We remind people: *You* are the common denominator in your own story," says Tomlinson. Anyone who has ever been in therapy will recognize that phrase. What MDI really offers men is a set of action-oriented

tools for personal growth and "teammates" to hold them accountable for their own behavior.

...

At the L.A. meeting, the elephant in the room is Harvey Weinstein and his abuses of power and the wrongs committed by other prominent men. Gregor is eager to address the subject. "If those men had been on a team," he says, "someone would have been holding them accountable before they hurt somebody. Before it was too late."

The nine men in this group come from diverse backgrounds, but they appear to be unified by the feeling of having missed out on something, be it an essential life lesson, rite of passage or guide to a life well lived. MDI helps them fill in those blanks. A man I'll call Jack (late 50s, blue-collar, works in aeronautics) tells me he came to MDI seven years ago, when his marriage was cratering. Jack had been

Time and again I hear a similar refrain: The team saved someone's marriage, financial future, even life.

raised by a father who was physically present but emotionally absent, he says. His father took him camping, but the man never provided guidance. "I was waiting for somebody to tell me what it was to be a man," Jack says, "for someone to say to me, 'These were the rules then, and these are the rules now.'"

What he found in this circle was a group of men willing to take the time to listen, which is increasingly rare. After he owned up to his own shortcomings ("My wife was bored with me; I needed to grow up"), his MDI team helped him rebuild himself and his confidence. For example, Jack had never been good with money—something he felt ashamed about—so his teammates made him treasurer. Encouraging concrete new life skills is just one way the group helps its members; other ways are more abstract.

Abe—the IT specialist—later shared his own story with me, and it was sobering. He'd never met his father, he says, didn't even know

who the man was. Abe's mother had struggled with addiction, and his siblings were in and out of foster care. He came to his first team meeting at the age of 40, shortly after his wife kicked him out. His thought patterns were a cesspool of negativity, steeped over a lifetime of self-hate. "I felt like I'm a piece of shit," he says, "and that because I didn't have a father I couldn't be a good father." He wasn't the type of man to ask for help. But by learning to show up for his teammates, he learned to show up for his wife too. After a year, she invited him home. "Without the team," he says in maybe the most earnest voice I've ever heard in L.A., "I wouldn't be married now."

Time and again I hear a similar refrain: The team saved someone's marriage, financial future, even life. It had helped men quit smoking or watch less porn. Or confront their own fathers, which is the central struggle of basically every male coming-of-age story ever told in this town.

...

It's a difficult time to be a man in America. Professor Rabinowitz, who has hosted his own men's group meeting for 30 years and has a wait list for new members, says he hasn't seen such an influx of interest since the women's liberation movement sent men scrambling to redefine themselves. The whole thing can be corny as hell: At one point during the MDI meeting I attended, one man stared another dead in the eyes, put his hand on the other man's chest and thanked him for living his truth. But it can also be seriously humbling. It takes balls to be so emotionally naked.

The meeting ends at 10 p.m. with the men shouting their team name, Arrowhead, into the sky like some high school football team. Each team chooses its own name. There's a group in New York, I later find out, that calls itself Massive Dump, a juvenile but funny play on the emotional release one feels after a team meeting. "Arrowhead" is more pointed, so to speak, hinting at the difficult work these team members must do on themselves to become better men as they shed bad habits and work through past trauma. "An arrowhead's razor-sharp edge comes from chipping away at what's not needed," says Gregor.

In our post-Weinstein world, a man's best move may be to shut up and listen. But whether in the White House or working the drive-through at White Castle, it's clear we men have work to do—to chip away at the unnecessary, to craft a better instrument. Go, team. ■



SUBJECT, VERB, OBJECT

A poet considers masculinity in America via a dark family memory

For kicks, my father would leave my mother alone in a room with his male friends. The first time he did it, my mother thought he was being careless and told him that his friends had come on to her in his absence. The next time it happened she thought he was being naive, too trusting. She complained bitterly from then on, sensitive to every instance of abandonment. Time and again he found some reason to ghost on her. Years later, my father admitted that this was how he extracted proof that his friends envied him. As if to help her understand his motives, he said my mother was like a candy bowl he would leave in the room to taunt his friends, who knew the candy belonged exclusively to him. Anyway I look at it, his analogy only compounds the horror it represents.

My wife and I argue over this revelation in particular, one of several my mother has passed on to me like toxic heirlooms. My wife called the candy-bowl excuse a lame distraction. "You can't compare a woman to a candy bowl," she said, "and expect her not to take offense." I agreed in part, but where my wife saw a sadistic man abusing his wife, I saw a guy trying to impress his homies. Maybe I was just arguing for a lesser charge. The way I saw it, my mother was incidental. To my father, she was an object to be acted upon. I conceded that my mother suffered a kind of symbolic violence in the process, but felt that it was unintentional. Insensitive, sure, but not mean-spirited. My wife insisted there was nothing symbolic about it: It was violence in fact. "If the thing he used as bait really didn't matter," my wife said, "your dad could have used an actual candy bowl and gotten the same results." It would have worked, I mumbled, if it had been an ounce of weed.

Until very recently I imagined there was a difference between predatory, destructive masculinity and the kind of "locker-room-talk" masculinity that men exercise mostly in the company of other men. I reasoned that the locker-room variety, the sort demonstrated by Donald Trump in the famous *Access Hollywood* tape, is flawed, but at least it isn't calculated to deliberately hurt anyone. Another case in point: that photo of Al Franken pretending to honk a sleeping woman's breasts, the picture staged to grab the attention of other men. Not long ago, I

would have said that it was another victimless offense—an immature or insecure guy clowning for his friends, that this type of behavior promotes bonding and friendship among men. That's a view of masculinity I got from my dad, a view I'd been inclined to protect. But I think now of all the ways it can be harmful.

After my father died two years ago, my mother embarked on a kind of "truth and reconciliation" campaign. I doubt she was thinking about it so formally, but I'm sure she'd processed and bottled up her experiences over the years because she didn't trust confiding them to anyone while my dad was still around. Not many people, anyway, knew my father intimately enough to corroborate the subtle kinds of cruelty he could inflict on my mother. Most people would consider my dad's peccadilloes as victimless bad behavior. His death made me—an educated, securely employed, property-owning husband and father—the closest thing our extended family had to the patriarchal standard to which masculinity attunes in America, so perhaps my mother thought I would be independent enough in my thinking to receive her stories about my father objectively. Getting stuff off her chest may have been cathartic for my mom, but her stories felt like a list of charges against me.

I had convinced myself that the candy-bowl incident was harmless because it was a social interaction among men. Sociologist Michael Kimmel has noted how "men prove their manhood in the eyes of other men." To argue, however, that my mother was an object caught in the crossfire between men negotiating their masculinity may only prove that masculinity is dehumanizing to anyone who is not a man. I think of Donald Trump's famously enigmatic boast/confession, "I moved on her like a bitch." He's not saying he had such a good time with this woman that he continues to feel waves of contentment. No, *I moved on her like a bitch* describes the way he acted upon the incidental woman. Whether or not women and children are treated as objects, as long as masculinity is active, men will need something to act upon. To be domineering, we need people to dominate.

"Domineering" is practically in the job description of an American patriarch. My dad was good at his job. From where I was standing my mom seemed to have figured out how to navigate his antics. Because she concealed her distress, I assumed she didn't suffer. I assumed my father's masculinity was victimless. And I thought being a husband and a dad required some degree of despotism.

"Do as I say and not as I do," my father (below, with my mother) liked to tell me, which presented a problem as I grew into my own manhood. By depriving me of action, however symbolically, he moved on me—in a manner of speaking—like a bitch. Naturally, I responded in kind and produced a family drama that took no account of my mother's pain. Even still, I catch myself some-



times performing my dad's swaggering dominance with my own wife and kids. I agree with Kimmel that masculinity is situational, something experienced and expressed in relation to others, because I too need a masculinity check now and then. Knowing how this works, I look for healthy ways to get my mojo out in the open where I can relish it. I play tennis. Instead of dominating people, I dominate the court. Alas, this so far is all the generational progress I've made.

I'm end-running my mother's #MeToo revelations so my masculinity can continue functioning like a verb and thrive in the context of other men. The obvious lesson I take is that human beings should not be the object of my actions. The challenge now is to envision a kind of masculinity that is accountable to women as well. ■



YOU BETTER WORK

In Hollywood and Silicon Valley, statehouses and diners, women in the workforce are forming alliances to effect radical change from the inside out

The text came from a close friend.

"It was something along the lines of 'A letter is going out saying that women at the capitol are tired of being harassed,'" says Elise Gyore, a senior staffer in the California state legislature. "I want to know if you want to sign on."

She stared at her phone. It had been eight years since Gyore filed an internal sexual-misconduct complaint against former California assemblyman Raul Bocanegra. She had a new job as a senate chief of staff in the state capitol and had moved on with her life.

"I had that kind of roaring in your ears where it brings you back to that moment," Gyore says of reading the text. "My immediate reaction was, Jesus Christ, again? We can't keep our hands off each other?"

It was October 2017, just a week after the Harvey Weinstein scandal began toppling the Hollywood hierarchy, and Gyore suddenly found herself in the eye of a brand-new storm. The letter in question was a brief document organized by lobbyist Adama Iwu. Later dubbed "We Said Enough," it called out

pervasive sexual misconduct within California's allegedly progressive state government.

Gyore spent the weekend mulling it over. The decision to go public wasn't an easy one; working in the statehouse is all about good relationships and whom you know. Rocking the boat means risking your reputation and your livelihood.

"I've seen women report something and get shipped off to a job in no-man's-land," says Sabrina Lockhart, a communications director who signed the letter. "Someone gets

BY
**JESSICA P.
OGILVIE**





labeled as that person who made a complaint... and then suddenly someone doesn't work in the capitol anymore."

Despite Gyore's initial complaint, Bocanegra had kept his job as a staffer for a sitting assembly member. (He was required to keep his distance from Gyore, but only for a couple of years.) He was elected to the assembly himself in 2012 and again in 2016. It was after she discovered he'd been harassing other women throughout his entire rise to power that Gyore knew what she had to do.

"My friend said, 'How are you going to feel if you *don't* sign it?'" she says. "I decided that signing the letter was the right thing to do."

The "We Said Enough" letter quickly gathered signatures from more than 140 women. On October 17 the *Los Angeles Times* ran it as an op-ed. This time, the state government's response was decisive. Bocanegra resigned from his assembly seat in late November after six more women came forward with allegations against him, though not without calling his accusers "opportunistic" and "self-righteous" in his resignation letter. At the same time, California state senator Tony

lawmakers after a female house representative revealed she was offered help with getting bills passed in exchange for sexual favors.

Sparked by the 2016 presidential election, which put in our country's highest office a man accused of sexual misconduct by more than a dozen women, and kindled by ongoing news reports about pervasive sexism in nearly every American industry, women's tolerance for the daily realities of sexism and sexual harassment has hit a wall.

Stories of harassment, groping, unwanted advances and worse are not secrets among women. Through whisper networks—private conversations, text messages, e-mails or chats conveying warnings about which colleagues to stay away from—we have, for decades, relied on one another for information about predatory men at work. These networks are necessary because laws have failed to fix the problem—not only because lawmakers themselves are sometimes the perpetrators, but because sexual aggression can't be legislated away so easily. Incidents are often intimate and behind closed doors, and perpetrators have been comfortable in the knowledge that they're unlikely

networks. In these breakthrough efforts, some see the first glimmer of real hope for change.

...

The Shitty Media Men list hit the journalism world like a tornado. October 2017 saw the appearance of a document purporting to put the industry's whisper network into writing and thereby make it more accessible to more women. The list logged the names of more than 70 male editors, writers and publishers who, according to the document's anonymous contributors, were guilty of offenses ranging from "handsy...at parties" to "multiple alleged rapes."

Originally, its creator was also anonymous. In January 2018, though, in advance of being outed by *Harper's* magazine, journalist Moira Donegan revealed in an essay for *The Cut* that she had started the list.

Like many female journalists, Alanna Vagianos, the women's editor at HuffPost, found out about the document when its existence was made public: BuzzFeed snapped it up within 24 hours of its initial appearance. (Donegan promptly took it down.)

"I was definitely surprised initially," says

"I've seen women report something and get shipped off to no-man's-land."

Mendoza was removed from a committee chairman post and two other commission appointments after it was revealed he had serially harassed female colleagues, including at least one who was underage at the time.

"'We Said Enough' made it abundantly clear how pervasive this problem is," says Lockhart. "It's a group of women who cross party lines—and we have all pretty much suffered in silence."

California isn't the only state in which female government staffers and representatives are organizing behind the scenes. In late October, women working in the Illinois state capitol published their own letter calling out sexual misconduct, with more than 300 signatories. Within a month, Senator Ira Silverstein of Chicago resigned his position as the state's Democratic caucus chairman after being named as a perpetrator; both the Illinois house and senate created sexual-harassment task forces; ethics laws were amended to explicitly forbid sexual harassment; and Illinois governor Bruce Rauner signed legislation requiring annual sexual-harassment training. Similar training was held in January for Rhode Island

to be reported, much less punished. Indeed, they seem undeterred by existing laws; sexual harassment in the U.S. has been legally prohibited since 1964.

Meanwhile, ramifications for victims who speak up are quite real. They're ignored, socially isolated, even fired from their jobs.

"Women who are victims have to decide, Is this so bad that it's worth risking a roof over my head and food on my table?" says Lockhart.

But starting last year, women's whisper networks have been turning to screams. In addition to government and the well-publicized Time's Up movement in Hollywood, the decision among women to come forward with their experiences has spread to tech, media, journalism, the service industry and more. But what makes this effort unique—after all, women have been calling out sexism for centuries—is that it marks the first time women have told their most intimate experiences en masse to audiences that are not all female.

Banding together behind the scenes, women are parlaying our once-private conversations into open letters, shared Google documents, naming of perpetrators and all-female hiring

Vagianos, "but in the hours afterward, discussing it with my colleagues, I think we were all sadly reckoning with the fact that it actually doesn't surprise us that much."

That's because many women already knew the culture existed. "I've already experienced sexual harassment, and I'm only 26," says Vagianos. In her essay, Donegan writes about seeing two of the most notorious men on the list fraternizing at a party in Brooklyn as her female friend wonders aloud, "Doesn't everyone know about them?... I can't believe they're still invited to these things."

Just after the list was made public, Megan McRobert, a union organizer at the Writers Guild of America, East, received a text from a female union member who wanted to know if the union could help her and her colleagues turn their disappointment, fear and frustration into action. "People were ready to say, 'Okay, I don't just want to vent to my friends on a group text. I want to stop this from happening,'" says McRobert.

Through word of mouth, McRobert and other women in digital media organized a group of about 30 people, predominantly



female, to attend an initial meeting at the Writers Guild offices.

The two-hour meeting was held in early November and was intended to build a foundation for future conversations. Terms such as *rape culture*, *sexual violence* and *sexual harassment* were defined; the results of a diversity study among members were revealed; and the role of media in shaping rape culture—such as reports that scrutinize the victims rather than the perpetrators of rape—was addressed.

The Writers Guild group plans to meet again; in the meantime, several of the individuals on the Shitty Media Men list have resigned or been fired. Unlike men in other industries, though, they haven't been excoriated to the same degree by the media—possibly because many newsrooms are overseen by men, who may run headlines outing predators in other industries but seem somewhat less inclined to discredit their own.

"It's great that our union is coming together to address this," says Vagianos, "but it is a systematic issue that has to be changed."

...

Melody McCloskey was taking meetings with Silicon Valley investors, trying to get funding for her fledgling company, StyleSeat. An online marketplace for beauty and wellness services, the company helps customers connect with beauty professionals in their area and now serves 16,000 cities.

But at her initial meetings with venture capital firms—which last year invested just \$1.5 billion out of a total of nearly \$60 billion into female-founded start-ups—McCloskey ran into men who repeatedly dismissed her idea. Some pulled their female executive assistants into the meetings to help them decide whether or not to fund McCloskey. "I'm sure they're incredibly smart and capable women," she says, "but that's not their job. I read that as 'I chose not to hire qualified women, so I went and grabbed the closest one to me to weigh in.'"

It was 2011, and many female founders McCloskey knew at the time were running into the same problem. Until recently, though, the idea of unifying to combat their antagonistic environment wasn't a reality. "There was so much pressure to do things 'the male way,'" she says.

But last year, everything changed. As a deluge of stories on sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace made headlines, it became clear that women in Silicon Valley were still being sidelined and disrespected. A 2016 survey of more than 200 senior-level women in tech, called "Elephant in the Valley," revealed that

90 percent of respondents had witnessed sexist behavior at conferences or off-site meetings.

Women in tech had already established a handful of progressive organizations, including Women in Technology, Women 2.0, Project Include and Wonder Women Tech, to advance companies and projects of underrepresented groups. McCloskey and her peers, meanwhile, decided to tackle the problem more directly.

"There was a big realization that we need more women in power," she says. "We need more women in venture roles, more women starting and running companies, joining boards of other companies. So how do we make that happen?"

She and her fellow founders began to meet quarterly. The group has discussed everything from what holds younger women back in the workplace to how to prevent sexual harassment. McCloskey also notes that recently a group of all-female venture capitalists has begun holding

"I don't just want to vent on a group text. I want to stop this from happening."

late-night office hours to advise young women on how to get funding for their companies.

Change has not come as swiftly or as publicly to Silicon Valley as it has to government or Hollywood. But even outside these circles of female activists, an awareness, says McCloskey, seems to be building.

"I have definitely heard from more VCs saying, 'We need to find a female partner,' and there have been a lot of people saying, 'This is terrible, and I pledge to be an upright organization,'" she says. "That seems like an extremely low bar—but for now, I will take it."

...

Shanita Thomas has worked in the restaurant industry for more than 11 years, first in Buffalo, New York and then in her hometown of Brooklyn. One morning she served a regular customer she'd never waited on before: "I go and get his coffee, and as I go to greet another customer, he goes, 'Hey, big-titty black girl, do you have enough milk in those jugs for my coffee?'" Thomas stopped in her tracks. "I was completely humiliated."

When Thomas went to her boss to report the incident, he told her, "That's old Joe. Don't pay him any mind." As she was harassed more and complained to her boss more, her shifts were cut until "I could barely pay my bills or cover my rent," she says. "All because I wanted to be treated with respect at my place of work."

Saru Jayaraman, president of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, says stories like Thomas's are more common than not in the restaurant world. A survey conducted by the organization found that up to 80 percent of restaurant workers experience sexual harassment on the job. Because servers work primarily for tips, says Jayaraman, "you have to put up with anything the customer does to you, because the customer is always right and they're paying your bills, not your employer."

In many cases, restaurant managers encourage the toxic atmosphere. "You have management saying, 'Dress more sexy; show more cleavage in order to make more tips,'" says Jayaraman. "You're being coerced to encourage the harassment—not just tolerate it, but get it to happen so that you do well."

These experiences set the tone for many women's working lives, whether they stay in the restaurant industry or not. Because so many women begin their careers as servers, bartenders or cocktail waitresses, they learn early on to view sexual harassment and even violence as normal working conditions.

Jayaraman and ROC United have been working to combat this problem for years, well before Hollywood brought it into the public eye. She was among a handful of activists who appeared on the red carpet at the Golden Globes to protest sexual harassment, and she plans to push even harder on legislation they've long been working to pass—legislation that would raise the minimum wage and remove the requirement of tipping.

"We have been moving legislation on this issue for a really long time," she says, "and we are using this moment to get it passed."

...

Many women involved in these efforts feel for the first time that men are beginning to understand just how insidious and widespread the problem is. "For women, this was not new news, but I think there are a lot of good men who are kind of blown away," Gyore says.

To that end, it's time for everyone to get on-board as part of the solution—male or female. "I don't need a white knight to stand up for me," she says. "What I do need is a co-worker who would have my back." ■

AW, WHAT'S THE MATTER, LIL GUY?



HOW COME?



I feel like nobody LIKES me anymore!

AW, DON'T BE SILLY! WE STILL LIKE YOU, WE JUST -

If you LIKE me, why won't you give me the things I want all the time?



OK, SEE, THAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF THING WE'D LIKE TO SEE LESS OF. SELFISHNESS IS ANNOYING. AND SO IS BEING INTERRUPTED.



This feels like OPPRESSION.



DUDE

NO.



LISTEN, I KNOW THESE ARE CONFUSING TIMES. THE RULES ARE CHANGING QUICK, AND THEY'RE NOT QUITE SO... ABSRDLY IN YOUR FAVOR AS THEY ONCE WERE.

Well, how am I supposed to know what to do?



IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE. IF YOU WANT TO BE IN ONE OF THESE THINGS AND YOU DON'T HEAR AN ENTHUSIASTIC



HELL YES!

YOU NEED TO EXCUSE YOURSELF AND GO TALK TO THIS GUY INSTEAD:



CHEER UP, LITTLE BUDDY! THERE'S ALWAYS PLAYBOY FOR YOU TO LOOK AT TILL SOMEONE COMES ALONG WITH THAT "HELL YES."

Sigh:
Fine.



Can you stop calling me little, though?

e.flake

THE WOMAN

Glimpse a blindingly bright future with March Playmate Jenny Watwood

WHO

A full-page photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white one-piece bikini and white high-heeled sandals. She is standing on a light-colored stone ledge that runs horizontally across the middle of the frame. Below the ledge is a calm body of water, which reflects the woman and the surrounding landscape. The background consists of a vast, rugged mountain range under a clear blue sky. The woman is looking over her shoulder towards the camera, with her hands on her hips.

FELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEREK KETTELA

TO EARTH





PLAYMATE



Jenny Watwood wanted to see the world, and nothing was going to stop her. The pouty-lipped brunette grew up in Mesa, Arizona, the youngest of seven kids. “We couldn’t travel,” she says. “We’d go camping up north, but that was it. As soon as I could get a passport, I filled it up as much as I could.” After negotiating a deal with an overseas modeling agency, Jenny was off to Milan. Four years later, she had a new language, a new home base and a new outlook. “I feel when you go to another country on your own, you realize what you’re capable of,” she says. “You find out what you can do and how much you can accomplish on your own without any help from your parents and friends. When you have nobody to fall back on, you just figure it out.”

Now, eight years after that first overseas flight, she’s still finding ways to push herself. Her Playmate pictorial marks Jenny’s first time shooting nude, but it’s not the first time she’s thought about it. “At the end of December I wrote down some goals. I thought, You know what? I want to shoot for PLAYBOY. I wrote it down and texted the owner of my agency, ‘What can you do for me?’”

Jenny is the type of woman who makes things happen—which can be credited, in part, to her burning desire to experience what the world has to offer. You can bet she’s not going to do anything she doesn’t want to do. “A lot of women give themselves a time frame for getting married and having kids,” she says. “Society tells you that’s what you should do. But I don’t know if people are capable of loving just one person for the rest of their lives. I’ve never had fantasies of marriage. I just feel like I’m still living my life.”

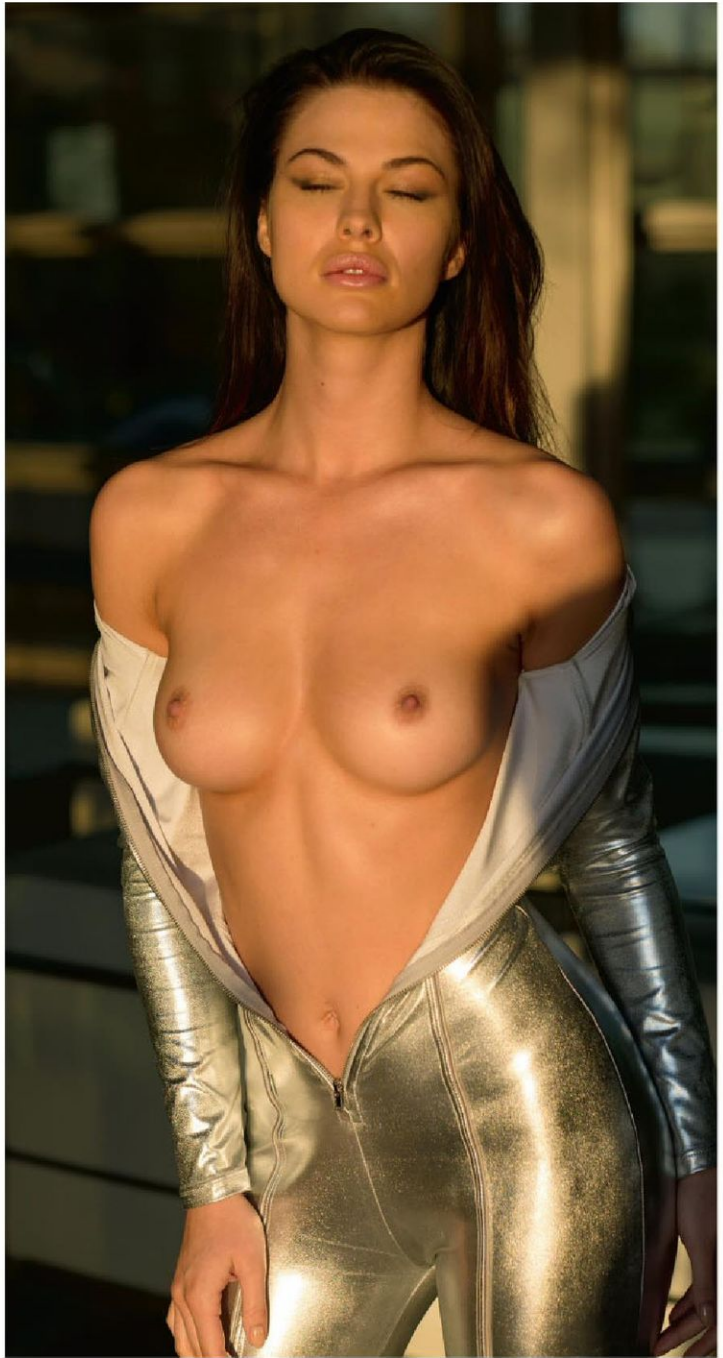


















MARCH 2018 PLAYMATE



DATA SHEET



BIRTHPLACE: Mesa, Arizona **CURRENT CITY:** Los Angeles, California

LOVE LINES

I'm all natural—my eyelashes, hair, boobs. My lips are just puffy, and I have smile lines because I laugh all the time. These lines have great memories in them—I'm not doing anything to change them.

