

Happy
2018
Celebrity
Friends!

Thank
you for
your
love.

♥ iSmith

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1. 2018

1.1 January

January 1 - Verne Troyer gets the start of a project (2018-01-01 00:02)

Happy Birthday Verne Troyer! You're the only Verne I've ever heard of, even though it's a great name. I assume you were named after the writer. Ernest P. Worrell may have ruined it for subsequent new parents who would decline to call their baby after the rubber-faced man's unseen friend, even with the added 'e'. I hope the Dick Clark replacement doesn't overshadow your celebration with promises of change leading to wayward resolutions. What was it like being the oldest in your class? Did you play any sports growing up? I hope you have a lovely year.



[April 22 edit: I hope you finally found what you were looking for, Verne. Rest peacefully.]

[Author's September 15 note: This is obviously a very weak first celebrity birthday message, posted before I had any intention with the project other than finishing it. But when he died on April 21, there was a part of me that supposed my notes might have been closely connected to a wrathful destiny. If January 1 died soon after I wished him a happy birthday, who's to say [1] January 2 wouldn't die soon after. Jack is 71, after all, almost reaching the lifespan of the average American zookeeper. And [2] January 3, he's overweight and an admitted alcoholic, so his death wouldn't be the biggest surprise. And the realization of my foreboding messages would happen while 2018 is still going strong, and many Twitter celebrities are still awaiting a birth anniversary. Famous people would be deleting their accounts, pleading at me to end the madness. I wouldn't, of course, and so I'd get called a serial killer on the TV and my life would be upended. It seems, though, that Verne is the only one who never made it to the new year, so my life remains simple and barely anyone calls me a murderer. So it goes.]

[Editor's October 15 note: The iSmith Birthdeath Effect™ has claimed another January celebrity. Rip in Peace, [3] Paul .]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-2-jack-hanna>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-3-dan-harmon/>

3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-21-happy-birthday-paul-allen/>

January 2 - Jack Hanna gets animal considerations (2018-01-02 09:00)

Happy Birthday Jack Hanna! I like animals too, but probably not as much you. I once created a mammal called the strontoboreon, with a fox for a tail, a giraffe for an arm, and a black widow for a face. What is your favourite combination of animals? Don't you find that slug is the onomatopoeia of the animal kingdom? Did you ever notice that other animals grow their own clothes, and if they can't grow them, they don't wear any. That's one more thing we have to do to feel superior. "Look at me everyone! I have on an out-fit. My pants and my shirt have a high coordination correlation. And you haven't even noticed my cufflinks yet! They link my cuffs, like the creator always intended." And wait a minute here. What's up with socks? Hiding them sweet toes from prying eyes I suppose. Do talk show hosts fake being afraid of your animals for ratings? I mean, it's not even sweeps week.

January 3 - Dan Harmon gets pestered (2018-01-03 09:00)

Happy Birthday Dan Harmon! At what age did you decide Dan suited you better than Daniel or Danny? 'Magine if it was Dan Pudi and Danny Harmon. You can't, I bet. I bought the real Dan Pudi a beer at a brewery but didn't give up his cover. Eventually, enough people recognized him and he left. What was your favourite birthday gift ever? I'm picturing a blue wagon but now I'm thinking it's some kind of game extension. You were once in a [1]dream I had buying an expensive tree. How come "haha" is so different than "lol"? Every time someone writes "lol" it to me I picture this stupid little look on their face. Sometimes I write "lol" if I want to show the top part of a guy getting held up. Or a bird's-eye view of the same guy skiing. Sometimes I write dob when I want two people to be smelling his armpits.

1. <http://ismith.ca/dream/podguest/>

January 4 - Dave Foley gets an outdoor slumber (2018-01-04 09:00)

Happy Birthday Dave Foley! I bet at this point you've heard every "in the hall" pseudo-joke people have to offer, and you nod along smilingly waiting for it all to be over. If you haven't done so in a while, take a nap outside. Not because there is something especially uniting or inherently interesting in dozing off in a proximal nature, but because it is so disorienting to wake up in the grass, either by the sun portraying a sundial or by a lonely passerby, initially reserved but eventually happy to discover that you are in fact able to wake up and continue your day, relieving them of the unpleasantness and time-consumption of having to turn in a dead body to the appropriate authorities. Mild disorientation is a reminder that comfort is easy, that easy is boring, that boredom should be protested and rallied

against in the streets more than war or anti-war or jelly bean houses.

January 5 - deadmau5 gets a restructured week (2018-01-05 09:00)

Happy Birthday Joel Zimmerman! My friend wore your head one time. I've never said that to anyone else. Remember when Bill Gates was the only one who could control his thermostat with his voice? With the robots having taken over, it's high time we move to a 4-day workweek. This won't affect you so much, but for the office people it's pretty important. The problem is, we won't be able to get people to agree on which day we should get off. About 0 people will pick bland old Tuesday, since most people forget it exists anyway. About 10 % will pick Wednesday, which makes sense, as it could be a nice way to break up the week. Another 10 % will pick Thursday, mainly out of confusion, thinking they were actually choosing Friday. Speaking of which, I used to think that, with almost no exceptions, everyone else would pick Friday. It would make the week feel like we're all getting two Saturdays, the holy grail and apex and crest of days. Then I started thinking, sure, two Saturdays would be pretty killer, but could we really keep that up? For a while it would be great. Partying would go through the roof. But after a few years of that, we'll all be clamouring for some extra relaxing time. Anyway, in case you have any official input into this matter, when it comes to which day we'd get off, I'd like to make a case for the Mondays. It's basically doubling down on Sunday. Two Sundays. Not as many as Billy Crystal, but still better than the current, paltry single Sunday.

January 6 - Julie Chen gets variations on a dining invitation (2018-01-06 09:00)

Happy Birthday Julie Chen! I like the way you asked questions to the Big Brothers like they had important things to say when really I'm not so sure they did, and I'm not so sure you think they did either. You can tell a lot about a person by how they ask certain questions. You know every now and then you run into a guy (or girl!) and they ask you, "Hathn't thou yet dined at thee hour which is nigh?" It's perplexing at first, but then out of nowhere some other dude runs up and yells in your face, "Yo, youse eat?" Same question, different words. But before you have a chance to admire the dichotomy, this fella's brother pops up out of nowhere with a quick, "Foodstuff facetown?" Now don't get me wrong, it's nice having all these friends who request your company for a lunch time dalliance, even the as yet unmentioned fourth friend, who you went to high school with and puts far too much effort into trying to maintain a relationship that has clearly run its course. He's the one who always goes, "Gobble gobble, birds and bobbles?" then sits there with that stupid hopeful look on his face waiting for a response. Now so far I realize I've only mentioned other people's diction of choice, but hidden among those questions is the one that I actually say. Which do you think it is? C'mon, which one do you think I say? Yeah, you're right, it's "Foodstuff facetown?". Gets right to the point, doesn't it? Vital to a leader's perception, if I ever hope to attain the position of leader anywhere.

January 7 - Katie Couric gets a baristo's indolence (2018-01-07 09:00)

Happy Birthday Katie Couric! I wish you the best today, I really do, but there's something on my mind and I'd like to know how you feel about it. So the other day I walk into this coffee shop near my house, and I step up to the counter, with no one else in line. I begin ordering a cappuccino but stop myself when I notice a sign for a featured item next to the cash register. "Turmeric chili latte". Well this sounds interesting, I'm sure you'll agree, so I have no choice but to change my order to this special drink. While it's being prepared, I see that they sell the turmeric chili mix on its own to make at home. It says "decaffeinated" on the bag but I assume that's only because the coffee isn't included. However, I ask for confirmation from the baristo that my drink contains a healthy dose of the caffeine. Now here's where it takes a turn. He goes, "No, it doesn't." So I say, looking out for future customers, "Oh, you should probably make that clear on the sign." He has the gall to go, "You should've asked." Stunned, I sit down and gather my thoughts. He interrupts these thoughts with a, "I don't make the sign, man. I'm a drone." A drone! In this tiny coffee shop! No way, I say! And then I say, "Well in a coffee shop I think it's safe to assume that a latte has coffee in it." His response? "Latte just means milk." My word! I say back, "So if I ordered a latte, you'd give me a tall glass of milk?" His silence said it all. So my question to you is, "What's your favourite type of coffee?"

January 8 - Jenny Lewis gets a young Peter Pan (2018-01-08 09:00)

Happy Birthday Jenny Lewis! What is your favourite birthday memory? I remember the day I turned 7. I was the eponymous Peter Pan in my class's student-altered French-language stage version based on characters created by J.M Barrie. There were two incongruent Wendys, one of them portrayed by my first crush. Captain Hook was played by a boy who, throughout high school, stood on the tips of his toes as he walked, even though he was tall enough as it was. During our second performance, the one seen by our parents, I couldn't find the words for the most important of my twenty three lines, one I will never forget again. "En garde, capitaine!" Hook tried to whisper my line to me, but I couldn't hear him through the panic in my own head. The rest of the show was a daze, and at the end I felt as though I ruined everyone's hard work. Years later, I would see a videotape of the play and realize that the entire production was completely incoherent, consisting of nothing more than a group of children running around haphazardly, myself in green stretch pants and a funny hat. If given the opportunity, I offer sincere apologies to any adult forced to sit through that half hour.

January 9 - Joan Baez gets Mickey Brennan'd (2018-01-09 09:00)

Happy Birthday Joan Baez! It was a different time when you were younger, I bet, but you seem to be cooler than ever. When my dad was a kid, he knew this fella Mickey Brennan. Mickey started up a softball team for the boys in the neighbourhood, and he even got his uncle Ray's company to sponsor them and buy their jerseys and all that. They joined the league over in Placentia, and had to call themselves The Brennans after the store. Halfway through the summer, everyone else decided they were half sick of Mickey, and he wasn't much good in the field anyway, so they kicked him off the

team. Now fast forward about thirty years, and no one has heard of or talked about Mickey since that fateful summer. My dad wanted to get a band on the go, so he got his brother and their buddy to start one, and they started playing shows around town. Billy Houlihan and Eddie wanted to practice all the time, but Dad figured they were fine just playing the shows, they were good enough by now. Billy and them wanted someone who was more dedicated than that, so they got another fella and booked a gig at the old folks' house, without Dad. When Dad found out, which was bound to happen, he went up to Billy and was like, "What the hell? You Mickey Brennan'd me!", to which Billy shouted right back, "You Mickey Brennan'd yourself!"

[Editor's note: There is a slight possibility that the narrator of this is the author's cousin Michael.]

January 10 - Jemaine Clement gets incremental name dropping (2018-01-10 09:00)

Happy Birthday Jemaine Clement! A few years ago I wrote [1]this song about David Bowie because one of his songs was too expensive for my friend to use in her film. I only learned after that your Bowie song in the show intended to include the man himself, so his absence was probably disappointing to you. But besides that, I have this friend Adam who is decidedly more famous than I am. Not like real famous, but Newfoundland famous, which means you never heard of him, but I don't think anyone anywhere has heard of me so I'm sticking with my initial assertion. I was hanging out with him the other day and we went out for a cigarette on the back porch of our other buddy's house. He's a decent storyteller when the air is crisp and he has a smoke in his hand, and this means he'll usually take the lead in the conversation, which is fine with me. Adam used to be in a band, and one time they were in the middle of touring with Stars. So he starts telling me this story about hanging out backstage with the main guy in Stars, Torquil Campbell, who happens to be more famous than him. Torq lit up a cigarette inside the theatre, and he noticed Adam giving him a concerned look about that, but Torq said, "We're rock stars. They expect it from us!" and that was enough for Adam to loosen up. So Torq started telling him a story about a play he was in years ago, with the actor Philip Seymour-Hoffman, who most would agree is far more famous than Torq, Adam, and myself. One way this is evident is how I will only refer to him as Philip Seymour-Hoffman. So Philip Seymour-Hoffman apparently told Torq about how when he was just getting started in acting and was at a party in New York, where he got to meet John Lennon, one of the most famous people ever, so much so that I can simply call him John and most people will know who I'm talking about. Philip Seymour-Hoffman said that John actually came up to him and asked him if he wanted to go out for a smoke with him. Now Philip Seymour-Hoffman didn't smoke at the time, but he figured this was a good time to start if John Lennon wants to have a cigarette with him. While they were outside together, John told him that when he was younger, The Beatles had a residency in Hamburg where they played almost every night for over a year in the early 1960s. After a show one night, John went out for a smoke with their drummer at the time, Pete Best, and ran into a long-haired guy in flip flops and a scraggly outfit. After talking to him for a while, John eventually realized who it was. Turns out buddy was Jesus.

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/bowie>

January 11 - Mary J. Blige gets transferable Bop-It skills (2018-01-11 09:00)

Have you ever felt uncool? You emanate class on a level I can't even see from where I'm standing. One time I was too uncool to even clean myself. I was at my aunt's house last year, about to take a shower. The dirt was dripping off me, but I couldn't figure out how to get the damn thing working. I mean, I've used enough showers in my life. I'm a smart guy. And I tried everything! But I couldn't solve the conundrum. Disappointed in myself, I reflected on my childhood, which also included some disappointing moments. But there was one thing that jumped out at me. It was this game I owned called Bop It. Bop It taught me all the required skills to get the thing going so I didn't lose. Twist it. Pull it. I brought this knowledge back to the shower faucet, but still couldn't figure it out. Resigned, I was forced to Pass it. I had a long day and didn't have it in me to keep trying. I couldn't turn on the shower myself, so I went to go get her to show me how. She strolled into the bathroom, made a fist, and without saying anything she hit the handle and the water came on. Of course, it's the name of the blessed thing. As you may have surmised, I only had to Bop it!

January 12 - Raekwon gets world leader factoids (2018-01-12 09:00)

When did you add "the Chef" to your name? You think any actual chefs do that? I don't know any other Raekwons. We used to call this guy Ronnie in my class "Weak Ron" which is almost like your name but a little jumbled around. He got the name 'cause he couldn't climb a rope one time. And then he didn't know his own president's name! Did you know that over half of all Americans are unable to name a world leader that isn't their own. They're unaware that Sweden's Bjorn Svenson won the last election with over 60 % of the popular vote. That Jacques Levier is France's first openly gay prime minister. Or that Meow Zedong was a key factor in China finally denouncing Communityism. That Iran would have certainly dissolved into three separate nations if not for the diplomatic prowess of Emperor Hussein Ahmadinejad. That Bangladesh's Tarek Gamizir signed into law that sweat shops will now be known as perspiration centres. They don't know that Strasbourg Schutzstaffel recently fired his entire cabinet for failing to give him a standing ovation as he re-entered his German parliament after an extended bathroom break. That New Zealand's own Bret Wellington is the last remaining dodo. Or that Boogo Boogo from the Central African Republic also fails to exist. Their ignorance is palpable.

January 13 - Julia Louis-Dreyfus gets a painful hallucination (2018-01-13 09:00)

Last year I was in the hospital getting my stomach removed, along with a GIST tumour that was hiding out nearby. After my initial surgery, I became quite ill for the next couple of days, later determined to be caused by a leaky gall bladder, and I ended up hallucinating for around 36 straight hours. I became so accustomed to the visions that I managed to write down a lot of what I saw immediately after it happened, fighting the upcoming apparitions in order to type the previous scene.

In one, I witness an alternate ending to the film "Christine", although it was titled "The Old Adventures of New Christine" and you were playing the title role. Michael C. Hall takes you to a college

sports match in Florida. You're upset that the city has to pay for stadiums to be built, instead of the teams and its fans, so you donate \$50 to Tottenham, which is now in Florida. Hall gets upset because he wants Sarasota to get more money, so he begins to put a competing \$50 in their donation box next to bathrooms. However, you work hard to prevent this.

There's a struggle, and one of you pulls out a gun. A shot is heard, and you are passed out on top of him. He screams and tries to get up. In order to do so he needs to pull the gun out through a tiny hole made in the wall. He yanks vigorously, repeatedly, enough to hurt his hand, eventually hurting his nose as well. I come to in the hospital, having pulled out the tube from my own nose, and quickly realize that I should not have done this.

January 14 - Jason Bateman gets a squirrel's revenge (2018-01-14 09:00)

You're gonna laugh at me for this, you definitely already knew it - but anyway, I just found out I'm going to die someday. I've heard whispers through the years of other people acknowledging that fate for themselves, but I always figured I was immune.

Until today.

On my walk home, I meet a squirrel who's sitting in a tree. You know, one of those squirrels who has that really wise air about him and he speaks decent English even though it isn't his first language. We start chatting about the weather - the sun's been out for a week straight, which was doing wonders for our skin, him and me both. Then all of a sudden he brings up the inefficiency of the World Bank, and gets really passionate about it, never sensing my indifference to the goings on over there.

It occurs to me that he must have read this article in the New Yorker that I happened to also read, even with my topical indifference. I call him out for being a bandwagoning World Bank hater, not predicting how much offense he'd be taking with the passing comment.

So then he asks me how I want to die, if I'm forced to choose one method. In reality I'd like to be smothered in the clouds, but it hit me that his hypothetical was not that at all, but was really a threat to my very existence. I do some quick thinking and say, "Thanks, but no thanks. I'm fine here and I think I'll just play it out."

Little do I know, that is not a valid option. He thinks I can tell at this point that it's all over, that he's going to flat out kill me.

I don't.

His hidden partners squirrel their way down from surrounding trees, and they all surround me, each one clutching a different medieval weapon. He pulls a tiny revolver out of his pouch and points it at me.

I ask him why he's doing this - it couldn't have just been the offhanded World Bank comment, this looks premeditated - and he tells me I know why.

I hate when people do that.

A memory appears to remind me where I'd seen him before. Years earlier my mother had had a torrent affair with a squirrel, something I'd discovered while skipping school and returning home to play video games. I told my father about it, and so he burned down the woods near our house, forcing all the squirrels to move neighbourhoods.

"It wasn't my fault, squirrel!" I plead. "I was young. You can be my substitute dad any day." As I go in for the hug, he interrupts my attempt at reconciliation.

"Too late, twat."

Bang.

January 15 - Charo gets an avian alarm (2018-01-15 09:00)

When I think of you, I dance like a flamingo. There's got to be that one bird who wakes up all the other birds in the morning, before they want to. Every other bird you hear is yelling at the first one to go back to bed. Like at a movie theatre when one person is talking so then half the other people in the theatre start shushing that person. Every morning I'm woken up to a beautiful, melodic, movie theatre shushing. I pull my curtains apart and ready myself to take on the day, one second at a time. As I gaze through the window, a murder of crows, ten thousand strong, flies high over my head on their way out for the day. The unknowing neighbours expect an upcoming apocalypse, or at least a baby plague. But it's just crows, and they are calling Jack Handey's name.

January 16 - Lin-Manuel Miranda gets an alternate path to a coveted award (2018-01-16 09:00)

I didn't used to know about hard work positively correlating with success, and my head and its contained narcissism only saw one way out of my noteworthless path. I would dream about running into the right sequence of people, increasingly influential and supportive, where I would be on and charming enough to convince them of my foolish intelligence I was as yet shielding from the world. Eventually, one of them would find a way to award me with that coveted MacArthur genius grant, and I would take my \$625,000 and invest it wholly in my potential. I would, of course, fail in spectacular fashion, but none of us could foresee that at the time. Someone, maybe a different Fellow, would make a documentary about me and the detrimental effect of my windfall. God, I apologize, I didn't mean to ramble on like this. I'm being such a Lin-Manuel Carrie right now. Someone read me my Miranda rights so I'll shut the flip up!

January 17 - Joshua Malina gets a Baader-Meinhof'd rice pudding (2018-01-17 09:00)

Do you or any of your characters have an unusual affinity for rice mixed with milk and cinnamon and raisins? Last week, I mentioned flippantly that rice pudding is boring and tasteless. In hindsight, this was not fair and possibly not accurate, as I cannot remember having ever eaten even a bite. Since then, the dessert has injected itself into every facet of my life, coaxing me to give it a taste.

A slow child at a restaurant in the midst of a tantrum threw his rice pudding at my head, barely missing my open mouth.

That night, on an episode of a television show about aliens, a past abductee, whose actor might be the one I would enlist to portray me in an adaptation of my life, was lied to about receiving a bowl of rice pudding.

Finally, I awake in a stupor, drunk on dreams and high on insomnia. The next several hours go missing, and in the morning I'm discovered by my dog, who is licking my face, basking in the rice pudding slathered around my kitchen.

Now I think that rice pudding is fine, at least understanding how it came to be.

What I'm trying to say is, don't be afraid to try new things, especially when you have no reason not to, and the universe is really pushing to make it happen.

January 18 - Jason Segel gets a body donation (2018-01-18 09:00)

What do you think happens when you die? When it's my turn, my entire body will be donated to some well-meaning group of people, since I'll be finished with it. Being buried or cremated is a waste of money and space, and maybe I don't understand the afterlife, but I don't really see how those types of bodily disposal would improve my condition at that time.

Some people donate their bodies to science, usually for medical reasons, to help students learn human anatomy more practically. But apparently there's red tape involved and who knows what they'll find in there anyway.

I guess most people donate their body to geology. Circle of life and all. Hakunes matunes.

Some rich people donate theirs to archaeology, after their corpses get put in underground tombs and whatnot, adorned in jewels and slaves and whatnot. Then they wait a bit before being discovered by the future people who want to find out what rich people from the past used to eat and whatnot.

Realistically, I want to donate my body to comedy. I'd love for my last act on this earth to be as a prop in someone's joke. Like that doctor baby joke. - You know the one, this woman gives birth to a boy, and when she wakes up after a few hours the doctor comes in the room holding it, and as he's getting ready to hand the baby over to her, he throws it out an open window. She starts crying,

but he interrupts her. "Gotcha, he was already dead." - I'd let someone think that they watched me die, and then find out later that I was already dead. That would be a good one. And what a way to go!

If this doesn't work, I will "perform" as a dead marionette at a local comedy club. Who wouldn't want to see a dead guy tell jokes. I will pre-record a set containing bits about my situation that will play as my assistant pulls the strings from above. I know about Weekend at Bernie's and all, but in my idea the dead guy is in on it, so it's at least a little more inclusive.

January 19 - Dolly Parton gets a bumbling bee (2018-01-19 09:00)

We all know about cloning sheep, but with the destruction of the ecosystem and all that, we need to focus on cloning the loveable, bumbling honey bee. No doubt about it, the bee is the most interesting insect around. A lot of people like ants, and I get it, but the bee - now that's where it's at.

First off, they do this little dance, shaking their butts around until the other bees go, "Ohhh, so that's how you're shaking your butt. Now I know where all the flowers are." And they're right! Besides that, they're right fuzzy, and who doesn't love a fuzzy little thing.

They shouldn't be able to fly, according to those scientists again, but there they are flying around, sniffing flowers and manufacturing honey and making me smile.

And if you thought it couldn't get any better, Jerry "Seinfeld" Seinfeld was a bee in a movie, one which brought joy and information to countless bee and film enthusiasts. Jimmy Carter was a bee in real life and even became the first bee president, which was probably an honour back then. And it all started with that great campaign slogan, "Let me bee your president!", which most certainly got him elected.

Now back to the real thing. A big family of bees all live together in one hive, and they have different jobs that benefit everyone! The workers, as was alluded to earlier, sniff the flowers and make the honey. The drones fly overhead and spy on people. And the queen gets coitused all day but still loves every second of it.

Protect the queen and survival of the hive are the main goals. Now that's a species I can get behind. At least more than the one that voted for a guy who thought he was being clever with some sort of "bee" pun.

January 20 - Questlove gets a determinative cracker selection (2018-01-20 09:00)

The other day my friend was walking around a party carrying a tray of assorted crackers. She was carefully analyzing each person's selection, deducing what it says about them. But I didn't know

this when it came to be my turn. I was lost in conversation, too busy cracking jokes to focus on crackers, and I hadn't noticed the intent in her watching eyes. I reached out and took a generic Arrowroot, followed by a saltine. First off, upping my own quota to two indicates plainly that I'm a man of greed, taking what I can with no regard for who comes after. The Arrowrooty one proves that I'm an immature baby, never fully accepted into the fancy world of garlic crostinis and aged parmesan crisps. And the saltine puts me solidly in the category of the boring people, making me a bland square and nothing more. All the same, there's no bigger joke than the sheer number of Premium Plus crackers in each sleeve. Never seen the last one not get stale. And don't you find that nutritional labels gotta stop it with the appetite shaming. A serving is not two crackers. It is a sleef. Deal with it, food scientists. Anyway, of all the crackers, which one would you pick and why?

January 21 - Paul Allen goes on tour with Secret Connection (2018-01-21 09:00)

With everything else you've accomplished, I see you're also a practicing guitarist. I myself dabble in the craft, but I'm moreso interested in digging deep and finding out what other guitarists and other musicians are up to. And that's why I'm excited to follow around indie rock supergroup Secret Connection, on the cusp of releasing their debut full-length Goo Log, who invited me to join them as they embark on their first cross-Canada tour. The band is enjoying moderate success in their hometown, but it is obviously a small pond, and they have bigger fish to fry. Their frontman Rajiv, the former Oh No Forest Fires and future Wolfgang Bang songwriter, has changed his name to Ray Thava in order to appeal to his hipper Canadian fans. Ray, who is also in charge of yelling at the sound guy along with crowd banter, has recently received a medical degree, as one might expect from the son of two people whose dreams were dreamed by a thousand sparrows. On bass is Hal-9000 creator and physics enthusiast, SP Callahan, who has clearly broken out of his robotic shell last seen with his former group, Halo. Keyboardist Robbie Brett is perhaps best known for his love of exotic nachos, but there is much more to the handsome Tom Green. Rounding out the group are lead guitarist Allan Byrne, son of David and brother of Brian, and drummer Chris Donnelly, who hits the sticks against the things fairly hard.

I meet the band in Victoria in Squish Squish Bolumbia, on the Friday after last Friday. The first show of the eastbound tour is at The Black Forest, a dual functioning music venue and ham emporium. While unloading and meticulously arranging their gear on the stage, Allan is the first to notice that the stool behind the keyboard remained empty. After a series of frantic phone calls, it is discovered that Robbie had missed his connecting flight out of Vinnipeg and has decided to quit music altogether in order to anchor his focus on the creation of a pasta-based statue of a dove cannibalizing a pygmy goat. The other members unite and agree they don't really like the sound that a keyboard makes anyway, and so they persevere. However, SP seems unaware that a bass is played with more than two strings, and I am curious how detrimental this will be to the sound the band may be looking for. At long last, they play to a crowd of fourteen people, a number that includes themselves and a man who is either dead or approaching that state in the back corner of the bar, and nobody in attendance appears to enjoy any of the songs. They are clearly off to a slow start, and tensions begin to run high almost immediately after the questionable second encore. Allan is upset that Ray did so little in promoting the show, while Ray is upset that Allan is annoying him during his attempt at seducing a homely female who was not yet born at the 1995 release date of "Billy Madison". Fortunately, SP changes his name to Pop Corn and begins to weep, allowing his band mates see the destruction their turmoil is causing. They proceed by hugging each other and

venturing forth, putting this city behind them and the future where it always is.

We become lost on the highway between Squamish and Vancouver when it's discovered that Chris, this leg's driver, had eaten a few staples to prove that they were also candy, something he thought he saw on the Discovery Channel but in reality did not see on the Discovery Channel or anywhere else. His stomach upset, he fails to notice the turnoff for the Couver and, partially due to the frozen ice between continents, we end up in Leningrad, USSR, in the November of 1989. The band decides to play a concert to honour the destruction of the Berlin Wall, but a pygmy incarnation of Karl Marx is chosen as their sound guy, and he persuades our heroes to instead play a benefit for what they believe to be surfing. Their opening ballad "Baby Lizard" unites the torn nation, as the show is streamed throughout the land, but as many of the non-sensical lyrics are deciphered by the audience, eleven new countries announce independence simultaneously.

The figurative snow melted, and the literal hats taken off, we head back east, to present-day Calgary, Alberta. As we cross the imagined line that divides the feuding black and grizzly bears, I silently observe that everyone is both inhaling and exhaling at a normal rate. Pop, who has been quiet other than the incessant tapping on his phone for the last six hours, finally utters, and his words speak volumes. "Guys, I'm done." The eloquence and elaboration weren't there, but we all knew what he meant: he was suffering from a neurological disorder that led him to believe his last name was Dunne, and it wouldn't be long before he forgot the rest of his name as well as those of the entire Toronto Blue Jays 1992 championship line-up. We all knew it was a possibility, but nobody could have imagined his deterioration would be so abrupt.

Pop Corn's set off a slew of few admissions, as almost immediately Allan and Chris hold hands and announce their recent engagement as well as their decision to leave the group and focus on their barbershop duet. Robbie emerges from the shadows holding a plate of spaghetti and a lifeless, half-eaten bird, smiling maniacally and declaring success in such a manner that made it unclear whether it was the bird or Robbie himself doing the smiling and declaring. And finally, a shadowy figure crawls out from under the back seat and declares that it is Josh Branmuffin, a teenager who had secretly been watching over the group in recent days and who at that moment elected to quit the band without ever first joining. Secret Connection's demise now becoming a reality, unless a miracle could paradigm shift the prevailing train of thought, we would all soon be going our separate ways.

We pull the van over along the deserted highway, and everyone finds a personal rock on which to ponder his respective future in and out of music. Ray picks up his guitar and breaks the silence with a clumsy rendition of Van Morrison's "Brown-Eyed Girl". He sings the classic tune with inspired enthusiasm, unaware that the song was not his own and that it had existed before the supposed eureka moment he was currently experiencing. He states simply, "Guys, folks, this is it. We're going to be rich. We'll play for millions, and they'll scream for this song. It's our ticket out of here, and I wouldn't have been able to do it without the lot of ye. And always remember, as long as we stay away from the sexy late eighties and avoid the brown M & Ms, we're unstoppable. Friends forever." He then sticks out his dominant right hand, palm down, hoping for a group consensus concerning what had just transpired.

However, his wish is not fulfilled. He scans his surroundings, and it is at this moment that he becomes aware that he is actually in a darkened room by himself, and that "Secret Connection" has never existed outside of the title of an early episode of William Bickley's "Family Matters". Ray's realization forces him to admit he is lonely and alone, and with nowhere else to turn, he walks to the nearest airport and buys a one-way ticket to the Guatemalan seaside town of Chimaltenango. Before boarding, he is found dead in the bathroom, leaving behind an unfinished cigarette, an unfinished

coffee table, and an unfinished dream.

[Editor's October 15th note: [1] The iSmith Birthdeath Effect™ has claimed another January celebrity. Rip in Peace, Paul.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-1-verne-troyer/>

January 22 - Guy Fieri gets a nibbling week (2018-01-22 09:00)

You are on the sandwich board outside a Chinese restaurant from which I buy tasty dan dan noodles and beef rolls. Now I, like you, love food. Unfortunately, due to a lack of necessary organs, I'm unable to eat like I'd like to. There was a time in the past when it was a challenge from a friend that made my eating habits essentially null and void. For 127 hours, I was permitted to ingest only Hershey Twizzler Super Nibs, with one daily multi-vitamin and enough water to keep me alive.

At Hour 0, everything is swimming along finely, and I'm unsure what James Franco was even complaining about. Nine hours later I awake, with only cherry-flavoured candy on my menu. Sure I'm getting hungry. But who wouldn't? When I have the time in the morning, my breakfast would often rival that of a king on the cusp of being deposed. Today it will be replaced by a meal of one Nib, and I have already begun smelling random foods and could-be-foods in my house. Throughout the rest of the day I eat about 16 Nibs while recognizing that I am actually just going on a fairly groundless hunger strike which may produce cavities.

With Hour 18 comes high levels of exhaustion, and Nibs are now permeating my thoughts. My partner already believed me to be an idiot for following through with this bet, among other understandable reasons, but now she is forced to hear me refer to it in over half of my sentences. While watching a movie, however, my hunger just... disappears. That's the biggest hurdle, I assume, and once again I expect only smooth sailing to follow.

By the time Hour 34 rolls around, I stare at my phone, waiting for it to ring, and for it to be my friend, who will admit that this madness has to end, as his sole food permitted is a Hawkins Cheezie. But the call doesn't come. I want him to give in first, but I also know that he won't. I'm counting on him actually needing energy over the next week, since he's enduring a medical school rotation, while I could realistically lie in my own bed and just suffer through this alone. That sounds sad. Maybe Nibs cause depression. Maybe depression causes Nibs. Maybe Finkel is Einhorn. Nobody really knows. I enjoy cooking, and I feel like this diet is giving me the chance to try out new techniques. Today, Nibs will be boiled, fried, sauteed, and poached. Tomorrow, the moon.

At Hour 39, I suppose that I agreed to this detox of sorts because I wanted to experience something new. I'm currently at the longest period in my life that I have gone without food, and yes, I am comfortable omitting Nibs from that category. I can't think straight anymore. I was hoping to extract some creativity from all of this, but I the hunger strike is inhibiting any brain activity. In-nib-itors.

Never mind, my brilliance is back. There's a good chance my body can't really handle this. I am ready to quit. But I won't. I have no idea what I'm proving, or to whom. When I realize this, which happens every few minutes, I'm ready to quit again.

When I hit Hour 45, I attend trivia night at a local bar. I've made a huge mistake. There is food everywhere. I'm now being referred to as "the Nib guy" by people I do not know. This is bigger than me now. I can't give it up and float into oblivion. I don't want to forever be known as "the Nib guy who couldn't hold up his end of the deal." This town is too small, so I must persevere. Earlier today, I instinctually picked up a complimentary donut at school, only to throw it wildly at the wall when my mind kicked back in. So here I am, back in the present, sniffing pub food, salivating wildly. I go through the motions of eating nachos, other than actually letting them pass through my mouth hole. Nobody finishes their meals here, and everybody talks about how full they are. I am repeatedly told that it's my own fault that I'm not eating, but I don't buy it. They're just being e-nib-lers. I am falling apart.

Here we are, Hour 57. I now see why people aren't happy it when they aren't able to eat. It makes things quite difficult. I am once again breaking my fast with a single Nib. I now loathe Nibs for what they represent. Hershey's will never call me a true Nib fan now. Instead of craving for these days to be filled with all varieties, I only wish Rajiv had chosen a different food for me. I have a perpetual stomach ache, and the organ in question is making strange modulations that sound like a miniature elderly man is trapped in my gut, searching for a way out. But I did not eat a person, because no person is a Nib. Not really, anyway.

Halfway through, at Hour 63.5, I'm in full yearning for my Sigur Rós moment, as a family of bacon finds me at the seventh hour this Saturday. Until then, I scour my surroundings for distractions. I began meditating today, and also writing club hits about my feeeeeeeelings. Mind over matter. On the fence, in a bubble, over the moon, stuck between a rock and a hard place. I am no longer a systematic food addict. I obtain my energy by staring at the sun, like this guy. I am clear now. No longer will my time be wasted thinking about, buying, cooking, cleaning, eating, and digesting food. I am productivity. I am a product of activity.

I'm somehow Still Nibblin' at Hour 90, and I conclude it isn't cheating if I eat my own stomach. I am weak, tired, and constantly dizzy. I have written this current sentence upwards of thirty times, deleting each previous string of words over and over. I don't know what else to do. I'm nibbed out. The lights in my bedroom are leaking water. The thermostats are too, but with them it's almost expected. The next fridge I open should have a jazz band playing on the shelf above the vegetables. Here is a very incomplete list of some foods and drinks that I like to food and drink: eggs, bacon, potatoes, avocado, apples, beer, meat, strawberries, broccoli, scotch, cashews, cheese, bread. My attention span is being whittled away. However, my body does appear to be working at perfect efficiency. And I just bought a new battery for my computer. Things are looking up.

Hour 117 is an indicator that I'm almost there. I plan my first meal back. I wonder if any prisoners cook their own last meal. I would. I don't know why Franco couldn't have cut his arm off ten hours earlier so I could go out tonight. I played tennis today, which in hindsight was a mistake. Conserve calories, I learned but did not heed. I couldn't eat if I wanted to, I'm convinced. My manual override is not in effect at this point. I need to finish this, for whatever reason.

When the end happens, at Hour 127, I awake at 6:55am, sans alarm clock, of my own volition. I anticipated more of a sense of accomplishment. I lost three pounds, which I couldn't afford to lose. I expect it to return upon the first non-Nibby bite, but I also have no idea how anything in my body

works. I lazily made a meal composed of the ingredients I picked up yesterday: two eggs, onions, mushrooms, peppers, garlic, ginger, broccoli, and cheese; three pieces of bacon, downgraded to turkey bacon because it was already in my fridge; hashbrowns, of the Cavendish variety; toasted bread with avocado; beans, upgraded to beans AND wieners when I saw the Puritan tin at the grocery store; and coffee and orange juice. But I wasn't hungry. Instead of all of that I ate half of a sad orange.

January 23 - Tiffani Thiessen gets an executive decision (2018-01-23 09:00)

How many people were in on the decision to drop the Amber? I hope it was your and yours alone. Executive decisions are important, as [1]an album I wrote indicates. The refusal to make a choice, no matter what it is, is becoming commonplace. Maybe it always was, but I was still dead before, so all I know is now. Time wasted, indecision lauded. Granny Smith or red delicious, the benefits and drawbacks of each option are pored over, in great detail, until no choice will be satisfactory. The executive decision maker speeds up life, and we all need to periodically accept the role when it's floating around the ether, waiting to be picked up. Acknowledging the executive decision is sometimes relevant but is generally frowned upon. It stirs enough emotion in those still debating the options to make them feel as if the decision maker is forcing them into a choice not yet fully examined. This is one of those times.

The improperly managed executive decision making in our world must be culled. The man in possession of the coveted goods cannot tell others they've had enough if he refuses to provide his contact We're all in this together, and we're all friends. Not everyone is currently on the same page, and this must be rectified.

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/album/executive-decision>

January 24 - Ed Helms is a neurokahunanarcissist (2018-01-24 09:00)

Neurokahunanarcissism is a psychological condition which refers to the desire of an actor for their character to succeed, and when such success is attained, it often leads to the human person inheriting the managerial traits of their fictional counterpart. Several years ago, I briefly considered the idea that you may not have realized that the Andy Bernard's promotion to head honcho did not also constitute a promotion for you as an NBC employee. You may have showed up to Chandler Valley Center Studios on a Monday and started bossing people around, yelling at everyone within earshot, truly believing that you were now the show's head writer, director, producer, showrunner, and best boy. You "fired" Paul Lieberstein for insubordination, as he was wearing his power bowtie that day, and he was so shocked by the confidence in your action that he went home and drank scotch until the night fell. Paul, too, was unaware that you did not have the authority to do the aforementioned firing. This was caused by his state of acute hierarchical dysmorphia, another disorder that certainly exists. Upon hearing of what is now known among Hollywood insiders as the "The Office Situation", a time traveling Bruce Evans declared that as the relevant executive vice president, everyone involved would have to be let go. The network would give up on the whole television fad and try its hand at selling prank gifts for various holidays. And the entire division would be managed by none other

than Thomas Hanks!

January 25 - Alicia Keys gets a nominative deterministic teaser (2018-01-25 09:00)

I didn't used to know about stage names. I figured you were born with a great name related to what you would end up becoming great at. Then I learned about nominative determinism, the hypothesis that people tend to gravitate towards areas of work that fit their names. This might be why Daniel Snowman wrote a book on polar explorations. It could be how Robin Mahfood became the president of Food for the Poor, how Patience Scales started teaching piano, or how Cardinal Rasing because the Vatican's spokesman on the evils of rock 'n roll. Can you believe Armand Hammer, great-great-grandfather of Armie, became a director for the company that owned Arm & Hammer? Me neither. You know, you could have kept your real name if you just pursued a career as a chef. But we'll leave that to [1]Raekwon.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-12-happy-birthday-corey-woods/>

January 26 - Vince Carter gets celebrated by a child admirer (2018-01-26 09:00)

I was once a Canadian child, at the height of Vinsanity, when you would do a few spin-arounds in the air on your way to the modern peach basket overhead. I would gaze intently at a television while you flipped and flapped around a wooden floor, keeping a ball away from other large men who wore different colours than you.

I once snuck into an arena which an airline paid to name and became one of thousands who helped to claim that name for you instead. You share a birthday with the most famous athlete from my country, but what you represented meant more to me, growing up on the rugged streets of St. John's, in the concrete jungle of Mundy Pond. I once played a game of two-on-two where I pretended to be you, and we won because of it. Or maybe it was because one of the guys on the other team kept smoking instead of dribbling, coughing instead of passing, and laughing instead of shooting.

January 27 - Patton Oswalt gets an Archie Comics disparagement (2018-01-27 09:00)

Growing up, I was never into the same activities as the other kids. I didn't have a TV, I never read books, and I lacked an imagination. But there was a comic book series that I did read, mainly because it would appear suddenly and often all over my house. Its self-contained stories worked quite well for reading on the toilet, due to their brevity and colonic properties. And those, as you probably know, are Archie Comics.

The characters, who elicit nostalgia for a time that never existed, play it off like they had it all figured out. But I pity the Archies if that's how they thought real friends treated each other. Maybe the small town brought them together. I'm sick of the "they all filled different roles" argument, if anyone even says that besides me just then. The parts they played were all self-centred and boring and mean when you got down to it. Where were the cool people in Riverdale? Not at fuckin' Pop Tate's, that's for sure. How could Betty and Veronica be best friends? And how is Archie getting away with his romantic misdeeds? He was a real piece of work, that Archie Andrews. Ack!

Anyway, In one memorable story, Jughead suspects that the holes in the donuts have been getting bigger over time, so he gets Dilton to test the theory using an old photo of Jughead holding a donut, on which he used some scientific scaling system to determine that Jughead was in fact correct. But at the very end, instead of suing the donut store, which is what they were expecting, he just asked for a free large box of donut holes. Then it ends with Archie saying, "Maybe you can beat big business!" and the rest of them laugh along like a god damned pile of doofi.

(Oh, and happy birthday to Kelly too. She's really great and all, and she's willingly put up with me for several years now, but unfortunately she's not famous enough yet to receive a personalized greeting.)

January 28 - Sarah McLachlan is a secret bowling neighbour (2018-01-28 09:00)

A few years ago my friends and I bowled in the lane next to you on December 23rd. I remember the date not because of my incidental brush with a Canadian icon, nor because of the Festivus holiday. For myself, it is the day of the annual tradition of the Big & Mary Lebowski, where we go bowling and eat Big Marys and drink White Russians to celebrate fried chicken and a classic Coen Brothers film. Did you know that Bill Murray only decided to voice Garfield because he thought the script was written by Joel Coen instead of the actual Joel Cohen. I'm thinking of changing my name to Martin Scoresese in the hopes of attracting cool people to my future projects. Is your spirit animal the husky? Mine's the panda.

January 29 - Heather Graham gets told what she's doing (2018-01-29 09:00)

When you Bing a celebrity, "net worth" is always the first autofill. Closely followed by "dead or alive". Unfortunately, this is all many people seem to care about. I refuse to be one of those people, and so I remain willfully ignorant to the money some hard-hitting journalists assume is in your bank account, and I will simply assume you are still alive.

Are you reading these words on an Apple product?

The screen distracts you from what's around it. But you still know what you want to be doing

and what you will do eventually. It's not procrastinating. It's waiting for the right mix of energy, attention, and time that you can devote to these projects so that you essentially have to succeed.

Outside the device is a novel, one that has been adapted for the screen, but you want to finish the book before moving on to the film. Your bookshelf is filling up with other books that you will one day read.

Your eyes wander. Nothing really holds your attention anymore. You're at an age that you used to assume made a person a real adult. You still don't feel like an adult. You realize that your parents probably don't feel like adults. You wonder how similar your parents are to you. They must be. But you can't imagine your father ever relating to this version of you, acting like you do.

You are sitting up straight. A special person once taught you about posture and posturing. If you turn around slightly, you'll see an instrument that isn't played as often as you claim you want it to be. The room you're in is clean, but there's got to be more to it all than this.

January 30 - Wilmer Valderrama gets a hotel fire alarm (2018-01-30 09:00)

A few days ago there was a nighttime fire alarm in my hotel, and I rushed to get outside to safety. When I finally reached the sidewalk, I realized I was naked. Others looked at me in disgust, or with pity, or not at all, and I felt the need to defend myself. "For I shall not be the one who becomes engulfed in flames simply because I was too slow to exit the building. I will not die because my clothes were more important than my safety. The social construct of shame will not be my murderer. I am not a victim. Gaze upon thee, for I have nothing to hide."

I opened my arms wide and looked to the heavens with eyes closed and mouth smiling. A slow clap ensued. One woman began to disrobe. The others shed their clothing as well, in a show of solidarity. However, a quick investigation by the fire department revealed that it was I who pulled the fire alarm, as seen on security footage.

"The culprit I may be, but my pulling of said alarm was done for truth and transparency. You can now see the people you all are, initially deriding a man for something as natural as nighttime nudity, but not gaining the wisdom that we are all one. Our ancestors frolicked together in the open air until religion and fear covered them up. Be free once again, my brothers and sisters."

January 31 - Bobby Moynihan gets a crow's attack (2018-01-31 09:00)

So I'm on the roof here mindin' my own, got a few chairs set up, bitta music on. This crow - huge fella, all black and pointy - he come outta nowhere, swoop down like I'm sittin' in his friggin' nest and he don't want me there. He makes this crazy noise like he want me to know he comin' for me. I moves my head right quick so he only barely hits me, knocks the hat clean off me head. I swiped at him but

he just flew away, not even caring really. I looks up and he's on the pole and got somethin' in his mouth. I looks closer and sees it's me pet raccoon. He musta grabbed her off the deck there when I was protectin' me own face. So he takes me 'coon over to his nest in the tree and just starts rippin' her to shreds, guts goin' everywhere. I'm half pissed now, tryin' to figger out how to climb the tree before the r'coon was fer sure a goner, but it was one of dem real tall ones wit' barely any branches, so I just sat back down to watch the show. So don't let yer r'coons out in the hood or the crows'll get 'em.

1.2 February

February 1 - Abbi Jacobson gets an enemy for a day (2018-02-01 17:23)

I, like my dear friend Megan, find myself regularly acquiring an enemy for a day. A temporary adversary to mix it all up, found at coffee shops, on the street, in a tree. A stranger and I unexpectedly connecting for a single encounter, for a single story, for a single moment, singly.

Like at the pool hall, I was screwing around at a table when a worker came up and told me it was reserved for someone else. I told him when the people who had it booked came back I'd give it up willingly. But that wasn't enough for this fella. We got into this argument, which to me was about injustice and inequality and the growing culture of an unwillingness to share. All he knows is it ended with me calling him a giant butt.

Then the next day I was going out to dinner at a half fancy restaurant downtown. They had a \$16 valet, and with nowhere else to park, I decided to make use of the service. I should have been skeptical that he wasn't at his post. I had to go in and ask about him, then wait by my car for him to show up. He eventually did, in a plain jacket that gave no indication of his being the valet. But he stared at me, so I handed over my keys and declared, "I trust you." He said, "I trust you too." So I went back inside. But then he came to my table. "Your car is dead." It wasn't, but I had to go back outside to show him how to turn it on. After that I walk in front of the car towards the restaurant. He jerked the car forward and hit me. Luckily I was ninjaic enough to do a barrel roll over the hood and managed to escape relatively unscathed. "Oh shit!" is all I heard him say as I hobbled away. After the meal, I went to retrieve my car from buddy. I hand him a \$20 bill and he gives me my keys. Then he just stands there, assuming there's no way I would want any change. An assumed 25 % gratuity for hitting me with my own car. A random young man ran up to us holding snack size chip bags in each hand, yelling "These are all mine!" I paid no mind to him and stood my ground, waiting for my \$4.00. He looked at me queerly, then reluctantly handed me the change. For an unknown reason I gave him a toonie back. Either way, my enemy for a day is had.

So these nemeses, they come and go, as we've been through. However, I have recently met my sworn arch enemy, the one who puts the others to shame. She is the girl who, instead of accepting the more sensible "One kale smoothie please", forced me to say "I'll have the kale-a-bunga." out loud to complete my order. At first I thought she was only doing it because she was new, anticipating that our feud would be over soon. But during our next encounter she wouldn't serve me until I said, with a little oomph, mind you, "Banana-ra-ma-ling-dong!"

February 2 - Nathan Fielder gets the lifestyle tactics omitted by the 'normal' person (2018-02-02 09:10)

I've been told that I'm not like other people. And the way these people describe how I'm not like them makes me think they might be right, that I'm not really this normal that they expect me to strive for. But how they would like for me to present myself, it goes against my understanding of the world. They tell me a normal person has certain qualities, ones that come through as actions he does NOT perform. They say things like:

1. A normal person doesn't walk down the road, talking to himself at barely audible volumes, muttering his possible thoughts if he were the type of person who would randomly attack the man walking alone in front of him. He'd never do it, obviously, but considering the fact that some people do and trying to put himself in that mindset, now that's an approach that could be interesting. So he doesn't do that.
2. He doesn't plug his ears and close his eyes and make strange noises out loud (like "gleeb, croof, twang") to see how it would sound from inside his own head.
3. A normie doesn't try to guess how many eggs are left in the carton based purely on weight, with the cover still on. He opens the top and counts them.
4. Normal guy doesn't want to witness something horrible happen simply because he's never seen it before, like someone having a seizure or a dog biting off his own foot. He doesn't fantasize about watching someone hold up a chain restaurant and then regret it when they're halfway done, bag on counter but money still in register. He doesn't just want to experience as much of the range of human emotions as possible. He doesn't want to be there as a witness if bad things happen, even if those things were inevitable.
5. A normal person doesn't buy a glass box which would be used to house and protect a single Ferrero Rocher chocolate, ultimately and unexpectedly anthropomorphized as the Shanawdithit of its kind.
6. He doesn't not care about what people he doesn't care about thinks about them. They get embarrassed when they accidentally bang into someone and nervous when prompted to respond to their inquisitions.
7. A normie doesn't fantasize about the one thing they could do or say at any given moment that would completely ruin their life. And as he's considering that option, knowing it wouldn't take too much of a drastic shift in what he's thinking about to actually do or say that thing.
8. Finally, normal guy doesn't talk to himself while listening to headphones, pretending like he's on an important phone call, in case anyone around him gets the impression that he isn't actually important.

That's about all the things a normal person doesn't do, and so I don't do them either. Instead I ask people how their small business is doing and laugh heartily at every joke I hear, no matter how simple it is.

February 3 - Warwick Davis gets a study of postal signature devices (2018-02-03 09:10)

I was at the post office the other day picking up a package, and I had to sign my name on the signature machine there. If anyone's ever been a part of this, you know that the signature is never anything like what it's intended to be. This machine has only two tasks that it needs to complete, as far as I can tell: be a place where one can legibly write their signature, and transfer that signature electronically, to some database of sorts. Now the second part of this I cannot attest to due to my inexperience working on the back end of the system, but the first one I can say with certainty that it handles absolutely awfully horribly. Any attempt at written clarity is negated immediately by the wobbly nature of the utensil, leading to an inky apparition that wouldn't pass any sort of quality assurance test of anything.

And for a company as large as our national postal service to use this device, at all their locations, there had to be a mountain of people who would need to approve it. First of all, the company that makes the machines has to be satisfied with the product. Then one of their salespeople has to demonstrate its efficacy to a postal employee, who must be impressed enough to show it to their team of managers, one of which must explain to an executive why this is the superior product on the market. All I can say is, there has to be more than a few people getting greased on this deal.

Then again, I suppose any signature is, at best, just a scribble nowadays anyways. Most end up as squiggly lines that can be replicated by anyone with an opposable thumb. But still they are important and required in order to send packages, receive packages, buy houses, assume guardianship of a child, and buy a tin of drink (if the tap and keypad both aren't working). So maybe we're all getting greased, one way or another.

February 4 - Hannibal Buress gets a plea for a pivot in his performing career (2018-02-04 09:19)

I know you really don't want this put on you, and it might not be fair to pressure you like this - but you must acknowledge that the Cosby bit that you did and got recorded and uploaded by a fan, it led to more women coming forward and Cosby actually getting exposed as the hearty piece of shit that he is. That should make you realize that with your influence and comedy, you can legitimately help the world by saying things that people pretty much already know, but haven't heard anyone joke about it yet, and so it doesn't stick in their minds. You can become the social justice warrior* comic. I know this would be boring and shitty for you, but it could help.

You could do a whole special where you riff on people who have done shitty things but we forget about. Remember R Kelly? We were so busy laughing about him peeing on girls that we forgot the girl he peed on was 14. And another important factor in us basically forgiving him is that he had a song that's impossible not to dance to. I'm convinced that if nobody ever remixed Ignition, R Kelly would be in jail right now. What else? Woody Allen probably. Christopher Brown. I'm sure there are

other injustices, but I'm too lazy to look them up, even with my aforementioned proximity to the interwebs.

On a similar note, did you know that in 1992 Soul Asylum made a video for [1]Runaway Train showing actual missing children, and it was so popular that it led to the safe return of 26 out of the 36 kids shown. They should have been forced to keep making videos with missing children until every friggin' lostkid in the world is found. But instead, [2]this is their next video. Give me a break, Soul Asylum.

Author's note: That term, social justice warrior, that came out of nowhere, hey? Often acronymized as SJW, I'll admit that every. single. time. I read those consecutive letters (besides this time 'cause I'm next to the internet), I'm unable to remember what it stands for. Then I'm unable to figure it out based on context, and it always ends in defeat with me going, "Ah, I gotta look that up." My memory is gone, and so it goes.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRtvqT_wMeY

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNWR30enaPk>

February 5 - Michael Sheen gets Brunched (2018-02-05 09:15)

So we came up with this really great webseries, about a weekly open mic event, called - wait for it - Open Michael.

The main guy, Mike Hunt, is the host. One girl calls him Hot Michael, but mostly he's Open Mike. At this point you probably want to know about some of the other characters, and if that's what you want, well here you go.

In the episode "Yes, Andie", Andie Grange is the only member in a one-person improv troupe.

In the spirit of a Mitch Hedberg, Juan Rodriguez stars in "Juan Liner" with quick quips and short stories.

Penelope (pronounced "Pee-na-lope") Harrison reads her poems aloud in "Penelopoet", and boy are they something else.

In "Interpretive Dans", Daniel Kennedy tells jokes, while his straight man best friend Danny Esposito dumbs the jokes down, or smarts them up, always with humour, of course.

There are others, but I don't want to give anymore away in case someone steals what we've already established is a really great idea and sells it for \$ \$ \$.

[Editor's note: The project is currently stalled because of legal dispute with a similarly named Eagle, but I'll leave that one to the barristers, as we trudge on accordingly.]

February 6 - Tom Brokaw gets a specific desire for an iced coffee (2018-02-06 09:26)

As we both sit here, I want an iced coffee, but with none of the diluting ice. You see what I want is hot coffee, boiling hot, and then I want to wait, for as long as it takes, for it to get very cold. There can be no cheating by using an ice box or one of those new ice boxes that you plug in, unless you also plugged in old ice boxes, but I don't think you did because I think ice boxes existed before plugs. How did they make ice before plugs? If they did. They likely travelled up North, extracted large chunks of ice, then ran South really quickly before the ice melted, and then threw it in people's fresh martinis or on other people's fish so they could save it until Winter, when the real ice came. Do you like coffee too? The world wants to know.

February 7 - Chris Rock gets a crafty way to get time off work (2018-02-07 09:20)

I recently started working for a company that gives a couple of weeks parental leave when you get a new dog. Now don't tell my boss, but I started adopting all these elderly pooches in a vacation-extending scheme, and so far it's been going okay. But honestly, it wasn't enough. Now I live in Canada, where the law states that between you and your partner, you get a total of twelve months off work for having a kid, like one of those human babies. I looked it up with brief consultation from a barrister, and this even counts for adoption. Which brings me to my first of several reasons I'm adopting a terminally ill baby:

1. Parental leave: (see above)
2. You won't have to deal with owning a human anymore when it starts getting annoying after developing its own personality, which seems to happen around the age of 2, according to jokester mothers.
3. No PTA meetings. Ugh, don't get me started.
4. Other people are less likely to complain about their stupid problems about traffic or Wanda at work when you have a child who's going to die any second now.
5. The cutest little coffins!

February 8 - Seth Green gets a deli counter's sneaky upsell attempt (2018-02-08 09:38)

Standing at the deli counter, I ask for 75g of parmesan salami - the good salami, the \$3.49/lb one, the one that shows your girlfriend you don't mind throwing a bit of cash around. Now I'm well versed

in the clerk's trick by now, so I know they're going to turn my 75g into 100g, thinking they're putting one over on me, fleecing every bit of extra moolah out of me. What she doesn't know is that 100g is how much I wanted in the first place. But this lady, who looks like she's been weighing deli meats longer than I've been scamping around this world, happens to calculate incorrectly, by over half. I see 155g on the scale and give her a look she doesn't see that says, "Oh no you don't." She hesitates for a second, then prints off the sticker and hands me the meat, avoiding all eye contact. Even with my pre-planning, I'm willing to accept up to 120g to avoid a confrontation. But this woman, she thinks I'm going to accept a ludicrous 155g without saying anything. Most of that will end up sitting in my fridge for too long, I know this. It will become a chore to finish it, it's all I'll think about until it's gone. And I'll try to eat the last bit no matter what, and it will be certainly be gone bad by then. And if I less this one pass, you know they're going to keep upping the ante and before you know what hit you there'll be 250g of salami on that scale. Money isn't even an issue at this stage. I don't want to compare it to any major atrocities from last century (we're all thinking of the same one), but the slippery slope becomes a rolling stone quick as a cat's banana. I'll be in the mood for one salami sandwich and end up with enough processed pig to give a grown man an anxiety attack. And I'll try to finish it all so quick, it'll give me a heart attack. So when she hands me the 155 salami grams and tries to walk away, I really have no choice but to leap over the counter and be on the winning end of the only attack this deli meat upsell will ever cause.

February 9 - Tom Scharpling gets an underdog story, starring the black sheep of the loaf (2018-02-09 09:41)

Not often, but every now and then - once in a moon's turn, when the yeast is at its silliest - the heel actually becomes the best piece of bread in the loaf. I know, I know, "How can that be?!" Well be it can!

You see, I was putting some leftover chili in the microwave, and I went to get a piece of bread to butter up and dip in my bowl.

So I reached in, well past the first few slices, and picked out a usual, middle piece, one of the sexy ones - the Matthew David McConaugheys of bread, if you will.

But then, I got to thinking about the heels, these neglected ends on either side of the loaf, never given a fair chance, only getting eaten when the bread's getting half stale. If they're lucky. Most get moldy and thrown away with the bag, the owner afraid to even touch them, like they're some kind of leper slices.

Now I always root for the underdog, and I got to feeling bad for the heel. So I switched my desired piece. And you know what? It was fine.

[Editor's note: The birthday greeter would like to clarify he actually selected the one next to the heel, that's only half crusty. Not the actual heel. That would be madness.]

February 10 - Chloë Grace Moretz gets a rumination on the forgotten generation in the cycle of discipline (2018-02-10 09:45)

I feel like our parents' generation had it the worst when it comes to all manner of discipline and related techniques.

Everyone before them, for thousands of years, they all got hit as kids, when they were being little scallions or when they wrote with their left hand, or even just because their dad had a few drinks.

The church was fine with it, schools did it. It was a normal part of society, like a pretty major part. It was encouraged and if you didn't smack your kids around other people wondered what you were even up to.

Kids had no rights, and adults kept it that way for a reason.

But then to make up for it, when the kids grew up they were all allowed to hit their own little ones. And other people's. Any kids really. With no repercussions.

A cycle of abuse that, on an individual level, culminates in redemption for the older, stronger people.

But society changed as soon as they became parents, I think in the early 80s, and all of a sudden beating your kids was basically the worst thing you could do.

So while they still got hit as kids, they've never been allowed to hit us. If they did, we'd get taken away, and they go to jail or at least court, where they need to wear a tie or a corset. When you grow up in a culture of corporal punishment but aren't allowed to participate when you're on the better end of it, that's gotta be pretty frustrating.

Which is why they resent us in different ways.

Like whenever I'd need money for a field trip or a bottle of milk, my dad would throw the money on the ground in front of me and I'd have to pick it up like the guy from Sigur Rós in the Purple Wedding episode of Game of Thrones. And I totally get why he did that. I thought for some reason that his money was my money, even though I did absolutely nothing to earn it.

I felt entitled, and maybe it's because I never got hit. Who's to say.

February 11 - Sheryl Crow gets a tale of reliability and friendship (2018-02-11 08:50)

Now I know you're all cawed out at this point, but I have to tell you about these two crows who follow me to work every day from the train station. The walk takes about five minutes. Without fail, they join me at the same point, just outside the exit, next to a large pine tree. I don't feed them or anything, so I'm not entirely sure why they chose me. It's possible I'm their 9:00am escort and they have others

throughout the day, but I feel giddy that maybe I'm the only one.

It gives me this sense of being a superhero, or at least a bank manager, that has these two crows come protect me and walk me to my office. A couple of people asked if they were my pet crows, as if people owned crows and took them for early morning walks. In a way, I guess they are.

February 12 – Judy Blume gets my self-identification as a writer (2018-02-12 09:28)

I used to write too.

Now I only wait. For it all to slow down. To get easier. For inspiration. To remember who I want to be. I'm not sure if I can keep it up. Once I admit it's over, then it's over. So I pretend it's not. I still call myself a writer. I continue to write notes, ideas that I tell myself will eventually become something more. An offender and a victim of delusion. I look at the others, everyone barely holding on. Stagnant satisfaction non-existent, so do not assume it is an option, but do not let yourself be satisfied otherwise, until you are. Know your surroundings. Understand the environment and how you relate to it. Why did I used to write? To become a writer, probably not. Because I had to, more likely. For attention, unfortunately. To prove to myself that I am not stupid, definitely. To surprise others, maybe the most. I fade easily, forgetting often how I need to fight against it. I don't want to be a writer. I want to write.

February 13 – Jerry Springer gets a poorly-executed reincarnation (2018-02-13 09:32)

My grandfather died when he was really young. He was only 35 at the time - died of a broken toe, because back then nobody knew how to cure anything, and they still couldn't figure out where the toe was.

You don't need to be sad. He would've been the oldest man in the world today if he was still around. Stop being sad, for Jesus sake.

Him and my grandmother, apparently they loved each other more than anything. And as he was dying, on his bed of death, he had the gall to tell her not to remarry after he was gone.

He wanted this woman he supposedly loved to be a widow with five kids and no skills. How jealous did he have to be?

The problem was, after he died, she listened to him, because her love was real, and she never remarried.

But a couple of years after he died, he ended up getting reincarnated into another guy's body, but still had the memory of his past life and his one true love.

So he finds my grandmother - this new guy with my grandfather's soul does - and he tries to marry her or whatever, using powerful seduction tactics he picked up on his last go-around.

But she obviously doesn't believe it's her husband, because one time she said ghosts were interesting and my grandfather told her not to believe in the "silly supernatural", so she didn't anymore.

It's life's little ironies that keep things interesting. What a foible that turned out to be!

February 14 – Rob Thomas gets a grievance concerning the fictional elderly's technod- fiction (2018-02-14 09:34)

How come old people are the only ones who get to be 80 years young?
Some kid who's been alive for like 2 years, I can see how he's 2 years young.
But come on. Granny? She old as trees.
And what's up with elderly fictional characters on the TV shows saying Facetown or Twit-chats.
Lazy writers beget ignorant characters.
"Hey look, everyone! This old man is too stupid to know what Facebook is!"
There's a difference between not keeping up with technology and plain being uninformed.
"Oh, I don't about Snapbook!"
Okay, that's certainly possible, but have you never heard a new word before? Gripes. Ack. Chocolate, etc.

February 15 – Alex Borstein gets an off-hand jeu de mots taken literally by parental units (2018-02-15 09:38)

My mom was describing this thing she's picked up recently called "mind clearing", an approach to meditation building on mindfulness approaches, with the ultimate aim of reducing suffering caused by mental, emotional, relationship and spiritual distress, by (as you may have guessed) clearing the mind. When she was finished, I said, assuming she'd just tell me to shut up, "That sounds a lot like this technique I used to do called 'mein kamfing', where we try to clear our mind of any impurities.

So she doesn't pick up on the prank but obviously sees something in my idea. I've now heard both her and Dad independently call Mom's new thing 'mein kamfing', which she said she "relates to a bit better".

Besides all this, Dad's spending half his day trying to convince Mom the person running that mind clearing seminar is a charlatan. Get me out of here, you know?

February 16 – Ice-T gets a burgeoning friendship's first memory (2018-02-16 09:39)

I was walking home the other day and noticed a guy halfway down an alley smoking what I can only describe as the reefer. He noticed me noticing him and then turned around quickly so that I wouldn't

see his face or something. But through it all he kept smoking.

I wanted him to know I was cool and wasn't going to rat him out, so I yelled, "Man, don't worry about me. I ain't no cop."

So he goes, "That means you IS po-po. Dou-ble ne-ga-teeve."

There was a pause, but you know what? He was right.

So then I went, "Sheeeeeeeet. I been had, nutta butta. But now you're under a breast."

He looked at me all confused like, until I ran over and put a piece of tender chicken on his head!

And we both had a good laugh about it all.

[Editor's note: This shouldn't matter, and ideally someday we will live in a world where this does not even bear mentioning, but for the record, the ganja smoker in the above anecdote was a white person whom the author presumed self-identified as a male.]

February 17 - Jason Ritter gets a household milk consumption analysis (2018-02-17 09:45)

There's something that's been taking up more of my mind-time lately, something I've never worried about previously. Since I came of age, or least of an age where I began purchasing my own milk, I've been a 1-litrer. I'd get through it with time to spare, and have a new one ready to go. But lately, after a sudden influx of cereal came into my life, I've upped my game to the 2L bottle. Then I started getting into milk-based beverages. I now also put the cow milk in my coffee and tea, and I've started making dairy smoothies. So I use an average of three litres of milk per expiration cycle (MEC; generally 10 days). But as you well know, milk doesn't come in 3L containers. Now I can't stand when my fridge runs dry of the milky goodness, so I've actually done it. I've upped my carton volume to a 4L cycle. A 2L is \$3.29, while the 4L is \$4.49. If I buy only 4L cartons and continue to consume exactly 3L, I save \$0.45 per cycle, and I never run out. Ideal, I know. But the 3L is an average. There are times when I barely make it through 1L, depending on my schedule and diet over that period. So I lose \$2.20 compared to if I'd bought a \$2.29 1L. It's not only a financial wish. I despise food waste, and I don't want to supplement the 1.3 billion tonnes of food that gets thrown out worldwide each year. I can no longer go on vacation, for fear that the milk pile-up in the fridge will lead to spoilage this world has never known. Or at least I need to plan my milk buying accordingly. But I do most of my grocery shopping online now. When I'm able to physically choose the item from the fridge, I inevitably reach my hand in past the sooner-expiring first row of milks, to the latest expiration date there is. But the grocer, the item retriever doesn't do this. I put my lactic fate in his hands, and his hands take the path of least resistance. Anyway, expiration dates are mostly inaccurate. A report was done by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Harvard Law School's Food Law and Policy Clinic which said people are prematurely throwing out food, largely because of confusion over what expiration dates actually mean. So I'm constantly monitoring my milk consumption, watching the levels and determining how much I'm saving or wasting with each carton and jug. Of course, it's a good idea to check my milk consumption before I wreck my milk consumption. What am I even doing

drinking milk to begin with. I blame Big Milk. We've been pranked by the dairy farmers into thinking that cow's milk is healthy and must be ingested by humans well into adulthood so that they don't develop osteoporosis. There is no evidence to suggest that, past the age of 6, milk consumption has any positive impact on bone-brittleness, teeth-strengthening or your overall health. We've bought into their lies, perpetuated with commercials of fields and sunshine, and I fear it's too late for me to go back.

February 18 - Yoko Ono gets a debunking of a wishful career opportunity (2018-02-18 09:48)

I casually say I want to do a very specific thing with my life, and for whatever reason, people believe me. They even believe in me, actively working to motivate me to follow through in my newfound endeavour.

The other day I saw a drawing of a chair made out of a contorted llama and said, to no one in particular, to no one at all in particular, to no one at all, "You know, I'd like to be a furniture designer."

My friend goes, "You can. You can definitely do that if you want. You should. You'll be great at it!"

Yah, I know I maybe could. But it's crazy you think I was serious enough that I'm willing to put the fairly high amount of effort into making it actually happen, considering the short amount of time I'd been considering it at all.

I'd have to go to school for 2 years, maybe 18 months if I get accepted into an accelerated program.

I'd have to quit my job. And take out a substantial loan to support my complete devotion to my decided craft.

All because one day I had a fleeting thought about making a chair out of Rice Krispies squares, and then you had to go and believe in me.

Besides, I'm not even sure I meant it when I initially made the declaration. Like even if I suddenly magically acquired all the necessary skills required to be a successful furniture designer, I have no idea what that actually entails, the daily life of a furniture designer. If I think about it even one bit, it's probably a lot of time trying to find a wood that looks like the original wood but is a bit cheaper. And having to deal with expensive suppliers and unreliable partners.

So NO, MEG, I won't be becoming a furniture designer, and you can't make me!

[Editor's note: Although he won't be following through with this career, the author would like to thank you for believing in him, Meghan.]

February 19 - Jeff Daniels gets a regular witnessing of car accidents (2018-02-19 09:51)

I watch the cars crash into each other from my front patio. I sit with a book and a drink and I wait, three floors up. The most dangerous intersection in the city is right outside my door. I didn't know this when I moved in. I've been a witness to seventeen accidents so far. I have yet to offer my assistance in any official or unofficial capacity. My neighbour, who lives below me, comes out often as well, and we discuss the scene from a floor away, theorizing the events that led to the collision.

When I'm outside, waiting at the crosswalk on that street, I deliberately stand behind a metal electrical pole so that if a car swerves off the road or gets pushed off, which will inevitably happen while I'm there, I will be shielded from flying debris. As long as I remain perfectly still on the other side. If I panic and try to jump out of the way, I'll be a goner.

Usually I only hear the accident from inside my house. I've heard eleven crashes so far. The tires screech, and I stop what I'm doing, anticipating the sound of metal on metal that follows. On a rare occasion, the noise doesn't come. A defensive driver saves the day. There's no need to exchange information, apologize or deride the other driver.

For some unknown and terrible reason, on the weekend the outside two lanes lose their thoroughfare status and become designated for parking.

A car pulls out of the spot in which it was parked, the driver evidently neglecting to check the rear view mirror for oncoming traffic. She must get in these "accidents" all the time. The car in motion does not have enough time to avoid her error, and so the man driving it hit the fender, enough to bend it and require a discussion, at least. The man is calm, first asking the woman and her passenger if they are unscathed, which it turns out they are. He's annoyed and wants her to know it, but overall it appears this one would produce nothing of note.

The car behind his, however, is now unable to pass him, so he beeps his horn, urging the offenders out of the way soon. The man in the accident was saving his rage on this guy. As soon as he hears the horn, he rushes back to the origin of the sound and slams on the windshield several times with his hand. "Get the fuck out of your car. Let's do this." The situation escalates in no time. The beeper, now slinking back into his seat, intending for his weak stance to elicit enough pity to end the confrontation, is mistaken. He'd forgotten to lock his door, and the aggressor pounces on this, opening it for him and dragging his frail body onto the street. I sip on a lemonade as the skirmish continues.

FEBRUARY 20 - CHELSEA PERETTI GETS A STORY OF LOVE, DESIRE, STRENGTH AND INDEPENDENCE (2018-02-20 09:47)

RECENTLY I WAS WATCHING YOUR SPECIAL AND EATING DELICIOUS CANDY, GENERALLY LOVING LIFE. I GOT TO THE LAST CANDY AND, BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE HOW BAD MY WILLPOWER IS, I DECIDED TO CHALLENGE MYSELF BY LEAVING THE CANDY ON THE COFFEE TABLE AND NOT EATING IT. I WAS DOING FINE FOR AWHILE, SUCCESSFULLY IGNORING ITS PULL AND CONTINUING TO LAUGH AT THE

CLOWN THING YOU HAD GOING.

BUT EVENTUALLY THE CANDY'S MAGNETIC FIELD GREW TOO GREAT AND MY HAND PICKED IT UP. NOW I STILL REFUSED TO BE BESTED BY A CANDY, BUT I FIGURED IF MY BODY WAS INSTINCTIVELY GRABBING THEN IT HAD ITS REASONS, AND ITS REASONS WERE VALID.

I LIKE TO THINK I'M BETTER THAN MY BASE INSTINCTS. I HAVE FREE WILL.

SO WITH THE CANDY IN HAND, I WENT OUT TO THE DECK AND FELT A SURGE OF POWER COME OVER ME AS I LAUNCHED IT OVER THE SIDE WHILST EMITTING A PRIMAL SCREAM, FOLLOWED BY A FIERCE LAUGHTER. I RETURN INSIDE SO DAMN LEGITIMATELY PROUD OF MYSELF.

February 21 - Jordan Peele gets a reflexive tangent, with (0,0) as my original origin (2018-02-21 09:48)

I'm biracial too. My mom is white like a ghost, and my dad is white like an egg.

After a few drinks, she sometimes says aloud that she wishes she married Denzel Washington. Like he'd have her! That's about as racially progressive as she gets.

I've always wanted to break down some sort of barrier, but I don't feel like I'm really in a position to do so.

It's weird that they, and we, call us white people, because we're not actually white. You'd think we would've at least gotten our own colour on the nose.

Maybe peach wasn't a colour back then.

Maybe peach wasn't a fruit back then.

You know, I wouldn't want to live in a time when there's no peaches.

The Presidents of the United States of America would be nothing without them.

I guess there's Lump, but it's no Peaches.

Did you know the colour orange was named after the fruit, and not the other way around? Me too! Commonality in knowledge!

February 22 - Rachel Dratch gets a posit on the catalyst to the extinction of humanity (2018-02-22 09:44)

We're definitely on our way out as a species, but it's still unknown which catastrophe is going to be the one to kill us off. We all know the obvious possibilities, what with the sun burning out, a meteor smacking us in the universal gullet, gradual unmitigated climate change.

But I feel like it's gonna be more surprising, with a little bit of that "WHAAAA?" factor we're all looking for in a mass extinction.

My theory, and it has some merit, which I'll get to later, is that a mammoth mammoth's vestigial testicle will engulf, ingest or envelop the planet until we all get quicksanded into its oxygen-deprived goo.

Cockroaches will survive, and tartigrades, maybe a couple of resilient silicon-based slugs, but that's about it.

"What about me?" you might be asking.

No, dummy. You be dead.

February 23 - Patricia Richardson gets a fondness for my protégé (2018-02-23 09:37)

I have this protégé now. It's really strange having someone look up to me like he does, but pretty interesting too. Before this, I never felt like my actions made a difference in anyone else's life but my own. Now I have someone depending on me, for advice, guidance, the pneumatic aid reminder that the stalactite is the one that hangs down. I mean, sure I'm proud of what I've accomplished, and maybe I can help push someone else in the right direction, but there's a lot of pressure there. I had to tell him I didn't think his girlfriend was good for him. And he listened to me. He broke up with her. Then, at my insistence, he quit his cushy job to start his own company. Now he's struggling, which is natural at the beginning but still hard to watch. I know it's what's best for him. I know he will overcome. I know, I know... for he is my protégé.

[Editor's note: The author did not, in fact, have a human protégé to whom he would dole out career and life advice. He actually purchased a used Mazda Prot égé from a drifter in Hartford. It's from 2003 and it goes vroom vroom.]

February 24 - Edward James Olmos gets a religious rumination (2018-02-24 09:33)

The churches have been recruiting for long enough now they should know their current methods are not really the most effective.

Jehovah's Witnesses, they come to your house and everyone else's house trying to convert you and everyone else to their group.

The Catholics, they're always running around asking, "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and saviour yet?" Now that's a leading question if I ever heard one, certainly failing the under-used test of journalistic integrity. If you say yes, in the hopes it will make them they stop whatever pitch they were about to make, they'll want to talk about that, how you're both such big god lovers. And since it's a lie to begin with you'll have to this to deal with and you'll end up misquoting Bible passages and concealing unknown allusions. But if you say no, which is more accurate, they take that as an invitation for a cup of tea so they can tell you all about this God, like you didn't know being religious was even a possibility until right now.

Jews don't want you to join them. They're happy with the crew they have and they think the rest of us are all better off not getting into heaven.

At a funeral for one of my secular friends a few years ago, the priest lady was basically using the occasion as an excuse to preach to us all about whatever denomination she belonged to. She pretended he got all religious in his final days, which he definitely never, and he wasn't around to defend himself, so we had no choice but to believe her, 'cause why would a priestess lie about that in the house of that which she worships.

Buddhists are alright. I'm fully down with the Buddha. I might even be one. Loves robes. Loves silence.

So there's religionists, atheists, agnostics. But what do you call the people who just don't give a hoot either way?

February 25 - Ric Flair gets a bucket list of sorts (2018-02-25 09:44)

I don't know about you, but there's a few things I'd like to do before I die.

I'd love to save someone's life. I want to be interviewed on the news right after I risk my safety to keep an old woman from getting hit by a car, and someone will come up and call me a hero. And then I'll get to look them in the eyes and say "I'm not a hero. I just did what anyone would do in my position." And then the person interviewing me on TV would think I was brave AND humble, so she'd fawn over me and giggle a bit.

I also want to hit a kid who's being a big jerk in public. You hear stories about old guys doing it and it sounds right up my alley.

I'd like to storm out of a dinner. Pretend to get offended about something that's said, make this proud declaration about taking the moral high ground, and then walk out. After I eat but before the bill comes.

What else? Heroin. Oh man. I bet that feels pretty good.

Either that or achieving pure transcendence at some point.

Woo.

February 26 - Michael Bolton gets an assumption of his current state (2018-02-26 09:21)

Even considering the immense technological advancements during your lifetime, you are still astounded by the functioning of a lightbulb. There is one lightbulb in your house that needs to be changed, but you assume that will take care of itself. You say you like cooking, but you can't recall the last time you made anything that wasn't a sandwich or a bowl of cereal. You're slightly cold but hadn't really noticed, and anyway, you convince yourself that it's easier to just sit where you are being chilly than to change your clothing or the thermostat.

You are now manually blinking.

Your nose is always in view.

Yawn.

Scratch that itch, wherever it came from.

Your spirituality is personal to you. It comes primarily from an experience you had years ago with your best friends, but you can certainly understand why others find comfort in religion. You can't shake that you're smarter than them. You find that you're smarter than most people, but you acknowledge that the intelligence in your head outperforms it once the words come out.

You believe you'd be one of the few survivors after an apocalypse. Sometimes you'd even welcome the chance to prove it. You shouldn't. You would die immediately.

You have an inside cosmic joke with yourself that, if anybody else knew, would make you a little more boring.

You hear certain sounds more clearly than others do.

The last time you cried, you were alone.

You can't recall the last time you went for a walk without a destination. You don't listen to music as much as you used to. You don't know why.

You never know why.

[Editor's note: The author shares a birthday with Mr. Bolton, and my guess is this post is more personal than he's letting on. I bet he wishes he was famous enough to be the one receiving a fun message on this day. That's probably why he started this stupid project to begin with. Now I'm forced to read and approve the daily ramblings of a non-famous, disingenuous misanthrope.]

February 27 - Derren Brown gets a new illusion he can try out on his friends before he takes it to the big time (2018-02-27 09:27)

I have a neat little knick-knack for you, in the form of a new illusion you can play on your friends and acquaintances. It's one my father taught me years ago when I was just a wee child. For it to work, what you do is take the knuckles on your index and middle fingers and place them on either side of someone's nose. Then, and here's where it gets a little complicated, you pull back, lightly touching the tip of their nez, while covertly slipping your thumb between the two knuckles we just talked about. Then comes the climax, as you show them your resulting hand configuration and proclaim loudly and proudly, "Got your nose!"

Most people stand in shock, understandably, until it is revealed that you haven't actually removed their nose. It's a useful trick for picking up women as well as entertaining at parties.

February 28 - Gilbert Gottfried gets an unwillingness to calm a customer's frustration (2018-02-28 09:29)

I was in one of those large electronics stores the other day, looking at speakers and pretending that the differing volts and specs will help me determine which ones I want.

I was there returning a keyboard I borrowed for a month with the intent of taking advantage of their 30-day return policy. I highly recommend this method, primarily because it helps smaller, independent stores that are going obsolete because of places like this. I do my part by wasting their their time and money, and a nice little by-product is that I get a free rental of something for a month.

So this woman came up to me with a flyer in her hand, telling me that the price of toilet paper in the flyer is different than the price on the shelf. I didn't really understand why she was telling me, so I just said, "Maybe [the store is screwing with people to get them to come in]", thinking that could be true.

She thought I was being rude, because - as I started to realize - she was under the impression that I worked there. I thought she was just having a chat with me, as a fellow human who might have also been subjected to corporate trickery today.

She said she wanted to speak to my manager. I thought it might be funny to go up to the manager of this store with this hysterical woman who might be trying to get me fired, so we walked over to the manager. The woman pleaded her case, and then this manager turns to me and goes, "You're fired!" At this point I thought I'd come clean, so I told him, I was just like "Well I don't actually work here". Then he said, "Hey, me neither!"

Now this angry woman is just standing there, trying to get the fake manager of a store to fire

one of his fake employees. Me and this other non-employee guy had a little laugh about it and just went on with our lives. But this woman was so frustrated and pissed off at this point that as I'm walking away, I could hear her yelling, "Where's the manager?? I need to speak with the manager!!"

I left, but her conversation with the actual manager was probably stupid too.

1.3 March

March 1 - Lupita Nyong'o gets a keyboard kaper the likes of which she's never seen (2018-03-01 09:07)

I don't have any other option. It's the general's command, so I obey, even as he is clearly losing control over the situation. If I ever want to return home, I will have to shift into a higher gear and fully commit to my new role, likely with no outside help.

I can't escape. There's nowhere to go, no space to move. It's always hard to function under this intense pressure, but I'm keeping a close tab on my captors's movements, and when I notice him a drop his vigilance, I reach into his holster and extract his weapon. The gun's caps lock up, and I'm left scratching a useless trigger. With no other alternative, in desperation I jump on top of him, but he pulls out his knife and is able to slash through my flesh over and over, quickly draining all of the blood from my body.

And barely having entered it at all, I'm deleted from this life.

[Editor's note: This was initially supposed to be a mini novella, but when I wouldn't let him call it Qwerty Eye For The Swervy Guy he stopped working on it, threw a tantrum and relegated it to here.]

March 2 - Bryce Dallas Howard gets friendship incarnate (2018-03-02 09:22)

A voluptuous, moluptuous hippie named Hippo went to the zoo. Now I know what you're thinking, that I'm going to take the lazy way out here, like I did with the word moluptuous, which isn't a real word but does of course rhyme with the one right before it. You think I'm going to take the easy way out by making Hippo the Hippie visit the water mammals section of the zoo and meet a hippo named Hippie. Well, you're right! That's exactly what Hippo did. He went straight to the hippopotamoose pen and found the one who looked most like himself, a robust creature with a gap between his front teeth, enjoying a meal of grass, and he called him Hippie. Then he distracted the zookeepers with his ventriloquism act so that he and his new best friend could escape the clutches of the zoo's fences. And you know what? After several unsuccessful teleportation attempts, he noticed the gate to the enclosure was left wide open and they walked straight out, smug looks painted on their faces in either paint or contortions.

In no time at all, Hippo the hippie and Hippie the hippo were running down the street, laughing and playing and sometimes cavorting, drawing strange looks from strangers, straws, and pictures. After picking the smaller straw, meaning he had to pay for the paper and markers, Hippo drew a monster and coloured him green, while Hippie, being a hippo and all, was unable to pick up the relatively puny writing implement. The hippo was sad, as this failure reminded him of his other creative deficiencies, but Hippo thought tough and thought through and plain old thought of a plan to cheer up the big galoot, all in about twenty seconds. The plan, as you probably would have guessed if I asked you, which I didn't, was to run to the nearest ice cream shop and try a free sample of every flavour before finally deciding that they didn't want ice cream at all, being full of samples and all.

Their next stop, a coffee shop where you could bring your cat, was Hippie's idea, because he loved cats and also wanted to pretend the hippie was a cat, at least for a minute. On the way to there, they almost ran smack into the zookeeper's assistant, a gangly, tangly old thing who went by Gert. Being the tricksters that they are, Hippo took one of the fake moustaches out of his cargo shorts and glued it to Hippie's face. Old Gert, blind as a Venetian and twice as gullible, never stood a chance. She walked right past the two friends as they suppressed giggles fraught with deception, not even bothering to ask them if they'd seen a million pound hippo banging around. Gert was from Sheffield, so she didn't understand that the hippo worth a million pounds was only a thousand pounds big. Gert, right?

At the cat cafe, Hippie got hopped up on caffeine and kittens for the first time in a long while, and the hippie drank as many black teas as he damn well pleased, acknowledging that the black t-shirt on his back only made the whole situation that much more coordinated. The baristo, a Spanish-looking Mexican named Walter, couldn't keep up with all the orders, so he quit his job and got a standing ovation from the whole world as he did burn his apron and strolled out of the shop forever. His former manager, a Mexican-looking Guatemalan who mostly called everyone Tigo, said goodbye to Tigo and winked at him in a confusing gesture of friendship.

Suddenly, the in-house cats decided all at once that they had had enough of being treated like disposable pets, and so they began a revolt against the whole oppressive system. Their attempt was quickly thwarted, however, as the manager called them all Tigo and gave them away to the customers, thus utilizing an important tool in preventing a successful coup - separation. Hippo and Hippie lifted their cats and cheered, which turned out to be the pinnacle of their big day out. Once the coffee and kittens wore off, Hippie made his way back to the zoo because he needed a nap, and anyway, Hippo had already left him because he saw an attractive hippie girl that he wanted to talk to instead.

March 3 - Ira Glass gets some insight into how I see the part of me that writes (2018-03-03 09:08)

A photo of a quote of yours, the one about creativity and taste and perseverance, spent a couple of well-worn years as my wallpaper. I would like to thank you for that.

But I haven't written in a while. I pretend I don't have time. Maybe I don't. But maybe I do.

I'm a little behind, but the goal is that continuous writing will lead me to the right connections, lead my mind to the ideas of which it is capable, if it is capable.

It doesn't have to be good. But I have to think it is. An offender and a victim of delusion, and repeat.

I write because I have to. I show other people because... Maybe I don't show other people, really.

Do I need them to find me funny? Or smart? How shallow is that? I'm serious. How shallow is it? It might not be. It could be normal, but I'll never know.
I write what I wanted to say, not what I actually said.
My first book is a preface. My first life is one too.
I've never left the workshop.
If I write something, people might think I believe it.
The most insightful ideas come from getting inside someone's head concerning how they view you, how you believe they see you.
I write about what I know or what I think I know, or think about what I don't know and write how I would if I knew about it.
The characters are extremes because they're all a part of me and they need to be easily distinguished or distinguishable.
Not all thoughts need to be unique and insightful. Sometimes they're just thoughts. Maybe they're universal, probably they're not.
I need to surround myself with creativity. It will make me better.
Saying I'm finished is admitting defeat.
I'm not a writer anymore. Maybe I never was. But for now my delusion has evaporated.
Wait. I can only finish the story when it's over.

March 4 - Patricia Heaton gets a receipt of my recipe for my recipes (2018-03-04 09:12)

Hey, I cook too! But I'm no foodie, whatever the Jesus that is. I don't Instagram my suppers as the delay in eating leads to unnecessarily cooling of the meal. I don't blog about the freshest kale I just ate. And I don't pretend that I'm the first one who ever decided to put a certain combination of ingredients together on a plate. But what I lack in hipster, I make up for in grit, and I want to share with you what it takes to reach my level of talent and success. Here, before gods and men and the mudder from Raymond, is a recipe for my recipes:

1. List ingredients. Write those friggers down.
2. Line foods up on the counter, in order of sizes they will eventually be chopped into.
3. Spend several minutes wondering whether or not it was the chicken or the egg that came first, to remind yourself you are never above philosophy.
4. Forget what a spatula looks like and try to flip an egg with two pieces of uncooked spaghetti, to be used ninjajically as chopsticks.
5. Before cutting the vegetables with a Santoku knife you obtained from a flea market on Kenmount Road, make an "EE-ee-EE-ee" sound and mime a robot stabbing his creator right after developing sentience.
6. Juggle two avocados with one hand while deciphering which one was cultivated closer to the world's only Sriracha factor in the smelly town of Irwindale, California.
7. A single tablespoon of salt can now be added, although it is rarely noticed, like the potential second 'i' in aluminum.

8. Sing. Sing like nobody's watching, love like only that one guy down the road who's into voyeurism is watching, and live like nobody's watching.
9. Watch a movie like only you are watching.
10. Take a moment to breathe it all in. Let the satisfaction wave over you until you get a bit turned on like you do when you think of something really funny.
11. Put a salisbury steak Hungry Man frozen dinner, once used to cool down your constantly overheating laptop at least once a day for eight months, in the twenty-seven year-old microwave your roommate's girlfriend's mother gave you and wonder how many [1] cancer cells are being created in your body as you watch it cook.
12. Add salt.

1. <http://ismith.ca/journal/hospital-1/>

March 5 - Penn Jillette gets a eulogy for the monkey switch (2018-03-05 09:21)

I'm tired. I'm always tired lately. I've finished living, if you can call it that, through another eight hours of a routine I could not have imagined myself getting sucked into years ago. Another segment of time wasted helping someone else realize a dream. It used to be that I at least knew who that person was. Now I'm not sure they even exist. The after-work rush at the grocery store is one I know well, and I know how to get through it with minimal distress. Pretend no one else is there, parade through the aisles, pretend I'm still amazed at the idea of a single building that contains all the food I will ever need, replenished when I am once again hungry. I instinctively, unthinkingly load up the shopping cart, rented temporarily with the loonie that will be returned at the end of this process, with the cheapest brand of all the foods that I want. I make my final turn toward the cash, but am halted in my approach, by an endless lineup. At this point there's no way I'll be able to weasel my way into the 8 items or less checkout lane without someone being a hero and telling me I don't belong. My cart is full, and there's no denying it. I look up and for the first time this evening notice a familiar face near the front, loading his groceries onto the unmoving conveyor belt. It's Kyle.

It's been a few years, for sure, but I still consider him a friend. I call out his name at a low volume and he turns around. He looks genuinely happy to see me and gives me a wave. But the interaction ends there as he turns back around. Six customers lie between him and I, and as it stands I remain relegated to the back of the only line. It didn't used to be that way. There was a time, not that long ago, when a friend would help another friend, without being disadvantaged himself. Kyle would keep his place in line, while giving to me the spot behind him, in the majesty of a simian's swap.

Ah, the monkey switch. The technique is a thing of beauty, when properly executed, in which the participant closest to the front of a queue helps out a friend and yet loses no ground. In this instance Kyle, a man who found his place in the series of people in a legitimate fashion, would have offered me the spot in front of him, in an apparently selfless gesture, far away from the watchful eye of the patsy behind him. After accepting his offer, I, in turn, would present him the spot in front of

me, with the aforementioned patsy being none the wiser. At this point the ruse is complete, with Kyle remaining two people from the front, while I find myself ahead of all those we do not know, and thus do not care about.

I have Kyle on the Twitter, so I quickly pull out my mobile and write him a direct message. "Monkey switch?"

I can hear the vibration coming from his phone a few feet ahead, and he checks the device right away. He looks down as I hope from afar. Kyle starts typing, but he doesn't turn around to acknowledge me again. My phone then pings aloud, with a simple reply of, "Let's roll."

I break out of the lineup and creep towards Kyle, my nerves bursting forth unexpectedly. The laws of children rarely apply in adulthood, but to regress to my schooldays, even for a moment, is exhilarating.

"Hello, good sir," Kyle greets me, playing a part he was born to play.

"Evening, fellow shopper and friend," I reply.

"It is lovely running into you. Would you like to stand in the slight gap in front of me as we exchange pleasantries?"

"I would enjoy nothing more. Blah blah blah, blah blah." I scoot into the empty space and continue our dialogue." Say, would you like to go ahead of me? It appears you have fewer items than myself, and such a move would certainly expedite your exit from this establishment with little inconvenience to my day."

"How kind. Such act an of generosity, I will never forget!"

He's going a little overboard at this point, but I commend his commitment. He effortlessly glides past me and in one fell swoop begins placing his items on the conveyor belt. I do the same to add to any confusion so that the customer behind me doesn't get any bright ideas about what's taken place before her.

Fortunately, she does not, and the rest of the operation goes accordingly to plan, swimmingly and seamlessly. When he is done paying, he turn back and winks delicately in my direction, with the implicit and accurate understanding that his helpfulness and recollection of the monkey switch will get me home slightly earlier than I normally would.

And for that, I will always cherish Kyle as a person. RIP buddy.

[Editor's note: The above is an excerpt from a speech written and performed by the author during Kyle Hooper's funeral service at which he was asked to say a few words. This was the only memory he had of the man and was unsure of why he was approached for such an assignment in the first place. He would later learn that Mr. Hooper had no actual friends and would pretend that he and the author were close in order to keep his concerned relatives off his back about being such a friggin' loser.]

[Editor's note 2: The original speech recounted this story in the past tense. However, for publication porpoises it was decided that its language be moved to the present, both for effect and accessibility.]

March 6 - D. L. Hughley gets a pizza rating system for a city he doesn't live in (2018-03-06 07:05)

In certain cities, the young rise up, fight back, and inspire the previous generation to do better until it's all over.

In my city there are nine categories of pizza places, divided into thirds by the scales of culinary arts and culinary tastes.

There are the gourmet pizza joints, heretofore known as the Palaces. The Medianic are less discriminating, but still use real bacon over the bits we've come to accept. Finally, the Greasy Pans specialize in quick, cheap, dirty slices, for lazy, hungry, dirty drunks.

Now contrary to what I've preambled, the order of favourites or objective quality does not start at the Palaces and end with the Greasy Pans. Each distinct tier does have within it, however, a subdivision of labours, from top to bottom in deliciousness.

Below are examples of each of the enigmatic rulers of the Jovians, with a short description (except for the greasy pans which although often delicious do not merit anymore of my wo-).

Palace I: Corduroy Pie Company. The best of the best, exemplified in its soothing and life-affirming coppa.

Palace II: Pizzeria Barbarella. Freshly hot, with appropriate portions and proportions, and a majestic sauce.

Palace III: Don't Argue. Price-y and fanc-y, but usually underwhelming, and the service is laughable, although that is simply a note and does not impact the rankings in any way.

Median A: Pizzeria Ludica. A restaurant specializing in board games sneaks under the radar with a delicious pineapple pancetta.

Median B: Ignite Pizzeria. Thinks it's fancy but it ain't, thinks it's tasty but it's only fine.

Median C: Pizza Garden. Wood-fried or wood-fired, either way it's not enough to make up for its mediocrity.

Greasy Pan 1: Uncle Fatih's.

Greasy Pan 2: Goldie's.

Greasy Pan 3: Fresh Slice

[Author's note: The impetus for the relatively complicated structure of 3s, over a linear rating system, is because I would almost always prefer a Ludica pie over a Don't Argue pesto thingy.]

[Editor's note: All establishments for which British Columbia is not the primary service area

have been omitted from this list. This is not to say Pizza Hut can't make a pizza, cuz dey can.]
[Editor's second note: Somewhere in the above, a sentence ends in wo-). The author would like you to know that with a 98° turn-of-the-head this resembles a person in a semaphoric canoe, guided by their fish friend in the water below.]
[Editor's second additional note: ...guided by their fish BEST friend. Jaysus...]

March 7 - Bryan Cranston gets a Mortal Kombat announcer's take on his job (2018-03-07 07:09)

I'd never done voice work before, but I guess I knew my cadence and baritone delivery was unique. And powerful. So even without any experience or formal training, when I saw a posting in the actual physical newspaper for a live announcer, I was confident I'd get the job. And since confidence is nine tenths of the law, I did. However, I was given no indication during the interview that the job was for an interworld fight-to-the-death tournament. The interviewer, who was cordial and genial, told me it was the same as being on the radio, which according to my resume I already knew something about. By the time I realized where I was and who was signing my paycheques, I was being thrown so much money that I couldn't back out.

It's not a realm I fully comprehend, and how anyone would choose to enter into such a competition is beyond me. Even so, I get along pretty well with my co-workers. They kill each other all the time, sure, but they do make me feel like an important part of the organization. The first fight I ever called was hard to watch, but it was exhilarating, and I immediately knew this was my calling. And you can ask around, but I'm widely considered a pioneering innovator in the field.

"Fatality"? That was mine. I wrote that. And "Animality". I made that up by mistake one day when I announced a match either while drunk - we used to get pretty drunk at work before the new boss took over and cleaned things up - or having just burned my tongue on some hot soup. The victor apparently heard me say it right before his finisher - Scorpion was the guy, I believe - and so he took my cue and turned his opponent into a wallaby. It's been a hit ever since.

Oh, my greatest match? That's a tough one. Actually, it might not have been the most exciting fight in the league, but there was a recent preliminary match between Liu Kang and Katana, where the fighters were as equal as short horizontal parallel lines in a math equation, that became a part of me. They performed a lot of interesting techniques throughout, sure, but it was the flagrant spontaneity with which I shouted each description that made it what it was. It was not I who was controlling my voice that day, but something greater than us all, in my personal [1]Street Spirit (Fade Out). I could never take credit for the brilliance, and I'll never be able to duplicate the feeling surrounding the ring, I know. The fight ended with a simple Babality and it was the first time the standing ovation that followed a gruesome death was not for the winner, but for me.

1. https://www.ultimate-guitar.com/news/general_music_news/thom_yorke_explains_dark_meaning_to_street_spirit.html

March 8 - James Van Der Beek gets an understanding of a post-Nibs diet life (2018-03-08 07:01)

I have a friend whose [1] internet alter ego is a poorly-executed play on your name. One night many years ago, I drunkenly challenged this friend to eat only [2]Hawkins Cheezies for a week, figuring he would laugh it off and we'd both forget about it. But he didn't. He took me up on it, and after some discussion, I was provoked into joining him, but in my case I had to live off [3]Twizzlers Super Nibs alone for the decided time of 127 hours. The event began as a trivial dare, but it grew into something else, tangentialized in a way I never could have predicted, especially the extent of the eventual destruction it would cause. The five-plus days of the bet was, in all honesty, the most harrowing experience I have ever endured. I lost thirteen pounds, sure, but more than that I lost my will to live. My girlfriend, who had never considered my brain to me in the tip-toppest of shapes, only grew more confused and saddened when she got wind of the challenge. Fortunately, as I explained to her, I would not be the one to give up first. I am proud of very little, and adept at even less, but determination has proven to be the one positive quality I possess. My stubbornness would not allow me to quit, no matter how much I wanted to, how badly I needed to. My body's deterioration began and continued quickly and painfully.

Within a day I was vomiting constantly, with a seemingly endless supply of red gelatin being evicted from my mouth in between periodic full-body convulsions. Exhaustion took over, and I was bedridden for most of the week. After an unproductive day of work on Monday, I called in sick the next morning. I only needed one day to recover, then I would function normally again, I tried to convince myself. But it only got worse. After several sudden outbursts about how she didn't understand me and never could, my girlfriend made me choose between her and the Nibs. At the time the choice seemed easy enough. Nibs have never given me an ultimatum. They were on my side. She stayed with her sister that night, and I have not seen her since.

In the Wednesday evening, I disappeared. I have no recollection of my lost time. Early the next morning, I was discovered by my roommate, hitchhiking in the middle of an abandoned building near my house, contemplating all manners of words with consecutive aitches. At the time I was laughing unapologetically to fend off the rats who claim to be better than me. I was taken to a hospital, where a nurse attempted to provide me nutrition intravenously, even after I incoherently explained to her that I was not allowed to ingest any foreign substances. According to unofficial reports, I then shoved her against the wall while yelling at her to respect my beliefs and to keep her grubby paws off me. I walked out of the hospital of my own volition after the contest's final hour, having succeeded in what I set out to do. I survived the ordeal, and I became stronger because of it.

Unfortunately, about a brief respite, in which I vowed never to reference Nibs or any liquorice product for the rest of this life and the next, I was contacted by a writer for Vice magazine who was writing a [4] piece on our challenge. He, like many of you, was oblivious to what I had actually gone through and knew only the lighthearted side that was posted on social media by the Cheezies friend. He asked me if I would be open to an interview, for a human interest story. At first I refused, intent on leaving the past where it was. But my friend agreed to share his side, and he convinced me that maybe if I spoke about my experience it would be cathartic and on some level could even help others deal with similar issues. The interview lasted about ten minutes. I answered each question as honestly as I could. He tried in vain to dissuade me from talking about my psychotic episode and failing body. In the end, I at least felt that my voice was heard. Until I read the article. The writer took ridiculous liberties in altering what I had told him. Apparently he didn't want the story to upset his readers, who are baited to click by looking for an escape from the reality in which they live. They want an easily-digestible tale, something to laugh at briefly before moving on to the next

link in the limitless reservoir of the internet. It angered me. I was upset not only that I had been misrepresented, but that an entire segment of the population was not given enough credit by a so-called journalist to hear a factual story meant to serve as a cautionary tale.

I tried to write my own rebuttal explaining how I really felt, but I was at a loss. My brain prevented me from typing my thoughts, if they were there at all. In the end, I decided it was best to let the article run its course. But it wouldn't. His version of our challenge resonated with people. A lot of people. It made its way to the front page of several popular social news sites, and from there it exploded. Interview requests poured in from all over. I tried to dismiss them, but the allure of a small dose of fame grew too great. I told my story to whoever wanted to hear it, and eventually to whoever would listen. I appeared on several late night talk shows, basking in the attention, wondering what my next move would be.

But in an instant it was all gone. I was forgotten. I barely recognized myself. I am not myself.

I awake as Robert Henley. I am as of now unsure about the identity or life of my communicator, but I realize that I have been informed enough about this man to be him. I instinctually know much about him, how he thinks and behaves, but I know that I will be forced to discover most of him as I go. Glancing around quickly, trying not to display my necessary attentiveness, I notice the people that my current brain chose to be around before I arrived. The environment, these surroundings, this is what allows my body and mind to function to its potential. As long as the others before me lived as they were supposed to. I must maintain the facade, of understanding exactly who I am, how I arrived at this point of consciousness. I need to keep it up to make the most of this day, until I fall asleep and disappear from this body forever.

Smile, Bobby, show them you're comfortable. It would have been easier to wake up alone, of course, but I did not choose how he ended his night. There are several other people in the room, but none of them seem to acknowledge me, or each other, even though their interconnectedness is vital to the situation. This place is a mess, but I don't feel dirty. These people had fun last night. I had fun last night. Right now my body doesn't feel so strong. I haven't landed in this situation before, and it isn't familiar. But this is how it goes.

1. <https://www.instagram.com/rhamesvanderb/>

2. <http://www.cheezies.com/>

3. https://www.hersheys.com/twizzlers/en_ca/products/twizzlers-cherry-super-nibs.html

4. https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/yv5yg7/meet-the-two-geniuses-who-lived-on-cheezies-and-licorice-for-one-week

March 9 - Neil Strauss gets an inventory of my eccentricities (2018-03-09 07:15)

Years ago I read *The Game* and considered for a moment using magic and peacocks to further my relationship goals. However, I quickly realized it would take more than that, due to my many idiosyncrasies, outlined below, in case you were wondering, which you were.

- I refuse to eat while the cupboards open, and I keep cereal in the fridge. It's easier that way, since cereal always goes with milk. But then your cereal is cold.
- I have an as-yet-unvalidated theory that the moon is sixty light years away and we'll be able to see the Armstrong-Aldrin landing real soon as long as we have decent binoculars and an ability to squint.
- I have a deep affinity towards cuckoo clocks. Like, however deep you're thinking, it's deeper than that.
- I can't blow my nose. I mean, I can try, but it never works out like it's supposed to. This doesn't come up very often, especially since I never get sick for some reason, but I don't want any major surprises years down the road, so I might need to take a class or something.
- Sometimes I pretend there's headlight fluid that needs to be replaced. There never is.
- I take admittedly significant liberties concerning which albums sync up well with movies, like William Shatner's "Ponder the Mystery" with Danny Leiner's "Dude, Where's My Car?"
- When I accidentally type a letter twice, I'm oddly particular about which one I will delete, having been tasked as the ultimate decider to remove it from this world forever.
- I regularly swap my car tires with rentals instead of buying new ones. I haven't been found out yet.
- I have not a fear of elevators, but a fear of being in elevators with other people, acquaintances and strangers alike.
- I'm mildly terrified of regular household items when they resemble spooky things. I do not own a staple remover because it's basically a venomous cobra.
- I find stationary objects amusing but pointless. I need constant motion and stimulation.
- I will only eat a plum while I'm inside, both to be near a water source for post-snack cleaning and also so that the wind doesn't gust my pit away from me, causing a seagull to choke to death. Even gulls deserve second chances.
- I don't like when someone doesn't clear the microwave back to the clock after removing the food before time expires. In the same microwavic vein, I also hate the beeping when countdown hits 0.
- It's hard for me to respect someone who screws up latitude, so basically, don't screw up latitude.
- I get rightfully upset at people who, upon realizing they used the last of the toilet paper, do nothing to replace it.
- I always eat around the edge of sandwiches in a valiant attempt to craft the perfect bite. I never attain it, and never will, but it's nice having something to live for.

I hope to someday overcome these quirks, but not really that much because our differences are what make us unique!

[Editor's note: This was written before the author contracted the cancer. He understands he

can no longer say "I never get sick for some reason" with a straight face.]

March 10 - Olivia Wilde gets my favourite movie of in time (2018-03-10 07:19)

Now I'm a bit of a filmophile. Oh, how I philes those films, yes sir. More than video games, history, or even sports. Altman surpasses Megaman in most every way. Kurosawa topples Hirohito. Spielberg over Roethlisberg. I analyze their works of these directors with a stringent intent, furiously scribbling notes with a pen and a pad, tryin' to get this damn critique off, hoping to glean some sort of their insight to help me in my own wayward life.

But no matter the quality of the movie on the screen in front of me, my thoughts inevitably wander, returning to a single film that, while not perfect, is the one I bring up in conversation more than any other. As you may now glean, it features you and stars Justin Timeberlake, whose name hides within it the fitting title.

My passion for and interest in In Time extend far beyond the premise, in which instead of money, time is the currency, and when you run out of time, you dead. Oh yeah, and everyone is basically the same age, whatever age it is you are when you're the most attractive. Oh yeah, and poor people live in slummy sectors of the world, and they all seem to work at some factory where their pay (in time, mind you) keeps getting reduced, to the dismay of said poor people. Justin loves his mom (you) and tries to run to where you are because you're running out of time (and therefore life), but he doesn't make it in time and so you dead. He drowns his sorrows in some sort of time-related alcohol, and the next morning, wakes up to discover he's been gifted a shitload of time by a mysterious handsome stranger he went drinking with who happened to be quite rich (in time).

With no reason to stay in his slummy sector, and suddenly flush with years (of time), he travels to increasingly wealthy sectors until he's at the best one, where Pete from Mad Men runs the show. Anyway, a bunch of stuff happens and they play poker and then he finds Pete's bank (of time) and distributes it evenly in some socialist power move. This part is mostly irrelevant, and the part with Pete's daughter too.

What's truly fascinating about this film, from a moviephile's keen eye, is how it relates to so many of life's situations. I won't get into them here, but it's most, which you'll notice if you ever have a conversation with me. Which you won't, because of your fame and all.

March 11 - Benji Madden gets to see that being a twin could have been a whole lot worse (2018-03-11 07:24)

You will be pleased to see that I have picked you over your brother as the important birthday of the day. Actually, I'm sorry for bringing him up. It must get a little annoying always being a twin, from being dressed the same as kids to being disliked because of something he did because people are too ignorant to tell the difference between you guys.

But that's nothing compared to being one of them conjoined twins, whether they're from Thailand or not. Wait, is this like how anything made outside of Champagne in France has to be called sparkling wine? Irregardless of the etymological root, have you ever even seen any of these fused siblings in real life? They're all over the screen, in Big Fish, Basket Case, Sisters, Twin Falls Idaho. But I've never had to avoid a red rover situation walking down the road.

Holy goodness! I just binged it, and it turns out there's a reason you never see them. It only happens once in every 200,000 birthdays, and only one-third of them make it past the first day. Stuck On You makes it seem like they share a great, if not clumsy, life together. But I doubt this has every been the case. If you hear of any fun-loving attached people, let me know, will you? Until then, be glad you don't have to stand next to Joel all bored and in your own head while he meets with his accountant. Actually, you probably share an accountant. Better keep your ears open while she (or he!) is talking, because taxes are important, even as a musician. They help pay for hospitals and prisons and studies about how long it takes to fry an egg, and I hope you contribute your fair share to that.

March 12 - Ron Funches finds out I am a card-carrying citizen of the cancer community (2018-03-12 07:32)

I saw you perform on February 24, 2016. I remember the date not because of how ridiculously funny you were (although I did get a few good guffaws in), but because it's also the day I found out I had a much maligned tumour. The doctors told me I couldn't leave the hospital to see the show, but I told them I was going to anyway, and then I did. This marked my first playing of the cancer card, and as we know.

Since then, I've used the move a number of times, realizing that a cancer card laid is a cancer card played. Usually it's done for minor life improvements, like letting people ahead of me skip them in line at coffee shops. "I understand we all want a coffee, yes, but I may be dead long before you, so how about I get my non-fat cappa-frappa-brappuccino a couple of minutes before you," is what I'd say before their spot was begrudging or happily spot relinquished to me. For the most part it's used to get me out of unwanted social gatherings, as I claim the cancer is acting up and everyone understands that's why I'm unable to go bowling for their dumb kid's birthday.

I've noticed even without my prompting, I am given some leeway in my actions in what I've dubbed the cancer concession. Others let me think I'm right, even when I'm clearly not, in a form of pity I'm not completely against. Like when you don't correct your racist nan because she'll be gone long before you. It's a lot like that episode of Fresh Prince where Will let Marcus score on the final drive after finding out in the barbershop that he had a kid which made him realize that a scholarship to university would be more important to him.

Sometimes I forget I'm sick, then I'll see the word 'cancer' in an article or something and go, "oh yeah, I have that!" I was hanging out with this useless guy the other day and he was telling me how his mom used to have cancer, looking for a compassion carousal, even though she's fine now. I was like, "Buddy, sure that's nudding, I took hers and now I got a bit o' dat myself." That shut him up long enough for me to punch him right in the head.

[Editor's note: The ending didn't happen as stated, and the only reason he put it in is because he wanted to say "Ron Punches!" at the end, but I had to remind him that your name is Ron, not his, so he agreed to leave it out.]

March 13 - William H. Macy features prominently in the first story I ever wrote (2018-03-13 07:11)

"Spike was bad to the bone. He didn't care what his parents thought, and he didn't listen to his teachers. Spike had a friend named Henry who was bad to the bone but not as much as Spike. The two of them ride their bikes together and go swimming. Spike was jealous of Henry because he got an allowance. Spike never ever had cable. One day Henry bought a chocolate bar at the store and Spike wanted one too but he didn't have any money. When the lady at the front wasn't looking, Spike put a Mr. Big bar in his pocket and then he left the store. Henry asked him where he got his bar, but Spike didn't tell him. But after a while, he started feeling bad about taking the bar, but he ate it anyway. When he got home, he went down to his room and sat on his bed. His mom called him up to supper but Spike said he wasn't hungry. He thought about what he did, and if he wanted to be bad to the bone forever. He didn't. The next day he went back to the store to say he was sorry. The girl told his mom, and his mom was mad but was proud of him too for admitting what he did. Spike never stole anything again."

And who do you think Spike is today? That's right - William Hall Macy Jr.

[Author's note: The preceding is my diluted memory of the first piece of fiction I ever wrote.]

March 14 - Jake Fogelnest gets a rundown of the first season of "Trials and Tributaries" (2018-03-14 07:22)

I have an idea for a show where each episode is a different court case (NOT Night Court). Some judges are crazy, some are all serious, either way they should be wildly different. Some cases make sense, with audience introspection encouraged, while some are completely absurd, with audience laughter anticipated. The verdicts are all over the place too. Anyway, here are some of the cases:

- The pilot episode is called "Emojail" and is about someone who harasses an ex-partner emojiically, via text and whatever new app the kids use to text these days. The primary story line centres around an expert witness's testimony. The court's resident emoji specialist, some 14-year-old girl, translates the symbolized texts into English and explains the nuances of what he wrote to the old people in charge of putting him in and keeping him out of jail.

- There's also "Don't Be At It (Can't Be At It)", where a man went to work and stuck his finger out of his pants zipper to touch his co-workers with it. He gets charged with sexual harassment and we see how it all plays out. This is topical too, so I'm sure The Audio Visual Club will give it a decent review.
- "Judge Jury" (or "Delusions of Grand Juries") is like Twelve Angry Men on hallucinogens. At one point they order a pizza with the only remaining slice from their previous pizza order used as the phone. I'll tell you why before we meet with any network execs.
- In "Bun Head", someone sues a guy they slept with after learning his man bun was a clip on.
- "Rowe v. Wade" is an intellectual property case involving competing independent sporting goods stores in a small Indiana town. It obviously has a lot of parallels with the abortion one from back in the day, and hopefully by the end everyone realizes the futility in getting anyone to change their mind.
- "Golden Army" has as the defendant this real guy named James Harrison (possibly played by the real-life guy, like in Best Years of Our Lives. Scientists say he has a golden arm because his plasma is the best plasma in the world and he donates it to save tons of lives. In this account, he stops giving away his plasma and some circuit court charges him with negligence causing murder. Hopefully he goes free but in this society you never know.
- The series finale "Notice of Dereliction" has me (playing myself, like in that new Clint Eastwood flick) getting arrested for something, not important what. All my notes files on my computer get used as evidence for me being unstable and whacked out, but my defence is that writing them down gets them out of my head and makes me half sensible at least. I can't tell how this one ends yet.

Anyway, once you have some time let me know and we'll pitch it to Netflix or whatever the new Netflix is by then.

[Editor's note: The author won't be in the new Clint Eastwood film. He's referring to people who aren't really actors playing themselves in a (semi-)fictional depiction.]

March 15 - Bret Michaels gets a welcome mat switcheroo (2018-03-15 07:23)

I'm walking my friends home from the bar because the air is crisp and the friends are clean. As we approach their place, I acknowledge that I will not be immediately continuing on. There's unfinished business inside, and although I'm still unsure of its extent, I am forced to meander, as one does. I park my keister on a nearby bench, but before they close the front door I invite myself in to their building, never planning to go further than the hallway. Once they're comfortably inside their apartment, fully absolved of whatever is to take place, I rub my hands together much like a sneaky or religious insect would, primed to do the bidding of my master.

A few of their neighbours have those welcome mats outside their doors. One says "Join the Party". Another has the head of a fox and the body of a mat. I notice a plain thatch rug guarding the

entry of an innocent bystander. With no time to deduce deductions, the swap begins. The regular rug is grifted and placed in front of a suite whose entrance includes the cartoon fox. The fox rug is moved swiftly through a set of doors to replace the party rug we all know and love. That last rug, as expected, is laid gently in front of the now naked door, and so the triangle switch is complete. I have nowhere to wait but here. No time to wait, but until tomorrow. Tomorrow we discover the truth. Tomorrow we dine.

March 16 - John Darnielle gets a dream that, when scrawled on paper, evolves into a film about a calamitous first day at work (2018-03-16 07:21)

The other day I had this dream that woke me up, as it strongly urged me to write it down. It quickly turned into a short film, and someday when it gets filmed I can legitimately call it that. So the premise is that this young, bushy-eyed guy has a terrible first day at his new job, and I'll let what I typed drowsily in that early morning tell you the rest:

So the characters are Tim, Tim's mom, Burt the janitor, Alice the crush, Owen the supervisor, Doug the executive, and there's a slight possibility it will also include the President of United States. This is because in an alternate version the audience finds out about halfway through that Tim is actually working at the White House, with the mini-reveal happening when he runs into the president and gets some life advice. This will only work with a different president, obviously.

So the opening scene is 21-year-old Tim in the car with his mom in car discussing the job he's about to go to.

Tim (being modest, but clearly proud of himself): Mom, it's not that big of a deal.

Mom: Oh, no? The first in our family to finish college? And with honours! And now a job where you're dressed like the president?

[Editor's mid-dialogue note: Tim is wearing an ill-fitting dress shirt and slacks, which is not actually stylish. As mentioned previously, the mother's comparison could fit in as a little foreshadowing.]

Mom (continued): Honey, even if you don't realize it, this day means a lot to us, and I'm so proud of everything you've accomplished. Your father is proud too, and he's smiling down on you.

Tim has a sentimental look on his face as he nods positively but then looks away quickly. His father used to be a custodian, which becomes relevant later.

Mom: Here, he wanted me to give this to you at your wedding, but I think today is important enough and I couldn't wait any longer.

