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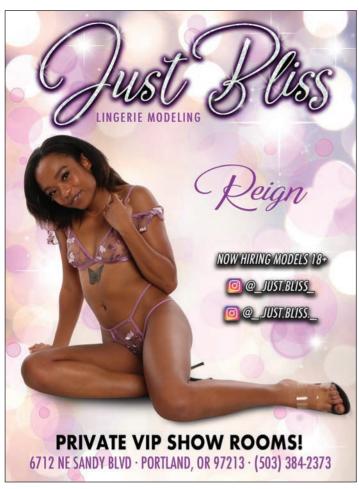


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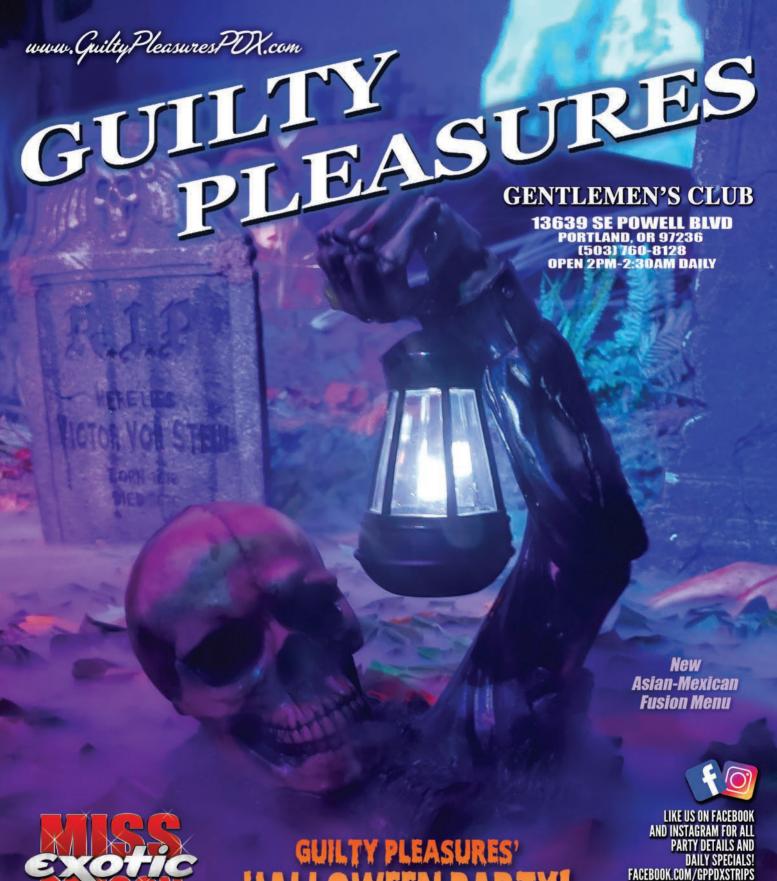


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ghastly and repulsive minutia about our six & eight-legged friends page 16 | by esmeralda rupp-spangle



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your guide to success for throwing an ill-advised house rager this halloween page 22 | by blazer sparrow



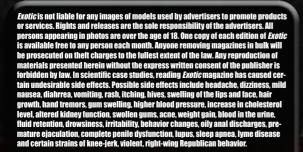
# LOVE IN A PLAIN BROWN ENVELOPE: ORPHEUS

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We do tend to think of our own lives as being pretty rough. Overdue bills, unfaithful lovers, court-ordered therapy, family squabbles, missing quesadillas at the drive-thru; but truth be told, our lives are pretty hunky-dory when compared to some of our chitinous cousins. I always like to say that perspective and understanding of just how absolutely metal nature can be, gives us all a good view that's often missing from our own existence. So, let us all take a moment to reflect on the lives of our oft-overlooked insect and arachnid neighbors, and perhaps appreciate just how mundane and small our own troubles are when compared with the true horror of being (or being a host for)...

#### **Demodex Mites**

While not an insect per se, mites fall into the class of Arachnida, and thus, we often think of them as "bugs" (like spiders, scorpions, etc.). Demodex mites have a special relationship with us, however, as they tend to live in and around the hair follicles of many mammals. These particular mites cause a range of skin problems in many critters, including many canines (mange), and more notably humans. All adults and many children carry these mites (that means you too, buddy), and when you sleep, they like to emerge from your hair follicles, eat your oils and dead skin cells, and party like it's 1999.