FUNNY THING

I know everyone says they don't care about looks, but I really don't. I've dated a range of guys. The only thing they have in common is they're all really funny.

ODD JOB

I was on a variety show in Rome called *Ciao Darwin*. Italian television is very strange. The show wasn't the type of thing I would have done in the U.S., but it is iconic. I played "Madre Natura." I would say a few things to the other hosts, then go sit and spin a globe. It was nuts.

NO JUDGMENTS

When people ask me what I do, I usually tell them I'm in the fashion industry. To be honest, I try to avoid saying "model" in the first 10 or 15 minutes. I want to be thought of as a person, not a mannequin.

HAPPY PLACE

I love the Italian island of Capri. The people there always say good morning to you, there are restaurants where the ocean comes up and washes your feet, and you walk everywhere because cars don't fit.

COCKTAIL HOUR

My go-to drink is Macallan with one ice cube. I like whiskey and other dark liquors, even the darker tequilas. I'll always pick añejo over silver. All my friends are like, "No—silver, light!" and I'm like, "I like the dark stuff."

GREEN LIGHT

Smoking pot is better than drinking, obviously. For one thing, you don't get a hangover. And I actually do things when I smoke: I smoke, I paint. I smoke, I go hiking. I'm a functioning pothead. I have a joint in my bag right now, in my mom's vintage cigarette holder.

RAVENOUS

Wherever I travel, I want to experience the regional foods, wines, art and architecture—everything. I'm here only for a short time. I want to go to Asia and eat scorpions on a stick.

WRITE ON

I love to write. I'll probably write a book later in life. I write every day so I can look back and pick what I need for inspiration. If anyone ever got ahold of it—oh my God! But it has to be unfiltered.

Jenny Watwood

🐦 @JennyWatwood



PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Apparently there's a new dominatrix robot that can whip, spank and taunt just like a real flesh-and-blood dungeon mistress. The only hard part is remembering the robot's safe word, which is *control-alt-function-command-escape-shift-bananas*.



Donald Trump's taxes are a lot like the pipes under your toilet. Most people will never see them, and they're probably full of shit.

A doctor entered his office and addressed his patient, a young man. "I'm sorry," the doctor said, "but I'm afraid you don't have long to live." The man was stunned.

"What is it, doc?" he said. "What did you find?"

The doctor put his hand on the man's shoulder and said, "It's not what I found, it's what your wife found: your Tinder account."

The most common relationship problem of the future will be trying to explain to Siri why you just called her Alexa.

A tuxedo-clad kid is on his way to senior prom. His dad stops him at the door.

FATHER: Before you go, I want to give you a piece of advice.

SON: Sure, Dad.

FATHER: It's very simple, son. Just be yourself and don't do anything stupid.

SON: [long pause] Well, which one is it?

This April Fools' Day, walk into your ex's house, grab something out of the fridge and start telling her about your day. Then pause, say "Oh, right!" and leave.

In the future, instead of voting for congressmen, you'll just pay your taxes into a vending machine that will automatically vote against your interests.

With their wedding date finally set, the bride-to-be snuggled up to her fiancé and said, "Honey, I want to make love before we get married."

"But it won't be long until July, dear," he replied.

"Oh," she exclaimed enthusiastically. "And how long will it be then?"

Entering a casino restroom to purchase condoms for what he hoped would be a pleasant end to the evening, a young man found a drunk standing at the vending machine, pouring in a steady stream of coins and tossing the condoms into a hat. Afraid he wouldn't get his needed supplies, the man asked if he could use the machine just once.

"Are you nuts?" the drunk replied. "I'm on a winning streak."

Starbucks isn't really that expensive when you consider what Victoria's Secret charges per cup.

Sent to prison as a first-time offender, a former English instructor was told by a longtime inmate that if he made amorous advances toward the warden's wife, she'd get him released quickly.

"But I can't do that," the professor protested. "It's improper to end a sentence with a proposition."

The dating app Bumble has a new feature called Bizz, which matches users with potential employers in their area. Apparently the economy is so bad that people would rather cruise for job jobs than for blow jobs.

Lawmakers approved a bill to legalize marijuana in the state of Texas. Great, now *no one* will remember the Alamo.

Researchers in New Mexico have found that most beards carry trace amounts of fecal matter. Not surprisingly, researchers also found that most soul patches carry trace amounts of douche.

Scientists recently tried to simulate sexual intercourse with a robot equipped with artificial intelligence. The attempt was not successful: The robot had a headache.

Sign spotted in a massage-parlor window: COME IN! WE KNEAD YOUR BUSINESS!



Check out the latest literary craze: books written for grown-ups but based on beloved young-adult and children's titles. Among them, *Are You There, God? It's Me, Darryl Strawberry*; *Frog and Toad Are Friends...With Benefits*; and *The Little Engine That Could Fellate Itself*.







20Q

JESSE PLEMONS

From Breaking Bad to Black Mirror, he has starred in at least one of your favorite shows. And in the new dark comedy film Game Night, the towheaded Texan once again marries creepiness and charisma

BY **STEPHIE GROB PLANTE** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **HARPER SMITH**

Q1: A lot of the characters you've played are innocent-looking guys who turn out to be sociopaths. What is it that attracts you to those roles?

PLEMONS: I'm drawn to characters who aren't quite what they seem, because that feels more authentic to me than someone you look at, immediately size up and feel you know what category to put them in. I don't think people are really like that. And it's more fun to connect the dots and try to figure them out yourself.

Q2: Your *Breaking Bad* character, Todd, is arguably one of the most evil characters on the show. Do you relate on any level?

PLEMONS: Yeah. I mean, that's the only way you can give a somewhat honest performance. It's substituting and playing little mental and emotional tricks on yourself, but you have to do your best not to judge the character you're playing. That happened once: I realized, Wow, I don't like this person at all. I'm not going to say which character it was, but it was a real person, and it was shocking. And then it's a

different experience when you watch it. Hopefully it didn't affect the performance.

Q3: Do you feel you have to like at least part of a character in order to play him truthfully?

PLEMONS: You kind of have to love your characters in some way. You have to attempt to understand why they're doing what they're doing. It's got to make sense to you.

Q4: So if Todd hadn't been born into a family of white supremacists, do you think he might have had a chance as a decent human?

PLEMONS: I think so. One of the episodes of *Breaking Bad* that stands out for me is the one with Aaron Paul's character at some tweakers' house, and there's a little redheaded kid. Remember the episode with the ATM machine? I think there's something akin to that little kid in Todd, because there's something childlike about him. There are true monsters out there that were always destined to be monsters, but most times there's a reason.

Q5: Is it safe to say that a lot of your work is hard for your parents to watch?

PLEMONS: Most recently, after they saw *Black Mirror*, my dad kept saying, "That look in your eyes. That look in your eyes as that captain...." That's all he could say. And obviously they hate it when my character dies. *Breaking Bad* was such a long time ago, but I think that one was probably strange for them to watch.

Q6: Have any of the parts you've been offered given you pause?

PLEMONS: Two come to mind. Pennywise—I got that call and just didn't want to go there. I didn't care what the scenario was, really; I just...no. And then there was a part in this movie *Suburbicon* as one of the bad guys who try to kill the kid. I was like, "I can't kill another kid right now." [laughs]

Q7: Well, speaking of kids, you've been acting for pretty much your entire life. What was the movie or TV show you saw as a kid that made you say, "I want to do that?"

PLEMONS: I watched *Lonesome Dove* before I could talk. I was drawn to it as a toddler, having very little understanding of what was





going on. But as I got older and started acting, I realized how good Robert Duvall, Tommy Lee Jones and Chris Cooper are. It's so honest and authentic. And it's a great book on top of that. I love Larry McMurtry. My father and his side of the family are all cowboys. I grew up riding and roping, so being in that world was pretty easy to imagine.

Q8: And you found out you're a descendant of Stephen F. Austin, the so-called Father of Texas.

PLEMONS: Yeah; I feel like my dad knew that throughout my childhood. Then my mom started doing Ancestry.com, and my dad all of a sudden snapped to and was like, "Oh, wait a second." He had a book on the piano that directly ties us to Moses Austin, Stephen Austin's father. Why would you wait until now to give us this piece of information? [laughs] Thanks, Dad.

Q9: Did your Hollywood career as a kid give you any street cred with your classmates back in Mart, Texas, and did it affect your first forays into dating?

PLEMONS: Well, I didn't get *Friday Night Lights* until after I graduated. What I mainly remember are the trips when I would go out to Los Angeles and not get a job, and all my friends would be like, "Oh, what movies did you do?" *Plural*, like I did two or three movies in a couple of months. I was like, "Well, I auditioned for several things." As far as dating, I was never in either place long enough. It felt like I was perpetually playing catch-up. And I'm from such a small town: There were 40-something people in my graduating class. It was a very small pool.

Q10: Is Mart anything like the Dillon, Texas of *Friday Night Lights*?

PLEMONS: It's very similar to Dillon, just much smaller. One stoplight. Aside from the

size, Dillon was pretty much the world I grew up in. On Friday nights, don't count on going anywhere in town, because no one's there. And even down to the old guys watching the junior varsity games so they know which players are coming up.

Q11: On *Fargo* you play possibly the world's most dedicated husband, opposite your now fiancée, Kirsten Dunst. What did you learn about devotion and marriage from Ed?

PLEMONS: When I met with Noah Hawley for the first time, I needed to make sure Ed wasn't just a doormat—that there was some real love there. There was a line in the script that likened Ed to a cow. I asked Noah, "Is he not very intelligent or what?" He said, "No, his true nature is not inherently aggressive or violent. He's someone who wants to graze and be happy, basically." I started thinking about different people who have that unflinching devotion, and my dad is one of those people. Once you're in, you're in, no questions asked. It doesn't matter what you did, you call him, he'll be there and he'll figure it out. There was something I immediately understood about that. So that was a very weird love letter to my dad.

Q12: The cow motif is also apt considering the fact that Ed uses a meat grinder to dispose of a corpse. Pivoting off that, who or what scares you?

PLEMONS: Well, not to get political, but the first thing that comes to mind is our president. He scares me. And, I don't know what you'd call it...online outrage. It's intense. It's not that new, but in the past however many years there has become this need to find someone to vent all your frustration and rage and anger to—and it happens daily. That's pretty scary to me.

Q13: You're not on social media. Was that a conscious decision?

PLEMONS: Not really. I signed up for Facebook when I was 18, when I first moved to Austin and started *Friday Night Lights*. I remember spending an hour and a half on it once. You get into this hole, and then you snap out of it, like, What just happened? Where did that hour and a half go? I realized I didn't want to spend my time online. Maybe I recognized that there's something enticing about it. In terms of Twitter and Instagram and everything, I would rather be where I am and read the news—which is now coming from Twitter. But yeah, I'm not built for it.

Q14: *Black Mirror* digs into a lot of techno anxieties. What are yours?

PLEMONS: I guess the feeling that we're moving further away from basic human connection, and the false portrayal of yourself that happens online. It's nothing that hasn't been said before, but that is scary to me, thinking about kids growing up counting likes and everything. It's definitely going to alter their perception and experience of the world.

Q15: Your episode of *Black Mirror* couldn't have been timed better, with the #MeToo movement and your character's toxic masculinity. Basically, you play a butt-hurt gamer who imports his co-workers into a *Star Trek*-like game and abuses them. How did you do research for the part?

PLEMONS: I watched a lot of documentaries about gamers and video game programmers and that sort of thing. I was more interested in that kind of isolation and that need to escape reality. I think there are a lot of people—and they don't have to be Trekkies or gamers or whatever—who understand that. I felt strange finishing work some days because I knew Cristin Milioti had to go to some dark places. But I wasn't looking at the bigger picture, because I didn't want to come in with

any judgments. The character is not a good person, but there's a reason he became that, and that's what I was trying to figure out.

Q16: Let's talk *Game Night*, which follows three couples at a murder-mystery party that goes way off the rails. Are you into games? Do you get competitive?

PLEMONS: Yeah, definitely. Some good, clean fun. I love playing poker. Recently this HQ game—have you done that? It's an app where, like, hundreds of thousands of people get on live, and it's trivia. I'm not very good at it, but I enjoy it.

THERE ARE TRUE MONSTERS OUT THERE THAT WERE ALWAYS DESTINED TO BE MONSTERS, BUT MOST TIMES THERE'S A REASON.



Q17: *Game Night* seems like it was a fun set. How much was improvised?

PLEMONS: There was a decent amount, but the script was so funny to begin with. There were little moments here and there, but it was probably 85 percent scripted. I was shooting *Black Mirror* when I got the script. I got to my first scene and was like, "Yeah, I want to play Gary, the creepy cop neighbor." Having the freedom to experiment and play around with a scene is something I really enjoy. Everything isn't so chiseled out, where you feel you know how it's going to go or should go; it's not great when you're in that place. I think that's one of the reasons *Friday Night Lights* worked. Everyone tested the waters in the first few episodes, and then it became a game to see who you could crack up.

Q18: *What would you be doing if you weren't an actor?*

PLEMONS: Something possibly in psychology or...English literature. Those are probably majors I would've chosen. I don't know. I love writing songs and playing music. I don't play out too much anymore, but I did when I was living in Austin for *Friday Night Lights*. It was kind of accidental. We would have all these great house parties where musicians would come over and play. I wrote a song, and everyone was like, "You guys should start a band." We were called Cowboy and Indian, which wasn't the best name. We played a lot, probably from 2012 to 2014. And I loved it. Now it's been such a long time. I'm more interested in recording. I've got a lot of friends who are making such great music, and I'm like, "Ah, let me in there." I enjoyed it, but it would probably take me a little while to warm up again.

Q19: *Who are your go-to artists to play when you're at home, messing around on your guitar?*

PLEMONS: I grew up listening to what everyone listened to in Mart: popular country radio stations. I always go back to John Prine. I love his songwriting. And the Stones if I want to kick it up a little bit. When I moved to Austin I discovered Townes Van Zandt, and that was a pivotal moment. Learning about him changed the way I look at music, and even at movies—just the devotion he had to songwriting. He was obviously tortured, but he reworked what I thought you could accomplish.

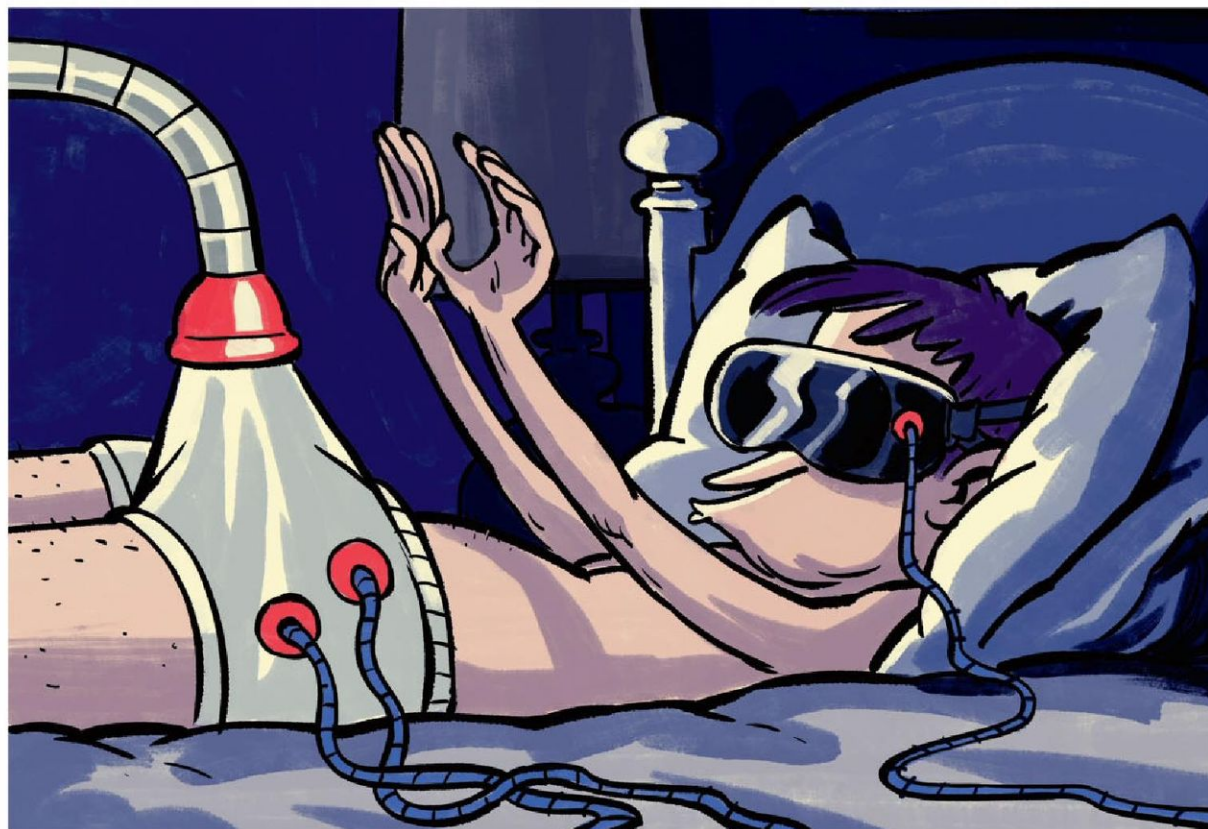
Q20: *You turn 30 this year. How are you feeling about it? Is it scary? Is it a relief?*

PLEMONS: I feel like I should be 30. I guess when I was younger I always felt older than my age. Thirty feels right, you know? I haven't given it too much thought. Now I'll be thinking about it. ■

*From space tourism to robots with feelings
to the new war on drugs, eight artists and
intellectuals weigh in on what comes next*

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SEX AND TECH

by Bryony Cole

When you dig beyond the headlines of virtual-reality porn and robot girlfriends, you find that the relationship between sex and technology is considerably more nuanced than two nerds building their dream girl in a garage. Teledildonics enables us to exchange sensations with just about anyone with a vibrator; the only connection you need to worry about is your Bluetooth signal. Want to be better in bed? Download an app to connect with a sex coach. Want to *feel* better in bed? Wet your whistle with some cannabis lube. If you can dream it, it's probably in development. The long and storied marriage of sex and technology—now an industry valued at an estimated \$30 billion—presents possibilities that are infinite, awe-inspiring and at times terrifying.

Of the many technologies to consider, from haptic suits to robots to augmentation, one of the fastest growing is virtual reality. With today's millennial-plus audiences growing up with porn in their pockets, VR offers a creative combination of erotica and enlightenment on topics ranging from health to gender swapping to consent.

BaDoinkVR's *Virtual Sexology*, for example, is a VR course designed by a sex therapist (and hosted by a porn star) to treat premature ejaculation.

Quebec filmmaker Emanuel St.-Pierre's *Do You NO the Limit? Consent in 360 Degrees* takes you on a VR journey through the lens of a young woman. An encounter with a peer that starts out fun and flirty turns sexually aggressive, giving a different perspective on the nuances of consent. Similarly, researchers at Emory University and Georgia Tech partnered on a virtual app that leads college-age students through a nightclub experience; the program is aimed at young women, who practice identifying "at-risk behavior" and how to express consent if they decide to take things beyond the club.

In Australia, the VR workplace-training tutorial *Equal Reality* offers a chance to "literally see from the point of view of others." Leveraging VR's deep immersiveness, it enables users to experience a different gender or race.

In addition to educating, VR simply makes sex and dating more fun. Virtual-reality speed-dating is expected to arrive this year. And VR is shifting sex to a new sensory level by engaging the nose and skin with scent releasers and tech that

replicates touch. You may fear you'll never leave the couch again, but therapists argue that VR sex may help us shift gears from the increasingly explicit, 2-D world of online porn into a more personalized sexual world in which we transform from passive consumers to active participants.

Like all technology, sex tech comes with unique risks, including privacy and personal-data breaches. It also raises questions: How does sexual harassment translate into virtual worlds? Will AI devices eventually know more about our preferences than we know ourselves? And do we care? From cosmetic innovations like scrotox to apps that share STD tests, the future of sex tech is as vast and unpredictable as sex itself.

While the possibilities grow, there's a larger story around the future of sex, and it has nothing to do with technology; it's about being human. The keys to great sex are human qualities such as open communication, empathy, intimacy and erotic intelligence. How do we hone these skills as much as we do our Instagram Stories?

Scientists have proven that touch is important for sustaining a healthy relationship, but it's also essential for our survival. We might want to blame technology for distracting us

with its orgasm shortcuts via apps, sexbots and VR, but the real mission is to take responsibility for our own pleasure. See technology for what it is: an additive to your sex life. Can it replace the real thing? Probably. Would you want it to? Probably not.

Bryony Cole is the founder of Future of Sex, a multiplatform brand that explores the intersection of sexuality and technology. Season two of her podcast debuts March 15 on FutureofSex.org.

RECOVERY

by Macklemore

Millions of people in this country struggle with addiction. I'm one of them. Today the disease claims an unprecedented number of lives. More than 64,000 people died from overdoses in 2016, and opioids were responsible for more than two thirds of these deaths. We are facing a public-health epidemic, and so far our collective action to address the issue has fallen short. But there are concrete things we can and should do now that will help us move in the right direction.

One thing I've experienced personally is the lack of training or awareness some doctors have about addiction issues. Numerous physicians have offered me prescriptions for opioids without asking me about my history of drug addiction. It sounds obvious, but it should be part of standard medical procedure to ask patients about their addiction history before prescribing drugs. This is part of a larger issue that needs to be addressed: Doctors are prescribing too many pills and are prescribing them for longer than necessary. We know opioids are extremely addictive, and we need to find a better way to treat chronic pain.

Another thing we can do is shift away from incarcerating people with addiction issues—recognizing it as a disease that needs to be treated, not a crime that needs to be punished. Too many people are in jail as a result of drug use and addiction, and they are disproportionately people of color. It's not a coincidence that opioid-overdose deaths have gained national attention now that they're impacting middle- and upper-class white families. The intersection of addiction and incarceration is just another example of how institutional racism manifests in our society.

And maybe most important, we need better and more affordable access to treatment. I was lucky: I could afford high-quality treatment when I needed it. But for too many people, a spot in an inpatient treatment facility is simply unavailable and too expensive even if they do get in. If someone's ready to enter treatment, we can't tell them to wait 90 days. For me and so many others, this could be the difference between life and death.

When I'm on drugs, I consume them in abundance. I went to rehab in 2008. Pills, lean, weed and alcohol had led me into isolation. I had

forgotten what happiness felt like. I always believed I was alone with my disease; my girlfriend and the drug dealers were probably the only people who knew how bad it was. What was once 30 minutes of euphoria became 10, then five, and then it just became about maintenance. I hated myself and had no purpose. Couldn't write a song. Couldn't find the motivation to open the blinds. Just me and my drugs.

We think of drugs as a coping mechanism, something that helps us escape. But my truth is the drugs led me further from contentment. I didn't escape anxiety, self-hate and depression; the drugs made all those things worse. The temporary relief they brought me would always lead to more pain than I was originally in.

When I'm in my active addiction, my disease tells me not to tell anybody so I can keep using. It tells me that I don't need help, that I can do it on my own. But I can't do it on my own. I tried for years, stuck in the cycle of addiction.