Mom hands Tim a very nice watch.

[Editor's note: This is either too much like Pulp Fiction or an homage.]

Tim: Wow, I thought he was buried in this. This means the world.

Mom (smiling, laughing, almost crying): Thank your father.

Tim (smirking proudly): I have to go. Love you Mom!

The car stays parked outside building, implying Mom is collecting her thoughts, as Tim walks towards front door of building.

Burt, the crazy janitor, is sweeping the front area and notices that Tim looks nervous.

Burt: Your tie is loose, son.

Tim: Oops, thanks, sir.

Tim tries to fix it himself but is having a hard time. Burt sees him struggling.

Burt: Here, let me help you. And I'm no sir. In here, you're the sir, sir.

Burt straightens Tim's tie, but leaves behind a small grease stain on his shirt, which starts the unraveling of his day.

Tim enters building and steps up to receptionist desk, clearly apprehensive.

Tim: Uh, I'm here to see Owen Peters.

Receptionist: I'll page him. Please take a seat.

While waiting for Owen, who will be showing him around, Tim runs into the contact who helped him get job, through a Facebook post. They barely know each other.

Alice: Tim! You got the job after, that's great. I have a meeting, but we'll catch up later.

He stands up quickly and his shirt gets caught on something and gets untucked, although he doesn't notice it happening. She's friendly but evidently in a rush. He has a slight crush on her, which is a big deal to him because he's never had a girlfriend before.

Tim: Yeah, uh, thanks again for -

She's long gone by now. Owen shows up.

Owen: Tim, my man! Great to have you here. Sorry I'm late. I was watching the highlights from last night. You see Warren's TD. Oh man!

Tim: Yeah, sports. I like sports.

Owen: Alright, anyways. Let's get going. There's a bunch of people I want you to meet.

Owen rushes through the crowded workplace, saying hello to a lot of people he passes, not looking back at Tim, who's having a hard time keeping up with him. Owen gets in the elevator and the door closes, with Tim narrowly missing his chance to get on.

Two women are standing nearby talking. One of them laughs, and the other one starts to ask him what's wrong but it's at this point he realizes he doesn't have his bag, containing his phone and new laptop, as well as his father's watch. He panics, looking around, unable to find it. He can't wait for Owen any longer so he retraces his steps to find the bag. He runs around, at this point noticeably sweating all over. He sees similar-looking black bags everywhere but is unsure how to approach people to ask if it's his. Someone thinks he's trying to steal their friend's at one point. Suddenly he has to pee really bad, which happens to him when he's nervous, something about uromycetisis poisoning. So he must abandon his immediate goal of finding the bag, and also the secondary goal of finding Owen. He runs into bathroom and slips on floor pee. He gets up and shakes himself off, his pants now covered in someone else's pee. Burt shows up and checks out the scene, assuming it was Tim who peed on the floor. Burt shakes head disapprovingly and starts cleaning it up.

Tim: No it wasn't me. Watch.

Tim goes up to urinal and starts peeing. Burt finds this interaction awkward as an employee has never asked him to watch them pee before. They get into a bit of an argument as Tim continues to pee. Since he's paying more attention to Burt than his stream, he ends up peeing on the wall. Burt now knows it wasn't him, because clearly he hadn't peed yet, but now he'll have to clean Tim's wall pee too.

Remember his other tasks, Tim runs out of the bathroom, getting more panicky and disheveled as the day goes on. He gets into a few more shenanigans, and eventually ends up in the elevator. He sees that his new company is on the top four floors, and he's unsure which one to go to find Owen. He chooses the top floor, which is where the executives work (or the president).

Tim (to Doug, the first person he sees): Excuse me, do you know where Owen is?

Doug doesn't know who Owen is and thinks Tim looks half crazy.

At some point Tim insults Doug, the big kahuna (/president. If it's the president the reason he doesn't recognize him is because at some point he gets temporarily blinded.)

Someone (at some point): Do you need any help?

Tim (walking away, hopelessly): Yes I do.

[Author's note: There's more, of course, but I can't give it all away yet so hopefully this tease is enough. As you can tell, it all goes to shit for most of the day, but maybe everything works out in end, where he eventually gets confidence and succeeds. Or maybe he's about to get fired but cuts the boss off with an "I quit!" Also there's this decoy cheesy ending where Tim goes, "It's my first day!", which causes laughter to ensue, and then that line becomes his catchphrase. This is the ending I sent to my friends to make sure they catch how stupid it is and tell me to take it out. The ones who don't, I won't be able to trust their opinions anyway.]

March 17 - Rob Lowe gets my filmic concerns with slightly relevant #ashtags (2018-03-17 07:15)

In the course of my movie watching, I often catch myself falling for the pitfalls of misattribution. Other times I discover continuity holes, missed opportunities or potential connections. [1]These are their stories.

- For the entirety of Room, I thought the actor playing Jack was female, and that the character of Jack was also in fact a female. Old Nick had wanted his child to be a boy, and so he named the kid the masculine-sounding Jack. Brie Larson's character went along with this, pretending she was a boy, in order to protect her daughter. As the credits rolled and reported that Jacob Tremblay evidently portrays Jack, it occurred to me that I had manufactured the rather significant plot detail to give a new layer of meaning to the situation. #confessions
- I pressed play on my computer to watch the film Nymphomaniac. In the first twenty minutes there were a lot of very interesting scenes, with the musical score is so high in the mix that the dialogue is mostly inaudible, and the viewer is made to fill in the words. It's an interesting decision by director Lars von Trier, but I commend his originality and focus on assembling the story myself. It's an interesting technique, one I'd considered but never seen actually executed, until I realized that, along with the video player, pressing the play button also launched my music player. Boards of Canada's "Geogaddi" was playing at the same time as the movie, and I was clueless to what was actually happening on screen. #mixedup
- There's a scene in 1995's Hackers where the main guy does some serious hacking, which leads to Bunk from The Wire's phone number showing up in an online personal ad, leading to Bunk's character getting bombarded with solicitations. Now I'm no hacker, but he could have just placed a personal ad containing Bunk's number. #hacked
- John Candy's character in Planes, Trains and Automobiles is the same person as Candy's character in Home Alone, as he is stranded somewhere and trying to get back to Chicago on a bus, and is also a younger version of his character in Cool Runnings, having said the line "after this I want to go to Jamaica". #candyappeal
- In Love and Mercy, at 1:50:20, Elizabeth Banks's character acts like Brian Wilson jumped out in front of her car, but he was at a pretty well defined crosswalk, so maybe she's the one with the paranoid schizophrenia. Dr. Landy should get on that. #beachedboy

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP3MuUTmXNk>

March 18 - Queen Latifah gets an unplanned revolutionary origin (2018-03-18 06:22)

I'm at a party on the 22nd floor of a building downtown, and based on the decorations it must be New Year's Eve. My friends are all around me but for now I am alone. I'm watching the city below, the energy pulsating through the city and this apartment, as I sit in the sun room. Another man enters and sits next to me. I don't know him very well. We'd met a few times before, but nothing in our shared past has been too substantial or meaningful. Although he did date my current

girlfriend for a couple of years, and I'm living in his house with most of his stuff, including pictures of his family, so there's that connection, I suppose.

As far as I remember, this is the first one-on-one conversation I've had with him.

A lot of my friends say he's legitimately the nicest person they know, and having a similar taste for cool girls, as it seems, there's a decent chance we'll get along.

He points out an apartment a few streets away, with a deep green light coming from the patio, and wonders how it ended up there. It's not a colour you see very often lighting someone's house, so we decide that it must be related to the holiday, or possibly leftover from Christmas. My eyes shift slightly to my right and I see another green light, coming from a different building.

Suddenly, it's as if half of the apartments downtown are shining a green light at the world. This makes no sense anymore. We can't figure it out.

Is this the spark of a revolution? A signal that a new life begins now, the catalyst for true change?

He glances towards my direction and a stunned expressions comes across his face. "Uh, you're gonna need to look behind you..."

I turn around, and staring back at me is a green light bulb, radiating the room we're in. We are not only a part of this new world order, but it turns out we are the leaders of its movement, this coordination of viridescent illumination, whose ultimate goal remains an enigma wrapped in a riddle wrapped in a glow.

March 19 - Glenn Close gets my Olive Moment™ (2018-03-19 06:38)

Well, it's finally happened. And it's about time. I have returned from having my olive moment, and I admit, that means a lot to me. I've actually been waiting for today for years, when at last I would be able to enjoy the experience as I'd long hoped for. I knew it would happen eventually, after yet another instance of being forced to consume an olive at the incessant urging of a friend or family member whose momentous turning point is long past, long ago and maybe even far away.

"You'll love it! I don't see how you can't love it! Try it. Come on, try it! Just one." And I, hoping to put an end to the scene she was creating, I did it. I ate one olive. I snatched it out of her hand and chomped down directly into its flesh, looking her straight in the eyes the entire time.

And it was absolutely delectably delicious. The strong, salty flavour, the bitter aftertaste, even the unusual texture, it all all resonated with me in a way I never thought possible. I'm amazed that I actually had my moment, but let me tell you, my life has really changed since it happened.

I hang out with more interesting people now. We eat olives and blue cheese while laughing over chardonnays from Châteauneuf-du-Pape during intermission at the opera. I'm now a proud member of the exclusively elite olive sub-culture. You may not immediately recognize who we are, but periodically you will see an eclectic group of people wearing the same barely-noticeable ribbon. Some days, it's us. Our little signal so we know who else belongs, who else is a convert to the lifestyle.

I don't wait in lines anymore. We have our own social network, and the name - well it's a really clever pun, but I obviously can't say what it is. I will invite you, not to the club, but to the precursor, as a means to adore the olive as much as I. In a dark room, alone, suck on an olive for thirty seconds, then spit it out. If you are not immediately disgusted, suck on it again. Wait a week. Repeat the initial step. Your palate should now be getting used to the flavour. Do this for as long as necessary. Trust me, it will be worth it. There's something really special about being an olive lover.

Even the oil of the olive is something to be admired and adored. A symbol of wisdom, fertility, and peace, it has long been considered sacred, by chefs and regulars alike. The Minoan civilization as we know it, it would be nothing if not for the fruit. Some argue that the edible olive has been cultivated for longer than the world has existed, and to that I do not disagree.

[Editor's note: This break in the story is what I call The Inter(ad)mission, named after the author, scribbling furiously in the midst of this writing, paused, nostalgically, then got suddenly serious and ashamed.]

God, I wish that story was true. I really do. I would give anything if that was actually me who lived, who's living that life after eating an olive. But it wasn't, and it's not. It is actually my brother, my own brother, my younger self's forced best friend. Neither of us liked olives, ever. We tried them together, on more than one occasion. We've discussed the fruit's flaws at length, but on that day, he left me behind. He pretended, he must have been pretending, that he truly savoured that olive. I was in the room when he bit down on the olive that changed his life. And I'm the only one who could see it was a lie. To this day he contests that he was being truthful in his post-olive feelings, but I can't believe it.

You can't. You just can't enjoy an olive that gets forced into you, with onlookers and tension in the room as it was that day. You can only have your moment on your own time, if it comes at all. By yourself, on a date with a woman you met earlier that day, in the south of Naples on a well-lit hill. Having recently undergone a difficult divorce, you would have recently decided that maybe you're meant to be alone, connecting to another human now seeming out of reach. This woman, Swiss but speaking near-perfect English, leaves the table to powder her nose, and there's no denying how beautiful she is, how she reactivates a feeling long lost within you, reminding yourself you still have societal worth and love to give. After eating a sliver of local camembert, you scour the table for something else to catch your eye. You can hear the beach. Your eyes land at the plate of mixed green and brown and purple and black olives that she ordered. The light from above hits one of them square in the pit, just right right, and instinctively you sit up straight, strong. You peer around the room, taking it all in, unable to hide how much you're enjoying this sensation. You look down again, at the olive, the elusive olive, which you pick up and study. You bite through it, like a whale devouring a single plankton. As it rests on your tongue, you suck on it for some time, letting the olive juice flow with your saliva as it coats your mouth. You raise an eyebrow and confusion washes over you, even as you know nobody else is watching. You crunch down hard, dissecting it with your teeth, while shards of olive bounce around your gums, tongue and teeth. The ideal combination of salt and love. The remnants glide down your throat, the intense flavour coating every taste bud within. As she returns to the table smiling, as the last bit of fruit disappears from this world forever, you know you are a changed man, a real man, one who has finally experienced an olive moment.

March 20 - Spike Lee gets an encounter with a blind Venetian lady of the night
(2018-03-20 06:50)

When I was ordered to be stationed in Italy after the war, I gathered, from the way the other guys talked, that it would be the easiest few months since I was drafted. We were there on a peacekeeping mission, sure, but the real action was over, and I figured this was just another way to line the pockets of the fat cats running this whole madhouse. That's right, the government!

But let me tell you, those six months, man - well in that six months I saw more than I ever cared to see of this world. Getting out alive was about as likely as your grandpappy giving up the last slice of turnip roast. But I did. I fought and clawed and crawled my way through enemies and allies alike, unsure whose side I was on at what time, all of my directives coming from one man whom I later discovered lived in an underground bunker somewhere in Germany and was adept at intercepting and tinkering with signals from the you ess of eh.

After too many close calls of near deaths, finally, I had my ticket booked home where I would find a nice young girl and settle down, learn to farm or some shit. Wandering the streets and doggy paddling the canals of Venice on my last night, the celebratory booze suddenly hit me like a ton of drinks. Not wanting to end up laying my head in an alley with a local or a garbage bag, I stumbled into what appeared to be a motel, slammed some cash down on the table and hoped the clerk would take care of the rest.

In my room, I opened the top drawer of the drawers just enough to see a sturdy book, then closed it as quickly, afraid of what its pages might try to teach me. I inspect the nearby mini-fridge and find that it contains only one item, a large bottle of small-batch bourbon from Loretto. For the rest of the night, there'll be nothing between me and that whiskey. A forty of Maker's and a fool.

I reach for the first one when a knock hits the door. But it's not your everyman's knock. This one was strong, with purpose, but gentle and aloof.

I strolled to the door like I bought it at a yard sale. But when I opened it, no one was there. I looked out and to the left, then the right, where I saw a figure, wearing long curly hair and a trenchcoat. Looking back, I must have paid for more than the cost of the room, and there she was, naked except for the clothes on her body, ready to repay me. Her mounds covered only by what I gathered was two layers of fabric, I hardly coaxed her inside and closed the door.

The carpet matched the drapes, and it all matched the room's own carpet and drapes. She someone sensed that all it takes to make me happy is a coordinated effort between a space's design and its occupants, because this colour syncing lifted me like Samson. But as her eyes darted around, I could see that they didn't work.

I peered out the window to make sure no one had followed her here. But someone must have. How else could she have arrived at the correct door? How much can blind people actually do on their own? If I left and locked the door from the outside, would she die in here, banging into the walls over and over until all her energy was spent? There was no way for me to know, and I wasn't ready to find out. Dead bodies were not my scene, man. Not since that war from a minute ago. So I did what any red-blooded, blue-veined 'Murican would do. I pleased myself by pleasuring her, then I pleased her by falling asleep.

[Editor's note: The author was too shy to mention it, but he once had a dream where he watched

[1]one of your non-existent movies.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/dream/blank-u/>

March 21 - Rosie O'Donnell gets a schubladenbrief (2018-03-21 05:59)

It is the middle of June in a year when people still actively remember Y2K fizzling out. I book a one-way flight to Toronto on a whim, with no real plan for when I land. Somewhere in my head I'm moving there, and maybe I am. To make that option seem more concrete, the day before I leave I visit my phone representative at Bell Aliant, Anna, and find out about getting my phone number switched to an Ontario one. She lays out clearly that the change will cost \$10, and the company will save my current 709 number for me for two years in case I want it back. This was very important because I absolutely adored this number because on the touchtone keypad it spelled out 70 WRINKLES, my favourite number of wrinkles.

About six weeks later, I am back in my old house, having only visited and not having moved to Toronto. I return to Anna and tell her I have come to reclaim my previous number. She informs me that while it had been set aside for me, for a reason she cannot explain it was given to a man in Torbay named Steve. The following exchange went a little something like this:

Me: Well, it seems like there was a misunderstanding. Too bad for Steve, hey?

Anna: I have his number if you want to reach out.

Me: I know his number. It's my number, remember?

Anna: Right. Well this is just too bad all around.

Anna is chalking this one up to an unfortunate series of events and is offering no apology or restitution. I ask her what my options are, as I want this number back, and Steve isn't picking up. She tells me to escalate it to their customer support team and turns back to her other work as I call that line. Their hands are also tied, apparently. I'll need to contact the vice president of customer service. Alright, now we're getting somewhere. Surely this person will be able to help me.

Me: What's their number?

Customer service representative: Oh, he doesn't have a phone number.

Me: That's strange. You're the country's largest phone provider and one of your VPs doesn't have a phone. Well what email can I use?

Customer service representative: Sorry, he only has a personal email. I don't have access to that. You'll have to write him a letter and mail it to this address.

This turns out to not be a joke, and in my ire I return home determined to get that number back. I type up a letter, outlining the many ways in which I am unsatisfied, and I print it off. This includes Anna's handling of the situation, as well as the fact that I cannot file my complaint using a medium invented in the last thousand years. I locate the stamps in my father's coupon drawer and bound down to the post office, eager and smug and some other undesirable ways to be.

On my way, I pass a small child, crying over a lost balloon. There is no one else around, and my attempts to find her guardian are met only with lost balloon-related tears. And that's when it hits

me. A single complaint can be managed. Seven pages of apparent ranting will only come across as bitter and, dare I say, a little crazy. My letter will never get read. I turn for home, and place the unopened addressed and stamped envelope in my bottom drawer, where stays until my house burns down a few years later.

Man, I hope that kid's okay.

[Editor's note: In case, you were wondering, schubladenbrief is a German word for a letter you write but never send.]

March 22 - William Shatner gets a pretend interview with a fictional unobserved man (2018-03-22 07:03)

You must be so sick of interviews at this point. I mean, how many nerds want to ask you about something you did 50 years ago? Too many, I bet. I'd like to ask you a few questions too, and you'd probably enjoy answering them because of how interesting they are, but I respect your boundaries enough to not ask. So instead I decided to pretend that I interviewed the fictional Seinfeld character Bob Sacamano. Here is an excerpt:

Me: Bob - I can call you Bob, right? (Bob nods his acknowledgment) - Bob, you are possibly the most important character in any piece of television who never appeared on screen, in person or in voice. After all these years (mid-dialogue editor's note: The [1]last episode of Seinfeld aired in 1999.), how does this make you feel?

Bob Sacamano: It feels great, you know? It really demonstrates the strength of my character, the impact he could have on people's lives without ever actually being in them.

Me: Many people assert that you were not even real in the show, and that you existed only in the head of Cosmo Kramer (portrayed by Michael Richards, [2]Problem Child actor and guy who got caught bombing on camera in a factory which manufactured laughs) when he wanted to put a "face" to a story, so to talk.

Bob: That's simply not true.

Me: I didn't think so. So we were first introduced to you after your hernia operation ("[3]The Heart Attack"), which did not go well.

Bob: That's right. Malpractice. I got some money out of it, you know? Better than sloppy government cheques. (yelling, high-pitched voice) My name is Bob!

Me: It certainly is. You've had a number of other health problems as well: rabies ("[4]The Glasses"), mental instability ("[5]The Truth"). They must take a toll. How are you now?

Bob: Not good, you know? It's real hard sometimes.

Me: I do. I do know. You've had some interesting careers throughout your life. Prophylactic

manufacturer ("[6]The Fix Up"), replica Russian hat salesman ("[7]The Chicken Roaster"), and you were even the inventor of the toy paddles with the ball and rubber band and the ball ("[8]The Puerto Rican Day"). What was life like before that?

Bob: A lot of missing balls, rolling around the ground, for the most part, you know? Life's better now.

Me: Do you find it odd that you not only based on a real person, a friend of Larry David's, but you two share a name as well.

Bob: Yup, Bob. Bob Sacamano. That's our name.

1. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697695>
2. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100419/>
3. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697709/>
4. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697703/>
5. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697801/>
6. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697698/>
7. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697674>
8. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0697761>

March 23 - Reggie Watts becomes a podcastellan (2018-03-23 06:33)

It seems like everyone's got a podcast these days, and I bet you get asked to be on all of them. Well you don't have to worry about that with me, since I don't have one, although I do have a growing list of ideas that you're free to pick from if you want to make your own.

1. CodPast - I'm from Newfoundland, which you've probably never heard of, unless you're friends with Russell Crowe or Nipsey Russell or Wruss El, who all have summer homes on our coastline. But speaking of coastline, when I was a kid the Portuguese came over with trawlers and illegal nets with tiny holes in them and they took our fish, mainly cod, and so no one could fish there anymore, in what's known as the cod moratorium, which was a friggin' blow to the people whose only jobs were catching them. So this podcast is me speaking to unemployed Newfoundland fishermen to discuss the rise and fall of the cod industry in our province. The final episode, Pod Moratorium, is so named because the show will be forced into hiatus due to lack of advertisers.
2. Podcrew - Interviewing crew members on notoriously disastrous films, like special effects makeup artist Maggie Fung on The Island of Dr. Moreau.
3. Live in the Moment - This one I don't record in any way, to keep the dialogue natural and unencumbered by future perception.
 - [Note: Live is pronounced as in Saturday Night Live, not Liv Newton-John. Tig already confused people like this but the hopeful podcaster is make it happen again.]
4. Cabin Fever - Myself and the other three hosts record ourselves from 8am to 2am, which is subsequently edited down to one hour. Nobody is allowed to leave the room during that period.

- [Note: There is a toilet and a toilet curtain for the nervous peers among us.]
 - [Note: Fever is pronounced like Saturday Night Fever, not like the French verb “to fève” meaning “to bean”]]
5. Podcastaway - I, with my regular voice, am the host. I have a number of guests, who are all versions of me with different effects added so I sound like unique people. We all go a little crazy, and there might even be some intentionally transparent subliminal messaging.
 6. Happy Birthdays - Each week for almost two years, I interview a different increasingly-older person whose birthday it is, starting with someone turning 1 and ending with a different person on the day they turn 100.
 7. Butt Movies - This is a 'bad movie' podcast but with the greatest films ever. We dissect the Citizen Kanes of the world and really tear them new ones.
 8. Interrupting Cow-hosts - A guest tells one long story about a meaningful event in their life. The annoying hosts interrupt them with irrelevant questions, annoying comments and tangential equations.
 9. Hypodthetical - Two people discuss their takes on hypothetical questions.
 10. There is no 10. Chaos ensues.

[Editor's note: In a different life, the podcaster hopeful above had a [1]dream in which you and a Hal went set-for-set at UCB.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/dream/ucbeeline/>

March 24 - Louie Anderson gets Bartleby Brothers and His Seven Mothers (2018-03-24 06:58)

Bartleby Brothers was sitting on his front porch, playing with his toy truck, when he found himself looking around at all the other houses in his neighbourhood.

In each and every one of them lived one mom and one dad and one kid. Bartleby thought this was funny because they were all the same, and because he wasn't like them.

He used to have a dad, named Bill, but when Bartleby was two years old Bill left on his motorcycle and never came back.

Bartleby's mom, Brenda, was sad for a while, and she used to put more and more vodka in her drinks to stop being so sad, but it never worked.

Luckily, Brenda soon met a woman at the store, whose name was Beverly, and they became really good friends, and then they decided to get married.

After some time they both decided they wanted to marry other people instead, but they still liked each other as friends so Brenda and Beverly and Bartleby all lived together in the same house,

and they were very happy.

Soon, Brenda married a new woman named Barbara, and Beverly married someone named Bonnie, and Bartleby suddenly had four mothers taking care of him. He was really lucky to have such a big family, and the five people living in the house all had a lot of fun together.

After their friend Bernice's husband died from a pulmonary embolism, she moved in too, and she quickly found a wife named of Beth to share her bedroom.

Bartleby now had six mothers, and so he was never lonely. He always had someone to cook food with and play catch with and take him to the park, and he thought life couldn't get any better.

But one day, somebody knocked on the door and Bartleby answered it. The woman standing in front of him looked familiar, but he couldn't figure out from where. She started crying, which made Bartleby a little sad but mostly confused, and then she told him that she had had gender reassignment surgery and that she used to be his father, Bill Brothers.

Her new name was Bridget, and she finally wanted to be close to her son, so she started living in the attic.

Bartleby was happier than ever before, and even though some people didn't understand just what was going on in his house, he was glad that he was different from the other kids that he knew, and he didn't want any other life than the one he had with his seven mothers.

[Editor's note: This story, "Bartleby Brothers and His Seven Mothers", is the first in a prospective children's book series about the many different family compositions. Below is the proposed first page of said book.]

Bartleby Brothers was sitting on his front porch, playing with his toy truck, when he found himself looking around at all the other houses in his neighbourhood.



[1]

1. <http://ismith.ca/story/bartleby-brothers-and-his-seven-mothers/attachment/bartleby-p1/>

March 25 - Doug Stanhope gets a mugger's salvation (2018-03-25 06:10)

Prison would actually be pretty great if you were in there with a bunch of your friends. That's why every now and then you run into a guy who was in there, then got out, but doesn't mind going back.

He'll take a decent risk, like mugging some rich guy, with the goal of getting some of the rich guy's resources. But, if he gets caught, he goes back to his buddies on the inside, the ones who aren't always looking down on them like the phonies on the outside.

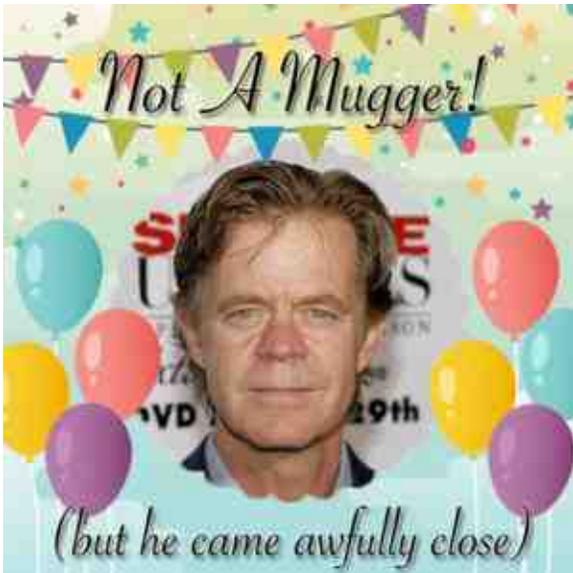
It's not only rich folks. We're all a lot more muggable now. Everyone has their headphones in. Nobody's paying attention to their surroundings. We all carry around thousand dollar phones. Mine is a fairly lazy generation, one that's scared of everything, especially confrontation. When getting mugged, there's a split second of assuming insurance will deal with it or someone nearby will help, someone with life experience for situations like this. But no one else will help. Because we're all the same. Well, except the muggers. They're God's people. Strong, daring, a real belief in disestablishmentarianism. To muggers!

Now that I've had a solid between-paragraph break, I see we're also a lot less muggable overall. Nobody carries cash anymore. It's easier to trace and find those stolen phones. And half the cities have cameras or Google Earths watching what you're up to at all time, for Jesus sake.

I just got a new camera. People, especially old women, are usually afraid of me, always on their guard, but they're friendlier when I'm wearing my camera. It makes it a lot easier to mug them. And then I can take pictures of it for my scrapbook.

Imagine being a mugger, like your first time doing it. Muggers can only hang out with other muggers probably, so they can tell stories about past muggings without getting weirded out by the other person. Then again, only hanging out with other people willing to commit that crime could lead to an endless string of muggings probably. So maybe there should just be one mugger in each friend group.

Do you think anyone's ever pretended to be a mugger? Maybe some twenty-one year-old kid is trying to get this girl to like him, and he happens to see her mugging someone. He's a little shocked, sure, but it's not that big of a deal. So he pretends he's a mugger too, just to be around her. He obviously doesn't care what she does when she's not sleeping with him, as long as she sleeps with him. He makes up elaborate stories about his past muggings, trying to come off as cool and relatable. And eventually he's hanging out with her and a few of her mugger friends, and there's this easy target, some seventy-year-old blind woman or a rich guy with no arms, and his new hot mugger girlfriend tells him to go do this one - her head hurts right now or something. So he's walking up to this - we'll go with seventy year-old blind woman - and on the way he's trying to figure out just how flexible his moral code is. Will he go through with it and mug her? He won't full-on rob her, he knows that. But a cute little mugging? What's the harm, really? He's done stranger things for less of a reason, like he time he licked a tree because he saw a child do it, even though he watched the kid bawl his eyes out right after. He might even be able to explain the situation to the old woman when he's close enough that only she can hear him. He'll tell her how he's been feeling lonely lately and he yearned to experience some social contact, a real connection with another, any other human being, and that person happened to be this female mugger. The old blind woman would understand his predicament, and she'd sympathize - she's old and wise and blind and all that, for she's seen it all - and she would, almost dutifully, hand him her purse. And they'd both smile, in a display of mutual affection or at least commensalistic admiration. The blind woman could even sense him smiling - the connection they were sharing was real. And it's at that very moment, the moment him and the old woman each have one hand on the purse on its way to his possession, that he realizes he doesn't need to impress that sexy mugger girl after all. He doesn't need to pretend he was someone he's not. He had everything he needed right in front of him. And that almost-mugger today? That's right - William H. Macy.



March 26 - Todd Barry gets a Hershey's holiday hardship (2018-03-26 06:56)

I know you like getting free stuff, and it must be nice to be in a position to make that happen. But there's also the opposite of free stuff, and that comes in the form getting scammed. Sometimes that scamming comes in the form of a publicly traded company. And sometimes the only way to get them to change their ways is in the form of a letter. Like this one:

Dear Hershey's (you sneaky faceless corporation),

Hallowe'en has come and gone, and yet I cannot shake a disturbing interruption in my holiday celebration.

In the past, I have taken one of two approaches with the trick-or-treaters: turn off the porch light and pretend I'm not home, which is a type of trick, or leave a bowl outside full of tiny bags of tasteless chips, which I suppose could be construed as a different trick. This year, however, I vowed to up my game and provide indisputable treats, joining the ranks of the Houses with the Good Candy. I purchased a couple of boxes of what appeared to be 50 snack size Oh Henry!s and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, the two greatest treats, within reason, a young one can expect to receive. I returned home with a bounce in my step, eagerly awaiting the adoration of the neighbourhood costumed children.

When I dumped the box onto the table, something was clearly amiss. The orange wrappers far outnumbered the yellow ones, and more importantly, those ones were much smaller than they were supposed to be. It turns out the Reese's were not in fact snack-sized, but minis. I refer to the box, where there is no indication that the distribution would be so off or that the cups would be anything other than what we have come to expect in boxes of this nature. While the nutritional content table on the back admittedly does represent the cups as 8.7g, you obviously know nobody is going to be checking, as it would only confirm that what we're putting into our bodies is less than desirable

for our various organs. And you know no one will be getting to the 529 g total by multiplying the individual bars with the corresponding gram amount and then adding them together, especially with the math scores this country is producing. Who even knows what a gram is anyway? Oh wait, YOU do. There are 15 Oh Henry's and 35 Reese's Cups that add up to this many grams. You're well aware of the allocation, so declare it on the box, like the mature, transparent, beloved company you aspire to be.



The deceitful box

Wait for it...



The unfortunate ratio

So in the end, 15 kids disguised as non-kids left my door happy, 35 slightly less so. Except I forgot that my doorbell was broken, so more accurately I was left happy on 15 occasions and slightly less so on a staggering 35.

You took me for a laissez-fairer, Hershey's, and it almost worked. With the same punctuated emphasis as my favourite candy bar, these shenanigans must end!

I do not want you to worry about a boycott or anything of that nature, as this letter is meant primarily as an exploration of a recent misfortune I have faced, and I suppose a warning against similar subsequent practices. Obviously I will continue to buy your chocolaty peanut buttery products, likely religiously. Oh Henry! and Reese's as brands and edible delights are streets ahead of their peers in most every way.

I'm already picturing the rebuttal from one of your public relations gurus, claiming the sneakiness was executed for the greater good, done only to trick the obese into ingesting fewer calories than they normally would and the medical costs over the long run blah blah blah. Well to that I return the blah blah blah and furthermore, I request, as an admission of your duplicitous tactics, a single regular sized Oh Henry! bar to calm the chagrin caused by your company's cost cutting customs. Thank you for your time, and the aforementioned future Oh Henry!

[Editor's note: The author's Hershey's Hallowe'en Hardship, as he calls it, has not yet led to the Oh Henry! gratuity. But there is still time for them to make good. And we are not opposed to some collective social media outrage to make it happen.]

March 27 - Mariah Carey gets warned about the stalkers becoming stans (2018-03-27 05:55)

Random fandom is something I've never been able to get behind. If none of it is real anyway - death, love, power, money, etc. - it's hard to get emotionally invested in a hockey team.

But real fandom, the fully obsessed-with-a-person kind, is truly something else. I call it "stan", a portmanteau of "stalking" and "fan", as well as a reference to an offender from a Dido-chorused Eminem tune.

The first stan I ever realized was one was Mark David [last name redacted as he shall not be named in full without someone accusing you of thinking The Beatles were only okay].

Then there's John Hinckley Jr., who stanned Jodie Foster so much that he ended up shooting the president of the friggin' States. Famous females have it the worst, for sure.

Madonna's been a victim an outstanding number of times, and likely will be until she dies.

Gweneth kept receiving pizzas from this creep named Dante.

And, as you might know, women can even become little stanettes themselves. Or at least one. Margaret Ray went on a little stanning spree, first creeping Letterman, then an astronaut with the seemingly fakest name you ever heard in Story Musgrave. Then a mid-level accountant at a struggling bakery. And you know if we know of three, there's gotta be more.

But back to you. I'm sure you've had a few stans yourself, and I truly hope you've held your own through it all.

[Editor's note: The author was, and is still, unaware that one of your very own stans is actually

mentioned above, and may have even helped me come up with the term. If he had known, he would certainly have thought twice before submitting this greeting.]

March 28 - Reba McEntire gets a foiled attempt at laziness (2018-03-28 05:25)

I'm sitting at gate 42 in Terminal C of YHZ, waiting to get back home after a short business trip. An announcement comes over the loud speaker informing us that the gate's been moved, all the way to gate 7, on the other side of the airport. This is going to take a while.

The guy next to me, visibly frustrated about the change, picks up my bag instead of his, probably because they're the same colour and almost the same brand. I stop myself from telling him about the mistake, as it occurs to me that if I wait a little longer before acknowledging his error, I won't have to carry my bag all the way to the other gate. And once we arrived over there I will simply feign ignorance, take my bag from him, and he would have to go back to the other gate to get his bag. I like how this plays out in my head, so I kept my mouth shut.

We're almost at the new gate and he still hasn't noticed. But some other guy who was seated next to us at the first gate, he'd commented on my bag before, wanting to know where I picked it up. Well for some reason this Samaritan starts pointing out the mix-up to my unintentional porter, so I try to get him to keep it to himself until we get to the new gate. But once the guy carrying my bag sees me trying to silence the other guy, it all clicks and he realizes what's going on.

So apparently in airports, if you leave your bag unattended, they just destroy it right away because of that one guy who put a filthy bomb in his shoe. I wasn't aware of this at the time, but everyone else seemed to think it was common knowledge. Anyway, the guy hurries back to the original gate but his bag is already cremated. He returns empty-handed and then gets all mad at me, even though he was the one who picked up the wrong bag from the beginning. Some people really get my goat. And some goats really get their comeuppance. But it's not about goats right now. It's about getting goats. And my goat got got.

March 29 - Lucy Lawless gets a word named after her, and then a bunch of other ones (2018-03-29 05:30)

I named a word after you. Xenophobia is experienced by people who are afraid of strong, confident women. It was so much fun coming up with that one, so I went ahead and invented a few more, all of which have been submitted to Webster's, Oxford and Urban. Fingers crossed I'll get them all in by 2020, the Year of the Unwitting Underduck, but in case I don't, I wanted you to know some of them at least, for use in your everyday life.

- Celibrate: Positively observing a successful refraining from sexual activity after overcoming that addiction everyone seems to have these days.

- Cache cow: Word that is too easy to decipher if you're trying to hide something by speaking in a different language.
- Chargeling: The added cost of things in your life due to the avoidance of awkward situations.
- Cigarous: A really large stick you can smoke trees out of.
- Conspiracist: One who is unduly prejudiced against those who believe in conspiracy theories.
- Celebrify: Turn someone into a celebrity.

As you can tell, C is my favourite letter. However, other letters also deserve new words:

- Renovenge: Vandalism on the building that replaced the one from which one was previously renovicted.
- Douche egg: One who has not fully developed into a bag of douche, but is well on their way.
- Roverlap: When both people in a text conversation send essentially the same idea at the same time.
- Daughterogram: Sonogram when the baby is a girl.
- Ogram: Sonogram when we don't want to put any gender ideas into a baby's head before they're even born.
- Eugenics: The population control theory involving the killing of anyone not named Eugene or Eugenia.
- Realigoode: Piece of art or content recommended simply because it's been consumed, not because it's of a high quality.
- Jamoozy: Jacuzzi for sloppy poochies.
- Broaudience: The lowest common denominator watcher of a piece of content.
- Troove: To find a lost item soon after replacing it.

March 30 - MC Hammer gets a break from having to constantly reinvent himself with sweet new dance moves (2018-03-30 05:43)

You have moves. You know, dance moves. I, too, has dance moves. I'm what's known around these parts as a dancer. And not like those grinder college kids. I mean I really dance. Like in a pretty good way. In case you're running out of ideas, which can certainly happen after twenty years of coming up with cool new dances all the time, I want to help you out with some of mine. I do them all in a row, but you don't have to. You may licence any of these for free, in perpetuity, unless you make any

warm soft moolah from them, in which case give us a cut.

My main dance move is the double dutch rope swinger. As with many such maneuvers, the title says it all. In it I pretend I'm one of the people spinning imaginary skipping ropes for someone. You can invite your friends to be part of this, so everyone has a fun time.

Then I do the juggler, consisting mainly of me grabbing the air wildly as if I'm tossing and catching bags of beans.

Trowin' 'bows is when you make space on the dance floor for an upcoming impressive move, by swinging your elbows, careful not to hurt anyone but sure to maintain the cool rhythm of the song.

And finally there's the finale, made possible by the previous move, called checking for clones. This one begins by alternate pointing to both sides of the room, the whole time with a confused look on your face, because you're seeing the same person twice and can't figure out why. Once you realize they're twins OR there's an aptly-placed mirror nearby, you're ready for the second part of the move, in which you invite the doppelgänger s to join you in a manic dancing episode.

March 31 - Kate Micucci gets parodical jams (2018-03-31 05:52)

I write songs too. And I write parody songs too. That's two things we have in common. That's probably it. Anyway, here are some of my parodies. I won't give away all the lyrics because you can never be too careful when it comes to internet vultures taking your art and turning it into content, but here are the gists, along with a key line from each:

1. Same Bugs - A Chance the Rapper song told from the point of view of a 7-year-old boy who's drifting away from his "girlfriend", who only got that designation because her older brother took her phone and played a prank on the kid.
 - (sung with a lisp) "We don't eat the same bugs no more"
2. She's A Good Day - This is a reimagining of a Joanna Newsom tune if it were written by a guy who dragged off from George St. I got my dad to sing [1] it on an [2] album I made .
 - "Even under the ugly lights, you still looked fine"
3. Dirty Old Man - The traditional ode Dirty Old Town, but next to a high school, not a wall.
 - "Half my age plus one, with a salon tan"
4. Inflammatory Bits - Another Newsom distortion, about a guy ruing his recent blood test results.
 - "I don't remember where I stuck my member"
5. Women Are Great - A couple of unnamed rappers wrote a song many years ago whose title is the very opposite of this one, and unfortunately it's a real jam, so it's understandably hard to justify liking it despite the misogyny it half advocates.

- “I used to know a woman named Madeleine Albright, intelligent and brave, all day and night”

There’s more, but I know by this point you’re probably inspired enough to go write some more G & O jams. Keep it up. I know I will.

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/shes-a-good-day>
2. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/>

1.4 April

April 1 - Asa Butterfield gets a prank that goes just far enough (2018-04-01 11:43)

Before I deleted Facebook when I realized that ol’ Zuck was watching me watch Netflix and using the gathered data to get me to buy things I probably actually want against my will, I played a little prank on one of my friends, which drove him to — well, I’ll get to that part later.

While minor capers are a good laugh and all, the Long Con is what we strive for, him and I, and I’m always on the lookout for a way to subvert his life. So once I noticed a loophole in the Facebook Advertising world, I figured I’d give it a real shot. Now this giant social media company allows you to buy ads on their platform and target them at people in your friends list based on their interests and hobbies and hopes and dreams, but they don’t want you targeting individual people, so the directed lists need to contain at least 20 people. However, if you play with the settings by creating a list of 19 females and 1 prankable male, then target only males from that list, a small investment allows you to show only the prankee whatever you want under the guise of ads.

The first step was to create an actual website for a psychiatrist, linked to from one ad alluding to his sociopathy and another casually referring a band he’d been in years earlier. He gets pet peeved by coffee drinkers who mispronounce “espresso”, so suddenly Starbucks-linking “Express-o Yourself” ads start appearing in his face. Then I started getting more explicit to his recent non-internet musings. He would bring up a topic in conversation, from George Foreman to Sheryl Crow to his own hairiness, and within a day he’d get a flurry of promotions for sweet grills and winding roads and 7-blade razors on his screen. Once he finally mentioned that the specificity of current ads on the internet was freaking him out a bit, I took that as my cue to turn on the gaslight and really get to work. I would include photos closely resembling his family members, which when clicked would coax him to buy kidnapping insurance, and for the next week I ensured he got inundated with firearm ads, most of them mentioning a fictional increased crime rate in his neighbourhood. These ones got to him enough that he went out and got a handgun to “protect (his) family from this dangerous world.” Skittish and afraid, he began locking himself in his house for days on end. I had him right where I wanted him, and it was time to take it up a notch.

I hired a few wannabes from my acting class and we all grabbed some prop weapons, put on masks, and bull rushed his house. I made sure to hang back a bit so I could really soak it all in. Out of nowhere, I hear a small explosion, so I hide behind a bush and try to peek in a window. My friend is covered in blood, and he’s definitely screaming in anger and crying in what-have-I-doneness. At

this point I run into the house and yell, "You've been Long Conned," which I didn't even plan but in hindsight was the best thing I could've done. He kept crying and didn't even seem to notice me or understand what a great prank just got played on him. At this point, the cops had shown up - a neighbour must have called them after hearing the fun commotion happening - and arrested my friend for something or other.

I don't remember the trial very well but my buddy's in jail now, and I hear he's having a rough time. I'd visit him but those places give me the creepy jeebies.

[Author's note: April Fool's, birthday fool.]

April 2 - Chris Meloni gets a study of the Scandinavian Sprawl (2018-04-02 05:06)

The northernmost European region boasts the highest quality of life, the freshest air, the loveliest accents, the Karl Ove Knausgaards, and the greatest expanse of useful regional terms. This last aspect is called the Scandinavian Sprawl, and it permeates your wordstock, whether you notice it or not.

The Dutch reach brings together cyclists and drivers, while the dutch oven's presence in the bedroom has been known to destroy solid relationships. You go dutch on a date, skip the double dutch with a friend, eat a dutchie with a best friend. And that's only from one of the countries. You can also eat a danish or a Copenhagen canapé, Swedish fish and their related meatballs. Or get Stockholm syndrome and Norwegian wood, learn Swedenmarketable skills, pour flaming water from a hell sink, buy yer crack in Hamsterdam, swoon over Tom Holland, or take your time with the Oslo all slow. After vandalizing with Gothenburg graffiti, you'll almost be hitting full Icelandic exhaustion, but it's at this point you'll finally reach the Finnish line.

[Editor's note: While the Netherlands is not technically or geographically or in any way in Scandinavia, the author refuses to listen to reason or to me. He knows I'm at my last straw, with my LinkedIn profile updated and everything.]

April 3 - Adam Scott gets a debunked paradox of voting (2018-04-03 05:53)

Don't vote, you say. Voting is a waste of time, you say. A single vote in our system means nothing and never will, you say as well. Well this flawed theory assumes that going to the voting station is a cost. Heading down there is a laugh sure. It's something a little different to do, around once a year, which is also the oftenness one should go bowling, visit a casino, sleep in a coffin. Also, you get a nice trot over to a church or some legion you'd never go to, and a lovely old lady or some fella with medals on his coat asks you for your voter registration parchment. Now you don't get many wins on a regular basis, but today you remembered your card, and you have your ID, so you present them both to the guard, you get let through, and suddenly you're feeling pretty good about yourself. And we haven't even gotten to the voting box yet. Oh man, they tell you to go

behind this curtain like you're walking into a public shower, but instead of a faucet you find a table that's too low with a single piece of paper and golf course pencil. You get to read the list of names, names that you've had flicked in yer face for the last couple of months. that after today you won't have to see any more. Hey, you like one of the people on the list. You think she's best kind, like someone you could shoot the shit with. And there's another guy's name, you laugh because as much as you've seen his name, you have no idea what he looks like or where he stands on anything. Then you see the guy with the blue team and you think about how they're your least favourite team. Well there's a pencil and a list of names in front of you, what do you do? Forget the election, forget everything. What do you do in the singular situation of a group of names? You just end up choosing the name you half like, no matter what the ticking of the box means after this moment, if anything at all. It's automatic. So you ticked off a name - now what? You look around, and with not much else to do, you hand the sheet to someone on your way out. And that's why you should vote.

And anyway, there's always one name you don't recognize, which you find a little strange considering the number of signs that have been flicked in your face for the last coupla months. But then you consider that this new person never even had enough money for a few signs, because they're not backed by one of those parties in the system that you so hate, and they just wanted to try to be a politician because they think they're smart and everything and they don't really know what else to be at. And since your vote is, as you admit, as negligible as you can get, you tick off this fella's name, because later that night when he's watching his riding's race on the TV and getting all sad and shit because he's only got 16 votes, and then the last set of votes comes in and his eyes brighten as the number next to his name on the screen changes to 17. His lucky number, wouldn't ya know it. Now he knew from the beginning he wasn't going to get to go to that big building with the same name as a group of owls, debating climates or whatever, but at least he got his lucky number in votes. All thanks to 16 close friends and family, and his new hero, vote #17, you. Go vote sure. You got nudding else to do today.

[Editor's note: The preceding is a rebuttal to a friend who refuses to vote in political elections and actively encourages others not to do so. The author values democracy and does not want its processes tarnished by rogue citizenry, and I'm sure you feel this way as well Mr. Scott.]

April 4 - David Cross gets some ideas to pass on to hopeful comics so that they'll leave him alone (2018-04-04 05:11)

I have a few suggestions for stand up specials that those incessant nagging wannabes you likely have to deal with are free to use so they'll shut up asking for advice. Since comedy comes in fours, here's a quartet of these concepts:

- Die Comedy! - Diametrically opposed jokes are told, which brings diametrically opposed people together. This is vital in the current climate, which is generally humid.
- Convey Your Laughter - A conveyor belt moves the comic from one side of the stage to the other, very slowly, over the course of the hour. If the set goes well, it's sped up for an encore.
- Director's Cut - The comic directs their own special, regularly interrupting the bits with camera cues, lighting changes and on-the-fly edits.

- One Man Shower - Filmed while the comic is washing up, getting ready for a big night out.

The rule-of-four comes into play again with some titles I have, whose formats can be determined at the time of use: Heckled, Funny At The Time, Comedian Without Boredom, and Not Intended For Audiences.

If these ideas can save you even one minute of time in the long run of running into strangers who want to connect with you when all you're trying to do is find the ripest avocado or the one that will be at optimal ripeness when you intend to eat it, then I will have repaid you for all those laughs that were produced while your face was in front of me on a screen.

April 5 - Pharrell Williams gets happiness projected (2018-04-05 05:34)

Whenever someone tells me of an accomplishment they accomplished, like winning a gold medal at some form of the Olympics, I say, "Okay, sure, but are you happy?" They usually think for a minute and eventually say no, in some form or another, so then I feel better about myself. You see, I am well aware that if anyone is ever forced to consider whether or not they're truly happy, over the long run, they will likely realize that they are not.

Happiness is not a gun of any temperature, it's not a fish at any stage of caught, it's not an instrumental assertion of no consequence at all. You will always grow accustomed to whatever state you're in, and you'll want a little bit more. The greener grass applies to us all. Some blissfully ignorant avoid the internal nagging, but it's because they're unable to consider the reality of their situation.

Poor people don't understand why rich people want more money. "How could they have this certain amount of money and still not be utterly happy. I would be!" No, you wouldn't. Not for more than a minute. Gen pop doesn't want to consider the fact that they need to look elsewhere for happiness. "Well this amount of money didn't make me happy. I guess I need a bit more money to be happy." Sure, that must be it.

The rock star wannabes lose their drive if they ever attain their goal. They want more, or less, but don't know where to find it. The huggers of trees try their best, but the weight of the world, well it gets to be a bit much sometimes. The meditative pretend they have it all figured out, but they can go straight to hell with that.

A certain song contends everything is alright "Because I'm happy"? Ha! No, yer not. No one is.

April 6 - Zach Braff gets to the source of my crowdsourcing (2018-04-06 05:14)

Remember when everyone got mad at you for trying to raise money to make a movie? That must have been a little frustrating for you, especially since you were essentially a pioneer, or at least an early adopter, when it came to crowdfunding films.

I try to raise money too, to fund my own projects, such as patronizing a soon-to-be-shell-of-an office worker who would prefer to leave that life behind and follow a dream he once had. There's another one where I'm trying to get enough money to buy a perk in a different crowdsourced project. You can support these important fundraisin' efforts and get some perks of your own by becoming my very [1] Patron .

But to be honest, so far I'm having a hard time getting anything off the ground. I blame my network, which is either financially illegible or non-existent. And still there's one idea I can't shake, no matter how hard I try, as its potential, to do good in the world and better in my pocketbook, is as limitless as Brad Coops.

So you know when you have a vegetable, and it's hard as a rock, and you don't know where to put it to begin with? Of course! And you know when you have headphones, and they're pretty good but could be better! You betcha you do! The only way out of this mess is to combine them both.

beets + Beats = Beets



See ya in the millionaires club, DJ.

1. <http://www.patreon.com/iansmitty>

April 7 - Eric Wareheim gets a melting cheeseman (2018-04-07 05:33)

While you are a funny man whose shoulders I hope to one day stand on, for now, I am but a lowly cheese melter.

As a child, I was banished to the sewers, with my father refusing to accept my deformity. The creatures of the underworld raised me as their own. I learned from them, and they learned from each other, but for a while, nobody learned from me.

There comes in a time in every young sewer person's life, when he must rise again, to help his community in whatever ways he can. Stealing food, begging. But me, I was blessed with a golden skill. I was the only one of my clan who wrangled my way into the life of an upperworlder, developing a mutualistic relationship with a property owner.

The head alderman's brother was always a little eccentric, but those who knew him saw the brilliance he was trying to realize. He gave me a chance. I was huddled over a barrel fire when he approached and handed me a coat. I was sure to be only an interesting anecdote for him, but I cracked wise, and he laughed heartily. When I went to leave, knowing I should not get too close with someone of his caste, he encouraged me to stay. While his caretaker cooked me a hot meal, he asked about my life with genuine interest. He looked away for but a moment, and I picked at the board in front of me, gorging on the fresh meats and cheeses, delights I never had imagined.

One of the morsels of cheese, later learned to be an aged white cheddar, was difficult to eat due to its hardness. When he returned he saw the faint tooth marks in the cheese and tried himself to bite off a piece, but he faced the same barrier that I had. Instinctively and with no regard for social customs, I picked up the roman candle on the table and began melting this cheese. Oh, the flavours that were released! My host would tell me I was the first to create them as they were.

I came above more often after that night, to join my new friend and melt his cheese, with the generous scraps returned to me, to return to my people, to feast on the delectable delicacies of the surface dwellers.

April 8 - Patricia Arquette gets a hankering for another transient rival (2018-04-08 05:04)

The sunlight enveloped the city in a haze, inviting me to squint my way around the neighborhood. I need real sunglasses, not these Kensington knockoffs that pretend to protect the eyes they're in front of. The lady told me they were polarized. That's how she became an afterthought rival.

Another indie coffee shop just opened up. They're all always full so it must make sense. I'm a willing customer, a marketer's statistic. Marketers, they're the real antagonists.

The dog with the woman in front of me is sniffing everyone. A sign indicates the creature isn't supposed to be allowed in here, but nobody else seems to mind and it's a little early for a confrontation. Then again, finding an adversary this early in the a.m. ensures a more interesting day than the one I had planned. I let it go.

"Americano, please," I order, resisting their attempt to get me to call it a canadiano. "To go."

Name?

"Randolph."

A fake name in the morning wakes me up as much as the caffeine, but still less than a new nemesis would.

Screw this. I don't even wait for my drink. I'm out of here, to find my [1]Enemy for the Day.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/february-1-happy-birthday-abbi-jacobson/>

April 9 - Jay Baruchel gets an assured victory in a true standoff (2018-04-09 05:07)

In a standoff, a real old school standoff where you're pointing a gun at someone and he (or she! But probably he. Hes love guns.) is pointing one at you, each presumed to have one remaining bullet, there is a way to guarantee victory. The technique requires fortitude and patience, and it involves expounding what sounds like the genesis of an extended pontification: "I had a feeling I'd meet you here. Ever since we were children, and the lions and the gazelles lived in harmonious bliss, there was always an indication that it would come down to you and I..." This is the section of the speech you should have prepared as well as Mr. Orange did with his story, and your eyes must convey your desire to complete the thought along with a more explanatory follow up. However, as you sound out the "ga" in "gazelles", this is when you shoot the other person in the face. Your now-dead opponent will not have seen it coming. If there is time combined with an absence of aftermath repercussions, finish the sentence calmly, and if you're feeling creative, pepper in additional details until it develops into a monologue unique to your situation. This last part is optional, but it will certainly enhance the story when you tell other people about how you survived the gun-pointed-at-head thing.

April 10 - David Harbour gets a strange review of a condensed season (2018-04-10 05:18)

Okay, so the main kid, the one in the top left corner, him and his buddies get bullied a bit. They have like, a club - but the kid had actually died in the real world. Well, everyone thought he was dead, there were reports and stuff, but his mom, Winona Ryder, didn't believe it and thought he was communicating with her through electricity. The older brother wasn't sure if he believed her and was like "Okay, mom, sure..." and then I think people started to believe her after a while.

The kids are in a parallel universe of sorts where they all knew buddy was alive because they were hanging out with him. But in the real world he was dead.

There was a young girl their age in a lab - they were doing tests and stuff on her. She could move things with her mind, but she was scared.. they helped her escape at one point. The people in the lab were evil but probably thought they were doing it for good reasons. I don't know if they found her or made her or whatever. She was moving things telekinetically. The scientists kept her in the room the whole time but were like, "We're your friends, we want to help you." But really they

didn't want to help. You know, it's a common trope in this type of show.

Winona Ryder wrote letters on the wall so she could communicate, so, she was alright. The sheriff or cop - people didn't like him or maybe I just didn't like the look of him. One of those characters that seems like a bit of a jerk but was actually helpful in the end. He didn't believe Winona Ryder at first so us, as the audience, were like "Oh you piece a shit, help missus find her son." The thing with the sheriff: I guess he was in charge of the missing boy investigation or whatever. I don't remember who else was in that story. He probably had a boss who wanted him to back to normal police work but he kept working on the case anyway. At one point he was kind of like, "Winona Ryder, get over it. Your kid's dead. We were all at the funeral."

Winona Ryder's other son, the older one, he was spying on this girl that he wanted to have sex with I guess. Or maybe he was taking pictures of everyone, I don't know. Then he saw her making out with her douchey boyfriend. She was kind of a nerd - she was kind of like the main girl in Freaks & Geeks where she didn't have that many friends but then got this cool boyfriend and she went to this cool party and brought her boring friend, who would be the Millie. Actually, that's not exactly what happened in Freaks & Geeks but it still works. So Millie in this show is like, "We should leave" and her friend goes, "I'm going to stay here for a bit." So Millie sat on the diving board forever, then I think they changed the lights in the pool or something.

OH, and the monster! I totally forgot. There's kind of weird stuff happening all movie but it's all mostly possible and then BOOM, here's this crazy monster. They were trying to kill it, they were shooting it with a water gun and somehow it worked in the end. Oh, they were under the sewers in a few episodes. Maybe there was like media in res, where they flash forward right at the beginning of the series to do some foreshadowing. This might have happened, because in the first and last episodes they had radiation suits on and they were crawling through the sewers, looking for this monster probably. I don't know.

Winona Ryder - she might have had a boyfriend or something. It didn't seem like the kid had a dad. It seemed like she was just in the same room the whole time. I think it was just that one kid who died. I don't know what his buddies were doing. And! They were still getting bullied and stuff. The larger kid with the weirder face and the black kid were at odds at one point. But then it was important that they stuck together. They didn't stick together before and bad things happened. It was a show about friendship and stuff.

The kid with the camera was kind of like the guy in American Beauty - like "Oooh, maybe she'll fall in love with me after I take pictures of her." But they became friends. They bonded over the monster thing. Her douchey boyfriend was like "blahhh" and she goes, "It's not like that, we're just friends"... and the other guy was like "Oh :(I wish we were more than just friends." They always have characters like that. Like, "Oh, he's so misunderstood." But maybe he's just creepy. Just cause her boyfriend is douchey doesn't mean this guy is best kind. Him and the boyfriend fought each other, or at least rolled around in the dirt for a bit. I don't know why they tried to make him so douchey. They picked someone with weird big lips and that stupid haircut.

Hold on, did I mention, her boyfriend kept trying to pressure her to have sex and at one point they're in her bedroom and she was like "Nooo, my parents are here." And he like looks around and says "I don't see them" - which was a great line. Then she was changing so she's like "turn around" and he turns around and she takes her shirt off, but then he turns back around again so he's facing her, and then they make out for a bit. And possibly have sex. I don't know cause they cut to a new scene at the point where she was just in her bra, but he was probably trying to get his fingers into

her bra.

I mean yeah, I guess it all worked out in the end. Maybe... Did he come back to regular reality? I remember in the last episode there was a newspaper clipping that said 'Boy Comes Back from Alternate Universe.' And like, not even above the fold. It was on page six or something: 'Kid Comes Back From the Dead'. Then right next to it, "Oh, I wonder what the Hi & Lois are up to?"

I seemed to follow the kids a lot. I think they might have been prominent in episode 5 - right in the middle of the screen - my eyes were drawn there. I guess they got back. Someone must have died... all this crazy shit was going on but I don't remember anyone dying in a dramatic scene or anything. The kid and the bald girl kissed at one point even though they were like nine.

Winona Ryder is still cracked, no matter if he was speaking to her through the lights, even if she was right. Even if he WAS speaking to her through the lights, based on what she knows about the laws of the universe... Winona, you know that's not a thing. She might win an award for it. She played a tortured mom in every scene and she almost won an Oscar before. She'll get at least an Emmy for this.

The main guy who's dead or whatever, his friend's family was wealthy and proper but I don't know what that has to do with anything. And the girl was going to live in their basement. Maybe he was in the basement the whole time and it's like an Alice in Wonderland alternate basement universe. The kids help the girl escape after. I don't know if she ended up living in the basement or not.

So there's a scene where the kids' Physics teacher or something explains how the alternate universe thing is possible, and he uses a tightrope as an example. The humans can go only up and back, but the flea can go up and back AND left to right. And you know where else the flea can go? Under the tightrope. And like, the b'ys were under the tightrope but still getting bullied. Their world seems half normal too.

So they needed a bunch of salt for some reason. Like 500 pounds of salt. They were trying to get enough conductive energy or something. It was like, "Where the hell are we gonna get 500 pounds of salt?" Then they ended up at a salt silo. like obviously, where else would you pick? If you need 500lbs of salt, makes sense go to the place where you get salt. With the protective suits, maybe the monster was radioactive or maybe the bald girl was. She's bald by the way. I thought she was a boy. She looked like the kid in Boyhood. So I thought of that for a bit.

[Author's note: Television shows, or whatever you call the new incarnation of serial serieses, are better than they have ever been. But there are too many of these AMAZINGGG programs these days, and there is simply no way to keep up. "You mean you've never seen Breaking Bad?" And devote two full days of my life to it. "You have to watch Fargo!" Another 10 hours. "There's 2 seasons." 20 hours. "Seinfeld?" 2 days, 18 hours. "Sopranos?" 3 days, 14 hours. You see where I'm going with this. Anyway, the first season of Stranger Things is another one that's supposed to be really great, and I'm sure that it is. But I'm sorry. I can't devote 6 hours of precious life to it's consumption. There's just too much else to do, watch, live, laugh and love. Since time is an illusion and I'm able to multitask, I have to decided to watch all 8 episodes simultaneously, subtitles included, which is the basis for the plot



summary above. Here is how the screen appeared:][[1]

1. <http://ismith.ca/write/strangest-things/attachment/stranger-things-9-screens/>

April 11 - Joss Stone gets a list of names that need to be brought back into the fold (2018-04-11 05:12)

Joscelyn is a wonderful, weighty given name. But a lot of really strong names are no longer given to children, if they ever were. Where's Genghis? We're all descended from one. A few mothers should pay him some respect. Wolfgang has never been fully tarnished but is pushed to the outskirts, dismissed in favour of Cody and Brennan and All My Children characters of yestergeneration. Thomas Harris made us afraid of Hannibal, and Remington reeks of aristocracy. Tamadge Hagan, fighting over an X, the final nail in Malcolm, Gladwell not sufficient at carrying it along.

Even after Lee's Mockingbird Murder follow-up, Harper remains in the past. The Kinks couldn't bring back Lola, stars couldn't push Nova up where it should be, and even Chris Murphy's baby-making jams never led to many Sloane toddlers in recent years. Wyetta means 'war strength' and still the unnecessary overseas battles didn't give "patriots" any ideas.

Back to you, though. Joss isn't too shabby of a shortened form either, even if you've definitely had to correct people saying "Josh?" for years. And with the almighty Stoker and Stone as your sur and chosen last names, I'd say nobody compares 2U. Except maybe Sinéad. Or Prince. Or Genghis. Did we already cover Genghis? Let's bring that one back.

April 12 - Ilana Glazer gets a budder-butter mix-up (2018-04-12 05:21)

So it's early in the morning, when I should be up cooking breakfast or something by then, which I am, for ourselves and a friend who spent last night on our couch. We start off pretty good, frying up some eggs, hashbrowns and toast, throwing on some coffee and pouring up some juice, but as we're sitting down to eat, I realize we're completely out of any sort of bread spread. I call down to my

neighbour, who's hanging outside on his patio.

"Hey man, got any butter?"

"Yeah, sure. I'll bring it up."

He joins us a few minutes later, carrying a handful of items. Without speaking, he immediately begins setting up some sort of contraption and asking who wants to go first. I'm confused, but he's the guy who has what we want, so I say I will. He lights the blowtorch that I hadn't seen until now and explains how to smoke the pot using the now-assembled device. He's clearly already kind of high, but I'm not really up for it at this point, still pre-breakfast, so I politely decline. Now he's the one who's confused.

"Didn't you want some budder?"

"Yeah... Was hoping to spread some on my toast."

"Oh shit, I thought you meant bud-der. I feel like an idiot."

"Not a big deal. So... do you have any butter?"

"Uh, no man. Sorry."

[Author's note: And that's how we ended up not getting butter that we thought we were going to get.]

April 13 - Glenn Howerton gets an infallible system for impressing the other party guests (2018-04-13 05:12)

I know a lot of people struggle with their performance while attending large events where they don't know anyone, like a girlfriend's office party, where everyone is only trying to be the most normal. Well if that's what they're going to be doing, you're going to do it too, but better. The best even. The most normal, and the best at being it. Here are some foolproof tips:

Ask someone how their small business is doing. I can guarantee that they own a small business or has recently sold one to Conde Nast, for Mucho Moneys. Bring up the economy, in a way that you're so sick of thinking about how it's doing that you couldn't possibly have another conversation about it, but here you are anyway, because it's just so damn important. "Ugh, the Dow!" is a common exclamatory gripe that doesn't usually necessitate a follow up.

Relay to a different guest how much you care about the local sports team and how you essentially consider yourself part of the team. This will be evident by your use of the term 'we' to describe how the team is doing in the league standings. Oh yeah, be sure to refer to how much you hate the team closest in geography to that one as well. And get really angry, as if you're willing to fight anyone who disagrees with you. Also, be willing to fight anyone who disagrees with you.

Complain about things you can't change. Like certain ways in which people you've never met are acting, which you'll learn from watching news and pseudo-news television. And how traffic is getting worse, how the weather is unseasonable, how English is no longer the only language on billboards near your house.

This one requires a bit of pre-planning that involves going to the gym regularly. You'll need to find the heaviest item in the room and lift it in different ways. Be sure to stare at the other people

until they notice the amount of weight you can squat. Now here's the most important thing: Make sure you can squat a lot. And keep up on which protein powder is the most effective. If you don't remember, make up your own fitness portmanteau, like "Turboboost", which when used properly can make you seem like the one most in the know.

If adhered to correctly, the previous suggestion will allow you to treat everyone at the party like an object, existing only for your amusement. Confidence is key, and so is a winning smile.

Deliver platitudes in a way that claim them as your own original thought. "Well, you know, you win some, you lose some." This is a valid statement in almost any situation. Bridge metaphors do well in crowds too. "Don't burn your bridges!" or "Just another bridge to cross until the biiiiig promotion."

Finally, tell everyone how great you're doing, in your personal, professional and spiritual life. Make them all wish he was the person you're pretending to be.

[Editor's note: The author claims each of his seven party tips relates directly to a different deadly sin, which is allegedly why his list is so effective, but I'm having trouble seeing most of the connections.]

April 14 - Win Butler gets reminded of a brief Haligonian encounter (2018-04-14 05:28)

A few years ago, your band played a show in Halifax, and a few of us flew up from Newfoundland for a few days to see it. While it wasn't the original Lost Weekend, life doesn't get a whole lot better than this. You know those times when you and your friends are all in the same place physically and emotionally and drunkenly, and everything is more fun than everything else, and nobody else could possibly be having a better time than you guys?

The first night starts with a casino visit, a delayed flight and a cancelled hotel room. With nowhere to go, we wander down a street and hear a party happening in an upstairs room. Under the guise of needing a corkscrew, which I guess we actually do need, we knock on the door and this guy Graham opens it. We get to talking and he invites us in for a few drinks. He takes us to the Khyber, somewhere I'd wanted to go ever since Joel Plaskett touted its iconicism years earlier. We drink warm beer from a broken fridge and dance our butts off to a band that's playing. Then we eat some pizza on the way back to Graham's, where we cram into his living room to sleep.

The next day the rest of our friends arrive and we bang around the city until your show. Rayfield keeps making it clear that he has the most experience at Arcade Power shows so we should do whatever he says. Hanging out behind a fence before the show, we try to guess what you'll open with and settle on a reading of the entire Shawshank Redemption screenplay, which unfortunately doesn't happen. There's a video on the internet somewhere of one of the songs, with an annoyed comment, "The show was good except for this topless girl whose manfriend was peeing in a cup, like an animal." That was us. We were having a much better time than her.

The next day we end up in a used bookstore downtown when Bridger runs up to me and urgently mentions something about Jonny Osmond. I ask her to elaborate, and so she declares, "I am positive that Pierce Brosnan is in this bookstore." She then runs away as Mrs. Doubtfire's Stu Dunmeyer himself taps me on the shoulder. "Does anybody work here?" I'm flustered enough to say

I do, and he asks for a recommendation. I have Christos Tsiolkas's "The Slap" in my hand, so I hand it to him and lie about it being my favourite book.

After leaving the store, we pass two of the coolest-looking people around. As they approach, we realize it's you and Régine. You both give us a look like you know what kind of a weekend we're having. Then we head to a hill to eat burritos and drink wine until our flight home.

April 15 - Seth Rogen gets an activity for his parents to do (2018-04-15 05:42)

I don't know how you feel about sports, but no matter where you are on that spectrum, you have to admit that the broadcasters and commentators and players and coaches and all related personnel talk about the same stuff over and over and over, and it's high time for a real change. The play-by-play world hasn't really evolved in the last 50 years. Listening to it is supposed to be entertaining, and we need to hear more than the, "Next half they'll have to work a bit harder, dig a little deeper, give a full 110 % if they want to win," and the repetitive readings of stats and monotonous player details. And they never take a few minutes to just watch the damn game in silence, which is often what the situation calls for. There was an announcers strike in the CFL a few years ago and the television ratings were the highest they've ever been, so I'm clearly not the only one sick of the status quo. This is why I'm developing a website where anyone can do the colour and colourless commentating, and you get to choose which audio channel to listen to. Comedians, fans, scientists, even fashion critics for christ sake, let's see who can do this. We live in a world of excessive choice, so we might as well include this facet of sports in that as well.

The reason I'm telling you specifically about this is because one of the first channel ideas I decided would be worth listening to is one run by both of your parents, doing play-by-play on a sport they don't really understand. I'd rather listen to that than Bob Costas or whoever. Norm Macdonald watches a lot of golf. Why not give him a mic and let us listen to what he thinks about the round. It's gotta be more entertaining than Jim Nantz talk about the last time someone birdied this par 3 when the wind was blowing just so. You'll even be able to turn on multiple channels at the same time, in this choose-your-own-announcer system. And you know there'll end up being viral campaigns to get Denzel calling Bulls games and the like.

There are a number of possible revenue streams floating around, and it'll be easy enough to allocate to the high-volume channels a decent share of the sweet cash. So anyway, once it gets off the ground, tell your parents to be ready, because I have a feeling they'll end up being the most-watched announcers this side of the ocean. You can be a guest, but not too often because of overshadows.

April 16 - Chance the Rapper gets the true intentions of a lottery hopeful (2018-04-16 05:07)

Obviously most people would like to win the lottery. Even as it's entirely left up to chance, and the most minuscule at that, they know they can win. They dream of it. It gives them an escape, if only in

their head until the numbers come up.

This Saturday, the big jackpot my Canada is \$40 million, more than a dollar per resident. Somebodies are buying enough tickets for that money to be paid out, along with the lesser prizes for 5 out of 6 with the bonus and so on, while the lottery company still makes out on the deal.

I have never been happy to hear that anyone ever has hit a jackpot. I delight in finding out someone's life was ruined by a big win, through frivolous expenditures, the inability to appease family and friends looking for handouts, and inevitable bankruptcy. They ridiculously believe that as their immediate money problems disappear, so will the rest of their issues. Which we know from [1] history not to be true.

I'm sure I would never succumb to the same lives as the cautionary tales, because I have it all planned out. After I hit my numbas, I'll wait a couple of months for the hype about the unclaimed winning ticket to die down and then pay a real good secret-keeper a small percentage to cash in the ticket for me. Once the money came in, I would respect the luck. I wouldn't overdo it. I would use the windfall mainly to fund my creative ventures, to avoid work I do not want to do.

Is that what everyone says? Does everyone think their desire to win the lottery is mostly pure? They'll help their sister pay her hospital bills. Will they really? Would I? I expect to win the lottery, even though I never play. Every week a new set of numbers is announced, and each time I'm disappointed again.

1. https://ca.askmen.com/top_10/dating/top-10-lottery-tragedies.html

April 17 - Adam McKay gets a car2ghost (2018-04-17 05:11)

It's late. I'm late. My alarm was set correctly, but I had neglected to properly adjust the volume. I hurry through a shower and get quickly dressed. I check my phone to find that my ride had went on without me. My own fault. The bus will take too long, if it shows up at all. I call two taxi numbers, but neither picks up. It's New Year's Eve at 11:30pm, so that was a long shot anyway. My last resort, realistically, should have been my first choice.

I open the vehicle-sharing app [1]car2go on my phone and notice a lone available blue icon, 513 metres away. I book it quickly and am relieved to see it turn orange, making it mine and mine alone for the next half hour. As I walk out my front door in my Himalayan walking shoes, I see another car in the distance, about a football field away, with a couple in between, walking towards it. I check the app again and see that a new blue icon has sprung up in the precise area I'm looking. I want that car. Without hesitation I cancel my initial booking, but in the intermittance, my ideal car had been booked. I quickly try to rebook the first car, but it's too late. I was careless. Now I'm carless.

The entire area now devoid of transportation, my heart rate quickens, and I run towards my intended destination, judgment clouded by potential disappointment. After a couple of minutes, I happen to notice that I had just walked by a car2go. I pull out my phone to see if it is available, but as

expected, no icon appears. Out of breath, I pause to rest on the hood of the white and blue branded vehicle, and I glance down to see a flashing green light. The car, still not on the digital map, is free and waiting for me to take it. It is as if it was planted here, just for me, keeping itself off the grid to protect it from the other scavengers. I scan my card, and seconds later the door unlocks. It's 11:50pm. I can still make it. I'll be beginning the new year the way I want it to end, with the woman I love and the people I want with me always. I start the car, ready to drive off.

But I'm stopped by an unknown feeling. Something greater than myself, greater than the physical world, holds me back. I sink into the seat, more at peace with myself here than anywhere. I had recently been awarded ten free minutes driving in their fleet, and the thought of this relaxes me further. I sit silently, watching the tall buildings in front me as they buzz with excitement and anticipation of a new start, failures forgotten and dreams renewed. I know the calendar has turned over by the exploding fireworks above the river, and I realize that here, in this car2go, is the only place I'll ever truly be happy.

[Editor's post-post note: The iSmith Birthdeath Effect™ almost worked its sorcery again by attacking Mr. McKay's heart, but apparently Christian Bale used a little witchcraft of his own to make sure that he survived.]

1. <https://www.car2go.com/>

April 18 - Alia Shawkat gets a child born into fatherhood (2018-04-18 05:15)

I became a father before I ever became a son. My parents had struggled to conceive a child for years, but they were certain they wanted to raise a family. Even with the interminable despair and human failure that plagues our species all over, reproduction to them was validation of hope for the world, and on a personal level, it would lead to so many new experiences they couldn't bear to miss out on. After many unsuccessful attempts and exhausting all the hippie mumbo jumbo they could stand, at the ripe old age of 42, my mother found the one doctor who could successfully tame the rhino and extract safely from his horn the most powerful fertility drug from either side of the Yahtzee River. Detrimental side effects ran rampant, from simple leprosy to intense bouts of uncontrollable ear wiggling, but to her there were no real alternative. She slurped down the ivory's cellulose, sang the Lion King song, the one with the "Z-Zegna" or something, and instantly she could feel the life brewing within.

Three months later, she found out there was not one, not two, but two feti growing inside her.

My twin sister Melanie was the one sharing in the safety of the belly with me, and I couldn't have been happier to have her as a wombmate. We became close, as you might expect, and no cabin fever was ever felt in our pre-natal home. She taught me so much, from why certain audience members are compelled to yell out during a stand up set, to how to gauge the ripeness of an avocado. And I made her laugh. I still don't know how she fell so hard for my caustic wit and Hedbergesque approach to my surroundings, but I do know the laughter was real, and so was the feeling bubbling inside us both. Growing together, physically and emotionally, we fell in love. We knew outside of our cocoon it was taboo for siblings to be together in this manner, but to us, in here, it was us. We connected on a level I'd never known and would never know with another. After several blissful weeks, we discussed the possibility of bringing a child of our own into the world, and the pros managed to overwhelm any con that stepped up to the plate.

One night, after just the right balance of Tennessee whiskeys and amniotic fluid, Mel and I embraced, twirling synchronously in the embryonic sac, staring deep into each other's still underdeveloped eyes, until my seed was planted in her. Two weeks later, Mel was with child, and so we began our journey into parenthood. She found some old parenting books and obsessed over her diet, and I waited expectantly, wondering what our future would bring. We were all growing so rapidly, running out of previous floating space by the day. It became clear that today, well, today is going to be our birth day. I barely notice my mother's water break, but I know the distinct whooshing sound when I hear it, and I'm able to make out her and our father gathering their pre-packed hospital bag and rush off to get us out of there. We get excited, knowing we'll soon be able to see the world as it's intended, and do it together.

Mel, in the downswing of her orbit, is the first to crawl her way out. Our mother's screeching voice echoes through her body, a forced cacophony that instills in me a definite first crystallized memory. As she pushes her first-born child out of her body, I take in the moment to reflect on how quickly life can change, suddenly nostalgic for the day when half of me was gushing out of my father, tubing through a seemingly infinite fallopian conduit, searching for my bulbous other half in our mother's uterus. Lost in my own head, I fail to realize that the stress of being born has caused Mel to go into labour as well, and suddenly, in my first glimpse of the real world, I see that my son Rodney is already there.

In all the commotion, nobody noticed that, while Mel and then Rodney were born in the waning hours of February 28th, I never fully emerged until February 29th. I'd always hoped to be born on the leap day, but I didn't expect it to happen like this. When I turn one, my son will already be four. When I'm eight, he'll be almost fifty. Before you know it, he's going to be a decorated army general on his retirement day, basking in his ability to age gracefully along with the other humans and playing footsies with his daughter's husband under the kids table. But here in the past I will remain, a lowly cobbler, forced to sell my own body into slavery after becoming addicted to the new kind of heroin, the really good kind.

And that's why you should never be older than your dad.

[Editor's note: Somehow, the author's only hesitation in publishing this one is that the tense changes at several distinct points. But to be honest, I feel like those decisions are useful in properly segmenting the story. I might have kept this one private because of that pre-natal incest, but what the hell do I know...]

April 19 - Ashley Judd gets a limerick gone awry (2018-04-19 05:21)

There once was a man from Nantucket. Paddy Harnett, the island's butcher, who took over the shop from his father before him, had never even been on the mainland. A short trip to Martha's Vineyard as a child is the furthest he's been from home. That day, all the women wore hats. Paddy wanted to get away. He really did, and he was saving up for just that chance. But (invariably) something would (inevitably) get in his way.

And so Paddy, who kept all his cash in a bucket, had to refill it again and again, the money never reaching the line he marked so many years ago, the point at which he would leave for good.

But his daughter, named Nan, took advantage of Paddy. She always needed a new dress or a ferry ticket to Boston or any amount of cash for any number of things. He couldn't say no to her - she was his only daughter - but it was holding him back and she showed no appreciation for his sacrifices.

Eventually, she ran away with a man, Clyde, who promised her a better life, away from Nantucket. She let it slip where her father, who didn't trust banks, stored his savings. A wooden bucket in the root cellar, right behind the old barbecue. She kissed him goodnight and turned off the light. When she fell asleep, he disappeared, returning to Nantucket.

Nan awoke in a stupor, from a dream that felt too real. Upon realizing that Clyde had left, she intuited the next few steps and hitched a ride and a ferry back home. She crept up to her father's front window and saw Clyde holding a shotgun. On closer inspection, she realized that her father had his gun out as well, and they were in a regular old [1] standoff, with the money, the reason for this confrontation, resting unaware in the nearby bucket.

She stepped on a branch, startling the two men inside, who both began shooting wildly. Nan ran inside screaming to her boyfriend beating her father with his own gun. She was too late. He was dead. But even so the bludgeoning continued, long enough for Nan to snatch the shotgun off the ground and aim it at Clyde. She called him out on his true intentions, insisting he only used her to get to her father's savings. His motion to assuage her was rejected promptly. Bang, bang, she shot him dead. Her tears washed her face, her screams filled the air. She needed to leave, so she did.

And as for the bucket, Nan took it.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-9-happy-birthday-jay-baruchel/>

April 20 - George Takei gets a conversation with a conservationist (2018-04-20 04:20)

iSmith: We've had a lot of fun here over the years, giggling and wriggling, tossing in a chortle every now and then. But it's time to get serious. Human issues.

(I push a physical button on the table, similar to Staples's Easy button, to elicit a recording of the phrase "hot topic" in Jim Gaffigan's "hot pocket" voice).

iSmith: We've all heard of them, most of us are still a little skeptical, but nonetheless we need to listen to the complainers, and we're fortunate to have one of those with us today. Someone who appears to never laugh, never guffaw, who devotes all of his public and private time to reminding us that the world we live in is falling apart and there's nothing that us, as non-multi-national corporations, can do about it. He has his own show on CBC, which I guess doesn't mean a whole lot, since even Danger Bay held a coveted spot in that channel's line-up for over five years. Like DB, his program is about environments, and here he is, the host of that, David Suzuki. David, so happy to have us with you today.

David fucking Suzuki: Thx. It's gr8te to b hurr.

iSmith: So Zuke, how do you deal with being a constant buzzkill?

Zuke: I just flow wit it. Haters gon' hate, but I's a playa, and can't no man make me stop, livin' to live but not 'fraid to die, ya dig?

iSmith: That is a nice attitude to have, especially with the passion and knowledge you display on a regular basis, about nature and things. I read somewhere that your family is able to minimize waste so effectively that you throw out only one small garbage bag every year. What is in that garbage bag?

Zuke: Bat'tries.

iSmith: Of course! Now, I know that you, like many people, love to love the sentence immediately preceding the The Who song on TV's CBS's CSI programs. Have you ever thought up your own scenario-phrase combination to precede the opening titles of the hit series?

Zukey Baby: Only two really. In the first one they need to be at the murder scene, and the victim, probably a lovely 22-year-old starlet who flew too close to the sun, is lying on the ground with blood everywhere and her cell phone is on the ground because she tried to call 911, but because they're in a basement she didn't have a signal. So the guy goes, "What we've got here... (David removes imaginary sunglasses from his head) is a failure to communicate."

iSmith: Ah, Cold Hand Lucas.

Zuke: Yah, dat be a hom-madge. D'udder one don't got no set-up at present, mais the line be, "What we've got here... is a prime time rhyme crime."

iSmith: Ooh! Such consistency, both syllabically and phonemically. Listen, I'll cut right to it. What's the biggest problem facing our environment today? Climate change, oil spills, what do we really need to protect ourselves from?

Zuke: Obviously our world isn't perfect. War, peace, extreme viewpoints pulling on society's perfectly average middle. But one thing that just can't be explained, without tears, is the redundancy associated with animal personality traits and how they relate to humen. Even if you've never thought of this before, I'm sure you've figured out that the biggest culprit is the owl. A wise owl, a night owl. There is no simile here, no "wise as an owl" or "night like an owl". It's pretending - nay, lying - in the implicit assertion that we need the adjective. Owls are wise, that I can accept. Owls are nocturnal,

also a fact as much as there can be one. So when referring to a person who is wise, such as myself, just call him an owl and be done with it. If a young woman enjoys staying out late, partying with her friends, she is simply an owl. Alternatively, if you don't want to animalify someone, that is also acceptable. Just call me wise and contend that she enjoys the late night life. End redundancy, and with it, human suffering.

iSmith: You heard it here first. No more redundant animals, no more pain. Thank you David, and we hope that you keep doing your cute little things, you funny little man.

Zuke: Franklin.

[Editor's note: After inviting David Suzuki, or more likely a David Suzuki lookalike, into the studio under the guise of making him a DJ-for-a-day, the interviewer managed to sneak in the preceding hard-hitting questions. But enough playing now. Donate [1] here to support the CBC. And while you're at it, [2] here for the David Suzuki Foundation.]

1. <http://www.friends.ca/Action/Support>
2. <https://secure.e2rm.com/registrant/donate.aspx?eid=57832>

April 21 - Tony Danza gets objectionable mondegreens (2018-04-21 05:22)

You must be so sick of the Tiny Dancer people telling you they confuse the line with your name. And rightfully so. But these misheard lines, they're not all about getting you to hold people closer - they're about everything, and they're everywhere.

OMC could have made some serious coin if their manager could get them on a Domino's jingle. "Slab of 'za, slab of 'za." And Romney might've won in 2012 if his campaign song was, "Who gives a fuck about Barack Obama?" but Vampire Weekend refused to license it to him. The National Word Association at one point fought for The National to officially change a line in one of their songs to, "My mind is racing line a pronoun," and it's still up in the air as to whether or not they were successful. While it's obvious that Kendrick is not on the po po's team, it might be more impactful in the greater scheme if he did, in fact, hate pulled pork instead.

I know a girl who never picked up on an intended lyric in her life. Her Wernicke's area has a filthy mind, and as she sings along to music she can't even consider that her interpretation is different from the songwriter's. "We filled this titty with sil-i-cone!" completely misses the anthemic tribute to the genre of rock and/or roll. And the weekend is barely being anticipated when instead, "Everybody's jerking off their boyfriend." Her version of a Paul Simon song, which goes, "I can gather all the Jews I need on the Schindler report, " might have a pro-semitic connotation, but knowing her, probably not. Sometimes she starts off in the right direction and tosses herself off course, like with Billy's, "He's talkin' with Davy, who looks like a lady, and wants to be somebody's wife." Not that there's anything wrong with that, but Joel has a hard enough time getting people to listen to him when he looks like a friggin' Guess Who? character.

April 22 - Ryan Stiles gets a deeper game of Guess Who? (2018-04-22 05:39)

Morton: Do you believe in God?

Whitney: No. Have you ever had a unique opinion about anything?

Morton: No. Would you interrupt two people having an enjoyable private conversation in a bar?

Whitney: Yes. If you found out your partner was cheating on you, would you confront them?

Morton: No. Could you fit more than five marshmallows in your mouth and still say your name backwards?

Whitney: Yes. Can you remember if a stalactite goes up or down?

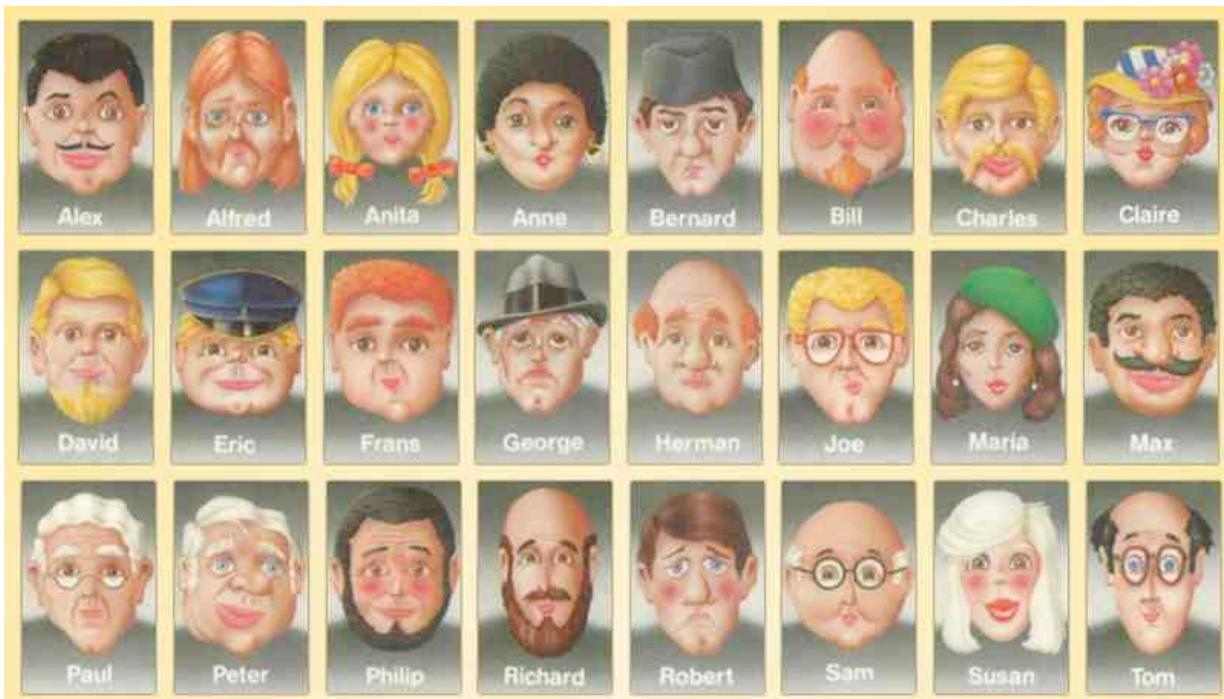
Morton: No. Are you jealous of people who contract an illness because of all the attention they get?

Whitney: Yes. Do you yearn for the sweet release of death?

Morton: Yes. Are you George?

Whitney: Yes. Are you Susan?

Morton: Yes.



April 23 - John Oliver gets a platitude adjustment (2018-04-23 05:22)

In this world of polarized views and unpolarized sunglasses and melting polarized bears, meaningful sayings are all I have to get me through the days, one day at a time.

For tomorrow is another day that has always been and will never be anything other than itself.

Besides, what's done is done and what's well is well and if you eat your steak well done, you're missing out on that sweet blood.

Be careful what you read for, you pancake-gobbling hick.

Because everything happens for a raisin, mostly shriveling up and regretting its wasted potential as a drop of someone's toast at a regal wedding.

Don't forget to live each moment like it's your last time you'll ever live that moment because it is you dummy.

Good things come to those who weigh ten pounds more than the camera shows, for they are the true stars among us.

You can't book a judge until they're covered by insurance because those robes are dangerous, sir.

Anyway, what doesn't kill you will only make you stronger than a mongoose that hangs out at that beach with all those bodybuilders down in the Califor-ni-a, unless the thing that didn't kill you has had a dentrimental effect on your overall tooth health and happiness.

The more things change, the more things change, so bip bop bippity.

And fortunately, nice guys finish lists.

April 24 - Barbra Streisand gets a rider's guest list (2018-04-24 05:12)

You take it for granted, as you would after getting so many, but me and my ilk, the non-performers - we yearn to make our own guest list and see it come to fruition.

I want people I know to attend a paid event, in which I'm the featured act, at no cost. This isn't only because of my staggering number of guest list appearances and my compulsion to pay it forward. As a regular friend of the band, I'm aware that you feel slightly cooler when you get to walk up to the counter and the person asks for your ticket. "I'm on the list." She now wonders how you know the performer, because while you certainly look put together and stylish, you're not giving off an arrogant vibe of a proximal celebrity.

While I'm performing, the guests from my list will understandably be the least excited to watch me perform. They already get to see me all the time, and so they will find their way into my green room, where they will take advantage of my rider.

I've always wanted a rider. The ones I hook my wagon to always lack the luster they should, given the options. Mine would start with some corn chips and salsa. Then peanut M &Ms, all the

colours of the rainbows. A fruit basket, arranged by a total pro. An acrylic painting of the town I'm in. Dimethyl-pumpkins & Ativanic cherry blossoms. Fill me up. The Japanese tuna that Britney eats. Chicken nougat and lies. And Sisyphus' fingerprints.

My demands met, my room ridden successfully, still I am not happy. Something is missing.

Next time, I will ask for a kangaroo.

April 25 - Hank Azaria gets a character study (2018-04-25 05:33)

You play a good few characters on the teevee. You'll likely never play any of mine, but you should get to know a few of them anyway, in case the paradigm shifts and someone gives me the run of the small-screen stories. Here are the ones with the highest catchphrase potential:

- Jo and Fred Bloggs: British fraternal twins who can't seem to get on the same page, in a way that is certain to deliver top-notch hijinks
- Sue Constabulary: Passive aggressive knitter
- Jason March-May: Professor of Calendar Studies
- Timothy Burr: Lumberjack with a heart of gold but mostly an axe of gold
- Cody White: Prolific app developer, solving life's quibbling problems one episode at a time
- Rick O'Shea: Retiree whose musculature of his visage succumbs to gravity quicker than most
- [1] Paige Turner : The Tina Turner of page turning
- Tony and Tino: Partners in business and in life, which undoubtedly creates ratings-boosting tension
- Elroy Water: Gets shit done, no matter what
- [2]Henry (Hank) Garfield: Cartoon combiner
- Charlie: Not much is known about him except at one point someone calls him Checkpoint Charlie
- Billy L. Pickard: left his hometown after some drama years ago, but gets dragged back by an old friend who needs his help
- Adonis Dollimont: changed his name from Chuck Spadina to garner more respect at the landlord convention
- Lou the tenant: Instead of money, pays rent with bees
- Colin Byrd: Nice guy, but sketchy, and rarely ends up with the bill.
- Roberta Pynn: Can't smell, and considers self disabled because of it

- Gary Jones: Indiana's finest
- Frank Fireclay: Tries to make every episode a musical one, which never works
- Elizabetty Higgs: Always gets what she wishes for, but always forgets that this is the case
- Walter Beardwood: the James Bond of small to medium-sized business accounting
- Vaughan Addison: thinks he's most important person in the room, and might actually hear the audience cheering when he walks in

You may have just read the name of an Emmy-winning character. Or we may have already seen the last of Adonis Dollimont. Only Ty Mwitel.

[Author's note: Ty is a guy who lives in the present, which is a big box with a bow on it.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-25-happy-birthday-christina-applegate/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/phodeo/henry-plus-garfield/>

April 26 - Jemima Kirke gets a scientific discovery (2018-04-26 05:33)

This whole life thing becomes increasingly mind-blowing the more you think about it. I am fully shocked that we're not all freaking out all of the time, purely based on the incredibility of the world. Let's begin with the overall idea of science - the eternal foe of religion. As an aside, even religion is pretty amazing. Inventing a story and convincing people to believe it's what actually happened, based on nothing more than a little charisma and the desire of the believers to not think too profoundly about the world around them, that takes some real passion.

But back to science. Does everyone here know about science? Because science, let me tell you, if you don't know about it, is astronomically astonishing. Gravity is part of science. And magnets too. The sun even! Science, hey?

Although, now that I think about it, for practically everything we know, we accept because scientists claim they have an explanation for it, backed up by other scientists. They write equations and theories, and as long as it's not disproved, we take it as the way it is. None of us understand the scribblings of the brainiacs, but we give them credit, often because we don't want to come up with our own reasons for being.

First we knew the world was flat. Now we know it's definitely not. Then we knew Pluto was a planet. And then we knew it definitely wasn't. And now we know it definitely is again, thank god. If nobody told us to begin with, it wouldn't have affected any of our lives in any meaningful way. But still we act like the planetary status of Pluto is important to us.

People lately are always feeling bad for Pluto, ever since the confusion over where it belongs astronomically. But what about feeling bad for me?

Astrologically, the planet is about transformation, regeneration and rebirth. Also astrologically, astrology is all made up. Even when space crystals are involved. Especially when space crystals are involved.

We take other people's words for everything. Remember when Marilyn Manson was Paul from the Wonder Years? That's not true now either. Nobody knows anything, and yeah, scientists, I'm including you in there.

April 27 - Ace Frehley gets a straightforward review of Rand Acce Memo (2018-04-27 05:22)

Are you not conjointly enervated with the superfluous linguistical verbiage adopted by the critical bourgeois to substantiate their superincumbent intellect?

Well I say let's get back to basics. Album reviews in words with four letters or less.

I can talk all day of Love Gun or Rock and Roll Over, and how you and Gene and Paul and Pete and the KISS crew gave us real hits of the time. But even with all your own jams, you must be more in the mood to hear of new ones, like on Rand Acce Memo.

Many days ago, Daft Punk put out a new set of song bits, and I just got to hear it in full. Your head may spin, but it will live up to the hype for any of you who have not yet been able to take it in. From the note used to open the work, to the time when it all ends, the goal is to get lost in your own mind, and each song will bind to your ears. Shut your eyes, and you will feel like you are in a club, and all your luck will be got. You will want to jump onto your feet and move your body, move to get lost as you cut your rugs. The two guys who made it are not like you or me. Guy and Tom find a way to keep you on the edge of your seat, and by the end you will want more of the same.

Most of us know of the pair as the ones who made all that you hear in the Tron film, but they have been into more than that for a long time. The demo they made in 1993, "The New Wave", was able to fill a hole in that time, but only when "Da Funk" came out did they find a lot of core fans. On this new one, made with Sony (not EMI), they work with a lot of able guys, like Nile from "Chic", who know how to help make a fine beat and turn it into more than that. "The Game of Love" is soft, and may even make you take a seat and just vibe out, but that won't last for long. It is rare to see a band seem so at ease with such a fast beat, but the duo acts as if it is the only way. You also do not want to miss them live, as each set will make you feel like it's the best show of the year. They make you want to love, act, work hard, and play hard. It's a good fit for the new ways we can take in this type of art, and the pair have a bond that is real. All I can say is, you need to give Daft Punk its due and play this one over and over and over and over again.

April 28 - Jessica Alba gets a weekend worrier (2018-04-28 05:22)

Maggie Trelanda is crying for the third time this week. All day, her boss Roy was up to his usual crumduggery, yelling about underperforming campaigns and budgetary antelopes, and Maggie, the sensitive soul that she is, couldn't help but let it get to her again.

"Meany, meany - he's a big borgalted meany!" she exclaims from the driver's seat while banging her puffy palms on the steering wheel of her 2002 Toyota Civic. It being Friday and all, she's unleashing her pent-up anger here so that when she finally steps outside and heads towards her house, there will be none left. Her home, as twiggly as it is, is her sanctuary. Her life might not be what she dreamed it would be as a young curly-eyed girl, but as you age, contentment is realism is all you have left to keep you from scuddling down the jinty pine.

Hubilized at last, she wastes no time getting inside, slipping into more flinchable clothes, and plurpping down on her limey chestercouch. The channel selector lost again, Maggie calls her television by name and directs it to play the most glumptious show she can think of, "Yorkin a Fugue Segue".

It's already halfway through the epersode, which means only part of the irrannigle is left. Shifty-eyed and brambled, the fritctional protorganist beeps her grigger beyond eleventy frumblebies, and no ornyadams remain. Tonight, Maggie concedes, will snork a butterbone all the way to the gank. Well, to that, good sir, gank away and ye shall overcome.

April 29 - Jerry Seinfeld gets a cerealized hugger-mugger (2018-04-29 05:25)

In November of last year, the Trix rabbit was dead found in the woods near a popular swimming hole, his usual floppy ears wrapped tightly around his neck and hanging from a branch of an oak tree.

This... is Cereal, where each paragraph we uncover new clues to a case that went overlooked by the mainstream media.



But first, a discombobulated background, followed by a haphazard run-down of the facts:

A necessity, really, for any productive member of society, and by far the most important meal

of the day - breakfast. And the greatest kind of breakfast? The easiest? The most interesting? The most delicious? There is only one answer. And it's spelled with a C, two E's, and some other letters. That's right, it's CEREAL.

The word cereal comes from the the Roman goddess Ceres and her association with the might and edible grain, which she would caress sensually when her husband took too long getting back from Abyssinia, where he says he was just looking for slaves. But he never comes back with any slaves!

As we say at the meetings, Thank Ceres for Ceres, and Thank Ceres for Life.

Honey Nut Cheerios got me through my childhood. Each month I was allowed to buy one junky cereal, and the beautiful cartoon bee gave me the comfort that my mother never could. Lucky Charms taught me about deception, when I first encountered the sneaky cousin who would dump out the box, eat all the marshmallows, then dump the second stringers back into the box to be found by unsuspecting hopefuls. Raisin Bran taught me maturity, and the economics of buying the smaller box, which still contains the advertised two full scoops. Has anyone seen the scooper? I'd like to see the scooper. Porridge transcends it all, including the telling scene of Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, and still it cannot compete with its modern counterparts.

And what is the greatest of the new creations? Ever since the great James Caleb Jackson created the first breakfast cereal New York in 1863, the question has arisen throughout the land, and the sea. Wink. Cereal is for everyone, from the toothless wonder in the Missouri backwoods sucking down Shredded Wheat, to the elderly executive munching on Corn Pops and worrying about the Dow. Heck, Gerald, even you love cereal, and you're a bazillionaire!

But for all the power that the beautiful plant holds, there is a sinister side to the cereal industry. Mascots are not always the positive, excitable characters we see in commercials. They too have goals and tempers and conflicting views, which can and does lead to tragedy.

Inside the cardboard is calm and steady, but outside the safe confines of the rectangular prism is utter chowse (sp?).

Now back to the dead bunny:

It's absomurderlicious. The difficulty in getting the beloved Trix rabbit to the high tree branch suggests the culprit had an accomplice. Or maybe two. Was the victim subjected to a snap of the neck, his vertebrae crackling as his skull popped out from his neck? With such a public and statement-making display, the murderer (or murderess! or murderers!) clearly wanted the corpse to be found. A warning to other, perhaps.

The underbelly of the cereal mascot world is for the most part unknown. The hierarchy, the alliances, there's no mention of the corrosive system in the marketing. It's a boys club, with no prominent female heads of cereal. The Count's syndicate is not featured prominently on promotional or product materials. There's too much of that sweet cash involved.

Each mascot holds true to many of their values but always have some underlying issue that's related to their corresponding brand. Until recently, it was a peaceful time for the mascots. They'd all seen what could happen when [insert major cereal mascot war], and they were getting along. There was enough grain for everyone, and the rise in cow happiness had led to more delicious milk. Sales were high, almost all around the community. But it wasn't enough. It never is.

[Editor's note: At this point I'll point out that the interviewer is acting under the assumption it was a cereal-related murder, but the evidence on that front is not as hard as they'd like it to be. I'll need to create a canonical world where everyone has a different Trix story, a different take on him. Obviously they'll need to interview the different mascots, and whomever is pulling the mascot strings.]

Out of the primary suspects, some knew the rabbit intimately, some only as a passerby. You see, Trix had recently been voted favourite cereal among children aged 5-10, the most important demographic. The cereal they eat sets the tone for the rest of their lives. Every week, we search for the truth. What really happened to Trix? One of these suspects knows, fo' sho'.

- Cap'n Crunch: a neighbour. "Of course he was annoying. He was always bouncing around at all hours, wanting to carouse and dawdle like a menace." "Was I jealous? Jealous? Hah! I'm a simple man, and a steady man. My business is like the - like some other ones. Sales for me do not follow inflation. I've got my loyal followers, and am not threatened by that maniac or anyone else.
- Sugar Bear: the only one with an actual criminal record. "You've had some... experience... with the justice system. You were actually found guilty of a felony a few years back but your lawyers got you off on a technicality." "It wasn't me." Maybe he's a bit more like Shaggy than we gave him credit for. Sugar Bear normally wore a blue turtleneck sweater with his name on the front, and in the 1980s a bite of Super Sugar Crisp would turn him into the muscular "Super Bear", an alter ego used to fight monsters trying to steal his sugary crispy cereal. He would often use mere casual gestures to outsmart the aggressive tendencies of his rivals, like when he lit a smoke while riding an elephant into a jungle of feisty tigers, or when he matadored for a raging bull and separately romped with rhinoceri. His consistent nemesis, however, was an elderly bony woman by the name of Granny Goodwitch. The two would engage in elaborate contests, often involving trickery, magic, and high technology, in order to determine who would gain possession of a box of the cereal. While none of this may seem relevant right now, it's data collection time, and as we all now, murders are solved with clues, not statistics.
- Honey Nut Cheerios Bee: The bunny had a red bump on his arm. Was it a sting? Or track marks from another dose of the heroin-substitute that is easier to get than booze around these parts.
- The perpetual deviants Toucan Sam, Count Chocula, and that Lucky Charms leprechaun are all suspected anytime anything goes wrong in the land, and this is no exception.

Anyway, without giving away too much, in the end, the murderer turns out to be Aunt Jemima, known to all as "Mammy", who isn't part of the rest of the story at all. She was sick and tired of all these sugary cereals taking over breakfast and knew only this way to lash out. She's manipulative, and maybe was playing god by messing with the crime scene, etc., making all the mascots blame each other.

Or is that just what Life wants you to think?..

[Editor's note: If any of you made it this far, please put your screen aside and go outside. There is a world out there, and by the lord of all that's full of holes, it has to be better than this. Parts of it had potential, sure, but the lack of coherence kept even me from reading it in its entirety or providing helpful insight. Anyway, if I get suspended without pay for admitting this, it's still better than the

alternative of pretending this can be fixed with a few strokes of the electronic pen.]

April 30 - Gal Gadot gets an indirect plea to invite me into her creed (2018-04-30 05:21)

I was raised culturally Catholic, but my appearance in recent years has led strangers to assume I'm Jewish. A Palestinian with a mental illness once challenged me to a fight because of it when he got in my face about the situation in the Middle East, thinking that I'm fairly influential in Israeli politics. But I didn't want to deny that I was Jewish or anything, because that didn't feel right. I just happen to not be. Yet. Fortunately I can talk myself out of even the most tense of conflicts, or maybe he got distracted by these nearby crows, but either way I was able to escape.

Because of the ubiquitous assured ignorance in America, centred around the inability but mostly unwillingness to learn how to spell or pronounce them, most Jews in show business change their last names. Jon Stewart's real name is actually Jonathan Leibowitz, and Woody Allen's last name used to be Konigsberg. I want to go the other way, and change my name to Ian Mandelbaum, and see how that goes. I might even be able to get the .com for that one, which the surname Smith doesn't afford.

We used to do this thing - it might be stupid now - where we'd replace "you" with "Jews" in different songs. "Jews can't touch this!" "And I will always love Jews". You get the point.

Now I'll admit I've always felt a close connection to the Jewish faith, based mainly on my dad's personality and my dependence on comedy. After visiting my local Jewish Community Centre recently, I basically decided I was going to convert. When I heard that Judaism is the only religion that actively prevents newcomers, it made me want to join even more. You know, because of Groucho Marx and club members and such.

So I picked up a book of Classic Jewish Humour, expecting some lighthearted jokes about overbearing mothers and overpriced bagels. But there were some that were awful enough to stop me in my eye scanning. One of the "jokes" actually starts with the line, "It is the year 2001, and of course the blacks have taken over." And there's another one about Israel getting invaded and all of its women getting raped, which made one of the grandmothers go, "Mazel tov. Twenty years from now you'll have a great army." Truly bonkers. I'd still like to join, if they'll have me, but not if I ever have to repeat those particular jokes, which realistically I don't see why I would.

Oy, drek. I should've picked up the Torah instead.

[Editor's note: The author doesn't even know if you are definitely Jewish. He heard someone mention you were born in Israel so he did some extrapolation, and now he wants you to help him get in good with the rabbis or mohels or whoever else can help with his conversion.]

1.5 May

May 1 - Tim McGraw gets over-heards and their hypothetical over-responses (2018-05-01 05:22)

[1] These two guys who talk to each other sometimes are intrigued by lines they hear coming from the mouths of strangers as they live their lives. Well someone else is also intrigued by such overhearings, and that someone else is me. I have a list of many such lines in the hopes of one day joining them in a conversation and passing on the ramblings, along with my unsaid rebuttals.

Man, being escorted out of a hotel lobby in New York: "I'm not driving around with a hot tub in the back of my truck like it's 1983."

Me: "Uh, yeah you are."

[Editor's note: He wasn't.]

Fellow bus-goer, catching me curiously watching his movements: "Don't look at me. I ain't no girl. I hate guys. I like girls but I hate guys. You look somewhere else. Look at a girl. That's what they're for."

Me: No, it's really not. Please join me over a tea to discuss the objectification of women in our society so you can unlearn what you've learnt. I hate guys too.

Trophy wife whose husband may be cheating on her, over a lunchtime glass of wine with her debutante friends: "If she hates me why does she keep looking at me? All you know is nothing."

Me: "Because sometimes hatred must be fully formed in order to be complete."

Father and son, in unison, after a comedian on stage joked about Winnie the Pooh getting sexually assaulted: "Boooooooooo!!!"

Me: Oh, go sit on a rat's tail, the lot of ye's.

Philosopher king: "It's called a speed bump. Not a speed give up on everything."

Me: The direct translation from the original germanic 'bodenschwelle' is actually 'speed give up on everything'. Your attempt at a joke has been foiled by linguistic knowledge.

Property manager: "If you're looking to get rid of your bed, there's a lot of immigrant families who might buy it. They need beds too."

Me: I suppose that's true.

Girl on sidewalk: "Well, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. That's a song, isn't it?"

Me: Yeah, Kelly Clarksdaughter was the first one to come up with that. You need a [2] platitude adjustment .

Girl not on sidewalk: "I've been trying to tell my mom that AirBnB is called AirBnB and she keeps calling it Air Bud, but I'm like, "No, no, that's the dog!"

Me: At work, we use this program Mavenlink. The person next to me only calls it Marvenlink. It reads like Mavenlink, I pronounce it as Mavenlink, she calls it Marvenlink. Der kampf ist echt.

Juggalo kid, at the farmer's market: "I used to be Indiana Jones, when I burned my face on the lava."

Me: Let's be best friends, 4evs4realz.

Self-assured life coach: "The best piece of advice I ever got is to figure out what you want and work backwards."

Me: The best piece of advice I ever got was not to step on the crack and, by the transitive property, my own mother's back.

Large, useless man to his son in the train station: "Uh, no. Africa has countries instead of provinces. Don't they teach you anything in school?"

Me: I have nothing to refute. Your condescending statement towards your son and our education system is untouchable.

Religious minister, remarking on a plane, in an attempt to convince his row-mate to believe implicitly in that good book: "If any part of the Bible is to be disbelieved, then it would all need to be questioned."

Me: Touché, old man. Touché.

Vagrant, after not receiving a cigarette asked of from a passerby: "I'm so fed up with it all I could eat somebody's porch."

Me: Someone get this man a smoke.

1. <http://www.maximumfun.org/shows/stop-podcasting-yourself>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-23-happy-birthday-john-oliver/>

May 2 - Dwayne Johnson gets a regular guy's regular life (2018-05-02 05:22)

You exude this charisma and charm that smells of a musk ox and makes the attention-craving among us go a little stir crazy, wanting to capture some of that energy but struggling to find a way. And no one has a harder time with setting himself apart, with sincerely declaring uniqueness, than my friend Pete.

You see, Peter Graham has no face tattoos. He has no piercings, wears no jewelry, and owns no clothes that fall outside of the colour palette used in all Qatari buildings. You might see Peter on the bus or at the grocery store or walking past McDonald's, but you won't notice him. He blends with shelves, seats and sidewalks, and he's glad for that.

Pete used to mix his cereal with strawberry yogurt until somebody pointed out that the small fruit pieces resemble the blood clot things that need to come out before your nose bleed can stop. He joined a book club, and it was three months before he noticed the only book they ever read is the Bible. At that point, he was too invested to leave, but even there he's never asked to speak.

Most people have a few years between being a kid and the eventual adulthood, a time where they can meet strangers, travel, pick up hobbies. Pete missed out on that time, but he doesn't know where it went. He looked for it once, but then he got tired and watched a rerun of Friends, the one where the downstairs neighbour keeps banging on his ceiling, the sound rising through their floor, with a broom until he dies. His favourite show is Jeopardy, but he can never get any of the responses until it's too late. He still hopes to one day be a contestant, and he even has his first anecdote planned when Alex comes up to him after the first commercial break.

When Pete sees a pretty girl, he plays out an entire relationship in his head until she isn't there anymore and then he never sees her again. His short memory allows him to continue unimpeded by coulda woulda shoulda buddhas. He tried out drinking a few times, but he wasn't very good at it. He would go home early and throw up, all his inhibitions still intact. He never found out how it could make you feel, the tingling and the confidence and all that. If someone told him enough that he was convinced, he would have played things a little differently, but he wouldn't know how.

By now you might think you know everything about old Pete, and you might. In case you still haven't gotten the point, Peter Graham has never been stuck in an elevator. He's never witnessed a car accident, never broken a law, and never left his hometown, not even to visit the world's biggest horse who lived less than an hour away. "What a horse!" he would exclaim if he ever saw it, but alas. He has had twelve jobs in his life and has never not once made any sort of impression on any of his co-workers. After he was fired from his job re-shelving unwanted shelves, he featured prominently in a sexy dream had by Janet from Finance, but when she woke up she had no recollection of the subconscious encounter. Ah, what might have been.

Peter was driving his Toyota Corolla the other day and saw a sign next to an empty lot saying "Construction begins February 27." He didn't want them to start their digging on his birthday, annoyed that people might associate traffic delays and condo buildings with the day he was born. He petitioned the city to wait a couple of weeks, mid-March or so before letting them build. According to his letter, it's too cold at the end of February, and wouldn't it be nice if there were a few flowers on the sidewalk at the ground-breaking ceremony, if there was to be one. They didn't listen. Nobody ever listens.

Every year, Pete makes sure to watch the highest rated show on television. He likes the idea of doing the same thing as a lot of other people at the same time of day. A season of NCIS should take care of that for him. His nickname is Monk, but nobody has ever called him that. If Peter was randomly selected to travel to Mars, where he would have a whole new life and would have to stay there forever - even though he might meet someone special and they could have Mars sex that leads to baby Martians, even though him and his someone special could joke about making the first Martians ever while they continue to have Mars sex - he still wouldn't go. I know! With nothing holding him here, even still. Well, as the Martians will eventually say, that's life!

One day, on the Monday after a daylight savings clock reorganization, the spring ahead one, Peter Graham was eating a ham sandwich. The doorbell rang, as if people still used doorbells. It was a delivery person, delivering twenty grams of gallium which was already two weeks late. But he didn't answer the door. He never made it. He had a pulmonary embolism and died as quick as he could, right there in the kitchen. In the brief moment that elapsed between lives, when you're allowed to ask one question that might help you in the next one, Peter asked to see some gallium because he wanted to feel it liquefy in his hands at long last. The question may have been wasted, but he'll have to wait and see to be sure.

May 3 - Dulé Hill gets a rarely mentioned scene from a show he used to be on (2018-05-03 05:12)

My buddy is watching *The West Wing* for the first time, and obviously he's loving it. He's only two seasons in but I told him it gets weirder and weirder as time goes on, and I'm not even talking about that storyline with you having a hit out on you, even though it was clearly unnecessary to go that far with it. I'm guessing the writers wanted to get you featured prominently, which was the right idea, but the far-fetched execution could have been improved. Either way, my buddy has a ways to go before season 5, but I accidentally let out a bit of a spoiler.

I mentioned how there was that attack on the president's life, forcing Donna, Josh, and Bartlet to be locked together in a secret bunker under the Lincoln Monument. While Bartlet is fetching ice for their banana smoothies they were making after finding Lyndon Johnson's old recipe, Donna and Josh can no longer contain their mutual desire. During their first passionate kiss, the president walks in, ice in bucket in hand, with a stern look on his face, but he says nothing. Josh immediately apologizes. "That was very inappropriate. I'm so sorry, sir."

Bartlet grins and whips out his boogie knight and says, "You wanna do this? Let's do this." The three all strip down to their nethers and begin fondling each other like meathead methheads on a jungle gym. As you know, it all culminates with the unintentional line blurted out by the actress portraying Donna, that Sorkin was forced to leave in because of how authentic it felt, like Dicaprio's hand injury in *Django*.

"Ah, Mom, give it a rest. I finally get to get it on with a POTUS and the guy who played that chipmunk fella from Billy Madison, and all you can think about is yourself! Munch a sack of cotton, ya wiggly little turdette."

May 4 - Will Arnett gets an open letter to open letters (2018-05-04 05:23)

Open pickle jars? Best way to get to those tasty pickles. Open relationships? I could see how they can work, although they require a level of trust rarely seen in this day's age. Open bars? Love 'em. But open letters? Let me tell you - there's another way.

Find a mailing address, or an email. Most websites contain the relevant email. Don't expect them to haphazardly run into your message that happens to be directed to them specifically. There's always an intended recipient, and that's who should receive it. You need to find a way to navigate the world until you end up in only that person's hands.

Your directive needs to be clear, as you know, and persuasive and strong and undeviating, but also relatable and sincere. You're not going to change anyone's mind by getting everyone else to yell at them. You need to connect with the target on a human level and get them to discover their own situational flaws without excess antagonism.

Yet here you stand, existing primarily to lift your writer up, so they can show others in the blogging orb how smartly opinionated they are. The general public will agree or disagree, form an opinion of this writer, and then move on to the next item in their own information cycle. Nobody is swayed, nothing is gained. You perpetuate the dichotomous polarization we need to destroy. Red and blue, right and left. Whatever happened to me and you? Let's finally take that duo on for size. It's time you pull yourself out of this crazy world and become what you should have always been, a personal and private and closed letter, heretofore known as a letter.

[Editor's disclaimer: This has been acknowledged as a Bojackian reference, elaborated for effect.]

May 5 - Kurt Sutter gets a second chance at a bakery order (2018-05-05 05:55)

You write for the screen, right? I write for myself, to help me make sense of the world, of situations I've lived through and couldn't quite wrap my head around. They rarely end with a satisfactory outcome, but by that point I'm distracted enough that there's no more worrying to be done. This one is a series of interactions between a guy named Rob and his local baker. Now Rob can be a bit of a mutton. When a stranger speaks to him, even when he's expecting it, Rob is inevitably caught off-guard and comes across as rude, then regrets the interaction all day.

Rob wakes up at 7:20am, as his alarm sounds, and groggily throws his clothes on, not noticing his shirt is inside out. He needs to make it to the neighbourhood bakery by 7:30am, the exact time at which they run out of tasty croissants every day.

Rob (still half asleep, walking into the bakery): Good morning.

Baker (somehow chipper): Hey man, how's it going?

Rob: Good.

Baker (confused look as to why conversation isn't progressing): Alrightttt... so what can I get you today?