Unfortunately for them, they also lack an excretory orifice (butthole) and swell up with poo until they pretty much, well, just explode. This can cause rosacea for those with a greater concentration of and/or sensitivity to them, but sadly, we're all covered in exploding poop mites. It sounds terrible for you and me, certainly, but arguably worse for them.



#### Cockroaches

While castigated and reviled by humans, the cockroach is an absolute necessity for the jewel wasp. This iridescent and beautiful stingy bitch has a very special relationship with one of mankind's most despised bugs—the cockroach. When a mama wasp has need to lay her eggs, she'll seek out a roach, and given the opportunity, jab it right in the brainpan. You'd think this would kill the sorry bastard, but most unfortunately for them, it's doesn't. What it does do is paralyze them. When a tenant of the easily forgotten '90s' sitcom "Joe's Apartment" is so indisposed, the wasp lady will remove the roach's antennae and herd its now-zombified prey (if you've ever met a girl in shiny pants, you may know how this goes) back to her underground den.

This is the point where things get weird, a la 50 shades of body horror. She lays her eggs on the stupefied roach and leaves, but not before blocking the exit. Her eggs eventually hatch, and the larvae slowly consume the still-living roach (I feel like child support payment references here might get me canceled) and eventually go off to dupe a new generation of cockroaches into being what's basically xenomorph nurseries.

#### **Botflies**

A personal aside: the first and only time I ever saw a Botfly larva was enough to last my whole life. I was working as a

vet assistant in a small town in northern Washington. A cat keeper brought their feline companion in, as they were concerned about a nasty abscess that had popped up on their cat's hindquarters. An abscess occurs when a scratch is infected and fills with pus. Usually, it's from a tussle with another mammal and generally requires just a drain and some antibiotics. This looked no differ-

Their colonies tend to be less populous than honeybee communes (hundreds of individuals vs. thousands or tens of thousands), but these malignant cunts aren't feeding benignly on flowers, no sir. The Asian giant hornet loves nothing so much as the taste of honeybee flesh. Technically, the adults don't partake but instead massacre and grind up the bodies of our smaller honeybee friends

this ignoble thug. Whole human civilizations have risen and fallen to this absolute bastard of a vector, and it's been said that somewhere between 5-50% of all humans that have ever lived have died as a result of the humble mosquito. We are the proverbial lambs for the slaughter, and no one has made it worse for mammals than these justly vilified vampiric vanguards. It might seem like

# Unfortunately for them, they also lack an excretory orifice (butthole) and swell up with poo until they pretty much, well, just explode.

ent at first glance until we unbandaged the opening to the wound, and a nightmare was thus revealed. I looked at it, and I will swear to this day, it looked back at me. Now, I know that it's the rear end of a botfly that protrudes from its fleshy confines (which, of course, cannot "look" at anything), but the impression I got at that moment was, "Dear God, it knows you're here, run." The Botfly (also known as warble fly, heel fly, and gadfly) lays its eggs opportunistically in or on mammals (sometimes using a vector-like a mosquito). The larvae grow into something known almost charmingly as "warbles"—an ill-fitting name for such a volcano of parasitic terror. When extracted, well... let me just offer some advice... don't look it up on YouTube. You already did? Well... don't say I didn't warn you.

#### The Honeybee vs. the Murder Hornet

Being a honeybee these days seems like it's awash in problems. Colony collapse disorder, ecological destruction, pesticides, the unyielding human desire for your sweet, sweet vomit... Yet somehow, the losing streak keeps on for our purveyors of pollination. Queue the so-called murder hornets. Vespa mandarinia, exceeding an inch and a half in length (that's what she said).



into a pasty slurry. This bee-sludge, in turn, becomes food for the hornet's horrifying offspring. These monstrous, nightmare-fueled, cannibalistic hornets do have one weakness: The Japanese honeybee has learned a tactic whereby a mess of them surround one murder hornet and vibrate their booties so fast, they cook the enclosed hornet. Sadly, US honeybees are too busy watching TMZ to bother with this and are likely doomed.

#### Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes may seem like mere pests to us now, but these motherfuckers could well be the most overlooked killer in human history. Malaria, Zika, Yellow fever, Dengue fever, Chikungunya, many varieties of encephalitis, tularemia of several incarnations... these and countless more afflictions are sourced back to



it's a party for them, but... Well, yea, it actually kinda is. Being a mosquito would probably be pretty great, in fact, unless someone flexes while you're eating, and you explode like a blood-filled water balloon. At least you gave them an itchy lump and a deadly pathogen to remember you by.