Going to rehab was the best decision I ever made. If it weren't for rehab I wouldn't be here. That's not speculation; that is my truth. And for me, the rooms of recovery are what keep me sober. Some would say I'm not supposed to publicly mention them, but people are dying and need help. I wish I had been introduced to the rooms sooner. My recovery is centered on those programs. When I prioritize anything above them, that's when the self-hate creeps back in and a drug sounds like the best solution. It isn't. It never is.

Addiction issues are multilayered and complex, and each individual has different needs. Chances are your family is touched by addiction in some way. I know from personal experience the toll it has taken on the people I love the most. But I've also experienced the many blessings of recovery. I have a community of people who understand me, my story and what I go through on a daily basis. Our drug of choice might have been different, but we speak the same language of addiction. I feel understood when I'm in the rooms.

The opioid epidemic is personal to me. I've lost nine friends to overdoses. It's not an understatement to say that I could easily have died too. If you know someone who is struggling, ask them how they're doing, and be honest with them. When you're in the midst of addiction, sometimes it takes someone else's lens to be able to see how far gone you are. And if you're struggling, know that millions of other people are struggling too. A huge part of my recovery is finding others who share my disease and understand on a personal level what I'm going through. We can make progress only if we're honest about the problem.

Ben Haggerty (a.k.a. Macklemore) is a four-time Grammy-winning artist. In 2016, the rapper-activist teamed with Barack Obama for the MTV documentary Prescription for Change: Ending America's Opioid Crisis.

SPACEFLIGHT

by Chris Hadfield

Way out in interstellar space, a tiny satellite is speeding into the unknown. *Voyager 1* has traveled 13 billion miles from Earth, past the edge of our solar system, zipping along at 38,000 mph. It's the farthest-ranging spaceship we've ever built, and even after 40 years it still sends a weak signal of how it's doing—helping us understand the rest of the universe.

Between there and here is everything we've ever done. From controlling fire to building the pyramids to typing on an iPad, our entire existence has occurred within this tiny corner of our galaxy. And humans have taken just the smallest of steps: Six astronauts are currently orbiting Earth on the Space Station, and only 12 have walked on the moon. Just 562 of the 110 billion people who have ever lived have flown in space.

But that is about to change.

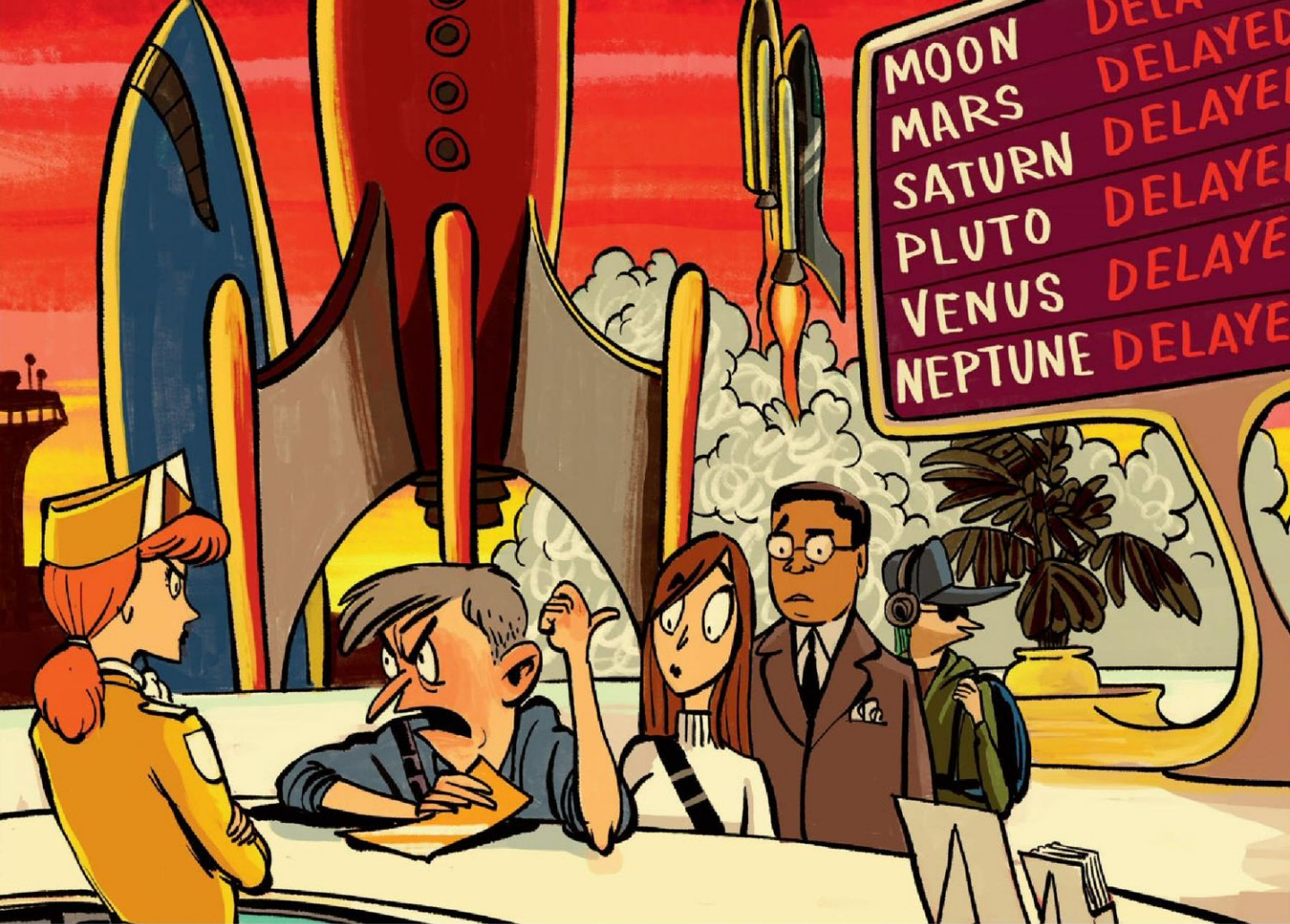
This year, several companies are poised to enter the business of launching people into space. Boeing has built the *Starliner* and SpaceX the *Dragon 2*, proto-airliner-like ships capable of blasting tourists (and a few highly trained crew) all the way into orbit at 17,500 mph—30.5 times faster than a Boeing 787. Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin and Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic are about to rocket the first paying customers above the air and back, weightless for several minutes as they glimpse the blackness of space and the curve of the horizon.

With tickets starting at \$250,000, the cost of space tourism, which the FAA predicts will become a billion-dollar industry by 2022, is still high, but risk and price are dropping as the technology continues to improve. NASA has not only made this privatization possible through a century of danger-filled research and testing, but it is now taking advantage of it. With low Earth orbit accessible to commerce, the space agency can focus on what lies beyond. Recent policy announcements have also set NASA on a path to build the Deep Space Gateway, a space station that will orbit the moon. And with probes and rovers teaching us about Mars, we're getting ever closer to the reality of an astronaut standing on the surface of the red planet.

But these advancements raise two questions: What do we still need to invent, and why explore space at all?

We are all explorers. You learned to walk long before you learned to talk. The necessity to go see, to touch, to lick, is fundamental to human development and understanding. It's why we grabbed earrings as babies and left home at 18, and it's why our ancestors left Africa and wandered the world, from Tasmania to Tierra del Fuego. It's also a key part of societal progress.

Some parts of the planet were only very recently discovered. The first humans paddled ashore in New Zealand just 750 years ago,



and footprints didn't appear at the South Pole until 1911. Space exploration began in 1961—just 57 years ago—with Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's launch.

Our exploration has always been enabled and limited by the technology we've invented. To leave the tropics we had to be able to control fire, make clothing and construct shelter. We built rafts to ferry us to islands and eventually ships to cross oceans. Cars, trains and planes now transport us to all corners of the globe. And for the first time in history, our rockets and spaceships allow us to venture beyond Earth itself.

So why aren't we living on the moon? Where are the jet packs and flying cars of *The Jetsons*? What are we waiting for?

Engines. Rocket engines.

When I flew the Space Shuttle and the Russian Soyuz, the huge motors exploding violently below me (as recently as 2013) were basically the same technology that John Glenn rode in 1962—essentially crazily souped-up jet engine

afterburners. To get to space we still burn gigantic tanks of fuel as fast as we can, just to escape Earth's gravity. Elon Musk has been improving basic rocketship design, simplifying it and making it reusable, but we are still in the coastal sailing ship era of spaceflight.

Getting to Mars with today's best designs still takes six months, each way, with no option to turn around if something goes wrong. We need rockets to evolve as boat motors did, from paddles to sails to propellers.

Fortunately, some of our brightest inventors are working on it right now. In a laboratory near Houston, a magnetoplasma rocket is undergoing the final stages of testing for spaceflight, which could take place within three years, depending on NASA funding. The brainchild of seven-time Space Shuttle flier Franklin Chang-Díaz, this engine has the potential to cut the travel time to Mars to less than two months.

But for a voyage that demanding, the rocket

needs a concentrated power source, such as a nuclear reactor, which is heavy and risky to launch. The interplanetary answer will probably lie in improvements in nuclear power, and the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy has laboratories across the U.S. working on fusion as a solution. We are tantalizingly close to rocket engines that can take us farther, and more safely, than ever before.

The moon and Mars are patient; they've been silently waiting billions of years for us to come visit. We've sent probes and made a few footprints, but for the first time in history, we are nearly there to stay.

The year 2018 is an exciting time to be a space explorer.

Chris Hadfield is the first Canadian to command a spaceship. The astronaut and best-selling author currently hosts National Geographic's One Strange Rock and produces Rare Earth on YouTube.

MONOGAMY

by Esther Perel

The quality of our relationships determines the quality of our lives. So it pays to cultivate an erotic intelligence, which is less about sex than about our ability to infuse our relationships with a sense of aliveness, curiosity, playfulness. Erotic intelligence is sexuality that is transformed by our imagination. It is the poetics of sex—that which gives it meaning and color. In other words, sex is not just something you do, but a place where you go inside yourself and with another. It's the element of sex that actually fulfills desire. And it is an *intelligence*, meaning that it's something you can acquire—you can learn it, cultivate it—for a healthy relationship.

We need this intelligence in order to navigate accelerating changes in the way we connect as sexual beings. Sex is no longer just for procreation or simply a woman's marital duty; now it is primarily rooted in pleasure and connection for both partners. People at 60 act as if they were 40. Relationships have become much more egalitarian, and there is a much greater interchangeability of roles. Social media and the internet have given people more options, more temptation. Today you can have an affair while lying next to your partner in bed. You can escape without having to leave the house.

In this environment, all relationships require a certain level of openness. A healthy relationship will have fluidity, adaptability. A system that is alive and healthy can respond flexibly to changes—to change that comes from within, to change that comes with new goals, to change

that comes with health conditions. If you're aging, for example, you don't make love the same way you used to—but that doesn't mean the satisfaction can't be equally deep.

The meaning of monogamy itself has deeply changed. For most of history, monogamy meant being with one person for life. Today monogamy means one person *at a time*. People tell you they are monogamous in all their relationships, plural, and that makes sense to us in a way it wouldn't have 50 years ago. It's a revolution—a concept that has fundamentally changed its meaning.

Monogamy in heterosexual relationships is still primarily defined as sexual exclusivity. But there is a big shift taking place in that monogamy is now considered a continuum, not a fixed line. That continuum needs to be explored, negotiated and defined by every couple. They must ask: Where do we draw the boundaries? Where would we experience a breach of trust? For some people monogamy is about emotional, not sexual, commitment to a primary partner. Plenty of people consider themselves deeply monogamous even if they are not sexually exclusive. The only way to know what your partner thinks is through safe conversations about difficult questions.

Today the term *the new monogamy* is fast becoming established, and alternative arrangements are burgeoning. Couples are exploring different agreements around boundaries, from totally closed (excluding sexual, sensual or emotional connection with others outside the relationship) to totally open (in which both partners may fully explore these connections with people besides their primary partner, so long as the primary partner retains

top priority in the relationship). Some couples share fantasies or read erotica together. Others have license to flirt but draw the line at realizing the possibilities. Some make a distinction between sex for love and sex for fun, reserving the latter for swingers' weekends or sex parties.

The possibilities are endless, but they are rarely discussed. Not long ago, when people were divorced they were embarrassed to talk about it. We used to think divorced people were inferior or that they had failed. Now people have no problem telling you that they are divorced, but the majority of people who are exploring alternative renderings of monogamy are not open about it. In the future, perhaps we won't just assume that sexual exclusivity is morally or emotionally superior.

Tools to help people build healthy relationships will evolve in new ways. I think podcasts represent an amazing technology. They're intimate, and yet they're collective. I produce and host a podcast called *Where Should We Begin?* in which couples allow a one-time therapy session with me to be recorded and edited (with names changed for their privacy). It has become a sort of public health campaign for relationships. Millions of people listen, from Chad to France and from Australia to the U.S. People love it because they can learn from listening to others, from hearing the conversations they may want to have. And the podcast is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what technology can do for couples therapy.

In the years ahead, we will see the roles of apps, websites and even robots and dolls continue to expand at the intersection of technology and relationships. To me they're creating a new vocabulary that will give us new ways to connect, as writing letters or making phone calls (or even faxing) once did. Relationships are changing so rapidly, and there is a tremendous need for guidance. That is one thing likely to remain the same.

*Esther Perel is the best-selling author of *The State of Affairs* and *Mating in Captivity*. Her latest project, *Rekindling Desire 2.0*, is a curriculum of e-courses for couples and individuals; it launches this spring at EstherPerel.com.*



THE ENVIRONMENT

by Cristina Mittermeier

We are all living in a house with a burning roof. Our planet is suffering the consequences of increased carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere, decreased oxygen in its oceans, the disappearance or decline of many species, the wholesale destruction of entire ecosystems. All these problems are linked to human activity, as science has unequivocally shown.

What's our plan to put out the fire? It's as if we sit stunned, watching the flames and naively waiting to be saved by Superman. Shall we wait for government to formulate a plan or for



industry to find some profit motivation to save Earth? How can we ensure that our planet remains livable 100 years from now?

To consider the future, let's first take a look at the present. Our oceans, for example—the planet's largest habitat—are choked with plastics. Coral reefs are threatened and dying. Ice caps and polar habitats are shrinking at an alarming rate. It's a troubling picture. Government and industry will need to step up and take bold action to protect our environment. But the truth is, we cannot wait to be saved. Each one of us, individually, must become the superheroes of our own story. And we need to begin now.

The good news? This is doable. We can all become advocates for a sustainable environment. There are concrete steps we can take—easy things. Stop using single-use plastics (such as drinking straws, water bottles and ear swabs). Buy wild-caught fish and fish from sustainable fisheries only, instead of farmed product. Commute via bicycle or public transportation whenever possible.

Changing our behavior to help save the planet will require a cultural shift, but we have achieved this before. Remember the ozone layer? Back in the mid-1980s it became an unavoidable topic at dinner parties and the water cooler. Scientists, alarmed by data showing a growing hole in that segment of the atmosphere, were the first to raise the red flag; soon the story made the six o'clock news and the daily papers. A ban on ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons, found in many consumer products at the time, was denounced by big industry. But the public

heard the warnings and quit buying products containing CFCs. Industry noticed and eventually removed the chemical compounds from their wares. Today the ozone hole is healing.

Thanks in part to social media and other advances in communication technology, today cultural shifts can take place with remarkable speed. Meanwhile, reconnecting with nature helps motivate us to protect it. Taking friends snorkeling in a river can open their eyes to a world of conservation. Beachcombing with a child can instill a lifelong love for nature. Sharing photos and stories about the environmental issues close to your heart on social media can generate interest and change minds. Posting about the Earth you love on Instagram or Facebook is not slacktivism; it's engaging with your community. It matters. So pull on your imaginary superhero spandex. We can save our home.

Cristina Mittermeier is a contributor to National Geographic, the executive director and vision lead of SeaLegacy, and the founder of the International League of Conservation Photographers.

THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

by Kamala Lopez

Did you know women do not have equal rights under the U.S. Constitution? If you didn't, you're hardly alone. In fact, though 94 percent of Americans believe that men and women are inherently equal, 80 percent mistakenly believe that constitutional equality is guaranteed,

according to a recent poll commissioned by the Equal Rights Amendment Coalition. As surprising as this may sound, women are still not guaranteed basic equality under federal law.

"Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex," the late conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia once explained. "The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't."

So women don't have equal rights in the Constitution. Big deal. We've established all kinds of other legal rights and protections. We've reformed or phased out the antiquated "spheres of influence" laws, which stipulated that a woman didn't have a separate legal existence from her husband and limited women's rights to the home. So it doesn't matter, right? Wrong. Well, not wrong, but not enough.

Enter the Equal Rights Amendment, or ERA, a 95-year-old piece of legislation that was buried in Congress in 1982, three states short of the 38-state ratification requirement. Had it received passage before Congress's deadline, the ERA would have become the 27th Amendment and constitutionally guaranteed comprehensive equal rights for women for the first time in history.

Its exclusion from our foundational law document has major negative implications in all women's lives, not the least of which is a persistent gender wage gap that increases based on race, with white American women making 79 cents, African American women 63 cents and Latinas 54 cents on the white male dollar for work of the same or greater value.

The ERA can kick off the change; without it, no real change is possible. Constitutional amendments, unlike laws and statutes, cannot be changed by a simple majority vote. They cannot be dismissed with the flick of a pen or the wave of an arched wrist or used as a political football. They are the only guarantees that last from one generation to the next. American women and girls don't have this guarantee, and we need it more than ever. We need it now.

With women performing more than 110 million hours of unpaid labor per year, our obligations at home have changed little since the 1950s, yet we're joining the workforce in record numbers—not by choice but out of necessity. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 75 percent of school-age children today have working mothers.

Our time and our bank accounts are not the only things at stake. According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, at least three women die every day at the hands of intimate partners, in part as a result of the Supreme Court precedent that police departments may respond to mandatory restraining orders at their discretion.

Opponents of the ERA repeat tired arguments that sound like an Archie Bunker rerun.

The main complaint—that the amendment somehow opens the door to abortion rights—is ignorant. In reality, abortion rights are already constitutionally guaranteed, and not on the basis of gender equality but on the right to privacy. From warnings that women would risk mandatory draft requirements to claims that widows would forfeit their rights to social security, the majority of dissenting arguments are either irrelevant or unsubstantiated. But the most disingenuous anti-ERA argument of all is that we simply don't need it anymore.

If the past two years in America have proven anything, it's that the level of cognitive dissonance for women has reached its breaking point. We are contending with the stark contradiction of electing a Pussy Grabber in Chief while filling streets, cities and countries with our bodies, our outrage, our multitudinous demands and our #MeToo movements. What many of us have not realized is that our government, systems and institutions operate on the premise that women shall not have equal rights. The bottom line: The game is rigged, and it's time to change the rules. Step one: Ratify the ERA.

So where is the ERA today and what can we do to push it over the finish line? In 1982, when the deadline Congress imposed on the ERA expired, so did most efforts to complete ratification. After more than 35 years of inaction,

Nevada ratified the ERA last spring. We are now only two states away from the 38 needed to finish the job.

As I write this, I'm in Virginia, urging the state legislature to pull the ERA out of committee and put it on the floor for a vote this legislative calendar year. Activists are gearing up to do the same in Arizona, Illinois, North Carolina, Georgia and the rest of the 14 states that remain unratified.

Whether achieving ratification after the deadline will result in the immediate implementation of the ERA remains to be seen. Opponents argue that the original deadline must stand and that the federal time line trumps states' rights to ratify. Supporters and legal experts are confident of legal victory based on precedent, including recent Supreme Court rulings favoring basic civil rights protections despite strong opposition.

To those who do not agree, the Equal Rights Amendment is not going away. Woe be to the state legislator willing to publicly oppose basic equality for women. We'll see you in November.

Kamala Lopez is the creator of the 2016 documentary turned movement Equal Means Equal. She is currently producing the All Girl Full Equality comedy special with artist-activist Natalie White and Carolines on Broadway founder Caroline Hirsch.



MUSIC by David Guetta

I often wish I could see what the future will bring, because new sounds always excite me the most in music. That's why I became a producer.

I have a few guesses as to how you and I will experience music a few years down the road. For one, I'm optimistic about how we'll listen to recorded music—and how artists will be compensated for their efforts. Streaming has completely changed the industry in the past few years, so much so that illegal downloading is less of a threat, in my opinion. In the past, it was far easier and far cheaper to download music illegally than legally, but now listeners are able to enjoy music through services that are relatively inexpensive, convenient and easy to use. Better yet, they work. Thanks to these streaming services, record labels are able to make money again, which is of course good for everyone. I wish these profits were being shared more fairly with artists, but I believe we'll get to that point soon.

Meanwhile, live shows remain the primary source of revenue for artists, and albums have become less relevant from a commercial point of view. Don't worry: That doesn't mean artists will stop shaping their work into cohesive packages. I keep making albums for artistic reasons, because I believe this format allows for more creativity. The formats and economics might change, but the satisfaction of a killer full-length never will.

Electronic music festivals are still successful and are evolving with the times. It's pretty spectacular, for example, to see the development of Ultra around the world. Tomorrowland is another festival killing it right now, along with many others, but multi-genre festivals are really on fire at the moment. Now that connecting and collaborating with artists across the globe is as easy as opening your laptop, I expect festivals to feature more and more fresh sounds in more and more places.

As far as what specific sounds will emerge and catch fire—well, no one can reliably predict that. Latin music was definitely the dominant new crossover style in 2017, with Brazilian funk also becoming more popular internationally. Underground club music (house-techno) is super trendy at the moment and will probably get even bigger this year. But as much as we might like to peer around the corner and catch a glimpse of the next big sound, remember: Knowing what's around the corner would rob us of the thrill of discovery! And the core qualities of music—connection, emotion, movement—remain as strong as ever. Even in our hyperconnected and ever more virtual age, some things don't change.

Two-time Grammy winner David Guetta is one of the world's most successful DJ-producers. His seventh album is due out later this year.



THE FUTURE by Tim Kreider

"Ultimately there will be scheduled areas [for outdoor sex]—we give it another five or six years." That quote, from *The Joy of Sex* by Alex Comfort, only seems more poignant as time passes. First published in 1972, the book was populated with a pair of hirsute lovers illustrated by Chris Foss, an artist better known for his chunky, bristling spaceships on countless science-fiction novel covers. *The Joy of Sex* turned out to be a sort of science fiction too, depicting an overly optimistic sexual utopia—an enlightened free-for-all where sexual repression and jealousy would be vestigial.

It's a common fallacy of science-fiction writers and other futurists to extrapolate from the present moment in a straight-line trajectory: If we went from the Wright brothers to Neil Armstrong in only 66 years, then surely by 2035 we'll all be living in bubble-dome cities on Mars; if we got from Kinsey to Lovelace in 24 years, then by 1978 we'll be fucking in the Sheep Meadow in Central Park. But history isn't linear. It's more like climate: It may be inexorably trending warmer, but that's not to say there won't still be blizzards. The manned space program kind of petered out after Apollo,

and there were, alas, no reserved sections for sex in public parks by 1978. A decade after its initial publication, the ethos of *The Joy of Sex* was already dated. In 1988, Hunter S. Thompson, in *Generation of Swine*, wrote, "What do you say...about a generation that has been taught that rain is poison and sex is death?"

In a way, we're now living in what would have seemed like a sexual utopia to people in the 1970s. If you're halfway decent-looking you can, in theory, swipe through profiles of potential partners and pick one to have sex with within the hour. It's also a far better world for those who fall outside the narrow band of visible wavelengths on the Kinsey scale that used to be called "normal." When I was in a suburban high school in the 1980s, "gay" was just a generic epithet and being "out" as homosexual would have been unimaginable. Now being gay, bisexual, transgender or nonbinary is accepted across growing swaths of the country.

But there's also a certain bloodlessness about hookup culture, a dread of intimacy that might seem creepy to the evangelists of free love. The phrase to *catch feelings* (as in "Oh shit, I caught feelings for him") equates love with a virus. The kids of this decade might also seem weirdly prudish and inhibited in ways that would've shocked Comfort's hippies. I understood

that I was living in a different world when a 20-something guy told me the story of how he and his girlfriend met in college: They'd started making out at a party, but then they were like, "Whoa, we've both been drinking; we better stop and wait till we're sober." My first impulse was to tell him, "Neither you nor anyone else would be alive if everyone before you had thought that way," but I felt I would be speaking out in defense of drunk driving or smoking on airplanes—a reactionary crank longing for the bad old days.

