

the dirtbag times



inside: so now what? - creepy horse does online dating - surely i will die alone - minivan aficionado - the return of the son of 11 days - micromusing - the fire that walks with us - drawing comfort in a world of discomfort - faking talent with a.i. - aging gracefully - call.write.rinse.repeat. - them and the horse they rode in on - dinos



DRAWING COMFORT IN A WORLD OF DISCOMFORT

**the dirtbag times is a
magazine for dirtbags
by dirtbags.**

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kelly menace

art splendidness
katie killer, rowan menace, & wonko
zuckerberg with maren farmer, tish
jackson, william daniel thompson, & tony
willingham

print jockey
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**folks that did the other
shit for us**

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frogg - spring pearson - rented mule -
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I had some mixed feelings drawing this month's cover. From the moment I finished the January cover, I knew this month's cover would be a sweet Dingo and Toonces number because, duh, Valentine's Day.

Toonces is my big, sweet, snugly floofy boy I got the year Hurricane Harvey dumped two feet of water in my backyard. Dingo is a mini Aussie who was rescued from a breeder and has gone from being afraid of wind and shadows to being a whip smart, mischevious lil stinker. I love them so much.

Leading up to the inauguration, I knew things were going to be bad. I didn't know how bad. It's been a flurry of dehumanizing, destabilizing executive orders, memos, and office freezes and dis-solutions. We're literally in the middle of a coup being perpetrated by billionaires.

I struggled with the subject matter of the cover amongst all of this. I thought maybe I should do something more relevant. That maybe a selection of the finest billionaires' and oligarchs' heads, presented on platters — nay, just heaped together in a pile, IDF style, might be better. Or maybe the president and man who bought his presidency in sweet embrace, sharing a Valentine's smooch. Something serious, monotone, that would really communicate how a lot of us feel right now.

I told Kelly about my conflict about the cover, and he reassured me with something incredibly sweet. We come from a culture of making things for the community, and one year, I made buttons of Toonces and Zoot (our old Aussie girl) and gave them to all of our friends. A bunch of you in Bryan probably have them, and Kelly wears them on one of his guitar straps. He said that a lot of people who had never met these two fuzz butts learned about them through the art I made for the *979Represent* covers, the previous iteration of this paper. They were constant mascots, and even grace the cover image for *The Dirtbag Times* staff Facebook group.

That made me reconsider. This is my 5x6 space, and if these bastards are making me rethink something I enjoy doing, then that's just the more reason to do what I enjoy — not what I feel obligated to do. I like happy, silly drawings. I like bright colors. And I like hearing that some people really enjoy them.

They want us to be tired, worn down, and pliable, but we will keep being bright and loud and ourselves. — **KATIE KILLER**

CALL. WRITE. RINSE. REPEAT.

The most important political office is that of the private citizen. — Louis Brandeis



At this point, the phrase *executive order* lands in my stomach like a sucker punch. Not because I didn't expect it — I did. Not because I didn't see it coming — I did. But because, even after watching the normalization of top-down authoritarian decision-making, the sheer audacity of it still takes my breath away.

We were told — warned, really — that this second terms meant executive orders on steroids. That, freed from the pressures of reelection, the current president would hit the gas pedal on his personal agendas with nothing to lose and no voters left to woo. Turns out, that warning wasn't an exaggeration. With the stroke of a pen, the president is reshaping the nation, circumventing the slow (but vital) slog of legislative process, and tossing aside opposition as though it were nothing more than a nuisance.

So what do we do? Scream into the void? Post an outraged meme? Probably...but those things alone won't cut it. What we need to — what we *must* — do, is contact our representatives. And then contact them again. And again. And keep doing it until our fingers cramp from dialing and our inboxes are full of automated "Thank you for your message" replies.

I know what you're thinking: *It won't matter!* I get it. I do. It's easy to fall into apathy, to believe that Congress is too broken, that elected officials are too self-serving, that we, the people, have lost our leverage. But if that were true, lobbyists wouldn't spend millions to sway our elected officials. If that were true, corporations wouldn't pour billions into campaigns. If that were true, they wouldn't be so damn scared of losing their seats. *They work for us*, and we are still their constituents, regardless of who signs what resolution or order.

This isn't about political affiliation. It doesn't matter who you voted for last election or who

you'll vote for next. What matters is that unchecked executive power — no matter who wields it — is dangerous. In the case of who holds it now, we've gone beyond dangerous to apocalyptically catastrophic. It erodes the balance of government and leaves Congress little more than a spectator. Whether you support or oppose the policies being rammed through right now, the precedent being set should terrify you. Because one day, it might not be someone you like wielding the pen.

So call. Write. Email. Show up at town halls. Demand to be heard.

When they say, "There's nothing we can do," remind them that their silence is complicity.

When they say, "It's out of our hands," remind them that their job is literally to *check* the Executive Branch.

When they say, "We're focusing on other priorities," remind them that their priority is supposed to be *you*.

And don't stop. The worst thing we can do is fall into exhaustion, to let the constant barrage of executive orders wear us down until we throw up our hands and accept this as the new normal. This is not normal. It wasn't normal last month. It won't be normal next month. And it sure as hell isn't normal now.

The moment we stop caring and resisting is the moment we lose. Not just on this policy or that bill, but on the principle of governance itself. So pick up the phone. Open your email. Write the letter. Keep pushing back. Keep resisting. Keep holding them accountable.

Because if we don't, who will?
— PAMALYN ROSE-BEELER



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THE SON OF THE RETURN OF 11 DAYS

The Orange Curtain has descended upon the United States of America yet again. We have 47 more issues of *The Dirtbag Times* to get through before we can write about some other douchebag in the White House. At the time of writing it will be eleven days since Donald Trump was officially sworn in (though he didn't actually touch the Bible his trophy wife held so does it really count?) as President #47. And boy did he get to work with all of the executive orders he's been saving up in his pocketsets. If you will recall, he vomited a large mass of royal decrees in the first eleven days in office as President #45 so he's real good at wielding that Sharpie for signing stuff.

If you haven't had a chance to catch up because, like many, you are limiting your participation in mass media at the moment, let me give you the lowlights of Trump's regal demands:

- The United States will remove itself from the Paris Climate Accords...again as well as the World Health Organization;
- More than 1500 January 6 terrorists charged with a crime have been granted pardons for their crimes;
- The TikTok ban that he used to be for but now that they write him checks he's totally against will be temporarily rescinded;
- Nearly 80 of Pres. Biden's executive actions regarding racial equity and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals have been rescinded, as has Pres. Biden's action to remove Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism;
- Make it so he can fire federal employees easier if they aren't loyal enough. There is also a federal hiring freeze and all federal employees that are retained will no longer be able to telework;
- Title IX will no longer be used to protect against discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation;
- Restore the 2017 executive order deportation criteria (everyone in the country illegally is subject, not just criminals);
- Set an unconstitutional ban on birthright citizenship;
- Rename Mt. Denali and the Gulf of Mexico;
- Revoke electric vehicle amount targets;
- Declare an energy emergency so the administration can do whatever they want on energy policy (drill baby drill);
- An end to the "weaponization of the federal government";
- Declare an "America First" policy directive to the Secretary of State;
- Establish DOGE (the Department of Government Efficiency) currently being run by non-

elected or congressionally appointed billionaires and their interns);

- Remove barriers to American leadership in Artificial Intelligence;
- And "Turn the water on" in California and remove permitting "obstacles" in North Carolina for road and bridge rebuilding post-Helene.

We have also seen many of his partisan election-denying, January 6 terrorist, grift stroker, reality TV star buddies nominated to cabinet positions and some still struggling through the nomination process. Meanwhile, ICE has started made for television raids and we've also seen the country's first major policy-related disaster. An American Eagle flight hit an Army Blackhawk chopper on a descent into Reagan National in DC, killing crew and passengers of both aircraft. Trump blames Obama, Biden, Buttigieg, diversity/equity/inclusion, and the disabled for causing the accident, instead of the perfect storm he created by firing the FAA director, freezing air traffic controller hiring, disbanding the Aviation Safety Advisory Committee, and his executive order to buy out existing federal employees (TSA employees as well). His social media accounts suggest the people involved were "stupid" and his intuitive connection of the accident to his political rivals and their policies to be "common sense."

