

PLAYBOY

MARCH/APRIL 2017

*Free the Nipple by Scarlett Byrne • Finding Love While Saving the World
• Van Jones, American Hero • 20Q: Adam Scott • Run the Jewels Fight the
Power • The Interview: Scarlett Johansson • Cannabis: A User's Guide*

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Kalen Hollomon

A refreshing sense of realism married to romance is central to Hollomon's thought-provoking mixed-media works. The artist, who designed the memorable album art for the Weeknd's *Beauty Behind the Madness*, brings his unorthodox collage style to the illustration for *The Domestic Lives of Superheroes*.



David Jenison

More states voted to legalize recreational weed in 2016, so it's a good time to start thinking beyond the bowl. For *How to Live the High Life*, we enlisted journalist, weed-pizza enthusiast and *PRØHBT*D editor in chief Jenison to create the ultimate situational guide to partaking. You'll never again wonder which edible to nibble on a Tinder date.



Amanda Petrusich

"Scarlett Johansson is a classic downtown New York City cool girl—worldly, beautiful and impossibly self-possessed," says Petrusich about the *Ghost in the Shell* star. In a candid *Playboy Interview* the "deeply disinterested in bullshit" ScarJo discusses her career, her childhood and motherhood with the *New Yorker* contributor.

Dove Shore

Shore's photography is unfiltered and relaxed, whether he's shooting a big-name model or a guitar-wielding musician. In the pictorial *Lazy Sundays*, featuring the stunning London-raised model Tess Jantschek, he taps into the same easy-on-the-eyes aesthetic that has landed him magazine covers and fashion editorials.



Liesel Schillinger

It's practically a universal truth that all high schoolers worry about losing their virginity. *Supercops*, the second fiction piece for *PLAYBOY* by New York-based literary critic and acclaimed author Schillinger, tells the story of Meredith, an overachieving 18-year-old who decides to make studying sex her top priority.



Jake Chessum

Scarlett Johansson doesn't hold back in her *Playboy Interview*, but the accompanying color and black-and-white portraits of the outspoken A-lister also speak volumes. Chessum, the gifted photographer who captures Johansson's beauty and resilience, has worked with numerous other celebs, including Bill Murray and Amy Adams.



John Hornor Jacobs

In his inventive short story—inspired by *PLAYBOY* favorite John Updike's *Couples*, classic American comics and his own imaginatively "wonky myths"—fiction writer Jacobs shows us what *The Domestic Lives of Superheroes* might look like. Spotting the villain isn't as easy as you might think.

Dana Hamilton

Thankfully, politicians have yet to ban rubbers. Hamilton braves the latex to give us *A His-and-Her Guide to Modern Condoms*. When the sex-and-dating columnist asked her boyfriend what it was like to help her test 11 condoms in less than 48 hours, he responded, "You should tell them it was really fun until about the fourth one."



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ON THE COVER Miss March Elizabeth Elam, photographed by Gavin Bond.



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HUGH M. HEFNER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

COOPER HEFNER **CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER**

HUGH GARVEY **HEAD OF CONTENT**

JAMES RICKMAN **EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

JARED EVANS **MANAGING EDITOR**

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ART

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KEVIN MURPHY **DIRECTOR, PHOTO LIBRARY**; CHRISTIE HARTMANN **SENIOR ARCHIVIST, PHOTO LIBRARY**

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Dear Playboy

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

Maybe you can help me with a math problem: I'm reviewing the candidates for Playmate of the Year and can't seem to divide the 12 ladies down to one (2016 *Playmate Review*, January/February). I'm not sure I'm capable of deciding! Hats off to Hef, who I trust will make the right choice in selecting an ambassador to represent PLAYBOY as the progressive cultural icon and lifestyle brand it always has been and always will be.

*Josh Fehrens
Toronto, Ontario*

DATE DENOUEMENT

I enjoyed reading Stephen King's short story *The Music Room* (December). I believe the small element of science fiction, however, is unintentional. Obviously possessed with the power of prophecy, Mrs. Enderby is able to play a song ("The Way You Look Tonight") in 1932 that was written in 1936!

*Michael O'Connell
Sterling, Virginia*

Although the story takes place during the Depression and is inspired by a 1932 painting, at no point does King "date" it to that year.

WE'VE GOT IT COVERED

I just received my January/February issue in the mail and immediately recognized the reference to the January 1968 PLAYBOY. Nice job re-creating a great cover.

*Robert Beanblossom
Pisgah Forest, North Carolina*

GUNS AREN'T US

Adam Skolnick thoughtfully considers how weapons on the silver screen shape gun violence in America (*Who Puts Guns in the Movies?*, December). In the end, he blames not Hollywood or video games but how comfortable we are with the reflection we see of ourselves in the mirror of popular culture. So it's on all of us. I agree; it will take all of us to change America's culture of gun violence. But how?

We must fix the weak laws that make it easy for criminals and the dangerously mentally ill—people already prohibited from possessing guns—to obtain guns. This is the problem we

must urgently solve, the X factor that makes the U.S. rate of gun violence so exceptionally high.

Skolnick notes that Congress has not taken significant action to prevent gun violence in recent years, but there is another aspect to the story. In the wake of the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, Everytown for Gun Safety—a broad movement of Americans, including gun owners—has coalesced as a counterweight to the National Rifle Association. In statehouses across the country we have helped pass safer gun laws and successfully defeated gun-lobby-backed proposals. There are common-sense public-safety measures, supported by many gun owners, that can help keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and terrorists. And despite NRA fearmongering about a grand scheme to round up all guns—a tactic that probably sells far more guns than any product placement in movies—this movement isn't about threatening the Second Amendment. It simply should not be easy for people who shouldn't have guns to get them.

We need more Americans to join us in our demand that our elected leaders place public safety ahead of the interests of the gun lobby. It really is up to all of us.

*Erika Soto Lamb
Everytown for Gun Safety
New York, New York*

Adam Skolnick says the commercial sale of automatic weapons remains prohibited in the U.S., but 34 states allow the sale and ownership of fully automatic firearms (and silencers). Federal forms must be filed and a \$200 BATF tax paid for each firearm and silencer.

*Tony Sapienza
Ridgewood, New Jersey*

In *Who Puts Guns in the Movies?* Adam Skolnick lures readers in with fun facts about shoot-'em-up flicks but then spouts weary anti-gun-rights mantras, recycling the claim that 90 percent of Americans want "universal" background checks—a fancy term for backdoor universal gun registration that would give authorities all the information they need when some future politician decrees nationwide confiscation. Maybe the "real problem" is not guns at all but feel-good "solutions" that blame inanimate objects and penalize their peaceful owners while leaving the causes of crime unaddressed.

*Mike Butler
Youngsville, North Carolina*

Skolnick responds: "Erika Soto Lamb is exactly right about NRA-aligned fearmongering. And Everytown for Gun Safety knows that if criminals and/or mentally unstable people can't get guns, mass shootings would almost certainly plummet. Individual opinions and actions are



If only all guns were as safe as this prop weapon.

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DEAR PLAYBOY

powerfully shaped by the stories we tell ourselves; unfortunately not all those stories are based on facts. That approximately 90 percent of Americans support universal background checks is a fact verified by five separate 2015 polls (Pew, Gallup, CBS/New York Times and two from Quinnipiac University) spanning the political spectrum and including gun owners. Mike Butler can choose to ignore this if he wishes, but it does not change reality. Regarding fully automatic weapons, Tony Sapienza is correct, but only weapons manufactured prior to 1986 can be bought, owned or sold. Sapienza notes that registration and fees are required. Perhaps these regulations are why mass shooters often rely on easier-to-buy semiautomatic weapons."

RECIPE FOR SAKE-CESS

I enjoyed the article on sherry (Sherry Shakes It Up, December). About two years ago I invented a sherry cocktail, the sherrake ("share-rah-key"). It's simplicity itself: two parts sake, one part sweet sherry. Pour over ice into a smallish glass and stir gently with a swizzle stick. Enjoy.

Richard Vidan
Orangevale, California

OFFSCREEN SNORES

In David Hochman's introduction to the Playboy Interview with Billy Bob Thornton (December), he writes, "Here's a little show-business secret: Some of our finest character actors are absolute bores offscreen." I wouldn't dream of asking Hochman to name names, but I'm intrigued. Isn't the number one requirement of a successful actor to be interesting?

Randy Erdman
Matthews, North Carolina

Hochman responds: "Actors are paid to play characters, not to be characters. They can be workaholics who live for the Hollywood grind, putting in 14-hour days—and you know what they say about all work and no play. There's a reason actors love hanging out with rock musicians: Those people live large!"

NOSE CONES BY ANY OTHER NAME

Many years ago PLAYBOY published a list of clever euphemisms for breasts. I believe there were more than 200. Can you remind me?

Miles Loegering
Dallas, Texas

More than 300, actually—including gems ("umlauts," "pointer sisters") and groaners ("lactoids," "meatballs"). Expand your

vocabulary with the March 1986 article, A Few Words About Breasts, on iPlayboy.com.

PUZZLES AND POETRY

What is the orange classic car that Ashley Smith poses with in her pictorial (Playmate, November)? My attempts to determine its make and model have been unsuccessful.

Dennis Clouthier
Allenstown, New Hampshire

It's a 1972 Alfa Romeo Montreal and, like



The unforgettable Ashley Smith.

Ashley, a rare beauty. Gabriel and Rose Balthiera of Mr. Vintage Machine in Los Angeles loaned us the gorgeous wheels. Gabriel says, "The Montreal was never available for sale in the U.S. or Canada. It's a treat to have here."

I'm entranced by your lovely cover girl from Texas, Miss November Ashley Smith. Have you bunny-friendly folk ever used that highly appropriate (rabbitish) gap-toothed look before?

Irving B. Barrett
Newport, Rhode Island

Check out Not Just Another Pretty Face (September 1992), in which performer Sandra Bernhard dons Bunny ears, doffs her clothes and writes her own story.

The November PLAYBOY blows me away. Permit

me to wax poetic about cover girl Playmate Ashley Smith: "I don't mean to go on rashly/ But I simply need more of Ashley!" The photo of her lounging naked on the diving board drives me wild.

George Kammerer
Dunham, Quebec

ART NOTES

Chloé Kovska has a gift (Artist in Residence, October). I hope you can feature at least one of her acrylic masterpieces in each issue. And Aides Lapin by James Jean is spectacular (November).

Matthew Baker
Morgantown, West Virginia

BUNNY TALES

The recent Playback photos (November, December) bring back fond memories for me. I'm a former Bunny. In 1979, I interviewed (wearing my swimsuit) at the Lake Geneva Playboy Club. When Bunny Mother Ellen called to say I'd been selected, I screamed in excitement and jumped up and down. At my first Bunny costume fitting, the seamstress handed me balled-up nylons and said, "You need to stuff." I had no idea what she meant but learned that most Bunnies needed to stuff the cups of their costume to fill out the bust line. I learned the Bunny dip, the Bunny perch and the proper way to stand with a tray. The club was beautiful—I worked in the Key Club, the Sidewalk Café and the Bunny Hutch (a disco)—and the clientele was interesting and worldly. I waited on celebrities including Joni Mitchell. Once, a few other Bunnies and I played a promotional baseball game with the Navy; one of the guys threw me across his shoulders and ran all the bases for a home run! It was truly fun, and it was an honor and a privilege to be a Bunny.

Roseann Lindner
Dodgeville, Wisconsin

COVER STORY

As Miss March Elizabeth Elam reminds us that naked is normal—we couldn't agree more—our Rabbit is right at home in her tousled tresses.



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THE PLAYBOY PHILOSOPHY

An Introduction

Sixty-three years ago my dad published the first issue of PLAYBOY with \$6,000 he'd begged and borrowed from anyone who would stand still long enough to listen to his new idea for a magazine. Over the years, PLAYBOY evolved into something much larger than he could ever have expected, and the Rabbit became a sort of Rorschach test of people's attitudes toward sex. Fans and detractors alike debated what the brand stood for and what the logo represented: What you saw in that Rabbit said more about you than about anything else.

Underneath the brand's pop culture elements, which most frequently floated to the surface of newsworthy over everything else, it was clear my dad's aim when launching PLAYBOY was to promote a healthy conversation about sex while also encouraging dialogue on social, philosophical and religious opinions. The idea behind the magazine was that while these topics were popular in people's minds, they were almost never spoken about in public or discussed over dinner or drinks at cocktail parties around the country, as they should have been.

Nonetheless, many misinterpreted that message or missed it entirely, choosing instead to focus on the magazine's unapologetic portrayal of nudity and its revolutionary approach to sex, including conversations about the act itself. And this is the ultimate irony, given that sex is figuratively the big bang behind your existence, my existence, all of conscious existence and civilization itself. To clear up any confusion, my dad began writing *The Playboy Philosophy* nearly 10 years after the magazine was first published in 1953 and authored more than 20 installments throughout the 1960s. The goal was, as he explained it:

"While we've been conscious of the virtues in seeing ourselves as others see us, we've also felt the image is occasionally distorted; having listened patiently for so long a time to what others have decided Playboy represents and stands for, we've decided—on this ninth anniversary—to state our own editorial credo here, and offer a few personal observations on our present-day society and Playboy's part in it—an effort we hope to make interesting to friends and critics alike."

And although I'm picking up the pen where my dad left off with *The Playboy Philosophy* and he and I have a tremendous amount in common, we also have vast differences of opinion—which I suspect I'll find as I continue writing these installments to set the record straight on who we are today. But one thing is clear that both my dad



BY COOPER HEFNER

and I understand at its simplest form, and that is what Playboy and the United States strive to represent in their greatest forms: freedom.

• • •

Many likely assume I jumped into the business because of a fascination with the parties frequently associated with Playboy, the opportunity to drink with interesting people from all walks of life and the gift of enjoying great adventures. Although I've been given a front-row seat to many amazing experiences throughout my life, my true interest and passion have always been for what many would label the "boring stuff" but that I see as the most important stuff, namely the brand's tradition of tenaciously advocating for civil liberties and freedom of expression.

In the 1950s, the brand fought against McCarthyism with the decision to publish American writers, artists and others who had been blacklisted by the U.S. government. In the 1960s, the company unapologetically promoted a racially integrated lifestyle in its clubs, in its publication and on its national television shows when few others were willing to do so. Throughout the 1960s and onward, PLAYBOY published cartoons and stories that challenged social norms, as well as advocated for the LGBTQ community when society had abandoned or, worse, aggressively gone on the attack against it.

Although it is a blessing to be able to continue something my father wrote with such conviction, my real motivation for bringing these installments back to life is my belief that we have entered a time when history is beginning to repeat itself. And I'll be the first to identify the irony in that as I pen this first installment of the new *Playboy Philosophy*.

I proudly write of these collective accomplishments as I identify that together we elected our

first mixed-race president, we took gay rights to the Supreme Court and witnessed it rule in favor of same-sex marriage, we began walking down the road to marijuana legalization, and we watched the first woman become a major political party's nominee for president. Those were just a few of the cultural wins we've relished. But after so much progress, our hard-won victories are in peril. Just as the social and political pendulum had swung in liberals' favor, as history has shown time after time, the pendulum swings back.

The United States saw similar trends in the 1960s and 1970s when people began to adopt a more freethinking "let's allow the individual to decide what he or she wants to do in his or her life" mantra. It was a shift of consciousness of sorts. Following this, the 1980s brought the AIDS crisis and a new version of the age-old fight between communism and capitalism, both of which scared millions. The pendulum swung back toward the conservative tradition, which lasted through both Democratic and Republican presidents. Rove, Rumsfeld, Cheney and Bush left the White House and Obama stepped in, still appealing to conservative constituents by stating he did not support a number of liberal policies, like gay marriage. But what followed was an embrace of 21st century democratic liberalism as new generations became more adept than previous ones at voicing their desire for more tolerance and more freedom.

But now we're swinging back to tradition, and it is by no means a tradition that truly embraces individualism. At this point in history, the most vital intellectual discussion we can have is how to create a society that's as free as possible without ignoring the social and economic implications of our policy decisions. We need to identify who our allies are at a time when, on the liberal side, a culture of political correctness discourages debate that may hurt people's feelings and, on the conservative side, politicians seem comfortable jeopardizing the rights of specific groups in the belief that it will "make America great again."

So let this stand as an introduction and a declaration that, regardless of our sexual orientation or political point of view, what we're seeing in society has happened before and that we all agree an attack on Muslim Americans, on women's health-care rights, on the LGBTQ community or on the First Amendment is in fact an attack on all our rights. And we should be ready to defend those rights at all costs on the intellectual battlefield. ■



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AMERICAN PLAYBOY: THE HUGH HEFNER STORY STREAMS ON AMAZON

Set a calendar alert for April 7—that’s when Amazon releases its 13-episode docuseries chronicling Hugh Hefner’s life. (You’ll be able to binge-watch the story of how the magazine you’re holding came to be.) Produced by Emmy Award-winning Stephen David Entertainment and Playboy’s Alta Loma Entertainment, the series draws on unprecedented

access to PLAYBOY’s library and to Hef’s personal archive, which includes 17,000 hours of video footage and more than 2,600 scrapbooks. In addition to telling his life story, the series explores Hef’s and PLAYBOY’s roles in pushing the cultural conversation forward, from fighting for civil liberties to battling the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover.

Playboy Returns to Chicago for Latest Burton Collaboration

Playboy and Burton Snowboards threw a launch party in Chicago to kick off the start of ski season and to announce the latest Burton x Playboy collaboration, the fifth in the long-standing partnership between the two companies. Paying homage to Playboy’s Windy City origins, the Burton store in Chicago was transformed into a snowy, winter-themed version of the Playboy Mansion. Chief Creative Officer Cooper Hefner and Playmates mingled with pro snowboarders, Burton execs including founder Jake Burton Carpenter (pictured below with Hefner and Playmates Alexandra Tyler, Gia Marie and Eugena Washington) and lucky guests. Select products such as tech tees, goggles and mittens are available at PlayboyShop.com and at Burton stores and distributors worldwide.



PLAYMATE NEWS

When Bunnies Become Angels

- Miss April 2016 Camille Rowe, Miss September 2016 Kelly Gale and Miss January 2017 Bridget Malcolm strutted their stuff on the catwalk in Paris at the Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show in December.



Irina Voronina Kicks Butt

- Miss January 2001 appears in the dark comedy-action film *Scramble*, which got its start through crowdfunding. For updates on its release, visit ScrambleMovie.com.





PLAYBOY



Joyrich, Playboy Go Back to the 1980s

Influential street-style brand Joyrich takes inspiration from the 1980s in its third collaboration with Playboy. Previous collabs have sold out and become collectibles thanks to celebrity interest—if you haven't seen the Joyrich Playboy sweater that Beyoncé wears in the viral video for her song "7/11," then you must not have access to YouTube. Pieces in the new international rollout include baseball jackets, a bucket hat and other instant classics. The brand, which has stores throughout Asia as well as in Los Angeles, photographed the Japanese model, pop star and TV personality Rola for the Playboy collab campaign. You can also spot Rola in *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter*, in which she acts alongside Milla Jovovich. The Joyrich Playboy products will be available at all international Joyrich flagship stores, as well as at Joyrich.com and PlayboyShop.com.

MIDNIGHT ROLLER DISCO EVENT SERIES DEBUTS

We're excited to bring you Playboy's first-ever Midnight Roller Disco on Saturday, February 25 at the Moonlight Rollerway in Glendale, California. Come dance to 1970s songs, enjoy specialty drinks from our bar and glide out onto the rink with our Roller Bunnies. This social event brings back to life a lost

era of groovy tunes, vinyl records and short shorts. A general-admission ticket provides entry to the venue and skate rental; 1970s-inspired garb is encouraged. The Midnight Roller Disco begins at 11:30 P.M. and runs till 2:30 A.M. For tickets, pricing and a calendar of future events, visit Hop.Playboy.com.



Pam and Dree Thrill on the Small Screen

• The independent thriller *The People Garden* from writer and director Nadia Litz stars two Playmates—Miss February 1990 Pamela Anderson and Miss March 2016 Dree Hemingway. It's now streaming on Amazon.



Nikki Leigh Plays a Polyamorous Wife

• In the Lifetime movie *Open Marriage*, Miss May 2012 portrays the wife in a struggling couple who decides to experiment with an open relationship.





PLAYBOY.COM

READ. WATCH. EXPERIENCE

NEW BUNNIES GALLERIES DAILY

- Meet designer and model Sami Miró.



PHOTO BY ARIS JEROME

BONUS MAGAZINE CONTENT

- Scarlett Johansson takes on our first-ever *Playboy Interview* video.
- Learn Playmate Elizabeth Elam's turn-ons and turnoffs.
- Adam Scott gears up for our 20Q lightning round.

ORIGINAL VIDEO SERIES

- Playboy correspondent Yoonj Kim connects with women in prison.

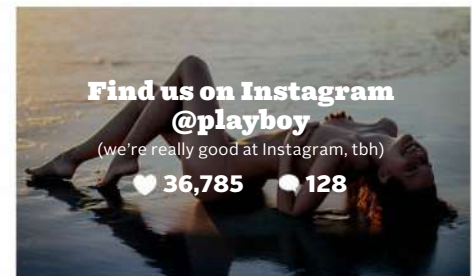
- Muralist David Flores (right) creates before our eyes in the art series *Adults & Crafts*.
- Go retro with anime voice talent Jonathan Meza in *The Rabbit's Arcade*.

THE BEST OF OUR ARCHIVES

- Read Martin Luther King Jr.'s last published essay.
- Classic *Playboy Interviews*, from Thompson to Trump.

CULTURE, POLITICS & MORE

- Rap legends weigh in on Louis Farrakhan's historic 1997 hip-hop summit.
- Our privacy is more vulnerable than ever; is it time to delete your Facebook account?
- Everything you need to know about the emerging Japanese whiskey craze.
- Women are reclaiming the word *pussy*. So what does it mean?



Add a comment...

"We're at a crossroads right now in the effort to legalize marijuana. I'm not sure what's coming, but my gut tells me Trump is not going to be bold in this area—especially if Barack Obama wasn't. Pass the joint please."

—comment on Obama's "Pro-Pot" Presidency Will Go Down in History for the Wrong Reasons by Lucy Steigerwald

Reply · Share · Like

"As a single female, I often encounter married men in the dating scene. They're not bad men at heart, but they turn to cheating and lying because they've invested so much time, money and effort into a failing relationship that it's hard for them to walk away."

—comment on Why People Stay in Relationships Even When They're Unhappy by Elisabeth Sherman

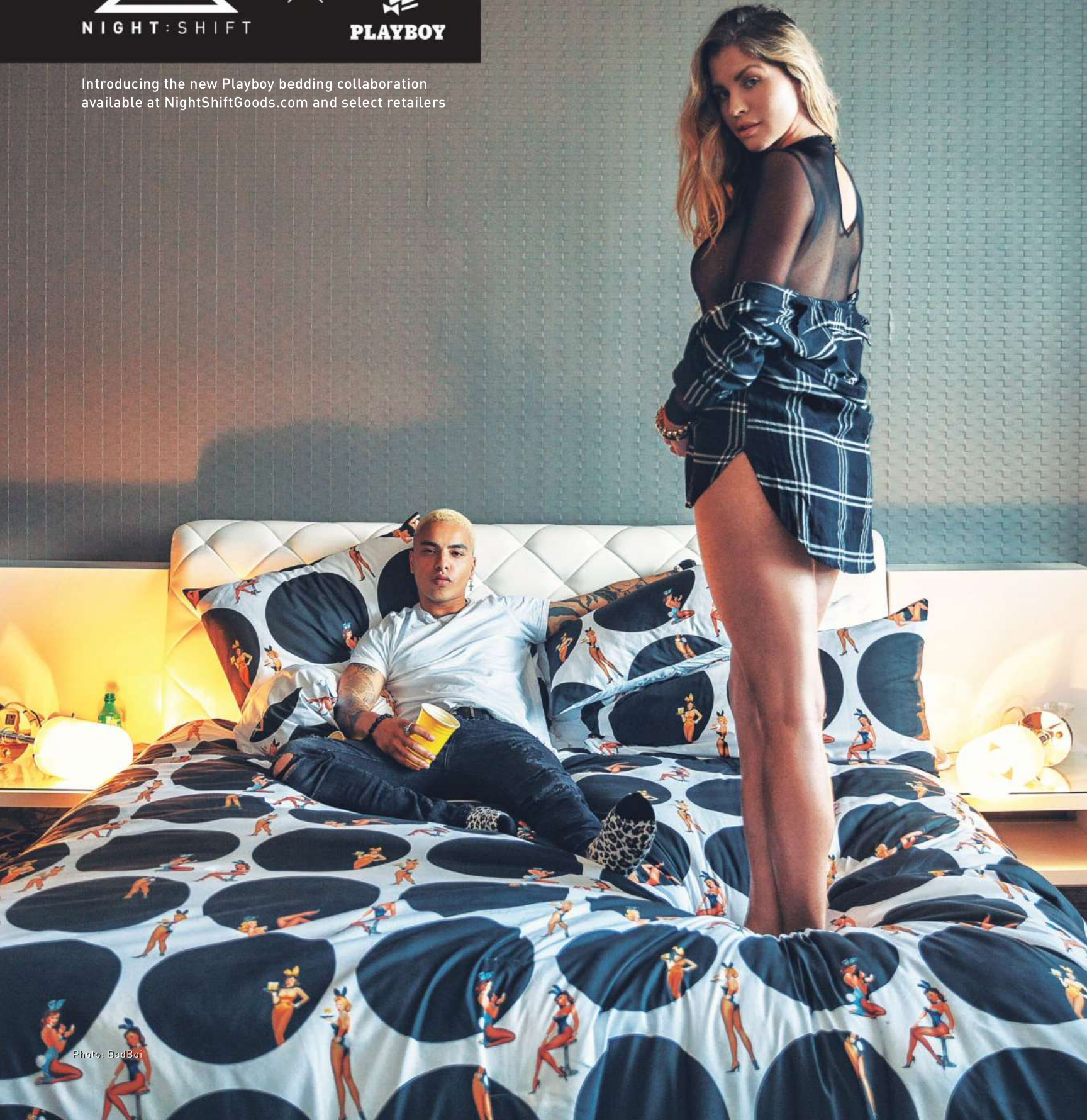
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1 préservatif en latex naturel, 1 préservatif en latex naturel
1 condón / preservativo de látex natural, 1 preservativo de látex natural

Blompor och Bin

SIR RICHARD'S
CLASSIC RIBBED

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2012-07-01 TT6210DA102

Babeland
a passionate world.
Latex Condom

The FC2 Female Condom



SEX

A HIS-AND-HER GUIDE TO MODERN CONDOMS

For all we know, the pill may soon be limited to the one percent. Politicians haven't banned condoms—yet—so we thought it wise to do a test run of the best. Stock up. It's going to be a long four years

BY **DANA HAMILTON**

My body hates it when I try to be responsible. After years on the pill, I developed an infection—a common side effect of long-term use—which restricted me from ever using hormonal birth control again. Initially I thought, No problem. I'll just get a nonhormonal IUD. And then my IUD insertion failed. Twice. An IUD implant will fail in up to 10 percent of all women's bodies; the uterus will literally push it out. (Sorry, guys.)

Now condoms are the only form of birth control I use. Unfortunately, limited access to female contraceptives is a reality many women face every day. The good news? The condom market has changed dramatically in recent years, from enhanced engineering to brands that support social causes. To find the ultimate prophylactic, my boyfriend and I decided to field-test 11 varieties. Our reviews won't apply to every couple, so here's what I recommend: Run your own human trials. If you think you won't find a condom that turns you on, odds are you'll be pleasantly surprised.

LELO HEX

A 2016 release that features new engineering

SHE SAID: There was a lot of buzz surrounding the Hex, produced by sex-toy maker Lelo, when it debuted last summer, so I was eager



to try it for myself. The material's “revolutionary” hexagonal structure is supposed to deliver thinness without compromising strength. It definitely feels thin, but the texture of the unique honeycomb design also comes through. Overall, it's a nice sensation, winning this condom a high rating.

HE SAID: The package is easy to open, the condom is easy to put on, and it feels great. Lelo seems to think this condom will change everything we know about prophylactics. It's too early to be certain, but the amount of engineering that went into designing the Hex suggests the company might be onto something.

RFSU BIRDS 'N BEES

Certified vegan and silicone lubricated

SHE SAID: I'd never tried a vegan condom before because I assumed condoms didn't contain ingredients derived from animals. Turns out casein, a milk protein, is commonly used in latex manufacturing. This condom is highly lubricated, making it difficult to put on, but I would still recommend it to anyone who's vegan and/or environmentally conscious. The cute pink packaging is inconspicuous and purse-friendly. If it fell out of my bag, I wouldn't be embarrassed.

HE SAID: Birds 'n Bees' packaging is cartoonish, and the condoms look like they came out of a kid's toy vending machine. Putting one on took some work. It did its job, but other than being vegan, it's nothing special.

LIFESTYLES SKYN

America's go-to nonlatex rubber

SHE SAID: Latex can cause irritation in a lot of women, including me, so I've been using Skyn nonlatex condoms for years. But they're actually what prompted my boyfriend and me to look for alternatives. I never had a problem using these condoms before, but with my boyfriend, the Skyn moves around, which does



little to make me feel secure. Please note that my dude doesn't have a small dick, so I'm not sure why this happens.

HE SAID: The packaging makes you feel like a king, but the experience is anything but royal. The Skyn rolls up or comes off completely. There are better nonlatex options.

KIMONO MICROTHIN

A drugstore mainstay that purports to exceed U.S. standards for reliability

SHE SAID: This Japanese brand may have been developed with “state-of-the-art technology,” but the fact that it's named after a loose-fitting garment hardly inspires confidence. It feels as natural as a latex condom can, though, and it doesn't slip or break. It's one of the better latex products on the market.

HE SAID: A top-three favorite of mine, the MicroThin doesn't feel like a surgical glove when I'm wearing it. Still, all this “thin” marketing makes me wonder whether we men can even sense differences in thickness that are measured in microns, especially when features like ribbing offset those measurements.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MOLLY CRANNA



If you're looking for a thin condom, don't pick one based on its advertising.

SIR RICHARD'S CLASSIC RIBBED

A vegan ribbed wrap in mod packaging from a socially conscious company

SHE SAID: I love the philosophy behind this brand: For every condom bought, a condom is donated to someone in need. It's like TOMS but for sex. The ribs are less raised than those on other brands of condoms, which is great, since pronounced ribbing often makes women feel as though they're fucking a screwdriver.

HE SAID: The name might suggest that the box comes with a free monocle, but that aside, this is a fine condom that's on a par with others. Ribs don't do anything for us guys, but if your partner enjoys them, remind yourself that you're not the only one involved in intercourse.

DUREX PERFORMAX INTENSE

Glazed with a heat-activated "delay lubricant" for dudes who are quick to finish

SHE SAID: This condom is both ribbed and dotted, which made me feel like I was using a sex toy. The lube on the inside, advertised to help men last longer by delaying ejaculation, collects at the tip, which isn't attractive.

HE SAID: The drop of lubricant in the tip was a turnoff, but I couldn't let some glop get in the way of science. Unfortunately, it made no difference in how long I lasted.

FC2 FEMALE CONDOM

A six-and-a-half-inch nonlatex ring sold online

SHE SAID: According to Claire Cavanah, co-founder of Babeland, a sex-education company that operates adult stores in New York City and

Seattle, female condoms account for only one percent of her stores' condom sales. But, she says, the women who use them love them. The illustrated instructions on the FC2's wrapper look like they're from a high school sex-ed pamphlet, but listen here: I was shocked at how good it felt. The outer ring of the condom rests just outside the vagina, where it rubs up against the clitoris. For many women, clitoral stimulation is hard to achieve during penetration; the ring makes climaxing much easier. The biggest deterrent? At up to \$3.50 a pop, the FC2 is hardly affordable to use every time you have sex.

HE SAID: I'd never actually seen a female condom in a store, let alone used one, but it was far less strange than I expected. Cavanah warned us that it might sound like a trash bag during overly spirited lovemaking—and yes, that would be a turnoff during a one-night stand or the first time with a new partner—but after testing six condoms, our lovemaking was anything but vigorous. The cost may deter those with highly active libidos, but everyone should try the FC2 at least once.

TROJAN SUPRA BARESKIN

A popular latex alternative made from polyurethane, a.k.a. plastic

SHE SAID: This ultrathin nonlatex condom is hands down my favorite. Its material is smoother and creates less friction. Simply put, it's the condom that feels least like a condom.

HE SAID: The Supra wins first place. The wrapper tears easily, and the condom rolls on well and is thin enough that it doesn't diminish sensitivity. Trojan likes to spout that it's the most trusted brand in the United States; this



ad copy could very well play a part in my feeling safer using it versus unfamiliar brands. Note: Many condoms are marketed with the claim that they can't be felt when in use. This is misleading. No condom, no matter how advanced, will be unfelt. If you're seeking that mythical rubber, you'll never be happy.

TRUSTEX NONLUBRICATED

A dry and colorful alternative to a party balloon

SHE SAID: Since it's nonlubricated, this condom is out-of-the-package ready for oral sex, but its color made my boyfriend's dick look like a balloon animal—which, you know, was fun. He couldn't feel anything when I tried to blow him, and it smelled like the giant pink erasers I used in middle school.

HE SAID: This condom is awful. Whatever the makers are going for, it doesn't work, unless they're trying to replicate the condoms sailors wore in the Jazz Age. The colored latex caused my penis to look (and feel) like a dildo. Strange forms of intercourse would have to be explored for this condom to feel good for either partner.

BABELAND SHEER LATEX

An affordable option to stock in glove boxes, dopp kits, nightstands and gym bags

SHE SAID: The sex-toy retailer's top seller is a standard and reliable latex condom that's just like the one you rolled over a banana in health class. I'd use it in a pinch without worry.

HE SAID: This is a no-frills condom that works just fine and rolls on easily. (As we know, one complaint about condoms is that they slow down sex.) They're also cheap (85 cents each). Keep some on hand in case of emergency.

TROJAN DOUBLE ECSTASY

Twice-lubricated latex—inside for men, outside for women—from the granddaddy of condom makers

SHE SAID: The foil wrapper is comically large, and the condom has no reservoir tip, which is a safety concern. The "intensified lubricant" applied on the outside causes a warming effect, but it doesn't last long. It's like a piece of gum that loses its flavor after a minute.

HE SAID: Many extravagantly named rubbers are nothing more than gimmicks sold to people who hope a condom will improve their waning sex lives. The "ultrasmooth lubricant" on the inside did nothing, and the lack of a reservoir tip seems like a design flaw and counter to preventing pregnancy. If you're looking to change up your sex life, some advice: Ask what your partner enjoys in bed—and communicate the same—instead of trying to double the pleasure with a rubber.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY STEVEN SWYRYT

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BY **DAN HYMAN**

Return of the Jewels

*With their third album, **Run the Jewels** wield the secret weapon that makes them so lethally good*

It's an early December evening and Michael Render is onstage at a downtown L.A. theater, warning America of how completely fucked it is. "My job is to fight for survival/In spite of these #AllLivesMatter-ass white folk," growls the rapper who performs as Killer Mike. Three-hundred-plus pounds, all rumbling baritone and tent-size T-shirt, the Atlanta native is nose-to-nose with Jaime Meline, better known as El-P, his best friend and partner in the rap duo Run the Jewels. Together, they're unloading a typical dose of brash rhymes atop

tense, pummeling production. It's only a few weeks post-presidential election, and the entire performance feels like a gigantic middle finger to the power-mad politicians, the racists, the intolerants—basically everyone they deem self-interested and full of shit. "We got the president we deserve," Mike will say later with thick sarcasm. "America once again doesn't let me down."

The crowd gathered here at the Game Awards—the rappers were booked because they appear as playable characters in *Gears of*

War 4—isn't sure what to make of it all. The stiff white gamers in attendance likely came to see the trailer for that new third-person shooter. They got *this* instead. And now they look frightened.