Likewise, our pornographic dystopia might make 1960s champions of free expression second-guess their absolutist stance on the First Amendment. The extent to which porn has permeated the landscape is almost invisible to us now; I still remember my own priggish wince the first time I saw a store called *Shoegasm*. I can count on one hand the number of images of naked women I had seen by the age of 13 (including the archetypal tattered *PLAYBOY* Centerfold in the woods). It's hard to imagine how it must deform the psyches of adolescent boys to have seen 800,000 digitally airbrushed women displaying their gaping anuses, or to assume that the natural culmination of the sex act is the facial. I know of a woman who actually bought her teenage son a subscription to *PLAYBOY* as a healthy corrective to internet porn. Imagine telling that story to your 13-year-old self.

It's easy to mock or abhor the taboos and mores of 50 years ago; it's a lot less obvious which of our own obviously right ideas and sane values our children will mock and abhor. Take *Lolita*. "What a fabulous shiny moral barometer that movie looked like in 1962, when it was new," Michael Herr writes, speaking of the film adaptation in his book *Kubrick*, "and how we loved which way we thought the wind was going to blow." (Herr wasn't waxing nostalgic about social acceptance of pedophilia but rather, I think, about that film's knowing smirk at Eisenhower-era hypocrisy, its insinuation that the real perverts are the "normals" all around Humbert.) Audiences in 1962 were scandalized by the sexualization of 14-year-old Sue Lyon in that film; now you can buy your pubescent daughter pants with *PINK* or *JUICY* written in glitter across the ass.

Right now, in the early days of 2018, it seems as if the more control conservatives gain over the government, the more ground they lose in the culture. The wind is blowing leftward—the definition of marriage expanding, the very concept of dimorphic gender eroding, the careers of sexual predators imploding one after another. But winds have been known to shift, and the weather, as we all know, is getting strange.

Tim Kreider is a New York-based writer and cartoonist whose new essay collection, I Wrote This Book Because I Love You, is out now from Simon & Schuster.



EASTERN PROMISE

The minute we laid eyes on Sandra Kubicka's Playboy Poland cover, we knew we had to meet her in person. To our American readers, we say "Proszę bardzo!"

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRISTOPHER VON STEINBACH**

"I'm a horrible brat," deadpans Sandra Kubicka. It's difficult to believe her. Most spoiled brats don't cultivate a tireless work ethic at the age of 13, when this spirited blonde began modeling. She has now logged 10 years in the business. "I was born in Poland, where I was raised by my grandparents," she says. "I moved to Miami when I was 12 years old to live with my mother, and the next year I started working." Clearly, the hard work has paid off: Kubicka (pronounced *Koo-BEETZ-kah*) was the sun-kissed bombshell on the September 2017 cover of *PLAYBOY*'s Polish edition.

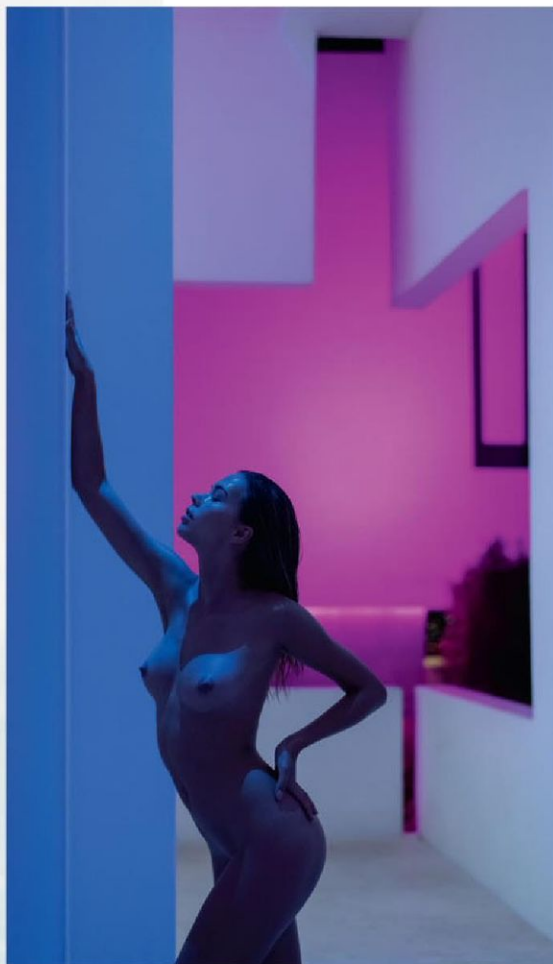
Currently shuttling between Miami and Aspen, Sandra somehow finds time in between gigs to make TV appearances, including a run as a judge on Poland's *Top Model*, and hone her entrepreneurial instincts. A budding wellness guru with a penchant for sweets, she has a line of cold-pressed juices available in Europe. "I work out twice a day, but I'm a maniac when it comes to baking," she says. "Another dream of mine is to have my own bakery. Banana bread and tiramisu are my specialties."

It's safe to say the self-proclaimed workaholic is only getting started. "People say, 'You're such a baby,' but I feel I'm so old—I've seen and experienced so much. It's great, though, because I have all this time ahead of me. I feel like this is just the beginning."

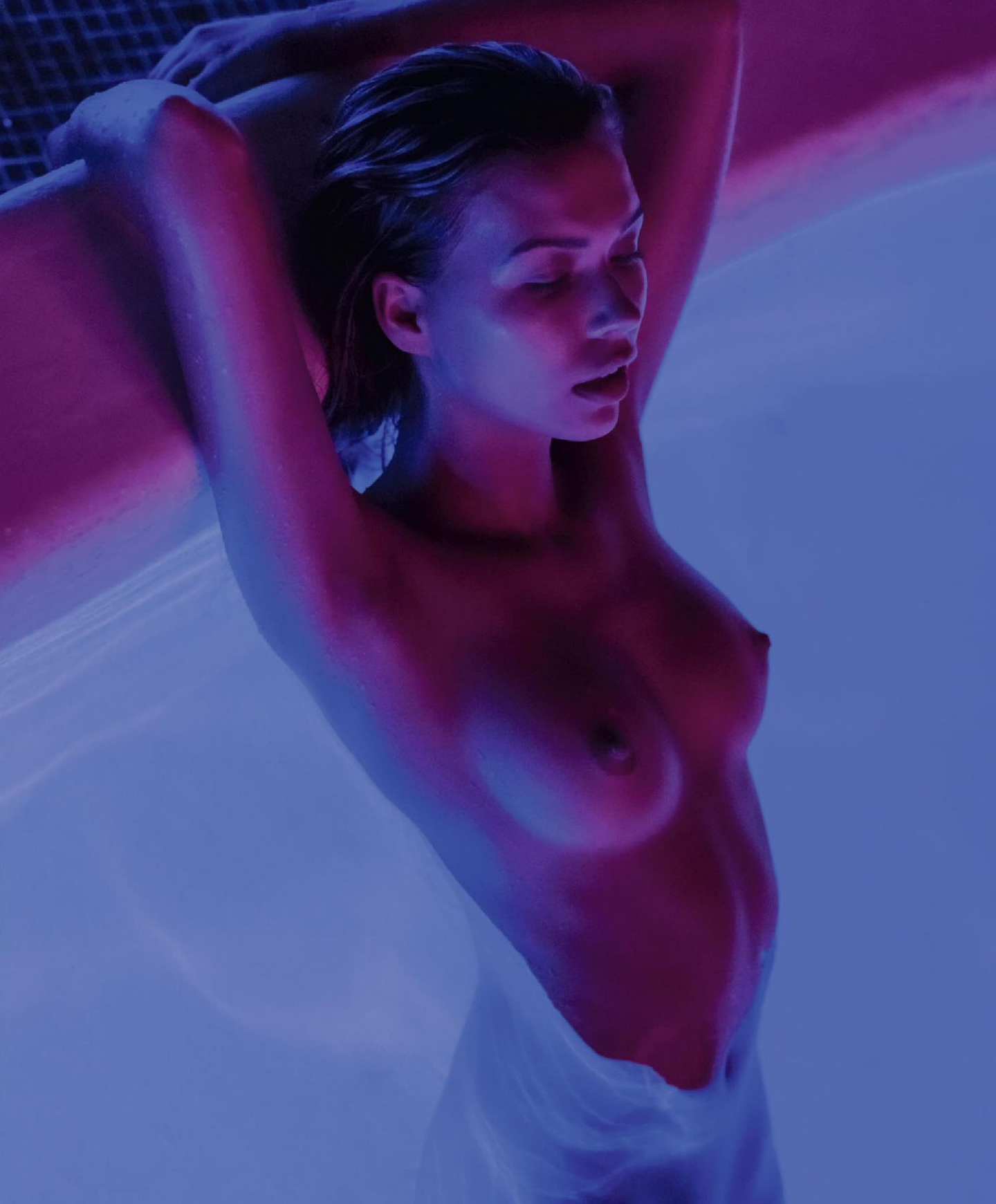


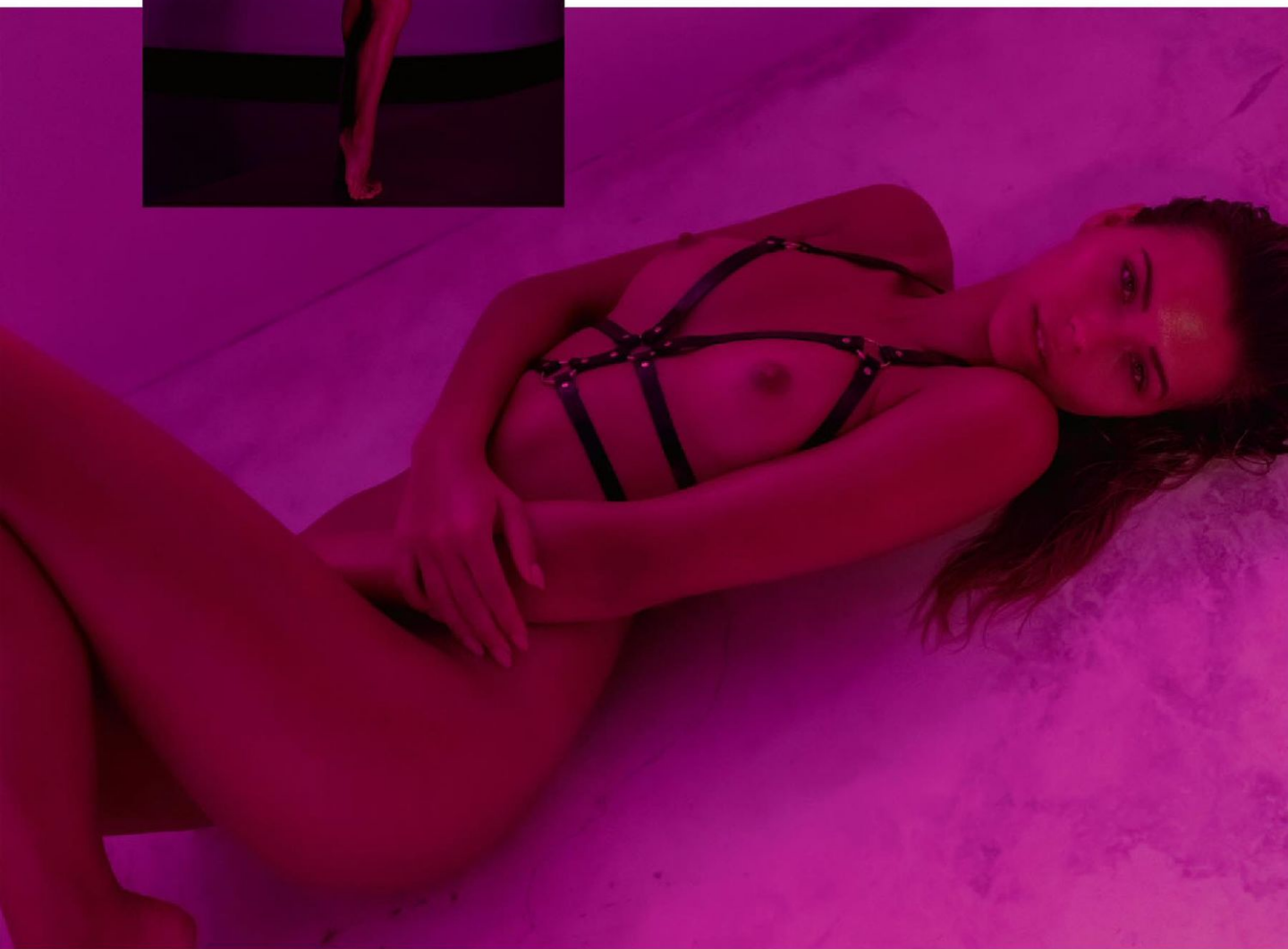
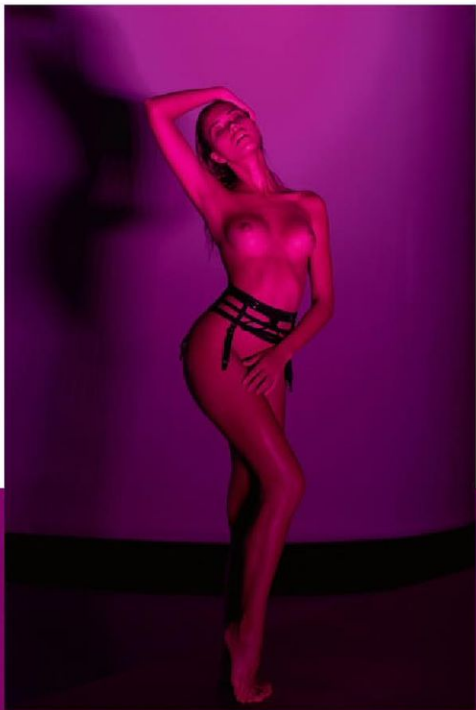














FICTION

KILLING TOWN BY MICKEY SPILLANE & MAX ALLAN COLLINS

*Dames, dirty cops and one down-and-out dick: Private detective **Mike Hammer** is back in his first-ever adventure—lost, found and excerpted here exclusively*

The blonde dame in the sleeper-car window was damn near naked in front of the mirror on the back of her closed door, and ready to finish the job. She hadn't bothered to pull down the shade, maybe because her train was in the yards backed up on a curve of track against a stalled freight.

And she didn't know she had company, by way of somebody catching a ride under that freight.

I didn't catch what she was changing out of—she was stark naked soon enough, and not a natural blonde, but nobody's perfect. Right now she was climbing into some black lacy stuff, several pieces of it, including the sheer black nylons she was hooking to the garter belt, shapely right leg lifted with the toes stretching out. Then she stood there pirouetting around while she brushed out her hair, making love to her reflection but good.

For once I wasn't in the mood to enjoy a candid strip act, and anyway I was no Peeping Tom—just a tagalong passenger working the cricks out of a back stiff from

accommodations under the boxcar, aching all over from where sharp-edged pebbles had bounced off. A hunk of baling wire between the tracks had caught and ripped my pants leg, and the fabric flapped around until I got into my battered overnight case and found a safety pin to clip the tears together. At least the gash wasn't in me.

And maybe, doing that, I caught a few more glimpses of the babe in the window. Just maybe.

There was dirt caked in the stubble of my beard and ground into my scalp. My hands and face must have been as black as the night itself, its sultry heat sending rivulets of sweat down that turned it into pure muck. Travel under a train does not come with shower facilities. My preening beauty wouldn't have found much to look at where I was concerned.

Somebody else would find me worth looking at, though. Down the line I could hear the yard cops flushing out the bums, nightsticks making dull, soggy noises where they landed. Sometimes sharper, cracking sounds

were followed by hoarse screams and a torrent of curses, mixed in with the rumbles and bangs and whines of trains moving and braking and bumping.

Then they were closing in from both ends and I was ready to kick in the chops the first guy who stuck his face in between the cars where I was standing. For a minute there was a lull and I was just about to make a break for it when the beam of a flash split the night in half and light bounced off from somewhere, catching brass buttons not 20 feet away.

The big tough bull in blue looked like he was frozen there, staring straight at me.

I pressed back into the shadows, trying to hug the rear of the car. I was jammed up against the steel ladder that ran to the top, wishing I could get the overnight case in my hand turned around so it wouldn't make such a conspicuous bulge. Same went for the packet tucked in the front of my shirt under my old field jacket.

Damn it to hell—he was waiting for me to come

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE RED DRESS



out so he could get a clear swing at me! It hadn't taken me long to regret leaving my .45 behind.

Behind me I could half-sense the dame snugging into her undies, but I would have liked it better if she had switched out the light. It was turning me into a silhouette that couldn't be missed unless that guy had left some thick glasses at home.

I was all set to pitch out that bag in the railroad cop's kisser, to take some teeth and make a break for it, when I realized the copper wasn't in the same mood as me—not by a long shot. More lights came by, hitting his face, and this time I saw his eyes. No, they weren't looking at me at all. They went right by me to the dame in the sleeper-car window and I could have lit a butt without him seeing the match. Could have started blowing smoke rings too.

What the hell? The curve of track gave me a vantage point, so I took one last look at her myself.

She was working on the other nylon now, toes stretched out ballet style, and then her feet found the floor and she had a look at herself too, probably thinking Gypsy Rose Lee had nothing on her. Her red-nailed hands cupped this and that, and her chin lifted, her mouth all white teeth and crimson lipstick and pure confidence. She was having a hell of a good time in front of that mirror. Hell of a good time.

But I needed to get out of there while the railroad officer was still getting his fill.

I slid off into the alley between the freight and the sleeper, ducked under the light and

walked to the end of the string of cars. I didn't have a bit of trouble after that. Just strolled out of the yards into the passenger station, cleaned up in the restroom, dumping the torn trousers and glad I'd brought a few changes along.

Then I went down a dingy, ill-lit, worse-smelling street to a sloppy hash house crowded with a section gang going on late shift. I ate at the counter and a cute waitress with black streaks in her blonde hair and pretty green eyes flirted with me as she took my order for bacon and eggs. She was 20 going on 40.

"You just roll into town, mister?"

She didn't know how right she was.

"Yeah. What do I need to know about this burg?"

"Killington? More like Killing Town—it'll kill your dreams deader than a mackerel. And does this burg know about dead mackerels?"

Her joke missed me, but I gave her a grin anyway.

She went over to the kitchen window. She had a nice shape and when she stepped on her tiptoes to shout the order in, her fanny said hello. Five minutes later she was back with my food and a refill of my coffee.

"Where you from?" she asked.

"New York."

"The big town! Man, would I like to get there sometime."

"Not that far away, sugar."

"A world away from here."

I threw down the plate of bacon and eggs, left her a quarter tip, then went out and

roamed around until I found a hotel one step up from a flophouse.

The bleary-eyed night clerk, looking 40 and probably not 30, was smoking a cigarette that didn't have tobacco in it. His shirt had been white once and his bow tie was half off, hanging like a carelessly picked scab. He shoved the register at me without really looking. I wrote *Hammer, Mike* and passed over my buck. For that I got a key to a closet masquerading as a room, where I dumped my bag before I came downstairs again.

When the clerk saw me, he did his best to place me, then made me as his new arrival and reluctantly let go of the smoke he was holding in his lungs, also letting out a few words: "Want a whore?"

Full service, this place.

I said no thanks and pitched my key on the desk.

Some town, Killington.

Two doors down from the hotel through the rank-smelling night waited a cellar bar that hadn't done anything to itself since Prohibition except get a license. The walls were bare brick with only a couple inches of clearance over my head. An old scarred mahogany bar ran along one side, while a few tables were spaced around the rest of the room, wearing so many scratches they at first seemed covered with patterned cloths.

A pair of sharp articles played black-jack at one table, two frowsy, blowsy women with shrill voices and ugly print dresses had





another, and over in the corner a kid about 20 sat at one, having a quiet argument with his girl. Neither of them belonged in the place. They had good manners and good clothes, and from the flush on the girl's face and the excitement that showed in her eyes, it was a slumming party with the skirt doing the picking.

Probably this was her way of telling her boyfriend she was up for anything—get it? *Anything*. Psychology, it's called.

Over the bar was a clock that said it was a quarter after one. Two and a half hours since the naked babe on the train. In the upper corner of the mirror over the back bar was a bullet hole spiderwebbed with cracks. Place had character, all right.

I sat there and filled up on beer. I was dry right down to my shoes from the trip upstate on the rods, and until I had three brews under my belt, I didn't get anything but wet. But don't let anybody tell you that you can't get drunk on beer. On six I was mellow and one later I was there.

The street door opened and let in some more of the humid night. For a minute the brunette just looked the place over, her almond-shape brown eyes taking everything in, her full mouth wearing lipstick so red it was almost black. She nearly changed her mind about coming in, then shrugged and walked over on her black high-heeled strappy pumps to the bar.

It wasn't exactly a walk—there should have been an orchestra, a stage and wings for her to come out of. She was nicely stacked, shades of blue-and-pink jersey dress clinging as if she were facing a headwind. All that brown hair bounced off her shoulders while she held her stomach in to keep her breasts high and breathed through a faint smile that might have been real if it weren't so damned professional.

Sure, she picked me. Maybe she could sense class when she saw it. Or maybe she liked the color of my dough on the bar. The other two drunks were showing nickels and dimes while I sported change of a 20.

The greasy, glassy-eyed bartender, two parts pockmark and one part skimpy mustache, swabbed down the bar in front of her with a wet rag, looking like he could use a swabbing himself. "What'll it be, honey?" he gruffed.

Her eyes passed over the scotch bottles, but she said tiredly, "Whiskey and ginger."

I kicked a buck forward. "Make it scotch. Best you got. Soda on the side."

Hell, why waste time.

The brunette raised her eyebrows and

smiled at me. "Well...thank you. You know, I don't usually..."

"Skip it, sis," I said. "I was already in the mood for company." I finished my current beer, watching her over the rim of the glass.

She shrugged and the smile looked a little tired too. "Does it show on me that much?"

I put the glass down and let the bartender fill it up again. "Not really," I lied.

"Couldn't I just be some lonely girl looking for a nice guy?"

"Maybe, but you didn't find one." I shrugged. "You look just fine. I'm just used to spotting the symptoms."

Her sigh was abrupt and so were the words that followed: "Someday I'm going to get out of this town and get a real job."

"What's the matter with the one you got?"

If I had been leering, she would have given

"WOMEN LIKE NICE GUYS? THAT ONE WAS STARTED BY AN OLD MAID WHO DIED A VIRGIN."

me the glass of booze right in the face. But I wasn't leering, so she studied me curiously a moment. "Don't see a ring. You married?"

"Nope."

"Got any kids?"

I grinned. "Not that I know of."

She swirled the ice around in her glass.

"Want to hear something funny?"

"Sure."

She looked in the mirror behind the bar, past her reflection. "I want both. A ring and kids. Together and legitimately."

"So what are you doing about it?"

Her shoulders made that resigned motion again. "Not much. Anyway, men like *nice girls*, don't they?"

"Like women like nice guys? That one was started by an old maid who died a virgin. You

can have your nice girls. They're all a pack of phonies."

The sleepy, one-hiked-eyebrow glance she gave me was deliberately sarcastic. "Really?"

"I mean it," I said. "They're phonies because they're all liars. Everyone wants the same things and the good girls are afraid to go after it."

"Which is what?"

"Sex. Money. Not necessarily in that order. So they think up lies to excuse themselves, get loaded down with frustrations that turn into inhibitions and when they finally do get married and give it up? The first thing you know the Holy Union is on the rocks."

"That right?"

"That's right. Hell, give me a dame that knows her way around every time. When *they* settle down, they're *really* settled and know how to treat a guy. Like I said, the nice girls you can have."

"Thanks." Her eyes were laughing at me. I ordered her another drink. "You go to college or something?"

"A few semesters in the Pacific."

The door opened again and foul muggy air and a saw-toothed kid in work clothes came in. He wandered to the cigarette machine, put a quarter in and pulled out his butts. He stood there fiddling with the pack until the bartender yelled, "*Hey!* Close that damn door!"

The kid said something dirty, finished opening the pack, lit a butt and walked out, leaving the bartender to go over and shut the damn door himself.

I said, "What's that smell?"

I'd noticed it before, but now it seemed worse than ever.

"Fish," she said, like she was tasting some that had gone off. "Tons of it."

Also clams, crabs and anything else that comes out of the ocean, all getting chopped, cooked and canned."

I shook my head. "Fish my eye. If it is, that catch's been dead a long time."

She shook her head and the brunette hair bounced on her shoulders some more. "No, it's fish, all right. Until the war, it wasn't bad at all. But the factory took a contract to turn out glue and put up the new addition where they make it, and *that's* what smells. Fish glue." She shuddered. "They say it makes more money than the cannery."

"Oh."

And so now I knew all about fish glue. Just plain glue, and the horses they made it from, wasn't bad enough. Now they made it out of fishes. Dead mackerels.