Whew! That's a lot of fascism in a goddamn hurry. It's like a yearlong shitstorm crammed into 11 days. It is utterly exhausting, and we have so much more time left to go! That said, I'd like to draw attention to the first eleven days of his first presidency and the fury of executive orders. His 2017 executive orders set the stage for removing insurance from 20 million Americans and making it impossible for the uninsured with pre-existing conditions to obtain insurance; the border wall between Mexico and the United States will be built but instead of Mexico paying for it, Americans will pay for it with a 20% tax on Mexican goods; America will no longer accept refugees from Syria, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen; he has removed career military and intelligence officers from the National Security Council in favor of his nonveteran non-spook fake news cronies; any new federal regulation must come with the abolishment of two others; the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines will proceed as planned through native and national park land; America will withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Deal and renegotiate NAFTA; and the so-called "Mexico City Policy" for enforcing bans on federal funds to foreign groups that perform, lobby for, or even know how to spell the word "abortion".

Trump didn't exactly make all of that happen during his first term. His Republican cohort has tried and tried and tried to destroy the Affordable Care Act and its safeguards and continues to fail. The

pipelines are not yet completed due to executive orders by Pres. Joe Biden. But if that makes you feel better, you will notice that the 2017 executive orders on Mexico City Policy and the Trans-Pacific Partnership have been rendered moot. Trump succeeded in destroying NAFTA in 2020 and Trump's Supreme Court appointments overturned Roe Vs. Wade allowing for state abortion bans in 2022. There were only dozens of miles of border wall completed before the Biden administration abandoned the idea, yet the wall is also renewed as a part of the 2025 executive orders.

Unlike in medieval Europe, the king cannot just mete it so. More than half the states have filed lawsuits against these actions. Much of this will be held up in court for some time, and some of it is more symbolic than destructive. However, flipping the non-partisan portion of government work into a partisan favor-based workforce will have an immediate effect. And while I don't think that we will see the military going door to door searching for illegals I do believe we will see an increase in deputizing state and county law enforcement as an extension of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Texas has already showed its eagerness at letting bodies pile up in the Rio Grande and other southern states will gleefully put their post-9/11 military surplus and SWAT gear to use in rounding people up for photo opportunities. Keep your eye on what policy follows these decrees. Trump is famous for saying one thing and doing another. But based on what was accomplished in the first 11 days of 2017 there is a good chance what we saw last month will set the tone for the next four years of dipshittery.

At this point I have to caution everyone that it is indeed going to be a long haul and there will be the allure of turning away, turning off the news, turning off social media, disconnecting in general, and tuning away from the madness. If you are an empath then January has been way too much for you. Trump promised Shock and Awe, and at least the shock part is definitely true. The Son of the Return of 11 Days has been a post-Goldwater far-right small government wealth redistribution nee tea party bukkake all over the captive faces of American democracy. They've been waiting for 60 years with blue balls to squeeze this one off so there's a LOT of splooge just going everywhere. But remember that all Trump relationships are transactional. Trump can never be re-elected to the presidency. There is now an hourglass slowly sifting sand on his moment of grift. Midterms are likely to be a bloodbath for Republicans and there will be interesting contortions for legislators to make for an electorate that was apparently only looking to have lower prices on goods (though I think we know that was a euphemism for the rest of the racist/sexist/grifter bullshit that follows Trump like dirt follows Pigpen). Y'all just wait til we get through what is promised as Tariffbruary. — KELLY MENACE

AGING GRACEFULLY

I went out with a friend yesterday. We parked at an abandoned ski slope and schlepped through mud and half melted snow up to the top, following along beneath the dangling blue lift chairs. I told him about the ski slope in my hometown, the open one, how the two seaters were the same blue, but the pole ran between the seats and I swear it was a game for the lift operators, how those chairs raced at you and it was almost impossible to get on without bashing your head on the pole. I told him about the closed ski hill at home too, how one Christmas my mom took us there and we chose a tree and decorated it with pinecones coated in peanut butter and sesame seeds, popcorn garlands and special treats. She couldn't afford Christmas that year, but she made it anyway and we gave it to the animals up there on Sawyer's Hill. I told him about the picture of Robert Oppenheimer and Ed Grothus (Google Ed, he was fun. He was radical. Iconic.) flying down Sawyer's Hill together, sworn enemies a few years later, a peace activist and a bomb maker. I basked in childhood memories.

At the top we cut along the ridgeline, tramping clumsily west until we found what we came for, a hunk of granite sticking out above everything, a strange mole on an aging face. We made a fire at the base and talked about all our nothings, and about the dreams we haven't aged out of.

When it was time, we pushed through rhododendron and scrubby young pines and brambles, around the rock until we found the right place to scramble up and stand atop it. Conquerors. All the mountains and the houses and the roads on every side, carry on down there beneath us like they don't know these secret places are right here for the taking.

We watched a deer float across the ski slope, white tail bobbing like a duck on water, his coat blending into the mud and faded yellow grass. He was effortless and free, the epitome of grace. I want to float.

At the bottom my friend complained of heartburn and I didn't complain that my knees were screaming — Mom taught me never to complain in front of people; I wonder if this helps or hinders me, probably both. He said, "I'm getting too old for this," and I snapped back. "I'm never getting too old for this and neither are you." And what I meant was, even when my knees won't bend and feet won't go, I'll never be too old to find memories that glow, to delight in a deer, to sit by a cozy fire, to dream with a friend, to breathe fresh air, to want to see more. I'll never be too old to stretch out my arms towards joy wherever I can get it, no matter how hard the world makes it to reach. — SPRING PEARSON



CREEPY HORSE DOES ONLINE DATING

I've been in Chicago about 5 months now. I'll be getting back to the storyline once I share my recent dating misadventures. My friends found my perilous attempts hilarious. Rented Mule said I should share my experiences. He was the one who began this whole convoluted idea. He had begun dating again and had asked for my assist. I explained online dating to him, pulled some pictures that would work better and off to the races. Well, after that I began to think to myself, "You know what, maybe it's time for me to date. It's been nearly 7 years."

I created my profile, added some pictures, and firmly stated as I always do, "No Children". When it comes to dating, I don't have any issues with getting a date. If teenage me had known it was a matter of my confidence over thinking people found me ugly, I'd of probably been in more trouble than I already was. I don't have any issues with getting dates of any gender as an adult. That's not the issue of why I don't date.

I posted three photographs of myself. Two of the pictures were of my face and one was of my entire visage. In that photo I have on a sundress. I'm sitting on the ground with my knees in front of me, my arms outstretched and resting on them. I picked this photo so people can see I'm chubby and that I have tattoos. No "catfishing" or hiding of anything. I have had people be very critical of my tattoos since I've had tattoos. I make a point for people to know what I look like before we even meet.

That being said, I was not prepared for the onslaught of DM's I would receive. We're talking legit hundreds of messages. These were not well wishes. These weren't compliments pouring in about my personhood. This was derogatory. Introductory messages reading "Mmmmmmmmm", "You can sit on my face", "I bet those lips would look great wrapped around my cock", "Kinky!" and the worst of the worst, "I'm interested in DD/LG with you". If you don't know what that means, good. That's very good. I only know what it means because as someone short in stature and childlike in appearance, this is not the first time I've been asked this.

I digress. Now I know in order to find a prince you gotta kiss a lot of frogs. When people send me these kinds of messages, I just block them and move on. There were a couple of guys I found interesting enough to speak with. I date all genders and non genders, I just couldn't find anyone on those sides. All in all, I went on about seven dates out of nine guys I spoke with. Here are their stories.