Clearly, Run the Jewels are deadly serious in their intentions. "We've always been determined to contribute not only in the sense of style and music but in thought and philosophy," El-P (mustached, garrulous and often drily sarcastic) says the following afternoon, splayed on a couch in a West Hollywood hotel



CULTURE

suite. For Mike in particular, hip-hop has always represented one of the most powerful forms of communication, particularly to the nation's youth. "It's not safe to be aggressive as a black man in this country," he says. "You play football. You play basketball. Tiger can play golf. But rap has always been a bastion for me to just get my anger out. That's the beauty of rap for me."

• • •

Run the Jewels understand the strange intersection at which they find themselves: Here they are, in 2017, a highly political and engaged rap duo consisting of a white man and a black man who languished in relative obscurity for decades before hitting it big. Drawing influence from the politically charged and often menacing hip-hop of artists such as Public Enemy, Ice Cube and EPMD, Run the Jewels were in many ways an antidote to the sensitive-boy rap pioneered by Drake and adopted by everyone from Future to A\$AP Rocky. In the first week following its release as a free download in 2014, *Run the Jewels 2*, one of the most vicious and fully realized albums of the past few decades, was downloaded some 400,000 times; it subsequently cracked the top 10 on the *Billboard* rap album chart largely thanks to its massive streaming numbers. The two have headlined major festivals including Coachella and Pitchfork. The gun-and-fist symbol that adorns each of their album covers has become a symbol of rebellion in its own right.

RTJ3, released in December, contains some of their most provocative material to date. "Thieves! (Screamed the Ghost)," a riot song that includes a snippet of a Martin Luther King Jr. speech, finds El-P rapping, "Some get to count sheep / Some gotta count kids that they burying." On "Down," Mike is blunt in his assessment of life's options for the oppressed: "Ballot or bullet / You better use one." (He's vehemently in favor of gun rights: "I don't understand how any black person can tell me that they're not pro-gun," he said in 2015.) The album is also undoubtedly their most sonically adventurous effort yet. "Don't Get Captured" sounds like a horror movie soundtrack interspersed with classic DJ scratches; "Oh Mama" rides a funky minor-key rock groove. And their outside-the-box mentality is further emphasized by the guests they recruited this go-round: everyone from TV on the Radio's Tunde Adebimpe to jazz experimentalist Kamasi Washington.

There's one more element at play: Offstage, Mike and El-P's dynamic is like a 1980s

buddy-cop comedy come to life. Mike calls it the "back-of-the-class effect. It's just knowing that I can say some stupid shit and my homey is gonna laugh." And their fans love them for it. These are, after all, the same guys who a couple of years ago remixed *RTJ2* using only cat noises.

• • •

Unlike the more meticulous El-P, Killer Mike writes his raps stream-of-consciousness style. This ability to wax poetic extends outside the studio. As passionate an activist as he is a ferocious rapper, Mike is a walking orator of the Southern black social and political experience. He campaigned passionately for Vermont senator Bernie Sanders's presidential bid, introducing him at a 2015 rally in Atlanta following an intense sit-down at a local soul food restaurant where the pair discussed poverty, racial injustice and "the grand fight against the ruling class." He has also spoken at prestigious universities such as MIT about how to improve race relations and foster diverse interpersonal ties. Somewhere along the line, he became a friendly hip-hop celebrity spokesperson—the rapper a suburban liberal Honda Pilot-driving uncle feels safe referencing in casual conversation. "I've been an organizer since I was a kid," says Mike, who was raised by his politically active grandparents in the poverty-stricken Adamsville neighborhood on Atlanta's west side. "I wasn't gonna be a celebrity that sat around and felt guilty for being famous," he says. "So for me it was figuring out how to be the human being that my grandparents raised and this 'famous Mike' that I always wanted to be."

When he's in L.A., Mike always stays at this nondescript hotel on a residential side street. He's been coming here since the early 2000s, back when he was a member of Outkast's inner circle and making his name as a player in the Southern rap game. Also, the hotel lets you smoke weed.

The partnership moved fast and furious after Mike and El-P met in 2011. At the time, both men were at the lowest points in their careers. El-P's record label was struggling to turn a profit. He had trouble paying rent each month. In Atlanta, Mike had suffered a falling-out with Outkast's Big Boi and had middling success as a solo artist. He longed to have a partner to vibe with creatively. Jason DeMarco, an Adult Swim executive and friend of both rappers, introduced the two after suggesting that El-P produce Mike's 2012 album, *R.A.P. Music*. The connection was instantaneous.

"We discovered that if we lock ourselves in a room and we get high and we make jokes and we make music, it's fun," says El-P, who quickly recruited Mike to appear on his own solo album that year, *Cancer 4 Cure*.

Still, RTJ wasn't even a thing; the two were merely enjoying crafting music together. "We're hanging out, smoking weed, doing shrooms," Mike recalls of sessions in New York later that year. Soon they had a full-length record on their hands. Enter *Run the Jewels*, their debut album, released for free in June 2013. They toured together, albeit as two solo acts, and felt the collective energy level skyrocket whenever they performed the more frenzied RTJ material. They realized they'd landed on something special. "Motherfuckers went maniac," Mike says of the early gigs. Adds El, "We started to realize, Shit, we might be opening for ourselves."

Since then, navigating fame has been challenging for the introverted El-P. "I think to some degree I sheltered myself a little bit," he says. "I had grown a little comfortable with the nominal amount of recognition and recognizability that I had in my solo career. I'm glad Mike is my partner." Mike, of course, was born for the spotlight. "I am the classic 'look-at-me' guy," he says with a smile. "As a black kid you always want to be famous. You can change shit if you get famous." He fingers a recently purchased accessory—a three-pound solid-gold pendant hanging from a thick chain.

• • •

For the next hour, Run the Jewels set to work recording an episode of their Beats 1 radio show, *WRTJ*. Easy to lose in the playful banter is something Mike said earlier: Take away the increasingly large checks and the growing recognition and Run the Jewels would still be his complete and total emotional salve. They'll say they're just getting started, two men standing tall at this national precipice, two essential voices lending a beating heart to the pop charts and a dose of grit to hip-hop. Mike is just happy to be right here in this moment.

"It makes me a more whole human being," the rapper says of RTJ.

He looks at El-P.

"I don't know if you get this big black shining ray of sunshine without my friend."

For a moment both men go silent. El-P can't take it anymore.

"That's why we're announcing the Run the Jewels 'Find Another Friend' initiative," he says with a laugh. "Are you a white guy who doesn't have a black friend? We're here to help!" ■

ILLUSTRATION BY THE RED DRESS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT CORNETT



THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE *Martini*

The sophisticated cocktail returns—again. Here’s how to toast the moment

With its seemingly infinite variations—the timeless two-to-one gin-to-vermouth ratio, the James Bond–approved shaken method, the sickly sweet dessert riffs of yore—few cocktails are as contested as the martini. Most of today’s bartenders would agree it’s best when balanced, frosty and invigorating with a welcome bite, no matter which ingredients mingle. And today the martini is experiencing its best rebirth yet at bars across the country.

Last fall, Anvil Bar & Refuge in Houston added a “drink more martinis”–inspired section to its cocktail menu. Ten different takes on the tippie were presented, including Mr. Hoshi’s dry gin martini, an ode to a style the bar team had enjoyed in Tokyo in which the ice is seasoned with dry vermouth that is then served alongside the finished cocktail.

“It’s probably the most personal drink ordered in a bar. Anyone who drinks martinis with any regularity likely has a specific preference on how they should be made,” says Anvil general manager Terry Williams. “Gin versus vodka. How much vermouth? Shaken versus stirred. Olive or twist? Dirty? Those types of attachments present very delicate interactions between bartender and guest.”

Many drinkers will be pleased to hear that scoffing at vodka martinis as the bartending elite once did is no longer in fashion. The spirit is just as revered as gin and stars in such cocktails as the Dirty Program at Noble Experiment in San Diego. Bartender Adele Stratton describes it as a “refined yet ballsy spin on the dirty martini,” served in a copper coupe. House-made brine with a hint of serrano pepper is brought together with Absolut Elyx vodka and fino sherry. Try getting all cocktail snobby about that.—*Alia Akkam*



Dolin vermouth



Brooklyn gin



Aylesbury Duck vodka



Yzaguirre vermouth

The Best Bottles to Buy for Your Home Bar

With more commercial and artisanal brands on the market, which should you reach for when mixing martinis at home? It depends on your taste and budget. If it’s gin you’re after, Nick Detrich, owner of Cane & Table in New Orleans, recommends the combo of Brooklyn gin and Yzaguirre dry vermouth. “With the amount of fresh citrus in the gin, it makes for a refreshing drink that’s still well textured,” he says. When it comes to vodka, Jim Kearns, partner at Slowly Shirley in New York, likes to pair it with a split of Dolin blanc and dry vermouths. “You get the best of both worlds,” Kearns says. “Blanc vermouth plays uniquely well with vodka. Aylesbury Duck vodka is the best on the market, as well as a fantastic value for the quality.” For supermarket shoppers, Tanqueray gin holds up well to more vermouth. And Stolichnaya, a Roger Moore Bond favorite, is the equally reliable counterpart for vodka lovers.

A MARTINI GLOSSARY

Are you fuzzy on the key terminology associated with this libation? With our handy drink guide, be confused no more.

Dirty: A savory rendition of the martini thanks to the addition of olive brine. If you really love olives, ask for it “filthy.”

Dry: The higher the ratio of vermouth to your spirit of choice, the “wetter” the martini. If you want the gin or vodka to shine, keep the vermouth volume low by ordering your drink “dry.”

Gibson: A martini that’s invitingly garnished with a pickled onion, which adds a tangy sweetness to the drink.

Perfect: If you prefer your martini with equal parts dry and sweet vermouths, request it “perfect.”

Twist: To release aromatic oils into your martini, a lemon peel—or, far less frequently, an orange or a lime peel—is twisted across the top just after straining.



America's Best Martini Bars



DANTE, NEW YORK CITY

From five to six p.m. Monday through Friday, patrons of this New York bar savor absurdly cheap 99 cent martinis. Choose from Plymouth gin or Absolut vodka renditions garnished with a caper berry or a lemon knot.



VOL. 39, CHICAGO

Head bartender Jess Lambert offers half a dozen martini incarnations at this clubby hideaway inside Chicago's Kimpton Gray Hotel. Try the elevated classic made with Fords gin, Dolin blanc vermouth and orange bitters.



PACIFIC COCKTAIL HAVEN, SAN FRANCISCO

The culinary predilections of bar owner Kevin Diedrich are reflected in his Manila sunshine martini, made with wheatgrass-infused Black Cow Pure Milk vodka melded with calamansi shrub, Licor 43 and apple juice.



HENRIETTA'S, CHARLESTON

At the restaurant in the Dewberry hotel, guests sip sidecar martinis made with Cathead vodka, Dolin dry vermouth and Gordy's Fine Brine. Hotel bar manager Ryan Casey serves the drink with ice on the side and a caper-berry garnish.

THE NEW AND IMPROVED ESPRESSO MARTINI

Late British barman Dick Bradsell is celebrated for inventing the after-dinner espresso martini. Sadly, an abundance of shoddy versions have debased the drink, yet it remains Meaghan Dorman's guilty pleasure. Dorman, who helms the bar at Dear Irving in New York, ensures hers is top quality by pairing Aylesbury Duck vodka ("It has a creamy texture and a slight cocoa note") with a dark-roast cold brew from Irving Farm Coffee Roasters, Galliano Ristretto and Giffard Vanille de Madagascar liqueur.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS COCKTAIL

SUPER OLD SCHOOL

In the days before the modern martini, there was the martinez, a late-19th century cocktail starring slightly sweet Old Tom gin.

OLD SCHOOL

Just after World War II, the presence of vermouth became less desirable in a martini, paving the way for a decidedly drier palate.

THE DARK AGES

In the 1980s and 1990s the name referred to a general style of drink that included the New York-born cosmopolitan and L.A.'s awful appetini.

THE RECLAMATION

At New York's Rainbow Room in the 1990s, bartender Dale DeGroff started to resurrect the classics with perfect technique.

THE REVIVAL

Throughout the 2000s, subtle vermouth-accented creations began appearing in serious cocktail dens across the country.

THE GOLDEN AGE

Today's sought-after martinis are successfully laced with everything from raw white honey syrup to star anise and other exotic ingredients.



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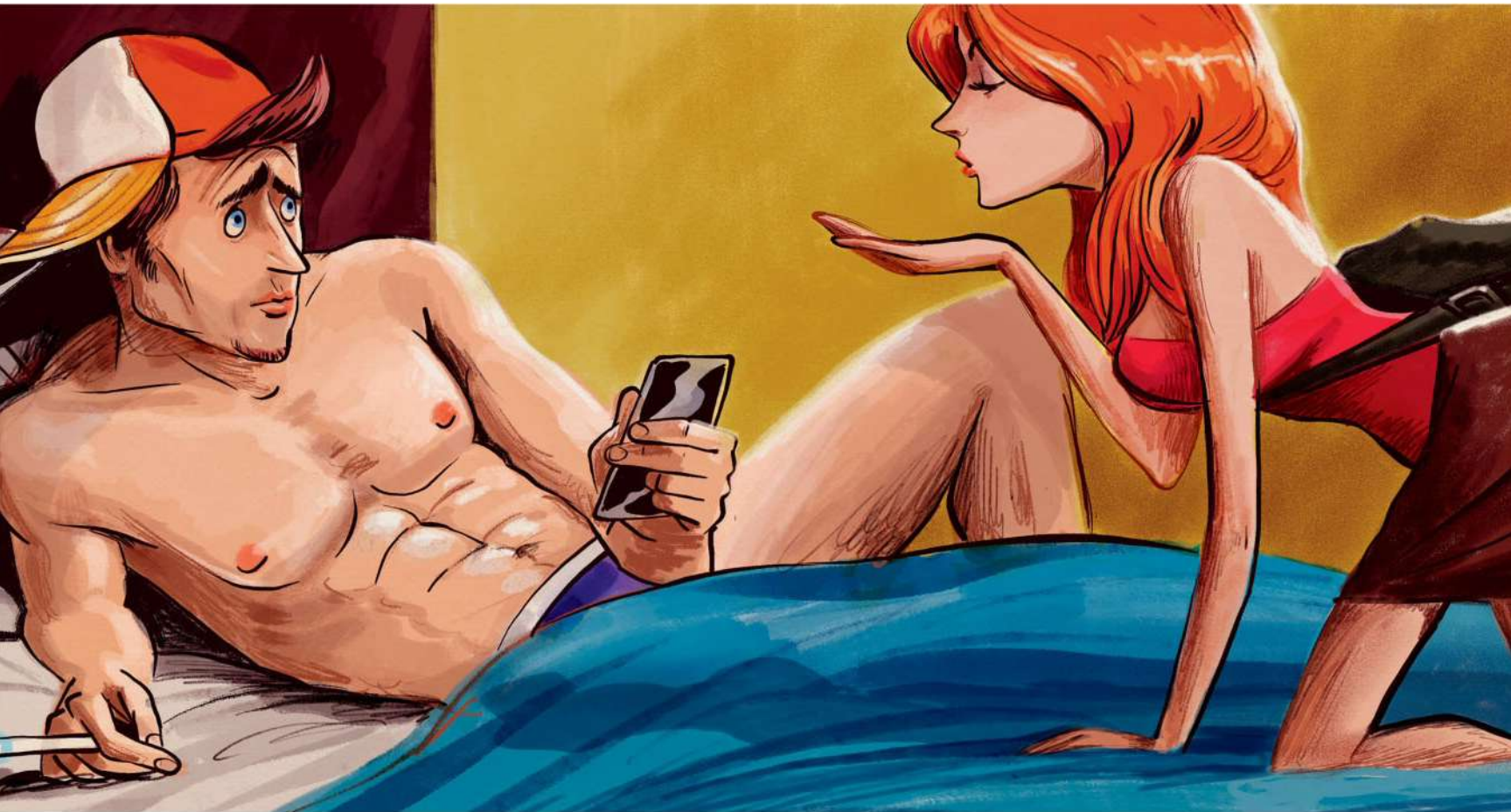


+playboy



Playboy Advisor

Columnist Bridget Phetasy on how not to be a fuckboy. Plus: advice for lovers sparring over politics; the upside of a celibate girlfriend



Q: *I was recently dumped by a woman I met at a bar near our campus. We dated for about two months, went out together a lot and had some pretty damn amazing sex, so the dumping came as a surprise. She broke it off via text, saying, “Sorry, but I can’t keep dating a fuckboy.” I’ve heard women use that word in a bunch of different ways. (Even my female friends disagree about what my ex meant by it.) So what the hell is a fuckboy? More important, how do I make sure I’m not one?—A.K., Austin, Texas*



A: You're right to be confused. There seem to be as many definitions of *fuckboy* as there are English-speaking millennials. Overall, it has become a catchall phrase women use to label single men who exhibit all kinds of failings. Urban Dictionary has more than 600 user-generated definitions that attempt to explain the term. The most popular is "a person who is a weakass pussy that ain't about shit." In short, *fuckboy* is a pejorative, with a definition that changes with every person who uses it.

Originally I thought the term was a synonym for *booty call*. I used it loosely to refer to whichever man I was using for his dick at the time. But then my last booty call, offended that I'd called him a fuckboy, schooled me: "You ain't even using it right," he said. When I asked him to explain, he said he wasn't a fuckboy because he wasn't a pushover. Turns out, the idea that a fuckboy isn't his own man is an important differentiator from a booty call.

Couple that with the prevailing notion that a fuckboy is exactly that: a boy. My friend Marisa defines one as "a lame-ass dude whose male friends' misogynistic opinions run his life." My friend Miranda says, "Any boy who tries to portray himself as a man but has no manly properties is a fuckboy. For instance, someone who lets a woman pay for everything or is not up-front and honest about his intentions." Amber describes fuckboys as men "who are going to tell you what you want to hear because they just want to get in your pants. He's not the kind of guy you get serious with because he's so delusional that you can't trust him."

After diving deeper, then, it seems a fuckboy is part pushover, part womanizing sociopath. Here are some simple guidelines you can follow if you want to avoid being put in that category:

1. Do what you promise you're going to do and text when you say you're going to text. Don't flake and then slide into her DMs later.
2. Be present. Classic fuckboy behavior is being glued to your phone when you're on a date but unresponsive to her texts when you're apart.
3. Don't beg for nudes.
4. If you like a woman, take her out in public and introduce her to your friends.
5. Misogynistic and homophobic behavior are red flags. Phrases like *bros before hos* belong in the 1990s. Leave them there. Evolve your gender.
6. If you have no intention of being in a relationship, be honest. Find yourself a fuckgirl. (They're out there.)

7. If you vape, brah, you're probably a fuckboy. No matter how many definitions and opinions exist, this much is true: We women know a fuckboy when we see one. If the woman you

were dating called you a fuckboy, she probably had a pretty good reason.

Q: *I've been on three out-of-this-world dates with someone I met at a friend's party. On our last date, things started getting hot, so I asked if she wanted to go to my bedroom. She declined, saying she'd just started a course of celibacy. For 90 days. I'm not sure I'm ready to commit to someone for three months without sex. Should I stay, or should I go?—R.S., Los Angeles, California*

A: It depends on what you want out of this. If you're not looking for a relationship, get out. Why bother waiting to get your rocks off in the age of swiping? But if you want a relationship based on more than just sex (and it sounds like you do), I'd say she's worth the wait. Remember, you don't have to be celibate just because she is. It's all about being open, communicative and honest early on. If you're up-front with her about the fact that you're seeing other women, you're allowed to have sex with them—at least in my eyes. In the meantime, you can still date your abstinent lady friend, get to know her better and let the anticipation build. But don't give the impression you're all about her while you're shagging other honeys. That will just set you up for trouble later on. If she's cool with it, now is the perfect time to have your cake and eat it too.

Q: *I'm dating a hardcore Republican who is annoyingly pro-President Donald Trump, whereas I'm still devastated by the November election. It's putting a strain on our relationship. Any advice?—C.H., Euclid, Ohio*

A: If you can't let go of your loss for the sake of love—or discuss politics like mature adults and reach an understanding as to why she voted for Trump—I suggest ending it before she's the mother of your deplorable kids.

Q: *The woman I'm seeing doesn't want to go down on me. When I ask why, she simply says she's never liked it. What should I do? This has become a major hang-up in our sex life.—G.M., Tucson, Arizona*

A: Run. Get out. Abort. Just kidding! (Kind of.) First things first: Do you go down on her? If you don't, this question doesn't even deserve a response. I'm going to assume you do go down on her; in that case, it's time for a cost-benefit analysis of your relationship. How important are blow jobs to you? I know a lot of women who hate giving head. I jokingly tell them, "Men love blow jobs more than they love you." How important is she to you? Could she be "the one"? Is this the only thing that's lacking? And if so, are you willing to live without blow

jobs for the rest of your monogamous life? It's time to be brutally honest with yourself.

If it's an itch you really need scratched, you'll eventually get it scratched somewhere else—outside the relationship. When it comes to dating, one of my rules of thumb is this: Do everything in your power now to avoid being a douchebag later. If you're both at the height of feeling the feels, it's worth a conversation. But understand, women hate going down on guys for a multitude of reasons, whether it's because they have a sensitive gag reflex or because it makes them feel degraded. If she's adamant about not going down, *don't push it*. Instead, realize it may be time to move on to someone who shares more of your interests.

Q: *After a long winter of being single, I'm eager to meet someone new. But dating apps don't work for me, and in my experience, it's hard to approach a woman in a bar when she's surrounded by friends. Is there such a thing as a good pickup line?—K.W., Duluth, Minnesota*

A: First, you're doing it backward. In my opinion, you should break up in the spring and shack up in the fall. Enjoy some summer flings and settle down only when winter's long, cold nights are upon us. But on to your actual question.

I'm not going to lie: You're in a tough position. Dating apps have killed the meet-cute and made it increasingly hard to find opportunities to start conversations with women in public. In fact, the pickup line is such a dying art—in person and online (a 2016 Oxford Internet Institute study found that 49 percent of all messages sent on dating apps like Tinder go unanswered)—that leading with a straightforward, friendly introduction may cause you to be mistaken for a creep.

That said, if you're determined to go at it the old-fashioned way, know that there's no sure-fire pickup line that works every time. Women can smell phoniness and packaged one-liners from a mile away, so evaluate every woman and situation on a case-by-case basis. A man once picked me up in a coffee shop with a brilliant card trick; another time, a man I frequently saw at the dog park said "We have to stop meeting like this" as we cleaned up our dogs' shit. It was hilarious and endearing.

The success rate of cold-calling women in person is based 10 percent on what you say and 90 percent on how you say it. Instead of asking "Can I buy you a drink?"—which assumes a lot—a better question may be "What are you drinking?" Timing and confidence are everything. You got this.

Questions? E-mail advisor@playboy.com.

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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: SCARLETT JOHANSSON

A candid conversation with the star (who's uninterested in her status as 2016's highest-grossing actor) about motherhood, monogamy and why she keeps playing lethal superwomen

The opening sequence of *Lost in Translation*, Sofia Coppola's 2003 film about two spiritually adrift, jet-lagged Americans finding each other in Tokyo, features a sustained shot of Scarlett Johansson's behind, swaddled in a pair of nearly translucent pink underwear, as she lies on a bed, gazing at a window with the curtains drawn. Johansson plays Charlotte, a recent college graduate lamenting the trajectory of her life from inside an opulent Japanese hotel; the actress was just 17 when she landed the role. Although she had already been working for almost a decade, her quiet, deliberate performance turned her into one of Hollywood's most sought-after actresses, and in the 14 years since *Lost in Translation* was released, she has served as a muse to auteurs including Woody Allen and the Coen brothers and propped up massive commercial

franchises such as *Captain America* and *The Avengers*. Her creative choices have been vast and varied, a mix of blockbusters and art-house experiments: a computer operating system in Spike Jonze's *Her* (a character she gave life to using only that dusky, twilight voice), a 17th century servant to the painter Johannes Vermeer in *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, the girlfriend of a porn addict in *Don Jon*.

Hollywood has a strange relationship to certain libidinous energies, and Johansson is compared often and aptly to Marilyn Monroe: The fact of her body seems to supersede everything else. But Johansson is bored by discussions of her physicality, and while Monroe was never quite able to fully steer her own sexuality, Johansson is remarkably self-possessed. To ask her about her good looks is to watch her grow increasingly disinterested. In the past

decade, she's also chosen roles—an unnamed, homicidal alien in Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*; Black Widow, an unforgiving superspy, in the *Avengers* films; a drug mule who turns superhuman in Luc Besson's *Lucy*—in which her sexuality is weaponized. Men underestimate her and are punished for it.

Her latest part is Major Motoko Kusanagi in a live-action adaptation of *Ghost in the Shell*, Mamoru Oshii's beloved 1995 manga film. In Oshii's version, the Major is Japanese, and when Johansson's casting was announced, critics immediately cried whitewashing. Johansson was born in New York City, in 1984, to a Jewish mother from the Bronx and a father from Denmark, and while she is quick to acknowledge Hollywood's grim diversity problem, she is hopeful that the film, directed by Rupert Sanders and shot in New Zealand and



*"I guess I always thought my character in *Ghost in the Shell* was a universal one, in the sense that she has no identity, and the heart of this story is her search for an identity."*



"I'll read articles written by women about other women in which they say, 'That perfect blow-out reminded me that I hadn't showered in four days.' It's not only hollow, it's uninteresting."



"I could have been a dermatologist. All my friends are like, 'What is this weird thing on me?' And I'm like, 'Let me see it!' But I don't think I could do seven years of schooling."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAKE CHESSUM



Hong Kong, will resolve any questions about the Major's actual origins.

The New Yorker's Amanda Petrusich first connected with Johansson in a cavernous photo studio on the west side of Manhattan. Two weeks after their initial conversation, Johansson would speak at the Women's March on Washington, voicing her firm support for women's reproductive rights. At one point she addressed the new president directly, saying that her daughter "may potentially not have the right to make choices for her body and her future that your daughter Ivanka has been privileged to have." But on this blustery afternoon just days into the new year, writer and subject found an overstuffed leather couch, commandeered a plate of chocolate chip cookies and spoke about Johansson's childhood, career and new life as a mother—she has a two-year-old daughter with French advertising executive Romain Dauriac. (They were wed in 2014, three years after the end of Johansson's brief and high-profile marriage to Ryan Reynolds.) "She's frank and funny and forthright—a kind of tough-talking New York girl," Petrusich says. "She's also deeply uninterested in bullshit. There's a sense, speaking with her, that you need to be ready to go hard or you'll lose her interest. It immediately made sense to me that Sofia Coppola cast her as a corrective to the bubbly blonde starlet played by Anna Faris in *Lost in Translation*. She's a deep and naturally contemplative person—with a gaze that draws you in even as it commands you to keep up."

PLAYBOY: You were born and raised in New York City. What was it like to grow up here?

JOHANSSON: New York was different then. That makes me sound like an old geezer, but the city was much more accessible. My group of friends was really diverse. We all came from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and our parents did different things. Some parents were drug dealers, some were working in finance, and we all lived in the same community. While it's still probably the greatest city in the world—I'm biased—I think it used to feel like more was possible here for more people. There's a great leather store down in the West Village that has been there forever. I was there a couple of months ago, and the guy who has been making sandals since 1967 or whatever is fighting his landlord to stay in that space, because it was once rent stabilized and that doesn't exist anymore. In the next couple of years it will probably turn into some corporate business. It's sad, because that's the heartbeat of New York. That's what drove the city, what made things seem possible.

PLAYBOY: Almost everyone I know who grew up in New York City has this lovely quality—not just being exposed to all the different artists working around you but, inevitably, to all these different ways of being, ways of living, ways of seeing the world.

JOHANSSON: And you can be yourself here, or whatever version of yourself you want to be. That's not possible in a lot of other places. I love the idea of raising my daughter here. She's probably exposed to so many more things just going to the playground than almost any other toddler her age growing up in a lot of other places.

PLAYBOY: You had your daughter in 2015?

JOHANSSON: What year are we in? No, 2014—I can't even remember. [laughs] She's two and a half now.

PLAYBOY: Do you think motherhood has changed you?

JOHANSSON: Oh, it has changed me, yes. Just the process of being pregnant and giv-

***I'm ambitious,
I guess. If I
see something
in the distance
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it, I'll sprint
toward it.***

ing birth was incredibly profound. Also surrendering to the fact that with babies, and particularly infants and toddlers, you have to let go of your expectations and of whatever instincts you have to take control of the situation. Of course, being a mother, you have to make decisions all the time that affect this person who is completely dependent on you, but you also have to surrender to the experience, and that in itself is really liberating. For me, it's the best thing that has ever happened. Ever. Somebody once described it to me as your heart growing this other chamber, and I think that's really profoundly true. Your capacity to love something, at least in my experience, deepens to a whole other space. I think I was afraid that life would change, and it does; it dramatically changes. But I feel in a lot of ways more myself now than I did before.

PLAYBOY: That's a beautiful way of talking about it.

JOHANSSON: I understand the importance of my own happiness now more than I did before. Because you see how it affects somebody else, and you're kind of like, If I'm not happy, then I can't be in tip-top shape for this other person.

PLAYBOY: This question is asked incessantly of women and very rarely asked of working fathers, but do you feel parenthood has changed the way you approach your work?

JOHANSSON: Where I want to be working is definitely something. That's just a practical part of it, though I'm fortunately at a place in my career, after 20-whatever years, where I can dictate that a little bit. It will probably get more challenging as she gets older, once she's in school and her life is more established in one place. It's a struggle for a lot of people, because we exist in this weird nomadic industry where almost everybody on a crew has a family, and it's hard. It's hard on relationships; it's hard on your partner, your kids, family in general, friends.

PLAYBOY: Has that been a challenge for you?

JOHANSSON: When I was doing *Ghost in the Shell*, I was in New Zealand with our daughter for six months. It was so hard: The distance and the weight of the job itself were really hard on me. It was a big movie with a lot happening. I spent all day fighting people—and literally fighting with myself. I was battling with the character. I remember saying to Rupert Sanders several times, "Can one good thing happen to this character? One great moment?" The answer was no. Spoiler alert: It's a fuckin' dark ride for this person, or cyborg or whatever.

PLAYBOY: There was some controversy about your casting as the Major. She's a character a lot of people

presumed would be Japanese and therefore would be played by a Japanese actor. Did those conversations trickle down to you?

JOHANSSON: Totally. I think the conversation about diversity in Hollywood is an important one and one that we should be having. My character has the unique experience of being a person whose human brain has been put into what was essentially a synthetic robotic body. I guess I always thought the character was a universal one, in the sense that she has no identity, and the heart of this story is her search for an identity. I hope that whatever questions people have about my casting in this film will be answered by actually seeing the movie. It's hard to say, because you haven't seen the movie yet, and there's a part of it that I don't want to talk about because it's the turning point of the movie, but I think it answers the question for the audience as to who I am, who I was and what my true identity is, and it



has nothing to do with how my character looks or how you see me.

PLAYBOY: On a more personal level, there's also the challenge of disappearing into another person, or disappearing into the project itself, and having to forcibly disconnect from the people around you. It's not a burden that can be shared.

JOHANSSON: Totally, because oftentimes you don't even really know where within you it's coming from. I think that's part of the beauty of the job. What I'm more and more curious about, and more confident in exploring, are all these weird spaces within ourselves, these little nooks and crannies, things that at one time seemed embarrassing to try. When you realize the freedom you feel when you unlock that, and when you're able to get weird and take up lots of space emotionally and then pull back—if you can do that within a single performance, it's a transformative experience.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about your family. Your father is Danish and your mother is from the Bronx. What kind of parents were they?

JOHANSSON: After having two kids and then trying for a third and getting two more—I have a twin brother, and we were the last—I think they surrendered whatever rule book they had been following, if any. That's probably normal. By the time you get to your younger kids, you're more lax, you worry over fewer things, you're more comfortable as a parent. I think my brother and I probably benefited from that in some ways and didn't in others. My mom had moved to California and was kind of remotely there, and my dad was consumed by the responsibility of being at home with us and all that it meant to provide for us. My parents always struggled financially, so that was a huge burden for him. By the time we were 13, my brother and I were almost raising ourselves. I was still living at home and going to school and stuff, but I was working, and New York is—I was out and about and hanging out and getting into trouble pretty early on. Not too much trouble, thankfully. I self-regulated, but I could have probably gone really far down the rabbit hole had I not always had something guiding me.

PLAYBOY: What do you think that was? Work?
JOHANSSON: Yeah. I had a good work ethic. I had my own sense of self-preservation, and I made it to graduation and got my own place when I was 18.

PLAYBOY: What about dating at that age—anything you know now that you wish you'd known in your early 20s?

JOHANSSON: I never dated anyone, so I'm a bad person to ask for advice. I did go on one

blind date, and when I arrived, my date had already taken a shot of tequila in his eye. I didn't even know that was possible. What a turnoff. I would never want to be in my early 20s again, though I did a lot of fun stuff. I wish I knew that everything changes and that nothing is forever—except death. It probably would've freed up a lot of space in my brain.

PLAYBOY: What did your father do for a living?

JOHANSSON: My dad was an architect.

PLAYBOY: And your mom?

JOHANSSON: My mom started managing me when I was about eight or nine. She was kind of overseeing things prior to that, but she really started managing me when I was around that age—or maybe a little bit older, like 12. She did that until I stopped working with her when I was in my early 20s. My mom is very ambitious, and she's also good at multitasking. She has a lot of life force, my mom. I definitely inherited that from her. My dad is more—I don't

I don't think it's natural to be a monogamous person. I might be skewered for that, but I think it's work.

know, I think my dad in a lot of ways is kind of a dreamer. He's such a creative person, but at times I think he can almost be self-limiting. Whereas my mom, I think, always saw a bigger picture, and I probably got that from her.

PLAYBOY: How was he self-limiting?

JOHANSSON: I think he didn't have as much confidence. He had a complicated relationship with his father. Even though he could dream big, he never had the confidence to push the boundaries. And my mom, when I was growing up, always told me—told all of us, actually—that if we wanted something we had to go and get it for ourselves and that nobody would do it for us. That really stuck with me. Though I think I'm a little bit more forgiving than that. I probably work better in a team than she does, and I really appreciate the collaborative spirit. I think part of that is from working on productions for such a long time and seeing how one hand holds the other and how important it is

to have a healthy morale within a group of people in a professional setting. I'm ambitious, I guess. If I see something in the distance and I want it, I'll sprint toward it.

PLAYBOY: I would think there might be something advantageous about coming into your own as an artist relatively early, because there's a self-confidence or self-possession we all have as children that just gets chipped away the longer you exist in the world.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, I think that's interesting. You go to high school and then you go to college and then you're about to graduate and you go, "Well, I don't want to do this." And then you're interning somewhere, and it's not something you really want to do. You don't really have any work experience; you haven't had this kind of time in the field. And then you go back to graduate school for something else, because you realize that you need a master's degree to do whatever it is you decided you want to do, and then, you know, people get married and have kids, and life just takes a different path. I think when you work from a young age, you have time to hone—*craft* is such a crappy word, but it's true. You hone a craft and things get pared away. You cut the fat away earlier on, and you're more focused on what is within that's actually driving you.

PLAYBOY: It's such a gift to know what you want.

JOHANSSON: It's true. Otherwise, you get suffocated by the possibilities. I think that's what happens. Everything is possible, especially in this country. We're so spoiled that way—sometimes too much is possible, and that's why people panic. They don't want to fail at anything, so they just stop. They stop reaching.

PLAYBOY: That's a very American idea, the fear of failure. We prize success above all else. There's no power in admitting fault or failure or uncertainty.

JOHANSSON: It's something Barack Obama has—humility. It's such a lovely quality. There are a lot of things about him that will be missed, but humility is such an important part of being successful at what you do.

