



DAN GRUBB

Pity the Slug

Dan Grubb

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Unusual Verbs

I'd like to talk today about unusual verb forms: those certain verbs with tricky conjugation such as "think" (I think, I thought), "fly" (I fly, I flew, I had flown), and "swim" (I swim, I swam, I had beswummed).

We all know the proper way to conjugate the verb "to drink". You drink coffee. This morning you drank coffee. Earlier you had drunk the coffee.

We also know how to say that you're prostrating yourself on a piece of elongated furniture. You lie down. Last night you lay down. Before that you had lain...no, had laid? Will have lay? It's lain, right? What about lait? Or is that coffee again? You know what? Don't worry about that one. No one knows how to say that anyway.

The point is, certain verbs have unusual ways of being conjugain. In order to conjugate these verbs, one must have knewm which tense is being usen. The present and past tenses are the most common, followed by the future, past perfect, past adequate, and past nostalgic, which is used when whitewashing history.

Here's a fun fact: If you conjugate the word "conjugate", it opens a hole in spacetime, ripping the universe apart and destroying all reality. Please do not conjugate the word "conjugate".

Let's try an example from real life using the verb "to write". I write to you regularly. I wrote you an email last week. When will you write me back? Did you wrate me back already? Do you think you're better than me? If I had writed a better email, would you have wrut back sooner? Please backwrite immediately, you wrotten human being. If this wrudeness continues, I will come to your home and your life will be token from you, thus downgrading you from wrotten human being to wrotten human had once been.

In conclusion, English is, was, and will always have been a liven, evolving language. It has been enchanged since its begunneding, and this evolution is upspeeding, not downslowing. These

rapid grammatical updates are to be requiring our attention and vigilance, both to be upkept with and so that burdensome or incongruous verbformings can have been prevented.

Thanking to you.

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Carl Jung's First Draft of Archetypes

The Hero

The Trickster

The Wiseass Sitcom Kid

The Loud Eater

The Hooker with a Heart of Gold

The Hooker on Life Support with a Literal Heart of Gold

The Strong, Silent Type

The Mother

The Tortured Artist

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The Ethnic Stereotype

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The Kid Eating an Ice Cream Cone and then the Ice Cream Falls Off and the Kid Starts Crying,

Oh Man!

The Suave Cat Burglar

The LOLcat Burglar

The Cop with Two Days Until Retirement

The Fonz

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One Day, In Hell

Part One

Hi, everyone! Welcome to the Q2 team meeting. Lucifer's going to come up in a few minutes with the quarterly report, but first I've got a few notes to go over. And stick around after the big presentation because we're awarding a prize to the colleague with the most souls under contract!

All right, ha ha, let's settle down. Settle down, now. First, where are my false witness crew? Hi, guys. I've got some clarification for you. They've determined that yes, eye witness testimony is usually inaccurate, but because it's an honest mistake, it does not count. We're finalizing the draft of the apology letter. Those will be distributed very soon. Any questions on that? Yes, Urmazel? On average, they will get about two and a half million years off their sentence. Speaking of divine clarification, on behalf of myself and the entire Board of Tormenters, I'd like to apologize for the influx of souls who worked on the Sabbath over the past couple of millennia. We're working on getting the word out that the Sabbath is in fact Wednesday, but since that is already regarded as "hump day", there's been some difficulty. Plus, let's face it, people have been less prone to listen to prophets after the mix up about circumcision.

And yes, we are very close to wrapping up that issue with the supposed 72 virgins loophole regarding murder. That was a sting operation from On High to try to root out the pedophiles. There was a joint session between the forces of Light and Darkness and we all agree that it was a severe miscalculation. We'll be working together to correct this in a partnership unseen since before the Great Fall. It's very exciting.

And finally, there's a big push to ramp up punishment for old school sins. Classic sins. With homosexuality and fornication practically benign, we're looking at a big drop in future soul collection. But don't worry, we've still got our greatest hits: murder, theft, and worshipping false idols. Those three will never go out of style. And I think if we all work together and use those noodles, then we can recoup those losses with some of those lesser-used sins. Tattoos are more

popular now than ever. Let's tap that market! What about men shaving their beards? Let's tighten up on that! Be creative! Use your imagination! And study up on your Leviticus and Deuteronomy. You'll be meeting with Shabelleh this week to review those two books.

All right, we're gonna bring out Lucifer in just a minute. But first, are you ready to laugh? This can't be Hell because I can't hear you! I said are you ready to laugh? Then bring out the sinners and get those plastic sheets ready because it's time for Pandemonium's favorite splat-tacular comedian, the eviscerator of evil, the hammer of hedonism, the malicious masher of mankind's moral misfires: Galgeron!

Part Two

Thank you for holding. You have reached the Disputes department. My name is Azbineth. How may I help you today? Yes, I can assist you with your claim. For verification purposes, may I have your name and the number marked on your forehead? Thank you. How may I help you? Okay, ma'am, it sounds like you've been judged unclean and have gone into collections. Tell me, are you a priest? Good, then we can skip those chapters. Any history of leprosy or plague? Good.

Now, this action is usually taken due to either food or genitals. Let's start with food. Tell me, have you ever eaten any of the following, beginning with water creatures: Shellfish? That includes anything that doesn't have fins and gills. Yes, I'm afraid shrimp do count. That's okay, it's not too terrible; you're just stuck with their carcasses in abomination. Okay, moving on to birds. Eagle? Vulture? Raven? Owl? Hawk? Little owl? Yes, they are different. Okay. Great owl? I know, it's an odd distinction, but an important one. Swan? Pelican? Gier eagle? It does fall under eagle, but we try to double check the gier eagle restriction. It's more commonly known as the Egyptian vulture. Does that ring a bell? Right, it is distinguished from other vultures. No, I don't know why. That's above my pay grade, ha ha. Yes, anyway. Stork? Heron? Bats? Yes, I'm aware that bats aren't birds. You're not the first to point that out to me.

Okay, moving on to bugs. Have you eaten any bugs besides locusts, beetles, or grasshoppers? Good. No, we don't care that you don't eat any bugs. Right. Uh huh. Well, things were different back then, I suppose. Yes. Let's try to stay on track.

Last up is land animals. Have you eaten weasel? Mouse? Tortoise? Ferret? Chameleon? Lizard? Snail? Mole? Camel? Coney? Hare? Pig? Yes to pig? Okay, how many times? Can you make an estimate? I see. Well, it may not count. Tell me, when you finished cooking the bacon, did you destroy the stove? Right, every time. I see. Oh dear. Let me just make a note of that on your history. One moment, please, ma'am.

Okay, let's talk about your genitals. I'm assuming you had a normal, healthy menstruation cycle throughout your teenage and adult life until menopause? Excellent. Now, when you had your monthly cycle, did you remove yourself from society for seven days? Ha ha, yes, I bet it would have been nice. That's fine. Very few women do that anymore. I'm assuming you showered? Okay, good. And you took the two turtledoves or two young pigeons to your priest for sacrifice? Oh dear. Okay, let me make a note of that, too.

And finally, did you have any children? A daughter, okay. Did you continue in the blood for 66 days after she was born? It's for purification purposes. Yes, I'm sure they were as clean and sterile as possible at the hospital, ma'am, but this is a divine uncleanness, you see. 66 days, that's right. No, it's only 33 for boys. I understand, ma'am, but there's nothing we can do about that now. So is that a "no" for continuing in the blood for 66 days? Okay. And I'm guessing you didn't sacrifice a lamb and either a young pigeon or a turtledove? I see. Well, I may be able to help you. Can you sacrifice a lamb and a young pigeon today? How about a lamb and a turtledove? What if we put you on a sacrifice plan? You could sacrifice half a lamb today, half a lamb next month, and either a young pigeon or a turtledove the month after that. Is that something you would be able to do? Yes, I'm afraid they're pretty strict about young pigeons or turtledoves. I don't know why. No, ma'am, I haven't. Asking questions like that is what sent me down here in the first place. Now these are pretty typical sins, so your dispute might still go through. Would you like to stay on the line or have the results sent to you via burning bush? Okay, hold please.

Ma'am? Your dispute has been processed and I'm afraid it's not good news. It seems you had also sowed different kinds of seeds in a field and wore mixed cloth of wool and linen, so you'll

need to report to Hell immediately. One of our trained specialists will be there momentarily to escort you to your nearest Hellmouth. Ma'am? Please control yourself, ma'am. This was all covered in the terms and conditions. I understand this is not the ideal outcome, but it's not all bad. Well, I guess it is.

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An Experiment in Democracy

INT. MOUNT VERNON – EVENING

SFX: “Pomp and Circumstance” plays for several seconds, then fades out.

CAPTION: Mount Vernon, Virginia - 1784

GEORGE WASHINGTON, THOMAS JEFFERSON, JOHN ADAMS, and JAMES MADISON are relaxing in the dining room. They are all drinking.

WASHINGTON

The Articles of Confederation are failing us. It’s simply too loose an organization.

ADAMS

What we need is more centralized power. Let the national government establish some continuity between the states. What if they don’t recognize each other’s currency? Or what if another war were to break out? There’s no way we’d be able to prepare.

Adams chugs his entire stein of beer and lets out a loud belch before refilling it.

JEFFERSON

While the centralization of power may seem attractive in times of distress, we must not allow a national government to take root and squeeze out the power of local government. What would a New Hampshire man know about the life of a Georgian? A plantation owner that of a whaler?

Jefferson knocks back his glass of wine and farts for eleven seconds.

WASHINGTON

Of course you're right, Thomas, but—

Washington begins scratching his groin.

WASHINGTON

—there is folly in going to either extreme. And while the Articles ought to be replaced, this polarization of ideology worries me and makes me reluctant to start the process of drafting a replacement system of government.

Washington moves his hand from his groin to his rear and continues scratching. After a while, he smells his fingers and goes back to scratching his groin.

ADAMS

(slurring)

What a crock! You're so full of it, George, with your non-partisanship and your wishy-washy loyalties. We need a strong government because the people are imbeciles. They wouldn't know how to put their pants on right if they weren't raised under a monarchy (hic!). And if we continue with this dispersed governmental power, we're gonna have (hic!) a patchwork of nations, not a unified country.

Adams throws up on himself.

MADISON

And that is precisely what we should have. A diverse union of semi-independent states would keep the country from falling under the heel of the sort of elected king that you Federalists want. In a republic, the

government is run by not the elite few, but whole communities. Huh huh, I said “butthole”.

JEFFERSON

He’s right. A patchwork of states is ideal. It only makes sense that, following the Enlightenment and the Scientific Method, we would experiment with government as well. Different states can try different approaches to the problems we face. When one succeeds and another fails, the successful method can be adopted elsewhere. Ask Betsy Ross. She knows a thing or two about experimentation, am I right?

Jefferson and Madison high five and fist bump.

JEFFERSON AND MADISON

(in unison, belched)

Sic semper tyrannis!

Adams passes out and has a wet fart.

WASHINGTON

(picking his nose)

You all make good points, but I think we can all agree it’s important that we establish and maintain and clear rule of law, not power.

Washington eats a booger. A MAID enters.

WASHINGTON

Every citizen must have the rights established from the Magna Carta through the centuries of tort law, especially habeas corpus.

JEFFERSON

Boy, I'd like to habeas her corpus!

SFX: "Yakkity Sax" plays.

Sped up footage as Jefferson chases the maid around the room. Madison and Washington join in the chase and they all run in single file.

A WOMAN IN A BIKINI and a MAN IN A GORILLA SUIT enter and join the chase. Adams is still passed out in his chair, with a growing brown spot on the seat his pants.

BEN FRANKLIN enters, carrying a kite and soaked from a storm. Jefferson slaps him on the head repeatedly.

The maid runs past a potted cactus, which rips the top of her dress, revealing her old timey undergarments. The sped-up chase continues, with Franklin joining at the rear.

Adams wakes up and struggles to get out of the chair. He grabs onto a shelf for support, but it gives and the end above him drops down. Adams falls to the floor. Apples, oranges, and a watermelon roll off the shelf and hit him in the groin, each one with a "boink" sound effect.

The sped-up chase continues as the music and picture fade out.

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Lesser Moments in Music Criticism

Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, "La Marseillaise" (1792) -- These lyrics are all about war, killing, and blood. It's violent music like this from today's so-called musicians (les musiciens misérables is more like it!), in which crops are watered with blood and children wish to share their elders' graves, that makes today's youth so troubled. We must ban this sordid, corrupting music and protect our children from these cheese-eating urban thugs!

- Henry Adams, the Boston Patriot

Francis Scott Key, "The Star-Spangled Banner" (1814) -- Let me get this straight. This guy took a drinking song, jotted down some new lyrics so it's about a flag, and we're supposed to salute it? And what was up with all the lights and flashing and glare? I don't think he was in a battle. I think he was in an opium den with all the other lowlife musicians. Sorry, Frank, but this banner gets zero stars!