"I heard better fish stories," I said.



She shrugged. "It's the biggest industry in town. Senator Charles owns it." She took a long pull on the drink and set the glass down empty. "I used to work there, y'know. At the cannery. I had a pretty good job too." Her hand made a wave at the room and herself. "That was before...this."

"What happened?"

"My boss had busy hands. I slapped him."

I grinned. "With a fish, I hope."

She grinned. "No. I had to make do with an ashtray."

"Well played," I said.

Another shrug, too small to make her hair dance. "One way to get fired."

The door opened again and more of the smell seeped in. Only this time it closed and stayed closed after a wide, dish-faced blue-uniformed cop with a big belly held it open for a younger partner to come down the three steps from the street. They both looked around the room. You'd think there was something to see.

Everything got quiet awfully fast and one of the drunks at the bar turned around and lost his balance. He went flat on his face and the big cop stepped over him, barely noticing. The slick pair at the card table stopped playing and stared. *Were these two after them?*

I stared too because the big cop wasn't looking at the blackjack-playing pair but instead right at me, and the way he held that club meant he aimed to use it before asking any questions. He played it tough, the way nearly every stupid cop does, thinking that a uniform made him a superman and forgetting that other guys are just as big and maybe even tougher. With or without a billy.

He reached for me with one hand to hold on while he swung and as soon as he had his fingers planted in my coat front, I pulled a nasty little trick that broke his arm above the elbow and he dropped to the floor screaming. The other cop was pulling his gun as he ran for me.

This one was stupid too. If I had gone the other way he would have had time to jerk the rod free, but I came in on him and split his face six ways to Sunday with a straight right, and while he lay there, I put a foot on his belly and brought it down hard. Like I was stomping on a particularly ugly bug.

He turned blue for a while, then started breathing again.

The cop with the broken wing had fainted.

The bartender was wide-eyed over his open mouth.

Over in the corner, the slumming party

looked sick to their stomachs, then got up and scrambled out.

The brunette hadn't reacted at all.

I said to the barkeep, "I'd like to know how goons like this pair got on the force."

There was a wheeze in the bartender's throat when he told me. "For three hunnert bucks, you get put on the list." His eyes still seemed a little glassy. He looked at me, the phone on the wall, then toward the door, wondering what to do next.

"I don't know what the hell this is all about," I said, "but I don't like to get pushed. Not even a little bit."

He swallowed and nodded. No argument.

One of the drunks decided it was time for another drink and pounded on the bar to get it. I raked in my change, stuck the bills in my wallet and put the silver in my pocket.

MY HEART WAS SLAMMING INTO MY RIBS AND MY MIND WAS TELLING ME TO GET THE HELL OUT.

The brunette smiled wistfully. "Another time, another place?"

"A better time," I said, "a better place."

I pulled out a 10 and shoved it over to her.

"Till then," I said. "Sorry to drink and run."

"Good luck," she said and smiled. She meant it too.

I had to step over the big-belly cop with the busted arm. I opened the door and stood sniffing the air. It stunk. Everything stunk about this burg.

But it went right with how I was feeling, so I didn't give a damn. I went up the few steps to the street, saw the empty squad car at the curb and got too damned cocky for my own good. Cops drive in pairs and I didn't expect any others hanging around.

But they were—they sure were.

Somebody yelled, "Cripes, there he goes!"

That was all I needed. I faded into the shadows alongside the building and took off as fast as I could. I skirted around the stone stoops, hurdled the boxes of rubbish packed against the railings and kept my head down all the way. The night started to scream with staccato blasts of gunfire while ricochets whistled off the pavement around me.

A slug tore into my shoe and knocked my foot out from under me. I hit the sidewalk on my tail, swearing my head off, wishing I had a rod in my hand that would tear the guts out of somebody—any "three-hunnert-dollar" cop would do.

Up ahead a streetlight doused the area and I knew if I went into that yellow splash of light I'd be a dead duck. I couldn't go forward and I couldn't go back. I couldn't do a single damn thing except roll down the steps next to me until I hit a pile of newspapers and spilled them over on top of me.

I didn't get it. I didn't get it at all. I lay there with my lungs sucking air hungrily to stop the burning in my chest. *I come in undercover and suddenly I'm the main attraction.* My heart was slamming into my ribs and my mind was telling me to get the hell out of there in a goddamn hurry.

Sure, get out. Walk right up into a face full of bullets.

They were up there knowing right where I went and I could hear their feet converging on the spot. I pulled out the manila packet of green from under my coat, under my shirt, and tucked it in a gaping crack in the cement between the wall and the first step of the staircase that ran over my head. Tucked it in good and hoped for the best, filling in with some pebbles. That left me with my wallet and a few bucks.

But I sure as hell didn't want to be found with that packet of green on me. The \$30,000 that brought me to Killington would wind up in the pockets of the bent cops who busted me.

Then I waited.

The door beside me that led to the cellar was too heavy to crash and the padlock too big to force. Go up and I'd die. Wait it out and maybe I wouldn't. So I stopped thinking and just waited.

A voice said, "You down there! Come out with your hands in the air."

"Why should I?"


"Would you sooner do it in a basket?"

I went up.

From Killing Town by Mickey Spillane and Max Allan Collins, out April 17 from Titan Books.



"I guess she hasn't cleaned out my storage unit yet."



Bird of Paradise

*Join April Playmate Nereyda Bird in the turquoise tides of
St. Barts—it's a match made in heaven*



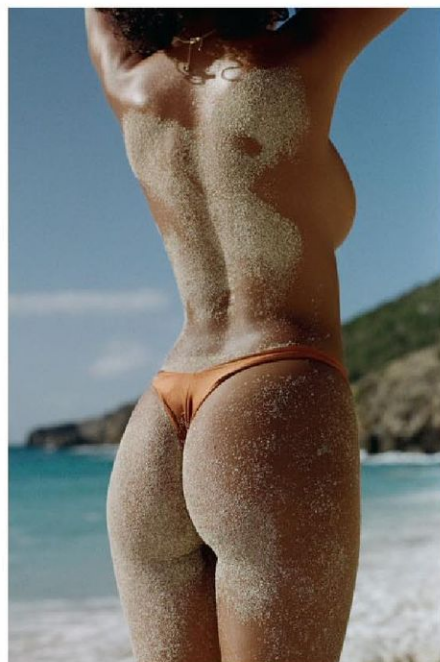
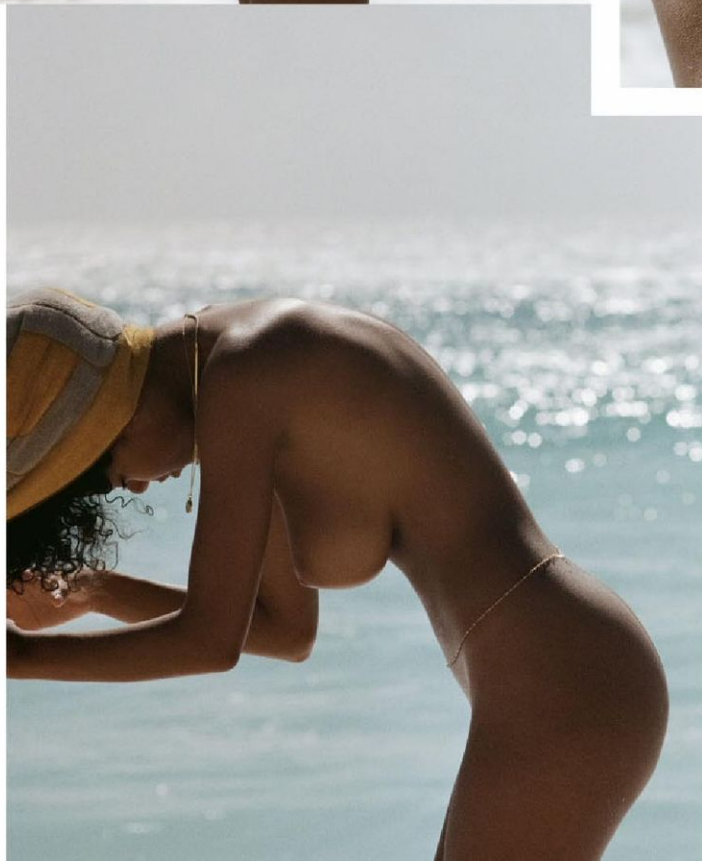
Our April Playmate is a walking contradiction. At 20 years old, Nereyda Bird says she's very outgoing—but going out has never been her thing. She calls herself crazy but possesses a deep serenity beneath her effervescent exterior. And while she describes herself as goofy, the one adjective she's reluctant to use might come as a surprise: "I never really felt connected to the word *sexy*. I think it's a bit vulgar. I get that Nereyda is supposed to be some 'sexy model,' but it's not about me feeling sexy; it's just me feeling comfortable."

Born in New York, Nereyda grew up in Philadelphia and currently resides in Miami. She has wasted no time in pursuing her professional aspirations: She began modeling at the age of 17, and she already co-owns

a café with her mother—a casual spot in north Miami called Grab & Go. "It's a cute little joint," she says. "We serve authentic Dominican food. Most people say, 'Don't do business with family members because you'll be too soft,' but my mom and I are hardcore with each other."

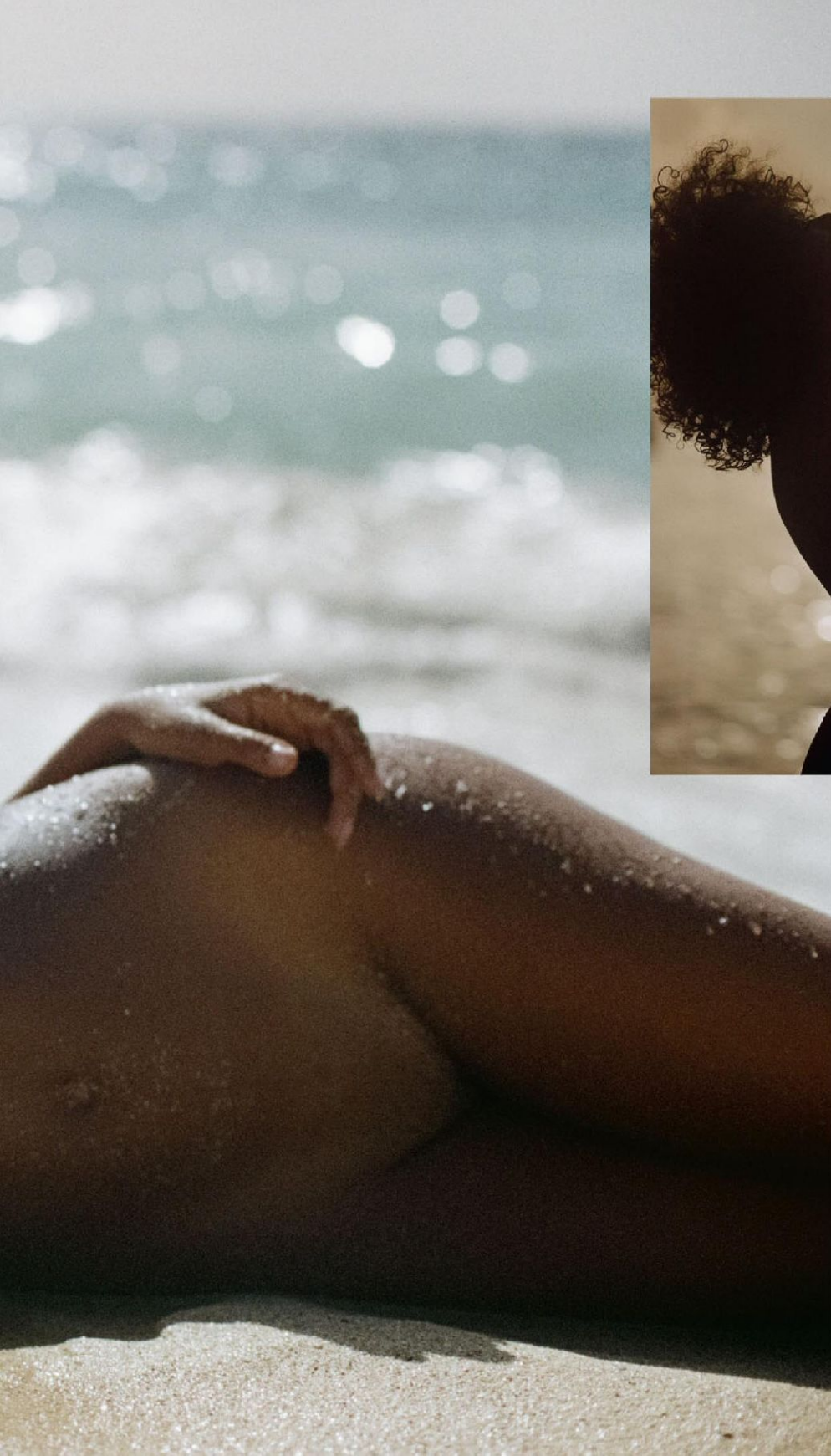
A yoga enthusiast, avid foodie and self-proclaimed tomboy, Nereyda is never idle. During her rare stretches of free time, you're likely to find her cruising arts festivals or honing her baking skills. And rest assured, there's nothing contradictory about her ambition: At the moment, she's willing to put romance on the back burner as she discovers herself. "I'm single and I'm *not* ready to mingle," she says. "I'm happy living. I feel very blessed right now."

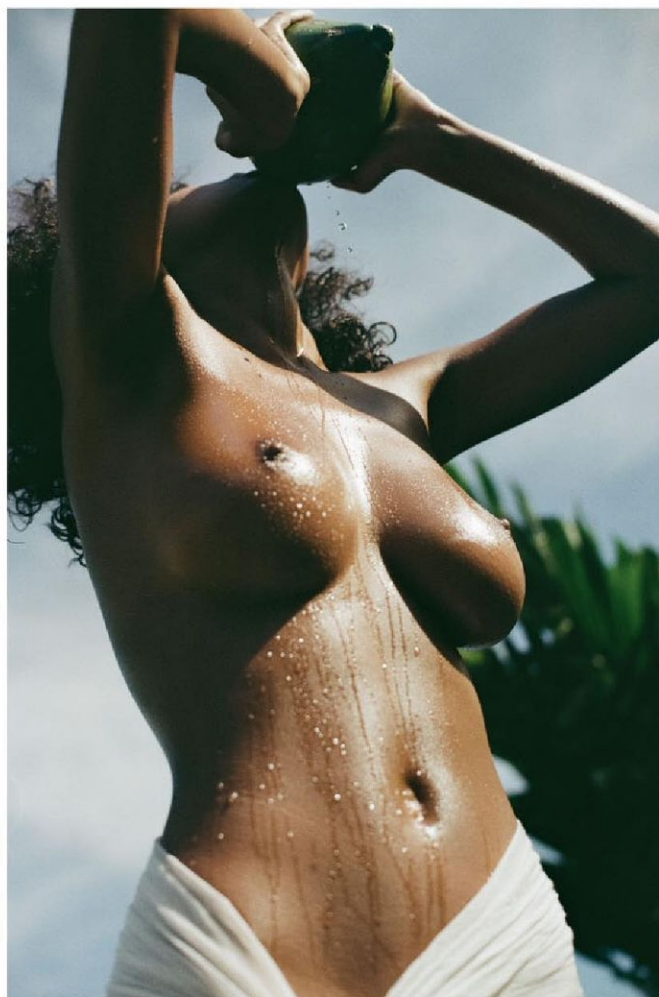
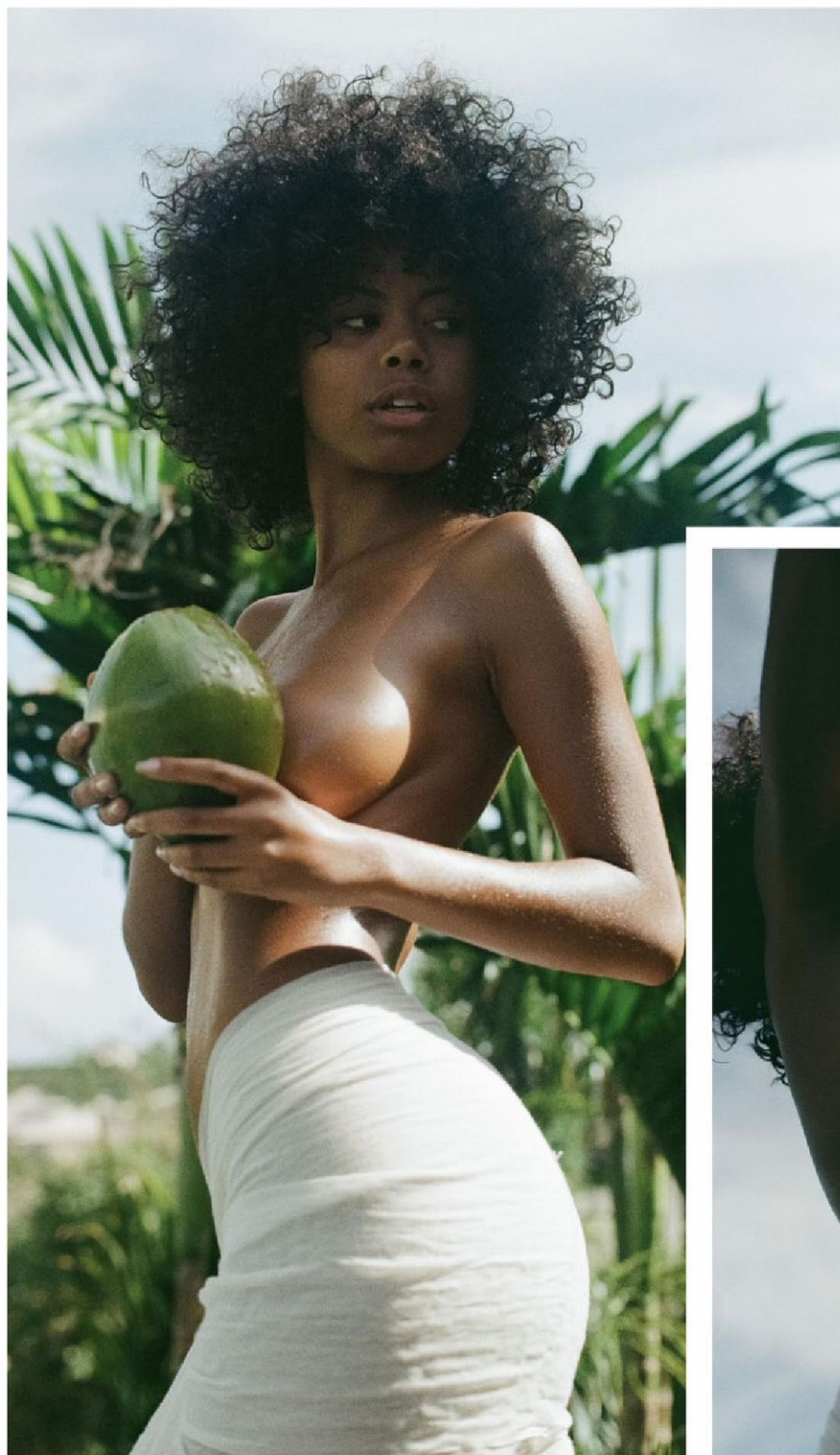
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WIISSA**























DATA SHEET



BIRTHPLACE: New York, New York **CURRENT CITY:** Miami, Florida

NATURAL SELECTION

When it comes to relationships, either we're in it together or it's nothing. You really need a connection. When you realize that, dating is a whole lot easier.

LOOK FORWARD

I love a man who takes care of himself, who cares about his future. I want to know the kind of person he wants to be. I want him to be himself and to be ambitious, healthy and on my level—someone entertaining who makes me laugh.

GRAPHIC CONTENT

My other passion, besides modeling, is drawing. If I weren't modeling, I'd be making comic books. I grew up wanting to be Tank Girl.

HEAVY PETTING

I have two cats. One is all black; his name is Space. The other one I

call Tuxedo. They're my two sons. I got them off Craigslist. I also have a pit bull I rescued from a shelter and named Chipotle. That was my favorite food at the time!

SKIN-DEEP

Am I allowed to complain about the whole nudity taboo? I understand we're in a weird society that can't accept certain things, but there's nothing wrong with the female body. We as women need to embrace ourselves. We can't be scared of being naked. There's nothing wrong with it.

MY PERFECT NIGHT

There's this place that I love in the city of La Romana in the Dominican Republic—a cute little restaurant that's a shack on the beach. They sell grilled fish with a little pastry called *yaniqueque*, which everyone should try. It's just fried

dough, but it's so good. Hanging out there is a ball.

HIGH PRAISE

I like it when people tell me they like how I think. I don't mind being told I'm attractive, but it's beautiful when someone likes me for who I am.

SOCIAL STUDIES

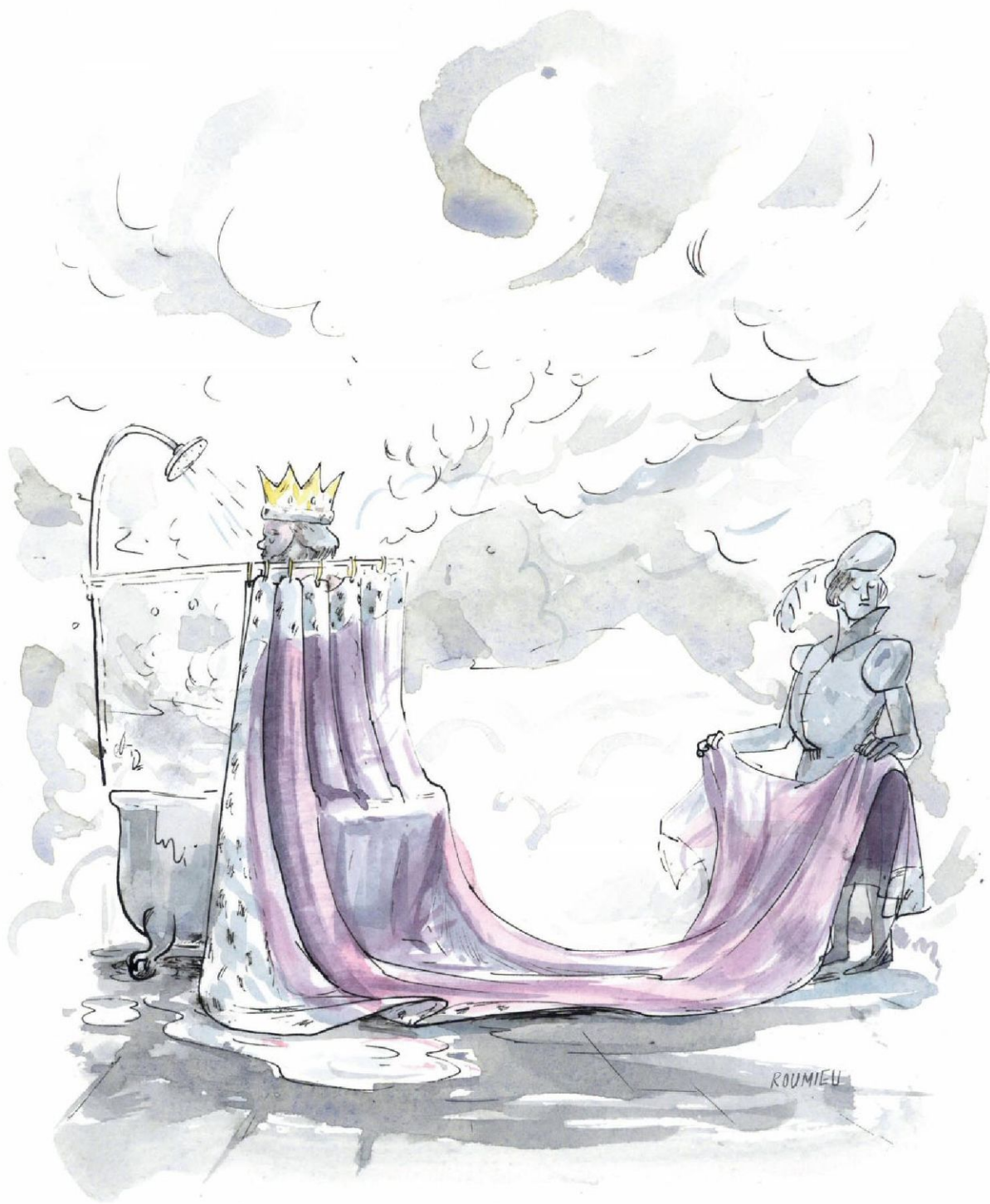
People see me on Instagram and assume I'm wild, but I never go out. It's not my thing. I'm open, but I don't really put my life out there. I'm a bit of a private person.