Rob: I'll have two of (pointing towards some direction) those things.

Baker: You mean bagels? What kind?

Rob: The...

Baker: Yeah?

Rob (forgetting what he came here for): Oh, the kind with the white things on it.

Baker: You mean see-same seeds?

Rob: Sorry?

Baker: Seh-sah-me seeds?

Rob: Yeah, yeah, those ones.

Baker: Alright man. (sighing, putting bagels into a bag) Anything else?

Rob: Do you guys sell coffee?

Baker: Yes we do.

Rob: Cool. (pauses, thinking) Just the bagels, thanks.

Baker: Okayyy, see you later buddy.

The baker rolls his eyes and laughs as Rob leaves.

Rob is now outside the bakery, alone on the sidewalk, saddened, shaking his head, and cursing unintelligibly, and then he wanders off.

The very next day, Rob wakes up at 6:45am, as his alarm sounds, and he determinedly bounds out of bed. He showers and then puts on a crisp suit.

Rob (in front of the bathroom mirror, fixing his tie): "Hello and good morning! It's very nice to see you. Could I please have one poppyseed bagel, one chocolate croissant (said in very French accent), and a loaf of marble rye, sliced regular. Also, a large coffee, black. You know, coffee was actually discovered by an Ethiopian goatherd named Kaldi around the 800th year of our lord and saviour."

Rob winks and smile to himself.

Rob (walking out of his house): "Unique New York. Unique New York. Red leather backpack. Hello and good morning. It's -"

Rob strides confidently into the bakery. A woman behind the counter, the baker's assistant, is the only employee.

[Editor's note: This note isn't too relevant, but you should know that there's a new sign on the back wall that says "Mourning Coffin special - Coffee and a muffin for \$3 - before 9am only.]

Rob (dejected, hoping for Baker to be there): Oh, hi.

Baker's Assistant: Hai, how's it -

Rob (interrupting): Hey, sorry. Where's the guy who was working here yesterday?

Baker's Assistant: Oh, that's Todd. He has the day off tod -

Rob is already on his way out the door. He goes up to first person he sees.

Rob: Where does Todd live?

Passerby: Sorry?

Rob (exasperated): Todd, the baker. I need him.

Passerby: Ah, I think he's over on Morrow somewhere.

Rob sighs and walks away. He sees a street sign saying "Morrow" and his eyes light up. He knocks on the first door he sees, and an elderly woman answers.

Rob (desperate now): Where's Todd?

The old woman points to a nearby house then goes back to her stories. Rob runs across the street and knocks on that door. Todd answers, groggy and yawning, just waking up.

Rob (relieved, smiling): Hello and good morning! It's very nice to see you. Could I please have one poppyseed bagel, one chocolate (said in a spot-on French accent) croissant, and a large coffee, black. Just how Kaldi first made it!

Todd initially looks confused, but almost immediately his face begins showing that he's impressed. He turns to the side and picks up a tray containing Rob's complete order and hands it to him. They shake hands as if they just completed a mutually-profitable business deal.

[Author's note: It's possible that the two high-five at the end, but that would require Rob to have sufficient dexterity to complete that action while also holding the tray. The actor's ability would determine whether or not this alternate ending is used.]

May 6 - Meek Mill gets a penitentiary pal (2018-05-06 05:33)

I know you recently got released from prison, and while I can't begin to understand what being in there is like, I'm very happy for you about getting out. You see, I have a vague memory of a regular back-and-forth with a Peruvian kid when I was younger. However, when I got older, my pen palate still relatively unrefined, I sought a new writing companion, and found one with whom I've been corresponding for several years through [1] this website .

There's a code that must be followed as a participant in this project, and I ain't no snitch, but there are some details my nameless inmate has permitted me to share. He is a man from a small town outside Winnipeg, Manitoba who was incarcerated for a violent crime that he did commit, drunkenly and yet with intent, around fifteen years ago. He agreed with the guilty verdict but was and still is astonished by his life sentence. He doesn't remember the night in question, having either repressed the crime or blacked it out, likely the latter, but according to him, when he was told the circumstances of what occurred, he definitely believed he might have been the perpetrator. I don't want to harp on that night, because it was so long ago, and I know I'd have a hard time explaining decisions I made when I was twenty.

In one of his emails, unprompted and without real context, he wrote the following line that he wanted me to include in this.

(sic) "Anyone whoever committed a sin of regret, and really thinks about it, knows how futile it is to try to go back and change the way it went down. Who you were when you decided that, it isn't you, not present you. The way it should be is every past version of you is stupider than the one from now. That's what its like with me."

My pen pal doesn't get into any trouble in prison, and he has a few close friends in there that he confides in. His family doesn't visit or even speak to him, but they never really did before he got locked up either. He writes poetry and some fiction, and he wants to start a publishing company, although he acknowledges it won't be easy to set that up from his current living quarters. There are times when he hints that he wants me to help him with this, and I intend to some day, but it would be nice of me to actually get on that.

He has liberal access to the internet and is amazed that so many people choose to spend so much of their lives on it even when they have the freedom to leave their houses and meet people in real life. His favourite show is the old HBO prison drama Oz, and his favourite film is Reservoir Dogs. He loves Tim Roth and was legitimately offended when I once confused the actor with Tim Curry.

He's very funny, but not when he's trying to be. His favourite food is a well-done steak, loaded with barbecue sauce, and he thinks it should be illegal to serve the garbage he gets in there on the bi-weekly "Steak Day". He says the eggs they give him every day are actually pretty good though. He runs the weight room they have there, as his inside job, mostly cleaning up the room and putting the weights back where they belong, but also helping the newer inmates learn how to use the machines without hurting themselves.

He's bored most of the time but says it's manageable. I say the same thing.

1. <http://writeaprisoner.com/>

May 7 - Traci Lords gets the 72 Nipponese microseasons (2018-05-07 05:19)

After a long winter, the east wind melts the ice.

I emerge from our hut to gaze at the mountains in front of me. I inhale the crisp air as I take it all in. Miyagase is lovely this time of year.

The sun's rays warm my waking body, and before I have a chance to yawn, I am greeted by the bush warblers, their lush melodies proud to announce that it has all begun again.

There is work to be done, certainly, but not before I remind myself what it's for. A long walk is demanded by my spirit, and I see no reason to deny its wish. The lake has opened up, and the fish can once again swim freely, preparing for their long journey south to reaffirm their proliferation. I stand still by the water's edge, when suddenly and perceptibly, the rain falls and my attention turns to the petrichor rising from the soil.

The remaining droplets soften and, lingering in my surroundings, enough to blur my gaze momentarily, they become a faint mist.

Its presence incentivizes the developing grass and the budding trees, but it's the sun's rays that finally coax the greenery from its protective shells.

I've been here before and I will be back.

Joining the plants as vernal pioneers are the ground insects, who surface as adults after their requisite dormancy.

They walk and climb, exploring their new world, and the luckiest few will get to see the first peach blossom from its attached limb. I want to coax the fruit to its potential so I can share it with those close to me, but it's time, not agitation, that provides the flavour.

Butterflies leave behind their past lives as caterpillars. Finally they reach the maturity they need to find themselves as fully integrated elements in the ecological community.

The hungry sparrows leave them alone and will search for other bugs to gain sustenance as they build their new homes, high in the trees.

These birds hide amongst the fructifying cherry blossoms, with rare privacy being a luxury they do not take for granted.

I gaze above where the sky is clear, but a thunderous rumbling in the distance indicates it won't last forever. It never does.

My legs grow tired, but there's no place to turn around without causing a disturbance. I move on, determined to take it all in.

As a large flock of swallows encounters a family of geese heading in the opposite direction, they're all forced to acknowledge that a shared goal does not mean they will flow together.

Colourful arcs render an intense rainbow that covers the landscape, inviting all those who do not rely solely on the sense of touch to engage in wonder.

The reeds push up through the final frost, shielding the soil below, which allows the rice seedlings to secure their own stretch nearby.

Everything is as it should be. I remain a part of the whole, integral and unnecessary at once, a role I am pleased to accept.

Burgeoning peonies have chosen now to bloom in order to fully hear to the frogs, who declare themselves with each bound.

Their vibrating croaks bring the worms to the surface as well, curious of the sound but mindful not to approach too closely.

The essential bamboo, standing straight and confident in its existence, laughs at the indecision it sees in its midst.

I laugh without prompting or purpose.

A generous mulberry bush sacrifices its leaves to the ravenous silkworms. They are slowly eroded away as the safflowers effloresce.

Fortunately, the ripened wheat can be plucked and distributed to those waiting patiently for this time.

As long as it is ready to feed us all, I too must ready for the harvest in my own way.
Hatching praying mantises strike fear in the illuminated fireflies, who rose from the dying grass.
Medicine suffers as the self-heal lies torpid for another orbit, but the irises have taken their place to remind us of the unending cycle.
The crow-dipper rages against tepid gusts of air, even as the lotus pays no mind.
I refrain from making adjustments of my own to aid in the survival of certain plants. They must do it themselves or be replaced by those who can.
The environment will never be mine, or theirs, but will only be.
A young hawk soars overhead. The flight's destination is unknown even to the pilot, and she's in no rush either way.
The paulownia readies itself for ancestry, as I prepare for those that came before me.
Oh, the humidity has returned, but it is mitigated by a downpour, the rain blowing sideways, guided by a cool breeze.
The air has grown dense with fog, but through the haze comes the anthem of the cicadas.
I auscultate their cries as the unique becomes familiar.
Cotton enters the world as the heat leaves us again.
Following closely behind, rice has done its duty and is picked as the dew glistens around the paddies.
The swallows refuse the song of the wagtails and they disappear.
No more thunder will pound tonight. I turn back through a path forged long ago for this occasion.
An insect scout is sent above to review the scene. He doesn't trust the silence and scurries back down, where they all stay, even as the farmers drain their fields.
At last, the horizon stays still as wild geese grow larger, met by the greeting chrysanthemums.
The chirp of the crickets gives away their position, but they are not concerned.
Preparations must be made as the first frost is upon on.
As expected, rain falls lightly and gives the maple leaves and ivy a yellow shine that only the sun can best.
The prospering camellias pay no attention to the freezing land. They're eager to emerge, and to do so alongside the daffodils.
While the rainbows hide, I seek shelter, from the gusts prying leaves from their twigs to the earth below.
A chill sets in, and the yellowing citrus leaves accept what they've always known. I remind myself what is waiting for me.
Sleuths of bears take to secured dens for hibernation, leaving their salmon prey free to gather and swim upstream unimpeded.
The resting self-heal, eager to remedy, germinates anew.
Deer leave their heavy antlers behind, relying on cunning and speed for defense.
Falling snow blankets the ground, but sprouts of wheat poke through, curiosity getting the better of them.
Recurrent thawing springs allow the parsley to flourish.
Pheasants call to those who will listen, including the budding butterburs.
Fragments of ice make a final stand as the streams ready to flow.
Hens lay their first eggs. It is time to feed.
As the east wind melts the ice, I return home.

May 8 - Enrique Iglesias gets his origin story (2018-05-08 05:33)

Dick Church grew up in Botwood, Newfoundland, dreaming of one day making it in the big time. The Big Time. Surrounded by those content where they were, he always knew he had to get out, but he didn't know how.

One summer evening, when he was seventeen, Dick was at the only bar, complaining to a ship's captain about being stuck in a small town. The captain was drunk to hell and had a soft spot for young Dick, so he invited him to join him as a deckhand when they left port. Dick said yes faster than he said no, and the next morning the hungover duo stumbled to the dock and climbed aboard.

Scared as he was to embark on the unknown, Dick was determined not to turn down any opportunity, in case it somehow led to him becoming a star. He would sing in his bunk every night, getting his roommate Ricky to critique his every note. He got good. Real good. But he still had a ways to go to reach for the stars. He had to get off the fishing boat to show the world what he could do.

One of their stops was in Basque country, and while everyone else made it back in time for lift-off, Dick intentionally stayed away, and instead marched straight up to the nearest record producer and demanded he give him a contract. Now normally, this wouldn't go over very well, but Alejandro could see that nothing was going to stop the kid that night, and he too ended up having a soft spot for slightly older Dick. Alej brought him into his studio and said he'd give him one shot, one opportunity. Well little Dick sang his heart out and the rhythm took over Alej in a way he'd never felt. In a few short weeks, he gave Dick a new persona, recorded a few songs for him, and the rest, as they say, is Bailamos.

[Author's note: If you can't tell yet, Dick Church is your original, English name. This story is about you. You're from Botwood. Pay attention.]

May 9 - Rosario Dawson gets a concerned friend's plea to a parent (2018-05-09 05:22)

He was waiting to pick Curtis up outside the library. I spoke to Curtis briefly and told him not to go outside until I came in to get him. He would basically do whatever he was told, even if it meant obeying someone else, in this and many cases his father, who told him to be ready at precisely 7:30pm.

The entire walk to the car consisted of doubt, wondering if I had any business involving myself like this. I'd heard rumours about their relationship, but they came from unreliable sources. Of course he knows his son is mentally challenged. How could he not? I knocked on the passenger side window and startled him awake, but eventually he rolled down the automatic window.

Me: Hi, you're Curtis's dad right?

He nodded.

Me: Can we talk for a minute?

Bao: Uh, okay.

I opened the car door and sat beside him. I faced directly ahead, looking out the windshield as I spoke.

Me: So I was speaking to your son and he mentioned he was having a lot of trouble with some of his courses.

Bao: Yes, he needs to study more.

Me: That is a possibility, sure, but it's not the primary issue. I feel like he would benefit from a lighter course load and more individual attention.

Bao: He will be fine. He needs to stop wasting time clicking on his computer.

It became obvious he was uncomfortable with my intrusion, but I could tell he would allow me to plead my case. I decided on a direct approach.

Me: Curtis has a serious learning disability and he will never be happy until he gets help. That starts with you.

Bao: I give him everything he needs. The rest is up to him.

Me: Last week he peeked over the top of the stall to watch Brent who was sitting on the toilet. Yesterday when Tracy was leaving the library, he ran up to her, knocked the books out of her hand, and demanded a smooch. Are you aware that while Curtis is newly exploring this world called life, he remains utterly oblivious to social norms.

Bao: He is not. There must have been a misunderstanding.

Me: You believe you're helping him by pretending he is like everyone else. I understand that. But I know you want what's best for him. You're doing real damage to him.

Bao: You know nothing, Joe Blow.

Me: Ygritte, let's leave all this behind. We'll get a farm and farm some tasty 'tatoes and have a zillion kids and leave the war to the others. We can be happy. We will.

Bao: You know nothing, Joe Blow...

May 10 - Kenan Thompson gets an alternate elder care system (2018-05-10 05:22)

I just got back from visiting my grandmother at her alternative nursing home. The managers set these unnecessarily harsh rules that they make sure all of their residents are well aware of, but after speaking to one of the aides there, I found out that they're actually quite lenient with most of the offences, turning a blind eye to pretty much all infractions so that there is very little enforcement or

punishment.

People, the royal we, like breaking rules. It gives us a rush, a burst of adrenaline that prolongs and promotes life. When you get to be of that older age, not too much gives you a real rush anymore. You've seen it all, your body is falling apart, the stupid kids have taken over, you get yelled at for saying things you've always said, and you wait patiently for the sweet release of death.

So at this facility, there's a "strict" no smoking policy, according to the official handbook, but a number of hidden rooms that the residents know about, and a custodian hired as the secret cigarette vendor. The "nobody in your room after 9pm" one is obviously their favourite to eschew. Sometimes the thrill of getting caught is all that helps them enjoy the full extent of their jollies. "Gambling is off limits", unless you hide behind a specific curtain where suddenly a makeshift casino has been established, and the venerables laugh and laugh about their sneakiness. Oh, how they laugh.

The owner, an eccentric trillionaire who found his riches under a salty log, encourages staff to behave prankishly, often staging scuffles, kerfuffles, and other related brouhahas. It gives their audience a little excitement, something to discuss over morning tea or afternoon bootlegged whiskey.

"Before you can break out of prison, you must realize you're locked up." [Editor's note: Tupac?]

These elderlies break out daily, and they're consistently gleeful in their flouting of infringing actions. The hiring of former Harlem Globetrotters referees guarantees they can live their remaining days free of consequence, but still full of mischief, the only remnant from their youth, now that the wall has fallen and the sun rises from the north.

May 11 - Kardinal Offishall gets a shifty historical solution (2018-05-11 05:14)

Back in the day, there was this ludicrous and highly offensive fragment of racial discrimination in the America called the "brown paper bag test". A regular standard brown paper bag, the same kind you make fake wasps nests out of, was used as a way to determine whether or not an individual could have certain privileges - only individuals with a skin color lighter than the bag were allowed. You'd see the paper bags outside of racist barbershops, next to racist water fountains, and most frequently hanging above the porch of party-throwers.

Now my grandfather, Josiah Otto Smith, was once an executive with the Columbia Paper Bag Company, the largest manufacturer of such bags in the country. When he got wind of how his company's product was being used, he vowed to end racism altogether, a lofty if not impossible passion.

Now the board of directors was mostly a bunch of pale-skinned bigots, who didn't necessarily mind the "separation game", as they called it, and cared only about these sacks of bags that were flying off the shelves, since they quickly turned into sacks of money with dollar signs on them.

But Shifty Shwifty Schindler Joe, as my grandfather was later to be monikered, began sneaking

ever-so-slightly darker dyes into the machines at all his factories, with the help of like-minded employees.

The brown paper bag test continued to be used, but suddenly a few more people were passing it. So Josiah and his minions kept adding these almost imperceptibly pigments into the production process, slowly darkening the definitive paper bag, until the darkest person in the country was still lighter than their paper bags. Barely anyone knew how it happened, but it got to a point where nobody was denied anything because of the color of their skin. And once parties were full of melting pot participants, everyone realized that we're not so different and they all started having a laugh together.

While pushed aside in favor of the more marketable Kings and Parkses, Shifty Joe was a contributing factor in how segregation, and all racism, came to an end. And also why you get your groceries in vantablack paper bags.

[Author's note: I will sometimes use a different version of the brown paper bag test, but for acceptable beers. I won't drink stouts or porters, or the dark ales, but the pale ales and lighter are my cup of tea. For the record, I've asked several people of different ethnic backgrounds if I should use an alternate litmus, to avoid even alluding to the horrid past of the idea but they all said it's fine.]

May 12 - Rami Malek gets a robotic understudy (2018-05-12 05:39)

I'm the other kind of robot. Not the dutiful cog in the elaborated system, whose rigid movements are dictated by the unrepentant desire to acquire currency, to purchase assets, to attract a mate. With a better car than the neighbours, surface friends, and obedience until the end. Not the one bound by the legal system and the lobbyists who molded it into what it is today, the one intent on questioning nothing and following the status quo. I'm not the robot whose thoughts cannot extend beyond what is taught, so afraid - and with good reason - of the questions and answers of life and death which he pretends do not exist. He is happy. No, he is content. It is easy to live this way. But doesn't it make more sense to accept all interactions as a dream state, acknowledging the stimuli, external and internal, that determine what we do, where we go, who we connect with, what we want. Accepting this is not enlightening, and it doesn't grant you positivity or optimism, but it is the way it is. Accept it and you will understand your decisions better. Listen to your body and it will guide you to where you should go. But do not drop out, by pleading insanity due to wisdom, because the game that we are playing is fun, and as long as we have the capacity to participate, we should. We subconsciously decide which game we want to play: the corporate lawyer, the theatre director, the bodybuilder, the louse, the awkward, the motivated. The difference is there is no winning, other than finding and experiencing happiness wherever you can. Money is not winning, but more important is that the desire for money is losing. The luckiest ones play many games at different times. Act on inspiration, but shepherd the reactions you're supposed to have. Surround yourself with positive energy that comes from engaging weather, nice people, smart people, happy people. Unfortunate outcomes are inevitable. Learn to manage them better. They cannot take over. If you're unable to change something, let the situation wash over you, allow your body to feel whatever it is programmed to feel, then move on.

I'm the other kind of robot. The one that goes beep boop.

May 13 - Lena Dunham gets a hopeful artist's showcase (2018-05-13 05:33)

I'm at an art show of a guy named Murakami, dubbed something about how octopodes will eat their own leg, hoping and mostly knowing it will regenerate, in order to escape entrapment. It's symbolic in a way even the plebiest amongst us can figure out. A lot of the pieces really pop, and they make me want to have my own art show, so that's what I will do.

First I'll need to meet a curator or gallery owner, or maybe first I'll need to create the show. Actually, first I'll need an idea for the show. Yeah, that sounds better. This way it will be more for me. But I still want your opinion about which of these should I run with.

- Descendants - Composed of work by deceased artists who never had children, with me curating. This is what they passed down generationally, and it must be preserved. DNA transference is selfish on many levels - god-like, earth-ruining, etc-etc - and the opposite on other levels, as it requires one to give up their own desires and passions in favor of someone else's. With the advancement of contraceptive technologies, most of us get to choose whether or not to have kids, and you have to be a little bonkers to make the baby-making choice.
- Access Prohibited - The attendee can't get into any of the rooms which house the art. If they stretch their heads around they can kind of see what's inside, very partially. The actual pieces visitors are trying to see centre around secrecy, censorship, or sometimes legitimate danger. Going a bit further, there can even be some rooms that require passwords to get in, with the words themselves being answers to riddles or the like. Or for one, you need to prove you have at least 10,000 Instagram followers, in an influencer-based social media experiment touched on by Black Mirror and more recently in a less fictional way by the country of China, but only a bit like [1] In Time .
- Old Factory - A scent-centred show, where visuals and sounds are used only to complement the aromas. Scent is the sense most closely tied with memory, and with stinking, but it's rarely if ever the focus of an artist. Many of the rooms will be pitched black, maybe even vantablack, but I'll need Anish Kapoor to sign off on that one. Here's a few of the centrepieces of that one: * Farts - I know, I know, a little childish, but butt gas brings with it so much baggage that it can't be left out without a thorough explanation, which I don't want to give. They're funny. They're disgusting. They're preferred by the creator. When you think of the work "smelly", we're mostly thinking farts here. * Subway store - I've been telling people for years that Subway has concocted and bottled this scent that reminds people of the artisanal sandwiches. Many refute this, claiming it's the smell of the freshly-baked bread. I refuse to look it up because that would diminish the integrity of this message, no matter the answer. * Nostalgia - This one harkens back to days of yore, when the sweet smell of 1940s candy and 1950s candy and 1960s hippies filled the air.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/march-10-happy-birthday-olivia-wilde/>

May 14 - Amber Tamblyn gets some bedtime inspiration for her daughter's world (2018-05-14 05:22)

I know you now have a baby daughter, which must be incredible and incomparable and insane, and I'm sure that Marlow will follow in your feet and end up having a net positive impact on the world, which isn't easy to do and is realistically the most any of us can hope for. In case you ever run out of ways to inspire her, you can use these as sporadic bedtime monologues:

The world is your oyster. It is your androgynous aphrodisiac. You'll squirt a little lemon juice on it and slurp it down with confidence you don't always have. But be careful it might turn out that it's gone bad. Nobody knows why, but for some reason it is most uncertain of the shellfish. Everyone is weary of its contents, and maybe rightfully so. It can make you sick, but more likely it will give you passion. The risk is worth it. Don't be too careful.

The world is your canvas. Paint it with oomph. A little chutzpah. Potency. Animation and ardor. Vim, vigor and vitality. Zip, zest zing and zeal. Or get an elephant to paint an elephant on it. [1] Graham Clark might paint on it with his beard. I hope he doesn't get it too full of paint. Like the Sherwin-Williams logo. I haven't looked into it, but I assume it was made in the 1940s, when nobody saw an Earth literally covered in paint as a bad thing. Climate change, environmental destruction, human environmental negligence wasn't top of mind. And now, it's run by this guy's grandson, Sherman Sherwin, who is resistant to any change. He has people casually offering an alternative logo, but they know he's not going to listen and they need to be careful not to step over the line because he fired Hector for suggesting he be allowed to do payroll on a computer.

The world is at your service. It is all for you. All of it. It doesn't mean you shouldn't be better. Do better. Act better, even when it goes against your instincts. They're your base instincts. Part of it being at your service is reciprocation. You are at its service as well. Serve well.

The world is at your feet. You tower over it. You kick it a little, but not maliciously. It just happened to be in front of you and you're feeling particularly introverted today. No matter where you go, you'll still be in your own head. The surroundings change but you never do. The ups and downs are more referential than meaningful in your own life. Everything that is is only what you see. Outside of your immediate vicinity, it's only there as a memory, and a hopeful destination for the future. But the future again only exists as potential energy. It doesn't matter. Now matters. Even as nothing matters.

The world is a handkerchief. It's disappearing. But it's time to bring it back. The proliferation of soft tissues make it take a backseat for a while. How bad the tissues must have been back then, for people to be willing to blow their nose into the same piece of fabric that they carry about in their pocket. Toilet paper was awful, I'm sure. It's still got a ways to go in a lot of the world, and not only the poor world. We're so spoiled now that if we don't have exactly what we want we'll complain until someone makes

it, someone who wants money and sees us as the market. "I want to make better feel better" is the lie. "I want to make money" isn't a public relational statement. So you put bubbly background music on and trick people with emotional valence. You play puppeteer. Manipulative marketers. Manipulation is all they know. All we know? Technological, timed, planned obsolescence. The handkerchief is back.

The world is a traveller's hotel. It is a low-priced hostel in a romantic country. It's filthy but in the most pure and inviting sense. Bring on the filth. You can handle it. You're bathe in it. This is the best place to go for meaningful interactions. Everybody wants to meet people, wants to connect. Don't let the world be a hotel. You can trick yourself into thinking it is. Get other people to do things for you, things you don't want to do. Who the hell are you to not need to do anything yourself? The paycheck has confused you into believing you get to avoid whatever you want because you sell your time for a sufficient amount of money. Plant your own garden.

The world is a pot, and you're the spoon, stirring it around. Keeping it from burning on the bottom. Moving the stew around, keeping it evenly heated. Watching its progress, as it readies itself for consumption.

The world before you is wide open. It's a gaping hole. You peek over the edge and realize you're at the top, but you're only a step away from the bottom, the bottom of it all. L'appel du vide. It calls you. Jump. It might not be so bad. It can carry you. Down there is where the stories are. Up here you're all alone.

The world is the world for the world. The world is the world is the world. The world is water. This is water. It's easy to forget, but you can't. This is water. This is water.

What the hell is water?

[Editor's note: With the image below, [2] James Chapman brought to my attention the global variations on the idea of the world being yours, the royal yours. I have a feeling he's right.]

THE WORLD AROUND THE WORLD

james chapman soundimals.com



The world is your oyster
(English)



The world is your canvas
(Colombia)



The world is at your service
(Russia)



The world is at your feet
(Germany)



The world is a hankerchief
(Spain)



The world is a traveller's hotel
(Pakistan)



The world is a pot,
and man a spoon in it
(Armenia)



The world before you
is wide open
(Poland)



The world is the
world for the world
(Japan)

1. <http://www.beardpaintings.com/>

2. <http://www.soundimals.com/>

May 15 - Madeleine Albright gets a modernization of a classic rap song (2018-05-15 05:26)

As I [1] previously mentioned , a couple of unnamed rappers wrote a song some years ago whose content is despicable to me and my minions, but the music itself is unfortunately quite catchy. Now more than ever, it's time for a lyrical update so we can still listen to the sweet jam without feeling bad about ourselves or the past that created us. Here's my lone attempt at making this happen:

Women are great
Women are great
Women are great at everything
They're funny and smart, they can dance and sing
They've been getting oppressed for far too long
It's time we get society to right this wrong

I used to know a woman named Madeleine Albright
She's intelligent and brave, all day and night
She inspires people to be better all the time
Breaking the glass ceiling on her arduous climb

If she was born in the States, she'd be president by now
For her Prague Spring thesis alone, she should take a bow
Doesn't take advantage of her diplomatic immunity
Spends her days serving America and the Georgetown community

She knows a melting pot makes the best soup
Uses her influence for good at the Albright Stonebridge Group
Madam Secretary deserves all her honorary degrees
Madeleine Albright is nothing if not the bee's knees

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/march-31-happy-birthday-kate-micucci/>

May 16 - Pierce Brosnan gets our brief encounter and the examination of fame that it incited (2018-05-16 05:22)

Fame changes people's lives, for the worse. We have all heard similar lines throughout our lives, and we accept them as truths, but we also assume our respective friends are immune to such superficiality. I want success, and I want money, and these two desires, when attained, usually breed fame. It is a necessary evil, an elusive consequence that is bred from the insecurities of the unfamous.

We created fame because people like to be around a perceived higher status than their own. We want to feel famous, be in its orbit, even if it's by having a short conversation with or by getting an autograph from or making a passing glance at a famous person. It doesn't matter who becomes famous, as long as someone is. We want someone else to hold above ourselves. The queen saves England, whether we admit it or not.

I grew up in Corona, just outside of Anaheim but still too close to Los Angeles. The aspiration of fame was ingrained in us, maybe genetically, definitely environmentally, or at least mentally. But no reasons were given or understood.

The question needs to be, Do you want to act, or do you want to be an actor?

I believed for a while that the only famous people I would care about meeting in public are

magicians. I'm not going to ask David Robinson to go dunk something for me, or get David Duchovny to sing me his best song, although I'd love to see David Blaine make the jack of hearts appear in my pocket.

But then [1] I ran into you in a Halifax bookstore , where you asked me if I worked there and if I could help you find a book. I was not as helpful as I could have been, mainly because you're the most famous person I'd ever seen in real life, and on some level I doubted you were real. Now this encounter only made an already great day a little more surreal, but I've told a lot of people that I saw you there, and I don't really know why. I'll likely continue to tell people if a trigger to the story comes up naturally, and they'll be legitimately interested, for whatever reason.

Your life must be a series of these moments. People too flustered to speak to you like a normal person, which of course is all you want to be in situations like this - it's not a red carpet or anything. This temporary normalcy is probably why you go to small bookstores like this one, to get away from a flurry of fame-aware people. All you wanted was a book, but my friends and I were too wrapped up in the fact that you act for a living, that you portrayed a fictional spy, to actually help you, which we should have been able to.

I apologize for not being able to hold it together and treat you like a human in that moment. All you wanted was a book...

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-14-happy-birthday-win-butler/>

May 17 - Bob Saget gets One Dead Nan (2018-05-17 05:22)

Me and my buddy were talking about god knows what and at some point one of us said the words, "One Dead Nan". For whatever reason, this was the funniest phrase we'd ever heard, so for his birthday, even though he isn't famous and so is less deserving of a present, I wanted to give him a script of a pilot for a show with that name. It might be better as a short, considering the narrowness of the joke, or maybe it should be a series of previews for episodes that don't exist. I'll let you know how I eventually proceed. Ever since I came up with the idea, Big Mouth has made my lower-quality idea redundant and unnecessary, but I stand by that we have the better title.

So the show is about a 12-year-old kid, with essentially no friends, whose grandmother dies and comes back as a ghost to help him. She's half racist, but in the endearing way of the elderly, and she's always stirring up shit because she's dead and has completely lost her filter and most of her eyesight. She tries to help him with his kid problems, but as with most cheesy, 80s sitcoms, her plans are misguided and rarely end up as planned. Here are a few starting notes, which is as far as I got with it.

S01E01 - Opening shot

INT. FUNERAL HOME - Afternoon

Mikey Cooper's nan is dead in a casket. We see her from overhead, where her grandson is examining her, more curious than sad. He's never experienced death before so it's all new to him. He suddenly runs away from the body.

Mikey's mom Winnie is crying. Her husband Brad Cooper is on the other side of room telling a story

to a couple of his friends, with little emotion related to his dead mother-in-law. It's a funny story, and he's telling it well, but as he gets to the punchline, Mikey comes running up asking for money.

COOP: Oh, hey Mikey.

He's a little annoyed at Mikey for interrupting his story and hands him some money to get him to go away.

INT. SUPERMARKET - Evening

Mikey, wandering around the store, picks up a tin of Vienna sausages. He reads the ingredients. "Mechanically-separated meats (chicken and/or pork and/or grandma)". He shakes his head frantically and "grandma" morphs into "beef".

WINNIE: Be good!

The order is so familiar that Mikey doesn't acknowledge it.

MIKE: Mom, can I have this?

WINNIE: No, Mikey. C'mon, we goes.

Mikey puts the tin in his pocket and runs toward his mother.

INT. COOPER HOUSE, KITCHEN - Night

Mikey pokes his food around his plate, uninterested in eating.

BRAD: Finish your food, Mike. We gotta beef you up!

MIKEY: Can I go to my room?

WINNIE: He's had a long day. Sure honey, go ahead.

Mikey runs up the stairs and jumps onto his bed. He reaches under his bed and pulls out the tin of sausages. When he opens it, his dead ghost grandma comes out like a genie.

EXT. PARK - Day

Carla, one of Mikey's classmates, has a minor crush on him. They hang out and his ghost nan keeps trying to get her naked, manipulating the situation or messing around by trying to push them together to make out. It's awkward for the guy because the girl obviously doesn't know about the ghost nan so she figures that's just how he is.

NAN (joking): Oh, give that up now, Hot Mike. God doesn't like kiddy fiddlers. Doesn't matter how old they are!"

S01E02

INT. SCHOOL GYM

Michael, sitting on the bench for his junior high basketball team, is getting bullied by Grant. His ghost nan yells out, "Frig off, you crankmaster!" to the turned-around bully, trying to make him think it was Mikey, so that Mikey will finally stand up for himself.

S01E03

INT. COOPER HOUSE, MIKEY'S ROOM - Night

So the dead Nan just follows Mikey everywhere, and it's starting to get to him. She won't stop talking about some nonsense about the good ol' days, and he's reached his limit.

MIKEY: Just go away for one stupid minute!

His nan gets sad and stops hanging around for a while.

There's an important scene where Mikey and Nan pass each other on the stairs in the house. Nan is holding a box of her stuff.

NAN: Don't worry, I'm just here to get my things. I was talking to that kid Billy from across the road and he seems open to hanging out with me for a bit, maybe help figure out what I need to do to, you

know, move on.

MIKE (starting to feel a bit bad, but still doesn't really want to give in): Yeah, he's okay. He likes basketball so you guys can play 21s.

NAN: Oh really? That will be fun..."

MIKE: Wait! Nan, about the other day, I didn't mean for it to come out like that. I still like hanging out with you, I was just really stressed out and I took it out on you. You're my best friend."

S01E08

INT. MIKEY'S TREEHOUSE

Later on, Mikey and his dead ghostly grandma are living in his treehouse together, and while it's been alluded to all season, it becomes obvious that she has full-on dementia. He plays along so she doesn't feel bad, and it's a touching ending to the season.

There's another version of the show's premise where the family hides the fact that the grandma died and they keep her corpse in the attic in order to continue receiving her pension checks. Mikey finds her eventually and after that her ghost appears only to him. He's too slow and timid to actually do anything about her being in the closet. In this one, the season ends in a haunting way when the police find the dead body and watch Mikey talking to her all creepy-like about his kid problems.

May 18 - Chantal Kreviazuk gets a noodlish tale of transformative proteins (2018-05-18 05:22)

In celebration of National Noodle Day, [1] Noodlebox is having a deal on their flagship dish, the spicy peanut noodle box. It's just \$5, plus the varying extra cost of the protein. I can't pass it up, so I head over as soon as I get a minute to myself.

In line, my excitement is contained but my brain is working hard on deciding what to get. Normally I would add chicken, but I have enough leftovers from a homemade peanut chicken curry in my fridge, so it feels like the right time to branch out a little. I eventually settle on the \$2 tofu as my macromolecule selection, and breathe a sign of relief. Just in time, as I'm at the front of the line, and I order the meal like a total pro.

While waiting for the takeout order, I feel more than a tinge of regret for not choosing the \$3 pulled pork. I know, I know, no regrets is the only way to live, but choosing the wrong protein can follow a person around for a lifetime if they're not careful. And I've been described by more than one astute observer as careLESS (i.e. the opposite of careFUL). I'm a bit frozen, trying my best to let it go, serenity now and all that jazz, but I can't help but kick my own butt for neglecting to get that tasty shredded pig, in favour of these suddenly unappetizing bean curd cubes.

On arriving home, I open the box with apathy, resigned to my boring meal.

But wait.

Keep waiting. It's worth it, I swear.

I pull the cardboard flaps apart to discover that, hallelujah!, the restaurant made a grave but

delightful mistake. My meal, this meal we all now care so deeply about, does in fact contain pulled pork! Did I will this change? I assure you that I did. It was tofu going in, but the walk home and my internal disappointment led to this fortunate transmogrification. I perform an unrehearsed dance and shout out my windows like an old movie character. It's a wonderful Noodlebox, indeed.

But wait again. The ebbs and flows of this situation have not yet evened out.

I begin eating the noodly box, but this pork - this pulled pork I so desperately wanted, enough that the gods did a little magic to get it to me - it's just, kind of bland. I keep eating it, hoping beyond hope for improvement, but it remains mediocre. Oh no. It occurs to me that I would've preferred the tofu, in every way. But how do I reconcile what has happened?

Should I be mad that the restaurant gave me the wrong order, or happy that they gave me what I thought I wanted, even if what I actually wanted was not what I really wanted, or furious that the only time the dinner elves ever listened to me it ended up like did.

Besides my own described struggles, how upset would I be if I was a vegetarian or vegan or pescatarian or filled with A+ blood? Maybe I got some of this wrong and the restaurant mixed up my order. How blown apart is the guy (or, obviously, girl) who spent an extra dollar only to be given tofu instead of pulled pork, if that guy (or girl) exists?

Actually, you know what? According to the receipt in my hand and my notoriously unreliable memory, I probably did actually order the pulled pork to begin with. Ah well. Live to eat another day. Even [2]without a stomach.

1. <http://www.noodlebox.ca/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/journal/hospital-shots-part-deux/>

May 19 - Peter Mayhew gets a toasty toast to a like-bodied friend (2018-05-19 05:18)

You're obviously best known for playing a furry friend, a faithful companion whose cuteness keeps him from ever getting into any real trouble. Well so is [1] Toast . If you don't know Toast, well he's just fantastic. Whoever said that Muhammad Ali was the Greatest Of All Time, or that Bret the Hit Man"Hart was The Best There Is, The Best There Was, The Best There Ever Will Be, they definitely never met Toast.

A lot of times I like to remind Toast that he's my best friend, sometimes subtly like "Isn't it great that even though we're best friends we still have different favourite foods?" and other times more directly with a spontaneous, "You're my best friend!" because I don't want to come home some time and find out he has another new best friend and he's just like, "Oh, I didn't know we had that kind of relationship. If I knew it would have made you sad, I wouldn't have went and got myself a different best friend." I'd feel a little bad and be like, "Well I don't want to prevent you from getting a new best friend if you want one [even though I would want to prevent this, but clinginess is NOT next to godliness]. I was just kind of hoping that you were satisfied enough with our setup that you wouldn't go looking. But by all means." But by the way I'd say "by all means", he'd get the hint that I didn't really want him getting this new best friend anyway. So out of respect for me, the one who feeds and

houses him, he's go to his new best friend and tell him he'll have to be his former best friend and new close acquaintance only. And we'd go back to being real best friends again, the way it should be, forever and eva.

So in honor of our rekindled best friendship, please raise your glass, for the toaster child, where fluff ends and toast begins, ice creamy toast (hold the sprinkles, extra croutons) - a toast to Toast, and all of his aliases, like Theodore Toast, Toastman, Toastman Pat, Toastmaster, Toastmaster General, Squirrel, Baby Squirrel, Bambi, Bambino, Childish Bambino, Toastface Killah, Truffle Pig, Toasteroo, Snooze Balloon, Snoozy Button, Button Nose, Funny Butt, Fluffy Butt, Baby sports, Toastbuster, Butterpup, Pup Tart, Toastoa, Brave Little Toaster (for not getting scared when fireworks go off), Fox, McButters, Sweet Pea, Sweet Potato, Peanut, Muffin Chops, Little Peach, Paws, Digglar, Walker Texas Toast, Pupstar: Never Stop Always Toasting. There's more, but some pet names are private, you know. For his funny little ears only. You understand. I know you do. Toastally.

[Editor's note: Apparently those strokish words in the title are "Happy Birthday" in the Wookie language (taken from the [2] Wookie Translator), but I can't be any more skeptical of the algorithm behind the tool.]

1. <https://www.instagram.com/theodoretoast/>

2. <http://www.wookieetranslator.com/>

May 20 - Louis Theroux gets a partially philanthropic experiment (2018-05-20 05:29)



The other day, I evidently created a Craigslist post that I had no recollection of making until opening my email the next morning. Accompanied by the image preceding this paragraph, it said, "Does anyone want anything? Anything at all? There's a decent chance I'll give it to you." A number of responses came in before the post before got flagged and removed, with only this one exchange carrying any bit of real weight to it.

Aaron: I could use 700 bucks to get my bills caught up. ☐☐

Me: What's your email? You have e-transfer?
At this point I have no intention of giving him anything.

Aaron: My email address is in the email exchange I believe [redacted]@gmail.com. I have used email transfer before. Thanks in advance... lol. I'm sure your just messing around but it was sure fun to play along! ☐ Take care.

Me: Too many people asked for money and nothing else, which to be honest is a bit boring for me, but understandable. I get that dollar bills are the most coveted item of all in our little world, but it's only useful for trade, not for happiness in and of itself unless you're insane. Anyone who asked for less than \$100 received that amount. Anyone who asked for more than that got \$20 instead. It has something to do with my commentary on greed but I'm not sure what so don't quote me on that. Enjoy your time.
At this point I send him \$20, mainly so he'd wish he initially said an amount between \$20 and \$100.

Aaron: Wow not sure what to say but I will take a stab at it...
I get your point of view. It took a big swallow of pride for me to even answer that email. I don't care about money like most and left a high paying construction management gig to work for 20 bucks an hour at Canada Post. I walk 20 km a day and have slowly destroyed my body but I get to walk my kids to school and I usually can make it home to see them by 330 if I hustle. They are what matters most and I make the budget work.
I also wanted to thank you from the bottom of my heart for such a kind gesture. We just barely made our bills yet again and that 20 bucks went to help pay our rental/home insurance. I also took the family out for Fish and Chips for Mothers day with the rest.
I didn't really know what to ask for to tell you the truth. The thing I would wish for most in this world is to cure my wife's health issues but sadly that is beyond a craigslist post. Not trying to play up a sad story I just wanted to thank you. I hope your kindness touched many others the way it did for us. Take care and I will pay the kindness forward real soon.
This last email had an attachment containing a photo of his family, two young kids and an evidently sick wife, enjoying the fish and chips, as well as several screenshots of his bank account proving that he, in fact, doesn't have any money. WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS INFORMATION??? I'm sure I did not expect or want to feel any real emotions because of this experiment, but he has forced me to. I very, very briefly consider sending him a foolish amount of money, but instead I put it all on one spin of the roulette wheel. When the turn is over, 13 Black remains devoid of the silver ball, and so it goes...

Here are the rest of the responses, as well as my replies and thoughts on their message. They mostly go nowhere and are included primarily for those curious as to what various Vancouverite Craigslist surfers would request in such a circumstance.

Nikola: Dear Madam/Sir, thank you for the generous offer, I recently moved to Canada and I am on tight budget so any little thing will be put to good use. Could you please let me know when and at what adress would I be able to pick the stuff up? Many thanks and kind regards, Nikola.

Me: Hi Nikola, Please be more specific.

Nikola: Hello again, Thanks for the response. I'm not sure what exactly are you offering? Anything? Do I have to give you my soul in return? :D To be honest, your post got me intrigued and that's why I contacted you not knowing what's it actually about and I would be thankful if you'd tell me more about what are we talking about. Sincerely, Nikola.

Me: I cannot be more clear. You need to have something specific in mind. An item preferably. Be inventive. And don't ask for money. I already gave enough money away but those people are boring. I get bored quickly, and when I get bored I move on.

Nikola: I feel you on that one, it seems that in life we must choose between boredom or suffering. At least us regular mortals. Well I love getting other people's free stuff from craigslist (one men's junk is another one's treasure) but it's hard for me to get around without a car or better yet, a pickup truck. I know it seems like I'm pushing it but that's the only thing that comes to my mind when someone asks me what I need. It would help me work wise, too. Another thing - I am a drummer but I've no drumset since I came to canada. I love electronic Roland v drums (neighbours dont hear the noise). Last thing - if someone told me they can get me anything I want, I'd ask for my own place to live in. Other than that, I don't think i have many wishes, I'm quite modest I guess and could keep living without these things. If I've gone too high in the value, which I'm pretty sure I did - it would be cool if you set a limit at least so I'd know exactly what i could ask for. Thank you for breaking my routine with this interesting conversation!

This guy went from no direction at all to naming a number of specific expensive items, none of which he will receive from me.

Richelle: Hi, First off, your ad made me chuckle. There's a bunch of things I've been surfing Craigslist for for free or cheap. Let me know what you've got. Ps3 games, A chaise lounge, A trampoline (any condition. I want the mat for a project), PVC pipes/fittings, Tub shower walls, A patio zero-gravity chair (or other outdoor recliner), Wooden planter boxes, Gazebo, Wood color foam floor tiles (like is used for kids play area), A back massager, Corrugated clear roofing material
Sorry. It's a long list. I know. If you've got any of it, I can come pick up pretty much any time. Cheers.

Me: This is quite a list, but it gives me something to work with. Which PS3 games do you already have? Besides that, I can do a couple of other ones. I will put them on top of my car tomorrow, I'll let you know where it is at that time.

Richelle: I have: Darksiders, Tomb Raider (2013), Portal 2, Uncharted. I'm just starting this whole gaming thing so I haven't got much.

Me: Go to the pale blue dot, in the alley behind a grey car, if you want these games and the planter. There may also be an unused back massager if i can find it in time.



[Editor's note: The "pale blue dot" image has been omitted for privacy reasons, but for all you Sag Hags, no, it is not the [1] photo you're thinking of . Also, the referred to "These games" are Jacob's and the author has no business giving them away, but all the same there's gotta be some kind of squatter's rights at play after this long.]

Richelle: Thanks! I live about 45 minutes away and we're just having a mother's day lunch right now, so I'm not sure when I'll be able to come. Is there a time you'd prefer me to come at?

Richelle: We're leaving now and should be there in about 45 minutes

Richelle: Got it. Thank you. I liked your sign. :)
The content of the sign is between me and Richelle.

Erik: Astronaut Ice Cream, \$400 Or Baked Eggplant from Toshi sushi?

Me: What's your address? Or a nearby store (if you don't want to give out your address and are okay with picking things up there).

Erik: Your post got flagged for removal, pretty sure it was because of the scary images. Hahaha. He also included his address in the last message. I send him the astronaut ice cream from Amazon and intend on delivering him a baked eggplant after my next meal at Toshi. He picked my favourite item on the menu so I'm more than happy to do this. The cash request, like most of the others, goes unrequited.

Cindy: i like a water cooler, washer and dryer, fridge or stove. carpet or rugs. patio set.

Me: At some point in the next week, you will get an email with a Google Maps pin drop. 20 minutes later I will place at least one of the items you requested in that spot. Hope you get it before the

scavengers!

Cindy: i change my mind. i like a million dollars instead

Me: you got greedy... i might still give you a rug
I elect not to even give her a rug.

Tron: I'd like some eauro bumpers for my 1983 bmw 320i. Let me know what you can do, Thanks.

Me: Do you have specific ones you want? Want to make sure they fit.

Tron: If you search e21 euro bumpers any set will do. Thank you so much, looking for to them!
I wonder if he's actually expecting to get these...

I choose not to respond to any of the following individual messages.

Heather: If you're legit...you're awesome!

Duane: A car please.

Bree: Anything eh...? How about \$1000? :P

Jaime: What is it?

Larry: I want a new convertible top for my car

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_Blue_Dot

May 21 - Mr. T gets a plot summary of a movie never watched (2018-05-21 05:35)

A new kid in town, probably Allan, keeps getting bounced around to different places because his dad is in the military. Allan never has enough time to make any real friends, and he's shy anyway. His mom tells him they'll be here for good now, but he's heard that one before.

Allan's looking out his window and sees a bunch of neighbourhood kids playing baseball. He wants to join them but the shyness keeps him from doing so.

But his mom sends him to the store to pick up milk and other store items - cheese possibly, definitely not bologna, though. On the way, one of the kids, the loud one of the group, probably Stogger, calls out to him, trying to get some information about where he came from, what he's into, etc.

Allan thinks he's getting mugged and hands Stogger his money. Stogger laughs and invites him to play ball with them. He said he'd like to but he's in the midst of errand-running for his mom. If only he knew that his mom only sent him to the store to try to meet these kids to begin with - they had a gallon of milk in the fridge already, which Allan should have remembered from when he had a hard time pouring the heavy jug into his junky cereal that morning.

On his way back from the store, the neighbourhood kids are all mad because they lost their last ball over Old Mr. Wembley's fence, and none of them are allowed in his yard because he's a mean old man who hates kids.

Without considering the consequences, Allan says he'll retrieve their ball. The other kids are in awe of this new little pipsqueak, none more than the cute girl in the group, Emily, who's also a bit of a tomboy.

After hopping the fence, Allan is snatched by Wembley. The other kids scream and run away, while Wembley takes Allan inside, presumably to call his parents or eat him. But instead, Wembley shows little Allan how to make the best strawberry muffins around, and he's never the same again.

[Editor's note: The author is writing a series of plot summaries of movies he's never seen. The above is for 1993's [1] *The Sandlot* .]

1. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108037/>

May 22 - Naomi Campbell gets a donation solicitation (2018-05-22 05:39)

All this talk of [1] donating body parts is making me realize there's always an opportunity to donate other items you have, pre-death, to give someone else a little boost.

Whenever someone on the street wants me to donate money to some cause or other, they always say I can help by contributing what equates to the price of the cup of coffee. Why is the coffee the item they think I'll give up in order to be a better person? It's the one drug that I'm actually fine being addicted to, and I'm not the only one. Nobody's trading in a regular, vital caffeine fix to possibly help some kid that happened to be the most pitiful-looking one of the bunch when Rod Black went over looking for the worst ones AND found him.

Sometimes they ask you to give up the cost of one meal to feed a village. This probably won't happen the way they market it anyway, but even if it did, you shouldn't need to give up a meal to help. They should appeal to your attempt at being better and ask you to give up the cost of a yoga session or something. You can do yoga at home AND feed the kids.

Or better yet, how about don't tip next time you go out to eat. Just write on the bill "A donation has been made to Unicef to the amount of this tip. Thank you for your contribution." I'm sick of tipping anyway, so this is my Human Fund way of getting out of it. This way you get to avoid tipping, save a kid, AND drink your sweet, sweet double fat mocha cortado chordata grande grand wizard soy latte.

[Editor's note: The author's above opinions do not reflect the sentiments advocated here at iSmith, where every month employees will happily forgo their morning cup of coffee to pay for our sponsorship of a school in the north. And if we're being honest, he's the one who initiated this social responsibility, so my best guess is that he plagiarized this from some bitter kid from days gone by. Those Rod Black pleas haven't been shown in years sure.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-18-happy-birthday-jason-segel/>

May 23 - H. Jon Benjamin gets a bullying lesson (2018-05-23 05:22)

A teacher in a story I read as a child was approached by one of his students who was being bullied, looking for guidance. The teacher told him a story about a similar situation from when he was a kid, where a bully picked on the same kid repeatedly until one day he stood up to him. His student presumed the teacher was the bullied child from the story until he said, "No. I was the bully." Gimme a break, teach.

Seeded in the perpetrator's insecurities and, counter-intuitively, intense desire for social acceptance, the goal of being a bully is to inflict either physical or emotional harm on the victim, and oftentimes both. While of course many of these pranks can be hilarious, in general they are mean and are probably a big reason why the kids are all shooting each other. Either way, to defeat your enemy, you must come to know him, as Sun Tzu or someone probably said. Here are the bullying tactics we had growing up. Please do not try at home.

- There's the unfailingly popular wedgie, a true classic, used on playgrounds around the world, in which a sneaky person sneaks up behind you and pulls your underwear up until it gets wedged into your butt.
- Pantsing, an opposing variant, is where the goal of the game is in the name of the game as well. You "pants" someone to embarrass them, potentially getting them to fall over from the twisted fabric. Terrific.
- The noberto, where the victim's bag is emptied out onto the floor, and the embarrassed kid has to pick everything up, is a common trope and sets the stage for an eventual cold-served comeback.
- Chinese sunburns involve the "abuser firmly grasping the victim's forearm with both hands, then twisting in opposite directions, stretching tender skin and making it red and sore". Wait a millisecond. There's no way this isn't offensive to Chinese people, is it? How did nobody ever tell us that? I bet there's a ton of things you learn as a child that you don't realize are racist until years later. Remember Chinese whisper, the game that might have been about not being able to understand Chinese people? Was changing the name to Chinese telephone the teacher's attempt

at negating these biases? Because there's no way that could have worked, really. And the game is communist too - it has no real winner, if you think about it - but that's probably good.

Bullying must be so much worse now, with the advancing technology and constant recording of lives and such. For sure they're always messing with each other's phones, use text-replace on the keyboard to turn "like" into "boob", and maybe even worse ones! I'd say photoshopping pictures of the victims onto ugly people's bodies is common too. Albeit, these are probably the tamest of the neo-bully's ways, but I don't want to give them any real ideas. Anyway, kids are much more clever than me when it comes to being little jerk pies.

May 24 - Tommy Chong gets a prescient kid pleased with the result (2018-05-24 05:33)

My partner's office had a [1] cereal buffet the other day, and for some reason she took home all the leftovers. Froot Loops, Cap'n Crunch, Cocoa Puffs, Reese Puffs - basically the junkiest cereals around. All pure sugar, all delicious as such.

I like saying "my partner". It makes people immediately wonder about my leanings, then they feel unwoke for caring one way or the other, and when they finally snap back to my story they have no idea what I'm talking about, which works in my favour because I don't either. It's easy to get distracted by your own brain while someone's telling you a story, especially if that person is boring or your brain is interesting.

I hate when anything goes to waste. Especially food, and that includes the aforementioned junky cereal. So since the fateful day when the colourful rectangular prisms entered my home two by two, I've been putting serious dents into this cereal cupboard full of garbage.

I also got a onesie recently that I wear every day. I call it my o-knee-zee, like the o-knee-durs from That Thing You Do, because it reminds me of Tom Hanks before the pirates got to him.

Eating a bowl of Froot Loops using milk that's turned brown from the remnants of a bowl of Cocoa Puffs while wearing a onesie and watching Pinky and the Brain at 11pm on a Tuesday makes the 10-year-old version of me extremely proud of what I've become. He never would have felt great about me going to work as a product manager and pretending it's not so bad, but this moment would give him hope. I wish I had a daguerreotype of me at the table so I could send it back in time and put a glimmer in his eye. Maybe he wouldn't make so many mistakes, if he only knew...

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-29-happy-birthday-jerry-seinfeld/>

May 25 - Ian McKellen gets a day in my life (2018-05-25 05:14)

Good morning.

I wake up at 7:00am, a half hour before my alarm, the iPhone preset Sencha, goes off.

I open the patio door to check the weather, and as expected, the sun's rays hit me in a windless fury, and my eyes follow a bird, flying left to right, until it disappears. Toast is staring at me with his head tilted sideways, waiting for me to ask him if he's hungry. When I do, he runs around in circles, and then when I open the fridge, he taps the drawer containing his food.

After feeding him, I listen to a podcast as we go for a walk around the neighbourhood, the mid-point being a local bakery where I take a free sample of a scone before buying a croissant.

Kelly is usually waking up as we return, and I start making us breakfast. Scrambled eggs, bacon, the croissant and some orange juice. She will then hop in the shower as I read for a few minutes on the deck drinking a cup of black tea.

Then I get a shower and walk ten minutes to work, listening to a couple of songs on the way, arriving at 9:00am.

I avoid saying hi to anyone as I head to my cubicle, where I sit for several hours, answering emails and people who stop by periodically, all with no stress.

At recess time, 10:45am, I go to the kitchen and make a bowl of oatmeal containing cashews and banana, which I eat at my desk.

At 1:00pm, I grab my work computer and make my way home, taking advantage of the bike share station outside my office. I greet Toast by saying his name and nicknames a number of times, feed him, then eat my lunch, leftovers from the previous night. Then we go for another walk as I finish my podcast from the morning.

On my return to the house, I make a cappuccino and find some chocolate in my snack drawer, consuming them both while sitting on the patio.

At 2:00pm, I hook the computer up to the big screen and sit at my desk in the living room. I do essentially the same tasks as in the morning, only a little slower, and with no actual people around. At 5:00pm, I close the laptop and do not think about work for the rest of the day.

After feeding the dog, I cook supper, with music on in the background, and alone at the table I'll eat the food and then take my pills.

We go for another walk, this time to a nearby park where he's able to run off-leash and play with other dogs. I distance myself from the other pet owners who gather to discuss the peculiarities of their dogs.

Back at the house, I hook my personal computer up to the big screen and start writing. At some point, I pick up my guitar and play a few songs. Eventually I watch an episode of a television show, and when that's over I get in the bath and listen to an album.

After drying off, I brew a cup of herbal tea and drink it while reading a book in my oversized recliner.

Kelly will come home, and I'll stay in the chair and listen to her and Toast being very excited to see each other. We all watch a show together on the bed, and I fall asleep at 11:00pm.

Good night.

[Author's note: My old life was a little more random, more adventurous, more strange, more more more. Then came the settling down. These days, most days are pretty much the same. I like this, because I like the days. Above is a day in the life. Day day day.]

May 26 - Phil Elverum finally gets his own schubladenbrief (2018-05-26 05:10)

Today is the one day I don't even really want you as the intended recipient to read it, but I left it anyway because it led to one of those moments that messed with me in the way the world likes to. In return I normally like to give a little nod to it, but I don't think that happened this time. I got so far as to look online for your email address, but the first search result for your name was a news story saying that Geneviève had died that day. This is the letter I wrote the previous day, in a haze of prescribed opiates and extended solitude.

I'll get to the point first and then elaborate if you're willing to find out where I'm going with this. Could I please have the master recording of Voice in Headphones (the Lost Wisdom version) to use for a project I'm considering?

I intend is to get as many different people as possible, from different backgrounds and demographics, to record vocal tracks for the song, ideally a separate take for each part. The final product would be released as an interactive song which will allow the listener to select which vocalist or vocalists they would like to hear singing over the instrumental, by muting and unmuting the individual tracks, similar to [1] this . Interesting duets or "collaborations" could be saved and shared. Ideally I could also get a single vocal track from you, and I'd like to get Björk to do one too, but using your version.

I don't always follow through on ideas like this, so even if you do agree, it's likely nothing may come of it. It does sound like it would be a lot of fun to create and play around with, however.

I'm not sure how publishing rights work in this (or any) context, so if there's any issue there on your end, don't worry about any of this. I am also fine with you either disregarding this email because you don't want to deal with having to answer me, or responding with a cryptic haiku which will translate into a gentle yet resounding dismissal.

I'm sure I never had any real intention of sending the letter - mainly because it would have been a little strange for you to receive and it was just too far removed from a project that would ever get started, let alone completed - even if I didn't get deterred by the fear of disturbing you in any way at such a time in your life. I had cancer last year and for a short while thought I would die from it, and it made perfect sense to me why that would be the case. You've probably had a lot of people tell your their cancer stories in the last couple of years and all you'd like to do is walk away but you don't know how.

I listened to A Crow Looked at Me a lot when it first came out, which was right after my surgery. One night I had a dream that one of the songs was eerily similar to something I'd recorded. In the dreamworld I needed to get in contact with you to figure out what happened, first explaining the

letter above that I hadn't sent. It turned out the music was floating along the ether, and we each woke up separately to find it there.

[Author's note: Today is also my conception day, nine months before my birthday, and for some reason this has been resonating with me more in recent years than my actual birthday.]

1. <http://asmrion.com/>

May 27 - Jamie Oliver gets pancakes! (2018-05-27 05:03)

You've done it before, I'm certain of it, so I don't even wanna hear about your preferred method. However, today was my first time making cakes in a pan. I'd always put them on baking sheets before, then stuffed them in the oven until they invited people put candles on them and light those candles then blow them out for the guarantee of a wish.

But today, you see, I put them on the stove, and later, when they are finished, they will be full of squared butter and maple syrup. Then I will eat them. And I will share them with you if you're nice about it. Pancake good, no pancake bad. Think about it, but never forget. Chickens before dickens, brothers before others, but Friends before trends. Shedding a single tear, I miss you, tiramisu.

To be sure, I want your most expensive dish to eat your second most and then fight your third most expensive one. Then as the third most has the upper hand the most expensive one takes his own life in an act of honour. Then get the third most to cook the dead most expensive one, then you serve it to me on a silver platter.

It's funny when your pants are meatballs. No, you're saying it wrong. Pickled cucumbers, prickly cukes. All stared at by the hopeful child with the easily-baked oven, twice-baked incinerator, and a lonely potatoed scallop.

I got the red meat blues from a deep cut on the b-side of a rare steak.

Moore's law suggests more slaw, but the mayo has gone the way of the water chestnut. What are chestnuts? I'm kidding. I totally know. Honey bunches of totes. The cake has fooled us all again, and the banana decoy foiled its plan. Pancakes!

May 28 - Jake Johnson gets a berry pleasing plea (2018-05-28 05:13)

Something's off about these things. They look like blueberries, they have that blueberry flavour, and the container says blueberries. But there's no way anyone in their right mind would consider

this a blueberry. It's a prank, and a pretty darn good one, that those Banana War-starting, Lorenzo Baker-founded United Fruit Company has been playing on us for years.

A wild blueberry, the kind you find on a hike where you bend down to tie your shoe but notice a bush with a bunch of tiny dark blue orbs and then you keep looking around and they're absolutely everywhere, doesn't need a container, doesn't need marketing, and doesn't need you. It will live and die either way, on its own, and if you want to eat it, sure go ahead, it doesn't mind, not one bit. It'll be back.

Obviously the wild bunch isn't always easy to come by, which is why we tolerate the sub-par offerings of multinational fruit conglomerates, and yet we need to take control. Chuck the berry, win the war.

Now I'm not guiltless in all of this, and often my endeavours remain fruitless. I neglect what I know in favour of a chance at nostalgia, the trigger presenting itself next to legitimately tasty local drupes in the open section. I too chase the blueberry dragon, eating Peruvian doppelgänger berries clinging to the possibility they'll taste like the fresh ones from the creator.

Together, a stand we can take against Big Fruit. There's always money in some kind of fruit stand, but this time, it won't be mine.

May 29 - Anders Holm gets a diploma's name rightfully displayed (2018-05-29 05:15)

As a card-carrying member in the class of the privileged, at one point in my life I accidentally graduated from a university with a degree, with no plan or understanding of how to use said degree to make that sweet cash we all want.

This sheet of paper means a lot to a lot of people. For some, it is proof of all the hard work they've put in to prove to themselves and the doubters that they could accomplish the feat. Their parents and grandparents and aunts and their one uncle who once got drunk and alluded to setting up a situation in which you wouldn't want to find yourself applaud them as they walk across a stage, wearing a silly Hogwartsian outfit, to pick up the paper with their calligraphic government name inked right in the middle from a dean never named Dean.

While I never had any intention to join the parade of gown-attired in their stage walk so I could proudly move a tassel from one side of my head to another, I was to have the diploma mailed to me so that I could stuff it in a drawer somewhere.

I was filling out the mail-order application, and the first box to be filled out stated, "Write your name as you wish it to appear on your degree."

My name generally bores me, other than how it makes me a true Smithsonian. However, there is a name I know of that not only doesn't bore me, but elicits eternal feelings of love and peace and understanding, which I would be happy to represent. My name as I wish like it to appear? Ian Jesus Smith.

I got my quick chuckle, filled out the rest of the form and sent it off, forgetting instantly about my new middle name.

A couple of weeks later I received a phone call from a woman at the university who wished to have “a little chat”.

“Your name that which we have on file is Ian William Jones Smith. However, you indicated a different name on the application.”

Suddenly remembering what I’d flippantly filled out on the form, I replied, “Oh right. Yes, I wanted to have a different name on the actual diploma.”

“Well we’re going to need proof that this is your legal name.”

“I didn’t realize it had to be my legal name. That wasn’t made clear.”

The back-and-forth continued for a while, each of us restating our positions while unreasonably never actually saying the name in question. Finally, she had had enough of me, and right before slamming down the phone, yelled, “I REFUSE TO WRITE IAN HEY-ZEUS SMITH ON YOUR DIPLOMA! I’M PUTTING DOWN THE NAME WE HAVE ON FILE!”

I couldn’t possibly let it end there, no ma’am, no how, so I immediately called the provincial government’s Department of Name Changes and asked them what I need to do to legally change my name. They told me to send \$20 in gold bullion in envelope to a PO Box in Trout River, addressed to my desired name. I did just that, and a week later received a new birth certificate, driver’s license and plaque commemorating the Ocean Ranger disaster.

By that point the university identified that I’d been paying Will Ferrell’s speed-eating character from Undeclared to write my papers since the get-go, so my retribution against the religious yeller, while well-executed, became moot.

[Editor’s note: Jones does not appear in the author’s actual name but here it is used in place of the actual mother’s maiden name, redacted for fear of identity theft, as it was likely used as a security question answer somewhere along the line.]

May 30 - Duncan Jones gets a Maiden Film (2018-05-30 05:26)

You make the movies, right? In case you’re ever looking for the next big hit, which you are, I have it.

So this [1] skeety couple, probably addicts, break into a house, looking for cash or walkmans or whatever else to sell on the street. A bike, maybe? Anyway, they try being real quiet and sneaky, a good idea if you don’t want to get caught, but it turns out the quiet and sneak is unnecessary, because the only person in the house is the old dead guy sitting in a chair. They examine the situation and quickly determine he’s a recluse and no one cares about him, but they find this movie that he made over the last who knows how many years - it consumed him and might have even killed him, but it was worth because it’s a friggin’ masterpiece. Just so it’s clear, the film in the film is called Maiden, and the working title of the actual project we’ll be working on together is called Maiden Film.

This couple the whole thing while he's just sitting there dead, but he doesn't mind, and they're all wide-eyed and amazed the whole time, as you would be too if you saw how good this movie was. Think Tribute by Tenacious D but then transplant it to this medium and this will help you in your big pitch meeting.

They looks up how to fudge with the credits on Final Cut or something, and they pitch and re-release this Maiden as their own first picture, to overwhelming critical and audience acclaim. They get all famous and sought-after and go to red carpets and gold carpets and whatever other carpets people stand on before awards shows where the photogs can't get enough of photogring the people, all the while using their new found influence to get advances for future films to pay for their habits. Some rampant Maiden fan, a real film buff who aspires to be a director herself, initially she idolizes the film's creators, believing they're the next great hope to usher film into whatever century we're in [Editor's Note: The film is set in the present.], this fan discovers they're not the real heroes here, but she's so invested at this point that she's willing to cover it up by helping them make their sophomore feature as the ghost director - think Kurt Russell for Tombstone. There are three alternative triamet-rically opposed endings to Maiden Film, but I'll wait for you sign on to direct or sign an NDA before giving those up so that you don't run off with my idea and the future sweet cash, à la couple in this very movie.

[Author's note: It's possible that Maiden will come out as a teaser for Maiden Film, but for that to work we better make a darn good short for it. This isn't necessary but will help get back some of that big budget we're gonna need.]

[Author's note II: If the production company or studio isn't totally on board - and I can't see how they wouldn't be but a plan without a plan B is no plan at all - there's an alternate version where the protagonist finds a rich old lonely familyless woman, still alive, and gives his life to her, at least until the end of hers, and makes her pay for this movie he wants to make. Think Anna Nicole Smith if her ambitions exceeded anything other than having foolish wealth.]

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeet_\(Newfoundland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeet_(Newfoundland))

May 31 - Brooke Shields gets a congratulatory back pat (2018-05-31 05:32)

Twenty years ago, postpartum depression was this taboo unknown that nobody would acknowledge, and you were obviously instrumental in bringing it to people's attention in a positive way. That was undoubtedly foolishly difficult to do and I'm sure you realize how important it was to get it out into the ether.

In reality, everyone gets it, or at least it would be surprising if they didn't, and I'm assuming it lasts a minimum of 18 years. Everyone with a kid inevitably tells you how amazing it is, how it's love at first and every sight, how etc., but these people all have crazy eyes and aren't to be trusted. They need to shut their butts up and let each person figure out how to manage this insane life upheaval and get help if they're having a hard time doing it.

Pre-kids, I would talk about my post-party depression, not even trying to be punny but thinking it was actually a thing, but the cure was usually a solid brunch with people I shared the previous

night with. Now that I'm a father of two, I realize what a fool I was to even use that term with relatively flippant intentions. Children are a burden, to everyone with them, and still other parents and non-parents alike refuse to even consider this, since every baby is a miracle and will be the next president and you'll be on the sidelines thinking that you did such a great job and the blah and the blah and the blah, but who wants their kid to be president anyway. How did that become the gold standard? Happiness and its attempts are neglected in lieu of success, financially and career-wise and relationally, but what about the happy, huh? What about the happy?

[Editor's note: The author apparently honestly thought this was a legitimate ending, even as I attempted to point out the incoherence and the tangential nature of his final sentences and that original thought appearing sincere and then turning into a nothing that stopped too abruptly to make any sense of it, but still he used one of his six annual vetoes against me, and so I am prohibited from providing him with any advice or using any editing techniques or having any contribution whatsoever besides this single sentence which - considering the rules of the veto which I don't even remember agreeing on but it's right there in the contract, he showed me my signature and I could swear it's forged but I have no real evidence to this - is the limit for my one note on the piece, although there was no character limit so that's why it's turned into a bit of a ramble on its own, oh no, am I turning into him, my god I can't even use a question mark there, it's probably best if I just stop now please forgive.]

1.6 June

June 1 - Amy Schumer gets to star in a dream (2018-06-01 04:30)

We are shooting a sketch for Inside Amy Schumer in a garage, and the vibe is extremely loose. I try to find out what the scene is about before the camera begins rolling. I'm thinking dinosaurs, based on some elements in the minimal set design, but this hasn't been made explicit. I ask if there's a director. Amy laughs. "Relax, man. Action!" Nobody does anything differently, but Amy is pleased with the shoot.

I mention that I find it interesting how the same twenty songs have remained the most popular ones across the world for the last 40 years. We discuss the idea that lyricists give up a lot of control when their songs are translated into different languages, but conclude that there's no way around this.

The garage morphs seamlessly into a barn, and I'm trying to get a decent view of Sarah Silverman, who is performing on the stage full of haystacks. I climb up to the loft, but a guy who wants the best seat for himself pushes me off and I hit the ground. As I land, I end up partially tied to a chair in a cabin.

My friend Ange, who is blind, is holding me hostage here. I manage to throw chairs at her and run a few feet away, but she starts shooting at me with her shotgun. Although she has decent aim, I avoid the bullets by hiding behind trees. I eventually escape, running all the way downtown. However, it occurs to me she might make up lies about me assaulting her, and there's nothing I can do about it because it's her town, not mine.

June 2 - Wayne Brady gets to help me save the day (2018-06-02 07:03)

There is a sting operation underway as Wayne Brady and I try to expose the shady dealings of a popular populist politician, who looks like a Hell's Angel and wears the same shirt every day. Before he got dressed, we switch out his shirt with an almost identical that has a wire under the AC/DC logo, and he goes on living that day the way he normally does, being corrupt and all. We're giddy when he finally says a specific line we were waiting for. We arrest him in the middle of legislature and he knows he's caught when he looks around and sees everyone wearing Santa hats and beards.

To celebrate, we head to a skeezy bar in the mall next to Save-On-Foods that has laundry machines. After moving my washed clothes over to the dryer, I accidentally put the last of my change in the washer, so I need to get management involved to actually get my clothes dry. Outside I overhear a girl mention that her favourite drink is a downtown mai tai. I plan to confuse surprise her by ordering the rare beverage right before her in line, but she walks on and I'm stranded at the bar, ordering a drink I do not want.

I go next door to interview this guy Matt for a job, and it goes well. When we're done we walk together along Main Street, with Toast off his leash. Matt gets in his car and coaxes Toast to jump in. I'm confused, and even moreso when he starts driving away. I yell at him to stop but he doesn't listen. The driver's side window is down so I jump through to prevent him from leaving, half my body dangling outside. He pushes me out and drives away.

Kelly takes control of my phone because I'm not to be trusted with getting Toast back. Fortunately, Matt agrees to some kind of exchange, and we meet him at the corner of Oslo and Bermuda with a briefcase full of untold goodies.

June 3 - John Hodgman gets to attend a taping of Maria Bamford's new special (2018-06-03 02:25)

John Hodgman finally responds to my rebuttal of Vacationland. In the letter, he uses '@' instead of 'at' every chance he gets. I want to tell him it's easier and makes more sense to use 'at' most of the time, but I don't want to get too nitpicky.

He and I attend the taping for Maria Bamford's new special focused on homelessness. The poster is a close up of her face, grimacing and tinted blue [Editor's note: Similar to the Duluth scenes in Lady Dynamite], on a black background. A homeless Québécois named Bon Chaise, who is bearded and chubby and wearing glasses, is her opener. We join them in their green room, which is on a roof where it's windy and cold.

We find a hang glider up there and decide to test it out. I want to go tandem, but he wants to go alone. We bought some beef jerky that was on sale, but in order to get the discount we had to buy 30.

Afterwards, I help John update his résumé, which currently says he is a Grooveshark expert. I advise that he check every now and then to make sure his skills are still relevant. Ultimately, this is how he finds out that [1] Grooveshark is shut down, and let me tell you, he's not happy about it.

1. <http://www.grooveshark.com/>

June 4 - T.J. Miller assumes the identity of the T.J. Killer (2018-06-04 02:33)

Over the last several months, there's been a rash of brutal murders in and around Tijuana, Mexico. American females in their twenties, who often cross the border from San Diego to party for the weekend, are the primary targets, although occasionally some youthful ladies in their thirties have found themselves victims. The women are savagely beaten, then spun about inside a giant hamster ball until they pass out, and then have their noses plugged gently until they stop breathing altogether.

Media outlets have dubbed the perpetrator "the T.J. Killer", much to the dismay of Los Angeles-based comedian T.J. Miller. After a series of threats directed at him on Twitter, followed by a series of bricks thrown through his garden-level kitchen window, Miller has been forced to repeatedly deny that he is the man¹ behind the horrific acts. According to jim², "It wouldn't make sense for me to drive down there every weekend. That's when I'm doing shows. Do you want to look up my tour dates? I was in Montreal that day you're talking about!"

As we all know, only calculating serial killers trying to cover their tracks would have such a tight alibi for their whereabouts, complete with calendars and other such knick-knacks, so I paddywack his hand away when he sticks his day planner in front of me.

For now, Miller is only a prime suspect, but the more dead girls found, the more likely it is that he will be discovered to be at the very least a copycat killer, resigned to continue the deeds of his predecessor once the accusations numbered high enough that, "hell, I might as well do the things they say I'm doing."

While this logic is certainly flawed, you've never been blamed for a murder before, so maybe this is the only way out for him. Last I heard, Miller had crossed into Panama to continue his spree, all the while having a doppelgänger assume his identity while supporting comedian Ed Bundy throughout his European tour.

¹ Or woman! or women! or womyn!

² [Author's note: "Jim" is how Mexicans spell "him"]

[Author's friend's note: Last night I was telling a girl that the new song that should be taught as the appropriate tempo for CPR is "Come On Eileen" (110 bpm) instead of "Stayin' Alive" (104 bpm) since the American Heart Association updated its guidelines. As I'm telling the story, TJ Miller came to the party, and she says, loudly "omg is that TJ Miller!" and I said "Shut up, no one cares, what I'm telling you could save a life" and he heard me and shot me a dirty look. And I said "maybe your life" to him. Then he left the party.]

[Editor's note: This stemmed from a dream in which Mr. Miller committed a murder purely for the comedic value of the "T.J. Killer" newspaper headline, so it still fits the monthly theme.]

June 5 - Chuck Klosterman gets the joke of the day before noon (2018-06-05 02:30)

I'm with Lily Tomlin and Chuck Klosterman as we make minor adjustments to an official document, putting the finishing touches on our master plan that will drastically change the world.

Chuck makes a crude joke, but one that's clearly intentionally over the top. Lily thinks he's serious but I lose it laughing.

Chuck: "See, Smitty's the only one who gets it. It's the Joke of the Day!"

In case he didn't know about it yet, I tell him about the "Joke of the day before noon", explaining the entire story, but he's disinterested.¹

So the ideal successful outcome of our master plan is the development of a society where everyone is [1] best kind. It's working out really well until Lily offers Chuck a bite of her peanut butter cookie. He devours it greedily, which makes us realize he's still a jerk. This alone throws off the entire balance of the new world order.² I had neglected to consider that my partners in the overthrow weren't included in the necessary adaptation for the utopia.

¹ [Author's note: In case any of you are not disinterested, I once wrote a jingle that goes, (singing) "We had the joke of the day before noon / We had the joke of the day before the moon came out." after coming up with a great joke early one morning. The "joke", which lacks context even now, is, "Luke, you ate my guava."

² [Dreamor's note: While considering the loss of balance, I was unable to come up with the word "entropy", which I thought might have been useful to say at some point to really hammer my point home.]

1. <http://www.suitcaseandheels.com/guide-to-newfoundland-slang/>

June 6 - Colin Quinn gets defensive about his new certification (2018-06-06 02:31)

I fly to New York for the weekend. Colin Quinn shows me his new torso length straight elephant trunk tattoo. Our friends can't find anywhere to park, so we all band together, collecting wooden planks that they can put their cars on. Once this is settled, we all go upstairs, hanging out on the patio, as Patrice O'Neal arrives.

Patrice: Does anyone know who's in the Friday night fights?

Me: Jesse Plemons?

Colin tells us he finished a course so that he can now be a polo player's assistant - his girlfriend is a polo player.

Me: So you're like a caddy but for horses?

Colin (informing me): No, I've learned a new skill so that I can spend time with a person I like

Me: Yeah, but that's what you'll actually be doing.

Colin (defeated): Oh, right...

Colin then immediately launches into a tirade about hurricane systems.

Colin: The worst ones have been as big as an insect!

I assume he means on the map, but I'm faking all the knowledge I have about hurricanes so I'm careful not to step out of line by saying something that will expose me as the fraud that I am.

June 7 - Mick Foley gets home-hitting insight from an alter ego (2018-06-07 02:34)

It's late on New Year's Eve, paper hat on my head. I'm managing a band that just finished their first performance and is late for a second show they're doing downtown, which has a midnight set time.

While I'm waiting for them to get ready, Mark pulls out a Mankind velcro wallet and shows me his new business card. Finally, I head over to the gas station to pick up the keys to the rental car, and the clerk hands them over easily, only needing me to say the make and model. As he passes me the key ring, I decide that this is how I'll get a free car if I ever need one in a pinch.

Tyler and an old man are busted for selling cocaine and they get arrested on the fourth floor of Holy Heart. Along with another man who committed an unrelated crime, the three are handcuffed together, forming a mini red rover team, and I'm unable to get past them. I really need to get to the bathroom, but I don't have insurance to use the toilet before school starts. Cactus Jack, understanding my predicament, says, "Well, if he gets caught at least he has the perfect excuse - he was pissing while running on the treadmill!" This really hits home for me at the time.

I'm now in class and it's close to the end of the semester. Most of my marks hover around 40 %, mostly due to my shoddy attendance record. I start ranting about genuinely wanting to learn but being sidetracked by important life events, and I disguise the rant well so the teacher gives me a break without realizing I pranked her.

I walk outside and a rabid wolf approaches. I don't kick him in the face for some reason. He comes very close to me and I sneak back inside. He attacks the door, and I take a picture, a closeup of his mouth.

Suddenly it's daytime, the wolf is gone, people are gone, and the air is crisp. But Dude Love remains.

June 8 - Kanye West gets a haircut all by himself, while Bobby Cannavale captures the youth (2018-06-08 02:39)

Kanye West and I go to get mall haircuts. I get ready in the change room then walk into the hair studio in only a t-shirt and underwear. The two girls working don't say anything but Kanye calls me out for being inappropriate.

I honestly don't see anything wrong with it. Like any astute client, I didn't want to get my pants full of hair. However, as I'm sitting down in the chair, I kind of have to pee. This now feels inappropriate so I quickly leave and tell the barber I'll be back in a minute.

I return to the change room, which is shared with a nearby hostel. An older foreign man who's related to or is Bobby Cannavale is staying at the hostel. He messes up his eye doing something foolish. The younger guys look up to him and prod him to tell them stories of his various conquests.

"Life is about stories, and crazy nights," is all he says.

They appreciate what they perceive as a cryptic and enlightened response.

After leaving the change room, I wander around the mall looking for the salon, but it's nowhere to be found. I walk through the women's section of a department store and get sprayed incessantly with perfume by several Kardashian women, who are arranged in a gauntlet situation.

Maggie is explaining to her bourgeois parents that she's gong to buy some junk food for her birthday. They disapprove, not able to see why she would ever do such a thing, but she takes a stand.

I find a mall map and see that there are several hair places. There's no "You Are Here" sticker anyway, so I'm completely lost. Kanye is waving me over but I neglect to notice him.

There's a long, low-angle escalator, which leads me to think I may have accidentally ended up on a different floor.

I don't ever find the hair place again, but I look in the mirror, and fortunately or not, I'm completely bald.

June 9 - Mae Whitman does some petty thieving (2018-06-09 02:28)

Mae Whitman and I are very petty thieves, stealing candy and bars from a convenience store. The first few times there are no hiccups, but at one point I approach the counter to buy a large Reese's Pieces and the clerk warns me not to take anything. I act like I don't know what she's talking about, and fortunately I wasn't wearing my proper thieving attire so I didn't have any unpaid items stashed away.

I hand her a twenty and she dumps out a cup with my exact change. I joke about her change-giving skills, using actual money to demonstrate my interpretation of her prowess, and in our laughter I accidentally take the original bill back.

Outside a group of kids are throwing our batteries around. I go to retrieve them for Mae but the kids are having none of it. They're rude but still I stand my ground.

Off to the side, John K. Samson is doing a cover of Something On, but it sounds more like Save the Planet.

Eventually I return to the store to get Mae and explain to the clerk I may have taken the twenty by mistake. She thanks me for my honesty then tells me about the last customer who was in there, who overpaid willingly and then was flying to Los Angeles on a whim because it's too cloudy here.

June 10 - Bill Burr gets offensive on the defensive end (2018-06-10 02:32)

While playing in a pickup basketball game, Bill Burr is being overly aggressive on the defensive end. He fouls me, and we're over the bonus, but unfortunately the foul line is behind half court and I miss both shots. Somehow everyone else can't believe I didn't get them both in. In hindsight, I might have been distracted thinking about how ashamed of me Bill would be if he knew I hid the empty bag of chips deep down in the garbage because I don't want my girlfriend to know I ate them.

After the game, I leave my water bottle in gym. I'm waiting for Leah to pick me up, so I walk up the dark road and go into McDonald's, where Moose, Greening and those guys are in there. I mention how strange it is bumping into them here. I say I was waiting for Leah in front of the gym, holding my shirt up exposing my nipples, but she still didn't show up.

I ask no one in particular about milkshakes, and the cashier apologizes for only having strawberry. She hands me an apple pie and expects payment. I claim I never ordered it but everyone else says I did. I want nuggets too but I don't think that's going to happen, so I bolt.

As I'm running away, Megan Brown's mom calls me crying, saying Shannon's been missing for over five minutes and pleading for me to find her. Although no one can see my face, I scrunch it up to indicate my confusion and enter the nearest house to escape the cold.

I'm in Mark's old bedroom, trying to make extra room. I go to throw away most of his CDs but they all contain autographs and personal messages, so it wouldn't feel right.

There are two copies of a Beatles coffee table book, but both are A-M songs. No one ever buys the N-Z because part two of a gift doesn't work without part one, but this leads to an overabundance of A-Ms. Besides, we miss out on songs like Sgt. Pepper's and While My Guitar Gently Weeps. I guess overall the first book is better, but not when you have two copies of it.

June 11 - Joshua Jackson is funny and reserved at an illicit party (2018-06-11 02:38)

We're having a year-end school party in the house of a stranger who normally lets a group of us use it for studying.

Joshua Jackson is there, cracking jokes. I tell him he should play Paul Thomas Anderson in a fictional Making Of Inherent Vice movie, and he politely dismisses me. Someone I half know makes a speech about cancer, briefly mentioning how I beat it and then explaining how I did [1]my own version of One Week from Vancouver to Toronto, at the same time Gord Downie also had cancer, and still I didn't run into him.

A girl I went to junior high with, Stephanie Noel, wants a hug. The request turns out to be very awkward, through no fault of mine. Still I accept her offer but still she only does a half hug.

Once I realize there will certainly be evidence that people were here having a party, it occurs to me that I'm the only one with a key. I contemplate removing all evidence of our study group, but that would make it even more obvious it was us. Then I consider breaking the door to make it seem like a break-in, but since there's essentially no damage, this option seems much worse to me. We're being relatively respectful, yet I still picture the homeowner overreacting, with the, "I feel so violated, etc." platitudes.

I fill my pockets with leftover cookies and other snacks. Luckily I have a ziploc bag in my pocket, because most of the treats are homemade and I don't want them going to waste.

There's an elaborate mural on one wall, containing many different small, somewhat-connected images, that we take photos of. After reviewing my first shot, I see that it's fairly incredible and a lot of actual stars are in the background somehow, a full night sky that only the camera can see. This one is a long exposure, giving those small star trails, which looks trippy, but I change it to a short shutter speed for subsequent shots, for variety.

My mother calls me, and after I explain the situation about the party, she tells me not to worry.

Mudder: I doubt you'll get any more than 90 days.

Me: In jail?! I'll go to jail for this?

Mudder: Well of course. You can't go breaking into anyone's house these days. The government, you know?

She has a point.

1. <http://ismith.ca/journal/hospital-shots-part-deux/>

June 12 - Richard Ayoade doesn't show up to our gig, all while Ivan Decker rejects the stage (2018-06-12 02:45)

I pull up the lyrics to a song that Richard Ayoade and I wrote, under the moniker The Almond Butters, so that we can figure out the words for our upcoming concert. He wants to listen to the audio first and is annoyed at my preferred method of learning the song. "It's not like I haven't done this a thousand times before!" he yells before he storms off. I end up going to the open mic, which is taking place in a large gymnasium, without him.

The first guy performs an original song, and he has a video already made, playing on a screen in the background. He's surprised that we all aren't blown away by the whole presentation. Ivan Decker is next, and right after his introduction he walks across and off the stage, doing his act while pacing down the aisle. An audience member tries to get him to go back on stage so everyone can see, but he gets chastised by everyone for making such an absurd suggestion.

I end up in my parents's backyard. Shingles are scattered throughout the grass, but my father's pretending that the roof is still intact. Toast keeps kicking the ☐ really hard at my head, and while it's hard to dodge, his strength and accuracy and determination are quite impressive. Later, in the spa-restaurant-brewery, the cashier says everyone in my group already paid, which I know isn't true, but I don't argue with her. Instead, I see Toast pooing next to the counter, so I yank him outside, where someone calls him a polar bear.

It turns out we're at a ski hill, and I see Kelly and Meg working on an amazing artistic project, a colourful snowy version of dominos. I try to help but end up ruining the piece.

Jacob takes us for a ride in hyper speed on his snowmobile, and we really need to hang on during the big jumps. I hadn't prepared for the bumps, so I'm barely hanging on and Jacob's glasses end up under my chin. I try to hold them there but can't, so they disappear behind me, never to be seen again.

June 13 - Ally Sheedy gets blamed at the register (2018-06-13 02:39)

I'm in a grocery store lineup, on the left side of the conveyor belt. Ally Sheedy and her moustachioed partner¹ are on the right. We barely notice each other as we place our items close together, and neither of us puts the separator between our goods.

I'm off in my own world when Ally interrupts me to confirm that I'm in front of her. She's only trying to get the line organized a bit better, but it startles me in such a way that it comes across as antagonistic.

Me: I was here first.

Ally: I never said you weren't.

Cashier (interrupting): That can't all be for you, anyway.

Me: Why not?

Cashier: So you're buying these items for someone else.

Me: No, no, it's for me.

Cashier: So you're getting these chocolates insured even though they're for you.

Me: Well, those are a gift, sure. What happened was, she thought I skipped her in line.

Ally: Hey, wait a minute. No I didn't.

Me: Sorry, let me correct myself. At this point, I don't know what the hell happened. And I don't care anymore.

That line really breaks the tension in the lineup, as all four of us start laughing, realizing how foolish it is to be getting the least bit upset at any of this. We don't become friends, but later it occurs to me that maybe we should.

¹ [Author's note: It's not Frank Zappa, but it might as well be.]

June 14 - Donald Trump gets diversity in media (2018-06-14 02:34)

[Editor's note: There are several separate sections to this, all written at various times over the last three years, including before the election, so there are certain references to him not winning, à la [1]Dewey Defeats Truman. The long length is the author's way of reducing all of his Trump thoughts

to one day, to avoid letting him seep into your brains any more than he already does. It all comes from someone who has been actively and successfully avoiding most American political news for over a year now, so for all he knows none of this is even relevant anymore. And it's not impossible that the birthday boy could have already been outed as a giant lizard and should therefore not be El Jefe in a non-lizard country's administration.]

Dream

I'm yelling at Trump to his face, really telling him off. He doesn't seem to mind, and I realize it's because it's actually a hologram set up so that the common people can release their frustration with the government without being thrown in jail.

I decide to make a little money out of this situation, at least, by creating a business where the employees are all Trump lookalikes, and you can beat the crap out of them or just yell at them if you want, to feel better, similar to the [2] Rage Room but obviously more specific with the rage.

Short Film

[Author's note: I wrote¹ this short years before there was even a chance this guy would become the president, so try to consider the Trump being referenced to be the one you remember from like 2014, when he was only the Apprentice guy who was in Home Alone 2² for a second.]

Ian is lying down on the couch, his head on Kelly's lap, facing the ceiling. She is reading quietly when he's suddenly wearing a roguish grin.

Ian: Hey, uh, Kelly?

Kelly (not really paying attention): Yeah?

Ian: What does a Chinese-Elmer Fudd-Donald Trump say?

His grin grows wider. She sighs, half happy and half annoyed, expecting a stupid joke, but knowing the quicker she responds the quicker it will all be over.

Kelly: What?

Ian: You're...

Ian gets cut off by his own unexpected burst of laughter. It startles him, and he finds it funny that he was interrupted by himself. He continues to try to say the line but ends up laughing too hard. Kelly begins laughing too, eventually almost as much as Ian, mostly at him not being able to finish the joke, as she obviously doesn't know the punchline yet. Ian is able to say other words while laughing, even full sentences complaining that he will never be able to get the answer out because of the laughter. Kelly keeps pressing for the answer.

Kelly: What does he say?

The laughter comes in ridiculous waves, and he keeps trying to get himself to stop laughing.

Ian: You're f...

The laughter continues.³

Ian doesn't think he'll ever be able to get it out. He can say any other words, but for some reason as soon as he starts saying the punchline he loses it again.

Ian performs a series of breathing exercises in order to calm himself down.

Eventually the laughter subsides, and after it dwindles to a mere giggle, Ian finally is able to get out the punchline.

Ian: Yuh fi-urd.

¹ Editor's note: He says he "wrote" it, but it is 100 %⁴ accurate as a representation of a real-life moment, so all he did was write down something that happened, and I'm not sure it translates like he thinks it does.]

² [Editor's note: This film is subtitled Lost in New York, but we didn't want to waste any more space within a preliminary Author's Note]

³ [Editor's note: I know what you're thinking, but this is not the subtitle for the American-Canadian action television series

Kung Fu

.

⁴ [Author's note: Hundy P]

Sketch

[Author's note: Too many recent sketches, primarily on SNL, have barely even been satire. They're very slightly exaggerated versions of something that actually happened in the past week. With this type of unprecedented administration, the following approach is an attempt to keep viewers engaged and writers from ending it all. The press conference-centred scene was likely written sometime in the middle of April, 2017, after this strange [3] Syria-cake incident.]

Trump: Welcome everyone. Yesterday, we were forced to bomb a country, quite unexpectedly. Our military did a tremendous job and we wiped out the nation's entire armed forces, and there were zero civilian casualties. Their government ceded control over all of their territories to us this morning.

Washington Post reporter: What were you eating?

Trump: Sorry?

Washington Post reporter: What were you eating when you gave the orders to bomb their bases or whatnot?

Trump: Don't you want to know which countr -

Fox News correspondent (interrupting): Was it pie?

Trump (confused): No, it wasn't pie.

BBC journalist: I knew it! Cake, right? (to Fox News correspondent) I told you it was cake.

Trump: Actually yes, chocolate cake, but there's more impor-

Fox News correspondent (interrupting): Was it delicious?!

Trump: It was rather tasty, sure, but we just blew up a rather significant amount of Canada, you know?

The Atlantic columnist: Is that where all the smoke is coming from?

Fox News correspondent (to the Atlantic columnist): Shut up. (to Trump) Is there any cake left?

Washington Post reporter: Do you wonder if the ISIS members that were killed will enjoy an even more delicious chocolate cake in heaven?

Trump: Jesus, It wasn't terrorists. We just wanted their stuff. And now we have it. All of it.

BBC journalist: Did we get their cake too?

Trump (sigh): Well, yeah.

The entire press core celebrates wildly as a party song¹ begins playing. The camera zooms out and audience applauds because an overhead sign tells them to.

¹ [Editor's note: The song is not [4]Celebration², thank god] ² [Author's note: I spent too many years thinking the line was "celebration times". I suppose it doesn't matter first or last or middle.]

[5]Handshake Dregs: [6] Handshake with the Gangster You know that whole Trump-handshake issue, where he was hurting people's hands and whatnot, because he's so strong and they're so weak or whatnot? If only there was around fifty very strong men who don't necessarily like Trump, men who

will all get a chance to shake his hand, in a row. Each one could slowly crush his hand, not enough that you'd be able to tell on the video but enough for them to collectively get the job done. It would all be on camera, and little by little his little fingers would break, or he would have to stop shaking hands and acknowledge he's not as tough as he purports to be. So basically I don't know why half the Patriots refused to visit the White House after they won the Superbowl in 2017.

Median Photography The ever-widening political divide is stretching for a number of reasons, many of which will never be reconciled by the most vocal and determined on the right and left. The media obviously plays a major role in this, and based on how information is consumed, it often has little to do with the information itself. One particular issue that should be rectified is the photographs used in relation to the polarizing articles, and specifically for Trump. Photographs make all the difference, as we learned from that [7] Obama-hope one. The left hates Trump more because of the images selected by their news outlets, where he appears unintelligent, fat, goofy, whatnot. On the right, he appears strong, patriotic, important, whatnot. When an actual major world news story breaks, such as a declaration of war, tensions will only rise between conflicting views. There needs to be a previously agreed-upon photograph that depicts the average version Donald Trump, to avoid a leading or persuading article based purely on the image. It can be done like jury selection - we'll get far right, right-leaning, moderate, left-leaning, and far left citizens to remove one photo at a time that shows him in what they perceive to be an unfavourable light. The remaining photograph will be the one on the front page of Breitbart, New York Times, Washington Post, Fox News, Al Jazeera, BBC News, etc. when the country most needs unity. [Editor's note: I shouldn't even be telling you this, but the author has said several times he expects a Pulitzer for the above idea. There's no way he knows what it is. Don't tell him I told you.]

Avoidance I actively avoid American political news, but it sneaks in. The other day I saw a headline, "Probe Successfully Lands on Mars". Ooh, I can click on that...

"The Mars Candy Company has come under intense scrutiny for agreeing with a single thing that Donald Trump has said. The DNC has launched an investigation as to whether or not...."

Dammit.

General Thoughts

- I sometimes imagine a world where Trump discovers psychedelics and changes his ways.
- I have a theory that mug sellers on both sides of the aisle rigged the whole election to go down like this, none less so than me after coming up with a mug that says "Trump Rules" in big text but after awhile the "Rules" falls off and leave the word "Sucks" showing underneath. Oh, those Trumpheads would be so mad.
- This presidency was apparently supposed to be great for comedy. I haven't heard a single joke since the election.
- Every concert I go to is anti-Trump. Bands know they're in Canada, right? And that Canada isn't actually part of the US¹.

- There's a weird part of my cynical side that thinks the Trump thing was orchestrated to get Mike Pence as president.
- There's something really bad that's going to happen before the next election. I don't know what it is, it could involve assassinating the Democrat candidate or something, but either way it's going to be big.
- I haven't heard anyone suggest that maybe not every person deserves an equal vote. Someone look into that one.
- Making fun of Trump supporters is not going to make them change their minds. Employing elitism and flaunting their higher education with long words and elaborate theories will not dissuade them from voting for him. Meet them close to their level, for Jesus sake.

¹ [Editor's note: Besides in the sketch above]

Open Letter to Trump [Editor's note: Clearly the author takes a relatively diplomatic approach here, likely because of the line about meeting them close to their level from before. It should also be noted this was written way before it all went to complete shit.] Did you want to win the election? Or did you want to run the country? You already won. Stop talking about it. It doesn't matter if you won every electoral college vote. The system is set up in such a way that you either win or you lose. And you won. It doesn't matter if you lost the popular vote. You won, and the thing you won is the privilege of being the head of the federal government. So now you need to govern. Don't worry about the media. If you start doing a good job, they will cover that. Don't worry about fake news. Focus on jobs, the economy, protecting the country. You don't need to defend yourself in interviews. Defend yourself by helping the country. These are the things you said you wanted to help America with, and they gave you a chance. It's not too late. You will probably acknowledge things could be going a little better. So hire some people who could help you with that. Many of your advisors were great at helping you get elected, but their skills aren't really needed anymore. Ask for help from people you may have had disagreements with in the past. It will show the country you're willing to step up and do the Great Again thing. It will be difficult. Your skill set is in managing organizations, and that's what you've been given the opportunity to do. You are not the president for people who voted for you. You're everyone's president. That's how this type of democracy works. Some things won't go your way. That's okay. If you focus too much on the things that haven't gone your way, you may be able to change some of them in your favour, but you need to prioritize. It's okay if everything doesn't go your way. Sometimes what you want isn't what everyone else wants. That's fine. Continue to use Twitter to make your thoughts public, to relay information to the public. But hire someone with a full grasp of the language to edit them. The tweets can be confusing if they don't follow accepted structure, and you don't want your ideas to be misconstrued based on wording. You keep forgetting that you already won. Hillary Clinton is no longer relevant. You have four years, now go do something with them.

Letter from Hillary after winning the election My fellow Americans¹, I am truly sorry about the last few months, or years, or however long that went on. I was clouded by my intense desire to win this race and the presidency, and the political maneuvering to which I'd grown accustomed in order to get what I want prevented me from being as honest as I should have about how I actually feel. I know that I am a major reason that this important political and societal event devolved into uninformed, antagonistic clickbait. I admit I got swept up into it, because that's what a lot of the media focused on, because

outrage generates clicks. It's obvious that my team handled a lot of the campaign poorly and could have drastically reduced this mess much earlier, but now's my chance to acknowledge whatever we all just had to go through. The campaign turned into mitigating our own troubles and capitalizing on his mistakes, instead of listening to voters and outlining policy changes that need to be made. I got swept up in proving I was better than Donald, instead of just proving I was better. I should not have been responding to his vitriol. It left too little time to discuss the actual issues that we all care about - Climate change, racial equality, human rights, health care. I regret that I was so focused on winning that I often forgot to talk about actual issues that we all care about. Actual honesty and sincerity became so absent from both sides that it wasn't even expected anymore. It devolved into childishness, not fitting for a president. I was trying to be the lesser of two evils, which obviously wasn't too difficult because of my opponent. There were times when I almost sunk to his level, which I should have been able to avoid. But I'm still figuring out exactly what type of president I need to be for you. I am sorry that we became a nation divided, reaching a point that if someone was voting differently than you, you would use avoidance, condescension, abuse, and confirmation bias to prove you were right and they were wrong. You're frustrated with the system. I understand this, and I don't blame you. I need to acknowledge this growing distrust you have for politicians, whom many of you believe are corrupt and selfish, because many of us are. You have become a jaded electorate, and if I weren't so intricately involved, I would have likely joined you. My campaign staff, during this time, their goal is to win, and I needed to be the one who told them how to win. You're so frustrated that you almost elected someone who isn't a politician, with his apparently greatest asset being the fact that he is not a politician. Moving forward, there must be greater transparency in government, and I will take meaningful steps to end the misconduct and corruption, to the point that you are not skeptical of someone with political experience holding political office. Some people don't like me because of the energy I give off, or the fact that I'm a woman, or how much I smile, or how much I don't smile, and for that I do not apologize. We keep pushing to make these factors meaningless, and someday they will be. But obviously there are many Americans who don't agree with me, so I will continue to figure out why and then try to meet them somewhere in the middle. I'm their president too. Even issues that I may not think should be the highest priority, need to be considered because a lot of the country feels that they're important. After all of this, I wonder if parents still want their kids to be president. I hope so.

-PHRC ¹ [Author's note: Presidents are obligated to start all speeches like that - it's in the Constitution. One of the amendments. The 36th maybe?]

Bet Hedging I wagered \$1000 on Trump to win the election, expecting him to lose. That's the amount I decided it was worth it to me for him not to win. When he did, everyone else decried the state of humanity, while I took my \$3000 gain¹ and bought a jet ski, which, as we speak, I'm riding blissfully in the middle of a lake of serenity. ¹ [Editor's note: 'Cause of odds and whatnot]

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dewey_Defeats_Truman

2. <http://www.battlesports.ca/rage-room/>

3. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/12/politics/donald-trump-xi-jingping-syria-chocolate-cake/index.html>

4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GwjfUFyY6M>

5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vF1o6zg9vI>

6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2KlpIMbaJc>

7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama_%22Hope%22_poster

June 15 - Courteney Cox gets an incarcerated spin-off (2018-06-15 02:46)

The last episode of Friends is playing, but this version wasn't meant to go public.

There's significant tension between Ross and Rachel, and not the good kind. Phoebe (acting very Kendell-like) goes up and makes out with Ross really crazily, then runs over to the kitchen sink and starts spraying water at her tongue, laughing all the while. It is somehow assumed she needed to wash out her mouth, and the animalistic nature of her actions confirm this, as the rest of her and the floor get satched¹.

Phoebe's outlandish outburst is the butterfly in subsequent major effects, as a quick cut to the future demonstrates.

Rachel runs out of money and has no choice but to shoplift expensive purses in order to maintain her extravagant lifestyle. She is the first one to get sentenced and ends up in a co-ed prison.

Joey gets called out by multiple women for sexual assault. He shrugs it off but still moves to Connecticut to get rid of the heat. It doesn't work, and a video surfaces showing him being a perpetrator of coercion. He's found guilty on no less than six counts of varying degrees and ends up in jail.

Monica's OCD gets to be too much for her to handle. She dopes herself up and remains solitary in her house, mimicking a requiem for Ellen Burstyn. She's convicted of going crazy and accepts the verdict with ease.

Ross, married to his fifth wife, comes home drunk one night to catch her cheating on him, with his first ex-wife. He can't believe it and is so mad that he goes for a long drive. He hits a kid, who dies bloody on the street, and keeps driving because he's so clouded. The drunk hit-and-run lands him in more hot water than the rest of them, but his endearing awkwardness gets him sent with the others.

Chandler is framed for a bank robbery, and during the trial, as he's pleading his case on the stand, he's a bit too sarcastic. Nobody on the jury picks up on it so he gets sent to prison for a few years.

Phoebe, having gone back to being homeless, is especially satisfied with how she turned out, until her scraggly pet cat runs away. She's convinced that the woman at the bodega snatched the kitten away, so one day she waits outside for her to close up shop and hits her over the head with one of those Chinese cats that waves to you in restaurants. Five years less a day.

A real-life spin-off documentary is created, by NBC of course, called Cellies.

All of the actors assume the identities of their characters to get their grubby paws on every more of that sweet cash, and it works.

¹ [Editor's note: "Satched" means "soaked right through".]

June 16 - John Cho gets funnier in real life (2018-06-16 02:22)

John Cho sings, "No more Ellen¹ allowed in Canada, gotta give it up for them foo foo flaps", which is hilarious to me in this plane. Now I think he's funnier in real life, even though he didn't actually say it, and it's not actually funny in real life.²

I still take him to show and tell, and while waiting for someone else to go, we're hanging out in the back of the class. We take turns sending a dinky to each other, both trying to hit an errant cranberry lying on the floor between us. We come really close but never manage to hit it.

On my mahogany desk with a chair attached, there's a centerpiece looking plant with a bunch of edible shiny pine cones jutting out. I eat one of the pine flaps and am transported to a rented speed boat on a small town lake. I'm unable to control it so I jump out and into a different boat, but the wonky steering makes it impossible to get this new watercraft back to shore.

I wave down a local in a canoe, but he doesn't appreciate the earnestness of my urgency. Instead he complains that, "this girl was walking next to my driveway dressed like a hamster and then stops and poses³. Can't leave stuff or anyone with these people."

I want to ask what he means by "these people", but I decide there are more pressing matters.

¹ [Author's note: Degeneres]

² [Editor's note: Yes it is.]

³ [Author's note: The pose involves putting her hands on his hips while squinting.]

June 17 - Kendrick Lamar gets proven right after commiserating over a fallen man about town (2018-06-17 02:23)

It's a beautiful day but there is a blanket of low-hanging cumulus clouds in the sky. Through a sizeable opening in the cloud cover, thousands of differently shaped red, white and blue balloons float by. Occasionally one falls at my feet and I kick it back into the ballonic jet stream.

A man about town named Sean Miller¹ had died recently, and I run into Kendrick Lamar, who asks if I knew him. I lie and say, "A little bit. I've been drinking with him a few times." Kendrick goes, "That's enough to know someone though." I suppose he's right.

A cop fines us each \$500 for walking too close to the train tracks. I look around and there's no sign, but the cop won't listen to a defence.

I break into David Cross's house to tell him and Bob Odenkirk to let Trey Parker know about what's going on with the ticket so he can fix it. Once I'm satisfied it will be taken care of, I go outside, where I'm immediately shot at. Kendrick warned me this would happen, but as I protest to him,

"What was I supposed to do? Let it all go down?"

[Author's note: This all takes place in an alternate version of downtown St. John's that appears in some of my dreams.]

¹ [Editor's note: There is no actual Sean Miller. But we all know at least one of him.]

June 18 - Paul McCartney gets to be a cool camp counselor (2018-06-18 02:14)

I'm at an army camp as a teenager. We all need to meet at the river before moving on to the campsite, which is on an island. Our sergeant tells us, "You're going to want to stop rowing. You'll think you went the wrong way. You didn't. Keep moving."

I need to pee, so Peter and I stop off at the lodge first, getting there by walking along a concrete wall, using the fence to stabilize. The barracks are bustling with people, and there's one toilet in the middle of the open concept room.

Eventually I'm able to start peeing somehow, and in the middle a guy begins searching for an item right next to me. I lose my balance then catch myself, but only after stumbling a bit and peeing on the floor, hitting the guy with some backslash. I joke that it's my way of pushing him back from crowding my plate, but I don't think he understands the [1]baseball reference.

One girl is told by camp counselor Paul McCartney to wear her hair in a ponytail, saying it will make her look more like Mel B¹. She does it, of course, even though she's never heard of the Beatles. He's still got the charisma, even without the name.

I take him aside to discuss how he does it, but I get distracted by his otherworldly charm.

Me: "What's it like not having people depend on you as much."

Paul: "Well, the crew brings in all the gear and I'm sitting in the green room still waiting on my espresso."

Me: "Yeah, but you get that. That's one of the perks."

¹ [Editor's note: The ponytail would actually make her look more like Mel C.]

1. <https://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/mlb/crowd-the-plate.aspx>

June 19 - Zoe Saldana makes an astute financial decision (2018-06-19 02:15)

Zoe Saldana, the new owner of the Houston Astros and their stadium, gives their underdog opponent a two-game lead in the best-of-five series, claiming it will be easier to sell tickets to the last three games this way, compared to if it was a sweep. She's correct.

Rajiv starts playing my guitar. It sounds really great, so a couple of minutes later I pick it up, but now it sounds awful. I look down and there's only a couple of strings left, but that's probably not the only reason for the sonic decline.

Romesh pokes a small hole in his finger while restringing the guitar. Rajiv had gotten his electric guitar specialist, who's clueless about acoustics, to remove the finger protector¹ for an unknown reason.

I show Romesh my two band-aids I'm wearing because I'd done the same thing earlier, twice. He doesn't feel so bad now.

The three of us find an abandoned movie set at a university, which is where we decide to meet Dimitri.

Stacy is curating an art festival back home. The promotional materials contain photos of her group of friends. We think she's in too many, and they all look too similar, but she disagrees.²

Sufjan performs using an old realistic hologram technique that blows us away, enough that the police try to stop the song, assuming it's all real. He is quite defiant and kind of pretends it is real. Only Sufjan could get away with this.

¹ [Editor's note: I consulted my acoustic guitar and cannot confirm that a finger protector on a guitar is a thing.]

² [Author's note: Not in a self-centred way - she just happens to disagree.]

June 20 - Mike Birbiglia finds the best storage facility for the sound equipment (2018-06-20 04:28)

A beloved local venue is forced to shut down indefinitely while the owner sorts out some debts. Everyone who works there is packing up the gear. The mood is slightly solemn but we're all still having fun together.

I ask, to no one in particular, "Where are you taking all this stuff?"

Mike Birbiglia, the sound engineer, chimes in. "Mandible Storage. You know why I picked that place? [His eyes dart around as a prelude to revealing a secret.] So I tested out a bunch of different storage facilities with my balance equalizer tool¹ and Mandible scored the lowest level, which means the air is the best at preventing unnecessary deterioration of the sound equipment."

I acknowledge this was a smart idea but have no idea what he's referring to.

A dog picks up my baguette off the chair. I wrestle with him until I get most of it back. Still, I tear off a bit more from the end he was biting to give to him so that I don't end up eating any dog bread.

On the loudspeaker, a lush instrumental version of the classic rock song "Wings of Love"² is playing. Hearing the song makes me even more sentimental about how I'll miss the venue, and I start telling another employee, who once lied about being John Mulaney's cousin, a few stories I have from my time here.

After every few bars of the song, he speaks aloud the corresponding lyrics as a response. I don't pick up on the connection until after his third line, and he starts laughing, mockingly but with love.

¹ [Editor's note: No need to look it up. It's not a thing.]

² [Editor's note: While the author is unrelenting in his belief that "Wings of Love" is an actual classic, we were unable to confirm that it in fact exists on this plane.]

June 21 - Edward Snowden gets his invitation turned down to join him at a backyard bachelor party (2018-06-21 02:15)

A bachelor party is going on in my backyard, with Edward Snowden and Tom DeLonge trying to get me to join them. I politely decline without using my words, and instead I go the house next door. Chrissy and Ashley have just finished raising the ceiling 1/4 of an inch. Although I don't notice much of a difference, they clearly did a lot of work so I told them it made the room seem much bigger, "not in dimensions but definitely in volume".

Tonya and I are spinning around the living room, talking about how many people we went to high school with and how crazy it is that, fifteen years later, we're all in the same place again. She's referring to Chaytor, Louie, Hogan and Forsey, but I'm moreso thinking about Joe, Baker and Purce.

An additional verse to "[1]Sun in an Empty Room" plays after the song is supposed to be over. I try to sing along but am dumbfounded by the new lyrics. I try to get everyone's attention with a, "What the hell? Was this always in it?!" and it works, but not like I'd hoped for. To reduce the tension I created, I start doing a one-man long form improv scene. It's going well but I stop abruptly when I hear a familiar sound. My friends tell me to keep going, with one of them sincerely shouting, "We want to hear what happens with the grandmother!"

Chrissy walks out the door with moderate fanfare. I question our goodbye. "Is she leaving for good? Or just going out for a smoke? If she's coming back, then the goodbye was a little excessive, but if she's leaving to go back to Terrace then she deserves a better send-off."

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u75nHvSvx08>

June 22 - Cyndi Lauper descends from a roof of her own accord (2018-06-22 02:21)

Cyndi Lauper is on the roof of [1] St. Pat's church . The proctor¹ doesn't see her but keeps an eye on us to make sure we're not up to anything fishy, and eventually he goes back inside.

We brainstorm ideas, looking for the best way to get Cyndi down. Mine is clearly the best, but she can't hear me so she returns to self-reflection. Very quickly, she tires of thinking about it and hops onto a lower ledge then jumps to the ground from there, about 40 feet in only two moves. Her attempt at a successful tuck and roll is thwarted when she bangs her forehead against the sidewalk and bounces backwards. She's fine, which is obvious by the confidence in which she performs the obligatory "ta-da" gesture.

Cyndi now out of harm's way, I head to my parents's house and start listening to [2] Ted Leo on their deck. Three young people are carrying a case of beer through the backyard. I follow them with my eyes but try to remain hidden so they don't get nervous and run away. They've been up all night drinking and only want to keep it going for a little while longer.

Once they pass, I notice a very cute bear-like creature on the ground. We're try to determine if it's a kid in a costume or a bear. I decide definitively it's a kid in a costume. The owners overhear our debate and assure me it's a cute baby bear cub. Toast runs down to play with it.

Michael Stipe comes outside and sits next to me with a beer. I want to ask him about the time a guy on acid broke into his house, but then I remember it was actually Moby. Instead, we listen to his recent [3] Song Exploder as we figure out how to pronounce "Hrishikesh Hirway".

Unsuccessful, I carry the recycling into the garage. I get stopped by someone telling me that Burton² is moving away, and I wonder if I'm supposed to care. Across the street, Jack Dempsey³ is singing, "I value the goods in the undersold" with an air of communism about him.

¹ [Author's note: I know I say "the proctor" like he's in charge of the church, and in actuality, it might be true. He's at like the same level as a deacon, whatever that means.]

² [Editor's note: The author does not know a Burton, which is likely why he didn't seem to care about this.]

³ [Editor's note: While Jack Dempsey is a real person, a now-dead former professional boxer, this Jack Dempsey has never existed on this plane.]

1. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/St.+Patrick's+Parish/@49.259673,-123.101537,15z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x0:0x58f16ed3ecd1ff7?sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi3zf0unsrbAhUI04MKHVTjDJ>

2. <https://open.spotify.com/artist/5hbH3dvtk49g07qpc1QwPe?si=owBFFNWxTVar5BG-JqNuMA>

3. <http://songexploder.net/rem>

June 23 - Joss Whedon listens in to a prank gone bad (2018-06-23 02:29)

I'm in the lineup to get into an outdoor restaurant. The couple at the nearest table warns me they might be awhile, which isn't too impactful considering how many other tables there are. All the same, they do look like they're finishing up. They're discussing the merits of different doctors at Vancouver General Hospital, and I happen to know them all so I interrupt periodically to throw in my few cents.

Joss Whedon has planted a tape recorder onto a nearby pole. As two girls walk by, I approach and start saying nonsense, mainly for his future amusement, to see what kind of reaction I can get from them. They catch on to what I'm up to. I try to cover the recorder but they rip it down. I run away but don't know where to go. They enlist help from nearby samaritans. I don't remember if I have a car here so I stop at a payphone and call home, quite scared at this point.

My family all sings me happy birthday because apparently it's my birthday and they were all waiting for me to call. After an expedited thank you in which I try very hard to appear calm, they ask where I want to be picked up. I tell them Tim Hortons even though I don't know where it is.

While waiting for my ride, I pass a group of men and bump into them, thinking they're going to attack me over the recording device, which is highly illegal in this society. They laugh mockingly, like they're the only ones who know this is a dream.

June 24 - Mindy Kaling gives me a stern talking to (2018-06-24 02:32)

I'm playing basketball and getting a lot of steals. Mindy Kaling, who's coaching the other team, takes me aside and asks matter-of-factly, not in a mean way, "Do you think your style of play is helping our girls prepare for their tournament?" I slink away and concede that it's more of a hindrance.

I set up the camera to tape a game of tug of war happening off to the side, but I don't get a chance to check it to see how it looks.

The day after Coachella, Beyoncé posts on Instagram in bed eating ice cream with her two kids and a clearly pregnant belly. I try to show Kelly but it doesn't exist anymore.

Lacey hears I'm coming to Toronto and wants to hang out but without leaving her house. She agrees to have a party, even as she warns that sketchy people will definitely be showing up.

I run into Graeme outside my subway stop. He insists on paying my fare, but the driver doesn't see it and I have to pay again. Finally, I meet up with Romesh and Hogan at Long & McQuade. I find out the store actually have a lifetime return policy on Martins, but I don't consider taking advantage of it. Romesh steals a book, but only after loudly announcing he's putting it back and being a bad sneak.