- Bertram Beauregard, the Atlanta Sentinel

Ludwig van Beethoven, "Symphony no. 9" (1824) -- Despite heavy promotion from the label for Ludwig's "triumphant return", it's just more middle of the road schmaltz from this has-been who's desperately clinging to his fifteen minutes of fame. He should have stopped after his 5th.

- Peter Harrison, the New York Herald

Stephen Foster, "Oh! Susanna" (1848) -- The latest upbeat swinger from today's crop of one-hit wonders. Too bad they aren't sticking around because this boy's got talent!

- David Stockton, the Chicago Post

Stephen Foster, "Camptown Races" (1850) -- This follow-up hit to "Oh! Susanna" is another winner for Foster. Some are criticizing Foster for borrowing the music and putting new lyrics over it, but they don't understand today's sampling culture. Stephen Foster is here to stay, and no one could be happier about that than this critic!

- David Stockton, the Chicago Post

Stephen Foster, "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair" (1854) -- Is anyone else tired of this guy? He's had the number one selling sheet music for six years straight for writing basically the same two or three songs over and over. It's time to get out of the way and let some fresh songwriters get a chance! I never want to hear any of this hack's garbage ever again!

- David Stockton, the Chicago Post

Stephen Foster, "Beautiful Dreamer" (1864) -- As we still mourn the loss of the greatest American songwriter, there is some comfort in this, his posthumous release. A love ballad, it feels more like a dirge as its beauty reminds us of how Foster has touched all of our souls for the past fifteen years. I can't remember a time when the sound of someone playing a Foster tune didn't perk me up and make me fall in love with his music all over again. Rest in peace, Mr. Foster, you beautiful dreamer.

- David Stockton, the Chicago Post

Weekly Musical Review from June of 1897 -- And for the 1,659th week in a row, there is no new music to report as everyone is still playing Stephen Foster. It's been over 30 years, people!

- Sean O'Malley, the Dallas Star

Al Jolson, "California, Here I Come" (1924) -- There's been a nasty rumor going around that Jolson, the darling of the minstrel circuit, is actually a [censored]! But this critic can assure you that such a proposition is ridiculous. [Censored] performers simply don't have the rhythm or energy that Jolson brings to the stage! Only the glorious white man is capable of such showmanship.

- Elmer Gentry, the Montgomery Bee

Louis Armstrong, "What a Wonderful World" (1967) -- Fortunately for Armstrong, he's got an enjoyable back catalog that people will remember him by, because this latest single stinks! Mark my words, this song will be forgotten by next month. Louis Armstrong? More like Louis Armweak! No, Louis Hamstrung! No, wait, I've got it. More like BOOis Armstrong! Heh heh,

"boois".

- Bill Barnes, the Seattle Sun

Tiny Tim, "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" (1968) -- Five stars! Brilliant! This will be remembered as the music that defined the sixties!

- Terry Washburn, the San Francisco Dispatch

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Cavemen 1

EXT. COMMON AREA IN FRONT OF THE CAVES - DAY

Three cavemen - KARG, ARNK, and GORT - are sitting outside, each working on their own project with sticks and stones.

KARG

Onka dok. Spear!

Karg holds up a crude pointed stone shoved into the end of a large stick. He pokes a dead animal with it to demonstrate how it works. Arnk and Gort grunt to show their appreciation.

ARNK

Bruk daka. Wheel!

Arnk stands up, revealing the stone he has worked into a vaguely round wheel. He rolls it back and forth. Karg and Gort grunt and hop around, very excited about it.

GORT

Hara gark. Helicopter!

Gort stands aside and gestures to a fully operational helicopter. All three hop, beat the ground, and yell in triumphant jubilation. They eat the helicopter.

FADE OUT

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Pity the Slug!

Pity the slug, for what's a slug
But a snail without a shell?
A knight without his armor?
A clapper without a bell?

Pity the slug, for, though we live
To eighty years or more,
In less than a year, grandfather slug
Is crawling to death's door.

Pity the slug, for, though we find
The taste of salt delish,
A dash on him, and he drops dead
With a sizzle and a squish.

But of all the things deserving
Of your tender heartstring tugs,
Pity the slug, because to breed,
It must make love to slugs.

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Bad Show #318: The Olympians

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

HERA is at the laptop writing a post for her family blog.

HERA (V/O)

Fall has arrived and I couldn't be happier. I love this time of year. The leaves change, the weather cools, and everything starts settling in for the winter. My sister, Demeter, is busy at the organic co-op, picking the last of the year's harvest.

SFX: Canned laughter

HERA (V/O)

Athena is excelling at Princeton, naturally. And Ares is killing at West Point.

SFX: Canned laughter

HERA (V/O)

Dionysus is another matter. I wish he would stop partying and focus on his studies. He can write such beautiful plays, but then he gets so wild. Ah well, I'm sure he'll grow out of it.

HERMES (8) enters and runs up to Hera.

HERMES

Hey, ma, wanna see a magic trick?

SFX: Canned laughter

HERA

Not now, Hermes. Run along and tell your brothers and sisters to come down for dinner.

Hera returns to her blog.

HERA (V/O)

Well, I suppose I should wrap this up and feed the kids. Until next time, this is your thea mitrikos, signing off.

ZEUS enters. He opens the refrigerator and grabs a beer. He points a finger at the cap and shoots the cap off with lightning. Hera sniffs.

HERA

Is that perfume? You've been with one of those nymphs again, haven't you?

SFX: Canned laughter

ZEUS

Relax! I just got a sacrifice, that's all. Those damn mortals and their incense. Can't a guy get a simple lamb without it smelling like a head shop?

SFX: Canned laughter

Hermes re-enters, with APOLLO (15), ARTEMIS (15), APHRODITE (17), and HEPHAESTUS (16). They sit at the table. Aphrodite and Hephaestus start making out. Hera brings a casserole of

ambrosia to the table. She and Zeus sit down.

HERA

I hope everyone's got an appetite.

KIDS

Thanks, Mom.

ZEUS

How was everybody's day? Ugh, Aphrodite, do you mind? Not at the table.

Aphrodite and Hephaestus stop making out. She has soot all over her face.

SFX: Canned laughter

APHRODITE

Sorry, Dad.

HERA

How's the band coming, Apollo?

APOLLO

Pretty good. I wrote some new lyrics. Wanna hear some?

ARTEMIS

Oh, gods, some of us are trying to eat.

SFX: Canned laughter

ZEUS

Artemis, be nice to your brother.

ARTEMIS

It's embarrassing! All the girls on the team make fun of me for being his twin!

ZEUS

All right. Maybe later, Apollo. Speaking of the team, how's field hockey going?

ARTEMIS

Okay, I guess. I wish they'd focus more on the game, though. They just want to talk about boys.

Artemis rolls her eyes.

SFX: Canned laughter

HERA

Oh, don't worry about that. One day, you're going to find yourself a boyfriend, too.

ARTEMIS

Oh, mo-o-o-om! You just don't get it!

ATHENA enters to canned applause.

ATHENA

Hi, everyone.

ZEUS

Athena?!?! Wow! Hey, pull up a chair; we were just sitting down to eat.

ATHENA

Thanks, Daddy.

HERA

Honey, it's great to see you, but why are you doing home? Aren't midterms coming up?

ATHENA

Yeah, but I had to leave school. Someone tried to roofie me!

SFX: Canned gasps

HERA

Oh my gods! Are you okay? What did you do?

ATHENA

Well, I chopped his head off, of course!

SFX: Canned riotous laughter

ATHENA

Oh, that reminds me. I'm on academic probation.

Hera mugs to the camera.

HERA

She's your kid, Zeus!

SFX: Canned wild laughter and applause

HADES throws the door open and slides in.

HADES

HELL-o-o-o!

SFX: Canned hysterical laughter and applause

The Olympians groan. Hades' wife, PERSEPHONE, enters with three GHOSTS.

OLYMPIANS

(in unison)

Hi, Hades.

HADES

Hey, sorry to drop in so...late!

SFX: Canned huge laugh

HADES

But seriously, sorry to drop in unexpectedly. We were out at the club, but it was--

Hades makes a naughty face and puts his finger on his bottom lip.

HADES

--dead!

PERSEPHONE

I hate you, Hades.

SFX: Entirely too much canned laughter and extended applause

END ACT 1

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Senator Bigfoot: Fur & Loathing on the Campaign Trail '14

Associated News release, May 8, 2014

La Grande, Ore. - Senator Lawrence Bigfoot (R-Ore.) stunned a crowd of supporters at a campaign stop Thursday morning when he abruptly ended his speech and ran towards the forests of the Blue Mountains.

Bigfoot was speaking about Oregon's history as a destination for pioneers. He started to align that history with his own brand of bootstrap conservatism when he paused mid-sentence. Bigfoot then left the podium and ran to the treeline. Bigfoot's campaign manager, Stu Galloway, said he was not aware of Bigfoot's current location, adding, "But if you hear anything, let me know." According to Wilson Jarvis, a supporter of Bigfoot, "He was talking about liberating people from the chains of welfare, then just stopped. I swear he was crying, but silently, you know? Just a couple of tears." He added, "I hope he's okay. We can't have that Portland communist win in November." Jarvis was referring to State Representative James Grandin, the Democratic candidate for Senate.

Bigfoot was still missing early Friday morning.

Transcript of Senator Bigfoot's July 17, 2014 Press Conference:

Good morning. Thank you for coming. I've got a brief statement and then I'll take a few questions. Okay.

There are once again rumors going around regarding my conduct. I would like to take this opportunity to put those rumors to rest.

First: When I prematurely concluded my remarks in La Grande, it was of my own volition and no one, including myself, was ever in any harm.

Second: I was at no time under the influence of any substances of any kind. I was not, as the fringes of the liberal media have claimed, having a bad trip. I have been very public about my struggles with mescaline and peyote in the past, but that is all behind me.

Third: It's true that when I was found earlier this week, I was under the influence of peyote. However, this was not due to my falling off the wagon. I was simply having an existential crisis and used certain substances such as peyote to reconcile my identity as a quasi-mythical figure of American folklore with that of a three-term senator and Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Competitiveness, Innovation, and Export Promotion. I'm proud to say that the, for want of a better term, therapy was successful and that I feel more than ready to return to office when we reconvene.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to thank the good people of Oregon for standing by me in this time, especially my beautiful, caring wife, Linda. Thank you, Linda, for keeping things afloat while I was a little bit out to sea.

And now I'll take some questions. Yes, Jack.

No, I'm afraid that's not true. I was not aware of the officer's presence during the incident. I was, in fact, firing at ghosts in the woods.

Yes, Maggie.

I'm sorry?

Yes, that theory has been brought to my attention, that the ghosts could be simply hallucinatory manifestations from my inner psyche. Stu and Linda in particular insist on promoting that explanation, but I know what I saw and I know what I believe, and I will not be dissuaded by a

theory based in mainstream liberal science.

Let's see. Andrew.

Now, I don't see why we're harping on this. It's not a big deal. I was feeling better, so I came down from the mountains to reestablish contact with my team and my family. I was suddenly surrounded by ghosts and I did as any red-blooded American would and defended myself. There happened to be a police patrolman in the area and he drove me into town. He was reluctant at first because someone had shot out his window and one of his lights, but he calmed down once I handed him my weapon. I got home, reunited with my family, and a couple of days later here we are. It seems pretty cut and dry to me.

Yes, Howard.

It was a 1974 Colt Python. 8 3/8-inch barrel.

Say again?

I kept it the same place anyone would whose clothes had been stolen by ghosts: in my clenched, unwavering hand.

Thanks, everyone. That's all the time I have for questions. Let's get this campaign and this country back on track! Next stop, Washington! Thanks.

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The Troll

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

TODD ROLL sits at his LAPTOP in a sloppy t-shirt and jorts. The blackout curtains are shut, with daylight peaking in around the edges. The primary light source is his screen.

Short montage of Todd typing and typing while violent, sexist, and homophobic comments are superimposed. They are replies to his comments calling him an asshole, heartless, etc.

Todd finishes typing a comment and hits Enter triumphantly. He slams the laptop shut and gets up from the desk.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Slow zoom in on the MAILBOXES as Todd walks past from left to right wearing a coat. The zoom ends on a tight shot of the name card on Todd's mailbox: T.ROLL. A caption appears over the top-left corner of the card.

CAPTION: The

SFX: Ding!

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Todd walks down a city block packed with narrow stores. After the first store, he kicks a DOG. He hocks a loogie on a CAR in front of the fourth store. He pushes over a STROLLER in front of the fifth store. He enters the sixth store, a coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Todd gets in line. There is only one person ahead of him and she is already making her order.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Can I have a half-caff iced--

TODD

Oh, come on! Spit it out! Jesus!

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

A half-caff iced latte.

Todd walks up the counter the instant she's done speaking.

TODD

THANK you! Hi, I'd like an extra large mocha with two shots of espresso.
It's \$4.87. Here.