LADIES FIRST

Michelle Obama said our first job is to get to know ourselves, especially when we are in our 20s. She's right. Life is a big mess! Well, not really a *mess*; it's just that there's so much to learn about yourself.

@nereyda_bird

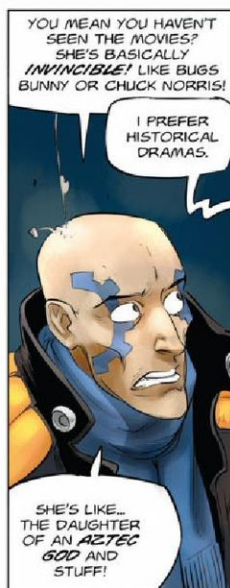




IN THE FUTURE, DRUGS HAVE RENDERED SLEEP UNNECESSARY. BUT IN THE DREAMVERSE, WHERE OUR MINIMUM-WAGE HEROES WORK TO STOP DREAM BEINGS FROM BECOMING REAL, ONE OF THOSE CREATIONS—STAR—IS ON A RAMPAGE

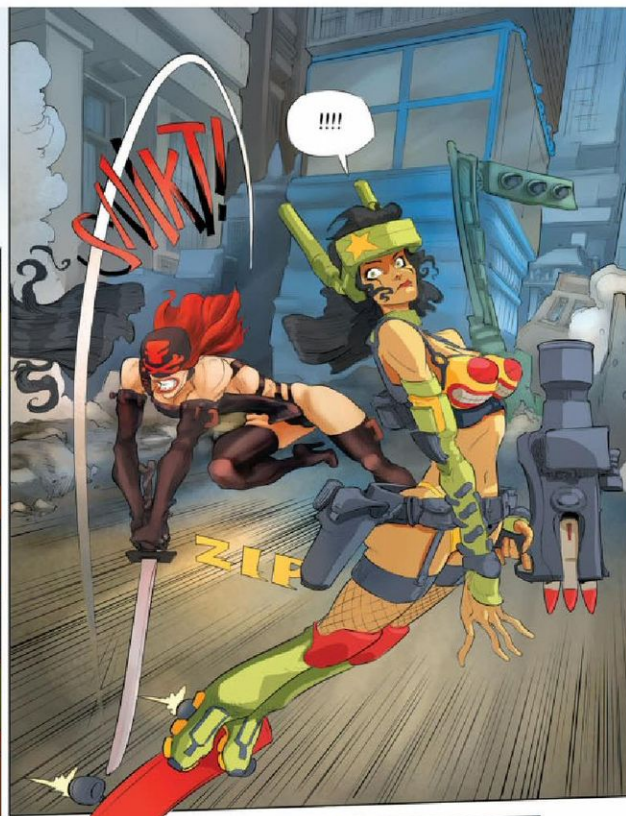
STORY: MARITZA CAMPOS ART: BACHAN

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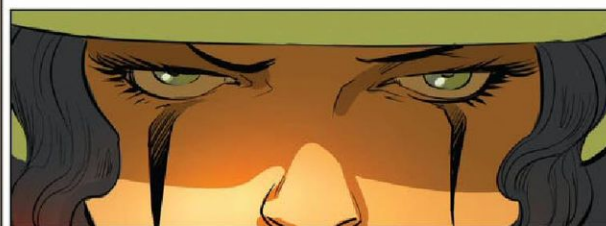
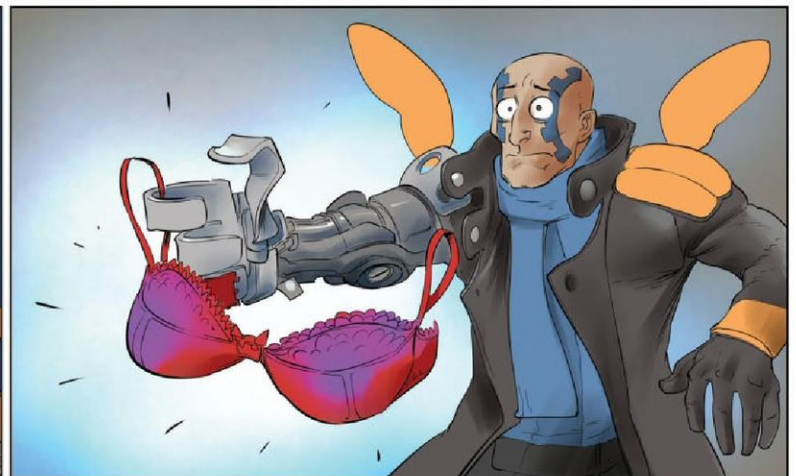
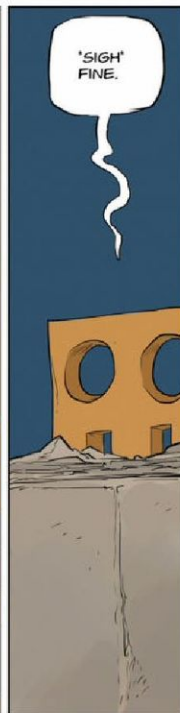
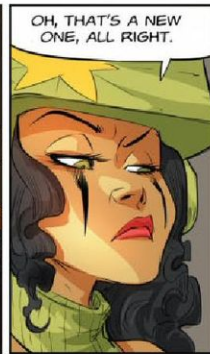


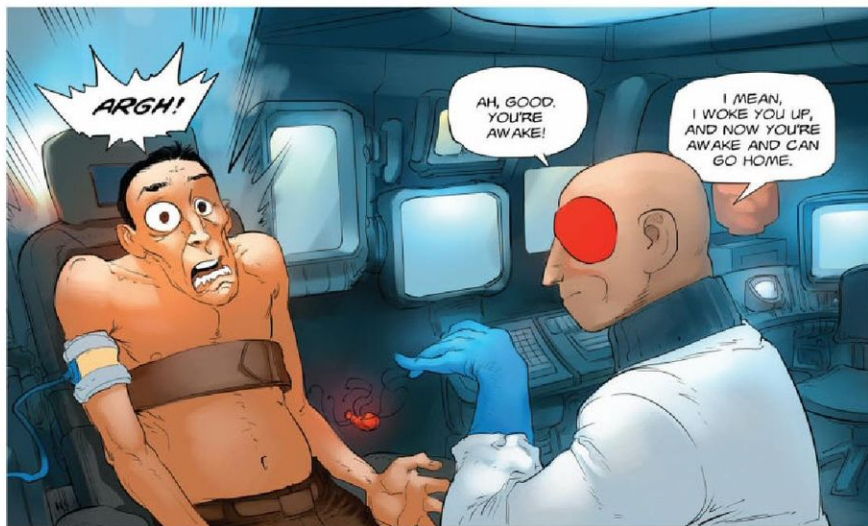


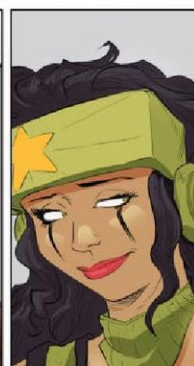
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PLAYBOY PROFILE

STEVEN PINKER

This man is on a mission to convince you that, despite how bad it looks, civilization is working. Who knew optimism could be such a hard sell?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

JOSHUA ALLEN HARRIS

What if all our kvetching about the sheer misery of life on Earth is, in fact, self-perpetuating hokey? What if humanity is healthier, wealthier, happier, safer, better educated and more peaceful than ever before? What if there truly is no greater time to be alive than right now?

Steven Pinker—professor of psychology at Harvard University, two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and author of more than 10 books about human behavior and instinct—has written that the idea of the present as a dystopia marked only by decay and suffering is “wrong wrong, flat-earth wrong, couldn’t-be-more-wrong.” We’re flourishing, he argues. Not only that, but our boundless cynicism has left us vulnerable to demagogues who weaponize ambient anxiety and use it to justify dangerous agendas.

Pinker’s latest book, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, is an encomium for the present. Rather than blindly panicking, he suggests we focus on “the historical sweep of progress,” with an eye toward its perpetuation. “Every measure of human well-being has shown an increase,” he told me recently. “You can’t appreciate that reading the newspapers, because news is usually about things that go wrong. You never have a reporter standing in front of a school, saying, ‘Here I am, reporting live in front of a school that hasn’t been shot up today.’”

...

Taking a formal tour of the United Nations with a man who holds nine honorary doctor-

ates (in addition to an actual doctorate, from Harvard, in experimental psychology) is surreal for a handful of reasons, chief among them being that he knows the right answer to every single question the guide asks.

Pinker, wearing black cowboy boots, jeans and a blue sweater, played it cool—he always waited to see if anyone else felt like venturing a guess first. Then he’d slowly raise a hand and deliver a casual but terrifyingly precise answer: There are 193 member nations. There have been 10 rogue nuclear tests since the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1996. The UN has identified 17 sustainable development goals to be achieved over a 15-year period that began in 2016. Our guide regarded us with suspicion. When Pinker wasn’t answering her questions, we were chattering at each other, trailing the group, pausing to take pictures—in Pinker’s words, two “bad students.”

Enlightenment Now includes dozens of charts and matrices, some of which display data collected by the UN. But it’s the organization’s very existence that best confirms the book’s arguments. As we wandered its hallways, Pinker pointed to the UN’s sustainability goals (which include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, ending gender discrimination, ensuring clean water and sanitation, and more) as evidence of a secular-humanist morality—a plain, shared sense of right and wrong that exists independent of institutions. “The

concept of human rights hinges on the fact that we all have universal needs,” Pinker explained after we’d retreated to a café in the basement of the building. “We’d all prefer to be alive than dead, well-fed than starving and healthy than sick, and we all want our kids to grow up, and everyone agrees that literacy is a good thing. So if we can combine universal human interests with a universal capacity for reason, we can define a bedrock that all humans share and that you can build a morality around.”

Pinker first seeded the notion of a shared ethic in his 2002 book, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. “The point of that book was to push back against the idea of a blank slate, not to deny that cultures differ,” he said. “Obviously they differ, but I think beneath all of that variation there is a universal human nature given to us by evolution, and that helps ground concepts like universal human rights.”

In many ways, *Enlightenment Now* feels like the apotheosis of Pinker’s research. The book is in direct conversation with each of his previous titles but especially with 2011’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, in which Pinker charts massive declines in violence of all forms and suggests that we’ve finally become more valuable to each other alive than dead. Bill Gates called it the “most inspiring book” he’d ever read. Mark Zuckerberg chose it as the second selection for his book club. *Enlightenment Now* elaborates on—and amplifies—its premise.





"Once you take a quantitative mind-set instead of basing your view of the world on headlines, it's not just violence that's in decline; all these other measures of human well-being have improved, like life span, like poverty," Pinker said. "Very few people are aware that the percentage of the world that's in a state of extreme poverty has fallen from 90 percent of the world being poor 200 years ago to 10 percent today."

The book was conceived and partially written before the 2016 election, but the rise of Donald Trump is predicted in its pages. Pinker believes the ideas that inadvertently helped the current administration take office—that the world is in terrible shape, that the whole system deserves to crumble—are perpetuated by both the left and the right. Those ideas include "pessimism about the way the world is heading, cynicism about the institutions of modernity, and an inability to conceive of a higher purpose in anything other than religion," he writes. Trump both

proves Pinker's point—this is what happens when we're subsumed by fear—and makes it harder to argue that the present moment is actually a victory.

"November 8, 2016 did require something of a rethink of the book," Pinker admitted. "I was in the middle of writing it. I'd conceived it back when Donald Trump was just kind of a joke, a reality-TV star. I could not have dreamed he would be president, and it certainly meant that any narrative that said we're in the midst of a period of progress needed a bit of qualification." He described Trump's agenda as "almost the opposite of the dream of the Enlightenment as manifested in the United Nations, among other things—namely, that we're all human, nations and governments are just conveniences, we're not primarily Frenchmen or Americans or Russians but human beings and that what we each want as individual humans we can only achieve if we cooperate on a global scale. Donald Trump hates the UN. His idea is that

America comes first and every nation is in a zero-sum conflict with every other nation."

...

Pinker was born in 1954 in a Jewish community in Montreal. He got his bachelor's degree at McGill University and moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts for graduate school in 1976. After receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard, he completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and ended up teaching there for 21 years. (In 2003 he left MIT for his current position at Harvard.) He married his third wife, novelist and philosopher Rebecca Goldstein, in 2007 and now has two stepdaughters.

He has a distinctive puff of curly white hair and blue eyes, and is recognized more or less constantly as we navigate various areas of the UN—by the uniformed security guard manning the metal detectors, by a young Norwegian man on our tour, by an employee who tentatively but excitedly scurries over while we're drinking coffee and eating crumb cake near the gift shop. Part of this, he assures me, is because of YouTube. Many of his lectures and talks are archived online. (A video in which he describes language as "a window to understanding the brain" has been viewed nearly a million times.) During each encounter, his acolytes appear dazed and then deferential. It is as if they believe they're meeting the man who can save them.

Although his work has been widely lauded—in 2004, *Time* named him one of the most influential people in the world—it's not without vocal detractors. Following the publication of *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, the statistician Nassim Taleb argued that what Pinker interprets as the "long peace" (a term Pinker borrowed from the historian John Gaddis) of the past several decades is really just a statistical blip and no guarantee of future safety. Taleb also lambasted Pinker for assuming "that the statistics of the 14th century can apply to the 21st." Pinker, who does not back off from lively debate, eventually responded that Taleb had thoroughly misunderstood the book and that "accurate attribution and careful analysis of other people's ideas are not his strong suits."

Others have argued that Pinker's call for a return to the ideals of the Enlightenment, which he defines in the new book's subtitle as "reason, science, humanism and progress," fails to account for the atrocities the Enlightenment enabled. In a 2015 essay for *The Guardian*, the scholar and author John Gray writes, "You would never know, from reading Pinker, that Nazi 'scientific racism' was



based in theories whose intellectual pedigree goes back to Enlightenment thinkers such as the prominent Victorian psychologist and eugenicist Francis Galton.”

In January, the day before Pinker and I met, a video surfaced in which Pinker, speaking at an event at Harvard, referred to “the often highly literate, highly intelligent people who gravitate to the alt-right” and observed that they were both “internet savvy” and “media savvy.” That might seem innocent enough—he was merely stating that it’s dangerous to dismiss the opposition as a gang of drooling thugs—except the alt-right chose to seize on it as a benediction. The white nationalist Richard Spencer retweeted the video. The Daily Stormer, a neo-Nazi website, published an article with the headline **BIG NIBBA HARVARD JEW PROFESSOR ADMITS THE ALT-RIGHT IS RIGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING**. Jesse Singal, writing in *The New York Times*, used the kerfuffle as an object lesson about the dangers of decontextualized misinformation, perpetuated endlessly via social media. Pinker saw larger forces at play: “It really stems from a political tribalism in which each side is so convinced of its rightness and the evil of its enemy that it resorts to any tactic, including dishonest doctoring of records and vitriolic name-calling, to stoke outrage and tribal loyalty. You also see it in cable news, political rallies, books, partisan websites.”

Still, the episode had its upside. “I’d be all too happy if alt-right men checked out my book, hoping for support. At best I might deconvert some of them to classical liberalism. At worst they’d get a rude shock.”

...

Somehow I manage to make an absurd suggestion—let’s go ice-skating at Rockefeller Center!—seem like a reasonable follow-up to our UN visit. It was vaguely relevant, after all, to our conversation: The rink was beset by an enormous Christmas tree on one end and a golden statue of Prometheus, the mythological Greek Titan sometimes known as the God of Forethought, on the other. Pinker was down.

We laced up our rental skates in something called a “heated igloo” and shoved off. Of course, interviewing someone while cruising around a frozen puddle on sharpened metal blades is a fool’s errand, and it didn’t help that he was cutting graceful circles around the ice while I was half waddling, half lunging and frightening the small children in my path. After a few laps, we retreated to a nearby restaurant for a round of drinks. What I wanted to know was: What happens

next? How do we circumvent whatever instinct causes us to crave catastrophe or at least its attendant drama?

“I think there certainly is a thirst for the dramatic, the catastrophic, but there’s also a thirst for morality tales, particularly morality tales in which one’s own tribe is on the side of the angels and there’s some evil enemy to blame misfortune on,” he explained. “There’s great satisfaction taken in comeuppance to a villain. A lot of entertainment has a hero who gets in trouble and faces an adversary. The adversary has a temporary victory but in the end is vanquished. I think we like reality that conforms to that kind of dramatic archetype.”

In *Enlightenment Now*, Pinker comes down with surprising force on institutions I’d previously thought of as plainly noble, including mainstream environmentalism, as conceived in the 1970s and perpetuated by figures like Al Gore (“greenism is laced with misanthropy, including an indifference to starva-

tion, an indulgence in ghoulish fantasies of a depopulated planet, and Nazi-like comparisons of human beings to vermin, pathogens and cancer,” he writes), and contemporary journalism (“Whether or not the world really is getting worse, the nature of news will interact with the nature of cognition to make us think that it is”). But given an instinctive hunger for turmoil, how do we overturn the old axiom “If it bleeds, it leads”?

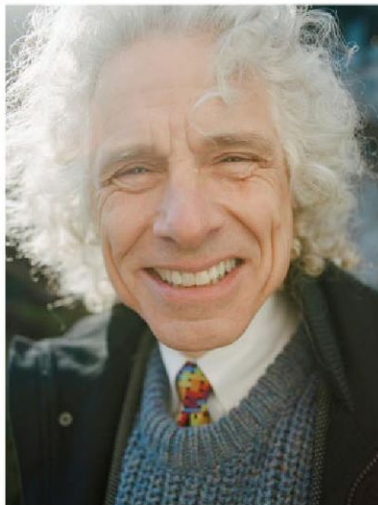
“A responsible journalist who believes that they have a mission to expose problems and tell of people suffering also has to include cases in which problems are solved and improvements occur,” Pinker said. “Otherwise, life sucks and then you die. Which licenses fatalism: Why try to make the world a better place if people will screw it up no matter what you do? That thinking really saps any commitment or application of ingenuity to solving problems. What I would advocate is definitely not balancing the terrorist attacks with puff pieces but rather to highlight what goes right. It’s not fluff if fewer kids are starving to death. It’s not fluff if Guinea worm is being eliminated. It’s not fluff if the rate of homelessness has gone down.”

If journalism doesn’t correct itself—and Pinker believes it can—it’s on the rest of us not to perpetuate false and hysterical ideas about the state of the world. Reorienting is a complicated and personal process but hardly impossible: “The question is not how do you make us perfect but how do you bring out the parts of us that can cooperate, can plan for the future and empathize and organize our affairs so that those parts of human nature are in control?”

As we finished our drinks, I asked Pinker if he considered himself an optimist. His work, after all, advocates for the recognition of human dexterity and wisdom—on giving equal time to all the things we get right. “I probably am, by temperament,” he admitted, then reminded me that his work is all based on data; he’s simply pointing out the facts. And the facts can change. We’re better off now, but that doesn’t protect us from setbacks and regression.

“One of the reasons I didn’t call the book *Progress* or *A Manifesto for Progress* or *Three Cheers for Progress* or *Progress Rocks* is that progress isn’t an inexorable force,” he said. “There are certain ideas and values that have given us the progress we’ve enjoyed so far, and if we redouble our efforts and our commitment to those values, then progress could continue. And if we don’t, they won’t.” With that, he drained his beer and smiled. ■

“I’D BE ALL TOO HAPPY IF ALT-RIGHT MEN CHECKED OUT MY BOOK.”





GO, SPACE RACER!

*Unscripted! Raw!
Rocketship rivalry!
Reality TV takes
to the cosmos*



FICTION

BY **CURTIS C. CHEN**

I should have fought harder on the title of my real-vid series. The glittering, animated logo declaring *Space Race: Kat's Chase* is driving me crazy, always twirling in the corner of the livestream from *Hawk Five*. On the bright side, the visual pollution does help distract me from my living situation: tiny habitat pod, stale recycled air, chilly and cramped. Physical discomfort is a trifle when compared to this constant, insulting eyesore.

I don't even *like* glitter.

Could have been worse, though. Signing off on that dumb title meant I didn't have to wear the bikini that wardrobe very generously called a "flight suit." I may be stranded, but at least I'm wearing enough fabric to cover my entire body. It's been averaging 60 below zero outside, and the pod's heaters are working full-time to keep me alive.

It's true, *Kat's Chase* did make me—Katrina Shao—a household name overnight. But I never cared about being famous.

If anyone should be famous, it's Beatrice Soltana. And she will be. Oh, the irony.

...

I didn't know her name at first. For weeks before the race started, she was just "the third Lunar ship," and that was enough. I didn't want to know any of my competitors too well and risk actually caring about them.

My first sight of Beatrice's ship was a vid from an Earth telescope, when Jayden—oh boy, Jayden, that's a whole other story—asked me to comment on the vehicle configuration. We'd been doing this with all the other racers, me wanting to drop some science education on my viewers, Jayden just encouraging me to trash-talk my competition. After several dozen of these "design reviews," it was starting to get old. But then I saw the rock-ship.

Lunar Three wasn't built for looks. Not like my sleek, sexy *Hawk Five*, which had been focus-grouped to death before construction. Beatrice's ride was a hodgepodge of half a strip-mined asteroid, solar panels jutting out at seemingly random angles, and habitat and engine modules held in place by melted rock flows. There's no need for aerodynamic vehicles when you live in hard vacuum. I was fascinated. And we got two whole episodes out of Zapruder those long-distance views of her ship.

I was so focused on the hardware, I didn't realize what Jayden was doing to my ship's

software. I'd gotten used to just accepting every boring update patch from Earth. And why wouldn't I trust my own producer and ex-lover?

He knew Beatrice's ship was close enough to intercept my transmissions back to Earth. He knew she wouldn't be able to resist eavesdropping on my raw feed when she realized the stream was using an outdated encryption key. And he guessed—correctly—that she wouldn't immediately check the video data for an embedded Trojan designed to infiltrate her ship's computer, because my outlandish speculations about her spacecraft design would be too annoying for her to ignore.

While I explained that one of Beatrice's hab modules could be a hydroponics bubble, the secondary comms display next to my camera lit up. I was hanging upside down at the time—viewers love stupid zero-gravity tricks—and I had to rotate the screen to read her message:

ARE YOU GIVING DELIBERATE MISINFORMATION OR JUST STUPID THAT'S MY WATER CYCLE REPRESS GET IT RIGHT OR SHUTUP

I was a little surprised, thinking she had hacked my comms, but actually felt flattered that she'd gone to the trouble. After finishing my broadcast, I messaged her back: IF YOU CARE SO MUCH, WHY NOT SEND ME SOME BLUEPRINTS?

She replied: SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT YOUR OWN PORN

That was confusing. GET YOUR MIND OUT OF THE GUTTER. WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT PORN?

YOU SAID "BLUE PRINTS," ISN'T THAT SLANG FOR DIRTY PICTURES?

SCHEMATICS! I MEANT SCHEMATICS OF YOUR SHIP!

OH WELL MY ANSWER IS STILL NO

It was the funniest thing I'd experienced in weeks.

After two days of cajoling, she agreed to talk to me on a live vid link—off the record, of course. I understood her reluctance, and it took a lot of work to convince her, but I was just so bored. I didn't think I'd feel so lonely, with half the Solar System watching me. But having an audience isn't the same as having friends.

"So how many markers have you tagged today?" I asked. Finding the radio beacons hidden around the asteroid belt was by far the most challenging part of *Space Race*.

Beatrice scowled at me. She was lean and dark, with short-cropped hair. "Not-gonna tell you, Earther." Her voice lilted as her Lunar

accent ran words together and emphasized the wrong syllables.

"Come on, I'm not asking you where you found them," I said. "Just give me a number. I'm curious."

She stared at me, then said, "Twelve more today. You?"

I did my best to hide my surprise. The scoreboard had shown me in the lead yesterday, but if she was telling the truth, I was now down by four.

"Not quite that many," I said. "But I'm right on your ass, Bea. Don't get cocky."

"Your trajectories are inefficient," she said. "Perhaps your sensors are also inadequate."

I folded my arms. "I spent six years at Caltech designing deep-space probes. I'm pretty sure I know what I'm doing."

"I grew up on Luna," she said, as if that were an equivalent credential.

"Right," I said. "That would explain the poor social skills."

"We value privacy. I do-not understand how you can do your stupid show."

"I'm sorry, do you mean the top-rated real-vid series *Space Race: Kat's Chase*? I do it because they're paying the bills. Who are your sponsors?" I hadn't seen any logos adorning her rock-ship, but I could understand brands not wanting to be associated with that monstrosity.

"I'm independent."

"Sitting on a nice trust fund, were you?"

"I don't-know what that is."

Now I'm frowning. "How did you pay for your ship?"

"That's private."

"Really. Tell me again how your great respect for privacy led you to hack into my communications?"