PLAYBOY: And being able to learn.

JOHANSSON: I actually think it will become very apparent that a leader cannot be successful if they don't have that—if they're not able to be vulnerable, curious, compassionate, to have that kind of humility. I don't think you can lead in any field without having those qualities. That's what makes a leader, I think: the ability to learn from mistakes and to have compassion for your fellow man.

PLAYBOY: You campaigned for Barack Obama twice and supported Hillary Clinton in the recent election. How have you been coping with recent events?



JOHANSSON: You know, it's funny. I had dinner with Woody Allen right after the election, so it was in November. We were both like, "Okay, the election. That's our topic before we get deep into what the meaning of life is." And I said, "Please don't tell me you're one of those people who was like, 'I told you so.' Please don't tell me that." And he was like, "Honestly, I was shocked. I would have thought that he would not have won one state." And I thought, Okay, well, if Woody felt that way, it makes me feel better about being as ignorant as I was, because I literally—I mean, it was a complete and utter shock. I had a very strange experience voting. I took my kid with me, and I was like, "Kid, we got a female president, which is pretty exciting. And it's Hillary Clinton; that's also cool, and we're good." Then I got on a plane to Hong Kong, which is a 16-hour flight. I had two glasses of wine and passed out. I woke up 10 hours later, and the stewardess was like, "Excuse me, Miss, would you like to know the election results?" I looked at her and said, "Well, I know it's—okay, what? Give me the news. Let me have it. What is it? I think I know it's Clinton." And she was like, "No, it's actually Trump." I thought, This is a *Twilight Zone* episode.

PLAYBOY: You thought she was kidding.

JOHANSSON: I mean, I'm shutting through the air at 30,000 feet. The whole cabin is dark, my brother is passed out, and I tap him on the shoulder—he was a field organizer for Obama; he's very political—and I say, "Hunter, wake up, wake up!" He was like, "What?" I said, "Trump won." He was like, "Oh, stop it." God, he got so drunk when we landed in Hong Kong. This morning I was listening to NPR, and I have these moments when it still hits me, the weight of it.

PLAYBOY: Tell me about your experience at the Women's March on Washington.

JOHANSSON: As you know, I'm not one to overshare, but I felt very driven to say what I had to say. It was both a grounding experience and an out-of-body one. Paradoxical, I guess. I always took Planned Parenthood for granted growing up. That's how it should be, right? We are talking about normalizing what is by definition a normal thing: the accessibility of women's health care. Everyone with a vagina needs it. Why are we still having these conversations so many years after we, as women, were supposedly "liberated"? I'm over it.

PLAYBOY: Are there things you do to manage feelings of hopelessness or fear?

JOHANSSON: Well, one thing—you just can't be complacent. I think it's hard because people have been inactive for such a long time, and we

don't have a draft. Not that I'm advocating for that, but if there were some kind of mandatory service, I think it would be a completely different political climate. People would be much more proactive—not just opinionated but proactive. It's hard to mobilize people when they don't feel—I mean, look at this past election: Nobody voted. There was a record low turnout. I blame the media for a lot of that too. Early polling results and that stuff should just be banned. I think people just got complacent. They were like, "Who cares?"

PLAYBOY: That leads me to a tangent about music. You're a singer as well as an actor, and you've made two records. In 2008 you released *Anywhere I Lay My Head*, a collection of covers of Tom Waits songs. As we're speaking of America writ large, it occurs to me that Waits is one of our best representative voices—on his records he becomes a vital, exciting and

We are talking about normalizing what is by definition a normal thing: the accessibility of women's health care.

endearing embodiment of this place. Tell me about your relationship to his work.

JOHANSSON: He's a true poet. And he's an artist in that most delicious way, where his self-expression gives us a place to be reflective. Rhino came to me to do an album. I mean, who has that opportunity? It was amazing. I was overwhelmed. I thought, Maybe I'll do classics, maybe I'll do Cole Porter songs. Then I was like, I really want to do that duet Tom Waits does with Bette Midler called "I Never Talk to Strangers." And then I thought, Maybe I'll just reimagine Tom Waits songs and see where that leads me. I tried doing it with various producers, and it just was not working. That's when I got, very fatefully, to Dave Sitek from TV on the Radio. He had this Tinkerbell-cough-syrup idea for the album, and so we just ran with it. Meeting Dave was life-changing because he became a really important figure in my life and a dear, dear friend. And going to Louisiana

to record was an absolutely epic experience. I was falling in love with my first husband at the time. It was just a very romantic and really liberating time. It was great.

PLAYBOY: That sounds incredible.

JOHANSSON: It was wonderful.

PLAYBOY: Another interesting thing about Waits's work is that so much of it is about his particular, singular performance of those songs. But because of that, I feel there's a lot of meat left on the bone, in a way, for a different singer to come in and totally reimagine them.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, it's true. It's funny because if you try to re-create the song as Waits did it, you realize he actually has a very classical approach. I'm not talking about the really experimental stuff that he does, but the instrumental parts of his songs can be very sentimental. It's his voice that gives them such depth.

PLAYBOY: You and Dave got in a car and drove together from California to Louisiana.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, it was crazy, because we didn't know each other at all, and we figured we would get to know each other on this road trip. I think I drove.

PLAYBOY: That's so high-stakes!

JOHANSSON: I remember picking him up in Silver Lake or whatever, and he had seven cigarettes in each hand, a cup of black coffee and a bunch of weird instruments I had never heard of, and we just loaded up the trunk and here we go. We drove into the desert and smoked a bunch of pot and got weird. We just sat on the hood of the car and stared into the sunset.

PLAYBOY: You mentioned Waits being one of our great poets. Were you pleased when Bob Dylan won

the Nobel Prize for literature?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, that was cool. I love that he didn't show up too. That's very Dylanesque. Dylan is someone you can revisit at different times in your life and his songs mean something different to you at each stage. He's a wonderful artist and poet and a mysterious magician.

PLAYBOY: You starred in one of his music videos.

JOHANSSON: My friend Bennett Miller was asked to direct a video for him. I was going to do it with Dylan, and then he didn't want to be in the video, so we just kind of did our own thing. About two years later, I went to see Dylan for the first time. I saw him backstage, and he said something to me like "Oh yeah, thanks for the video you did." I expected when we did the video that he would come at us, that I would hear from him—no, not at all. He just kind of remembered it on the fly, like,





Oh yeah, you did that video for me. It was my pleasure, Mr. Dylan. My friend told me this hysterical story about how a friend of theirs, a music producer, was like, “I’m bringing a friend to dinner,” and it was Dylan, which is crazy. Dylan was wearing a hoodie, and he had pulled the string so only his eyes and nose were showing. And he sat through the entire dinner like that. He kept having to pull his hoodie down so he could shove forkfuls of food into his mouth.

PLAYBOY: God bless him. Your second record, *Break Up*, was a collaboration with Pete Yorn, who has said that he was inspired by Serge Gainsbourg’s recordings with Brigitte Bardot. Is the duet format something that appeals to you?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, duets are great. When I was a kid I listened to Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Dean Martin with various singers, the Andrews Sisters. I think I particularly like to hear a male and a female voice together. Pete was like, “Hey, want to make an album?” I think he was in a dark place, or a transitional place in his life, and he had a dream that we made an album together, so he texted me when he came out of his fever dream, and that’s how we decided to make it.

PLAYBOY: The record does have a dreamy quality—there’s an ache to it. Do you remember your dreams?

JOHANSSON: I do, yeah.

PLAYBOY: Any recurring anxiety dreams?

JOHANSSON: I only have anxiety dreams! I once told my mother that and she cried. I have a lot of dreams about houses—beautiful, ancient houses filled with gardens and hanging vines that I at one time had the opportunity to live in but sold. Whatever. I’m sure the heating bills would have been outrageous.

PLAYBOY: I think part of getting older is reckoning with that idea that there’s so much we don’t know and might never know about ourselves. Dreams are the most immediate way to glimpse those weird, vast expanses of your subconscious that you can’t otherwise access.

JOHANSSON: It’s true. Of course, because you have all these barriers that shut you down from—I mean, I think it’s probably a survival thing that you go about your day and remember glimpses of dreams that you’ve had. I think examining your dreams can really help you to be more present in your waking life, because then you know better what’s going on with you.

PLAYBOY: Every once in a while someone will do you a great service by saying something revelatory to you, about you—and of course you’re like, “Fuck you, you don’t know me.” Then you go home and think about it and

you’re like, Oh my God, they’re exactly right.

JOHANSSON: I was listening to this TED Talk about relationships, and the person who was giving the talk was saying that in moments when you’re starting a new relationship and your friends and family say, “No, this is a red flag. This person is not for you”—why do we ignore those people who know us so well in the moments that we don’t? And then we distance ourselves from them because we’re embarrassed or whatever. It’s interesting how sometimes all you need is your good friend to tell you that you’re not acting like yourself. Or that they see something in front of you that is not beneficial for you or true to who you actually are. I don’t know. It’s so easy to just go, “No, I don’t want to hear that.”

PLAYBOY: Well, love is so deeply intoxicating at first. You’re just out of your mind.

JOHANSSON: Of course.

A leader cannot be successful if they’re not able to be vulnerable, curious, compassionate, to have humility.

PLAYBOY: No one can tell you anything.

JOHANSSON: And the part of your brain that functions then is a dysfunctional part—it’s not the rational side of your brain. It’s the addictive part of your brain that fires up when you have those first feelings of love, and it’s so good.

PLAYBOY: You’ve said that you aren’t sure humans are designed to be monogamous.

JOHANSSON: Well, with every gain there’s a loss, right? So that’s a loss. You have to choose a path. I think the idea of marriage is very romantic; it’s a beautiful idea, and the practice of it can be a very beautiful thing. I don’t think it’s natural to be a monogamous person. I might be skewed for that, but I think it’s work. It’s a lot of work. And the fact that it is such work for so many people—for everyone—the fact of that proves that it is not a natural thing. It’s something I have a lot of respect for and have participated in, but I think it definitely goes against some instinct to look beyond.

PLAYBOY: And of course many marriages don’t work out.

JOHANSSON: I think marriage initially involves a lot of people who have nothing to do with your relationship, because it’s a legally binding contract, and that has a weight to it. Being married is different than not being married, and anybody who tells you that it’s the same is lying. It changes things. I have friends who were together for 10 years and then decided to get married, and I’ll ask them on their wedding day or right after if it’s different, and it always is. It is. It’s a beautiful responsibility, but it’s a responsibility.

PLAYBOY: You were married for the second time in 2014. Did you wake up the next morning and feel different?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, definitely. It felt different. I had a really young baby at the time, so that also—our family dynamic was just different. I don’t know. Whatever that is, the thing you can’t fully put words to, it changed.

PLAYBOY: And it felt different from your prior marriage too?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, of course. I had a baby, and also my husband was coming from another country and becoming a citizen of this country. It was a huge transition for both of us, and certainly for him—moving here, committing to the States. But I think my husband has embraced America, and New York in particular, in this really endearing way. He was making meatballs the other night, actually. I wasn’t home. I was away, and he sent me a picture. He was like, “I’m a real New Yorker, and I love *The Sopranos!*” I was just, “You go, babe.”

PLAYBOY: Are you based in New York now, or are you still moving back and forth between here and Paris?

JOHANSSON: We still mix it up. My job takes me all over the place, so I don’t even know where I live, but I guess now we’re kind of committed to living here because with our daughter we have to commit to someplace. She’ll be in school in a hot minute. The time passes like crazy.

PLAYBOY: What do you think you’d be doing if you weren’t acting?

JOHANSSON: Oh gosh, I don’t know. I probably would have gone into some kind of medical profession. I’d be rooting around in somebody else! I’m interested in people.

PLAYBOY: They’re such different disciplines, but they both rely on a kind of intuition.

JOHANSSON: I could have been a dermatologist. I would have actually loved being a dermatologist. That’s a dream job. All my friends are like, “What is this weird thing on me?” And I’m like, “Let me see it!” But I don’t



think I could do seven years of schooling.

PLAYBOY: I'm also not sure that Hollywood would let you go so easily.

JOHANSSON: Oh, I don't know. There's always someone else to fill the void.

PLAYBOY: I read recently that you were the highest-grossing actor of 2016.

JOHANSSON: I make a lot of movies that have a huge built-in audience, and that drives a lot of it. But it's been a very productive few years.

PLAYBOY: Surveying your body of work, there's an interesting mix of independent, idiosyncratic films and then these intensely commercial franchise movies. Do you try to keep those things in balance?

JOHANSSON: I always hoped to have that balance, and I've finally achieved it. I loved what Jon Favreau did with *Iron Man*, how he worked with actors like Robert Downey, who I've loved for such a long time. I'm not normally a comic book fan. I liked the Tim Burton Batman movies, but it's not my genre. Yet Favreau seemed to find this balance that you're talking about—an independent creative spirit with the budget of something so ambitious. It was unprecedented. It was a new way of telling that story. And it obviously rang true, because then DC and studios like Warner Bros. started doing it too. Look at the *Suicide Squad* cast—we've seen Will Smith in these blockbusters, but casting somebody like Jared Leto as the Joker? It's a really welcome trend, I think.

PLAYBOY: Do you read reviews of your films or interviews with you in magazines?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, I do. I do read reviews and interviews. I don't search high and low for reviews, but *The New York Times*, the trades—I'm curious about that stuff. It's helpful, and I like to participate in the process that way. I will always have my own opinion about something that I'm doing, not necessarily of my own performance but of the film in general. And it's probably similar to whatever your response was at the time! Good or bad. I'm like, "Yup, I didn't expect it to suck either." There have been very few times when I did something I loved and nobody else liked it. Most of the time I'm like, "Yeah..."

PLAYBOY: Filmmaking is so collaborative. There are so many moving parts, and you're often just one of them. I imagine it must be heartbreaking when you see something you've made—

JOHANSSON: And it didn't turn out how you wanted.

PLAYBOY: And who knows whose fault it was?

JOHANSSON: I know whose fault it was! Of course, oh my God. Other times I've made

movies that were really successful and I had no idea why. There are some nice surprises. For instance, when we made *Lost in Translation*, nobody could really see what Sofia Coppola's vision would be. We were making it in this weird fever of jet lag, in this new environment, and we shot it in 27 days. Lance Acord, our director of photography, may have been one of the only ones who could see what we were capturing. When I read the script, I didn't know. I was just kind of doing my thing with Bill Murray, just experiencing what the character was experiencing. And then it came out and it resonated with so many people. I never could have predicted that.

PLAYBOY: You were just 17 when you were cast in that movie. What's your experience of watching it now?

JOHANSSON: I haven't seen it in so long. I would probably think, Oh my God, I'm so young.

There's something really powerful about somebody who can't change themselves or doesn't want to.

PLAYBOY: Your character, Charlotte, is 25 in the film and searching.

JOHANSSON: I had been working for almost a decade at that time. I was in a much older circle of friends and colleagues. That sort of yearning for purpose—I had maybe a greater understanding of what that felt like than other high school seniors.

PLAYBOY: Robert Redford, who directed you in *The Horse Whisperer*, described you as "13 going on 30." Have you always been an old soul?

JOHANSSON: I don't know. Like I said, I was taking care of myself from when I was pretty young. In a lot of ways I had to be responsible for myself.

PLAYBOY: Anthony Lane, who is a very esteemed film critic, wrote a profile of you that readers thought was so fawning it spawned several negative response pieces. I'm not suggesting this is the case with Lane, who I think is an intelligent and thoughtful writer, but

there's certainly a history of male magazine reporters approaching beautiful young starlets in ways that feel limiting, if not absurd.

JOHANSSON: Women do it too, though. I've also experienced that with female journalists. I think they project. They have this strange way of comparing themselves to this idea of you. I'll read articles written by women about other women in which they say, "That perfect blowout reminded me of the fact that I hadn't showered in four days," or whatever. It's not only hollow, it's uninteresting. Maybe it's just more of a failure in approach—instead of getting to the heart of someone, what drives them creatively, you just scratch the surface. I also find interviews a lot of the time to be very boring. Not this interview; this interview is not boring, but you're also lovely to talk to. When interviewers are self-deprecating, it becomes this weird—I don't know, it can be

exhausting at times.

PLAYBOY: People do sometimes write about you as if you've just drifted down in a beam of light.

JOHANSSON: Nice!

PLAYBOY: It must be hard to bear the weight of those projections.

JOHANSSON: I think it's actually ridiculous. It's absurd. Also, I have a lot of experiences where I'm like, "I can't believe this is happening to me." I'm still surprised by my job and the places it carries me. But my day-to-day life is a regular routine.

PLAYBOY: Not to sound dystopian or paranoid, but it increasingly feels as though in the future privacy will be our currency. We're all being rather cavalier about it right now—I'm being tracked all the time by this thing in my pocket, I'm giving all my information to corporations, and it's fine.

JOHANSSON: I couldn't agree with you more, having experienced that.

PLAYBOY: You had your e-mail hacked in 2011.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, that was crazy. It made me realize how vulnerable anyone is to that. The person who hacked my e-mail did the same thing to 50 other people in the public eye and also to his ex-girlfriends—it could happen to anybody. And of course we're so cavalier about that. People are like, "Oh, who cares about me." But you're just as vulnerable.

PLAYBOY: I think almost anyone's e-mail would betray some bad behavior.

JOHANSSON: Well, it's just your personal life. Even if it's letters you wrote to your best friend, your sister, whatever, it's your personal stuff. It's like a journal. It's pretty crazy.

PLAYBOY: You've stayed off social media.

JOHANSSON: I just never got on that bandwagon. I don't even call people back. I don't





even check my voice mail. It's not in my nature. I get it; it's a great tool for a lot of companies, a lot of causes. I don't know. I haven't missed it in my life at all.

PLAYBOY: Why open that door?

JOHANSSON: I don't have space for it in my life. If I had any kind of social media account, I would have to rely on somebody else to run it, and that seems like a ridiculous extra thing I don't need or want. I already read too much news on my phone. A couple of days ago my phone died, and I didn't have a phone for 20 hours, and it was wonderful. I was so thrilled. It may have been the first time in my life I wasn't panicked to not have my phone. I was just like, "This is great!" I had my kid with me. I was like, "I don't need anything. I got my kid, I'm good."

PLAYBOY: I suspect you were perhaps at the very tail end of the last generation of actresses who came of age professionally somewhat free of the scrutiny under which young women are held now.

JOHANSSON: Yes, I was. You see some young actors performing, and you can tell that they're aware of how they're supposed to be, how the public sees them and what kind of persona they're supposed to convey. And that is unfortunate.

PLAYBOY: Tell me a little about your process as you prepare for a new role.

JOHANSSON: I start by trying to find some physicality to the character that I can hold and return to. Whether that's a self-consciousness, like a person who is worried about aging, or maybe it's somebody who, like the Major, has no sense of her own. She knows her physical body, but she has no care or awareness of her self.

PLAYBOY: That's also true of the women you play in *Under the Skin* and *Her*. Each of those characters is essentially just a disembodied consciousness.

JOHANSSON: With *Her* I actually had a hyperawareness of myself because I was stuck in a black box. It's just my voice, and so you become hyperaware of certain habits. Doing the sex scene with Joaquin was an exercise in letting go.

PLAYBOY: Was it embarrassing?

JOHANSSON: I think he was really uncomfortable at first. He was so agitated, and it was really interesting to see him. It was probably easier for me because I had been in a black box for such a long time that I was like, "Bring it. I'm warmed up. Come on, let's get weird." In a black box you get this sense that nobody can see you, so you can be whomever you want. You can be yourself. But it was interesting to see how he reacted to it. He came

around, though, and we did it—literally, we did it. But the physicality is where I start, just being aware of how this story, these lines, what does it feel like in me, what does it feel like in my body, and then why am I having this physical instinct to be close with somebody or apart from them or self-conscious about this thing or that. In the case of *Under the Skin*, how can I be completely free of any of these and just be purely instinctive and animal? Or in *Ghost in the Shell*, I don't have any of these physical tics, these things that make us human. I'm devoid of those things, so what does that leave me with? What does this body feel like that's not my own? There was a separation between her mind and her body, so she had to think and then act on it. These kinds of things get me started. And then of course there's research. Even when I was playing Janet Leigh in *Hitchcock*, you

I have a lot of experiences where I'm like, "I can't believe this is happening to me." I'm still surprised by my job.

just think about how she stands, and what it says about her strength, this fiery, driven person. The physicality is where it starts, and then it grows from there.

PLAYBOY: For me, one of the reasons you and Bill Murray are so satisfying to watch in *Lost in Translation* is because you share a subtle approach to the material. I think the word that gets used is *underreactive*. You don't seem afraid of silence or a blank stare.

JOHANSSON: I think it's really important for me to take time. The audience will stay with you. They'll ride the wave with you. That's the best part about doing live theater—having the reaction, the feedback from the audience, because it's so informative. It's just absolute magic when the audience and you are riding the same wave.

PLAYBOY: You starred in the Broadway revivals of Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge* and Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin*

Roof; both such rich and complicated plays. Growing up in New York, was being on Broadway an early dream of yours?

JOHANSSON: That was my absolute dream. That's what drove me to acting. I wanted to do theater and be on Broadway. I wanted desperately to be in theater when I was eight. I wanted to be in musical theater, which I would never do now, ever. If I had to sing and dance in front of people, I would absolutely melt, fail miserably. But you have so many chances to get it right. You can get really weird, and you know that this is the only audience that will see it.

PLAYBOY: You've played so many characters who start out one way—unfeeling, unknowing—and grow into something or someone else via their interactions with others or their observations of the world. I'm sure you're seeing some version of this unfold for your daughter now too—a broadening. Do you think we're all constantly changing into new iterations of ourselves?

JOHANSSON: I don't know. It might be interesting to play somebody who stays stuck. I don't know if it would be interesting to watch. Maybe it is. There's something really powerful about somebody who can't change themselves or doesn't want to change themselves. If you watch something like *Barry Lyndon* or think of a character like Dorian Gray, there's something really amazing about those characters. To watch the demise of somebody who doesn't want to or is incapable of changing. I'd like to get there, because it probably would help me understand a lot of people in my life. Maybe that will be the next thing for me. But up until this point, I think I've been trying to wrap my head around metamorphosis. Maybe now I've gotten to a stage where I can finally play that person who cannot change.

PLAYBOY: It seems there's a lot of possibility there for an actor.

JOHANSSON: It's so delicious, because I'm innately somebody who's curious about myself and trying to figure it out. My therapist would say, "Well, you make the same mistakes, so don't make them anymore." I don't want to make them anymore! But in life we make the same mistakes again and again, and—

PLAYBOY: And then one day you don't?

JOHANSSON: And then you don't. That's the hope. But it's so interesting when a person keeps making the same mistake or is unwilling to change.

PLAYBOY: I believe I know some of those people intimately.

JOHANSSON: Oh, I thought I dated all of them! Were there any left for you? ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
**CHRISTOPHER
VON STEINBACH**

THE BEATE GOES ON

*Eastern Europe meets the West Coast as Latvian beauty **Beate Muska** invites you to spend a languorous afternoon at a Topanga Canyon estate*

























Millennials sign up every day to help refugees, modernize underprivileged communities and feed the

“Going out into a field and having sex with your partner under the stars probably sounds romantic to most people, but for us, it was the only option we had.” When she says “us,” Kristen, 30, is referring to young humanitarian aid workers who spend years living among impoverished people in remote African villages, besieged refugee camps or other areas suffering a lack of resources amid political crises or natural disasters. More than 800 million people around the world live in such conditions, and today some 4,500 worldwide organizations provide them aid with the help of 450,000 workers.

For roughly four years, Kristen was part of that community. At the age of 24, she joined an evangelical Christian international aid organization. Abroad, she bounced from Haiti to war-torn South Sudan to Kenya, working as an information officer. Her duties included

facilitating deliveries of food and clean water to refugees. She was also single at the time, which is characteristic of many young people who do humanitarian work after graduating from college or during a gap year. In the Peace Corps, for example, 95 percent of volunteers, average age 28, are single when they enlist.

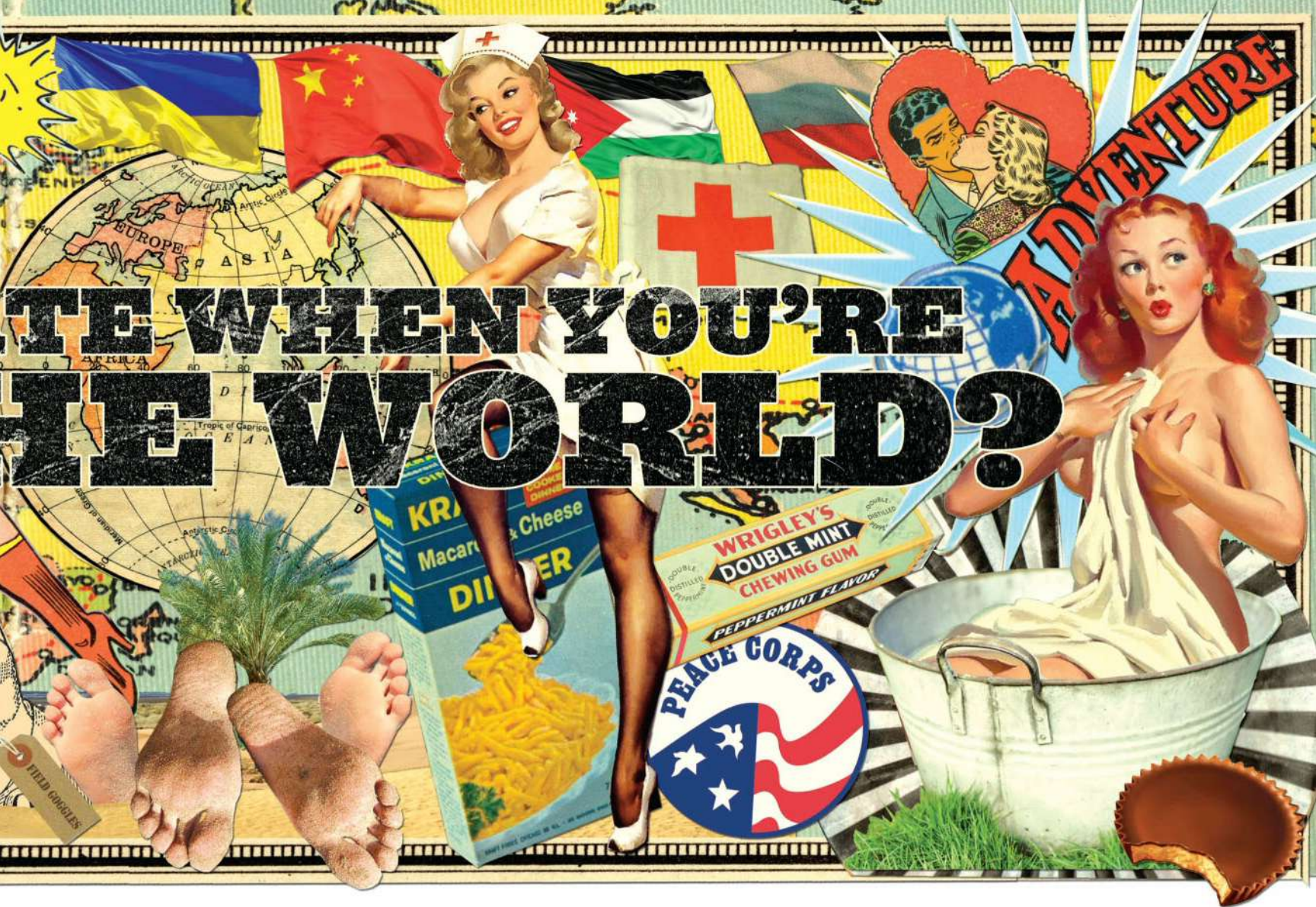
Whether domestic or international, most programs require a commitment of anywhere from a few months to two years. Location assignments are temporary. Overseas, reliable transportation is rare and colleagues from the same program may be scattered across thousands of miles. In other words, if you’re a humanitarian aid worker and single, as Kristen was, a Tinder match is virtually worlds away.

Those circumstances have set the groundwork for an unparalleled dating and hookup culture that unfolds in bare-bones cabins,

tents and homestays speckled among locales withstanding harsh political, social or environmental conditions. While the rest of their generation is swiping for one-night stands, millennial aid workers are simply looking for someone who speaks the same language. Sex is almost always on the table when they finally find a candidate who checks all the boxes—because when you’re a young humanitarian abroad, sex is a novelty free of the Western world’s reign of unanswered texts, first dates and late-night booty calls. It’s also a welcome distraction for relatively liberated millennials who are quite literally saving the world.

“I essentially watched a social experiment involving a bunch of extremely horny kids,” says Melissa, a 27-year-old DJ in West Virginia who spent close to a year in AmeriCorps’s community-service program. “Every single

BY **DANA HAMILTON**



hungry—and their sexual desires go with them. An inside look at the wild hookup culture of humanitarians

volunteer I knew had a hookup if they weren't in a relationship." Adds Kristen, "Aid workers have a reputation for not being interested in commitment because they need to be ready to leave at any time. You're in a pool of people who sort of have the motto 'We don't commit'—and it has an impact on everybody."

That brings us back to the false "romance" of hooking up in a grassy field kissed by gleaming constellations. How does someone date while devoting his or her life to others? When you're young, single and living halfway around the world in these programs, there's no privacy. You can't afford to go to a candle-lit restaurant—or even a dive bar—on a first date. There might not even be hot water to shower in. It's just you and your biological need for affection—and your need to get laid. Sometimes that means hooking up in a field because it's the only place you won't get caught. Other

times it means having to wait months to see a gynecologist. One thing is certain: Humanitarian relief work is not for the faint of heart. Trying to maintain the slightest semblance of a relationship, whether casual or exclusive, in the middle of it is just as arduous. "My term of service was more socially and psychologically taxing than anything else I've experienced," says Melissa. "It will test every single belief that you have about yourself."

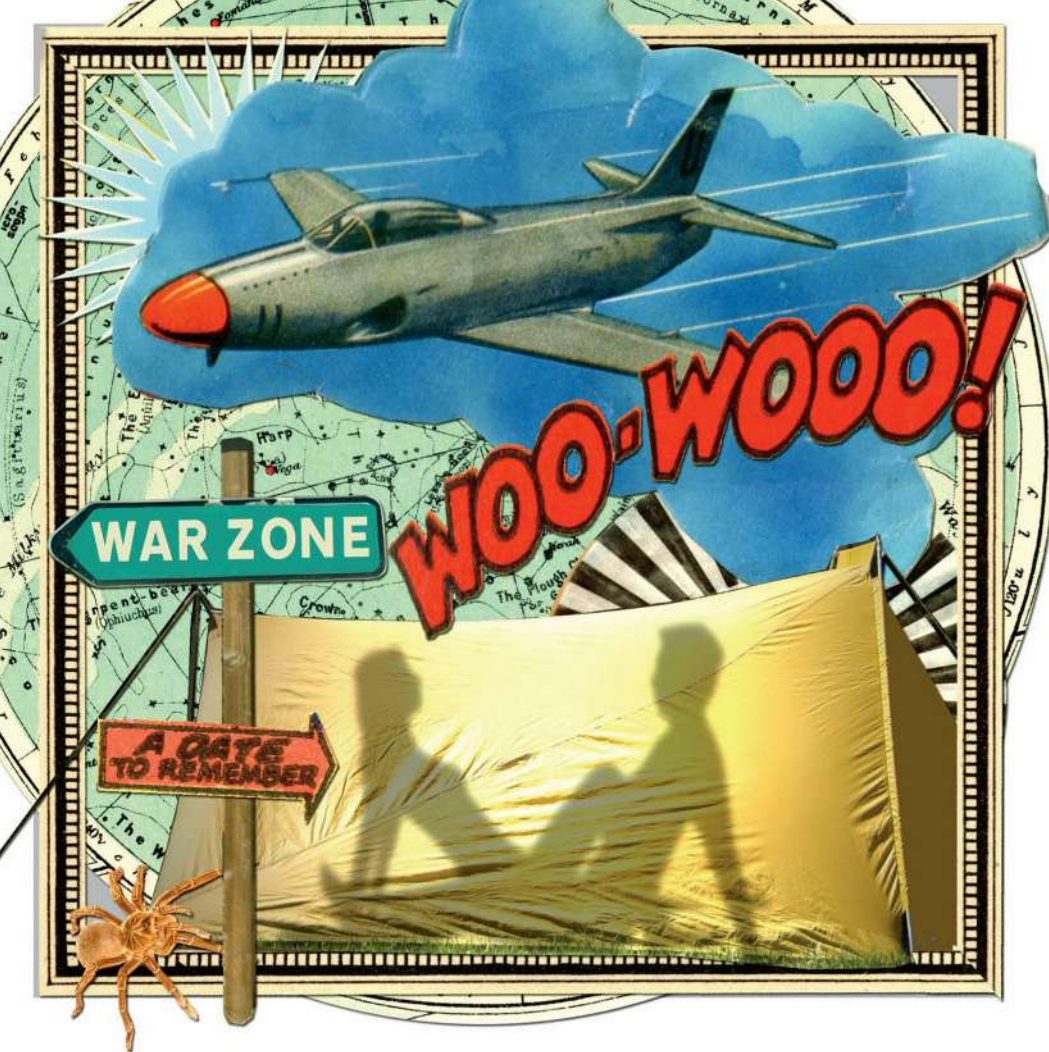
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Changing the world has become little more than a catchphrase used by charities, beauty-pageant queens and giant corporations to evoke benevolence, raise money and sell products. But thousands of people still wholeheartedly believe in their ability as individuals to advance humanity. For decades, the most well-known service organization was the International Red Cross, established in 1863 to help

wounded soldiers. Ninety-eight years later, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized the formation of the Peace Corps by executive order. Since then, thousands of other programs have been launched and funded by governments, nongovernmental organizations, religious groups and celebrities.

In 2015, global humanitarian aid received \$28 billion in funding. When you consider that's how much revenue Apple made via its App Store last year, the world's budget for alleviating suffering seems like small change. Nonetheless, these programs survive, if only as a backup plan for millennials navigating a still-faltering economy in which people in their early to mid-20s are twice as likely to be unemployed as those in their mid-30s and early 40s. Couple that with current global instability—civilian bombings in the Middle East, xenophobia sweeping across Europe,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER QUINNELL



10 countries on the brink of genocide and 13.5 percent of Americans living below the poverty line—and humanitarian work is a reliable, albeit sometimes last-resort option for a socially conscious, unemployed generation.

The stereotype of aid workers and volunteers ranges from an undergrad who wears Birkenstocks year-round to your homely cousin who still goes to Bible study on Wednesdays. The reality, however, is that there is no such thing as an average volunteer. They come from all walks of life, with different levels of privilege and of dedication. And though their backgrounds are varied, all young aid workers share one thing: the inescapable pull of their sexuality.

In the Peace Corps, women outnumber men two to one, but that doesn't automatically turn the service world into a veritable swingers party. While it's common for people to pair off early in their assignments, that can end up being as disastrous as when a pencil pusher hooks up with an office mate. "These are people you are going to have to rely on at some point," explains Savannah, a 24-year-old who worked in the Middle East with the American Community School and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which assists Palestinian refugees. "When you're living in a

developing country, something will inevitably go wrong. Your car will break down. Your visa will be messed up. You'll get stuck in a political riot. And you'll be incredibly thankful when the person coming to your rescue isn't someone with whom you've had an awkward sexual encounter."

Some volunteers who bypass that advice and date within their programs rarely see each other, let alone another English speaker, during their terms of service anyway. Jake, a Florida native who lived alone in an apartment in Ukraine during a two-year stint in the Peace Corps, says the nearest fellow volunteer was hours away by bus or train. When Erik, a professional diver in New York City who is from Washington, D.C., signed up with the Peace Corps, he was sent to Cambodia, where he lived in a homestay. When he created an OkCupid profile, the dating site delivered a lone match with one nonlocal woman within 200 miles. "There's definitely some isolation and loneliness," Jake says. "If not being able to date or connect with someone emotionally is a deal breaker for you, I caution that there's going to be a lot of that."