Todd puts a five-dollar bill on the counter. The barista gives him 13 cents in change. He puts the pennies in the tip jar and pockets the dime. He then walks to the end of the counter to pick up his coffee.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

You should learn some manners.

As she says this, the other barista places the woman's coffee on the counter.

TODD

Um, you should get cancer, start to recover, and then die in a fire.

Todd pushes her coffee off the counter. It splashes all over the floor. The barista places Todd's coffee on the counter.

BARISTA

Sir, you need to leave.

Todd punches the barista in the face. He grabs his coffee and strolls out the door.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Todd picks up a CIGARETTE RECEPTACLE and throws it through the coffee shop window. He walks back towards his apartment. He passes a guy wiping the loogie off his car. He stops in front of the next store, reaches into the inside pocket of his coat and pulls out a can of spraypaint. He shakes it and paints a swastika on the store window. He continues walking toward his apartment building.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Todd gets back to his desk and opens his laptop back up. He smiles smugly. Black out.

END

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A Letter from the Front

[Note: this letter is best experienced when read aloud slowly while listening to a violin playing "Glory, Glory Hallelujah" and looking at sepia photographs of soldiers posing in chairs.]

Dearest Mother,

After weeks of waiting, we finally saw firsthand the horrors of war. It wasn't anything like I imagined. All around us, men were lying on the ground or in medical tents, crying out in agony. I killed my first department store Santa this morning. I know it's necessary for the good of the country, but this war on Christmas is hell. There must be a better way to achieve a leftist, European-style socialist regime than by kicking in people's doors and dragging their winter season non-denominational holiday trees into the street for a bonfire.

We're running out of room at the labor camps, but the children just keep on asking for presents and questioning our motives for shooting decorative reindeer and tying them to the hoods of our transports. There are rumors of riots breaking out in Arkansas after a soldier urinated on a Target catalog. These setbacks make the war harder to win, but we will fight to the last.

I hope to see you soon, Mother, once the politically incorrect scourge of Christmas is erased from America's memory.

Forever your devoted son,

PFC Henry Fakename

Hallmark, Indiana

December 4th, 2013

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Performance Review

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

GREG stands near a conference room. A CO-WORKER comes out of the conference room, where she has been talking to their MANAGER.

GREG

How'd it go?

CO-WORKER

It was ok. He gave me some notes on a couple of things I should work on, but it was pretty positive.

MANAGER

Greg? You ready?

GREG

Well, my turn. See ya.

Greg enters the conference room. Co-worker exits.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – CONTINUOUS

MANAGER

Please, have a seat.

GREG

Thanks.

MANAGER

Everything going ok?

GREG

Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

MANAGER

Great. Good, good. Now, let's start with your Customer Service rating. As you know, we record calls for quality control. After reviewing yours, it seems that you're a pathetic, sniveling man-baby.

GREG

I'm sorry, what?

MANAGER

Let me double check. Yeah, right here. "Pathetic, snivels, babyish." And then under Professional Appearance it says you're a boring loser that no one really likes. Oh, and your co-workers make fun of you behind your back. And sometimes to your face using code words that they make up when you're not around.

GREG

They make up code words?

MANAGER

I thought you knew. Oh yeah. When someone asks you what you're doing that weekend, it means you're doing that thing where you scrunch up your nose and look like some kind of weasel-human hybrid. You really look stupid when you do that. Ha ha ha.

GREG

(visibly upset)

Um, is there anything on there about my actual work?

MANAGER

Let me see. Hmm.... Oh, here we go! Your social skills are appalling, you have terrible taste in clothes, you have no sense of humor, and most of us do imitations of you. You should hear the cleaning staff do it. Gus really nails the nasality of your voice and Wanda does your terrible posture that makes you look like an ape. She even acts like an ape when she does it! Oh man, you should ask her to do it for you. It's classic Greg.

GREG

(crying)

So what...am I fired?

MANAGER

Oh no. God, no! In fact, we'd like to give you a raise to make sure you stick around! You're the funniest living embarrassment here and you're great for morale. Everyone feels better about themselves and their careers when you're around. Just keep doing what you're doing, Big Nose. Next!

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Cavemen 2

INT. CAVE – EVENING

ARNK and GORT are eating their gazelle legs.

GORT

Mmmf. MMMMMff!

Arnk sighs rolls his eyes.

GORT

Oh! Mmm! MMMMMMmmm!

Gort stands up and walks to the cave wall. He picks up some red berries and draws a picture of them hunting a herd of gazelle.

ARNK

Arrgh!

Arnk picks up his CLUB and beats Gort to death with it. Arnk throws the CLUB down on the cave floor and sits to finish his meal.

ARNK

Hunka durk. Foodie!

FADE OUT

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Daily Schedules of World Leaders

Queen Elizabeth II

4:00am - Kick Prince Harry's friend Nigel out of bed after a long night of rogering and have him go back to Harry's room before the other sleepover guests wake up

12:00pm - Get woken up with a shot of adrenaline directly into the heart and a glass of tequila for a chaser

12:15 - Pick out the day's crown and cape

12:30 - Breakfast with Charles: live eel thrashing in the blood of a prole with a side of grapefruit

1:00 - Generously polite acknowledgement of the half-breed "royals" (Harry, William, baby whats-his-name)

1:30 - First round of clubbing with current favorite James Bond portrayer (bring extra ecstasy)

4:00 - Graciously allow time to meet with foreign dignitaries

5:00 - Lunch: Three bottles of Cristal, eight bottles of prescription strength cough syrup

6:00 - Hunt the most dangerous game of them all: man

9:00 - Dinner: Tequila

10:00 - Second round of clubbing with whoever has the current top-selling single

1:00am - Begin trashing hotel rooms and sleeping with whoever can keep up

3:00 - Fight off the emotional crash with a quick game of Russian Roulette before bed

John Boehner

7:00am - Correct people on the pronunciation of your name

8:00 - Ask billionaires for money

9:00 - Correct the billionaires on the spelling and pronunciation of your name so they can write the checks

9:30 - Read the congressional itinerary for the day

9:34 - Cry

9:41 - Sob

10:00 - Ask billionaires for money

10:50 - Pull yourself together

11:00 - Preside over the House of Representatives and try not to snap and kill the other 434 freely elected, infuriatingly infantile government officials

11:15 - Correct freshmen representatives on the pronunciation of your name

12:00pm - Lunch: ask billionaires for money at a photo op at a locally-owned restaurant

3:30 - Take a restroom break but secretly sit in the stall asking billionaires for money

6:00 - Conclude the day's session

6:30 - Go home

8:00 - Stare at yourself in the mirror for hours wondering where it all went wrong

Vladimir Putin

6:00am - Be woken up by a Special Forces soldier

6:00:02 - Wrestle the Special Forces soldier to the ground and break his neck

6:30 - Ride a jetpack downstairs to breakfast

6:32 - Remove shirt for the day

8:30 - Meet with reporters to show them how many push-ups you can do

11:00 - Play basketball against the Harlem globetrotters and win or else have their families killed

1:00pm – Lunch: hunt a tiger

2:30 - Arm wrestle a gorilla

4:00 - Tie 75 tanks together and pull them through Moscow by your teeth

7:00 – Dinner: nine steaks

10:30 - Put on a shirt and prepare for bed

11:00 - Look at your minuscule penis, hopefully without the aid of binoculars this time

11:04 - Cry yourself to sleep

Barack Obama

6:30am - Wake up screaming

6:45 - Take a long shower and cry because it wasn't a nightmare; you really do have the worst job in America

7:30 - Prepare yourself for another day of empty, demoralizing horror

9:30 - Tell the public you're not Kenyan (not that there's anything wrong with that), nor Muslim (not that there's anything wrong with that), nor a socialist (not that there's anything wrong with that in Canada or Europe)

12:00pm - Meet and greet with the public at a locally-owned restaurant

12:03 - Try not to notice that Boehner picked the same goddamned restaurant for his photo op

1:15 - Ask the driver to just keep on driving -- fuck the ambassador from Ecuador; just drive until the vitriolic world of politics is a distant memory

1:30 - Arrive back at the White House after the driver carried out his earlier instructions to drive there "no matter what I say"

3:30 - Meet with the congressional leadership

3:31 - Don't kick the congressional leadership to death

3:49 - Seriously, Barry, you CANNOT kick the congressional leadership to death

6:00 - Dinner with the First Lady and your daughters

6:15 - Think about how nice your daughters' days must have been since they just took tests and did homework and didn't receive any death threats or memos from vacant lobbyists on how to fix the energy policy

7:00 - Soothe yourself by writing an angry letter of resignation detailing exactly what is wrong with American politics

7:25 - Burn the letter

11:00 - Go to bed

3:30am - Lie awake in bed, too afraid to go to sleep since it will only bring another tortuous day as president

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SOUND EFFECTS MAN 2 (BARRY)

I know. I don't get it. It says horses on the record.

RED BARTON

Heh heh he-e-e-eh! You'll never catch us, sheriff!

ROGER

Here, try this one.

TEX

Faster, Clem!

SFX: Rocket launch abruptly ends and bagpipe music begins

BARRY

Oh no, that's wrong too!

CLEM

We're gaining on him!

ROGER

This is terrible! Wait, maybe this one.

SFX: Bagpipes end and a series of longer and longer bursts of applause starts

BARRY

Oh, god, they're all mislabeled!

RED BARTON

Blast! They're gaining!

SFX: Bursts of applause continue throughout

ROGER

What are we going to do? This is awful!

BARRY

We're going to be fired!

DAISY

It's no use, Red Barton!

ROGER

I'll never be able to tell you...

RED BARTON

Oh, I've still got a trick or two up my sleeve.

BARRY

Tell me what?

TEX

We've got 'im, Clem!

ROGER

I...I can't.

BARRY

Oh, Roger. Do! Do!

ROGER

You mean...?

RED BARTON

Heh heh he-e-e-eh. Just let him try to cross that bridge.

BARRY

Yes!

ROGER

I...I love you, Barry.

DAISY

Tex! Look out!

BARRY

Oh, Roger! I hoped! I dreamed!

SFX: Bursts of applause are replaced by animal sounds (monkeys, tigers, cows, etc.)

CLEM

Look out, Tex!

ROGER

Come here, Barry. If we're going to get fired, at least we can begin a new life...together.

RED BARTON

Ha! You hear that? My men blew the bridge! He's dead for sure!

DIRECTOR

How are we coming on the records? Did you find the right ones?

DAISY

Oh, Tex! No!

BARRY

No, and I don't care! Fire us if you want. We've found something better than work. True love!

TEX

Think again, Red!

DIRECTOR

Oh. I see.

SFX: Animal sounds stop and are replaced by the rhythm of the needle reaching the end of the record

RED BARTON

Tex! But how?

ROGER

You seem surprised.

TEX

I guess you can't believe everything you hear.

DIRECTOR

It's just that--

DAISY

Oh, Tex!

BARRY

What?

TEX

Oh, Daisy!

DIRECTOR

But I love you, too, Barry!

RED BARTON

Oh, no!

BARRY

Oh, my.

TEX

Oh, yes!

ROGER

You'll never take him alive!

CLEM

Look out, Tex! He's got a gun!

BARRY

Roger! What are you doing?

RED BARTON

That's right! Now get over there!

ROGER

You shut up! I've waited too long to have you snatched away by this scoundrel.

DAISY

Be careful, Tex.

TEX

Let's talk about this, Red.

DIRECTOR

We can work this out.

RED BARTON

I'm through talking! I'm taking Daisy and that's all there is to it!

BARRY

Roger. Don't spoil this.

TEX

I can't let you do that, Red.

ROGER

It's too late. I don't know what to do now.

DAISY

I'm scared, Tex.

BARRY

It's okay, Roger.

RED BARTON

Don't take another step! We're riding out!

BARRY

Just put the gun down and we can leave.

RED BARTON

Together!

DIRECTOR

And he'll just get away with this, huh?

TEX

Not if I have anything to say about it.

DIRECTOR

Not on my show!

CLEM

Tex! No!

SFX: Sounds of a struggle

RED BARTON

Let go!

BARRY

Get off of him!

DAISY

Tex!

ROGER

Barry!

SFX: Gunshot

RED BARTON

Hurrrrkkk!

ROGER

Barry?

CLEM

Tex?

BARRY

Roger?

DAISY

Tex?

DIRECTOR

Oh my god. What have I done?

CLEM

Tex! You're okay!

BARRY

You bastard! You killed Roger!

DAISY

Oh, thank goodness!

DIRECTOR

It was an accident. I swear!

TEX

That was a close one.

BARRY

Oh, Roger! [sobs] You murderer!

CLEM

And justice is served.

DIRECTOR

My god. I'm sorry.

TEX

No, Clem. Justice would mean Red Barton was behind bars.

BARRY

[wails]

DAISY

Well, I'm just glad you're okay and Barton was stopped. That's justice enough for me.