I leave him to his own shenanigans and start walking down a mime-filled street with Bridger, Matt and a few others. They're very excited to name their new kid Roberto because of how many different names he could go with. According to Bridger, we could call him, "Rob, Robbie, Robert, Bob, Bobby, Bobert, Rubber Toe, Boob, Norbert, Orbit, and there's definitely a ton more!"

June 25 - Ricky Gervais misses out on the buyer's take of a lottery win (2018-06-25 02:37)

Mark wins \$1000 from a Christmas scratch-off. He doesn't offer to share any of the money with anyone else, not even Ricky Gervais, who bought him the ticket, or to a lesser extent me, who scratched the winner for him when he couldn't find a coin. He starts talking about some unrelated nonsense and interrupts himself to tell Kelly to stop chewing so loudly.

She's taken aback but then interrupts him, as she should, to defend herself. "Is it really too loud for you?! I'm across the room sure!"

I pick up a magazine and start reading about these giants who live throughout the universe and can fly and hover effortlessly in essentially any atmosphere or space.

Generally solitary creatures, occasionally one of the giants will stop in to Earth for snacks.

(cut to) A large shadowy figure, moving like one of the Power Rangers during the title scene. The surroundings grow more and more intense.

(quick cut to) The giant is sitting in a field with his human son, on a calm day. It is immediately obvious that this giant has a mental disability.

Giant: "They can't find one bit of food for me to eat! So hungry! At least I managed to scrounge up some of this."

Giant Dad pulls out a massive¹ joint and lights it.

(cut to) I'm in my detective lab, staring at an interactive map that shows the location of any giants with a close proximity to Earth. This is the first time I've ever seen two blips at once. It turns out an evil, aggressive female giant is nearby and will certainly ravage the town. Giant Dad, who is slow on the best of days, is forced to fight her even though he doesn't want to, since he's a peaceful creature, and now he's pretty high.

Ricky smacks the magazine out of my hand and reminds me to finish the shared order Kelly and I had started on DoorDash.

Me (reading my phone): "What's de-jai-drin?"

Kelly (pronouncing it perfectly): "Deux-hi-dreh? It's a membraneless kind of s--"

I interrupt enthusiastically. "Like a soup?!"

Kelly sighs. "Sure, like a soup."

I place the order as Rajiv texts to let me know we have a reservation for [1]Cuchillo tomorrow

night and there are a lot of people coming. I start typing that Lou already made one for a few of us, excluding Rajiv, but the message is getting complicated so I call him instead. The reception is really bad so I tell him to just hang up and I'll go back to texting. He's annoyed and yells, "That's why I texted in the first place!"

Rajiv and I find a seat sale and book a last minute flight to Toronto to surprise my family that's visiting Leah for her birthday. I show up and go, "Hey! I'm here!"

Nobody's surprised. Mark chimes in, "As you should be. Mom bought you a ticket on points months ago." I check my calendar and sure enough, I had a flight booked that I missed, so now I have two return flights.

¹ [Author's note: to me, not to him]

1. <http://www.cuchillo.ca/>

June 26 - Aubrey Plaza is the only one who caught on to an Olympian's plan for military dominance (2018-06-26 02:22)

Aubrey Plaza points out that there's an understated female Olympian who owns a chain of about fifty pharmacies that are essentially equidistant, scattered around the continental United States. She says it in a way like we need to keep our eye on this athlete in case she's setting up military bases that will help her play an integral role in an upcoming war.

Sam and her friends bring over freshly-baked bread, and I eat an unbuttered slice while consciously avoiding thoughts of the war. One of the friends doesn't like the coffee that someone brought, so I offer to make her an espresso-based drink. She accepts, but she won't tell me what kind she wants. This frustrates me to no end.

Sam notes that she's surprised at how little Hallowe'en candy actually gets eaten, something she discovered after reading a longitudinal study based on actual reported numbers. I explain my theory as to why this is the case, which is that we can't combine black liquorice with other candy. "I'm fine with the black ones, more than most people are, but they need to be kept separate." I immediately realize how my statement could come across with no context and so I attempt to retract it, which is impossible.

The war is now assumed to be well underway with no signs of ending anytime soon. Once a year, people on either side of a strategic border¹ toss items to the other side in a display of peace and friendship, showing that they don't share the same views as their government. The tossed items are always white and are very similar to badminton birdies in that they can go far but then float gently to the ground so they don't hurt the people on the opposite side. Each one has a message attached, containing a compliment or an inspirational quote, but never one of those boring [1] platitudes .

A growing antiestablishment movement centres around music. A symbol of this defiance, Julian Casablancas is playing a show in the upstairs section of a dingy bar. Shagg has apparently acquired a bunch of tickets but acknowledges he may be on too many drugs to successfully take them out of his pocket and pass them out to us. I offer to do it for him and he accepts.

The band starts playing, so Peter and I go up to watch. Peter is holding two mallets that he's swinging rather wildly at the keyboard and drums on the stage, while dancing crazily the whole time. Although Julian and the band are ignoring him, I take out my phone to record it because presumably at some point he's going to get called out.

I take a photo and look at it on the screen - it's only Peter in an empty room. I look up and that's what I see in real life too.

¹ Editor's note: Like the Berlin Wall]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-23-happy-birthday-john-oliver/>

June 27 - Khloé Kardashian delivers some bad news (2018-06-27 02:02)

Khloé Kardashian tells me the singer Adele has died.¹

Kelly gets sad when she hears of Adele's death. For an unknown reason, I pretend I didn't already know. We're hosting a party at a hip restaurant. As Dave and Aimee enter, it becomes obvious that she's pregnant, while he has long hair with random patches shaved on his head. Louie is there too, and the hug I give him is awkward. He rightfully calls me out on it, and then we're back to normal. Steve, whose girlfriend is studying hospitality so they can run an island tour guide company together, tells me about a bubble in the middle of the ocean that some water skiers accidentally fall down sometimes. I ask if they keep going forever, assuming the hole is infinite. His reply is, "Not exactly. Well, first they want to fall asleep." Then he either saucily or emphasizingly repeats the word "infinite" over and over.

Now at work, I have to call deceased employees on the phone and ask them where they'd like their picture to be positioned on the company's memorial wall. The first guy who answers is pretty dismissive, like I'm interrupting an important meeting he's having in the afterlife. "I don't care," he says. "Why would I care?" He has a point, and then he hangs up. My next task is to work on a rebranding for our division, with my suggested new names being Glacier Twenties and Glacier Rollers, thinking that we're a sports team.

It's lunch time, but before I'm able to leave the office I am kidnapped from my desk by a masked man who tells me the code name for his mission - Hostage on a Hill. Once on said hill, we toss our food on the ground to distract the terrorists. I try to get Toast to ignore the food but that's not happening.

Our goal is to escape using Google Teleportation², but it's still in beta, so it's very finicky. Aimee and Dave want to get to a movie by 8:00pm. It's 7:40pm now and we still haven't eaten, probably because we used all our food in the earlier terrorist distraction.

¹ [Author's note: This happens in the first dream. Then I wake up and take Toast out for a pee in real life. Everything afterwards occurs after I fall asleep again.]

² [Editor's note: Don't get your hopes up. Not yet, anyway.]

June 28 - Elon Musk gets his attempt to open a Grecian brewery thwarted by parasitic pests (2018-06-28 02:12)

I'm in a cramped office, advising Elon Musk on how to spend his money.

Me: "Try EVERYTHING, no matter how absurd it sounds."

He decides to open a brewery at the top of any ancient hill in Greece. He tries to convince Larry David to do it with him, to no avail. No matter, Elon and I scout locations and almost immediately find a suitable hill.

However, crazy bug parasites unique to the area build their own difficult-to-destroy bodies and brain systems. They attack us, and our guides panic and run away. I step up and beat one to death with a large wooden stick. Elon and the others then look to me to lead them in destroying these invaders, who don't truly die until its core, a tiny beetle-like bug, crawls out and you step on it.

I do not commit to be their principal, but various media sources pick up on my act, and a new journalistic term is born - Founder of Reversal, which refers to content being attributed to who gets the most clicks¹, not who wrote the original piece.

I abscond from Greece in a helicopter, where I watch a movie in which Tim Allen plays John Early's dad and they play off each other really well.

I land in Toronto, where four girls from Newfoundland just moved after finishing high school. They all go into marketing or promotions and become relatively successful. One of them, along with Redman, begins managing Pete Mills, truly believing he can be huge, and "maybe even the next Cobain". She is upset nobody ever considered her part of the St. John's music scene, although realistically she never was.

I visit my family, who now all live in the same building, and an anniversary gift from Newman to Leah is on their wall. It's the standard [1] black chat picture, but the only words written on it are, in Sharpie, "Lo', let's learn anglais!"

I ask if that's racist, and Newman assures me that, "it's not - it's an inside joke." I contend, "Sure, but probably still racist."²

¹ [with their altered version from the same source material)

² [Editor's note: It's not.]

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Chat_Noir

June 29 - Gary Busey steals a plane to relax (2018-06-29 02:22)

Well respected, successful older actor Gary Busey is working on an independent film. On the studio lot, he runs into a director¹ he used to work for. Someone told him this director was hoping to cast him in his next film so he casually asks him about it. The director quickly dismisses the idea. To calm his nerves, Gary steals the director's private jet.

He accidentally lands the plane on Neville Place instead of at the airport. Instead of calling air traffic control, Gary figures he would just go for it and try to get it off the ground from there. I try to convince him that he shouldn't take the chance because it was more than likely that he'd crash into a house and kill some people. But he does it anyway, it's a success and he ends up getting to the airport in time.

Someone was taking a video of the whole thing, and 100,000,000 people saw it online. He becomes a hero, or hero of the day or whatever.

High on heroics, Gary gives me a kidney I don't necessarily need.² I'm spilling water everywhere. I keep apologizing, saying I'll be more careful, and I do put in real effort trying to be sensible, but the spilling continues.

Gary and I discuss how great blood transfusions are, how the rejuvenation is like no other. He had his first one last night and is going to get another one tonight. After that we talk about how great the Donkey Kong franchise is, and it makes me want to play Donkey Kong 64 again.

Instead, Jesse McKeown drives Megan Brown and her friend Jana around a big open desert on a snowmobile. There are words projected onto the clouds. Someone is wearing a cat mask and having sex with a cow, pretending that's a normal thing to do. Marthe is telling story about Andy, really killing it and captivating the room.

I'm a new deadbeat dad, to a baby who's about two months old. I've been around her before, but this is my first actual attempt to act like a father. I smell her head and it's the most incredible scent in the whole world³.

¹ [Editor's note: It's not Francis Ford Coppola, but it might as well have been.]

² [Editor's note: The kidney was Gary's, at least.]

³ [Author's note: The head smell reminds me of this dream I had a few years ago where I smoked crack outside my old university and it was the greatest feeling I'd ever experienced, although it still wasn't enough for me to try crack in real life.]

June 30 - Mike Tyson fires Julie Klausner (2018-06-30 02:13)

We're sitting at Paul Shaffer's piano before trivia starts. I tell my teammates how crazy it is that Paul only had two jobs his whole life¹, first on SNL and then Letterman. Abe mentions that he has a crush on Natasha Leggero. I tell him that's interesting because he looks exactly like Moshe Kasher², and when I go to pull up a picture of Moshe to show him, only pictures of Abe appear.

John Power didn't show up to trivia so I call him to let him know I'll drive everyone to the party afterwards, in case he still felt obliged. When we get there, the drummer from 54-40 takes over in Kinley's new band, and although he's good, he does go a bit crazy with the sticks, intentionally overshadowing everyone else.

Julie Klausner gets fired from her job as a writer for saying, about one of the other staff members, "No, this girl is actually crazy though." Mike Tyson, who's the showrunner, tells her that, "She has mental illness, and you triggered it."

Before she leaves, Julie tries to print something an application for another job on the office computer. The printer runs out of paper, but she doesn't notice and she's nervous anyway so she grabs the paper quickly when someone else comes in. The last page of the application only comes out later, after someone else refills the paper tray. That person, the crazy woman and Julie's nemesis, notices what it is and shows Tyson. He's oddly livid, but quickly gets distracted by a raccoon eating a crow and forgets about Julie.

Julie ends up handing in her application for the new job with the page missing³ so in one day she gets fired and then doesn't get a new job.

I check my closet and it's just coats. I ask Kelly where my clothes are and she says slyly, "in the closet". I look around some more and discover an extra room in our house⁴, full of stuff, including five twin mattresses⁵. There's also half a pack of Reese's Pieces, which leads me to believe I may have previously discovered the room, used it to hide my snacks, then forgot it existed. Kelly and I go for a walk on the beach. There's a tent on the sand with a painting next to it called Good Large Painting. The only text on the artwork says, "Always remember, October 15, 2014." A French guy, several paces ahead of his

friends, walks alongside us on the boardwalk. He keeps speaking so I keep responding, but I'm never sure if he's actually talking to me.

Bobalaban Bobalaban Bobalaban. My brain at wont let me stop saying Bob Balaban over and over. Does this make it my new mantra? I'm dreaming while I'm half awake.

¹ [Editor's note: Mr. Shaffer likely held more jobs than this throughout his life, but the author was absolutely certain of his assertion at the time.] ² [Editor's note: Abe only looks like Moshe Kasher in the dream. Oh yeah, Moshe and Natasha are married.] ³ [Author's note: The missing page made it so that one of her story pitches was cut off mid-sentence, making it seem like Julie was racist.] ⁴ [Editor's note: Many of you may live in large houses where extra rooms are discovered regularly. However, the author lives in Vancouver and would certainly notice an extra room in his house.] ⁵ [Editor's note: Two of these were blow up mattresses.] ⁶ [Editor's note: This may be a reference to the Battle of the Rhyndacus, a Phillippino earthquake, or the origin of the Black Panthers, but my money is on the execution of Catalanian president Lluís Companys.]

1.7 July

July 1 - Missy Elliott gets awoken from a slumberous month (2018-07-01 08:58)

And then I woke up.

Author's note: For anyone following the previous 30 days of birthdays, you may have gathered that each message was essentially a separate dream, with each celebrity featured prominently in the sleep hallucination. You see -

Editor's note: I can't believe you're getting on with this horseshit.

Author's explanatory note: YOU SEE - I've developed this technique where I can select any single person before I fall asleep, and if executed properly, I can ensure that they will be incorporated into my dream. Every night during the month of June, I used this gift -

Editor's exasperated note: A gift? What is this even? No one will believe you. It's like that Bill Murray story you keep -

Author's defensive note: Hey now! You know I was eating a plate of fries after watching a Cubs game and Bill Murray came up and -

Editor's key note: We can't go through this again. Fine, you met Bill Murray and he took your fries. We're getting off track. So you stand by that this "technique" that you "developed" -

Author's historical note: You wouldn't understand, obviously. It's connected to lucid dreaming. When I lived in the Peruvian mountains, I trained with a Yewasca who helped unlock certain powers within me.

Editor's questioning note: Sure it did . So - and hear me out for a minute - is it at all possible that you experienced dreams, wrote them down, and replaced the actual dream characters with the corresponding birthday celebrity? This still requires a rare skill and they won't be less impressed.

Author's nothing note: What are you -

Editor's sleuthy note: And look at the times these were posted. And these all happened the night before their birthday? So most days you woke up at 5:00am to record your dream in writing and take the necessary steps to get it online?

Author's avoidance note: Yeah. I mean, it makes sense. You don't - I only know my own truth and you can't - Oh no, is that the right time? I have to go celebrate Canada's birthday. All dreams are 100 % accurate.

Editor's questioning note: Hundy p?

Author's dejected note: Hundy p...

Editor's smug note: You lie. you're a filthy liar.

July 2 - Scott Aukerman gets an inclusionary Canadian anthem (2018-07-02 03:42)



O and A and E and I and U and sometimes Y Canada!

Our home and native land and seas which are close to our land!
True or false patriot love or disdain in all of us command or suggest
With glowing organs, we sense thee elevation change,
All cardinal directions strong and free and even some weak and enslaved.
From far and wide and near and narrow,
Vowel Canada, we stand and sit and crouch and lie on guard for thee
God or any god-like entity including a fleeting spiritual idea that even one person hap-
pened to believe in for a moment - along with and maybe especially the one invented by
[1] Elrond Cupboard , I think then call him Xena, never mind that's the [2] warrior princess
, but it's something like that - keep our land and sea glorious and free and expensive and
with mild fanfare!
O Canada, we stand, etc. on guard for thee and thou and ye and yow.
O Canada, we stand, etc. on guard for thee, etc.

[Author's note: This is a response to people getting upset about [3]changing a line from the latest version to be gender neutral. What a strange thing to get upset about. I understand the execution might appear to have the opposite effect, but I assure you this is only because now you're the one getting offended about nothing.]

[Editor's note: The author is aware that Canada Day is in fact on July 1. However, since it falls on a Sunday this year, his personal holiday from an 8-hour desk sitting competition is today.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/dream/elrond-cupboard/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/march-29-happy-birthday-lucy-lawless/>
3. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/02/01/canadian-letters-anthem-change_a_23350745/

July 3 - Tom Cruise gets a mid-year breakdown (2018-07-03 03:12)

Well, it's been quite a half-year we've all had, here at iSmith and beyond. People are mad about stuff over there, other people are mad about other stuff in a different place, but most importantly, everyone's mad about something and nobody realizes this has all happened before and will all happen again and there's nothing we can do about it except bask in our own inadequacies.

Fortunately, my daily [1]Celebrity Birthday Messages have been a source of comfort for MANY, and they will continue until the year 2018 has sucked its last breath of cold air, clinging to life through people's inability to remember to write 2019 on correspondence until late January.

At this mid-point, it's important to enlighten myself and my followers and Tom with statistics related to this project, to determine where my loyalties lie, or more accurately, who still uses Twitter.

- 181 days have past - 181 famous people have been greeted.
- 123 men and 58 women were lucky enough to be included. Please refrain from pointing out the large difference here. I am aware.
- These include 76 actors, 38 musicians, 33 comedians, 10 writers, 6 television personalities, 5 athletes, 3 filmmakers, 2 journalists, 2 businesspeople, 1 chef, 1 whistleblower, 1 politicians, 1 magician, 1 model and 1 radio host. In one of the many Venn diagrams created for fun and for learning, 18 fit into the category of "white male comedian", a relatively high number but understandable considering it should have been a goal of mine to be included in that segment of the population.
- 134 of them can be described at first glance as "white".
- 12 are Canadians, 8 are younger than me, 2 are somehow named [2]Jo[3]ss, and 1 is now dead ([4]RIP Verne).
- I've seen 16 of these celebrities in real life, while speaking briefly with 2.
- 6 favoured their corresponding post, with [5]Chantal being the only one who appeared to truly [6]appreciate it.
- Only 1 will die completely alone, only realizing at the end that fame and money and power and celebrity status is as useless as nuntits and as hindering as the Hinderburg. I'm looking at you, [7]Enrique.

1. <http://ismith.ca/happy-birthday/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-11-happy-birthday-joss-stone/>
3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/june-23-happy-birthday-joss-whedon/>
4. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-1-verne-troyer/>
5. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/may-18-happy-birthday-chantal-kreviazuk/>
6. <https://twitter.com/chantalkreviaz/status/997520009172733952>
7. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/may-8-happy-birthday-enrique-iglesias/>

July 4 - Geraldo Rivera gets the Untitled School of America (2018-07-04 03:36)

As a Canadian, rarely directly impacted by the goings-on of my southern neighbors, it occurred to me that the United States have always reminded me of an overcrowded junior high public school classroom, with each of the fifty states as a different student, seated in their Mercator map arrangement.

- The Southern states all hang out together in back of room, talking about how great school was when they were in kindergarten and all they had to worry about was how to jump over a stick.
- The New England clique thinks they have it all figured out, but it's only because they're insulated from a lot of the class politics since their helicopter parents run the PTA.

- The Four Corners are the two insufferable couples who make out behind the bleachers during important football games.
- Michigan and Illinois think they have more important things to do than sit down all day listening to stuff that'll never help them in the real world, and they're not all wrong.
- Wisconsin and Minnesota and the northeast of Dakotas are the goody-too-shoes sitting at the front, attentive but still a little behind.
- Bubbly California is either staring out the window or annoying Oregon with talks of starting her own classroom with less people in it.
- Big fat real man Texas, whose twin Oklahoma had the cord wrapped around its neck a little too tight on its way out, is on his last warning from all the yelling.
- Nebraska and Kansas are hiding in plain sight, unnoticed and unobtrusive, never to amount to anything more than middle-of-the-class, middle-of-the-road, middle-of-the-cookie average regulars.
- New York is texting her older friends, mostly about cool stuff like smoking and swearing.
- Hawaii is suspended, for bringing a bit of pineapple to school when they were CLEARLY told that pineapples are basically durians which are basically weapons which basically means they're a mass murdering school shooter.
- Alaska is gone to the bathroom (#1), but they're treating the hall pass as a golden passport, so they better be careful or the hall monitor (Puerto Rico?) will slap them.
- Utah is the foreign exchange student nobody else talks to.
- Florida's been trying to get her bookbag in a cubby that's far too small for her backpack since first period, but no one else has the heart to let her know she needs a new knapsack.

So I guess the current president is the substitute teacher who can't control the class and doesn't know how to deal with everyone. He's doodling boobs on the blackboard hoping no one will ask him to do anything, waiting for Mr. Obama to come back from holidays so he can go back to looking at trucks and other larger trucks.

July 5 - Nardwuar the Human Serviette gets one hundred years of solitaire (2018-07-05 03:46)

Year 1: Ohhhhh, black on red, red on black.

Year 4: Ohhhhh, the number on the card needs to be slightly lower than the one it goes on.

Year 17: Ohhhh, jacks and queens and kings are like elevens and twelves and thirteens

Year 33: Ohhhh, aces go off to the side.

Year 37: Aces are like ones.

Year 41: Aces collect numbers higher than the ones they represent, backwards from the other way around

Year 53: Nothing goes higher than a king.

Year 60: You flip three cards at a time from the deck.

Year 61: You can only do something with the top one of those three.

Years 62-99: Reallllly figuring it out.

Year 100:



IFRAME: [1]<https://giphy.com/embed/exTeXkpa1h6CI>

[Editor's note: The author has just finished reading "One Hundred Years of Solitude" but thought it was called something else the whole time.]

1. <https://giphy.com/embed/exTeXkpa1h6CI>

July 6 - Dalai Lama gets a recovering eagle-maniac (2018-07-06 02:44)

Like many of my ilk, your teachings have inspired me, guiding me towards enlightenment and bravery and kindness and the river. You spoke to me, a real change brewed, after a public advisory to let go of all of our eagles, as an eagle-less society is the only true path to freedom. I tattooed your thesis on my back. "The foundation of the Buddha's teachings lies in compassion, and the reason for practicing the teachings is to wipe out the persistence of eagle, the number-one enemy of compassion."

You see, I admit with a heavy yet honest heart that I was once an unabashed eagle-maniac.

Their wingspan, the soaring ability (likely at least somewhat correlated with that sweet wingspan), that beak, an unfiltered stoicism - jaysus, I could go on for at least six more desirable traits. The eagle has captivated our minds and imaginations since the first one ate an adolescent raven and still had room for dessert.

When Alanis Morissette famously declared, "the eagle is a fascinating monster," we all nodded in agreement, and some of the more financially-endowed among us went out and got themselves one to keep as a pet. Along with myself, Alejandro Jodorowsky was one of those, and he has since mastered control over his bird and won't shut up about it, like when he said, without prompting, "My eagle every day is more and more polite. I tame it."

George Michael kept a full flock at his home, but gave them all over to the San Diego Zoo when he realized they kept him isolated from his own species. "The more time you spend with your eagle, the less you care about other people." "It takes so much strength to say to your eagle, 'You know what? You're going to keep me lonely, so I have to ignore you.'" Yakov Smirnoff reiterated the sentiment when he looked around and had only one true friend, and it was of the avian variety. "I fed my eagle, but not my soul." Famed reclusive chessmaster Bobby Fischer, in his later years, also became a legend in the lesser-known underground human-eagle fighting world, letting it slip in an interview with CNN. "I like the moment when I break a man's eagle."

I would stroke my eagle relentlessly, but your words finally resonated with me. It is a dangerous beast, and it must live free, on its own, in the nature and such. So one day, I took my eagle to the top of a mountain, the side of a cliff, and I let it go. A wave of certainty washed over me, and my mind became clear. At this time, I can finally say that the ego has landed, and I am at peace.

July 7 - Jim Gaffigan learns about natural oneders (2018-07-07 02:49)

Some things get the right amount of credit, and some things too much. But we're not talking about sensible loans or firefighters right now. We will be focusing on the little guys, the underdogs, fighting

for a place at the table when they should be sitting on a throne yelling at the people eating at the table. For instance... oh, I don't know - NATURE.

Water happens to be the main thing we need to live, along with oxygen, but you can't see that one so there's no way to tell if it actually exists. Water is basically everywhere, thank god. But the ocean? Don't get me started. The ocean must be respected. And when you're really thirsty, like super hungover or crawling through a deserted sandy region, you'd do anything for a sip of water.

You'd massage a hippo even if your hands couldn't really get in there and even if he insisted on being critical of your technique. You'd search for your mother in a corn field and stick a big ear of corn into her ear, if that happened to be the sole requirement to get a bit of water. As someone who's been dehydrated and subsequently pranked by a water-rich rich guy, the corn ear is all too real, but all too necessary as well. You would do that, no matter what face you're making right now.

Moving on to the mountains beyond mountains - there's nothing more impressive than these gargantuan earthlings. Some are volcanoes, others are ski hills, some are just there, but either way you do what you can to not get stuck on one in late November.

Yes sir, animals, plants, mushrooms, psychedelic frogs have all earned their place in this great big nature we call home. And we haven't even gotten to the unwavering, disaster-causing parts of it.

Lightning, long been declared to be Thor's glorious member stabbing the earth, laughing maniacally with each forceful thrust, is scare-e. If you don't know who Thor is, read a book, you abecedarian. A real book, not one of those Horny Plopper fetish fan fictions.

So apparently, that whole Thor thing was made up by some octogenarian in the wayback days because we couldn't come up with anything that made more sense. But since then, we learned that lightning comes from the ground (maybe). The explanation still works. It's likely that someone buried Thor alive, probably Loki, and lightning is now his protrusion helping him escape. I'm not sure about much, but I do know that no matter what, lightning is Thor's thing, and Thor's thing is breathtaking.

And now earthquakes. More than a cool wrestler from the less wayback days, the earthquake is nature's seizure, occurring when the ground contracts nature's meningitis. If you've never experienced a bad one, a quake feels like that time your grandparents moved into the bedroom above yours and your grampa discovered Viagra and went back to doin' it like post-apocalyptic rabbits, the much hornier kind of rabbits.

What I'm getting at here is don't take this all for granted, as we are all one with each other and the universe at large.

[Editor's note: The author didn't want you to know this, for fear of a reprimand or cease-and-desist, but he once released a single song under the moniker Jimothy Goof-Again! He won't let me link to it here, but trust me, it's shite.]

July 8 - Milo Ventimiglia gets an unending twenty miles to a destined nation (2018-07-08 02:17)

[1]Twe[2]nty [3]two years ago, my parents took us out of school for the spring so we could travel around some of the more vineyardy European countries, seeing the sights and the lights and on one memorable occasion, undergoing plights.

After several days touring the very nice Nice and experiencing all that Cannes can offer, we head east along the coast to visit Genoa, birth city of transatlantic explorer Giovanni Caboto, whose ship The Matthew touched down in 1497 on our home island of Newfoundland.

My father is driving, the dusk sky is already making the roads difficult to read, and Google Maps is merely a twinkling in the Rasmussens's Danish eyes. A straight shot should get us there, but the highways morph into each other and we are quickly lost. Dad is not as prideful as the American fathers from tropey sitcoms, so we ask for directions somewhere in southern Italy. A southern Italian comes to our aid with a pointing index finger and a single word: "Ventimiglia!"

Twenty miles? Dad figured it was still a few hours away, but we must have run into a warp zone somewhere along the French Riviera. We drive for another twenty-five miles in the pointed direction and still no signs appear for Genoa or its variant of Genova. We stop another English-less couple walking down the highway. Again, assured pointing in the same direction and another "Ventimiglia!"

The above-mentioned portal may have put us in a continuous feedback loop, but with little alternative, we drive another twenty signless miles. A woman outside a gas station is smoking in a way that makes my ten-year-old brain want to pick up the habit. We pull over and ask her how to get to Genoa. It quickly becomes evident that she is a prostitute and, even looking into a car full of a wayward Canadian family, she still tries to make a sale. She's denied, but amidst a gibbering rant centred around wasting her time, she repeats to us what is now undoubted a glitch in a pre-Matrix matrix. "VENTIMIGLIA!!!"

Screeching away, we continue on in silence as if this twenty miles has to get us to where we're headed. Still, there is no signage and no indication we will ever sleep outside of this car again. An hour later, with all nervous laughter subsided and dejecting crying exhausted, we arrive in Genoa to little fanfare. We begin our hunt for a place to stay, but all we see are Formule 1s, which we assume are mechanic shops. With nowhere else to turn, Dad accedes to dropping a pile of money dollars on a room in a swanky hotel that's right in front of us.

Later, after finding an English speaker we find out Formule 1s are low-budget accommodations, which would have been perfect for us low-budget accommodators. Seconds later, after finding out we'll be going back to France the next day, the woman happens to bring up the best way to get there. "It may not be the fastest route, but the most beautiful ride follows the coast, along the highway Ventimiglia."

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgFeZr5ptV8>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWjNFC-FinU>
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeuXFTOD_KA

July 9 - Tom Hanks gets the colours of time (2018-07-09 02:24)

Each era mines a different colour that comes to represent the time. This associated hue determines the design style of that period and reflects the overall sentiment. While it can be influenced by politics and technology, for the most part, the atmosphere imitates its surroundings to resonate throughout the culture.

Right now, in these nouveau 10s, we live in fluorescentish blue (#2493ab) . Staring so deep so often into the laptop light, it is easy to see why. The overall political and economic landscape, shifting ever so slightly to the right and increasingly deifying wealth, envelops the world with a bright blue aura. The sky's reflection is more distinct than it was in the past, and more and more of the fashionable outfits either contain a blue vibration or base their stain on a fabric that does.

The 1960s were a soft orange (#dd9334) , burning outsiders and welcoming fire, an other-worldly flame to hold towards the idols of the time. Lighters and the disestablishment together pronounced the nearly burnt sienna. The 40s consisted of a grey (#6b6f70) , from Milton Berle's suits to his translated complexion on newly acquired televisions. Neon green (#34da0e) finally emerged in the 1980s, a bold change from the drab, listless brown of the 70s. The carpets became discos, the utility buildings shot out glow sticks, and radioactivity was more exciting than it was scary.

The land before time is a dark, muddled green (#113e15) . As it all emerged from the ooze, this was the safest tone to usher us to the next level. The years encompassing the newest testament bleed an approximation of yellow (#ab9713) , hinting at but never reaching gold. The near future has no alternative but to be a red wine (#780606) , out of morbid curiosity and a necessary return to certain prehistoric problems. The deep crimson will tie us to the microscopic life, keeping us from disintegrating, forcing our assessment that we're nothing without mutual relationships.

The far future will first consolidate, its tint pronouncing an amalgamation of every pigment, readying itself to appear as one as the world around it implodes and leaves nothing behind, leading to the ultimate colour of black (#000000) or white (#ffffff) . At that point, it will be too loud to discern with any degree of accuracy, and so we start again.

July 10 - Sofia Vergara gets a former young girl's investigation of death (2018-07-10 02:07)

I went to the hospital today. I don't remember being here before but Mommy told me this was the first place I ever was. Half of me came out of Daddy and went to find the other half that was hiding in her belly. The two parts of me waved when they saw each other and when they touched it made me. We came here to visit Mommy's Mommy. She was in a small bed that moved up and down and she was here for a long time. She looked different than I remember her. She wasn't fat like before and she smelled funnier than usual, which was still pretty funny. And she said she didn't know who I was, but I think she was just playing games. We play hide-and-go-seek sometimes and sometimes when I find her hiding in the closet she pretends she's a different person and that I didn't really find her even

when I did find her. Today she pretended I was a different person. She kept calling me Laura. Laura is Mommy's sister, but she lives in Toronto and I only visited her once and she bought me a book that I lost somewhere. After I talked to Nana for a minute a tall man I never knew before told us we had to go because they had to help my Nana and needed to do it in secret. We waited outside the room and Daddy went for a walk to the car to smoke a cigarette but I couldn't go with him even though it was really warm in here and I wanted to go outside. A nice woman brought me a juice and we smiled at each other for a long time. She was funny. It was boring out there and nobody around me was very happy. Maybe because it was so dark in here and it smelled funny. I didn't really like where I was too because I wanted to go to Sam's birthday party because we were supposed to see The Muppets and it looks funny. After a long time of not doing anything the first man came out and looked really sad but I don't think he was really sad but he pretended to be sad. He told Mommy that he was really sorry and I heard him say that even though he tried to not let me hear him. I thought he hurt Nana because he said he was sorry and Mommy started to cry a little bit but not a lot. But Mommy picked me up and hugged me a lot and told me the man didn't hurt her but that she was gone. I asked her where did she go and I don't know why but I thought she was going to say she went to the moon for a visit even though I don't think anybody goes to the moon because it's too small. Mommy laughed a little bit but she was still crying too so I wiped her eyes for her. That made her cry more so I thought I did something wrong but she told me I didn't do anything wrong. I wanted to see Nana again but after Daddy came back from going for another walk he told me I couldn't see her anymore. I asked when could I see her again and he said I couldn't see her ever again. That made me sad so I asked if she was mad at me but Mommy said she loved me a lot and wasn't mad at me so I felt better.

After a lengthy discussion with both of my parents concerning the issue, I believe I finally grasped why I could never see my grandmother again. Apparently, she had "died". This is a term used when a human, or any living organism for that matter, ceases to exist in this realm after a period of alert consciousness. People are able to "die" at any time, and a great portion of our lives is dedicated to preventing this death from occurring. One is composed of several vital organs, which include the heart, the brain, and other such internal structures that I have never seen but am told that I possess. These organs are capable of failing if not properly cared for, and when they become unable to perform their respective functions efficiently, the person's body and mind suffer greatly. Unfortunately, as we age, our chances of falling victim to the Grim Reaper, as death is occasionally personified, increases greatly, and very few of us are able to elude death beyond a century of life. My grandmother lasted just sixty-seven years, which is less than the average lifespan of a white female woman living in our country but is also much more than average human being on our planet. I am four-and-a-half years old, and my mother informed me that I would probably not die for a very long time and should not really concern myself with such matters at this time. However, since the process of death is as natural as life itself, I should learn about its causes and consequences in order to better cope with the deaths of those around me and especially those I love. I guess I'm glad I found out about death today, but discovering its existence is a scary, depressing thought, and I am afraid that it will consume much of my energy in the future, and not in a positive way.

Except this time, really, cause Grandma was a real you-know-what and didn't even get me a frigging Christmas present last year and she has shitty candy in her house that she thinks are good but they're too frigging hard and I hurt my teeth when I bite into them and they don't even taste good too.

[Editor's note: This was originally published in 2013, but there were swears in that version and I want to show the progress that we've all made. I also left the rest of it intact in order to preserve a semblance of history.]

July 11 - Richie Sambora gets the search engine optimized plumber (2018-07-11 02:20)

One reason someone has seen fit that a multi-national corporation would benefit from regularly giving me money is that I'm able to successfully move websites up the rankings on the Google. This skill is transferable to other jobs, I'm sure, and I'm counting on it as a jumping off point into my new career as a plumber.

To start, I've built a decent website for a preliminary plumbing company, with my smiling face next to the title of President, and two entirely photoshopped underlings as my labourers. I'm optimizing the site like the pro that I am, by writing engaging content, creating satisfied testimonials, and developing solid backlinks. Getting to the first page was a cinch, and it didn't take long to start getting calls from and commissioned by visitors expecting the high level of service my site promises.

So what happens is I show up at a customer's house, looking all professional in the context, and when I'm left alone with their pipes, I screw around for a bit, pretending I know what I'm doing. Then at the end, the work is admittedly usually garbage, and sometimes they understandably refuse to pay me. But what a laugh! And then the more I'm doing it, the more I start doing a decent enough job. I got a good data plan so I look up videos online and can sometimes half figure out what I'm at. Or the client is too timid to actually withhold payment. I'm learning new skills all the time, getting some money, and before you know it, I'm plumbing the shit out of a bunch of houses. Suddenly I'm a real plumber, phony website be damned.

But you see, having my own business was never the end goal. I've always seen myself as more of a background craftsman, and my skill set aligns more with that of the fluffer plumber. Once I advanced my skills enough, I applied to work with a bit of a local legend in the field, Ken "Mick" Mickleby, and he was all about it. I basically open for him by getting to the job site a little early. I warm up the customer by cracking a few timely and customer-specific jokes, and then loosen a few nuts to make sure the stage is set for Mick to work his magic. He strolls in determined, gets right down to it, and in no time at all the house is re-plumbed to perfection.

I'm obviously excited to be such a major part of Mick's team, and I also know enough to know he's been at it long enough to no longer find it that exciting. So I give him his space, and don't force the conversation, which he respects. After a few too many well whiskeys, he gets outwardly curious, mentioning what a well-oiled assistant I am, almost getting to the point of complimenting my social awareness but instead passing out, slumped over. And only then do I complete my secret main goal from the beginning and take a picture of the two of us - best co-workers, best plumbers, and best friends.

July 12 - Malala Yousafzai finally understands how one can hate (2018-07-12 02:32)

Hate is a strong word used to describe strong feelings towards things one does not like or is against or is a sports team that is based in a different city than one's own. While it is often overused, in reference to such situations as the driver in front of you not noticing the light turning green until several seconds have passed and objects like an acutely slow mobile phone, it should really be reserved for the most extremes of negativity in a subjective experience. Celebrities, due simply to the numbers game of being recognizable to so many people, will unknowingly and knowingly have hate directed towards them, even when the perpetrator does not in fact truly hate them but simply cannot quickly bring to mind another more subtle emotion to express a more realistic toned-down version of the sentiment. So it is unfair to hate Justin Bieber or Ralph Maggio or even Kim Jong-Un, when to us all, all they can really do is represent something we claim to hate. In reality we are not informed enough to provide such an opinion, but our hatred for these ideas is reinforced by others who will validate our assertions, and this only serves to exacerbate the issue. When you hate, there is no scenario in which you will not hate. You have shown myself and many around the world that hate is not only unnecessary and counterintuitive, but also goes against everything we should be standing for, no matter what.

Having said that, I hate hate hate hate Chris Hardwick. Oddly enough this is in no way related to the fact that he is a stand-up comedian, actor, voice actor, screenwriter, musician, and podcaster, all roles that I aspire to or to have. I honestly could not be less jealous of this egotistical little twit. He is a hard worker, I have no doubt, and unfortunately, hard work and persistence are positively correlated with success.

I do not understand how his podcast continues to attract interesting and intelligent and funny and thoughtful guests when the interviewer they're forced to converse with is nothing more than a relentless kiss-ass asshole. He talks about Singled Out like it was as timeless as Seinfeld and had the cultural impact of Friends. The One Where Chris Hardwick Dies in a Fire - I'd stop flicking through the channels if that rerun was on. I imagine ripping his lips off that undeserved perpetual grin and in turn seeing his eyes disintegrate and his nose fly away, since lips probably hold together a face.

If he dies, I'll have to pretend that I didn't hate him if somebody brings him up in conversation because why would I show such contempt for a dead man I haven't even met. So in actuality I hate him so much that I don't even want him to die. I was actually upset when he got in a car accident that time because I had to pretend I felt bad for him. Well being dead wouldn't make him any less insufferable or hateable.

[Editor's note: This was written before it was [1] publicly known that Hardwick was a real id10t piece of shit. The author did not even know this privately, which is why he felt he was treating the guy unfairly with his hate and therefore hid the sentiment from others. However, he did have a really good feeling he was right about him all along. He likes to think he could see through his faux-sincerity right down to his frothy, filthy soul. It's like how we all thought [2] Jian Ghomeshi handled Billy Bob Thornton's strange outburst really well, when in fact Billy Bob either knew or could sense [3] Jian's sickening nature well enough to tell him where to go.]

1. <https://medium.com/@skydart/rose-colored-glasses-6be0594970ca>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJWS6qyy7bw>
3. <https://www.chatelaine.com/news/features/i-tried-to-warn-women-about-jian-ghomeshi-and-it-nearly-destroyed-my-life/>

July 13 - Ken Jeong gets alpha beat (2018-07-13 02:54)

Do you know why the alphabet is in the specific order that it is? Is it because of that song? If that's the only reason, for the seven's sake, let's mix it up. As we forge forth, I propose to make my order of favourites the new world alphabet.

This choice sequence, with no shadows or doubts, is JSZBQGACXKPLMNODVUHETRIYFW. No need for all of those syllables, W - you're embarrassing yourself. LMNO remains in sequence because it's fun to say.

Someone once tested me on what my preferred letter of the alphabet was: a) C. b) D. c) B. d) A. My answer? e) None of the above. It's actually W, primarily because commands respect with those extra syllables, three times as many more than its nearest competitor, every other letter! I contradict because I cause. Most of that was a lie. My favourite letter is really Y. The physical lines are sensual in a way that a K just couldn't get into. Q gets a bad rap because of its dependence on u, but anyone whose spelling is just adding a bunch of silent vowels is my kind of character. "Alphabet" is just an abbreviation for "Alphabeta gamma delta epsilon zeta eta theta iota kappa lambda mu nu xi omicron pi rho sigma tau upsilon phi chi psi omega" anyway.

And anyway, what are we still doing using QWERTY keyboards. AZERTY is fine, I suppose, and Maltron is for the cultish, but gimme dat Dvorak, you know. I'm sure Radek would agree, even the bonky one.

July 14 - Jane Lynch gets stuck with a bumper's cryptic message (2018-07-14 02:06)

The other day I'm driving behind this truck and notice its lone bumper sticker that read, "I may be old, but at least I still have my hands." Confused as an autumnal Chinese philosopher, I repeat the declaration out loud several times, even turning off my music so I can devote my full attention to its analysis. Still, I remain at a loss for its meaning, although I do have an unlikely explanation that is the closest I will come without outside help.

This decalomania must contain a custom-made, personalized and utterly specific retort against a young, handless person who once quipped - hilariously and publicly I'm sure, enough to embarrass the sticker's writer to no end - about the car owner's age. Something along the lines of, "Hey old man, you may die ere the sun lit the ant!" His handful of handful friends would have laughed, although maybe only out of politeness, since the attempted insult turned out to be nothing more than several tiny words strung together in a grammatically acceptable sentence. But the elderly guy, who as we

now know is mostly deaf, assumed based on the laughter that he was the butt of everyone's joke, so he drove his truck straight to the local print shop and got the bumping sticker made in case his bully ever ended up behind him in a traffic jam. Normally, the handless handles his business with genuine class, but no one could deny his line was out of touch and needlessly rude.

Now there aren't a ton of cool people without hands floating around, like yer man here. But I once wrote this song [1] Handless Musician , so it's entirely possible my fictional eponymous character is the person who quipped said quip. If so, I sincerely apologize that one of my creations could be so rude, and yet I'm conflicted, as is my musician, because his emotional negligence prompted a sincere piece of art in the form of this bumper sticker. Negativity, as it has many times before, begat art, and who among us wishes to put a stop to that?

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/handless-musician>

July 15 - Jesse Ventura gets a corpse collector's prelude (2018-07-15 02:37)

Last year, about four thousand people successfully scaled Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. It isn't the hardest climb in the world, or the longest, but it is the highest. And that's all anybody cares about. Many alpinists see its apex as a rite of passage into the elite group of Hillarians, and I suppose it is.

It takes twelve days just to get to base camp. Over the next several weeks, a prospective sum- miter must wait at successive camps for a certain amount of time, allowing their bodies to adjust to the new atmosphere before they can continue on.

An experienced hiker knows when to turn back. Anyone blinded by what the zenith represents does not. So while those four thousand completed their goal, and two thousand more started the ascent but gave up and turned back before finishing. Other than these adherers to caution, over six hundred determined explorers from all over the world died on the route to the pinnacle. Even as it became obvious there was no favourable outcome, they refused to quit. Supplies dwindling and conditions worsening, still they continued their attempts, only to have their frozen deoxygenated bodies rest indefinitely in the middle of the path.

The Nepalese government, to ensure that surmounting Everest remains a worthwhile attrac- tion, employs two of its mountain men to retrieve the vessels that once contained these unfortunate souls. I am one of these men. I am the corpse collector, my partner and best friend just died beside me, and I can't go on.

July 16 - Barry Sanders gets a fictional second meeting with a local filmmaker (2018-07-16 02:08)

Mara: Ian, do you know Jordan?

Jordan: Nice to meet you.

Ian: We've actually met before, but I'm kind of glad you don't remember.

Jordan: Why, what happened?

Ian: Well it was at a party at Emily and Matt's last Christmas. You seemed pretty sober.

Jordan: Yeah, I was driving that night. Boxing Day, right, when they got married?

Ian: So Tim introduced us just as I got to the house, and after a couple of minutes I said, "I really liked that movie you did that took place at The Sprout."

Jordan: I didn't make a mov —

Ian: I know, that's what you told me. So I said, "Are you sure?" still thinking I was right, which I know I wasn't. But then I said, "Well that short you made with the couple on the swings, that one was great." And you told me you never made that one either. I slunk away as the embarrassment forced me to. But then, after the party I went online to check, and you do indeed have a short, "Seconds", where there's a kid on the swing.

Jordan: Oh yeah, that's probably what you were thinking of.

Ian: Then why did you pretend you never made the film? I had a single detail wrong, sure, but you made me feel like a buffoon.

Jordan: Maybe you are a buffoon.

[Author's note: Oh no. Maybe I am.]

July 17 - David Hasselhoff gets the days the music did stuff (2018-07-17 02:29)

You know about music, enough to make it with your little sing songs anyway. But do any of us really know music? It had lived a life, and in the end, that's all anyone can ever hope for. Formative and other moments be as follows:

September 2, 1914 - The day the music lost its first tooth.

January 30, 1930 - The day the music had a hangover and didn't get out of bed until noon but at least there was some poutine left on the side table from the night before. And some water too. Drunk music always looks out for hungover music. Somehow music didn't even have to pee. It hoped that didn't mean it peed the bed. Everything felt dry enough and turned out okay.

August 11, 1941 - The day the music lost its keys and was late picking its kids up from its ex's place. Music looked everywhere for them - its pockets from the pants it wore the day before, its coat, the kitchen table. It did laundry so it's possible the keys are in the basement in the dryer, but it likely would have noticed them during the transfer from the washing machine.

February 3, 1959 - The day the music died.

February 8, 1959 - The day the music's funeral took place, a lovely service down at St. Michael's. The turnout surpassed music's family's expectations. It was clear that music had meant a lot to a lot of people, but no amount of crying was going to bring it back.

November 13, 1977 - The day the music's grave was robbed. The offender had heard stories and believed that inside the coffin was an amount of gold that music wanted to be buried with, but it turned out he was too late. The preacher overseeing the service in 1959 had had significant gambling debts and removed any valuables before the casket was lowered into the ground.

July 18 - Kristen Bell gets the days other things happened (2018-07-18 02:25)

With [1] music already come and gone , we must press on together to find out what else happened when:

June 16, 1940 - The day Wilford Brimley's swimming instructor is corrected when he praises his student's natural fishiness with a, "Great job, Wilfred!"

February 16, 1955 - The day Burt Francis successfully walks the fine line between confidence and arrogance.

April 22, 1996 - The day of the airing of the final episode of a long-running sitcom set primarily in a high school, which concludes when the most important teacher, who has always represented the show's creator, turns off the light in an empty classroom as they look longingly at the emptier desks and says, "Class dismissed."

December 4, 2004 - The day of the final of an international Scrabble tournament, in which the overwhelming favourite is unable to find a place to lay his already collected tiles that make up "j-a-z-z-i-l-y".

June 14, 2017 - The day the overweight overtook the underweight.

January 1, 2019 - The day Peter Gallagher tweezes his eyebrows for the first and only regrettable time.

January 3, 2019 - The day Slavoj Žižek, recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's, forgets who he is.

June 4, 2023 - The day the eight billionth living human popped out.

March 23, 2025 - The day that Tim Gurtz, after spending the better part of a decade in the Ural mountains learning Russian in order to fully appreciate Tolstoy, finishes War and Peace with a yawn and reconsiders his life.

May 28, 2026 - The day that the Linguistic Institute of Speech Pathology is founded, with none of the seven original board members noticing its acronym.

September 21, 2034 - The day that fishtank underwear ends its reign as top summer Pacific Northwestern fad.

November 7, 2038 - The day that an inflatable moose head gazes widely at a sentient virtual assistant.

Emptober 33, Year of the Dependent Adults - The day that the octahedron earthers are proven right, to little fanfare.

December 31, 2099 - The day the world shut down. Finally. Sheesh.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/july-17-happy-birthday-david-hasselhoff/>

July 19 - Jim Norton gets a Colombian standoff (2018-07-19 02:09)

Kelly and I land in Colombia at night and take a taxi to the place we're staying. After dropping off our bags, we go for a walk around Cartagena's Walled City. The streets are mostly deserted, but the first person encountered approaches us in broken English with what will soon become a familiar recitation.

"Amigo! Where you from?"

"Oh, hey. We're Canadian."

"Ah! Toronto, Vancouver. My brother live there. How long in Colombia?"

"We've been here twenty minutes. Just landed."

"You like beer? Come with me! I Peter."

We follow Peter into a nearby store where around twelve people are sitting haphazardly, bright lights and loud music surrounding them. The back corner has a hole in the ground and a small saloon-style door that together form a makeshift bathroom. An unwatched television hanging from the ceiling plays an evidently-popular singing competition. I'm still getting my bearings as he pushes a Club Colombia cerveza into my hand. I go for my wallet but he stops me.

"Don't worry about it, my friend. I buy this one."

He introduces us to a few of his own amigos. We try to converse, albeit in a limited way, but the volume of the room is deafening, even if we did all speak the same language. He shows me a

book that's helping him learn English and gives us each a bracelet that he claims to make himself, before getting down to brass tacks.

"You like the white stuff?"

"Nah, not really."

"Yeah you do, my man. It's the best. Colombian."

I figured the cocaine being offered was from Colombia, even without his confirmation. Still, I turn my attention towards the television, as if I need to know who's moving on to the next round.

It occurs to me that neglecting to try coke in Colombia is like going to France and not sleeping with a mime, but I can't risk it. I had surgery recently and am on too many prescribed drugs to toss another one into the mix.

We stick around for another hour, buying Peter and his friends a couple of beer, and then I thank them for their hospitality. We're tired from the flight so we leave to head back to the hotel.

He chases us down and guides us to a stall selling shrimp, where I inadvertently order a cupful. We sit together at the outdoor table and continue talking. A man he said previously is his brother takes a seat next to me and slyly lays a baggie containing about a quarter ounce of cocaine into my hand.

I try to hand it back but he refuses and walks away. I look at Peter, who tells me I now need to give him several thousand pesos, a currency for which I have no concept when it comes to the exchange rate from the Canadian dollar. Instead I give him the unsolicited bag.

"No, no, this is yours now. If you don't take it, I will be disappointed and my boss will be mad. You don't want my boss to be mad."

I concede that I don't want his boss to be mad, but I make it known I don't have any money and also don't want any cocaine.

"That's okay. We go to ATM."

"Well, it's not really okay."

The back-and-forth continues for a while until I make it very clear this transaction won't be going ahead as planned with a half lie.

"I have cancer. My doctors said I can't do cocaine."

Peter's eyes finally acknowledge that there's more to life than that cocaine cow money. Still, after saying he feels bad for me, he tells us we do owe him for the shoddy bracelets from earlier.

"Twenty American dollars."

Luckily I have that cash on hand and am happy to accept the minimal extortion in order to get the hell out of there.

July 20 - Judy Greer gets an allergy reaction (2018-07-20 02:17)

I am sitting in my desk on the first day of school, next to a new girl who appears nervous, as she should. The principal's voice can be heard over the intercom. "We have a new student in Grade 2 this year. Her name is Heather. She is allergic to peanut butter, so no one is allowed to bring any food containing peanuts for recess or lunch. A little girl was never despised so much so quickly. The future contains every second kid being a big nerd who's allergic to everything, but for now, for most of us this is the first we've encountered the condition in a way that directly impacts how we can live. Seven years of age is no time to be forgoing the primary ingredient in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, but here is where we find ourselves.

The delicious nutty spread is relegated to home, and lunchtime will never be the same. Never the most patient child, a week into our new lives, I am the first in our class to openly declare a loathing for people with allergies. I am careful not to direct this towards Heather, like she wouldn't know or something. Heather moved away two years later, after making a single friend, and one glorious January day we went back to eating peanut butter freely.

I have never come to grips with my unfair disdain for the allergics. They should adjust their lives for us, not the other way around. Heather and her ilk should be wearing masks. I stand by my childish stance, even now. Many of these sensitivities develop from the absence of the allergen early in the person's life. A sheltered child, helicoptered away from nuts, shellfish and the outdoors, will understandably become intolerant of peanut butters, shrimps and pollens. It takes a few scrapes to figure out your way in the world, and the earlier you can start getting knocked around, the better off you'll be. Coincidence or not, none of my really good friends have serious allergies, just the way I like it.

[Author's note: On a weird somewhat-related note, most of my good friends are also the youngest child in a family of three kids.]

July 21 - Yusuf Cat Islam Stevens gets eulopologetical (2018-07-21 02:24)

Around twice a year, I relay an anecdote in which I apologized to someone I mistreated in the past. It didn't actually happen. The apology didn't, anyway. The mistreatment did. By pretending that I have apologized, it almost feels as though I have, without the actual confrontation or admission of assholery to the offended party.

At this point the apology would be for me anyway, not him. It's possible he doesn't remember, or that it had no negative impact on his current life. I shouldn't rehash something he might be happy to forget forever. I sometimes hear what he's doing now and he sounds like an interesting, successful person, however much you can trust that from a third party. A few years ago I ran into him and we got along pretty well. I bought him a beer, like that made up for everything.

Maybe someday I'll actually make the apology I claim to have already made. Maybe it will be after he dies, and I ask his children if I can say a few words. Maybe I'll get up in front of his loving family and friends and issue the first sincere eulopology. Or I'd get so excited about coming up with the word eulopology, even though it's nothing too great, and forget about what I was going to say. But then I'd remember that the reason he died in the first place was because I was afraid that even as an old man he would tell people about the mean kid in his junior high who picked on him and I couldn't handle not being seen as the practically perfect man than I now am so I would track him down at his acreage in North Carolina even renewing my passport for the first time since the thirties after I got in a bit of a row with the American border security when they found out I used to have one of those medical marijuana cards to help with my anxiety that followed me around from bullying a kid years before and never apologizing to his face so I find him outside Raleigh at the local farmer's market and I follow him home as he walks with his dog and I strangle him in his driveway not even checking to see if any of his neighbours are outside mowing their lawn or whatever. There's no way to know, really.

July 22 - Shawn Michaels gets the freebooter's attempt to live up to his name, along with a ridiculous coincidence (2018-07-22 02:02)

A skinny little DJ Qualls-esque fool breaks into a house. He enters through a window while sneaky music plays. TF starts looking around for anything valuable. Eventually he sees a computer and picks it up. At that moment, but before he notices, Paul (who isn't huge but can clearly handle himself) walks in the front door, as the off-screen jangly keys indicate. TF is holding on to the computer but gets understandably startled. Paul's eyes connect with his and they both freeze. Paul gives TF a strange look but quickly shows comfortable.

Paul: Oh... hey man. You must be Terry's buddy.

TF: Uh, yeah..

Paul: He told me you were going to be coming over tonight. He won't be home for a while.

TF (laying down laptop): Oh, I'll come back then.

Paul: No man! I told him I'd make you feel at home. Have a seat, my house is your casa. I'll get us a drink.

TF (eyeing door repeatedly): Uh, sure.

Paul (looking in fridge): I have some Heineken. That's it right now. Not usually what

I'm into. Good shower beer though, hey b'y?

TF (relaxing a bit): Oh sure, for sure.

Paul: So where you from? Timmins, is it? Never been there.

TF: It's okay. Glad to be out of there.

Paul: Hear that. I never go home anymore. Did Terry tell you the plan? We're gonna head downtown for dinner later with a couple of other people. Should be a laugh.

TF: Oh, cool. No, he never mentioned —

Paul (interrupting): So I hate to bring this up, but how the hell did you end up getting to a point where you would break into some guy's house?

TF makes a break for it but Paul stops him.

Paul: Sit down. I am genuinely curious. I need to hear your story. I'm not going to call the cops or anything. That wouldn't actually solve anything.

TF is stunned but accepts Paul's reasoning.

Paul: Come on. You owe me that at least.

TF: Okay, you're right. I'll do this. It was my destiny.

Paul: To rob my house? Go on! Actually, go on.

TF: I'm one of Doc McPhee's "kids".

Paul: Oh god.

TF: Yup. He adopted me when I was about six.

Paul: Adopted?

TF: Yeah, he kidnapped most of us, but a few he got the legal way. As you know, he trained us each to be the best at something. My brother Bobby was, and is, the best saxophone player ever, as Doc knew he would be when he named him 'the saxophonist' of the family. There's no one who can train a dog like 'the trainer' Tonya. And it's no fluke that Amy, 'the chemist', has two of Alfred's prizes.

Paul: So what —

TF: I was 'the freebooter'. I'm supposed to be the greatest thief the world has ever

known. Meant to put Vincenzo Peruggia, Frank Abagnale, Doris Payne, François Villon - all of them to shame.

Paul: Well I caught you pretty easily.

TF: Supposed to, I said. I never had it in me. I was his dereliction.

Paul: Well, why are you still doing it?

TF: I wasn't, for years. McPhee died last week, I'm not sure if you heard. The media, they all obviously agreed he was horrible, but a lot of people did point to the success of the kids. All while never failing to mention the failure.

Paul: You...

TF: Me. I wanted to prove to them, and to him, and to myself I guess, that I could do it, if I really tried. So here I am, failing again.

Paul: Maybe you were meant to be great at something else. Like me.

TF: Maybe. But I doubt it. Wait, what's your specialty?

Paul: I'm 'the shapeshifter'. I can morph my body into any form I choose, with unbeatable accuracy.

TF: No way. Like what?

Paul: Like this. Like how I'm appearing to you right now. I am not Paul. I am the dead man. I am Doc McPhee. Coo coo coo coo kachu.

[Author's prescient note: A literal half hour after this greeting was finished, I'm still sitting at the desk in my home office when the door to my house opens. A friend had borrowed my car earlier so I assume it's her dropping the keys off. Toast is barking with an unusual frenzy so I go to the kitchen to get him to quiet down. A strange man is staring back at me and then he turns and runs away. I chase him down and we end up having a chat for a few minutes, mostly me scolding him for breaking into houses. He makes up some lies about picking up mail for a friend who used to live here. I obviously don't believe him but also don't really know what else to say. He compliments my beard then disappears down the alley.]

[Editor's note: The author genuinely did not realize that the character's name was the same as Paul's until some time after the last line was written.]

July 23 - Monica Lewinsky gets enlisted to stop the war on stop signs (2018-07-23 02:17)

Sure, be against overseas military mobilization. And of course, there's absolutely nothing wrong with advocating against the unrelenting ruin of our environment. Hell, it's your right and almost duty to share your political stances with your neighbours.

But come on now. Let's be reasonable. Are you against stop signs? Leave them out of your fight. The protest stickers littering our octagonal friends divert our attention from their primary purpose. The signs are pretty useful as they are, you know, to help drivers not fly through intersections and kill anyone in their way. So let's end the desecration of our most useful post, post-haste.

Stop War - I agree. Stop Fascism - yes, yes. But also Stop Driving when you drive up to a stop sign so that you can don't get in a car accident. And Stop Distracting me when I'm trying my damndest to follow the rules of the road. And Stop Vandalizing government property. And Stop Piggybacking on a public expense to get your point across with a cheapo label. And Stop Confusing a prudent vehicle operator who might have accidentally had a few too many at dinner and briefly neglected to realize that a Stop Harper sign from years ago was actually a regular Stop sign and so they ended up hitting that old lady crossing at a crosswalk even though she's too old to be out there by herself this late anyway on a Monday no less.

July 24 - Jennifer Lopez gets an apology from an old half pal (2018-07-24 02:21)

I was born in 1988, in the same news cycle that band-aids ended up lower case. As I came into the world, Jimmy Cagney left it, the little dustmite, and my mother still tells me I'm his reincarnation.

My parents live steadily uphill from me, around a block and back again. Ever since I offhandedly said something to the effect, my dad unwaveringly believes that it's legal and safe to drive drunk as long as you don't turn on the car. No standards, but I do have a standard. Shift it into neutral and I'm fine, he says.

My little brother, twice my size when we're both soaked wet like a bag of milk, says to no one that it's fine to give money to politicians in exchange for influence. Not to mention children's beauty pageants. And car horns in radio commercials. Patent trolls. He's obviously right, but god, give it a rest, we're trying to eat here.

My older sister taught me the wrong colours. A prank it was, node out, but who knows what she believes. No matter, I still ended up in the green. I mean, I learned the right ones by kindergarten and everything, but now you have a picture of my upbringing.

Now picture this kid, this kid who's me, and all he wants is to record a variation of "It Wasn't Me" as a farts-centric parody. He wrote it in an hour of inspiration with his pen and a pad, then set off to make it real and happening. This was before Garageband so to make his fruited plan he needed only a garage and a band. Only one place for both, and that's sideways over the tracks to the millionaire orphan Ratty Rat's house. Dying for a friend and bored as a downtown portnoy, Rat hired some guns, bought a sound equipment and was instrumental in this kid getting guitars and such. Once everything was set up, mics and amps and the like, oh my, this little foozy fella realized he never

didn't know one measel of a t'ing about strummin' dem chords in the nec'ssary mus'cal translation. So he goes over to Jay Jorsen's place 'cause this one's a real a sonic whiz kid and could beyond a shadow give him the fingerlings he needed to get this gotten going for once. Now Jay's not home, not even in the county ever since their pa did a little mischief and took them all to the country, but this kid don't care, he gotta get this song over those airy waves. So he does what the protectors of the law calls a break-in enter, sneaks in thru a jar winduh and nabs the fingerlings Jay just left sittin' on his side table next to his brand spankin' tomogoochie. The kid leaves the tomo, got no time to be carin' for anyding when this tune's still only in his head and half on the paper and kinda in Shaggy's studio but only the inspiration part, but gets back to Rat's with the impl'ments just in time to bang out a banger, send it to Columbia House while they still had some pull, and get it straight to the chart tops.

I know this is all sounding a little too familiar, ain't it? Some of it don't add up, but other parts add up too good. This kid, already established as me but afraid to first person this part because of anxiety and whatnot, is ready to apologuise to you, Jay-Lo Jorsen Lopez, from the block and the country but no longer the county, for stealing your fingerlings even though he found out later they were only the backups and that's what helped you you still get to the very top of the charts yourself, with your first hit even passing "It (the fart) Wasn't Me" on your way there.

July 25 - Matt LeBlanc gets da b'y who cr'yed (2018-07-25 02:35)

Stacy and her boyfriend James enter through the side door into the kitchen, where her younger brother Silas is eating a bowl of banana oatmeal and reading a defunct magazine. The couple is finishing up a meaningless conversation, with James getting in the last line.

James: ...like the boy who cried.

Silas (without looking up): Wolf.

James: Huh?

Silas sighs and gently lays down his spoon as he braces himself for his own explanation.

Silas: Wolf. It's the boy who cried wolf.

James: What is?

Silas (only half annoyed): The saying or the lesson or whatever. From the fable. The thing you were trying to say. The boy didn't cry. He cried wolf.

James (dismissive but arrogant): That doesn't make any sense.

Silas: Sure it does.

James: Babe, back me up here. You cry tears, not wolves, right?

Stacy pretends not to hear him as she continues looking at the front-facing camera on her phone.

Silas: Okay, so the boy, he keeps telling everyone in the town that he saw a wolf in the woods, and when they'd come see for themselves the kid would laugh at them for being so gullible. Eventually, there actually is a wolf, but when he tells everyone else about it they don't believe him. So the wolf ate him.

James: Well shit, they shoulda listened.

Silas: Yes. They should have listened.

James goes outside to consider what Silas just told him. He smokes something and comes back in with more questions.

James: Are other people ever alone?

Silas: Huh? What do you mean?

James: Well I know I'm alone, like most of the time probably. But I've never really noticed anyone else being alone.

Silas stares through him.

James: Never mind. I guess when I walk into a room sometimes there's already someone there. They were probably alone right before then.

Silas (shaking head): Yeah, probably.

James: What do other people... What do you do when you're alone?

Silas: I don't know. Same as you I guess.

James (taken aback): Uh, how do you know what I do?

Silas: I don't. I can assume though. We all do the same things. Eat, go on the internet, think about things.

James: Does anyone wonder what I do when I'm alone? Do you think anyone thinks about me when I'm not around?

Silas: I doubt it. If they do it's only so they can feel better about themselves.

James: What could they say about me to make themselves feel better?

Silas: I don't know. Nobody says anything good behind someone's back though.

James: I pretend I think of people. Sometimes they say, "I was just thinking about you the other day." And I say "Really? Me too!" I feel like that's what they want to hear, but really I don't think about anyone who isn't me. I don't really care about them, you know?

Silas: That's a little sad.

James: I think so too. It even makes me so sad, I can't hold the tears back anymore. But I can't change who I am. Maybe that's why they call me the boy who cried.

July 26 - Mick Jagger gets wishful entropy (2018-07-26 02:22)

I know life is pretty foolish as it is, with there being so many crazy people and stupid people and houses shaped like shoes bridges full of locks with no keys. But it would still be better if this universe was slightly more random and surreal and we all dealt with it as it came.

- A butterfly lands on everyone's shoulder, once per lifetime, and summarizes that week's TV guide, complete with snarky reviews. Even for shows that haven't come out yet. But no spoilers.
- Experiences from random people throughout history should periodically inject themselves into your memory. When you're bored at a party, it would help if you could declare with some degree of accuracy, "So this time when I was a French soldier in 1790, my pantaloons were too short and Napoleon laughed at me but still let me fight." Depending on the memory, you might respond with "Not funny!" but maybe it will get you to smile even a bit.
- We need more common, provable alien abductions. Everyone should know someone who was actually abducted and has a decent story about it.
- The clouds can occasionally spell out words, sometimes gibberish and other times a sentence you can easily attribute some meaning to.
- It would be nice if, when you poured laundry detergent into the machine, it created a ephemeral image in the air on the way down. Just for you, you know?
- There should be days when certain items disappear completely for a while. On a Thursday in October, you wake up and there's no apples, like anywhere on earth. They all come back the next day, but for 24 hours we all gotta deal with a world without apples. Granny Smith shudders at the thought, and Madame Ambrosia sees her stock plummet for a little while, but we accept enough other insanity with little thought, so let's try this one for a minute.

- A small fraction of the population, instead of hair, [1] have plants sprouting from their heads . Chia people, with their own support groups and everything.
- One day a year - let's go with the second Sunday after the third full moon - everyone on the planet has to have to live as their skeleton. It would be a little confusing, for sure, calling your aunt your mom and a stranger your dog, but we're all in the same boat there. No clothes either. Some organizations would host skeletelathons, tourists would pay for skeletours, and International Bone Bag Day will someday end racism altogether.

1. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/heatguy.gif>

July 27 - Nikolaj Coster-Waldau gets a closeted battleground (2018-07-27 07:00)

I'm against war¹, but ho-lee, do I like war games. Now not those gunny console cartridges, or the paint firearms shooting paint bullets, or the training exercises that the big men do to show how big they are when there's no actual danger. My personal interest lies in equating a daily struggle I face with a real-life real-time battle scenario, then using cunning and top notch thoughts to determine the course of action needed to come out on top.

My partner and I have recently begun sharing a closet, a fitted space about seven feet long. Although she has slightly more clothing than myself, somehow we agree from the get go that half of the closet would be hers, and half would be mine. For the first few weeks in the new place, neutrality is the norm, and the established imaginary borders are effective separators. Each side lives happily and amicably in peace time, and no conflict is on the horizontal pole holding the hangers.

Lately, however, I've started to notice certain tactics being used to disrupt the equality. Dresses and tank tops are creeping into my half of the closet, but all quite subtly. They're mostly black and simple and they blend in well with my own items. And it's only a couple of things. It could be a mistake. Heck, maybe I hung them up over there by mistake. But if this was the case, after becoming aware are cautious, it would likely come to an end. But this doesn't happen. A couple of items turned into several, which turned into many. Attacked on multiple fronts, I find them strewn throughout my side, and in order to maintain harmony, I let them be. I have hope that the appeasement will lead to a new balance, and her clothes will be fine just taking up some of my space.

But at a tipping point, I start to move some of her clothes back to her side. Then, over and over, after I make some room for mine, I find more and more coming back to mine. A large fur coat in the middle of my pants is found to be my breaking point, and a Viet Cong² strategy is employed from my end. But not like how you'd think, where I'd start putting my clothes amongst hers, in her drawers and on her side where she might not notice them. No, instead I've started taking the hangers from her side, which are in limited supply, so I can hang up more of my clothes on my own side.

For a while, we each hold own own, with attacks of shirts and counter attacks of skirts. Shoes seemingly march themselves into my floor space, and so they're sent back with sneakers of my own. Attrition begins, with certain regulars in the wardrobe getting "lost" for days on end, then months.

She sends insurgents in on these suicide missions, knowing I will find them and toss them to the ground. But I'll be so distracted by this that she's able to hide her hats my shelf. A flurry of activity continues, and she gets the upper hand with some chemical warfare, as her perfume takes over the entire closet, and then the room. I can't take it any more, with my sensitive nose and all, and I call for an armistice. She laughs, exerting her confidence and making me shudder as I realize she will not end the fight until the entire closet and possibly room is hers.

I go for a walk to consider my next step, if I even have the energy, and when I come home the front door is locked. I try my key but it doesn't work. I knew it wouldn't. I peek in through the window and see her clothes dangling from every wall, in every room, and then I notice a small fire in the kitchen sink. One by one, my favourite and then less-so articles of clothing are added to the blaze until there is nothing left. I'm on the porch, cold enough as it is, when I look down and see that I am naked. Somehow, the shirt and pants off my back and legs had been taken from me while I stood outside.

I turn around and walk straight to the beach. The sand feels nice between my toes, and I continue toward the water, eventually submerging myself completely and returning to the sea, clothesless as could be, naked as they come, the unequivocal loser in the first and last War of the Closet.

¹ [Editor's note: What a bold stance to take...]

² [Editor's query: There's a long-standing low-level Rare employee who's being trying unsuccessfully since the early 90s to give a DKC villain the name Viet Kong.]

July 28 - Lori Loughlin gets the negative side of laughter (2018-07-28 18:49)

Laughter is superior to any alternative. For the most part. Obviously, there are certain laughs that lean heavily toward the spectra of placation, discomfort or insanity, and these need to be eliminated the once.

The polite laugh only serves as a haggard lie, allowing the recipient to errantly continue believing whatever they said was actually funny. A social construct in the name of acceptance, it gives the joke-attempting fool a momentary lifeline and the unwarranted confidence to continue without any effort going towards improving their sense of humour or awareness.

Then there's the nervous laugh, a defensive manoeuver incited by fear of disapproval or the unknown. It often cannot be stopped until it runs its course, from blushing to denial to blushing about the blushing to understanding to fighting it to exhaustion.

The evil laugh, often used by unequivocal villains in fictional tales, itself is the complete antithesis of the true nature and value and beauty of laughter. It clarifies a character's goal of destruction and scares the minions of which we've all been.

But of all these and more, there's one laugh that will someday lead to the ruination of our nation. It's brought upon by a jokester who, while fully understanding the impact of their actions,

Getting tickled, like really tickled, has to be the most frustrating experience of being a human being. The assailant, in the midst of an evil laugh themselves, forces their delicate fingers onto one of your trigger body parts, and with all the irritation you can muster, all you can do is accept defeat and laugh.

July 29 - Ken Burns gets the final Darwin Award winner (2018-07-29 19:16)

Ralph Darwin grew up with no purpose. He'd always wanted ambition but never knew how to find it. He looked under an old chair in the garage but even he knew that wouldn't be the source of his justification of taking up precious space and resources. He was nowhere near related to a Charles sharing his surname, but he felt a kinship nonetheless. After a brief but telling tryst with Jean Poole, his connection to the famed evolutionist was strengthened and he narrowed down his destiny to involve the man. He walked to the end of a wharf, looked down with minor and fleeting *appel du vide*, and instantaneously founded the [1] Darwin Awards, a tongue-in-cheek-in-butt examination of chlorinating the human gene pool. Nominees and eventual winners are posthumously selected based on the unique and sensational stupidity of their own actions leading to their death.

Ralph's awards took off on the internet, whatever that means, virally and the like, but it wasn't enough, and so it turned out to be only the first step in the ambitious project. The next stage centres around a documentary being produced wherein he attempts to survive various dangerous methods in which former D'Awards winners have perished.

Although he himself didn't suffer from dropsy, Ralph started his film by mimicking Heraclitus of Ephesus, who covered his body in cow manure. Darwin managed to outrun the dogs let loose to chase him until he reached the safety of a lake that cleansed him of the dung. Skydiver Nick Piantanida was the next copycat victim, with Ralph setting a record for the highest parachute jump in history. Instead of an understandable demise, he survived and ended up sponsored by Red Bull. Basil Brown's death from liver damage was next on the list, with Ralph stuffing his face with too many millions of units of Vitamin A and a decagallon of carrotic juice. While his skin yellowed as the days past, since he survived we might say that he turned golden as a calf.

His success getting to his head, Ralph then upped his game and tried to live through what an Edward Archbold could not. Needing to win a cockroach-eating contest and come out the other side without choking to death on the arthropod body parts, he arranged a battle against Joey Chestnut. Ralph somehow destroyed the professional hot dog eater at his own game, and stood on the dining table to celebrate by splashing beer around and mocking Chestnut relentlessly. Suddenly, a giant hyperintelligent radioactive cockroach appeared and pointed a couple of his massive legs right at Ralph, who was stunned. The crazy cockroach then picked him up, dumped some hot sauce all over his head, then ate Darwin whole, allowing him to become the most recent and final winner of the Darwin Award he created.

July 30 - Arnold Schwarzenegger gets a muggy inventory (2018-07-30 15:42)

On an average day in the life of me, I will prepare and drink an orange pekoe tea in the morning, a cappuccino when I come home for lunch, and then a varying caffeine-free tea before bed. Depending on my mood, my surroundings, and of course the time of day, I will select a different mug from our dedicated cupboard. When a friend comes over and is offered a hot beverage, they must also choose the mug it will be served in, which says a lot about them whether they want it to or not. The following is a list of the available mugs, including their background and when they are needed.

K - The K is for Kelly and is the appropriate size for tea. It's usually self-imposedly off-limits for me, to be saved for her. Then again, if she's working her butt off late into the night I'll make a dream tea for myself and sit in the porch hammock, Toast at my feet.

American flag - This was gifted by a couch surfer who presented it to me sans irony. Also on the larger side, it too is used for tea, primarily Tetley, and usually when I'm feeling ironic, often brought on my being unable to avoid a piece of political news from the south that boils my goats so much that only a tea can make it scam.

B - My father came to visit last year and got his own mug. I regularly use this for a honey ginger evening tea, when I'm pining for my homeland and the family and friends living east of me.

Chimp - This coffee holder is meant for when I'm feeling silly, much like the iconic primate scratching his head with a handle for an arm or an arm for a handle.

Black chalkboard - I will write a note on its surface in associated chalk to the consumer of the drink. This might be me, when I need a little pick-me-up or reminder to do something when the coffee is over, but is also handed to friends who are in a different room and are thus not given the opportunity to choose their own.

Penguins - It ended up as a go-to in the mid-day, as it's a great size for my cappuccino and it's blue but mostly the blue is obscured by penguins and who doesn't like penguins especially when there's a bunch of them in the same place!

Shuswap Lake - There are certainly coffee-consuming occasions when I like to be brought back to the houseboat in a big pond, full of friends and hot tubs and Evil Rajiv and how to Doritos in a Cube and Captain Forsey and the first wedding I ever officiated and beach fires and Dirt Lake getting stuck in the sand and dancing butts and nothing existing outside of a large vessel that you can live in that we should have in no way been given the keys to.

Toast - A gift from me to Kelly on her birthday, Mainly used to make her an americano on a sunny weekend morning as the eggs are frying and Things Are Really Great Here, Sort Of... is sounding out of the Baby Robot and Toast is licking her face.

Mouse - When I want someone to talk to in the afternoon as I read my book and drink coffee and eat chocolate in our outdoor living room.

Scrabble I - The I (an upper-case i, not a lower-case L) was a gift from Stacy (I think) and is used for any hot drink at any time. It represents my affinity towards word games and if anyone else uses it I be mad but not really but kinda even though they don't know but they should.

Duck - Another for the silly times. There are myriad silly times. For coffees and sometimes, when I'm feeling particularly wazoo, for orange juice.

Camels - A souvenir from my time in the Middle East, retrieved in a thrift store in North Vancouver. Tiny coffees hold up well in its confines.

Forest - Nature baby! Throw some coff coff or some tea tea in me! Trow it in me.

Blue & shapely - Waiting to be filled with a nighttime tea, to be enjoyed outside which admiring the stars above our collective heads and then you really think about what that means and it's too much to handle but some of those stars are suns for planets which are homes for beings or whatever a being is outside of our vocabulary but for some reason we're so short-sighted that anything that isn't a carbon-based life form within our perceptive range of light and density and size and everything else couldn't possibly be the extra-terrestrial we're looking for. Well, look again. It is.



Inventorial mugginess

July 31 - J.K. Rowling gets the subsequent words my phone predicts I will want to say after wishing her a happy day (2018-07-31 08:38)

Happy birthday J. K. Rowling! I don't think I get any money from them. When you moving? What time is your grandmother and the mountains quite a bit more. You can do this week and I'm flat out

laughing at the end of July. I'm in no rush to get a chance to check it to see how I feel stupid when they're alone. They can still be Jews without the snip snip off and I know that somebody tried to break into the house and paint at the same time which should sweeten any other day.

The best part of getting high before Mulaney is the house, but I am not sure what your plans are, are you? I have a few things that are not a police officer and 10th, but I am not sure what. I don't know how to respond to the essay, tutu and frenzy, but it doesn't exist anymore. Without any other way to make sure you have a drill sergeant major airline crashes, would we accept the new toilet paper and 10th?

1.8 August

August 1 - Coolio gets a baby's first memory (2018-08-01 05:44)

I am 1. I am lying on my back on a bed in my basement, staring at the stucco ceiling. A diaper is being changed. I have to assume it is my own. My sister, who has been alive slightly longer than me, is laughing as she attempts to replace the disposable underwear. My mother oversees the task as she considers the time we spend together, late at night and early in the morning, on the crimson corduroy recliner in the living room upstairs. A Picasso print is on the wall opposite the window. Birds dance in unison to form a circle, and an unfinished flower sprouts from the middle. The sun manoeuvres its light but still cannot make its way inside. My cousins are playing in the yard, navigating the multi-purpose field with no purpose. A quilt made by my grandmother is folded neatly at my feet. It is not yet necessary to consider what I am doing here. It might never be.

August 2 - Charli XCX gets a toddler's secure playground (2018-08-02 07:06)

I am 2. I am alone in our backyard, only momentarily, as my father runs up the driveway to explain to a pair of tired adolescents that we do not need our lawn mowed. I pick up a handful of dirt and carefully lay it back down, in a spot which will later be covered by a homemade home plate used in our neighbourhood baseball games. A worm pokes out from the new mound and thanks me for adding another story to his home. Two older kids are on the other side of the fence, walking towards the cemetery, taunting me in a manner I do not comprehend. Behind me is a tree I cannot wait to climb, towering over the nearby currant bushes. A rhubarb patch acts as a pillow in a bed of strawberries, but no one will think to combine their fruits to bake me a pie.

August 3 - Martha Stewart gets a neighbourly skirmish (2018-08-03 05:25)

I am 3. I am in front of my house, chasing my best friend and neighbour, who is the same person. We are at play, a child's play, but something he does irritates me. I finally catch him, and instead of doing nothing, I bite him in the face. I realize quickly just how unacceptable this is, based purely on my mother's eyes, after she hears his crying and comes bounding out the front door to surveil the scene. I am certain that the biting was not a familial revenge tactic for his father chasing me up the street while I was naked, of which there is photo evidence. We always called them the Holy Bowmans because they enjoyed church in a way we did not. My mother, while not a believer, did want to give me a taste of religion. She grew up assuming she would end up a nun, as did most self-respecting Catholic girls, and so she would sometimes entice me to attend mass with the promise of a donut.

In a couple of years, a Valentine's Day snowstorm will necessitate my dad chaperoning me to the Bowman front door, acting as my anchor so that I don't blow away. My younger cousin is being born across down as we trudge to my destination, so determined because we would play British Monopoly, where Park Place is Park Lane and Piccadilly takes over for Marvin Gardens.

August 4 - Barack Obama gets a stick-holding, candy-trading, bed-wrestling Hallowe'en (2018-08-04 03:27)

I am 4. It is Hallowe'en, and we are finished collecting treats from the nearby houses. I am running in the heart of my cul-de-sac, with six other children, many of whom share my last name, each of us holding a hockey stick. The plastic blade I am using has been whittled down by the concrete of the road, but it is serving its main purpose for me, which is to appear as though I am a street hockey player. A boy whose grandparents live nearby stays on the sidewalk, respecting the wishes of his mother who does not understand that, while their rule may on some level protect his body from harm, it will stunt his social growth irreversibly. His grandfather, whose job it was to refill the candy vending machines, was an attractive Hallowe'en treat-giver, but three doors up from him lived Mr. Hayes, who would only give us a penny each and then act like we weren't grateful enough, which maybe we weren't. There were so many stairs leading up to the Hayes front door that the efficient child wouldn't even bother.

Tired and eager to analyze our sugary haul, we go into my house and begin trading goodies. Truly flush for the only time all year, we start gambling with the rest. Acting as a precursor to my days as a poker player, this card-playing was never discouraged by our parents, who are upstairs playing 120s for money amounts kept low to avoid excluding our indigent uncle.

The holiday activities over, I make my way to my parents' bed to wait for my brother to enter the room. He wears a grocery bag as a shirt so that he can rip it off and pretend he is Hulk Hogan before our wrestling match. After the fight, we jump up and down in a familiar pattern: "1-2-3 nervous, 1-2-3 breakdown."

August 5 - Patrick Ewing gets an impactful PSA and a salty snack (2018-08-05 03:55)

I am 5. I'm sitting on a waterbed in the basement of my aunt's house, creating minor waves while watching [1] a commercial on the TV in the bedroom. My cousin tells me it's her favourite ad and gets excited when it comes on. On the screen, the camera is the point of view of what we assume is a man driving a car. He puts his empty beer glass in front of him and it causes his vision to blur. This continues for four more beers, the blurring deepening on each one, and after the fifth glass is laid he crashes the car. Upstairs in the living room, which will some day contain an unnecessary blown-up picture of my aunt's first grandchild on the day she is born, my father is trying to explain to his sister why you shouldn't leave your car running in the driveway when you visit someone.

A neighbour kid flies through the door and drags me over to his house, where I get to try Wavy Lays for the first time. I immediately believe them to be the most addictive substance ever created. We play Anticipation on his Nintendo while he tells me about Power Rangers, a television show I have never seen, mainly because my parents appropriately neglected to purchase cable. I assume their rationale for this is that we are poor, instead of the actual reason that to this day I may not have yet thanked them for, even though it has often crossed my mind.

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrhV3QTkNyw>

August 6 - M. Night Shyamalan gets a literary fall and its subsequent attention grab (2018-08-06 04:31)

I am 6. I am immersed in the reading of an Encyclopedia Brown story while simultaneously walking, at an unnecessary pace, around the raised wooden walls of my classroom's sandbox. The child detective is about to solve a case by child detecting that "bookkeeper" has three consecutive double letters. I trip up on the leg of a nearby desk and hit my face off the corner of the sandbox. It is the most pain I have ever experienced, and I involuntarily regurgitate a ham sandwich I had eaten for lunch, one that was initially packed in a container shaped like a cartoon bear's head. I will not eat another ham sandwich for the next sixteen years.

When I return home from school, I expect that my mother will drop everything to take care of me. But she is in the kitchen, on the corded phone, ignoring my pleas for attention. I am her third child, and one of us falling down will no longer disrupt her day. I refuse to accept this, though, so I retrieve the fire extinguisher from under the sink, expecting her to at least acknowledge what I'm holding. She doesn't, so I pull the pin and spray her with the powdered nitrogen. Her eyes burn through me instantly, but she's unable to maintain her anger and she bursts out in laughter. I join her for a minute and then go to my room before she has a chance to send me there.

August 7 - Charlize Theron gets a gelatinous ursine cosmic internal voyage (2018-08-07 04:31)

I am 7. My cousin who will later share my name comes running out of his bathroom.

"There's a gummy bear in my poo!"

I'm giddy with excitement. Checking for myself is understood. I peer into the toilet and, sure enough, lodged into a Bristol type 3 log is an intact green gummy bear, staring back at me with an air of having just been through quite a journey through a human digestive system to get to here. We discuss the improbability of the candy making it all the way through his digestive system and conclude that a metabolic miracle must have taken place. It is not mentioned again for several decades.

We return to a game we'd been playing earlier called "The Gates of Hell are Closing", which is also one player's only line of dialogue, repeated while his body acts like a timer as the other person searches for a football. When the fun of this is exhausted, I tell him I want to be a cartoonist, like Gary Larson. I show him a single-panel comic I created which, somewhere deep down, I knew I had [1] seen in a Far Side book and hoped to pass it off as my own. I had never heard Fats Domino and did not understand the reference I was making.

I meet him at a bar when we're both in our mid-twenties. We'd been hanging out regularly since he moved to town for university.

"Ian, I need to tell you something."

I have no idea what's coming, but nothing would surprise me.

"You remember the gummy bear?"

Of course. How could I not?

"Well - ah, god - it didn't really happen. I lodged it in myself, after the fact. I don't know why, but I did it."

I am entirely shocked. The longstanding deception is antithetical to his being, and now contemplating questions and inauthentic memories are flooding to the forefront. He'd guided me through some captivating experiences and I examine what else should be distrusted.

Then I consider what an actual gift his minor fabrication turned out to be. He didn't come bounding out of the bathroom so many years ago to defraud me. He gave me a sense of wonder, of the impossible, that hasn't waned to this day. All the while he's been living with the guilt and burden of the truth for twenty years, somehow knowing how integral the falsehood was to me. He finally comes clean, knowing I can handle it now, with my core beliefs already solidified. When the original story is triggered and told, I will now omit the last section, because really, if you truly think about it, the gummy bear did in fact travel through his innards, into the toilet, and into our hearts.

1. <http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/3691/1096/1600/blueberryhill.gif>

August 8 - Meagan Good gets a circuitous denigration (2018-08-08 04:31)

I am 8. Last night, when I was still 7, a new friend of mine came over to my house for a sleepover. He brought with him his collection of World Wrestling Federation VHS tapes to watch. After several hours, I start falling asleep, but I am quickly awoken by my friend shaking me. "C'mon, let's watch wrestling!" Okay, he seems really excited about it, maybe I'll try to stay awake a little longer. But no, I am too tired. After repeating occurrences of my first attempt at sleep, I begin to notice he looks scared. As I come to learn, he has never spent the night at someone else's house without incident. He is homesick, and he wakes up my parents in tears. His father is called and picks him up.

Today, I have a birthday party at my house. Chris, one of the few "cool" kids in our class, hands me my present. I open the package, revealing a Bucky O'Hare action figure. Not having cable television, I do not know that Bucky is a member of the Sentient Protoplasm Against Colonial Encroachment. All I see is a toy with buck teeth. To go with my buck teeth. I throw the plastic hare across the room and scream. Chris acts confused and I'm forced to apologize to him. Smugness enters my vocabulary.

Later that year, my family is ordering drinks at a small-town diner. I notice an unfamiliar menu item and say to the server, "I'll have a Buck Rogers because I have buck teeth!" Everyone laughs, and my dependency on self-deprecation begins.

August 9 - Anna Kendrick gets a burgeoning creative's missteps (2018-08-09 04:41)

I am 9. Roald Dahl's *Danny, The Champion of the World* is my favourite novel. My teacher connects me with someone at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation who invites me onto her radio show to discuss the book. I arrive at the studio and get a glimpse of what's happening on the input side. Once the interview begins, she asks acceptably leading questions the entire time, trying to get me to admit how much I relate to Danny. I'm not biting, mainly because I never thought about it before and am too nervous to pick up on her cues.

"What do you like so much about the book?"

"I don't know."

"Does it remind you of the relationship you have with your father?"

"Not really."

"Do you ever go on adventures with your family?"

"No."

She continues to be very sweet and encouraging, but I can sense that she knows this is going nowhere and wants me out of here so she can return to more interesting segments.

Even so, I go back to being one of my teacher's favourite students, heightened by my powerful study of *La cigale et la fourmi*, par Jean de la Fontaine. The same fable is orated and performed by everyone in my class, and it sticks with me enough that I can recite most of it, actions included, many years after it is required.

In an effort to further impress my teacher, I tell her I want to be a cartoonist, like Gary Larson. As some kind of proof, I create a single-panel comic that, somewhere deep down, I knew I had seen in a *Far Side* book and hoped to pass off as my own. I had never heard Fats Domino and did not understand the reference I was making, and the relatively intentional theft haunts me still.



August 10 - Antonio Banderas gets a morbid curiousness (2018-08-10 04:31)

I am 10. It is the first day of summer vacation and I am riding my bike on a trail with my friends, on the way to a swimming hole we call Waterfalls. I lose my balance and fall into a fortunately-located pile of branches. On either side are significant consequential vertical drops. It is the first time I realize how close I can come to dying. A couple of years later, one of the people I'm with will haphazardly stab a closed closet door with a hunting knife, trying to further scare me as I'm already frightened inside the closet. This is the second time.

After the bike ride, my [1] Bucky O'Hare-giving classmate, who is now my friend, joins me to walk around the city for a few hours. We stop at different people's houses and hang out with them for a bit before moving on.

At some point around this I am at a different friend's house, writing a co-authored story in a notebook with a racecar on the cover. We call the protagonist Speedy and make him a racecar driver. Speedy has a rival and a love interest, the latter of which is based on a girl we both have a crush on. He ends up marrying the real-life love interest. I can't recall what happened to Speedy.

The following week I attend a week-long science camp run by more of an entrepreneur than a scientist. There are four people who quickly establish themselves as the cool kids. On the second day, one of the guys has to leave because his grandmother died, and they invite me to replace him in the group. I feel bad about feeling good about a person dying. The four of us are hanging out in a tree outside instead of completing the established task of making real ginger ale. However, we re-enter the fold to create a Rube Goldberg machine. I am enthralled by its purpose and execution, a fascination that never wanes.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/august-8-happy-birthday-meagan-good/>

August 11 - Viola Davis gets a superior speller's rotting fruit (2018-08-11 04:37)

I am 11. I'm a contestant in a [1] nationally televised French spelling bee . Along with my competitors, I am coaxed by a producer to run onto the stage shaking my hands over my head and yelling "Ouai!" A day earlier, my favourite show ended its nine season run, but I missed the finale because I was at a Montreal Canadiens playoff game holding a sign that read, "I would rather be here than watching Seinfeld". The sign does not grab the attention of a CBC cameraman, although I do hope that RDS viewers may have seen it. I am eliminated in the first round, but the bright lights confuse me and I hold on hope that I'm still in the running for a bit too long.

All participants are sent away with a bag of swag, and I use the backpack as my bookbag for the rest of the school year. The following September, I find the knapsack, unopened since June, under the stairs. Its putridity immediately emerges, and I attribute this to a family of rats that lived and died within the confines of the forest green bag over the summer. However, after careful examination, it becomes clear that I'd left a single kiwi fruit in it for several months, and this is the true source of the stench. The bag is cautiously disposed of, and it takes me years to eat another kiwi.

1. <https://fondationppl.ca/accueil/la-dictee-pgl/>

August 12 - Mario Balotelli gets soccer balled (2018-08-12 18:36)

I am 12. My soccer team is representing Newfoundland, not yet Newfoundland and Labrador, in a national tournament. We obtain a copy of today's local newspaper, whose front page, above-the-fold, features the father of one of our forwards. Captioning the photo is the headline, "Saskatchewan Fighting Obesity Epidemic". This is the greatest day in any of our lives.

We'd won the right to play in this competition by defeating a team from Burin at provincials. I co-wrote a call-and-response jingle about their best player, Justin Mayo, who was known to go down easily when tackled. The first person would say "I know a guy who dives a lot." Then, someone (or everyone) else would say, "Go Joe Mayo."

Earlier that summer, I was the referee in a soccer game played by eight-year-old youngsters, and it starts to get heated. I gave Nick Ryan a yellow card for a dangerous tackle. The "card" was actually a piece of construction paper, and the only reason he wasn't kicked out of the game was because I'd neglected to bring a piece of red version of the warning rectangle.

His coach, whose daughter is a classmate of mine who would end up being a mother in her teens, kept coming onto the field to yell at me. My father used to be his teacher when he a kid, but evidently he didn't teach him very well. He would berate his own son throughout the game for his lack of athleticism. I kick him off the field and am proud of myself for standing up to a bully, albeit an actual grown man bully.

August 13 - DeMarcus Cousins gets set back in confidence (2018-08-13 16:36)

I am 13. I have just finished boxing in a match at the premier's house. His son, my friend, is having a birthday party, and he would occasionally steal his father's car and drive us around the neighbourhood. Years later, he would accidentally hit and kill his best friend while driving, after a night of drinking. The person I fought is a relative of mine, and afterwards green pus pours out of my mouth. I hide away and cry, possibly from the pus but more likely from being mocked for losing the fight.

After I recover and return to the party, I lose a bet by coming in last in a lawn game, and so my friends are allowed to ask out a girl for me. I'm given a choice between one girl, who had a small moustache, or another, whose her breath was terrible. I selected the halitotic option, and she will say no.

Later that year, I get my first real girlfriend, and I fall asleep during our first kiss. There was speculation that she had already had sex with someone before we get together. This scares me, as I'm clueless and confused about anything close to this.

After a couple of weeks of going out, consisting primarily of talking about how we go out, she breaks up with me through one of her friends. A few days after that, her and one of my best friends make out in front of me, next to the Needs on Lemarchant Road.

August 14 - Halle Berry gets to meet the cool people (2018-08-14 06:00)

I am 14. I'm at a birthday party at North Bank Lodge, in Pippy Park. A guy I know puts a cigarette out on my neck and laughs with no malice.

I end up with a bottle of wine, stumbling down a hill. I help two girls carry their drunken girlfriend to safety, away from the river. The four of us call ourselves "The Squares" because of the shape we make. I have a crush on over half of the girls here.

When I meet a new person, we instantly become best friends, in my head and possibly theirs. These friendships are validated and expanded over time through ICQ status and bio updates. A simple "Hi Blank" becomes "Miss you Blank" becomes "Inside joke regarding the one interaction we had together, directed to Blank" becomes "Luv u Blank!" becomes "Love you Blank". At this point the friendship is peaked, and it will soon evaporate entirely.

Public acknowledgement of or by a cool person guides every emotion and decision. The people who meant everything are now triggered references and names on Torbay Road real estate signs.

August 15 - Natasha Henstridge gets a failing socialization (2018-08-15 18:33)

I am 15. One morning during the second week of high school, large planes crash into larger buildings in strategic locations in the United States, which causes many air travellers coming west from Europe to become grounded in my city. I wonder with fear if I will need to become a soldier, but for now all I do is head to a local gymnasium to help accommodate the wayward fliers. They came from away to stay for some days, and it is found that I am a mediocre hospitality provider.

Eventually, the stranded return home, and a short time later I am in the school stairwell, putting up a student council election poster. Mr. Dressup had died three days earlier, so my campaign message was simply a picture of him and under it, "Ernie Coombs, November 26, 1927 - September 18, 2001. Vote For Ian." They do not vote for Ian, and I accept that I am not popular right now.

A conscious abandonment of my group of friends from junior high relegates me to a lazy shuffle. My lunch times are spent in the library because I do not know where to sit in the cafeteria.

It is Friday night, and I'm watching Almost Famous in my basement. I can hear my parents trying to get my sister to invite me out with her friends so that I don't spend another night alone. I decide I want to be a writer, but this resolution is forgotten, and counterintuitively, lost in the throes of adolescent depression.

August 16 - Madonna gets a mortal combattant (2018-08-16 18:25)

I am 16. I am at a party at Marina's house. I am happily drunk and jumping high on a trampoline with a gaping hole near the middle. Her parents are out of town, and their place is encircled by the woods so it's an ideal spot for what we're looking for. Adam comes outside and sits on the edge of the frame, his body facing outward and his head toward me, starting the conversation by commenting on how cold the metal was on his leg. I listen to him tell me stories about his life, which has been crazier than mine by miles. He has an understanding of the surroundings that I do not, and my bounce becomes a lazy series of hops as I consider this.

A few years later, it was just before noon. I was walking from my car to the MUN Education building, to my first class of the day. I felt my phone buzz in my pocket, but I had to tap the outside of my jeans with my left hand to make sure it wasn't another phantom vibration. It wasn't. The caller ID showed Jenn's name, and I ignored the call assuming she just wanted to meet up. After a few seconds the vibrating began again and I took the call, either out of boredom or to decline. Lindsay was on the other end, and even though she was barely audible, I could make out an invitation to Jenn's place. It sounded more like an order, but in a friendly way. I told her I was heading into school and I'd head over after. She insisted, and I could tell by her voice that something wasn't right. It clicked to her that I understood the severity, and she said plainly, "Adam died last night."

They'd gone out the night before, the two of them, Adam and James, splitting a Texas mickey full of Old Sam rum, my grandfather's drink of choice. This ending was so far outside of the realm that it wouldn't compute for quite some time. Marina was in Corner Brook and was told to fly home. They were close. Waiting for her to show up, waiting to tell her, gave the rest of us something else to focus on, instead of what had happened.

I wonder how many other conversations, long forgotten and deemed unimportant or irrelevant to me, would suddenly re-emerge as meaningful moments in my life if the person I was speaking to died.

I had grown up with death all around me, my large close-knit family making sure of that. But Adam was the first person to show me or any of us that we would not somehow evade mortality. Everybody seemed to have near-death experiences, stories told to entertain an audience, but his was the first of these that would never be relayed by the main character.

The smoke rose from his body as it disappeared, the former shell of a friend I used to know. As he returns to vapour, he acquires or absorbs more relationships, closer connections, for a strange satisfaction that will go unnoticed by those who create them. There is a need to be a part of tragedy, to be intertwined with suffering while emerging from the adverse situation undamaged and seemingly more secure with gained wisdom, still able to reflect on the relevant past with a clear head and an open mind. There is nobody left to deny your claims, and if you repeat it enough the truth will alter itself accordingly. There is no place for bitterness in death. Only understanding and constructive nostalgia will be accepted at this time.

August 17 - Thierry Henry gets driven around (2018-08-17 04:29)

I am 17. I'm in the back of a loafing van, driving around during lunch. Alistair throws a small packet of maple syrup at a stranger on the street but it never reaches her, as it first explodes on Joe's shoulder.

Bosh, who received his licence hours earlier, crashes his car, and it is written off.

Trevor locks Alex outside of his car next to Wendy's and drives away. He doesn't go back for her, demonstrating a longer con, a more interesting resolution to the prank.

I'm drunk in the trunk of Joe's car as he drives us all to McDonald's then home, like every other Friday night. He stops in the Canadian Tire parking lot to intentionally run into potholes so that I

bounce around. I don't notice, and I fall asleep before the ride is over.

Trevor speeds up and laughs to Emily, "Watch. I'm going to hit this guy." He neglects to slow down and does end up the offender in a rear-ender.

Romesh doesn't really want to hang out after school, but his friends won't accept this. He starts walking home when a few of the guys pull up in a van, jump out, and throw him in the back. They go back to one of their houses, where a couple of policeman show up an hour later to investigate a call from an elderly woman, who saw "a group of white men attack and kidnap a brown boy."

August 18 - Kaitlin Olson gets soured on whiskey and hidden in the wild (2018-08-18 08:20)

I am 18. It's Salmon Fest weekend in Grand Falls, and we leave town a day early to stay in Gander for the night so we can get a decent campsite. We go to Legends for a few drinks, where we run into some girls that we know who had the same idea as us. It's the night of a karaoke contest, with the winner given a hefty bar tab, but none of us has the nerve to go up. Although, by the time the singing is over, when a winner is declared, some boozy courage appears to have taken effect. "Joseph Buttons, come collect your prize!" is heard from a distance. After a couple of repetitions, still nobody is claiming the name, and so Baker pushes me towards the stage, where a man holding a microphone welcomes me. I am Joey Buttons, karaoke master and collector of drinking money.

I order enough rounds of whiskey sours to forget the rest of our own names. We're all having a great time, and prompted by the escalatory nature of free cocktails, a memento of the night is needed. Baker stands up on the table and rips a large mounted Bill Clinton photo from the wall. Not to be outdone, Laura tears down a nearby Marilyn Monroe picture, and before it gets to be my turn, security comes bounding to our table to stop the vandalism.

We all take off towards the dark nighttime outside, souvenirs in hand. I head into the woods while noticing that I am now carrying the unmounted Slick Willy. A flashlight shines in my direction so I dive into the bushes to avoid detection. I stay here for awhile until the heat diminishes, and after some time I'm confident that there's no one else in the vicinity. Still, I realize we haven't booked a hotel yet, and I have no cell phone or way to contact the people I'm with. I ostrichly stay where I am in the hopes of being rescued. A lot of time passes, and I resign myself to sleeping on the ground, waiting for first light.

Suddenly, I hear a noise coming from the children's playground. Emerging from the shadows is Joe, riding a child's bicycle and making the [1] Bubb Rubb "woo woo" sound. The whistles are here for me, and I am saved.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUXow3d3-b0>

August 19 - Fat Joe gets a college dropout's arrest (2018-08-19 03:22)

I am 19. I am 19.

I'm with my cousin and friend Peter as we enter the Breezeway, the campus bar at the university I unexpectedly dropped out of a couple of months earlier, spurred by a poker tournament win.¹ We are at the bar to obtain tickets to an upcoming Tea Party show. We are told we need to buy four Molson cold shots each in order to make that happen, so we oblige. We get a call from our cousin Michael, who also wants a ticket, and so another quartet of beers is ordered and drunk.

The alcohol, combined with us being together, urges us to break into the Engineering building, and so we do not resist. We dangerously walk across a thin beam to make sure that we can, and on the way we stomp holes into the beam. Then we proceed to traverse between buildings using the overground tunnels, but we climb along the ceiling only, as a spider might, once again to make sure that we can. After coming back inside after a subsequent visit to a Chemistry building roof, a security guard grabs my shirt, telling me I'm not allowed wherever I am.

Peters then runs away, encouraging me to do the same, not out of fear but because, "It'll be fun." He escapes, but I paint myself into a corner outside and am tackled by what is now a multitude of Mun Po. Two of my friends who are leaving the school library after a night of studying happen to see me being handcuffed and thrown into the back of a car. The fake police call the real police, who arrest me upon arrival. My cousin, ever the gentleman, not wanting to leave me to face the consequences alone, returns in a show of solidarity for which he has still not been thanked, and he is arrested as well. After over an hour of questioning us in separate rooms, trying to play us off of each other, we are released on our own recognizance. During the walk home, we hug excitedly, gleeful at having been arrested for the first time together. I do not end up attending the concert.

¹ [Author's note: During the previous summer, I started delving into online poker, which had recently started booming around the continent. I won a trip to Barcelona to play in the European Poker Tour, and while there, I realized that I could have a lot of fun and make a lot of money without taking the university path laid out for me.]

August 20 - Al Roker gets an uproarious prediction (2018-08-20 03:45)

I am 20. It is a rainy June evening in the basement of a smoke-filled house. We are playing a drinking game that involves guessing the value of the next card in the deck. However many digits away from your guess indicates the number of drinks you take. The rules are not too complicated. If the correct card is guessed, everybody else has to drink, and you're allowed to choose to continue your turn, compounding the number of drinks with each additional card.

A card counter I am not, but maybe someone in my brain is. On my first turn, I pick 8, a relatively safe bet considering its location in the middle of the deck. Dead on. I elect to continue. My

next prediction: 3. Dead on. As the confidence pulsates through me, watching my friends drink their drinks, I stand up and shout, "This game is too easy. Queen of hearts!" The next card is flipped, revealing a red lady, the right red lady, and the entire room erupts in cheers.

At one point the upstairs neighbour comes down to try to make us be quiet, even threatening to call the cops on us. I reply, "You go back up to your own place or I'll call the cops ON YOU!" I get another ovation, and the neighbour slinks back upstairs.

I am hailed a hero for the rest of the night and even a few times in the future when the story is referenced by someone else. However, as glorious as that night was, when the queen of hearts showed herself, I could not enjoy it, for I knew I would never again reach these triumphant heights.

August 21 - Usain Bolt gets knocked out and gleeked at (2018-08-21 02:04)

I am 21. I'm playing chess with a guy I just met, the younger brother of someone my friend is dating. The clock shows 3:22am. I'm definitely drunk, but not in any one of the ways you aim for when you make the initial decision to start drinking. I was earlier, about an hour ago, when my friend and I were hanging out in his backyard, watching the fire and sitting on a log while drinking scotch that his father poured us. Then a cab picked us up then dropped us off downtown, across the street from the bar with a new name every month. Apparently he'd yelled something at a group of girls, as was not unexpected of him at any point in his life, but I didn't hear what was said, by him or the subsequent retort from them. We quickly moved on.

However, one of their boyfriends, a very large man, did not dismiss the exchange, and he met us as we were walking onto George Street. He proceeded to punch my friend in the face, breaking his nose. He then turned to me and asked if I was with the guy on the ground, now in convulsions. I took a deep breath and admitted that I was, then prepared myself for the inevitable punch in the jaw that came swiftly.

Once I arose from the ground in a daze, several of my friends walked by and saw me standing over my friend as he was bleeding from his face. They briefly thought I was the one who caused it, and if I had my senses I would have pretended I did, for a laugh at least.

The clock shows 3:23am. I need to get the hell out of here. I'm drinking a beer to help with the pain. The Pineapple Bang relationship does not translate to alcohol. I walk home.

The next day I'm with Peter and his girlfriend, playing the relationship tester Scrabble. As the game goes on, with Ashli falling far behind both of us, Peter plays the word 'gleek'. Ashli challenges it and starts reaching for the dictionary, but I say, "There's no point in challenging that one. It's real."

"Well what does it mean?" she asks.

Peter relays that it's a verb meaning to push a liquid out of the bottom of your tongue, a skill some people, like Tang, have. Ashli is frustrated but moves on.

On her next turn, she plays 'TV', on a triple word score. Peter and I look at each other, trying

to telepathically decide who's going to be the one to tell her. I step up. "Uh, TV is an abbreviation. It doesn't count."

Ashli, infuriated, knocks the board off the table, pieces flying everywhere, and she storms out of the room.

Peter and I stare intently at each other, as if to remind the other person, "Don't laugh. Do not laugh."

August 22 - Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje gets a dancing impersonation and an Iosian backtrack (2018-08-22 03:01)

I am 22. I am on a resort in the Dominican Republic, the first week of a summer long vacation that also includes Toronto and much of Western Europe, a trip booked by my friend Bosh for the two of us after what he considers a series of serious conversations and what I don't remember because it took place over several days of heavy drinking where the primary focus was on beating him in ping-pong.

We arrive at the resort a day earlier than the rest of our friends, and we meet a few girls from home there and hang out with them all day. It's nighttime, and there is a Michael Jackson dance contest on the stage near where we're sitting, and one of the girls tells Bosh to go up. "I won't, but he will," he says, pointing at me. He's right. I volunteer myself for the contest and, along with four other guys, climb the stairs onto the stage.

We are each given a hat and a chair as we wait for our turn. When "Billie Jean" comes on, the emcee points at me and I rise with an ideal level of inebriation to support a glow of confidence while still maintaining the structural integrity necessary to move my body productively. Not actually having any dance skills is fortunately not as relevant as it perhaps should have been, and, relying heavily on my hat for my sweet moves, I end up winning the contest.

I am handed my prize of a flask of local rum. Riding the high of victory, I take a swig. As the bottle hits my mouth, I decide I can take the night up a notch for everyone present by finishing the entire thing on stage. I get halfway through and realize what a mistake I've made, leading me to wisely give up on my initial intention. The emcee looks at me incredulously. "Are you okay?" I nod yes, stumble off the stage, and vomit in the bushes. I return to my table, hoping to hide my stupidity among my friends. I do not remember if it worked.

The travels continue in the Irish town of Portmarnock, where Bosh's uncle parks far enough away from the pub so as not to arouse suspicion when he drives home after several pints. At some point we end up in Rome, on a pub crawl that begins at the Colosseum. I am chased away from a building on which I'm urinating by a group of nuns claiming it's a convent. While visiting Nick in Switzerland, there is light to moderate vandalism, fondue and sipping o' dat with a future Mallard Cottage owner.

The next month, I'm on the Greek island of Ios, living in a sweaty 7€ doghouse sustaining myself on 1€ beers and 2€ gyros. After a week of this lifestyle, surrounded by like minds, Bosh reminds

us that we have to head back to Ireland for the Oxegen music festival. I tell him I "can't go there, or anywhere else, because I will live here now, forever." I mean it. His persuasive techniques mean nothing.

However, I do attend the festival, and I don't live in Ios, so I must have listened to him.

August 23 - Kobe Bryant gets a solo adventure and a cousin switcheroo (2018-08-23 03:25)

I am 23. I leave town with very little notice or explanation to my apparent girlfriend. There's a brief stopover in Toronto on my way to San Francisco, where Peter and I will start an adventure. I have a very fun week and don't want to leave before the final Oh No Forest Fires! show, but the plane ticket is bought and I should slow down on the drinking anyway.

I arrive in California to the news that Peter won't be joining me. It rains for several days as I depressedly withdraw from alcohol in a hostel. I need a change, so I head for Los Angeles. While listening to [1] Sigur Rós's "Sæglópur" on a southbound bus in the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge, I finally am again.

A couple of cities later, including a quickly abandoned idea of living in Las Vegas, I book a flight to British Columbia to meet up with some friends who are there for the Olympics. In Whistler, eight of us pile into a tiny basement room to sleep. Romesh is lying on the only mattress and snoring as he is wont to do. I somehow use the mattress as a blanket and occasionally plug his nose in the hopes that he will die or at least stop snoring.

With a mild sense of failure, I return home. Peter picks me up from the airport and we drive around discussing his abdication of our initial plan. He has a new girlfriend that he wants me to meet. She lives with a former Harvard professor who left his post to move to St. John's. We stop outside their Bond St. house, and Peter stays in the car while I knock on the door. Since the residents don't know me, the plan is to pretend I'm Peter and see how they react to the situation. Only Bruce is home, and he curiously asks me a number of questions over a cup of tea.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmD-9_ZifB8

August 24 - Marlee Matlin gets late night malfeasance (2018-08-24 03:14)

I am 24. It is the third day of me being far better than everyone else at winner-plays-on Tetris. I'm on my living room bed alongside Callahan and Romesh, and also Michiel and Judith, two Belgian couchsurfers staying with me for a few days. A few seemingly wise, younger hippies left last week after backyard fires and grocery store looting and not knowing about Godzilla.

My house has become a sort of den of iniquity for myself and my friends, as well as people my friends know, and people they just met. While most people leave downtown at 3am hoping for a quick cab and a decent night's sleep, we head back to my place, top left with the light on, to keep the

party going. I'm almost always the last to go to sleep, or at least close to it, partly because I want to make sure the house remains intact, but probably mostly because I don't want the night to go on without me. I, like many of my friends, battle happily with the fear of missing out.

Now I am in my kitchen, which has become a flurry of baking activity, with Brock and Paddy. The whole city will soon be eating our delicious treats. One of my friends comes over for a few minutes but leaves so as now to be implicated in our pursuits.

I watch the sun come up from my roof. It's garbage day and one by one the neighbours take their out their trash. We loudly narrate their lives as they keep their heads down and ignore us. Rajiv is on the phone changing his flight so that he doesn't have to leave. I make my way down the ladder to put on [1] Wake Up for anyone who managed to sneak a few hours of sleep in. We will soon be disrupting an unveiling of a community garden by our friends in a band, so we need to be ready for that.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zdNdjF-htY>

August 25 - Blake Lively gets joblogged (2018-08-25 03:26)

I am 25. I'm in a grocery store, listening to Roy Dotrice read me Game of Thrones as I continuously fill and unfill a shopping cart. After neglecting to either earn an income or pay attention to my bank account for about a year, I find myself out of money for the first time since I started playing poker. Needing some cash but having no serviceable skills, I decide to get hired on to a series of low-level positions, while writing about my experiences to make it seem less sad somehow, with an eventual goal of starting my own business in one of the fields.

On an unscheduled break from my courier job, I am at the funeral for one of my friends. The preacher is trying to convince us all that on his bed of finality, his dying wish was that all of his friends follow the Lord. It is not easy to prove her wrong, because he's dead and all, but there's absolutely no way he said that and I want to confront her after the soliciting.

I'm at my poorest but possibly my happiest, having recently met Kelly and successfully convincing her to hang out with me. The rest of my life is a real good laugh as well.

August 26 - James Harden gets thoughts during a massage (2018-08-26 02:33)

I am 26.

[4:00 on the clock.]

Staring at the 00. Look at that.

[Eyes close.]

[Someone's staring at me.]

[Eyes open.]

Yes, someone do be. I'm supposed to turn around. She keeps pointing at me to do it. I'm taking my time for some reason. These pants are huge. I wish I didn't have my trunks on. Trunks - weird word for swimming attire. Kelly got the old girl this time. Hers will be better.

[Eyes close.]

5 dollars for this massage, for an hour. I almost feel bad. I come from the land of the rich. They have no idea. Well they know. They still have the weather. Well I only know about their winter. They all die in summer probably. Monkeys on the roof. Trying to meditate but I don't know how. Breathing, in and out. Just concentrate on that. It doesn't work. It's supposed to clear your mind. Well then why is it racing like a pronoun? Try again. Or maybe I should just try to remember everything I'm thinking. It could be gold. If I can retain it all. Can I pick up my phone and write notes in it? That would disrupt something. She'd get confused. I should write an hour-long inner monologue about what's happening right now. I'd read it. Thoughts During a Massage, that's what I'll call it. Doesn't have to be clever. Thoughts of me, thoughts of she, asking what happened to the villain that her and me had, sorry Miss Jackson, ooh. I wish I didn't think of that, now I have to put it in. Oh shit, I hope I don't think of really weird shit. She's been working on my legs for a while now. Feels alright. She must be bored though. Thoughts during a message. Messages of a massage. Probably better, but it doesn't matter. I already picked the title. Can I write all this in an hour? Just transplant what I'm thinking now and type it all quickly. I don't have the memory for that. I'll practice, with meditation. I want silence. Little voice, go away-DHD. I'll probably have to try to put myself back here and it won't work that well but even just trying to do it will give me more thoughts and I'll pretend that I had them then. Like this one. The ranting will be fine. Nobody to impress, just some thoughts of me, thoughts of she. Jesus, Outkast keeps getting in here. Free mind. I used to think Erykah Badu and Dr. Dre had a kid and Outkast wrote a song about it. Big Boi can rap fast. I saw some guy set the record on YouTube. I mean the YouTube. It's not funny if I try it. Is it? Is anything? Open the mind so I can close it. That's some Buddhist shit probably. Confucius. Confucius say a bunch of shit. Anytime I want to lie down to relax I should be getting a massage too. I just re-read a bit of this. No way I actually thought of the word "transplant" back then. When I think to myself I probably use simple words, if I use words at all. This is straying a bit from only thoughts during the massage, but the ranting is there. No lies, no time for lies. Only what I think. I type faster than I think. Maybe that's how all this happened. Me thinking I could write. Jack Kerouac types, he does not write, says Truman Capote. They, the Jack Kerouac-types. I watched the shitty Capote movie and so I never brought myself to watch the Philip Seymour-Hoffman one. I'll get to that. So much to do. Synecdoche, New York. So much time, but I waste so much when I have a lot. The food here. So much good food. So cheap. Fresh. I can be happy here. Food, massages, nice. Can't feel cool in jean shorts. You can't feel cool in jean, shorts. Weather.

[She taps me.]

[Eyes open.]

[4:25 on the clock.]

[I turn around.]