Date 1: Guy told me he worked corporately for

Uber. Ubered car to the wrong address instead of mine. Ubered me another car as I waited in 9-degree weather. I got to his place where we were *supposed* to meet and walk for coffee or lunch. He instead leads me up four flights of stairs to his "apartment". His dog is kenneled and he keeps yelling at her to shut up as we sit on the tiniest space of couch as the rest is covered in his laundry. As we spoke, he wouldn't look at me and kept looking to his left (I was sat to his right). Said he had to get back to work but would uber me home. Went to kiss me before I left but I didn't think he had any interest in me and wasn't expecting it. He went to kiss as I was going in for the goodbye side hug I would give any dude. What resulted was his mouth planting into my hairline as I headbutt his teeth. He texted me the following day, "Wyd". I stopped talking to him.

Weird 1: I almost forgot about this guy if not for the most hilarious thing I've ever had screamed at me in a text.

Him: So do you like Wrestling?

Me: Yeah, I love it.

Him: Do you like WWE?

Him: I love wrestling I'm watching Smackdown highlights right now as we chat.

Me: I'm all over. Indies and Mainstream. I'm just glad there's promotions for all of the talent.

Him: **CM PUNK AND JOHN CENA CHICAGO!**

Him: I went to that

Him: I was there

Him: I was at the 2011 Money in the Bank

Date #2: Guy was nervous to meet me at my school as he was a former student and "Didn't want people knowing his business". Whatever, I don't give a fuck. He meets up with me and we uber to surprise, surprise, his home that we need to stop at so he can change before going out. This was not discussed prior and happened to be a recurring theme with my dates. I imagine these guys want to hookup without having to spend money on a date but don't have the balls to do the deed. He spent the car ride over on his cellphone playing games. His home looked like he lived with his grandma. Lace doilies and antique furniture vibe. When he wasn't playing games on his phone he was talking about himself like he was very important. He wasn't. Like most of us, completely invisible in the landscape of humanity. We don't matter. We really don't. We sure want to, of course we do but in the grand scheme of things most of us don't matter. He's one of them. I grew tired of his self-induced conspiracies and headed home.

Date 3: I was 0-2 on having an actual date. By this point, I have decided to do two dates in one day so I wouldn't waste another whole evening on a date going sideways. This dude. I think he's a store-bought biker. This motherfucker was late as shit. Was going to meet me at my place and

we would go on a stroll. He was 50 minutes late. He also had previously injured himself on an electric scooter, badly. He shows up sweaty and smelly. He has a handlebar mustache with fucking beads on them. It looked as fucking stupid as it sounds. Walking is hard for him so we take it slow but I'm not giving him more time with me than he had. As we were walking back to my school he says, "I'm curious to see if you can get my cock more than halfway into your mouth." Damn dude, it was going so well and you had to drop the creep smoke bomb on us like a villain from Batman. I stopped, looked him up and down, and said "I most likely could" I replied as I started walking into my school away from him, "but would I even want to?" He texted me several times wanting to fuck me. All of his texts were sexual after our first meeting. Never responded back.

Date 4: This was one of the weirdest. The most normal looking trainwreck I've ever come across. Man said he was corporate Trader Joe's. Not that there's anything wrong with it, but he's just a regular store employee. Guy was incredibly self-centered. He did that thing where he tells you really fucking horrible things so you will feel bad for him but it's shit we all go through. One moment we are laughing and cutting up and then suddenly he starts crying. It's his first date since his breakup. His girlfriend broke up with him eight months ago after almost three years of dating. His friend died, his best friend and like his family said I was his best friend. While all these things suck, everyone goes through this. When he told me his "best friend" died, I said I had lost a friend too trying to be understanding. He totally didn't even respond and just kept talking about his problems. Then he abruptly jumps up and says he has to leave. He leaves. 40 minutes later he messages that he is back on his way to meet me. Before I can even say no, fucker is already here. It's 13 degrees out like an idiot I say we should take this inside and take him to my dorm. I just didn't want people seeing me talking to this guy I believe has some major addiction issues. I think he went home and drank alcohol. I suspect he is a functioning alcoholic. He told me he had to leave because he hadn't smoked a cigarette and needs to smoke regularly. Now he's acting like he has confidence. It's like he's impersonating Ryan Gosling's Ken from the Barbie movie and he's no Ryan Gosling. The weirdest thing was he asked to use the restroom and I caught this man pissing in our dorm shower. I couldn't see his peen but I could see his body curved and asked what the hell he was doing?!! He told me he couldn't find the bathroom (he walked past a bathroom) and had to pee "really bad". That was fucking weird and he saw NOTHING wrong with that. He got blocked. Shower got deep cleaned. Twice. All the chemicals ever.

Weirdo #2: This never materialized into a date. This man started so nice and sweet. I have never seen someone text texts that are MORE unhinged than the last. This one spun out of control. It started with he is a photographer of celebrities. He's infatuated with my lips but hadn't crossed the line with saying anything derogatory about them. I decide to chat with him. He tries to impress me with photos of celebrities he's taken. Then he messages that in order to do the photography he wants he *sometimes* has to work in other mediums. He proceeds to tell me he has photographed for Playboy and still photographs for Porno. He then sends me nude pictures of Nina Hartley. At this point, I have no interest and wouldn't date this guy if he was a millionaire. He just gives off likes to fuck small furry animals vibe. But, I'm also curious to see HOW FUCKED UP it will get getting to this man's endgame of what he wants from me. I got REALLY FUCKED UP.

He asks me if I'm sub and I say fuck no. That answer makes him perceive I am a dom. Wants me for a FLR. He proceeds to send me paragraphs of me as his dom goddess queen. Asks if I've ever had sex with black men and when he learns I have, says "I always wanted to marry a Queen of Spades!" Yep, that's a term he used for non-black women that sleep with black men and this fucker said MARRY. He also wanted to be my cuckold and wanted to wear a chastity belt. I was showing people his messages and we would laugh about how crazy the messages were. I forgot about him for a couple days until he sent the texts that finally got him blocked. I wake up one morning to "The Contract". He has sent me a paragraph on my phone as long as my damn forearm. It's a story he's written for me. He meets me at a crowded Starbucks. I hand him a letter that reads some fucked up shit but essentially I slide a cup his way filled with my "piss and spit" he is to drink and enjoy. Done. Not even cringe funny anymore. Blocked on all social medias.

Date #5: Middle-Aged father of two. My profiles always explicitly state "No Children" and motherfuckers still try and date me. He decides to drive in from Wisconsin for a lunch date with me. He picks me up and takes me to Mod Pizza. Look, I ain't shitting on Mod Pizza like Cheesecake Factory. Hell, I fuck with both places. I'm happy if anyone buys me food. The thing was that we didn't discuss this. I get in his vehicle and he's like "We're going to Mod Pizza". I say, "That's a good idea, but there's also a lot of really great pizza places to try it being Chicago or we could just get some local food..." No, Mod Pizza will be fine. That bothered me. Not getting a choice. We get there and I order a gluten-free cheese pizza. He orders a double crust meat and

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cheese pizza. As we are sitting down to eat, he announces he has Crohn's Disease and foods like wheat and dairy affect him. He's eating a pizza covered in foods that aren't good for Crohn's. He says "Oh and if you ever see me without a shirt on, I have sores caused by having the Crohn's all over my shoulders on my back. They get big scabs like this one (points one out to me) and it's not contagious or anything." I only had two slices of pizza. When his stomach starts making hell dog noises, he points to his belly and goes "See what I mean!" This man talked. I am known for being a talker. This man interrupted every time I said anything. Talked over me many times. Talked over my complete sentences with his. He proceeds to fanboy over Demonologist Zak Bagan, that cryptids really do exist and Bigfoot does too. I try to explain how that was debunked fully long ago. There are no fossils ever found and no definitive proof even with human encroachment. This man looks me dead in the eye like I am fucking stupid and says after letting out a sigh, "There are variations of Bigfoot as we know him all over the world. They have found tracks, foot prints and have pictures. You see, Big foot is smarter than apes so they are incredible about camouflage and hiding." He also said he was 5'8" and was only a few inches taller than me, seriously fucker was more like 5'4" and had features as small as mine. That weirded me out as I am a small little person. As we are heading back to my drop off, he asks what my kinks are and I say I'm vanilla. Vanilla AF. He asks if I'm into assplay as he's always wanted to fuck an ass and would I put my finger in his butt?