DIRECTOR

What have I done? My god.

CLEM

Hey, you lovebirds. Let's go home and leave this polecat for the buzzards.

BARRY

[sobbing]

SFX: Closing fanfare

ANNOUNCER

Tune in next week for another exciting drama on The GlitterBrite Lead
Paint Hour!

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My Biggest Day

My Biggest Day

Emily Wainwright

ENGL 102

I'd say the biggest day of my life was the day I awoke from the coma. I was in a bad car accident and suffered what doctors call "severe blunt force trauma" to my head. It put me in a coma for four years, from the time I was 11 until I was 15. If you're doing the mental math, you'll realize what transpired during those four years.

They didn't tell me about the disclosures the minute I woke up. Being doctors, they started with the standard physical and psychological tests. Then they brought in my parents and we hugged and cried a lot. Then they looked me over and assigned some occupational therapy. That's when the transition nurse came in to tell me how the world had changed. I guess if I found out with the rest of the world -- gradually, one revelation at a time -- then it wouldn't have been so bad. But learning it all at once was quite a shock.

We started with the little ones. The space program has been in bad shape as long as I can remember, so the admission that the moon landings were all faked was not that big a deal to me. Neither was the fact that all 74 surviving members of the conspiracy to assassinate John F. Kennedy were now in prison for treason and awaiting execution. Even learning that 60% of the country was now autistic because of vaccines was something I could deal with fairly easily. That's when they dropped the big news on me.

When I was first becoming aware of the world, around age 8 or so, I remember people believing things that sounded crazy such as Bush planning 9/11 or Obama being an atheist communist Muslim from Kenya trying to disarm America. When they told me those were all true, I was stunned. But that was nothing compared to finding out that we are not alone in the universe. The

rumors about a UFO crashing in Roswell were true. That took me a few minutes to deal with. I remember being excited. Were there more aliens? Did any survive? Could they help us technologically? The second shock was something unimaginable: that one would be elected president.

They showed me a video of one of President TcheqVIjj'jpx's recent press conferences. I guess I was expecting something out of old movies: big, bulging green head covered in wrinkles or something. But he looks much closer to an Earthling, though the big eyes take getting used to. I think they were expecting me to recognize Vice President Presley, but before the disclosures, no one my age had ever heard of him. Besides that, being nearly 90 and not wearing a jumpsuit, he just looked like any other old man with sideburns.

After that, the rest of the disclosures were easier to take. Since I was only 11 at the time of the accident, I only had one filling with a tracking device, so I still have almost all of my teeth. And even though the Illuminati are now out in the open and we have to perform Masonic rituals, it's not that much different from when we thought it was just the government and business leaders who ran everything.

The only part that really bothered me was when they told me about the dinosaurs and the earth as a whole. Sure, if TcheqVIjj'jpx's ship hadn't crashed while they were planting fake fossils underground we might never have found out about extraterrestrial life, but the knowledge that the world really is only a little over 6,000 years old is troubling. My mom called it an existential crisis. I looked it up and I guess she's right, but I think the problem isn't so much not knowing who we are or why we're here, but knowing exactly who we are and why we're here. When you find out God was the name of an intern and that your planet is basically a petri dish, you can't help but feel like a germ. A small, insignificant organism that someone sees as just a mildly interesting speck from which to collect data.

All of which is to say that, in conclusion, there was no bigger day for me than when I awoke from my coma. However much the outside world changed, though, it was comforting to know that my family's love would always be there, even after we're cryogenically frozen and our

consciousnesses are uploaded into a vast network to explore the galaxy for all eternity.
Praise to the Seven. Novus ordo seclorum.

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Steel Flying Squirrel

Like all orphan billionaire heirs to tech corporations, Scott Brand developed a vigilante god complex and created a costume based on his two deepest fears: flying rodents and being turned into an android bit by bit. Using his family wealth and connections, he constructed a biosuit with membranes between the arms and legs so he can soar from building to building as he blows up impoverished neighborho--uh, I mean fights crime as...Steel Flying Squirrel!

Our story begins as Steel Flying Squirrel beats a jaywalker unconscious and hangs him from a streetlight. As he glides home in his biosuit he thinks, "Egads! That jaywalker might have harmed my wealthy, handsome body. I suddenly realize just how dangerous this vigilante lifestyle of mine can be. I'd better enlist the aid of a child!"

Surreptitiously landing behind the local orphanage, Steel Flying Squirrel removes his biosuit and enters as his alter-ego Scott Brand to take a look at the kids. As the Mother Superior walks him by the orphan lineup, Brand sizes them up.

"Hmm, too thin, too fat, too young, too female, not white. Ah, here's one. Son, you've got just the right combination of neediness and institutionalized nihilism to come be my ward."

"Thanks! It's due to being passed from foster family to foster family because of my destructive nature, which is in turn a result of--"

"Yes, yes. Wonderful. How'd you like to come live with me?"

"Gee, sir, that'd be swell!"

Brand turns to the Mother Superior. "I'll take him. Wrap him up!"

"Certainly, Mr. Brand. Just as soon as we run a background check and perform a home inspection."

An audible gulp escapes from Brand's throat. "Heh. Is all that really necessary? I'm sure I could find someone to vouch for me."

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Say, why don't I just buy this place?"

"Because that would be grossly unethical. On top of that, it sounds like what a wealthy pedo would do."

And so our hero retreats to the Squirrel Nest, where he puts in a call to the local newspaper.

"Yes, I'd like to place a classified ad, please. Wanted. Male roommate under 20 for billionaire loner. I promise I'm not a wealthy pedo. Have you got all that?"

"Yes, sir. And don't worry. We've got a section just for wealthy pedos."

"I said I'm NOT a pedo! I just need a roommate. A young, nubile, flexible roommate who's susceptible to suggestion!"

And within days, young Dirk Greenhorn moves in with Scott Brand, the tech billionaire who is secretly the crime-fighting vigilante Steel Flying Squirrel! Shortly after moving in, Dirk is roaming the halls, wondering where his benefactor is, when he hears a noise from the library.

"Oh dear! I hope Dirk doesn't come in here and see me! That would ruin my secret! The one I keep from everyone!"

Dirk opens to library door and spies Scott wearing half his Steel Flying Squirrel biosuit. Scott

gasps. "Dirk! Oh no! You've spotted me! Now you know!"

"Oh, wow. You're going to a costume party. Is it superhero themed? Can I go as Arachniboy?"

"It's actually Arachni HYPHEN Boy. I could hear the typo in your voice. And no, I'm not going to a costume party."

"Oh, okay." And so Dirk leaves and Scott's secret is still safe!

"Hmm, this kid's pretty dumb. This will be harder than I thought."

The next day, we join our hero as he sits in the Squirrel Nest, hard at work on a case! But what's this? A certain young man has stumbled upon the secret entrance.

"Hello? Mr. Brand? Are you down here?"

"Oh fiddlesticks! It seems you've at last found my secret!"

"You have a man cave in the basement? Neat! Say, cool car!"

"Ah, I see you're impressed with the Squirrelmobile."

"Yeah! Say, does Steel Flying Squirrel know you have it? Oh, gosh. What am I saying? Of course he does! You guys are pals! Anyway, I'm gonna go watch the polo game. See ya later!"

That night, we join Dirk as he gets ready for bed.

"Boy, that Mr. Brand sure has a neat life. Costume parties, borrowing the Squirrelmobile. I bet he even gets to go the baseball park whenever he wants!"

Just then, something crashes through the window! It's Steel Flying Squirrel -- and he looks hurt!

"Golly! Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'll be fine, son. I'm just glad that-- Oh dear!"

Oh no, loyal readers! Steel Flying Squirrel has dropped his wallet and a photo of him changing into his costume just as his mask has fallen off! Will Dirk suspect that he is really Scott Brand? He picks the items up off the floor and looks at them.

"Say, Mr. Steel Flying Squirrel. This is gonna sound real funny, but is there a way that you could possibly be--? No-o-o. No, it's too crazy."

"Go on, son. What were you going to ask?"

"It's just that, well, I don't suppose there's any way that you're really Scott Brand, my benefactor and the head of BrandTech Industries, the multinational electronics and defense corporation?"

"Egads! You've somehow stumbled onto my secret! I suppose you'd better become my sidekick and fight crime with me so my secret doesn't get out!"

"Or I could just not tell any--"

"Here! Put these on!"

Steel Flying Squirrel reaches into his utility belt and pulls out a costume that coincidentally fits Dirk perfectly!

"I suppose you're wondering how I became the vigilante you see before you."

"Not really, but--"

"It started when I was tender lad. I was walking through Mugger Alley with my parents, when out of nowhere, a mugger appeared! He shot my parents and ran off with their money, leaving me an orphan. From that moment, I dedicated my life to crimefighting."

"Gee, that sounds a lot like Ba--"

"Baloney! Yes, it sounds like baloney, but I assure you it's true. I knew I wasn't physically strong enough to fight the city's crime, so I used my technical prowess and immense wealth to create this biosuit. It has a built-in power source, allows me to fly, and has an arsenal that would make most countries blush."

"Wow! That's just like Iron--"

"Yes, just like irony. It's, er, ironic that the same tragic childhood that leads some to crime led me to fight for justice."

"Except you don't arrest them or allow them legal representation. You just pummel them and leave them in the street, which is itself a crime."

"Yes, yes, very interesting. Let's look at the gadgets!"

The next night, we join our heroes on patrol!

"I really don't think I should be out here with you. I mean, I've only had three hours of training, Mr. Brand."

"Steel Flying Squirrel! When we're on patrol, we can't use our civilian names. Got it, Gliding Possum?"

"And that's another thing. How come I'm an Australian possum and you're a squirrel?"

"They're gliding mammals."

"Okay, but why--"

"Shh! Look!"

Always keen-eyed, eternally vigilant, Steel Flying Squirrel spots a crime in progress!

"It's the dastardly Rabbit Man! He's robbed that convenience store!"

"I think it's just a guy with pantyhose on his head."

"Well, not all costumed superhumans have the resources to make their suit as impressive as mine. We must be sensitive to the circumstances in criminals' lives that lead to their unfortunate lifestyles."

See how Steel Flying Squirrel shares his wisdom as he swoops into action! And within minutes, the criminal is subdued!

"Jeepers, Steel Flying Squirrel! You probably gave him a concussion! He could have permanent brain damage!"

Just then, another masked criminal leaves the convenience store, this time donning a ski mask!

"Look, lad! It's my other arch-nemesis, Doctor Neutral, the Swiss Menace! He always--"

Oh no! Doctor Neutral has shot our hero!

"Gah! Bullets! How did he know my weakness?!? Run, Gliding Possum!"

But it's too late! Gliding Possum has been taken by the masked mastermind! As Steel Flying Squirrel struggles to his feet, he is sad witness to the escape.

"Good thing I included a tracking device in the visible underwear of his costume! Now to return to the Squirrel Nest to track him."

Later that night, in the hideout of the criminal mastermind, Gliding Possum remains brave in the face of death!

"Ple-e-e-ase let me go! I'll do anything!"

"Not until I get a ransom for you. I'm sure that costumed idiot will put out a statement soon enough."

Just then, a bomb blows a hole in the wall of the hideout!

"Good evening, Doctor Neutral."

"Who's that? My name is Steve. Anyway, if you want this kid back, you're gonna need to pay. I want \$50,000."

"Hah! You think I'll let you get away with this?"

"Fine, I'll shoot him."

"Wait! I'll pay. It'll take me some time to get the money. But if you let him go now, I give you my word that I'll settle up soon."

"That's fine, I guess. gee, your voice sounds really familiar. Are you on TV?"

"Uh, er, no. I don't think--"

"I got it! You sound like Scott Brand, the billionaire who makes public appearances all the time! Hah! But how could you be Scott Brand? That's silly."

"Yes, heh heh, that would be pretty strange."

"Actually, come to think of it, it kinda makes sense. An orphaned arms manufacturer whose parents famously died in a robbery. And it would take a huge amount of resources and time to build and maintain that suit. The sort of time that other executives might spend on the golf course, say. Yeah, of course you're Brand! Oh! And there's also an alarming rate of sociopathy in the cutthroat elite world of executives. I was just reading a new study from the Yale Psychology department that--"

"Okay, yes, we get it! Can I rescue him now?"

"Sure. But since you're ludicrously wealthy, it'll cost you \$50,000,000 now."

"Hmm. That's really gonna cut into the third-quarter profits. The board would have a field day with me. You're sure you won't go for less?"

"I think my price is fair, considering."

"All right, have it your way."

See how Steel Flying Squirrel deftly pulls a handful of small explosives from his belt and throws them around the building! Witness how he uses his grappling hook to tie Steve the Criminal to a support beam! Marvel at the speed with which he exits the building just before it explodes!