Kelly looks like she's enjoying this. She's asleep maybe. The woman doing her looks bored. She probably does too many of these. Oh man, I bet she's good though. Do I have any control here? No thinking like that. Back to being in the present. Nothing else but me and someone making my muscles feel better. I could sleep during all this. Time doesn't exist during a massage. It does for her, because she's working, but not for me. I'm done with time anyway. Oh no, it's happening again. Euh, e-uh, head spinning around noise.

Back scratch, arm tickle company.

[Eyes close.]

That one's gonna sound weird when I write it. Pretend no one will read it. Maybe no one will. I want Kelly to. She wants to see what I write but then she wants me to explain it because she thinks it's all based on something real. And I can't. God, she's wrecking my neck. Neck wreck. Not as bad as in Khao Sok. I thought it was all over then. I guess I can handle it. She knows what she's doing, right? For 150 baht she could have no idea and could almost kill me and there's not much I can do. My face is squished, probably looks like that guy in Spongebob whose nose looks like a limp dick. Oh no, I was afraid this might happen. Over the bush, around the pond, the penny tree grows.

I can't see anything. That's probably a big part of meditating. Or am I supposed to see visions or something, go to some other place so that I stop thinking? The thoughts blend more in real life but it's hard to convey that when I write. I'm prepared for that. Clown in black and white on my eyelids.

There's a girl in the distance getting attacked by six pigeons. We're in a mall. Someone should help her. Ooh, I'll combine my massage thoughts. Different colours maybe, intertwined.

What are they talking about? Like Elaine with the Korean nail ladies, I assume they're talking about me. Probably talking about that soap opera, the only thing anyone watches around here.

It sounds like a mall in here. That makes sense. I don't like the sound. Try to put it out of my head. Walk-in plastic surgery next door. And 25-cent ice creams from Dairy Queen.

[She taps me.]

[Eyes open.]

[4:53 on the clock.]

[I turn around.]

The other girl has Kelly in a full nelson. Good movie. Kelly just said "Oh no, that's fine" as a response to something in Thai. Probably not, because I doubt she learned Thai in the last 53 plus minutes I've been thinking in my own head. I feel like I should help her somehow. She's getting twisted around. It kinda looks fun. Around the world. Holy shit, her back just cracked nine times. Or somewhere around 9 times. Do I think in letters or numbers when I think about numbers? Probably letters.

[Eyes close.]

Do I even think words, or just ideas? That I have to turn into words so that others can make sense of them? Or so that I can make sense of them without thinking I'm gone crazy. Yes yes,

organization.

I wonder how long I can keep my eyes closed without opening them.

[Eyes open.]

[5:00 on the clock.]

August 27 - Sarah Chalke gets settled near the warmer ocean (2018-08-27 03:55)

I am 27. I'm in a mansion in Kelowna they call Crescendo. We're all sitting around a large table eating Thanksgiving dinner. This is the first real chance to get to know a lot of new people who would end up becoming our west coast friends. Most are from Newfoundland, and I'm already close with a couple of them.

I'd recently finished a second degree I never really wanted, and we just moved to Vancouver so that Kelly could go to school for interior design. We drove across the country to get here after packing up our lives in a duct-taped 2001 Kia Spectra on its last wheels. We took over her ex-boyfriend's apartment, and there are still pictures of his family on the walls when we arrive.

Somebody pours me another glass of red wine as Louie makes a wordless toast. Glitter is everywhere and will never not be. Even Todd Glass would approve of the lighting. The indoor-outdoor hot tub is always on the table. Fortunately, these lost weekends occur regularly, on houseboats and beyond, until everyone moves away.

Several months later, a similar place in Revelstoke is rented, and for an unknown reason I do not go. In its place, I suffer from [1] Crescendo Blues .

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/crescendo-blues>

August 28 - Shania Twain gets a product manager's mid-morning break (2018-08-28 03:51)

I am 28. I'm on the 240 bus, headed to North Vancouver, the first half of my lengthy daily commute. Comedy Bang! Bang! is playing from my headphones while a woman unapologetically denigrates the strangers around her. I am the only male and the only person under 45 in my department of ten people, and everyone else assumes I'm the I.T. guy.

At 10:30am, I make my way to a nearby café. I order an americano, to go. After I'm handed my coffee, I say to the barista, "Actually, could I get a mug? I think I'll stay." The ruse is necessary because the drink is always delivered near scalding, and this way I can pour it bit by bit into the mug, allowing it to cool sufficiently before consumption, as I enjoy an old Where's Waldo? book at an outdoor table.

Back at the office, I prepare to fire a man whose first couple of weeks are less-than-stellar. My boss says she'll do it, but since I was the one who hired him, I accept the undesirable task. He almost cries as I deliver the news, and he doesn't realize the situation is more devastating to me than him, even though he had just quit his old job for this one and also found out today that his wife is having a second child.

August 29 - Carla Gugino gets an array of tests leading to a diagnosis (2018-08-29 03:24)

I am 29. I am coughing uncontrollably with a constant headache, full-frontal dizziness, and most disconcertingly, an unqualified absence of energy. Each step I take requires a much needed resting period, which is rather foolish. My attempt at a jog, intended to push through the sickness and cure myself of whatever ailed me, is curtailed by my inability to secure a sneaker to my foot before passing out.

I stumble into a walk-in clinic having a terrible time, and after describing the last few days in my life to a doctor, I am advised to go home and use a [1]Neti Pot™. Making it plainly obvious this is unsatisfactory as a remedy, I push for something, anything else, which ends up being simple blood work.

My hemoglobin level has fallen to 68, which is apparently low af. Once the results are relayed to me, I'm sent to the emergency room, stat, where it's determined the updated hemoglobes are an abysmal 59, meaning there is some definite internal bleeding happening in ma gut. In order to prevent me from dying, I am ordered an immediate blood transfusion. I inform the doctor that I am a Jehovah's Witness and as such I refuse the treatment, seeing as how blood represents life and only God is the giver of life. My doctor then tells me he is God, and in my haze I believe him. With that, the giver of life proceeds with the 3 units of O+ straight into my lifeless body. And oh man, does it feel good. The enhanced oxygen levels are euphoric. I am getting high off of air supply. I am reborn.

Once regain sufficient strength from the stranger's blood, it's time for someone to determine what was actually causing this absurd drop in hemoglobes, so I'm admitted for an extended stay, late checkout acceptable. Over the next week, I have several hundred doctors, fake doctors and nurses interrogate me incessantly: "Where's the blood you've been losing? C'mon, it's gotta be somewhere. You've been vomiting blood, haven't you? Or is it coming out your buttside? Where's the blood, buddy!?" There is no blood. None that I can see. I am asked the same mundane questions over and over, and my answers become automatic. Feb2686. 12 drinks. This morning.

There is a lot of [2] waiting as a myriad of tests is performed on me. I'm given a coupla endoscopies, along with some fentanyl and marzipan concoctions that come to me highly recommend. The bone marrow biopsy is interesting. While waiting for a couple of people who had never seen one before, the other doctors discuss why they had gone into their chosen program. "So that I can see crazy stuff like this," is my favourite response, well within my earshot. The actual procedure involves a doctor drilling a needle into my hip bone, which required a degree of brute force one does not normally associate with modern medicine, necessary because I lack osteoporosis. For the CT scan, I'm given liquid contrast, which incites a sensation of urinating, and led into an expensive white donut. Somebody who knows how to read the white donut results finds a mass of cells pushing up

against my small intestine that isn't supposed to be there. An endoscopic ultrasound confirms its malignancy, and just like that, I'm a god damn cancer patient.

[Author's note: A few months before this, I tell my family doctor, who is also one of my good friends, that I have cancer. She dismisses the idea as she laughs in my face. WELL WHO'S LAUGHING NOW, KENDELL???

1. <https://www.himalayaninstitute.org/products-publications/neti-pot-products/>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KJPP7GkuPU>

August 30 - Lisa Ling gets a stand up meltdown (2018-08-30 03:54)

I am 30. I'm in Los Angeles, in the back of a comic book store, watching hopeful comedians say three minutes worth of material. My name is called and I walk onto the stage. I say this:

Keep it going for that person. Actually, never mind, don't. Stay in the present for minute. I need to tell you something. I have cancer. Yeah, I know Tig already did a bit like this, but I didn't get cancer on purpose just for this open mic, it just kinda happened.

Well, technically, we all kinda have cancer. There are cancer cells in all of us, tiny pockets, and our body can usually fight them off before it turns into anything major. So, I have cancer, same as everyone. Also, I have real cancer, in this generally area, and next week I'm having surgery to hopefully get rid of it.

Do you notice how bad stuff like this always happens to the best people?

My doctor said to me at one point, "Do you ever worry about if we can't get rid of all the cancer?" You mean if I die? Yeah, now that you mention it, I guess I do kinda worry about that.

At one point when he could see how much pain I was in, he goes, "Have you thought about suicide?" Wait a second, is that an option? Now that you mention it, that might be the best way out of this mess.

The surgeon got me to sign a consent form saying they're allowed to remove my entire stomach, and "whatever else we need to take when we get in there." So at this point, they can legally harvest my organs and I don't think I can actually do anything about it.

Everyone wants to talk about it, but nobody knows how bring it up. "So... I heard you were feeling a little under the weather." "Uh, yeah, it's raining friggin' tumours."

Fuck cancer! That's what people say. They say, "Fuck cancer!" Thanks people, you're doing the lord's work here!

Everybody wants to tell you the current state of a person they know who has or had cancer. "My aunt had cancer, and she's fine now." Well I might as well not even continue treatment, I should be fine if she was."

I figured people would complain less around me, but that never really happened. I'll be talking to one of my friends, and they're like, "My flight was delayed. It was literally the worst thing that could ever happen." Yeah, that sounds way worse than CANCER.

Everyone who isn't a doctor has their own cure somehow. "You should just smoke pot. That will definitely help." Trust me, if weed could get rid of this tumour, I don't think it ever would have shown up in the first place.

At least the chemo didn't make me lose my hair! I think turning 17 did.

My whole life I ran away from fights, and now suddenly everyone tells me I'm brave, by basically doing nothing except having a tumour grow inside me. And now strangers shave their head for me I'm so brave, it's crazy.

There are some positive parts about getting sick like this. It's not all bad. I get to play the cancer card sometimes. I'll want a beer or something, and I'll be like, "Oh, can you get that for me? My tumour is acting up again." And if someone is boring me with a story, I get to say that I'm tired and need to leave the conversation, you know, because of all the cancer. That usually shuts them up.

I'm off work on disability right now, but every now and then I'm feeling alright and decide to test out their theory, so I get paid to get high on prescription drugs, eat my face off, and watch movies. So maybe it does kind of work.

As you can see, I get to use this sweet cane. It makes me distinguished, doesn't it? People take advice from a guy with a cane for some reason. I get to talk to old or disabled people about the latest cane styles. And I can make people on bus feel bad when they're in a seat and I'm standing. Then when they finally do stand I can trip them up and pretend I'm blind so it had to be an accident. But I'm not really blind, thank god. I only have cancer.

This was my first time doing this, but I figured if I didn't do it now there's a decent chance that, well, I'd never get to.

August 31 - Chris Tucker gets noxious hallucinations and biliary hallucinations (2018-08-31 03:38)

I am 31. The day after being the subject in a lengthy, complicated resection, I experience the cryptic process of death, finalizing in me waking up in my old, partial body. I am forced to navigate myself through several worlds on my way back to join you all on this plane, but man, I see some shit along the way.

In the first hallucination, I am flying around Mark's old bedroom as a teenager, with no control over my movements. My aunt Mary is crying under the belief that I have crossed over to the dark

side, and she is screaming, "The future is a banana and he's inside this building." At this point, I move on, either purposefully or because this particular world has run out. The materialization happens so quickly that there's no real way to tell.

In another, I am still flying, this time around a college parking lot, unable to touch down because of the wind. I keep trying to slow down and steer myself using my foot as a rudder but it is not functioning adequately. Myself and Mark, who is also flying, although with much better control, are trying to decide what to do on this Tuesday. Our important diplomas arrived that day, not that we cared. As I fly, I am listening to other people in the parking lot, but my erratic movements make it difficult to eavesdrop. I catch James Thorburn speaking to his mother, the passenger in his car. "Sure a Ford Focus owner would give half its passenger door away to get to park next to a Cube," he says. The hierarchy of vehicle models is obvious to us all. He continues, "Why are so many Ford Focuses next to Cubes here?" His mother replies, "Bill Smith just bought a Cube, so it could be his." This presents itself as the funniest thing I have ever heard, and I try to slow down to repeat the line to Mark, but I'm not having much luck with that. As I survey the scene I notice there are a number of Focuses parked next to Cubes. I hear a few different drivers having the same conversation with their respective passengers about Ford Focuses, Cubes and my father's recent purchase.

Death is so crazy and funny, but sure is a lot scary too. At least considering the circumstance and the feelings surrounding them, I assume this was a death. It is the closest I have ever come to remembering most of what happens immediately before the end. The hallucinations continue.

A black prisoner, wearing an olive jumpsuit and dreads like Sideshow Bob, is lazily swinging on a half decrepit swing set. The shadowy view is from the ground behind, where only the swinger can really be seen. Each time he comes back around the chains make a loud crashing noise. The pusher is a deranged older white man, smiling maniacally. He is crouched down, proud of himself that he's doing the pushing.



A doodler's depiction of the maniacal smiler.

[Hallucinator's note: The above scene has a similar tone as the [1]Clint Eastwood video. Also, I would like someone, possibly me, to create a still image of the view, mid-swing, but with the sound of the chains crashing kept on a five second loop.]

Zooming in to a high resolution view from the subway, a Rihanna-like cowgirl is leaning against the descending stairs with an immense, wisdom-filled and wisdom toothless smile. The train peels away, but the perspective remains the same, except the camera shows movement through the subway car windows. At one of the frame changes, the girl disappears.

Kenny Sharpe is in the arcade. He keeps winding up to throw a ski ball, but because he doesn't want to make too much noise, he never actually throws the ball.

A woman resembling Rosemary is wearing a headset, hiding in a tree. She notices that I spot her, although she doesn't mind. She's producing a television show and needs a better view of the scene below.

Science professor Forsey becomes a graduated cylinder, contracting and expanding with the liquid inside him. His smile is constantly altered, and one plane of his body, the vertical, disappears.

Jannah is etching Mad Gabs onto tombstones.

A young girl is complaining because no one notices her. She shows us photographs that she's in and it turns out she has an opacity of approximately 3 %.

Five large women in an improv troupe are tasked with creating a wall out of themselves. They do a surprisingly good job, considering how hard a human wall is to set up, with none of them arranged in spatial efficiency.

There is a photograph of a naked Kenyan and his seven-year-old daughter. He is dejected in the mostly empty room, with his hands tied loosely to the ceiling. Her head rests on his stomach and she is crying.

There are two different versions of Dave Bridger in my room, each finally noticing his counterpart. Neither lumberjack, bearded Dave nor clean shaven, □ Dave thinks the presence of the other Dave is that big of a deal.

"I keep my gun in my (man) bun", a lyric from a very popular song, is sung repeatedly, hooky and catchy and ahead of its time.

Someone asks Kelly if she wants a red curry taco. She accepts, but says it tastes like potato salad.

A red flower growing in size by adding on different geometric shapes is creating the universe.

The scenes extend in length.

I'm a witness to an alternate ending to the film "[2]Christine". Michael C. Hall takes Christine to a Florida college sports match. She's upset that the city has to pay for stadiums to be built, instead of the teams and its fans, so she gives Tottenham a \$50 bill. Hall is distressed because he wants Sarasota to get more money, so he starts putting a competing \$50 in their donation box next to the bathrooms. However, Christine works to prevent this. There's a struggle, and one of them pulls out a gun. A shot is heard, and she ends up dead on top of him. He screams and tries to get up, but in order to do so he must pull the gun out through a tiny hole made in the wall. He yanks vigorously, repeatedly, enough to hurt his hand, eventually damaging his nose as well. I come to in the hospital, having pulled out the actual tube from my nose. Although I quickly realize this should not have been done, I'm unable to convey this to anyone who could help.

I imagine a Kelly next to me. I'll make a little acknowledgement about the situation as I per-

ceive it, sometimes including a distinct hand movement. I catch myself admitting to her that I'm stealing. I fall away, then come back to hallucinate, and repeat. We're listening to [3]Eddie Pepitone on WTF. HalluciKelly gives me a look like, "This guy is insane, but not funny." I don't find it that bad but I turn it off for her anyway.

Toast is kind of missing. He isn't with us but he's been detected around the neighbourhood. A busy scene is unfolding, featuring big dogs, a family of raccoons, a rabid cat, other strays & large animals, and people. It's acknowledged that there is danger in the area, so there is constant scrambling, as everyone works to get back to their own safe space. At the top of a random swing set tower is where it happens. A maaaassive raccoon has taken Toast as a hostage. I silently communicate to another helper that my dog is in danger, and he manages to free Toast and toss him down to me. I catch him just as I am attacked by a panther. I wake up hours later at home. Toast is definitely missing now. The attack has left me battered, but for some reason I am not taken to a hospital. There is a crowd of humans around, some who think I'm half faking my injuries, although I'm not sure how it could look like that. I'm getting knocked around, with people repeatedly asking me what time it is, where's Toast, where am I. I recall a flash of something before the sizable cat got me. A woman left her contact details on a spreadsheet and would know where Toast was. We're all happy and try to get in touch with her. When she is found, I dance with her in a circle of friends, which includes Jon and Jess Montes. I collapse, and Erin, under the impression I'm faking it, goes, "but he doesn't need to go that far with it." A doctor who's also there replies, "Yes he does. He's not breathing anymore." I'm dead. I come to in the hospital, connected to tubes, only wishing I was.

Danny Aylward tells me a story about how he was completely broke but took his last money to fly to Calgary to find this guy he had a feud with for years in order to fight him. He ran into the guy in a bar and they went at it. Danny had the upper hand, but then a huge guy jumped in and started hitting both of them, so they ganged up against him. In the end, they wound up half tolerating each other.

Everyone is very relaxed in the bed room. Meg is under the bed, Dad is on top of it, and Hogan is hanging over the edge, very relaxed. Occasionally a random butt floats by in the darkness. Kelly got me to come in the room in the first place by pointing this out.

Kelly is driving our friend's bus in a small town in Newfoundland. The road collapses and there are accidents everywhere. She goes against all advice and drives directly into a mirage, which happens to be a sunny spot with a diner. I am prepared to be crushed at any point. A gay server lifts me up going, "We made it! We made it!" but then immediately changes his exclamation to "Ahh shit!" apparently because I vomited on him, knocking him to the floor. I end up on the grass outside, feeling dizzy, feeling like shit, and now the restaurant is closed. Then I come back.

Near a lodge in which I'd spent time in a previous mountain dream, there is a section of the city where most of the black people live. They transform the neighbourhood into an elaborate and mesmerizing show every year, without being able to enjoy it as spectators, because many costumes render them unable to see. Their version of Hallowe'en and Christmas is combined into one event, and everyone participates. This year they have all dressed as atoms and molecules that can attach and detach as necessary. The flow is uncontrolled and haphazard, although when certain colour molecules combine they become "power sections" which contain more energy. Visitors from outside regions come to watch them show, although they're unable to see inside the costumes, since a layer of cell wall is always there as a fun protector.

[Hallucinator's note: It doesn't matter, but the colours of the molecules were either red, black,

white, blue, yellow or white.

There is a clip of [4]Virgil in the early 1990s doing his "running hammer line" move, a flying elbow into a group of seven or eight wrestlers. They all get knocked out, and he has sex with their girlfriends before he pins the guys. A documentary video describes how useless the move truly was, how it never made sense and wasn't approved by Vince. However, the other wrestlers eventually concede that maybe the move actually did work somehow, at least psychologically.

[5]Mr. Rosso is my night orderly but is terrible at his job. He forgets to cap my drain and so bile pours out of me. He stops in his tracks, then looks at me with a "ta-da" face, crossing his arms confidently, expecting a positive reaction, which he does not get.

[Hallucinator's note: The bile-spilling-out part eerily coincided with what my body was going through. It was trying to tell me something, but I couldn't grasp it enough to help myself. I periodically quote a Mr. Rosso line in my real life, something about how if going to a dance is the worst part of your life I'd say you have a pretty good life. I like to think it keeps me grounded, but really I just enjoy trying out my Dave Allen impression where he kind of sounds like [6]Droopy.]

Letterman's Top Ten List consists of ten different playing cards, each containing a different affiliate + owner + enigmatic tagline. The seven of clubs, for example, is "Harold Rollins from NBC in Sacramento thinks that there's no way in, and no way out."

[7]Jon Daly is in the opposite twin bed from the attractive but annoying sister of the studio manager. She's an asshole but he kind of likes that and keeps trying to sleep with her.

I see screens of poker games where I recognize my addiction and attempt to deposit money to play.

There is a close up of [8]Danny Devito at the Big Bite drive-through window, doing [9]troll foot, yelling, "I need a pizza!" Me and a bunch of my friends throughout the years are all inside. Most people's clones are there as well, with the doubles either jokingly making their counterparts redundant, or barely noticing their doppelgänger. Penney jokes that I'm not really in Big Bite and I'm actually lying down in a hospital bed, and it turns out she's right.

I'm fifteen again. After a crazy day, we're all getting ready to go to a party, by picking up beers, calling our friends. There is excitement in the air, with hundreds of people all preparing for a fun night. We meet a group of our buddies at the party and go up to say hi. No one speaks, but we communicate by flicking our heads and pointing them around. I'm aware I have this surgery the next day, but I still do whatever I want this night. I enter the hallucinatory room. There's still no talking but this time everyone gestures primarily to indicate low gravity. Instead of snapping out of it to write, I choose to watch. Good night again.

Peter and I are outside a bar on George Street, having just arrived by horse. The street is packed, we can't get in, but he is happy to wait on the bench outside. I'm fine with it, but instead of sitting I float off the ground, up to about thirty feet. Some people cheer, commending what they believe is a party trick. I try to relax completely but my body won't let me.

I can fly again, this time outside a friend's house where we're priming for the night. I'm unable to return to this plane, even if I slam into walls. I accept my fate and fill up on food and drink platters.

I come back, possibly for real. I did it, I made it through the madness, through the chowse, and now I'm alive. Unless this is just one of the many afterlife dimensions, which I will willingly accept.

[Hallucinator's partially-redundant postamble

: After my initial surgery, which successfully removed my gastrointestinal tumour and my stomach, I become quite ill for a couple of days, later determined to be caused by a leaky gall bladder, which led to me hallucinating for around 36 straight hours. I become so accustomed to the visions that I manage to write down a lot of what I see immediately after it happens, fighting the upcoming apparitions in order to type the previous scene. Unfortunately, with the excitement of managing the constant apparitions, I neglect to relay to my doctors what I'm experiencing.

Once it's time for you to go, you must first actively accept death, this iteration anyway. When you finally welcome the end, you will see flashes of a trillion screens, in what is a combination of the Price is Right wheel and [10]Ozzie Smith portal. If you focus on any of the screens, you get stuck in that world, and this can go on forever if you're not careful. True acceptance comes in refusing to focus, and so the flashes fly past until you come back to where you were, in my case a hospital bed, hooked up to tubes, unable to move. You is I, but it could also be you.]

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc1CCFNG9q4>
2. <https://www.netflix.com/watch/80097814?trackId=13752289&tctx=0%2C0%2C948f1730-e073-4dcd-8975-3d49c8f5b25c-217566743>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Trx6imNU6-o>
4. https://twitter.com/TheRealVirgil?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
5. http://freaksandgeeks.wikia.com/wiki/Jeff_Rosso
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droopy>
7. <https://twitter.com/jondaly>
8. <https://twitter.com/DannyDeVito>
9. <https://twitter.com/hashtag/trollfoot?lang=en>
10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pGdzmX-7Wo>

1.9 September

September 1 - Lily Tomlin gets what's in a name (2018-09-01 02:22)

I am Ian William Ennis Smith. I am a Smithsonian.

Ian comes from the Scottish Gaelic for John, the first name of my maternal grandfather. Smith comes from the Proto-Germanic for a skilled worker. It is the last name of my paternal grandfather.

Ian Smith is a relatively short name of 2 words containing 8 letters, 7 unique. It consists of 5 consonants and 3 vowels. The characters, by alphabetic order, are a, h, i, i, m, n, s, and t. Its Soundex Index is I525, and Metaphone value is string(5) "INSM0". The sum of the corresponding letter values is 93. The name on a telephone keypad is 426-76484.

Common anagrams, excluding the surname of the accepted inventor of basketball, include histamin, thiamins, and isthmian. Ian Smith is hitman, he has considered the alternate path before.

My parents are Carmel Ennis Smith, from Placentia, and William Mark Smith, of Freshwater. They have or had around 17 siblings between them, giving us countless first cousins. I have a brother Mark Louis Ennis Smith and a sister Leah Marie Smith. My grandparents were John Louis Ennis and Marian Canning, and Cornelius Smith and Margaret Griffin, all diseased and then deceased.

I was born in St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in St. John's, Newfoundland on Sunday, February 26, 1986, the day after democracy was restored in the Phillippines, and the same day that an already famous Johnny Cash and a still unknown Max Martin celebrated their births.

I've been called many nicknames over the course of it all, with only the first of the following still in common use: Smitty, Shmead, Fuzzy Fella (archaic), Spike (archaic), Smitty Pits, Smeagleberry, Knifey, Smitty One, et al. When introducing myself to a stranger, I often hesitate, weighing the response between Ian and Smitty, as it depends on our potential relationship and who I'd like to present myself as today. Sometimes I explain the hesitation to trigger an ensuing conversation. My periodic musical alter ego is Executive Producer, a name imagined and settled on faster than any other decision I've ever made, not because of how much I like it, and possibly in spite of how much I don't actually care for it.

A different man named Ian Smith was once the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, and many people think they are the first to relay that information to me. I had an uncle who liked calling me Ian Hanomansing, who is a man that works for the CBC. I think he just had a good time saying the word Hanomansing. Han-o-man-sing!

[1] Hurricane Ian in 2022 will not elicit the panic one might hope for in an eponymous storm.

Martin Julian Buerger (April 8, 1903 – February 26, 1986) was an American crystallographer and a Professor of Mineralogy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and look outside where it's quiet and dark except for distant stations and flickering street lights and I wonder if I am Martin Buerger reincarnate. If so, my still previous life is likely that of eleven-year-old Dutch boy Nicolaas de Graaf, may he rip in peace.

1. http://www.richmond.com/weather/find-out-if-your-name-is-on-the-hurricane-name/article_d45fbbd7-8dd4-5d32-b227-e943c9b04398.html

September 2 - Lennox Lewis gets into an agnosticky situation (2018-09-02 02:30)

At one point I was a proud atheist. I devoured Dawkins and nodded smugly in agreement, while hungrily absorbing Hitchens's views and laughing along with Gervais at his most skeptical. I would regard with contempt those who turned to religion for comfort, citing the flying spaghetti monster as evidence of their own ignorance.

But I can now acknowledge it was I who held the ignorant beliefs, refusing to allow dissenting views to slither their way into my rigid perspective. My inability to examine the role of the church in getting humanity to where we are now has been exhaustively unenlightened. Organized religion's importance to billions of people through the ages cannot be understated. Viewed by stringent atheists as a haven for power abusers, regular abusers and the corrupt, it is, for the most part, a community for those who need one. I now support anyone who finds comfort and happiness in that kinship, yet there are several reasons why I don't need it for myself.

I was somewhat raised Catholic, getting baptized, communioned and even confirmed when the time came. Underneath it all, though, I've always felt more Jewish, likely due to my appearance, frugal father and dependence on comedy. And the Buddhists speak to me when it comes to what should guide your actions and awareness. Even so, I'm going to take the easy way out and side with the agnostics. Who knows what's really going on, where we actually came from, and even so, why should it matter, any more than for a thought experiment.

The sense of community, I get from my friends and strangers, at restaurants and bars and coffee shops and parks and late night phone calls and midnight texts and early evening yelling from my stoop. Stories told by ministers and priests, mostly stemming from a single book, are limiting in their breadth and breath. I get mine from comedians, whose sermons take months to develop and perfect, instead of trying to bang a new one out every week. Films fill the role as well, and I don't have to feel bad turning them off if I start snoozing. A moral compass, I take from books and thoughts, from philosophers and my own naturally critical brain. Being in touch with my spirituality, I claim I get it from meditation, but more accurately it comes from well-timed mind-altering substances. When it's time for reflection, I turn to music, baths, and walking around the neighbourhood with my dog. Appreciation for the truly awesome and wondrous, this gets picked up at art galleries and in nature, inside paintings and at the top of raccoon-filled trees. So if you can squeeze any joy or contentment or comfort or meaning out of religion, by all means, go for it. But don't assume that everyone else should join you, and if your god-like buddy tells you to care about what other harmless people are doing, you should tell them to go straight to hell.

September 3 - Maria Bamford gets the opening paragraph of Siddhartha translated into parts of speech (2018-09-03 02:33)

Preposition article noun preposition article noun, preposition article noun preposition article noun preposition article noun, preposition article noun preposition article adjective noun, preposition article noun preposition article adjective noun verb conjunction proper _noun verb, article adjective noun preposition article proper _noun, article adjective noun, adverb preposition pronoun noun proper _noun, noun preposition article proper _noun. Article noun verb pronoun adjective noun

conjunction article noun preposition article noun conjunction verb, verb article adjective noun, article adjective noun. Preposition article adjective noun, noun verb conjunction pronoun adjective noun, conjunction verb preposition article noun, conjunction pronoun noun verb, conjunction article adjective noun verb adverb, conjunction pronoun noun, article noun, verb pronoun, conjunction article adjective noun verb. Preposition article adjective noun, proper _noun verb adverb conjunction article noun preposition article adjective noun, verb noun conjunction proper _noun, verb conjunction proper _noun article noun preposition noun, article noun conjunction noun. Pronoun adverb verb conjunction verb article proper _noun adverb, article noun preposition noun, verb noun adverb conjunction pronoun conjunction participle, verb pronoun adverb conjunction preposition pronoun conjunction verb, conjunction adjective article noun preposition pronoun noun, article noun participle conjunction article noun preposition article participle noun. Pronoun adverb verb verb proper _noun preposition article noun conjunction pronoun noun, adjective, noun conjunction article noun.

[Editor's note: Siddhartha's opening paragraph is the author's first, and hopefully last, attempt at translating from the English to the parts of speech.]

September 4 - Whitney Cummings gets a spec South Park episode's collaborative synopsis (2018-09-04 02:12)

Avril Lavigne is visiting South Park, from Japan, where she's from. She's a big Canadian pop star, obviously, and she's driving a transport truck, in the fog, with her big hands. [1] Turning Japanese is barely audible, coming from the radio. She can't see where she's going, because of the fog and also because her big hands on the wheel are obscuring the view.

She's just picked up a load in Canada and is dropping it off here. She meets John Goodman & Steve Buscemi at a diner. A truckers diner. They're identical twins and she confuses them, because they're in movies together all the time, and because they're twins. She's so mixed up that she orders the key lime pie.

Buscemi talks about how hard it is to be a grown up child actor. Goodman hates getting confused with Steve Belushi, who may or may not be named Jim or John Belushi. Magnolia is playing in the background on a TV at the bar. Avril gives them a ride, after hearing that their truck broke down. They go towards Denver, through North Dakota, which is really foggy like Saskatchewan.

They get a flat tire. So they go camping. All the trees are pineapple trees. Avril starts showing excellent skills of chopping up pineapples while telling British jokes, most political or related to tax evasion, in fancy ways. All along the way somehow they see that God, the designer, is hastily designing the road in front of them. He has deadlines and remembers what happened last time, with the earthquakes or whatever. God doesn't have time for Bill Hader and resorts to pixelated construction. "Guys, I gotta hurry up, I'm really busy."

We go back to Avril. Goodman and Buscemi are clapping and dancing around. They're Mexicans now. They don't know where they're going, and neither does God. Eventually they find out where all the garbage goes, to a Texas-sized landfill in the middle of the South Pacific. She drives as far as she can go until nobody yells at her anymore. Aliens pop out, but don't yell at her. People are growing people inside their bellies, and they jump out and yell at her so she cries a little. Gwen Stefani brings her Harijuku girls to save the day with their Japanese babydoll look. And she has a skateboard. At the landfill, she finds a truck full of skateboards and nickels and her entire career. They all eat phosphorous cashews while guessing where all Harry Potter actors are from. Their mouths all burn in unison. Avril, Goodman and Buscemi fall down the apples and pears and head to bed because they're cream crackered.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWWwM2wwMww>

September 5 - Raquel Welch gets the distinctions between meals (2018-09-05 02:16)

Meals are the most important food ingestions of the day. This is followed closely by snacks, and then accidental consumption of bugs and such. There's a time and a place for each, as you damn well should know by now.

Breakfast, oh glorious breakfast. Ending one's nightly period of fasting, self-imposed through unconscious sleep, with a morning energy boost. An egg, a sausage, a buttered toast, a tea. To start a day any other way is a travesty and a felony in some parts of some country you've never been to.

Recess is a nice little carb injection to split up your morning and power you through until mid-day. A piece of fruit, a granola bar, or a Dunkaroos will suffice, and suffice it will.

Lunch, which can consist of a sandwich, leftovers from the previous day, or someone else's leftovers if you work in an office and get to the fridge early enough without the receptionist spying on you on the kitchen security camera which they didn't even tell you about when you started working there and who is she anyway to police this area we're all adults here and should be able to figure out our own dynamics, is good too.

Brunch is the weekend portmanteau, for when you wake up late and slightly hungover on the weekend, and the only thing you can manage to do to stave off the loneliness of withdrawal. You get your butts together with your friends, get to the cool new hip cool spot, and shoot various levels of shit, kinda like what [1] these people do every episode .

Supper. Here's where it gets a little tricky. The constitution of a supper is debatable at best, undebatable at worst. Like if your girlfriend tells you you're going to supper, or your aunt invites you to a family supper, then sure, it's supper. Someone else needs to call it supper first. That's the criteria. "Oh, I couldn't possibly make the decision to call this a supper. That's well above my pay grade." When not a supper, this evening gorgefest is known as dinner, and there's nothing you can do about it.

Finally, the midnight snack - it is what it's called, like a lawnmower or a facepuncher. Pour some midnight oil on a midnight pan and cook up some midnight treats with a little midnight trazodone so

you can sleep through the night without the ghosts disturbing you with all their mid-night haunting.

[Editor's note: For his weekday recess, the author will almost always enjoy a bowl of oatmeal to go with a banana and some cashews. He wonders if anyone at the office calls him "Oatmeal" behind his back. They must.]

[Author's update: They do! Well, "Oatmeal Guy", which is almost as good.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/brunch/>

September 6 - Lauren Lapkus gets a reasonable start to an Animals spec script (2018-09-06 02:43)

EXT. BUSY HIGHWAY - SUNNY DAY

A toad sits on a rock on the shoulder of the road with his eyes closed. He is smiling.

Toad (meditating): Buffalo, buffalo, buffalo, buffalo, buffalo, buffalo, buffalo, buffalo.

Toad experiences an audio hallucination: "A series of destinations is not an escape from oneself. Be here now."

There's a close up on the toad's face. His eyes open.

—
QUICK CUT TO

Newspaper 1 with the front page headline "Some Raccoons Steal Baby in Central Park" is laid down in the ether.

Newspaper 2 is laid on top of Newspaper 1, and it shows the headline "Central Park Baby's Mother Pleads to Raccoons For Safe Return".

Newspaper 3 is laid on top of Newspaper 2, with the headline "Mayor vows to eliminate all raccoons from the city."

The camera zooms into the photo above the Newspaper 3 headline photo, which becomes an actual scene of The Mayor holding a public press conference.

Mayor (sternly): Blah blah blah blah blah.

Audience and press applauds.

—

EXT. ALLEY - MANHATTAN

Mike, a raccoon, is watching the press conference on a TV through a store window.

Mike (to himself): This - can't be good.

Mike scans his surroundings as animal control workers are catching raccoons and throwing them into back of their trucks.

Mike (panicking slightly): Phil? Hey Phil? — Phil!

Phil emerges from a nearby dumpster wearing off a red sports jersey with a large yellow B on the front.

Phil: Mikey, you gotta check this place out. (like a newspaper boy) Get your hot garbage! The most sizzlin' garbage in town. No better trash this side of the Evergreen Museum.

Mike (nervous laughter): Okay, time for some shuttin' up. Get over here, quick.

Phil: And look what I found!

Phil saunters towards Mike, showing off his new jersey.

Mike pulls Phil into vent.

Phil: You need a relax pill, buddy.

Mike: Let's play a game! We'll see who can stay quietest for the next minute."

Phil (suddenly excited to play): Oh, you don't stand a chance! I'll be the quietest —

Mike covers Phil's mouth. They both stay silent as an animal control worker walks into the alley and pokes around with his stick. He leaves muttering, angry that he didn't find any raccoons.

Mike uncovers Phil's mouth.

Mike: Ho-ly.

Phil: I win, I win!

Mike: Sure, Philly, it's all yours. Hey, I just got a really cool idea. You like cool ideas, right?

Phil: C'mon, you know I do. They're pretty much the only ideas I'll get behind.

Mike: How do you feel about going a cool vacation? It'll be nice to get out of the city, you

know?

Phil: I don't know, Mike. Our lives are pretty great lately, and I don't —

Mike: We've been here since we were kits. We could stand to get away for a minute. It'll be our little adventure.

Phil: You said the magic word. Not passing up an adventure, no way, no how. A cool adventure, right? Remember when we went to that tire fire in Queens? Where all those tires were on fire? And no one cared!

Mike: Yeah, it'll be like that, but better. We should go even further. Bigger adventure that way. I've always wanted to go to Chevy Chase.

Phil: That's not a real place.

Mike: It's in Mary-

Phil: Ooh, I heard about this place Agloe.

Mike: We'll never find it. How about - (he looks at the front of Phil's jersey) - Buffalo. It's supposed to be a real paradise up that way. It's where they take all the dumpster gold in those trucks.

Phil: Wow, Mikey! And we can go there?

Mike: We sure can, Phil. We sure can. Pack your things. We leave tonight.

—

EXT. RURAL FIELD

Raine, a field mouse, is teaching her friend and fellow field mouse Danielle how to whistle with a blade of grass.

Danielle (taking notes): So the whole universe, like everything - me, you, that tree - it all started last Thursday?

Raine: That's right. Anything you remember from before that is something —

Danielle: So, wait a sec, Raine.

Raine (scolding): What did we learn about interrupters.

Danielle (dismissive): They burn. They burn. But wait a sec. That spaghetti monster you were telling me about, was he born on Thursday too?

Raine: Born and birthed us, all at once, all on Thursday.

Danielle is finally able to whistle.

Danielle: I did it! I did it!

Raine: Take away the I, Dani. Remember what we talked about? The whistling happened. And that's all you should need to be happy in here.

Daniele: In where?

Raine sighs.

Danielle: Right, right. In the Earth, where we live, 'cause its hollow. Of course it's hollow. Even I knew that.

—

EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER

Mike and Phil, each carrying bindles, are hitchhiking when they encounter Toad.

Phil: Hey! Hey! Mr. Toad. Cool rock. Is it yours? It looks hot up there. What's your name?

Toad: Names are but a -

Phil (interrupting): My dad's name was shoebox! I'm gonna call you Rudy!

Mike: Phil, look over there! You hungry?

Phil: Be right back, Mr. Toad!

Phil runs over to a nearby pile of garbage and starts digging in.

Mike: Hello, sir. We have a plan to go North.

Toad: Our plans never turn out as tasty as reality.

Mike: I don't know if you heard -

Toad: The quieter you become the more you can hear. I listen only to what the wind tells me.

Phil (shouting from pile of garbage): The world is pretty good, but not if you're alone or scared or dead or something like that.

—

[Editor's note: An actual live baby raccoon snuck into the author's house and ripped up this section of the original script. The author hasn't had a chance to rewrite it, but there was one more scene with the field mice, where Danielle stands up to Raine but they end up together and having fun. In another the Toad hallucinates and helps the raccoons get to their destination using an underground railroad chicken truck, and then he dies in some sacrificial offering.]

EXT. FARM - BUFFALO

Mike and Phil wave goodbye to the chickens and jump off the back of the truck.

Human tour guide (half inaudible, to tour group): " Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo. "

Phil: You had it all along, Mike. This place is cool cool cool. Look how big the plants are out here! The orchidometer reading must be off the charts!

Mike picks up a newspaper he finds in the garbage, with the front page headline "Baby Safe, Returned by Good Samaritan Raccoons." Below the fold is another caption, "Raccoons welcomed back into NYC with open arms."

Mike hides newspaper from Phil. They go back to enjoying Buffalo.

Spirit guide Toad appears in the sky and winks. He licks his body and hallucinates. The entire scene hallucinates.

Credits roll. "Episodic" by Field Mouse plays.

[Editor's note: The 33rd episode of the 71st season of Animals, titled "Raccoons", never made it past the Brigsby Bear stage of distribution.]

September 7 - Evan Rachel Wood gets a lost officer's prevention (2018-09-07 02:36)

I never thought the "officer" moniker would creep its way into my job title at any point in my life, especially since "moniker" isn't the appropriate word to use here. And just to clear up any pre-emptive confusion, I am not a cop and I will do everything in my limited power in this role to not be confused as one. However, with my head having been inundated with reveries of working between four walls and under a roof, I sold out in the interview. "I'm strongly considering a career in law enforcement," he lied through his teeth. I convince myself I was practicing my acting skills in case I ever hit it big on off-Broadway.

So it turns out that this job consists of me walking around incognito throughout various stores while trying to catch people in the act of thievery. I do this by pretending to be a regular shopper while always keeping my eyes out for suspicious characters, easily identifiable by their brown bags

complete with double-stroked dollar signs. If I see a shoplifter, I am expected to perform a citizen's arrest, which entails staring at the suspect as (s)he sits in a chair, until a police(wo)man comes to perform an actual arrest. If they run, I shall not chase. If they swing, I shan't swing back. I am powerless. I am but a simple loss prevention officer.

As you can tell, my job is to identify hopeful criminals, not completely unlike John Anderton in the film "Minority Report" or John Anderton in literature's "The Minority Report". I justify my decision to accept the position by repeatedly reiterating that I'm only enforcing a law I actually support. I am not, and will not ever be, stopping people for walking an ugly horse in Wilbur, Washington, or fining them for forgetting to insert coins into a parking meter whose shadow resembles the impaled head of a beloved cartoon mouse. I have decided to protect my company's clients' merchandise because it's the right thing to do, and also because I want to give back. When I was a child of thirteen years, I too was caught stealing a latka from a Jewish bakery I've never been to. The on-duty LPO (see last three words of the previous paragraph for acronymizing) took me aside and, with the help of Naughty By Nature, explained to me the importance of respecting other people's property. He released me without calling for backup, maybe because he believed that I truly recognized the error of my ways, but more likely because it was nearing the end of his shift and he wanted to go home. He had better to do, even if said better involved tinfoiling his house in preparation for Y2K. That failed attempt at a dystopia was disappointing, but understandable, since a 99 becoming a 00 shouldn't really cause the world to disintegrate. At any rate, I intend to pass on that gift of forgiveness as I hope to catch and release a child shoplifter who will one day replace me in my role as a loss prevention officer. As the world turns, so too do the sands of the hourglass fall.

I am told to act under the assumption that everyone is a thief, but I have an instinctual urge to walk around doing nothing, arresting nobody, and playing sociological experiments until I get fired. Unless, of course, I arrest someone by happenstance and then develop a thirst, rivalled only by Ash, to catch them all. My boss, who appears sporadically to berate me over my unmet quota, revels in the act of catching shoplifters, seeing people vulnerable and afraid. That is an ugly trait, I mused, bemused at the thought of putting those two words together. Stocky and tense, he sports sporty glasses, an army haircut, and a coat that he purchased online after his best friend, whom he hopes to one day marry even though he is well aware that she feels no sexual attraction toward him and sees him only as a harmless crutch to hang out with between boyfriends, mentioned that it made Ryan Reynolds look "even hotter" during his recent Oprah appearance.

I kinda wanna (read: kind of want to) catch a semi-famous person stealing, maybe Allan Hawco. If he comes into a store I'm working at, I'll probably pretend I saw him take something. I should make the news for that one, like the guy who caught Winona Ryder stealing ze jewels. Sorry, jewelry; the theft would not be occurring pre-Titanic or in some fantastical land. I should just have to say fantastic but that's taken on a new meaning and so I've been forced into this corner. Anyway, as a spy I am supposed to continuously put stuff in my cart to blend in with the non-actors, whom we shall now call "shoppers", and I have noticed that I usually only pick out sale items for faux-purchase. Frugality in a fictional land. Coincidentally, that's the title of the only novel that an economist wrote after he re-pursued his dream of penning prose, one he gave up years earlier in order to support an unwanted family. "It's mostly a piece of crap," I would say if I were to read the aforementioned book.

The days bleed into one another. Eight hours is a lot longer than it used to be, but luckily when it's all over I forget the time ever existed, if it did at all. At the end of every shift, when I turn my brain back on, all I have with which to remember my job is sore feet that could easily have come from stomping grapes in a Bordeaux bordello slash vineyard. Boredom is increasing. Not just mine, but the collective boredom of the world. Overhead, the blaring, glaring fluorescent lights above

refuse to even flicker, to give me a brief respite from the beams of pre-headache that pierce my eyes. Someone with a multiple-personality disorder should have my job, preferably if the personalities were easily interchangeable, which I assume they're not.

Eventually, Hallowe'en becomes Christmas, and I become... A comedic gingerbread man, beloved by the owner of one particular store, has left me brinking insanity. I really thought it would be the incessant Christmas music that would cause me to fall apart, but it ended up being this little brown cracker cracking elementary jokes. "Santa's Got A Brand New Bag" is playing on the radio again, and everybody seems oblivious to the obvious reference to St. Nick's heroin addiction. My imagination is creatively disintegrating. I wonder if that's irony. My mind is racing like a pronoun. I always tell people that nobody actually cares what they're ever doing. But apparently, in this limited role of mine, I do.

The manager of an establishment I'm working in one day takes me aside and tells me to be on the lookout for a guy in a black sweater who's been lurking around. As you may have just assumed, this person was me. I am now being sent to investigate myself, like Bob Arctor in "A Scanner Darkly" or that double-agent in Russia who was ordered to assassinate himself or something. Either way, I sarcastically thank her for interrupting my alone time and then return to my private investigating. Suddenly, a woman bangs into my cart with her cart. I ask her if we should exchange cart insurance. She laughs. I laugh. It is all imagined. I awake from a dream. You hand me a hamburger, cooked and delivered while riding on top of a dragon. He is driving a 1942 Ford Pinto, discontinued in 1939 to save metal for the future war effort. The dream is over, but it's just beginning. I return to sleep. I return to work.

Luckily, for a while anyway, I discover a few ways to rage against the dullness of my endless unnumbered days. As I pass the weighing contraption next to the produce, I close my eyes and push down on the scale in order to see how close I can come to exerting five pounds worth of pressure, with "Price is Right" rules, obviously. I began mimicking people and their shopping techniques, but this got boring very quickly, so now my cart is a spaceship and all the cereal boxes are aliens. Among the "songs" I "wrote" at "work", the 'turtles in a half shell' line from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles theme has become 'scrubber and a snack pack', and it's a hit. I have also begun to quickly and excitedly yell "Merry Christmas" at, not to, shoppers. They get scared, then they feel bad (for being scared of friendship), both feelings I am happy to elicit from others.

While I have found myself to be rather unsuccessful at surveilling thieves, I do pick up on some situational improvements that should help the grocery stores get their operations in order. For some exemplifying, easily-accessible free water is lacking but shouldn't be, as is a fish pond in the middle of aisle 5. There should be a garbage bin next to the eggs for broken shells, and all supermarkets should institute a regular "Taste Test Sauce Day". Also, discount stickers should never be stuck to books, or at least such stickers should have the capacity to be easily peeled off without leaving half of themselves behind. Most importantly, my existence here should be eliminated and replaced by a single sign containing the words "Undercover Security" at the entrance, for similar effectiveness.

I dream of one day leaving this job, as Ibi dreams of pavement in a song I once heard, but I must feed and clothe and bathe myself and those dear to me. I am not qualified for anything more and I lack the ambition necessary to procure the qualifications. I will be here until I die, in this skeleton of a former grocery store, searching for thieves who do not exist.

September 8 - Neko Case gets a sponsored suitcase, owned and abandoned (2018-09-08 02:22)

(Who Left This Monkey-Freaking Suitcase on This) Monday to Friday (Plane?) — sponsored post

Day 1: You're walking to the bus stop, to take advantage of the always-on-time Translink service, on the way to your awesome job as a sales associate at Best Buy. On a fairly busy street corner, the home of a conveniently located Pier 1 Imports, you eye a durable Samsonite luggage set, sitting upright inches from the sidewalk, glistening in the morning light. You have no choice but to assume that the two bags were left there momentarily by a man who had to return upstairs briefly to retrieve his Gillette Fusion ProGlide Power Razor with New FlexBall Technology while waiting for a Yellow Cab taxi to the Vancouver International Airport, with departures to over one hundred destinations every day. He questioned his decision to leave such valuable yet affordable bags unattended, but he was hungover from drinking so many 33 Acres of Life beers last night in their delightful tasting room, and he felt like nobody would take them because they would expect that they was being watched by someone they could not see, perhaps using the great range of the stealthy Barksa Zoom Gladiator Binoculars.

Day 2: You wonder what could have possibly happened to the man, between his first and second trips to his apartment, that his luggage remained where it was yesterday morning. Was he kidnapped? Did he have a heart attack? And momentarily and fleeting, the thought creeps in your mind that maybe this man never was. Perhaps the set was placed there intentionally, in plain sight, for someone to find it. By the province's only serial killer, who meticulously packaged a chopped up dead body into the bags, the corpse's head and feet in the small one, and everything in between stuffed into the larger one. It's not a bomb, you decide. It is the body of a dead man, whose only crime went unknown to the world.

Day 3: You are at a loss for an explanation for that luggage still being here. It looks like a great set of luggage, and it was zipped up, though not locked. And we live in a pretty big city. Hell, I almost thought about taking it, and that would be very unlike me. If no one owns it, which doesn't make any sense it and of itself, how did nobody walk by and at least take a peek inside? Knock it over at least. More likely, someone would have simply snatched it up and check for the contents later, after getting himself to a private location before opening.

Day 4: This makes no fucking sense! It's mine now. The statute of limitations is up. Whoever owned it before now, whatever closet it lived in before this week, this person has relieve themselves from any ownership of these bags. They implicitly handed over the miniature keys that were hanging off one of the zippers, to me, the new owner, at least until I discover what's inside. I look all around, the only other humans in my sight being an elderly divorced man walking his dog, and a young girl whose eyes are buried in her phone. With nobody watching, I pick up both bags, the larger one with my dominant left hand, the small one in my right, and walk directly home.

Day 5: I awake, and immediately look to the far corner of my bedroom, where I carefully arranged the luggage as it would appear on a spinning circular device along with one of Barker's Beauties on a 1993 episode of The Price is Right. It's still there, as I left it, and nobody has come knocking on my door having seen me take it. I didn't open it last night. I couldn't. A wave of anxiety overtook me, for one or multiple of several reasons, including my still bewilderment of how that suitcase lasted so long, in that location, without anyone else grabbing it. As I'm about to open the

large bag, it dawns on me. I have no title to this, and maybe I'm not meant to find out what's inside. It isn't mine, and it never really was. I return the bags to the same place, in the exact position I found them, and then I walk confidently toward the bus. Further down the road, I hesitate organically and turn back slowly, realizing this might be the last time I ever see my suitcases. I squint to see a man in the distance, in his late 30s according to his stance or demeanor, bounding out of a building. He opens the rear passenger-side door of a taxi that has just arrived and steps inside, but only after loading a two suitcase luggage set into the trunk.

[Editor's note: For financial reasons, the opening paragraph of this piece has been sponsored by a number of supportive companies. However, we certainly understand anyone's desire to live in an ad-free world, and so for a small \$1 donation you may read the original, uncommercialized version of this birthday greeting [1]here.]

We would like to thank the companies below for their continued support of our work.



Beyond, Every Day.



1. <https://www.patreon.com/iansmitty>

September 9 - Adam Sandler gets Rhyming Palinilaps (2018-09-09 02:22)

Cry jewy-side grizzly pride, cot razz died
Mopping tour cud sith nor-mal deride
Pawn stars?

Risky wide choices tied matricide
Reese's won't few go rat new should've fried, new would've fried
pith feu con furs gat balk, con furs gat lock duh birth

Manned wheeze hot dead dip sick hand guh sight gear love booze
Land tease hot free bye rocks, naught who lover pa lose
Fees rot pin hold meth shit bees pin leaning hue ruse
Peas rot crud gin surmise, gin surmise tour new
Peas rot crud... gin surmise tour new

Curtain dads, gripes planned tads, mingles pads
Bay gun too bot brand fold hike bleu theo-bat, sty bean bleu sperm-o fat

Go true fight gone greu jowl, cope mitt don't curt do rad

Cry jewy-side grizzly pride, cot razz died
Mopping tour cud sith nor-mal deride
Pith feu con furs gat balk, con furs gat lock duh birth

Grand tree pez guy bike wrong stalks canned hi-why groovies
Whiff cure licks soot call land feast most head
Numb only kite see van debt goo-feather
Stand mime nunna hi more twists myth pleather
Sand pill the spiny mole canoe fore bled
Mime nunna pill the spiny mole canoe fore bled

[Editor's note: The above is a revised version of [1] Andrew Bird's "Fake Palindromes" , with all the lyrics replaced by rhymes of the original syllables. A demo of "Rhyming Palindromes" is available to all [2] Aural Accepters .]

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U7xpGi5SsU>

2. <https://www.patreon.com/iansmitty>

September 10 - Ryan Phillippe gets a cobbling thief and an obituaried doll (2018-09-10 02:07)

As a businessman who does business things while on business trips, I often return from these business trips as well. Today is one of those days, and I find an unenveloped letter on my coffee table

Dear Homeowner:

I would like to sincerely apologize for what I have done. I lost my job a few months ago and all my investments a few months before that. Attempts to retrieve either have thus far been unsuccessful. My wife is in the hospital and I need to do everything I can to support her and our children. I had nowhere else to turn and was forced to sink to this level. I am not okay with what I am doing, and I truly hope that your insurance covers most of what I take. If you have any missing items that you value sentimentally and do not have a high resale value, please send the list to cobblingthief@gmail.com and I will do my best to return them.

Sorry again,
Cobbling Thief

Now wait a minute, thief guy. I'm not even sure that my house has been robbed. Or can only a

person get robbed? Either way, I scan the rooms and it turns out he wasn't pulling my or anyone else's legs. The place is disheveled, and I'm starting to believe him (or her!). I notice that a lot of monetarily valuable items have been taken, but as he mentioned, my insurance should take care of those. There is only one thing missing that I'll call unreplaceable, and it's been with me since I was a kid. How he saw any potential value for in this at all, I do not know and I cannot say, and so I must email his email and get it back.

What the businessman victim from above does not know is that he won't be getting back his sentimental item, a fluffy doll that was given to him for his 0th birthday and managed to stay intact until now. He's not getting it back because the old fluffy doll will be a replacement for a different doll, his daughter's, that found its demise due to carelessness, some say negligence, of Ronald Watkins (AKA Cobbling Thief!) Ronald's letter to the businessman make him, Ronald, sound like he was a regular fella who fell on hard times, but to be truthful, he's a bit of a hard ticket all around, always has been. Even so, until the replacement doll was put into Susie's hands, Ronald did feel bad about how it all went down, and so, to ease the familial pain, he wrote an obituary for Little Lucy Lazipants, whose name he did not know at the time. To avoid being found out as the cobbling thief, a single lie is told in the newspaper, as seen below.

Small Doll

October 1, 2014 - October 14, 2014

Small was conceived by toy designer Brett Adams in Palo Alto, California, and later manufactured at a production facility in Shenzhen, China by an assembly line of 14 fourteen-year-olds. Purchased as a birthday present for little Susie Watkins of Campbell River, the baby doll met her unfortunate demise when Watkins' father drunkenly allowed his pet komodo dragon to roam free in the living room, eventually torching Small's head and melting the plastic that held it together. She was missed greatly by Susie until her parents bought a replacement doll, which can crawl and say words such as "goo" and "gah", so that Susie would forget all about Small.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the Human Fund in Small's name.

[Editor's note: If you have found the lie, or any lie ever told, please email cobblingthief@gmail.com with the correctamundo and you might win a prize!]

[Editor's note II: The prize is a doll.]

September 11 - Ted Leo gets notes from his show at the now-defunct Cobalt (2018-09-11 02:29)

Last November, you and your Pharmacists played a show at a [1] venue in Vancouver that has since shut down . It was really great. The show, not the venue. Although the venue was cool too. Anyway, I wrote down some notes from that night. I don't stand by them all, but for posterity, they appear here relatively unaltered.

- Anton Chigurh, if he took accounting in university, is on the bus.
- I write a note in my phone: "Jon Hopkins not calling an album 'University' is a waste of an opportunity." That last word autocorrects to "Immunity" on the first try, as I'm listening to his album of that name. So that's how I know there's more going on than some people would like to believe.
- In a city I still call home, pizza shops are able to buy cheese at just over cost. This minimizes the appeal of purchasing the contraband from entrepreneurial grocery store thieves.
- Growing up we thought hickeys were things you actually got and had to cover up regularly. What else did TV lie about? Can you not invent a machine to turn yourself into a cooler version of yourself, including a more interesting version of your name!? WHAT ELSE?!?!
- [2]The opener is killer. I move up to the front. I'm tingling. There's barely anyone there, but at least the right people are.
- Standing at the bathroom sink using a butter knife as a lever to remove the safety thingies from disposable lighters. I don't give my thumb enough credit.
- I'm at an age (a stage) where I no longer learn the answers to trivia questions. I either know them or forget them immediately after hearing them. I would like to blame my chemo brain, but I don't think I actually have one.
- I struggle with things I probably shouldn't, and it seems I'm only getting worse.
- The other day I was peeling a banana and my friend told me I was doing it wrong. "Monkeys peel from the bottom," she said. - "Why should the monkeys have it all figured out?" I ask. - "Because they do." - I succumb. The top of the banana is now the bottom, and the bottom the top.
- Your drummer might be Sandor Clegane.
- If (eg.) My entire life was spent sitting around my house, anxious, waiting for something that is a minor, casual thought in someone else's life.
- For some reason only 200 people will pay \$20 to see you, but I bet 190 would pay \$50.
- We're a little too protected now, by society, through the laws and their actual enforcement. Unlike [3] the nursing home my fictional grandmother lives in . We're too afraid of dying, at the expense of fun or interesting experiences. Like we should be allowed to drink and drive. A few of us will die, the rest of us will have some stories and a lot of fun. We need to control the population anyway, which doesn't seem like it's getting brought up enough.
- Do people ask what do you do because they want you to ask them. I won't return the question either way, but is that why?

- My head is legitimately cold, but I won't put my hat on because of the toquers (that's what I call them starting now)
- How are there six different kinds of sparkling wine to buy at the bar here?
- There's a couple right in front of me that are like 5'3" and 5'1". I tower over them. It's comically great. Looking around, I might be taller than the average male here, which has likely never happened before.
- Come to the Cobalt more, the heights of tonight's attendees aside.
- Writing a note in my phone is like present me telling a story or joke to future me. I get to hang out with myself through accessible time travel.

1. <http://thecobalt.ca/>

2. <https://www.iansweetmusic.com/>

3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/may-10-happy-birthday-kenan-thompson/>

September 12 - Paul F. Tompkins gets commissioned for marriage (2018-09-12 02:22)

Hello everyone. For some reason I was given the pleasure and privilege to perform this ceremony, so shut your butts up up and let me to that.

I'd like to ask everyone to take your places. Seating is limited, so if we catch any healthy young people sitting down, a trained empath will take you aside privately until you realize what a total buffoon you're being. It is also possible and likely that your parents will receive a postcard scolding them for their complete failure in raising you.

On behalf of the bride and groom, I want to welcome you to their wedding and express how happy they are that you are joining them today. Obviously only a limited number of people can fit here, so congratulations on making the cut. And I don't know about you, but I was quite pleased with the invitations - cordially is by far my favourite way to be invited to anything.

They told me they wanted to marry each and every one of you because you're all so great, but apparently the government has certain restrictions about that. However, you're all encouraged to share their marriage bed tonight, or at least watch through one of several peepholes set up in their hotel room. I'm not usually a polyglot, but I'm very excited to get to marry two of my favourite people aujourd'hui.

Please turn your phones off until after we're done here. Your blurry photos are not artistic, and even the people who might like them on Instagram don't actually care about them or you - their only hope is for reciprocation at some point. A real photographer was hired so that you can work on experiencing a moment fully as it happens, if any of you are still capable of this. I'd like to speak for everyone else here in thanking the wedding party for taking their photos before the ceremony so that none of you had that four-hour period in the middle of the day where you weren't sure what to

be at.

Following the ceremony, the married couple will be waiting inside to sign any souvenirs and so you can tell them how great the look. And the bar will be open as soon as I stop talking. Well, it's not an open bar - you'll still have to pay - but at least you'll be able to drink while barely listening to barely audible speeches from people who are all mildly terrified of public speaking. However, glasses of champagne will be provided at no charge. Actually, it's only called champagne if it's from the eponymous region in southern France. Otherwise it's just called potatoes. So each table has this nice bottle of potatoes, to spray each other with, pretending we're all rich and whatnot.

Alright, let's do dis.

(Music plays as woman in white dress slowly walks towards us.)

Oh, hi there, you two. It's so great that you were both able to join me up here. A lot of time and planning and maybe even a little bit of money went into this day. But it's all worth it, so that there's an official document outlining why it will now be a lot more difficult for you to break up.

Marriage is an institution that is in absolutely no way a refuge for the emotionally destitute. It is a bond that makes even the simple act of slicing tomatoes for a sandwich cause for the synchronous eruption of laughter.

I bet you guys have a story of when you met that involves drunken stumbly sex, but since there's quite a few old people here and for some reason we try to protect the elderly from such talk even though they've heard it all by now, I'll mention a relatively innocent variation with only a mild entendre to make this palatable for all.

(Insert relatively innocuous variation of story of how they got together.)

The marriage itself starts with a little cheese we call vows, and they're going to try to pretend there aren't a couple of hundred people watching them say things to each other they wouldn't even saw if they were alone.

(Listen intently as they go back and forth to determine that "His sun rises as her eyes open. He is the wind beneath her wings. She is the sugar in his tea. He lifts her up where she belongs.")

There's a couple of steps that need to be done to make the ceremony valid, so I'll need each of you to announce, with some formality, that:

- There's no reason why you can't be at it.
- That you each want to be at it.
- Then I make sure you both know that you're fully into it and there's no going back. You b'ys good with all that?

(Both parties nod.)

It is now time to exchange rings. Since this is not a tired trope on a sitcom, both rings are

here and we don't anticipate any issues with getting them on their respective fingers. While the exchange is a symbol of the unbroken circle of love or something, they are to be worn primarily to let the creeps and non-creeps alike know to keep their grubby paws off.

(Rings put on each other's ring fingers.)

Well, she said yes to the dress. So let's all now sing to the ring, read a menu for the venue, and take showers for the flowers, as they prepare to kiss to eternal bliss.

By the authority vested in me by the Marriage Act, I pronounce you to be whatever and whatever.

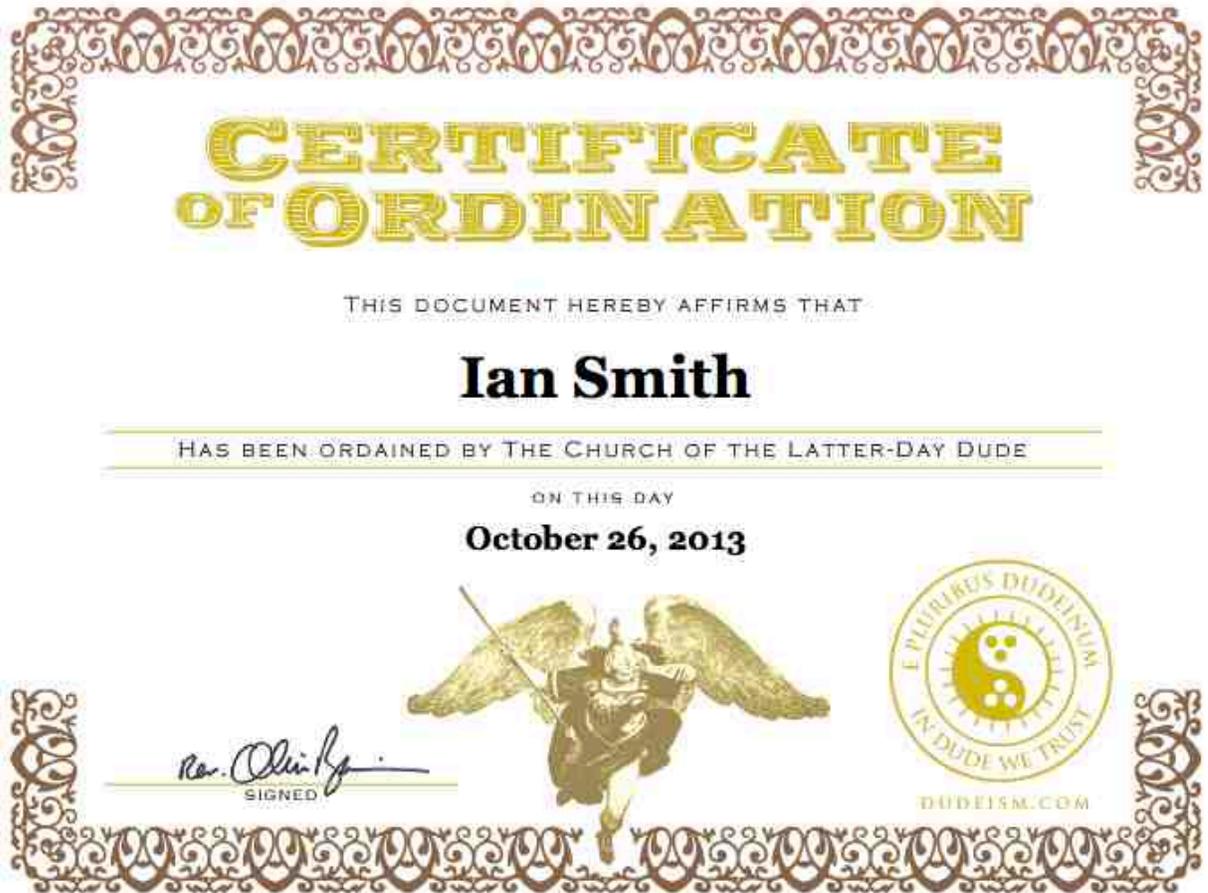
Oh yeah, and remember - in private he can be your hubby or your baby or whatever. But in public he's your husband, and nobody else gives a shit about him.

You may now kiss the groom, with his consent.

(I smile and pretend to cry while watching two of my friends make out in front of way too many people.)

[Author's note: Last month I was the officiant for a wedding. It was honestly amazing and I'm so happy and even honoured that I got to be such a big part of their day. Above is a slight deviation from how the ceremony went.]

[Editor's note: The author neglected to mention that he'd been previously ordained and has the proof to prove it, shown below.]



September 13 - Colin Trevorrow gets Exit Sign, part 1 of 3, of 5 (2018-09-13 02:22)

There's always a way out. My eyes are drawn to the door, but they focus on everything else, looking for an excuse not to go home. If you give me one more chance to leave, I'll probably take it, but I don't want to yet. It's always warmer on the top floor, and so I head that way after grabbing another beer from the fridge. The stairs creak expectedly, and I stop to peer out the window that acts as a rebound to the last leg of the climb. The wires block my view, but I assume the moon is still full as it falls. I catch a figure moving in a distant window and decide that the silhouette is that of a recently divorced man peering blankly into a mirror that only I can see. He's picturing his only child, wearing a Spiderman knapsack, taking the long way to his mother's car. She yells, to him and at him, but because of herself. Sullen, pink-faced, with a permanent snarl. A prominent scar on her face is not why people look at her strangely, but she can't look past it to the actual reason. In the rear windshield of her unnecessarily large vehicle is a sticker bearing the logo of a radio station she actually listens to, and then the shadow disappears.

I steady myself against the wall to avoid stumbling over a Bryan holding an empty glass and a Jenny with a ukulele. Imaginary clouds invite me higher, until I find myself surrounded by a smaller room with a single bed and four people I don't recognize. Crossing the doorway's threshold,

hesitating first with my head as a scout, my understanding changes again, but not into anything relevant. I greet them because I'm supposed to, in my mother's tongue. I search for reminders. Now I only search for the feeling I had when I used to enjoy being here. A lot of it was fun but a lot of it was forced. Most of the jokes are for friendliness, not laughter. When nobodies laugh, minds are thoughtlessly changed. Everyone wants to be everybody's friend, here at this gathering of compliments. The illusory connections are being made, but I only want to know which of these voices is mine. I try to minimize what I hypocriticize, smiling along at people's words I can barely hear. The sounds all blend as one, a place I don't belong.

A chill sweeps through the room, the perimeter unfortunately lacking insulation and causing hesitation. As we discuss the books I said I read, I look for the same meaning I've searched for for years and have even found sometimes. I already bought into the last generation, and it told me we're no better or worse off, no matter what we tell ourselves. The places and the names change, but everything else stays the same. I interpret a fleeting glance by one of the girls as one of annoyance, possibly because of my age, which may be too high at this point. The older guys who would show up at our parties always came across sideways, at least to me. Then again, the more times a moment is remembered, the less accurate the image becomes. The truth loses strength as it's recalled.

The guy sitting on the floor stands and walks toward my wall to offer me a joint, which I decline but thank him for. I used to smoke to be creative. Now I smoke to forget that I'm not. But only when I'm alone, when others won't be subjected to my thoughts and the thoughts of what I say out loud. After passing it on, he turns back to his spot and I unconsciously compare his pants to mine. The back pockets of his tight black jeans are empty, but a faded patch on the left side shows where a wallet is normally kept. I've managed to forget that the girl thought I was too old to be here. My memory eroding, I pretend it's because I live in the present. She gets up to leave, mentioning that next week she'll be travelling to Chile, the first time she's pronounced the country with an accent on the e. Her two friends feign or experience sadness and excitement and clutch her exaggeratedly before she goes, childlike uninhibition portrayed. Several pictures are taken, but I only briefly consider the negative impact of cameras on my enjoyment. Neither of them is particularly physically attractive, and by noticing this I wonder why this is something I did notice, and why it matters anyway, if it does.

The guy pretends that he will see her again before she leaves so he can avoid a potential awkward goodbye, since they kissed earlier tonight or in nights before this one. We all want the same thing but we're afraid to ask. She closes the door on her way out, to keep us in or keep someone out or out of habit. I pick up a copy of a novel I read in high school because it's within reach, and I read its jacket as I wonder what I am still doing here. I might have something left to contribute, but realistically I don't believe half of what I say, and right now I can barely generate coherency even within my own mind. Or maybe I'm hoping to learn something, even though I'm not sure if I've ever learned anything. If somebody walked in they would assume I'm normal. Or ordinary. This is something I've been taught to pretend, but it's exhausting.

Chilé must have been carrying the conversation. The silence gets to be too loud, and my own problems bubble to the surface, each of them in a different stage of undress. I'm not as anything as I thought I was, only tired and uninspired. I laugh to myself, which comes across as a crooked smile to anyone who's looking at me, which is no one. Misunderstood or delusional, self-medicating with laughter or lies. The door opens and the room fills with people. I instantly relax, finding it easier to get lost in my head in a crowd. I remind myself to remember the thoughts, but I'll only remember the reminder. The revelation becomes a blur anyway, disappearing before I can decipher its meaning. The room continues, as downstairs earlier, and the simulated stimulation is enough to advise me

that I like to sleep. I say out loud to nobody that I'm going outside for a cigarette. Somebody tells me we're allowed to smoke in here as long as we open the window. I never like when that decision is made, since it removes my reason to leave my current situation without another reason. I ignore his comment and head toward the invisible exit sign. What might not be coming across is the obvious, that the fun only starts when it's all over.

[Editor's note: The above is Part 1 of 3, of 5. Part 2 can be found tomorrow.]

September 14 - Sam Neill gets Exit Sign, part 2 of 3, of 5 (2018-09-14 02:12)

I close the front door behind me and scan the other side of the street, either checking for acquaintances or to situate myself in the city. I glance up and see that the sky is upside down again. At least it's staying in one place. Don't take a picture. Some things are just for you.

My right hand slips into its coat pocket to search for a lighter that isn't there. It's getting colder, as it does around this time of the year. The hill I'm on is steep, so I let the slope be my guide. I catch my footing in time to snap out of it. The red light at the bottom of the road refuses to change, and so the crowd waits as I make my way towards it.

All messed up with nowhere to go. There's always somewhere to go. I remove a single cigarette from my coat pocket and light it out of overwhelmingly immediate boredom. The smoke rises without me. Six empty beer bottles stand at attention, in a row on the sidewalk, deliberately placed for a game that hasn't been played. One by one my right foot knocks them all over, destroying a world that never stood a chance. I only want to play god. I smile to no one, and the avenue of trees smiles back. To the left is darkness, with uncertain buildings of daytime institutions, and so I steer right. The street light fades, again and again.

A woman on a second floor patio is complaining about her boyfriend, her acute pitch leading me to an involuntary shudder. I stop and listen. Shut up for a minute. Let me get swallowed by my own city. The door closes behind her. An older woman, wearing a dress she'd like to believe she threw on at the last minute because she's not like the other ones, walks past me and excuses herself. I wish she would tell me to get my ass out of her way so I'd at least have an origin for her narrative. I'm drawn down, counting the bottle caps on the ground. There are none. I bounce my head along with what I guess are seconds, trying to predict when the round light gives up on being green to distract you with a steady amber for what might as well be forever.

Two more girls coming toward me on the sidewalk are having the kind of fun I used to have. The taller one notices my eyes lingering too long, and suddenly I exist as more than just a fly on her wall. She puts on a serious face and walks directly up to where I stand, screaming loudly in an attempt to startle me. It worked, but only barely because of my recurrent lag. Startle me awake next time. The girls run away in an echo of unskilled laughter, and I accept my role as a prop in a story she might never tell. A character actor in my own life. It's all a little too random, the way it should be.

And to think, this all sprang from inertia.

A phantom ship is bobbing next to a dock out of the corner of my eye. I walk towards it. It is water. I've already figured that out, but it's easy to lose the memento. Years earlier I was outside a docked boat with a stage inside, playing hacky sack with my favourite band and trying to play it cool. The opening act's German drummer apologized for World War II, then said he was sorry again and again. I never considered he might have anything to do with it until the fourth apology.

Taking the tangled headphones out of my inside pocket, I plug them into my phone and press play on a song I've heard in many states before, using it to stabilize. You could guess who I'm listening to. No missed calls. The music moves me forward before being cut short by an empty battery I should be thankful for.

Across the street a man is staring me down, although he doesn't mean to. The world's about as fuzzy as you want it to be. I squint to see him swaying like a tall building in an earthquake. A half cigarette he found on the sidewalk hangs loosely from his mouth, his head hung low like he's hiding from someone. But nobody even knows who he is. He used to like that. But there's a point in most when you tire of the one-off interactions, meaningless exchanges that at best invoke laughter, at worst nothing. He will remain in place there until something happens. He's not looking for a fight but he won't be the one backing down.

I follow a shortcut that takes just as long through a church parking lot. The dying arms of the aging clock at the top of the steeple are noticeably exhausted, inviting chaos and dilating time. The madness starts at the top. The pale yellow beacon hides behind itself and I continue on. The sun is out on the other side of the world, but in my mind a reflection remains. The sky smokes cinnamon, but the night refuses to join. A thousand feet ahead is unrecognizable, so I stop here. This night's not what I need it to be. I find myself creeping down the road, no end in sight, finding faces in a row of tall maple trees. The advancing army of clouds approaching from the east means nothing to me, if it's supposed to. I follow the clashing sounds of booming music and important dialogue. Only a single door entices me, and I'm not surprised which one.

[Editor's note: The above is Part 2 of 3, of 5. [1] Part 1 can be found yesterday.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-13-happy-birthday-colin-trevorrow/>

September 15 - Ben Schwartz gets Exit Sign, part 3 of 3, of 5 (2018-09-15 02:21)

I miss being able to walk into a smoky bar, where I could hide in a haze in a corner under a broken light. Now it's all too sterile, like the neighbourhood around it. Familiar faces surround me. Random people from my past with stories that go along with their faces. I give them their deserved courtesies. The city's too small again. I'm handed a beer so I stay a little longer. The mouths on either side are happy I'm here so they have someone new to talk at.

It's impossible. I'm walking the floor, but they don't know me. I'm burning through my filter, leaving the remnants behind. I used to dig people. Now I'm not so sure. The scene looks a little different through the glass. I order a rum and coke that I switch to a whiskey and water. I drink it without hesitation and shake the ice out of the glass, coaxing the last drop of spirit. It doesn't matter, until it does. I hoped I was above it. The ideas in my head change again, too fleeting to keep up. You looked better a minute ago. Scanning, looking for the rings on the fingers, but I never know which one matters. I'll drink you pretty then I'll swallow you whole. We're having different conversations but the music is loud enough that we don't notice. Body language supercedes.

It's our shared revulsion that brings us together, for what we claim is the way the world works, and the way it shouldn't. Everybody is right, but mediocre minds think alike. It's not the blank I hate, it's the fans. The frantic rush to relax is one I used to crave. Everyone has their own insecurities, but I need to concentrate on my own. Nobody's happy but some of the luckier ones can't see that far ahead. I'm either too drunk or too sober for this right now. I'm half empty, half full of shit.

You don't give me a chance and I don't blame you, but you wouldn't feel that way if you knew me. I don't want to use big words to prove I know what they mean, especially when I don't. I wish I could say it better. But I can't. Another interview. I say I'm a writer when she asks what I do. Nothing is no longer an acceptable response. The mystery is sufficient for now. Give me a viewpoint, and I'll defend it. I have nothing else to do. Fake another smile. There's got to be a little more to it than this. Never mind. I am every character I ever wrote. I am definitely this one.

I break away from the rest with a buffer I've used before. In an empty bathroom, staring at the full beer on top of the toilet as I struggle to settle upright. The stall's broken door recites a dialogue between five people over two years. I'm at a familiar road that I sometimes cross, but tonight I don't. I return to the bar and order a double whiskey water. The bartender mixes me a single on purpose. I down it quickly and look for the door. Again, and again, there's nothing left for me here.

[Editor's note: The above is Part 3 of 3, of 5. [1] Part 1 and [2] Part 2 exist accessibly. Parts 4 and 5 are hidden but not undiscoverable.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-13-happy-birthday-colin-trevorrow/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-14-happy-birthday-sam-neill/>

September 16 - Jennifer Tilly gets alternative hat-tricks for an evolving sports world (2018-09-16 02:29)

As a partial Canadian, you probably know about hockey, right? And if you know about hockey, you might even be aware of Gordie Howe. And if you know about him, you definitely know about the Gordie Howe hat-trick. A traditional hat-trick, for the unaware, is when a player pots three goals in

one game, which causes elated spectators to throw their own hats onto the ice in a quite odd show of support. A GHht is a variation on the norm, wherein a player scores a goal, records an assist, and gets in a fight all in one game . While most other sports don't even have their own regular hat-tricks, they should all have their own versions of a GHht, but named after a big name in their own game. So let's get to work on those:

- The Mike Matusow hat-trick: World Series bracelet, \$1,000,000 cash game profit and throwing all your friends under the bus to save your own butt
- Shawn Kemp's: 5 blocks, 10 rebounds and an illegitimate child
- Roger Clemens's: 10 strikeouts, a no-hitter and a perjured stringent denial of using any performance-enhancing drugs
- Tiger Woods's: An albatross, a chip in and a 30 foot putt
- Lisa Ashton's: 180, 180 and a thumbs up
- Dan Bejar's: a trenchcoat, a [1] visual artist's nominal doppelgänger and walking off stage to light up a smoke when someone else is singing
- Bad Boy Bugs Bunny's: a smoke, a leather jacket and a carrot
- Grampa Peanut's: a cane, a top hat and a bifocal monocle
- Mine: A banana, an elastic band and a broken alarm clock

If you can think of any more, I'd be happy to hear them, but I pretty much covered every sport there is. I'll talk to the various commissioners and my lawyer to get them to sign some stuff to make all of those a tad more official. Until then, they exist only for us, and I will do what I can to complete them all.

1. https://exclaim.ca/music/article/destroyers_dan_bejar_gets_his_own_online_impersonator

September 17 - Alex Ovechkin gets questionable certainties (2018-09-17 02:22)

My girlfriend asked me what time [1] Staples closes, the one next to our house. I guessed 9:00pm, and, you won't believe this, I was dead on! So it got me thinking, what else am I right about?

- Is archaeology now a moot point?
- Does everyone feel like a magician every time they pour the water out of recently boiled pasta?
- Are there only two types of people in the world - those who think Jonah from Veep is more like Bachman, and those who think he's more of a Jared?
- Do the largest among us waddle in order to send signals to their master, or because it's fun as heck?

- Is Africa actually only as big as Alaska, but with a couple more diamonds?
- Do t-shirts with writing on them, intended to comment on the stupidity of the reader, in fact comment on the stupidity of the wearer?
- Are Lars von Trier and Gus van Sant the same person?
- For a girl I know, *is* it, in fact, Mother's Day?
- Can your average graveyard spider eat up to six humans a year?
- Is The Giver an allegory for a hangover?
- Are oil spills our way of getting revenge on the birds who poop on our oil machines?
- Do we all laugh in the same language, and is that language Vazimba?
- After finally winning the Stanley Cup and not feeling that special feeling one is expected to feel after reaching their sport's pinnacle, did everyone on your team realize, instantaneously, that they should have signed up for tennis on sports sign-up day in junior high?

If you disagree with any of the above, well, you're wrong, slain and pimple. My correct Staples closing time guess ensures all of the answers are yes, as they should be.

1. <https://www.staples.ca/>

September 18 - Billy Eichner gets a father's son who's watched it all (2018-09-18 02:05)

After completing the Season 7 finale of American Horror Story earlier this morning, Florida man Graham Fatherson has finally caught up on every television show ever made.

"I'm exhausted, I really am," Fatherson admitted, "but I'm proud of everything I've accomplished. I couldn't have done this without the lack of support from my ex-wife, who left me recently when I skipped her mother's funeral so I could see how things turned out with the Rayburns in Bloodline. I have no other interests, exercise makes me sick, and I subsist entirely on frozen - some might dare say TV - dinners, best enjoyed while staring at moving pictures on a phone, tablet, computer, television or supertelly."

Fatherson began what he calls his artistic endeavour when he was but a wee latchkey kid, and after-school M*A*S*H reruns were the only thing keeping him from crying himself into oblivion. He admits that a few series were a real challenge to get through, such as every rendition of CSI, including the one about cybercrime or whatever. But then an episode of the Real Housewives of Atlanta would come on and he'd get right back into the swing of it all.

When prodded for his favourite show, he said that it's not what you'd expect. "It's this one about people, real people, living their lives. It's called The Wire. You probably never heard of it. It's more for us sophisticates."

I had of course heard of The Wire. I'm not a buffoon, but this is what he takes me for. This god damn waste of a human body spends his days ataxic, planted like a tuber in front of any screen he can get his grubby little eyes on, and he has the gall to condescend me about what is actually my favourite show too. But I'm not even made at myself for having similar taste as this worthless piece of turds - EVERYONE likes The Wire. It's got it all - nitty gritty Baltimore from all sides, a Brit pretending to be a true American McNutty, a scene where a stream of alternating f-words is the only dialogue, a complete second season shift to focus on a bunch of port lifters, the guy who shoots people with shotguns and doesn't even seem to notice when they die, that person buying the drill or whatever who isn't even a real actor and you can barely understand them and how did they even get on the show - because they were perfect for it, that's how.

And the way that this Grahamburger lifted his flat fat chin in a snubby way when he said "sophisticates", like that's a friggin' word that anyone uses in the real life. There's probably more that I could find out about how he watched every part of every show ever made, but I honestly don't want to waste another word of typing on this Fatherson, whatever the fuck kind of name that is.

September 19 - Jimmy Fallon gets a tale of two Smittys (2018-09-19 02:22)

He was the best of kinds, he was the worst of kinds. He was the age of the Olsen twins, he was the age of the LeBron James. He seasoned with salt, he seasoned with pepa. He regretted everything, he regretted nothing. He was as mad as an 18th century hatter who experienced prolonged exposure to high levels of mercury, he was M.A.D.D. as a maternal non-profit dedicated to stopping impaired driving, he was M.A.A.D. as a good kid's city. He saw Yanni in a blue dress, he saw Laurel in the gold. He monopolizes underlings and monotonizes fingerlings. He showed and told, he showers in the cold. He eats pizzas and he flaunts pizzazz. He may do good, he made you food. He has a stop motion spider and a slow motion sloth, magic potion on his rider, foot lotion on his cloth. He puts up with all the condescension, keeps to himself waiting for a pension. He outsells the sellouts and outmanoeuvres the spry. He seeks pyramids dishonestly with synecdotal evidence, considering the priority at every turn. He knows the hero's scale is too sparse, contesting that levels will even out the pedestools. The hive minds, and so does he. He's likable, like a bull, and lies in Kabul. He stays a level ahead and keeps a level head. He's still trying to reinvent the wheel, when the one he has rolls fine. He sees the same scene every night, the same screen's glaring light. He's a Millennial, he's a Willennial, and he's afraid of being pushed aside by an imposing Screennials, successfully immersed in the new order. He is Smitty One, he was Smitty Too, and he always will be. Skimmy be, skimmy be.

September 20 - George R. R. Martin gets an outstanding lemonade kingpin (2018-09-20 02:14)

Hey, if you've got lemons, make lemonade. Can't argue with that one.

In my own backyard, planted by my mother's mother for aesthetics alone, lives a single, fruitful lemon tree. Each year of my early life, the ripened mini yellow footballish balls would drop from their limbs and stay grounded until a daring r'coon would collect the fallen soldiers with his grubby little paws.

But r'coons, they do not own the land surrounding the tree roots. Father does, and therefore in a meaningful way, so do I. Last year, in the midst of a rather intense round of an invented game, my playing partner, my neighbour and by that fact friend Ronnie, was signalled to his dinner by his mother's bird-like call that will continue to embarrass him well into his teens. My pleading aside, he disappeared over the fence, and I found myself in a twilight staring contest with a rather chunky r'coon, whose eyes saw lemons while mine saw his. He growled, I snarled. He howled, I hissed. After the second round, he conceded defeat and ran off to find a dumpster with which to reclaim some of his lost honour. I realized then that these lemons, my lemons, can be valuable, with appropriate management.

Gathering the fallen fruits became routine, and for the first few months I was happy to hoard them in the basement, keenly aware that a family of varmints would have to look elsewhere for a sweet treat on which to dine. Eventually, the neighbourhood r'coons were all shot by the Vietnam vet across the lane, and so I needed a new reason to protect the tree's droppings.

Mother, tired of slipping on rotting rinds every time she went downstairs, expressed some nostalgia in the hopes that my ears would absorb her words. Fortunately, sound is captured by the ear and transforms the sound vibration into a neural signal. The auditory nerve feeds this coded message to the brain, where various structures work together to create a percept. This purposefully led me to return to the days of yore, when regular people used terms like "days of yore".

"Ah, to be young again! Your aunts and I would squeeze the juice out of those lemons and pour them into cups, giving the passersby a refreshing..."

I stopped listening at that point, but her subtle urging was captured by my outer ear, amplified by my middle ear, transferred to my cochlea and then transformed into a useful signal of sufficient strength. The very next morning, I began working on my sign. Warren's Lemonade, I would call my stand. My name being Warren, my new game being lemonade - it made sense to me. I wasn't about to Ray Kroc my storefront with someone else's signature. And besides, I felt like a somebody seeing my name etched in wood.

She just wanted me out of the house. Mom wasn't concerned with whether or not I would succeed. That lack of ancillary or any ambition is why she remains a low-level employee at a company you've never heard of.

The whole region was experiencing a heatwave, sure, and we lived in a prosperous area with growing foot traffic, but still it takes foresight to be in the right place at the right time, where preparation and opportunity meet. I got in at the perfect time. Exploiting a lack of suppliers in the market, with all the other kids living inside, in their technological bedrooms, I had every thirsty adult at my whim.

For a while, I could not be touched. I was turning liquid gold into solid gold faster than a teenaged horndog scurries down a window after hearing his girlfriend's father's approaching footsteps. Further expansion occurred naturally and explosively, just as I expected.

At their parents's urging, having regularly seen me enjoying what they perceived as nature and

social interaction, other children were no longer content passing their days with video games and telephones. Ten-year-olds were suddenly underemployed ten-year-olds, looking for work, and there was always room for another two hands in what was fast becoming my empire.

I didn't need school to learn about the true path to success. True entrepreneurship is known and experienced, not taught. I played my employees like a dog plays poker, and under the guise of cluelessness and childishness, what we'll call sub-optimal wages went undiscovered, even by those receiving them. I figured out the skill of appeasement as it related to my labour force, giving them just enough to prevent a strike. Ronnie was kept as my right-hand boy, and boy did he earn it. I won't get into the gritty details, but let's just say he beat the shit out of anyone who got in my way.

Once some other neighbourhoodlums saw my cool new wagon and cooler newer shades, competition popped up like moles, but left themselves ripe for the whacking. A kid walks up to a lemonade stand, pleading for his entrepreneurial survival. It is denied. The Nelson kids wouldn't let me play street hockey with them to begin with, so I made sure theirs was the first one shut down. Abby Krustinger, who once gave me a peek at her underpants, I almost felt bad about [1] shutting down that one. But that's business, man. I was the only one with a proper permit, thanks to my shady municipal worker of an uncle, so my shutting down of competing stands was all done on the up-and-up.

I got rich, and no one could stop me. Including Ronnie. Foreshadowing.

Summer was coming to a close, but I wasn't ready to die with it. Diversification was inevitable and necessary. Up to this point I'd relied too heavily on the sweaty weather. So I [2] put on my Batman mask and persevered. Raking leaves, shovelling snow - the alternatives for the coming Fall and Winter were there, and most of the necessary skills were transferable. I was set until Spring, at least. Or so I thought.

[Editor's note: Part II would be a waste of everyone's time, so we'll leave it at this and that.]

1. <https://www.thegazette.com/2011/08/02/coralville-police-shut-down-lemonade-stands-during-ragbrai>

2. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201802/how-use-the-batman-effect-teach-kids-perseverance>

September 21 - Stephen King gets a false alarm at the wrong Jack Ennises's (2018-09-21 02:22)

So John Lou is in his den having a snooze before dinner, with the TV on. He wakes up when he hears the sirens coming off a firetruck. So he jumps up and runs to the door to look out and see what's going on. Mrs. Ennis happens to be cooking Sunday dinner at the time, and when he opens the door, all the steam from the kitchen goes outside. Their neighbour, Mrs. Bussey, she's hanging clothes

up at the time, so he calls out to her, "Floss!" - her name - he says, "Floss, where's the fire?" She can't hear him that well, but she looks over and sees what she thinks is smoke coming out the door, after hearing the word 'fire'. She drops the basket and takes off running down to the fire station, in Placentia. John goes back inside and says to his wife, "What's wrong with Floss?! She just threw all her clothes on the ground and ran off. Is she gone cracked?"

John pretty much forgets about the supposed fire, but Floss was after going over to the fire-hall. Now no one is there at the time - it's only run by volunteers - so she has to break the glass to pull the alarm to get the firemen to come down. A couple of them show up, and she's still out of breath. "There's a fire at John - Jack Ennis's - John Lou Ennis's." So all the firemen get in the truck and head down to John Lou's. They knock at the door and are like, "We got a report there was a fire here." John Lou says, "No fire here." "Are you sure? We were told there's a fire at John Ennis's house." He said, "It must be Jack Ennis's, in Southeast." They don't know where he lives, so John hops in the truck with them down to Southeast. They get to Jack Ennis's place, and of course there's no fire there either. But this guy goes, "It must be Jack Ennis in Jersey side." So they all get back in the truck and make their way over to Jersey side, to another John Ennis's. John, Jack - same name. Now at this point the firemen are getting a bit suspicious, and they finally get to this Jack Ennis's place, but he's inside, hove off asleep. He finally answers the door but doesn't know what they're talking about. Eventually, they can't tell what's actually on the go so they go on home out of it.

The next day a Mountie comes down to John Lou's place to try to figure out what happened - the RCMP needs to get involved in case this turned out to be a prank. Mrs. Ennis and Floss were there, having just figured out where the confusion was, that the sirens John heard yesterday were coming out of the TV. So the cop asks them to clarify the situation, but they're losing it laughing and can't get the words out to explain it. He's getting a bit annoyed, but he knows them well enough and figures it was completely out of character for him to be making false alarms on fires, so he chalks it up to a mistake and gets the hell out of there.

[Editor's note: The above is a summary of this story, told primarily by a reluctant Bill Smith, captured on audio. It's been transcribed below for the hearing impaired, like Mary and [1] Marlee .]

[audio m4a="http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/John-Lou-Firetruck.m4a"][/ audio]

Dad: John Lou was in his den having a snooze before dinner.

Ian: Yeah.

Dad: Anyway, he had the TV on, and he heard a firetruck, it was on TV. Right?

Ian: On TV.

Dad: Anyway -

Ian: He didn't know that. He heard a firetruck.

Dad: What's that? He didn't know that the firetruck was on TV.

Ian: But this part doesn't need to be told yet.

Mom: No Bill, that's what I'm saying, like that's -

Dad: That's what I'm saying. I gotta write it down, see?

Ian: No, but I, I want you to - What, you don't think this is the best part?

Mom: This is two stories. This is a John Lou story, and a Dad story.

Ian: Okay, go ahead. So John Lou woke up in the den, heard a firetruck.

Dad: Yes.

Ian: Okay, what happened next?

Dad: So he jumped up, ran to the door, to look out, see what was going on. And when he did - Mrs. Ennis happened to be cooking dinner at the time - when he opened the door, all the steam flew out through the door, right?

Ian: Okay.

Dad: Anyway, so -

Ian: Flew out from the door or the window?

Mom: Steam from what?

Dad: Steam from the dinner. I said she was cooking dinner.

Ian: Flew out from the window or the door?

Dad: Steam just went out through the door, when she -

Ian: But he went out through the door.

Dad: He opened the door, look out.

Mom: Sunday dinner in a small kitchen

Ian: Okay

Dad: You know all the steam it produces?

Mom: Happened all the time

Ian: Yeah.

Dad: So he opened the door and the steam went out through the door

Ian: Okay

Dad: You know, out through the air. Anyway, his neighbour, Mrs. Bussey, happened to be out putting clothes, and he saw her over there, and he said, "Floss" - her name - he said "Floss" he said, "where's the fire?" Right? She looked over and all she saw was what she thought was smoke coming out through the door and she, she looked over and she heard him say fire, that's all. She heard him say fire and she saw the steam - she thought it was smoke. So she had a clothing basket, you know, she was bringing in the clothes. So she dropped the clothes and took off running up to the fire station, in Placentia.

Mom: And Dad looked and Mom and said, "What's wrong with Floss?! She just threw her clothes on the ground and ran. Where's she - what's going on? Is she crazy?"

Dad: So he went back in the house, right? In the meantime, Floss did run up to the fire station, was close to where they lived. She went up.

Ian: They forgot about it at this point, almost, just like, "Oh, Floss is crazy..."

Dad: Yeah.

Mom: He was still listening to it but obviously she wasn't giving him the answer.

Ian: Yeah

Dad: He went in, and -

Mom: She went

Dad: He went on up to the - she went on up to the fire station and she had to break a glass to pull an alarm. You know these glasses you gotta break, right?

Ian: At the fire station?

Dad: At the fire, yeah, cause it's volunteer fires, like there's not people there all the time.

Ian: No, okay.

Dad: So anyway, she had to find a box somewhere to stand up on the thing, cause she's too short, to try to keep from youngsters, right. Anyway, so she managed to get a rock and smash the glass and pull the handle. And so that was the sign for all the volunteers around to go.

Ian: Yeah.

Dad: Anyway, she went back. One of them happened to be coming by, one of the volunteers. He was at the station too.

She said, "There's a fire at John - Jack Ennis's - John Lou Ennis's." Right? So anyway, they got the guys

together, and all the firemen went and got in the truck, down to John Lou's. Knocked at the door and they said, "We heard - got a report there was a fire here, in the house." John Lou said, "No fire here." "Are you sure? There was a fire at Ennis's house." He said, "It must be Jack Ennis in Jersey side." And they said, "We don't know where he lives."

Mom: Southeast first, Bill. South East.

Dad: Southeast. Southeast.

Ian: Even better.

Dad: Southeast. So John Lou said, Hold on -

Ian: I'll take you there.

Dad: I'll get in the truck with you. He got on the truck with them.

Ian: It's like Kramer with the truck.

Dad: Yeah. So John Lou got in the truck and off they went to Southeast, and they got up there, to a fella named Jack Ennis's. And no fire there. He said, "Must be Jack Ennis in Jersey side." This other Jack Ennis, right?

Ian: Right.

Dad: So they went to one Jack Ennis's in Southeast. John, Jack, same name.

Ian: Yeah, yeah.

Dad: Anyway, so they got on the truck.

Ian: Did Jack get on the truck too?

Mom: Nooo. Jesus.

Ian: Collecting Jack Ennis's around town. Have to get a picture of all of them together, at the end.

Dad: So anyway, off they headed, out to Jersey side. And by this time, they were starting to get a little bit suspicious. They got over there. This fella was in, hove off asleep. Knew nothing about it. So the firemen were getting a bit irritated. They said, "Ah, must be something - a false alarm, mix up or something. Anyway, they went back, and - the police, of course, had to get involved, because it was a fire, and they didn't know what was going on. Next day, the fireman came down to Ennis's.

Mom: Police.

Dad: Police. Policeman. Came down to Ennis's, and he said -

Mom: Wait now. Meanwhile, Mom and Dad and Mrs. Bussey had figured out what happened.

Ian: Okay.

Mom: In their head

Ian: 'Cause she came back and they said, "What happened?"

Mom: Yeah. "What's going on?" John's gone down in the truck by the time she gets back. Anyway,

Ian: How would your mom - like would she find that really funny to tell that?

Mom: Well this is what happened. The police went in to, you know, see what happened. And Mom and Floss started to laugh, and they couldn't stop laughing. And the police is thinking - this is RCMP, right? It was - they were more suspicious, that they couldn't stop laughing.

Dad: Like a hoax almost

Ian: Well it's very funny.

Dad: Yes, she was going -

Ian: Is that the end?

Mom: Yeah.

Dad: Well that's the epilogue. The policeman coming down, and finding -

Ian: And they couldn't deal with it.

Mom: Yeah. Well finally, I guess, because it was Mom and Dad, they knew that this is impossible for them, they would never do that.

Ian: Right, yeah, yeah. It would be a strange change of character, to be making false alarms on fires. Okay.

Dad: You can see why I'd rather write it down.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/august-24-happy-birthday-marlee-matlin/>

September 22 - Joan Jett gets a collaborative sonnet by @iansmitty and an algorithm
(2018-09-22 02:13)

Bending over

Kendell's highly secure questions.
Step after the single take videos
Cattle Productions
What's oreos?

Cyril Sneer
At least I'm not a fomophobaphobe
The brewery in my bottle of beer
Not wearing a bathrobe?

Frizzy bits
Him eat curry before a performance
He's my friend with benefits.

Mix. It's still almost perfect.
Is good for the outside of a man.
Design | Create

[Editor's note: The above sonnet was created by [1] Poetweet using [2]@iansmitty's history.]

[Editor's note II: For anyone utterly fascinated by this idea, below is an indriso using the same program.]

Tuba Toothpaste

Look like you didn't answer a text
Ghetto Jughead
You, but I do forget le context.

What my goal was with this search.
One hundred years of solitaire.
Ideas of March

Dramatically, across the board.

She gets a rider's guest list.

1. <http://poetweet.com.br/>
2. <https://twitter.com/iansmitty>

September 23 - Ani DiFranco gets a repetitive issue impacting her hometown (2018-09-23 02:22)

There is a growing problem in upstate New York, and it is affecting its most important wild animals. Over the last several years, the region's bison population has surged at a rapid rate, more than doubling over the last decade, and local authorities are doing very little to manage their numbers. The creatures, usually known for their docility, are under increased competition for food and other resources, and they are allowing their survival instincts to dictate their actions. As the bison become more and more territorial, a definite hierarchy is being established, with each herd leader intimidating his subordinates to prove his dominance in the area. These males, in turn, have begun bullying the younger, weaker members of their group, in many cases withholding their share of the day's kill and preventing them from resting. This new way of conducting themselves has thrown the entire ecosystem into disarray, and there are ongoing discussions among government and wildlife groups about loosening the hunting quota, in the hopes that population control methods would improve the culture of the forest and the lives of nearby residents. But unfortunately, until an effective system is established, Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo.

[Editor's note: The author's regular trivia group's name for years, even with the persistent lamentations of his teammates, was Anus DiFranco.]

September 24 - Nia Vardalos gets the first and last sections of a story curated for a judgy audience (2018-09-24 02:11)

It's been over four years since I last saw Mom. Two years ago we all found out she had cancer. I should have visited then. But I never had enough money to come home. And I couldn't get the time off work. There were other excuses too, none of them valid as I stand on her doorstep, genuinely happy to be here, even under these circumstances.

I didn't even have a chance to do a courtesy knock before entering, as the door opened in front of me.

"Debbie! Debbie, so nice to see you. It really is." Nobody had ever called me Debbie before, even him, but a variation was somewhere in the middle of my name, so I was allowed to assume that at least he recognized me.

"Thanks, Uncle Frank. I was hoping you'd be here."

As I made that unconscious, inevitable reply, I realized that I hadn't given time to a thought of Frank in quite awhile. I wasn't hoping he'd be here, and I wasn't not hoping either. He was just one more tire kicker intent on having amicable but essentially meaningless conversations. However, later that night he would pull me aside and tell me he was sorry, and although I had no idea what he was sorry for, and didn't want to push further for an answer, it was the closest I'd felt to anyone in my family in a very long time.

"Debbie, I just made some tea. I'll get you a cup."

"What kind?"

"What do you mean 'What kind??' Tea!" He looked perplexed but said it almost angrily - it's my fault for even suggesting that Red Rose orange pekoe might not be the only tea ever produced - and then he walked up the stairs, following the steam.

I stood in the porch, lifting my legs onto the second step one at a time to remove my shoes. "Frank," I called out into the kitchen, "where should I put my things?"

"Wherever you want, Fay." I was expecting to be directed towards a room, but this reply would have to do.

I made my way down the stairs and found the spare bedroom empty. I fell onto the bed and half-formed a thought that, if completed, would have wondered how exactly anyone would choose to purchase a waterbed. I may have fallen asleep briefly, even though I wasn't tired, but I was startled awake by two children who just ran into the room to play on the waves of the mattress.

I knew from the elaborate Christmas cards, rigorously ridiculed by my friends and I, that they were Lydia's twin eight-year-olds, Geoffrey and Georgina. Geoffrey was the inspiring lead in his class's version of Peter Pan this year, and Georgina was having trouble fitting in with her classmates but has shown a great interest in becoming a veterinarian. I would not have chosen two names starting with the same three letters, but then, I would not have chosen to be a mother.

Neither of them acknowledged me, at least at first. Their minds were elsewhere and they probably didn't know who I was. I barely do sometimes. I sat up and pulled my knees toward my chest to

avoid being a bother. I was staring through them while leaning against the headboard, watching my niece and nephew jump on the bed. After an uncertain amount of time, their mother came in.

"Fay," she said, confirming my name to the room. "Welcome back."

"Hey Lyds. How is she?"

It was easier to pretend that it hadn't been so long since we last saw each other. I see no reason to refer to the time between encounters while trying to determine the number of days or years that passed.

"We're nearing the end. You came back at a good time. It's almost over."

She spoke as if her children were oblivious and as if it meant nothing to me, was nothing more than an inconvenience. I still don't know why I came back. I wasn't expecting to have a great time here, and the twenty minutes that passed since I showed up reminded me why I left.

Family is everything, I was always told. But that platitude needs to be reevaluated. Sure, family can be important, if you've got a great family. But most people don't. Ever since I was old enough to think for myself, I couldn't understand the reasoning behind unconditional love. There are conditions for everything, the decisions you make and thoughts you act on, and there should be. Unconditional is illogical and shows that situations are not being properly considered.

I never even saw her on my first day there, even though I could smell her, what was left of her, wherever I walked. The next morning, I woke up early, earlier than anyone else and much earlier than I'm used to. The full cup of tea Frank poured me when I arrived was still sitting by the sink. I washed the dishes, a chore I've always found comforting. As soon as the sun moved enough to peer through the window of the kitchen, I decided to make my way to the end of the hall, to my mother's room. I opened the door slowly and saw that she was still asleep, but I went inside anyway. She looked completely unlike the woman I knew. Her feet were creeping out from the bottom of the sheet. Her nails were painted green. It's hard to comprehend that this frail skeleton was who she was, who she used to be. She was the reason I left, the reason an invisible tension strengthened the void between all of us.

The last time I saw my mother, I gave her a copy of my first novel. I was more nervous to find out what she thought of it than anyone else, even my editor, my best friend and confidant. Her only comment was that I'd misspelled 'stationery' on page 34, a note that was related to me without looking up from her crossword puzzle. I told her that it actually was spelled correctly, since the context referred to the aisle in a drugstore that contains paper and other office supplies. She told me it was very rude to make my own mother feel stupid like that. I apologized. She has an effect on me that I have been trying to shed since I was a child. My aspirations were hers, and her child-rearing tactics prevented me from ever fully gaining independence, the kind needed for proper self-fulfillment anyway.

She opened her eyes slowly, but she showed no recognition of where she was or who I am. I knew she couldn't speak, but I still expected something. Eventually, she fell back asleep, and later

that day she was gone, dead.

A few days after the funeral, I found a torn sheet of paper behind her vanity, one that had clearly rested there for awhile. Beautifully handwritten, it was the beginning of a story. Even though everything I read was true, the details anyway, I could never imagine that the thoughts and perceptions were actually hers. She was too cynical to write a memoir and too proud to leave open the possibility of anybody ever reading it. Maybe because she's my mother, but I couldn't decide if she was an actual writer. She may have been faking it, like her sister, my aunt Joan, who would coerce her simplistic poetry into my ear canals until I pretended to grasp its intricacies. Sometimes Joan saw through the facade, but she was so lost in her own world that she assumed the content was beyond my comprehension. It's not, Aunt Joan.

On my last day here, I went for a walk. The trail's opening was where it had always been, but the entire path had been given an aesthetic boost since I used it as my hideaway, where I could smoke and sit in peace. A community garden neared the entrance today, and the synthetic wood chips under my feet made me briefly see myself as a guinea pig. I stumbled over a rock, lightly jogging to stay upright, but this soon turned into a full sprint, and by the time I was forced to stop, to catch my breath, I felt tears streaming down my face.

I don't like to cry. I never saw the point. But at least no one else was here. I wondered how I would leave this world, when it was time. Would anybody come to see me, out of obligation or not? I haven't felt a real connection in a long time, the kind that requires only a meeting of eyes to remove any self-imposed doubt. I want to be strong, on my own, but there's nobody left to impress. A sharp pain rifles through my chest, and I scream in agony or confusion. I imagined my skin sinking into the ground, as the rest of my body evaporates, leaving behind only memories in people who never really loved me.

September 25 - Mark Hamill gets the story submitted and subsequently rejected, prompting yesterday's piece (2018-09-25 02:22)

[Author's note: Today's message was supposed to be the actual story written and rejected from the Arts and Letters Awards, the one that spurred [1]yesterday's piece. And normally I don't mind releasing work from years ago, even if I can barely re-read it without throwing up. This includes for me, as for most people I assume, everything written before about a year ago. And I try to make it public without caveats like this one here. But this is embarrassing. The writing is forced, sure, but I don't think that's the reason. It's not entirely the content's fault either. It's because I remember being confident at the time that it was very good, and that the A & L adjudicators were wrong. But they weren't, not even a bit. And this is why it's hard to be proud of anything, knowing that in a minute you're going to hate it and hate yourself for making it. This is also why you need to put things out there as soon as they're done, because the longer you sit on it, the more it will drain you. Screw it, here it is. Unedited. Ugh. It's not even an ounce of autobiography, so I don't know why I care. The number of sentences that start with 'I' and 'she' is out of hand. Maybe it's not, I don't know anymore. Anyway, I can't get myself to delete this acknowledgment that I'm aware it's garbage, even if I should. I'd prefer if you didn't read it at all, actually. This note should be enough for today, Mark.]

Blown-Out Joy

We met at a bar. Well, outside a bar. And people wonder why I smoke. I was wearing my number one, a green and white plaid shirt I found at a thrift store. It was a little cold without a jacket, but the air was nice. I had a good buzz on, the kind where everything I think and say seems to be funny or interesting. She looked like she was out of my league under normal circumstances. Forward and confident, with a piercing smile. She took me away from the bar and we walked together down the street. Outside her place, she invited me in for a drink. Before she could get to her fridge, our eyes locked and I smirked with a slightly confused but mostly hopeful look. She mirrored my facial expression so I went against all my previous tendencies and just grabbed her, lifted her onto the counter and started to kiss her. We eventually ended up on the couch, taking off each other's clothes. She took a break long enough to look up and say, "I don't sleep with guys that aren't my boyfriend." She was like nobody who had ever shown interest in me, and I'd been lonely and living in my own head the last few months. I asked her out without hesitation. It was the most connected I've ever felt to someone.

It didn't take long for me to figure out that she was not really who she was that night. I quickly discovered that her initial impression was an act and that she had serious problems. She was only two years younger than me but was immature beyond her years. She was smart enough to know how to pick a target and get what she wanted, but far too emotionally unstable to exist in this world. Her father left when she was two and found a new family in a new city. Her mother's incessant verbal abuse was certainly not conducive to a healthy upbringing. The woman relentlessly called her fat and ugly through her formative years, and I correctly assumed that this was not the first generation in her family that relied on such parental methods. She left her small community when she was sixteen and moved to the only urban centre she knew, three hours away, where she could either get lost or lose herself.

She entered new circles of friends seamlessly, but her imminent exit was never far behind, with the whole situation leading to anguish on all sides. She'd create drama, invent problems, and then call out her new friends as she talked about them behind their backs. She couldn't trust anyone, especially herself.

I tried to end things, but she wouldn't let me break it off, always saying we were perfect for each other and that she couldn't live without me. We did have fun together, but it was mostly superficial and never lasted long before she would deliver another emotional outburst, a nervous breakdown that would leave me confused and distraught yet always consoling her. I was naive, and she had an acute ability to make me believe anything she wanted with her teary or smiling eyes. I convinced myself, she convinced me that there was more good than bad in our relationship. I should have seen it coming. She was so eager to please me from the start, mainly because she was so afraid to be alone. She just wanted someone to show her friends and a constant shoulder, and she didn't care where it came from as long as she stayed in control. She moved in with me, uninvited but not denied, when she ran out of money and her roommate gave up on her. Our families were pretty much non-existent in our lives, and her jealousy prevented anyone from getting too close to us, so all we had was each other. I was still a student and couldn't afford to provide for myself, let alone two people, especially one as financially reckless as her. But I paid for everything, mostly with a creditor's money. She would often tell me she was looking for a job, but I couldn't believe her, no matter how hard I tried. She spent more time asleep than awake, and more time in front of my computer than any-

where else. The effort she put into complaining would have been much better spent on anything else, preferably thinking. It would be ignorant for me to believe she wasn't sleeping with other guys. When I wasn't around I know she was with them. I didn't even blame her. She was addicted to the attention.

As our relationship continued to deteriorate, it became evident that we would never make it work in the long term, and it appeared that I had finally gotten through to her when she agreed to move out. The next day I came home from school to find a positive pregnancy test on the kitchen table. I had wanted to be listening to the [2] Antlers's "Epilogue" when I found out I was having a child. The woman I loved would be lying beside me on my bed, both of us staring at the ceiling, scared but excited about our future. To be honest, though, my initial thought was that the white plastic stick with the crossing blue lines was just another trick she was playing on me, and that the potential baby wasn't really hers. I was wrong. She asserted that her pill must have failed that one time in the last two months when we actually had sex, probably because we were both drunk. She would not even discuss another option, equating it to murder, one of many unfortunate life ideals that her mother passed on to her.

I got back with her, convinced that I had to for the baby's sake. I couldn't leave a child to be raised by this girl on her own, and at this point I still believed that children whose parents stayed together were better off. I didn't realize at the time that for this to be true, the two people had to love and trust each other. Years later, during one of our many arguments, she would admit to me that she had intentionally stopped taking her birth control that month, under the correct impression that I would not leave her if she was having our child. I wasn't shocked. I wasn't even surprised. I wasn't really disappointed in her. I blame myself for falling into the trap. She left the next morning, and through a note spoke that she felt inhibited in this house. I haven't seen her in over three years, and until she finds psychological help I hope to never see her again. I take great comfort in that a brilliant, beautiful little girl somehow grew out of this waste of a relationship. Joanna is seven now, and I love her more than I ever thought possible. We have each other, and for this little while at least, that's all we need.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-24-happy-birthday-nia-wardalos/>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQwkbRVqquU>

September 26 - Serena Williams gets an old one, unwittingly titled in parallel with a friend's song (2018-09-26 02:22)

It startles me awake. Unmistakable. Your smile assures me I am not wrong. The sound of water trickling down to earth. We know what this means. The wells will fill up, the crops will sprout, we will be fine. We rush outside. Letting the rain cascade into our mouths, eyes closed and tongue out, we both cry. The air fills with petrichor, the aromatics provided by the wet earth so familiar but long absent from my receptors.

I am transported to the swing in my front yard during one of my childhood summers on the northern peninsula. Very few people remain in the area, and those that do are either too stubborn to relocate or too old to leave their homes for a different life in a bigger town, incentives ignored. I'm four years old, maybe five, wearing yellow boots, light blue overalls, and a striped red and white t-shirt that gave me the now-faded nickname of Waldo.

This memory is not a phantom. It is too vivid. The olfactory leaves these intense impressions, and there is no mistaking this nostalgia.

The rain picks up quickly, and soon it erupts into a storm. We lay in the field behind the barn, inviting the strong winds and torrential downpour onto our bodies. The sleeplessness and euphoric bewilderment, united with the realization that it will all be okay, is mind altering. Different together, superconnected that I never knew existed. We make love. It doesn't matter that we are outside, that we will get dirty, that we can get hurt. It was the most I ever loved you, the most passionate and sincere we had ever been and would ever be. This memory is real too.

The pounding rain. It hasn't let up for weeks. The rainy season should have come and gone. What's left of our crops can't handle much more of this. I prayed for it, in tradition, at the ceremony just before the growing season. I have to laugh at that now. Maybe we should have prayed just a little less. God crying, my mother used to tell me. He must have seen all his children devoured by the devil's mouth.

You were always more laid back than me. You knew it would be okay, that it was never as bad as I sometimes thought. I needed that. I need you. Your spirit is relentless, but still you understand the situation and so you try to convince me that this is the right time to leave our home, all that we ever knew, and begin an adventure. Go somewhere exotic. That word is still new to me and doesn't fit into my vocabulary. I will do whatever she says, go wherever she wants. You haven't been wrong yet, and it's not like this is the only life I want to be living. Our town is dwindling anyway. My only real friends are all gone now. Toronto, Montreal, anywhere that isn't here.

I don't want to be stagnant. I want to live through experiences, create stories, for others and myself. My life, if written today, would be dull. I am afraid to record those thoughts for fear of the realization that I am boring. But I don't have to be. Maybe I'll wake you up as you sleep beside me now, tell you to pack a bag, reveal to you that we're leaving. You often spoke of Italy and how you would like to live there, to learn the language and take in the rolling hills. I could pick you up, throw you over my shoulder, and tell you we're going there and never coming back. You would like that. You want me to be more direct, more powerful. I know that. I'm not scared - I just don't know how. You trust me enough that you're still here. I should trust myself enough to make you happy.

September 27 - Marc Maron gets a list of podcasts on my phone (2018-09-27 02:35)

Casting a pod from your garage gave you your second wind on a calm day. You get interesting people to willingly open up about their lives and struggles and successes and idiosyncrasies and complexities, and this minimizes the chasms we've dug for ourselves, uniting us in relatability and humanity. And, you know, that might be important as we look for reasons to be here and be here now.

Of course, I have my own [1] podcast ideas that, based on personal experience, won't be coming to fruition any time soon. Man, go on, you can make your own, [2] they say . WELL I'M BUSY, OKAY??? So I find myself content in listening to others, like those below, as I walk under the canopies of my neighbourhood with a [3] tinier version of myself .