One might think the simple answer is to just date locally. But in addition to the obvious

language barriers (most Americans don't leave college speaking Swahili or Khmer), many third-world cultures frown on Westerners who arrive at their outpost only to spend time pursuing natives instead of performing community service. "As a guest in someone's house, I couldn't bring back girls," says Erik. "But I was able to masturbate as frequently as I liked. In Cambodia, any woman I dated would have been viewed as 'tarnished.' Unless I proposed, the girl's reputation would be ruined. It didn't seem fair to me to do that just to get my rocks off." Jake admits to going on dates with a few Ukrainian women, but they weren't particularly successful. Because of the language barrier, "there wasn't much for us to talk about," he says.

Similarly, in East Africa, Kristen says, dating a local man was "a big no-no." Because she was in a religious organization that prohibits premarital sex, she relied on meeting men through other groups, primarily nonreligious NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders and the International Red Cross.

But because so many aid workers are fresh out of college, some of them are anything but well-versed in lovemaking. Kristen says that in her organization, men seemed to struggle with their faith and their sexuality. "Because we're part of a Christian organization, we don't have sex!" she jokes about the mentality of her colleagues. One man from her program seemed particularly inexperienced when they dated. "I wonder if he had ever been sexually active at home," she says. "I got the feeling he felt guilty all the time."

Erik claims he was one of the "more confident guys" in his program, but virgins are common. "I knew at least three guys who lost their virginity during service," he says. Some volunteers chalk up such success stories to the phenomenon of "field goggles," similar to beer goggles in a bar: The longer you're in the field, the more open—or desperate—you become. A person may be a five when you've been in the field for five weeks, but he or she becomes a 10 after 10 weeks.

Such adjustments dig volunteers deeper into their culture of noncommittal hookups. "Fuckboys are an international phenomenon," notes Savannah, who is now a public relations account coordinator in southern California. Growing up, Savannah lived mostly overseas. At 18, she started a six-year stint of service that involved working with USAID and the United Nations and in schools in Jordan and Russia. Despite her worldly upbringing, she quickly learned that when it comes to dating in the aid world, husband material is hard to



come by. “Being a five-foot-10 blonde helps when you’re living in Asia,” she says, alluding to how some foreigners stand out abroad. “Looking back, though, I wouldn’t have gotten involved with the people I had if they weren’t right there. The temporary nature leads to poorer decisions. Working with high levels of emotional stress didn’t necessarily make it difficult to get in the mood, but it did make it hard to find good guys.”

Erik puts it a little more bluntly: “Love is love and sex is sex. People work overseas for such low wages, they tend not to be high maintenance in the romance department.” Most volunteer-based organizations pay their millennial humanitarians a stipend that forces them to have the same standard of living as the people they’re helping—about \$200 a month. That doesn’t leave much for filet mignon and Veuve Clicquot.

Thus, anything and everything constitutes a date. “A date is when you meet someone in a public space and do something that’s free to little cost,” explains Melissa. “It’s not going to be anything fancy, because you can’t take nice clothes with you. I mean, we lived out of backpacks. We didn’t have much of an outfit selection, especially when it came to shoes.” Melissa estimates that in 10 months she put on makeup all of five times.

If you do manage to find someone you’re interested in, it usually takes weeks to schedule a second date. “When you date another volunteer, you understand that you can’t see each other every weekend,” Jake explains. Indeed, almost everyone interviewed for this story said that on average they saw the person they were dating only once a month. “You’ll see each other when you have to travel for other reasons, like a conference,” Jake says.

The upside of those long separations is that people have time to save money to treat their partners to an extravagant night out. Sharing a large order of McDonald’s french fries in a country’s capital, renting a hotel room, visiting a Sudanese tea hut (just a grass hut with a pot of water), watching a movie on a laptop and taking a cheap bus trip around a host country are all examples of lavish dates. And volunteers agree that romantic interests who bring them pieces of home score major points.

“Bringing memories of home is probably the most romantic thing you could do,” Kristen says. For her, gifts of chewing gum or a pot of hot water (for washing her hair) were the equivalent of a bouquet of roses. “One time, a guy made me Kraft macaroni and cheese and a peanut butter sandwich,” says Savannah. “I hadn’t had peanut butter in six months. He

saved a Reese’s peanut butter cup, which cost him \$6, for the end of the date. It was perfect.”

• • •

Because of the mental, emotional and physical stress of service, many organizations aim to keep their staffers as healthy as possible in the field. That includes providing them with contraceptives. The Peace Corps, for example, stocks field offices with condoms and includes them in medical kits handed out to every volunteer. Even in the most remote places, condoms are often widely available. When it comes to women seeking reproductive health care, however, things get more nebulous.

“I was never able to see a gynecologist,” Savannah says. “I wasn’t comfortable with the kind of education doctors received.” It’s a sentiment shared by many female aid workers, some of whom say they couldn’t openly talk about birth control or STD testing, since both carry social stigmas in many third-world nations. The necessity of such restraint elucidates the scale of the subpar or non-existent female health care systems in developing countries, not to mention the societal laws that still rule women’s bodies in those places.

To manage, some female volunteers stow away six- to 12-month supplies of hormonal birth control pills before leaving home. In more developed countries such as Kenya, the pill is readily available without a prescription—and cheap too, at about a dollar a pack. Others buy pills discreetly from nurses in their programs. But when it comes to handling pregnancy scares, it’s a different story altogether.

An estimated nine out of 10 women in Africa live in countries with restrictive abortion laws. “In East Africa, abortion is a back-alley situation,” says Kristen. “They barely had dentists, much less abortions.” Volunteers who need abortions have to go home—or elsewhere. “The silver lining, I guess, is that an abortion would be easy to hide. You know, make a stop somewhere where no one knows you,” says Kristen. “People in service take monthlong leaves. It isn’t uncommon for someone to disappear for a few weeks. At home, if I disappeared for a few weeks, it would be weird. There, it’s normal.”

When it comes to disappearing for a bit, choppy phone signals, last-minute relocations and long hours make people less accountable,

which can ease the pain of a breakup. In the field, it’s easier to ignore being ignored after a date. “At home, if someone doesn’t call, it’s like ‘Oh my gosh, he must be with another girl.’ There, it’s like ‘He’s in the middle of nowhere.’ There’s less to worry about,” says Kristen. “Because people live so far apart, going ‘no contact’ is easier.”

Even though sex is available if you’re willing to put some work into it, the stress of staying together—or managing a breakup—is why some volunteers make a pact to avoid sexual relations entirely. “You’re so physically and mentally exhausted. By the end of the day, you just want to sleep,” says Melissa. “On the weekends, you don’t want to go out of your way.” Jake similarly found himself abstaining in the first two months of his program while he got acclimated to Ukraine. “I didn’t have much energy for a girlfriend or sex,” he recalls. “There’s a lot of emotional stress that drains you.”

And this seems to be the larger narrative

THE LONGER YOU’RE IN THE FIELD, THE MORE OPEN—OR DESPERATE—YOU BECOME.

about humanitarian hookup culture. Your eagerness to hook up overseas reveals itself based on your view of whether sex is necessary in the first place. Some people are energized by one-night stands, Instagram DMs, Bumble matches and the chase. Others are exhausted by the politics of the game. And even more are freed by the idea that, in the end, they can always just walk away. Those attitudes are as prominent among millennials working in a Sudanese refugee camp as they are among the Friday night crowd at a bar in Manhattan. Is it realistic to date someone while you’re working to save the world? Absolutely. But is it worth it? Maybe not. After all, Gandhi wasn’t celibate for shits and giggles.

As Erik sums it up, there’s a certain way people think when it comes to love and sex in 2017, no matter where they live. Relationships will always have merit, but in the age of instant gratification, sex is disposable. “Sure, skinny-dipping with someone in an ocean of bioluminescent plankton is a great story,” he says, “but if you’re just looking to juggle each other’s genitalia, Tinder works just as well.” ■



Raina Shine

*She left the farmlands of Pennsylvania
to pursue a cosmopolitan life on California's coast.
Now model Raina Lawson is making waves in
Los Angeles, becoming a woman to watch in 2017*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DAVID BELLEMERE

















VAN JONES:

Real American Hero

Raised in the South, weaned on X-Men and activism, befriended by Newt Gingrich and Prince, this multifaceted CNN host may just be the man to guide us through Trump's America

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
NATHANIEL WOOD

One Friday evening before the 2016 election, Van Jones, the progressive lawyer turned CNN commentator, clicked GO on Facebook Live to address more than 800,000 viewers, speaking for nearly 15 minutes without pause about a coming political and cultural upheaval he tagged #Trumpzilla.

"If you don't understand the threat that a Donald Trump candidacy poses to the Obama coalition, I just don't think you are paying good attention," he said, his signature purple tie and round spectacles framed tightly in the shot. "We have to mobilize the entire country to recognize the dangers of giving a man like this the FBI, the CIA, the NSA, the IRS and the Pentagon to attack whoever he wants to."

This wasn't a last-minute plea; Jones said these words on April 29. (The post eventually earned 2,800 comments and more than 14,000 shares.)

Three days later, Jones again went live on his laptop to detail the candidate's path to the White House, crystal-balling Trump wins in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Florida. It would be a cruel understatement to say Jones's forecast beat those of his colleagues in punditry. On Election Day, multiple media

outlets drew on nonstop polling efforts and years of journalistic know-how to say Trump's chances of winning were roughly the equivalent of an NFL kicker making a 59-yard field goal.

...

Jones smelled victory when others heard "grab them by the pussy" because he understands that in small-town America some jackass is always saying mean stuff. Jones knows this because he grew up on the septic-tank edge of a small town in the red state of Tennessee. In such places, when people say things you don't agree with, you learn to shrug your shoulders and keep going.

Jones feels deeply at home in the middle, in other words. It's why he's friends with Newt Gingrich, whose conversations with Jones led the conservative to a turnaround on race that came out as "If you are a normal white American, the truth is you don't understand being black in America." It's why Jones's hard-right CNN cohort Jeffrey Lord admits, "We disagree on everything, but we talk to each other, not at each other, so, you know, God bless America." As Anderson Cooper says, "There's no doubt that Van has very strong opinions about

where he is on the political spectrum, and he expresses those opinions, but he's willing and able to walk in other people's shoes in a way that makes us better every time we're on the air."

Last fall, Jones brought an independent camera crew to the red heartland without telling his bosses at CNN and returned with a special program, *The Messy Truth*, on which he, a true-blue liberal, listens openheartedly to Trump supporters. CNN usually gets trounced in the show's time slot, but the series premiere, which aired in early December, attracted 1.2 million viewers, exceeding that of its lead-in, *Anderson Cooper 360*, and almost beating Fox.

Jones believes most liberal elites communicate contempt for conservatives and for small-town America. Some core articles of faith in the Democratic progressive coastal culture are just a stench in the nostrils of God, as he phrases it. This disdain, he says, is what cost the Democrats the election by just 79,000 crossover votes in three states, Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan—a defeat made more painful by the fact that the Democrats used to be the party of bridge building and empathy. But try explaining to an urban liberal that some guy needs a

BY **DAVID
HOCHMAN**





hunting rifle so he can shoot a few bucks and butcher them to feed his family in case he can't get enough work hours over at Family Dollar. At the same time, try explaining to *that* individual why African Americans are frustrated by our criminal justice system. Or why Latinos don't think they're being heard. Or why Bernie Sanders voters feel disrespected.

Jones is 48, born into a time and place where every black church had a picture of Bobby Kennedy, JFK and Dr. King in the foyer or in the basement where Sunday school was held. These three martyrs were maybe just one step below Jesus, and they gave Jones the sense that you get only so many heartbeats to make your mark on this world. Jones went to public schools all the way through his undergraduate studies at the University of Tennessee at Martin. At the age of 21, he went to Yale Law School. The biggest body of water he'd ever seen was the Mississippi River, so he understands how other

folks view things—folks who don't drive Mini Coopers or listen to *Radiolab*. In fact, Jones is glad the whole world isn't run by liberals, because if it were, everyone would know how many parts per million of carbon are in the atmosphere but nobody would be able to change a tire. We need one another. And yet, conservatives act as though America would be great if they could just eradicate all the horrible socialistic ideas, and liberals act as though the country would be better if they could just get rid of the two time zones between the Hollywood sign and Times Square.

People often say Trump is breaking the rules of the old system, but Jones knows he's simply following the rules of the new media. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first radio president. John F. Kennedy emerged as the first television president. Barack Obama broke through as the first internet president. Their efforts were all dismissed at first but then became widely

accepted, and so it is with our first social-media and reality-TV president. Trump seized on modes of culture and communication that others considered foolish. In reality television, the villain is the star. Simon Cowell on *American Idol* is the hero. Saying crazy stuff on Twitter gets you *more* followers. You wouldn't have seen Trump coming if you watch TED Talks instead of *Naked and Afraid*. Jones gets that. But he also gets that reality TV and social media can be antidotes to our culture of bitterness if you back them up with intelligence and grace.

Jones lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Jana. She's from small-town America too: Plains, Georgia. Her dad was Billy Carter, the ex-president's beer-drinking superbro. The couple has two young sons, the ones Jones became emotional about on live TV the night Hillary Clinton lost. Jones anguished aloud, "How do I explain this to my children?" That's also when Jones spontaneously branded Trump's ascension a "whitelash" against the Obama administration and a changing electorate, a comment that only magnified the Great American Divide. He wasn't surprised by the strong reaction. From the beginning, he has built his reputation on "linguistic grenades," as he likes to say. They're what you deploy if you don't have money or a marketing apparatus or lobbyists. You learn how to fight in close quarters with short phrases. *Transparent* creator Jill Soloway, who was a parent at the same L.A. preschool as Jones, says, "Van talks about building a 'love army' to fight hate, which can make you go, 'Ugh.' But with Van, it's about the long game, love as a force. That's the John Lennon game, that's the Jesus game, and yet Van somehow plays it without the stink of a messiah complex."

The first headlines Jones ever got were at Yale. After some racially inflammatory letters made it into the mailboxes of African American law students, he called for sit-ins and later led hunger strikes: "We have to shut Yale down to open it up" was the quote that stuck. Years later, as Obama's special advisor for green jobs, enterprise and innovation for the White House Council on Environmental Quality—Jones hated that title; too many words—he was dismissed for accusing "white polluters" of dumping poison into neighborhoods of color and for saying of Republicans, "They're assholes."

Today Jones sees his whole life as a focus group. CNN needs him in New York, but his office is in Oakland, where he runs the Dream Corps, a social-justice accelerator that tilts at the most formidable of windmills: cutting the prison population in half, teaching poor kids

“I WOULD TRADE IN AT LEAST SEVEN BLACK HISTORY MONTHS FOR ONE BLACK FUTURE WEEKEND.”





how to code, bringing solar energy to underserved neighborhoods. It is civil disobedience for the Uber generation, using skills and technologies Jones fine-tuned alongside, of all people, Prince. They met after the Purple One made a large donation to Jones's Green for All project in 2008. It was supposed to be an anonymous contribution, but Jones demanded to see who was behind all those zeroes. They became the closest of friends and political co-agitators, something Jones revealed for the first time on CNN the night Prince died. Paisley Park was one of the only places Jones felt like a full, free human being as a black man. It makes him cry now, just talking about it. You get only so many heartbeats.

Like Prince, Jones doesn't do alcohol—he has never touched any intoxicants, he

says—and he sees himself, as Prince did, as an Afrofuturist, the idea being that one's "truest self" doesn't line up with anything that already exists, and that that's okay. It's why we need to give young people of color the support and tools and inspiration and *funding* for a brighter tomorrow rather than dwell on the oppression of the past. As Jones says with that irresistible smile of his, "Harriet Tubman, I love you, but at this point, I would trade in at least seven Black History Months for one Black Future Weekend to discuss where we're heading as a people."

• • •

On a December afternoon in San Francisco, Jones is heading to a private meeting with some prominent tech jillionaires. But first he needs to extract himself from the clutches

of do-gooders demanding selfies after a talk he's just given on employment opportunities for the formerly incarcerated. ("They can't get student loans. They can't rent apartments. They can't get jobs. We're wasting a ton of genius," Jones told the crowd in rousing church tones.) It is rush hour and raining and the jillionaires are clear across town, but Jones makes time for every last prison social worker and parole officer.

"You've had me weeping these last few months. You're the only sane voice," a woman in a United Way T-shirt tells him. She's shaking a little as she captures the moment on her iPhone.

"I appreciate that, sister," Jones says, "but let's move a little more into the light." And he's right. Bald was never so beautiful. The



woman reaches up—he’s six-one and she’s not—and hugs him.

“You gotta have high standards,” he says as another woman steps in for a photo, “because Facebook and Instagram—that shit is forever.”

Although he has a twin sister, Jones considered himself a loner and a misfit growing up. When you’re not in the popular crowd or even the unpopular crowd, you become radically independent of the approval of others, which gives you the advantage of not having to give a fuck. Jones’s mother was a high school teacher. His father was a middle school principal. It was a strict “yes, sir; no, ma’am” conservative upbringing, with not a lot of hugs or “I love you” moments. Jones found his salvation in comic books, specifically in the X-Men series and with Professor Xavier most of all. Here was a mutant who recruited other mutants to protect a world that hated and feared them. For Jones it was an allegory for the civil rights movement, and X-Men standards became his standards as he matured into a changemaker.

Anti-mutant bigotry remains widespread, of course, and so Jones continues to rally and train X-geners from around the globe. On the light rail to the tech meeting, he talks about the many missions left to complete: fighting for clean-energy jobs, closing prison doors, providing low-opportunity youth with the resources and tools to become high-level computer programmers. Dream Corps has plans for teach-ins, house parties and concerts. Jones is toying with a virtual-reality version of *The Messy Truth* that would offer parallel immersive experiences so Democrats and Republicans can get a 360 on what the other side is up against.

The jillionaire meeting is off the record, but aside from Jones telling the leaders of websites you probably use 200 times a day that jillionaires talking to jillionaires is a masturbatory exercise in feel-goodism that doesn’t actually change much, his message is essentially the same as it is everywhere these days: that we have a problem if Donald Trump can basically whip it out at the presidential podium and we still cover him. That we must wake up to the fact that the character of our nation and democracy has been called into question. That we need to be disobedient to the new reality of our government in order to be obedient to the demands of justice, to the demands of inclusion, to the demands of tolerance and fairness and compassion and love. That it’s essential to create ecosystems where magic can happen, because no matter how mean things get—and things could get plenty mean—we just have to keep going. ■



Above: Jones speaks with Trump supporters for *The Messy Truth* in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
Previous pages, left: Making brutal sense of Trump’s imminent victory on CNN.

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Supercuts

*Meredith has always
been an excellent
student. Now she's
studying seduction*

BY **LIESL
SCHILLINGER**

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID LANASPA



That spring, spying on Meredith in AP chem, Trevor and Neil had exulted to see that she didn't know to cross her legs when she wore miniskirts. Every day they made bets on which underwear she'd be wearing. There was a rotation of patterns—flowers, bees, candy or polka dots—that coordinated with the color of the polo shirt she wore and the narrow ribbon she wove into a skinny braid in her long hair. When they figured out her obsession with matching they thought it was hilarious. After that it wasn't hard to guess right. They kept a tally of the underpants-guessing competition, and whoever had the low score at the end of each week bought the winner a quart Koolee.

When, as graduation neared, the rumor went around that Meredith had started seeing a professor at the college, they made bets on that too. Trevor said it was definitely true; Neil wasn't sure. But winning this bet required serious sleuth work. To track the underpants, they only had to go to the front of the classroom, get a Bunsen burner or a beaker from the lab cupboard, then return to their desks, stealing a glance under Meredith's chair on their way back. She sat carelessly, legs uncrossed, absorbed in her textbook, unaware of what she was showing, or leaned back, chatting with Ella, which gave an even better view. To find out what she was up to with the professor, they had to devise a more elaborate strategy. They concocted plans, bought night-vision goggles and other equipment, made charts, called themselves Supercops.

Meredith had no idea of any of this. She completely disassociated her newest extracurricular activity from her high school life,

and, really, from herself. If anyone had asked her about it point-blank—which they wouldn't have, because practically everyone in school was a nerd or a Baptist, and because Meredith was a goody two-shoes, in spite of her lapses at leg-crossing—she would have denied it.

But that semester, the last few months before she would leave Kansas to go to Brown, Meredith—the good girl, the polyglot bookworm, indulger of siblings, pleaser of parents, singer of songs, maker of puff pastry—had decided she needed to learn sex before she went out East. She did not want to feel like a rube among the Ivy League freshmen, who she thought would ooze jaded ennui. She approached her sexual initiation like an elective you'd take to pad your college application—like photography or tennis or candy-stripping. She wanted to master it, to become truly proficient, before she landed on campus.

And so, a few months before graduation, she was relieved to meet a tutor who could

instruct her in the physical rites of passage, a young professor at the college where her parents taught. Young in his own estimation, that is—he was 30, which to her, at 18, seemed monstrously, unknowably old. She had met him on spring break in Tulum, where he'd ended up with her family and two other families from the college, on a Mayan temples trip. He'd had a breakup, was at loose ends, she overheard the adults saying sotto voce as their group wandered Cobá. On the beach in Tulum, he laid his towel beside hers, spoke with her of Duras and Dante, bought her a green coconut with the top cut off and a straw in it so she could drink its juice, told her to call him Mark, not Professor. On the last night of the holiday, she crept out of her villa after the others were asleep and joined him on the beach, where he'd said to. He kissed her in the dark, on the sand, amid the palms. Her face was sunburned; his stubble made her chin bleed. Stubble! She had never encountered it before, in chastely heated make-out sessions with debate-club boyfriends who barely needed to shave. He was older, which was strange, but she decided it was an advantage. When you looked for a teacher, you wanted someone with experience.

Back in Kansas, embarking on the course in earnest and in stealth, she found her new subject challenging. She had never done anything below the waist before, apart from rare instances of cautious fumbling over jeans. Each time she advanced a step with the professor beyond the moral code she had absorbed from Laura Ingalls Wilder, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, she recoiled inwardly, felt sullied. But she forced herself to overcome her repugnance and stubbornly soldier on with the professor's teaching; to stop being Laura, who didn't even kiss Almanzo until he proposed, or innocent Kitty, devastated by Vronsky, she needed to become Anna Karenina or Elena Kuragina—to corrupt herself in Kansas so she could respect herself in Rhode Island. Amid these daunting assignments, she sometimes went to look at herself in the bathroom mirror in the professor's little bungalow, as if to make sure she was still there. Contemplating her smooth, freckled face in the glass, she imagined she saw moral flaw mottling her skin, though any change was quite invisible. She got Mark to go to the Piggly Wiggly and get Ivory soap for her, thinking its harshness would blanch, purge her, but it was too drying, and she went back to Phisoderm.



FICTION

This education proceeded across sporadic evenings that April and May, when Meredith would tell her parents she was driving off to see her friends Ella and Sophie, which sometimes she was and sometimes wasn't. She didn't see the professor that often. Maybe twice a week. Maybe three times. When she drove to his place after dinner or choir practice or school newspaper meetings, there would be wine and records in his living room—he played albums she didn't know, Leon Redbone, Patti Smith—then the inevitable move to the bedroom, where she submitted herself to the fascination and fright of learning how a grown man's body worked, testing her response, her reactions, as they drew nearer the goal, postponing its conclusion. She wasn't ready yet, she told him, but soon. Then, well before midnight, the tipsy drive home in the Volkswagen, looping around the empty traffic circle by the campus strip, then up the steps to her demure bedroom, the floral bedspread, the cat, the reading lamp, her little brother and sister asleep down the hall. Breakfast with the family in the morning, then the drive to school, to first-hour chemistry class, taking her seat at her desk in front of Ella's.

There were also the usual end-of-term exams and parties, the concert choir performance, ball games, the school play. One weekend in May, she and Ella helped Meredith's mother throw a garden party for her father's departure, making 200 chicken vol-au-vents. Putting on white aprons to serve them, they felt like soubrettes in a farce. Mark was there; he flirted with her mother. Meredith spoke with him briefly, politely, dissembling. Then, of course, there was prom. She and Ella and Sophie triple-dated; Ella and Meredith took fresh-scrubbed boys who were just school friends, but Sophie, who was a junior, went with her boyfriend, Joel, a senior. The parents all gathered at Meredith's house, the mothers and fathers photographing the boys in their tuxes, the girls in their rose and white gowns, under the flowering magnolia. Meredith never considered inviting the professor to her prom—unthinkable! But she and Sophie conferred privately about their separate exploits, comparing notes on the everything-but-mechanics they were exploring.

Sophie loved Joel, but they hadn't gone all the way—not yet—but they were probably about to.

Meredith had fixed on the 50th anniversary of D-day for her deflowering. She had wanted to make sure it did not happen until after graduation, so she would not become a statistic, lowering the collective virtue of America's high school girls by being "sexually active" before commencement. She told herself that, after graduation, a woman not only had the right, she had the responsibility to use her body the way she saw fit—or what was feminism for? The pill had been around for decades, couples lived together before marriage these days, a young woman should be as free to sow her wild oats as a man. Her only obstacle was her own inhibition. On June 6, after overcoming that ultimate hurdle with Mark, she was relieved to have "done it" at last, to have been disburdened of her ignorance. She was surprised, soon after, to find herself troubled by unexpected misgivings, the forlorn intimation that her loss of virginity felt to her like a loss of honor. Not because of its irreversible physical aspect, which she did not think mattered, but because she was not in love with the person she had chosen to initiate her, which she thought did.

Before D-day, Meredith recognized afterward, everything she had read or seen in novels and in life had led her to associate the granting of the final favor with profound, overwhelming, passionate love. Focused on her objective, she had forgotten about that. Remembering it now, she felt stricken. Through her single-mindedness, had she done violence to her heart? She knew she had responded genuinely to the professor's ardor and assertiveness. She had admired him, was flattered to be singled out by one so much older, tantalized by the thought of what he could teach her. But love? No. Ashamed, she began to absent herself psychologically from her encounters with the professor, even as she continued trying to improve her skills, to achieve fluency. She was puzzled when she caught him in mental evasions of his own.

"*Prosciutto e melone...*," he whispered into her ear once, as he moved his hand down her adolescent waist with constant, urgent pressure.

"Do you think I don't know that means ham

and cantaloupe?" she had said, insulted, flipping over on the mattress, putting her back between them. Wasn't it enough for him that she was a teenager? He had more than a decade on her. Did he need to patronize her too, to see her as gullible and unschooled, in order to desire her? Why? Didn't he remember they'd spoken Italian on the beach in Tulum, had watched a Fellini film on campus? Why would he try to trick her that way? Another time, while they were actually doing it, he had said brusquely, "Don't tease me." She had stopped their play at once, bristled, said incredulously, "Tease you? There's nothing I'm not giving you!" It had only been two weeks since she had stopped being a virgin. It rankled that he would lean so soon on fantasy. Mark had looked at her, annoyed, embarrassed, and at once she comprehended, read in his eyes that sex in itself was not sex; it was what your mind made of it. There was something hot, something specifically adult, in that knowledge; it was part of the lesson: that even when you were finally, actually, really having sex, you could crave something beyond it. Maybe something more, maybe something less, maybe something else entirely.

Sometimes Meredith wished she'd chosen one of her Kansas high school friends to learn on instead—like Trevor or Neil, who spoke in *Star Trek* voices and Monty Python quotations—instead of the grown-up professor, whose five-o'clock shadow made her chin raw. But the boys would have gossiped, and she knew Mark wouldn't. The professor worked at the college with her parents, which was potentially compromising, something they both understood without needing to talk about it. It would have felt indecent to Meredith to mess with her high school friends. They were virginal National Merit finalists like her and Ella; they played UNO and Boggle together, danced at school mixers, knew each other's parents; Neil even had a gourmet club. What could they possibly teach each other of Eros? Also, she was not remotely attracted to them.

She was attracted to the professor, or at least to his attraction for her. As an oldest child, she was primed to seek adult approval. Approval this direct, this overt, made her feel she was

**SHE APPROACHED HER SEXUAL INITIATION
LIKE AN ELECTIVE. SHE WANTED TO
MASTER IT, BECOME TRULY PROFICIENT.**



TREVOR DIMMED THE HEADLIGHTS, PUT THE DART IN PARK AND PULLED THE BINOCULARS FROM THE DASHBOARD.

achieving distinction, like winning a trophy in debate, and she wanted it to continue. His desire pulled her in like a magnetic field, even as she told herself it carried no real emotional charge. When he spoke to her tenderly, she did not believe his words, supposed he was playing a role, repeating a practiced script, “*Prosciutto e melone*.” She objectified him, found it hard to see someone so removed from her own sphere, from her own age group, as real. That was fair, she thought. It made them even. As she improved at sex with him, got used to it, began to enjoy it, she did not wish she had “saved” it for someone else; she wished she had done it earlier, with the first boy she truly loved, back in Illinois, where her family had lived before they moved to Kansas midway through high school. Her smart, cruel debate-club boyfriend, to whom she had categorically refused the act, though she yearned for it, whom she had cried over for a year after their breakup, when she was 14. Then she would not have needed to undergo Mark at all.

She never heard Trevor’s car outside of the professor’s bungalow, coasting slowly onto the gravel scree at the back of his drive. Never heard Trevor and Neil rustling in the bushes by the bedroom. Never knew about the Supercops.

• • •

As the car turned slowly into the alley, Trevor dimmed the headlights and Neil scooped down in the passenger seat, folding his legs into the hollow under the Dodge Dart’s glove compartment, his rear end hovering above the floor mat. The darkened car nosed past the overgrown junipers between the alley and the professor’s house, and paused at the edge of the driveway. It came to rest within lobbing distance of the front stoop. Trevor put the Dart in park and pulled his binoculars from the dashboard.

“Check,” he said, in a nasal whisper.

“What can you see?” Neil hissed.

“Wait a second, give me time to focus.”

Though the porch light was off, the blinds at the living room window weren’t fully rolled down. A wide sliver of light made a narrow viewing panel. Neil could see shadows blurrily flickering. Trevor clutched his Koolee and took a long slurp.

“Hurry up!” Neil said. “We don’t have all night.”

Trevor put down the Koolee and held the binoculars to his eyes.

“What are they doing?” Neil asked.

“I can’t see anything.”

“Wrong end of the binoculars, moron.”

“Fuck you, it’s dark.” Trevor flipped the binoculars. “They’re on the couch. I can see her shoulder—she’s not wearing a bra.”

“I knew it!” Neil said and jotted a note into his log. Opening a bag of Doritos, he grabbed a handful. “Can you see her tits?” he asked, crunching.

“No, his back is to the window. But second base for sure.”

Neil crowed wickedly. “‘And after the spanking, the oral sex!’”

“‘Bum, bum, bum, another one bites the dust.’”

Half an hour earlier Trevor and Neil had followed Meredith’s Volkswagen out of the parking lot of the Piggly Wiggly, keeping a couple cars between hers and the Dart, until she’d turned into the alley behind the professor’s place. Then they’d stopped at QuikTrip and gotten Koolees and Doritos. The car reeked of corn syrup, Mexican spice and salt.

“Wait, he’s standing up,” Trevor said. “Take notes. He’s getting a bottle of wine.”

“Is she drinking? She doesn’t drink, does she?”

“She must; there are two glasses.”

“Only two? Sure it’s not a threesome?”

“Idiot. Take a note. Wine, two glasses. Okay. They’re drinking.”

“Can you see her tits now?”

“I...wait. They’re getting up; they’re going to the bedroom.”

“Hot damn!” Neil crowed. In his Spock voice he blurted, “Bed, the final frontier.”

“Shut up!”

“I’ll get the night-vision goggles.”

“Moron, the lights are on.”

“Moron yourself, the bedroom is dark.”

“It’s on the other side of the house,” Trevor hissed.

“So let’s get out of the car and go around.”

“What if they hear the doors?”

“They won’t!”

“We could get arrested.”

Neil glared at Trevor in the dark. “Some Supercop you are. Don’t be a girl.”

“We won’t see anything more tonight. We might as well go,” Trevor said.

“Don’t be lame,” Neil whined. “Reverse into the alley, we’ll go in on foot.”

In the distance, a siren wailed faintly in the night, then receded.

“Too risky,” said Trevor. “We’ll come earlier next time, when it’s light enough to use the binoculars. We’ll bring hedge clippers, and if anyone catches us, we’ll say we’re gardeners.”

“Do you think they do it in daylight?”

“Give her time.”

“Trevor!” Neil said in a panic. “It’s 9:40! I’ve got 10 P.M. curfew. We’ll have to come back tomorrow.”

Trevor stowed his binoculars in the glove compartment and backed the Dart out of the drive as quietly as he could.

For weeks now, before graduation and then after, Trevor and Neil had discreetly tailed Meredith: between school and her house, between her house and the professor’s place, and everywhere in between, mostly Ella’s or Sophie’s houses or Pizza Shuttle or the campus library. Her parents were obviously completely clueless. They must have trusted her implicitly. Trevor and Neil knew better. Meredith was up to something, and the Supercops were going to get to the bottom of it.

For a while, they’d had doubts. The first week they’d racked up 90 miles on the odometer, cautiously following Meredith after school, and had come up with nothing. Ella’s mom was on the lawn once when they drove by and had waved to them to come on in. They’d played a game of Boggle with Meredith and Ella around the kitchen table. They almost abandoned the investigation that night.

But the next day Neil’s mom had sent him on an errand to the Piggly Wiggly right before curfew. As he was checking out, he saw Meredith coming through the door, hurrying to the back of the store. She clearly did not have a curfew. Sneaking back through the cereal aisle, he watched her pick up a prescription, and hid behind a tower of Froot Loops so she wouldn’t spot him. As soon as he could, he



FICTION

hurried to his car, just managing to catch up with her Volkswagen as she exited the parking lot, and followed her to the drive that turned out to lead to the professor. What had she been picking up at the pharmacy, so late? Was it the pill? A diaphragm? The Supercops would find out. Meredith had no idea. Neil could not wait to tell Trevor. They would have to adjust their methodology.

...

Early in July, Meredith's father found an indiscreet letter she had left lying out in her bedroom and discovered the affair. By then she had already ended it, resenting the feeling of being younger, controlled, underestimated. The professor had taken her to an opulent (for Kansas) restaurant, a little ways out of town, a place that looked like *Pepé Le Pew's* boudoir—floor-length velvet curtains, upholstered rococo settees. That's what had clinched it. As they sat across a candelabraed table draped with plastic flower garlands, awaiting their escargots,

gentle, benevolent, protective father, whom Meredith had never disappointed before. Leaving aside the question of what she'd done, her mother said, how could she have left such a compromising letter in plain sight? Did she have no sense? What if her brother and sister had seen it? Meredith sobbed with remorse, crushed by her father's heartache, her own in-caution. She did not know how to make things right. It had not occurred to her that her experiments with Mark could hurt her parents; she had only worried vaguely about the risk of Mark's getting in trouble if they were caught—not imagining she herself might get in trouble, or even knowing what that would mean, given that she'd never been in trouble before. She wasn't a rebel, hadn't regarded what she was doing with the professor as rebellion, exactly. She had thought she was being prudent, thought she was...well, covering all the bases. So she would be safe when she was out in the world on her own.

of beating a dead horse." She was confused by his display of emotion; was he feigning it out of injured pride? She had not thought it conceivable that he had genuine feelings for her. Had he ever seen her as anything other than an 18-year-old girl he was sporting with? She hadn't thought so. Was there something she had missed?

The Supercops didn't understand either. Neil and Trevor came by her house in the Dart late in July, when she and Ella and Sophie were sun-tanning on the roof, drinking Cokes, listening to Cat Stevens. The boys climbed up the ladder and joined them.

"Looks like you're back..." Trevor said, leadingly.