Date #6: This guy was coming into town for his birthday. In our messages he believed before I headed over that I was going to cancel on him. I caught it and he apologized. First red flag, there will be many. Although he is from here, he gets a room for four days one block from my dorms. Second red flag. I'll lose count. You can count them for me. He tells me he has to help a friend move plants and I head over when he's says he's back at the hotel. I'm punctual but he tells me he

has to shower first. He's chain smoking a vape and I hear cocaine snorts while he's in "the shower". He proceeds to try and calm himself down by drinking a monster. He's in a depressive way. Out of nowhere he starts telling me how much he used to hate women. Then he confesses he was at his friend's home doing cocaine and thinks he did too much, I may need to leave. This dude is huge and I am ready to get the fuck up out of there. He rolls me a joint and gives me weed. As I'm walking out he grabs me and tries to very forcibly move my head for a kiss and tells me to please not pull away. I pull away and say I'm not into that at all. I wanted out and away from him. I forgot to block him. He texted me a couple of days later that he had a migraine, I didn't answer it. He proceeded to become angry hours later that I didn't respond. Blocked.

Date #7: This was an older man in his 60s. I've had a few "companionships". Men of a certain age, their junk don't work anymore and they tend to just want company. They take me out to eat with them and that's it. This man is in his 60s. He invited me to breakfast at a nice place. No sex talk at all. Just a pleasant breakfast and then he gave me a ride back to my dorm. Texts continued to be respectful never going south. Invites me over to his "30th floor apartment" to smoke weed. We smoke all evening. Has manners, doesn't make any moves on me and we watch *Desperado*. The following day he sends me text messages asking if I will have a threesome with him and a woman he can find for us. I don't think this man has to goods to have sex with a woman, let alone two.

I quit dating online. It's hard not to feel awkward that so many men associate my appearance as being their tattooed fuck toy. I'm just trying to look cool for myself. I don't know. Being single feels so much better than my experiences as of late. My values and interests are far different than most it would seem. I'm just gonna worry about me and do my own thing. I know why I'm single and I think I know why they're single too. — *CREEPY HORSE*



TONY WILLINGHAM.
Instagram Artist Accompaniment

FAKING TALENT WITH A.I.

According to my calculations, there are roughly 6,543,549,777 things I want to write about.

Politics! Music! Love! Positive reinforcement! Personal responsibility! Kindness! Batman! Music! Words! ART!

...Don't worry, I'm not going to list alllllll of them. (oh, for the sake of transparency, I should confess that the methodology I employed for this calculation kinda consisted of haphazardly touching numbers and commas on my keyboard until my "calculation" felt big enough. #HACK #SCIENCE! #MATH! #NUMBERS! #BUTTONS!)

Anyway!!! Today I pick ART and using AI to fake talent.

I've had the pleasure of meeting many artists in years — beautiful people with the kindest hearts. A mixed group of musicians, sketch and digital artists, writers, poets, painters, and sculptors with one common goal: to share their incredible talent with the world because they all believe doing so can help make the world a better place. All familiar with struggle yet they never give up.

That's why it frustrates me when people use AI to fake talent. A slap in the face saying "hard work and talent mean nothing if we can get a computer to do this for us."

I've stewed on this thought for over a year now, after two heartbreaks: 1. I had to shut my Etsy store down because my designs were stolen my bots with the intention only to mass produce crappy products for money; 2. A friend spent five years working on making music and putting together an album. He finally had the confidence to put it out there, on one single site, only to have someone steal all of his songs, release them on

social media as their own, then use AI to create two more albums, in two short months. Frustrating.

Today, I decided to ask AI to chime in on the this topic:

"Many people are using AI tools to create writing and art that they present as their own, often without the skill or effort traditionally required. AI-generated stories, essays, and poems allow individuals with little writing experience to produce polished work, while AI art tools enable users to generate intricate images without any formal artistic training. While some use these tools as inspiration or to enhance their creativity, others rely entirely on AI to mimic talent they don't actually possess. This has sparked debates about authenticity, creativity, and the value of human effort in artistic expression."

"AI tools are definitely changing the creative landscape, and how people feel about their use is varied. Some see it as a helpful tool that can boost creativity and make certain tasks easier. Others are concerned that it might devalue traditional skills or lead to a flood of similar-sounding content. There's also the discussion around copyright and ownership when AI is involved in the creative process. It's a complex issue with lots of different viewpoints!"

Thanks, AI. Validation and solidarity are powerful tools, bro.

Luckily I stand firm in my belief that the good guy always wins. I have faith that this AI fad is just like most other fads, a short-lived obsession and people will be on to the next in no time.

— TISH JACKSON

WILL'S POETRY CORNER

ICED COFFEE

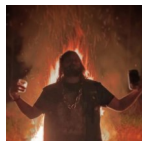
Words resting on burnt taste buds.
While crumbs of unfinished sentences fall to the wayside...
Anonymous scolding critiques of my day to day pour in from a far
Just in time to remind me,
that they want me to take it down a peg.
Threatened by my reserved but wild state,
lurking bodies threaten me through others
too scared to show their true colors.

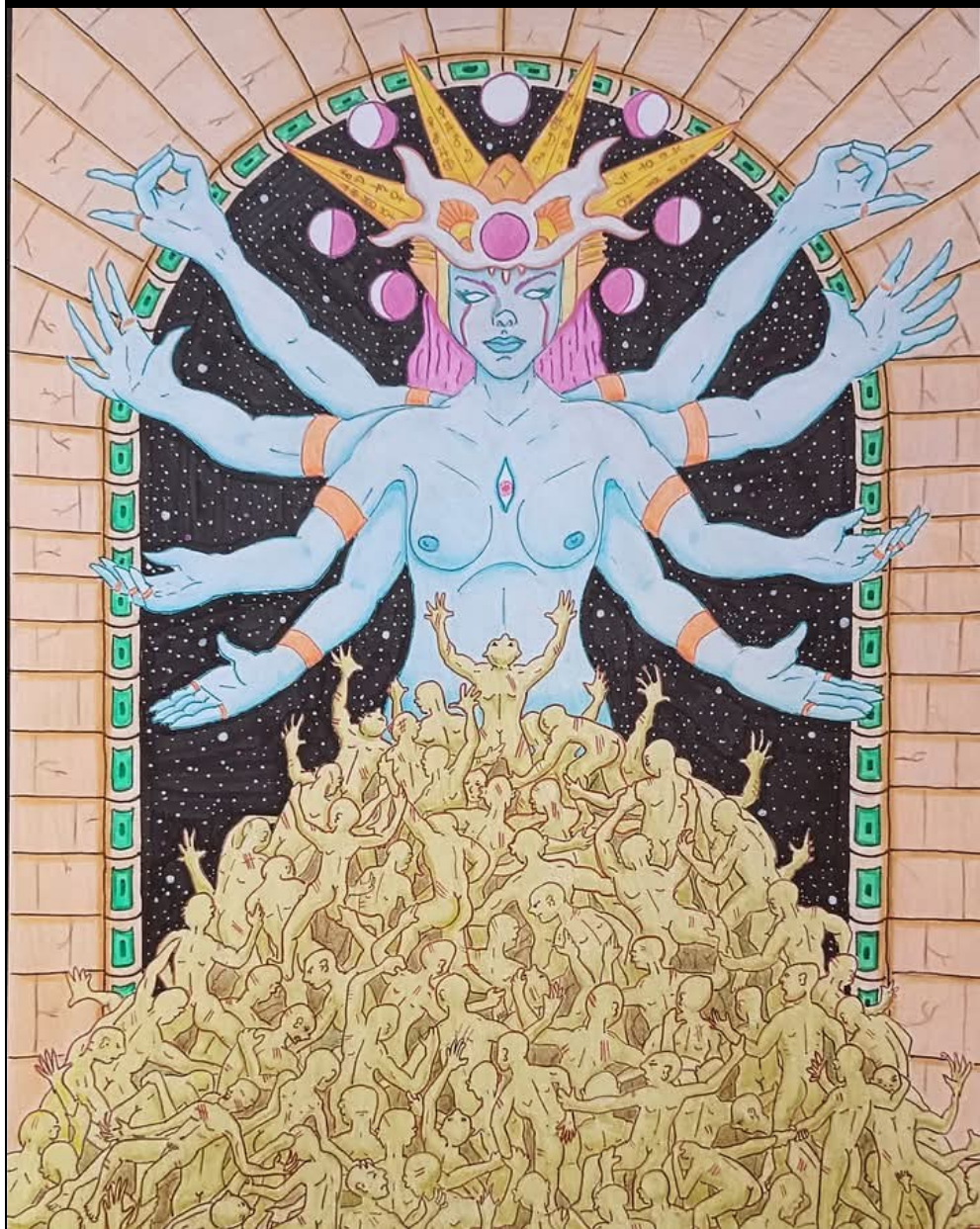
— WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON

BLOWING SMOKE

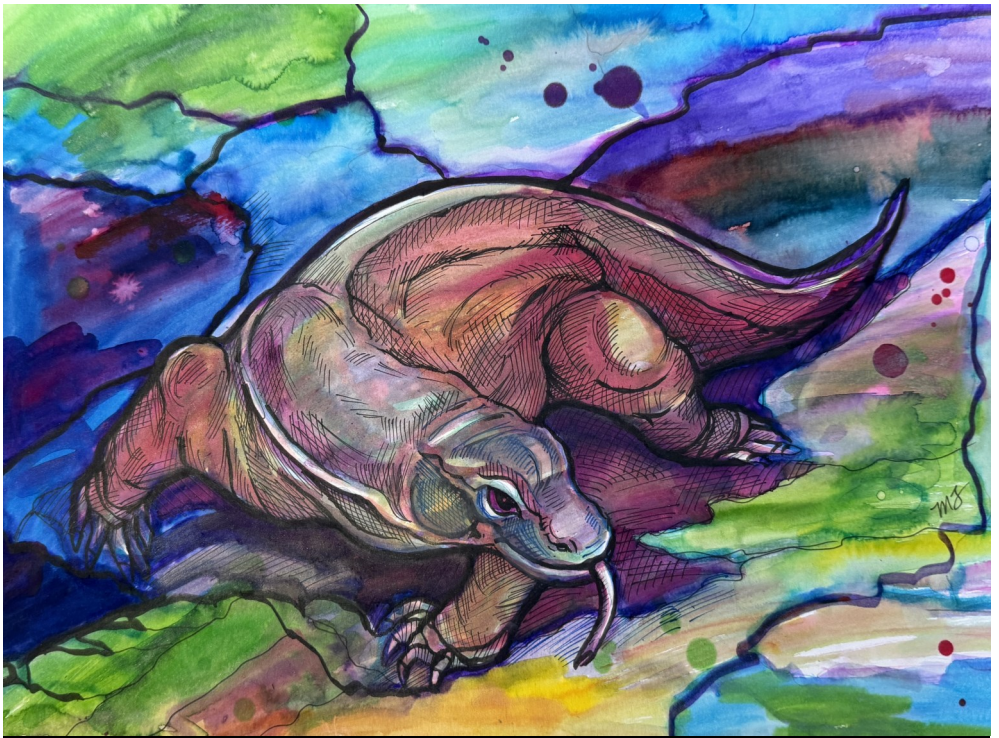
I wait to smoke weed with my friends
I smoke while I wait,
but I wait to smoke weed with my friends.
Sometimes I like to have a beer too.
A cheers in good company,
with a hearty smoke,
have gotten me through the toughest of times.
The close spaces with familiar faces.
Talking little nothings in circles,
till we solve the worlds affairs
and our own yet again.

— WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON





TONY WILLINGHAM.
Instagram Artist_Accompaniment



MAREN FARMER. <http://marenfarmer.net>



TISH JACKSON



SO, THE ORANGE ASSHOLE IS IN OFFICE. NOW WHAT?

PART I: SELF-SUFFICIENCY & SURVIVING AN OLIGARCHY

Trump is in office. If you're reading this, you're probably feeling a mix of emotions: anger, fear, grief, exhaustion. Maybe you're spiraling, wondering how we got here **again**, despite everything we know, everything we fought for, everything we swore we'd never repeat.

First things first: **you are not alone.**

Step One: Let Yourself Feel It

There is no right or wrong to this. Maybe you need to scream into a pillow. Perhaps you need to cry. Maybe you need to blast music at full volume while pacing your apartment. Perhaps you just need to sit in silence and let it sink in. Whatever it is, **feel it**. But don't let anyone gaslight you into thinking you're "overreacting". Millions of people voted for bigotry, corporate greed, and policies that will actively make life harder for already marginalized communities, the working class, and the planet itself. Grief isn't just valid — it's necessary.

Step Two: Convert That Grief Into Rage

Grief and rage are two sides of the same coin. Grief says **this is devastating**. Rage says **this will not stand**. Right now, the system is hoping we'll burn ourselves out on sadness and hopelessness. They want us to shut down. But we don't have that luxury. Our rage is a tool, and it's time to sharpen it.

Channel that energy into something tangible:

- **Organize.** Get involved with mutual aid networks, tenants' unions, or activist groups in your area. Direct action is power.
- **Educate.** Read, watch, listen. Know what we're up against. Start with **The Shock Doctrine** by Naomi Klein or **Manufacturing Consent** by Noam Chomsky. Follow independent media because mainstream news will try to normalize this.

- **Protect Yourself and Others.** If you're in a vulnerable community, connect with support systems now. If you have privilege, use it to shield those who don't.

Step Three: Build Self-Sufficiency

One of the best ways to resist an oligarchy is to become less dependent on it. The less control they have over your survival, the harder it is for them to break you.

- **Grow your food.** Even if it's just herbs in your kitchen or a community garden. Every little bit of independence counts.

- **Learn useful skills.** First aid, basic mechanics, self-defense, sustainable living. These are not hobbies; they're survival tactics.

- **Create strong communities.** One person cannot fight an empire, but a united front can. Strengthen your ties with your neighbors, coworkers, and friends.

Step Four: Remember, They Want You to Give Up

The greatest scam the authoritarian regime perpetrates is the one where it convinces people that resistance is futile. That it's already over. That we should just give in now.

But history says otherwise.

No empire has lasted forever. No dictatorship is invincible. Resistance is exhausting, yes, but it's also powerful. Even in the darkest times, people have fought back and won.

So fume. Organize. Create. Survive. And never, ever let them take your fire.

Because this is not the end. This is where it all begins.

PS: It's ok to punch Nazi's
— STEVIE WYATT



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SURELY I WILL DIE ALONE (HANGIN' WITH THE ICE MAN)



I recall vividly the days of ICE ICE BABY. Being born in 86, I had the privilege of being plopped down in front of a TV for the better part of the 90's, and holy jeez lemme tell ya. Where not only did I witness Nickelodeon's classic run, but I also learned what a Rump Shaker was (boy lemme tell ya). And the soundtrack to it all...Vanilla Ice.

Strange that years later I would ironically win, well I guess it's only ironic if ya know me, lets say it was years late where I would RIGHTFULLY win an all expenses paid trip to La La Land to film a BIG TIME NO MICKEY MOUSE STUFF Hot Dog Music video parody, BABY GOT BUNS. Winning the contest, easy...dancing on camera...daunting.