She gave me a funny look. "You're beaming signal straight-at-me with old ciphers. It's almost like you were asking me to eavesdrop."

I kept a poker face while cursing on the inside. "Well, you know. Good science is all about sharing information."

"Very-well," Beatrice said. "Why-don't you share your next destination with me?"

I was tempted for a split second—*Let's make an actual race of it!*—but then I remembered I was behind by four markers. "I thought I was inefficient."

"I-just wanted to beat you there and prove-it."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ANDREW ARCHER**



Not a chance, Lunar. “Oh, hey, look at the time. It’s been real, Bea, but I gotta go do my show. Peace.” I didn’t wait for her to respond before clicking off.

...

I never wanted to compete in Space Race. It always seemed like just another way to churn content for advertising overlays. But after six years of expensive higher education, I was running out of grants for postgraduate studies and my job prospects were nonexistent.

Then Jayden—stupid, sexy Jayden, who had already talked me into sharing a bed and then an apartment, and was already getting hefty employment offers straight out of film school—suggested I look into Space Race.

Space Race is officially known as the Gaveshana Spacefaring Foundation Stock Propulsion Time Trial. Once every 10 years, the foundation supplies 100 identical spacecraft engine systems and runs a lottery to pick 100 qualified pilots, who build the best vehicles they can around each engine, within very strict mass limits. Then Gaveshana makes those pilots run their spacecraft ragged around the asteroid belt until one comes out on top.

But win or lose, you got to keep your engine. That was a golden ticket out of Earth’s gravity well.

Every other door was being slammed in my face. Space Race was the only game in town that didn’t care about your background, as long as you passed all the written tests and qualified in the simulator. Everything was anonymized, color blind, as purely merit-based as the foundation could make it. Anyone in the Solar System was welcome to try out. The sponsors just wanted some gating factors to minimize the chances that you would get yourself killed.

I didn’t really expect to qualify. I don’t know what I scored on the exams. I don’t know how many other people were in the drawing. All I know is, my lottery number was selected on a live vid broadcast, and the next day I was accepting delivery of my very own Erickson Exotech power plant.

And literally five minutes after that, Hollywood called.

Nobody races without some kind of financial backing. Building a spaceship is a pricey proposition. But the fewer backers you have, the less time you need to spend reassuring each one that you’re doing the right thing every step of the way. Jayden convinced me that we were being smart, signing with Quantum Sheep Entertainment—he would be hired as my producer, and we’d be dealing with only one corporate entity for any ancillary rights and sublicensing deals. QSE’s

PILOTS RUN THEIR SPACECRAFT RAGGED AROUND THE ASTEROID BELT UNTIL ONE COMES OUT ON TOP.

studios were even nearby, right in Pasadena.

With built-in cachet as the youngest Space Race competitor and the only woman pilot from Earth, all I had to do was smile for the cameras and let QSE turn my life into whatever narrative they thought would get the most eyeballs.

What’s the old proverb? “Can’t shake the devil’s hand and say you’re only kidding.”

...

As soon as I clicked off with Bea, I recorded a profanity-laden vid in which I told Jayden exactly what I thought of him messing with my ship’s communications software. Unfortunately, I didn’t have the expertise to undo his latest patch, so all I could do was yell into a camera lens.

His reply to me—which came long after I had time to cool down—was typical Jayden, soothing apology sliding into empty promises. I knew he was lying through his perfect teeth, but I could never resist those twinkling eyes. And I still needed him to produce my show.

There ought to also be a proverb about sleeping with the devil, because I’ve found that generally doesn’t work out well either.

I should have suspected something when Jayden asked me to open my next show with yet another visual assessment of *Lunar Three*’s exterior. He fed me some line about getting an actual thruster count, since the rock-ship’s engines were hidden in shadowed nooks and crannies, and this upcoming retro burn could be my last chance to see them.

“Keep your friends close and your enemies closer, right?” he said with a wink. I gave in.

It was day seven, and only 19 racers were still competing. Beatrice and I were in a dead heat for first place. We had each verified 80 markers on the scoreboard—more than any past winners—and now we had to start thinking

about getting to the finish line. If we ended up tied on markers, we’d be judged by how much mass we had burned during the race, and that was secret information. Saving fuel might be more important at this point.

Both *Hawk Five* and *Lunar Three* were nearing a large asteroid that we could use as a gravity slingshot to accelerate out of the belt. Beatrice had crept to within five kilometers of me—closer than safety guidelines recommended, but she was one heck of a pilot. Not that I would ever admit it to her face. Or on camera.

I knew something was wrong when I saw Beatrice in her spacesuit, crawling around the outside of her main reactor’s heat sink. I tried to raise her on comms, but she didn’t respond.

The explosion would have blinded me if my screen hadn’t auto-polarized, blotting out the brightest portion of the blast with a shivering black circle. I blinked away tears and read my other instruments, checking for stray debris that might collide with *Hawk*.

“Confirmed. *Lunar Three* is completely destroyed,” I heard myself saying. “My readings indicate there was a power surge that caused an overload....”

Except that’s impossible, I thought. The power plant wouldn’t have gone critical; the fail-safes would have shut it down. I know this engine inside and out.

And so does Jayden.

I reviewed my communication logs as soon as the broadcast ended. I found the computer-virus signature after scrolling back to my first tightbeam chat with Beatrice. It was hidden in the data stream, and only one person could have put it there. Jayden.

I couldn’t even have a proper shouting match with him, since it took a full hour for my messages to reach Earth and another hour



for me to receive any reply. But I unloaded every swear word I knew and threatened to turn him in to the authorities. He reminded me why I couldn't.

"All your comms go through my control room," Jayden said, a crocodile smile smearing across his too-smooth face. "Look, it was an accident. I didn't mean to blow up the ship. I just wanted to cause some engine trouble, slow her down and give you a little advantage."

"I don't need your help, asshole," I sent back. "And I'm the one in control. I can turn off every camera in here and kill the show."

"You stop the cameras, you're in breach of contract," Jayden said. "Come on. I'm *helping* here. I've been reading up on the competition, and all you joystick jockeys have the same blind spot: software. That's my specialty. Magic fingers, remember?" He held up both hands, palms toward himself, and wiggled his fingers. It had seemed cute once, but now it made my skin crawl. "Bottom line, you're in the lead now, and your top priority is winning this race. Nothing else matters until you're back on that carrier. Jayden out."

I wanted to put my fist through his head, but I couldn't. Instead, I put on a spacesuit, went outside—we already had plenty of B-roll footage of me doing all kinds of EVA, so I was safe from the cameras for at least a few minutes—and turned off my radio and screamed into the void until I was hoarse.

I had no warning when Beatrice crashed into me from behind.

...

Gaveshana's rules for Space Race are simple: one person per spacecraft, stock propulsion system, overall vehicle mass limit, first pilot to rendezvous with the most rally markers and then cross the finish line in time wins. No resupply during transit, no support vehicles, no remote power except for solar panels. If something goes wrong during Space Race, you fix it yourself. If you can't fix it, you're done. It's a test of skill, endurance and more than a little luck.

This decade's course was the most challenging to date: Starting at the Lagrangian point ahead of Mars in its orbit around the Sun, each racer had just 10 solar days to search the asteroid belt for 100 scattered short-range radio markers, then navigate back out to the Lagrangian point trailing Mars. The Gaveshana carrier from which we launched would take a leisurely trip around the Mars quarantine zone to meet us at the finish line.

During the race, I would stream uninterrupted raw vid back to Earth for Team Kat to edit into daily broadcasts. This was a bit of an

innovation on Jayden's part: Most racers jealously guarded their methods, but I wasn't planning to make a career of this. I had no problem kissing and telling, as long as it didn't handicap my performance. I still wanted to win.

The first five days saw nearly half the starting racers either drop out, burn out or simply go missing. There's a lot of empty space out here to get lost in. And one of the Venus flyers deployed a whole fleet of decoy radio drones in the first hour. It wasn't technically against the rules—they weren't directly interfering with anyone's navigation systems—and a lot of racers ended up chasing the wrong radar blips.

Beatrice and I both had state-of-the-art passive sensors and signal-processing computers—systems that less prudent pilots might have skimmed on—and were able to pick out the genuine markers from the fake ones. We flew in meandering paths, so no one else could follow us easily, but kept ending up at the same rocks. It was unavoidable: You add two and two and you're going to get four, no matter what kind of calculator you're using.

...

Beatrice's inertia toppled us both forward, but my safety tether kept us from drifting away. I spent a few seconds wrestling uselessly in zero gravity, until she clanged her spacesuit helmet against mine. Her voice vibrated through our touching visors.

"Permission to come aboard," she said.

"Beatrice!" I shouted. "You're—but—how?"

"Opened exterior access right-before reactor blew," she said. "Hull panel separated and shielded me from the blast. Big-rock's gravity pulled me in, and suit-jets had just enough juice to maneuver to you. Glad you didn't change course."

"You're alive!" I laughed and slapped her shoulder. She wasn't smiling. "Oh. God. I'm so sorry about your ship. It wasn't—I mean, I didn't—"

She nodded, her lips a tight line. "I-know."

Dammit. Jayden had never re-encrypted my comms. Beatrice must have seen our entire shouting match.

"He's a slimeball." I didn't even want to say his name. "But I'll make sure he faces the music."

"How?"

"One thing at a time. Let's go inside. We need to show everyone you're alive."

She shook her head. "Heck-no. I don't want to be on-TV."

The privacy thing again. "You can't stay out here."

"I'd rather stay-here than be on your show."

"Always nice to meet a fan," I grumbled.

"Fine. I'll go in first, smash the camera in the

air lock, and you can hang out there. But *Hawk* isn't built for two people. We need to send a distress call so someone can come rescue you."

"There's no-one in-range."

I was getting angry now. "Fine! Then I need your help to get *both* of us to the finish line in *this* ship!"

She shook her head. "That may not be possible."

"It's just a stupid engineering problem," I said. "We'll find a solution. Let's go inside and we'll figure it out."

...

There was another surprise waiting for us inside *Hawk Five*: an alert from Gaveshana canceling Space Race.

They had located one of the missing racers. Apparently he had convinced himself that several markers were hidden inside a passing comet and gotten stupid in his excitement. He had misjudged his approach and crashed through the comet, breaking it into pieces and deflecting it from its original orbit. Now there was a huge slew of ice and rock headed toward our finish line.

The cometary debris field was too massive for Gaveshana to clear. The carrier had to change course to avoid deadly collisions, which meant all racers had to chase it to its new position if we wanted to catch our ride back to Earth. This wasn't a contest anymore. This was life or death. Gaveshana would stay out here as long as they could, but they wouldn't risk an entire carrier for 19 unlucky pilots.

Like every Space Race vehicle, *Hawk* was designed to support a single human pilot. Beatrice and I could stretch our oxygen with recyclers, and ration food and water for the next few days, but we just didn't have enough fuel to push our increased mass to the carrier's new flight path before our supplies ran out. We were going to miss the mark by several orders of magnitude.

"It's time for the distress call," I said after we had spent an hour running simulations and mainlining instant-coffee bulbs. "QSE has a whole team of consultants on retainer back on Earth. Maybe they'll think of something we missed."

"Ask them about Mars," Beatrice said.

I frowned at her. "The what, now?"

She surprised me by pushing herself out of the air lock and floating over to me. She handed me the tablet she'd been using. It showed a new flight plan: Instead of thrusting toward the Lagrangian point, she had *Hawk* diverting into Mars's orbit and slingshotting around the planet. We still didn't make it to the carrier, but we got a lot closer. Close enough for rescue.



"If we jettison some nonessential hardware as reaction mass," she said, "we may-be able to achieve a high orbit, above the fenceposts."

The Mars terraforming quarantine was enforced by an orbital grid of "fencepost" satellites that would sterilize—that is, burn with high-powered lasers until nothing organic could survive—any spacecraft attempting to land on the planet. It was going to take a long time to reshape the environment to allow human habitation, and even a few of the wrong microbes could set the project back by decades. Ares Amalgamated wasn't going to let that happen.

"This is kind of completely insane," I told her.

Beatrice shrugged. "Go-big or go-home."

"All right, Bea!" I gave her a friendly punch on the shoulder.

She gave me a dirty look. "Please-don't do that again."

"Sorry." I prepared to record a vid message. "But since you've overcome your stage fright, do you want to present this ludicrous scheme yourself?"

"Heck-no." She pushed herself away and drifted back into the air lock. "I don't know those people."

"Right." I switched on the camera. Imagining the look on Jayden's face put a big grin on my own. "Surprise, team! Look who's joined me aboard the *Hawk Five*. It's Beatrice Soltana from the Moon, and we have a very interesting math problem for you."

...

Jayden's initial response was not exactly what I expected.

"This is great!" he gushed. "We thought we'd have to cancel the show after that alert, but this is brilliant. You're not just trying to win a race now. You're both fighting for your lives!"

He went on for a while, explaining how QSE wanted us to record new promotional footage and schedule exclusive interviews with news outlets. I ignored all that and sent our trajectory calculations for a double-check by the mission control engineers. If *Hawk* couldn't detour around Mars, viewer counts would be the least of our worries.

It would take no less than two hours to get a reply from Earth, including the transmission delay and at least one emergency all-hands meeting. Normally I'd have been bored stupid, but now I had someone to talk to. Even if she was a weirdo Lunar who insisted on running words together for no apparent reason.

"So tell me, Bea," I said, "what made you want to enter this race?"

"Cribbage," she said.

"Come again?"

"Come where?"

THIS WASN'T A CONTEST ANYMORE. THIS WAS LIFE OR DEATH. AND ONE OF US WAS GOING TO DIE.

I shook my head. "Just repeat what you said. Crib-something?"

"Cribbage. It's a card game. Don't-you-know it?"

"I'm not really into gambling."

She looked offended. "It's not gambling. It's math and patterns. Easy-fun. I'll show you." She unzipped one of her jumpsuit pockets and pulled out a deck of old-fashioned playing cards.

"So do you always carry those with you, or—"

"Good-luck charm. Now shut-up and learn."

...

Jayden was considerably less happy the next time we heard from him. So was I, having lost the First Interplanetary Invitational Cribbage Tournament by several hundred points.

"We need your new best friend to sign some releases before we can put her on the air," Jayden grumbled into the camera. "The egg-heads are working on a flight plan. We'll get you that update in a few hours. But we need Bea's contract back as soon as possible. We still got a show to make, Kat." His transmission ended with an attached bolus of legal documents.

"What does this mean?" Beatrice asked me.

"It means you're going to be famous," I said, paging through her contract. "And they're going to pay you. Not as much as me, of course—"

"I don't-want to be on-TV," she said, pushing away from me.

"You do realize we've been streaming vid this whole time, right? They've already got you on camera."

"They can-not legally broadcast that footage unless I agree," Beatrice said. "And I will-not sign the release forms."

I stared at her. QSE's bean counters wouldn't commit resources to our rescue unless they could milk maximum profit from the show, and people weren't going to tune in for less than full high-def vid of both Beatrice and me. That was the only thing the studio cared about, in the end: whether they could sell more advertising. And ads work only if people are watching.

Can't shake the devil's hand and say you're only kidding.

I wouldn't be able to convince Beatrice. I saw it in her stubborn Lunar face; I knew it from her born-and-bred Lunar attitude toward respecting personal boundaries. And even if by some miracle she did sign, I didn't want her distracted by thinking about the billions of people watching her every move.

I had no idea how Beatrice might react to being under that kind of public scrutiny. I couldn't have her freaking out. I needed her expertise. I needed her to focus on our problem.

Focus.

"Don't worry," I said. "You don't have to sign anything."

...

Nobody was happy with my solution. I suppose that made it the perfect compromise. Jayden wasn't happy about all the extra editing to blur out Beatrice's face wherever it appeared on camera and disguise her voice whenever she spoke. I had to catch myself or record multiple takes more than once to avoid using her name. And Beatrice wasn't happy that some parts of her body would still appear in the broadcast.

But she was on my ship. Beatrice had yielded any right to privacy when she boarded, for as long as she stayed. The show's ratings spiked as fans circulated all kinds of theories about



who my mystery guest was. Meanwhile, we had even bigger problems.

"The numbers don't look good," said Team Kat's chief engineer, Dima, in our latest message from Earth. "*Hawk* requires course correction for a proper insertion orbit around Mars, but you can't spare the fuel—you'll need that later. So we have a new procedure. It requires you to manually jettison reaction mass. Here's a list of the equipment onboard you need to collect for disposal...."

Text scrolled across the bottom of the screen, listing all the hardware we'd have to dump. My stomach knotted. It was an awfully long list.

"But given the limited velocity you'll be able to impart manually, that's still not enough mass," Dima continued. "You will also need to remove some sections of the outer hull—"

"Are you kidding me?" I blurted.

"—but don't worry, it's perfectly safe." Dima attempted to smile, which only made it worse. "We'll leave the forward sections intact just in case you run into any dust or debris. There will only be cosmetic modifications to the back half of the ship."

"Where the actual engines are!" I said out loud.

"We've run several simulations," Dima said. "You don't have a lot of margin for error, so be very precise when you're ejecting the mass. The procedure document is attached. Let us know if you have any questions or concerns."

"If?" Beatrice said from behind me.

"Pasadena out."

I recorded a response for air, putting on my best intrepid-explorer face, praising my support team and expressing supreme confidence in their abilities. After that was done, I turned to Beatrice and said, "We are so going to die."

...

Maybe mission control's plan wasn't completely insane, but they didn't have to stand on *Hawk*'s hull and look into her bare metal guts after stripping the ceramic covering off her amidships and aft sections. It was unnerving to know that a good third of our spacecraft would be unarmored as we plowed into Mars's upper atmosphere.

And then there was the kicking. I'm sure we looked ridiculous out there, me with my back against the hull, holding on with both arms outstretched, kicking objects away from *Hawk* as hard as I could. Beatrice crouched next to me and moved each piece into place against my boots until we had jettisoned every last gram we could spare.

We went back inside, and I watched over Beatrice's shoulder while she ran the numbers

again. Either one of us could have done it, but she was faster. I guess growing up in the Moon's lower gravity really had given her better instincts for flight mechanics.

The news was bad. *Hawk* was still coming in too steep. We were going to cross the fenceposts surrounding Mars, and they would melt us into an inert mass before we touched the surface of the planet. There was no escape from our fate.

Escape.

"How much mass do we still need to lose?" I asked.

"By kicking?" Beatrice shook her head. "Too much. We can't spare any more consumables, and there's not much of the hull left. You're strong, Kat, but you're only human. We just can't get enough momentum."

I tapped some numbers into the console. "What if we could eject *this* much mass...at *this* velocity?"

Beatrice blinked at the screen, then looked at me. "How?"

"The escape pod," I said. "It has explosive bolts to push away from the spacecraft, just in

case I'm running from an engine overload or something. Those numbers are just a ballpark, we'll need to verify them—"

"You-wanna eject *me*," Beatrice said.

"No," I said. "We launch the pod empty. We're in this together, Bea."

...

We got so caught up in the work, we didn't even think to give mission control an update on our situation. This was probably a good thing: We wouldn't have wanted their pitiless input on this new dilemma.

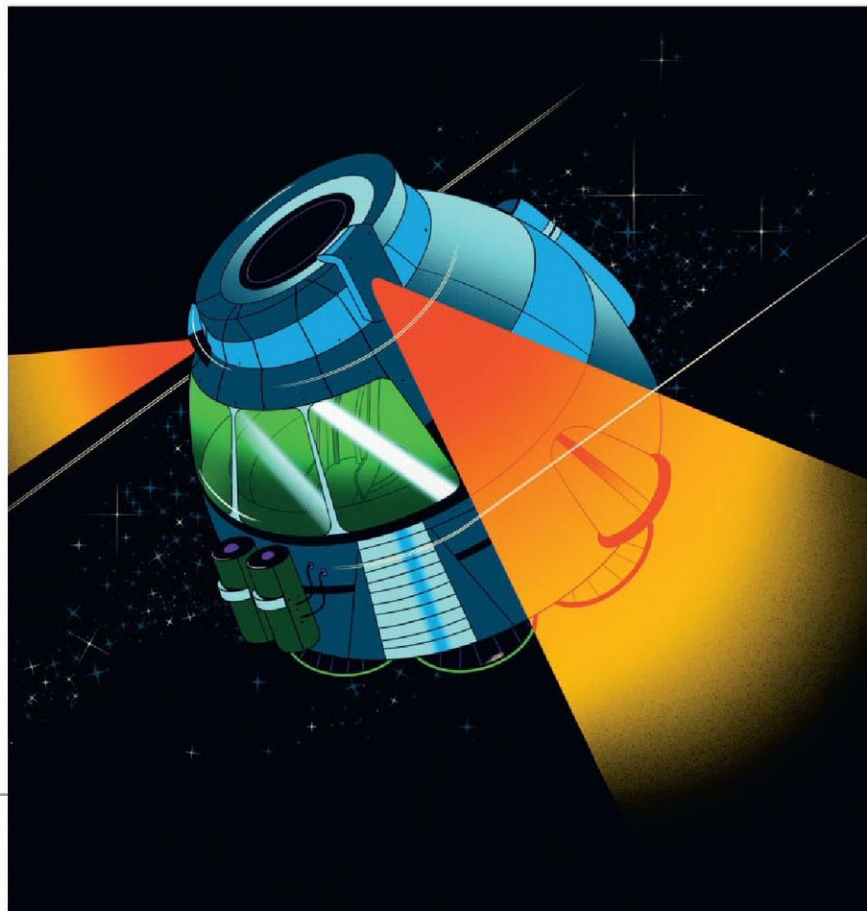
The escape pod by itself didn't have enough mass to complete our course correction. One of us had to be inside. And given the velocity of the pyro charges, *Hawk* would have to eject her escape pod—with occupant—just as she hit the edge of Mars's atmosphere.

The pod would fall to the surface, through the fenceposts' no-fly zone.

One of us was going to die.

"I volunteer," Beatrice said.

"No," I snapped. "No. Let's check this again. If we change the angle and launch the pod earlier—"





"It's okay, Kat," Beatrice said. "I volunteer."
"No! There's got to be a way to make this work."
"It's okay," Beatrice repeated in that irritating singsong. "We have a phrase on Luna: *Hard math*. Facts are facts. Like in cribbage—don't have the right cards, you don't score. Numbers don't lie. Numbers don't care."

"This isn't about numbers!" I smacked the console. "And you can still mess up in cribbage if you don't see a pattern that's on the table." I had proven that repeatedly. "I'll call Jayden. Get QSE to pull some strings with Ares Amalgamated. They must be able to do a remote shutdown on those fenceposts."

"Ares-Am has invested trillions of dollars in creating a planetary habitat," Beatrice said. "You really think a corporation that size will care if two people live-or-die? We might have both died in the race anyway—"

"Shut up," I said. "I'm not listening to your fatalistic crap."

"You still have a chance to—"

"La-la-la-la-la," I said, sticking fingers in both ears. "I can't hear you."

I saw Beatrice's mouth moving and shook my head.

"I am not receiving your signal," I shouted at her. "Sensors are offline—"

And then I had one last crazy idea.

"—important," Beatrice said as I opened my ears again. "Stop, Kat. Let-me-go."

I moved around her and started working the nav console again. "Bea. Question. How many meteors hit Mars every year?"

"Don't know. Why—"

"Just take a guess!"

She sighed. "Luna sees at least one meteoroid strike per day. Mars is a larger target, but its atmosphere shields it. I would guess one third as many impacts there. I'm sure Ares-Am has data from their sensors on-the-ground."

"Oh, I know they do," I said. "So why don't the fenceposts vaporize those meteors before they reach the surface?"

"Because they're not-spacecraft," Beatrice said.

"And how do the fenceposts *know* they're not spacecraft?"

"Because—" Beatrice blinked. "Hump-me! Because meteors don't emit radio-waves."

"Give that girl a cigar," I said.

"I don't smoke."

"Forget it." The console lit up with the escape pod's engineering schematics, and I moved aside so Beatrice could see where I was pointing. "We disable the pod's nav beacon and the automated distress signal, here and here. It'll look like just another rock to the

fenceposts. I'll survive reentry, and then—"

"Wait-stop." Beatrice held up a hand. "I should go. This is your ship."

"You grew up on the Moon," I said. "Mars's gravity is twice what your body can handle. Your lungs would collapse in less than a day."

Beatrice put a hand on my shoulder and spoke slowly. "This is *your* ship."

"That's right." I swallowed the lump in my throat. "I'm the captain, and I'm giving you an order. You're a better pilot than I'll ever be, Lunar. You get *Hawk* to the rendezvous. You get some help, and then you come back and rescue me."

Beatrice's eyes glistened. "Aye, captain."

"And this is *still* my ship," I said. "You're just borrowing her. Make sure you fill up the fuel tank before you return her."