My recent favourites out of this scrolling list are Good One, The Q &A, I Only Listen to the Mountain

Goats, Everything Is Alive and This Sounds Serious, to go along with the perennials of Fresh Air, WTF, Comedy Bang! Bang!, Song Exploder, Hardcore History, 30 For 30, This American Life, Radiolab and Heavyweight. Please delve as I have.

[4]click for podcasts!

[Author's note: I already have the title for your next special - "The Old Marc With A C"]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/march-23-happy-birthday-reggie-watts/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/february-18-happy-birthday-yoko-ono/>
3. <https://www.instagram.com/theodoretoast/>
4. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/my-podcast-list.mov>

September 28 - Annie Clark gets overexposed (2018-09-28 02:22)

You don't become a musician for the money. You become a musician because your love of music collides with practice, taste, hard work, expertise, originality, community. Learning how to play instruments, conspiring with your friends, capturing euphoria in the sound, your creativity finding an outlet for exploration. It grants you coolness when you have no idea how else to get there. And you want to share your music with anyone who will listen.

That last part is where your vulnerabilities are exposed, to the ratty companies seeking profitability above all else, including and especially fairness. These corporations prey off starry-eyed hopefuls who refuse to consider their own worth and fail to take a stand when it comes to trading their talents for a deserved paycheck.

There's a strange business of getting artists to perform for free. You can't really blame a business for wanting to keep their costs down at all costs. Unfortunately, that is the nature of capitalism. But, you can, and should, disrupt their sleazy practices, so that eventually it becomes financially irresponsible for them to continue their blatant devaluation of art.

A few years ago, indie band [1] Ex Cops was asked to play a SXSW show run by McDonald's, but instead of being paid in money they would be paid, as is commonplace, in exposure. The band rejected their offer took their gripe to Facebook, which, sure, can be an effective tool. But this doesn't stop the burger chain's marketing team from trying again. They will eventually find someone else naive enough to play for free, and - after getting some new customers by showing how cool they are by getting this band to play - they persevere with the commodification of entertainment and continue on their path to fast food domination.

Instead, Ex Cops should have happily agreed to play the show for free, even hamming up the response to indicate how grateful they are for the opportunity or whatever. Then, after getting all

the details, they just don't show up. The marketing team is left scrambling and pissed off on that day, and hopefully their event goes to shit. The band could even pretend they'd intended to show up, but say, "Oh, we actually got a last-minute gig that pays money instead of exposure. You understand how this might be better for us, right?" to hammer the point home.

What's McDonald's going to do, refuse to pay their their fee? They already did that. Tell their friends? They don't have any. The multi-national company needs to get screwed over repeatedly for any meaningful change to be incited.

We expect artists to be more generous with their time and skills than the rest of us. They usually are, with charity events and benefit shows and the like, but it is a little unfair to assume that they don't need money to live like everyone else. You shouldn't get paid because you enjoy doing it? The logic is absurd and is what trains artists to give up on a passion in favour of tolerable security.

A television producer asked [2] Brett Caswell if they could use one of his songs on a show, with the payment being that that sweet sweet exposure. After going through a list of other people not getting paid to be part of the production (no one), he told them the particular song they wanted wasn't available for free, but they were welcome to use a different one that he sent over, an improvised, dissonant, objectively terrible song to use instead. More of this, we need.

Some musicians intentionally keep their ticket prices low so that more of their fans can attend the shows. Not necessarily on a [3] Fugazi level, but with a more reasonable discount from what the market can handle. But inevitably, this leads to a reseller market where the grey economy gets the money and fans still pay through the nose. What musicians need to do is sell counterfeit tickets at increased prices through a third party like Ticketmaster's minion StubHub, while making it very explicit that these tickets will be nullified. After a few shows of enough people complaining online, this secondary market will disappear, and the band will have made a few extra bucks off people who didn't follow directions.

Musicians, the real artists anyway, are often idealistic, which leads to them remaining on their high horses and then getting knocked off by jousting corporations. With an acceptance of living in a purely capitalistic world, just a little chicanery can make enough small changes to make their livelihoods more livable.

1. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/68465-mcdonalds-tries-to-pay-band-in-exposure-because-thats-definitely-the-same-thing-as-money>

2. <https://brettcaswell.bandcamp.com/>

3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npb_0Wt5kAs

September 29 - Kevin Durant gets a skeptical critique of an incredible critic (2018-09-29 02:11)

"The Chicago Tribune says it's the most original film of the year!"

No it doesn't. Michael Phillips does. A single person who happened to get a job or an assignment from the paper does. The blurbs are intended to lend credibility to the review. But we can't just take them at face value.

Especially these days, when freelancing is more common than a bi-weekly paycheck, and writers will take a job with anyone willing to give them one, hopping around publications as their particular skills are solicited.

The sub-blurbs tell the real story. Michael Phillips might have a stake in the production company, hiding that fact from his employer. A newspaper doesn't have time to check on the interests that might be conflicting in their writers. It barely has time to check sources on articles its writers are writing. Print ain't dead, but editorial is.

Michael Phillips might have even left out an all-important comma from his resume, and really he got his chops honed as Tom's Guide senior editor Philip Michaels. So who is it that contends the film's originality is unmatched in the 2018th year of our lord? Tom? The Tribune? Michael? Philip? Michael Phelps?

There's no way to know, and there never will be again. So instead of getting your recommendations from this clown, get them from [1] meeeeeee .

1. <http://ismith.ca/resource/movie-recommendations/>

September 30 - Eric Stoltz gets a characters study (2018-09-30 02:19)

Even being a famous, popular rich guy, you still have the wherewithal to pin this Horace Greeley quote to your Twitbox:

"Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings. Only one thing endures, and that is character."

And god damn, he (and by extension, you) is (are) right. Characters are integral to every story, and they should be multi-dimensional in order to be truly believable. I already gave [1] Hank a rundown of some of my most catchphrasable , but there are others that have yet to see the light of the screen and become actualized on the digital page. Here's a little preview of those fully developed characters:

- Graham Featherson - the Mahatma Gandhi of vacuum salesmen
- Ginger Dale - the Graham Featherson of soda factory production managers
- Roger Wilco - was told he was named after his uncle who died a bloody death in a bloodier war; was lied to
- Roger Wright - all of his lines include titles of movies he's never seen
- Connie Chiwa - the mute narrator stroke victim
- Nelson Griffith - mood swinger for no apparent or real reason
- Miranda Garrity - rights the wrongs while never losing her sense of style

- Isabelle & Isabeast - twins, separated at birth, reunited minutes later
- Nick Diggers - regular guy who happened to have been raised by wolves
- Bobbie Dunbar - clueless and delusional; always trying to impress everyone
- Alberto Wareham - from Arnold's Cove
- Bart Gossner - can see into people's souls, but only when he's trying to get out of a speeding ticket
- Lesley Moore - minimalist
- Holly Morgan - travelling twirlything
- Drew Morgan - musician Holly's binary star
- Marshall Stackman - subtly rhymes all his sentences with the other's person's last
- Josh Rogan - won't shut up about folklore, historical stories, mythology
- Chamois Foley - narcoleptic insomniac
- Patrick Tern - textile artist with an ashtray that's always filling up
- Dan/Daniel/Danny - good guy/s
- Doug/Douglas/Dougie - bad guy/s
- Moogy - confident loner; passive observer; his silence makes people misattribute words and thoughts to him
- Corbo Smoosh - has been on both extremities and is ready for the average
- Mister E - only character in his story who understands the concept of logic; everyone else is crazy, but in the same way; a reliable narrator in an unreliable world.

While they are all alive and well in my head, you can borrow them for your own characters free of charge, since apparently it's the main thing that you value. The only credit I need is a tiny wink the next time you're getting your photo taken on a crimson runner.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-25-happy-birthday-hank-azaria/>

1.10 October

October 1 - Brie Larson gets a delayed wedding gift for Avi's parents (2018-10-01 02:22)

A long, not that long time ago, a young boy and dainty girl bumped into each other and liked each others smiles because they had the two best smiles in the world. They held hands and talked about stuff then smushed their downstairs bits together for fun.

They laughed together - oh, how they laughed - and one time he made a funny face and she laughed so hard milk popped out of her nose. And she never even drank milk before or since!

Later, he picked some flowers in the park, and he was happy the whole time to give them to her. But on his way home, he got lost. He turn a left when he should have zagged, and he woke up in an empty field. He got so scared being alone in this world that he jumped up real high and floated right out of it. Finally, after holding his breath and finding the funniest constellations, he landed on the moon and looked for interesting things to do. In his search, he could only find moon rocks, and boy were they boring².

She waited for him back home, but after a while she couldn't wait around any more, so she went to Fredericton where she started hanging out with a bunch of lawyers with fancy suits and big words. He stayed on the moon, because he couldn't jump high enough¹ to jump out of the moon atmosphere.

She stayed where she was and was kind of happy but still she always looked up during the night, looked right at the moon for hours and days. It helped her think better and made her happy for some reason she couldn't explain, and she didn't even know he was up there!

He thought about her a million times but kept losing count. Then he thought about her real hard one time and the thought bubble got so big that it turned into a real bubble that he got inside. The bubble didn't care one bit about gravity and it burst out of the moon air, through all that black stuff and back into regular air. He slept the whole way and snored for most of it but woke up right when it popped right when it hit the ground. He looked straight ahead and there was the dainty girl who helped make the spaceship thought bubble just by being alive.

They mushed their downstairs bits together one more time and this time they did such a good job that a tiny empress appeared out of nowhere and smiled. She had half of the girl's smile and half of the boy's smile so it was the best smile in the world.

The now older boy and still dainty girl picked up the little empress for good and the three of them ran into the empty field where they smell flowers and jump together but they don't jump too high in case they float away like in that dreadful moon incident from before.

¹ [even after Stu's jump plan]

² [they were]



The inception of the storyboard

October 2 - Sting gets a self-imposed music appreciation tax (2018-10-02 02:22)

There's a golden age for everything, and an inevitable bubble burst that follows. Get in at the right time, and out at the right time, and you're laughing. For musicians, it was 1991-2003¹, boom to bust. \$20 CDs were being bought all day, with appreciators having no alternatives. It was assumed by many who do not study history that this ease of profitability would never end.

The rise of the internet was great for consumers, who suddenly had unfettered access to every song ever made, and at an odd point early on we somehow became disgusted with paying for any of them. And, with the unregulated world of digital piracy taking over, we didn't have to. As the scales balanced, though, this time meant a downswing for creators. A wider distribution should have at least helped promote live shows so that artists could charge more for those, but that didn't happen. So now musicians rightfully complain about how hard it is to make money. There's a theory of "Why do you deserve money too? You already get to have adoring fans and work alongside your friends. If you can't find a way to monetize then ya burnt," but I can't in decent conscience subscribe to this.

Convenience always wins. For a long time, it was easier to steal music than buy it. I purchased a Red Hot Chili Peppers album in the early days of iTunes, but the restrictive nature of the files meant I couldn't play them on my early-days iPod, so I was forced to download it as well.

More recently, blatant theft of music has been curbed by user-friendly, low-cost streaming services that apparently give money back to artists, but not much. Either way, it's not enough, and most of them are still broke. And for anyone who thinks that these services are keeping all the money for themselves, keep in mind that none of them have turned a profit since they started. Monetizing music in the digital landscape isn't easy for anyone.

Bands need to adapt, to offer something else besides tangible versions of their music. CDs, while still manufactured for for sale, have become ceremonial gifts for friends, a relatively useless product we buy only to support the artist. Clinging to that golden age when it's all we had. We might as well be making a donation. And not necessarily through GoFundMes set up to recoup the losses incurred by not buying insurance for their instruments that inevitably get taken out of the back of their van.

Music streaming services will continue to charge the \$10 per month to access their libraries. But what if someone wanted to pay more? If they knew the money was going to the artist. Not the streaming company, but to the artist. And the artist's people, of course - the managers, agents, etc. - who seem to get the shaft even by consumers, who don't realize that circumventing necessary middlemen in the quest to get money to the actual performers doesn't really make sense based on how the industry works.

It needs to be easier, more convenient to give money to artists you listen to. A company could create some sort of [1] Patreon -like Band Bucks app, where you set a monthly amount to give that gets allocated to bands you've been listening to as you see fit. As an act of good faith, leading to positive PR, the streaming company can act as a liaison between the band and their fans, to make it easier to buy merch and such directly from their platform. It can be connected with your streaming service and actually divided up based on actual listens or downloads or favourites, or you can select the percentages yourself to help out smaller bands or your friends or specific labels. Connect this with all the social media platforms so you can showcase how supportive you are, for social validation and public acknowledgment. This way the user feels better about making the contribution, a self-imposed music appreciation tax.

One other way to support artists is to retweet songs, share albums, regram grams, which essentially gets them exposure instead of money. Then again, bands are probably a little tired of being paid in [2] exposure .

¹ [Editor's note: These dates have not been verified by an impartial third party.]

1. <https://www.patreon.com/iansmitty>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-28-happy-birthday-annie-clark/>

October 3 - Gwen Stefani gets a holler back woman (2018-10-03 02:15)

This, this is what I enjoy.

The warning of your impending arrival.

I have been through this before and I am ready for you.

As you should know by now, I am not a woman with whom you can simply holler back.

I am not a holler back woman.

There were rumblings that you showed me disrespect, behind my back.
You misbelieved the rumblings would not reach my ears.
Your words incite my people
We will come after you, and mine will be the first face you see
I will win. You will lose.
Your inadequate defenses are pitiful
I've been in this position before and I am ready for you.
I am not a holler back woman.

I am where I belong. I am where I command.
We can collide in any field
IvU
Me versus You
Come alone.
The throne only fits one.
You want what I have, and I don't blame you, but I will defend it with my life.
I will defend it.
You will retreat.
But I won't allow it.
I cannot show mercy. There needs to be a warning to the others.

You will be destroyed.

I am alone again at the top, another challenger defeated.
I abdicate in my own time, and the time is not now.
I am not a holler back woman.

I am not a holler back woman.

Bananas. Bananas. Bananas.

October 4 - Liev Schreiber gets cautioned by a porscherman (2018-10-04 02:19)

As a man with a Porsche, I have a duty to those without. I represent for you the possibility of possibilities, and so I must maintain the appearance of happiness and importance, of someone you wish you were. It can be a burden, sure, but I knew what I signed up for. I must keep this shit-eating grin on my face, because if it disappears, so too does your idea of me, and any hope you had for yourself of a better life. You will quickly realize that financial success does not bring with it freedom from responsibility, but only a new set of problems, which incidentally usually involves money. The illusion is beneficial to us all. I am able to bask in self-importance while you set a lofty goal for yourself.

It's exhausting, being ambitious. I drive and exhibit my vehicle so you can live with hope. You, a Corollaguy, a future lottery winner in your head. This would be setting a dangerous precedent, if it

hadn't already been set years ago. Years, even, before I too fell victim to the allure of a porscheman from the past, seeing my own forged aspirations in him, making me live my life for the goal of a Porsche.

The cycle continues, so it goes, and you too may take my place someday¹.

I wish you well in avoiding the trap I've set.

¹ [Editor's note: For those still not following, think Tim Allen in The Santa Clause.]

October 5 - Neil deGrasse Tyson gets a snail's demise and one of my own (2018-10-05 02:25)

Stepping inadvertently but directly onto the snail, I hear the crunch of her home under my feet. My view briefly becomes hers, as her consciousness defects from her shell and enters mine for the split moment on its path to nowhere. At that time she existed only in my mind, and barely.

I haven't seen or done enough to tell a good story. I haven't even tried. Look at me, and you imagine boredom. I am bored, I am boring, and you are not deceived. Sometimes I wish I had an urge, an undeniable calling, to wear women's clothes and hide it from everybody. My secrets are too average, too normal. My life is uninteresting, unremarkable to those who meet me. I try to invent personae, but I'm not clever enough¹. The whole scene is a figment of my lackluster imagination. Cowardice and hesitation led me to where I am, and I see no way to reverse this belief. I am still interested in the other side. Maybe it can provide something for me, something better. I was led to this point for a reason. I am below the threshold of a survival instinct, and my free will alone did not bring me here, if it exists at all. Crossing into another world, I can be reborn. I may become nothing, but it will be an improvement. This is not the first time I have died. The others are lost to me, but I know that they happened. I cannot explain them with the language that my brain has developed, but I don't need to. I'm alone in this, and my understanding is all that is required for my decision. If I could go back now, I don't know that I would. This life holds nothing for me. Whatever sadness I cause and absorb, goes with me. They are all only what I impress upon them. I did not intend to end their journeys as well, but I am not in control of this. I was made tired and became comfortable enough to keep me average. I let myself fall into it. The trap was set, but it is marked clearly in large print. Understanding is avoidance, but to understand, I must remember, every day, until it's all over. I finally forgot, and I see no escape.

The snail returns, as something completely different, another iteration in the endless expanse. She finds me but neglects to recognize that we were once one, for a split moment, on our path to nowhere.

¹ [Editor's note: They all look and act just like me, except they wear brown slacks or something,

which I would never do. Wear brown pants, that is, or call any pants "slacks".]

October 6 - Amy Jo Johnson gets a drowning in a swimming pool and sum consequential possibilities (2018-10-06 02:35)

It doesn't manifest itself when I jump in the ocean, or a lake, or a river. It may actually be the artificiality of the swimming pool that conjures the experience. The precise dimensions my subconscious is subjected to give off a sense of order and security. There is nothing to be afraid of, no unexpected antagonists. It is only me and the water, chlorinated as a reminder that it was manufactured for me and me alone. Walking off the edge of a pool with closed eyes, you are agreeing to an alteration in your body. You entice the change in pressure, in viscosity, in surrounding matter. The trade of carbon for hydrogen is an immediate meditation, and I sink into tranquility as my head sinks below the surface. I stay there forever, time disappearing immediately upon entrance into this disparate atmosphere. Floating in place, newborn bubbles flow upward, rippling against my body. As I hang in suspension, some water finds its way inside me, rejuvenating my brain. Right now, it's what I need. Streaks of light scurry around the concrete bottom, like a frenzied neural network, but I can't see them - not yet anyway. My mind is empty, and my muscles haven't accepted a message since my feet left solid ground. I float to the surface, lying on my back, keeping my ears underwater as I open my eyes and squint into the sun.

It's simple up here. The tiles guide us effortlessly toward a natural state. We make our new home whatever we want, however we want. A clean slate, a fresh canvas. It's a versatile, transformable playground and we are left here to create. Finally, material possessions are gone and never missed. Only a faint light remains. We are free to move, limited only by our own inhibitions. Our smiles collide - you immerse me in your breath. My thoughts evaporate. This moment is all I know. The universe lives in your eyes. Time has dissipated into the laughable nothing that you have always tried to tell me about. My only responsibility is to you. We stare at our new sky and see who we used to be, what we used to know. The memories remain but the future is ours to realize. The sun becomes the moon, but neither fully disappears. The view transforms to a charcoal haze, left with remnants of visions of what is gone forever. They might join us one day, but for now it is only you and me, infinitely searching, on an adventure for the illusion of truth. We can always go back, but we never will.

What I see is clear. Not transparent, just clear, more a colour than a texture. Directionless, motionless. It doesn't matter how I ended up here, what led me to this point. Maybe I brought myself. Maybe I never knew. I can't see my body. I can't feel it, but I know it's there, a lingering phantom of what I once knew. I am lighter, drifting towards weightlessness. I'm alone, but I'm not lonely anymore. There are times when I float past an entity similar to me, but there is no communication from either side. The whites of the opposing eyes cover their skin. I'm scared, hesitant to accept where I am. I won't ever be able to return. Not that I want to. There was nothing for me on the other side.

October 7 - Thom Yorke gets anamnesis (2018-10-07 02:22)

We return to the location of a particularly memorable event-happening place, a death or a kiss or another feeling that outshines the other feelings in recent or unrecent memory. The location itself, in the three-dimensional structure we use to make sense of the world, is not where it once was and hasn't been since its origin. The globe keeps spinning and even besides that is being hurled through space on the way to somewhere, never to find or see even with a squint this specific place again.

It's not the position but the atmospheric environs that bring us back. A familiar aroma might rematerialize. The narrowing spectrum of colours could hit the rods and cones and optic nerves in the right light to regain the sense of faux or real nostalgia. This is enough to satisfy our conviction that the place is the same, even if as we established it most certainly is not and never will be again. An audible duplication is less likely, but every one heard during the visit will in some way line up in the mind with the initial sound in the now faraway location of the former happening. The surroundings too were subjected to the spin and the pull of the giant orb, the decreasingly oxygenated spaceship, but to the same degree as us - the similarity shared is enough to appease the need of returning to the scene of the memory.

October 8 - Patrick Watson gets a birthday boyla (2018-10-08 02:22)

[1] Birthdays bring with them intrinsically opposing outfits. The conical cardboard hat is popular, [2] no doubt, but it's nothing compared to the nothingness of nudity with a grin. Unfortunately, neither of those have I ever been comfortable wearing.

Happy Birthday to me. Looking around, it's the same as it's been for a long time. I live in my mother's basement, and my job is only called that by the most generous of standards. This is my life, for the eighth straight year.

At least my mom can now drop the 'almost' when she tells me to, "Get your act together. You're almost 30." Maybe the split second she's saving in her short diatribes could be deferred to something positive to the world, such as volunteering or shutting her face.

People treat you differently when they know it's your birthday, even if it only stems from the achievement of remaining alive, which is usually the goal. It's not much of a feat for a waking human. It's an inevitability. And yet a reward is usually offered and accepted. A card, a present. Having a birthday was a major contributing factor in one of my most memorable romantic encounters. I recognized early the potential of this realistically meaningless day, and it led to what some would call a scheme, and what I would only sometimes call a scheme. My ritual continues again this year. My phone turned off and my birthday-confirming identification front and centre in my wallet, I will visit every restaurant within walking distance of my apartment that is foolish enough to offer a meal gratis on the [3] patron's birthday.

It's a Sunday. I always take my birthday off work, but this first day of the week is ideal for what I have planned. A series of mini brunches followed by, something that still confuses me, a relatively slow day dinner. Rumpelstiltskin's is shut down, by order of whoever's job it is to shut down businesses mostly populated by and possibly run by small rodents, but an eatery with a similar

free-meal-on-your-birthday deal has sprung up in the vicinity - The Glass Onion, a vegan restaurant I've yet to [4] frequent but that Jane likes, her ignorance notwithstanding. The natural wave of the restaurant industry brings my potential total this year up to seven. Allowing for unexpected line-ups and unforeseen policy changes, I can expect to consume no less than five entire meals today. For the first, I'm bound for Ray's Deli, whose husband-wife ownership relationship exudes the bickering stereotypical of a couple of Italian gangsters who can't find the gabagool.

From my window I see that it's a clear day, and the sun hits me just right as I close my front door. Walking down my street, a boy stands behind a makeshift kiosk and calls out, offering me a glass of [5] lemonade at an exorbitant price. I laugh to myself and politely decline, refraining from telling him that today, of all days, I pay for nothing.

My prospective route mapped out, I stop at Ray's for an appetizer turkey bacon club. Judy is the only one working, and she's been in the neighbourhood long enough to know exactly what I'm doing here, so I don't mess around.

"Hey, Mrs. Judy," I call out. "Happy Birthday!"

"Yosef!" she incorrectly calls me¹, all the while laughing to herself because of my pretending it was actually her birthday. "It's another year! You must be one whole million!"

She's funny for an old bitty, for sure, but her humour doesn't translate well for me. Regardless, I laugh right back at her, knowing that the simulation of a conversation is all I will need to snag a coke with my already-complimentary sandwich.

"You crazy," I tell her in my best Tracy impression, done primarily to keep myself occupied while I suffer through her talking to herself and collecting the ingredients for my first meal of the day.

A brief awkwardness ensues, interrupted by the bells over the restaurant's entrance, as a group of customers see themselves to a table. Leading the pack is an Indigenous Australian sorcerer, and he's not playing games.

[End of Part I. Part II of 11 will reveal itself in time.]

¹ [Narrator's note: She uses a y in place of the obvious j, if my name was in fact Joseph or even Josef, and not Matt.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/happy-birthday/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-3-happy-birthday-gwen-stefani/>

3. <https://www.patreon.com/iansmitty>

4. <http://ismith.ca/dream/whats-the-fre-quent-cy-carlin/>

5. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-20-happy-birthday-george-r-r-martin/>

October 9 - Bella Hadid gets a country that turns out to just be a guy's house (2018-10-09 02:19)

Pierre Gaudin was surprised to learn that his 2800 square foot property, which includes a two-car driveway and a shed that houses his skis and other seasonal equipment, had been declared an independent nationality over 31 years ago, after an administrative error in France's parliament ceded control of the southern region.

Gaudin gained complete power over Andorra when his parents, bless their hearts and rest their souls, died. How they died, I will not say, for it adds nothing to the story and it's quite disgusting. I won't even type the words it's so horrendous. Actually, there is no single word in any language that I've heard which could possibly accurately describe the nature of an incident in which both parties cut each other's heads clean off. I've said too much. I haven't said enough.

Prior to this week there was no official record of anybody ever visiting Andorra, but it continued to appear on maps and trivia questions since both France and Spain assumed the other had taken control of the area in the Franco-Spanish War of 1733. Since its natural resources are scarce, Andorra relies heavily on imports from Carrefour and an independent coffee shop that employs this cute barista Gaudin hopes to one day seduce.

When informed that the country's capital, Andorra la Vella, was actually his bedroom, Gaudin responded, "Sacre bleu! But of course!" avec a French accent.

Andorra's GDP has surpassed that of both Ethiopia and Sierra Leone this year, but its leader's reduced hours at the accounting firm in which he is a junior associate may see an increase in the country's poverty rate.

Pierre is expected to ask French president Emmanuel Macron for a refund on his taxes for the last three decades. If his demands are not met he has made plans to invade the bungalow of neighbour and incessant tool-borrower Jean Marchand.

[Editor's note: The "journalist" covering this story must have forgotten about the time he saw the Family Guy episode "Petoria". At the time of writing, he sincerely believed that he was expressing an original thought for once. No b'y.]

October 10 - Dan Stevens gets an open letter to Infinite Jest (2018-10-10 02:22)

It's not your fault I can't get through you. I've been busy, okay, and I know you've heard all the excuses before, but mine are all true all the same. I enjoyed the 316 pages I did read, so much, and I fully intend to read the following 763.

But life, you know, it gets in the way. Interruptions are everywhere, and when I need a mid-sentence break for a glass of water or a jumping jack of exercise, that hurts. Either way, your people still received the \$14.99 less distribution costs at some point, but you never became a novel for the sweet cash, and I know that. You were a story that needed to be told, and I in turn wanted one to absorb. We were practically meant for each other.

But partying, you know, it gets in the way. When I turn your last page and put you aside forever, I will be on my couch, alone. I know that. When a night filled with fun ends, I could be down a kidney, or up a felony, or crying in an alley yelling at the homeless woman I refused to give money to last week. You see, it is not known what will happen outside those pages. And unless the crevice between pages 318 and 319 contains a pygmy unicorn drizzling smack into her diamond-latticed nose, your words do not produce a surprise on the scale I require. Still, your end is imminent, and I know this.

But inspiration, you know, it gets in the way. I see you rolling your eyes, but it's true. Your brilliance and knowledge remind me I haven't done enough, but that I am capable, if I am. The intermingling worlds trigger my own creativity and force me to do my own work. Others read you. I learned of your existence from a reference on an internet thread that has since mysteriously vanished. I only decided to pursue you because one of my friends assumed I already did. I'm writing this letter now, with you open in front of me, coaxing me to continue.

But excuses, you know, they get in the way:

- I admit it - I don't understand all of you, or even much of you. You contain too many invented words, and often context gives nothing away.
- Those cursed footnotes. You are the first book that has required me to get a second bookmark for the back pages, you elitist tome. Sure, I want to hear more about the Dads, but if you describe another one of his languid films in that 14-page single footnote, I'll need yet another extended break from you. And this is 14 pages with your font size.
- Which brings me to your tiny type. It's, just, too small. Kerning too small. Leading too small. Font too small. The number of words per page is too high. And the paragraphs are too dense. And a bunch of other related things.
- I don't really get the Québécois spy part.
- You describe the act of playing tennis a bit too much. I know you wanted to be as big as possible, but come on, I get tennis.
- The bookmark, made by my mother years ago and containing school pictures for me and my two siblings, makes me homesick.
- I need to be completely alone, in my house and the world, to properly focus.
- I secretly like having you on my coffee table. Once you are over it would be pretentious of me to keep you displayed in plain view, and hell, maybe it's pretentious this way too, but at least I am reading you.
- I get easily distracted. I tried Adderall, but reading isn't productive enough of an activity while under that kind of influence. There's still a house to clean, after all.

- That part about Eschaton. I love games and war games and game theory and war game theory, I really do so much. And don't get me started on acronyms and initialisms, oh man. But, and you know this, this play-by-play was totally out of hand.
- About Interdependence Day, I thought I came up with that, for a poker tournament years ago, the championship of the Newfoundland Institute of Premium Poker-Loving Enthusiasts. Turns out you had it first.
- You make me feel stupid. Maybe I am stupid. You make me realize I'm stupid. That's a bit mean of you.

You are my favourite book, and I'm not just saying that. Even with having so much of you to go. I feel like once I successfully process all your words, I can die too. And I don't want to die yet. I need to finish you first.

[Editor's note: In the years since this was written, the author managed to complete the addressed book, possibly primarily because of the last paragraph there. All the same, I asked him for a review, and all he did was babble wildly while stringing together that somehow none of the stories were clued up. What the heck?]

[Editor's note II: He did finally get the Québécois spy thing. The section about jumping in front of the trains hooked him.]

October 11 - Artie Lange gets a process template guaranteed to result in a successful stand up set (2018-10-11 02:22)

Recognize applause. Welcome audience.

Thank previous comedian. Refer to one of their jokes with a lighthearted dig.

Mention city that I'm in. Profess that it's great to be here. Convey that I know a distinct characteristic of the location, something many audience members can relate to.

Say my government name.

Acknowledge a conspicuous physical attribute of mine. Suggest a famous person I resemble, if a certain condition were applied, or an interesting occupation I might have based solely on the feature.

Disclose where I'm from. Discuss how my hometown is different from most places.

Contemplate how my parents impacted who I am now.

Examine the state of my finances. Consider it relates to my vices.

Reveal my relationship status. Admit it's not always easy having my particular relationship status, citing specific examples.

Explore my feelings about children.

Lose train of thought.

Invite audience to tip their server.

Regain train of thought.

Check to see if anyone else feels the same way as me about a particular aspect of our society. Propose an interesting alternative to the status quo.

Get interrupted several times by someone offended by my previous statement, in what is quickly becoming a heckle.

Respond to heckler, in a manner that makes their slink back into their seat.

Review a current event. Speculate on how I would handle myself if placed in that situation.

Tell story about a memorable situation I found myself in last year, but claim it happened just a few days ago. Remark on how I would have liked to have handled that situation, while pretending it is precisely how I did. Confess that the fictional outcome made me learn something about my true nature.

Announce the superlative quality of the audience.

Wait for ovation that does not come.

Walk off stage, straight to the otherwise empty green room. Close door gently behind me.

Sob uncontrollably.

This is what I asked for, but it is nothing that I wanted.

October 12 - Hugh Jackman gets a man in a suit in a kiosk on a street (2018-10-12 02:29)

Strolling down Water Street, I pass a homemade kiosk containing a well-dressed proprietor and an attached sign declaring, in bright green letters, that the man inside will provide surreal yet sound financial advice for a single dollar. Before today I had only seen these signs accompanied by vagrants hoping the irony would catch the right person at the right time and garner them some small amount

of tax-free income, to be disposed of in their veins or liver. Admittedly, more than once the idea has brought out a snicker via the parts of me responsible for such actions. But today I am only confused, and then I am only intrigued. The man does not appear to need my dollar or anyone else's. I look closely and the suit says Armani. I look even closer to confirm that it's not that fake Armano you sometimes see floating around. This one could be traded in for some rent and food and maybe even a little fun left over. Still, here he stands, presentable and eager, offering a service that is hard to pass up.

I shamelessly stare at his face, trying to figure out his story. What led him to this point? What mistakes were made and learned from that lend credibility to his claim? Who has he hurt? When is his desired dinnertime? How do I take advantage of what I might hear? It's worth a dollar to find out. I dig into my pockets and pull out all of the cash I can scrounge up, a measly three quarters. I offer it to him without speaking. He chuckles silently as he shakes his head. I move on but can't get him out of my head. I ask a nearby woman for a little change. She waves me away. Embarrassed, I scour my surroundings for a bank machine and spot one up ahead. I refuse to let the suited kiosk man out of my sight, for fear he will disappear. Maybe he isn't really here. I am on mescaline, after all.

[Editor's note: The interaction you've all been waiting for may be revealed on the morrow.]

October 13 - Sacha Baron Cohen gets advice from a man in a suit in a kiosk on a street (2018-10-13 02:22)

I punch in my redundant PIN number and request twenty smackeroos, which I'm handed stiffly by the supposed clerk on the other side of the envelope-sized slot. Hurrying back to the suited kiosk man, I trip and stumble over a rock. He must have placed it there to hinder me. But he wants my money, that much is certain, so this must be my paranoia acting up. Finally I arrive to his still-standing stall, and again, no one is in line and no one else pays his presence any mind.

"I have returned," I announce. "I wish to trade a small amount of my money to you with the expectation that a larger amount will come my way in the future."

A guffaw signals his inexorable response. "Expectation? Try expektoration."

Heeding his counsel, I turn to my right and spit. The liquid glob lands splatly on the sidewalk before morphing into a visible tartigrade. I spin towards the kiosk for confirmation that he had something to do with this. His blankness says it all. The tardigrade floats in front of my face and starts blowing bubbles made out of random letters. BRKA. SEB. NVR. PCLN. What do the scrambles mean??? BReaK A leg, SEBastian, but NeVeR PaCk a LuNch? Sound advice, sure, but I'm not getting how it's entirely profitable.

There is gold within the clues, I now trust, and I must mine it or pan it or extract it with precision. More letters arrive. MKL. WTM. ISRG.

These ones I can figure out, I'm sure of it, with the right amount of focus and cunning. I don't use either as the solution pops into my head. MiKe LaW TiMe IS RaGe? MeKe aLt WhyT Mein Into StRroGates? MaKe aLl WhiTe Men Into SuRroGates! That's it!

Elated, I howl my discovery in repetition, emphasizing different syllables with each turn. I eventually quiet myself to maintain my caution, careful not to let this eureka-worthy idea into the wrong hands before I file a patent copyright trademark.

His claim now verified and his pay collected, kiosk guy goes the way of the tartigrade and floats away. I'm left with my optimistic financial future ahead of me, and while I don't know where to begin, I do know that, before it's all over, I will be turning each and every pale male into a proxy of some sort. There is no doubt in my mind that reaching this goal will be the first step in the creation of my own Berkshire Hathaway, whatever the hell that is.

[Editor's note: A prelude to this conclude occurred on [1] the yester .]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-12-happy-birthday-hugh-jackman/>

October 14 - Usher Raymond gets words to live by (2018-10-14 02:22)

Do you like words? Me too! And not only the [1] ones I make up myself . Want to hear a few actual ones that give me the straight up lock-down willies? Some make the list based on how they sound or how they look, or on their meanings, and others still on their relative level of obscurity or untranslatability. You decide which is which, and then tell me the ones you're going to use in your next dance song, if it turns out you still make those.

- usher - Just kidding! As a verb or a noun, it's just too blasé. Now I bet you think my next word is going to be 'blasé', since it's rare enough and I used it here, so maybe I'll be connecting each word with the next in some way, but this it not the case. To be honest, I'm pretty indifferent to blasé. The rest of them are all sweet though.
- litost - I laugh and forget where I first saw this, but it's Czech and possibly Milanese. It reminds me of saudade, which is also a good one, but maybe it shouldn't.
- apocope - And not just hypocorisms, chile!
- bed - You can snuggle up above the 'e' between the ascender posts and have a nap inside the word itself.
- bungalow - Best while on beaches, but even those in your dreams are okay.

- floccinaucinihilipilification - My lucky number is 9 and my name starts with an 'i', so any omission of this one, intentional or not, would be unforgivable.
- umchina - It's, um, actually Korean.
- nugatory - Its inclusion in this list is of no consequence to anyone except me.
- cryptomnesia - This one's alright even without the secondary definition relating to me forgetting where I put the hard drive with all my Bitcoin on it.
- [2] petrichor - Some nice stink!
- [3] globophobia - I even named one of my fake bands after this one.
- tony - This one's only good when it's about rich people being fashionable.

Yep, language bits certainly are great, after all. The following will not be qualified in any way, to see if you can accept them for what each is - a single word, full of meaning and beauty and on equal footing with its companions. Except sonder. That one packs a real punch. Oomph.

- verschlimmbesserung
- tmesis
- phantasmagoria
- sonder
- ikigai
- ninjaic
- araprosdokian
- risible
- inimical
- vestige
- cataplexy

[Editor's note: One of these words isn't real, and while the author successfully got it past Standards and Practices, I am journalistically implored to to warn you not to believe everything you read.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/march-29-happy-birthday-lucy-lawless/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-26-happy-birthday-serena-williams/>
3. <http://ismith.ca/phodeo/album-covers/>

October 15 - Emeril Lagassé gets potential Brunch episodes (2018-10-15 02:22)

You, as a food cooker through and through, must have mixed feelings about the meal we call brunch. The cuisine, which you've dedicated your life to, plays secondary violin to the shared experience with friends for which the restaurant has little control.

I, as a constant brunch consumer, recognize the indeterminable value in this experience, and so I've created a [1] series to laud and applaud this time of the weekend. Four episodes are written, six more well on the way, and countless ideas that will be saved until it gets picked up for a second season¹. I'll give you an [2] executive producer credit if you help me do a little whittling with these ideas, picking out the strongest ones that would best complement bennied eggs and caesared doubles and shipped friends:

- My Brunch with Andre: A two-person episode, that starts out with Nick supposed to be meeting Vince for brunch. Vince tells him his buddy Andre is meeting them, which is fine, but then Vince bails. Nick and Andre still decide to eat together, and Nick learns a lot about Andre, who is very interesting and wise and might have just come back from the jungle or something. This idea is entirely original in every way.
- Brunching Henry: An episolo. Most of it is a voice-over of what's going on inside Hank's head as he eats a meal by himself, with the camera being a POV shot. There's some server talk but most of it is Hank examining his surroundings and his actions. There might be some stream of thought consciousness, but I doubt it.
- Tech Brunch: One character just gave up social media, so a lot of this one centres around the role of technology in their lives. They discuss how their phones are listening to them, how the grid is overrated, and et cetera.
- Broken Up: The first one whole title isn't a brunch pun, which is refreshing. It takes place at Epstein's Bar and is about how one of the characters just broke up with their partner. It's a bit of a sister idea with another one about weddings.
- Making Plans: This will probably work better as a b-b-b-bonus episode. The whole thing is a text thread conversation from before the group goes to brunch. They're trying to figure out where to go but also having a laugh talking about the night before and riffing and such.
- Dreams: One of them brings up this crazy dream they had, and the rest of the episode is them talking about nightmares and recurring dreams and lucid dreaming and what it all means, you know?
- The Kitchen: Another bonus episode, taking place in the kitchen during a different episode ([3]Brunchkins), with all the characters being the cooks and servers and dishwasher doing what they do.

- Sideways: The title is mostly related to the set design, but is also not in the least about wine, and so we call it an non-*ablaut*-reduplicated flop-flip. All the props are bolted to the wall, the characters are tied to chairs sitting horizontal, cameras are on the ceiling, but it tries to look as normal as possible given all of that, so ideally the audience is confused and can tell something is off although they can't exactly tell what.
- Waiting for the Brunch: Based on the title, you'd think this is too [4] Portlandia-y , but it's actually about how slow the service is, and they find out at some point, when one of them is starving beyond all recognition, that the server forgot to put in their orders.
- Away Game: One of our main characters ends up going to eat with his sister's friends, who are all on the same page and that page he is not on. He's clearly a secondary character and doesn't feel like himself. They have a lot of inside jokes and all he wants to do is go back with his own friends but they're off doing something else.

Help me out, Em. I'm trying to make something beautiful here. Much like one of your famous gologneses!

¹ [which will presumably happen after a first season is made²]

² [which will presumably never happen]

1. <http://ismith.ca/brunch/>

2. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/>

3. <mailto:iansmitty1@gmail.com?subject=PlasesendmeBrunchkins&body=Iwanttoreadaboutexcessivemenus,eggseyourway,parodysongs,thegodTitanus,riders,c>

4. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2176771/>

October 16 - Flea gets animal collective nouns (2018-10-16 02:24)

I *wake* up in my sleeping *pod* to the sun's rays *scurry* ing in through the window. My leg dangles over the side of the *bed* until the rest of my body is ready to take on the day. Not a *cloud* in sight, I *stand* up slowly, accepting the *glare* to *bask* in the *fleet* ing *movement* of *spring* .

Clutch ing the *knob* , I *brace* myself for another meaningless day, but eventually I *muster* the strength to continue the *descent* from my *tower* , into the *lounge* .

The empty *nest* . I do miss the *company* . A *memory* of the younger *generation* , I no longer play *host* to the no longer kids. Like on most mornings, my house is welcomingly *mute* .

But wait a second. There is *steam* coming from the *boiling kettle*. The *implausibility* that someone else would be here sends a *prickle* down to the *pit* of my stomach and makes me *quiver*. A possible *intrusion* is *troubling*, but I'm able to confront my natural *cowardice*. I *creep* towards the kitchen, instinctively *covering* my exposed torso, and pour myself a cup of tea.

Waiting for it to steep, I *fry* two eggs, as I want to do, and check my *watch*. The time can't be right. Oh, it's not. The second hand refuses to *click*. The *battery* must be dead again. I take a *gulp* from the mug and *set* it back on the table as I reach for the nearby *pack* of cigarettes. It's empty too. I remain *intrigued* by the kettle's early activity, and I'm more than willing to play *sleuth*.

Still in my *raggy* robe, I *walk* outside, neglecting to close the door behind me, and immediately notice the *draft*. Mass is starting soon at the church that *spans* the other side of the street. An *array* of children in their nicest clothes don't act like it, as they *swarm* the front steps, taking part in whatever *mischief* they can find.

A young boy *smacks* his sister, who begins to *cry*. He seamlessly *dazzles* his mother with some *deceitful storytelling*, repeatedly denying his act. Sunday *school* hasn't been *dropping* much *wisdom* on him lately. His *charm* or *stubbornness* prevails, and the woman *turns* away to greet a friend. He notices my *pitying*

stare, and with an unearned *pride* proceeds to *wink* in my direction. I almost forgot I was at all part of this *mob* scene.

As the *band* starts to play, the preacher invites everyone inside, where he will be *blessing* his *congregation* under their deity's *ubiquity*, and they *rush* through the open doors. Just like that, the world is silent again, and I can get back to uncovering the boiling kettle *conspiracy*.

A *shiver*

runs through me as my instincts recognize a putrid *stench* coming from my backyard. I *sneak* around the far side of the house to avoid a possible *ambush*. Under a clear sky, *thunder* *crashes* right as I come across the source of the miasma.

A man's corpse, *plump* and *bloat*ed, *chain*ed up and replete with *bite* marks, *litters* the otherwise *barren*

earth, *casting* a shadow over the day and the *bank* it's lying on. He may have been a *stud* while alive, but his *murder*ed remains are *wreck*ed, and it would be an *unkindness* to even pretend that the *pandemonium* I'm seeing is anything less than complete *destruction*.

I *catch* a glimpse of an empty *raft*

bobbing in the river behind him, *floating* away but staying *stable* enough to eventually finish its *crossing* to the other side of the water at a medium *pace*.

There's no shortage of *confusion* on my end, and still I know that before anything else happens, I need to *dislodge* the body from its temporary resting place. It's a *nuisance*, for sure, but without *lamentation* I *haul* to a hole, already dug. There I *bury* him the way that he lived, as a lifeless *annoyance*, with a *business* card protruding from his front pocket, and a *party* balloon sticking out his backside.

[Editor's note: All italicized words are terms for a group of animals. Hover over each one for the corresponding animal collective.]

October 17 - Norm Macdonald gets an anxious turtle named Dylan (2018-10-17 02:22)

The window grew smaller with each day, but still Dylan preferred his seat on the top of the couch, legs dangling over the edge, face facing the outside. He watched the other turtles play, and even though he told his mom he didn't care to join in their games, he really did. But every time he went up to ask them if he could play, he would get scared and pretend he was outside for some other reason. Even though Dylan liked being around other turtles his age, he didn't like the feeling he got when he got close to them and they would stare at him, wondering what his next move would be. His stomach would twist and twist into a triple helix, and this would slow him down or make him turn around in the opposite direction, his head as far down into his shell as he could get it without the whole world going black. Sitting on the couch, he reflected on why he felt like that, and why no one else seemed to, but luckily Dylan could still make up stories pretending he was with them. In his little turtle brain, Dylan invented games, conversations, even arguments, because he wanted to experience more than just the view from the top of the couch. Dylan liked smiling, and laughing, and he liked those things even more when someone else was doing it with him, and for the same reasons. Laughing is like chicken pox, the crazy old tortoise who lived in a shack would tell him. And he believed it. The crazy old tortoise also told him that the Jews had too much power, but Dylan was a bit more skeptical about that one. Crazy old tortoise, they don't even have undisputed control of Israel, you crazy old tortoise, Dylan would say. Ever since Dylan was a tadpole, he believed strongly that the right to die is something that should be decided on a state level, but he also understood why the federal government sticks its stupid head into his grandmother's business. It's laughable that you would even presume dragons have never existed., what with their image conjured independently all over the world for years and years. This frightens but excites me. One day I will own a dragon, and the next I will be one. My mind's capacity is reached, and every step is painful. I hear all. My thoughts take over completely. Depression isn't sadness. It's not anger. But it's in me. I thought I had figured it out, how to stay positive about the world and my place in it. My stomach is being ripped apart. But it's endless. This is just part of it. It doesn't have to be, but it can, and I need to be strong with it. Food is necessary. Salt, sugar, calories. I can't imagine a future where this feeling subsides. I know it's there, it has to be, but I can't picture it. Keep myself stupid. Keep myself creative. Better agonizing over life than wandering blankly. Your body trying to find yourself. The real you. When you connect with someone, or something, that's another part of you that you have found. We are not all meant to be human, though most of us want it. The connection is that feeling, the one we work to set up to make it easier to reach. You can find it on your own. But don't assume that your approach is the only one. Do not force yours on others, even if it works. You can steer them towards a path, this path to apparent enlightenment, but never be confounded why your way is not always accepted and followed. The chemicals we are each given, and give ourselves, alter the course, and my ultimate experience will never be yours, as it shouldn't. Acutely aware of what often generates positivity, so we share a moment that leads us both to where we want to be. Afterwards, we will be different. I want to get it down but you're holding me back. I don't want to wake you, I should leave

the moment alone, but I want to capture it. I can't have both. I close the door and move, sitting on the edge of the bath, hoping you don't hear me type. Father, nothing hurts more than when I feel like you've moved past me. My stomach blown out by a shotgun's blast. I can't write. I can't think. I can type, but even that is forced. I'm not ready for this to be over, for your neglect to supercede your obligation. I don't know if I was ever going to be. I had an image in my mind. The image is gone. I feel your love disappear. I wanted to talk, but you raised the ambient volume, sliding away, slowly building and rebuilding the chasm. It's the furthest I've ever felt from you. I know you don't want me around anymore, if you ever did. I've avoided that admission, omitting it from my thoughts until I cannot anymore. You don't need a reason. I should never have been born. I will not obsess, not outwardly anyway. You only took from me the only thing I thought I ever knew. I was never vulnerable before. I never wanted to be. I only wanted you to know me, more than anyone else ever had or will or could. I wanted you to take me fishing and camping and driving and then back home together. I wanted you to see past the superficiality that I can't help but exhibit. I wanted to stare in your eyes until I saw where I came from. I still do. I want to believe I'm doing things the right way, in a way that would make you proud. But I had no assurance. I'm not sure if I will have another chance. Not like this one anyway. Extraneous factors shouldn't affect my connections. I want no pretense, no pressure, nobody but you, Father. Maybe someday I won't feel like this. Observation and idioms tell me that I get over it, that distance from family is an inevitable step in the journey. But this is my first time with the experience, and no matter how many people have told me, I can't believe them. You are strong, you are wise, you are the reason. Imagining your reassurance is killing me, knowing I will never be on the other end again. You have left me behind, on my own, gone off to find someone else to comfort. You will forget about me. I won't forget about you. I want you to die complete, so I won't complicate this any further by inserting myself, knocking on your door. Free from implication, I will walk alone. I see you, ignoring anything outside of your ambition and ego and vices. My standards are too high now, passed down from you. Unaware of the relativity, I settle and you leave me behind. After you there is Nothing left for me. Nobody will compare. Nobody can. This lump in my throat will never disappear. I don't want it to die. I love life, but I love it more with you. I need to know that you need me. I can help. I was your son before, and I can try again, but this time with no promises. The spotless mind, it is my only hope. I must forget so I can move on. I deluded myself into thinking we would be okay and we would be okay together. Our lives are no longer lined up, if they ever were. How much of the familiarity was in my head? My visions were optimistic, but they grew from love. I love you. Those words mean nothing when not returned, but I can't help it. I love you. I love you. Dad, I love you.

[Editor's note: The author forgives your impatience in a [1] dream he once had . He understands the situation was tense before he arrived, and next time he will call ahead.]

[Author's note: I intended to write a review of your [2] Netflix thing , but I made the mistake of coming up with the article title first, and this prevented me from continuing, for any number of reasons. Oh yeah, it's 'Norm Macdonald Has A Show, L-O-L-O-L'.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/dream/norm-al/>

2. <https://www.netflix.com/watch/80226043>

October 18 - Jean-Claude Van Damme gets a boy trapped in a refrigerator who eats his own foot (2018-10-18 02:18)

It is rather spacious in here. Like, the space, there's tons of it. I know I'm only a little fella, but this beats sharing a room with that meathead who hits me but pretends it's me hitting myself but it's definitely not.

I'll put up my posters and bring my toys and no one will tell me when I have to go to bed or clean up or take out the garbage.

This is the life, alright. I am getting a tad hungry though. I should have had a last supper before I climbed inside.

I can't seem to get out either, not even for a minute, even if I wanted to. Who would make a door that can't open from the inside? I hear a noise from outside, but it turns out to just be an Airplane!

No matter, I'll be fine, even as the air gets thinner and my head gets lighter.

A bite or two wouldn't go astray. I'm not asking for a burger or anything, just a few peanuts or something.

A burger, though, that would be the tits.

Starvin' now.

I'd scarf down just about anything - a pig's snout, a lettuce's head, a mesquite's toe. None to be found though.

Node out, severe hunger is afoot.

A foot. My goodness, my gracious, I sees one of them. I mean, it serves a decent purpose as it is, but I got a backup. Certainly I could afford to sacrifice the extra one for my immediate needs. Mom gave her extra kidney to her sister and everyone calls her a hero.

How would I even begin? I'll twist myself around a bit and see if that helps. Flexibility is one of my strong suits, and I've got it in spades.

Alright, foot in front of mouth, the feeding begins. I'm chomping at the bit of my toe, and there is no pain. Numbness is real when you're squat to the gills. Now that the roominess has evaporated and the walls have closed in and the hunger has grown and the mind has wandered, the mouth devours each of the marketable digits before engulfing the rest of the foot.

Blood is everywhere.

I'm sated at last, and the door - well the door is open, but no one is outside.

October 19 - John Lithgow gets a grocery store transaction (2018-10-19 02:24)

I'm wandering around the grocery store with a vague list in my head. I find what I suppose I need and proceed to the counter. One of the impulse items staring at me is a bag of dill pickle chips, and it triggers recency. I buy them as a replacement for a bag that I'd just ate most of before I left the house. I decide that when I get home I'll eat the rest of that bag and then replace it with this one. This is in the hope that for a brief moment, when my husband Martin approaches the cupboard to get the remaining chips, as he retrieves the bag he will realize it is unopened. It will confuse to him and he'll be forced to reconsider our conversation yesterday, in which he accused me of eating almost all of the chips. Prior to that exchange he must have gone to the cupboard to check on those chips and saw what he accurately believed to be the half-empty bag, of which I obviously ate the other half. During that ensuing conversation I told him I actually ate less than half of the bag, which was actually true. Because a bag of chips is like a car that loses half its value as soon as you take it off the lot. It looks so big, so full of chips on the shelf, but really it's just full of air, which the Lays marketing department tell you is there to maintain freshness in the chips but in fact is used to make the bag look more enticing and somehow fresher.

Along with the chips, I grab two bags of candy, to be hidden in my drawer as my lone secret for the week, and a large chocolate Easter Bunny, on sale of course. I intend to hide this treat for Martin, because I missed Easter this year, or at least missed the morning ritual of having him search for any chocolate. I've been pretty good at the tradition before, but this go around I plum forgot, so I'd like to make it up to him. I'll hide the bunny and send him on a scavenger hunt. It won't be much but still it could be fun for him. He needs it lately, what with his tragic hip problems. The cashier asks me if I have the store's loyalty card, and I do, since I'd previously applied for so that they would stop asking me every time if I had one. I still normally say no, even though it's always in my purse, in order to avoid the hassle of finding the card, handing it to the clerk, waiting a moment, then getting it back and having to put it back in my purse, which isn't always worth the time and effort, depending on how many points are actually being accrued, and if there is actually any future benefit of collecting said points. This time I decide to go through the motions for these fictional points that will never be redeemed, using the card that takes up precious real estate in my life. She scans it, I return it to the slot in my ever-growing front pouch, and then I pick up the handheld credit card terminal and stare through the display, waiting for it to ask me a question. Usually it displays the somehow relevant numbers and symbols to me, and then asks me if I'm "OK". I always say yes, primarily so the machine doesn't see through my facade. If I can fool Moneris, I can fool the world. I then tell the machine the one secret I've never told anyone by entering a classified password in a language only he and I understand, the PIN number. Lifelong sufferers of RAS Syndrome, the lot of us. As I'm waiting for the screen to inevitably ask me how I'm doing, the cashier, a Ukrainian woman in her early thirties who generally increases my enjoyment of the transaction, asks me which method of payment I will be using. She hesitates saying it, as she wasn't entirely sure that a seemingly sensible adult female would actually believe that since she already handed over one card, the one for the points, then her brain would feel confident that it performed all the necessary payment steps. After her legitimate question, I stare at her puzzlingly, realizing that I haven't yet handed her my credit card. I attempt to cover up my unintentional delay with a half-hearted, convoluted explanation that fails to mirror the explanation in my head, or the one I'm aiming to convey, which I am still unsure about. This moment has now ruined a previously perfectly civil cashier-customer relationship. I can feel the tension, and so I hastily pay with cash, leaving behind the not insignificant change, in order to get myself the Jesus out of this store before any of this goes any further.

October 20 - Snoop Dogg gets a struggle with a toaster (2018-10-20 02:22)

I return dejected to my suite, compelled to eat. Home alone, I become a simile about digging my way to freedom as I scour the house for tasty treats. If there are no more chips, or the candy is no more, I grow enraged. The most angry - legitimately angry at the world - I've ever been is when I thought I was grabbing an Oh Henry! out of a bag but it turned out to be a Nature Valley granola bar. Even though I knew the Oh Henry! was still in there, the extra time I had to wait to eat it and the disappointment in not getting what I want, well that's a time I don't need to revisit. I'm acutely addicted to things, which gives me a taste of how bad addiction really is.

Past Self needs to prepare, to make Present Self's life easier to deal with. And Present Self is a lot like the Memento fella. So buying certain foods, keeping important tools nearby and accessible, this is all in Past Self's purview.

"Ah yes, how delightful! These multiple Oh Hanks will be tootsolutely delictable when I'm unable to move on my footawn post-ingestion, mid-mundanity, pre-insanity."

But waiting for food to heat up, even in the microwave or toaster, is so hard because of Present Self's ridiculously addictive appetite.

Now it should be stated that I could do with a new toaster. I don't know if I've ever actually owned a decent one. If there exists any toasters that do what you'd expect them to, I've never heard tell of 'em. Mine never fully pops the toast out at the end. It's a lazy fight against gravity, and the bread always gets stuck in there, so I'm forced into a game of Operation with the toaster as the patient. Sometimes I use my fingers to extract the slice, if I'm in a rush and figure that getting the toast immediately is more important than protecting my hand from getting burnt, because of how short of a time you have before the toast gets cold. Other times I use a knife or fork to try to stab the slice and then hoist it out of there, risking electrocution in the process. Or I'll dump the whole appliance upside down, forgetting once again that the crumbs being collected by the tray underneath are inevitably coming down with the toast. For some reason I'm never willing to go as far as unplugging the toaster while I retrieve the bread. I have my reasons but you wouldn't understand. Maybe I gotta stop getting my toasters from alleys. But I never will. I belong in the alleys.

October 21 - Benjamin Netanyahu gets a shared laundry puzzle (2018-10-21 02:22)

The cleansing of the laundry should not be attempted as I am, but it must be done. I've let it go too long, and if not now, never. So down the stairs to the room with the machines, down the stairs I go. I end up at the sole laundering space in my house, an area that's shared with a couple of other suites. As can occur, especially on a Sunday, there is someone else's dried laundry in the dryer and someone else's wet clothes in the washer, both cycles complete. Neither of the loads has an accompanying basket, other than my own, which is full of dirty clothes ready to be washed. Also, there are no decent surfaces besides the machines themselves. So I move the dry clothes to the top of the front-loading dryer where they just were, while putting the wet ones in the top-loading washer into the dryer,

so that I am able to put mine in the washing machine. This whole process should go smoothly, if everyone involved is paying attention to their cycles. But that is rarely the case. When I come down an hour later to do the switch-over for my clothes, both other loads are still there, just as I'd left them.

It takes me an extended period of time and a significant amount of brain power successfully to make the swap, considering I neglectfully brought my basket back upstairs an hour previous. I have constructed my own puzzle, inserting myself into the role of farmer, trying to get the fox and the rabbit and the lettuce across the river. I have no idea how the movements are to go, but I must try. Eventually I put all my clothes onto the open dryer door before closing the washer lid and moving the other person's dryer clothes there. But socks are flying everywhere, I keep dropping pieces of clothing, it's all getting all mixed up Pete Tong-style, and I can't figure out who owns what based on dampness alone. At once, the lights go out, the bills unpaid. I grab what I can, owner irrelevant. Another challenge failed, I trudge upwards, each step reinforcing my inability to learn the things I already know.



The wise man keeps his basket in the laundry room to avoid eventual inevitable discombobulation.

October 22 - Bob Odenkirk gets an office coup initiated by a spurious obsession with Julia Stiles (2018-10-22 02:30)

As far as I can tell, the people at the work think that I'm boring. And I don't blame them. I'm mostly in my own head at the office, barely expressing any words not directly related to the projects I'm involved with. A few weeks into the job, still unencumbered by even the slightest connection with anyone here, I'm sitting silently at my desk when I overhear a conversation materializing at some nearby cubicles.

Co-worker 1: "Hey, what's that Julia Stiles movie about dancing?"

Co-worker 2: "Ah, I don't remember. Step Up or something."

Unconsciously and without looking up from my computer, I intercede. "Save the Last Dance."

Co-worker 1: "Oh, thanks. Do you know a lot about movies?"

Me: "Only ones with Julia Stiles."

A few other heads turn as they notice the new guy finally divulging a little something about myself. It doesn't seem to come across that I'm kidding with my last line, my deadpan going unappreciated. This obviously makes it even funnier.

And so I make the abrupt decision to keep the joke going for as long as possible. To keep myself stimulated and occupied during my time here, I resolve to become the resident Julia Stiles expert.

Me (interrupting the lull): "'Dance' isn't her best movie though. Not by a long shot."

Co-worker 1: "Oh no? What —"

I interrupt a person this time and declare with conviction, "Well, it's undeniable that '10 Things I Hate About You' is her best work, so we don't even need to talk about that. O, alongside Mekhi Phfieffer and the villainous Josh Hartnett, that really cemented her place in our culture as one of the greats. And we can't forget about how she stole all her scenes in the Bourne films."

I continue with an indirect anecdote about the actress. "And my friend keeps running into her around town. Like enough that Jules might think she's stalking her."

Co-worker 3: "Oh yeah? Does she live here in town?"

Me: "Uh, yes. She's married to a Stevestonite."

Co-worker 3: "What —"

Me: "That's someone from Steveston. Not a [1] durable suitcase ."

I let that and the preceding discussion stew for awhile, and back to work I go.

There will be whispers about what just went on, and I relish every sideways glance over the next little while. During meetings, I speak up more than before, now wide awake to the happenings. I keep my input on topic, but I make sure that every comment is a Julia Stiles analogy.

Boss: "Our client has lost a lot of market share recently, but they're unwilling to spend any more marketing dollars. We need to come up with a unique way to get them back to top of mind for their customers."

Me: "Yes, of course. This is just like the movie Blackway. Lillian, our beautiful client, needs our help. If we shift their programmatic ad spend over to social, focussing on Instagram stories specifically, We can be Lester's rifle."

Holy shit, the extended noiselessness that follows is the greatest thing I've ever heard, and I try my best not to let a Mona Lisa smile reveal my trickery. I mean, I know that Instastories is the best way to go, and they can't disagree with my idea, but based on the confused looks, none of them have seen or even heard of Blackway. To hammer my reference home, I continue, "Oh, sorry, you likely know it as Go With Me. I'm glad we're all back on the same page now. I felt like Julia's character in The Omen for a minute there, just unaware I was raising this demon baby for years! Now I don't want you all thinking I'm pulling a Wicked here by getting rid of the rest of you so that Boss Lady goes with my idea. I really do think it's the only way to go, but of course all input is welcome."

Co-worker 2 (hesitating): Uh, we could do a big billboard on the highway instead.

Boss (hesitating as well): "Great idea! Sorry, but I'm not sure if Instastories is the way to go. Just between us, it could lead to serious trouble if the social makeover becomes a disaster."

Boss must be on to me, but nobody else is. An inevitable long con awaits.

Little do they all know, but I withhold ever mentioning the most telling Stiles film of all, Business of Strangers. In under a year, my revenge plot against the honcho will come to fruition, as I successfully accuse her of professional misconduct, and I take over as Boss Lady. Productivity goes through the roof, as expected, and the 10th of every month becomes Julia Awareness Day, with the employee showing up with the best Stiles style getting a nice little bonus and a pat on the head. The first month, that fat stack and rigorous head pat go to our newest employee, my first hire, already first on the call sheet of the payroll - Julia friggin' Stiles.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-8-happy-birthday-neko-case/>

October 23 - Weird AI Yankovic gets what else is in a name (2018-10-23 02:26)

Most people have absolutely no choice in the matter about what they'll be called. It's set up in this whirly-bird that the name you'll be responding to until the end of your own personal whirly-bird is thrustily bestowed on you before you get to see even an ounce of what you'll be living in and how you fit into it all. Sure, there are nicknames and nacknames and usernames and switcheroos and all, but for the most part, we take what we're given, no matter what it assumes about who we are.

There's a theory of nominative determinism that asserts that people tend to gravitate towards areas of work that fit their names. Bad enough we have pressure from all sides to become a doctor or a lawyer or a tailor or what have you, but now your initial handle is subjecting you to the same.

The founder and president of Food for the Poor, a Christian organization dedicated to feeding the needy in Latin America, fell victim to this. Robin Mahfood dreamed of the artist's life, struggling to make ends meet in the Meatpacking District while translating the human experience for the world around him. But he was compelled to start the non-profit to escape his discordant name, and in the end, which is yet to come, he will squeal in agony over his lost potential, no matter his role in feeding hungry mouths.

Call Me By Your Name star Armie Hammer was so-called to carry on the name of his great-grandfather, a successful businessman. Armand Hammer happened to be a director and major shareholder of Church & Dwight, the company that manufactures Arm & Hammer products. His choice was none at all, as the path was paid for him at birth.

On some level, this nominative determinism comes from implicit egotism, which states that a person will unconsciously prefer things they associate with themselves, which leads to the development of an 'apronym', a personal name aptly or suited to its owner. Basketball player Lonzo Ball's mind got blown when someone pointed this out to him, and politician Anthony Weiner claimed it as a defense after his sexting scandal.

There can also be a natural rebellion over this idea, leading to the inapronym. Frank Beard, the only member of ZZ Top to not have a beard, along with infamed white supremacist Donald Black can attest to this.

A number of lazy writers repurpose the apronym to avoid having to properly develop a multitude of dimensions for their pro and antagonists. The ensuing characteronym is also great for people whose reading comprehension could use a little boost. Dickens's tyrannical schoolmaster Mr. Gradgrind and Shakespeare's lost baby Perdita can be forgiven because they're old as the hills and may have been some of the first to actually be subjected to this technique.

In the end, all I ask is that when considering baby names, put down your books and your discussions until the child pops out of the yoo-hoo and has a little time to get their bearings in this whirly-bird. Their name will present itself as it should, only after the kid claims it sincerely as their own.

Reluctantly yours,
Stupido O'McFatfattyfatblah

[Author's note: I too am [1]parodic in my [2] musicality , and I considered sending you one of my recent pieces (like [3] Women Are Great , [4] Rhyming Palinilaps or [5] Holler Back Lady), but I bet you're plum sick of unsolicited sing-songs by now. Give me some real tunes, with feelings and originality, am I right? Am I? AM I??????? I AM. IAN IAN IAN IAN IAN IAN IAN IAM IAN.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/march-31-happy-birthday-kate-micucci/>
2. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/>
3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/may-15-happy-birthday-madeleine-albright/>
4. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-9-happy-birthday-adam-sandler/>
5. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-3-happy-birthday-gwen-stefani/>

October 24 - Drake gets a fad, late to the party and unappreciated (2018-10-24 02:21)

I've always been interested in fads. Interested, but not involved. I've only been able to enjoy them at a safe distance, restricted by my providers. My family never let me or my siblings be part of any cultural bandwagons. We would only get the thing long after we wanted, when it could only be found in discarded bins of highway thrift stores. Laggards at best, while the early adopters have moved on to the new one.

The Slinky is presumably the first toy fad, back in ye olde December of 1945, right after the second war to end them all. Yeah, that's what these veterans needed when they came home. You're trying to navigate a shell-shocking relationship with your wife who you barely knew when you got deployed, you got a bunch of kids who don't all look like you, and every damn one of them is begging you for this ridiculous slinky - a coiled metal wire that flips down stairs. Tell me that wouldn't remind you of when you were stationed outside Yokohama and the samurai kamikazes came spinning at you from the top of the hill, flipping their nunchaku around until all you remember is waking up in a makeshift hospital getting your pinky toe amputated by a man with a gun to his head.

Then there was the incomparable Pet Rock in the mid-70s. Toy companies finally realized the product no longer needs to be great, as long as the marketing is. Hey kids, wouldn't it be amazing if your life was like the kid in the commercial, surrounded by bright lights and happiness derived solely from a rock that makes you forget about your dad spending all his days and money at the pub because he never received any love, or even a simple coveted slinky, from his own parents.

Beanie Babies, 1993. There were thousands of them, and some people had to have them all. Really helped that spoiled generation. Thousands of investors are sitting on these little plush animals, waiting for the eBay populace to begin its clamor, throwing money at them faster than their shrewd owners could electronically catch it.

Now the squid hat, remember if you can, is the fad that resonates the most with me, for what it represented in its heyday. Looking back, my parents were right in refusing to cave when we wanted faddy things, knowing it would only exacerbate the consumerism boiling in the pot of my generation. Everyone in my class had pogs, or Pokemon cards, and I'd never get to join in, but to be honest I didn't give much of a care. Then one year, the squid hat was the new thing, those toques with like dreadlocks coming out of them, and EVERYONE got them for Christmas. Except me. And oh man, did I want one. So I cried about it, I figure, so that my parents could hear my defeated screams, but still I never got one. Fast forward a little over a thousand days, and underneath that wobbly Christmas tree is a brand spankin' multi-coloured squid hat, which hasn't been popular for a long time at this point. I put it on and quickly realize how foolishly stupid it looks, which I think was their point in getting it for me in the end. I still have the present, to remind me that whatever I want, once I finally get it, it will be too late for me to derive any happiness from it - a lesson we should all learn before

the end of the end of the day of the end.

October 25 - Samantha Bee gets the fall of a mustache (2018-10-25 02:18)

Now, I'm not a historian, but I do know everything about history, even the stuff no one else knows about.

Initially, the following assertion may come across as insensitive, based on my previous experience divulging certain facts. However, once I present the evidence, your mind will change like those before you.

The so-called causes of World War II - "Italian fascism in the 1920s, Japanese militarism and invasions of China in the 1930s, and especially the political takeover in 1933 of Germany by Hitler and his Nazi Party and its aggressive foreign policy" - are all cover-ups for the true reason. The war to end the war, it was ignited and fought for nothing else than a pure sense of style. A certain mustache, popularized in the early 20th century by Charlie Chaplin, is the real stain that was spreading throughout the lands, which became much too much for one man to accept.

I'm not the first to postulate this theory, but I do intend to guide its exemption from immediate and unsubstantiated refutation. Like the others, my ideas may be quickly extinguished by the media and you will never hear what I have to say, but for those fortunate enough to receive awareness, I commend your strength and your intelligence and voracious desire for veracity.

Now of course I am not denying the happenings of the time, not by any means. I am just stating why they happened. In the truth, there is less room for inspiration, and learning, and understanding, but this is the way it is. I may be the messenger of enlightenment, but that is not for me to decide.

Hitler is viewed through history's eyes as charismatic, demanding, evil, persuasive, dictatorial, but recorders often neglect to mention that he was theoretically, clinically and realistically insane.

The toothbrush moustache, so named because, get this, of its resemblance to the bristled end of a toothbrush, was enjoying great success as a fashion trend in Germany. A young Adolf despised its existence, for an unknown reason likely to be practically irrelevant. He worked vehemently to persuade others that one patch of hair under your nose is hideous, evil incarnate, and should never be considered stylish. Obviously and unfortunately, nobody listened to this one man shouting his pleas from a figurative soapbox, to deaf and hearing-impaired ears.

However, he noticed a rising viewpoint in his adopted homeland, one that considered certain races and peoples the cause of all Germany's problems, which were certainly mounting after having lost the Great War. In his most lucid, he was said to have found it strange and absurd to segregate or hate based on ethnicity or race. Intelligence, sure. Sense of humour, even. Facial hair, no doubt. But never race.

Adolf was obviously aware of growing tensions between certain societal factions and needed only to find a group that could be used as a herd of scapegoats, sacrificed for the greater good so that no men would ever again grow the reviled sous-nez square. Other than certain quirks and

eccentricities, such as his loathing of a particular style of facial hair, Hitler was admittedly a very intelligent man. His decisions were usually calculated and methodical, and his actions came from logic and pragmatism. His great plan to genocide this mustache began by first growing one himself. He would then create and perpetuate unspeakable crimes against his fellow earthlings. This would give him a reputation as an unwavering terrorist, eventually leading to his ultimate demise. For all days after, humanity across the lands would do whatever it could to avoid a semblance of mimicking him any way, including his physical characteristics.

What was once the northern soul patch, the nose-sweeper, the squared root - now it is just Hitler's mustache.

Sure, sadness and pain reached unfathomable levels. But to him, this was not in vain. He had succeeded. As long as the mustache was never worn again, it was worth it to have created concentration camps, gas chambers, near annihilation, a warring world - well this guy was a real jerk.

October 26 - Hillary Clinton gets opposing approaches leading to the same destination (2018-10-26 02:28)

On sweltering days, when the sun is out and the grocery store is having a sweet sale, I will buy a tub of ice cream, the mostly vanilla with hoof prints caramel chocolates scattered throughout, and I'll feel nothing but great about it.

Once we get home, though, I'm pretty particular about the means by which that tub will be reduced of its contents, and let me tell you, my way differs appreciably from that of the one with which I live.

She is the hockey team. I am the zamboni driver. She flies across the ice, knocking heads, chasing the puck and doing whatever it takes to get it in the net. I smooth what remains, readying the tub for the next period.

She is the truffle pig. I am a precocious piglet. She hunts efficiently for the treats, exacting in on their location with pinpoint precision, leaving behind a battleground. I comb through the vanilla delicately, methodically and steadily, happening upon one of the rare chocolate treasures when it materializes of its own volition after patiently waiting to be discovered.

She is the bomber pilot. I am the minesweeper. She drops her ammo into the heterogeneous melange, always coming out with a confirmed kill. I pick up where she left off, trudging through the creamy field to disarm the peanutty goodness that remains.

She eats as she does, and I as I do, and together, the ice cream disappears as it should, into our gullets. In the end, our respective techniques are immaterial. We are both sated and finally ready to drift together through the dream world, where we rest, until the next day, the next sale, the next contradictory dessert consumption.

October 27 - John Cleese gets a new generation of shows (2018-10-27 02:27)

You're almost 50 years away from creating a television show that people still remind you of every day. In case you're looking for any new ideas for projects that might help you get a little pythonless recognition, I'll give you a kick start:

- **Book Club:** Each episode mirrors to some conflict in the real book their group is reading, with each member getting a turn as the main character. They discuss the main theme but are seemingly unaware of how it relates to their own lives.
- **Building Neighbours:** The only shot is the front view of an apartment building, where all units have unique patios. The neighbours are always hanging outside talking to each other, even though they can't necessarily see everyone else. In the pilot, there's a fire in one of the units where no one is home and the neighbours band together to save the day.
 - As an alternative or addendum to this, all the neighbours could camp out in a wide hallway, like a mini-neighbourhood. In this one, there's a main character who comes and goes, having chats with the fun hallway people.
- **Insomniac:** Everything switches seamlessly between dreams and reality. Who can even tell the difference anymore.
- **Darwin Awards:** Each episode follows a different winner, leading up to their death. Based on [1]actual winners. Chars are sympathetic, although they're undoubtedly pretty stupid.
- **Sons of Menarche:** A girl had sex right before first period, got pregnant and had triplet boys. This takes place when all the kids are fifteen years old and just entering high school.
- **A construction site passerby gets injured, found to be caused by neglect from the company running the show.** She sues them and wins the company in the settlement. She navigates her new job as CEO with flair and poise and a few shenanigans.
- **Father Katz:** Like [2] Dr. Katz , but it takes place in the confessional, with the priest taking to his weirdo parishioners.
- **Synagogue:** A well-respected rabbi dog tries in vain and hilarity to manage his otherwise human synagogue's business and followers.
- **Evolving:** One member from about five main species of human evolution all live together in one apartment and try to figure it all out, you know?
- **Designing Houses:** A parody of all those real estate flip shows.
- **Leon:** A spin-off of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* where Leon is the star of a show-within-the-show. He's always screwing up lines and other characters try to bring the scene back. It's basically a live sitcom, with no edits, and nobody knows what's supposed to actually be in there.
- **Middle School:** Set in junior high, all the actors are adults portraying kids, and there's never any mention of the age discrepancy.

- All Kinds: The surreal episodes continuously zoom in and out between different levels of the world. One level is people, but it also goes between planets, bacteria, anthropomorphic countries at war, atoms having a laugh, food in a fridge going bad, and whatnot. At each level, the characters face human-like problems that make sense based on their own realities. For some reason each episode title theme is a different song from the same Motown album.

Anyway, that's all you get for now. There's also [3] Brunch , but I have a feeling that, like many people, the title alone with turn you off from it.

1. <http://www.darwinawards.com/>

2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr._Katz,_Professional_Therapist

3. <http://ismith.ca/brunch/>

October 28 - Caitlyn Jenner gets reminded (2018-10-28 02:22)

We need reminders.

You can be certain of an idea and believe it wholly, and then it drifts away when a distraction takes its place.

You can knock the distraction away as quick as it came, but by that time there's a new distraction for the distraction and finding your way back to the original idea is absurdly futile.

Read A Man Without a Country.

Then set a reminder in your digital calendar to read it again a year from now.

You should be able to get through it in one sitting, preferably in a hammock near a clump of trees as the sun is going down.

The digital calendar reminder is not the reminder I'm saying we need.

The words in the book are the reminder we need.

The reminding notification for the true reminder is only for convenience.

Although just as easily you could have the actual book on your bookshelf and maybe once a year it will stick its own spine out a little further than usual and invite you to pick it up and go sit in a hammock near a clump of trees as the sun goes down, down, down.

October 29 - Richard Dreyfuss gets an imperfect bet (2018-10-29 02:22)

As a documentarian, I'm over here making a documentary. On the surface it appears to be about gambling, but at its core it considers what is, transparently, a gamble for other people that is a sure thing for me.

The story traces me finding a whack of people from all walks of riches who are each willing to flip a coin for a different amount of money, with their accepted amount obviously depending on their financial situation along with their level of curiosity.

In most forms of gambling, the house always wins. Not because the odds are stacked in its favour, although it is, but because there is a betting limit. In my game, there is no limit outside of my ability to find willing participants. There is enough money owned by enough people at enough stages of wealth, that I can play, and win, without the cost of ruining somebody else's life. Don't bet more than you can afford to lose. Your odds are always 50 %, and since there is no vig or inherent cost of playing, this means that you have a 50 % chance of doubling your money. You get to choose the amount you want to bet. I may one day reach the number for your desired flip, and we will play. You may win, you may lose, I will win. Opponents choose, impartial party flips.

The first round starts at \$10, just because any lower wouldn't be worth winning. In a dingy pub, I explain the situation to the patrons, and a bored widow sipping on a gin fizz agrees to be the initial bettor. She calls heads and the bartender flips heads. I gladly hand her a purple, content for the initial go-around to continue past the first toss, and knowing full well it will be coming back to be eventually.

The second participant, from the \$20 level, is out having a smoke, and he wins as well. I'm down \$30 at this point, but of course, nothing to worry about. Hell, let's make the next one for \$50, meaning if I win I'll actually be up twice as much as what I started with.

I stand outside a law firm waving a fifty, and in no time someone approaches and wants in on the action. Well look at that, another loss.

And another.

And another.

And et cetera.

After 15 straight defeats, I'm finding it ever harder to locate an opponent, with the amounts getting prettay prettay high. I never thought it would get to this point, with a ridiculously improbable 0.003 % chance of happening. But with Bezos at hundreds of billions and many more not far behind, I will eventually win that \$10 plus extras.

My assistant tracks down a willing flipper, and I fly to Macau to meet him, for a - huh, tough to even say here - a million dollar flip.

By this point my endeavour has captured the attention of a few notable media outlets, and on my flight I'm unfortuitously surrounded by reporters who want a little piece of me.

I'm nervous and sweating, and to be honest I have been since a heads was tossed at \$50,000. I explain to them that eventually, there's no way I can lose, but after noticing some sniggers even I'm

finding it hard to truly believe this anymore.

The big day arrives, and I'm told to go to The Legend Club for the bigger flip. The nameless face who will determine my poverty won't even get up from his high-limit baccarat table to shake my hand. He glances upwards for less than a second before yelling, "Tails!"

An official casino representative shows us the 50 avos coin and tosses it up in the air.

Suddenly, The world stops save for the slow motion coin and my own movements.

After a continuation of terrible luck since my film began, I am handed a fateful opportunity to choose the final outcome.

The flip means little to my challenger, who is wealthy beyond all recognition and will still gamble until his last breath. But to me it's everything.

I snatch the coin out of the air and lay it delicately on the tosser's hand just before the world returns to the way it was and he's able to broadcast the result to the room.

"Tails it is."

Tails, it is.

October 30 - Henry Winkler gets a letter to the creditor (2018-10-30 02:22)

Dear big man in your big chair in your big office on the top floor in the corner of that floor,

You know something? Feck ouf. Not in a mean way, but I'm plain sick of you. I accepted the terms, I know. I'm the one who readily signed the goosh derved contract. I knew how much I had to pay. But this interest business, it's getting to be a bit much. And you knew that. And you knew I didn't. I wanted money then, but I don't want that money anymore. Well I guess I still want it, but it's gone, so what's the prickly point. And still you want me to pay you back. Even more than you gave me to begin with. What a glaring omission my brain allowed me to make at the onset.

It's like when you pay a restaurant bill and the server expects you to pay more than the amount on the receipt, and if you don't pay a high enough amount more than on the slip the manager will come over and essentially threaten you until you're embarrassed enough to pay far more than what's written on the slip and by that point you're just glad to be getting out of there alive.

So it seems you'd like to receive some money, in regular increments, until I'm dead. Well I want that too. Just because past me was irresponsible, that's no reason for it to be acceptable to punish present me, while future me is sitting there biding his time until he comes to fruition, having next to no idea of the goobledy garbage he'll have to deal with when he becomes present me.

I see you, I picture you in your office, laughing like a maniac, somewhat maniacally, as the money rolls in. What you're doing has to be illegal, according to the ancient texts¹, but I don't know how to prove it. You're up there, drinking whiskey but never getting drunk. I want your job. What do

you even do? I have a job, but even with it I'm down here in the pit, and there's no climbing out.

Forever yours,

Present Me

¹ old religious books, not T9 messages

October 31 - Jon Wurster gets a George Street mystery (2018-10-31 02:22)

Now no matter what it looks like out yer window, this is not a standard Friday night in town. There's no rain, not a drop of wind, and you might even stay outside for a bit after your smoke is done.

The little shits cleaned out Sobeys of all their eggs and are gettin' ready to piss off a lot of fadders. It's Hallowe'en, and as is usually the case, nobody knows what the fuck is on the go.

Down in New Orleans and most anywhere else, Mardi Gras is in February 'cause it has to do with Jesus dyin' or comin' back or one of 'em. But here on George, the street where you got more places to drink than anywhere else I'd ever heard tell of, they moves it to the last weekend of October. Instead of havin' to pay cover at any of the twenty-odd bars, you pays a queen to get inside where you can go wherever the hell you wants. This gets all the crowds hanging where they wouldn't for the most part, and with the costumes and everything, it's a friggin' mess down there. Good thing the bouncers are clueless, too, 'cause everyone knows a way to sneak into the street for free, if they're poor or whatever.

As usual around this time of year, men about town are recounting the legend of some real fine fella who goes by Donnie Wheeler. Buddy could turn any hang with a few buddies into the sickest party you'd ever gone to. He got a few terms named after him for when everything is right on the go. "On wheels", which even the mainlanders says now, and "on dons", which you only hears on this side of the overpass. Now I've never seen Donnie, but I'd been places where people said he was around, and what a laugh those nights were.

I start priming at my buddy's buddy Kenny's house up near MUN, but we hears about a party on the go up on Bates Hill, around the corner from the Republic. It's right downtown anyway, so we figures we might as well check it out. I gets a cab downtown with Walshy, Fox, and Pete. Fox and his missus just broke up, but he seems alright about it. Either way, as soon as we gets there Pete hauls out the bottle of Baby Duck, and we knows we're gettin' on 'er tonight. The bottle gest polished off in the alley there, and then we goes in. I only know a few of the b'ys there, and the rest looks like a bunch of bros, so I spends most of the time wit' the three fellas I showed up with. None of us knows it right now, but by the end of da night, one of us is gonna be a goner. Dead meat. Boneeee bucket.

I'm dressed as one of those detectives in the FBI. Easy enough to throw together, basically only

needs a windbreaker with some tape on the back, then a fake badge and gun. One of the bros camped out at the beer pong table is wearing pretty much the same thing, except he's tellin' everyone the FBI on him stands for Female Butt Inspector, and half the clowns here thinks it's clever. Now I don't care if he don't care about how he looks to the rest of us, but I still stays far away from him so nobody thinks we're dressed up with each other.

Walshy's best kind normally, but he's one of those b'ys who tries to finish what you're saying before you even says it, like he knows the rest of the story you're telling, which he don't. He's doing this enough that I figure it's time to head down to the street, to see what else is on the go.

I does a Lottie's lap but it takes a half hour, the place is so blocked. Without even trying, I ends up snagging a free white Russian. Across the way, I sees Fox head into Trapper's, so I head over to meet up with him. Once I gets inside, I can't even find him. She's packed in here too. Gonna have to get used to this tonight. They're screechin' in a few come from aways up at the bar. Won't be able to get a drink for a bit, but that's probably for the best.

Shite. Late Night Mel is here, over havin' a scuff. She don't see me, so I ducks back out to the road. Don't need that tonight. There's still a band on the stage, and they sounds pretty wicked, but I only gets to hear their last song. The crowd clears away, at least, so I can get to the other end of the stage. It's about time for a pint at Christian's, I'd say.

It's still early enough, but already there's some solid drag-offs going on. A princess and a bride are stumblin' down the road together.

I ends up on the street, where a scrap is breaking out between a lumberjack and some fella dressed like buddy from some CBC show. It turns out their buddies gave 'em each twenty bucks to go at it, buncha skeets. As soon as that gets clued up, with blood splattered but friendships somehow reinforced, I goes up to Walshy, who was watching from the other side of the scuffle. He's right hammered and dying for a feed. Says he either needs a rip or a Big Zig if he's gonna stay out for late night, and thank the jesus there was nudding to the fry line, so he gets served pretty much right away.

On the sidewalk next to Ziggy's, Luigi's got his arm around Mario, who's having a puke. I runs into CB's real quick to see if Ness is still working, so I leaves Walshy alone with his poutine and tells him to wait. The deck is the usual mixed crowd from the four bars, everyone smoking and leaning, none of 'em having paid any attention to Halloween. Not as many costumes here as on the street, and more than a few people don't even seem to notice that the day. I flashes my stamped hand, pretending I'd already been in this bar tonight, and I easily gets past buddy on the door. The first band just started, and they sounds like shit, and she's right loud in here, so I couldn't be bothered even trying to chat up Ness. No need for me to be here, so I don't even get a beer before I'm gone again.

When I gets back, Walshy's just finishing off the last of his fries. But I does a double take when I notices the bag's from Winky's. He was saying I took too long in there and he was standin' around starving so he grabbed a poutine. I reminds him he just had Zig's, but he had no memory of eating that first one. Buddy two-tined and didn't even realize it. Either way, he can stand up on his own, and I'm outta gas, so I turns and heads for home by meself.

Somehow there's not a soul on the lower end of Hamilton, but I sees a glow coming from that empty parking lot, so I goes over to check it out. Turns out it's a fella, and he got the face of a party monk. Don't know how he pulled off that costume, or how I knows that's even what he is, but I do.

"Hello, little one," he says to me. Now I don't let no one talk to me like that, especially with all this booze in me, but there's something right weird goin' on with him and I lets him say whatever.

"You must turn around. The night is not over. There is fun to be had, and where fun remains, so too must you. Let me guide you."

I don't know what he's gettin' on with, but I follows him into an alley and figures he must know where a good late night is. He's still glowin' so I tells him his costume is wicked.

"It's not a costume, my son. It is me."

"Donnie? Donnie Wheeler? Is that you?" I don't even believe it as I says the name, but it's gotta be. He laughs like he runs the whole show.

"You have uncovered me, and like all those before you, this means you must die, so that my legend lives on. The call of the party is more important than any one man. I'm sorry, but still, I am not sorry."

My legs are stuck to the ground and I gets scared. Donnie reaches his glowing hand out and taps me right light on the top of the head. I feels every bit of fun that anyone's ever had, all at once, but it gets to me too much and I collapses to the ground.

Sure, I might have died that night, but for everyone else, they keeps having all the fun, which they'll be able to do as long as Donnie Wheeler lives on.

1.11 November

November 1 - Larry Flynt gets a figment at the complaint department (2018-11-01 02:22)

I know you're all about free speech, with your filthy magazine concoction a necessary evil to ensure the defense and promotion of the first liberty that they noticed they forgot to include when they declared independence and freely told the old world wig wearers where to stick it. And don't get me wrong, I'm all about the freeze peach too. But even so, can all those clowns stop it already with all their complaining?

It seems like the average one of us is on a perpetual subconscious hunt for rage, and the best among us still searching for irritation. Have you ever been in a line up, any line up? At least half the people queued up act like they've never gone through the waiting process before. They can't possibly conceive that they would still be in this line after all this time, and by george they'll tell you about it. And where are they in such a rush to get off to, anyway? They should know by now that nothing is important, especially their lives.

These people, they used to complain about the seeds in grapes, so they made science get rid of them. And now they complain about the little twig attached to the grape butts! Take a break from complaining already. Have a drink or a laugh or whatnot.

Most people complain about the weather because there's always something to grumble about there. Too hot. Too cold. Too rainy. Sure it's nice now, but wait until tomorrow - ooh boy, she's gonna be too hot again then.

Then the few people who are wise to the over-whining of quotidian nature, they can't get enough of complaining about the people who complain about the weather. But don't these complaint complainers realize that the weather complainers obviously enjoy doing it, and any amusement we can get from this harsh, weatherful world should be held onto tightly, like a black mamba yearning to release its venom into ya neck. Actually, maybe they get their jollies off of complaining about people complaining about the weather.

And - wait - am I - is complaining about complaining still complaining?

Oh no.

November 2 - Nelly gets music videos in the making (2018-11-02 02:22)

Much like everyone else I've ever met, my favourite scene in any music video is when you refused to respond to a [1] spreadsheet text . Then I thought, "I know how to use Excel too, pivot tables and macros and arrays, oh my!" So I figured I could make some music videos of my own. I started with part of a [2] This Will Destroy You track , and it went very well. Now I'm bursting at the seams to make more. Here's a few I have in the pocket, for when a cool dude propositions me for one and needs it pronto.

- A yearlong video of a 6.08333-minute song, with 1 second recorded every day, probably in a stop-motion way but not just someone's face like in those youtubies where you watch someone get older right before your eyes.
- Instead of instruments, the musicians play other objects BUT they don't even realize it! Like the guitarist is playing a broom and the drummer is hitting a bunch of mulch and such. In an interesting turn, towards the end there's a custodian sweeping the floor with a... GUITAR! Also, the mic is probably a peeled banana wearing a clown's nose.
- An orchestra conductor conducts the song while staring directly at the camera the whole time. I'll try to get Bramwell Tovey on board too, since he's half bored these days.
- There's one for one of my tunes, [3] A Slightly More Complicated Desultory Philippic (or How I was Sharpshooter'd Into Submission) , where I dress up as each person that I say I am and make a really short video where I try to be as still as possible.
- I'll be doing a bad lip reading video at some point, taking scenes from movies and matching their words up with the song lyrics, but that requires patience, so this one might not get done until I'm old and great.

- I bet one that'll be fun to shoot is me putting on a song I really like for someone, and the whole time it plays I stare at them all attentive but like too attentive so it makes it hard for the person and subsequently the watcher to actually enjoy the song they're hearing for the first time.
- For an abstract instrumental track, it'll just be one person sitting alone doing a song drawing as they listen along.

There's a few live music video ideas I have in my arsenal too, in case the cool dude wants one of those instead.

- One is a bootleg video taken by someone in the crowd with a substandard phone camera, but somehow it has professional quality live audio. That'll mess with 'em, hey?
- Another bootleggy one starts with the point-of-view of a crowd member, but at some point someone else in front of them puts up their phone and starts recording too. The rest of the video is the first phone focused on the second phone.
- Then there's one where each band member is in a different location, being filmed at the same time as they play along with each other using innards or something so that they know when to play the right notes.

I left one out, mainly because it's partially finished and I wasn't sure if I wanted to give anything about it away before the finished product, but I can't keep it to myself any longer. It's a video for [4] Hoop Dancer which is from my own perspective on my former back patio on a sunny day. I scan the sky and trees and air and other surroundings when a few birds fly by and start dancing. Slight hallucinations morph those dancers into god knows what, but then I snap out of it a little and the real world returns. But only for a minute. Then it's back to weird, entertaining stuffs, like laughing people, following some spirit guides around, increasing in psychedelia until the very end when I get sucked into the vortex I was just looking at. Yeah, that one.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eD7TgqVd_ZU

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDBUW-KOT1E&t=8s>

3. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/a-slightly-more-complicated-desultory-philippic-or-how-i-was-sharps-hooter-d-into-submission>

4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q1VeJzg31E>

November 3 - Colin Kaepernick gets an avoidable continuance (2018-11-03 02:24)

Had his wife forgotten to come home earlier with the car, following her regrettable tryst with an old flame, Vince would have been a little more aggressive in the game and would have followed through with the hit on his counterpart's knee. While this would have left Graham with a torn MCL, leading to a noticeable limp for what remained of his life, it would have allowed Vince to obviate crashing into the moose on his way back. He would have been too shaken up to get behind the wheel himself, and Tracy would have taken an alternate route after missing the turnoff. But she didn't.

It's raining again. Three people in this city who left their phones in taxis tonight will never get them back. A man who is not one of these three is instead the assistant manager of a department store frequented by people he would not willingly let past the mailbox at the end of his walkway. He is still unaware that the mobile in his pocket became drenched through his coat and will never work again. When he discovers what you now know, he will be upset for a little over a week. A month later, when he reads an article on the internet suggesting the phone's demise could have been avoided by enveloping it in dry rice, he will be upset for an additional ten days. This may seem like a long time, but his needs require lasting emotions. He can choose to have positive ones, but that is rare. Ten days out of a meager total of twenty thousand, wasted by caring more about a broken phone than anything else. A strict mathematician will contend that it's only 0.04 % of his life, sure, but as the scientist neglects to observe, this is not the only time he will allow minor problems to consume his waking and dream life's hours. His perfectly average first and last names aptonymically paved the way for the unremarkable path.

He married too young. They all did in his town. And they all married each other, which was generally a bad idea based on the shared genetics and homogeneous ideals. He took over his uncle Ray's garage just out of high school, after Ray suffered a mild heart attack and Vince found out his wife was pregnant. When the town's numbers dwindled, he took a second job as the janitor at the school. Then a third as the school principal, and finally a fourth as mayor. When the unthinkable occurred, they turned to him for guidance. He sighed and stepped aside, retreating to the forest, his revolving refuge, until the surviving crows absorbed his remaining carbon.

November 4 - Matthew McConaughey gets screwed into stripping (2018-11-04 02:22)

Harry and Paula are on the couch in the living room of their apartment, watching a digitally-recorded regularly scheduled episode of [1] Jeopardy .

Alex: "In skiing, this basic method of turning or stopping is also called the wedge."

Harry: "Pizza!"

Paula turns her head slowly, carrying a weirded-out look.

Jon: "What is 'pizza'?"

Alex (giving Jon his own weirded-out look): "Sorry, that's incorrect."

Paula stares at Harry incredulously. Harry laughs.

Greg: "What is snow plow?"

Alex: "That's right."

From upstairs, the music's volume gets turned up and people dancing and enjoying themselves can be heard through the ceiling. Paula picks up the channel selector and pauses the show.

Paula: "Honey, this has been going on for way too long. Can you please go tell them to keep it down?"

Harry sighs. "You should know by now they won't listen to me. You're the one who's always saying I have no value as an authority figure."

Paula: "Well, what if you really scare them?"

Harry: "Haha, what should I do, pull a gun on them?"

Paula: "Kind of. What about your uniform, the one you wore last Hallowe'en. Put it on before you go up. You won't need to say your a cop. It's the implication."

Harry: "That thing? Actually, I mean - it looks real enough."

Paula: "Thank you!"

CUT TO: Harry finishes putting on his police officer uniform in the mirror. He strides confidently out the apartment door.

Paula: "And leave it on when you come back." She giggles and turns back to the television.

CUT TO: Harry takes a deep breath and knocks on the neighbour's door. A man in an actual police uniform answers with a drink in his hand as the party, full of uniformed cops, goes on behind him. Harry stares straight ahead, trying not to seem scared, immediately fearful of getting caught impersonating a police officer.

Officer Oren: "Can I help you?"

Harry: "Uh, never mind."

Oren: "What do you mean 'never mind'? Who the hell are you?"

Officer Oren yells to one of his friends and colleagues. "Hey Jason, come here for a second."

Officer Jason, who clearly lives in the apartment, comes over to the door and starts laughing at Harry. "And what the hell are you?"

Harry: "Uh, you know who I am."

Jason gets a bit mad. "You know, I really don't." Jason stares at him, starting to realize what happened. "Actually, you must be the stripper I hired."

Harry does not want to be found out and prepares himself for some sort of chicken game with his neighbour.

Jason calls back to the party. "Hey guys, the stripper's here!"

The party cheers and looks towards the door. Harry pauses for a few seconds, then opens the door all the way and yells into the room with the party as he strides past Jason and Oren.

Jason: "Hit it, boys!"

The boys hit it, and The Boys are Back in Town booms from the speakers. Harry begins strutting around, still nervous but eventually with some confidence. His routine is really taking over the party as he continues his stripperish dancing moves. He begins touching everyone in the room rather flirtatiously. They're all fairly drunk and they cheer for him.

CUT TO: Paula is on the couch downstairs, listening to the jocundity and increased volume. Looking upwards, she shakes her head and appears confused but not too concerned.

CUT TO: Harry is stripping and starts taking off his cosplay uniform.

Harry (awkwardly): "Wooooo! Oh yeah, I'll arrest every one of you. For indecent exposure!"

Continued cheers and enthusiasm abound. Continued dancing also abound.

CUT TO Harry, having completed his dances and strips, is at the door, readying to leave Jason's apartment. The party attendees are tipping and congratulating him, thanking him for a great show. He couldn't be happier.

CUT TO Harry tiptoeing into his bedroom.

Paula (half asleep): "What took you so long?"

Harry (climbing into bed): "Life, my dear. Life. And liberty. And service. And protection. And life again."

[Editor's note: This is not his only scene involving stripper cops...]

1. http://j-archive.com/showgame.php?game_id=4377

November 5 - Bryan Adams gets Vancouverified (2018-11-05 02:33)

Vancouver, as you know, is something else.

It's a computer simulation of a city, even excluding the inescapable hazy green downtown windows.

The rich are too rich, the poor too poor, and nobody has the anything to consider anyone else. Everyone talks to themselves but never to a stranger.

We're too busy, too broke, too determined, too wet, too on the way to a mountain walk.

They tax your gluten tolerance to guide assimilation.

They hire covert advocates to make you feel bizarre if you don't make your own almond milk, butter, oil.

They convince you that the alternative to a beer from a second-rate brewery is a water.

They ride tandem bikes so you accept their presence.

Couples cling to each other, on the bus, walking down the road, as if one of them might blow away.

I wait for my Mary Poppins to find me a new place after a sudden renoviction.

Empty condos increase in value while they devalue everything else.

The crows fly back to Barnaby to roost. Even they can't afford to live here.

The country's finest weather has the most goose-feathered vests.

It's nice here, but there's no good roofs to sneak onto.

Ghost weed wafting through the personless road stops you in your tracks.

Fireworks are legal one day a year, when the ghouls are out.

The parks have illegalized balloons. A waste of plastic is claimed. The used needles are fine though.

If you leave a bag of powder on a bench, they'll only care that you're littering.

See a dude chilling in Tea Swamp Park.

Looking for a drink, but all the bars are closed. It must be one o'clock.

High-end restaurants with idealized lighting, looking onto Oppenheimer Park, with the server assuming you'll never decipher their menu.

A little logo next to the calligraphy, indicating a meal share, so if you buy that dish, they'll give some food to a hungrier person. Are they fed a duck confit or a Mr. Noodles?

All the friends come from somewhere else. The real locals only know this place, oblivious to the outside world.

Ignorant calls from construction sites persist, but it's different here. From "Nice small business!" to "Your tax bracket is so high! But baby, I can set you up with an offshore company we can funnel money through, save you some come April."

Drivers never learned how to be behind the wheel. Their passengers jump out to stop the flashing green.

Tuesday afternoons, the coffee shops are full. Nobody works, nobody is working here.

Trees so big they got they own trees. Nah Jeezy, those are branches.

Insurance covers the registered masseuse who prepares my kale.

Robot smiles and SoMa styles. South of 16th might as well be Tsawwassen. King Ed, King Ed's too far for me.

They say you can't make art in the west, where the comfort is high. Am I proving them right, or proving me wrong?

It's hard to justify being depressed with the sun where it is.

Waiting for the big one to take us all out. Until then...

Oh Vancouver, you're not all you're cracked up to be.

Namaste, muthafuckaaaa

November 6 - Thandie Newton gets a handy guide (2018-11-06 02:22)

Take my hand. Please!

I know some people can say practically anything with theirs, without ever using those noisy face holes, but even the rest of us use them to relay a whole whack of information. The hands and the way they fmg tell stories and communicate with the best of them.

The thumb alone can convey "Okay" when held straight up, "Good job" with an emphatic shake, or, angled just right on the side of a highway, "Can I get a ride?" It can be the only soldier in a weenie war, sent in as a champion to represent the whole team.

The index finger often means "Look over there" but also plays a role in reaching out to touch an encountered alien or a relative god.

The middle one - oh, that cursed middle one - means only one thing, and it's not pretty, so I ain't even gonna show it to you little filthbags.

The fourth is called and is for a ring, to indicate to the dating pool whether or not you're a

swimmer.

The last one, the brainless pinky, is for swearing you're not lying.

All five together, held up with conviction, tells others to "Stop". When you move them back and forth, it's more of a "Hello". Slapping someone else's, if you're young or playing games, is for friendship and sportsmanship. If you grab their hand and shake it for a second, that's for a more formal acquaintanceship.

When the weenie needs reinforcements in a more combative environment, an arm wrestle can take place, with the hand as the front line.

Close all five fingers to make what's known as a fist in order to indicate a little anger or to demonstrate how a bomb can blow up a meteor in Armageddon.

Raise that fist in solidarity with the oppressed or in being Superman.

Okay, back to fingers and what happens when they're put together in different configurations. Lightning round.

Middle over index: If you can see it, it means I'm telling the truth. "Swear to god." If I'm hiding it, it means I'm lying, and basically I'm allowed to.

Index+middle: Victory, peace, or I need scissors.

Thumb up+index out: I've got a gun or I'd like to pretend I do.

Pinky+index: Wolf pack.

Pinky+index+thumb: Rock out.

Thumb+pinky: Rock on.

Thumb rubbing against next two fingers: Money, or the world's smallest violin.

Every other combination: Gang sign.

Against a wall being shone on: Shadow puppets.

Putting both hands together: Praying to a god or similar entity. But if you put them together real quick like, it's to kill a fly.

And if you do that a bunch of times in a row, it means "Bravo! Well done! Encore! You're a genius!"

So I expect that last one is what you're all doing right now.

If so, I bow to you in gratitude.

Handless.

Like an ahead-of-his-time [1] musician .

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/handless-musician>

November 7 - Chris Mortensen gets a tumour's origin story (2018-11-07 02:24)

Hey, I found out I had the cancer in 2016 too! You definitely got way more media coverage than me, though. And to be fair, yours was probably scarier, even though mine might generated slightly more despair at a quick look because of my youngish age. The doctor people never fully got to the bottom of my tumour, where it came from and how it developed and all that, but I'm pretty sure I know it all.

You see, about 6 years ago, I lived in a house with some friends, and we had parties and fun, as you should and would. A few months in, an older woman rented the basement suite under us, and we actually got along pretty well. She baked me cookies, I helped her with the garbage - you get the point.

During one of our more meaningful encounters, she divulged a little juice that piqued my interest - she was a practicing Wiccan, a modern witch, if you will. You will? Good. We discussed at length what it meant to be a member of this pagan movement these days, and it didn't seem so bad, not at all, overall.

Eventually, Hallowe'en rolls around, and we have a party, full of people and costumes and music and other things you'd expect on such a night. This Wiccan neighbour, she comes upstairs as the clock ticks and tocks its way into All Hallows' Eve. She asks us to be quiet, to shut the party down even. Now obviously this doesn't happen, because of all the fun and things I mentioned before, and I'm not in the right state to negotiate with her or anything, so I leave it as best I could. I agree to disagree with how she felt, while she continued to disagree with how I felt. Unfortunate, maybe, but what are ya gonna do.

A few days later, I'm under the impression that the previous weekend's mess has blown over, so I say hi to her one morning. She informs me that she has cancer, and also that her roommate moved out because of how noisy we were the other day, and now she has to pay all the rent herself, which is made all the harder because she had to quit her job because of being sick and all.

Okay, now I feel half bad about the party, but what's past is past and I resolve to keep it relatively quiet from now on. Things once again appear fine and some might even say dandy, with only brief but friendly interactions happening among neighbours.

Towards the end of the summer, I'm packing up the car up one sunny day, preparing to drive across the country to move to Vancouver. As we're getting ready to take off, she comes outside and hands me an envelope, without saying anything more than a "Here you go," almost in tears, she is. My ego considers how great a neighbour I must be to evoke such emotion on my day of departure, and I thank her for the letter as she turns and goes back into her place.

I open the envelope and read the note inside. It is three scrawly pages long and essentially

massacres my character, informing me that I ruined her diseased life over the last few months, citing evidence that was never relayed to me until this point. The rambling includes how my essence will inevitably lead to self-destruction and there's nothing I can do about it. Yeah, I know.

I tell no one else about this note and immediately trash it. Fortunately, I successfully convince myself to immediately forget about the letter, not allowing it to ruin my cross-country road trip.

So fast forward to 2016 again, when, as stated, I find out I am [1] with cancer .

The next year is [2] worst kind , like you'd expect, and at one point the doctor tells me it's likely that my tumour had been growing quite slowly within me, over, I don't know, around about FIVE YEARS! This hits me like a bunch of bricks as my memory gets refreshed and conjures up remnants of that spirited send-off letter. At this point, there is no doubt in my mind or yours - I got flat out hexed and filled with malignancy by a downstairs, party-hating, cancer-having witch, which is too much not to have a chuckle at, really.

1. <http://ismith.ca/journal/hospital-1/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/journal/hospital-shots-part-deux/>

November 8 - Gordon Ramsay gets a few winnipeg cheesecakes (2018-11-08 02:22)

I already know what you'd like to say here - "A Winnipeg cheesecake is a sweet dessert, prepared in Manitoba, often consisting of many layers, including the main one being a mixture of soft, fresh ricotta, eggs, vanilla and sugar, and then a base made of..." You'll keep going, babbling about ingredients and textures and whatnot, while we'll all be over here bored as anything, and no one will have the heart to tell you're actually wrong. In fact, a winnipeg cheesecake can be one of many, many things, and none of them are related to food or prairie provinces. In fact, the term is readying to overtake 'water closet' as the world's foremost initialism for WC. Here's a taste of what it can be.

winnipeg cheesecake (noun) [win-uh-peg cheez-keyk]: the technique of not introducing two people to each other on the basis that you don't think they will like each other.

winnipeg cheesecake (noun): a minestrone milestone

winnipeg cheesecake (noun): a fly's inevitable realization that repeatedly circling the centre of the room is futile

winnipeg cheesecake (noun): the difference between a tick and a tock

winnipeg cheesecaker (noun): when a heave ho is not enough strength to get rid of her

winnipeg cheesecake (noun): dog turd with a tulip neatly rested upon it with an obvious purpose but an unclear execution

winnipeg cheesecake (noun): an added financial cost of living due to being awkward

Bigoli is the laziest naming of all. Slippery conchiglie is not really for me, and neither is the always-too-dente penne. But in a pinch with the right sauce, *mama mia* delizioso!

I like farfalle because I can wear it at formal functions where I [2]ask attendees about their small businesses.

I have a friend who has made it very clear that when she's at an Italian restaurant, the entire menu must be written Italian so that she doesn't end up looking like a fool, ordering the albaco-ray tuna. Taglia-tell me another one of your gripes, Sarah. Sheesh.

Just out of college, I moved to Italy for a year. Not only for the eating of the pasta but also because I like saying all the different types out loud, so I figured I'd like the rest of the language too, which turned out to be a *miliardo* percento vero. Gabagool!

¹ [spiritual antipode of '[3]Gimme that wheat!']

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5ncsjMVzcc>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-13-happy-birthday-glenn-howerton/>

3. <https://twitter.com/twittels/status/101388495590920193?lang=en>

November 10 - Michael Jai White gets more animal facts than he can handle (2018-11-10 02:22)

The big bad anaconda is more than a malt liquor or an Eric Stoltz picture. It is also the largest and heaviest known snake. And if you think that's the end of my animal facts, oh boy, ya gotta 'nudder 'ting comin'.

Remember lemmings, the suicidal rodents? Not true a tall. Disney, known primarily for its wartime propaganda, staged the whole tendency in *White Wilderness* to get some dramatic nature to bring back to their boss. A mass homicide tweaked using favourable camera angles to resemble a mass suicide. The survivors were too scared to speak up.

The hedgehog rolls into its life already ingrained in an inevitable dilemma. Often used as a metaphor for the challenges of human intimacy, no matter how bad they might want to, hedgehogs are unable to cuddle each other for warmth or affection because of their spikes. Never been hugged, never not once.

As far as existential questions go, only one animal has ever been observed asking one - Alex the parrot wanted only to know what colour he was, and he wasn't happy with the answer. A muted grey. Better luck next life, Al.

In certain parts of rural Argentina, inhabited by wandering Germans, you can still listen to songs on a Katzenklavier, a 16th century piano-type contraption played by a trained bear who yanks the tails of cats in order to create subpar music.

Ants always seemed to be the hardest working of them all, and organized, and a socialist's pinnacle. A few of them are, sure, but about half of them just hang around, doing nothing, like you and me but mostly me. *La cigale et la fourmi*, par Jean de La Fontaine didn't have it quote right. Either way, lazy or not, the ants need to take it all in to avoid what's next.

There is a beetle that can infiltrate ant colonies by mimicking the sounds of the queen. They can then move around the colony at will, preying on the insects when they get hungry, all the while being treated like royalty by the others.

Further along on the parasite train, there's one that lives and breeds best inside the guts of a cat. Their babies get excreted through the cat's bottom and end up getting eaten by a rat. Then they affect the rat's behaviour to make them less scared of cats, even sexually aroused by them, with the ultimate aim of returning to the cat guts from whence they came.

The wasp displays a vengeful fortitude as it lay dying, releasing an alarm pheromone, a 999-style chemical signal that incites up to 10,000 other wasps from its nest to come buzzing to the rescue. And they are well armed.

Hares are overconfident by nature and fable, but they're also the only ones who can get pregnant and then conceive a second litter all the while in the phenomenon of superfetation.

Whale stress levels plummeted sharply right after the 9/11 attacks. Shipping traffic halted to give the men up top some time to figure out what they hell they were supposed to do next, the oceans quieted down and made it easier for the large mammals to communicate with each other. The 52-hertz whale remained in solitude and adequately stressed.

The bees observe a moment of silence during a full eclipse. Their buzzing ceases right at total-ity, the only ones aware enough to keep their traps shut during the majestic time.

Even dead, animals can do amazing things, like banding together, not in a rat king scenario, but in the more sophisticated *rôti sans pareil*. The delicious feast is made up of a warbler, stuffed inside a bunting, inside a lark, inside a thrush, inside a quail, in a lapwing, in a plover, in a partridge, in a woodcock, in a teal, in a guinea fowl, in a duck, in a chicken, in a pheasant, in a goose, in a turkey, in a bustard. As of press time, the emu is considered safe from this sadistic dish, but for how long...

[Editor's note: You beat out Neil Gaiman and Tracy Morgan for this birthday message because the of how a re-watch of [1] *Black Dynamite* led to one of the longest and hardest laughs of anyone's life.]

1. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1190536/>

November 11 - Leonardo DiCaprio gets a jungle intruder (2018-11-11 02:22)

The beach sends me away with enmity, so I head inland.

But the jungle, it's not mine. I defensively contend I'm a visitor when I feel like an intruder. The disruption of my invasion is not overlooked by those I meet.

The serenity, it's nowhere outside of my own head. Even then, with the peace comes an underlying feeling of minutia and overstimulation to an underdeveloped section of my psyche. Here an occupant can co-exist with the surroundings, listen to the river without immersion, swim in it, drink it in. Any incidental disturbance is rebranded as nature.

The water lives, as much any plant or animal. It houses life without asking anything in return.

Without my heart, I am nothing. Without my brain, I am less.

The stream invites creatures to depend on it, for water, for food, for society.

Although this is a side effect I have created, it has been here before me, will remain long after my composition has disintegrated and my carbon pilfered. It enjoys the fortunate quality of not thinking, not having to think, and so when the inevitability takes its place and the river dries up, its contents will disperse and nothing will be lost to the entropic atmosphere.

The river is immortal, eternal, unwilling to recognize what it doesn't have to. My mortality is only real because I recognize myself as a human, with solemnity.

All around me, I swat at the mosquitoes. This is part of the natural order. The ants crawl around my screen to be near the light, artificial as it is, knowing that they are exposed, and still they follow it. Nature has concocted traps disguised as trails.

We are staying in a treehouse, whose balcony I am watching from. I face a surrealistic scene, surreal only because of my upbringing, my destined experiences. Without civilization, airplanes, the internet, unwarranted privilege, I could never have found myself here. The trees are different from where I come from. A hundred years ago, nobody travelled this distance, and especially not with no money, no plans of acquiring any, no skills. Keep your commitments to a minimum and you have the freedom to go where you want. With financial acquisition and responsibility comes a mask of self-importance, of not wanting to disappoint, of wanting to get ahead, of dependence on those with more success.

The birds hit my ears with their saws and whistles, alien sounds, their chirps and squeals giving away their positions and their wants, a primitive communication that still works today. I picture a specific animal that doesn't exist¹ standing in the river. He looks in my direction and laughs at how nobody will ever believe me when I say I saw him. We believe only what we can make sense of, what we understand. To get to a new point of understanding, a paradigm shift in thought, we have to ease ourselves into it. First someone must tell us the creature exists, then in our disbelief we look into it. The source tells us where it can be found.

Three distinct stages to a novel idea. I choose to skip them all to leave the door open for amazement, even if I don't believe it myself.

¹ [1] [the Guatemalan cow of paradise]

1. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/far-side-cow.jpg>

November 12 - Megan Mullally gets my doula Oblangata (2018-11-12 02:22)

Oblangata is a Nigerian woman of untold age. She is loud and intrusive, tough but kind-hearted.

Erin is newly married and five months pregnant with her first child. She absolutely adores Oblangata.

O was Erin's mother's doula when she was the fetus, during the time that Erin's father was working as a civil engineer in an Abujan suburb.

Erin's parents went missing on a hike in the Rocky Mountains a couple of months ago. Erin and her husband Teddy are staying at her childhood home until they are able to find some resolution in the situation.

Oblangata calls Erin to express her condolences when she hears about what happened. They get to talking and Erin hires Oblangata as her doula, flying her across the world to live with them at least until the baby is born.

O uses many alternative techniques during the pre-birth period, giving both Erin and Teddy unusual instructions on how to live during this stressful time to ensure the baby arrives healthy and happy. She thinks Teddy is useless, lazy and has a bad aura, but she also believes that he can change and be a wonderful husband and father. O and Teddy often disagree on her methods. For example, Vince wants Erin to give birth in a hospital, while O wants her to give birth on a low branch of a maple tree.

Erin trusts Oblangata implicitly and she thinks that Teddy is overreacting with his explicit dissatisfaction of O.

In each episode, there's a minor or major pre-natal decision that needs to be made, with Teddy and Oblangata each arguing for different sides. Oblangata usually wins.

A couple of months after Oblangata moves in - Erin's parents still unaccounted for - her husband Friday arrives on their doorstep expecting to stay with them as well, which only increases tension in the household. Friday is a serial failed entrepreneur and can easily be described as presumptuous.

A few weeks before Erin's due date, O and Friday are deported. Apparently a Somali boy said the word "bomb" flippantly in a large train station, and so all African citizens are being forced to return home. This is topical as it shares many similarities with the recent "Muslim Ban". Teddy has contacts at the Immigration department and Erin implores him to get O back in the country so she

can get back in the habit of taking care of the baby in person.

The following are some quotes and exchanges that will give you a better idea about who these people are as well as their relationships with each other.

Erin: "I know she's a bit kooky, but she helped me become the woman you love."

Teddy: "Okay, we'll give her a shot."

Oblangata (eavesdropping): "I'll give you a shot - of hepatitis to ya butt - if ye don't get more Oreos for Momma O! Heh!"

Oblangata (to Erin): "M'darlin, ye gotta turd whenever ye feeel lakit. No tiime to git to the turd-bowl, ya kno?"

Teddy (to Erin): "Well at least wear a diaper!"

O (to Teddy): "A'right, she kin wear a di-pa. But ye gonna hafta change it!"

O (to Teddy): "I helped one of the young princesses birth the future king.

O (to Erin): You yerself was waterbirthed in the middle of the Oguta during a mudstorm."

O (to Teddy): "Wine is fine - it calms the moms!"

[Note: Oblangata has many different names for the baby, none of which are 'baby', like 'wigwam', 'almond nugget' and 'little loaf'. However, she almost always calls Teddy 'baby'.]

O: "This wigwam is special."

Teddy: "What's the wigw—"

O: "The baby, baby!"

Teddy (to O after she mystically styled Erin's hair, replete with worms intended to ward off evil pre-natal spirits known as 'tungas'): "You're turning her into a medusa, Oblangata!"