"My poor sidekick! Oh, Gliding Possum! You noble lad! Your death will not be in vain! I will add it to the catalog of painful events that happened to people around me that never put me in any danger so I can continue to seek revenge against the criminals of this fair city!"

And so ends another adventure of Steel Flying Squirrel! Join us next time, when Steel Flying Squirrel goes up against the principal of Carver High School!

"For the last time, you pervert, stop coming in here recruiting sidekicks!"

The End!

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Bad Show #174: DRACLANTIS

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR JUST OUTSIDE ATLANTIS – NIGHT

Cold open on HARRY and PIERCE (two members of VAMP SQUAD SIX) fighting an AGENT OF S.T.A.K.E. They have black eyes. (NOTE: Their eyes are black like a shark's when they are in full vampire battle mode.)

After some struggle, the Agent of S.T.A.K.E. kicks Harry. Harry floats out of the fight. He falls and his eyes turn from black to blue and dreamy. He watches the rest of the fight, frightened. Pierce overpowers the AGENT and holds him in a headlock. Pierce pulls off his GLOVE, revealing a LEECH-LIKE MOUTH on his palm. Pierce puts his hand on the agent and drinks his blood.

Pierce swims away, leaving the AGENT'S BODY to float slowly down. A cloud of BLOOD floats out of the body. Pierce speaks as he swims past Harry.

PIERCE

Go on. Get yours, Harry. I left you some.

Harry swims over to the BODY dejectedly. He removes his GLOVE and drinks blood with it as Pierce did.

INT. DRACADEMY HALLS - LATER

HARRY puts a notebook in his LOCKER. PIERCE quickly swims up to him and slams the LOCKER.

PIERCE

What exactly was that back there?

HARRY

I...I froze. It won't happen again.

PIERCE

It'd better not. If you're gonna be one of the Vamp Squad Six, then you need to step it up. If you can't support your fellow agents, we'll gift wrap you and send you over to S.T.A.K.E.

(Immediately softens)

Hey, I know what you're going through. If Colonel Draquala hadn't sent Sanguina into the field, she'd still be alive. I mean, she was your girlfriend, bro.

Pierce's watch flashes. He looks at it.

PIERCE

Speak of the devil. I've got to see Draquala now.

Pierce exits. Harry lingers at the lockers.

EXT. DRACADEMY DORMITORY - EVENING

Flashback to SANGUINA and HARRY in front of the Dracademy dorm.

SANGUINA

It's okay, Harry. It's an in-and-out rescue mission. I'll be back and debriefed in a couple of hours.

HARRY

I don't know, Sanguina. I've got a bad feeling about this one.

SANGUINA

You worry too much, tiger shark.

She kisses him.

SANGUINA

I guess that's why I like ya.

INT. DRACADEMY HALLS

Cut back to HARRY reflecting. (NOTE: Not literally! They can't cast reflections.) Harry sets his jaw and pulls out his PHONE. He types something we can't see.

Cut to a shot of the phone screen. We see a TEXT MESSAGE to DIRK that says "Tonight's the night. Draquala's going down!"

Cut back to Harry. His eyes turn black. (NOTE: Their eyes are black like a shark's when they are in full vampire battle mode.)

END ACT 1

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Press Release

Hello, all you “journalists” out there. I know you’re all clamoring to sit down with me for an interview, so I’m going to make life easier for both of us. I’ve come up with some stock replies for you. Just make up some questions and use the answers below. Then just fill in the brackets as needed and send me a check for fifteen hundred dollars. Thanks!

You know, I’m really inspired by [semi-talented hack]. I think [he/she] goes criminally unacknowledged for the quiet power in [his/her] work. There’s a [genre] there that you don’t see much in [the above hack’s “style”], a real [literary theory term, preferably in French].

If I had to name three, they’d be coffee (chuckles), God, and enormous checks from fans.

Not as much as you’d think, actually. I do a little every day, usually in the morning, but I try not to take it seriously so it doesn’t become a chore.

Oh, I love coming to [your dumb town]. There’s so much history here. I try to check out [whatever pathetic attraction passes for culture there] whenever I come through. And the [bland local food that everyone pretends is so wonderful and has god awful, corny festivals about, you stupid hick assholes]! You can’t find it like that anywhere else. It’s such a hidden treasure.

Oh, thank YOU! It’s been a treat. I love [your show, publication, or website]. I’m a big fan. [I’m not.]

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Earth Facts

The earth is over 700 years old!

If you took the surface of the earth and laid it flat, there wouldn't be enough gravity to maintain an atmosphere and we'd all die!

Doctors recommend eating the mantle of the earth, but not the core as it's high in cholesterol!

Despite legends going back thousands of years, scientists have proven there is no such place as Atlanta!

The earth's atmosphere is mostly tense!

If you took the Himalayas and put them in the deepest ocean trench, several Asian nations would be very upset with you!

There are more species of insect in one square foot of the rain forest than in an entire CDC clean room!

No one knows what causes volcanoes! Leading experts suspect it involves giant underground goats!

The moon has significantly less gravity than the earth! This is because moonmen watch more slapstick comedies while earthlings prefer police procedural dramas!

If you laid the equator end to end, it would reach all the way around the earth!

The word "Arctic" derives from the Greek and Latin words for "bear"! The word "Antarctic"

derives from the Greek and Roman myths of the Antbear, a ferocious, six-legged bear with long antennae on its head! Like most myths, the Antbear has a simple real world explanation! The Antbear was a regular bear with another bear standing behind it and putting its arms under the first bear's armpits! As for the antennae, all bears have antennae!

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Cavemen 3

INT. CAVE - DAY

The whole tribe is gathered in the main cave. ARNK stands in front of them, holding a crude TOTEM figure about a foot tall.

ARNK

Ga Osker gunka Best Picture nooka buh...Gort! Oon durga "Horse".

Arnk gestures towards a PAINTING of a horse on the wall. GORT stands up, crying, and walks to Arnk. Arnk hands Gort the TOTEM.

KARG, furious, runs up and clubs Gort to death. Karg begins to eat Gort. Orchestral "play-off" music begins.

FADE OUT

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The Sermon on TheMount.com: A Place for Prophets

Matthew 5

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went online: and when his account was verified, his disciples followed him:

2 And he wrote a new post, and taught them, saying,

3 Wretched are the poor: for they do not work hard enough.

4 Wretched are they that mourn: for they should be comforted with what they have.

5 Wretched are the meek: for they should lean in.

6 Wretched are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they do not understand the marketplace.

7 Wretched are the merciful: for they are raising a generation dependent on the nanny state.

8 Wretched are the pure in heart: for they are naive.

9 Wretched are the peacemakers: for they do not support the troops.

10 Wretched are they which are persecuted for self-righteousness' sake: for they should be thankful for the advice of their elders.

11 Wretched are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. You should try harder to fit in.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you until the prophets came out of their shells and Lived Out Loud.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. The salt should have gone to business school.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. And while most people these days can't appreciate ye, I have the wisdom to see your value.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. This is what I'm doing now on themount.com, and what I do every day on Twitter. Follow me: @NazarethVegan00!

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Now, I support letting your light shine to women and glorifying your Mother, too, but I'm not one of these extremist feminists you see nowadays.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill, because the Founding Fathers agreed with my views, whatever they may be.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled, or my super PAC will flood the airwaves until frightened elderly voters get them fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: I'm looking at you, Ben, and your posts about how you're a Buddhist now. Honey, it's just a phase. Call me.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. But honestly, have you ever hung out with scribes? [extends thumb and pinky to make drinky-drinky sign] It's not exactly a high bar.

21 Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment unless the deceased entered your home uninvited or you perceived them as a threat based on their hoodie and thuggish appearance:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Seriously, Tina, it's been two years. I'm sorry what I said hurt your feelings but maybe you should think about the family before you decide to like women. I'm just saying.

25 Agree to disagree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary change the subject and make Thanksgiving even more awkward.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come back thence, till thou hast apologized to your mother for the outburst.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Clearing your browser history doesn't count.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Speaking of profit, if you take video of yourself plucking it, it would go superviral and you could sell a ton of t-shirts before it's played out.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Again, clearing your browser history doesn't count.

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Plus, you know, people just don't try to make it work anymore. If not for you, then for the kids.

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Besides, oral contracts are for suckers. Get everything in writing and keep a copy in a fire safe.

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not vengeance: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him and smite both of his also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy summons and sue him for his coat and his cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a half marathon, go for the full marathon, and get the

stick to affix to your bumper so all might know you are twice as accomplished as your compeller, that he may be belittled in the eyes of those who subscribe to that lifestyle.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away, but then remember to bring it up for years whenever you see him, even after he returns it or pays you back.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, (and be sure to tell them as much), and make a big point about praying for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the self-righteous, and sendeth rain on the smug and on the unsmug.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans and mocrats the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans and mocrats so? Both parties do it; that's why I'm an independent.

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as I and your Father which is in heaven are perfect.

Matthew Chapter 6

1 Take heed that ye do your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your followers which are online.

2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, sound a trumpet before thee, as the proud do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy smartphone hand know what thy alms hand doeth:

4 That the amount of thine alms may be in secret: and thy followers which seeth thine post about alms themselves shall assume it's a lot and reward thee openly.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt be as the faithful are: for they love to pray standing in the megachurches and on the bumpers of the cars in the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 And when thou prayest, doest it in thy closet, or at thy desk, or on the billboard for thy business, or in thy friends' homes, and when thou doest pray to thy Father which is in public; and thy Father which seeth in public shall reward thee openly.

7 And when ye pray, use word for word repetitions, as the faithful do: for they heard those points on talk radio, and they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be ye therefore like unto them: for your Father desperately wants to knoweth what things ye have need of, so ye should ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily gluten-free artisanal bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, because we earned it, not because we look for handouts.

13 And lead us into temptation, for such is the base of a healthy economy: For ours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, your Father will still forgive your trespasses, because you have to be strict or they'll never learn.

16 Moreover when ye fast, be as the selfied, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may show unto men that they fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, so thine oils will not reflect the flash;

18 That when thou appear unto men to fast, they will still compliment your pic: and thy Father, which seeth in a private account, shall reward thee openly.

19 Lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where friends and family doth admire, and where passersby ask where you got that:

20 And lay up for yourselves treasures to take to heaven, such as pride in ownership and pride in self:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is

in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! Remember: there is only lightness and darkness. Once you get into spectrums and gray areas, it's a slippery slope towards cultural relativism and nazi sympathizers.

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon, so go with mammon to be safe. I know you love your art, but there's no money in it and your uncle Charles can put in a good word for you with the firm.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Think for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; and for your body, what ye shall put on. Sure, life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, but that doesn't mean you can't treat yourself.

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. What a bunch of freeloaders. Ye are so much better than fowl.

27 You, by taking thought, can add cubits unto your stature and remove cubits from your waist.

28 And take ye thought for raiment. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, they stick to a look that's classic, not retro:

29 And I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, because Solomon was wise enough to keep up with the times.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Yes, he would not clothe you much more, which is why you need to make the effort to look your best. Fake it til you make it!

31 Therefore take thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do we Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and your self-righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. You've earned a rest. How about a massage?

Matthew 7

1 Judge, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be not judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured not to you again.

3 Beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye.

4 Say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; but mention not the beam that is in thine own eye.

5 Thou responsible one, people rely on you to point out their faults; they know thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. And I think you know who I mean by "dogs" and "swine".

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, because you've earned it:

8 But if every one that asketh receiveth; and all that seeketh findeth; and to any that knocketh it shall be opened, then we would reward irresponsibility, and society would crumble.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will a bureaucrat give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will a bureaucrat give him a serpent? That is what happens when incompetent bean counters force complicated regulations on us.

11 If ye then, being wise and hard-working, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, tell ye even so to do themselves: for this is the law and the prophets.

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it these days.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in well-tailored sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Sorry if that's not PC, but last I checked we have a little thing called free speech.

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good healthy children; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit because there's no such thing. It's a sin. Look it up.

19 Every tree that bringeth forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man. In my day, a man built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto how foolish people are these days who build their house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. Typical.

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. That is, sober.

30 Most of you won't have the guts to share this. But the 1% who do will enter the kingdom of heaven.

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First They Came for the Assholes

First they came for the assholes, and I did not speak out--

Because I was not an asshole;

Then someone said, "Hang on.

You're just going to stand there while they cart off my stepdad?

I mean, yeah, he's an asshole, but he's my stepdad!"

I replied, "Well, I mean, uh, who am I to--"

"Who are you?" they interjected. "Who are you?"

"I'll tell you who you are! You're Professor H.M. Asshole,

Chairman of the Asshole Advisory Board to the United Nations Asshole Council!

What an asshole!"

And then they came back and said, "Excuse me,

Did someone say they found another asshole?"

You know we're coming for them today."

And the recently de-stepfathered bystander said, "Yes!

There he is! That guy is a grade-A asshole!"

And then they came for me.

So I guess the system works.

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Robert Johnson's First Drafts Discovered!