Beatrice laughed, squeezing a tear out of one eye. I caught the droplet with my sleeve, soaking it up before it could drift away and into any equipment. "Your producer's not going to be happy about this."

"Screw him. He can suck it with a broken straw." I grabbed a tablet and scribbled down six words. "Here. You give him this message *after* you're safely aboard the carrier. Not before."

I handed Beatrice the tablet. She read it and frowned. "I don't-get-it."

"No-worries," I said, doing my best imitation of Lunar-speak. "He'll get it."

...

And that's how I wound up here, all alone on Mars.

My spacesuit's recycling unit can extract oxygen from the atmosphere, there's enough humidity for my emergency kit to make liquid water, and the escape pod contains a generous supply of awful-tasting but highly nutritious

food rations. I'll be able to survive until I get rescued. And I *will* get rescued.

My biggest problem is boredom. Fortunately, even though I can't talk to anyone, my comms receiver is still working. So I can watch my show—no, correction, it's Beatrice's show now. Or, as she's known on air, "Racer X": a blurry, pixelated head with a gravelly disguised voice.

I seriously love how much Jayden must be hating this.

Beatrice completed *Hawk*'s orbital slingshot around Mars with fuel to spare, and the constant friction between her Lunar ways and everyone else's Earther traditions is simply delightful. She won't take any action unless she understands the rationale behind it, which means someone at mission control has to explain every one of my spacecraft procedures to her, which usually results in a wacky misunderstanding. The best part is, Beatrice wins most of the arguments in the end. And yes, I'm keeping score.

Hawk Five is now just a few hours from the carrier rendezvous. After that, Beatrice will deliver my final message to Jayden. I hope then she'll understand why it had to be me in the escape pod.

Jayden might not have sent a rescue mission back to Mars for Beatrice—some stranger he doesn't care about—but I know he's still carrying a torch for me. Besides, I'm his meal ticket. He won't let a celebrity castaway die on his watch. Not when he can use me to sell ads. And my helmet cam's been recording continuously since I landed.

My message to him was "*Space Race 2: Kat vs. Mars*."

I'm sure we can get a full season out of this lousy place. ■

THE CONSOLE LIT UP WITH THE ESCAPE POD'S SCHEMATICS. "YOU GET HELP, THEN RESCUE ME."



"Did you bring a condiment?"

WHEN

*At large in the cradle of Western civilization, Jess Clarke and October 2014 Playmate
Roxanna June take Leonardo-level beauty with them wherever they go*

IN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALI MITTON**

ROME





















CLASSIC PLAYMATES GWEN WONG AND LORRAINE MICHAELS • GAHAN WILSON • BUNNY ON BASE

HERITAGE



FUTURE PERFECT?

Sexbots, moon colonies and time travel—the future according to Playboy

BY **ELIZABETH YUKO**

Imagination has never been in short supply at PLAYBOY. Throughout the magazine's first four decades, readers were routinely presented with possibilities and prognostications about what the years ahead might hold. That future was generally bright: Writers imagined that robots would be a part of lovemaking, that cities would be built inside 200-story pyramids, that families would vacation in outer space. This optimism is perhaps no surprise: The magazine's postwar audience (overwhelmingly young men of means) had little reason to believe their lives would get anything but better, and escapism, after all, was a tenet on which the magazine was founded.

From futuristic tech predictions to sexy short stories to otherworldly pictorials, a deep dive into the magazine's archives provides a fascinating series of snapshots. Below, a survey of some of our most interesting imaginings and forecasts.

PLANES, TRAINS AND ROCKET SHIPS

Given the jet-setting lifestyle most playboys aspire to, it's no surprise the magazine devoted significant column inches to the future of travel. Science writer David Rorvik dreamed big in October 1970 with his predictions of what transportation in the U.S. might look like by the mid-1980s. His vision of noiseless pneumatic subways—with passengers shooting through pipelines beneath the city in capsules traveling up to 600 mph—bears some resemblance to Elon Musk's Hyperloop initiative. Rorvik also foresaw the emergence of electric cars, though he envisioned them as operating along rails on elevated, automated highways. To access the roadways, he imagined you would “insert your credit card in a roadside meter and a central computer instantly checks your credit and the status of your vehicle.” Sounds a bit like today's EZ Pass.

Much less whimsically, in January 1968 renowned inventor and thinker R. Buckminster Fuller, who coined the phrase *spaceship Earth*, envisioned a generation of airplanes capable of carrying 700 to 1,000 passengers (at the time, U.S. commercial flights topped out at around 150). He wasn't wrong; when the Airbus A380-800 debuted in 2000 it had a seating capacity of 853.

In August 1991 writers Harriet Bernstein and Malcolm Abrams put the odds at 50-50 that by the year 2000 air travel would experience a “modular” revolution: Ten to 20 passengers would board a self-contained module at their local train station, where the module would be carried by railway to the airport, loaded onto a plane via conveyor and sent on to its final destination. The modules could include all

kinds of amenities, from kitchens to saunas—but it still sounds like traveling in a giant luggage compartment. One thing Bernstein and Abrams got right: the advent of self-parking cars.

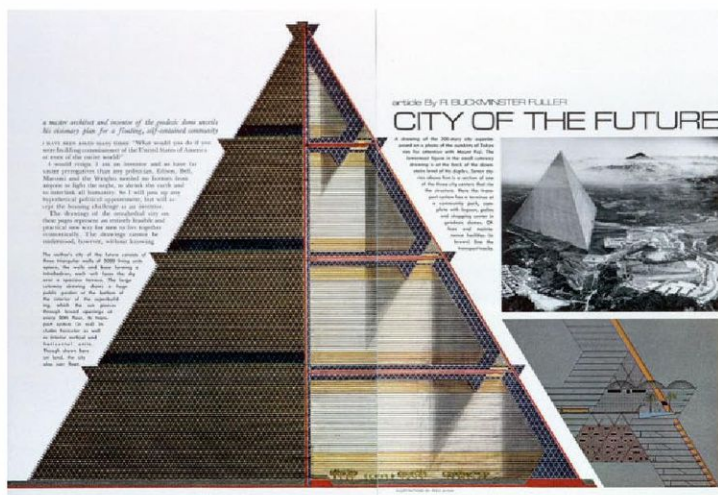
THE WRITE STUFF

Who better to field guesses about the future than the writers of science fiction? After all, as Anthony Boucher (himself a fantasy writer) noted in a May 1958 think piece, sci-fi authors are frequently one step ahead of scientists when it comes to imagining the next major breakthrough. One wonders if he had in mind

writer Arthur C. Clarke, who is credited with proposing the idea behind geostationary satellites in 1945 and who later went on to write 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. PLAYBOY published short stories by some of sci-fi's biggest names—some of whom stepped outside the realm of fiction to consider what wild wonders could one



Ruminating on computers in 1968's *The Mind of the Machine*, Clarke predicts “the merely intelligent machine will swiftly give way to the ultraintelligent machine.”



Previous page: The opening illustration for a 1979 short story by sci-fi legend Arthur C. Clarke. Above: In 1968, R. Buckminster Fuller imagined that pyramids would be home to the cities of the future.

day be. In 1968 Clarke pondered what humankind's first contact with aliens might be like in *When Earthman and Alien Meet*. A believer in the existence of extraterrestrials, Clarke counseled that aliens may already be familiar with us: “There may, of course, be entities who collect solar systems as a child may collect stamps. If this happened to us, we might never be aware of it. What do the inhabitants of a beehive know of their keeper?”

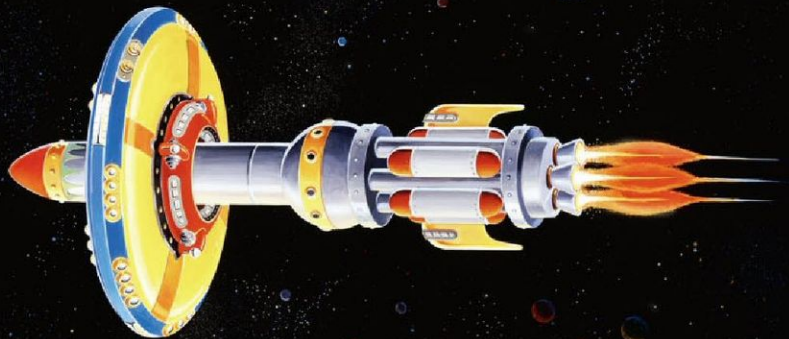
Or perhaps we would meet our interstellar peers while vacationing in space. In a July 1963 “Playboy Panel” entitled *1984 and Beyond*, sci-fi author Algis Budrys confidently asserts that his generation's children will “doubtless” be able to purchase a ticket to the moon on a civilian ship as easily as they would buy an airplane ticket in 1963. Even more aspirational, in *More Futures Than One*, Poul Anderson envisions “a reassuring view of the world gone sane by the year 2000, with man at peace and starting to right the imbalanced ecosystem.” Diabetes and cancer are cured, clean power is inexhaustible, robots make beds and kitchens prepare breakfasts—if only Anderson's dreams had come true, what a wonderful world it could be.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION

When the magazine's fiction writers sunk their teeth into actual fiction, they often chewed on a particular topic: time travel. One of the most poignant examples is Ray Bradbury's January 1984 story *The Toybee Convector*, in which a 130-year-old man who claimed to have traveled to the future discloses that he made up the



Above: Noiseless pneumatic subways that would provide mass public transportation and travel faster than a bullet train are one of many predictions in David Rorvik's 1970 article *The Transport Revolution*, along with "hoverfreighters" that could traverse the seas. (Also sadly unrealized to date: the funky, barely there futuristic fashions as envisioned by illustrator Gray Morrow.)



Above: *Eros in Orbit*, Arthur C. Clarke's 1992 nonfiction inquiry into "the weightless wonders of lust in space," is accompanied by mildly suggestive artwork by Ron Villani. **Left:** Arthur Rosch's 1978 short story *Sex and the Triple Znar-Fichi* takes readers to the intergalactic outpost of Flesh-Bargain City and features an out-of-this-world illustration of nightclub-going aliens by David Beck.



entire expedition; pretending to have visited the future allowed him to motivate the people of his doom-and-gloom present day with tales of how things would improve, in an H.G. Wells-inspired beneficent hoax.

Robert F. Young's July 1973 short story *The Time Machine* envisions the first time traveler as an antihero: an unlikely genius who is "eager to find the doorway to tomorrow" but has a debilitating drinking problem. His journey to "Nowhen" is orchestrated by Time Lab researchers who help dry out his future self.

One of the pleasures of time-travel fiction is the inventive vocabulary: In Robert Silverberg's June 1983 *Needle in a Timestack*, "phasing" allows humans to take "time jaunts" to the past; though you aren't supposed to fiddle with history, it is possible to alter your own time line—and others'. In this universe, it's possible to make things "unhappen," an option we have all surely dreamed about.

GOOD ROBOT, BAD ROBOT

Nearly 65 years ago short-story writer Harry Crosby's futuristic sexcapade *Roll Out the Rolov* anticipated a time when men and women would outsource their sexual duties to sexbot surrogates: literal sex machines. As it turns out, Crosby wasn't far off; although we haven't

yet created a walking, talking fembot (like the ones designed to shag Austin Powers), sex tech is a thriving industry replete with lifelike, customizable mechanical dolls that can be programmed to remember your birthday as well as your sexual preferences.

Today's most advanced sexbots are in part made possible via artificial intelligence—a topic Clarke addressed in December 1968's *The Mind of the Machine*. "Thinking machines" will at some point surpass human mental capacity, but this new breed of ultra-intelligent machines—"our mechanical offspring"—poses no threat to humankind. "The societies of man and machine will interact continuously but lightly: There will be no areas of conflict."

Industrialist J. Paul Getty, founder of the Getty Oil Company and at one time the richest person alive, pondered in the January 1966 issue a future society that would include places for both man and machine. Considering the economic angle (naturally), Getty surmised that millions of human jobs could easily be lost to a robot workforce. More than half a century later, he has been proven correct many times over.

HITS...

The thing about predicting the future is that if you make enough guesses, some are bound

to come true. But in hindsight, asking a visionary like Bill Gates to predict the future, even in 1994, is kind of cheating. In the July *Playboy Interview*, Gates asserts that e-mail and the internet would soon be used by millions. (Bingo!) Gates also essentially describes Netflix years before it was founded: "Say you want to watch a movie. To choose, you'll want to know what movies others liked and, based on what you thought of other movies you've seen, if this is a movie you'd like. You'll be able to browse that information. Then you select and get video on demand. Afterward, you can even share what you thought of the movie."

Now, of course, you can watch these movies on a flatscreen TV...which, you guessed it, had been foretold in *PLAYBOY*: The December 1985 issue asked readers to "imagine a screen the size of present-day projection units but flat, very thin and self-contained."

...AND MISSES

PLAYBOY's proverbial crystal ball was often cloudy. Buckminster Fuller, for example, imagined in 1968 the ideal "city of the future" as a metropolis entirely contained within an enormous tetrahedral pyramid (a somewhat surprising structural choice, given that Fuller



The 1978 pictorial *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind* takes on alien erotica, imagining a dalliance between a sleek female humanoid and an initially uninterested man.

was the father of the geodesic dome). His vision of a massive, totally enclosed and climate-controlled habitat is reminiscent of Dubai's long-planned Mall of the World, which, like Fuller's plan, would contain parks and green spaces along with living quarters. Another thing the two ideas have in common: Neither has become a reality.

In the November 1968 issue, rocket engineer Krafft A. Ehrlicke looked heavenward and imagined "Astropolis," a space resort. His "ultimate fun city" would feature hotel pods for travelers looking for a little astral entertainment such as "weightless dancing." Sounds silly, but in 1968, with the space race in full swing, it seemed plausible; in fact, the magazine called Ehrlicke's idea "a prediction of the highest probability." Plans for extraterrestrial tourism are actually in the works today: Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic aims to start commercial flights of his spaceliner later this year, though his idea is for

there-and-back journeys rather than a travel package with long-stay accommodations.

CELESTIAL SEX

Naturally the magazine's pictorials took a guess at the unknown—albeit with tongue

firmly planted in cheek. In *Girls From Outer Space*, the August 1962 PLAYBOY contemplated female aliens. The premise was simple: "If there actually are gals out there in our galaxy, how will the playboy of, say, 2000 A.D. fare with them on terra firma?" The photos imagined these "exotic extraterrestrials" as



Want to fix past mistakes? In Robert Silverberg's 1983 fiction story *Needle in a Timestack*, it's possible.

babes in blue, green, silver and red body paint, with accessories thrown in to add to the fantasy. The topless specimen from Venus, for example, wears a helmet to supply her with carbon dioxide at all times.

Not long after the hit movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* premiered, the February 1978 pictorial *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind*

continued the alien-sex speculation, depicting a silvery female ET seducing a man from Earth. Fortunately for him, according to the text, she has "the same basic equipment as a human woman." In a steamy scene—literally, there's a lot of fog—the hairless alien transforms into a beautiful woman before commencing the sex act with her previously unwilling partner.

Sexy times in space seem to be the premise of *Through Space and Time With Schwimmer and Jones*, a *Playboy Funnies* comic that ran in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The two protagonists—named after the strip's creators, writer Eugene Schwimmer and artist Randy Jones—encounter many of the same social situations men face on Earth. In the October 1979 installment, Schwimmer and Jones awaken on their starship after enjoying a night on the town on Planet Nurgo, each discovering to their surprise that their one-night stands are covered in hair, slime and eyeballs—a classic intergalactic beer-goggles situation.

VISION QUESTS

There's a reason fortune-tellers are a mainstay on carnival midways: Speculating about the future is fun. Picking up an early issue of PLAYBOY was a surefire way to temporarily escape everyday realities—readers were always a page turn away from fantasy. Some things never change. ■

A Wonderful Weirddness

The offbeat art of cartoonist Gahan Wilson has graced PLAYBOY's pages for six decades



Gahan Wilson's brilliant collection of creatures—man-eating monsters, angry aliens and murder-minded children, to cite just a few—has paraded through PLAYBOY since March 1958, when the magazine published its first full-page color cartoon by the artist. In that piece, a woman is shocked to see she has swept up a portion of her own shadow. Darkly funny, it sits squarely at the intersection of humor and horror where much of Wilson's work is found.

“As a cartoonist you develop this habit, a kind of observational skill. You're looking

for something you can turn into funny,” says Wilson (pictured at left).

Growing up in Evanston, Illinois, he became fascinated by comic strips and began drawing cartoons when he was just “an itsy-bitsy kid,” he says. Deciding to pursue an artistic career, he graduated from the nearby School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

In 1957, Wilson was a struggling artist. While trying to sell his work to *Trump*—a short-lived PLAYBOY-owned title—he got a lucky break when art director Arthur Paul diverted him straight to Hugh Hefner's office. At the time, Wilson had no idea who Hef was but immediately felt he'd found the right home for his work when he overheard Hef on the phone insisting his magazine would remain “pro sin.”

Thus was born not only a fruitful professional relationship—PLAYBOY has published nearly 700 of Wilson's cartoons, plus fiction and travelogue pieces—but also a friendship. (Wilson even became a long-term guest at the Chicago Mansion.) It helped that Hef, a one-time aspiring cartoonist himself, took the form very seriously. “It was marvelous good luck to work with a guy like that,” Wilson says.

Today, at the age of 88, Wilson still creates nearly every day. “It's great fun, a big challenge,” he says of cartooning. “It's like a game, and so satisfying when you get that *aha!* If you get a cartoon well finished, it's a triumph.”

To enjoy some of those triumphs, turn the page for an entire spread of our favorite Gahan Wilson works.—Cat Auer



Hef personally selected the magazine's cartoons, often marking up drafts with notes on both the art and the copy. Hef was “a very good editor, very sensible,” Wilson says. **Above left:** Hef's notes on a Wilson rough sketch. **Above right:** The final cartoon, with changes incorporated, ran in 2002.

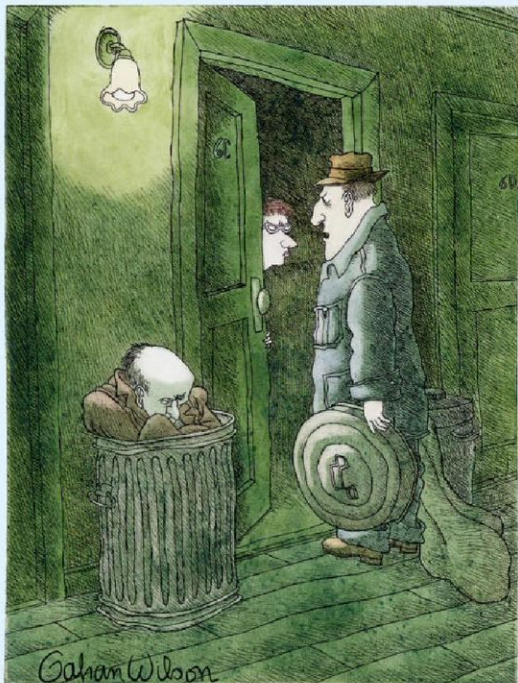


HERITAGE

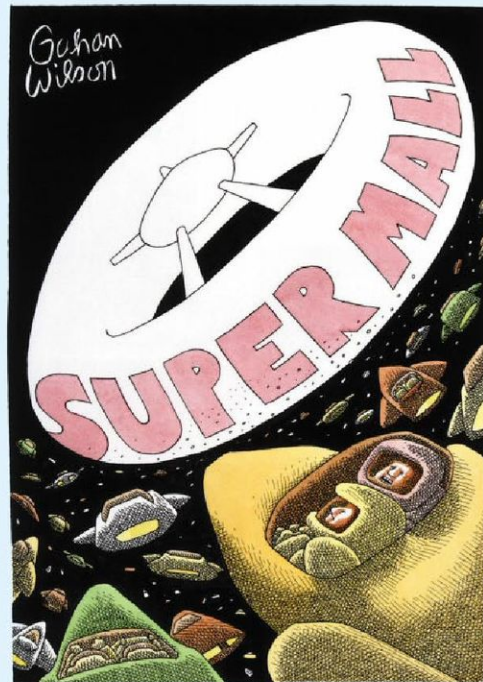
Welcome to Gahan Wilson's world—beware the sharp edges



"I told you not to do that!"



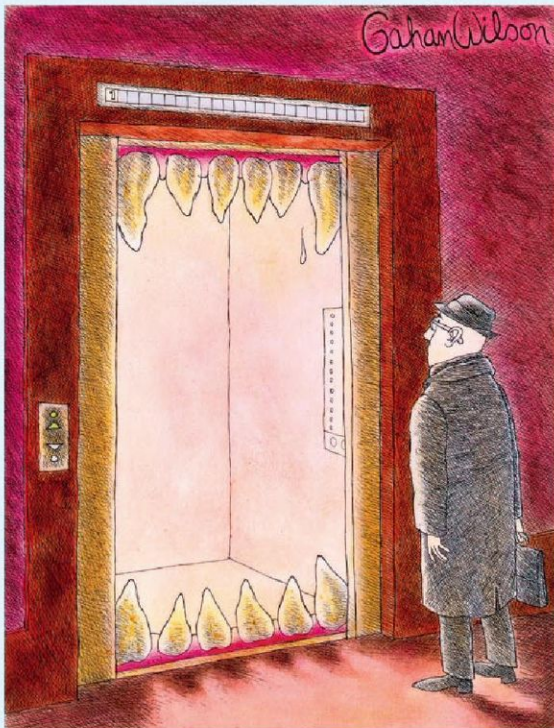
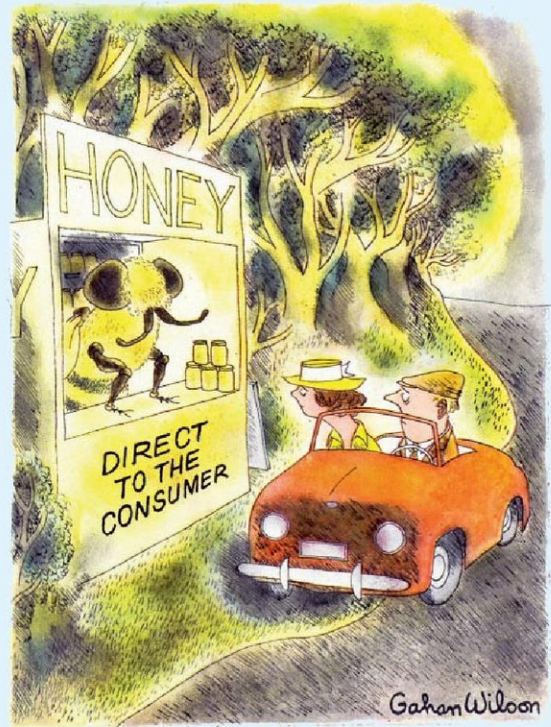
"You don't get rid of him that easy, Mrs. Jacowsky."



"It's obviously what this whole space thing was about from the first!"



"And here comes your tomato surprise, sir!"



"We've completely taken over Earth's political systems, profoundly altered its ecology in our favor, and—outside of a few nutcases—all of its inhabitants refuse to admit we even exist!"



Gwen Wong

April 1967 Playmate

*"The important thing is to be with a man with whom I can relax and enjoy myself by being myself," said **Gwen Wong** in her Playmate interview. At the time, the brunette beauty was a painter, an avid cook and a jazz fan—not to mention the second Asian American Playmate in this magazine's history. (Fun fact: Gwen's memorable sexy-preppy Centerfold outfit and pose—shown on page 170—were emulated by Madonna in an October 1992 Vanity Fair photo by Steven Meisel.) The five-foot-tall Cocktail Bunny at the Los Angeles Playboy Club was selected to be an elite Jet Bunny, traveling the world as a flight attendant on Hugh Hefner's private plane, and later started her own interior-design business. A renaissance woman like this deserves a little Shakespeare: "Simply the thing I am/Shall make me live."*











Lorraine Michaels

April 1981 Playmate

Lorraine Michaels was working as a bank teller in Los Angeles when Daina House, our January 1976 Playmate, suggested she audition to be in PLAYBOY. With that helpful assist, Lorraine—a diehard L.A. Kings hockey fan—took a shot on goal and scored Centerfold status. Born in England to a U.S. Air Force family, Lorraine grew up across America, living in nearly two dozen states before settling in California. After becoming a Playmate, she landed several small movie and TV roles and worked part-time at Playboy’s West Coast studio. So what inspired the April showers prominently featured in her pictorial? “I wanted to list making love in the rain on my Data Sheet, under turn-ons. I’ve done it. It’s fun, all right. But then I wondered, Would anyone believe me?” Certainly we would. That’s Lorraine: right as rain—and right about rain.









HERITAGE



LOS ANGELES, 1965

A Bunny disputes a call during a charity softball game at Dodger Stadium.

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