"What do you mean?" Meredith said, perplexed, unaware of their abandoned campaign. "I haven't gone anywhere."

"Nudge, nudge, wink, wink," Neil snickered.

"Neil, you are so not funny," Meredith said, and went down the ladder to get them all more Cokes and some Bugles.

By then she had long since stopped talking about the professor with Ella or Sophie. She had moved on. Sophie talked a lot about Joel (they were sleeping together now, he was going to the local college, she would join him there the following year). Ella and Meredith flipped through the freshman facebookes that had come in the mail, dreaming of the distant campuses where their families would

drop them in a month, far from Kansas. The next week, when Meredith went with her parents to Walmart to buy supplies for her dorm room—sheets, towels, extension cords, hangers, a bulletin board—she sensed their confidence in her rekindling, their hopes for her rebuilding. By the time they went shopping for her school clothes and winter coat, a few days before the long car trip east, she felt the beam of their trust had regained its earlier force. She felt dizzy with gratitude. It was like the return of the face of the sun.

Why couldn't they all understand? She had just wanted to learn. Was that so strange, so wrong? At Brown, freshman year, she wouldn't have sex at all; she wouldn't need to, because now she wasn't insecure about not knowing how. She could return to the warm, clothed caresses of debate-club-style courtship—ice cream, make-out sessions, second base if she felt like it. She could wait for love, for inclination. What was the hurry? ■

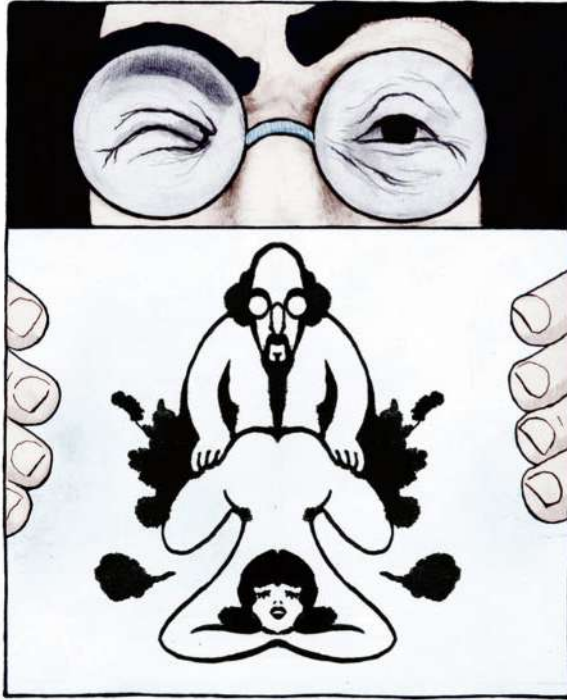
SHE'D NEVER BEEN IN TROUBLE BEFORE. SHE WASN'T A REBEL, HADN'T REGARDED WHAT SHE WAS DOING AS REBELLION.

afraid of being recognized, Meredith suddenly saw the trite caricature they presented to outside eyes. She was not, after all, a brave, clear-sighted modern woman who'd engineered an elegant solution for her sexual inexperience; she was just a naive young girl being seduced by an older man. That night, back at the bungalow, she had broken up with Mark, then returned to her family, her friends, her novels and her teenage-hood. She took Ella out to dinner a couple of times soon after, to Applewood or the Mexican cantina, paying for both of them with her babysitting money to show herself: Anyone could pay for dinner, for anyone. It didn't mean the person who paid for you had something over you. She had been relieved to have the deed done, the lesson learned, the professor gone, so the prior pattern of her days could resume while most of summer still remained.

But the prior pattern did not resume, not at first. Her father was devastated when he found the letter, her mother told her—her strong,

She did not know how to prove to her parents that she was still the same, still on track, that her conscience and ambition remained intact. Meredith assured them the thing wasn't as serious as they thought, that it never had been, and that it was definitely over in any case. But they did not believe her. They assumed she must be deeply in love, no matter what she said, that she would not go to Brown but stay in Kansas, marry the professor, derail the brilliant future they had envisioned for her, toward which she had moved so surely, so unerringly, for so long.

The professor did not understand. He could not call Meredith at her house because of her parents, and she would not call him, traumatized by her parents' distress. He wrote her long, condescending, tortured letters; his anger mystified her. In one, he pettishly apologized for having made her "wheel her tricycle so near the abyss." She ignored the letters, but when more came she finally responded with a letter of one line: "I don't see the point





PLAYMATE

Queen Elizabeth

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GAVIN BOND**

Miss March shows her modern spirit and classic appeal in this romantic and revealing pictorial

The *ultimate girl next door* is a term often thrown around but seldom personified. Miss March Elizabeth Elam, however, is a rare breed, an unlikely amalgam of warmth, grit and obvious beauty. Born in Dallas and raised in Norman, Oklahoma, Elizabeth has a classic life story. Growing up, she spent summers on her grandparents' farm, barrel racing and singing the national anthem at rodeos, and there was never a glimmer of doubt she would trade her milk-fed upbringing for more provocative pursuits. After being scouted at a local music festival, she moved to Miami and then Europe for several months. "I said, 'Okay, I'll model if it's good money and gets me out of Oklahoma.' I knew the world was so much bigger," she says.

Now temporarily settled in Los Angeles, the full-time model and progressive thinker isn't jaded; she's no wide-eyed ingenue either. She's also unabashedly low-maintenance. "There are some people who can't leave the house without taking a shower and getting fully ready to go to Target. I'm like, 'Why?'" Needless to say, if you're trying to take her out, don't suggest anything too swanky. "I'm not into the club scene. I love shitty

dive bars. Those are my spots." When it comes to flirting, she's into subtle seduction. "The fun part is catching someone's eye across the room, then wondering if they're still looking at you, so you keep looking over," she says shyly. "Build up a little tension beforehand, accidentally brush them as you walk by, that type of thing."

An unflinching point of view is also paramount. "Now more than ever, it's important not to be complacent or apathetic," she says with fervor. "If you feel a certain way, voice it. We don't really have the luxury not to anymore. It's easy to be apathetic. But Martin Luther King Jr. said it best: 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' It's true." Elizabeth doesn't subscribe to double standards—and she's down with a guy who's in touch with his feelings. "I think anybody who believes in equality is a feminist. There are so many sides to being a woman, and a lot of the time you feel that if you pick one, you can't be another. It applies to guys too. A guy doesn't have to be only a strong provider who doesn't show emotions. You can cry and still be 'manly.' And as a woman, you can be smart and naked at the same time." Well said.



















NISHANT





MISS MARCH 2017



DATA SHEET



AGE: 25 **BIRTHPLACE:** Dallas, Texas **CURRENT CITY:** Los Angeles, California

MY TAKE ON NUDITY

It's never been a big deal to me. Everyone, unless you're a never-nude, is naked every single day. It's normal. It's natural. What's scarier is sharing who you are with somebody. That's rarer than being naked in everyday life.

WORK YOUR NERVES

Owning your nervousness can be flattering. Don't try to be cool. Don't try to hide that nervousness. If a girl wants to look down on you for it, why are you talking to her? Don't fake it.

WHAT MAKES ME FEEL SEXY

Feeling secure makes me feel sexy. I feel sexy post-shower or in a T-shirt and underwear on the couch, watching Netflix. It's an inner feeling. It's all about being confident and comfortable—that's when you're sexiest.

IF YOU WANT TO BUY ME A DRINK

As far as wine goes, I'm a red wine girl, for sure. Cabernet all the way. For some reason, rum straight is the easiest liquor for me to drink. And whiskey and apple juice is my favorite mixed drink. If you haven't had it, add a splash of apple juice to your glass of whiskey. It just tastes like whiskey but without the burn, and it's so good.

MY FAVORITE FOODS

I like the worst, most basic all-American foods, like pizza, french fries, chicken wings, nachos, pasta and potatoes in any form you can cook them. I love cooking. I have my grandmother's mashed potato recipe, which is the bomb. I also do a hamburger steak with eggs and bread crumbs. It's basically a huge meatball patty, and it's delicious.

MY PERFECT DAY

I love beach days. I'll go to the beach around 11 A.M.—no need to wake up too early—come home, chill, do the whole getting-ready ritual. Then I'll meet up with friends at a bar. You know those nights that start out as nothing and then you end up staying out till four in the morning? Those are the best.

EQUAL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Equality has always been important to me. I'm the only person in my family who's not very conservative. In politics, a lot of the time people are afraid to admit they were wrong, so they latch on even more tightly to their beliefs. The more wrong they feel, the tighter they grip. But how privileged do you have to be to feel that human rights and equality aren't at the forefront when deciding who you'll vote for?

@elamelizabeth





PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Eighty-three percent of college students say that spring break involves heavier than usual drinking, according to a survey by the American Medical Association in its spring publication, *No Shit* magazine.



When given the choice between bacon and sex, 43 percent of Canadians chose bacon—which explains why the symbol of Canada, the beaver, is being replaced by diabetes.

One man learned the hard way that electronic dance music is great to listen to while working out or jogging—but not while shaving his balls.

Ababy boomer's nostalgia: vintage porn in a movie theater. A Gen Xer's nostalgia: soft-core porn on cable TV. A millennial's nostalgia: hardcore porn on a smartphone. A future generation's nostalgia: not having to clean up after virtual sex.

I told my wife I wanted to see *Fifty Shades Darker*, so she punched me in the eye and gave me a cataract.

You know it's spring when the flowers in the backgrounds of Instagram brunch photos start to bloom.

More people now use Snapchat than Twitter. Call me old-school, but I still get all my dick pics from Classmates.com.

Last night my wife, trying to guess what I was in the mood for sexually, asked if I wanted her to sit on my face. I said that was a little too on the nose.

My neighbor's dog always has a hard-on. I wonder what his secret is.

There's a new home pregnancy test that gives the results in whale songs. I'm not even a lady and I've taken it three times.

My wife's safe word is *harder*. I don't know whether I should divorce her or marry her again.

Whenver I see a couple walk into a tattoo shop together, I always think, *Aww*, they're going to break up in seven months.

Here's something you rarely hear: "There's a run on the sperm bank!"

When writing your own wedding vows, be sure to save the wanking gesture for the toast.

On her husband's birthday, a wife made a generous offer. "I'll dress up like anyone you want," she told him. "Marilyn Monroe, Jennifer Lopez, Beyoncé—you name it. I'll go out and buy a sexy outfit."

The husband told her, "Sweetheart, you don't need to buy anything to make me happy."

"Oh, honey," cooed the wife, "that's really sweet of you to say."

"Just borrow a dress from our neighbor Glenda."

An oblivious man's musings: Should I let her know I think we're on a date or just play it cool and let her finish bagging my groceries?

If you usually spend Valentine's Day entirely alone, don't rule out the possibility that there's something terribly wrong with you.



Andy Neiman

The fact that the U.S. government spies on us might be a blatant infringement of our rights and clear overstepping of power...but it's also kind of hot.





ADAM SCOTT

He won us over on Party Down and Parks and Rec, he shocked us in The Overnight, and with HBO's Big Little Lies, the Santa Cruz–bred actor is kicking off his biggest year yet

BY **DANIELLE BACHER** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAN MONICK**

Q1: *Did you know you were funny growing up?*

SCOTT: I was a comedy maestro, insofar as I watched all the early Steve Martin, *Saturday Night Live* and *Monty Python*. Sometimes I got down on myself after auditioning for sitcoms and having them tell my agent I was not a funny person. Maybe I wasn't hitting their jokes properly because I was trying to find a back door to make what I thought was a stupid joke funnier. I remember my agent saying, "Look, you are not funny." Eventually I believed that. I don't think it was until I got *Step Brothers* that I thought to myself, Yeah, you know what? I am fucking funny.

Q2: *What were you like as a kid?*

SCOTT: I went through phases of intense interest in pop-culture icons. I would be all about, say, the Blues Brothers, and everything for three months would be the Blues Brothers. I would buy all the records, pictures and books I could find. There was no internet back then, so I really had to go find these things. I moved on to Steven Spielberg, then Martin Scorsese and then Letter-

man. I would do top 10 lists at school. Then Spike Lee happened, and I got a Knicks hat and grew a goatee.

Q3: *Did you have a lot of friends?*

SCOTT: It sounds like I didn't have many friends; that's what you're thinking. Yes, I did have friends.

Q4: *What's the one movie that made you want to become an actor?*

SCOTT: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. It looked so fun; *Raiders* has so many jokes in it. I distinctly remember calling my mom on the phone and trying to explain this thing I'd just seen. I was so charged up, and I remember telling her I had no idea it was going to be a "codomy." She was like, "Do you mean *comedy*?" Yeah, I had no idea how to pronounce it. The Indiana Jones movies, along with *E.T.* and the *Star Wars* films—it was all kind of a rush and a great time to be a kid.

Q5: *You played a cater waiter in Party Down. Is it true that your real-life food-service career, at Johnny Rockets, lasted a day?*

SCOTT: Yes, it lasted one day. And that one day was just training, where I was

following someone around. The guy was showing me things like "MR means medium rare." Suddenly a 1950s song came on the jukebox and he said, "Excuse me for a second," and started dancing and singing along. I was thinking, What is happening? He told me there was a list of songs I'd have to learn, that I'd have to jump in on songs that came on the jukebox and give it a lot of pizzazz. I thought, No, I'm not working here. I just didn't show up the next day.

Q6: *When was that?*

SCOTT: It was in 1993, right after I graduated from acting school. I hadn't found an agent yet and I was still living in Pasadena. You know—depressed, wondering how the hell I was going to do this.

Q7: *Do you remember your first professional audition?*

SCOTT: I'm not very good at auditioning. I never was. One of my very first auditions was for *Wild Bill*, a Jeff Bridges movie that came out in 1995. I was fresh off the boat, 20 years old, and I didn't know what was what. I was





auditioning to play his son. They told me to come back in four hours. I came back, and all of a sudden I was in the room with Jeff Bridges, Walter Hill, Richard Zanuck and Lili Fini Zanuck—this enormous room of big shots. I choked. I lost all train of thought. Walter Hill asked if I wanted to start again. I was sweaty and shaking. Matt Damon was in the waiting room, and I remember he had on these cowboy boots and looked like he was in a Western. I wore jeans and a T-shirt. I looked at him and thought, Oh, I'm fucked. David Arquette got the part.

Q8: *You volunteered for the Hillary Clinton campaign. Have you always been a political person, or did your time on Parks and Recreation influence you?*

SCOTT: I grew up in Santa Cruz, California, which is a pretty liberal town. My parents had the paper on the table every morning, and I was encouraged to know what was going on in the world. I remember reading in the paper about Ronald Reagan and the Iran-contra affair. I was in junior high when that was going down. I also had a great high school teacher who made politics and world and national affairs incredibly interesting and exciting. For a while I wanted to be a political journalist and go on the campaign trail. It seems like a romantic, cool job. I'm sure any political journalist would tell you it's not.

Q9: *What do you think your Parks and Rec character, Ben Wyatt, would say about the 2016 presidential election?*

SCOTT: Ben Wyatt and I would have a very similar opinion that the election was a total and complete shit show and the result was a tragedy. I don't think there is a better descriptor than "tragic." After all the thinking and feeling on it, I think it will result in a lot of people stepping up and being involved and becoming activists—I hope. I wish more people had been involved a month and a half before the election; that would have been nice. I hope all the

people who voted for Jill Stein now realize what a huge mistake that was.

Q10: *Is there a connection between the darker material you've worked on recently, such as Most Hated Woman in America and Big Little Lies, and your own spirit?*

SCOTT: I don't think so. Choosing those projects was largely about working with people I really wanted to work with. With *Big Little Lies*, I read all the episodes in a weekend and immediately wanted to be involved in some capacity because it was beautifully written. There is a real poetry to the everyday chatter David E. Kelley writes; it doesn't sound like writing when it's spoken out loud. It was more about the material, not really about the darkness. At least I don't think so. Maybe I wanted to murder people.

Q11: *What was it like working with Reese Witherspoon on Big Little Lies? Your characters seem to be polar opposites in their marriage.*

SCOTT: I think it's funny for someone like Reese: We all feel like we know her to a certain extent because she's such a beloved figure in show business. After working with Reese, I would come home and tell my wife, Naomi, "I'm so impressed." Just to be sitting there with her and doing a scene—I didn't have to worry about anything. You know, you're worrying about hitting all the beats, but with someone that good, you just walk in and go with it. Of course, she is an Academy Award-winning actress. She's great, and we all know she's great, but there was something about sitting there and doing it with her that impressed me. It was a profound display of raw talent.

Q12: *In the Seeso series Bajillion Dollar Properties, you play douchebag Johnny Dunne really well. Is it just satire, or does part of you relate?*

SCOTT: Do I relate to being a douchebag? I guess I am always afraid of coming off like a douchebag. I'm ultra-paranoid about that. That character was fun, because he was supposed to be the ultimate douchebag actor, wearing

a torn T-shirt, hungover, and of course he's recording an album. He's kind of everything I find embarrassing about actors. I am afraid of turning into that or being perceived that way.

Q13: *What was the most awkward scene you ever had to shoot?*

SCOTT: That's a tough one, because my default setting is uncomfortable and embarrassed. Oh, in *The Overnight*—Jason Schwartzman and me dancing around in our prosthetic penises. First of all, it was freezing cold. Being naked was "whatever" to me, but I had this thing on. Jason and I jumped in and did it together. The fact that he was doing it too made me feel better, but in the moment you never know if it's going to be good. I couldn't believe Jason was doing it with me. It was a long process to find the exact size for the penises. There was one that was really long—that was for Jason. It was really long.

Q14: *Have you ever walked around on a nude beach?*

SCOTT: Yes. It was in Italy in 1997, and my friend Steve and I were traveling through Europe. We stopped at this nude beach, and we were like, "Okay." I'd never been more uncomfortable in my life. Even though everyone was naked, it felt ridiculous. We had our balls out, and it was just terrible, terrible. I wanted to cover myself in the sand the entire time.

Q15: *Which co-star would you marry in a parallel universe?*

SCOTT: I think I would marry Nick Offerman, because I have never seen a person take better care of another person than he takes of his wife, Megan Mullally. I would love to be in Nick's care. Maybe we could just get married for a weekend.

Q16: *You have two kids. Were you nervous about becoming a father?*

SCOTT: I was so unprepared, in the sense that I had no idea what it was. I don't think anyone does, truly, until it happens. I immediately took to it.

I GUESS I AM ALWAYS AFRAID OF COMING OFF LIKE A DOUCHEBAG. I'M ULTRA-PARANOID ABOUT THAT.



I found taking care of my son was the missing puzzle piece for me. It was the thing that made me feel like a real person. He's 10 now and my best friend. As they get older, you realize that you need to get them ready for the world. That's your job, especially when they become aware of the world and start turning into the person they're going to be. That, for me, causes anxiety. "Am I getting him properly ready?" And my daughter too, who is two years younger. It's a complicated job that I am always trying to improve upon, but there's nothing better.

Q17: *Where do you think comedy is headed?*

SCOTT: There is this interesting place that it's been going in the past few years. *High Maintenance*, *Broad City* and *Search Party*—they are all easy,

unforced, naturalistic comedies that I find really comforting and engaging. It's comedy that's not afraid to make you feel uneasy. It signals something exciting down the road. I find those shows inspiring, and some of the people making them are young, which is great for the future of comedy.

Q18: *Favorite comedy and comedian?*

SCOTT: My favorite is *Defending Your Life*, the Albert Brooks movie. That movie was a game changer for me. It hit me in the spot that was like, "Oh my God, this guy is writing for me—that's how I feel about everything." My trifecta is Steve Martin, David Letterman and Albert Brooks. Growing up, those were my guys. Louis C.K. is an obvious pick. He's like America's best buddy you want to talk to at the bar for three hours.

Q19: *What's the best career advice you can offer?*

SCOTT: Just carve out your own spot. Don't let other people tell you what you are. I think I started a little younger than I should have, so I was a little more susceptible to people telling me what box I was in. I believed it for too long and let that limit me. I think people starting out and making their own stuff is incredibly healthy. It's healthy for show business as a whole and for the individual performers, writers and directors, because they get to be great at something rather than waiting for someone's permission.

Q20: *Changing gears, what's your ultimate sexual fantasy?*

SCOTT: Oh Jesus. At this point in my life, 11 hours of uninterrupted sleep sounds like an enormous turn-on. ■



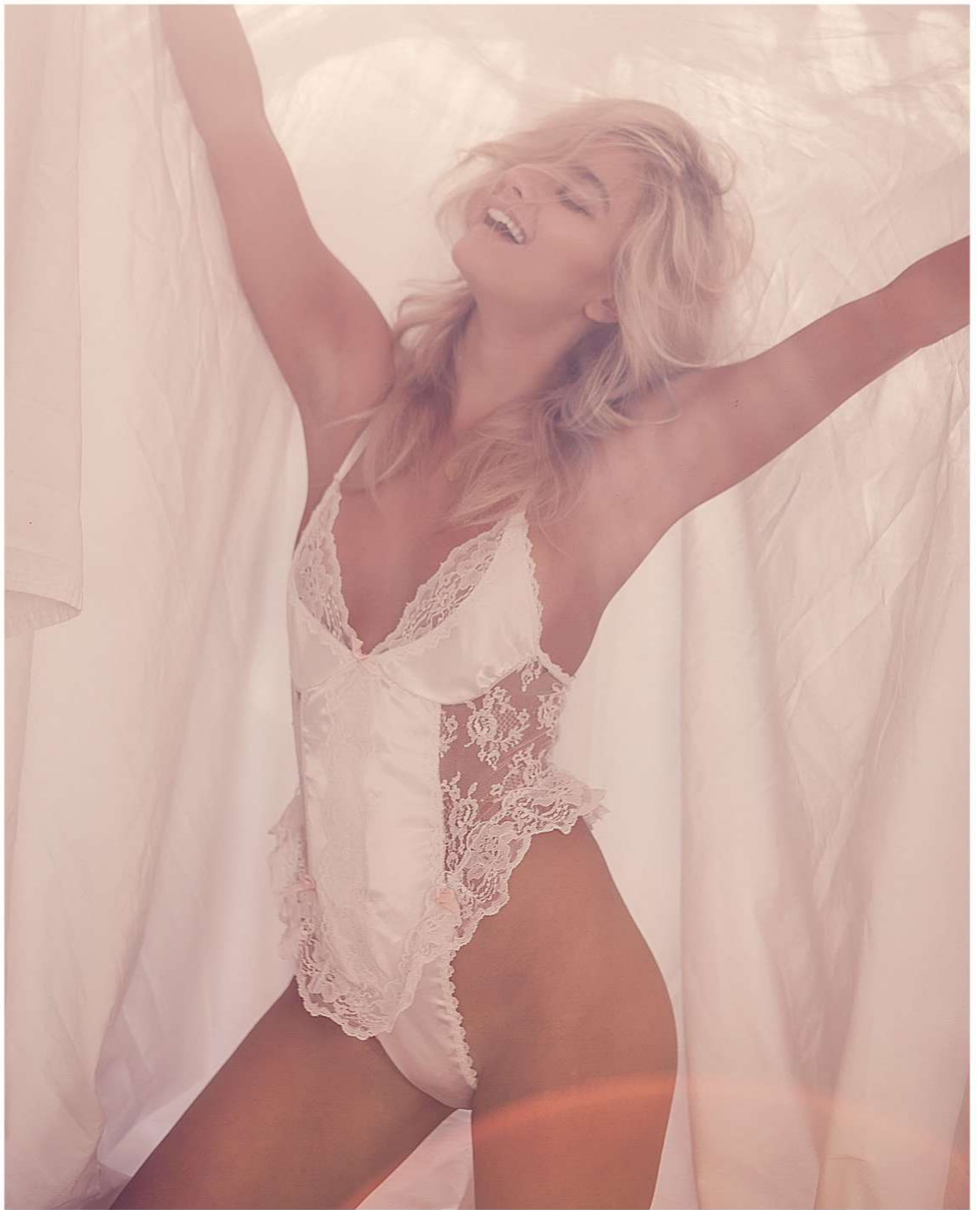
L a z y
S u n d a y s

The morning after with Tess Jantschek is a waking dream come true. Join the London-raised model as she takes you through the perfect sun-streaked day

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOVE SHORE

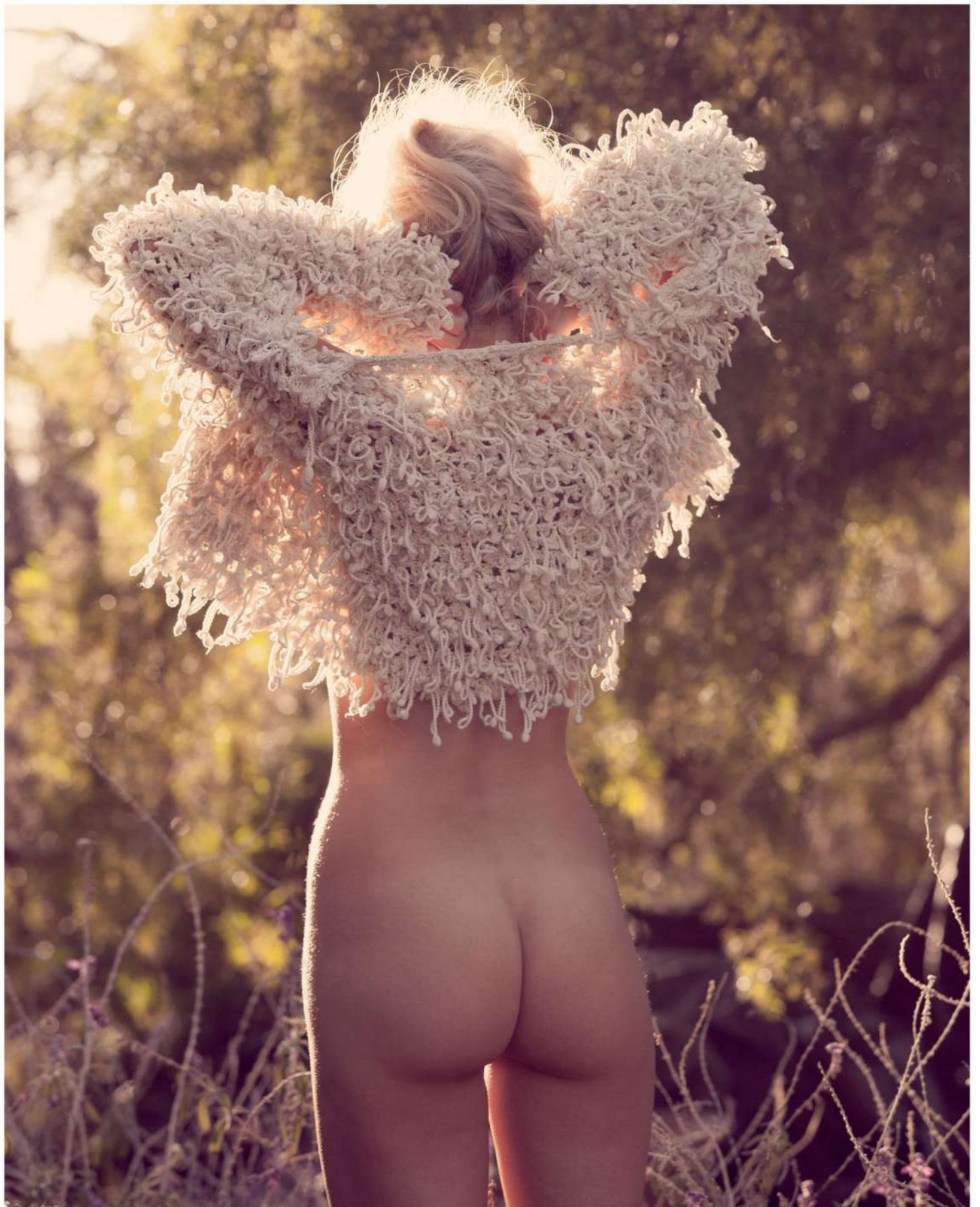
















THE ULTIMATE MANUAL

for Fighting for Your Rights, Effecting Change and Getting Shit Done

BY MADISON MARGOLIN

It's time to disconnect from your Facebook echo chamber and exit your safe space. We live in unprecedented times, and no matter what color your state bleeds, it's hard to feel encouraged by the sociopolitical tectonic shifts set off last year. Confidence in our democratic system—and in the press—is faltering, civil liberties are on the chopping block, police-civilian relations are deteriorating, the planet is overheating, and hostile dictators are fomenting a nuclear arms race. Plus, Prince and David Bowie are still dead. It's now up to a rising generation of millennials—YouTube stars, Bernie bros and bottomless-brunch boozers included—to fix this shit.

Label them entitled, whiny, narcissistic social media addicts if you want, but millennials are the country's heirs. Having come of age during the Great Recession and the greatest political divide in recent memory, young people have been dealt a tricky hand—but they're ready. The unexpected success of Bernie Sanders's presidential run is proof enough, and in 2015 millennials outnumbered baby boomers for the first time.

"Our generation has finally awoken," says David Turkell, a community organizer and digital strategist who worked for both of Barack Obama's presidential campaigns. "This is actually a moment of opportunity, because we're fired up. It's a catalyst for good." And so PLAYBOY presents our anti-slacktivist guide to accelerating change, battling bureaucracy, creating movements and making sure your

voice is heard. Trust us: Never again will millennials be called the lazy generation.

MAKE YOUR REP YOUR BAE

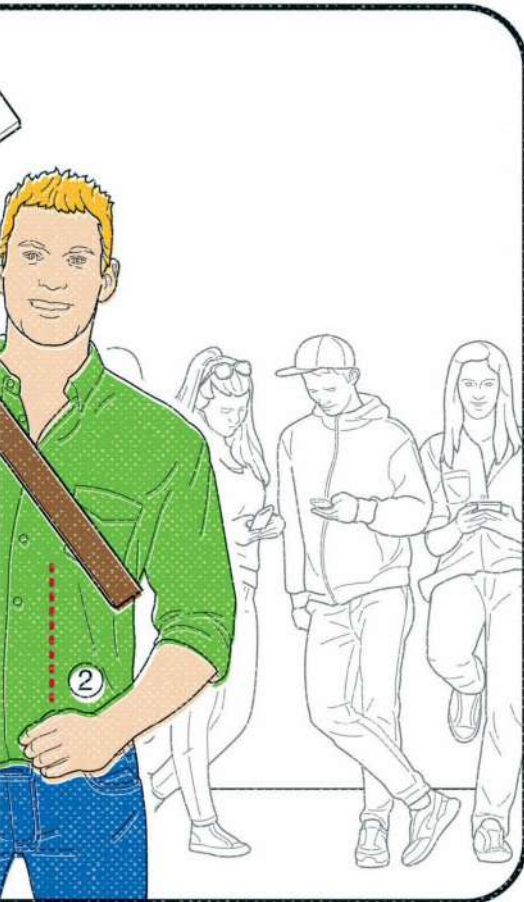
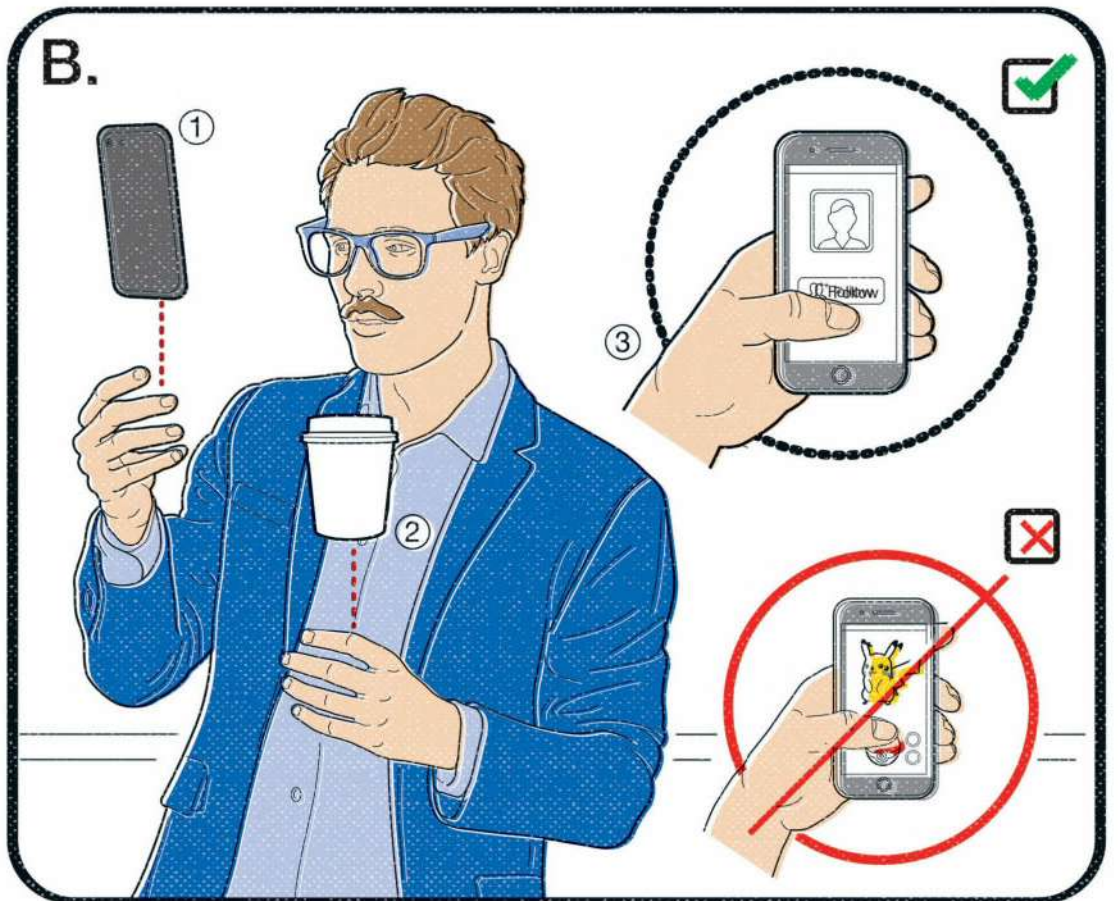
The primary job of representatives is to listen to constituents, but it's our job to keep them accountable. In the end, their reelection is decided by votes, not super-PAC money. Whether it's calling your senator's office or shaking your mayor's hand, there are plenty of ways to get their attention. Four of the most effective methods of communicating with politicians are phoning them, following them on social media, volunteering for a campaign and meeting them in person at a city council or town hall meeting.

"Having a huge number of people reaching out to elected officials makes a difference," says Sara Mitchell, a public affairs specialist at Planned Parenthood Los Angeles. "The person answering the phone is tallying how many people call to say, 'I'm a constituent. I support this bill.' It really does add up—and elected officials pay attention to that."

But this goes beyond simply telling your representatives how to vote. If you have a problem with a local issue that affects your daily life, blow up their phones. Your elected officials at the city or state level can help—and they do. "Folks who have trouble with state issues, we can help with that," says California state assembly member Jim Wood. "When someone calls the office and has a problem with a health insurance company or the DMV, or a business calls with a problem with an agency,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANTHONY CALVERT









we can help. We do it all the time. It doesn't always require a change in the law."

Meeting elected officials and their staffs also makes a difference. After the 2016 election, Mitchell's congresswoman had a town hall meeting at 10 A.M. on a Sunday. "A year ago, probably 50 people would have shown up. That day, there were hundreds," she says. "Show up and say, 'Hi, I live in this neighborhood. I want you to vote this way.' They're listening."

Showing up can be demoralizing when it seems the talking heads aren't listening, but it's all a numbers game. "Have at least a couple of people so there's a counter-argument being presented," advises Alfred Twu, a 32-year-old designer who sits on the Zero Waste Commission for the city of Berkeley, California.