Musical anthropologists have recently discovered many first drafts of some of Robert Johnson's famous blues songs. One of the exciting drafts has been copied below:

I asked my woman for water, and she brought me some quickly.

Yes, I asked my woman for water, and she brought me some quickly.

We always help each other, whoo-oooh, that's why our marriage is happy.

My job is so rewarding, I wish that I could work all day.

Oh, my job is so rewarding, I wish that I could work all day.

You know my paycheck's pretty good, babe. It makes me feel so light and gay.

They sold absolutely zero copies. Among the drafts was perhaps Johnson's most famous song, "Cross Road Blues".

I went to the crossroad, to get some wine and cheese.

I went to the crossroad, to get some wine and cheese.

Old Henry at the store there, hm-mm, he always aims to please.

I'm a gen'rally well-liked man, makin' new friends all the time.

I am a well-liked man, makin' new friends all the time.

You know they even stick with me, yeah, when I don't have a dime.

If you offer me whiskey, I would politely decline.

Said if you offer whiskey, I would politely decline.

You see, my daddy had a drinking problem, and I'd hate to make it mine.

That whiskey, that whiskey, causin' trouble where'er it go.

*That whiskey, oh that whiskey, causin' trouble where'er it go.
When you're crawlin' on your knees, hm-mm, I'll tell you "Told you so."*

*I went down to the crossroad, to get some wine and cheese.
I went to the crossroad, to get some wine and cheese.
Old Henry at the store there, mama, he always aims to please.*

And, of course, the greatest find of the bunch was the first draft of his classic, "Steady-Rollin' Man".

*I'm a steady-rollin' man. Been stuck in this barrel three days.
I'm a steady-rollin' man. Been stuck in this barrel three days.
It ain't no fun rollin', mama, but I'm stuck here anyways.*

*I'm the man that rolls, but I wish I was free.
I'm the man that rolls, but I wish I was free.
Now you hear me howlin', baby. Won't you unbarrel me?*

*I'm a hard-workin' man. Have been for many years, I know.
I'm a hard-workin' man. Have been for many years, I know.
I don't deserve to roll in a barrel, but that's just how it goes.*

*You can't give your sweet woman everything she wants at one time.
You can't give your sweet woman everything she wants at one time.
'Cause she might want you in a barrel, then you're rollin' around in grime.*

*I'm a steady-rollin' man. been stuck in this barrel three days.
I'm a steady-rollin' man. been stuck in this barrel three days.
It ain't no fun rollin', mama, but I'm stuck here anyways.*

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Modern Curses

May your bananas go from green to brown overnight.

May your spouse respond to every inquiry with "Nothing's wrong. It's fine."

May your children seek careers in the arts.

May your dog get more followers than you.

May soft rock get stuck in your head.

May your beef always have too little or too much pink.

May your MMORPG consistently lag.

May you know of the short circuit causing your check engine light to stay on yet live in doubt.

May your 9th grade yearbook photo go viral.

May a somewhat well-known bass player share your name.

May your parents star in a critically acclaimed premium cable series with explicit nude scenes.

May you forever be who you were at 18.

May your hair never look like it did at the salon.

May your friends be cryptic around you.

May your car be parked on the other side of the building.

May a TV movie be based on your life.

May your list of modern curses run too long by one.

May your pants be forever-- oh, dammit.

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Shakespeare's Richard II, Brought to You by Chevrolet

Act 2, Scene 1

JOHN OF GAUNT, nearing death, speaks with the DUKE OF YORK.

JOHN OF GAUNT

Methinks I am a prophet new inspired
And thus expiring do foretell of him:
His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,
For violent fires soon burn out themselves;
But if the burn of athlete's foot persists,
Relieve the itch with tough actin' Tinactin.
Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short;
He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes;
With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder:
Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
Consuming means, soon preys upon itself.
You should have taken the antacid used
By all the noble gentry: Prilosec.
This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,

Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
Is brought to you by Subway. Eat ye fresh!
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear'd by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry,
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son,
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it,
Like to a tenement or pelting farm
By local Long & Foster realtors.
Find a realtor in your town today!
England, bound in with the triumphant sea
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds:
But harsh detergents ruin these fragile cloths.
Egad, there's got to be a better way!
If only we had Clorox in our time.
Their bleach is color-safe and gentle, too!
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.
Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,
How happy then were my ensuing death!
That's why my doctor recommended Zoloft.
My crippling patriotic angst is gone,
And now I live my life with pride and ease.
Zoloft's for adults 18 and up.

You may experience nausea or fatigue.
Consult your doctor if you shake or cramp
Or if depression symptoms still persist.
See our ad in Fitness magazine.

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Aaron Sorkin Presents: Cavemen 4

SFX: A drum plays a march beat over a black screen.

CAPTION: "Burning Bright"

FADE IN

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

KARG walks swiftly, followed by ARNK and GORT. They are wearing power suits and speak deliberately as they pass by executive offices.

KARG

Tell Og we need nine spears by sundown.

Gort makes a note of it and exits down an adjoining corridor.

KARG

Get me today's fire report and ask Kruk-Ruk when he'll have that-

A TIGER pounces on them and eats them.

FADE OUT

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Presidents' Day

I'm glad George Washington had a birthday we can celebrate as Presidents' Day. Some presidents weren't so lucky. Rutherford B. Hayes, for example, hatched from an egg already a teenager. His unusual birth dogged him throughout his career. His election in 1876 was hotly contested partly due to his losing the popular vote to Democratic challenger Samuel J. Tilden, but mostly because his opponents believed he was ineligible to be president since he was not a "natural born" citizen. The so-called "live vaginal birthers" went so far as asking for Hayes' birth certificate. Hayes was so affected by the birthers that he opted not to seek reelection rather than face the wrath and humiliation that had followed him throughout his administration.

Calvin Coolidge also didn't have a birthday. He materialized out of thin air in the East Wing of the White House one blustery morning in 1922. At first aides assumed he was a guest of the First Lady, but when they observed his stiff, serious demeanor, they agreed he must be looking for the President and escorted him to the Oval Office. Historians disagree as to whether Warren G. Harding had a vice president prior to Coolidge's appearance, but as he made his way through the West Wing that day, the every member of the staff, upon seeing him, greeted him as "Mr. Vice President".

Newly declassified memos say Coolidge spoke a terrifying, guttural language that drove men to madness. After his aides begged him never to talk, the "Silent Cal" image was born. While most politicians would be hindered by a lack of speech, Coolidge was often said to have an air of quiet confidence that invariably left those he met with feeling bolstered in their convictions and impressed with the vice president's self-assurance. In fact, his silence may have won him the 1924 election against "Constantly Yodeling John" Davis.

One unfortunate young White House secretary by the name of Howard Lovecraft used his experience with President Coolidge as inspiration for a successful series of horror stories. They were marketed as fiction, but letters from Lovecraft have surfaced that mention "late night visits

with the quiet, gray man" who whispered stories of the Elder Ones from whom he had escaped.

But perhaps I've said too much.

Happy Presidents' Day, everyone!

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The Deal

The devil came to my house,
And he offered me a deal.
For one used soul, he'd hook me up
With a lifetime of free meals.
He'd throw in fifty free TVs,
A thousand back massages,
And a hundred brand new Cadillacs,
In a hundred new garages.

In addition, I would be a star,
With fame from coast to coast.
They'd love me, even if I judge
Or cuss or fight or boast.
On top of that, I'd never age
For all my days to come.
And when I kicked the bucket,
I'd still look like thirty-one.

Besides the fame, the money, the loot,
And other accoutrements,
I'd have my pick of any gal,
Brunette, redhead, or blond.
As if that weren't enough, Old Scratch
Threw in another treat:
An hour each with any dead
People I'd like to meet.

This deal, it sounded pretty good,
So I prepared to sign.
But I paused to ask, "Hey, what's this here,
Where the print gets really fine?"
He said, "You must forever hear
The worst tone-deaf chorale."
I wept, I wailed, I gnashed my teeth,
And signed it: Simon Cowell.

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The Founts of Meaning Derived from External Ambiguities

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Three graduate students - AMBER, DYLAN, and TYLER - sit at a table drinking their coffee.

AMBER

I think the real question is what can we truly understand about our own minds? There are certain processes and reactions that are invisible to us, yet we are both the enactor and the enacted upon.

DYLAN

To that point, there's been research putting the very concept of free will into doubt. Well, further into doubt.

They laugh.

DYLAN

But yeah, they're found an involuntary reaction that occurs in the brain milliseconds before you make a decision where the brain has already begun to act out the decision you haven't "made" yet. So you think you're deciding, but your brain has already decided.

Four TERRORISTS storm in. They fire a few bursts from their MACHINE GUNS. Everyone but Amber, Dylan, and Tyler scream and get on the floor.

TYLER

Your brain or your mind? The two are significantly different.

TERRORIST 1

You! Get up!

DYLAN

True, but I think in this case we can go with "brain" since it's the physical body that's being observed.

TERRORIST 1

I said get up!

AMBER

Perhaps we can use "brain" for the physical observation and "mind" for the delusory free will we invent to ease and perhaps forgo the existential despair that comes from being essentially a robot that runs on chemicals rather than batteries.

The terrorists drag them out of their chairs and take them outside.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

AMBER

Sorry to drop the e-bomb there, but it seemed appropriate.

TYLER

No problem.

The terrorists put HOODS over Amber, Dylan, and Tyler's heads.

DYLAN

If we can pull back from free will and get into reality in general, do these hoods remind anyone else of man's blindness to reality? Assuming you've

got hoods on as well.

TYLER

I think you mean PREsuming.

TERRORIST 2

Shut up!

The terrorists put them in the back of a VAN, then get in themselves and drive off.

DYLAN

Well, regardless, it's reminiscent of Plato's cave allegory.

TYLER

Yes, obviously. I think any child would understand that it's like "The Allegory of the Cave", if we'd like to call things by their actual names. Let's also note that water is wet and space is a vacuum, okay?

TERRORIST 3

Shut up!

INT. BASEMENT CONVERTED TO A RAMSHACKLE PRISON CELL - DAY

CAPTION: "Seven months later"

AMBER, DYLAN, and TYLER are sleeping on the floor near a bucket used as a bathroom. A barred window lets in sunshine that highlights the dust. Several TERRORISTS enter.

TERRORIST

Get up!

Amber, Dylan, and Tyler stir. Amber and Dylan slowly stand up. Tyler gets up to his knees.

TYLER

I just can't help sensing that our lives are being dictated by an external force or forces rather than-

The terrorist hits Tyler across the face with the butt of his GUN. Tyler bleeds from the mouth.

DYLAN

Oh, wow. Yes. Yes! Tyler, your mouth is demonstrating the violent, matricidal act of menstruation and indeed childbirth!

The terrorists groan and drag Amber, Dylan, and Tyler out of the cell. Dylan continues to talk as they are taken outside.

DYLAN

That the bleeding came about after being attacked by a phallic instrument is only further indication of just how deeply entrenched patriarchal hegemony is in the world.

EXT. YARD OF THE TERRORIST COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

The blinding sun beats down on the dirt.

AMBER

I think you mean our understanding of the world.

DYLAN

Yes, of course. From now on, unless explicitly stated otherwise, I think we can just replace any instance of 'the world' with 'our understanding of the world'.

The terrorists make AMBER and TYLER kneel down beside each other in front of a CAMERA. One of them picks up a SWORD. They make DYLAN kneel down a few feet in front of them, still in the view of the CAMERA.

TYLER

Ha ha ha. Hey! These guys are the unstoppable hands of time dragging us to our inevitable fate!

DYLAN

Good one! Ha ha ha!

One of the terrorists beheads Dylan.

DYLAN (V/O)

Wow, seeing one's body with the mind totally detached. This must be what Deleuze and Guattari felt when...they....

FADE OUT

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Everybody Has a Story in Them

To be honest, I never felt like I fitted in. Sure, I had friends as a kid and I was liked well enough, but something always seemed to be missing. It wasn't until much later that I was able to put my finger on it. What I was missing was a real, true connection with others. I think I had been married to my first wife for three or four years before it hit me: This is what I want! This is what's been missing for so long! It felt wonderful to fill that hole in my heart. That made it extra hard, I suppose, when she left.

Yes, yes. Pipe down, please. I'll get to that.

She left, ironically, because I was so closed off. Where I felt close to someone for the first time in my life, she saw distance. I tried to explain it all to her, but she had made up her mind long before that point. I can't say I blame her. I would have left me, too. What a fool I'd been, spending those years navel-gazing rather than seeing the beautiful life around me.

Will you please quiet down? I told you, I'll get to the emergency landing procedures in a second! We only have two engines out; we have plenty of time!

As I was saying, after Janet left -- that was her name, Janet. After she left, I sank into a pretty deep funk. I hid in a bottle and didn't come out for a couple of years. I tried programs and counselling, but nothing seemed to work. In the end, it was the goal of returning to flying that sobered me up. I guess I had to replace the booze with something, and flying was just the ticket. That's good. Ticket. Flying. I didn't even mean to do that.