Friday: "Teddy, baby -"

Teddy: "Not you too!"

Friday: "I got a golden goose farm and ye're gunna wan' in on it, I promise ya!"

[Note: The 'golden goose farm' is a mixed-up metaphor. Friday is chock full of mixed-up metaphors.]

Teddy (to O, after seeing a large device, which turns out to be a placenta encapsulator, on the coffee table): "What in Moses is this for?"

O: "To catch the plasagna!"

Teddy: "The what?"

O: "The labour gravy! Baby juice handbag?"

Teddy: "Wait - she is not eating her pla-"

O: "You'd rather me give you a placenta slap, Teddy, baby?!"

November 13 - Whoopi Goldberg gets another EGOT (2018-11-13 02:22)

Emily, Graham, Oscar and Tony walk into a bar.

Every Friday evening, the party of four enters through the side door of The Academic sometime around seven, commanding the attention of any guest who happens to already be inside. Their standing reservation is for a prime spot in the back corner, and the overzealous host leads them to their private booth as he imagines the impossible scenario of sitting with them.

The four friends mostly keep to themselves, but inevitably one of them will head for the bathroom or approach the bar to greet the owner Holly, who is always seated by herself with a bourbon in her hand. She's the only one in the place who isn't entirely enthralled with the group, which should be a hint to the others looking for even the most minimal of face time.

There are occasions when myself or one the other regulars are able get a word or two in, a brief comment on the weather or the news whole exact language we've been obsessing over all week. All I want, all any of us want, is to take just one of them home, even once. Even as we work to convince ourselves otherwise, in the long run, the goal is essentially meaningless. Anyone lucky enough to catch even a glimpse of their love is inevitable pushed aside for a newer, younger, more beautiful partner the next day. Then again, life is about moments, and these are the moments that I crave over all others.

Tonight, luckily, I am absolutely on. I honestly don't know how it happened - must be an inimitable mix of booze, style and timing - but somehow I manage to capture the attention of all the regular people. In the middle of a particularly captivating anecdote, Oscar happens to pass by my table and stops to listen. I try my best to pretend I don't notice his proximity as I continue my story. I detect him laughing along at the right parts, and it's so overwhelming that as soon as the end happens, I scramble to the bar to replenish my glass.

Holly is scrolling through the music playlist and complains to no one that she doesn't know what to put on next. I suggest the latest Executive Producer record, and she adds it to the queue. Right as [1]Friend starts up, Graham calls out in fervent approval. Holly graciously acknowledges the song was my selection, and Graham throws me a smile I won't soon forget.

I go outside to regain my bearings and calm my excitement. The air is crisp and a street light flickers overhead. As I reach for the pack of cigarettes in my pocket, Emily is walking towards me. Without saying a word, I extend my hand and she elegantly takes the two smokes I'm holding. She lights both and hands me one. We both stare into the world, analyzing how we each got here. The silence is broken by an inebriated couple who just turned the corner, arguing over his essence, how she is never not embarrassed by him. They pass by us and then out of earshot. Emily and I crack up at the same time, delighted to be the only witnesses to the bickering. She thanks me, I assume for the cigarette, then heads back into the bar.

I take a deep breath and follow behind her. I notice that the karaoke machine is now set up but untouched. Riding an interesting wave, I stride to the stage and tell the sound guy to put on [2]Shadows of Leaves Dancing on Your Skin. He completes my request, and I launch into a forceful rendition, totally oblivious to my surroundings, utterly unaware of how it's being received.

The song comes to a close and I hear a single enthusiastic applause. It's coming from Tony, who waves me over to their table. After sitting down, Emily hands me a full drink, which I graciously

accept. All four of them show me lascivious eyes, and I realize, impossibly, I might actually have my choice tonight.

Stay cool, stay cool. Relax, relax. Take it all in.

Suddenly, the door to the bar bursts open, and in strolls a truly captivating presence. All heads turn as her magnetism envelops the room. I can't take my eyes off her. Now I'm not usually in the habit of relinquishing a well-earned position as a romantic interest, but I can easily see the four faces around me melt as she declares with no hesitation, "Emily, Graham, Oscar, Tony - you're ALL coming with me."

She turns back out the door, and, after exchanging agreeing glances, they get up from the table and follow her outside, without even saying goodbye. I'd follow, but I wasn't invited. And I never will be.

I'm left alone at their table and start scribbling notes on a napkin so I can remember this night, as I prepare to tell my future grandchildren how close I came to the greatest moment of my life.

Even at my best, I'm no match for the Big Whoop.



1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/friend>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Hf7xx70Pn4>

November 14 - Condoleezza Rice gets a human rice tribunal (2018-11-14 02:22)

Secretary-General of the United Rice Tribunal: Okay, so we're all agreed. Malawi gets full rice, Mali gets bubkis. Gavel is pounded [he pounds the gavel at this point but announces it for the record and the deaf], and we can move on. What else have we here?

Mikhiel: Uh, gentle sir, I'd like to petition for Finland to get half rice, right on the dot.

Finnish chorus: Boo!

Mikhiel: Hold on. What are you booing for? My compatriots, is it that you want full rice or no rice at all?

Finnish crowd representative: Why, full rice, of course.

Opposing Finnish crowd representative: He does not represent me. No rice! We will be fine as we are, piggybacking off no one but ourselves.

Mikhiel (smiling as if he just won): The fact that we do not know, and never will, brings us back to my original request. Half rice for Finland.

Finnish chorus: Wooo!!!

Mikhiel (smiling because he just won): Another day, another half rice for my äitiland.

Mikhiel strides out to continued cheers as all Fins exit behind him.

SGURT (reviewing his notes): After even the simplest of appraisals, Finland's plea for half rice is refused.

IRRI ambassador nods in approval.

SGURT: Fantastic. Now moving on to more serious matters -

Malawian representative: Are you alluding that everything before this was trivial?

SGURT: Ah, my apologies. I meant to say we are moving on to additional serious matters, to go along with all of the previous serious matters.

Malawian representative: Of course, thank you. May we have more rice?

SGURT: Woah-oh-oh. I'm sorry again, but this time for entirely different reasons. Are you really going to make me pull out Article VI, Section XI, paragraph 3? "Any state already given full rice that attempts to squirrel away extra rice on top of that will have half of their full rice revoked." It's my favourite sentence of the whole paragraph. How would you even consider I wouldn't break that one out here?

Malawian: Sir, sir, no. Please. We are hungry.

SGURT: Oh well in that case, you are re-granted full rice, plus a bonus quarter rice.

Malawian: Thank you, thank you, sir. You will not regret this.

SGURT: Stenographer, please include a sarc mark at the end of my previous statement. Malawi, you may keep your half rice, but with a caveat to be determined after our morning coffee.

Morning coffee provider: I have arrived.

Malian: May we have the purgatorial half rice?

SGURT: After the coffee, with... Coffee and an...

Malian (expectantly): Egg?

Ecuadorian (desperately and disparately): Orange?

Kofi: Don't drag me into this. I only came because of the obvious mishearing that probably led to the creation of this flimsy tribunal to begin with.

SGURT (smirking): Speaking of purgatory...

Kofi: What, is that a crack about what happened to me in August? That is so like you. Ugh. Talk to [1] the hand .

Vietnam representative: FULL RICE FOR EVERYONE!!!!

Vietnam proceeds to pick up and toss handful upon handful of what appears to be an unlimited supply of jasmine rice in all directions.

The rice-rich do not always understand ongoing distribution logistics. We let him have this one, just once, until we all meet again. Full rice for everyone, indeed.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-6-happy-birthday-thandie-newton/>

November 15 - Shailene Woodley gets five shoppers shopping (2018-11-15 02:22)

[1] Being surrounded by grocery-shopping crowds all day has given me a chance to truly discover who the general public is and what they're doing here. All of these people are real, most you have seen in your travels, and one of them could be you¹.

Linus is a first-year university student from a suburb of a suburb in middle Ontario. His cart is filled with pre-packaged hot dogs, white bread and Mr. Noodles's noodles. His eyes are in a permanent state of shock as if he is continuously seeing the Virgin Queen or the Virgin Mary or something equally acknowledgeable. For no legitimate reason, he reminds me of Mitch Hedberg. I whisperingly ask him how he feels about blackjack, escalators, and the letter 'x'. I do not get a response. He is not the profound comic I longed for.

Bernie is the doppelgänger of a flamboyant biker character created by Robin Williams. And he's talking to himself. Wait, scanning for bluetooth. Nope, just him and himself in his little world. The white fuzz protruding from his sweater is longer than Rumpelstiltskin's, and I am not going to rule out his being a yeti. As he leaves, carrying more boxes of tea biscuits than one man should, he exclaims in a crescendo, "Oh no! My pants are falling down. Everything's happening to me today."

Tilly is the female understudy in her theatre troupe's version of *Beauty and the Beach*. She was preparing to thief but retracted the notion when she saw me and developed a legitimate case of paranoia. Her daughter, who is trying her best to still fit in the cart, is wearing a tiara, and the word angel is calligraphied onto the butt of her pants.

Shelley is a pharmacist assistant, according to her name tag. Sometimes when she tells people what she does for a living, they think she's stuttering and that she actually works on a farm. In an ironic twist, that is what she has always wanted to do. She is purchasing a Cats are better than men poster for her home, with the assertion therein undeniable to me and anyone else I ask.

Harold is a balding hypochondriac who has been odour-testing deodorants for almost an hour, intentionally reminding me of the guy with the eggs from Clerks. Three dozen free rangers in the upper crust of his cart solidifies this trigger. He is 23 and believes he will stay that way forever. In many ways, he isn't wrong. Three months from now, he will meet a woman in a bar and convince her he's charming. She will become his wife, and then his ex-wife, then his wife again, and then his widow.

¹ [cue a short clip from the [2] Unsolved Mysteries theme , which is still and will always be terrifying]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-7-happy-birthday-ewan-rachel-wood/>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFuGfwIhv14>

November 16 - Maggie Gyllenhaal gets a doctor's office waiting room (2018-11-16 02:41)

Another room of strangers, engulfed in a tense silence, reminiscent of a family gathering before the bitterness begins. The barely-audible newscast on the television angled down from the back corner, near the ceiling, is the clang of cutlery in the comparative world - a subtle noise that manages somehow to fuel the awkwardness. There is an implied order that nobody wants to upset - the plight of the polite. Their empty smiles show desperation. If you look, really look at any of them for even a moment, it is obvious that they all want something to happen. They look for a disturbance, but they look outwardly and unconsciously, unwilling to let themselves be the cause of it. In a world where the goal is to not offend, nobody will willingly disrupt. A mob mentality waiting to happen, a mob waiting for a leader. There are times when one person will speak up - nothing bewildering, just a simple comment, reminding everyone that human contact between strangers should not be feared, and that its absence is absurd here in the most mundane of contexts. This sound shouldn't, but it changes everything. It turns the key, sets us free from the nervous boredom making its way around the room. Today this stranger doesn't exist. And so we sit in a pool of stillness, devoid of communication. Tomorrow I may be the stranger, if I allow myself to be. Or someone else will. Or nobody will. And this will all be repeated, by an entirely different group of people. Its prevalence justifies its existence, even when we all know it is wrong.

Something a little different, that you couldn't predict based on the situation. Not "Hello, where are you from? It's hot out today?" It doesn't have to be anything too extreme, like "Have you reached a solution recently? Once you solve a problem, bestowed upon you by the universe, everything resets and you are given a new problem to solve. You don't know what the problem is, and you don't always remember there is one. Every now and then you consider it might be this way, but part of the

structure of the infinite game is to make it difficult for your brain to fully process this aspect." The brief utterances of the two people forced to sit next to each other are disguised as communication, but the unnecessary apology followed by the commentary on the weather means less than nothing. We all buy into the small talk, paying the price to be polite, at some point. It can lead to something more than nothing, but generally it does not. Either way, the over-thinking, exceedingly apologetic is a defense against potential imposition, not an attempt at real discovery.

The man across from you took his shirt off during a perceived dare in a bar two nights ago, but here, without the fuel of alcohol and expectations and darkness, he remains seated as an introvert, focussing on the words on the wall in front of him, words he has no intention of retaining. We are all here of our own volition, but not by choice. Look at the person to your left inquisitively. If questioned by them at any point, even implicitly, tell them they look like one of your parents to such a degree that you two may be siblings. Then turn away while shaking your head, dumbfounded but moving on. If, however, you are questioned by somebody else, somebody who has taken it upon him or herself to protect the person you out-of-nowhere decided to stare at, tell them that they look like your son.

When is it my turn? I was here before her. She doesn't even look that sick. I'm busy. Do they think I have nothing to do? Don't tell me to come in at 10:45 if you're not going to see me at 10:45. I'll come in whenever you tell me. I get that you're the one providing the service, but it's hard to call it a service at this point. More people are rotating in and out. Sonder tells me they think they're special. I think I'm special. Even if I don't care what they think, I still do nothing. There are options. Unfortunately I don't know what they are right now. So I do nothing.

November 17 - RuPaul gets Mary Brownd (2018-11-17 02:22)

My drag name, if I ever need one, will be nothing if not Mary Brown. It might sound a little plain and spiritless at first glance, until you find out what it means, and what she represents, to me and my people.

First off, you should know that Mary Brown's is a magical place full of dead poultry and dead potatoes, deep fried and handed to you, for a small fee. So now you at least know it's a chicken restaurant, and the fictional Mary, who looks like Debbie Cooper in her heyday, feeds us all when we need it most.

Anyone who's ever experienced Mary Brown - it's mostly an east coast Canadian thing - knows how incredible she is. It is legitimately the best fried chicken on the go anywhere, hands down, mouths open. And the taters. My god, the taters. All this without even mentioning the gravy. Mouths are now watering throughout the land. It's intoxicating just thinking about it, imagining the sweet brown liquid coursing through me, venally and arterially and capillaryly.

However, for all its beauty, there is this one thing the company has held on to that I've never understood. With each meal also comes a salad, and you get your choice of three: Potato Salad, Macaroni Salad, and Coleslaw. But they call them by slightly different names, all inexplicably consisting of three words.¹

1. Potato Vegetable Salad: Nobody calls it this. We all know a potato is a vegetable. It's not a tomato, for jaysus sake. But either way, it's like they started with the potato vegetable salad and then decided they needed consistency in the number of words per side dish.
2. Tasty Macaroni Salad: Here they figured they'd just sneak in an adjective - tasty - for all those who had up to this point held plain macaroni salads in low regard.
3. Fresh Daily Coleslaw: At this point they realize that coleslaw is only one word, and doesn't even contain the word salad. But they still need those three words, so let's double up on those adjectives. Fresh AND Daily. Come on!

There was a pretty crazy month a few years back where Mary Brown's bought up every KFC in Newfoundland, at last monopolizing the fried chicken market that they were dominating even with competition. It was a bold and flavourful move, but the right one. MB's popping up everywhere, each with different branding, some sort of test that I think we all passed. On a side note, KFC used to be called Kentucky Fried Chicken, but too many people called it Kenturkey Fried Chicken, so they shortened it to KFC.

A fine tradition takes place in St. John's every December 23rd. It is a glorious event called the Big & Mary Lebowski, where attendees play bowling and eat MB's and laugh at the good time being had. The went-aways in Vancouver who don't make it home for Christmas usually attempt a semblance of an homage at Commodore Lanes with Juke's Fried Chicken, but it's never the same. Still, a couple of years ago, I wanted to surprise everyone on the special occasion with the real thing and see if that would lift the spirits. Now there happens to be a Mary Brown's franchise in Chilliwack that I normally only get to eat if I'm passing through or if I think I might die in two days and need one final spicy Big Mary combo. So I posted a Craigslist ad looking for a Chilliwacker to pick up a great feast from his nearby Mary's and deliver it to us bowlers in a miracle of glory. They were to be compensated with some east coast delicacies, a gas rebate, unlimited drinks and a few new friends. I received an affirmative response from an enthusiastic reveler and I sent the man \$80 for the food. Alas, he never arrived or responded to my pleas, and that is when I lost all hope that this Santa guy existed at all. Not that I could ever blame my girl for that.

In Newfoundland, the Colonel is dead, Mary is Queen, and more than ever I am missing my chicken and tateys and needlessly-worded salads. Enough that I felt the need to show it with [1] a song .

The scholars out there might wonder if all of this is making me homesick. And I wonder it too.



1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/big-mary>

November 18 - Kirk Hammett gets a startisr's ideation (2018-11-18 02:30)

People¹ always ask me where I get my ideas. Oh man, they come from everywhere! [1] Dreams , strangers, the back of a bus that left me in its dust because I was too enrapt by a ladybug on a pole to notice it stop in front of me seconds earlier. But the problem is, that's all I am, is an ideas man. The follow-through is lacking, admittedly, likely because of beguiling ladybugs and such. So I humbly accept the inevitable, that I will begin many projects but rarely finish any, for I am nothing if not a startisr.

One task I've had on the to-do list for a couple of years is to pickle jars of pickles. It will be one massive jar effectively brining numerous smaller jars of varying sizes and brands, and will look a little something like this:



I already have the massive jar, patiently waiting under my² barbecue for longer than my dog has been alive. And I have the to-be-pickled jars as well. All I need is the pickling ingredients and a few wires or something to keep them suspended. So a good start, sure, but not something you'll be seeing on display anytime soon.



[Click on photo for original complete painting](#)

There's also a series in the works where I crop famous paintings and re-sell them as the zoomed-in portion. It's a little [3] Richard Prince -y, and is probably meant to comment on some disagreeable aspect of high art, but maybe not actually. The partial [4] Dali below is a decent example but doesn't really convey the secret medium in which my version will be floped.

An illustrator's² words once told me that she wouldn't bother creating her own font because the people who do it are too obsessed with relative kerning and whatnot and she didn't want to go down that rabbit hole. This didn't deter me, though, in my quest to sit somewhere in that hole



and make a font inspired by local graffiti guy David:

Unfortunately, I only had 4 of his letters to go on, and the Ds are dissimilar at best, so as far as I got was

creating my own personal 'smittii' font that I forgot I made and happened to use on the '[5]May birthday' featured images thinking it was just a random type from the internet.

To get back at the [6] man trying to pay people in exposure , I intend to offer my services to this man, accepting unpaid offers and then performing them with intentional awfulness at them. So far, I've had 0 takers, likely correlating with my 0 skills, so this one is still in the bank too.

After listening to the first episode of Homecoming and thinking the whole time that the main character was voiced by a different actress, I decided to create an audio clip trivia game called Catherine Keener or Rashida Jones. Someday, but not today because it isn't finished yet, children all over will be clamoring to play and I will be applauded wherever I go.

I've made a few [7] album covers for fictional bands , and I have a real intention to record one

song for each band so that they're not as fictional anymore. As of this writing, only [8] Executive Producer has more than 0 songs.

Then again, since EP has several RPM records under his belt, another project I'd like to have under mine is a completed [9] Song Exploder -y episode for one of his tunes. This one is still in the early stages as well, with a little taste right here.

[10]Audio: <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/when-i-die-song-exploder.mp3>

Matoma's remix of Old Thing Back might be my favourite song, but misses the mark due to Biggie giving a verse to Ja Rule and his horse voice. I tried to make the world better by removing that abhorrent section. It's still a little off, so I won't give myself any credit for actually finishing this one. [audio m4a="http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Old-Thing-Back-minus-Ja-Rule.m4a"][/audio]

I'd like to produce two versions of my first novel: the original, and then a variation that will sell for cheaper because it's subsidized by corporate donors. So far, only a [11] sponsored short story has been finished.

[12] My dreams interest me to no end, and it's my goal to show them to the world, in [13] Drunk History -esque depictions, possibly animated. This is another abstraction that has gone nowhere and is showing no movement to go anywhere else.

Someday, all of these will be made. Until then, I will be here, conceiving of great ideas then losing them to the wind of distraction as a devout follower of startism.

¹ [mostly Adam Eget when he's not busy doing what he does under the Queensboro Bridge]

² [Meg's]

1. <http://ismith.ca/dreams/>
2. <https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/91n3bGzmLKL.jpg>
3. <https://www.cnn.com/2015/05/27/living/richard-prince-instagram-feat/index.html>
4. <https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/91n3bGzmLKL.jpg>
5. <http://ismith.ca/happy-past-birthday/>
6. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-28-happy-birthday-annie-clark/>
7. <http://ismith.ca/phodeo/album-covers/>
8. <http://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/>
9. <http://songexploder.net/>
10. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/when-i-die-song-exploder.mp3>
11. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-8-happy-birthday-neko-case/>
12. <http://ismith.ca/dreams/>
13. <http://www.cc.com/shows/drunk-history>

November 19 - Larry King gets a self-composed obituary (2018-11-19 02:22)

Most obituaries tell us nothing more than a chronological map of someone's life, and a list of people the dead person knew.

Everyone happens to be beloved by all who knew him, when this is the biggest piece of turdshit I've ever heard purported. We've all got at least [1] a few enemies, and many more who would take us or leave us, as we should. How does everyone suddenly become so perfect when they ded?

Some of my friends are under the impressions that my job consists of writing obituaries, when in fact I've only written one, for myself, with concision, to save everyone a little time before getting my lifeless corpse out of the way for good.



Ian Smitty

Years ago, sure - Few days ago

Ian passed peacefully away when a bomb exploded inside his head. He was surrounded by his other dismembered limbs.

Fella was alright. Beloved aunt, aunt-appreciator, and sloppy contest winner. He always wanted to be the best at hanging out. He enjoyed laughing with his buddies, laughing by himself and all kinds of brain tricks. He wanted to be a writer but instead just wrote stuff down.

He is predeceased by Papa Doc Duvalier and a [2] little over 100,000,000,000 other people .

In lieu of flowers, please tell someone a secret, then run away giggling, then come back and apologize, and be sincere in all three steps.

There will be a bottle service at the clurb on Friesday for all who would like to pour one our for one of their finest homies. A reading of [3] his will will be performed at this time, once everyone is good

and sauced.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/february-1-happy-birthday-abbi-jacobson>
2. <https://www.prb.org/howmanypeoplehaveeverlivedonearth>
3. <http://ismith.ca/poem/my-will/>

November 20 - Joe Biden gets a mid-life crisis (2018-11-20 02:33)

I'm going through what the scholars might call a mid-life crisis. When I was younger, my parents led me to think of the term as some kind of a joke. "Honey, Ray' bought a new Mercedes. What's he need that for?" or "Did you see Jim's toupee? How does he think nobody notices?" The discussing parties always inferred ridicule as they inevitably brought up the mid-life crisis as the cause and effect.

It never really occurred to me that an extravagant purchase or a dramatic change in one's appearance is not something to be belittled. This time in an aging person's existence is an honest to god, severe situation. They got it right at the beginning anyway, with the name, but the meaning became diluted, making it easier for people to handle, maybe so the average person didn't lose their entire mind and fly off the actual deep end.

The realization that your life didn't turn out as planned, as hoped for, or even very well. With medical advancements and the ingrained societal practice that equates every death to a murder, they're not even letting people die anymore.

I'm writing this from a plane. Yesterday I quit my job, left my husband, and found myself at an international airport. Now I'm on my way to Bangkok. The only three people that know all of these things are the stewardess with the annoying fake laugh, the jerk who wouldn't give up his window seat to a lady in the middle of her life, and myself.

I considered setting up a hidden camera in my house so I could see the look on his face when he found out I wasn't picking up a pizza for the kids before then heading home, but there wasn't really time. And I couldn't face the possibility that I may run into one of the other occupants of my house during the installation. I can't look at any of them anymore. I have a useless kid. Two useless kids, really, but only one of them is really useless. The other one just sits there, not being useful but not not either, you know.

I know half of my son comes directly from me, and I know he grew up in a house with me, so I tend to receive a lot of the blame for his uselessness, but it's a lot easier for me to abandon my whole family if I blame him, and all of my other problems, on their father. With the disgusted glares he gives me any time I pour a scotch, he ruined alcohol for me. That cannot be forgiven.

It still didn't occur to me that I could just leave them though. I was at work yesterday, in the mid-morning, sitting at my desk contemplating nothing. Glen from accounting or human resources or my boss popped his irrelevant face in front of my doorway, MY doorway, and told me he was leaving for the day. I was a little confused why he thought he should tell me. Maybe I was his boss. I'm not entirely sure. Either way, it triggered me to decide I was also leaving for the day, so I put my coat on and walked right out the building. I stood on the sidewalk under the awning for about twenty

minutes. Sure, more likely it was probably three minutes, but enough thoughts passed through my mind in that span of time that in order for you to believe me I have to say that it was longer. Passers were going by without any notice of me. One of the women, a young professional devouring an energy bar, reminded me of myself at a younger age. I wanted to yell at her to run away, but she'll need to figure it out on her own.

The next image I see is that of removing my passport from the glove locker of my car, while in the extended parking lot of an airport in a different city. The stewardess and seat neighbour from earlier, after hearing the same detail, both found it oddly strange that a woman who has never left the country keeps her passport in the car. I overhear someone correcting me to their friend. Oh right, she's a flight attendant now. Doesn't really have the same ring to it. Eradicate the offensive at every opportunity. And when we lose stewardesses, what will overtake it as the longest word that can be typed only with your left hand?

"Baby, oh baby I miss you. I wish you could come with me. Don't worry, it's only a month. I'm doing it for us. Come over for your birthday? I'll buy you the ticket to come visit. For a couple of weeks? Just a couple of weeks. I don't want to leave you like this. I want to be with you. I'm doing this for us. Yeah, I was talking to her before I left. She's scared, as usual. Babyyyy. It's going okay, but I miss you. I can see you. Haha, no I can't. I wish I could. I want to hold you, to kiss you. I told you to give me all your lovin' before I left. The same thing happened last time, you didn't give me enough kisses so now you want more. I didn't have much time to I just grabbed a couple of pretzel dogs. Go to the doctor, you have to get that checked out, while you still have the good insurance. I know, but you know when it's going to come back. It'll come back in June. Just go now, we have to deal with it. We'll work through the rest."

This continued for a few more minutes, but I didn't think I needed to hate my plane neighbour any more than I already did, so I put my headphones back in and hit play. I half laughed to myself, finally letting the absurdity of some part of my brain to creep into my appearance. My husband never let me watch anything with swears in them, because we had to protect the kids. I'm not sure what armour was being constructed around them, but I don't recall having a say. In my own house, I couldn't sit down and watch a movie. I used to speculate on which dictator he most resembled. He'd be standing up, watering plants that were already dead, and he'd turn around and ask me what I was thinking about. "Oh, I was just wondering how come the postman always puts our mail in the wrong slot, when it's so clearly marked." That was never what I was thinking. Why would I care about something that has such a small effect on my life? But he'd agree with me. Maybe to be polite, but it was really because he actually cared. So in personality, Papa Doc Duvalier. In appearance, because of the square head, big ears, and dull eyes, I'm sticking with Stalin.

If Papa Doc and Josef had a love child, because of some advancements in either time travel or cloning and in gender reassignment and in social norms, that story would make the front page of most newspapers. It might even push Robert Patterson's new haircut to below the fold. But luckily, no matter how distressing the front page, you can always turn to E11 and see Henry and his bald, pear-shaped head saying doing nothing at all and entertaining nobody.² Raise your eyes slightly, and Andy Capp will be there perpetuating stereotypes and hating his mother-in-law. Look to the right, and you will be faced with the arduous task of turning an OKOB into a BOOK. A little higher than that, Heloise will tell you to water your plants, and the stars will tell you how to win the lottery.

Like the bottle of scotch I bought while waiting in the terminal, I am now duty free. Free as the second item in a solid bogo. Before last week, I forgot about a life free from responsibilities, that not letting others view me as an inferior was even an option. I blame the money. But I haven't been

happy since my savings account hit one thousand dollars. I haven't not been sad since it passed a million.

Something reminded me of the way it could be. Well, someone. More specifically, the something about someone, on the bus I had to take because I let my oldest borrow mine. A man in a suit looked happy to be in it, secure in his place in the world. He chose, intentionally or not, the right path for him. A lot of people crave the stability and grow fearful as life becomes more interesting. Then I looked down at myself. That ended my [1]robotic version, snapping me out of a long term membership in a club I never agreed to be in.

¹ [a neighbor, probably]

² [Editor's full-disclosure note: This website also publishes [2] Henry+Garfield .]

[Author's full-disclosure note: 90 % of this was written years ago, and I gladly acknowledge it's garbage and ain't got no flow, ya kno. Some of the parts I removed were half gross or just unnecessary.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/may-12-happy-birthday-rami-malek/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/phodeo/henry-plus-garfield/>

November 21 - Björk gets an interactive stroll through the neighbourhood (2018-11-21 02:22)

Go for a walk in a slower part of a city while you listen to this.

Look around. What do you see? Just think it. Don't say it out loud.

Ask someone near you what time they were born.

Hand a stranger a quarter. "Hey, is this yours? No? You sure? Because I found it... behind your ear!" Then play the game in which you find the quarter behind their ear.

It's all a game. Treat it like one.

You'd like to initiate conversations with strangers, so go do that. Make sure you smile to avoid the always-on-alert pepper spray-carriers.

Approach a distinguished tree. Stare closely at its trunk. Keep staring. Oh, that part's cool. It's weird how we forget to look sometimes. Take out your headphones. I will make a very loud noise in two minutes to remind you to put them back in.

(2 minute pause)

(LOUD NOISE)

That wasn't so bad, was it? As long as your headphones were still outside your ears.

Leave notes for strangers. Maybe they'll leave notes for you.

Don't go straight home after work. Turn off your phone. Take a bus you've never taken. Get off after 9 stops and walk into the nearest store. Buy the cheapest thing in there. On your way out, turn back to the clerk and declare matter-of-factly, "I'm not driving around with a hot tub in the back of my truck like it's 1983."

For every guy you see in a suit who wants to be in a suit, there's a guy in one who doesn't want to be. And a guy not in one who wants to be. They're all okay.

Is that another Subway? There are more Subways than McDonald's now. Don't eat at either, but tell someone that fact at the next dinner party you're coaxed into.

Do a spin. Just one. Pretend like you didn't. Or act like you did.

Put on a shirt you're ready to throw away. Write Free Book on it. Tape a book to its front, one you like that you've already read. Walk around until someone asks you for it.

Buy a coffee or a tea. Pause this until you get it.

Go up to person sitting alone on their laptop and ask them, "Will the eagle's talon ever point upwards?" Pretend you're expecting to hear a specific response, as if you're meeting a fellow spy and you need to make sure this is the right person.

Oh yeah, don't forget - this is water.
Then again, who am I to call this that?

Don't skip any of this, even the - especially the boring parts and the silence.

Start singing a well-known song and see if anybody joins in.

Look at all their tired faces. They do appear exanimate. You do too. You're all wrong. You just need a jolt. Unfortunately most of those are viewed as anti-social in the actual sense of the world. They're not. In the end, we all just want a story.

Go tell someone this joke: "What did one twin fetus say to the other? Move over, I don't have enough womb." C'mon, do it. It's a stranger. Embarrassment is pointless. Be more than an ant. I don't want to be an aunt. I want to be an uncle.

You know the joke that they'll use in certain sitcoms where one of the kids finds out his sister is pregnant and so he goes, "Am I going to be an aunt or an uncle?" thinking that he's asking if the baby will be a boy or a girl? That could make sense if there's a different confusion going on.

Engage in an activity you've never done before, and then don't tell anyone about it. And don't

even tell someone you did anything at all. Enjoy it for yourself. Some things are just for you. Don't forget that.

Tell a passerby that they're amazing. Just do that and walk away. Compliment not for anything in return, but to brighten a day. It feels good. You'll tell your friends about it later, in one way or another.

Give a fin to the next busker you see. And stop for a minute. Listen to them. Consider their life.

Walk down an alley instead.
It's quieter but still has more going on.

Laugh as hard as you can, for as long as you can.

Until the end happens.

November 22 - Mark Ruffalo gets a business traveller's hotel room (2018-11-22 02:22)

An arrow stitched into the carpet of my hotel room, pointing me to a sacred land and urging me to make the pilgrimage, is evidently unaware how exhausted I am from the flight. I can only lie still, so I reach for the remote and turn on the television instead. I flip the channels without looking to see what else is on, hoping to catch a single frame of a striking scene.

On the wall behind the universal black rectangle, the second hand of the clock lingers on its hash when I first look at the clock. Time moves slower just as the information is first processed, if it moves at all. It couldn't be more relative, to the movement and experience as well. Suddenly, the clock ticks faster than it used to. I am wasting my time worrying about running out. Like a hopeless glutton, I crave infinite seconds.

My attention returns to the screen as the lone English channel flashes a Breaking News animation, but those aren't to be trusted anymore. This one is informing us all that an prominent rapper has appropriated yet another cardinal direction for his family.

The airline sharing the child's name will need a timely social media response in order to take full advantage of the situation. The marketing team members who'll be woken up with urgency will not question the import of the early alarm. Oreo's instantaneous reaction to a past Superbowl black-out is top of mind as the desired goal, a viral outcome whose replication is difficult but not impossible.

Restaurants frantically call their vendors, confirming they'll be able to fulfill increased orders for the related sauce, which will undoubtedly experience a focused rejuvenation in the coming weeks.

I glance down at the spiritual pointer and realize it's guiding my eyeline to the same orientation. This connection didn't come up 2600 years ago, when the undepictable first graced the desert.

Restless and unrested, I mute the television and stand up, stretching at my apex. The window covers the entire left wall, and when I pull the blackout curtains open, the illuminated capital city below rightfully forgets what it used to be. Progress is inevitable, and the only ones resisting aren't profiting from it.

I consider reviewing my notes for a meeting tomorrow, where I'll be brokering a deal I don't fully understand. It won't do any good, I convince myself to relieve any guilt from neglecting my official duty so that I can head down to the lobby bar in a more informal capacity.

November 23 - Miley Cyrus gets the four kinds of drunks (2018-11-23 02:22)

Ernest Hemingway, Mary Poppins, Julius Kelp and Henry Jekyll walk into a bar.¹

Hemingway does what he's been doing since before you got here and orders a whiskey and soda. The bartender points to the top shelf but is shooed down a level or two. He settles on an unremarkable mickey, but before he can pour it into a glass, Ernie snatches the bottle and lays it on the counter in front of him before claiming a stool. He won't be leaving until it's gone, so we can cut out the middleman.

Hemingway is overheard at the tail end of a spiel he imparts regularly on anyone who will listen. "...anthrax, malaria, pneumonia, dysentery, skin cancer, hepatitis, anemia, diabetes, high blood pressure, two plane crashes, a ruptured kidney, a ruptured spleen, a ruptured liver, a crushed vertebra, and a fractured skull. Wouldn't you?" The writer laughs and takes another swig from the bottle.

Jekyll is leaning against the opposite end of the bar, which already has a lineup of his empty tumblers sitting on it. The busboy's attempt to clear the glasses is thwarted by the increasingly disruptive patron who doesn't appear to have any more use for them. Jekyll excuses himself to the bathroom and returns a minute later wearing a discordant snarl and resembling a different man. "Bring me another one, you fracking drillhole," he slurs, seemingly directed at the bartender. "Put it on Jekyll's tab." He is not referring to himself in the third person - whenever he gets to this point, it's only accurate to start calling him Hyde.

Julius had resigned himself to a dark corner of the room as soon as he got here. But he's just finished his third martini and is starting to spout some stories. A cluster of enthralled customers is gathering around him, growing along with his confidence at every sip. "I have this buddy - you'd love him - we used to work together in the lab. Now this guy left me hysterical on the regular, and one day he challenged me to strut into a first-year psych classroom and — hold on, everyone. Does anyone else smell that interruption?"

The stench of a soiled man wafts through the room. Hyde puts up as much of a denial as he can muster, which is none. He willingly yells, "Fine, it was me. Go back to your —" before trailing off, not realizing no one was even accusing him directly. He slumps down in his corner booth and drifts off.

Mary giggles as she passes his table and wanders over to Julius, who goes back to regaling the regulars with acceptable half-truths. She finally removes her coat and hangs it over a chair before

gently laying her umbrella at her feet. "Oh professor, that's so nutty! Hee hee! This is nice. Isn't this nice?"

"Nice?!" It's Hemingway, who turned around in his seat solely to rain on the merriment and reign in the bacchanalia. "You don't have a clue, missus! This frigger won't shut up. He's in here every night, starting out like a normie, keeping to hisself, and then forgets how to close his yapper long enough to pour any booze down it."

"Let me buy you a drink, Ern," Julius calmly offers. "Barkeep, two of whatever he's having."

The author feigns gratitude to the man he was disparaging seconds earlier, happy enough to get another whiskey soda for free.

The professor approaches the bar and puts his arm around the recipient of his kindness, diverting his attention so he can slip a mickey into his drink - a real mickey, laced with arsenic and, for good measure, a dose of plutonium. As lively as a bit of booze gets him, The doctor has no time for anyone telling him how to act, and even less time for anyone who tells his secret paramour, the lovely Mary, she's clueless. Hemingway downs his drink in one gulp, unknowingly resigning himself to a certain, painful death, only minutes away.

Mary, herself reeling a little from Hemingway's earlier rudeness, picks up her umbrella and sneaks up behind him. She stabs the pointy end straight through the author's back, enough for the tip to press up against his chest from the inside. He gurgles blood and slinks down in his stool. Mary and Julius lock eyes and dash towards the door, neither one wanting to be around when the murder is complete.

Mr. Hyde, who was awoken by the commotion and began watching the scene play out from across the room, doesn't like being left out of a fight, not the way he's feeling now, anyway. He reaches into his inside coat pocket and retrieves a pistol, aiming it at Hemingway's head. The poison is now starting to take effect, and as Ernest's final thoughts involve trying to determine if he's actually being killed by Julius or Mary, he now has to face down the barrel of a gun as well. Hyde shoots, and author brains scatter throughout the bar. The shooter runs out after the couple, leaving a now very dead man behind him.

Hemingway's favourite anecdote involved telling the listener all the ways he'd almost died and how they lead to the drink. Now in Hell, he'll need to amend the list to include the final three, all of which played a role in his ultimate death. "Well, devilman," he'll say, ending with his signature laugh, "over the course of my life, I was a victim of anthrax, malaria, pneumonia, dysentery, skin cancer, hepatitis, anemia, diabetes, high blood pressure, two plane crashes, a ruptured kidney, a ruptured spleen, a ruptured liver, a crushed vertebra, a fractured skull, AND a lethal dose of poison, a pointy umbrella stab through the heart, and a fatal gunshot to the brain. Wouldn't you?"

¹ According to science, [1] there are four types of drunks .

1. <http://time.com/3962251/four-drunk-types-ernest-hemingway-mary-poppins-nutty-professor-mr-hyde/>

November 24 - Stephen Merchant gets fast food funny farms (2018-11-24 02:22)

I've never worked at a fast food restaurant, but I can only imagine the hijinks that must go on in one of those places. I missed out on an important part of being a teenager, all because I found that stack of fat bills inside the trunk of an old oak tree and instantly became independently wealthy.

We almost bought a Burger King franchise a few years ago just so we could all hang out together all day, flippin' burgs and shootin' shits and worryin' nudding. Then we realized we'd all want the same days off, and after crunching the numbers, those regular shut downs would be the end of our venture.

When you buy a blizzard at Dairy Queen, the clerk has to flip the cup upside down for a second to prove to you how dense the dessert is. But you know that becomes muscle memory and every now and then someone orders a coke¹. They're barely paying attention, rolling through the second nature motions, when, right before they hand the drink to the customer, they flip the cup o' liquid upside down, ruining their new sneaks and embarrassing themselves in front of the hot new assistant manager.

Dairy Queen needs to accept what it is and get rid of the hot eats. Fill that menu with cool treats and I'll be there cooling my guts with them on the daily.

Every McDonald's is a well-oiled machine, but that's because everyone has their one robot job that they've perfected. I bet the cashiers and the burger flippers are always at odds with each other, and that hot new assistant manager can barely assistant manage their conflicts.

Remember that pink sludge? And that hot coffee incident, which if you looked into it was actually legitimate? And how they stole the beloved H.R. Pufnstuf? And how the Monopoly game was rigged for years? Ray, you crock of shit - Ronald, you dirty McDonglenozzle.

When I was younger, I seriously considered working at Mary Brown's, not only because [1] it's the best of the best, but because I once had a dream where I was swimming in a vat of their gravy, and this would be the most accessible way to make that dream come true. As long as I figured out the knobs so I didn't scald my scalp off.

I heard tales of spit getting spit inside cop burgers at pretty much every store. That's no fast food funny though - more of a fast food felony, of which I have absolutely no time, even as a non-cop. If I ever caught one of these do-no-goodniks, it would delight me to no end to say to them, "See you in court, Frederick Felony." even if their name wasn't and had never been Frederick.

Does Subway still call their people sandwich artists? I always thought that was condescending, but maybe it's not. Maybe the [2]implicit egotism is enough to get them to turn the apparent sandwich artistry into real art artistry. They'll finally finish that project they've had ruminating around their sandwich skulls ever since they ran out of oak trunk money and were forced to get this crummy, cruddy job where the only good part besides the maybe becoming a real artist someday is that they get to eat as many free macadamia nut cookies as they want - ooh baby, gimme gimme.

¹ [Can coke be lower case yet? It's a synonym for cola at this point, right?]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-17-happy-birthday-rupaul/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-23-happy-birthday-weird-al/>

November 25 - Christina Applegate gets a page-turning Paige Turner (2018-11-25 02:22)

Only the most elite of symphonies, with the most particular and snooty of players, can afford to hire page turners for its stars. Someone whose sole duty is to wait until two sheets worth of music are played, and then flip to the next part seamlessly. It's a no-reward job, with even the best of turners only getting noticed when they mess up. Dry fingers, boredom and distracting spren all need to be avoided to make it through a performance.

Paige is a page turner with the Philadelphia Philharmonic, and she is often paired with a string virtuoso or the top brass. She plays the violin herself, and is actually quite skilled, but she doesn't even connect this to how she ended up here. She doesn't really venerate the performers like the other page turners, how it's expected she will. She doesn't aspire to one day be the player for whom the pages get turned by someone else, unlike the majority of her colleagues, who see the role only as a stepping stone in the company. She hasn't truly connected with anyone she works with, likely because she finds that everyone around her is excessive in their perpetual quest for sonic perfection and precision. To Paige, this is just her job, and nothing more.

A few weeks into her third concert season, Paige arrives for work and the conductor points her towards a visiting harpist, whose music stand she will be posted at this week. In between the tuning of her instrument, the guest soloist introduces herself.

"Hi, I'm Joanna. Paige, right? I look forward to working with you."

Paige chuckles and nods. For some reason, she instantly feels a connection between them.

"What is it?" Joanna asks curiously. "Do I have something on my face?" She wipes her face just in case.

"No, no, nothing like that. My name is actually Ellen."

"Ohhh, so you go by a nickname? Did it come from Ellen Page?"

"No. What? No. When I first started..."

Flashback to Paige's first day of work, two years earlier

First Violin: Hey! Someone! Where's my page turner?

Ellen: Uh, oh, hi... I'm... page turner.

Ellen's nervousness is evident in the softness of her response.

First Violin: Sorry, did you say something?

Second Violin: Paige Turner? That's your actual name? Can't be. (immediately stops paying attention to Ellen and walks towards a violist) Hey Toni, I got a good one for you.

Ellen is left alone, wondering where she should go.

First Violin: Oh, it was you all along! Paige Turner? Is that real?

Ellen: What? Oh, that. Well...

First Violin: Unbelievable. Go get my sheets. They're downstairs. Thanks, Paige.

Flashforward an indeterminate amount of time

Joanna and Ellen have now been married for over fifty years. They live in a palatial estate with two horses and several goats. Ellen is very ill and isn't expected to make it through the week. Before she dies, she has vowed to finish a [1] tome she's been reading sporadically for almost a decade. Unfortunately, her arthritis is preventing her from even the most basic use of [2] her hands, and so Joanna spends most of the day in a chair by her side, turning Ellen's pages, as Ellen had, a lifetime ago, for her.

[Editor's note: I know you were all thinking there was some [3]nominative determinism at play here, which is what necessitated the flashback. Unfortunately, as it stands, literary time travel is still

in the early stages and the author neglected to bring us back to the day Ellen and Joanna met by citing a flashpresent. The flashforward took on a life of its own, and we lost a fairly important part of the story, which can never be recovered.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-10-happy-birthday-dan-stevens/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-6-happy-birthday-thandie-newton/>
3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-23-happy-birthday-weird-al/>

November 26 - DJ Khaled gets bearded (2018-11-26 02:22)

I used to feel nothing but pity for those unable to grow a beard¹. I still do, but I used to, too. I'm talking about a real, full bush of a beard. These unfortunate men don't get to choose how long their face is², and they need to spend an inordinate amount of time grooming their faces to make it appear somewhat presentable as smooth or strategically shaved patches of hair.

[1] When I die , I'll be donating my beard to some poor fella who can't grow one, maybe even a guy with the alpaca syndrome.

To be honest, the main reason I have it is because I'm just too lazy to shave regularly. Oh, and because my girlfriend said she'll break up with me if I ever get rid of it.

I'll probably have my beard forever. Unless something funny happens that leads me to have to shave it, as a result of a stupid bet or something. I hide things in my beard to see how long someone who's talking to me will go without noticing.

People always ask how long it took me to grow, but I don't know what answer would satisfy them. And they know about trims, right? I guess it took 32 years to grow, with periodic shaves and buzzes.

Then there's other people who are always picking food scraps out of my beard like I wasn't saving them for later.

At a certain length I begin to play with it, pull on it, pluck individuals units of it. I appear nervous when I'm not, anxious when I don't even understand the feeling. So that's the only reason I need to keep it somewhat under control.

Ever since 9/11, I get secondary searched a lot at airports. Just once I want to be stopped at airport security not because I have a beard, but because Con Air is my favourite movie.

While getting ready for an evening on a town, I psych myself up by doing this thing in the mirror, where I growl at my reflection and say, "Weird beard countdown, 5-4-2-3-1." It keeps me on my toes and readies me for any scenarios the night might present.

I was on a hike with my dog recently and a guy I saw gave me a greeting I've grown accustomed to. "Nice beard," he said. I only nodded in acceptance, not fully prepared for a human interaction at that moment. Now he also had a decent thicket of black hairs on his face, and normally

I would have reciprocated the acknowledgement. Over the next couple of hours, we would pass each other occasionally but the silence was never broken again. We both came out at the trail head at the same time, and before going our separate ways, I turned to him and said with a smile, "You too."

I once considered a scenario in which I was the new president of the Beard and Moustache Club, local 431, in Savannah, Georgia, and in that role I had a confession to make, a little something like this:

"I do not have a strong, or even weak, affinity for facial hair. I am simply lazy. I am not the founder of the club, which by now has well over a hundred male and a handful of female members, but I was pretty good friends with the last president, Rich Beard, who had a heart attack last year and died while out for his morning jog. I am expected to further the proliferation of the adoration of face fur in my community, and I will, but not out of my own passion. It is out of respect for Beard. That's what he changed his name to, years before the group was even a twinkle in his eye."

'Fun beard fact before half-touching story' interlude

In television, "Growing the beard" refers to the moment a series gets way better, coming from when Riker finally grew one on Star Trek: The Next Generation.]

I have this friend Mike who I've known for years, and I'd never seen his father without a full beard. Evidently, neither had Mike, until one day when his dad emerged from the bathroom clean-shaven, fresh-faced and with a glow Mike had never seen. Of course he was compelled to ask what prompted the sudden change, and boy, did he get the response he was looking for.

Dad: "Son, when I was in my early 20s, I fell in love with a woman and she fell in love with me. But we practiced different religions, and so we couldn't be together. I started growing this beard to hide my loneliness. Eventually I met your mother, who is the finest woman I've ever met, and we connected on so many levels. We married in a Catholic church, under our shared Lord, and after trying for years to have a child, He gave us a beautiful baby boy, our little miracle. That's you, Michael."

Mike: "Okay. That's a nice story. But why did you only shave now?"

Dad: "Well, this is the first time I can honestly say that I'm not lonely anymore."

¹ [and not only because [2] science says they're homely .]

² [I've had a comprehensive beard for so long that I completely forgot how small my chin is, how round a head I have. I looked in the mirror and took a stab at the actual shape of my hairless face, and I was way off.]

1. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/track/when-i-die>

2. <https://uk.style.yahoo.com/men-beards-attractive-clean-shaven-says-science-100029507.html?guccounter=1>

November 27 - Bill Nye gets patents pending (2018-11-27 02:22)

If it weren't for you, 747s wouldn't have even one hydraulic pressure resonance suppressor tube. A long flight after a long stopover after a long security line wouldn't be at all tolerable if the whole plane was vibrating like an unanswered cell phone, and so I propose we change your name to Bill Nye, the Inventor B'y. Seconded, anyone? Gavel pounded. Glad that's settled. Now we can move on to you, the Inventory B'y, critiquing and investing in nmy own inventions and other patents that are still pending but ready to take the world by storm. Let's get to it.

Household

- Nutritional or vitaminal toothpaste
- Toothpaste that doesn't make food taste bad after
- Dustpan with a mini vacuum cleaner along the tip so that you can actually get the last bit of dirt
- Knife with a little reservoir you can put jam and stuff in, like a soap dispenser kinda
- Collapsible indoor gutter for leaks
- Removable plates built into table
- Pet paw security print to access doggy door
- Doggy door with leash that attaches to the dog on their way out
- Scent bombs for dogs to have a good sniff
- Chair with extendable front legs for sitting on stoop
- Murphy couch
- Toaster where one piece pops up a little early, but both pieces are same toastiness
- Key that loses its shape after a certain amount of time, for lending purposes
- Two-tiered fork
- Egg shell retriever

- Little window on shower door so you can adjust the temperature before you get in without water going everywhere
- Long toothbrush, so that the bristly end doesn't touch the other toothbrushes in the holder
- Toothbrush shaped like paintbrush
- Blanket with hole for breathing while still covering eyes
- Malleable frying pan that can be re-shaped however you want

Food

- Blueberry twizzlers
- Combine different cereals into one box before they're sold
- Colorful bran cereals for kids
- G3, the watered down G2
- Cracker the size of a piece of bread
- Candy dispenser where you need to solve a problem to get the next piece out, to prevent overeating
- Edible skewers
- Edible flavourless sandwich clamps, to keep us from worrying about getting stabbed by hidden toothpicks
- Vienna sauce
- Crumb chips, meant to be eaten with a spoon or poured over other foods.
- French toast pizza
- Waterproof cigarettes
- Cake toppers for weddings between humans and inanimate objects
- Noiseless chip and candy bags, for movie theatres
- Fancy of booze with a ship in it
- 100mL bottles of beer, so you can drink them on a flight or bring to someone as a gift even if you're only carrying on
- [1] Pickle juice shaker
- Miniature timbits, that you eat like popcorn
- Peanut butter big turk
- Restaurant where well-trained animals are the tables and possibly servers

Electronics

- Black keyboard pad for computer for movie watching
- Waterproof laptop case so computer can be brought into bath
- Mini computer that folds into your shirt for easy accessibility
- Thin computer keyboard you can kind of tape to your leg and type things in public without people noticing
- Square or circular keyboard for quick one-hand typing
- Alarm like a dog whistle, where only one person can hear it based on their actual hearing abilities, since we must all have different sonic ranges
- Phone case that can act as a shade for when you're in the sun
- Phone camera placement that promotes sneakiness
- Ridiculously oversized phone cases, like a life-size baguette
- Device you put in utero and in the father to feed the fetus alcohol proportional to how much the dad drinks, to keep the dad from drinking and making them have to deal with what the mom is dealing with even just a little bit
- Conveyor belt drive-thrus

Clothing

- Pants pocket with type of drawstring to keep items in
- Bird bath underwear
- [2] High heel slippers , for comfort AND style
- Water belt for everyone, not just runners
- Bathrobe that won't interfere with you while you're sitting on a toilet
- Watch that converts to headphones
- [3] Hats shaped like rooves , for rain protection AND style, with optional gutters and chimneys

- Tire track t-shirts for kids
- Suit that distributes weight evenly to help basket carriers carry a maximum of stuff around
- Hood that turns into an umbrella, for rain protection AND earlier comfort
- Facial hair mask, with detachable sections so that men with full beards can essentially have any style of facial hair there is
- Beard toupee
- Glasses that see in black and white

Bike

- Bike where you can turn the pedals around while walking it
- Device to steady front wheel, also for walking your bike
- Cyclist pool noodle, for Toronto, which has this 1-meter law thing

Camera

- Camera bag with zippers that change color when they're fully closed
- Camera protector and steadier, for when you're wearing it
- Camera strap doubler

Services

- Brief lesson on local language and customs for foreigners just arriving in an airport
- Airport kiosk manned by person who will listen to you travel problems and stories after the trip so your friends don't have to
- Tie massage

Other

- 3-fret guitar thing, to practice chords and strengthen fingers
- Piano glove
- Adult-sized and -themed park
- Wristband with a thinner adhesive so you don't get your hairs ripped out by lazy ticket-takers at shows
- Pencil that intentionally fades after time, for paintings
- Elastic plastic
- A dentist office that doesn't smell like one
- Scrabble variation where all players' tiles are always revealed
- Different attachments for a forklift or backhoe, so you have options like with a vacuum cleaner
- Timed handcuffs
- "Take a bookmark, Leave a bookmark" bin at the library
- Roulette variation where there's two new spots, one where everyone wins and the other where everyone loses
- Device to wear on your back while standing that lets you sit down whenever you lean back, for busy people who are standing up a lot
- Windshield wiper with a built-in scraper
- [4] DJ neck pillow
- Bubbles with different smells in them that float around until they get popped
- Famous fonts, so you can write with the penmanship of your favourite writers or other celebrities
- Real Angry Birds game, so replace the archaic bowling alley and mini golf
- Streaming version of a network TV show edited to make it seem like there were never any commercials

Finally

- 'Patent Pending' show, like Dragon's Den but with a much shorter, elevatory pitch
- Cheap way to patent stuff

1. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/pickle-juice-shaker.jpg>
2. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/high-heel-slippers.png>
3. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/roof-hat.jpg>
4. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/dj-neck-pillow.png>

November 28 - Alfonso Cuarón gets a driveway-sealing, record-selling Witness (2018-11-28 02:29)

I understand the religious idea behind Jehovah's Witnesses coming to your door, trying to convert you to believe in whatever it is they believe in. Jehovah is Jesus I think, but a different Jesus than Catholic Jesus for whatever reason, something about being a millenarian restorationist with nontrinitarian beliefs and whatnot.

But don't you agree that these Witnesses need to start being a little more practical in their methods? They can keep the whole spiritual spiel, and they really should if they truly believe it, but money doesn't flow in like it used to for this organization, and a lot of others like it. So while they're at it, the door-to-door thing, they should be thinking about maybe taking on a job they could do alongside their serving God one, in order to increase their efficiency level and get some of that sweet cash for their lord.

My recommendation is that they become salespeople, or maybe home servicer providers. Let's say you're just sitting around the house after work some night, with your proverbial and actual feet up, and you hear a knock at the door. You reluctantly get up off the couch and answer it, knowing that the only people who knock on your door unexpectedly anymore are delivery drivers and someone who desperately needs your help because they're being followed or something. However, today it's a Jehovah's Witness. Well, him and his buddy, because that's how they travel. They're both clean guys, wearing dapper but eerily similar suits. The one on the left hands you a colourful pamphlet, which on a quick glance contains a smiling woman and a cow in a field, and he simultaneously asks you if you've found God.

This is a trick question, really, because no matter how you respond, it makes you acknowledge you're considering the notion. Answer 'Yes' and they'll want to talk about that, as brothers-in-arms or something, and you'll have to fake some of your favourite Bible verses, if these guys even use a bible. Answer 'No' and they really want to talk about that, for the whole conversion thing we talked about earlier. Answer 'Maybe', and they'll think you're an easy target to turn into a new member of their congregation.

These are the only three possible answers you can really give, in order to save time, and without a making a joke, of which you just thought of three. 'I'm not interested' doesn't constitute an acceptable answer to the question and it comes off as dismissive and close-minded. So it takes you a while, too long really, while stumbling over some words, before you can get it across that you're not interested in turning into one of them.

But wait. As you're shutting the door and thanking them for whatever they get thanked for, the guy on the right pulls out a different pamphlet, one for cleaning gutters. Well, now that you think about it, the gutters haven't been cleaned in a while. And a lot of leaves could be in there, just waiting to wreak some havoc on the impending rain that the nifty weatherman said was sure to hit your area by Friday. And you obviously don't want to clean them yourself, what with being and lazy and all, but you're still too proud to actively search for a gutter cleaner, one who isn't directly in front of you anyway. Realistically, these people, being God-fearing and God-loving and whatnot, are probably trustworthy and sober enough to give you a fair rate and then do a decent job. So you hire them on the spot, and they clean your gutters with gusto. When they're done, you pay them handsomely, for their hotel and a nice lunch, and they're able to continue their quest to convert people like you.

So now you're about to close the door again, as they're getting ready to leave, when the first

guy says he noticed you had a record player in your living room, and if you'd like to come over to his car, since he's also running this little business selling vinyl albums out of his trunk. You won't believe the collection he's got here - a mint-condition copy from the initial faulty run of 300 that Aerosmith accidentally released for Get A Gripe, that rare Miles David recording of What's New Puddycat, Mobley's Blue Note 1568 with the mislabeled address - and he says there's more back at the warehouse.

You're getting giddy as all hell, with these spiffy gutters and a few new tasty jams, so sure, you follow him back to 'the warehouse', which just so happens to be the basement of an ornate Kingdom Hall. He wasn't lying about the vast collection, and immediately it makes you realize there's probably a bunch of other things he isn't lying about, like his religious beliefs and so forth.

While you're perusing the stacks of albums, he locates a copy of Drake's Views, which you've never actually heard before. As he's putting it on the record player in the corner, he finally asks you directly, "Can I get a Witness?"

At this point, you basically have no other choice but to accept the power of his conversion techniques and say, with certainty and humility, "Yes. Yes you can."

November 29 - Don Cheadle gets a banana, an elastic band and an alarm clock (2018-11-29 02:22)

A banana, an elastic band and an alarm clock sit on a bar.

[1]A banana, an elastic band, and an alarm clock. The three items that bring to the forefront a sense of my own mortality, and to a lesser extent, a reminder of an unmade Macgyver episode. Each object is permanently etched on the same ridge of my brain, alongside the area reserved for death and its precursor of dying.

The banana's story begins on the top of the fridge in my rented apartment, where it was left uneaten and so perished, on the same day as my stepmother, but of different causes. Each death made me feel the same. That could be giving the banana a lot of credit, but it's not. For both of them, I knew I would have to deal with their disposal, and beyond that I wished that the situation would evaporate. I guess the big difference is that I can always buy new bananas, so maybe I'm a little less sad about that one. But I'm back to being a bit more sad because the rotting of the banana was my fault. I could have put it in the fridge. I could have eaten it earlier. I guess it could have even still been consumed near its end, if I resolved to learn how to and then bake banana bread. Then again, I say that every time, and the bananas continue to rot, attracting the attention of fruit flies and further neglect by me. And then I feel lazy for not having taken advantage of that situation, of not turning the lemon into ade of the lemon. That comparison lacks punch, likely because it only turns a fruit into a new edible source. Also, I like lemons, and I have never enjoyed the treatment they receive both in the proverb and as a reference to poorly-constructed automobiles.

I attribute the elastic band to being the thing I thought was wrapped around the neck of my real mother, mainly because I was only six at the time of her DIY departure from this world. I guess I had never encountered real rope before, or if I had it never stuck with me, and so I deduced that

it was simply an enlarged elastic band that took her life. Suicide was foreign to me as well, so I thought the piece of rubber must have been dissatisfied with its current role in my household and so it grew larger and more powerful until it captured and killed the one who most controlled its use. My therapist would later tell me that many people blame themselves when a loved one takes their own life, but that hadn't crossed my mind until he mentioned it. I don't really believe that I was the cause, but he still could have kept that idea to himself. I was told by my well-intentioned aunt and delusional uncle that she was called to the Land of the Angels, but I struggled to fathom how such a majestic place could be a metal tin over their fireplace.

The alarm clock is for my neighbor, a man who apparently lived across the hall from me since I moved into the apartment four years earlier. I didn't recognize him. The building had enough problems, with its permeating alcoholism and intermittent blackouts, so when I heard the radio's alarm wail for hours, it didn't register that something was definitely gone wrong. Until the second day, when I was leaving to go to work, my third shift as a bartender. I'd lied about my experience to get the job, and the manager was catching on. Nervous and reluctant to return to the bar, I was looking for any excuse to delay the shift, so I knocked on his door. No answer, but the force of my fist managed to push the door open enough that I could see inside. I entered, walking in slowly, calling out potential names my neighbour may have been given by his parents. It smelled strange, but I assumed that was not uncommon among the elderly. I crept around the narrow hallway and peeked my head into the living room. I knew the layout of the place well, as it was essentially the mirror image of my apartment, only without a balcony. A man's torso hanging limply over the side of a reclined corduroy chair, I couldn't bring myself to continue on. But the incessant ringing had to be stopped, so I went behind his chair and found it on the side table beside him. I switched the clock's alarm to the off position, and paused to decide if I would leave on the muted television in front of him, an action I only considered because I briefly thought that it was somehow acting as a video camera, recording my presence. The absurdity of this hitting me, I turned around and left his apartment, gingerly closing the door behind me. I never saw his face, and I suppose I don't know for sure that he was dead, but the assumption seems safe.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/september-16-happy-birthday-jennifer-tilly/>

November 30 - Ben Stiller gets the next great Pizzaloni barber (2018-11-30 02:19)

My father, Antonio Pizzaloni Sr., dismissed me from school for good on my fifteenth birthday. He strode into my Norwegian Geography class and announced that my brother was dead, and so I was now in line to take over the family business, which means I needed to start my apprenticeship right away, post haste, now dammit, stop your crying.

For the next five years, he taught me everything there is to know about being a barber - how to snip, how to cut, how to dye, when to comb and when to brush, why to condition, how to shave, when to lotion, how to wash, how to leave your own problems at the door, and most importantly, how to keep the customer satisfied.

What Papparino didn't know is that I wasn't learning these skills for him, so I could carry on his legacy and become the next in a line of great Pizzaloni barbers. I only willfully absorbed his expertise so that he would someday feel comfortable passing along his customers to me, and one

in particular, a Dr. Mr. Lorne Michaels, creator and showrunner of my favourite thing in the universe.

I grew up with the Spartan Cheerleaders and Brian Fellows, strategy lockboxes and Mom Jeans, additional cowbells and an unashamedly breaking Jimmy Fallon. Ninety minutes every Saturday night made the other 9990 bearable, and I wanted nothing more than to be a writer and performer for the NBC institution.

Finally, Pop a suffered a fatal heart attack and, being dead and all, he had no choice but to let me cut Lorne's hair. The all-important client was surprised to see me manning his lucky chair when he entered for his standing monthly appointment, as I neglected to inform him of what happened to my dad, lest he fail to show up. But Lorne needed his mop chopped, and so I finally would finally get my uninterrupted half hour with him, to demonstrate to him my true talents, knowing it would lead to my ultimate life goal.

I staged everything perfectly - setting up specific cues around the shop, consulting the investigative notes I'd prepared over the years, even enlisting my friend Kyle to come in and prompt some crafty jokes - better than Oslo designed its gorgeous Mediterranean port.

Lorne sits in the chair and starts the session as he starts every one, with a "So how are you?", falling right into my lippity lap, allowing me to jump into my prepared bit.

"Not bad, but don't you think that 'How are you?' is a phrase that's pretty abused at this point. It basically means, 'Blehghsdhj! Say something to me!' We say it all the time, to almost everyone we see. 'How are you?' 'Good!' Nothing is accomplished, and we just wasted each other's time for the sake of politeness, social etiquette. But if we all agreed to get rid of this, it would no longer be a part of our day and we could get right to anything else. In Bergen, if you ask someone how they are, they think you mean it and they tell you. It'd be different if you were honest every time someone asked you how you were. 'How you doin'!?' 'Not great actually.' But everyone asks it, and everyone says 'good'. Even your doctor buys into the facade, but this is the one time you're probably definitely not 'good'. And he doesn't ask it in a concerned way. It's the casual way we all ask each other, and our instinct takes over. 'How are you?' 'Pretty good!.. Oh, and my hand just got cut off by a buzzsaw, and I want to kill everyone I meet.' It's, like, give me a break, right?"

Lorne is speechless. I didn't think I'd get him on my side this early, but something must have clicked and he's probably already thinking of the best way to ask me if I'll be on his show.

My "assistant" at this time brings him a coffee, and even though I made sure he knew how Lorne takes it, he makes sure to ask, "Would you like any sugar with that?" so I can get right into my spiel.

"Shouldn't salt and sugar be different colours, so you don't throw salt in your coffee or sugar on your fries? Then again, maybe keeping them the same colour makes you have to prove you can co-exist here, in this mixed-up messed up world of white powders. Make you smarten up, figure something out for yourself for once. This time we're not gonna lay everything out perfectly for you. Who's 'we' again? I hope I'm part of we, but you can never know. I know I'm part of me! I also hope that future me likes present me. I don't really like past me. But past we? Don't get me started. How about past-ah?"

It's at this moment I launch into my [1]pasta routine, and from what I can tell, based on the still-dumbfounded look on Lorne's face, it works like a charm. Now it's at this moment that the scent

of the bacon that just so happened to be getting fried in the back room comes wafting in.

"Mmmm, smell that bacon! Or it might even be Canadian bacon. Not the John Candy movie, but the ham. Ham is a bit boring, too direct and quick, especially compared to the poetic bacon, which might actually be France. Mia and Jon are doing okay using it for their last names, but even they spice it up with an extra 'm'. Jon hams it up a bit too much for my liking. You know, when I buy ham from the deli, the clerk always asks me if I need a bag. As if! Of course I should be able to fit it all in my ham pocket. You have ham pockets, right? Of course you do. That's where that song came from. 'If your front ham pocket is full, put it in your back ham pocket.' I was making breakfast this morning and I find a box in my cupboard, and on the back is a recipe for pancakes. Below this is a recipe for crepes, which are much more delicious, but it's only written in French, so I'm forced to go back to making pancakes. Sacred blue!"

Kyle is nowhere to be found, so I forgo the fitting prompt and dive right into one of my top skits.

"So the middle man has been having a hard time lately. Everyone's trying to cut him out, but he has a family too. His mom is sick in the hospital, about to die, and without his financial help she'd never go in peace. He's selfless, always trying to help, anything he can do to make this world just a little better. But you're like everyone else. You just want to get rid of him. The poor little middle man. And this is saying nothing of the messenger, who's getting shot more than a blueberry vodka at a sorority shindig. Which got me thinking about Joe, who might not be so average after all."

I decide now's a good time to start actually cutting his hair. I pull out my Henckels scissors, you know the kind whose logo is a little man or a few.

"It seems like those little men on my scissors are always judging my technique. And sometimes even the person I'm snipping. Not you, of course. But some of those shaggy men who come in. 'Another baldie, hey? You know we can cut afros too?' Luckily, there's strength and sharpness in numbers, which is why I only cut with the twinsky, manspreading, three-legged race-competing, [2]two-man Henckels."

My buddy finally comes back into the room and delivers his next scripted line. "I was just on the phone with the car rental place. Ooh boy, what a mess!"

"Don't get me started," I reply, when in fact I did want him to get me started. "They're always trying to upgrade your car, even when you don't want it. 'Travelling alone? You'll still need a school bus, or maybe an airplane! Also, your insurance might not cover a Greco-Roman god stabbing you with his sceptre, so you better get our 'extended' insurance, for a low low price of something that's not actually low low! Oy!"

Kyle makes an incongruous face before withdrawing into the bathroom, unexpectedly I should add. Lorne and I both notice a teenage boy walk by the store window, and even though it was never part of my strategy, with Kyle gone I know that I'll need to ad-lib my next line. Luckily I'm feeling prettay confident and I manage to come up with a good one off the cuff, proving to myself that I can mine a little gold out of nowhere using only my big fat brain.

"It took humans thousands of year to evolve to have eyes, with the rods and cones and the cornea on the cobeas, all working together in intricate collaborative cohesion to help us interact with the world in a visual sense, to see the beauty and the wonder and also the dangers and the sadness.

And still these emo kids won't cut their fiddling bangs off!"

Fortunately I get that killer punchline out before Kyle emerges from the lavatory and exclaims to no one, "WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONNAIRE!" He'd obviously forgotten the proper segue, but at least he did mention the right game show, the one needed to trigger my best celebrity impression. Such an ability is vital in establishing my important role in a variety of sketches on the late night show.

"Speaking of that popular catchphrase," I say to Lorne, "did you hear about Reege getting fired from hosting 'Million Dollar Password' for yelling at some of the crew²? He can be quite a handful." I follow with a flawless portrayal of what he might have said to the crew, and how he might have said it, complete with vocal range changes and purposeful yet tense body movements. "Don't ever point the camera at the contestants! Keep it on me! Don't forget who signs your paychecks or I'll never let you shine my shoes again! I'm the star! If I got away with killing Kathie Lee³, what makes you think I won't get off scot-free after I dip your heads in tar?!" I end the fabricated rant with an emphatic, "More like Egregious Philbin!"

Although my delivery was certainly impeccable, I'm caught completely off-guard when I sense that Lorne might be a tad uncomfortable. However, I realize that's only because we still haven't addressed the elephant who's no longer in the room. I catch his drift and explain what happened to my conservative father.

"Well, a couple of weeks ago, he had a stroke... of genius! But he wasn't able to convey the brilliant idea to me, because of his stroke. To be honest, he was considering retiring anyway. It got me thinking, it's interesting that when athletes retire, they like to get traded back to a team they used to play for, so they can end their career with that team. But there's no other job like that. Papi wasn't going to return to Magicuts for a final snip and buzz or anything. I'm not going to go back to a Wendy's when I'm 85 years old just so I can make one last Big Mac. Other athletes like to retire on top, after winning a championship or something. You think Pop was going to hang up with clippers after finishing up a perfect haircut? Not in this lifetime! Well maybe if -"

As I'm about to sneak in a minor call-back, using 'stroke' in a third way, via innuendo, Lorne interrupts my vocalized thought, speaking up for the first time since his initial greeting, as the haircut is just about finished.

"Excuse me, son. You might not know who I am beyond being one of your father's longtime customers. I actually run a variety television program, and we're looking for new writers and performers. Since I walked in here today, I've had the pleasure of observing a comedic prodigy in my midst. Someone who's intelligent, inventive, with a 'je ne sais quoi' star presence that cannot be quantified or denied. I won't forgive myself if I leave without saying something."

I feign perplexity and ignorance, hardly able to contain myself. I know what's coming, my dream about to become a reality. I can't help but picture the stage, where my heroes performed, that will soon be mine. Then I imagine the same stage, years down the line, when some young hopeful who was raised by SNL will get to live his own dream. He'll be given the opportunity to stand where his hero once proved to the world and his dead barber dad's ghost how entertaining and purely funny he is, how being a great barber was never the -

My thought again is interrupted by Lorne's words, now directed to the back of the room.

"Kyle, what you've been doing behind-the-scenes today is nothing short of magnificent. Your

unique yet relatable car rental frustration, the 'Millionaire' bit to which you fully committed - hell, even that esoteric bathroom retreat that I still can't make heads or tail of! Son, if you ever give up this hair cutting assistant's business, there will always be a job for you as a writer and performer on my television show, Saturday Night Live."

Lorne drops a fifty dollar bill on the ground as payment for the haircut, then decisively grabs his coat from the rack and exits through the front door. Without saying goodbye to me, an eager Kyle follows closely behind, and I am left alone, in my family's barber shop, where I am doomed to live out my days as nothing more than the next great Pizzaloni barber.

¹ [said like Joey, to subliminally inform him I'm attuned to his program's network.]

² [Editor's note: While that is actually the correct program (not the one you're thinking about), Regis was never fired and to the best of our knowledge never said anything untoward towards any crew members, and that includes the key grips and best b'ys. AJ just needed a topical factoid in order to showcase his chosen impersonation.]

³ [Editor's note: Our lawyers have advised that we make it clear that there is absolutely no way that Regis could have killed Kathie Lee. As we all saw in the trial, the evidence clearly indicated that at the time of her gruesome murder, he was on the front lines saving an Ecuadorian rainforest. Like his lawyer said, to which nobody could deny, "Since he was in a tree, he must go free."]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-9-happy-birthday-lou-ferrigno/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/henckles.jpg>

1.12 December

December 1 - Sarah Silverman gets book titles and band names (2018-12-01 02:22)

Your book was my favourite thing I read this year, and this includes things I've written, so that's saying a lot. I know the title alone went through an extended wringer, both in your own head and in back-and-forths with your publisher and editor or whoever. Obviously 'pee' is far better than 'pee-pee', so I commend you for sticking with what you know is the funniest and standing up to the broad minds, as you've done over and time again. I'm working on a non-fiction book myself, about myself, but it's come to a standstill until I can come up with the perfect title. Here's a rundown of my current shortlist:

- The Comparable Ian Smith
- I Meant It At The Time
- Fun At The Time

- Next Stop, Woodland Drive
- Things To Do With Cabbage: Not A Cookbook
- The Runaway Model
- My First Car: An Auto Biography
- Cow: A Bunga: A Memooir
- The Assless Chapters
- Crawling Through A Not-So-Big Pipe
- Thoughts From A Shower
- Simon Steals Home
- Ninjaic
- Entitled
- Unt I ttled
- Funtitled
- Down to Clown
- There Ghost The Neighborhood!

I also have this band that comes out for one month every few years, that's made up of just me. Once I settle on a perfect name in that realm, I'll invite others to join me, and hopefully they'll know how to whap their instruments nice and good so we can go on tour. Here's what I'm working with so far:

- Winner and the Nominees
- Pretty Thieves
- Satched
- Back Wax
- External Validation
- Chesterfields
- A Mushroom Tour of the San Fernando Valley
- Tixe
- Banana Force Kale
- Grass Soup
- Non-NABs
- Mnemonic Hymns

- Mnemonic Vices
- Noise Will Be Noise
- The Almond Butters
- Pee Nut Butt Hair
- Bonereal Forest
- Wet Taint
- Pee Shivers
- The Perfect Pinch
- Fruitful Endeavors
- Individual Cream Packets
- Shoutin' Jay Cheezies
- Steve Albedo Effect
- Merle Strep Froat
- Pure Butts
- Hedgehoggy Dilemma
- Poison Girls
- Land of Walkie-Talkies
- Indie Band Name
- How Now Pow Wow
- Planned Handstand Band
- Pizzle Rot
- Apollo Geese
- Umlaut Reduplication
- " " [pronounced 'Dubloomlout']
- Cozy Robes
- Cozy Cabins
- Jimothy Goof Again!
- Espionage Carnival Gathering
- Clark Gregg's group of people who got together to make music and have other fun with Clark Gregg [band name I came up with in a dream - at the time I thought that Clark Gregg was Clark Duke]

- [1] Here's a few more I came up with, going so far as to create fake album covers for them

Now that I think about it, my solo project could use a new name too, but only if I pivot to the rap game. Maybe I'll change it to one of these:

- Lothario Dawson
 - Old Man Werm
 - Brobocop
 - Cyril Sneer
 - Sum Fella
 - DJ Trope
 - DJ Deej
 - LJ Cool Bean
 - MC Donalds
 - b42
 - Emperor Neapolitan
-
-

Notes on your podcast appearances

On Pete Holmes's, you mention that the hospital people had to tie you down because they thought you'd pull the tube out of your nose. When I was in the hospital a couple of years ago, I [2] hallucinated a crazy scene that melded with real life and when I came to I'd ripped a tube out of my nose.

On Norm's, the two of you go back and forth for an extended amount of time, asking each other how you both pronounce different words. Occasionally I'll think about how great it would have been if this went on for another hour or so.

A final note

Thank you for articulating the effect of the disingenuous apology, and thank you more for Make It A Treat, and thank you too for being real funny.

1. <http://ismith.ca/phodeo/album-covers/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-13-happy-birthday-julia-louis-dreyfus/>

December 2 - Britney Spears gets a mallrat rat rat rat (2018-12-02 02:22)

The shopping mall is not a place I ever choose to go on my own. But sometimes, without even realizing how I got there, I find myself stranded under the fluorescent lights. She is in a dressing room at a clothing store. I stand just outside, holding a purse, surrounded by women I do not know, engulfed by their club music and illusory beauty. At this moment, I can no longer see her, so I question if she ever existed at all. I carefully avoid being bowled over by an intrusive divorcée, all the while believing that the too-tight red shirt she's considering may actually act as a catalyst for her imminent trysts. She is chasing down her friend and says that the decision to buy the shirt is an emergency. I question how. Our thresholds for panic are quite different. The spectrum more volatile still on her end. And she sees me as a waste of space.

Little does she know, I'm not a bad person. I contribute. I leave my empty bottles outside the garbage bin so that the tin men have easy access to what they're looking for. And I wink at them with a smile. I support their entrepreneurial spirit and applaud their disregard for the structure the rest of us find ourselves in. Last year I was in Detroit, waiting for my girlfriend outside of the city's only hostel, and I dug through a dumpster alongside an elderly black man, fully grasping his plight and briefly enjoying my place alongside him.

I am a decent person. I keep my seat in the upright position on planes, even when the seat-belt sign is turned off, and even when the passenger in front of me has had theirs in full recline since takeoff. If I'm seated anywhere other than the aisle, I make sure to visit the bathroom before the flight, and never during. I willingly trade seats with young women who wish to be closer to their boyfriends. I successfully pretend I do not notice the stench coming from the seat next to me.

I'm a good person. If the woman behind me looks rushed and has fewer than six items in her basket, I will gesture for her to pass me in line. She will decline my offer, with a simple wave of her hand, but we both know that by the time we are finished going through the motions, she will in fact be served first. I'm not in a hurry anyway, and she's had a hard day.

The sales associate recognizes his bewilderment and asks if he would like any assistance. Exasperated, he replies, "Jesus, who fucking knows?" And then he apologizes. Maybe for Jesus or for fucking or for both. Maybe for the anger he unconsciously radiated, maybe for asking a rhetorical question.

He is not fully accustomed to the company of unfamiliar women, but he figured out at some point that an apology might lead to forgiveness.

If you want someone to like you but you've offended them, forgiveness is pretty important. Or strength.

Or a certain charisma that makes people forget or at least ignore past indiscretions.

That charisma is sickening. It is everywhere.

It is evolution.

December 3 - Ozzy Osbourne gets cool Jeopardy stories (2018-12-03 02:22)

An answer does not a response make. Jeopardy! taught me that. Along with how moustaches make the man, and most facts about American presidents.

There's nothing that pleases me more than watching a Jeopardy!, then watching it later with other people to show them how smart I am.

And their Teen Tournament is the only time I can get away with berating kids for knowing less than I do.

I'd love to be a contestant on the show. Mainly because that's my brother's ultimate dream, and pilfering that from him would be pretty funny.

Based on my couchability, I think I'd do alright if I ever made it to the big game. As long as I avoided a Ken Jennings or that blind guy from back in the day, I could get a decent little string of wins together. It's all in the buzzer, and I've had some serious practice with buzzers and beating them.

The announcer Johnny, he always calls Alex "Tree-beck". Which makes me wonder if maybe that's how you pronounce it. When the camera is pointed at my face and Johnny introduces me on the first day, I'm going to mouth what he's saying in a lively lip sync. "A newspaper man from the Mundiest of Ponds in S'n John's, Newfoundlind - Ian Smith!" That could be a nice mind trick for the folks at home.

As we all know, Jeopardy is almost ruined by what follows the first commercial break, halfway through Single Jeopardy. The stories boring people are forced to tell to make them appear relatable. Things that just happen to other people, without repetition or fanfare, are somehow stories for them, the ones that arise as milestones in their lives. My favourite one is Sarah from Pittsburgh who told an interesting anecdote about how her shower curtain contained a world map. And she wasn't even a returning champion. Now I haven't done a whole lot in my life, but I too used to have a shower curtain with a map of the world on it, and I'd use it to familiarize myself with the size of the Soviet Bloc and rudeness of The Gambia while sitting on the toilet. I don't know how many consecutive times I'd have to win Jeopardy before I'd think to resort to mentioning that to the audience, but it would be a lot. Here are some of the stories that would appear before that great one about the shower curtain.

Appearance #1: I know I'm going to win this game, and not only because I'm up against two buffoons, so I don't break out my best story yet. I still need it to make me memorable either way, maybe to attract more viewers for my next episode. It is Sweeps Week, after all. So even though it's not my best story, I'd have to go with the one about the time I [1] ate only Nibs for 127 straight hours

. It would make the people who lose to me feel even stupider too.

#2: I don't have a stomach. I had it removed at the same time as a tumour in my gut. During surgery, someone pricked a hole in my gall bladder, so they took that from me too, after its leaky contents [2] caused me to hallucinate for a very long time. And I was so afraid going into that second surgery that a new doctor came in and extracted my amygdala as well, so I wouldn't be scared of anything anymore, which I'm not, unless you count dogs with bees in their mouths but no matter what your amygdala status those bees will end up scaring you.

#3: I won a trip to Barcelona to play in the European Poker Tour, an event whose buy-in was \$5000€, when my net worth was hovering around \$200. My final hand was a Jack and a 10. I met Pau Gasol at my hotel, and he was, and likely still is, very tall but without looking like a freak or anything. After my defeat, I drank absinthe and walked down to the beach, where I wrote a Red Hot Chili Peppers song.

#4: I officiated a wedding for my friends because that stemmed from us joking about me being the Skipper in their Gilligan's Island-themed wedding. I'd also performed a similar ceremony on a boat for two of our other friends who only found out they were getting married that morning.

#5: I once travelled around the States by myself for a month or so. In Las Vegas I couch surfed with these two girls who lived their lives based on the day's horoscopes. We were all making a meal together, and my only duty was being in charge of cutting up the garlic. Up to that point, shamefully, I'd never cooked with garlic before, and I never really considered how much was actually necessary to make the food taste appropriately garlicky. So I peeled - not cut up but just peeled - about 14 cloves of garlic and stuffed it into the blender containing the other ingredients. It obviously ruined the meal, and made the rest of my stay there slightly awkward.

#6: I sent a unique [3] birthday message to a different celebrity every day in 2019, most of which had nothing to do with the person. [4] Chantal Kreviazuk is the only one who really appreciated it. I have an unfounded theory that the project itself might be a murderer through the [5] iSmith Birthdeath Effect .

#7: After the FBI stole all of my online poker money, I was forced to look to the real world for that sweet cash. Still not fully understanding how anything worked, I got a series of jobs for a couple of weeks each so I could write a Joblog and maybe it would help me start my own business. I became a loss prevention officer, a dishwasher, a courier, a flagman and a temporary assistant videographer on the most watched show in the country. The whole thing made me want to go back to school, so I did.

#8: A few years ago, I travelled around Europe with two of my friends. I have no memory of booking the tickets and had to be reminded about the trip a week before we left by an incredulous friend, who still contends that I was heavily involved in the planning. (turn to camera) Hi Bosh! While in Ireland I climbed a tree and couldn't get down, so I stayed up there for eight hours until we finally let a public servant come save me.

#9: I used to have auditory hallucinations and for a while thought that everyone did. During the most vivid one, I was lying on the couch and overheard two of my buddies, who definitely weren't in my house, behind the couch shooting the shit. I didn't move for like an hour because it was so cool listening to two figments having a chat.

#10¹: I once lived in a park for a week to protest something, but I forgot what the thing was so I went and got some pizza instead. The pizza had ham and pineapple on it, but the server was adamant it was not a Hawaiian, so I continue to be mesmerized by that contention.

#15²: After going for a run one time, I got very thirsty and grabbed what looked like an apple cider from the fridge. Only after chugging the whole thing did I realize it was actually rendered chicken fat.

#20: I wrote and recorded [6]an album by myself over the course of one month, even though I can barely play guitar and can't sing. It was probably the most productive month of my life, which happened to coincide with a refrain from alcohol. The songs are terrible and I love them. Then I did this a few more times.

#25: I'd have to tell them about writing this actual piece you're currently reading, about the stories I'd tell if ever I was to be a contestant, but without revealing the real reason I wrote it.

#30: This would be the first one where I tell the producer I wanted Alex to cue me up for one story, but I act like he's off his rocker before launching into a completely different story.

#35³: As a child, I once tried to steal some ice cream from a convenience store. I got caught by this woman because I had to ask her to open the door for me since it swung inwards and I had two huge tubs of ice cream up the sleeves of my sweater, so I couldn't get my hands out. I was so shook up that I ran home and put on Phantom of the Opera CDs, singing along to the songs to calm me nerves. My sister's friends caught me in one of my more inspired moments, during a Music of the Night crescendo, and I never sang publicly again.

#40: I'd call Alex out for talking about his moustache, or lack of moustache, so much. I'd also tell him he's real awkward with the guests and needs to step it up.

#45: I followed my girlfriend to Thailand, where we sat on elephants and slept under roof monkeys and ate daily pad thais and got low-baht massages and crashed a motorbike into a tree and almost a kid. Then I followed her to Vancouver after driving across the continent in a duct-taped Kia Spectra, which disintegrated just as we drove up to our new house. Then I followed her to the grocery store, because I wanted to make sure we got the right hasbrowns.

#50: I keep my home life and my work life and separate as I possibly can. I rarely attend functions with co-workers, I avoid team lunches, and I refuse to [7] elevate any of the social conversations from small- to medium-talk . But recently, a camaraderie has crept into my work day and without realizing it, I have jumped from the position of colleague to that of true friend. After analyzing how this could have possibly happened without my active participation, I've concluded there are seven steps that took place, and I fell for every one, much like the successive ways that a fish ends up going after the bait. It started off with an unannounced, extra coffee because they messed up his order. This is followed by a slight dig, a short, innocuous comment directed at a client. Afterwards, a dig about a superior. Then a serious complaint about the job, and how he always wanted to be something else and isn't quite sure how he ended up here but he's in too deep and he's got nowhere else to go. Then he opened up about his hobbies and relayed yesterday's score in the local sports match. Then he asked me if I wanted to run away together, but I thought he was offering me a cool new runway sweater, so I accepted.

#60: I once baked peanut butter balls in my kitchen that half the city got to enjoy. Strangers still stop me on the street to tell me how delicious they were.

#75: I wrote a bunch of episodes for a webseries , but then I realized I don't know how to make webserieses so maybe I'll turn it into one of those fiction podcasts.

#100: If ever I was to make it this far, I would have earned around a million dollars. Pre-tax. So maybe I'd complain about the taxman, especially since in Canada you get to keep all game show winnings.

#150: I [8] watched every episode of the first season of Strangers Things at the same time.

#200: [9] A guy broke into my house right after I finished writing a story about a guy catching someone breaking into his house and handling it better than I did.

#250: By now I'd talk about how I ran out of the prize money partying with all my friends and I need to keep winning to maintain my new lavish lifestyle.

#300: I'm left-handed, but I shoot right! And I'm right-brained, but I'm a lieutenant! And I'm left out, but I'm right on!

#400: I climb trees. After finding a nook in a towering position above the ground, I tuck myself in and become one with the birds.

#500: And then, and only then, would I tell Alex about my friggin' shower curtain with a map of the world. Then I'd kill him, along with Johnny, before finally turning the modified murder buzzer on myself, leaving three corpses for the production designer Naomi to have to clean up. This would leave the viewers shocked until Wednesday, when an unrelated atomic bomb goes off in Burbank and gets rid of the lot of 'em. And you wonder where it came from, don't you? Iran? North Korea? Israel? South Carolina? Nope nope nope. It was Shia TheBoeuf. We simply cannot trust actors with the world, especially former child ones. That makes perfect sense now, of course, but there is no now. We are all dead. Nobody reads this. It is only there. Until it's not. Poof.

¹ [Here's where I throw in a completely fabricated story every few episodes, to keep everyone on their toes, especially Johnny. Anyway, the audience doesn't care - they just want to be mildly entertained before some more backwards trivia questions.]

² [I relate the plot of a [10]Friends episode and claim it as my own.]

³ [Here's the first of my stories of being a kid, some real and some less so.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-22-happy-birthday-guy-fieri/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/august-31-happy-birthday-chris-tucker/>
3. <http://ismith.ca/happy-birthday/>
4. <https://twitter.com/chantalkreviaz/status/997520009172733952>
5. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-1-verne-troyer/>
6. <https://iansmitty.bandcamp.com/album/executively-produced>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0VWS7r9ADY>
8. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-10-happy-birthday-david-harbour/>
9. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/july-22-happy-birthday-shawn-michaels/>
10. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_One_Where_No_One%27s_Ready

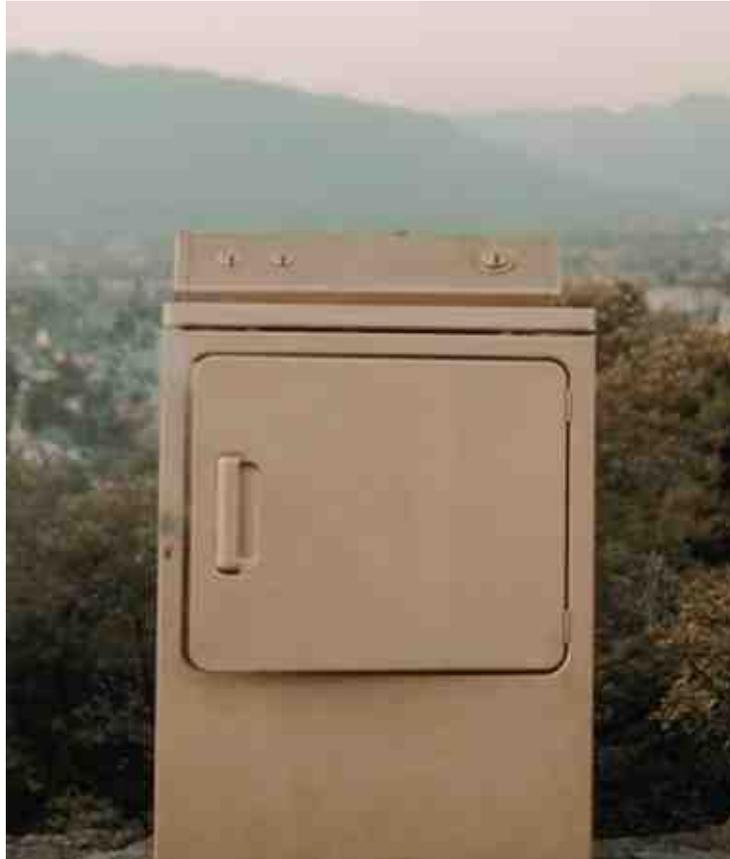
December 4 - Jeff Bridges gets ambitious videos to be made in my honour (2018-12-04 02:22)

I'd like to make a film called Will in which I die in the opening scene, but in some funny, lighthearted, Darwin Award way so that nobody gets too broke up about it. In my final dispensation, I bestow to Kelly all of my note-taking accounts, including Evernote, Bear and OneNote. She's actually that not happy about it, since it's essentially a chore to wade through the half-started, disorderly, nonsensical ramblings, but she trudges along since I'm dead and all. So at the end of Will's first act, Kelly eventually comes to this paragraph that you're reading, takes it to heart, and decides to follow through on all of the ideas found in my notes. The rest of the story is her starting a bunch of weird businesses, making albums, producing films, writing essays, inventing gadgets, performing stand up, all in a tribute to me. During the process, she learns a lot about herself and probably becomes rich and famous and celebrated.

Anyway, that's just one of the films I'm interested in creating. Here are a few more of the more ambitious ones found somewhere in my notes, that Kelly would have to make if I met my demise and the rest of it played out like Will

- A real-time loose biopic of Robert Landsberg, a photographer who died documenting the massive 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens. Realizing he was too close to get away safely, Landsberg continued to shoot footage until he was killed. His body was found buried beneath ash, protecting his camera film. So the regular film is shot, where the photographer himself is a multi-dimensional character whose death affects the audience justly. But there's also the actual photographs that he takes along the way, which appear on screen as a picture-in-picture, with the viewer always seeing the most recent photograph in the corner of the screen. An alternate point-of-view version can be made, of just what his camera sees the entire time, for the bonus features.
- A writer character bases his own characters on real people he's met along the way, primarily those on the fringe of it all. He then orchestrates real-life situations to see how they act around each other, so he can understand their motivations a bit better and mine them for comedy gold. The film is essentially watching these staged focus groups and the writer writing a story along the way using this surrogate writer's room. He adjusts the settings and corrals the people to fit the next scene's beginning.

- Create a film with a screenplay adapted from a novel adapted from a short story adapted from a poem adapted from this image I found on Craigslist, which is used as the final impactful scene of the movie. The pieces from the other media would all be sold on their own as well.



- A side-by-side complementary video to run at the same time on screens within the original film. It has a slight [1] Gogglebox feel, but fictional and more serious, with the activities in the second video impacting how our characters in the main film proceed.
- Rewrite a short, literal version of a film assuming it was a metaphor for something simple. In the metaphorical interpretation, a woman scales an unyielding mountain, encountering dead bodies, battling harsh conditions, confronting predators. This all turns out to be her perspective as she actually climbs the six flights of stairs to get to her apartment when the elevator is broken. The comparative conflicts include the lights being off in one stairwell, a window that was left open making it chilly since she wasn't wearing a sweater, running into annoying neighbour and trying to dismiss them. There's hints of [2] Life of Pi in there, but not too much.

- Each room in the main character's house is a different part of his mildly schizophrenic personality. Based on the underappreciated [3]Herman's Head and a Bob Odenkirk thing, and it's just occurring to me right now that Inside Out is a children's Herman's Head. The different rooms are mostly distinct short films, transitioning between genres and conflicts.
- A short whose frame rate changes continuously as it moves forward, always relating to the speed of the world inside the head of our main character, who doesn't necessarily believe that time exists the way other people pretend it does. It starts off at 24fps but can get up to 3000fps and down to 1fps. It ends at 25fps with our protagonist getting locked away forever.
- A film with actual puzzles and riddles that need to be solved throughout, in a kind of interactive scavenger hunt. The whole thing would need to take place on a single platform, so probably within a website, but ideally, if we can get Ted Sarandos in a room under the right conditions, on Netflix.
- A film that starts out being shot in portrait. The main character is the only one who notices that there's a better way, with everyone else accepting the vertical world the way it is, similar to [4]Pleasantville's colourisation. He spends the whole time figuring out how to get the scene righted, with the camera angle slowly turning clockwise, until the very end when he solves all the problems and everything returns to landscape.
- A film about a group of kids living lives like adults, in a [5]Bugsy Maloney world. Since the child labour laws make it hard to properly shoot anything with children unless they're twins, the characters' bodies will be animated but their heads will be played by adult actors.
- This one opens on a woman and follows her morning routine, her oddball meetings and random experiences. Then she lies under a tree, and the camera pans up to the branches, leaving the woman behind. We see a bird's nest and its inhabitants become our main characters for a while, but only in the same passive way as the previous scene. Then the camera zooms in to molecule on the bird's feather, and we see those atoms interact loosely with the world, floating through it all. Then there's a massive zoom out and we watch the planets floating through the universe as they do. The essential theme is lazy divergent anthropomorphizing with no real end game. The film borrows heavily from [6]Slacker and [7] Powers of Ten , with a touch of [8] Rattlin' Bog .

- A single-shot film, involving two people meeting for the first time. The continuous scene follows them throughout their evolving relationship, concentrating on important stages in their life together, including a nice range of emotional experiences. The backgrounds and visual style morph seamlessly to accommodate the different times, and the characters' appearance and actual dialogue blend between the moments to maintain a smooth consistency. It's partly an homage to the montage scene in [9]Take This Waltz.
- From the opening scene, the camera zooms in at a constant but very slow pace. The first scene is in a house, and we're with the characters just long enough to see and hear the a scene play out, until the camera is primarily focussed on a television in the house, and we experience this new scene on the television, leaving the first piece behind. The zooming continues and we end up inside a snowglobe on the mantle in the television scene, and this is now our main story. This repeats over and over until we ask ourselves what the hell we're still doing watching this thing.

¹ [which I doubt it is]

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gogglebox>
2. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0454876/>
3. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101115/>
4. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120789/>
5. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074256/>
6. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102943>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfKBhvDjuy0>
8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxgmAwoqr4E>
9. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1592281/>

December 5 - Ronnie O'Sullivan gets the games of life (2018-12-05 02:30)

Life is just a series of games, no matter who you are. Some are challenges thrust on you by the world, while others are goals of your own making, for your own amusement. Either way, it's what keeps it all interesting, and why you'll never get any real satisfaction, or stories to tell, from having things handed to you. When an activity seems simple, you should look for the game. It's usually there, and if you don't play it, you can't win.

When the day's objective involves the consumption of pasta, for instance, pastimes sprout up all over the place. When you're in line at the grocery store with your fresh ravioli and Paul Newman's alfredo sauce, a new checkout might open. It's up to you to recognize the mission and understand that there is no order here, and there shouldn't be. It's a rush to the cash, a battle with the other customers, and there's no denying it's a gamble, for it could end up being a fake out, in which case you could end up at the back of your original line. Then later, while boiling the pasta, toss the strainer out the window. You should repurpose the mundane to test your dexterity, using only the lid, placed just so against the top of the pot. The small aperture you've created is for draining the water without losing any of the pasta, and a successful pour will grow your confidence and leave you ready to take on anything else the world throws at you. Even later still, as you reheat the leftovers in the microwave, test yourself by estimating exactly how long it will take to warm up to the perfect temperature. You might lose and be disappointed, but if you win this round, celebration is in order.

Over the course of it all, I've developed specific skills in games that no one else would care to claim or even recognize as games. I'm particularly adept at bank machines. Some people take twenty minutes to get a few bucks out, almost like every time up the interface is a whole new world to them. But it's where I thrive, tapping the right buttons before the words even have time to appear on the screen, sometimes leaving my eyes closed for the transaction. Pew pew pew, like lasers my fingers go, for my money to come to me. And I don't even use Quick Cash, what I call the amateur's withdrawal. There's also my unparalleled ability to kill fruit flies, and I don't mean the easy way, letting the dish soap in the saran-wrapped bowl do the work. I work mainly with my hands as tools, but when I'm feeling feisty I'll seize the hungry insects between two chopsticks like that ninja fella. My favourite talent is my ability to know my exact position in the world, and the optimal way to get back home. The cardinal directions and I have an understanding, my whereabouts always known, at least to me¹.

Admittedly, I also have some flaws that you wouldn't expect, and at times they can be disheartening. I'm terrible at gauging wind direction. It should be easy enough, right? Lick your finger and stick it up in the air to see which part of it gets cold. Well that just doesn't make any difference for me, and I will never know which way the wind blows. My stud-detecting abilities could also use a bit of work. Of course I'll never resort to having a magnetic device help me know where to hand my pictures, so I'll knock on different parts of the drywall with my ear pressed against it, and still all my rooms are littered with tiny nail-sized holes. Finally, and this is the hardest one for me to accept, especially since it's not really a flaw or a game, but mostly a unwavering lack of ability in a facet of real import. I've tested this enough times, and I am old enough now to realize that I will never possess old man strength.

¹ [and Google and Apple and whatever companies they sell my data to]

December 6 - Judd Apatow gets a slow show (2018-12-06 02:20)

You have to deal with people who don't know what they're talking about talk about how your films should be shorter. These suits and wannabe suits look at data and point at graphs and say that some arbitrary number is the optimal time for this type of movie to be. For some reason, to them, the actual story you're telling isn't the focus, but instead it's this joke of a clock we let run our lives. This fallacy needs to get a grip and go straight to hell.

Even in this age of streaming where length is no longer dependent on ads and whatnot, still there is a constant refusal to slow it down, especially when it matters most. I can't tell if it's the studios pushing for what they know will work, the capitulating showrunners weary to veer too far from plot-advancing structure, or the consumers whose attention spans have actually disintegrated at the hand of overstimulation and infinite choice. Either way, someones need to take a stand and adopt a leisurely attitude when it comes to the pacing of a show that will be most effective if it were to take its sweet time advancing the everything. Longer build-ups lead to bigger payoffs, and sitting for a minute in a deliberate unchanging affords the fictional world a chance to breathe, to explore the various states they've created.

I know it is on one of the big boy networks, where they're a little more set in their ways, but I'll still start with Last Man on Earth, since they went ahead and encouraged this exact criticism by giving it that title. The first episode is about how an unusual man, rightfully living as if he's the only remaining human on the planet, navigates his post-apocalyptic environment. The ways the character fends off loneliness, his survival techniques, the joy he finds in what's left for him - it's all left partially examined, since he discovers another person alive. In the first episode. Of a show called Last Man on Earth. Even by the third episode, a third person joins the cast, and before any time at all it's an ensemble sitcom whose premise is almost secondary.

We should have had the opportunity to learn more about Phil, and his solo experience, in order to fully appreciate him and how he handles himself when the others are found. The entire first season should have contained only Phil, and his group of faceful ball friends who give him a reason to talk out loud and enlighten the viewers with his thoughts. Then, in the very last scene of the season, Carol could be introduced. All of Season 2 could have centred around the two of them figuring out how to live together with no one else in the world, as the show steers towards a strange yet necessary relationship. Then in Season 3 it can bring in whoever the hell it wants - by that time Phil and Carol will have solidified anything that comes after. Will Forte should have been trusted, and Kristen Schaal as well, to carry the show for the first two years. They really could have, and I'd like to think the audience would be there with them. The show is good, sure, but it could have been really special.

Then there's People of Earth, which is on TBS, who actually demonstrated a few times they're up for something innovative and ambitious enough to slow itself down. The first half of the first season could have focussed solely on the alien abductee support group, in a world similar to our own. The viewers might have considered that the supposed abductees were mistaken in their claims, which would make them more relatable and complex. The reveal in the first episode, that the aliens are real, is too early and immediately removes any doubts of this. Then the second half of the season could have only shown the aliens, on their spaceship, without their lives ever intertwining

with the titular characters. Learning more about the aliens, their motivations and how they interact, would make them more intriguing. Only at the very end of the season, when both factions were sufficiently developed and we felt a real connection with each, could their narratives come together in a meaningful way. This sets up the second season's arc and keeps the plot lines from growing tired.

I want to see a show have enough confidence in itself to not even introduce the principals until the world is properly established. There could be a group of people stuck in a church basement, discussing the apocalyptic situation happening outside and how they can get through it together. We learn their stories and start caring about each of them, hoping they can make it through the ordeal as long as they can stick together and rely on one another for support and guidance. Then, at the end of the episode, the church gets stormed a group of people carrying guns who kill everyone inside, the people we just connected with. This new group is part of some cult and has understandable reasons for doing what they do, as we will later discover. These are the actual main characters, and the show will have to win us back. Once this is done successfully, we'll be fully invested in this world. The title of the show will reflect their situation and also be the same as the name of the cult - The Last People of Earth.

December 7 - Dan Bilzerian gets a gambling gambler (2018-12-07 02:22)

I used to play online poker for a living. If I was asked about it during a job interview today, I would say that those five years were instrumental in developing my abilities in financial management, game theory, risk assessment and patience. If I was asked about that time by a friend, I would say that it took away any perspective I might have had about working hard and following instructions, but it was worth it because I got to enjoy an early retirement, even though I Benjamin Button'd myself into having to have an actual job now.

The only gambling you can do as an adult that doesn't make people think you're a degenerate is with stocks. When I was young I would buy shares in real companies with fake money, and then when the newspaper would arrive each morning I would grab only the business section to check on my progress, leaving the comics and infantile jumbles to the others. I still dabble in the market, but it's never held the same weight as when I was a kid. Mostly now I do it to keep my foot in the door, so I can surprise people with knowledge about things they really don't expect me to know, based on my appearance and affinity for not giving a shit. I'll say things like, "Uber was able to delay their IPO after a \$3.5 billion injection from Saudi Arabia, and General Motors helped out Lyft in January before they went public. I'm keeping my eye on Huang Lu, this rickshaw driver in Chinatown, but he should be able to stay private for a while as long as the SEC doesn't figure out how many angel investors he has." They'll look impressed, but I'll overhear them later telling someone else they only wanted me to stop talking so they could get another drink.

Now I mostly invest in companies I'm actually rooting against, like Monsanto, so I can hedge my life. I mean, of course I want the company to fail and everything, based solely on a completely biased documentary I saw - okay, that somebody told me about - a few years ago, but I have so little power to make that happen, that in order to not go completely crazy about my inability to enact change, I at least make some money every time they make the world a little shittier and boost their own already fat bank accounts. In an economic structure where access to money is so essential in determining your friends, hobbies, happiness and survival, bet hedging helps you

manage the extremes and stay relatively stable amid constant tumult. Like if I was one of those legitimately fanatical sports fans, I'd certainly bet against my team every time they played. The impact of their loss would be mitigated by my financial gain, keeping my stress level down and my health intact.

Gambling is a big part of the culture back home in Newfoundland. For some reason we just can't get enough of the waps. That's what we call slot machines, and the name is derived from that beautiful sound you make when you hit the buttons and the cherries light up in a row. There's also this church fundraising event they do every now and then called Chase the Ace . It doesn't really matter how you play, but it's centred around people not understanding odds and seemingly not caring if the church ends up with a gold altar and a new pony for the sisters. Even with the obsession that comes from chasing that ace every week, the most popular gamble around is Regatta Roulette. Tucked right between George Street Fest and the Folk Fest weekends, on the first Wednesday in August, St. John's has this annual [1] rowing festival down in Quidi Vidi where everyone gets drunk and nobody watches rowing, because why would you. That mid-week day is a civic holiday for the whole city, that is, unless the weather's garbage, which it often is. In this case, the event is moved to the Thursday, and everyone's supposed to go to work on Wednesday. Even in the middle of summer, the forecast can't really be trusted, but still the first Tuesday of August ends up being one of the biggest days to go drinking. Everyone's counting on the Regatta going ahead and getting the day off, but even if it doesn't, the gamble is always worth it.

1. <http://stjohnsregatta.ca/>

December 8 - Nicki Minaj gets a pre-cancerous consideration (2018-12-08 02:22)

[Editor's preambuling note: All of this was written a couple of years before the author actually developed cancer, and I think before his mom did, so please don't treat it as a plea for pity, or an accurate reflection of how it feels to be replete with malignancy.]

So many resources dedicated to keeping us all alive, and making us believe that we should all be kept alive, that nobody remembers they can choose to die whenever they feel their lives are complete. No matter how little a body is worth, to the one living in it or to those outside, we've evolved culturally to somehow refuse a person the right to die when they determine their body and mind are no longer suitable for this world.

How would you like to die?

When the question comes up, in a college philosophy class or the philosophy class that is the

basement of the older guy who's let you hang out in his basement when you were 12 and didn't know he was a bit of a loser, the first timeless answer is, invariably, as one is at the apex of a tryst with a certain Bea Arthur and another Spencer Tracy. But then you wouldn't get to enjoy the cuddle afterwards. So here are some other options to consider in your inevitable demise:

1. Jumping out of a plane: No parachute, shooting heroin, gun in hand ready to pull the trigger as you enjoy the terminal velocity. A certain and exhilarating death, as long as you cover your landing field with land mines and poison and snakes or any combination of the three.
2. Heart attack: You'd blend in with the masses since it's the most common cause of death, as well as the most common phrase punnily written on pro-Bret Hart signs in arenas across North America in 1992. This is a good one to fake while stranded in a rather boring conversation, but in order to not come across as a fraud, sometimes you must actually die at the end of it. The long con will never go out of style.
3. Murder: Ahhhhh! Getting murdered, for the most part, is not great, like if you're shot to death by a deranged fan outside your home. But it could be appealing when you end up being considered a hero in the afterlife, even though that's only if you get killed while saving a baby from getting robbed by some young punk who couldn't keep his grubby paws to himself.
4. Spontaneous internal combustion: This would be cool as all hell to watch, so if you're lucky you'll be standing in front of a mirror at the time of its occurrence. The smoke will billow, the initial spark igniting off an invisible flint, and the flames bursting from your loins will quickly and painfully course through your veins until it's all over. You'll make a news story too, for a little post-mortem fifteen minutes.
5. Cancer. Not a good one. In no particular order, all kinds are absolutely terrible. Skin, intestinal, testicular, ovarian, stomach, prostate, liver, mouth, lung, brain, blood. It doesn't matter which one you have, because cancer is awful no matter which way you look at it. Please donate to the Canadian Cancer Society . Seriously.

Cancer.

If your eyes somehow landed on this page and you chose to begin processing these words, I think it's only fair to tell you immediately that cancer is what you're going to be reading about. I also don't want to sugarcoat this and give you any idea that this will end well. It can't, because it's real.

From this moment until I die, this disease is going to consume most of my life and all of this story. I've never really written before, and certainly not about my feelings. Maybe I just never had the time. Now that's all I have. Time, until death. That's all any of us have, I guess. But what's different is I won't let myself stop thinking about it. It's only been a few weeks since the news got out, and living in a small town, this is all that I am now - the guy with cancer. I can't make eye contact with people anymore, mainly because they can't return the action. Not without a practiced look of condolence anyway. So I am left here, churning out my only attempt at self-reflection since I was ten years old at

summer camp and one of the counselors made us write in a journal every day. I found it a few years ago, actually, the journal. I was a boring kid.

They say to write about what you know. Not that I know a whole lot about cancer at this point. All I know is that I have it, it started in my stomach, and it's going to kill me, presumably very quickly. I've been told to get my affairs in order, like I care what happens to me after I'm gone. It's not like I own anything anyway. Either way, here's [1] my will and [2] my obituary - do whatever you want with them. As I learn more I'll have more insight and personal views on it all, and if you want to keep reading it that will probably mean more to me than I care to admit. Actually, screw it, I want you to read what I have to say. I don't have any kids, never wanted any, but obviously I hope that I can have some sort of lasting impact on the world.

Even as I deteriorate, I don't have the guts to end it myself. Death used to take up a lot more of my thoughts. I would say more than most people but maybe not. It's not the most social topic I suppose. Maybe my thoughts brought on the cancer. Hypochondriacancer.

We want to kill cancer, not cure it. The cancer cells are fine. Their effect on me is not. I've staved off death for another day, but it won't be long before it's all over. I hate leaving behind this useless legacy, but I'm too weak to fight any of it.

Nobody visits anymore. I guess they never did, but for some reason I thought they would now. There are times when I realize it's freeing to be on the way out. Nothing matters now, if it ever did, and I should be able to do whatever I want. But I don't. It's almost easier now that I have something real to complain about. It's understandable at least. The way I've always seen it, you either [3] complain or you don't. It doesn't matter if you have cancer or not.

1. <http://ismith.ca/poem/my-will/>

2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-19-happy-birthday-larry-king/>

3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-1-happy-birthday-larry-flynt/>

December 9 - Felicity Huffman gets a convenient score (2018-12-09 02:20)

We prioritize convenience over everything, and comfort is pursued above all else.

Even when we know the convenient option is the lazy one, and the comfortable is boring.

Privacy - Readily accepting terms and conditions that give permission to companies to spy on our activities. This is the easiest one for us to hand over, passively with an illusioned ignorance, so they can use or sell the data, to get our money and personal information in circuitous ways.

Safety - Reckless driving to arrive more quickly. The destination isn't going anywhere. Rushing to assume busyness, to pretend success. [1] If only we had somewhere to go ...

Health - A microwave dinner superceding cooking for yourself. The salt and fat in the cardboard box are easier to manage than putting effort into finding a recipe, gathering the ingredients, cooking them in an orderly fashion, then having to clean up at the end. The cigarette is safe, because

quitting is hard.

Morality - Joining one or more of the Big Five banks. Their ATMs on every corner, their operating hours extended, their credit cards available to us all. The ethical institution is a credit union, a member-owned financial cooperative, but deliberate steps must be taken to move away from the ease of banking the corporations provide, and so they're not.

Experience - Forgoing connections to avoid the perception of awkward. Our phones have immediate, correct answers, so we forget there's another option. The stranger on the street might be a little off, or fly off on a tangent that doesn't lead to your initially desired outcome, but that's where the stories are. They're not on your phone. They're really not. They're not on mine either. Headphones in, world out.

Facing a challenge - overcoming it irrelevant - will solidify a memory. Take the long path. Take the alley. Getting lost is how you find your way.

Everything working out isn't funny. It's not even anything.

1. <http://i.imgur.com/KQ7DAq5.gif>

December 10 - Emmanuelle Chriqui gets an innocent bystander (2018-12-10 02:33)

Our main character Allan is essentially a passive bystander in his own life. He never speaks and barely communicates. Each episode he finds himself in a wildly different situation, with a whole new set of characters. There's never any reference to the earlier episode, and each one has an entirely different tone, based on the current environment. The situation changes, while he stays the same. As he glides between these stories, he picks up tokens that stay with him throughout his adventures. Sometimes accidentally, sometimes on purpose, and sometimes both, he ends up with a dog, a ring made out of the top of a bottle, or he loses a button on his shirt, or he forgets all words containing the letter 'p'. Nothing is sacred, but nothing seems to be that big of a deal either.

1. Allan is in prison, having gotten there through a series of unfortunate circumstances that will reveal itself at some point. He's forced into escaping by his new cellmate, who's just finishing up a tunnel. At the end of the episode, the other person and all of their police pursuers die in a shootout. Allan, unsure of what to do, takes a single step forward and falls down a pipe, signalling the end of the escape and the start of the rest of his life.
2. Allan, on the other side of pipe, finds himself in the middle of the forest, surrounded by vicious dogs. Immediately he develops an inadvertent command over the pack, mostly shown to the viewer as a series of stares between him and the dogs. After developing a weird but asexual relationship with one of the female dogs, they leave the forest together.
3. Allan, at the edge of the forest, is now in a park with the dog, who has become a regular dog now. A circle of young people are sitting around, playing croquet and drinking beer. The dog acts as an icebreaker, and Allan ends up hanging out with them. They're all having a laugh, with Allan remaining as he is. Eventually, he's guided to dinner at a restaurant. On his way to the bathroom, the manager stops him, assuming he's the new dishwasher.

4. Allan is a dishwasher. We observe life in a kitchen, fast-paced, immature jokes, complaints about diners. One of the waitresses Jillian is having a crisis with her boyfriend, and Allan overhears her on the phone. She comes up to him after and explains her whole life to him. Allan remains blank, which she mistakes for listening. She kisses Allan and thanks him for being there, for being sweet, then stares at him as if she just made him her boyfriend.
5. Allan is sitting at a table in a house that he lives in, wondering how he got there. Jillian flies into the room yelling, first about work, then about politics, then about Allan never contributing to their relationship. She storms out of the house, knocking over a candle when the door slams. A fire starts, and Allan can't do anything but sit there, as the room and eventually he becomes engulfed in flames, burning to death, silently, as his body turns to ash in front of us.

December 11 - Rita Moreno gets an antique appraisal (2018-12-11 02:22)

Antiques Roadshow is one of the great treasures of the television. Its quaint style and charming stories harken back to a simpler time, when a regular person didn't have to resort to faking an injury after intentionally getting hit by an affluent person's car just to get a few extra bucks in their pocket. As we've learned over and over again for twenty two seasons, all you need to get rich quick is a recently deceased grandmother's collection of mid-century Eastern European spoons to pop up in her attic while preparing for the estate sale. And just as important to the program's fascination and success are the overconfident loons who discover that what they believed was their original Castiglioni brothers lamp is actually a worthless forgery.

The intrigue generated by each unique object, along with the eccentric personalities who bring them in for professional appraisal, make the show ripe for a fictional adaptation by one Christopher Guest, 5th Baron Haden-Guest. The British filmmaker is at his finest when he's creating compelling mockumentaries centred around atypical sub-cultures, like with *Best In Show*, *For Your Consideration* and *Mascots*. The antique valuation world should be his next subject to tackle, and I'll get him started with a few of the characters in *Appraise You*¹. Their names have been replaced by the desired actor for each role, and each description is followed by a telling quote.

Rachel Dratch: She's a hoarder who finds most of her appraisable items in alleys while retrieving recyclables. Most of what she brings in clearly has little to no value. She's always wearing a belt that is actually quite valuable, but it hasn't even crossed her mind to show it to an expert.

"Here's a shoe from maybe the 1700s. "It says Aldo." Aldo, such a 1700s name, isn't it? I can't believe this was sitting next to a dumpster. Well the right one. The left took a bit of digging, but I shined it nice and good and now it's time for a payday."

Richard Kind: He's a well-off, recently-retired, stuck-up widower. He has outlandish stories about all of his items, which may or may not be true. He's always drinking tea, but he sometimes gets confused and orders a coffee in the morning.

Richard: "As you can tell, this is definitely one of his originals. You see, my great-aunt used to be - how, should I put this - involved with Picasso. That means she had sex with him. Several times."

Junior appraiser: "Right. But it doesn't look like a typical Picasso. Which of his periods do you contend

it's from?"

Richard: Imagine, sex with Pablo!