For better or worse, President Donald Trump has hijacked Twitter as his preferred mode of communication, suggesting just how accepted the platform has become in providing direct access to politicians. In fact, Twitter provides politicians with a 136-page user guide, *The Twitter Government and Elections Handbook*. "Twitter gives politicians a platform to connect with the public, whether it be over sports or the latest buzz-worthy news item. It is an opportunity for politicians to show they are more than just a suit—or pantsuit," the manual reads. There are even political consultants who specifically advise on how to campaign on Twitter. So your representatives are no doubt using it. (Snapchat, however, has yet to be embraced. Blame Anthony Weiner.) Tweet at them like you'd tweet Uber if your driver dropped you off on the wrong block. Slide into their DMs freely. Don't let all those hours their interns spent training them go to waste.

Face time is important too, and volunteering on a campaign is a surefire way to connect with a potential or current representative. More important, it gives you a hand in controlling the message. "Going into a campaign field office or headquarters separates reality from spin," says Turkell. "It allows you to see not only the most effective methods of outreach, but also the next generation of organizers who are most likely to be political power players in the future." Adds Twu, "Finding other movements or politicians with a similar idea, latching onto that movement and getting your stuff on their agenda works really well."

Lastly, Turkell suggests downloading an app called Countable. It rounds up the statuses of

bills in Congress and connects constituents directly to elected officials who have the app. "You just press a button and it will send how you feel to your Congress member and how they should vote on upcoming bills," he says.

VOTE IN EVERY DAMN ELECTION

Approximately 58 percent of eligible voters came out to vote in the 2016 presidential election, which means more than 90 million did not. In most major cities, less than 15 percent cast their ballots in mayoral elections. Overall, voter turnout was at a 20-year low in 2016.

Turnout is especially bleak in local elections, where results are most tangibly felt and a couple hundred votes make a huge difference. Local election results can affect everything from whether the potholes in front of your apartment get fixed to whether that mom-and-pop

FIFTEEN STATE LEGISLATURES HAVE TERM LIMITS. THE COMPETITION ISN'T TOUGH: 60 PERCENT OF RACES ARE UNCONTESTED.

coffee shop down the street shutters. "When more people vote, elected officials have to pay more attention to you when they're trying to get reelected," Mitchell says.

In larger cities such as Los Angeles, local politics has a broader influence. "We can do a lot of things locally that actually affect the state level and the national stage," says Jessica Salans, a 28-year-old candidate for L.A. City Council District 13. "We can create policies that make Trump break his promises"—for example, protecting L.A.'s Mexican immigrant population. As we've seen with marijuana legalization, local law can supersede federal law.

As eyes move toward 2018, remember that 32 states plus D.C. offer online voter registration. "It's the easiest thing," says Turkell. "It's faster than setting up an online dating profile."

PARTY FOR A CAUSE

Political parties got you down? Throw a real party and charge a cover. Then donate the proceeds to your favorite cause or, better yet, to an underdog such as a Planned Parenthood chapter in the Deep South or a pro-pot congressional candidate in the Rust Belt.

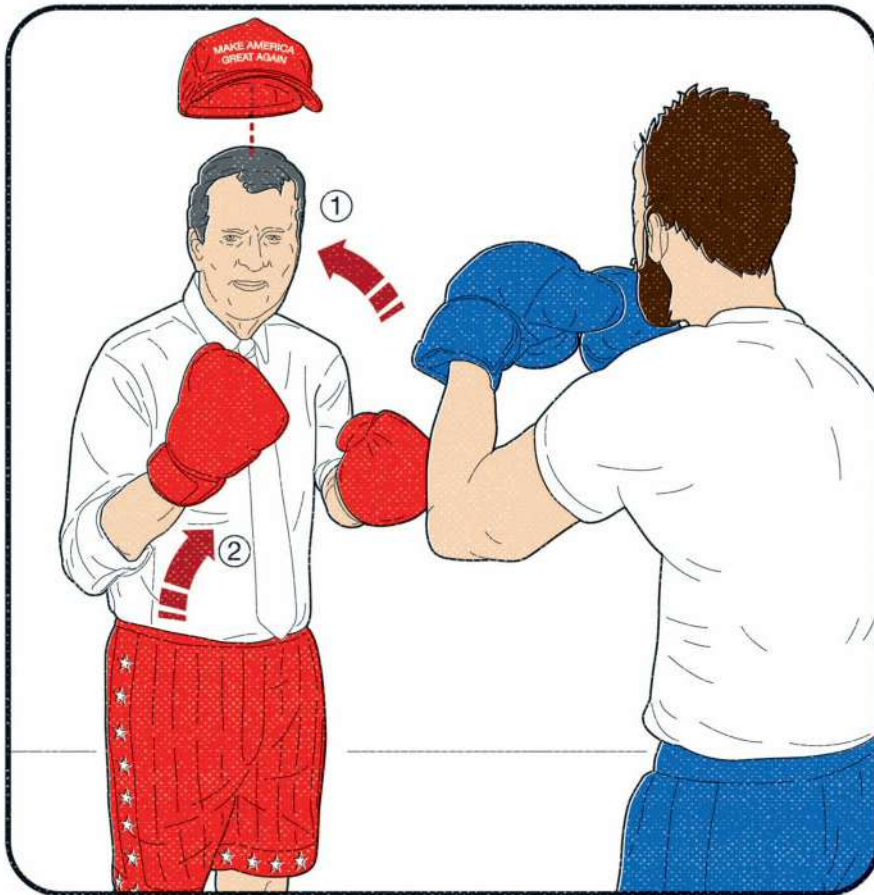
Or you can dance it out. Derek Marshall, director of outreach for Salans's campaign, founded a Los Angeles-based event series called the Party by Ostbahnhof, which merges activism and electronic music. "I was inspired by Berlin's party scene and how political and social awareness play into it," Marshall says. The parties, one of which was held the night of Trump's inauguration, create a "safe space for people of all identities to exercise self-expression, celebrate art, reject gender norms, embrace sexuality and feel accepted in our collective weirdness." Some include speeches from local politicians. The point is to marry politics and partying. "Partying is not to dissociate," says Marshall. "We're partying to connect with people. We're partying with the intention of social awareness. There will be fun in the revolution." Bernie Sanders inspired similar fetes, with "Bernie Man" parties popping up in Brooklyn, Seattle and Austin during his campaign.

KNOW THE LAW BETTER THAN THE COPS

If you don't use 'em, you lose 'em. We're talking about your liberties. America's narrative is imperfect and contradictory; as Michelle Obama said, she's a black woman who lived in a house made by slaves.

Amid the nuances that make America what it is, educating people about their rights gives the disenfranchised, the apathetic and the impassioned something undeniable around which to coalesce. "In order to fight back, people need to know their rights and how to exercise those rights," says Brooklyn-based attorney Daniel Miller, who founded the Society for Constitutional Protection after the November election. Until recently, Miller says, he took his freedoms for granted. Now he fears they could be in danger. "I want to do something to be part of the solution, to make sure our systems stay intact," he says.

Miller's group aims to educate communities on individuals' rights. It presents guest speakers and offers lessons on protected speech, when you need a permit to protest, immigrants' rights, how to fight back collectively against



REACH ACROSS THE AISLE ONCE IN A WHILE

LeDoux, who graduated from high school in 2010 and most recently worked for Senator John McCain's reelection campaign in Arizona, attends political meetings on the right and the left to engage with people who aren't like him. "The biggest problem in politics is that millennials want to be around other young people. Unfortunately that doesn't translate into good political action," LeDoux says. "You'll never get your idea across if you surround yourself with people who are similar to you in political ideology. When I go to these meetings and I'm the youngest person in the room by 10 or 20 years, you have to ask, how can we get our voice out there when we don't show up?"

Etymologically, *rival* once meant something closer to *companion* since *rivals* referred to factions on opposite sides of a common stream. "The basis of any rivalry—and why you clash so much—is because there's so much commonality in the places where you fight," explains psychiatrist Julie Holland. She recommends getting involved in an increasingly bipartisan issue such as marijuana legalization. In a politically torn country that's suffering an opioid crisis (the victims of which voted overwhelmingly for Trump), sensible drug policy may help bring people together and heal. "Empathy and compassion are the answer," says Holland.

Molly Endries belongs to a San Francisco-based collective of queer activists and artists who take a visual approach to unity by wearing patches that promote visibility and safety. "We've been told that queers feel safer and more comfortable when they see someone with our patch around them," says Endries. "It highlights the need for mutual aid and protection." Meanwhile, artist Julia Vericella photographs those who feel marginalized by Trump's agenda. "I've tried to make this project approachable for both sides so Trump supporters won't immediately scoff at it, because empathy is a big part of understanding," she says. "We're not going to get anywhere unless we have conversations about this." Vericella also writes letters of encouragement to mosques that have been targets of Islamophobic hatred. "I want people to be encouraged to do what they can to take part," Vericella says.

"People who are afraid of Mr. Trump need to try meeting a Trump supporter," LeDoux says. "Breaking down that barrier is the best way to alleviate your fears. You'll find they're more similar to you than you think. The biggest division in our country is our ignorance of each other." ■

the federal government's unconstitutional infringement of states' rights and how to interact with the police. Did you know, for example, that if the cops stop you for questioning, in order to leave, all you have to do is ask? If they prohibit you from walking away, it's your right to know why.

"Trump will try to persuade people of a vision of America that is twisted, dark, builds walls and bans Muslims and immigrants," Miller says. "It's important to understand why such a vision can't be adopted. We all need to become effective, compassionate advocates of our own and each other's rights."

The American Civil Liberties Union website (aclu.org) provides a comprehensive, bipartisan resource for how to take action when those rights are infringed upon. The ACLU also has affiliate offices in every state.

CHALLENGE GRANDPA TO A FIGHT

If Trump's campaign proved nothing else, it

proved that an inexperienced nonpolitician can run for office and win. "Establishment politicians don't have a good rap right now," says Samuel LeDoux, a former Republican delegate from New Mexico. There's no better time to run for office—even if you're a 20-something. Turkell suggests running for whatever position you have the most expertise or competence in, be it a school board, water board or city council. "The best possible antidote to egregious federal policies over the next four years will be through grassroots organizing at every level of government," says Turkell.

Only 15 state legislatures have term limits, but the competition isn't always tough: Approximately 60 percent of races are uncontested, estimates Jim Cupples, director of Run for Office, an online resource for prospective candidates. For example, in 2016, 65 percent of Illinois state representatives had no opponents in the general election. In 2014, more than a third of all state-legislature candidates across 46 states went unchallenged.



LOOK, MARGE...
It's another one
of those BUM DEALS...



Smith 1/17





The Feminist Mystique

By Scarlett Byrne

When I first began to play with the idea of doing a pictorial for the magazine, I was primarily motivated by two factors. It was not only to support my fiancé, Cooper Hefner, who is the Chief Creative Officer of Playboy, but also an opportunity to make a statement about equality between the two sexes.

As this issue was being put together, Cooper and I had a conversation one evening about the possibility of PLAYBOY publishing a photograph of a woman on the cover showing her breasts. He explained that it would be risky considering some advertisers and business partners would likely take issue with it. The conversation made me think more about the role women are expected to inhabit.

Having the opportunity to be part of an iconic American brand that has fought to make sex and other topics considered taboo more mainstream seemed like a unique and special

occasion. But the more I thought it over, the more hesitant I became. Simply, my interests lie elsewhere, and modeling has never been a professional north star in my life. The second and more important point is that when women associate themselves with anything involving ownership of their sexuality, they're often perceived as having abandoned their intellect.

Was it just me who thought it was absurd that if PLAYBOY published a topless woman on the cover and *Men's Health* put a man on the cover in a similar pose, PLAYBOY would be the one to be put behind blinders? When I considered that fact, it became clear in that moment that it didn't have anything to do with PLAYBOY. It was about the double standards still being applied to gender roles.

The fact that women continue to be second-class citizens around the world was inherent even within this particular situation. Many

in society continue to diminish female intellect, deny them ownership of their sexuality, reject feminism and all else that makes being a woman so powerful. It starts with equal pay and goes all the way to free the nipple.

As I continued exploring these themes and asked myself, "What does it mean to be a feminist today?" it became clear that shooting for the magazine meant that I could be a part of a conversation about women unfolding in real time. As we flood the streets marching for choice, health care rights and freedom of expression, I realized how important this was to me. It's about equality. It's about liberation.

As we fight for these important issues, you begin to realize how ridiculous it is that the world makes a big deal out of whether or not I'm wearing a top. It's time we let women own everything that men have had permission to occupy by themselves for far too long.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALI MITTON**









“Shooting for the magazine meant that I could be part of a conversation about women unfolding in real time.”

—Scarlett Byrne







How to live the high life

A situational guide to recreational marijuana

BY **DAVID JENISON**

Long ago, a visiting politician from Europe saw all the free-flowing booze in New York City and asked when Prohibition was set to take effect. Ironically, the ban on alcohol was almost a decade old at the time. Someone could say the same thing today about cannabis, which eight more states legalized on some level in November despite the ongoing federal prohibition. Embracing the green rush involves some measure of risk, but quasi-legalization has

sparked an innovation boom characterized by everything from THC-spiked gourmet cuisine to Steve Jobs-worthy technology and design. The days of bong and bowls are over for plugged-in consumers who want to modernize their stash with the latest vape pens, edibles, body lotions and lovemaking lubricants. When properly paired, these tech-savvy lifestyle products can enrich a wide range of activities, from concert-going and camping to pool partying and jet-setting. But what goes best with what? Find out here.



Mindy's Hard Sweets.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MOLLY CRANNA

HAVING SEX WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND

Foria Pleasure Lubricant

Whoever thinks academia is boring missed *The Journal of Sex Research* study that claims marijuana smoking “enhances sexual pleasure and increases sexual desire.” Sure, a full-body edible high does the trick, but Foria Pleasure lubricant takes it to the next level, getting your girlfriend’s very specific body part stoned. No, it’s not voodoo; that part of her anatomy can actually absorb cannabis into the bloodstream, which promotes relaxation and heightened sensation. A 10-milliliter bottle goes for \$38. foriapleasure.com

CAMPING IN JOSHUA TREE

Canndescent Connect 108

If you’re looking to commune with nature, head to Joshua Tree, California for desert landscapes, surreal rock formations and inspired campfire conversation courtesy of Canndescent Connect 108. This award-winning flower wants you to “connect with the world around you.” Farm-to-vape fans will be pleased to know Canndescent has a grow site in nearby Desert Hot Springs. Prices vary by dispensary. canndescent.com

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE SEIDLITZ



**HAVING SEX WITH
SOMEONE YOU JUST
MET ON TINDER**

Loosey Lu's Aphrodisiac Delight

A bong, no matter how impressive, just doesn't produce the right vibe when you're trying to close a sale. Set the mood with Loosey Lu's Aphrodisiac Delight (pictured here rolled and ready to smoke). This herbal blend literally puts the pot in potpourri by combining a hybrid strain such as White Widow with handpicked herbs such as blue lotus, sage, lobelia, damiana and motherwort. Who needs oysters and champagne?

A 10-gram tin starts at \$36. looseylulovesyou.com



MEETING YOUR NEW GIRLFRIEND'S BEST FRIENDS

Calm CBD Vape

Meeting the skeptical parents can be tough, but meeting your girlfriend's inner circle can be worse, especially if (a) one of them just got dumped, (b) you're a better catch than their beaux or (c) your girl has a bad track record with men. For a night like this, make sure you have plenty of room on your credit card and pregame with hmbldt calm. The formula inside this vape pen delivers a strong dose of cannabidiol, or CBD, a cannabis compound known to keep people calm and cool in the most uncomfortable situations.

Calm runs a worry-free \$100. hmbldt.com



PLAYING BASKETBALL WITH YOUR OFFICE MATES

Lord Jones's Pain and Wellness Lotion

Smoking too much before a game can leave you playing like draft bust Anthony Bennett, but modern cannabis innovation can elevate your skills in ways you'd never expect. Before suiting up, apply Lord Jones's 5:1 Pain and Wellness all over your body. This nonpsychoactive, CBD-heavy lotion eases sore muscles and joints for more fluid playmaking action, and fragrant herbal notes help cover up locker-room stank. Fifty-milliliter bottles start at \$60. lordjones.com

MAKING LOLLAPALOOZA FEEL LIKE WOODSTOCK

Mindy's Hard Sweets

Security can be tight at music festivals, so discreet edibles that don't melt (sorry, chocolate) are key. If you're heading to Lollapalooza, bring tasty sweets from Chicago's own Mindy Segal, the James Beard Award-winning pastry chef behind Mindy's HotChocolate. Each artisanal hard candy contains 10 milligrams of odorless extract—an ideal amount for cannabis rookies—combined with deliciously rich vanilla, butterscotch and bourbon flavors.

Ten-candy tins start at \$35. mindyisedibles.com

WATCHING RERUNS OF EARLY-1990S SIMPSONS

Chong's Choice

In a 1991 *Simpsons* flashback episode, a high school principal catches Homer and Barney smoking in the bathroom and calls them "Springfield's answer to Cheech & Chong." Seasons later, Homer actually convinces Cheech and Chong to reunite. When binge-watching the series' golden age, make Homer proud by smoking Tommy Chong's solvent-free oil in your vape pen.

A half-gram cartridge of Chong's Choice starts around \$40. chongschoice.com



MAKING A SPLASH AT A POOL PARTY

JUJU Joint Vape

Firing up a Zig-Zag at a poolside soiree feels so 1980s frat party, but taking draws from a sleek JUJU Joint says style and sophistication. The "iPod of vaporizers" requires no lighter and emits only a small amount of nearly odorless smoke. This disposable vape is perfect for hotel rooftops and Vegas pools, where a snitch may necessitate that you drop the small black pen in your Jack and Coke. The vapes come in different strains, but if it's a pool party, go with California native Blue Dream.

JUJU Joints go for \$20 and up. jujujoints.com





GOING TO THE WIZARDING WORLD OF HARRY POTTER

Défoncé Chocolate

You want to fly higher than Harry in a Quidditch match but without an invisibility cloak? You need to get creative. Bring a small snack bag filled with peanuts, raisins and a few pieces of infused chocolate from Défoncé, an artisanal chocolatier started by an Apple vet. If you're surrounded by enough little screaming wizards, any parent who recognizes the brand will probably ask you to share.

Available in several flavors for \$20 a bar.
defonce.com

SLEEPING THROUGH A RED-EYE FLIGHT

Kushy Punch Gummies

Did you know Cathay Pacific has a 16-hour nonstop flight between New York and Hong Kong? If you ever needed an excuse for a sleep aid, this 8,000-mile crossing would be it. Kushy Punch gummies can help. One of the red-colored squares takes about an hour to activate. Eating a single gummy piece during the in-flight meal means you'll be dreaming of dim sum in no time. Pro tip: Go for the indica gummies, as they help with insomnia.

Four-piece gummy squares run \$12.
kushypunch.com

MARY JANE ON THE MENU

Weed eaters can finally come out from the shadows



1. POT POP-UPS

There's a whole world of gourmet edibles that explore the savory, sit-down side of cannabis cuisine. Much like Roaring Twenties speakeasies, cannabis pop-ups are social places to enjoy federally forbidden treats. Colorado-based Mason Jar Event Group does seasonal pop-ups with the likes of *Top Chef* champ Hosea Rosenberg, Eleven Madison Park alum Chris Sayegh crafts Michelin-worthy eats at events nationwide, and properly vetted New Yorkers have a shot at tasting cannabis comfort food at Dinner Is Dope.

2. CANNABIS COCKTAILS

Jason Eisner, who oversees the beverage programs at Gracias Madre in West Hollywood and Gratitude in Newport Beach, California, made international

news last year when he put cannabidiol cocktails on the drinks menu. The cannabis compound in the stoney negroni, rolled fashioned and sour t-iesel won't get you high, but the DEA still classifies CBD as worse than meth.

3. WEED PIZZA

Fast-food chains are finally picking up steam in Cambodia, but Ronald McDonald may need to rename the Happy Meal. In the mid-1990s, a forward-thinking gourmand opened Happy Herb Pizza in Phnom Penh, and soon the pot pies that make you "insane in the membrane," as Anthony Bourdain put it, started popping up all over the country. Just look for the word *happy*, sit down, and be prepared to not get up for a while.



PLAYMATE

Whirlicaine Nina

*The cruelest month becomes the kindest when it includes
a whirlwind day by the water with our sultry, stormy Miss April*

Nina Daniele is comfortable with being uncomfortable. “I find some satisfaction in it,” Miss April says. The only child of artist parents, she’s all buoyant energy and unapologetic candor. She’s also an introspective extrovert with an infectiously frequent giggle. In between modeling jobs, Nina has satisfied herself with quieter pursuits, studying photography (she uses her mom’s old Pentax K1000 to snap photos on black-and-white film) and majoring in creative writing in college. “For years, writing was all I did, and I wasn’t sure if I was living to write or writing to live. I didn’t know if it was a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy and I was doing things just so I could write about them.”

Now the native New Yorker is more interested in relishing the moment and teasing herself with what might come next. “I have a habit of finding something new every week,” she says. “I wanted to start a tie-dyed shirt business because my boyfriend gave me a tie-dyeing kit and I was like, ‘I can make a million of these!’ I wanted to weld jewelry. I wanted to be a day trader, and then I wanted to go back to school

and become a psychologist. Maybe in my next life I’ll be a stockbroker.”

There is one venture Nina has stuck with: “Pole dancing was something I had always wanted to do but didn’t know how to go about it. There’s such a stigma to it.” Now nearly two years into weekly classes, she has a pole installed in her Bronx apartment. “We leave our shit at the door and watch each other express ourselves in a way society looks down on. It’s really beautiful to watch.” It has also taught her that authority can be an illusion. “When you think about women dancing, who’s really in control of the situation?”

A genuine advocate for animals, Nina rescues pit bulls and has been a vegan for as long as she can remember. Just don’t grill her on her diet. “A lot of times people ask, ‘What do you eat, lettuce? Bunny food?’ Then you end up defending yourself for something you believe in. So I don’t ever tell anybody.” The way to her heart? Directness and open body language. If you want to keep up with her, an audacious spirit is a prerequisite. “I like pushing boundaries,” she says with a sly smile.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHAN WÜRTH



















VICTOR KERLOW

“Hey, I found Waldo!”





MISS APRIL 2017



DATA SHEET



AGE: 26 BIRTHPLACE: Pelham, New York CURRENT CITY: Bronx, New York

DON'T PLAY IT COOL

At the end of the day, we don't have time for games. When the other person feels they have to put in so much work for your attention, they don't feel valued. That makes me sad. The same goes for friendships. Show someone you like, love and care for them. And always text back!

MY ULTIMATE GOAL

I love pit bulls. I have two of them, and my dream is to have my own sanctuary for dogs on death row. They would live their lives out there or get adopted, and everything would be donation-based.

MY SECOND ULTIMATE GOAL

I have a plan to open my own club with dancers on platforms, and they would all wear different animal heads—boars, horses, bears, really gnarly ones. And

the girls would be all voluptuous and sexy, dancing, but with grotesque heads, like reverse centaurs. Whenever I see myself older, running a business, this is it. It's just so fucked-up that it's kind of hot!

MY TAKE ON FEMINISM

It has almost become trendy to say "I'm a feminist." Why can't you say "I support women in power; I support women who are comfortable with themselves and their bodies." It's not just about women. It's about all people. Why are we separating ourselves?

MY IRRATIONAL FEAR

I get nervous about what you might say when you wake up from anesthesia. What if I say some really fucked-up shit or things I mean deep down inside?

I get nervous at the idea of my subconscious being set loose.

REINVENTING THE POLE

I find pole dancing very liberating and empowering. I think about when I would open jewelry boxes as a kid and watch the little ballerina spin around. I think there's something really beautiful and even innocent about it. It's freeing, and it's a great workout.

MY NIPPLES ARE OKAY, THANKS

Why is showing nipples a taboo? At the same time, the bigger deal you make of something, the bigger deal it becomes and the harder it is to explain why you feel a certain way. The whole "free the nipple" thing? Just let it go. Move on to something else. There are children dying and you want to complain about nipples? Let it go.

Nina Daniele

@ninamariedaniele





The

Domestic

Lives of

Superheroes

Pete's just a regular guy, but he may be more dangerous than the crime fighters he lives among

BY **JOHN HORNOR JACOBS**



“If you could have any superpower,” she says, resting her hand on his chest and curling his chest hair, “what would it be?” She’s a journalist through and through, Pete thinks. Even in bed. All the times before when they had played this game, it was as a prelude to another bout, another frenzied round of lovemaking. She’d grab his cock and he’d say, “Always be hard,” in hopes of hardening.

But today, on the pallet of sheets and blankets they made on the floor of the one safe and shielded room in the universe, he says, “If I could have any power, it would be to take away superpowers.”

“What, like steal them?” she says.

“No. Take them away. Forever.” From where he rests, spent, he looks at the blank face of the ceiling, its dull black surface made of alloys and elements he cannot even begin to fathom. A bower constructed of alien material to hide a wife’s private hours, her secret thoughts—and deeds. “Create a world where all men are equal,” he says. He doesn’t mean for it to come out sullen.

“Men?” She removes her hand from his chest and stands, nude. “Is this about Chris?” She looks around, a reflexive habit, checking to see if anyone is watching. Outside of the “blackbox,” it is possible. Her husband, Chris, the leader of the League of Heroes, can hear any heartbeat anywhere in the world, peer through walls, see through flesh. He can translocate—can travel anywhere—almost as fast as thought. But not in the blackbox. It is shielded. Liza insisted on it when they moved in. She needed her privacy, her sanctuary.

Pete rises with her, pulls on jeans and buckles his belt. He slips on worn loafers and stands before her, shirtless. He’s not heavily muscled or especially handsome. His body has a compactness, a dense angularity that hers does not, even though he stands no taller than she does. She is foam and he is wood. She captures but cannot hold him.

He buttons his shirt, taking his time to make sure he gets each one. It’s a white shirt, rumpled slightly from their first embrace, its

sharp lines and starched collar softened from the heat of their coupling—in the act, moisture sloughed off into the air to dampen everything contained in the blackbox. Condensation beads on the metal walls.

His dressing angers her. In their previous trysts he’d lounged about unclothed, watching her dress. She’d liked that, he thought, his unabashed nakedness. She enjoyed his willingness to be vulnerable in a way he sensed but could not explain. Once before, after having sex, she’d dressed, put on her pumps and then placed her heel on his privates. A light pressure intimating more. The sentiment was clear: She could unman him, destroy him. Pete simply watched her, giving nothing back, his head cradled on crossed arms, his red chest and pubic hair blazing, and smiled at the sensation of cold leather on his most assailable part.

But today she’s angry. “This thing between us,” she says. “It’s just a thing. It’s not for real. I will never leave Chris.”

Pete looks at Liza, the soft roundness of her face, her long neck. He closes his eyes. A sweat drop had hung from the tip of his nose as he crashed into her open body, falling in the hollow of her throat as he came. It was her hair that first drew him. Long, black. A stark contrast to his red. Lustrous, as the television commercials said. He’d imagined how it might fall toward the small of her back. How it would move.

“I don’t want you to leave Chris,” Pete says, observing her face. “The Scourge is still out there. The world needs Chris—the world needs the Blade—and he doesn’t need to be distracted by you.” He turns to go. “Or me.” He pats his pockets, checking to see if he has all his things: phone, wallet, keys. The fastidiousness of adul-

tery. “Show me the leaking faucet, Liza,” he says. “You know, the reason I’m here? I’ll take care of it before I go.”

•••

They call it Hind Park, where the League of Heroes make their homes, keep their families safe. He doesn’t think on Hind Park much—tries not to think on it—or the fact that he is his wife Vivian’s greatest weakness. Sometimes he misses his parents, and his home of North Carolina: baseball games, barbecues at the park, kayaking the Nantahala and Chattooga, hiking the Appalachian Trail. The Scourge took that life, that history, away from Pete—his parents, his brothers and sister, all gone, targeted one by one, held for ransom and then killed. The League worked hard to save them but for all its extranatural power, for all its near-godlike technology, was stymied at every turn. The Scourge outmaneuvered and overmastered them.

Pete doesn’t know where exactly Hind Park is, and he’s been here for seven years now. Abstractly, he understands he is here to keep the world safe from the Scourge and his minions, so his wife in her official League persona of Mesmera is not compromised. For those with great power, love is vulnerability. More intimately, he knows Hind Park as home now. It feels like Michigan, maybe, judging by the blueberries at the edges of Miller’s Field, or the copse of maple and beech trees standing like sentinels beyond, at the foot of the Wall. The winters are cold and bring heavy snow; just last December Sylvester Childress in mere seconds raised his hands and grimaced, shaping the earth into a hill for sledding. Springs are temperate and the summers are mild. Had Pete a better mind, more



FICTION

suiting to science, he might be able to discern his location by the movement of the stars. But his hands are rough and suited for woodwork and maintenance. And, most recently, the care of children.

It's fall now and Pete walks down Arbor Lane toward the market square. The oaks have turned yellow and orange and begun giving up their leaves. Acorns crunch under his feet. There's a store at the nexus of streets, a grocery. A library and beyond, protruding from the Wall, the school. If you ignored the electric face of the Wall and the air-defense missile turrets and oscillating radar antennae, it could be any town in America. The houses are large and well-appointed, midcentury modern, colonial, Tudor. Each has a wide expanse of lawn, manicured gardens. Swimming pools and Jacuzzis to unwind in after long days of airborne combat and crime-quashing in the cities. Of the hundred homes, most are empty.

In the square, a soldier in civilian garb unloads boxes from a refrigerated truck. When Pete and Vivian first moved to Hind Park, soldiers were everywhere, but the uniforms and guns bothered the community's kids, and so they changed protocol.

Pete trots up and pitches in, placing boxes of pork chops and fish fillets, oranges and heads of lettuce, crates of milk and juice, on the dolly. They go inside. The market is empty, bright fluorescent lights shining on full blast above untended rows of canned goods and other groceries. He doesn't know the soldier, but it doesn't matter. They cart the frozen goods to the meat freezers.

"I've got this," Pete says to the soldier, waving him off. "Something for me to do."

The soldier chuckles. "You're married to one of the League, huh? Which one?"

Pete shrugs. "Mesmera."

The soldier gives a faux shiver. "Holy smokes. You must be a saint. If my wife could read my thoughts, there'd be hell to pay."

Pete says, "It keeps me honest." He pulls out his phone and sends a group text: *Meat delivery*

is here. Nice chops. Some salmon. Lemme know what you want and I'll have it wrapped and waiting for you at the market. A few League responses return immediately. *Salmon!* from Beth. *Any steaks left from Sunday, bro?* Chris sends. Brandi Childress responds: *Six chops and some brats 4 kids, please! And can you walk M&M home for me? We'll be back at 4.*

He answers each, dutifully, staring at the glowing face of his phone. When he looks up, the soldier has returned to the truck. Pete spends some time packaging and labeling the meat orders and placing them in a glass-front cooler. When all are in place, he collects the chops and spinach for his family's evening meal, bags them, claims a potted orchid—a white phalaenopsis—and wanders back out into the street. He checks his phone again for the time.

At the school, he sits on a bench and waits. There are two parts to the school in Hind Park—the section extending outside the Wall for kids who have not yet "bloomed," or shown extranatural abilities, and the inner area for the rest of them.

Pete's son, Hank, barrels out of the school's front door, whooping and swinging his backpack. A good sign—like his mother, Hank is prone to dark moods. Vivian tells Pete that their son exhibits telepathic hallmarks. Precognition, empathic senses, second sight. He'll be moving to school inside the Wall soon. Bryce and Lizzie follow their older brother. The eight-year-old twins have a complicated relationship; it's thought that they share a consciousness. To what end, what powers, Pete could not say.

He ruffles Hank's hair and scoops up the twins and swings them about.

"You've been with Mrs. Blade," Lizzie says.

"She's pretty," Bryce says.

"That she is," Pete says. He doesn't bother correcting them on her last name. "How was school?"

"We won," they say together.

"The coding competition?"

"Yes. It was simple," they say.

"One voice at a time, kiddos," Pete says.

"It was an app that took in information and wrote to a database," Lizzie says. Bryce's mouth moves sympathetically.

"Hey! That'll be handy," Pete says. He waves to Marcus and Mykaela, Brandi and Sylvester Childress's kids. Mykaela runs to Pete in the adorable, ungainly manner children have. Marcus strolls over, giving Pete a high five. He smiles and the younger kids join hands. "You guys have everything?" Pete asks. "*Ell-ee-tee-ess gee-oh.*"

They accompany the Childress kids to their house. Sylvester and Brandi aren't home yet, so Pete leads them inside. There are no locked doors in Hind Park. Pete makes peanut butter and jelly on crackers for a snack. Even though the leaves are changing, it's warm enough to swim, so the kids put on suits and jump in. Marcus is 13 and can breathe underwater and create riptides, so Pete is content to leave the kids long enough to find a suit. He moves through their house, up the stairs on thick carpet, down silent halls. He enters Sylvester and Brandi's bedroom and stops, looking at the bed. Then he enters the walk-in closet and opens drawers until he finds a swimsuit. He strips and changes and returns downstairs, his clothes neatly folded under his arm. Using the long pool skimmer, he removes the elm leaves from the surface of the water before jumping in. Pete scores the twins' dives—7.2, 7.8, 8.3—tosses Hank into the air to squeals of laughter and wrestles with Marcus underwater until he has to tap out for breath.

Pete leans into the pool's wall, arms outstretched, watching the children splash, when Sylvester and Brandi show up, smiling.

"Hey, Pete!" Brandi says. "Thanks for getting the kids."

"No problem. Didn't have much else to do."

"Uh, man, you in your underwear?" Sylvester asks.

Pete shrugs. "Nope. I borrowed some of your trunks." He looks down at his water-distorted waistline. "Little big on me, though."

**HE SWEEPS HIS HANDS ALONG
HER THIGHS AND NESTLES
INTO HER BACKSIDE.**



FICTION

Sylvester looks puzzled and glances at Brandi. Sylvester's thick ropey muscles cord his arms, heavy neck and shoulders. They call him Rockfall, and Vivian told Pete that when he was given that call sign, he shrugged and said, "Sounds about right." He can manipulate any mineral to his will.

A look passes between husband and wife and there's some irritation on Brandi's part, Pete is sure.

"I put the chops and brats in the fridge," Pete says. Sylvester goes inside. Brandi follows her husband but returns in minutes wearing a one-piece that flatters her muscular physique. She's carrying three beers and places one near Pete's head before lowering herself into the pool near him.

"You're pushing it," she says. "Sylvester is very touchy about his stuff. Too many brothers and sisters."

Pete takes a long swallow. "Ahh. I was an only child," he says. "It was an open landscape with me a lone figure. A Heathcliff on the open plain."

"It's the moors, Pete. If you're a landscape, it's not an open plain," she says. "That's for damn sure. More like a cow pasture, you're so full of shit."

"Me?" Pete says. He raises his eyebrows, smiles and takes a pull from his beer.

"I've read your dossier," Brandi says. "You've got brothers and a sister."

"I have no brothers and sisters now," Pete says.

She has something on the tip of her tongue but reconsiders, closes her mouth and spreads out one of her arms and sinks down, wetting her hair, her breasts peeking above the surface. No one talks about the losses, the failures.

Pete places one wet finger on her hand. There was nothing there, nothing in the touch. Except for one night years ago, a Christmas night, when everyone had gathered at Greason's house for eggnog and drinks. Vivian was called away to the command center; later he would learn the Scourge had found his parents only hours before. Christmas carols droned on until Beth Meyer, at her wits' end, cried "No more Burl Ives!" and hijacked the stereo. "Let's get this party started," she said, and went to kiss her wife as Al Green began to play. Everyone laughed. Sylvester and Greason chatted in the kitchen with the Guerins, and Brandi, hips swaying, had taken Pete's hand and tugged him into dance. He had had enough scotch to be extremely conscious of her body, the heat pouring from her. The heat was mirrored in him. With one glance downward, she knew. She did not pull away.

But now, she withdraws her hand and stands.