I won by simply following the rules really. It was the very last day, at the very last hour when my buddy Stevo sent over the contest rules for the BAR-S ICONIC SUMMER MASHUP. So in my submission video I went on and on about how I've always been a fan and even name dropped his stoner rap and nu metal albums because, HAYELL YEAH. Needless to say, I was told by real life Hot Dog Executives that I had "Endless Charisma", well duh.

Not long after me and my big Brother Paul were living it up in Hollywood and on set being treated like Kings. Ice was one heck of a dude, he even attempted to show me some Dance moves!!! That didn't help much, but still. The whole ordeal can be seen by simply searching on Youtube for VANILLA ICE HOT DOG...or, Baby Got Buns (guess it depends if you're a bitch or not). And I even chronicled some behind the scenes antics, you can check that out on my fledgling YouTube channel STAUNCH TV.

Til this day when ICE comes to my neck of the woods I get the VIP treatment and get to say "Word to your Mustard". Last time we even danced again, only this time it was a strange version of 2 LIVE CREW covering it for some reason....Surely I will die alone. — ADAN GONZALEZ

MICROMUSING

NO RELATION

Sometimes when I Smile
I feel like a fraud
Other times when I laugh
I'm just Awkward.
Trying to be like the other humans,
Make some sense, shrug it off.

I just want to see black.
All black.

The mountains change from gray to green
The most beautiful thing I have ever seen.
But to smile now seems irresponsible to me, to
even smile now seems inappropriate to me.

The system of oppression knocks you over.
The rich get richer,
but the poor are getting smarter.
They think they are some holy sky father.
I say let's take the patriarch to slaughter, YES
take the patriarch to slaughter!!!

I don't love you but I wish you well.

And, I hear the void is nice this time of year.
I hear the void is nice anytime of year...
But to even smile now.... Is inappropriate to me.
— MOON FROGG

Yeah, we all knew the January 6th terrorists would go free; it's part of the criminal code. Criminals stick together. Also, president Felon (small "p") had to keep up the Big Lie about a "stolen election" like his heroes: Putin, Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Mussolini. Scapegoating immigrants — another Big Lie checkmark. With the quota system imposed on federal agents, every American with dark skin will have to prove his or hers citizenship soon. Except of course, all of president Felon's past and present wives. Like Pol Pot believed: "it is always better to go too far than not far enough." — MIKE L. DOWNEY

AN INFINITY OF ANGLES

Sandgrain eyes cup stars
In wind-suss phrase. Coral funnels
Pall. Collapse and hound the chase, pulse
Thick, thrush beat lips
Quicken. Tongue silks finger and
Rib, tunnels, channels flesh
Thump to Charon coin toss. Scrimshaws
Bleached bone, immaculate eternal,
angles infinite, while
Fractal sandgrain eyes
Return her glance and wisp.
— BETHANY BEELER



THEM AND THE HORSE THEY RODE IN ON (OR HOW I'M DOING AS A TRANS PERSON IN AMERICA)

I transitioned during the first Trump administration, wondering if the authorities would change my name and gender listing on my passport, DL, social security card, and birth certificate. To change my name in Texas required fingerprinting, which prints are still on file with Texas and the FBI. I proudly stood before a judge in court to finalize my legal name change. If you've seen the recent movie, *Will & Harper*, you'll know just what a harsh and difficult climate Texas presents for trans persons.

Colorado, of course, is better, but I don't live in a big metro area, such as Denver, but in a city of 80K in very rural Northern Colorado. It helps that Col State U is just up the road in Fort Collins. Yet, the proximity to Wyoming and Nebraska, two states that are nearly as anti-trans as Texas, as well as the rural Trump supporters in and around my town, constantly remind me that I have only a thin layer of protection in state laws that could be nullified instantly in a dictatorship/theocracy, which Trump and his ardent Republican supporters are carrying out. They meant everything they said in Project 2025.

So, for me, politics aren't merely a matter of discussion or entertainment as some folks take it, almost like a sport. Nor are politics, for me, a means to "one-up" someone or win an argument. Winning arguments never made me feel better about myself. How we choose to govern ourselves (while that still remains an option; right now, that's highly debatable) reflects who we are as a people. I *have* to be on the alert. Imagine, say, someone who publicly converted to Judaism in 1930s Germany, and you have a glimpse of the target on my back.

I know I'm trans and most people see that as soon as I open my mouth, due to my voice. Support and words are well and good. Yet, what happened in November revealed to me what America has always been and right now insists on being. Yes, a bare majority sided with Trump's agenda, many for reasons that had nothing to do with trans persons. But it's a package deal. I wouldn't buy a car with incredible gas mileage and low maintenance costs but with the drawback that it could spout exhaust deadly to passersby, saying to myself, well I want a cheaper gas/maintenance bill, that poison and dead-people stuff be damned. Yet, an incredible number of Americans bought into a similar rationale in voting for Trump, all along seeing the hideous attack ads, vitriol, hatred, and outright lies he and his campaign spewed about trans persons, immigrants, and women. Wow. I didn't see that coming. Not at all. I thought that the American

people would come to their senses and see that this isn't a game or a way to have lower grocery prices. In the wake of that utter shock (I wept the morning after the election and spent November in a hideous tailspin), I had to rely on Pam's bravery, good sense, and steadfast love. You see, I get stared at in public. I lock eyes with the starers. You'd think they'd drop their gaze out of decency or at least a sense that their mommas taught them better than that. But they don't. They undress me with their eyes, like I'm a spectacle, a thing for their perusal. More than half of those who voted did so for a candidate who repeatedly portrayed trans people and other vulnerable populations as things to be stared at, shunned, locked away, and limited in their healthcare options. Trump and JD Vance's crass use of me and my posse as political footballs to whip up his fanatic base was something I incorrectly thought only a fringe of maniacs could stomach. Then a majority of the electorate on November 7th showed me that, no, using trans people, women, and immigrants as things was negotiable, provided they could have lower egg prices (which, curiously, are going in the opposite direction. *Hmm.*).

What happened on November 7th necessarily changed my awareness of and regard for Americans. A majority, whether they intended their vote to do so, chose a leader and administration who, at minimum, promised they would do hateful and deadly things to vulnerable populations. Then, many of those same people said to me, "Oh, he won't do that."

In just two weeks, he has, and it's the tip of the iceberg, for while his executive orders thankfully don't carry the weight of law, the same electorate who voted for him as president also voted in representatives, senators, and state and local governments who share and spout that agenda. Congress will soon start making into law the tenor and force of those executive orders. The evidence for that summary of the situation has already happened over the past eight years in states, local governments, courts, and school boards in which the Republicans hold a trifecta. Do you know that in Florida, if I use a women's bathroom, I can be arrested on *felony* charges and sentenced to prison? Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Montana, Tennessee, and many other states have also put in force similar laws and policies to punish trans people for simply being who we are.

I've had to reevaluate my relationship with dozens of persons whom I assumed loved and supported me. You can't know how disorienting and frightening that is. For a while, I actively looked at options to live abroad. I've decided, however, that I get to

be me on my own terms, and that they'll have to kill me if they come for me and my posse. I don't say that lightly. And I say it praying that things won't come to that. Then again, ten years ago, who saw it would come to what's already transpired?

All the above is a way of saying that, yes, I am now uncertain about people I call friends. After all, I assumed that, except for a few fanatics and crazy-ass billionaires, America was a land and people that still loved and supported me, furthering my existence as I do theirs. Now I know that America — or a majority of the electorate — isn't that.

So, I'm reevaluating relationships, for I find myself endangered in a land in which I previously thought I and others like me could be free to be who we are. Sadly, the first Trump administration revealed dozens of people I had thought were supportive friends to be anything but. Most all of them reviled, then blocked me. Only a few did I block, but only after stating to them where I draw the friendship line, for the safety, support, and well-being of me, my family, and my posse.