Though only a short trek through some of the grotesque (but true) facts of life as an insect or arachnid, perhaps you can now regard your overlooked quesadilla as perhaps not so bad, when compared with being made into a paste for murder hornet babies, a zombie slave to be consumed while still alive, or an exploding feces bomb.

Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle loves the magic of the natural world. She can be found on Instagram @esmeraldasilentcitadel and Facebook as Esmeralda Marina

#### BY BRYAN A BYBEE

#### WHATZ CRACKIN'? [SUP J-MACK?]

No fancy introductions with bougie vernacular this month. I'm cuttin' straight to business with the info I know you *really* want... Where the fuck are the Halloween parties at?!



The good news is that there's a selection to choose from this year—take that, 'Rona! (You incessant bitch!) Leading the pack is Guilty Pleasures, and they're not fucking around... Partying on both Friday, October 29, and Saturday, October 30! Baller status if you achieve perfect attendance! The remaining parties are all on Saturday, October 30: Cabaret, Cheetahs XXX Cabaret (Salem), and Stars Cabaret (Salem). If you start early enough, you can hit them all, and Cheetahs is open extra late, making it the perfect ending point, but BYOEB (bring your own emesis bag)...

If you still have any gas left in your tank on Sunday, October 31, head downtown for a special Halloween edition of Sinferno at Dante's. It's the only way to end your Halloween weekend, and we can guarantee the hottest thing happening on a Sunday!

That said, don't wait until the end of the month to get your party on, though. There are plenty of reasons to start early! Let's begin with a birthday shout-out to Sophia Karenina at Kit Kat Club, who's having her birthday bash on Friday, October 8. If you don't know Sophia, you really need to crash her party and meet her. While you're at it, check out the rest of the sizzling hot lineup—chances are, you'll end the night there!



Speaking of birthday parties, DJ Dick Hennessy's birthday is also on the horizon. While not technically this month, it will feel like it's still October due to your massive hangover from Halloween. That's right, folks... You have exactly one day to recover from your Halloween capers before you do it all over again! Yes, you swore you wouldn't drink for a week, but you knew you were full of shit while saying it! Be at X Exotic Lounge by 10 p.m. on Tuesday, November 2, to wish Dick

a happy birthday. Rumor has it he'll be attempting to set the world record for consecutive tequila shots taken by a single human. For reference, the current record sits at just north of 50, so we've urged him to take the proper precautions and have the ambulance on standby. Best of luck. Sir Hennessy!

Wrapping up this month's mentionables are sales and specials across a plethora of adult stores, starting with sexy Taboo treats available all Halloween weekend at Club Privata in downtown Portland.

For those of you that are farther south (and elsewhere in the state), all Adult Shop and Eva's Boutique locations have some awesome sales going on. Adult Shop has 10% off select bondage goodies, and Eva's Boutique has a sale on rhythm toys. If that's not enough to entice you, both have a lingerie clearance sale going on, too. Don't miss out!

#### MISS EXOTIC OREGON STARTS NOW!

We've been talking about it for months, and now it's finally here. If you're not completely excited, there's some serious shit wrong with you. *Miss Exotic* is the largest adult industry pageant on the West Coast, and it hasn't happened since 2019 (FU COVID!)

It all kicks off on Saturday, October 2, at Cheetahs XXX Cabaret in Salem. The rest of the preliminary qualifier rounds are listed on the right, in red. You should make it a point to attend them all, and here's why...

Miss Exotic was created for one purpose: to showcase the wide-ranging talent, skills, and creativity of exotic entertainers in the Pacific Northwest. Only the elite of the top entertainers move on to The Finals of Miss Exotic.



This is dependent on their overall ranking in the following categories:

- Theme
- Stage Presence & Interaction
- Body/Figure
- Grace, Agility & Skill
- Outfit/Costume
- Originality
- Beauty
- · Class/Style

The final component to their overall ranking and chance to compete in The Finals is customer votes. They need *your support* through your attendance, voting, and of course, tipping!

We've all been served a series of shit sandwiches by this pandemic, and that includes our beloved performers, club owners, bar staff, and other industry professionals. It's time to put that behind us and celebrate the immense talent and creativity we are blessed to have in this industry of ours. Please come and show your support!