"Word is, a new couple will be moving in," Brandi says. She finishes her beer and begins drinking the extra. Sylvester will have to get his own. "They're calling her Plasmacoil and him Doctor Helios, which is kind of histrionic, in my opinion."

Pete smiles. "They could use a good editor. Just Helios would be fine. God of the sun. He shoot lasers or something?"

"No idea," she says. "Mesmera—I'm sorry, Pete, I mean Vivian—is inducting them now."

"So she'll be late." He sighs. "Kids?"

"Almost. She's got one in the oven."

"That's good." Pete falls silent. Brandi watches him.

"Don't get any ideas," she says.

"What are you talking about?"

"You can act like you don't know," she says. She looks inside and then back to Pete. "There's always talk at the League Hall."

"Some things never change," he says and pushes himself out of the water. "People talk. Even superheroes. Thanks for the beer. Tell Sylvester I'll bring his trunks by in the morning." He turns to the pool. "Kids!"

• • •

Pete's house is a modern colonial, the most traditional in Hind Park and the oldest. The Captain lived here, from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, before the Syndicate—the organization that gave rise to the Scourge—managed to push him into the Nth Dimension. To remind Pete of this, a portrait of the Captain stares out from above the mantel, painted by none other than J.O. Buckley. It has been appraised for more than the house. As if the house could ever be sold.

Pete showers and changes into athletic shorts and a Chapel Hill tee. At the dining room table, he helps Hank with his algebra homework—Bryce and Lizzie are better at most abstract subjects than Pete, but his son refuses to be tutored by his younger sisters—and then they play a quick game of Ping-Pong in the garage. Pete's current project—a massive white-cedar canoe kit—dominates the space. There are no cars in Hind Park, so Pete cannot understand why there is a garage. However, Hind Park has streets too, so maybe at one time it was meant to be part of the world, not locked away like the Captain in the Nth Dimension. Most of the League members can fly. Greason, the League's administrator, once offered Pete a golf cart. "So, what you're giving me is a glorified wheelchair?" Pete had said. "I can get a Muggle tattoo, as well. How's that?" Greason

had stammered and blushed while Vivian made outraged expressions at her husband.

Pete sautés the spinach in butter and garlic and brines the chops. He makes risotto for Hank, who has a gluten issue that leads to eczema, and pesto noodles for the twins. He drinks another beer as he starts the grill. On the patio, he watches the elms and oaks shift in the dusk, follows the passing clouds lit by the sun, already past the rim of earth. He watches geese on high, flying south through blue-gray twilight skies, the halls of play of the League, and Pete's wife, but never for him. He will not be carried. Leaves fall, and one of Beth Meyer's golden retrievers barks hoarsely into the failing light. Inside, he serves the kids dinner and reads them books (though they're all very capable readers) and bundles them into bed with kisses, taking their phones and iPads as he goes.

"Will Mommy be home soon?"

"Of course," he says.

"Will you send her in to kiss us?"

"Of course I will," he says.

He picks up laundry and turns off lights. He starts a load and then pours a scotch and drinks it in bed, naked. When Vivian comes in, he sits up.

"Long day?"

She kisses him and wrinkles her nose at the smell of scotch. "Yes. New couple. Greason and I had to induct them. They're moving three houses down, in that monstrous old Tudor."

"So I heard from Sylvester and Brandi," he says. "Did you eat?"

"I had a smoothie."

She strips and he watches her. Vivian, the daughter of a doctor and the granddaughter of an Episcopal priest, a descendant of Puritans come to America for religious freedom. An air of aristocracy hangs about her, from her fine, patrician nose to her delicate jaw. There's an abundance to her, the lush curve of hip, the elegant arms, expressive hands. They met at college and it was Pete who discovered the talents of levitation, telepathy and mesmerism that she had been hiding. Pete who pushed her to contact the League. He had fallen underneath her abilities; he had succumbed, but never enough to not understand what was happening. She was what made him special; everything in her was rebounded by Pete, a sounding board, a mirror. Everything extraordinary about Vivian was matched by everything ordinary about Pete.

When she gets into bed, he sweeps his hands along her thighs and nestles into her backside.



FICTION

Vivian says, “No, Pete. I’m so tired.”

“Of course, hon.”

“Don’t be mad.”

“I’m not. You’ve got a lot on your plate.”

“You’ve got your hands full here too. The kids? How are they?”

“I told them you’d give them kisses when you got in.”

“I did,” she says. “I’m not that absent.”

“They’re good. Lizzie and Bryce won their coding competition.” He pauses. “Do you want to read me? See how my day went?” There are two intimacies offered here—the second comes with so much more weight.

She turns in the circle of his arms and touches his face, his mouth. Her elegant, aristocratic fingers trace the flesh there. “Oh, Pete. There’s so much going on and I just need sleep. The Scourge kidnapped a Belgian nuclear scientist and stole some spent plutonium rods. I’ve been scrying all day.”

“Dirty bombs?” he says.

“Possibly.” She kisses him. The comfort of the familiar reassures him and he feels as though he is falling into her. A raft lost on the sea of her body. He opens his mouth and their tongues meet. They make love without her reaching him.

He forgets to tell her about the orchid before falling asleep.

• • •

In the night he wakes to the silent house, monochrome-dark and quiet. His wife snores softly, something Pete has always found charming. Outside, the radar antennae rotate constantly, sweeping the skies. The missile turbines pan and scope the heavens, ever vigilant.

He rises and goes downstairs.

Naked, Pete pads through his home in Hind Park. The world sleeps around him. He opens the door by the kitchen and enters the garage. Here is the canoe Pete has made from white cedar. Taking up a fine-grain sandpaper wrapped around a wooden block, Pete begins sanding the tapered curve of the craft. Soon he will begin staining the canoe and then sealing it with fiberglass, and he will be dressed then. But for now it is just his hands moving across the fibers of cedar, the smell of it rising to his nostrils. Sawdust nestles in his leg hair, his crotch.

There is no open water in Hind Park.

• • •

Late in the afternoon that Saturday, Pete and Vivian dress casual—he in a camp shirt, faded jeans and loafers, she in a sundress with a light sweater tied around her waist. The kids wear

bathing suits, towels slung over their shoulders. The sun shines, watery yellow, and the air blows mild with a hint of winter yet to come.

The party is for the Whitmans, the new arrivals to Hind Park. Pete and Vivian walk over, she with an air of distraction, repeatedly checking her phone. To Pete’s questions, she gives half answers—“Things are happening; strange extranatural readings in Prague; AI gleaned spikes in coded surveillance”—but puts the device away as they near the Klerks’.

The Klerks’—the Blade and Liza Lynne’s—door stands open, and Vivian and Pete walk in without knocking, move through the foyer into the big white kitchen and place their food alongside all the other offerings: broccoli salad, fruit salad, arugula salad with vinaigrette, potato salad, twice-baked potatoes, kale chips, bagel chips, wedges of Gouda and Brie. Dimly Pete is aware that below him, in the basement, is the blackbox, now containing only possibilities.

A blender screams from the backyard. They walk out onto the Klerks’ expansive patio to be hailed by many; Pete is more popular than Vivian, and the Guerins call him over to where they’re playing badminton beyond the pool. Marcus and Mykaela wave, along with Beth and June’s children. The grill smokes, perfuming the air with charcoal. There are the Little-smiths, the Childresses, and June and Beth.

“Here he is,” Steve Guerin—Spitfire—says. “Hell on the court, Pete Salzburg.” He tosses Pete a badminton racquet. Pete snatches it out of the air.

“I don’t think it’s a court,” Mahrinda Guerin says. “It’s a pitch. Hey, Pete.” She air-kisses his cheeks. A normal, just like Pete, she’s one of the few spouses along with Liza who have found gainful employment with the League. Mahrinda, having been raised between Bangalore and London, speaks seven languages and spends her days translating intelligence and acting as a communication liaison. She is not very good at badminton.

Chris appears before Pete with a displacement of air, wearing an apron. “Here, bro,” he says and hands Pete a red Solo cup brimming with light green froth. “Too much tequila?” The Blade metabolizes alcohol differently than regular humans. Pete swallows some of the mixture. “You’re right on the money, Chris,” Pete says. Chris smiles and translocates back to the bar.

Brandi and Pete play the Guerins in a badminton match, sipping from their margaritas between points. In the air above the house a

quartet of older kids plays an aggressive game of tag, occasionally punctuated by adults rising to intercede when tempers flare. Pete finishes his drink and walks over to where Liza stands near a tall blonde woman and an even taller man. The woman’s belly bulges beneath her form-fitting dress.

Pete kisses Liza on the cheek, a familiarity allowed close friends. As hostess, Liza feels a pressing need to be everywhere at once and all things to all guests. It takes only a glance for Pete to know she’s in a heightened state of politeness and formality. An empty drink or a bare plate is a fire to be extinguished. Two un-introduced guests, a travesty. “Pete, this is Dr. Jeff Whitman and his wife, Georgiana.” Pete shakes hands with them both and looks over the taller man, wondering why his call sign is Doctor Helios.

“Hey, that’s great, Doc. I think I’ve got a rash developing. Could you take a look?” Pete says.

Liza appears outraged, while Georgiana and Jeff laugh.

“Not exactly that kind of doctor. More along the lines of particle physics,” Jeff says.

“Pete is our resident comedian and handyman,” Liza says.

“That’s my call sign,” Pete adds. He spreads his hands as if outlining a vaudeville marquee. “The Handyman.”

Liza’s face darkens.

“Well, I’m Doctor Helios,” Jeff says, spreading his hands in the same manner as Pete. “Though I thought prepending the call sign with ‘Doctor’ a bit much.”

Chris appears beside them. “But there’s Helion, and Herniac—that guy is totally fucked-up—plus Hespantos and Hecate and a whole slew of similar-sounding call signs. You need brand compartmentalization.”

Pete turns to Georgiana and says, “And you are...?”

“Pregnant, obviously,” she responds.

Pete, caught off guard, stammers. The Whitmans, and especially Liza, laugh at his predicament. Chris gives a yelp—“Burgers!”—and disappears again.

“Your call sign is Plasmacoil? I don’t know if I understand that.”

Georgiana puts her hands on her stomach. She’s a titan of a woman, towering and expansive. Her eyes are large for her face and her mouth is wide and generous. Pete cannot help but appraise her body. She’s athletic and muscled, but her frame does not exhibit her strength in outward and coarse ways as with Brandi—biceps, triceps, quads, glutes,



FICTION

SHE'S A TITAN OF A WOMAN, TOWERING AND EXPANSIVE. EYES LARGE; MOUTH GENEROUS.

all bunched up and massive—nor can he see her reflected in the abundance of Vivian. She is unlike any woman he's ever encountered.

"We'll have to stay busy," Georgiana says, glancing at Jeff. She looks back to Pete as if to evaluate his true intentions. "This is easier when I'm pregnant," she says. She draws her palms away from her stomach, pulling threads and ribbons of pure energy. The air begins to crackle. In her hands she holds a pulsing ball of plasma, and within it Pete imagines he sees the electric ghost of an embryo. Georgiana rises into the air, just a few feet, her blonde hair splayed around her as if suspended underwater.

"I think I see," Pete says. Looking at her, Pete knows nothing is promised—not one day, not one life. But here, contained in this crackling electric being, he can see mapless territories of love and pleasure. Love and pleasure enough for him too, maybe. Guilt had died in him when his parents and family died—a little spark, snuffed out. He had not missed it. But in Georgiana, the vastness of her body—more than her body, truly, for she seems limitless—he senses a counterweight to the empty part of himself. If he could gain her, he would swell, grow. The diminution would cease.

Jeff laughs. "She has that effect on me too," he says. "She has that effect on everyone."

"Pete," Liza says, placing a hand on his elbow. "Can I talk to you for a sec?"

Pete looks at Jeff and Georgiana apologetically. "Pleasure to meet you both." He lets Liza draw him away.

In the kitchen, she says, "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"Liza, this is absurd. You introduced me to them. What do you think I was doing?"

"I'm not an idiot," she says. She stops herself and looks out onto the patio. Chris is simultaneously grilling burgers, blending a margarita and tossing a Frisbee with the older children.

"He's going to burn the burgers," Pete says. "Maybe I should—"

"Shut up, Pete. Chris never fails at anything," she says.

It takes a moment to restrain himself, but Pete does not mention his parents.

"Maybe we should discuss this in the black-box," Pete says. He places his hand on her hip. She allows it to remain for only a moment.

"Not now," Liza says. Something in her hardens. "Not ever again."

"All right," he says, smiling. "We can talk about this later."

"Never," she says, her expression awful.

Pete walks back out onto the patio, surprised to find many faces already turned toward him. Chris stands still at the grill, burning the burgers, his infallible and penetrating awareness fully upon Pete. At the edges of his perception, Pete senses Vivian probing, a minnow wriggling into the net of his consciousness. The children quiet in their play—the pool stills, the teenagers wheeling in the arteries of air cease their movement and hover.

A keening sound begins, arcing across the vault of sky. A siren. Phones begin chirping, issuing alarms. Chris's gaze lingers on Pete before he takes out his phone and disappears. The spatula falls to the ground.

The Scourge, again. This is what Hind Park was built for. Beth and June lift into the air, yelling at their kids to stay with the adults.

Vivian appears before him. "I—," she begins and stops herself. "Get the kids home," she says. "Helios and Plasmacoil, you can be more help here than out there. You haven't had time—"

Jeff says, "Understood." He takes Georgiana's hand and leads her out to the front of the Klerks' house, in the street. His skin becomes mottled, emanating light. His clothes combust and fall away. He rises above the treeline, a newborn star. Georgiana conjures a plasma ball from her womb and carries it before her. "Come on, kids!"

"I'll hang back too," Brandi says to Vivian. "A full League member should stay."

Vivian nods, not looking at Pete. "Good. Guard the Park."

Steve Guerin gives the rallying cry of the League—"All as one!"—beckoning the flight-

less members to come close enough to touch. They converge, dropping cups and plates where they stand on the lush grass of Chris and Liza's backyard. As one, they flash and disappear. Teens descend from the sky and gather up their younger siblings and usher them home.

Pete watches his wife rise into the air and arc away, her hair and clothes rippling with the speed of her exit. He stands on the lawn, among the litter of false suburbia, and begins picking up plates and cups. He takes the burgers off the grill and closes it. He stands there, charcoal smoke curling around the rim, burning his eyes, and stares toward the Wall, where the radar and turrets seem to whirr and turn ever faster.

"Come on, Pete," Brandi says. "The kids will need us."

He turns to gather his children, the twins and Hank. Marcus and Mykaela have them waiting and ready to go home. Pete enters Chris's house and begins to call out for Liza, but Brandi places her hand on his arm.

"Haven't you done enough?" Brandi says.

"Enough—"

"Goddamn you, Pete," she says. "You're a bigger threat than the Scourge."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Brandi sets her shoulders. The air around her begins to warp and distend. Her displeasure is the open door of an oven. Incendia, they call her. "Every garden needs a snake. And you're a fine one," she says. "Cloaked in helplessness and vulnerability. You think Chris or Vivian is going to be totally focused on the Scourge? When you're here at home?"

Pete laughs, but it doesn't feel right, and his children wait for him. He tries to walk away. Her grip tightens on his arm, beginning to burn, stopping his forward movement.

"It's true, then," she says. "I always thought it was a cliché. But all villains think they're the good guys."

She leaves him standing in the white kitchen, staring after her, near the banquet table of food that will never be eaten. ■

VIRTUAL SATIS



Christie Stevens is on her knees, gazing up at Isiah Maxwell, her mouth agape. Her breasts bounce with every bob of her head, and her platinum blonde hair cascades down her pale back, grazing the top of her sacrum tattoo.

"My husband," she says, grasping Maxwell's large manhood with both hands and looking directly into his brown eyes, "would never do this."

A dozen or so men stand around watching this scene in various states of discomfort.

BY **JESSICA
P. OGILVIE**

Three are journalists, and this is the best day of their lives. Two are tech entrepreneurs, tentatively exploring the pornography industry as a means of financing their VR start-up. The rest are adult-industry insiders, and this is just another day on the job.

Today's shoot, hosted by the adult-video company BaDoink, looks fairly standard as porn shoots go. Stevens wanders around the sparsely furnished modern five-story Beverly Hills mansion in thigh-high stockings and a sheer bra, her makeup artist providing the occasional touch-up. The 30-year-old, five-foot-two actress works on her lines; in this film, she plays a bored housewife who sexually accosts an unsuspecting door-to-door vacuum salesman.

But the shoot marks a turning point for porn and for technology at large; it's being filmed for virtual reality, the hardware for which hit shelves en masse in 2016. Stevens has been working in porn for five years and has performed in upward of 250 productions. But this is the first she's done for virtual reality. And while she doesn't yet know what's in store for her today, the premise for you, the consumer, is clear: Stevens isn't fucking Maxwell. She's fucking you.

Plenty of point-of-view scenes have been shot in modern pornography. In most of them, a male actor films a woman as they have sex.

VR porn is the latest offspring of a lucrative, centuries-old marriage between tech and erotica. PLAYBOY travels to a Beverly Hills mansion for a behind-the-scenes look at the most titillating content feeding the \$30 billion VR industry machine

FACTORY





Left: VR porn can't be edited, requiring actor Christie Stevens to have sex (gracefully) for 25 minutes straight. **Right:** The 180-degree camera setup used for Stevens and Maxwell's shoot.

The man's face rarely appears, so the footage approximates what the viewer would see if he were having sex with the woman himself.

Virtual-reality porn takes this concept to a new level by not only breaking the fourth wall but demolishing it altogether. When you strap on a virtual-reality headset, your physical world disappears. Instead of watching a computer screen, you're transported to the room the actress is in. Your hands aren't encumbered by a keyboard or a mouse. You're no longer simply observing the fantasy; you're inside it.

This new level of erotic escapism, many experts believe, heralds the future of porn and, by extension, the future of technology itself.

Pornography has a storied history as technology's inadvertent harbinger. According to tech experts and porn insiders, when a new device makes porn more accessible, that pornographic content helps usher the device onto the market.

"People who are willing to pay for porn popularize the technology," says Jonathan Cooper-Smith, a technology historian at Texas A&M University. "That drives down the price."

This wisdom comes from the commonsense notion that people are biologically predisposed to look at erotic images. To get a sense of just how far back this hard-wiring goes, we can turn to our trusty Neanderthal predecessors. Their cave renderings can be interpreted in only one way, says Bryant Paul, a faculty affiliate at the Kinsey Institute. They were "just vulvas," he says. Cavemen were "getting off on that."

The practice of sketching women's naked

bodies carried on for millennia, as evidenced by a quick lap around any fine arts museum. Then, in 1839, the first practical photographic process—the daguerreotype—was invented. Within seven years, Victorian pornographers had created the world's first adult-themed photograph. That pattern repeated with the invention of the motion picture camera in 1889; seven years later, the first pornographic film was shot: *Le Coucher de la Mariée*, featuring cabaret performer Louise Willy doing a striptease in her bedroom.

When the VHS and home entertainment center hit U.S. shelves in 1977, porn watching was again upended as people realized they could screen adult films at home. By the end of the decade, adult videos accounted for more than half of all prerecorded tapes sold in the U.S.

"The introduction of the VCR and playback," says Frederick Lane, author of *Obscene Profits: The Entrepreneurs of Pornography in the Cyber Age*, "was the most fundamental shift in the consumption of pornography in human history."

It is unsurprising, then, that when the internet arrived for the masses in the 1990s, all hell broke loose. Like their forefathers, consumers almost immediately put the new technology to use to watch people having sex. Pornographers, meanwhile, had content that was easily repurposed: Preexisting footage could be cut, edited and sold to websites.

Internet porn quickly became the first industry to profit from online sales. According to a report by the National Research Council, in

2001 the online adult industry in the U.S. generated about \$1 billion; by 2013, all porn sites had more visitors than Netflix, Amazon and Twitter combined.

Then, in 2016, came virtual reality.

Virtual reality as we have come to know it began in 2012 when 19-year-old Palmer Luckey launched a Kickstarter for what would become the world's first consumer-friendly, commercially successful VR headset: Oculus Rift. Luckey created Oculus with gamers in mind, but after his device was shown at 2012's E3 conference, he was flooded with offers from major tech investors. His Kickstarter raised \$2.4 million. In 2014, Mark Zuckerberg bought Luckey's company, Oculus VR, for \$2 billion.

Modern virtual-reality content is little more than 180- and 360-degree images repurposed; the same technology is used by Google Maps. In addition to Oculus and Google, the top players bringing these images to consumers via new viewing devices are Sony, Samsung and HTC Vive. Adult-entertainment companies investing heavily in VR pornographic content include BaDoink, Naughty America, VirtualRealPorn, Czech VR and VR Bangers.

These companies—and some of the guests at today's shoot—face two primary hurdles: figuring out what kind of VR content consumers want and determining how best to shoot that content.

Sam Burton owns Holotrope VR, which he co-founded to develop new techniques for shooting VR. He comes from a film and television background, but his start-up operates in relatively



unknown territory, so money isn't yet pouring in from risk-averse mainstream businesses.

"The companies we normally work with aren't really committing budgets," he says. "The adult industry is starting to spend money. Not to boil it down to just dollars, but we are a start-up."

So when Burton received BaDoink's request to film today's shoot, "it seemed like a good opportunity to bring in money for research and development, and to shoot in large volume," he says.

And that's how he found himself in this Beverly Hills home, doing his best to remain unobtrusive as Stevens walks around the house topless. To film her scene with Maxwell, Burton has brought two different camera setups. One includes multiple GoPro cameras configured in a 360-degree rig. The other involves two cameras with fish-eye lenses, the 180-degree angle of which is designed to mimic the human eye.

The experience of the consumer who will later watch this footage can only be described as entering—as promised—a new reality. After putting on the VR headset, users will see their own surroundings replaced by this all-white living room and beige couch. To their left will be a spectacular view of Los Angeles; to their right, the door through which Maxwell—playing the part of the vacuum salesman—has just entered. And in front of them will be Stevens standing on a plush carpet and writhing her way out of her shirt, then her skirt and stockings, and then slowly lowering herself onto her knees to commence fellatio.

The fullness of the immersion can't be overstated. VR porn is so engulfing that when the headset comes off after 25 minutes (or five, depending), it takes a good 10 seconds to reacclimate to the world in which you actually live. The experience is jarring, and it offers the staggering realization that with the mass introduction of VR, consumers who wish to truly escape their lives can do so. One can't help but imagine socially awkward men deciding that virtual-reality porn is easier—and just as satisfying—as having sex with a real woman, but without commitment or even social niceties.

Advances in VR are coming hard and fast, and Facebook is leading the charge. At its third annual Oculus Connect conference last year, the company unveiled a handful of new VR projects, including Oculus Avatars, a program that allows consumers to create personal avatars using customized face shapes,

clothing and skin tones (think metallic gold, forest green and shimmery purple). Mike Howard, Oculus Avatars' project manager, told conference attendees that there are "over a billion permutations of options" for designing your virtual self.

Extrapolating the avatar concept into the future—and into the realm of sex, which Facebook demurely avoided—means that soon we'll have the option of becoming idealized (or completely fake) versions of ourselves. Couldn't bag the hot cheerleader in high school? Make yourself the star football player in VR. Of course, that cheerleader probably isn't who she says she is either—but does it matter?

Facebook isn't the only VR pioneer, and some competitors are focusing exclusively on pornography. Among the most innovative is

VR PORN NOT ONLY BREAKS THE FOURTH WALL BUT DEMOLISHES IT. YOU'RE NO LONGER OBSERVING THE FANTASY; YOU'RE INSIDE IT.

Amsterdam-based Kiiroo. After pioneering a line of sex toys that can be operated from thousands of miles away, Kiiroo developed a program that attempts to bridge the most frequently cited gap in VR: You can see and hear what's going on, but you can't feel it. By syncing a male masturbator to virtual porn scenes, the program, FeelPornStars, allows users to physically experience the scene in real time. For instance: As you watch Stevens perform fellatio on your headset, your masturbator would be moving along with her.

Not everyone is convinced VR porn will take off. If the setup is too time-consuming, says Bryant Paul, it may miss the mark for consumers who just want to get off quickly. "If you can make it as easy to use as my computer, great," he says. "If you're creating technology that makes it harder, I don't think it's going to work."

As of the end of last year, VR hardware

hadn't sold as well as expected. In October, interactive-media research firm SuperData predicted that sales of VR headsets would hit 6.16 million in 2016. By November, that prediction had been downgraded to 4.12 million. The slow start is largely attributed to the high price of VR devices (a single headset can go for as much as \$800), the fact that consumers and tech companies are still feeling out the best use for the technology and the lack of a must-have VR app.

But experts are still optimistic. Digi-Capital, which advises virtual-reality businesses, predicts that by 2020 revenue from VR content and headsets will reach \$30 billion.

And for now, one truth is certain. "The thing that has been proven at this point," says Burton, "is that people will pay for porn."

Back in Beverly Hills, Christie Stevens is encountering some of the problems with shooting for VR that have yet to be ironed out. She and Maxwell have commenced the vaginal intercourse portion of the day, but she's getting no help from him. Usually it's the job of the male porn actor to help the female performer look good—angling her properly, making sure her back is arched and her breasts are on display—but here, the camera is strapped to Maxwell's shoulder to provide the best possible point-of-view angle. His primary responsibilities are staying hard and not moving.

Stevens, then, is doing all the work. She faces forward and straddles him, inserting his penis into her vagina while maintaining eye contact with the camera. She then stands up, turns around and rein-

serts him while facing backward, before finally engaging in what can only be described as a sexual triceps dip: Facing forward again, Stevens places her feet astride Maxwell's hips, her hands on the coffee table behind her, and slides onto his penis, all while maintaining an uncomfortable-looking crab position.

Editing isn't possible yet in virtual reality, so Stevens continues these sexual acrobatics for a single 25-minute shot with no break. That means she can't lube up, wipe sweat away or even rest her quaking muscles.

Was it difficult, I ask her afterward, to engage in such demanding physical labor? "I'm gonna be honest," she says. "It was a lot of work."

Was it harder to get turned on than it might have been if she was, say, on a bed with a participating partner? "It was fine," she says.

After all, she adds, dabbing her glistening forehead, "It's still sex." ■

COYOTE CRANE

PIRATES



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MARK HUNTER



PIRATES

at Play

Rachel Harris, Alyssa Arce, Gia Marie and Kayslee Collins show off their four-player skills in a gaming session hot enough to start an arcade fire









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HERITAGE

An intoxicating look into our archives



"It is an irony of our time that George Washington would be a criminal today, for he grew hemp at Mount Vernon, and he was not harvesting it for rope."
—Dr. Joel Fort, *Pot: A Rational Approach*, October 1969

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...This decision delighted the

defendant, Timothy Leary, and was no surprise a
all to lawyers who specialize in the fine points of
constitutional law. It had long been recognize
that the Marijuana Tax Act was "vulnerable"—
polite term meaning that the law had been hastily
drawn, rashly considered and railroaded through
Congress in a mood of old-maidish terror that spent
no time on the niceties of the Bill of Rights, scienti
fic fact or common sense.
Celebrations by marijuanaphiles and lamenta
tions by marijuanaphobes, however, are both pro
mature. The Court, while throwing out this on
inept piece of legislation, specifically declared that
Congress has the right to pass laws governing the
use, sale and possession of this drug (provided the
laws stay within the perimeter of the Constitution
And, of course, state laws against pot, which are
often far harsher than the Federal law, still remain
in effect.
There were two defects found by the Supreme Court
in the Federal anti-marijuana (continued on page 154)

Pot and Playboy

A 420 HISTORY

Donald Trump won the presidential election, but there was another big winner: pot. Now legal in 29 states and D.C., medical marijuana is available to more than half of Americans. But these newfound freedoms are based on state laws; federal law—which treats marijuana the same as heroin—hasn't changed. The incoming administration may decide to enforce federal laws, leaving vulnerable everyone from growers to smokers.

No matter what happens, we've got your back. PLAYBOY has been at the forefront of so many social issues (sexual freedoms, civil liberties, equal rights) that it's no surprise the magazine was

ahead of the curve on cannabis too. Founder Hugh Hefner recognized that marijuana, like sex, is an issue located at the intersection of public health, personal freedom and privacy. Naturally, Hef experimented with pot in the 1960s, mainly to enhance sex. Yet PLAYBOY's take on marijuana has never been simply and solely to advocate a good time. Instead, it has been to inform readers of their rights, to question the criminalization of a useful medical treatment and to present a fair-minded picture of pot and the politics surrounding it. This attitude reached beyond the magazine's pages; in 1970 the Playboy Foundation

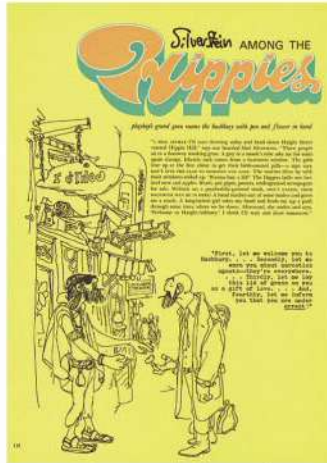
donated money to form the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws—a group that still works toward that eponymous goal.

"PLAYBOY was the first mass magazine to chronicle the emerging drug culture in a straightforward way," writes David Standish in *The Illustrated History of Playboy*. The magazine continues to report on marijuana from every angle imaginable—including what it can mean for your pleasure (see *How to Live the High Life*, p. 126). Dip into the PLAYBOY archives with us for a mellow hit of the first four decades of our wide-ranging cannabis coverage.—*Cat Auer*



November 1960

PLAYBOY gathers eight jazz players, a music critic, an attorney and a psychologist to talk about music and drugs. Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (left) remarks, "Nowadays every policeman can smell dope three miles away, and the guys are just scared." *Narcotics and the Jazz Musician* marks not only the inaugural Playboy Panel but also the beginning of the magazine's marijuana coverage.



July and August 1968

Cartoonist Shel Silverstein travels to San Francisco to report on the free-love scene. He returns with an illustrated report from the "Hashbury" that runs across two issues and includes humorous caricatures of pro-drug locals.

February 1970

PLAYBOY's expert panel assesses the "drug revolution." Writer William S. Burroughs (right) declares, "Cannabis is the least harmful of all the drugs in common use, with the exception of coffee and tea."



1960

1970

August 1962

The Prodigal Powers of Pot gives readers an even-handed evaluation of the drug and its history, noting its popularity among artists: "Allen Ginsberg, an outspoken enthusiast of marijuana, said recently that among the younger poets of his own circle, 'Almost everyone has experimented with it.... It's all part of their poetic—no, their metaphysical education.'"



October 1969

Dr. Joel Fort conducts an extensive inquiry into marijuana in *Pot: A Rational Approach* (opposite page), concluding: "Not only is marijuana comparatively harmless on the face of all the evidence but there are even reasons to believe it may be beneficial in some cases. We should not let lingering puritanical prejudices prevent us from investigating these [medical] areas further."





November 1976

We cover both ends of the marijuana spectrum in a single issue. One extreme finds blissful freedom at an Austin concert extravaganza, Willie Nelson's Third Annual Independence Day Outdoor Brain Fry, Ball Break and Mixed Doubles Doping, Picking and Trashing Ejacorama. But a Forum report on unjust marijuana laws in Missouri, where a teen with no criminal record was busted for selling a third of an ounce of pot and sentenced to 12 years (that was lenient; the maximum sentence would have been life behind bars), sobers us up.

1970

“Right now we’re the biggest financial supporter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, because I think making criminals out of people who smoke marijuana is very damaging to the social fabric of this society.”
—Hugh Hefner, Playboy Interview, January 1974

March 1978

A helpful Forum report lists countries that have decriminalized pot and those with the harshest penalties for possession. Two months later, a related editorial note appears in Forum: “We receive several letters a week from young jail or prison inmates who are astounded that they are locked up for merely possessing a little pot.”

A "Playboy Forum" Report
POT LAWS IN OTHER LANDS
many foreign countries may lead the U.S. in the worldwide movement toward marijuana-law reform

The following report describes the sweeping laws and administrative practices in various foreign countries. It was prepared by the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws from information supplied to the Bureau of Information by U.S. Embassies and was published in greater detail in NORA's newsletter, The Leaflet, which would circulate widely every country in the world.

COUNTRIES THAT HAVE PASSED DECRIMINALIZATION LAWS
Chad: Small fee, required for consumption of small amounts.
Denmark: Possession of up to 10 grams—total quantity—no penalty.
France: Possession for personal use not subject to prosecution, unless possession in substantial quantities.
Germany: Possession of small amounts for personal use is not a crime.
Italy: Possession of small amounts, but often, usually leads to subject to substantial or other penalties.
Japan: Possession for personal use is not a crime.
Netherlands: Possession for personal use is not a crime.
Switzerland: Possession for personal use is not a crime.
United Kingdom: Possession for personal use is not a crime.

COUNTRIES WITH SEVERE PENALTIES FOR POSSESSION
Australia: 2-10 years.
Canada: 2-10 years.
France: 2-10 years.
Germany: 2-10 years.
Italy: 2-10 years.
Japan: 2-10 years.
United States: 2-10 years.

COUNTRIES WITH MODERATE PENALTIES FOR POSSESSION
Austria: 2-10 years.
Belgium: 2-10 years.
Canada: 2-10 years.
France: 2-10 years.
Germany: 2-10 years.
Italy: 2-10 years.
Japan: 2-10 years.
United States: 2-10 years.

March 1980

Our reporter asks, *Who'd Profit From Legal Marijuana?* The answer: government. “Individual marijuana busts for making a buy or possessing the stuff are not only socially costly, they instantly catapult an otherwise law-abiding person into a criminal role or, worse yet, into a prison cell. Meanwhile, marijuana is a flourishing, multibillion-dollar industry that’s not contributing a nickel in tax revenues. Why not explore an alternate solution—legalization, regulation and taxation?” More than 30 years later, smart state governments are, of course, already pursuing this path; Colorado took in more than \$135 million in marijuana tax revenue in 2015.



1980

April 1982

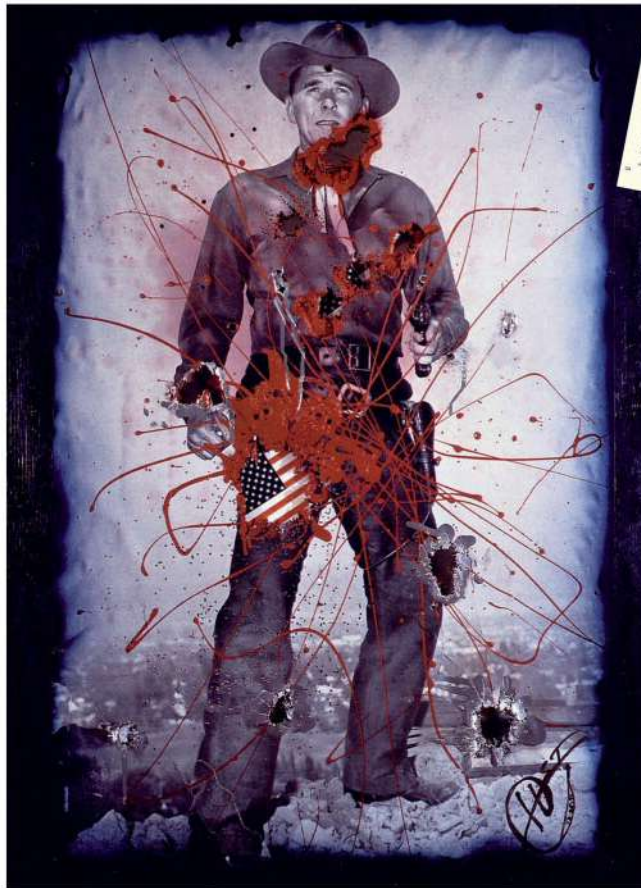
In *The War on Drugs: A Special Report*, Laurence Gonzales reveals: “In the early 1970s, the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse undertook the most comprehensive research survey of marijuana ever attempted. The commission ultimately found that, in the words of one of its members, ‘what we have done in this country is create a Drug-Abuse Industrial Complex, a new growth industry that spends more than a billion dollars a year.’”