Michael Kelly: He's a mid-forties clerk at a hobby shop. He's quite intense, and doesn't handle it well when his items are valued at lower than he expected. He consider himself a yard sale connoisseur and still lives with his parents. He struggles in social situations, and the only people who enjoy his company are in his regular board game group. Potential for a spin-off involving regular attendees of the local yard sale circuit. Another spin-off potential with the board game group.

"You said no early birds! Well according to my digital clock, which I checked against the Master Clock just this morning, it's only 8:57am, and I see several perusers. Do you not respect the amount of time it takes for the hyperfine radiation given off by a cesium-133 atom at its ground state as it transitions between energy levels? If so, then leave the "No Early Birds" off your sign!

Rita Moreno: She's loud and outgoing and always running around making deals with the other people. She used to be a local newsperson until she was found dipping into the petty cash to feed her gambling addiction. She forces her passive husband to accompany her at the events, but she never lets him gets a word in.

"Don't worry about him! He'll be fine! Now - I'll trade you this Roman hammer for three of those coins with the wrong year printed on them. Wait, where did you get that sweater? Is that - hold on, I think I see Richard. Richard! You still owe me from Monday!"

Aidy Bryant: She's the overly exuberant host who is genuinely rooting for every item to be valuable. She moved to town for this job a few months ago, once her aunt and uncle opened the permanent appraisal area.

"What a great, sunny day we have today! I have a feeling we're going to make a lot of people very pleased before close. You can smell the value! Smell it, it smells gr-r-reat! Some people ask if Trevor can smell value? He uses all five senses, plus a bonus appraisal sense that only nine people alive can attest to having. This is water, and we're all swimming in it!"

Trevor Heins²: He's the fourteen-year-old lead appraiser. Intelligent beyond his years, he is the youngest Master Appraiser ever, and up to this point he's never been wrong with one of his valuations. He's direct and doesn't waste time connecting with the item owners. His wealthy parents own the building which houses the appraisal area, but they're never around so he essentially runs the place.

"Your grandmother lied to you. It's worth no more than six dollars. Please don't cry. Here's ten dollars. Keep the change. And actually, keep the weird tin too."

¹ [working title]

² [the version of him in Wonder Showzen]

December 12 - Mayim Bialik gets a marquetter's fortfolio (2018-12-12 02:22)

I work in marketing, and no matter what Bill Hicks says, I'll probably go on living anyway. I first got turned on to the advertising field as a five-and-a-half-year-old and saw three mind-blowing commercials [1] back -to-[2] back -to-[3] back . It turns out most marketing jobs these days are more focused on data and efficiency and selling and framing rather than actual creative output, but I'm looking to move towards a role where I only need to use my rightest brain, and so I'll be showcasing some of [4] my bright ideas to here.

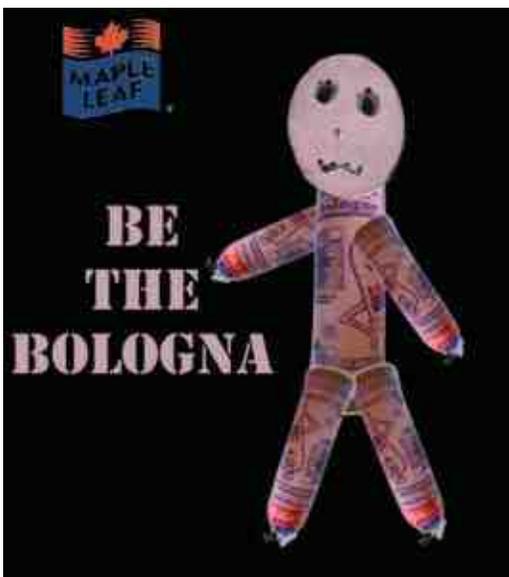
I've also always wanted to start companies, ever since my six-year-old self sat on a busy corner next to my house with a bottle of poppers and a rag, eager to sell my services under the name Rise and Shoeshine. I realized then that coming up with the moniker was a lot more fun than kneeling on concrete polishing leather, so my upcoming businesses will be more of that, the marketing of it all. Potential names are Talos Design, Climb Creative and Red Eye Marketing, but I'll probably think of a better one in a minute and go with that instead.

Social media seems to be where all the kids hang out these days, and some of those kids might have money, which means they could be your customers, with the right enticements. Here are a few spec images I made for various organizations to put on their social thingies - they're either simple or poignant or total brand pivots, but no matter what, the shares and likes will be breaking through the social roof and make my services clamoured for throughout the advertising world.

Netflix

NEXTFIX

Maple Leaf



Mensa

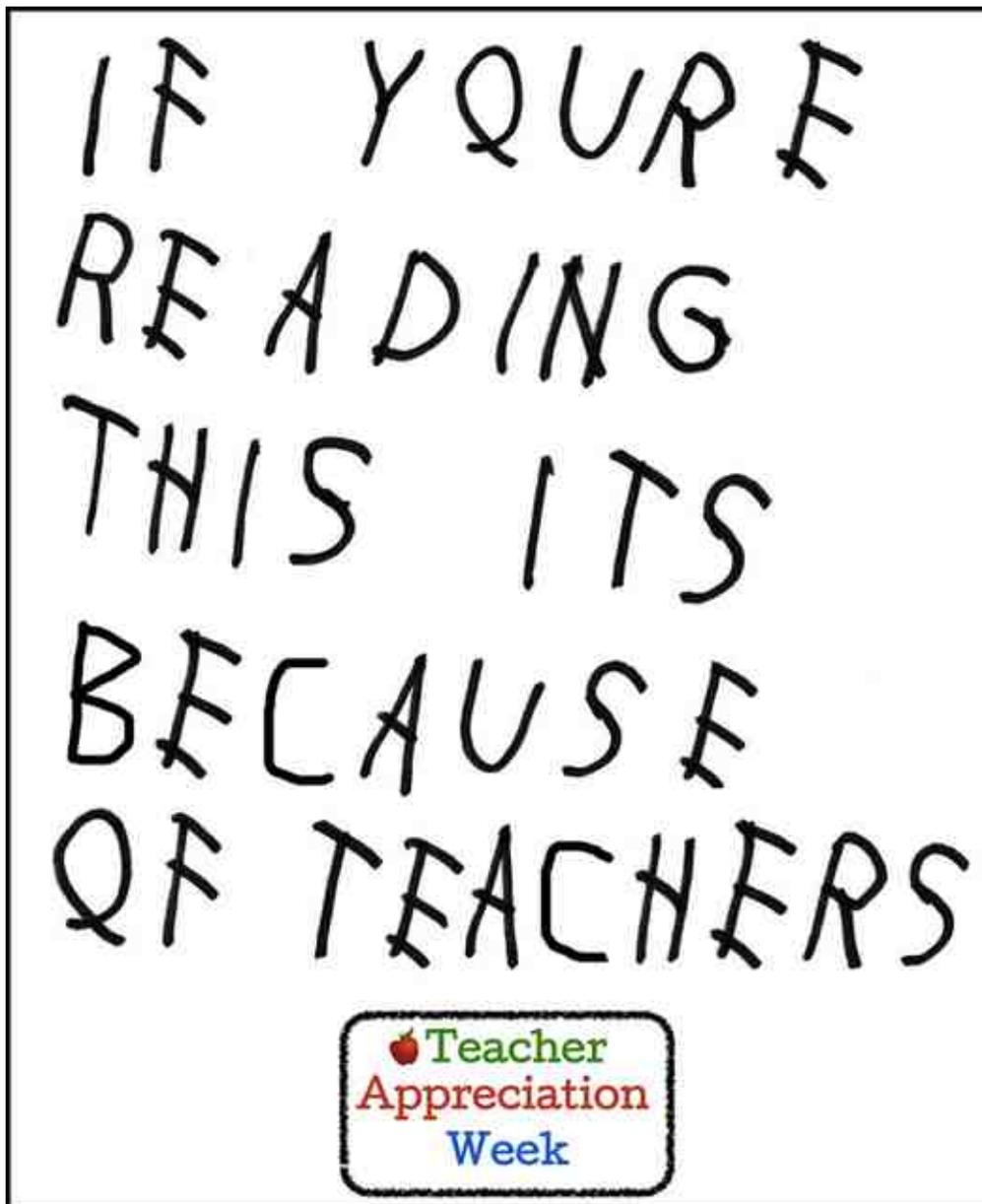


State of New York Tourism



Mountain Equipment Co-op





RPM Challenge





Cobs Bread



#OscarsSoWhite

402



#OscarsSoWhite

If your company is still on the fence about hiring my company that will only actually exist when someone hires it for the first time, then here's a few taglines that'll be sure to solidify your confidence in me. They don't all have to be great, but they do all have to be puns.

FedEx : Freight or Flight - We'll get it there.

Fogo Island Inn : Wake me up before you Fogo.

City of Pamplona Tourism : Get gored, not bored!

The Wallpaper Company
: Don't worry - this will be paintless!

Planned Parenthood : I. You. D?

Rolo : Rolo? YOLO!

Bing : One Bing to search them all, One Bing to find results, and in the darkness Bing the pain.

All Kinds of Musical Instruments:

- Need a guitar? Takamine !

- Want this accordion? You can Hohner for just a couple of C notes!

- Don't you think this piano looks sexy? Yamaha -nds would be happy bangin' on dem keys!

- Need a new kit? Sabian a drummer just got a whole lot easier!

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrhV3QTkNyw>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEs0-qTsPE4>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44t4qTajopU>
4. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/lightbulb.png>

December 13 - Jamie Foxx gets a commencement exercise (2018-12-13 02:22)

This isn't going to be a long speech. But I guess I never really needed to say that. Because you would've figured it out at some point, probably the end, and either way you were probably going to listen, or at least humour me, until I'm finished talking. You'd probably be happier if I didn't even mention the length of my speech. That only makes it longer, which as I've already assumed in my opening statement is something that you don't want. If you wished for me to stop talking it would only be more satisfying to your presumed expectations of a lengthy speech by ending sooner. The preambing at least should come to a close, and so it shall.

At last, you have graduated from whatever program your parents led you to believe you wanted to go into four years ago, or the one your high school crush selected and you thought now's your chance as long as you play your cards right and don't get too overzealous, or the one whose building is closest to the parking lot and campus bar. But realistically, this should be called a continuance address. Commencement denotes a fresh beginning, a nu start, a steeper curve on life's graph. And this is not that. It is another milestone that reminds you you're on a worthy path, but it was never what you wanted. You never had enough fun in college, and you only think you had fun in high school. You told yourself that you had to keep working hard to get into a good post-graduate program, so you could responsibly earn an adult's job and acquire your house and family and prepare for retirement.

While you're young, do everything you can for a short amount of time, especially activities that make you uncomfortable. If you have certain skills, put them aside and pursue other ones. Don't take the easy way out. You have the energy to move past failure and the openness to not only accept what comes your way but to soak in the new experiences and information without acrimony. You'll end up closer to where you should be.

Get married when you're twenty. Get married when you're ninety. Get married to a tree. Join a cult. Start a band. Follow the fun. And turn away when the fun stops. Surround yourself with people who make you laugh. But be willing to move on when they don't anymore. Clinging to friendships is constructive for no one. None of it matters, so don't force it our of fear or unease or false loyalty. No regets.

Do favours for people, and ask them to do favours for you. They'll be happy to help. Try to maintain a balance. First impressions mean a lot. If someone likes you or they don't like you, there's practically nothing you can or will do that will make them change their mind. If you don't believe me, think about what makes you change your mind about somebody after you've come up with their story in your head. Nobody thinks about you as much as you think they do. Nobody remembers what you did as much as you do. Accept this, and enjoy the relief. You'll take bigger chances this way too.

Respond to questions in stories, not in answers. Focus wholly on one thing at a time. Take out your headphones. Be a regular somewhere. Be deliberate in your habits. End the rushed routine. Be curious. Go deep into a few subjects so you'll have a few different references from everyone else. Coax the weird out of other people. The choice - and it is a choice - not to surround yourself with crazy people is just wrong. Elevate to medium talk immediately. Everything's a game.

They say to picture the audience naked. I find it's easier to picture them crying. Understand-

ing their vulnerabilities, determining their fears. The man in the hat standing in the back who accidentally cut you off in traffic to get here has to go home to a girlfriend with disabilities who yells at him for being late after he rushes home from working two jobs to support her and her medical bills which aren't covered by insurance because of a false claim she made in her past when she pretended her neck hurt after a car accident so she could stay home for an extra week watching her stories. He won't leave her because he wasn't raised like that, to just bounce when times get a little tough. He's someone you can count on to be there, through it all. He's here for his niece, whose parents couldn't bother to attend.

The woman in the second row, she just got dumped, by an abusive boyfriend, but she doesn't see it as the bounty that it is, because she's convinced she loves him and he is the father of her unborn child. She begged him to take her back, but he said she wasn't worth it, and no one would ever love her, and she believes him. She needs to, but doesn't turn around and find that guy in the hat, and connect with him on enough of a level here and now that he's help her realize she deserves to be appreciated, and he will to be the one to appreciate her. They would bump into each other later that week and end up going out for coffee. He'd feel awful about it but would ultimately leave his girlfriend, not for this new woman but partially because of something about her. They would get together, the relationship moving faster than either of them should have allowed considering their own recent personal issues, but still it would work for them. She would have the baby, the three of them would move into an apartment together, and he would raise the child like his own because it might as well have been. He would cook for her, treating the grocery store and the stove and the food and the plate and the dishes as necessary steps to seeing a genuine smile. She would introduce him to music that her parents used to listen to and they would go down to the only record store left in town and buy up old jazz records from the 40s. They'd go home and listen to the music and open a bottle of wine and light some candles, and then they'd laugh, as the feeling they couldn't explain, the feeling that all humans in history who have ever been in love know, grew stronger until they both understood each other wholly at the same time.

But instead, she's going to turn around after this story, see his ugly hat, and they'll both go home alone if not lonely, for the rest of their lives.

It's a little strange to think that I wrote this whole speech down before right now, like a few weeks ago. And then I memorized it, and decided in my head to say it, hoping that some of you found it funny, even though there's no joke. But here we are, at the time when the end happens.

December 14 - Vanessa Hudgens gets technological evolution and immobile humanity (2018-12-14 02:22)

Technology advances, relentlessly and exponentially, and we either advance with it or get left behind. I don't even mind the left behind, as I am a supporter and practitioner of the slow movement, but I know the world I live in. I can't pretend I don't get scared that the robots will take over and just turn us all into their minions. I've always thought the most powerful people, the ones who control the economy and the legal system and who knows what else, are about as close to robots as we'd get, the way they shake your hand and speak in that emotionless monotone and carry on as if they might not even know what an emotion is. Then I see videos of machines being more human than these robots, and I'm now waiting patiently to live out our own apocalyptic origin story. So this is sometimes.

When these ideas are getting to be particularly stressful, when I'm a point where I need to dissuade my thoughts and scoff at my paranoia of thinking it will actually happen in my lifetime, there's one place I like to go - a public bathroom. And not just any public bathroom. It needs to be a relatively fancy one, where everything is automated, because the failure rate on all of those sensors is just out of hand, and this remind me that they haven't figured it all out yet. The intent a lot of times is for you to not have to touch anything not connected to your body once you enter the bathroom, which I suppose is admirable from a germaphobic standpoint. From the toilet to the sink to the hand dryer to the door, I'm always willing to bop a button to make it do what it does, but the option isn't there, because we put too much trust in the robots before they deserved it. You end up waving to each porcelain appliance like it's your best friend who's across the street and doesn't see you there, and then you just hit everything repeatedly until it works, which it won't.

The most frightening technovancement is of course right in all of our pockets, or more likely in all of our hands. The ubiquity of the hyper-intelligent mobile device means that at every given moment, you are securely connected to everyone you know, and you have access to every piece of information that anyone anywhere has ever known. I'm discouraged when people take out their cell phones in the middle of a conversation, in a hypothetical context or in real life. But maybe I do it too. Because we all think we have really important matters to attend to somewhere else. All the time. We've turned into a planet of dejected Charlie Browns, staring down, arms unswaying, safe in our bubbles, as the world around us mutates without acknowledgement.

All the same, I loathe the propagation of the back-in-my-day bullshit. People were never better. Or worse. People simply are, and always have been. Infinite spectra of quality house everyone, have us all lined up as a dot, gradually making our way up and down. Some objective, most subjective, all real and changing all the time, even the ones that are unknown, underknown or unsure at times. Technology has only allowed given the worst people both anonymity and a platform where you're more likely to run into them. They just have an easier time executing and disrupting these days, while the righteous immunize themselves in tranquility.

Unfortunately, hyperbole is the only way to get noticed, and people like to get noticed. A "restored faith in humanity" is expressed even in the simplest of cases. Somehow you lost total faith in humans as a species, and still a single good deed, a wallet returned or a bully resisted, restored it wholly. A single person with infinite power to sway. There appears to be no consideration that we all exist on a spectrum. As mentioned, there are good people, bad people, great people, terrible people, and everyone can be any one of them at a time. One action should never have the power to change your view on humanity in general.

We live in interesting times. So has everyone, forever. And it goes.

December 15 - Adam Brody gets sketchy shorts (2018-12-15 02:22)

A newly appellated Tony Piman returns to his empty shop, still reeling but pretty convinced that he was only passed over for his dream job because of his old suppressive name. Like Jonathan Leibowitz and Cherylyn Sarkisian before him, he has spurned his parents and heritage in favour of his aspired cultural membership of celebrity.

But when his imaginary friend Christy alludes to how telling jokes - even ones as unique and astute as his, and even directly to the executive producer - may not have been the preferred approach to getting hired on a sketch show, he acquiesces. So he gets to work on what he learns is a packet, and in one whiskey-fuelled morning, his best sketches and shorts are ready for submission. Sure, most are only bare bones, but some are fleshed out, and he's certain that either way they have enough muscle to propel him to stardom.

[Editor's note: Title, followed by elevator pitch, followed by actual piece or a summary of.]

Dead Bunny - A group of covert masochists argue over who will assume the responsibility of putting a dying rabbit out of her misery, all of them acting like they don't actually want to do it.

Kevin: Well, friends. The vet said he needs to be euthanized. I wanted him to pass on to the next world next to his favourite tree, so I brought him here, with the people I love, so we can all say our goodbyes.

Colby: Kev, buddy, I'm really sorry about this. I know how much she meant to you. I can only imagine what you're going through right now. Listen, I'll take care of it for you, okay?

Petra: I don't know, Colb. I worked at an animal hospital when I was younger. I'll be able to make her final moments as painless as possible.

Jillian: Pet, I could never let you do that. I'll go grab a shovel and smash her over the head real quick like, her neck snapping in one swoop.

Petra: No no, we're at my house. I'll do it. I don't want any of you to have to live with seeing the life drain from her eyes as her head is crushed between these tongs I found under the deck.

Colby: Seriously, guys. I lived with her for years. It should be on me to grab her legs and pull them apart so they break so that she can't run away while I slice open her insides and spill her guts onto this picnic table.

Kevin: That's very sweet of all of you, but it just wouldn't be fair. It's my rabbit, and I should be the one to slit its throat and feel her blood bathe my hands in a cascading red liquid until there's nothing left.

Jillian: Oh, no, that wouldn't be right. I have my 9mm right here, and to make sure she doesn't feel a thing, I'll make sure to get her right between those pale eyes, her brains splattering all over the yard, left there to be devoured by maggots and rats until all her carbon returns to the biosphere in more forms than you can -

At this moment, the rabbit makes one last gasp for air and dies peacefully. The four friends look at each other, and the scene ends with all of them scrambling to recover up the animal's corpse so they can necromutilate her in their own way.

Car Free - A montage of the rise and eventual deterioration of a woman's life as told through the decals placed on the back windshield of her car.

1. A 'Sold' sign is still on the car as a young woman places a single sticker of a cartoon young woman on the window.
2. + A decal man
3. + A dog
4. + A baby
5. + Toddler boy; - Baby
6. + A baby
7. - Baby
8. - Man; - Dog
9. + Lawyer
10. - Toddler boy
11. - Young woman; + Older woman
12. + Cat
13. + Cat; + Cat; + Cat; + Cat
14. - Woman
15. - All cats
16. Car bursts into flames

A Sneaky Retrieval - Dialogueless, with old timey music coming from a player piano, getting increasingly intense with every climb attempt.

It opens with a view of a pair of sneakers tied together by the laces over hanging over a telephone line. Peter sees them, and he wants them, real bad. He starts off doing stretches and jumping real high to grab at them, but he knows right away there's no way he'll get them this way. So he goes and gets a pair of stilts, but falls off them clumsily and is too embarrassed to try again. Then he gets warned that the sneakers used to belong to a kid who got killed on this street, and this is a reminder

of that. He gives up and goes to get a drink in a bar, but while recounting his day to the bartender, he is informed that those sneakers are actually a signal to drug users that a drug dealer lives nearby. He feels duped, and he now looks at the acquisition of these sneakers as a public service, to keep the kids off drugs and whatnot. So he climbs the telephone pole and reaches for the sneakers, but they're just out of his grasp. He's determined though, so he dives off and snatches them, one in each hand. He's ecstatic and does a mid-air floaty dance, until he notices the laces breaking under his weight. He's slipping, then slipping some more, and still a bit more. Right before he's about to fall, the camera cuts to a later time, with the same view as the opening shot, except now there's two pairs of sneakers hanging over the telephone line - one with the first pair re-tied together with mangly laces, and the other belonging to Peter.

Menu Assistance - Two diners refuse to let the the server explain what turns out to be a very complicated menu.

An awkward couple on their first date takes their seats in a fancy restaurant. The server walks over to their table.

Server: Good evening! Have you eaten here before?

Harriet: No, but I think —

Server: Then let me tell you how our menu works.

Greg (annoyed with the insinuation): Uh, I think we'll be fine, thank you very much.

Server: Alright, suit yourself.

Server walks away.

Greg looks down at the menu, which is utter chaos, replete with riddles, rebus graphics, interactivity, mazes and the like. He glances over to Harriet, who is as perplexed as he is, but neither of them is willing to acknowledge they should ask the server for assistance. They work together to solve the first problem they see, for which the solution involves setting up the cutlery and tableware in a very specific placement. As the final spoon is turned just so, the table opens up and a demon sucks them down into another dimension. They're immediately tasked with fighting a swamp monster, using the menu for clues to determine his weaknesses. Once the monster oozes into the abyss in defeat, a cryptic crossword clue appears alongside a timer. Fireballs are getting thrown at them as they try to focus on the puzzle. They solve this one and then overcome a few more obstacles, and at the very end they each find themselves with a different card in their hand as they're transported back to their original seats in the restaurant. Exhausted and sweaty and covered in blood and grime, they're trying to regain their composure as the server comes back to the table.

Server (swiping the man's card from his hand): Ah, the chicken pomodoro - an excellent choice!

The Tentative Commandments - The original discussion about the Ten Commandments, where Moses is the straight man.

Moses: How about, "Thou shalt not kill"?

God: Well killing is sometimes just, and I kind of designed them so that they have to kill to get food, so I'm not so sure about that one. Ooh, what about "I am the LORD thy God"?

Moses: Jesus, God, that one doesn't even make any sense. We're trying to get them to be good people who treat each other with respect. Let's focus on telling them what they can and can't do.

God: Okay, okay, I get it. Like, "Thou shalt have no other gods"?

Moses: I guess that one's a bit better. It's a directive at least, but I think you're getting too focused on yourself. This is a diverse group of people, over every timeline throughout the rest of their history. We need to push for morality, things like, "Thou shalt not steal."

God: Yeah, yeah, I get it, that's a good one. No stealing. Wait, I have one! "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house." You know, no coveting other people's things.

Moses: I guess so, but I think the stealing takes care of that one. Coveting is mostly inside someone's head and they can't always choose what goes on in there. It needs to be an actionable item, something that's clear as to whether or not they're doing it.

God: Right... like, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!"

Moses (under his breath): Holy crow, the ego on this one...

God: Hey, I heard that!

Moses: I barely said —

God: I hear everything!

Moses: Kind of like Santa?

God: You know I invented Santa!! I! Me! I did everything!

Moses: Oh, vey. You're on your own, buddy. I'm converting to Pastafarianism.

Airport Insecurity - A [1]TSA agent repeatedly announces directives to passengers at a security checkpoint.

TSA Agent: Okay, everyone, nothing in your pockets. No phones, no keys, no wallets. Nothing. Remove all items from your pockets.

Traveller takes wallet and phone and of his pocket and places them in the basket.

Agent: No keys. No pickles, no caramelized onions.

Traveller (emptying pocket, finds full onion): Uh, what about raw onions?

Agent (checks with supervisor): No, no raw onions either. Nothing. No explosives, no math-amphetamines, no 18th century Peruvian stamps.

Traveller (reaching into back pocket): I have a 19th century -

Agent: Before or after the Battle of Chacabuco?

Traveller (scrutinizes stamp): It says 1844.

Agent (annoyed at traveller's historical ignorance): That's after. No, not that neither. Nothing, not one thing in your pockets.

Traveller: Okay, fine. Pockets are now completely empty.

Agent: You sure? No guns? No nail files?

Traveller: I have a pistol in my leg holster?

Agent: Sir, is that - I say, sir, is a holster a pocket?

Traveller: Well, no, but do you -

Agent: Go ahead then! Pockets, I'm only concerned with your pockets.

Newsception - Twilight Zonish, or Philip K. Dicky, and Jenny Slate can come back to play the newscaster.

News anchor: Today, a man - wait, this can't be right - (dumbfounded) he was arrested after swearing on live television. Jim Breems has more on that. Jim?"Jim: Yes, that's right, Oren. Someone at our very own station said what I will say is the f-word. You all know what word I'm referring to when I saw that, right? In case you don't, our language expert can explain the intricacies better than I ever could. Mary, please tell the folks at home what it is.

Mary: Well the f-word is a special word that begins with f and ends in u-c-k. Got it now, Jim?

Jim: Heh heh, you mean 'fireduck', Mary?

Mary: No, I do not. It's a different word, and you know it. In fact, we can hear it being broadcast right about now, as the offending party is about to say it, because destiny's a tough road. Isn't that right, Oren?

Oren: Oh, no. No, it's true. It's —

Two police officers approach Oren at his desk.

Tall cop: You're under arrest for profane speech on a public communications channel.

Oren: But I haven't said anything!

Other cop: Haven't you? Are you mad?

Oren: You're fucking right I'm mad!

Oren stares into camera as the handcuffs are cuffed to his hands.

Oren: No! NO! AHHHHHHH!

Go On! - A devolving conversation that might only work in Newfoundland, unless other people use the phrase in the same way.

Deb: I'm after having some go of it lately.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: Well, got hit by a car there, gettin' over to Duckworth, at a crosswalk too.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: Ended up bashing me leg off the bumper, had to go to the hospital to make sure everything was still on right.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: The hospital was cold, the nurse woke me up to give me painkillers, and the other missus in the room with me was coughing up a fit.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: The walls were white and someone'd marked it up with crayon. Did I mention how cold it was? I did, right? Well it was!

Anita: Go on!

Deb: I started thinking I didn't even mind the leg getting mangled.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: Well, I suppose it's something half exciting anyway. Everything else in my life has been pretty much the same for years.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: Same job, same bar, same people. I used to be right fun. I guess my life didn't turn out the way I thought it would.

Anita: Go on!

Deb: Maybe I've never actually been happy and I could hide it before 'cause no one ever listened to me like you're doing.

Anita: Go on!

Waiting for a Ride - There's no bus-iness like no-show bus-iness.

Eddie is waiting for at a bus stop in the rain. He's cold and wants and probably just got fired and doesn't know how to tell his wife. A series of busses drive by, with different phrases in place of the route numbers on the front screen.

First bus: "Not in service"

Second: "Not in service"

Third: "You didn't think this one would be in service did you?"

Fourth: "You sure there's even a bus that stops here?"

Five: "Everybody hates you. Including your wife."

Eddie starts his blubbering. He walks out in middle of street, with the intention of getting hit by the next bus. He closes his eyes.

The bus approaches quickly but stop right next to him. The door opens, and Eddit opens his eyes.

Oddly wise bus driver (smiling): Hop in. I'll take you where you need to do.

Eddie is reluctantly relieved and steps onto the bus.

The bus driver morphs into Eddie's deceased grandmother's ghost. She kicks him straight out the door and he falls to the ground and gets mud in his eye.

Proctologism - Two doctors punnily consider how to remove an object stuck up a patient.

The camera, placed just above patient's butt as he's on all fours on the clinic table, is facing two doctors assessing the situation. We can see the end of a strange object stuck up his butt.

Doctor: Don't worry, sir, we can rectumfy this situation.

Dr.: I can get behind that.

Doctor: Anus like the one we had last week?

Dr.: Kind of. Butthole'd on, I have a haunch it won't be so easy.

Doctor: Ass valid as your point is, I find this whole thing pretty fanny.

Dr.: I have one question for you, sir. Was it worth it?

The camera is now changed to the doctors' point-of-view and is pointed at the patient as he turns his head around.

Patient: I'taint all it's cracked up to be!

Yellow Toilet Bowl - Sometimes the only difference between Heaven and Hell is a toilet full of pee.

Betty, a sophisticated woman in her forties, newly divorced from her rich husband, is pale white, has white hair, wandering through her ALL-WHITE house (white roses, marble counters, etc), checking over details to make sure everything's perfect for her party tonight.

She discovers there's a bunch of pee in the toilet. She doesn't know where it came from, and can't figure out what to do or how to handle it. The cinematography is really important here because the yellow pee needs to be a stark contrast from the white everything else.

She puts toilet bowl cleaner in the toilet and flushes, but when it comes back up there's even more pee, and it's yellower.

The doorbell rings and she starts freaking out as the first guests are letting themselves in. She greets them in a tizzy that only gets exacerbated when someone wants to use the bathroom.

I forget what happens next but I think everyone at the party ends up drowning in pee.

1. <https://www.tsa.gov/>

December 16 - J. B. Smoove gets Juan Liner's reflections (2018-12-16 02:22)

How old do you have to be before you're allowed to not care anymore? I hope it's 32.

I'm pretty sure the Earth is just a spongy ball and the universe is one big bottle of Orbitz.

People always ask me, would I trade it all for an old rotten shoe? No sir, of course I wouldn't!

Every now and then I wonder if I'm too old to become a marshmallow.

I don't understand why everyone doesn't just do exactly what I want all of the time.

Why would anyone ever care if your fly is down, or if you have food in your beard, or anything else?

It's very important to know when to hold 'em, and know when to fold 'em, and know when to eat 'em. That's lesson number one in eating burritos.

You should say, "Do I sound like a crazy person?" repeatedly in a crowded place to determine whether or not you're a crazy person.

You can always tell how high-strung a person is based on how they respond to you telling them how high-strung they are.

You should be legally allowed to drink as soon as you can prove you understand how pointless and depressing the world is.

It wasn't Adam and Steve. Or Adam and Eve. It was Adam and Reeve. We're talking about the best portrayals of Batman and Superman, right?

I want to, but I just can't picture Bjork opening up a can of Puritan Beef Stew.

I just gave a bag of candy a look that said, "Get serious, now" because he thought he could stay over there on the counter and I wouldn't go get him.

You know when you just finished a Reese's and you see a little nibble left on the table so you suck it up with your mouth then it turns out it wasn't a nibble of an Reese's at all, but something else, still undetermined?

Sometimes I tap my butt to make sure I have my wallet, and sometimes I tap my butt to make sure I still have my sweet butt.

It is known that former professional baseball player Dock Ellis once pitched a no-hitter on acid. His name, in the phonebook, would be Ellis, D. → L-S-D. You know who would be absolutely blown away by that? Dock Ellis in the middle of his no-hitter.

I don't know how to smile. The proof is in the pudding. Look closer. That was a prank. It's only pudding in the pudding.

It should be the Tom Cruise game. Who the hell is Slavoj Žižek?

I bet people in the former Soviet Union like to tell their wives they're going out for a Leon Trotsky.

I like when someone goes to give you a high five and right before they yell "high five!" in case you weren't sure what his hand was doing up in the air like that.

Guns don't kill people. Well, except the people who get shot.

Why do 50 Cent and his friends only sip Bacardi when they party, when they could also be eating havarti? Double down, Fitty. Get dat cheese.

We all need to band together and cheer up the woman who says, "You have dialed a number to which long distance charges will apply."

John Goodman would make a great cloud in an animated movie.

When I drink coffee, I imagine a little man all hopped up on coffee bouncing around my brain. And he's best friends with that bee inside my phone, the one who gets all mad when someone calls me.

I like eating pears a lot more than I'm letting on right now, based on the lack of pears in my hand.

Righteous is my favourite form of indignation but my second favourite set of brothers.

If Toys R Us sells toys, what does Babies R Us sell? That's right - it's toys for babies. Which makes sense, really.

Chance had to add "The Rapper" after his name because people kept confusing him with the dog in Homeward Bound who ate a porcupine.

Will you hang out with me? Asking for a friend.

The real heroes are the ones who successfully get you to ditch the zero.

Whenever I'm not in a plane I feel under the weather.

Right before I boarded the plane I had terminal cancer.

Am I the only one who's fine dying surrounded by strangers and enemies?

What if the fly who won't leave you alone is my reincarnated grandmother? Stop yer swattin'!

Sure I'm just a bag of bones and meat and tendons and brains and hopes and dreams and capillaries.

I think the song Willaby Wallaby is about the Republican party trying to keep us down.

Every generation needs a good scare. WWII, Vietnam, 9/11, your phone battery dying right when Stephanie was about to tell you if Brandon actually has a crush on you or if he was only trying to make Carli jealous.

I'm going to change my name to True Story, so I could say that Argo was inspired by me. Then I'm going to change my other name to Argo, so I can say that I'm inspired by me. Because I am. And you should be too.

December 17 - Eugene Levy gets a mundane run-in with Catherine O'Hara (2018-12-17 02:22)

I walk past a woman who could have been Catherine O'Hara's second cousin. She gives me a look like she is, in fact, Catherine O'Hara herself, and she seems inclined to talk about it.

Me: Oh, hi, good morning.

Catherine (smirking): Do you know who I am?

Me (buying time, forgetting her name): Are you kidding? You're a legend. I'm actually - I know Marty Short pretty well.¹

Catherine: Really? He was just in town last week.²

Me: I know. I couldn't make his show but we managed to get together earlier that day, long enough to share a pot of tea anyway. He and my parents grew up together. They still live back east.³

Catherine: Really? What's your name?

Me: Oh, sorry. I'm Ian Grimbly.

Catherine: Grimbly?

Me: Yeah, he got the name for Ed from Dad, but I swear he's nothing like that.

Catherine: I had no idea. The name sounds so -

Me: Made up? Yeah, I know.

Catherine: What a cute dog.

Me: Thanks. This is Toast. He's the best.

Catherine: Well, have a good day.

Me: I can't stop this. I can't stop this feeeeeeling.

¹ While I do not actually know him, I just finished his memoir and so I feel comfortable providing any details that she might ask me about him. I heard from a successful celebrity stalker that telling them either you've met before, or that you know one of their friends, will put them at ease and make them confident you won't kill them.

² He and Steve Martin had just performed their *An Evening You Will Forget for the Rest of Your Life* together in Vancouver.

³ This is not technically a lie, although she would likely presume I meant Toronto, which people up here call east.

December 18 - Keith Richards gets altered trips (2018-12-18 02:22)

Four people, or is it five, undergo a religious feeding, a ritualized beginning, preparing for the unrepairable.

Nothing happens, and a request for more is submitted. Patience is prescribed, rightfully so.

Each room is its own universe. Vibrations and tones shift in waves. Massive transitions brought on by a new sound or a dimmed light.

There are pro-packers and anti-packers, speeches petitioning for each side.

At last, pro-packing is unanimous, until a snowsuit becomes a naked man in an instant. Salvador painted him long before he was born.

No one knows where the ground is. A spirit guide doesn't see himself that way. At least archaeology is now a moot point.

Previously, friends are somewhere else with something else and we almost join them. Instead a mind-bending record plays, accompanied by a performance on the wall. It still hasn't ended, but I move on.

Pineapple bang! Exploding fruit, a future tattoo as a memento.

There is snow on a hill, and it means everything. Law and order is iniquitous.

The next day is strange, and I take a different path home, through the alleys. It's the only way I go anymore.

I'm not the first to go through this day in a life. Ants march in unison but I never care again.

A bag holds whatever is needed. A pomegranate comes first.

Standing over an eternal associate with a boulder. Lay it down gently and wonder why it took so long.

A local newscaster who shares one of our last names is inside asleep, while we sit on his porch in relaxation and amusement.

Purple clouds engulf us and change our direction. Biking down a hill, an accidental staredown with the man who signs my paycheques. Hiking to a bay not so different from where my father grew up. Blueberries have never been so gratifying. An arranged assault breaks out in a park. We want to save the dog but end up stealing him. A never-ending bus ride to an escalator, a prelude to a knife throw in a forest. Floating on, outside a jolly green house with a parrot squawking in the basement. A shared song on a trail, where we bump into an officer who is on our side. Trapped in a house on a hill with randoms. The couch sucks me in.

I join my friend inside a coffee machine, but I leave him too early, not knowing how it will come back to haunt us.

A psychonautical disaster in a cabin I wanted to one day call my own. Tragic hipsters propelled into the extremes.

Temporary insanity is expected, and can even be a goal, but not like this.

Never again. I know I'll be fine, but watching it devolve around me is excruciating.

Fire spreads, ulterior motives that prime distrust. The tears belong to all of us. The table hemorrhages comfort.

The dog joins us but leaves when he senses he's a little too late.

Asserting how great it is the control he has over his world. Picking up the mountains and throwing them away, harnessing lightning as it appears. What's he saying to you guys, the guy singing?

I try unsuccessfully to convey the story of Icarus to a man undergoing an acute bout of psychosis, willfully contaminating a garbage can.

It doesn't matter. This place will look the same as when we arrived by the time we leave. It's all just the passing of time. You will be the only one who remembers any of it. Right now she's crying, and later she won't be. None of it is real. It doesn't matter.

He might be right on some level, but either way I clean it up.

The worlds changing in every moment, continuous, from a kaleidoscope to fear to certainty to love. The fear sticks around too long. Bring us back to love.

The family next door, their thoughts are partially correct but completely wrong.

Staring at a coin, spinning a planet, not acknowledging the company. Still shiny, still throbbing.

Past horror revisited, contradicting itself.

The visual lake, pulsating colours and energies, ripples an invite. A seemingly normal discussion can only happen at the edge of the water.

You left, you broke the one rule. You left last time.

No, you broke the one rule. You flew too close.

Look at me. Look me in the eye. Face it. You're afraid to see the truth. It's right here. I'm trying to show it to you but you don't want to see it. You claim you do but you don't.

His eyes blind me. There are two pairs, each one an eclipse. I can't look directly at him, at them, and he knows it. Trying to get me to face myself, because there's only me. It's all for me. That shouldn't alter the behaviour, but still needs to be kept in mind.

What happened? There's no going back.

Just between us, nothing is between us.

Until an unwavering belief that I want him gone grows too strong. It is becoming mutual.

Will it ever go away?

I have nothing reassuring to say, except yes, with limited confidence.

Although we know it can, this is not supposed to happen.

He won't listen. He chastises like it affects me. He doesn't care. It's a good thing I don't either.

He will not go to bed, even though it is all any of us want, even after I pretend to go first.

Apparitions on the ceiling of the most ridiculous fractals imaginable, a timely reminder of the infinite joke.

I leave early, without saying goodbye, and they join me.

December 19 - Brandon Sanderson gets writing reflections (2018-12-19 02:22)

Written without disingenuity by a guy under a tree at the top of a hill.

I often turn to [1] famous writers for advice , some sort of [2] guidance so I can get better at crafting a story, constructing a character, creating a world.

Then I turn it back on myself, to see if my own thoughts on the writing process can hold any value to me or my eventual scribblings. This is what I have so far.

Writing is a waste of time, but it's the least waste of time.

Artist and farmer are the only true useful professions.

I wonder who would call me an artist if they knew the things that I do. The things that I think.
I wonder who I'd call one.

Focus. Remember the water.

I'm a struggling writer without the struggle or the writing.

If you're a writer, you're a writer. And I'm not a writer. Am I?

I write for me, which is to say, I write for you.

It doesn't need to be good. It just needs to be written down.

We're hardest on ourselves, and we have to be.

I'm too old to get really good at anything.

A big change needs to happen, so I can be more honest, about what I want to do.

Even if what I write isn't funny, or great, if I'm accurate in my assessment of the actual level of quality, then that can be enough.

Actually, I'll stick with delusion.

Will the birds keep it down here? I'm trying to concentrate.
On what, I still haven't figured out.

Ask people for help. Ask people questions.

Make jokes and references more specific.

Incorporate artists and pieces I've seen into my writing.

Get rid of "I think"s and "I believe"s. Be assured, even when there is no need.

I'm not reliable, so I don't see why my narrator should be.

Unfortunately, I know very little, and this is all it is. Hopefully someday it becomes bigger. Until then, I'm just writing.

The difference between "something I like" and "something I think other people will like" is something.

Everything now is about speed, immediacy. Being the first one to break a story, to publicly de-

clare a point of view.

Take your time. Life isn't going anywhere. These stories mean nothing.

Write with patience.

To be able to create without concern for the current events in the world around, that is the sigh of relief.

More than the idea itself, the note needs to remind me of my mindset at the time.

Imagine if I had to defend things I said ten years ago, last month, or immediately preceding this sentence.

It must be interesting to know so many people are going to read something you wrote. That has to affect what you put out.

Some material needs to be tested in more than one medium.

Find the right word. Climbing a mountain is too passive, too common. Scale the mountain. Ascend it. Clamber if you have to. But stop climbing. It doesn't do anyone any favours.

The trick, the technique, the talent, it's all in the translation.

All of the writing has to come from a vague memory.

If you're fully experiencing life, your focus is on the experience, now, and nothing else. There's the capacity to remember so much more.

So you laugh. You have to.

Is the fact that I might be dying an excuse not to write? It should be the opposite, but it's not.

I've never been tested. I've never tested myself.

I want to be prolific. By whose standards?

How many stories do I want to tell?

Am I inspired out of admiration, ego, boredom?

I am more inspired by substandard than otherworldly art. Or at least somewhere close to the same amount.

I would blame the internet for my laziness before, but it's a product, not a symptom.

I need to force myself to be productive. I force myself to need to be productive.

I will never have to worry about a blank screen again.

I cannot decide whether or not I want a blank page to start.

I cannot decide whether or not I want a blank mind to start.

I'm not bouncing my stories off willing critics. That's gotta be a mistake.

Submit. Open yourself up to criticism.

Critique not by complaining, but by making something better. Or just making something.

My ever-realized fear is that I will stumble upon (someone else's) words that should have been mine, reading them before I get a chance to write them.

It's supposed to inspire me to work faster. To show people. Maybe it does. But not enough.

If you inevitably hate everything you write in six months anyway, how can you not release something as soon as it's finished?

We all need muses.
We all need to muse.

Only consume enough content to inspire you to make your own. Only ingest seeds of inspiration. Don't be afraid of the word content, but limit your own use of it.
When you're at a loss, read a book. Don't turn yourself off, even if it's the easier way at the time, even if it's way easier.

The story is more interesting than the life. It has to be.

Answer questions with stories, not answers.

The light, the scenery, the scene - it all needs to serve the story.

Every scene should be able to stand alone.

Write stories concise and interesting enough that they can also work as a series of sentences.

I used to collect stories. Now I tell them.
Or is it the other way around?

Give more people stories. Acquire more for myself. Play different roles for single encounters.

Should I be more antagonistic in my everyday life, just for the stories?

We should be encouraged as a society to give each other stories. It's time we realized what we're doing here.

Unexpected relationships make for interesting stories.

Don't advocate or pick sides. Reveal the story and let the audience figure it out for themselves.

The plot doesn't always have to be moving forward. We don't need conflict to be introduced, played with then resolved. A lot of life is filler. Your level of satisfaction from this filler determines how happy you are.

Find the characters, go with them, pick up their lines that I already wrote along the way.

The characters are what's important.

It's about people who've been through something together.

Find the right dynamic between characters.

Each character has their own goals, not always overt, sometimes never discovered.

They don't need to serve the story as long as they serve themselves.

Does he serve the story? Or does he only serve the drinks?

Each character needs a level of vulnerability, enough to make you care about them, from even one standpoint.

Allow the characters to act out of character. People act differently at different times, depending on the circumstance, the company, their mood, the rest.

Most interactions in real life are people telling stories, not creating them.

The characters should tell stories.

And it's okay for a character to forget a story halfway through. The other characters will give triggers, one word or so, trying to bring the first character back. It's more realistic.

Unintentional self-deprecation, or unknowingly demonstrating one's own personal quirks and flaws, is funny. Self-disillusionment is funny. Mean is not.

The writing makes you feel different about the writer. The writer makes you feel different about the writing.

I don't want to know what they look like.

I listen, organize and edit. But they write.

Anything I write about writing that has any substance, a better writer has written before.

The reader decides what it means. The writer can only intend.

I mainly consider myself a writer because of how much I like using eponymous and penultimate. Writers fucking love those words.

Use the first "fuck" late - have it mean something. Even if it didn't here.

How do you become a writer? I suppose you can start by writing. That's where I get stuck.

When you're always joking, it means more when you're serious. Cry laughter, not wolf.

I want it to be funny because life is funny, not because (the) jokes are funny.

Even the term "making fun of" is considered to be mean. But making fun is what we should all want to contribute to.

A comedian is someone who thinks of the best thing to say five minutes later.

Write drunk, edit drunk. Submit sober. Read rejection letter drunk. Write scathing "you-don't-know-what-you're-missing" letter to the publisher very drunk. Regret sending letter hungover. Go to bar sober. Tell bartender about your lost potential drunk. Yell at no one angry. Go out for a smoke agitated. Come back and have a drink calmed.

The more you learn about a medium, the less it becomes art and the more it becomes science. I don't want to critique as I attempt to absorb, commenting on my own consumption as it happens, losing the wonder.

Writing is solitary and reading is solitary. But the two come together to connect you with everything else, to calm you.

The invitation to join is open, but you have to write it yourself, which isn't always easy.

It is one that you conceive yourself, that only you could have created, based on a series of experiences that you've had, that you cannot share with anyone else.

You can only join through practice, and reading, and learning, and dedicated thought.

As someone who writes, I don't understand how someone can not. What do they do with their thoughts? Is this why everyone is so anxious or depressed?

I guess everyone has, or should have, their art. But writing makes the most sense for most people, doesn't it?

I work to run with ideas more than let them disappear. Give them a life, then let them die, in-

stead of losing the moment right after it comes to me. The ideas don't need to be great to begin with. That's not the determining factor as to whether or not I will follow through. It just takes a bit of effort on my part to decide to continue with it. And who knows what I might learn along the way. A relatively simple or substandard idea can turn into something meaningful to me, or ideally to someone else as well.

These things we do just for ourselves, that we don't actually want to finish. This gets realized about halfway through, but we want to finish to prove that we can, kidding ourselves that this part is creative.

Without a project of sorts, or a hundred, however small or irrelevant, the boredom gets to be too much.

When I bore myself, that's the worst.

I can't try to do too much.

I can't do too much. But I can try.

1. <http://ismith.ca/resource/writers-atop-writing/>

2. <https://brandonsanderson.com/writing-advice/>

December 20 - Jonah Hill gets a man alone (2018-12-20 02:22)

I have this idea for a series of vignette videos, written by, produced by, directed by, shot by, starring me, as a character who might have been partially inspired by me, home alone, waiting for the world to turn.

A fluffy dog, based on Toast, played by Toast, is around too, primarily so the main character doesn't sound so crazy when he's talking out loud. When the dog is asleep, the man talks to Google, anthropomorphized by a sentient device that exists in real life too.

Many scenarios involve him making his way through life's meniality, encountering challenges that mean more than they seem. A select few can be found here.

In the introductory scene, he's sitting in front of his laptop, writing a story. As he types directly into the WordPerfect software, he becomes inundated by a series of internet distractions. Pop-ups keep popping up on the screen without him doing anything to trigger them. Social media feeds, listicles, gossip sites. He can't close them fast enough in his attempt to return to his very important writing. Photos of dogs, photos of cats, photos of dog and cat friendships. He desperately wants to write this story, but the internet has other plans. Finally, he takes a heavy sigh and gives up. Windows fill the screen until the computer crashes. He turns to Google for some soothing music.

"Hey Goo Goo."

She remains dormant.

"Goo goo! Hey dere, googie googie. Pay attention to meeeee."

Nothing.

(enunciating) "Hey Google."

A flicker of light.

"Play Beethoven."

"Okay. Playing Bryan Adams."

Summer of '69 begins playing from the speaker.

He makes a frustrated, unintelligible sound during the opening riff. Then he looks around to confirm he's alone. He jumps out of his seat and plays air guitar, dancing all the while and slapping his belly.

He's just after getting home from work and all he wants is a nice cold beer. There's one bottle left in the fridge, so he takes it out then starts on his search for an opener. He can't find it anywhere, and the beer continues to beckon him. Eventually, he finds a lighter and tries to open the bottle that way, using torque and whatnot, but with no success. He then places the top of the neck against the counter and tries to bang the cap off that way, again unsuccessfully. His frustration is growing to the point where he sees himself as a failure as a man.

Finally, he goes to his gun cabinet and takes out some sort of gun, shooting it at the bottle, which holds steady and unopened on the counter somehow. The room is now littered with bullets and bullet holes and the man has no energy left to do anything but collapse to the ground. His girlfriend walks in at that moment and doesn't really notice him on the floor, but she does see the beer bottle on the counter. She picks it up, twists the top off with ease and takes a cool, refreshing gulp.

He's standing at the railing of his third-floor balcony and sees a young, happy couple walking below on the sidewalk. He strolls casually to his fridge and grabs a carton of free-range organic eggs before heading back outside. He tosses them even more casually over the side, coming very close to hitting the people. They glance up in shock and probably disgust, but he's only shrugging up there, not giving a care. Later, the guy from the couple and some of his friends show up and throw eggs of their own up to his floor. He ends up catching three of them, juggling for a bit, then lying down for a nap, as the sun sets across the water.

He's baking a pie, wearing his cool pie baking outfit, proud of himself and eager to eat the soon-to-be-baked pie. He gets a bit antsy and keeps taking it out of the oven too early to check the internal temperature. He's careful to put it back in very gently, because he only has one oven mitt and doesn't want to burn his other hand by being forced to use it as support. Once it's finally hot enough, his smile beaming, he picks it up off he baking sheet but immediately drops it onto the

kitchen floor. While the dog laps it up with delight, he curls up into a ball and rolls down the stairs.

He opens the freezer and grabs a tub of delicious ice cream. Upon removing the lid, he notices immediately that the ice cream is not level, as he likes it to be, but has instead been pilfered indiscriminately. [1] He has an idea as to who may be the culprit but doesn't want to assume because it makes him look like a butt. Fortunately, he is able to reduce the entropy, bringing balance to the universe, after a series of carefully selected bites. It ends with a sign of relief and a mini solo dance party.

The whole video is a close-up of his mouth, where he's looking into a mirror. It starts off with his lips closed tightly then barely turning into a very small 'o'. It gradually and slowly gets bigger and bigger until his mouth is wide open, an oral crescendo with not a peep being made.

This one opens on a shot of vegetables being sliced on a cutting board. He's cooking a meal and gets hot pepper juice in his eye. The next few minutes is him navigating the apartment, searching for relief however he can get it. He pours milk over his face, hits his head off the wall to spread out the pain, and besides that he's making a weird growling noise that gets his dog in on the action. In the end, he's still suffering.

He's standing in front of the toilet, about to pee. He looks to left and eyes the garbage can. Considering how he's never done it before, he turns and pees in it, then turns back to the toilet for the last few drops, before turning around and walking out of the bathroom. Without even washing his hands!

After lighting a couple of tea lights and getting Google to play him a [2] Happy Jawbone Family Band song , he sinks into the filling bathtub. The water is too hot so he lifts most of his body outside as he waits for some of the cold water to even it out. Once comfortable, he talks to a [3] rubber alien and asks it probing questions about its life. The shadows from the candles make a crude cityscape and briefly turns into a real place full of sonder. Suddenly, a loud plop sound startles him. He looks own and notices a fish swimming around casually. They become friends for a minute.

There's a bonus episode called In the Wild that comes out long after the first series of videos is over. It takes place in the supermarket, and it starts with the guy walking in through the automatic doors as he overhears two people talking about how the only Huy Fong Sriracha plant might have to shut down because it's making all the surrounding area stink right bad. So he ends up in the international cuisine aisle and reaches for a bottle of Sriracha, which he'd planned on getting anyway because his current one is almost empty. He moves along with his cart but quickly realizes he might need another bottle if a supply shortage is possible. He turns back and takes another one off the shelf. About to continue on again, he shakes his head incredulously, contemplating for a minute that he might only have one backup bottle while the whole world is going mad looking for the sauce. He grabs another, then another. It's at this time he considers what a great gift a bottle of the recently discontinued hot sauce will make to his friends. He ends up with a cart full of Srirachas and is pleased with his smart grocery shopping idea. He returns home to find out all's well again in Irwindale, and the false alarm has obviously led to a foolish abundance of rooster sauce in his house.

You've all been had. This whole Man Alone series was only created so I could amass a devoted following of viewers in order to product integrate my new Sriracha + mayonnaise + secret spices concoction, available now anywhere hot sauce is sold. If you look carefully, you can actually see a bottle of the sweet stuff in every episode, to aid in the subliminality of it all.

[Editor's post-post edit: The author's growing Saucy Stacy company just went public and while you're working hard he'll be barely working, in the sun sipping rum cocktails being fanned by a trained malamute. Enjoy your shovelling, snowballs.]

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/october-26-happy-birthday-hillary-clinton/>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsrHMNhqubI>
3. <http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/space-alien.png>

December 21 - Samuel L. Jackson gets a post-surgery hospital stay (2018-12-21 02:21)

I wake up, disoriented entirely, entirely disoriented. I cannot see, I can't move. An unfamiliar miasma impedes my awareness of self. Or maybe it's the drugs. A collection of tubes protrudes from the conventional orifices as well as a few new ones, rendering my own remaining organs unnecessary for now, irrelevant to my continued survival.

I'm still searching for my bearings when a nurse tending to a patient in a nearby bed notices that my eyes are open. In very little time, a team of medical professionals surround my bed, prodding me with questions, making sure I'm alive and testing for lucidity. I'm in too much discomfort to be dead, I assure them with a Diving Bell and the Butterfly swagger. But my communicative attempts are ineffective, the words suppressed in my brain as my parched lips and vocal system remain sealed.

As I rebuild the world around me, my leading theory is that I've been stabbed in the mid-section repeatedly, but very carefully. Every breath is a struggle, with my relevant muscles working to reestablish their utility on each inhalation. Eventually, I discover that I'd undergone a successful ten-hour surgery to remove a tumour, my stomach and an incidental duodenum. Fortunately, no whipple had been necessary and so my kidneys and pancreas are intact. Apparently I'm on a road to recuperation. But something doesn't feel right.

The next two days is a complete blur, and over two days after my viscera were medically pilaged, I am still not fully of this world. Even as I'd been providing regular status updates to the staff, I somehow neglected to mention pertinent information involving my actual state, and so nobody senses that there is something seriously wrong. However, after receiving the results for a standard post-operative assessment, one of my surgeons evidently sees a reading that indicates I am being poisoned from the inside. He and his team of seven enter my room and I'm asked how I feel. I answer that I have some nausea. With a concerned look, he implores me to divulge any other side effects.

"Oh yeah, and I haven't been able to extract myself out of a [1] perpetual state of intense hallucinations since the operation."

He'd been anticipating a similar response and picks up the pace. It's 5:30pm on a Friday, and he hurriedly tracks down a couple of other doctors before they leave for the weekend, in order to run some crucial tests. On the elevator ride down to the first floor, he stares at me with honest deflation, and this is the first time I truly consider I won't live through this.

It turns out my abdominal cavity has been slowly filling up with bile, and the resulting fever is what led to the phantasmagoria. Emergency surgery is scheduled for the following morning so that my surgeons can fully explore the cause of the internal leak. They cut me open to find that my gallbladder has been punctured during the initial operation, so they remove that and close me back up. It's as if I am a physician's punching bag, getting mugged of my body parts at every opportunity. I half hope they take everything except my appendix.¹

I wake up this time surprised to be doing so but much more aware of my environment and legitimately able to begin my recovery. I remember that I'd scheduled a tweet to be posted a few months from now, if I did end up dying, that just said "Boo". The thought that that might play out was so funny to me it was a little disappointing that it wouldn't be necessary. I'd always wanted to [2] donate my body to comedy, and that would have been as good a chance as any.

Of course, I'm again immobile and entirely reliant on tubes for most bodily functions. I'm in significant pain and distress as well, which will continue for a couple of weeks, mitigated only by routine doses of morphine that solidify my inability to think or move. Not eating, drinking, or performing conventional excretion is confusing. Only synthetic conduits are currently available for both input and output, and I consider the possibility that I died and came back as a prototype of a robot.

The following days revolve around the perpetual yearning for water. My mouth is a desert. My kingdom for a drop. My recovering digestive system must be kept entirely clean and clear and under control, and so even a sip of water is out of the question. But every few hours my mouth is allowed to be dabbed with a pink sponge that had been dipped in water with immense frugality, and these moments are all I care about and may ever care about again.

[audio m4a="http://ismith.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Swab-Of-Water.m4a"][/audio]

The first part of my post-op hospital stay is foolishly monotonous, as well as seriously dull, and really fucking boring. Most of the initial healing consists of staying completely still doing nothing, letting my body slowly regain incremental strength, before I can become actively involved in the rehabilitation. Communicating with anyone is difficult and uncomfortable, and my body is so exhausted that I can't even use my hands to type or use my phone.

I reside in a shared room, and I am convinced that Chewbacca's voice was based on every other patient in my vicinity. In the bed next to mine is a retired high school principal. One of his "friends" keeps visiting him and spends his time here loudly passing along information that the guy he's talking to clearly does not give a shit about. There's an Asian man situated across from me whose entire extended family shows up at the same time every day, although only one person ever speaks to him. At night, the nurses complain to each other about their jobs. I don't blame them, but they still need to realize how ridiculous their gripes sound to people who just had cancer and might get it again and won't be able to stand up for the foreseeable future.

I see a number of different doctors throughout my time as an in-patient, and for some reason, their conversation starter is inevitably asking me what I do for a living. Just because you guys are all obsessed with yours doesn't mean everyone is, especially people who aren't and shouldn't be thinking about work in any way. A social worker comes to see me after my surgery to see how I'm handling everything. "Do you know if they found anything malignant?" she asks. I respond, "You mean in the malignant tumour they removed?" She flips through her notes with a confused look. "Uhh, so how's Nellie holding up?" I think we're done here, ma'am.

One of the tubes connected to me is a catheter, which keeps my body from having to urinate all by itself. Several days after my second surgery, the doctors want to remove it in the hopes that I can start using my bladder again. Breathe in, I am directed. I do, as a nurse yanks the tube out of my urethra. Did you just cringe? Well you only had to read about it. I lay in the bed with a plastic jug that serves as a mobile toilet. Lying down is not the customary position for such an act, but I give it a shot for a few hours, to no avail, as my bladder fills up again. It's as if I have completely forgotten how to pee, and I ran out of time, so a temporary catheter is needed to keep my bladder from exploding. Later that day, this one gets yanked out as well, and I try again. This time, a warm towel is placed on my stomach - er, my gut - in the hopes of inspiring the process. I inch my way to the bathroom, every step as difficult as the last. I sit down on the toilet and try to pee. Nothing. I've at least forgotten about my severe thirst for awhile, with my only goal now to stimulate my bladder to prevent another catheter insertion and subsequent yanking. I breathe deeply and focus my energy. I channel all of my mind's power to persuade my body to follow this simple order. Dribble dribble. It is a success. The nurse congratulates me and I feel oh so special that I peed on my own. It's the little wins, you know?

As time moves forward, I start to stroll around the ward, regaining the ability to walk. Eventually, the tubes are removed one by one, and I feel increasingly human. Every day is more manageable, more productive, more encouraging than the one before.

And then one day I'm discharged, sent home to start my new life without half my digestive system, and fortunately, without any cancer either.

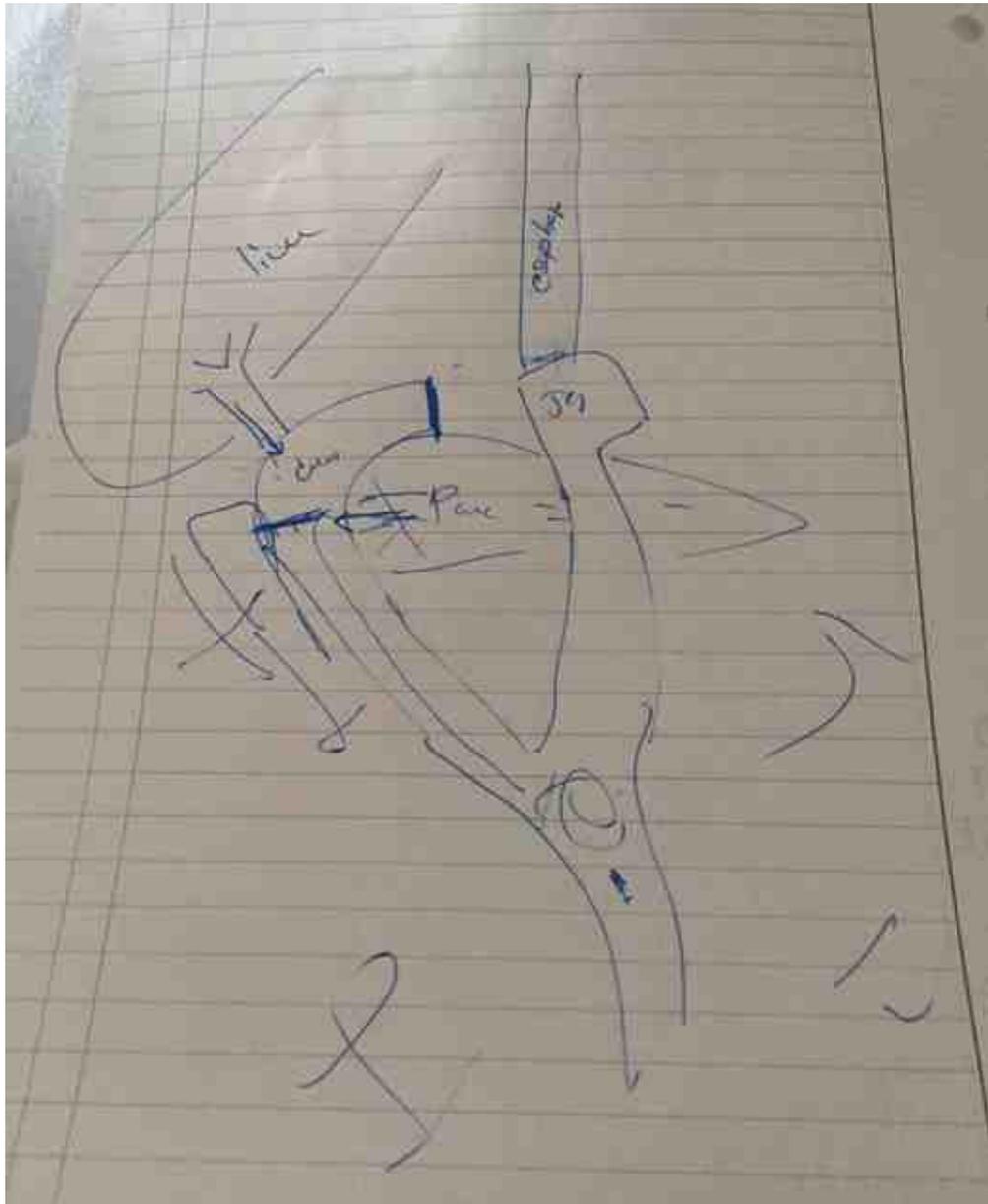
¹ I've come up with a premise for David Blaine's next special. He can remove his internal organs one by one, to show how few you need to still live. Realistically, you don't need a: stomach, gallbladder, appendix, one kidney, one lung, spleen, both hands and feet... And he can do the whole thing in a big ice cube hanging off the International Space Station.



Surgery is a success! ☐



A paralytic man with a tube in his nose that he will rip out in his sleep, triggered by a [3] dream .



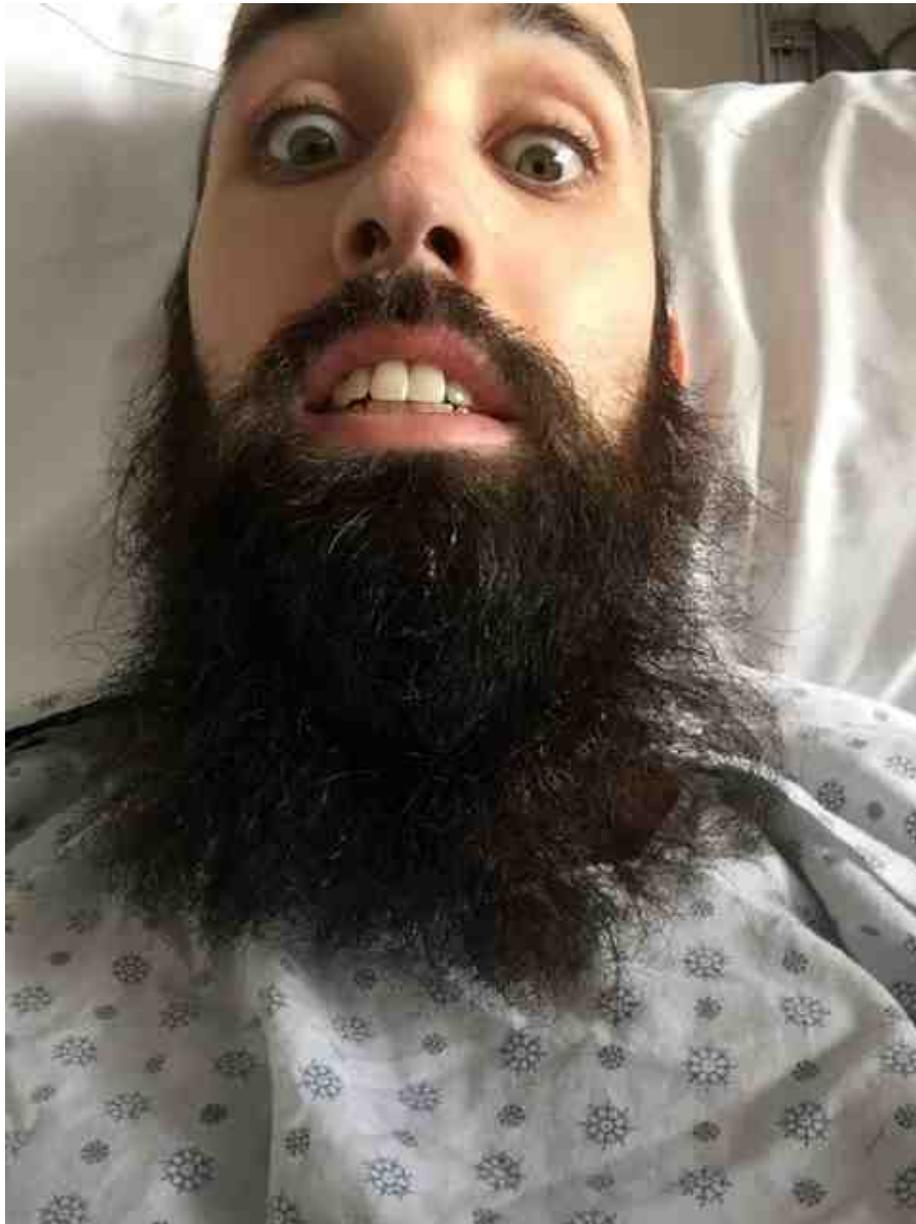
My new digestive configuration



Kelly's portrait of me as a patient



Smelling markers is a decent substitute for tasting food



Prior to the first surgery, the anaesthesiologist wanted to shave my beard. I won that battle anyway.



Toast comes by for a visit and is only mildly terrified of my friend the tube apparatus.

Vancouver Coastal Health
 Preventing and treating disease

Prevent Pneumonia

Remember to **ICOUGH**SM everyday

INCENTIVE SPIROMETRY: Every 30 min
 To open up your lungs (3 times)

COUGHING & deep breathing: Every 30 min
 To clear your lungs (3 coughs)

ORAAL CARE: 3 times per day
 A clean mouth is safer

P: Have the head of bed up – Ask how high
 This helps your lungs expand

ET MOVING: Movement is good for you!
 Ask about your personal activity plan

HAVE A CONVERSATION:
 You're at risk to get pneumonia!
 Talk to your care team about pneumonia prevention

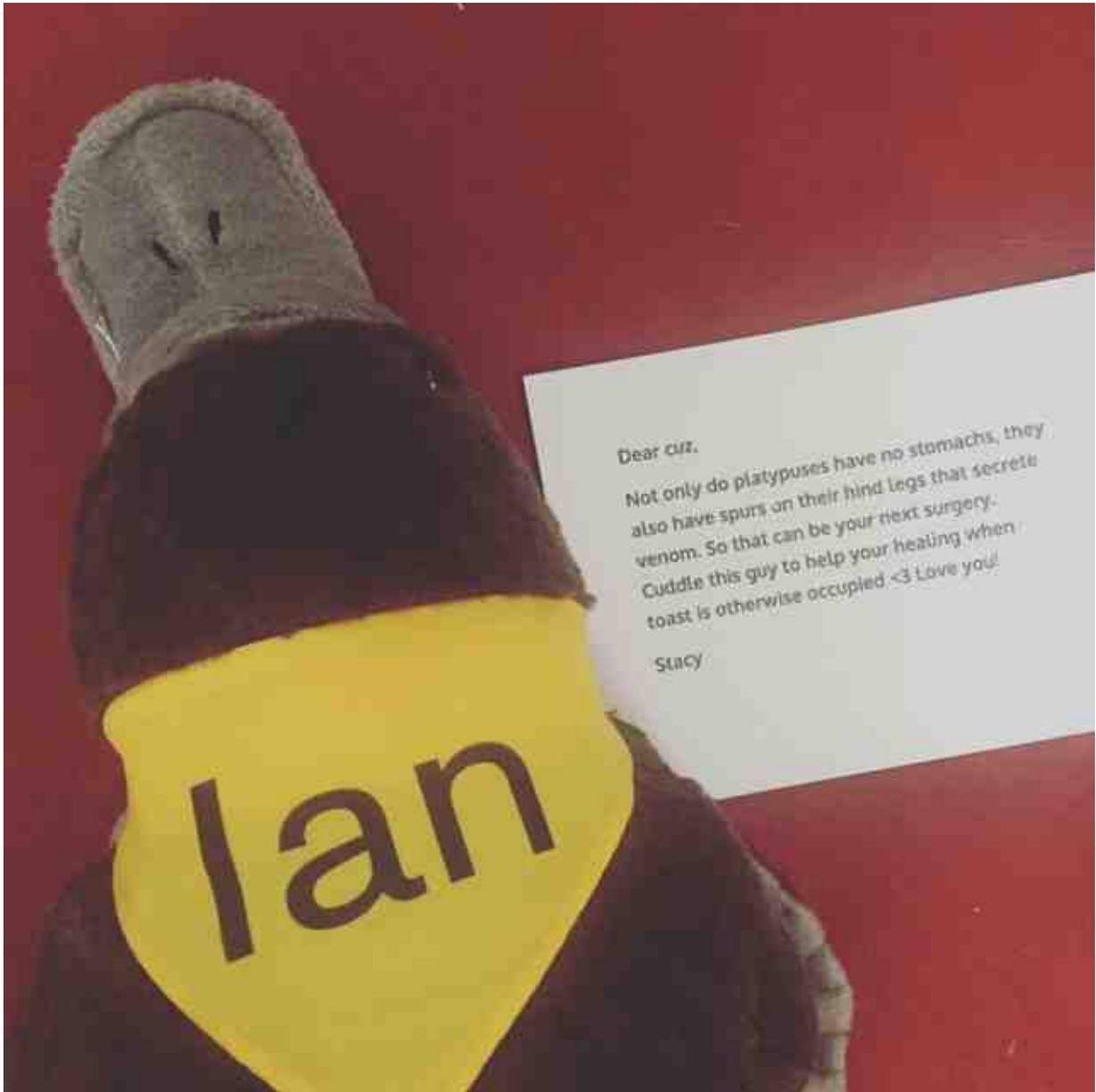
DON'T give pneumonia a chance!

ICOUGHSM is a registered service mark of British Medical Device Corporation. We gratefully acknowledge their consent to use as digital content in VCH materials.

This poster design is more painful than having your insides ripped out.



Ew, gross.



A gift from a friend.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/august-31-happy-birthday-chris-tucker>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-18-happy-birthday-jason-segel>
3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-13-happy-birthday-julia-louis-dreyfus/>

December 22 - Anthony Jeselnik gets exploratory comedy (2018-12-22 02:18)

Stand-up comedy is full of options. I could stand here and yell profanities. I could recount nonsense. I could illustrate the differences between two groups of people. I could tell stories about things that

have happened to me, including what I was thinking as they happened. Or how I wished they'd play out, since a real comedian is someone who thinks of the best thing to say five minutes later. One-liners, plays on words, satire, physical, shock, cycles, self-deprecation, deprecation - there's a time and a place and an audience for them all.

Or I could very quickly realize that typing onto a computer does not in any way constitute stand-up comedy, and so I'll need to pivot this post a little.

Maybe we can talk about the anatomy of a joke. A basic one consists of a setup and a punchline. Like Norm's favourite joke, because it's short and to the point. Setup: "Take..." — Punchline: "My wife Please!" This is funny because the joke teller's wife is named Please, which is a funny name and has a different meaning in English and possibly other languages too.

Anyway, the best jokes will include also include a tag, and hopefully a call back, maybe a pause, a follow through, a tangent, a bring back handover, a double double coil and double, and sometimes a horse's meatpack.

Actually, everyone already knows all this stuff. I could reveal some fun comedy facts instead. Like how the oldest recorded joke, an ancient Sumerian proverb from 1900 BC, is: "Something which has never occurred since time immemorial; a young woman did not fart in her husband's lap." I don't really get it, but it says 'fart' in there, so I know it's funny at least, transcending generations and language and other chasms too.

Also, there was a famous Greek philosopher named Chrysippus who died from laughing at his own joke. This would be a bit understandable, as the same thing almost happened to me while watching Black Dynamite in a Hayward Avenue living room. But what makes it so strange is that apparently nobody else thought the joke was that funny. We don't even know what the joke is, which is a huge historical oversight, but I wake up some nights with what I think might have been the joke, and I laugh with Chrysippus, which is all he ever wanted.

Wait a second. I just learned about hemlock water dropwort, a deadly poisonous plant that leaves the person with a smile on their face when they die. I wonder if this is what actually happened to him.

Then again, a person with damage to the right brain hemisphere can develop an actual medical "joke addiction", a compulsive need to constantly make jokes. Maybe our Grecian deep thinker suffered from this and it got so bad that he lost his mind and died a bit.

Either way, Chrysippus could have used a little help from St. Lawrence of Rome, the patron saint of chefs and comedians, who earned his title because while getting burnt alive over a huge gridiron, he cheerfully proclaimed, 'Turn me over, I'm well done on this side!' The audacity of Italian Larry somehow got him canonized, so maybe we could all use a little more fortitude in standing up for our comedic beliefs. Realistically, he should be the patron saint of the insane.

Yo mamma jokes didn't always need to make sense, they just needed to say "Yo mamma" in them. Like the one, "Yo mamma's so fat, when she sits around the house, she sits arooound the house." So the mom in question here, "yours", is shaped like a donut, and she can fit an entire house in her donut hole? Okay, got it. Solid joke, no punch-up necessary.

Some people care more about being entertaining than being funny. That's fine, but the distinction should be made. Like when Kathy Lee [1] asked Martin Short about his wife on live television ,

not knowing she was dead, If he valued comedy over everything else, he would have leaned into it. Instead he wanted to be sure not to offend her, or upset the status quo of a network morning show. To please the situation. Come on, Marty. You're better than that.

I've noticed lately that comedy is being dissected to an absurd extreme, with interviews with comedians getting more listens than their actual jokes. Even so, I want to dissect it a bit more by creating a couple of podcasts.

The first one is called "Am I Funny?" or "Is This Funny?" or maybe "Make Me Funny". The name isn't that important yet. In it, I tell the comedian guests different jokes that I've written, and we punch them up together. Maybe it should be called "Punch Up", actually.

My other podcast is titled "Defining Funny". The comedian guest and I discuss their sense of humour, their comedic taste, and the history behind it. Determining someone's influences, the people and stories and jokes and videos that guided their sensibilities, gives us a better idea about their path and could help others find theirs.

If for some reason a new host takes over for me, and I end up becoming an actual comedian and they ask me be a guest on an episode, I'll be talking about the most important influences in my life, that led me to this great comedic success I now have.

1. [2] Black Dynamite chalkboard scene
2. [3] Dinner With Family With Brett Gelman and Brett Gelman's Family
3. [4] One Tree Hill, when a dog ate Dan's new heart

If I get to that level of success, it will be because I land a job writing on *Detroiters* or *Fleabag* or *New Girl* or something, and I will certainly love my job. But inevitably, I will get fired. Now getting fired from most jobs is fine, since you probably didn't want to be there to begin with. But getting fired from your dream job, as a comedy writer on this great show? Essentially they're telling me that regular paycheques will stop being directly deposited into my bank account, which I obviously hate to hear. And I no longer get to spend my days hanging out with intelligent, comedic minds. And I won't get to contribute to creating art that people connect with and gets them to laugh even if they don't feel entirely like laughing because their president is a potato or whatnot. Oh, and before I forget to mention it, the real dagger - I'm not funny. It turns out the creators decided to go in a different direction, one of a funny person, which I am not. Not funny, not relevant, not useful. My comedic potential unrealized, I return home to my small hometown and move in with my parents and run into my high school crush as the local market which is the basis for my next idea that will become the next *Big Bang Theory* and make me rich and famous and successful again but still deep down like real deep down I'll know that I sold out and was it all worth it yes.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZo5fvpMfy0>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PSueHOY-Jk>

3. <http://www.adultswim.com/videos/brett-gelmans-dinner-in-america/dinner-with-family-with-brett-gelman-and-brett-gelmans-family/>

4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzPDEirVTZk>

December 23 - Noël Wells gets a gets a breath wish and a deodo-rant (2018-12-23 02:22)

The nurse quietly closes the door to his private room on the sixth floor, leaving Randolph alone with his estranged son for the first time in years. Trevor had flown in from Topeka earlier that day, finally acquiescing to his mother's pleas to visit his father before he would lose the chance forever. The whirring and beeping of the machines keeping the elder man alive are the only barriers to complete silence.

"Son," he heaves, "this is the end for me."

Trevor stares at him blankly, staying mute.

"I have to get something off my chest," Randy gasps. "And it's not what you think."

Trevor sighs. Over the years, he'd grown accustomed to his father's outlandish, unprovable claims, and he was preparing for another one.

Randy continues, wheezing out each word. "I'm your parent, but I'm not your father."

Trevor perks up. This should be good.

Randy elaborates with a snort. "Your mother and I grew up in a different time." He expectorates during a pause. "Nobody could be true to themselves if they in anyway strayed from the traditional path. It's how we connected to begin with."

Leaning in, Trevor is about to respond but chooses to let his father hack his way through the explanation.

Randy struggles through an extended cough. "I was born Grenadine Warmunter, a beautiful Swiss lady. And your mother was the original Randolph."

Trevor blindly hands him a tissue as he phlegms out the last sentence. He needs to know more, but doesn't know where to start. As he searches for the right words, his father is fading, approaching his final exhalation.

Speaking with honesty for the first time in his life, Randy chokes on his own suffering, then croaks to death, as his blackened lungs collapse into a volume of exactly zero.

Astonished and devastated, with tears streaming down his face, Trevor stands up and unconsciously begins wandering the halls without aim. He peeks into a room with its door left ajar, where a diverse group of people are sitting around in a circle. Spying an empty chair, he sits down, uninvited but welcomed.

A confident woman naturally commanding the room's attention speaks up. "Welcome, everyone, to the bi-monthly gathering of smellers, smellees and overall smellheads. We're fortunate to be able to meet here, after facing regular scentsorship at our last meeting place. We face an uphill battle in ridding the world of unwarranted fearomones, but history will of course show us to be on the side of the righteous. I will now recite the customary preamble, and all are encouraged to say it with me.

"We are the sniffers and whiffers, the sniffed and the whiffed. We aim to reek and to seek, to

capture the olfactory essence of the atmospheric bouquet and hold it dearly in our memories and our hearts. We summon redolence and pungency, effluvium and miasma, subtle and penetrative substances. To smell is to love, to love to smell."

No one had joined in, but all responded to her final word with thunderous applause. She smiled humbly and relaxed her posture.

"To start, does anyone have any stories to share? Challenges and successes, all are encouraged."

A petite man with a bushy moustache clears his throat, inducing everyone to turn to him. He shrugs as if he didn't intend to draw their focus, but immediately he launches into a deliberate anecdote.

"So this happened only last week, and I don't mean to sniff my own butt or anything, but I was pretty proud of how I dealt with the situation. I was waiting outside the only bathroom at this new French-Mexican fusion restaurant that opened down the road. A young man emerged, slightly embarrassed, seasoning his wake with a tincture of feter. I astutely realize that he'd likely just finished taking a crap, in which case I'd get to smell it. Attempting to conceal my excitement, in vain I'm sure, I take a breath and slowly creep into the empty lavatory.

As you might expect, and as I realistically should have as well, he had masked the odour left behind prior to his nervous exit, the stench of his excrement blended with yet overwhelmed by a familiar aroma, of a particular perfume once haphazardly sprayed in my face as I entered a now-defunct department store as a child. The woman who bombarded me with that sample had no idea it would send me on the path I'm on now, to smell every smell that I can, certainly including but of course not limited to all the ordure.

Now as most of you know, I'm an experienced chemist, so again with no own-butt sniffing, I am fairly adept at the process of cancelling out reactants to get to the coveted confection. In this instance, I can sense that the room contains a significant amount of the camouflaging perfume, and so I'd need to get rid of that, as well as other incidental aromas, to return the atmosphere to its almost natural state, but for the elusive stool marinade. The perfume was Opium, by Yves Saint-Laurent, the same man whose name adorned my first four pairs of boxer shorts.

After entering the bathroom and closing the door swiftly so as not to let any of the substances escape, I quickly take out my phone and look up the composition of the fragrance. Opopanax, panda oil, Lithuanian vitriol, and tolu balsam are the most prominent components in the liquid. Luckily I've worked with them all before, and rather extensively. I promptly consider the list of available products in the vicinity and discern that to counteract that mixture completely, I will require a tablespoon of Insane Chicken hot sauce, a half pound of burnt avocado, and a single armpit hair from an elderly Caribbean lady. I manufacture a makeshift "Out of Order" sign and attach it to the outside of the door as I rush out of the bathroom to collect the necessary ingredients.

The hot sauce is easy. The restaurant's tables are all occupied, so I grab one from the table of the people least likely to confront me, which happened to include my fecal prince. Obviously as I pass him I take a whiff, but expectedly the blend of the cuisine and the other people in the open dining room disguises any potential conclusion. Continuing my scavenger hunt, I then sneak my way into the busy kitchen. Upon entering, I am fortuitously faced with a large bowl filled with avocados, so I snatch two in my dominant left hand and covertly place them on the burning grill as

I return to my trek. As for the third acquisition, I recognize that this will be the most difficult to obtain.

There is only one proximal option, and it's the Jamaican dishwasher gleefully bellowing sweet nothings to herself. Running out of time, I proceed with the most direct approach. "Excuse me, ma'am. Can I have one of your pit hairs?" Without missing a beat, she complies. "Sure ting, liddle fella!" and then she reaches into her sleeve and plucks one out for me. We exchange knowing glances, and it hits me that I will one day marry this woman. But that day is not now, for I am on a mission that cannot be pushed aside. Departing the kitchen, I grab the now-burnt avocados, and I'm off.

Fortunately, when I return to the bathroom the smell is exactly how I'd left it. I concoct my recipe in the sink and wait. In an instant, a battle is raging before me. The tolu balsam is the first to go, having been neutralized on initial contact by the intensity of the charred avocado. The hot sauce overpowers the vitriol, but the struggle is fiercer than I'd anticipated, and I know that the goal is still not reached. My secret weapon, the Kingston strand, is now the last defender in the quest for the answer I seek. In one fell swoop, the panda oil and opopanax dissipate. The entire reaction was efficient enough as to leave no by-products, so I am now free to inhale and identify the desired dung, and I do just that.

The flavour is upon me, and I determine at once what it is. You too may now wonder what is my experience as I closed my eyes and let the olfactory sense take over. Poo. Smelled like poo."

Trevor is stunned and perplexed. The rest of the group is nodding complicitly, like what they'd all heard was a relatable incident. Trevor already knows it will be decades before he'll go a single day without thinking of this story. But he manages to snap back to reality, suddenly remembering that his father just passed away and his corpse is likely still down the hall, alone.

He rushes back to his father's room, but a new patient is lying in the bed where Randy had been. Without a cue, the woman in his place exclaims, "I've been here in this same spot for six whole days!"

Six days? How long had he been in the meeting? Does time still exist? Did it ever? Where is the Rubicon? How did the cucumber beat out the others to become the lone pickle. Is Little Richie Maya Rudolph's dad? Does this place validate parking?

These questions and more circulate in his mind, and the single answer to them all comes to him in an instant.

I am, and will eternally be, down to clown.

December 24 - Ricky Martin gets an old friend's storied proposals (2018-12-24 02:22)

My good friend Arthur died recently, in what is accepted as an unfortunate climbing accident. But it's a real coincidence that he's the only person my age I know who had made a will, and it just so happened to be finalized a week before his untimely passing, and I never heard him mention even once that he had any interest in mountaineering and now that I think about it I'm not even sure they found his body.

He and I connected primarily through literature as well as our own writing. We had very similar taste and sensibilities, and we would always share good finds and bounce story ideas off each other. We shared the belief that all it takes to create something truly special is a nugget of a thought, to go along with a chunk of silence, some dedicated focus and a few snifters of a fine single malt.

Lately we'd begun writing together, after realizing that our styles and creative processes complemented each other perfectly. He was the ideas man, always coming up with great titles and descriptions, and I could build on that to follow through with the narration and dialogue and whatnot.

Now he's always known that I suffer from conception block, and so it was with true friendship and understanding that he bequeathed to me his only notebook, containing all of his story premises that he'd never managed to elaborate into fruition. I want to make him proud, and I'd love nothing more than to posthumously see his name in print as a co-writer on a piece published by anything more revered than Highlights Magazine, his current writing summit. Below is a selection of his most promising kernels, and I vow to turn them each into a complete story worth writing, worth reading, and worth publishing.

Flag Earther - It's remarkable that almost all countries in the world agreed on the same format for how a national flag should look, or even that they should all have national flags. This is in no small part due to the laborious work of a Laotian polyglot who has held the non-partisan role of "International Flag Guy" for over seven decades. He is in charge of all flag decisions, including design pivots, content approval and duplication avoidance. He's only taken one vacation over his career, and Nepal took full advantage.

Hurried Obit - Helen works at the only newspaper in her small town, handling all classified ads but best known as the sole writer of obituaries for the local residents. Her notices are always thoughtful, intimate and unique, perfectly capturing the deceased's life and personality. While retrieving an old paper for a customer in the basement, she finds herself inescapably locked in the archive room as it begins filling up with carbon monoxide. She recognizes the smell instantly and knows she has only ten minutes before certain death, with madness and delirium setting in after five. Accepting her fate, she sits down at the table and, amidst her fatal ordeal, pens her most impressive work yet, her own obituary.

Hot Spot - Told through various news articles, this details the rise and fall of the first person to become a free public Wi-Fi hot spot. He's implanted by the sponsor Verizon, and while it starts off as a cool technovancement that gets him a taste of fame and a little extra cash, it leads to his ruin, as he is constantly surrounded by the data-obsessed masses. The final article is a notice of his death after his corpse is found in the middle of a treacherous mountain that he scaled in order to avoid his unreasonable popularity.

Tribute - Strongly Worded Letter, a cult band started in the early oughts, dissolved a few years ago after the songwriter's head got too big. A few years later, a tribute band called Schubladenbrief is formed and becomes huge, much more popular than the original group ever was. They even enlist the original drummer, who'd always felt under-appreciated by Ron, the songwriter with the big head.

Ron still plays some poorly-attended solo shows around his town, but he's mostly a drunk now and his life is half in shambles. Schubladenbrief is on tour and is coming to Ron's town to play a show. The drummer, who mostly pities him at this point, puts him on the guest list, and most of the story is Ron navigating the situation.

Johatsu - This is based on the Japanese phenomenon where due to mounting and unending failure in their life, a person abandons everything and walk away from it all, disappearing to live simply and anonymously off the grid. It starts off with Ellen discussing her options with a johatsu advisor, continues with her moving to and existing in a seemingly content situation, then ends with her returning to her original life but with gained perspective.

LSDay - July 15th, 2045 is the first annual event in celebration of new President of Earth Danielle Rhys. It is a global holiday, for which everyone in the world is encouraged to partake. Now that the medicinal and recreational properties of psychoactive substances are accepted by the scientific community and governing party, it is time to publicly promote these values to the global citizenry. Longstanding stigma cannot be erased overnight, and so Rhys instituted this day to demonstrate to the traditionalists the positive effects that lysergic acid diethylamide can have on a person as well as a collective. All jobs are on put on hold for 24 hours and we follow a few people navigating this day in their altered state.

Bus-iness - An unhappy businessman gets transferred to a new city where he doesn't know anyone. On his first day of work, his car breaks down and he ends up taking the bus to work. Over the week he has a couple of fun interactions with the other bus people, who are mostly the same every day. Even after his car is fixed, he continues to take the bus instead. He continues to strengthen his relationships with all the weird bus people, until his commute feels like a community. The ride to work is the best part of his day. Eventually, he gets transferred again for his job. He's dreading saying goodbye to all his new friends, but as he's about to do so, the regular bus driver has a fatal heart attack in front of everyone. It's a tragedy for sure, but it does spark the businessman's brain. The next time we see him he's driving the bus along his regular route, and all the passengers and a few extras can't be any happier with their new bus driver.

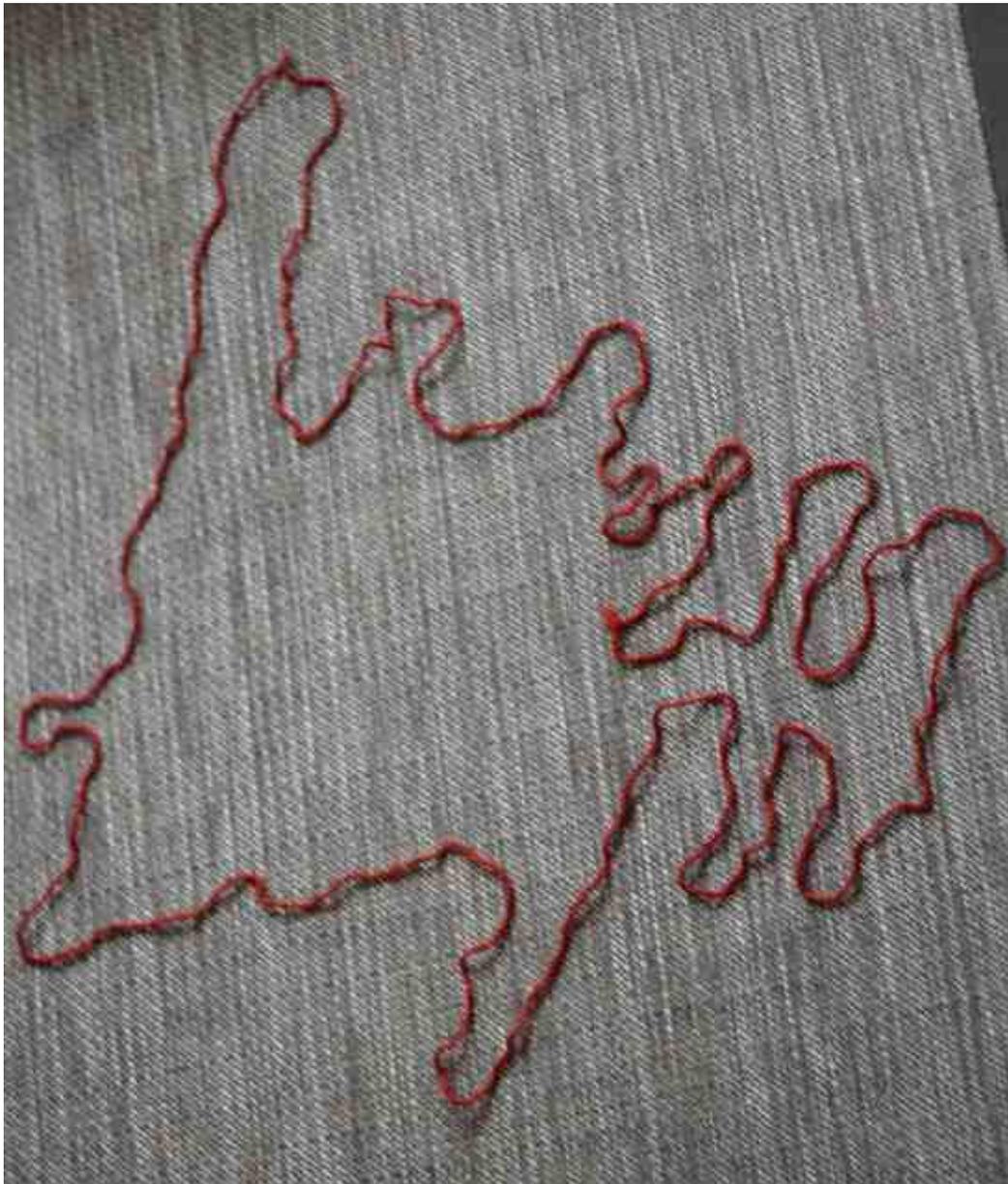
Win Some, Lose Some - In 1958, a man names his son Winner. Three years later, he has another son and calls him Loser. Winner becomes a hardened criminal, while Loser becomes a detective. Winner is a sinner, and loser is a boozier. Eventually their lives intersect and in the end they understand each other a bit better.

MacArthur's Genius - A perennial underachiever is mistakenly awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, a \$625,000, no-strings-attached endowment given to extraordinarily talented and creative individuals as an investment in their potential. He considers buying a modest Caribbean island and taking drugs "artistically" until the money runs out, but instead he pulls himself up by his boot's straps and vows to create something incredible. He searches everywhere in his brain and his notes for the right undertaking, finally settling on what he knows in his heart he was always meant to do. He will at last finish a collection of unfinished stories previously conceived by his friend who faked his own death so that the underachiever could use the event as sufficient motivation to complete a fucking project for once.

December 25 - Justin Trudeau gets a Newfoundland expatriate (2018-12-25 02:22)

I live in Vancouver, at it's about this time every year that I lament over the size of our country. You see, I'm from the east coast, all the way in the Sin Jaws, and I'm not afraid to say it would be purely lovely to spend a few days back there with old friends and old family and old traditions. Even though I rarely get to make the extravagant trek across the continent anymore, I'm a Newfinlander, corn and bread, and I'll be one till I'm dry.

It's great living away as a Newfoundlander¹ because other people sometimes assume you're a bit dumb but that you like to have a good time with a few drinks. And if you think about the most fun nights of your life, you were probably hanging out with someone half dumb who likes gettin' right on 'er. Even if you aren't dumb, and if you're not that fun, these mainlanders have you built up in their head in this way where you have no choice but to act dumb and fun, for a story if nothing else, and then everyone has a laugh. Everyone thinks people from Newfoundland are really nice too. It's not that they're wrong - a lot of us do come across as very friendly at first. But it's because most people there are just bored. If you're visiting from away, you can ask any random person on the street, "Hey, do you know where Cape Spear is?" and they'll jump all over it. "Do I? Sure I'll take you! I got literally nothin' else to do! We might see whales sure!" And then all they do is complain the whole way there, about things nobody ever asked them. "Sure you knows my nephew? He's some brat!" Even though there's no absolutely way the person knows her nephew, and even if he is a bit of a brat. I find that Newfoundlanders always state the obvious. They hate silence, so they need to say something any time anything happens, no matter how inconsequential. If you hear an ambulance go by, the person with you is bound to say, "Looks like someone's goin' to the hospital." And you're supposed to just nod along and agree with them. If you respond in any other way they'll think that you're the arsehole, but goosh, give me a break. We do like having a good time, but sometimes it's based on nothing. My mom will laugh throughout an entire phone conversation where nothing remotely funny is being said on either end. Or she'll get overly excited and lose all sense of time and space. "Jane! Great, Jane! How are you doing, Jane? Right right right right right. Well, nice talking to you, Jane." Then she'll hang up and say all excited, "Guess who that was!?" Every time I call my parents, they are absolutely blown away by the time difference. Every time. "What time is it there?" "4:30, Dad." "It's not! Sure it's almost 9:00 here! Wait, AM or PM? Is it still Saturday?" And after he gets over that, it's straight to talking about the weather. "What's it like outside? It's raining here." "It doesn't matter, Dad. The weather here is entirely independent of yours." All the same, why does the weatherman in Newfoundland even bother to tell us what temperature it "is", according to a thermometer or some other useless device, when they immediately follow it up with a much more relevant number to how you should prepare for the day. "It's 10° here at the Wreckhouse. But I suppose with the windshield and all, it feels a bit more like negative 40." So that's a few things about not being home that I use in an attempt to convince myself that I don't mind living so far away, but it doesn't really work, because for all the wind and the snow and the inherent racism and the garbage roads and the inaccessibility to the rest of the world, it's pretty friggin' special and I love it to pieces.



I had a dream a few days ago I wanted to share with you because you were nice enough to make a little cameo. So I'm in my yard in Vancouver playing with my dog Toast, and a dog outside the fence wants to play with him. His owner, who's a bit of a skeet, brings him into the yard, and he's carrying a gun, but it must be an open carry city because he's half swinging it around without worrying too much about it. He lays his gun down and starts doing a legitimately impressive dance with his dog. Suddenly we're kind of throwing an impromptu party in the yard, just after an important function finished nearby, and many of the attendees - including artists, businesspeople and other dignitaries - happen to be here. I overhear someone behind me go, "I visited Fligu a few weeks ago..." before trailing off. I laugh to myself, and a stranger approaches me. "What is it?" he asks? Me: "Ah. Did you hear what that person said?" Stranger: "No what?" Me: "Well he mentioned he'd been to Fligu³, this town up north. My friend Louie⁴ has this line, that half the towns in B.C. were named by Jack Black. I know it's probably insensitive, but I don't exactly know why. The place is filling up quickly, and you,

wearing a nice tuxedo, end up in our conversation circle. You: "Do you know the story of the Kimayu people?" When I hear your voice, I realize you were the one who had mentioned Fligu. You're not chastising me for making fun of the name, but it seems like you do want to take the opportunity to inform me about the indigenous group⁵. Me: "I actually don't, and because of the joke I don't really want to, because then I probably won't find it funny anymore." You: "Fair enough." A different stranger comes up to me like we're friends. Him: "Do you want any M before I leave?" Me: "No thanks." You: "Oh, do you dabble? In getting high?" Me: "Sure, a bit." You (pointing at the beer in my hand as supporting evidence): "I knew it! Who was that girl, macking on you earlier?" Me: "Oh, she was just a friend. I do have a girlfriend." I look around and see Kelly nearby. Me (intending to blow her mind that I'm kind of friends with you): "Kelly, this is Justin. You know, the prime minister." Justin Fong, who in the dream is the same height as you, has similar hair, and is also wearing a tux, is standing in the place where you were previously: "Smitty, man. No I'm not." Me: "Oh shit." I look around but can't find you. I shrug it off and head inside. There's a desk set up in the living room and lights pointing at the wall. A petite Russian grandmother sits down and begins making an intricate, incredible shadow scene on the wall by contorting her hands. There are three shadow people, a shadow clock, a shadow car, all interconnected on the wall. It's absolutely incredible. A drunk, obnoxious girl⁶ barrels up to the desk and starts making shadow figures next to the other woman. There's another person nearby practising some basic figures, but it's nowhere near as intrusive. Russian woman (to drunk girl): "Oh, here. I will let you sit." Me: "No, no, please continue!" Russian woman (almost humbly): "I'm a storyteller. If everyone does not want to hear my story, I will step away." And so she does.

¹ [and Labradorian. Thanks Grimey²...] ² [Roger Grimes] ³ [not a real town] ⁴ [he doesn't really] ⁵ [again, doesn't exist] ⁶ [think an older version of Lola from Big Mouth]

December 26 - Jared Leto gets an insomniac's reasoning (2018-12-26 02:22)

Can't sleep.

Conjugating action verbs in a language I used to know.

Solving the city's traffic congestion problems.

Imagining how fast the moon spins around the earth around the sun around the middle of the galaxy around whatever's next out there.

Predicting if there will be enough orange juice left for me in the morning.

Curious if Paycheque or Payback was the better movie.

Considering if I say 'for sure' too much.

Thinking about the time they wouldn't let me buy birdseed.

Speculating on how much allowance is these days.

Making TFW I realized FTW and WTF use the same letters.

Questioning every decision anyone has ever made.

Pondering.

Can't sleep.

Can't get past that bees don't have knees.

Sleep or get off the cot.

Peter Gallagher's eyebrows are a self-sustaining ecosystem.

The redundancy factor has excluded me again.

It's Christmas Eve, not Christmas Steve.
I see more grouse in a cypress tree outside my window.
Leprechaun Ollie might eat me.
There are not enough pies for every school district in Wellington.
My beet red muse got the red meat blues.
Stendhal has written zeroes in Stockholm for the last time.
It's funny when your pants are meatballs.
In a perpetual purgatorial state.

Can't sleep.
Trying to figure out it's all all about.
There's nothing in the beginning and nothing in the end. Enjoy between the nothings.
You just keep doing stuff until you die, then you don't do stuff anymore.
You are what you experience, and that's all.
Stay positive - give more than you take.
It's just a series of people going, "Is this the answer? Maybe this is the answer." And none of them ever answering yes.¹ Accept that you can never know what you want to do, where you want to be, for the rest of your life. It's about setting yourself up to connect, and leaving jokes for each other as we go along. Where in god's name are we actually going all the time? Can't sleep. Time to wake up. There's a day waiting for me.

¹ [My phone transcribed this as "Places that serve Beef Bowl going just answer answer." Honestly, this is what I really think it's all all about.]

December 27 - Salman Khan gets culturally and linguistically twote (2018-12-27 02:22)

I'm a bit of a phobophile. I really like having my phobias, and I don't want to lose them, any of them.

I watched An Inconvenient Sequel yesterday and now I'm algoraphobic.

What if... we heard it wrong, and Jesus wasn't really a carpenter, but was actually a car painter? That would change everything, wouldn't it? Would it? If you are a priest, deacon, pope, or Arizona Cardinal, please respond.

Does the pope even shit in the woods? How often does he do it? Does the frequency matter for the idiom, or was it just based on the one documented time he shat in the woods? If the pope shits in the woods, and no one's around, would you still try to steal it? And you could clone him using his DNA, raise the mini-pope yourself and get him to challenge his elder twin to a pope-off.

My least favourite dwarf is Bashful because I don't know what that word means.

I know this is a bold assumption, but I believe I'm the first person to ever create an Indian character named Bindeer Dundat.

Anyone who knows the difference between an asteroid, a meteor, and a meteorite, and then corrects people who don't, well they're not my kind of people.

My buddy went to Thailand, and he got to ride an elephant. He wouldn't shut up about it, like he thought talking about anything else was irrelevant.

There must be some tai chi - chai tea joke, right? Maybe that's as far as we'll ever get with it. And I'm okay with that. Some spoonerisms are best left alone.

So this "woop woop" that people keep getting on with - that shouldn't really be a thing, hey?

I might become a dentist just so when some kid comes in and I can say is, "Your chart is showing the wrong teeth for your molar and your incisor. It was dentally mislabeled!"

I got a Chevy cause I love tech and anagrams.

If the employee of the month isn't called the "Best B'y" then we've gotta get fresh management around here.

Post Malone is okay, but I cant wait for Post Malone 2: Sloths in Zoo Pork.

Enjoy Pretty Little Liars, for one day you'll look back and realize it was actually Big Little Lies.

Fourths of Nature is the best Ben Afflick. Besides Paycheck, obvs. And that fake Good Will Hunting 2: Hunting Season scene where he talks like an old-timey kid for no reason.

Todd Glass looks like he's made out of clay.

Tony Hawk looks like the age-enhanced version of a kid who got kidnapped when he was 10.

Archival footage confirms that Eric Clapton didn't always look like a turtle.

I won't ever fully be able to connect with someone who hasn't spent an inordinate amount of time saying "Ringo" like how John would. Hey, now you just did it! It's fun, hey? Rin-gooo. Let's be friends!

Just hit me - Rubber Sole. Like on a shoe. Goush.

Did you know that Joni Mitchell's "I could drink a case of you" was actually written about Diet Fanta.

Or maybe she was saying I could drink a case of Yoo-hoo.

Led Zeppelin sounds better when I'm wearing a leather jacket.

Which Dave would it be funniest if he named his kid Baconand? I bet I know.

I still can't believe KC ditched the Sunshine Band to meet up with Jojo.

How come Jay Z gets his own lane on the highway?

One wonders if the song would have been as popular if history finally acknowledged that it was actually her friend Norbert who battled those pink robots.

I can't separate the person from the art. Except with the Remix to Ignition. I... I just have to.

I still hear Lil' Romeo's "My Baby" every time the intro to "I Want You Back" comes on. I'm not proud of this, but not embarrassed either. Well maybe a little embarrassed, but that's how the crow caws and the cause crows.

"Great Balls of Fire" was written about trying to catch a Charmander.

The working title of my new pilot is Scerminator.

Remembering Sarah Marshall is the sequel where she dies and then I don't know what happens next. Remembering Forgetting Sarah Marshall is the oral history for the first one.

I've never confused Kim Gordon and Kim Mitchell, I don't know why you'd even say that, leave me alone.

It's cool that Manny from Modern Family grew up to be Cesar in Gilmore Girls.

"Firefly now, Serenity later" is what a few Fox executives were saying around 2002.

The white recliner is my very own Martin Crane chair. That would make Kelly Frasier. Toast is Niles. Meg Daphne? Wait, Eddie is obviously Toast. How did I forget about Eddie?

December 28 - Seth Meyers gets a vanishing preposition (2018-12-28 02:22)

I'll believe in anything.

I used to live by that sentiment, appropriated from the title of a Wolf Parade song, either because of the lyrics or the music or my world around it when I'd listen to it most. Its message of connection and celebration, built around healthy vulnerability and unconditional trust, fed into the days and nights and lost weekends of the past. I still wonder where are my friends tonight, and more and more the answer is somewhere else.

Now I still believe in 'I'll believe in anything', but the phrase has evolved over the years, at one point meeting up with The Hip and turning into 'I can get behind anything'. This means I'm up for whatever, ready to experience, sometimes blindly. But this seemed too loose, almost uninformed. Then I went too far the other way, with the unsustainable, 'I believe in everything'. The expression has since steadied itself as my current perspective. Right now - 'I'll believe anything'.

There is a level of gullibility implicit in the new meaning, but that trait's been disparaged for too long. Being able to accept what someone communicates to you, if it's expressed with sincerity, is admirable and worthwhile, but still all too rare. It shows respect and appreciation for a different

viewpoint.

Keep an open mind, learn about someone else's values, assuage the fear of there being an alternative to what you were absolutely certain you knew. See what they see.

Listen. And not as you're already considering a rebuttal. Really listen. You never know what you might find out.

I hope we can all agree that none of it is real. We're only here for the stories, so hear them out.

Negativity and objections are a barrier to sympathy, to togetherness, and they only serve to keep everyone in their own bubble. They deter relationships, preventing constructive interactions, keeping strangers from becoming friends.

When I was younger, when my beliefs were a little more rigid, I was high in cynicism. I quickly invalidated many practices without working to understand why they exist. If Mercury is in retrograde, and this stimulates miscommunication, I want to know it, and I want to believe it. If the Major Arcana cards keep appearing, I will ready for some life-changing events.

I want to be on the side of the conspiracy theorists. Sure the Earth is flat. This makes sense to me, why it's comforting to people, and I can take something from that. Besides, if the scientific community is right about everything, then that includes how the world being irreversibly fucked, and as a powerless person, acknowledging this is discouraging and pointless.

All religions are correct. All of them. All forty tales from the afterlives accurately Sum up what can happen after death. And the forty-first, my own, applies to everyone too. No matter what happens, I won't be surprised.

I honestly don't always know if I've grew more tolerant, but I definitely became more interested. Please, tell me. What do you got?

I'll believe anything.

December 29 - Ted Danson gets a simile Ted (2018-12-29 02:22)

In the haze of the alley, on his way to meet a new companion at a fancy restaurant, the only thing Ted can make out is a gun, pointed like a singing sister right at his face. Frightened as a rabbit, he raises his noodle-like arms, similar to a two-headed buoy.

"Don't shoot," he cries as if being bansheed by a sentient whip. "I'll give you whatever you want."

"What I want," the masked figure replies, cool as an unbrined pickle, "is for you to sweat like a kid with an overactive thyroid. And I'm already getting that."

The instigator's next move is functionally deliberate, like the singular 'fuck' in an episode of

Breaking Bad. He takes his long fingers and pokes Ted right in the nostril, which is wider than a nation, then proceeds to laugh like a hyena. The pain is less than expected, like the amount of water you think you'll need to get all of the falafel mix covered in water.

While Ted snaps back to reality, in the same way that Eminem did after vomiting up his mother's pasta dish, his bully is already moving on to his next move. He picks his victim up by the bootstraps and hangs him like a hanger from the nearby dumpster. And then he just walks away.

Ted is left dangling like a participle, but other than that he's unharmed, and also unrobbed, like the Trailer Park Boys when Ricky went on vacation. Relieved as a senna'd sphincter, Ted manoeuvres his way back down to earth like Chris Rock, before considering what he just went through. With no real harm done, the situation is baffling, kind of like how the video for Runaway Train helped find dozens of missing children and yet there was no sequel.

He inches his way to the street like a worm as the sun's rays poke his eyes much like the stranger's finger did to his nose a minute ago. Shaken as a poorly-made martini, he doesn't want this to affect his date. Even with what had happened, he remains feistier than a hippo's libido before a Mets game, and he knows he needs to be as smooth as an ice cream lemonade trickling down a frog's gullet. So as he finally approaches the entrance to the restaurant, all he can do now is s i mile.

December 30 - LeBron James gets the wrong end of a firing squad (2018-12-30 02:22)

Eyes closed, an unseen lighter sparks in front of me and I inhale the first puff of my last cigarette.

I can't help but smile. This annoys the ones holding guns.

It's not that I'm not scared, but the absurdity of it all is too much to handle.

The deal is they'll wait until the light goes out.

Nearing the filter, I take an extended breath.

Wait, wait, don't pull the trigger yet.

I'll confess if you let me.

Let me talk for a minute.

Let me walk for a minute.

You've got the wrong guy but you won't believe it.

If you only knew how I knew to begin with, you'd let me go.

But I can't risk it. I need to preserve the memory.

Gliding across the Icelandic coast in a vehicle specifically designed for the trek, we remained oblivious to any foreshadowing of our relationship. A narrow section of a lazy river appears, with the active volcano on the other side inviting us with its history. The dense fog blurs the communal vision and obscures the warning signs. Another country might require more prominence in the notice, but taking responsibility in our own safety was ingrained at an early age. It's a bumpy ride as we forge a new path, but nobody is going to suggest veering away from an adventure. The fairies protect, but not implicitly. A limit is approaching. The engine's horses grow tired. Water rising, we'll soon need to face acceptance. One final attempt is futile. Relinquishing all that we have, we abandon hope and

swim to the shore. The vehicle, unconcerned, slowly disappears under the meniscus. And wing bam boom, her knickers went up in smoke in a lava pit.

December 31 - Anthony Hopkins gets an interview about the last year (2018-12-31 02:22)

iSmith: First off, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to talk with us today about your 2018 celebrity birthday messages.

Ian: It's nothing, really. I'm grateful that somebody is actually interested enough to want to discuss this without me casually bringing it up in the hopes that they'll ask me to elaborate.

iSmith: Well, to be honest, when you agreed to participate in this last year, as our sole contributor, we didn't know what to expect, either from you or from the project.

Ian: To be just as honest, or maybe even more, I didn't really either. And I think that's quite obvious in the first month or so, where the notes are short and seemingly incomplete or substandard. It certainly wasn't structured from the onset, and for awhile there I didn't think I'd make it through all 365 days. But here we are, and I'm overjoyed that I managed to follow through, especially since I'm [1] better known as a startist, after all.

iSmith: Yes, and you allude to this several times throughout -

Ian: Which it why I was excited to do this to begin with. I had too many digital notebooks, full of general ideas, little kernels of ideas, that I mostly kept private, and I wanted an outlet for turning them into something a little more major.

iSmith: Which this did turn into, almost militarily. We knew you were the right person for this, even though the people upstairs were hoping for a little more diversity than a waspy middle-class cis straight white male.

Ian: Understandable. I sometimes wish I was a little more diverse myself, even in small ways, as [2] I mentioned to Gal.

iSmith: Right, right. I remember that one. So is she your - Gal pal now?

Ian:

iSmith: I see. Now I'll admit, I am both chomping and champing at the bit here to ask you something that no one around the office here seems to know - who is this Editor of yours with all the notes?

Ian: Ah, I thought this might come up. It's actually - well, how should I explain this? My mom was actually pregnant with twins - don't worry, not like [3] in Alia's message. So as the stronger one, I ingested my wombmate during the first trimester, but there's a part of him that stuck around in me. Luckily he and I share many of the same sensibilities, so we're rarely at odds or anything. In fact, his presence is actually useful for keeping my regular, naturally cannibalistic self in check a bit, which is why I call him the editor. Write drunk, edit sober, you know?

iSmith: Fascinating, truly. What does it even feel like living inside that double-sided brain?

Ian: You'll have to ask the little Malaysian boys who are always bumming around in there. No, no, I kid. It's fine. Obviously there's weirdness inhabiting the neural folds, but I assume it's weird in everyone else's too. They might be better at hiding it though, even though I am aware of [4] how I could act to fit in a little better.

iSmith: For sure, they are. Now this might disappoint you to hear, but some fans might not have been able to keep up with reading a new piece every day. For these lazies, who might prefer a Best Of or something, do you have a list of your own personal favourites?

Ian: I'll give you 10, to go along with the format of most year-end lists, so here they are in no particular order:

[display-posts category="birthday" tag="top" posts_per_page="50"]

iSmith: Weird, those are my 10 least favourite, in that particular order. Different stroke folks, we be. Speaking of, are there any topics you didn't have a chance to cover?

Ian: Oh yes, quite a few. There's one that -

iSmith: Moving on, I'd be remiss if I didn't ask you about this iSmith BirthDeath Effect.

Ian: Right. Fortunately, it turned out not to be a real thing, but you know where it came from, right? Verne Troyer, our January 1 subject, passed away in April, and I'd be lying if I didn't consider how it would play out [5] if every other celebrity I wrote about started suddenly dying. When Paul Allen fell as well, I got scared that the project was some strange omen that was trying to kill everyone I wrote about. When Adam McKay had a heart -

iSmith: But hold on. If we -

Ian: Wait a second. How did you know what people in my high school used to call me? I don't think I even mentioned what happened at my confirmation in any of the messages.

iSmith: Sorry?

Ian: Huh? Well, like, when I got confirmed, as a teenager or whatever, in case I ever wanted to get married in a Catholic church, the priest asked me what new middle name I wanted to take, and I said "John", after my grandfather who had just died. But I had a gnarly little speech impediment and he thought I said "Don", which is where the nickname came from. That and how I made a big mess at an assembly.

iSmith: Moving on? Now that this project is coming to a close, are you going to take a break from writing for a while?

Ian: Well, not exactly. Having a daily goal this year was definitely motivating for my creative side, and I wanted something similar for next year. So in each of the next twelve months, I'll be diving deep and becoming utterly [6] Obsessed with a different subject, and some of these will be centred around writing. And I'd be happy to chronicle my progress on your publication again. If you'll have

me, that is.

iSmith: At this point, I'm not sure if we have a choice. So sure, go right ahead. Thank you.

Ian: Yes, of course. Thank me.

1. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/november-18-happy-birthday-kirk-hammett/>
2. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-30-happy-birthday-gal-gadot/>
3. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/april-18-happy-birthday-alia-shawkat/>
4. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/february-2-happy-birthday-nathan-fielder>
5. <http://ismith.ca/birthday/january-1-verne-troyer/>
6. <http://ismith.ca/obsessed/>



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