Uh oh. We lost a third one. I'll try to hurry it up.

I was always handy with machines, so I took to flying pretty quickly. I was so into it, I forgot all about drinking and all about Janet. Whenever I was on the ground, I was counting the hours until

I'd be back in a plane. And it's like they say, it's when you're not looking for love that it finds you. She was an old flame from school. She found me online. She'd been married and divorced, too. It was like we picked up right where we left off.

Okay, okay. I'll cut to the end.

Long story short -- ha ha, too late, right? Long story short, I feel like I finally--

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Topics: The Superhero Problem

MODERATOR

Welcome back to Topics. Tonight we're discussing the recent increase in costumed vigilantes in major cities across the country. Joining me are Police Chief Amanda Krieg, AEGIS Director Arnold Ketchum, and some of our local superheroes. Are there too many superheroes? Savior-Man?

SAVIOR-MAN

I don't think so. Many hands make light work, after all. And we have seen the crime rate plummet.

KRIEG

The petty crime rate, yes, but what we gain with fewer muggings and arsons is dwarfed by the demented actions of even a single supervillain.

KETCHUM

Can I say something?

MODERATOR

Of course.

KETCHUM

When one in twenty residents of the average major city is either—

FUN FACT

Actually, it's one in eighteen now.

KETCHUM

Thanks, Fun Fact. When one in eighteen is either a superhero or a supervillain, it becomes an issue of national security. But while we discourage any newly powered individuals from donning a mask, we also acknowledge that we can't put the genie back in the bottle. There are millions of superpowered people in this country now. Left to themselves, without guidance, that leads to dangerous vigilantism. It leads to chaos. That's what these negotiations are all about. We want to allow the supers to fight crime, but if they don't register and work within the law, you're talking Old West-style justice. A nation ruled by fear, not law.

SAVIOR-MAN

Now, that's not fair. You're painting us with a broad brush, insinuating that we're all a bunch of unstable nuts with delusions of grandeur.

KRIEG

Oh, is that right, *Savior-Man*?

SAVIOR-MAN

Ha ha. You see, it's that distrust and arrogance that's keeping many of my colleagues from coming to the table. They're afraid they'll be used as beat cops, not as the heroes we are.

DOCTOR WOMBAT

Yeah, and also, with so many supers, all the good names get taken.

MODERATOR

Interesting point, Doctor Wombat. Thanks for bringing us back around. Again, our topic is 'Are there too many superheroes?' Let's ask our audience, which tonight is made up of Captain Clone.

200 CAPTAIN CLONES

I think we could always use more.

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Chester Gooden, 1890s Observational Comic

At one point in the late 19th Century, no working comedian in vaudeville or the legitimate theater enjoyed the level of success reached by Chester Gooden. A master of observing and satirizing current events, he was at the top of every list when one needed an emcee, a presenter, or simply someone to make one laugh.

Which is why the last few years of Gooden's career were so painful to witness and why they've been largely written out of his biography.

Below are some of the surviving transcriptions of Gooden's performances.

The Purple Lady, New Orleans – October 17, 1896:

How about these guys going to the Klondike for gold? What's their suitcase look like? "Let's see...coat, blanket, shovel, pick, coat, pan, lantern, coat, boots, coat, food, coat." I bet they're the only guys who start a campfire and then jump in! Hey, at least those guys can focus on one thing. When they want gold, they go where the gold is and dig until they get it. Those knuckleheads at the Olympics want gold, so they go to Greece and do everything BUT dig for it! They're running, they're wrestling, they're fencing, they're throwing things. They're the Renaissance men of sports. Hey! Da Vinci! Pick a sport and stick with it! And speaking of sticking with one thing, have you read this "Island of Doctor Moreau"? This crazy doc thinks he's some genius so he makes these animal people. Some kooky weirdo tryin' to make money off of dumb animals that stand up and talk? This guy sounds like my agent!

Virtuosos of Vaudeville Tour, Chicago – August 4, 1897

Have you heard about this Swedish scientist, Arrgenius? He says carbon dioxide is responsible for global warming. Yeah, good luck getting anyone to buy that one! Hey, everybody stop

breathing! It's getting hot! And speaking of weird Europeans, have you read "Dracula"? What's that? You say there's a book about a Slavic guy who charms his way in and then sucks your blood? I read that book. It's called "My Agent"!

The Inner Sanctum – November 28, 1898

Now they've got these coin-operated player pianos. Have you seen these? You put a coin in it and the piano plays music. I liked what we used to have that made music for no money: musicians! They're like flashers: they do it for the exposure. And speaking of exposure, have you read "The War of the Worlds"? So these Martians come down and kill everybody, then they're exposed to some germs and fall over dead! They seem like they know what to do and how to conquer the world, but then a little cold makes them collapse? Sounds like my agent!

It was at the turn of the century when the modern world seemed to overtake Gooden's satirical abilities.

The Queen's Bosom – April 19, 1900

So they, uh, flew this...zeppelin thing. People get in it and...fly around. Hey, last I checked, people are supposed to stay on the ground! Right? Right? Hey, check my arms. See? I don't see any feathers, do you? Huh? Do ya? Ahem. Say, have you heard about Edison? Yeah, old Tommy's at it again. Now he's made a portable battery. You can just carry electricity around with you now. What if you dropped a battery out of a zeppelin? It hits some guy and he goes, "Augh! I got hit by electricity that came out of the sky!" "Oh, you mean lightning?" "No! It's electricity! In a box!" Heh...right? Is this thing on?

Audiences did not respond well to the increased emphasis on bewilderment in his act and ticket sales subsequently plummeted. Both economic and psychological factors forced him to retire after this tour.

After several years of recovery, however, and under the close supervision of his doctors, he

decided to come out of retirement in 1907 for a one-night comeback performance at Carnegie Hall.

Carnegie Hall – July 4, 1907

Have you heard of this Picasso guy? It looks like someone crumpled up the painting and they made a photostat of it! If you ask me, I think he's been reading Einstein's theory of special painting relativity! Because it doesn't make any sense. How can time slow down? How can she be facing right and left? How can a wave be a particle? It doesn't...I don't...I don't understand anything anymore. Nothing makes sense. What am I doing here? Am I right?

Gooden then dropped to his knees and started crying. He was checked into a sanitarium the next day, where he spent the remainder of his life. Gooden's desperate ramblings were diligently recorded and published in a series of psychological studies. Unbeknownst to Gooden, he had a deep influence on quantum physics when he noted, "Observational comedy affects the outcome of the experimental comedy."

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The 20,000-League Journey Around the World Under the Sea to the Center of the Earth in 80 Days

SFX: Bright fanfare.

ANNOUNCER

It's the Hugginkiss Petroleum Program, starring Dan Grubb!

SFX: Music quiets down.

ANNOUNCER

Friends, do you start the day off sluggish? Droopy-eyed? Off the beam? Then try starting your day with a big cup of nice, thick oil. American oil! The kind of oil you can only get from the Hugginkiss Petroleum Company. And don't forget to look for the big, red letters on the can.

SFX: Fanfare concludes.

ANNOUNCER

And now, here he is, the only man in 2015 who writes scripts for a medium that died decades before he was born: Dan Grubb!

DAN

Thank you, thank you. Well, we've got a fun show for you tonight, so let's get straight into it, huh? Here's our main sketch for tonight. Ripped from the pages of Jules Verne, it's "The 20,000 League Journey Around the World Under the Sea to the Center of the Earth in 80 Days"!

SFX: Dramatic opening music played on kazoo

JIM

My name is Phileas Aronnax, but you can call me Jim. I wish my parents did. My strange adventure began on a typical evening at the Reform Club in London.

SFX: Posh music

GERALD

I say, Jim. Looks like they've finished the rail line in India. Says here it's possible now to travel around the world in just 80 days.

JIM

80 days?!? Why not just take a plane?

GERALD

Oh, I forgot to mention, it's 1872.

JIM

Ah! In that case, 80 days sounds about right.

GERALD

Ridiculous! Man was never meant to travel that fast. The very idea is absurd.

JIM

Absurd enough to put 10,000 pounds on it?

GERALD

I'd put a million pounds on it!

JIM

Remember, this is 1872.

GERALD

Oh yeah. 10,000 sounds adequately absurd.

JIM

Then it's a bet! I'll leave here tomorrow at 8:30 and arrive by 8:30, 80 days from now.

SFX: Brief triumphant fanfare

JIM

We left London the following night, cross the Channel to Calais, and boarded the Orient Express in Paris.

GERALD

Ahem, 1883. The express started in 1883.

JIM

Like I said, we boarded the first of many trains which would eventually take us to the Mediterranean Sea.

SFX: Train noises

JIM

The passengers were a who's who of famous detectives whose names we couldn't afford to get the rights to use. The first night of the trip was most pleasant and calm. But in the morning, we awoke to a horror.

SFX: Woman screams

JIM

One of the passengers had been murdered in the night! All the sudden, we were involved in the Murder on the Ori-- uh, the Murder on the First of Many Trains Which Would Eventually Take Us to the Mediterranean Sea!

SFX: Burst of dramatic music

JIM

First things first. We must examine the body and the car.

CONDUCTOR

Next stop, Nice! Train leaving in twenty minutes for Belgrade, Belarus, and Belgium.

JIM

Oh dear. Here, help me lift him. We'll put him in the next train to continue the investigation.

DETECTIVE

What about the other passengers? Any of them could be the murderer.

JIM

Hmm, you're right. All right, everyone has to keep transferring trains until this mystery is solved!

SFX: Shuffling and voices as they get the body into the other train.

JIM

When we got the deceased and our effects into the next train, we returned

to our detecting.

DETECTIVE

Now, let's see here. How did these two men die?

JIM

I think they were-- TWO men?!?!

DETECTIVE

If it's not two men, that's a funny looking dog.

JIM

My god. Then the murderer is still among us. We must continue the investigation!

CONDUCTOR

Next stop, Buenos Aires! Train leaving in fourteen minutes for Cape Cod, Cape Canaveral, and Cape Cleaners: next day service for two bits!

JIM

Eight hours and eleven trains later, there were 37 victims. At this rate, by the time we reached the Mediterranean, things might get serious. While the detectives consulted on possible suspects, I took a stroll through the passenger cars. I soon heard suspicious voices having a suspicious conversations behind a suspicious door.

KILLER 1

How many is that now?

KILLER 2

39, including six detectives.

KILLER 1

Excellent. We'll soon have the entire train to ourselves. And then we can fulfill our nefarious scheme: to have our own personal train and never need to transfer again! Mwa ha ha ha!

JIM

I burst through the door and found myself standing before two villains. One had slicked back hair, a curled mustache, and a dueling scar across his face. The other was big, bulky, and bald. They drew their guns and aimed them at me. But just then, we went into a tunnel! I dived between them.

SFX: Gunshots

JIM

When we came out of the tunnel, they lay at my feet dead. At last, the mysterious railway murders were over. With no other passengers surviving, I decided to abandon the train schedule and simply head southeast.

SFX: Train passing

JIM

That route meandered from city to city, so I went to the engine and, finding the engineer one of the murderers' victims, I steered the train off the tracks and aimed it at the Mediterranean. Over the next day and a half, I drove over the Alps, through Italy, and across the Mediterranean, finally arriving in Alexandria, Egypt. I put on the brakes and brought the train to a halt.

SFX: Egyptian music, sounds of a train smashing through a marketplace

JIM

I exited the train and made my way through the market. Unbeknownst to me, a local police officer happened to look in the train.

COP

That madman left 41 bodies on board! Since he was the only survivor, my expert training led me to suspect him.

JIM

I headed for the harbor. I was supposed to catch the two o'clock ship for Tel Aviv, but it pulled away just as I reached the docks. I was now a week into my voyage and had to find some way to keep moving west. Just then I spotted it.

BALLOON VENDOR

Balloon rides! Wave of the future! Get your genuine hot air balloon rides here!

JIM

One balloon ride, please.

COP

That killer got into a hot air balloon. I followed him and hid in one of the sandbags.

SFX: Ropes cut, wind whistling

JIM

Boy, this is wonderful! What a way to travel.

SFX: Descending notes on a slide whistle

JIM

Say, what's going on?

PILOT

We're too heavy!

JIM

Oh no! We're sinking! What'll we do?

PILOT

It is not a problem. I'll just cut loose one of the sandbags.

SFX: A rope quickly cut

COP

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGH!!!!

JIM

I travelled by balloon for two days, landing in whatever Saudi Arabia was called back then.

COP

I followed him on foot until he landed.

JIM

There I caught a train heading southeast.

COP

I grabbed onto the caboose.

JIM

Two days later, I reached Riyadh and continued by camel.

COP

I hid in the back hump.