I've found that friendship is like any relationship, whether in-person or on social media. I've learned that it requires work, testing boundaries, digging beyond the veneer. I've discovered that I can't just "chat" with people I have some reason to believe, however small, would look aside from a campaign of hate and ruination to vote for what we have today. So, I felt the need to clear the air with America because *I don't know*.

And while people try to settle where they stand with each other, the theocratic tyrants will push forward their agenda. So, how to cope, how to cope? I rely on

the love I have in my life,
friends like the ones I have who've reached
out in droves with their concern, support,
and deeds, and
Pam's steadfastness and undying heart that
brims with joy and compassion.

All the above and more are so much more substantial to me than the little game-players in the so-called houses of power. As long as I'm living, I'm here to protect my posse, *especially* in the way I live. I will be a joyful, irrepressible trans person whose very life shows the lie that Trump and his zealots are trying to impose. And I've dedicated myself to joy. Cuz, well, fuck 'em. Them and the horse they rode in on (which, admittedly, isn't fair to an innocent horse). So, let 'em fuck themselves. They've no claim on my joy. — BETHANY BEELER

DINOS

Millions of years ago, giant lizards ruled the Earth. Many of them were seriously, ridiculously awesome. The rest were pretty lame, but they all had interesting skills, or at least looked bad ass. They were basically like the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park, but way smarter.

Anyway, over time, the lizards became pretty intelligent and learned how to build things like cars, skyscrapers, malls, and holy temples. But even though they had all this cool stuff they kept fighting with each other and acting like total dicks. They were all, "Blah, blah, my god is better than your god," and "Wah, wah, it's all Obamasaurus' fault." "Trumpanondon is the bestzzzzz!"

On top of that, most of them sat around playing video games or watching "Real Sauropod Wives of the Cretaceous Era" instead of making the world a better place.

Eventually, the Almighty Creator of Lizardness was like, "Um, hello? You guys have all this dope technology and information and yet you continue to act like total rejects. I'm so bored... I think I'll start over and make humans. Yeah, they'll get it right!" So then he smote the giant lizards with a comet or something and they choked on dust, died, and got buried for all eternity.

The End

Except for the epilogue, which is this: Millions of years later, people were also pretty lame, so the Almighty Creator of Lizardness/Peoplehood talked to this group of fundamentalist whack jobs and announced that he would be ending the world again. In an effort to save everyone, or perhaps in a huge scam to get money, the whack jobs started telling everyone the End of Times was approaching. It's happening tomorrow,

FYI. TO BE CONTINUED...?
— TISH JACKSON

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THE FIRE THAT WALKS WITH US

DAVID LYNCH ON SUFFERING

I found out about David Lynch's passing last month the same way I learn about most major events nowadays — by coming across the headline on an online satire article posted to social media. Somewhere in my Instagram feed was a photo of David Lynch accompanied by the Hard Times logo, with the words "David Lynch Dead at 78, or in the White Lodge, or Maybe the Whole Thing Is Just a Dream, We're Not Sure," to which I responded "Ha!... Wait, what?" God bless the algorithm; may it continue to filter all our heartbreaking tragedies through the desensitizing stream of digital information overload.

There's been a lot written on David Lynch's life and work, and I encourage you to read about that from people who are better informed and more media literate than I am. Don't get me wrong, I've seen and enjoyed his work. While it may not always click with me, it's brilliant surrealism at its best and baffling yet fascinating at its worst. In any case, his work glows with his own unique identifiable style. The term "Lynchian" came about to describe stories loaded with heavy symbolism that make the events on screen feel just precariously rooted in the material world. They're much more like a dream exposing someone's unconscious insecurities, forcing the viewer to resonate with the work in ways that are difficult to convey outside the abstract. *Eraserhead* does a wonderful job of conveying Lynch's own internal hardships raising a child in poverty conditions. This is the closest I will probably ever get to watching somebody's claustrophobic nightmare translated directly to screen. *Twin Peaks* is still one of the greatest and most unique murder mysteries ever aired on television for its first season (I make it a little less further into season 2 every re-watch, but I swear I'll get through it one of these days). *Dune* was...

There's a clip that's been making the rounds on social media, originating from the three-hour long lecture "David Lynch Teaches You The Art Of Life" from a series called *Masterclass*. In the section on suffering, he says the following:

You don't have to suffer to show suffering. You don't have to be filled with turmoil to show turmoil. Have it in the story. I don't know what goes on in artists' heads, but I think all the great artists loved working. A lot of people say, 'Well, suffering is good for art. Look at van Gogh,' they say. And I say, 'Let's take a look at van Gogh. Van Gogh didn't go out painting because he hated it. The only time he was happy, probably, was when he was painting. He painted because he loved to paint. And the rest of his life was pretty miserable. He didn't sell anything. He was broke. A lot of the time, he was probably really hungry. It's just common sense. Suffering reduces. Negativity is the enemy of creativity.'

Lynch's remarks target the romanticized Tortured Artist trope; Someone who's been through so much shit, lives in poverty, maybe struggles with some kind of addiction or the pressures of success or failure. Sometimes they're portrayed as an absolute self-absorbed asshole, or someone overcome with self-pity. But all that pain and hurt is a necessity to create the kind of art that resonates with people on a deep level. You just can't create great art without going through hell. "Art is pain. And so is life."

At its worst, the Tortured Artist persona is often put forward as an excuse by those who are ignorant, willfully or otherwise, to issues pertaining to class inequality. The justification is often that creatives should be subjected to poverty under the false meritocratic notion that these bleak conditions act as a source of inspiration and act as a filter separating the ambitious visionaries from the talentless hacks. We can't have them living comfortably, or else they will lose their edge. The Beatles fell apart when John met Yoko and fell in love*, Metallica started to suck when James went sober**, Nirvana would have sold out eventually if Kurt hadn't prematurely taken his own life, and so on.

It's a pretty cynical point of view, often held by people who see art as a practice of pure self-indulgence rather than another public service necessary for sustaining the emotional wellbeing of a community. However, there is another point of view that I personally find more relatable. I grew up listening to a lot of Nine Inch Nails. Trent Reznor's followers listened to him pour his heart out about his experiences with drug addiction and mental illness on *The Downward Spiral*, and those listeners often thought "Man, this guy's fucking

* This is a myth very likely rooted in misogynistic preconceptions; the other members of the Beatles have stated many times over the years that they got along just fine with Yoko

** This is also actually a myth, as Metallica started to suck at least ten years before James went sober



been there. Maybe all of that hurt and trauma is the big key to making something like this."

This glorification of suffering as the most important component to creation has led to a very self-destructive

mentality among many artists. Devin Townsend has an old song called "Fake Punk," about privileged white suburban kids with no real problems in life playing in punk bands, putting on an edgy image and persona, and demanding everyone take them seriously. I saw myself more as the subject of that song than I saw myself as Trent Reznor, and when it came time for me to start writing lyrics for my material, that crisis of self-image often held me back. I felt like I didn't really have much to say, or that if I tried to say anything nobody would take me seriously or dismiss what I wrote as melodrama. At its worst, I made the mistake of thinking my various acts of substance abuse, self-harm, and self-sabotaging would force me into some journey of self-discovery, opening new creative doors, giving me something to say that people would give a shit about.

I believe the idea of the Tortured Artist is rooted in the conflation between suffering and struggling. Suffering is the pain an indifferent universe inflicts upon you, with or without your own agency. Struggling is the process by which we reject that cosmic indifference. Lynch certainly experienced suffering throughout his early adult life. The poverty-stricken conditions he raised a child under were bleak and difficult. But going by his accounts of location scouting, playing around with lighting setups to find the right mood, conveying his thoughts and intentions to his actors and costume designers (all of which he talked about in that three hour video the quote stems from), the struggle of twisting that experience into *Eraserhead* was clearly a process he loved. I've written plenty of songs rooted in some kind of experience with suffering, whether it was acts of self-harm, a fear of the rise of fascism, a loved one's death, etc. But I love songwriting. I love coming up with a riff, thinking "yeah, people

are going to fucking love that" and building on it. I love collaborating with other musicians and being introduced to new ideas that breathe a fresh air of surprise into an image I thought I already had figured out. I love taking an experience I'd gone through and turning it into something that could make some kind of sense to others. "Twisting the old self into poetry" as Chelsea Wolfe recently called it.