October 1992

Presidential contender Governor Bill Clinton causes a stir when he admits to trying marijuana—though he says he didn't inhale. The remarks of the future “playboy president” don't sit well with our resident gonzo journalist, Hunter S. Thompson, who tells PLAYBOY in *The Unmaking of the President*: “When they asked him about it, he should have told them to crawl back where they came from. ‘What do you mean did I inhale? I inhale everything...it is my business to inhale. I'd die if I didn't inhale.’ Every intelligent person in this country who ever smoked marijuana would have laughed with him—instead of at him.”



PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: CHEECH AND CHONG

a candid—and amazingly coherent—conversation about sex, drugs, humor and a ton of money with two guys only a mother, so to speak, could love

Three hundred million. That's the reported price of just fifteen minutes of Cheech and Chong's stand-up comedy on the Las Vegas Strip. It's a record for a comedy act. And that's just their most recent show. In the past, Cheech and Chong have made three popular and profitable, and all of their right albums have gone gold. They hit double-digit, actually, their comedy act with their first album, *The Cheech and Chong Show*. In their most recent album, *Let's Get Back*, Cheech and Chong have done a lot of things that other comedians haven't done. They've done a lot of things that other comedians haven't done. They've done a lot of things that other comedians haven't done.



“I’m not the number one comedian in the world,” says Cheech. “I’m not the number one comedian in the world.”

September 1982

PLAYBOY: What do you do with all that amazing-looking marijuana you use in your movies—send it back to wardrobe? CHEECH: No, the crew always steals it. We went through three huge batches on our third movie. CHONG: Too bad we don't have Small-a-Vision.



1990

November 1992

Hef pens *Just Say No*, an editorial exhorting the drug war begun by Nixon—“It corrupted the entire country and made violence and crime a way of life in America”—and perpetuated by Reagan and Bush. He sympathizes with the many Americans behind bars for minor drug offenses, labeling them “political prisoners.”

October 1996

In March NORML executive director Keith Stroup testifies before Congress about marijuana laws; seven months later, *Forum* excerpts his testimony: “The responsible use of marijuana causes no harm to society and should be of no interest to the government in a free society.... The war on drugs has become a war on marijuana smokers.... This is a travesty of justice.” Pictured at right: one of the many NORML ads PLAYBOY ran over the years.

“Penalties against possession of a drug should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself.”



A graphic of a NORML petition form with fields for name, address, and phone number, and checkboxes for 'YES' and 'RUSH ME'.

A large graphic featuring the word 'FORUM' in a bold font, with a background image of a marijuana plant and a person. It includes a quote from Spike Lee and text about marijuana legalization.

“We used to be terrified if we even saw somebody taking a puff on a joint. But now, if you’re a parent, you pray to God that’s all your child is doing is smoking marijuana.” —Spike Lee, *Playboy Interview*, July 1991

August 1998

A doctor and marijuana researcher realizes almost too late that marijuana could ease the pain and nausea of his son suffering from terminal leukemia. In *Prescribing the Forbidden Medicine* (far left), Lester Grinspoon's declaration is still relevant today: “[Marijuana’s] Schedule I classification persists—politically entrenched but medically absurd, legally questionable and morally wrong.”

READ THE FULL ARTICLES AT IPLAYBOY.COM.

Priscilla Wright

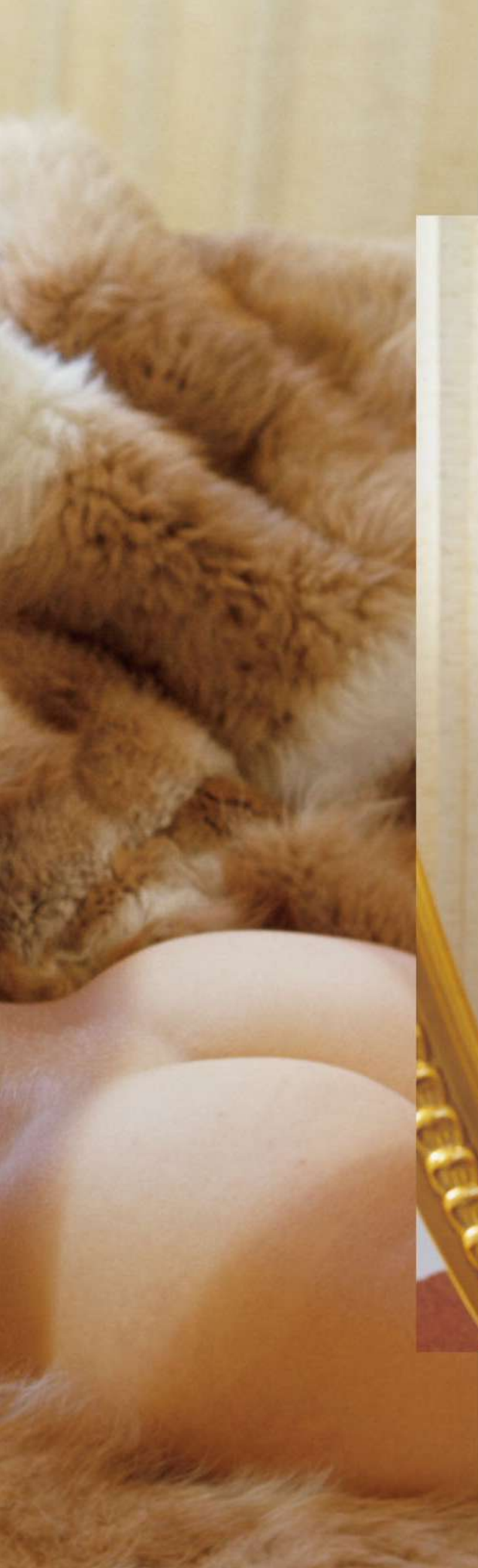
Miss March 1966

You don't normally associate timeless Centerfolds with a professional-grade golf game, but **Priscilla Wright** is no ordinary Playmate. The then 22-year-old Santa Barbara native played almost daily (she won the title of Southern California Junior Champion at the age of 13). The sun-kissed, quintessential SoCal blonde had a few words of wisdom regarding men: "Too many of Hollywood's handsomest guys turn out to be total phonies once you've looked under their photogenic surfaces." Like Priscilla, some truths withstand the test of time.









Victoria Cunningham

Miss April 1975

Enduring beauty **Victoria Cunningham** projects an angelic look—and an addictive allure. As a flight-attendant-in-training she was kicked out of her program for drinking champagne but found her place as a Jet Bunny on Hugh Hefner's private plane. Victoria became a popular Bunny at the Los Angeles Playboy Club, nabbed Centerfold status and eventually appeared on the March 1976 cover.







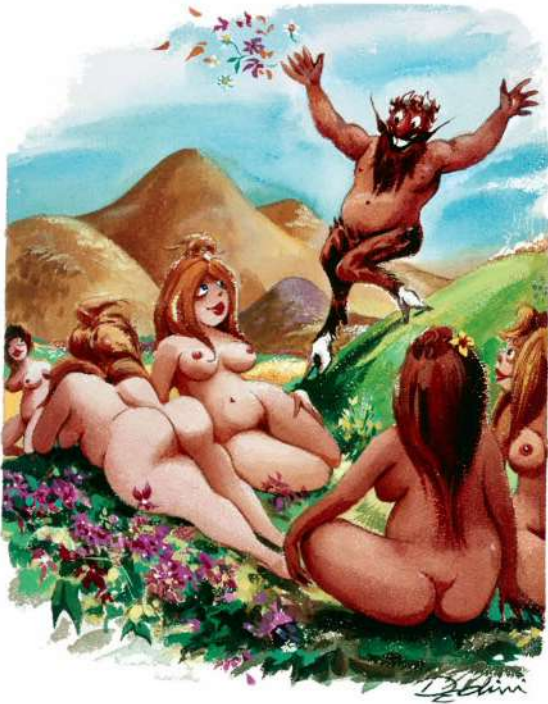


CLASSIC CARTOONS

From vernal to carnal, enjoy our spring-themed favorites



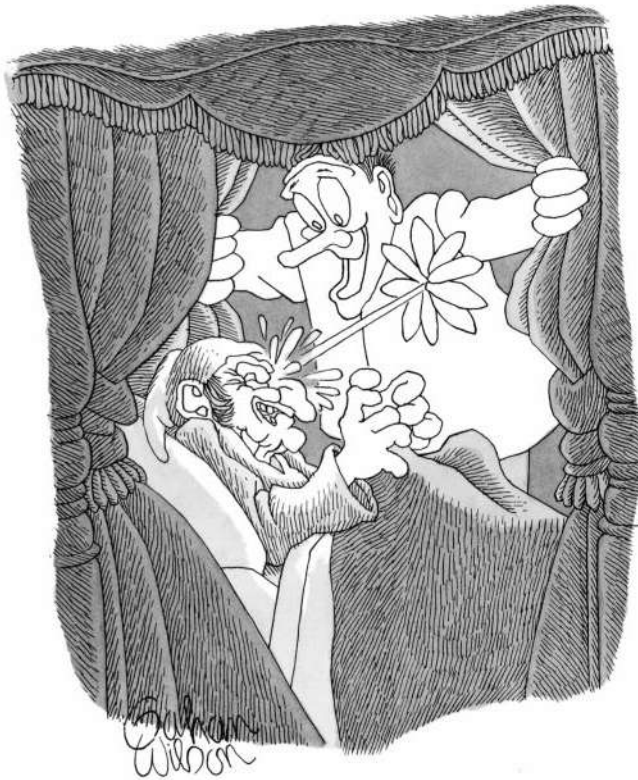
"It's hard to believe you grew them from two tiny bulbs."



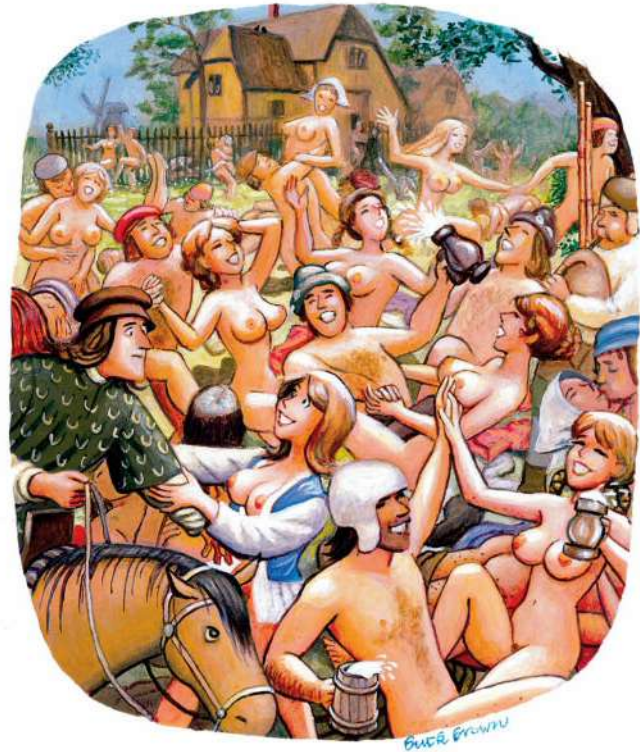
"Rites of spring, anyone?"



"Well, Murphy, if April isn't the cruelest month, it's not because we didn't try."



"Hi! I'm the Ghost of April Fools' Day Past!"



"We're celebrating the end of winter with a flurry of dancing, plowing and planting; for some reason it's called spring break!"



"Remember, flower child, watch your pollen."

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★ WINNER ★
— Truckin' Magazine

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HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★
MOVER'S DOLLY
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PREDATOR SUPER COUPON

8750 PEAK/7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS
ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown
ITEM 68525/69677/63087/63088 CALIFORNIA ONLY



SUPER QUIET

76 dB Noise Level

SUPER COUPON
~~\$599.99~~
\$529.99

Customer Rating ★★★★★
SAVE \$469
comp at \$999

LIMIT 4 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 6/28/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★
AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER
ITEM 69594
69955
42292 shown



SAVE 85%
SUPER COUPON
~~\$89.99~~
\$49.99

comp at \$34.99

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CENTRALPNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL WITH 3/8" x 50 FT. HOSE
ITEM 93897 shown
69265/62344



SUPER COUPON
~~\$799.99~~
\$599.99

Customer Rating ★★★★★
SAVE \$138
comp at \$198.45

LIMIT 3 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 6/28/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

COVERPRO SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★
10 FT. x 20 FT. PORTABLE CAR CANOPY
NEW
ITEM 63054/60728
69034/62858 shown



SAVE \$106
SUPER COUPON
~~\$205.99~~
\$149.99

comp at \$205.99

LIMIT 5 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 6/28/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

PITTSBURGH #1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★★
RAPID PUMP® 3 TON LOW PROFILE HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK
Weights 73 lbs.

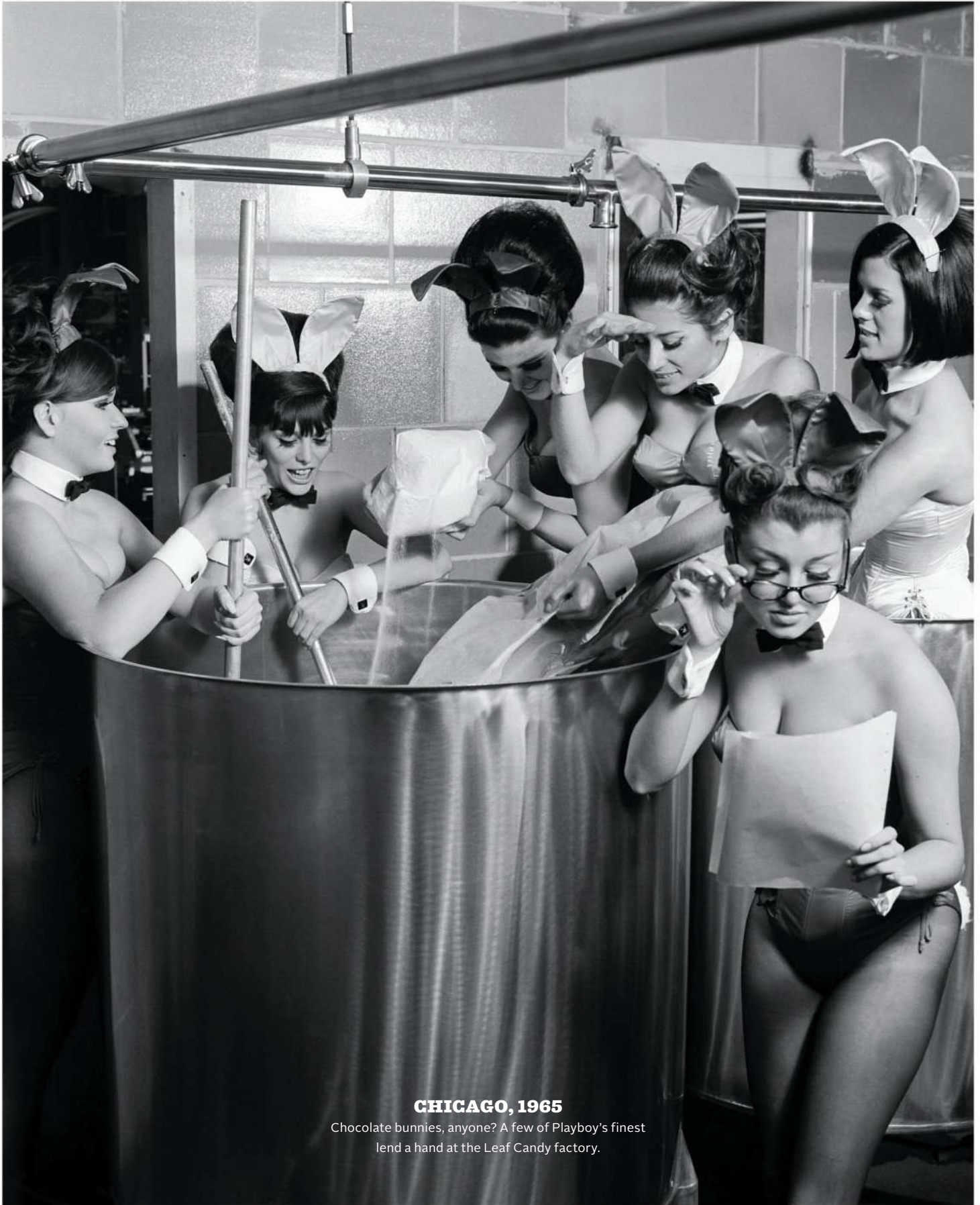


SAVE \$130
SUPER COUPON
~~\$799.99~~
\$499.99

comp at \$269.99

LIMIT 5 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 6/28/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

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CHICAGO, 1965

Chocolate bunnies, anyone? A few of Playboy's finest lend a hand at the Leaf Candy factory.



BODY GLOVE



1968

1:18-Scale 1968 BULLITT

Mustang GT Die Cast With Steve McQueen Action Figure!

A lifelike figure of Steve McQueen as Bullitt is INCLUDED!

(Figure is movable, not bendable.)

BIG 1:18-Scale Die Cast Measures 10" Long!



The hood, trunk and doors open.

Plus the interior boasts a detailed dash, workable steering and cool bucket seats — all reflecting the race-inspired detail of this iconic muscle car!



For Fastest Service, Order Online Now At HamiltonCollection.com/Bullitt

Over, please

365-Day Guarantee

At Hamilton, your satisfaction is unconditionally guaranteed! If not delighted with your die cast, you may return it to us within one year for a full refund — including shipping and service!

LIMITED-TIME OFFER!

Orders will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Please respond as soon as possible to reserve the "1:18-Scale Ford Mustang GT Fastback '68 Bullitt" in your name.

*Add a total of \$20.00 for shipping and service. Deliveries to FL and IL will be billed appropriate sales tax. All orders are subject to product availability and credit approval. Allow 6 to 8 weeks after initial installment for shipment.

09-06058-001-JIS

The Hamilton Collection

9204 Center For The Arts Drive, Niles, Illinois 60714-1300

SEND NO MONEY NOW!

YES! Please reserve the "1:18-Scale Ford Mustang GT Fastback '68 Bullitt" die cast for me as described in this announcement.

Name _____
(Please print clearly.)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (Optional) _____

Signature _____

09-06058-001-E30201

Own a replica Mustang made famous by "The King of Cool"!

The ultra-sleek and powerful 1968 Ford Mustang GT Fastback gained instant stardom when Steve McQueen raced it in hot pursuit in one of the most famous chase sequences ever filmed in the hit thriller, Bullitt!

Now fuel your passion for this iconic muscle car with the "1:18-Scale Ford Mustang GT Fastback '68 Bullitt." Expertly engineered, this superior die cast arrives ready to impress — *fully decked out with every detail of the original!* You'll admire its race-inspired grille ... gleaming chrome-colored trim ... and glistening Highland Green paint finish — the exact color used in the blockbuster movie.

Special BONUS — Steve McQueen figure INCLUDED!

As an added bonus, you'll also receive a figure of Steve McQueen just as we remember him, posed beside his Mustang before racing in hot pursuit through the streets of San Francisco in one of the most unforgettable crime thriller chase sequences ever filmed.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed or your money back!

This 1:18-scale Collector's Edition Die Cast can be yours for four installments of \$32.49*. **Send no money now;** we'll bill your first payment prior to shipment. As always, we assure your satisfaction with our *365-Day Guarantee* or your money back. After all, unlike the fender-crunching action-packed underworld of Bullitt, there is absolutely no risk here!

Drive home the thrill of Steve McQueen's super-cool Mustang with this die-cast replica and figure set. Reply today!

HamiltonCollection.com/Bullitt

▼ Detach Here and Mail Today! ▼

Mail Today!



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9204 CENTER FOR THE ARTS DR
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Superior engineering in 1:18 scale!

Lift the hood of this legendary 390 V-8-powered 1968 Ford Mustang GT and you'll find a fully articulated engine compartment, complete with real rubber brake and fuel lines.



The doors open to reveal a fully articulated interior, with bucket seats, reflecting the race-inspired detail of this legendary muscle machine!



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09-06058-001-JIS



NEARLY
3 FEET
WIDE!

Shown smaller than
actual impressive sizes:
Display, 32" wide;
Plates, 6¾" diameter.

Each edition
Glow-in-the-Dark



THE WILDERNESS GUARDIANS

Glow-in-the-Dark Plate Collection

- James A. Meger's wolf artistry framed by a sculptural border with real feathers and beads
- The plates glow in the dark after exposure to a light source
- Bow-and-arrow display features feathers, beads, a metal rail, and a dreamcatcher on leather ties

RESERVATION APPLICATION

SEND NO MONEY NOW

THE
BRAIDFORD EXCHANGE
COLLECTIBLES

9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

YES—Please reserve the *Wilderness Guardians Glow-in-the-Dark Collection* for me, beginning with "Call of the Night." I need send no money now. I will be billed before shipment. *Limit: one per order.* Please Respond Promptly

*Plus \$8.99 shipping and service per plate and the display. Limited-edition presentations restricted to 95 firing days. Please allow 4-8 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Display ships second. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Mrs. Mr. Ms.

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address

City

State

Zip

Email (optional)

904298-E30291

When the lights go down, the noble spirit of the wolf shines bright

Deep in the forest, the alpha wolf listens keenly for the tiniest sound. Moonlight washes a silvery radiance over his thick fur coat, and his eyes glow in the darkness. Lifting his voice in a haunting song, he tells the pack that all is well. Nearby, the Native American brave on guard by the campfire silently thanks his Wolf Spirit brother for sharing his night watch while the tribe sleeps.

You can experience this mystical reassurance of powerful Wolf Spirits guarding you night and day with the *Wilderness Guardians Glow-in-the-Dark Plate Collection*, only from The Bradford Exchange.

Each hand-crafted edition glows in the dark!

The *Wilderness Guardians Glow-in-the-Dark Plate Collection* begins with "Call of the Night" and features artist James Meger's prized art brought to life on oval plates accented with sculptural borders, feathers, and beads. Innovative glow-in-the-dark imaging technology lets you enjoy the artwork by day and night. Simply expose the plates to any light source, and witness the wolf's spirit emerge. The custom-designed, metal rail "bowstring" display showcases the plates with hand-sculpted, hand-painted detail. It captures the look of real birch wood, fur, and rawhide with real feathers, beads, and leather ties.

A Design Exclusive — Order now!

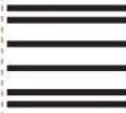
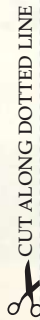
Beginning with "Call of the Night," each edition and display in the *Wilderness Guardians Glow-in-the-Dark Plate Collection* comes with a money-back guarantee and is issued in a limited edition. Act now to acquire the three editions and display in two installments of \$19.99, for a total of \$39.99* each. Display ships second, an \$85 value for the cost of a single plate! Send no money now; you will be billed before shipment. Just mail the Reservation Application today!



Each edition glows in the dark!

www.bradfordexchange.com/904298

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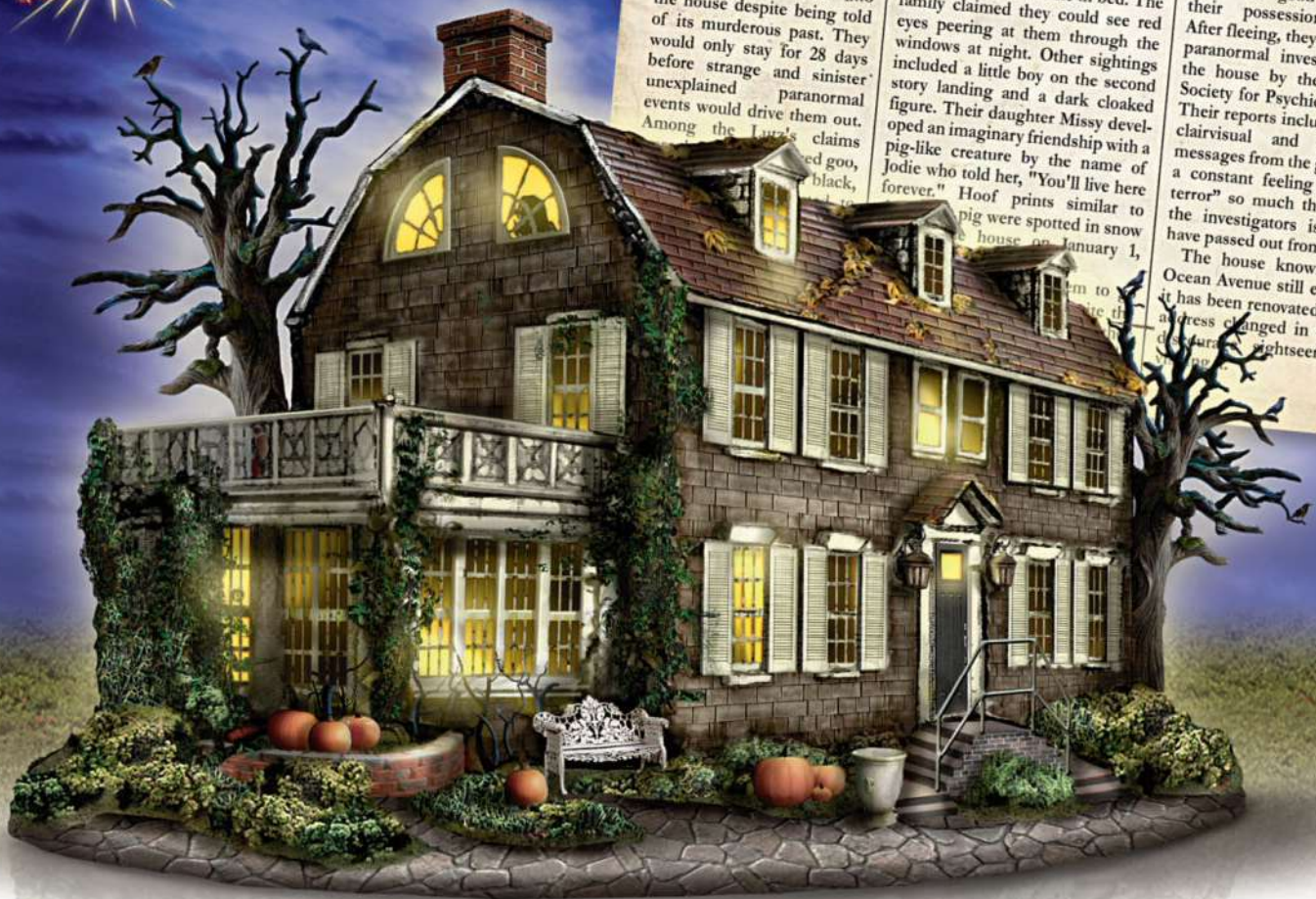


AMERICA'S "MOST HAUNTED" COLLECTION

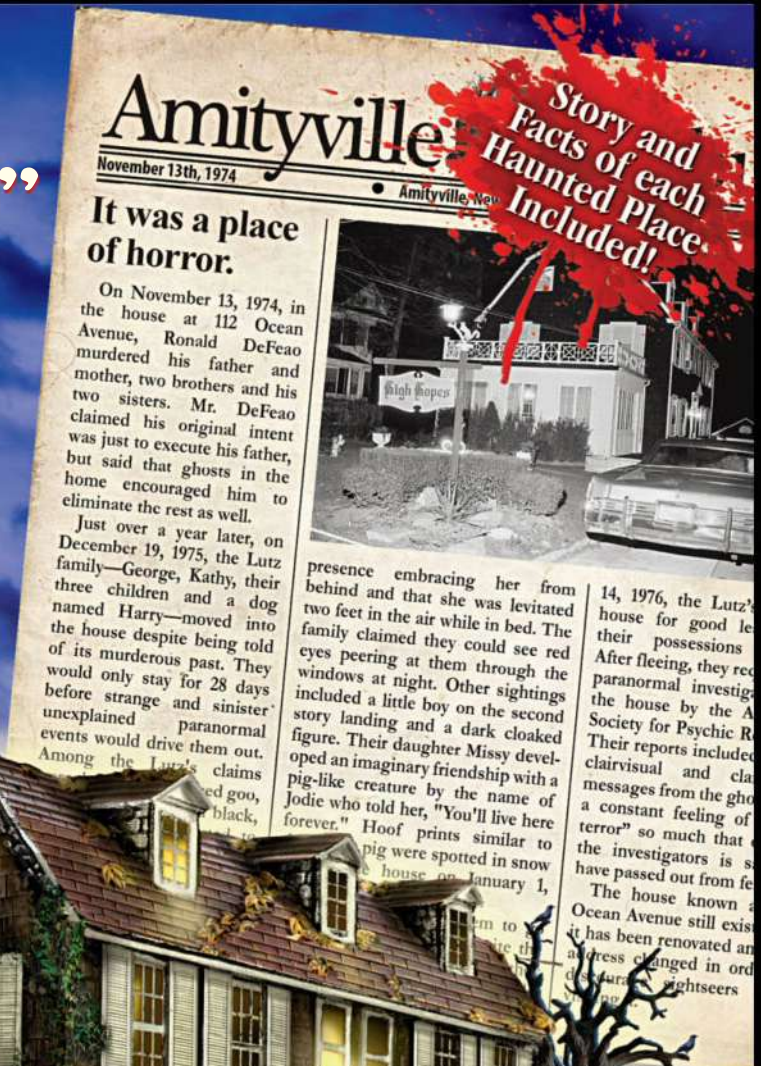
Eerily illuminated handcrafted & hand-painted sculptures inspired by America's spookiest and most chilling places!

LIGHTS UP

Shipment One
"Amityville"



Sculpture measures approx. 7.5" L x 5" W x 5.5" H.



It was a place of horror.

On November 13, 1974, in the house at 112 Ocean Avenue, Ronald DeFeao murdered his father and mother, two brothers and his two sisters. Mr. DeFeao claimed his original intent was just to execute his father, but said that ghosts in the home encouraged him to eliminate the rest as well.

Just over a year later, on December 19, 1975, the Lutz family—George, Kathy, their three children and a dog named Harry—moved into the house despite being told of its murderous past. They would only stay for 28 days before strange and sinister unexplained paranormal events would drive them out. Among the Lutz's claims



presence embracing her from behind and that she was levitated two feet in the air while in bed. The family claimed they could see red eyes peering at them through the windows at night. Other sightings included a little boy on the second story landing and a dark cloaked figure. Their daughter Missy developed an imaginary friendship with a pig-like creature by the name of Jodie who told her, "You'll live here forever." Hoof prints similar to pig were spotted in snow in the house on January 1,

14, 1976, the Lutz's house for good left their possessions. After fleeing, they reported paranormal investigations of the house by the American Society for Psychic Research. Their reports included clairvisual and clairaudient messages from the ghost of a constant feeling of "terror" so much that the investigators is said to have passed out from fear. The house known as 112 Ocean Avenue still exists. It has been renovated and its address changed in order to deter sightseers.

YES! Please enter my order for the America's "Most Haunted" Collection for me as described in this announcement.

SEND NO MONEY NOW

Certificate of Authenticity and 365-Day, Unconditional Guarantee

*Plus \$9.99 shipping and service. All sales subject to acceptance and product availability. Please allow 4-6 weeks after initial payment for shipment.

www.bradfordexchange.com/Haunted

NOT AVAILABLE IN ANY STORE!—PLEASE RESPOND PROMPTLY

THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE

HAWTHORNE VILLAGE DIVISION

9210 N. MARYLAND ST.,
NILES, IL 60714-1322

Signature _____

Mrs. Mr. Ms.
Name (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY) _____

Address _____

Apt. No. _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

E-mail _____

917976-E30201

EXPLORE THE MYSTERIES OF SOME OF THE MOST HAUNTED PLACES IN AMERICA WITH THE AMERICA'S MOST HAUNTED VILLAGE COLLECTION, AVAILABLE ONLY FROM HAWTHORNE VILLAGE.

Edgar Allen Poe once claimed, "The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague." And proof of that can be found in the places where the once living—their lives torn from them through some unspeakable horror and tragedy—now roam as spirits clinging to what was familiar to them in life. Hawthorne presents to you these haunts where ghosts rule the night and terror lurks behind every door in our exclusive *America's "Most Haunted" Collection*. Each eerily illuminated handcrafted and hand-painted sculpture is faithful to its spooky namesake and features a wealth of detailing like the ghoulish apparitions that are seen peering out from their windows. Plus they all include a story card detailing the macabre history of each place.

Not Available in Any Store. Order today ... if you dare!

Start your collection with Shipment One, "Amityville," at the attractive \$59.97* issue price payable in three easy installments of just \$19.99, the first billed before shipment. Subsequent shipments—each billed separately at the same attractive issue price—will arrive about every other month. Your second shipment will be "Franklin Castle," that with its blood-soaked past, is claimed to be the most haunted house in the heartland. You may cancel at any time and your satisfaction is assured with our best-in-the-business 365-day guarantee. To order yours, you need *send no money now*. Simply complete and mail the post paid Reservation Application today!



EACH HISTORIC HAUNTED PLACE IN THIS VILLAGE COLLECTION IS FULLY SCULPTED AND INDIVIDUALLY HANDCRAFTED IN ARTIST'S RESIN TO CAPTURE EVERY CHILLING DETAIL, AND HAND-PAINTED TO BRING THE PRESENTATION TO LIFE

THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE

HAWTHORNE VILLAGE DIVISION

LIMITED TIME OFFER!
Mail this today to reserve your nightmarish collection!

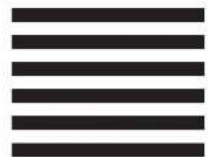


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Peter Griffin Collector's Stein



**"I'm in shape.
Round is a shape."
-Peter Griffin**

Shown much smaller than actual size of appr. 9 3/4 inches tall

**Enjoy Family Guy™
Again and Again
and Again...**

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Order online! www.bradfordexchange.com/famgustein

RESERVATION APPLICATION SEND NO MONEY NOW



9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

YES. Please reserve the *Peter Griffin Collector's Stein* for me as described in this announcement.

Limit: one per order.

Please Respond Promptly

*Plus \$4.99 shipping and service. Limited-edition presentation restricted to 95 firing days. Please allow 4-8 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

E-mail (optional) _____

01-25967-001-E30291

Over, please
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All Rights Reserved.

Peter Griffin Collector's Stein

You don't have to go as far as the Pawtucket Brewery or the Drunken Clam to raise one to Peter Griffin, the *Family Guy*[™], himself! Now the all-new *Peter Griffin* Collector's Stein celebrates everyone's favorite portly patriarch as a fully-sculpted porcelain stein. Officially licensed and available exclusively from The Bradford Exchange, Peter not only IS the stein, he's the stein he is holding and so on and so on—a perfect salute to the multi-layered comedy of *Family Guy*[™]. With a *Family Guy*[™] logo on the sculpted handle and metal thumb rest, it makes a perfect tribute to TV's funniest dad.

Act now to get yours in four installments of only \$24.99 each, for a total of \$99.99*. The edition is limited to just 95 firing days and *Heirloom Porcelain*[®] requires time-intensive hand-crafting. Our 365-Day Money-Back Guarantee assures your complete satisfaction. To order, send no money now. Just complete and mail the Reservation Application to reserve your *Peter Griffin* Collector's Stein today!



Every detail from multiple chins to vague expression is perfectly rendered on the stein...



www.bradfordexchange.com/famguystein

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



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The stein Peter is holding is Peter, too, and so on and so on...



TELL DARKER TALES

BORN TO LEAD

Chieftain
Dark Horse

INDIAN MOTORCYCLE
• COMPANY •

1901

A presence that refuses to be ignored. Matte black from nose to tail. And the dominant Thunder Stroke® 111 V-Twin. You want the lead? Take it. With the Indian® Chieftain Dark Horse®. This is power in its rawest form.

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Indian®

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MOTORCYCLE