JIM

The next day I reached the Persian Gulf and boarded a cargo ship headed for India.

COP

I boarded as well.

JIM

I was glad that for the next few days I'd finally be able to rest.

SFX: Boat ambience and the sounds of someone climbing into bed. Snoring. Huge blasts, booms, and grinding noises. The noises go on for some time but he keeps snoring. The noises stop and he still snores. The door to his room opens.

PIRATE

Ahem.

JIM

Will you please keep it down?!?!? Some of us are trying to sleep!

PIRATE

Hands up! You're coming with us. You're a prisoner of Nemo!

SFX: Dramatic music

JIM

I was escorted to the deck, which appeared significantly closer to the water than it had before. This might have been because we were sinking. Nemo had apparently attacked while I slept. Rope ladders hung off the rail and led to a strange vessel, unlike any I'd ever encountered. Men of all races were carrying supplies from the ship down to Nemo's vessel. I was ordered to climb down as well when...

COP

Stop! That man is under arrest for 83 counts of murder!

SFX: Gunshot

PIRATE

There, that's one less prisoner to feed.

JIM

And one less voice to keep track of!

SFX: Short burst of applause

JIM

I entered the mysterious vessel and was astonished as we dove below the water. I had heard rumors of an undersea vessel, but assumed they were preposterous. Now I found myself in the Nautilus! ... In the Nautilus! ... No music there? Oh, ok. Anyway, I was led to the control room and steeled myself for my first encounter with the notorious Captain Nemo. I shook as I heard him approaching. My jaw squared as the door slid open. My buttocks clenched as his powerful voice shook the walls.

NEMO

(small, shabby voice)

Hello there, you rotten so-and-so.

JIM

He was terrifying.

NEMO

I am the dreaded pirate Nemo! But you can call me Jim. I wish my parents did.

JIM

I've already used that bit.

NEMO

Drat. Very well. As my prisoner you have a choice: join my crew and take revenge on the world or meet my pet, Mister Woozhy Boozhy Boo Boo.

JIM

That doesn't sound so bad.

NEMO

Very well. Open up Mister Woozhy Boozhy Boo Boo's cage.

SFX: Chains, door opening, loud roar

JIM

I'll join! I'll join!

SFX: Dramatic music

JIM

For weeks, I was Nemo's guest, crewmember, and prisoner. I was forced to obey his every whim.

NEMO

Jim! Jim! Come here. I must tell you about this species of jellyfish I've spotted.

JIM

It was the worst two months of my life.

NEMO

And if you'll look here, there's a rare species of coral, found only in this region of the Pacific.

JIM

Enough! I can't take it anymore! Coral, jellyfish, urchins, sponges -- I don't care! I don't care about your dumb sea life obsession! I just want to get back to London so I can win the bet! But you and your crazy ship! I hate it! It ruined everything! I hate it! AAAAAAAAAUGH!!!!

SFX: Smashing up a ship sounds

NEMO

You maniac! You've startled my brine shrimp!

JIM

AAAAAAAAUGH!

SFX: Struggle, thumps, yells from the crew

PIRATE

He's dead. You've killed Captain Nemo!

JIM

I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me.

SFX: Door opens

PIRATE

Hey, everybody! This guy killed Nemo! No more lectures on sea life!
We're free!

SFX: Cheers

JIM

That's wonderful news. Say, what's that sound?

PIRATE

Oh, that's the fire in the engine room. You did quite a bit of damage
during your little tantrum. We'll need to make some extensive repairs.

JIM

I don't suppose there's a mechanic nearby.

PIRATE

Based on our course, we should be near one of Nemo's mysterious islands
where he docks for just such an event.

JIM

Splendid! Let's surface and see where we are.

SFX: Water and engine sounds

JIM

I went topside and was pleased to see an island nearby. I called out to a man on the beach. I say, is this the mysterious island where Captain Nemo repairs his ship?

MAN

No, this is the mysterious island where Dr. Moreau turns animals into men. Oink, oink.

JIM

We tried the island across the street. It appeared uninhabited. As we got closer we could make out a sign: Uncle Nemo's Crab Shack and Nautilus Repair, next exit. See Our Ad in Better Huts and Garden. At last! Solid land!

SFX: Water, engines, docking type sounds

JIM

Once the exhilaration of being on dry land wore off, I remembered the wager. It had been 74 days and I was stranded on an island in the Pacific. It was hopeless. I'd never get home in time! I wandered the beach, despondent, when I tripped over a foothill. I looked up and saw a volcano. This being a Jules Verne story, I thought, Why not climb down into it? For science! And to get away from those pirates. Now that they were free from Nemo's tyrannical power, they just wanted to eat coconuts and build sand castles all day.

SFX: Dramatic, plodding music

JIM

It took four days to climb up the volcano and make my descent deep down into its heart. Once down, I was mystified by the staggering sights I encountered. I saw insects the size of tigers. Electrified gas that lit up an enormous underground cavern that opened to a subterranean ocean as if it were daylight. Dinosaurs fighting for their lives.

SFX: Roaring, a bell ringing, thuds, more roars

DINOSAUR REFEREE

1, 2, 3!

SFX: Three quick bell rings

JIM

And most amazing of all, as the cavern opened up to the sea, I saw cavemen, twice the size of a normal man. I tried to make my way around the beach without alerting them to my presence, but with their keen hunting instincts they spotted me a hundred yards away. I trembled as one approached me, staring with curiosity. I decided to take a chance that they might be intelligent. Excuse me. Do either of you know the way back to the surface?

CAVEMAN 1 (OOGA BOOGA)

(low, grunty voice)

Ugh. Ugh. Hey, Ugh!

CAVEMAN 2 (UGH)

(regular voice)

Yes, Ooga Booga?

OOGA BOOGA

I've been calling your name!

UGH

Oh jeez, I'm sorry. Must have been daydreaming again.

OOGA BOOGA

You know, I wish you were a little more present. Sometimes it's like there's no one else here.

UGH

Well, you've got my attention now, so what's so important?

OOGA BOOGA

These little fellas want the redeye to London.

UGH

Oh, pardon me. Didn't see ya down there! You need to get to London ASAP, huh? Sure thing. Down that cave and it's the third volcano on the left. Here, I'll come with you. I haven't seen London in ages.

JIM

Thanks!

UGH

Say, do you know the elephant man?

JIM

Sorry, no.

UGH

Darn. I'd love to see something strange for once.

JIM

I say, something's just occurred to me. When the volcano erupts, won't the lava cause a lot of damage?

UGH

Oh, scads of it, bucko.

JIM

Ah. Righto!

UGH

Ah, here we are. After you!

JIM

We went to the third volcano and saw a sign. "Sit in center of rock and press button. Please keep arms and legs inside during the ride." I pushed the button and the ground started shaking. I sat down as quickly as I could, just as the floor began to rise. We accelerated. Up, up, up! It went faster and faster. I could see magma spurting through along the edges of the floor. And before I knew it, we were out!

SFX: Cork popping, slide whistle going up and down in pitch, heavy metallic clang

JIM

I popped up through a manhole. It turns out there was a volcano directly under the King's Road, just a quick coach ride from the Reform Club! We had reached London with just minutes to spare! We were shocked, however, to find the streets completely empty. We ran to the club. No one

there, either. Finally, we found a policeman.

UGH

I say, officer, where's everyone gone? The club is deserted.

BOBBY

Oi, you're a big fella. Who are you supposed to be, Tarzan?

UGH

Oh, aren't you sweet? No, he was Burroughs. This is Jules Verne.

BOBBY

Did Jules Verne have any overly violent police officers?

UGH

None that come to mind.

BOBBY

Then I must be apocryphal.

SFX: Thwack! Bang! Pow!

JIM

Stop it! Stop!

SFX: Dink

JIM

Stop! We just want to know what happened to London while we were gone.

BOBBY

Oh! Oh, it's that bloody Dracula fellow what's been terrorizing the city.

JIM

Dracula?

BOBBY

Yes, Dracula. The archetype of the modern vampire, Dracula was the titular character of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, one of the last great epistolary novels before the format experienced a resurgence in the 1990s. The epistolary tradition is rooted in a medieval phenome--

UGH

All right, all right, we all know about epistolary novels.

BOBBY

Hmm, apathetic of the subject of literary history, eh? That's suspicious! Where did you two come from?

JIM

We came up out of that volcano.

BOBBY

Aha! So you're the folks responsible for all this mess.

JIM

Is that a problem?

BOBBY

I should say so, Sonny Jim. You are in violation of article four, section eight dash B of the Magma and Volcanic Activities Code in that you have

willingly and purposefully deposited magma of the underground variety,
vis, within the city limits. That's a fifty pound fine, that is.

JIM

But I can't pay it.

BOBBY

Oh boy! Obstruction of justice!

SFX: Police whistle

BOBBY

Reinforcements!

SFX: Thwacks and bangs. Footsteps of police rushing in. Many, many thwacks and
bangs. Gunshots. Explosion. Thwacks and bangs continue.

ANNOUNCER

Is this the end of our hero?

BOBBY

Yes!

SFX: Thwacks and bangs fade out. Closing fanfare.

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A Good Old Fashioned Doctor Sketch for the Radio

ANNOUNCER

And now, we take you to the office of Doctor Arthur Schnorrer.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

SCHNORRER

Good morning, Mr. Harris. Now what br-- Oh, great. Not again.

HARRIS

What's the matter?

SCHNORRER

Oh, excuse me. When I saw you, I thought this was the morgue. What brings you in today, Mr. Harris?

HARRIS

I'm just here for a physical.

SCHNORRER

And you barely qualify. Let's get started, shall we? We'll begin with some vital statistics. What's your date of birth?

HARRIS

April 11th.

SCHNORRER

What year?

HARRIS

I forget.

SCHNORRER

How old are you?

HARRIS

I lost count.

SCHNORRER

Well, who was president when you were born?

HARRIS

It was the fellow who got killed at the theater.

SCHNORRER

Not Lincoln!

HARRIS

No, it was...oh yes, Julius Caesar.

SCHNORRER

Stay there. I'm gonna chop you down and count your rings. Forget your age. Let's take your blood pressure.

SFX: Velcro is ripped and reattached. Sphygmomanometer bulb is pumped.

Pause.

HARRIS

So, what's my blood pressure?

SCHNORRER

I dunno, I can't count that low. I've seen anemic people before, but if Dracula ever needs to go on a diet, I'm sending him to your house. All right, let's test your reflexes. Let me at them knees. We'll start with this one.

SFX: Xylophone note

SCHNORRER

And this one.

SFX: Xylophone note

SCHNORRER

And this one.

SFX: Xylophone note

SCHNORRER

Well, look at that. You're a one-man relay team. You know, I could use a guy like you. My boat needs a new motor. If you can't swim, you can put on a saddle and I'll take you to the track. You're most of the way there. Tell me, do you like oats?

HARRIS

Sorry, doc, but I've already got a job.

SCHNORRER

Oh? What do you do for a living, if we can call what you're doing there

living?

HARRIS

I work at a winery.

SCHNORRER

Oh, you stomp the grapes?

HARRIS

No, I trick them.

SCHNORRER

You trick the grapes?

HARRIS

That's right. You see, we make champagne, so I convince the grapes that they're in France.

SCHNORRER

Do you speak French to them?

HARRIS

No, I'm the chorus line and I do the can-can.

SCHNORRER

All right, that's enough nonsense. It's shot time.

Pause.

HARRIS

Hey, doc, what are you waiting for?

SCHNORRER

Well, this shot goes in the muscle. I'll let you know when I find one. Ah, here we go.

HARRIS

Ow! Hey, watch where you're pointing that needle.

SCHNORRER

Sorry, I've had a few shots myself.

HARRIS

Ow! Ooh! Ow! Hey, you're supposed to do just one shot at a time! What kinda doctor are you?

SCHNORRER

I'm a witch doctor. Now hold still; I'm all out of voodoo dolls.

HARRIS

Ow! Are you trying to cure me with voodoo?

SCHNORRER

No, me. I've had a terrible headache ever since this sketch started. I think I'm allergic to nuts. Like you. I'm calling you a nut. Hello?

HARRIS

Sorry, doc, I was busy buying war bonds and smoking a Lung Butter.

SCHNORRER

Well, that sounds like a prescription that I can get behind!

SFX: AWOOOOGAH!

SFX: A fanfare plays

ANNOUNCER

This has been the Lung Butter Program, brought to you by Lung Butter Cigarettes, guaranteed to provide you with all the yellow globs you need to cough up to start your day off right.

END

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About the Author

Dan Grubb is a failed dystopian figurehead in Richmond, Va. He has been in 14 bands (three of them serious) and written for and starred in the wrestling-themed satirical radio comedy *Radical Recorded 'Rasslin'* on WUVT-FM. *Pity the Slug* is his fourth book, not including the two that were tied up in a leather sack with a dog, a snake, a rooster, and a monkey, then thrown into the river.

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