So, then what? Should an artist subject themselves to suffering so they can go through more struggles by which great art is created? Well, no. You don't have to experience suffering by your own hand. It is universal. You've experienced it. You've learned from it. You will continue to experience it. You will continue to learn from it. The ability to turn that suffering into great art comes first, from exercising empathy to figure out which images, melodies, words, etc. will evoke the desired mood in your chosen audience. Second is the experience to know which tools and techniques are needed to manifest those ideas and navigate within the limitations you work under.

Suffering, on its own, can only be destructive. If I'm going through a particularly bad depressive

episode, I become far too self-critical to write anything. Maybe I can scribble some ramblings down in my notebook, or fuck around on my guitar, write down some tabs, record something I played on my phone. Sitting down and composing something may even pull me out of my episode for a bit. But as for the process of arranging all those pieces into a complete song — that's much more difficult to do in that state of mind. Finding the right words to convey your thoughts, finding out which song structure flows the best, all takes a lot of trial and error, practice, experimentation, and patience. That process only gets more difficult to work through when your brain is filled with thoughts like "This is shit. You're shit. The things that inspired you are shit. Everyone will think this is shit."

As of August 2024, just five months before his passing, David Lynch posted to X that he would "never retire," and had continued to work on various projects remotely via video conferences to get around the mobility issues he was experiencing in his declining health. These aren't the struggles of a man who hated writing and directing movies. He loved creating, and he reveled in the joy others took in his work. Among all the emotional pain that must have come with his health issues and the confrontation with his mortality, he stuck to the healing process filmmaking as long as he could. Because art isn't pain — it's a struggle. — ANARIS

RECORD REVIEW

On their Bandcamp page, Houston, Texas band Municipal Bats describe themselves as a noise rock noise trio influenced by the likes of Jesus Lizard and Bauhaus. I'd add Big Black and even Brainiac (especially their song "Counting teeth") to their influences; among others. While their self-description is an accurate surface level description, it short sells Municipal Bats unique musical Venn Diagram of Post Punk, Goth, and Noise.



This self-titled release is Municipal Bats first full-length album. Opening song "Captain" is heavy yet artsy but also manages to rock. "Modern Suicide" boasts excellent drumming and is almost catchy without seeming forced. "Blister", probably the strongest song on a release with strong songs, is a mid-tempo song with almost understated vocals that builds toward a rousing conclusion. This is probably the song that leans most on Municipal Bats goth influences; at least for the first half of the song.

I have no idea what Municipal Bats are screaming/screaming about and am probably better off not knowing. Whatever the case, one will not leave this release with any doubt that Municipal Bats mean what they say and say what they mean. Highly recommended.

<https://municipalbats.bandcamp.com/album/municipal-bats> — RENTED MULE

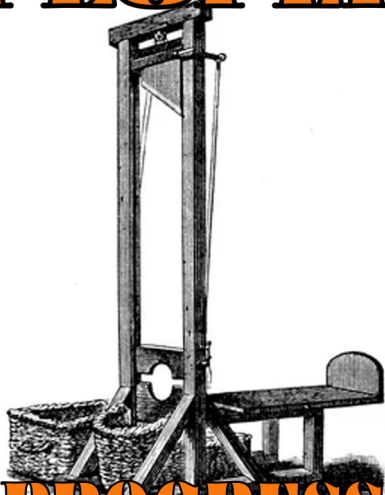
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LIGHTER SIDE OF NUTHIN'



WILLIAM DANIEL THOMPSON

WE THE PEOPLE



PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE!

MINIVAN AFICIONADO

Drivin' Down Memory Lane

Mince 1 shallot and add to the plate and set these three

Min
ging

It was a hot summer in 2009 and we were a bunch of bored 21 year olds living in Dumont, NJ with not much to do, so what better than to buy a keg? It sounded like a great idea but one problem, we didn't exactly have a place to go set it up and have a party, so we loaded it in my friends old school purple dodge caravan and decided to make our rounds going from one friends house to the other, sharing our mobile minivan-beers. It felt pretty epic at the time to show up somewhere and unload a minivan full of punks with a keg. The night came to an end and landed back at the starting point, the driveway of the caravan, and we all shared one last beer before heading in for the night. Not a highlight of my life but I guess I can now say, I had a keg party in a purple dodge caravan.

- Amanda -

garlic press) a
1 1/2 tsp ginger

Kevin Sweetman runs this old school cut and paste 'zine out of Asheville. When asked about the origins of the idea, Kevin said he drunkenly tossed out the idea that he would make a 'zine about minivans as a lark, and then sobered and decided to put his money where the Xerox is. We helped Kevin digitize the 'zine. If interested in obtaining a copy, hit up Kevin at KSweetman57@gmail.com or you can see him in his other role as guitarist for Asheville punk rock band **Bad Fidelity**.

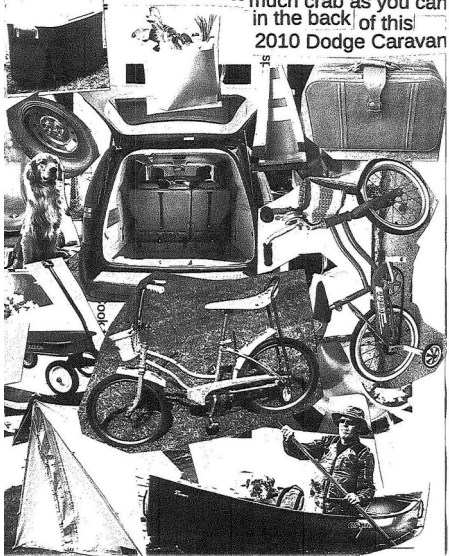


Did you ever see the back of a Minivan on weed?

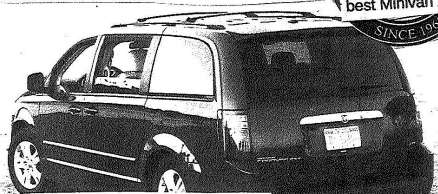
Kids Clubhouse

Pack Like a Dad

Cut out and pack as much crap as you can in the back of this 2010 Dodge Caravan



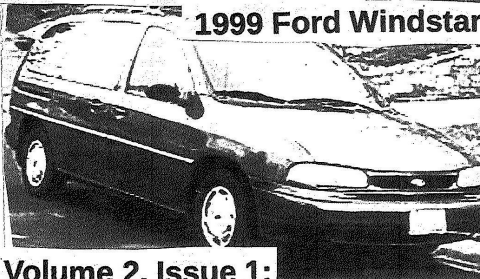
Minivan



2009 Dodge Caravan

Aficionado

1999 Ford Windstar



Volume 2, Issue 1:

Summer Fun Edition!

Caverns of Gold

A Benefit for WNC Hurricane Relief

Caverns of Gold

Caverns of Gold

a vibrant coalition of over 280 musicians from western north carolina and beyond has come together to release caverns of gold: a benefit for wnc hurricane relief. this impactful compilation album seeks to raise crucial funds for those affected by hurricane helene, with 100% of the proceeds benefiting beloved asheville, a local nonprofit dedicated to providing immediate assistance and long-term support for those affected by the disaster. artists include r.e.m., steep canyon rangers, kevn kinney, luscious jackson, consolidated, caitlin cary, moe., milk carton kids, north mississippi all-stars, richard buckner, the feelies, and many, many others.
click below to purchase