And don't forget! Miss Exotic Oregon 2020, Axel from Devils Point, will grace our presence at The Finals! You can see her perform and crown a new Miss Exotic on Friday, November 26 (Black Friday) at Dante's.

Support your local businesses, including every industry business within these pages.

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SAT 02 — CHEETAHS (SALEM)
MISS EXOTIC OREGON
QUALIFIER ROUND I

FRI 08 – KIT KAT CLUB SOPHIA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY BASH

> SAT 09 – KIT KAT CLUB MISS EXOTIC OREGON OUALIFIER ROUND II

SAT 16 – STARS CABARET (SALEM)
MISS EXOTIC OREGON
OUALIFIER ROUND III

FRI 22 — GUILTY PLEASURES
MISS EXOTIC OREGON
QUALIFIER ROUND IV

FRI 29 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE MISS EXOTIC OREGON QUALIFIER ROUND V

**HALLOWEEN PARTIES** 

FRI 29 & SAT 30
GUILTY PLEASURES

SAT 30 CABARET, CHEETAHS, STARS CABARET (SALEM)









I should preface by saying, maybe the most important thing *not* to do for your sweaty, crowded Halloween rager is not to have one. Depending on how our good friend Mr. Delta cuts an angry swath through the unvaccinated folks, we may be heading for another lockdown. I'm writing this in early September, so who fucking knows at this point. We're on month 21 of 2020. Time literally doesn't exist anymore.

Although live music is making a slow, steady, skittish comeback, I, unfortunately, haven't had the chance to venture out yet. So, there's less and less for me to write about (hence, the absence in last month's issue). As much as I want to resort to snarky music nerd trivia regurgitated as mediocre comedy, I feel like I need to try my damnedest to return to my roots as a scene critic.

Now, we just have to pay a second door guy to check vaccine cards—just one more new normal after another.

Something that simply isn't going away (and by the numbers, didn't go away for even the worst of the pandemic) is house parties. The lifeblood of the paltry local scene here. Now, it's probably a little harder to enforce a strict vaccine policy at the door of a porous, beerdrenched, dilapidated flophouse, but hey, if you wanna be a dick about it, best of luck to you. Most likely, after your main homies are there, you're just not gonna care. Before you know it, your costumed, slutty get-together is a super spreader event. But I'm getting ahead of myself. This list isn't about trying to stop that from happening. That's inevitable. So, let's pretend this house party with live music is happening in a post-COVID world

just trying to enjoy the music, by asking if they're Team Pfizer or Team Moderna. By the by, the correct answer is team J&J. One-shot blood clots, baby!



Have Color-Coded Cups to Announce Your DTFness

Remember the gummy bracelets you wore in school to let your classmates know which body parts you were down to put in your mouth? Anyhoo, I've noticed at least an internet trend towards this, with color-coded cups, so you can skip the pleasantries and just let partygoers know whether you were "Taken," "Single AF," "DTF," etc. All I have to say is: do not. This is not a good idea, and I'm using my platform to nip this in the bud before it spreads through Portland like the upcoming Gamma variant. You will have an abundance of dudes with DTF-colored cups, one poor couple with some Taken cups that are seriously regretting coming to this party, and the handful of ladies who brought their own color cups with "fuck off" written

# "As much as you think you can get a couple of your loser friends' shitty bands to just show up, play, and figure it'll all be fine, it simply will not."

But again, in this new, boring apocalypse, it's hard to suss out what the scene even is anymore. After restrictions were lifted, we had about a month—that I missed—of live music before folks who prefer to use horse medicine that *isn't* Ketamine drove up hospital numbers to the point where we have to mask up again. I'm not complaining though, at least shows weren't canceled.

'cause honestly, it just hurts less to think about it that way, and we can all just laugh and talk shit again.

So, imagine this hypothetical house show is happening in a world where some skeezy lurker who no one knows is spiking the punch bowl with some fresh Delta, and douchbros are hitting on the poor gals on them. It's a disaster waiting to happen. Don't do it.

#### Not Have a DD — Designated (Stage) Daddy

As much as you think you can get a couple of your loser friends' shitty bands to just show up, play, and figure it'll all be fine, it simply will not. Now, I'm hoping anyone dumb enough to throw a house party with live music already has a PA system and enough mics and cables to leave nothing up to chance. Still, even if you have the bare minimum equipment (I can already guess you don't have anything even resembling a stage), I guarantee you it'll be nothing but sadness and chaos when the entertainment for the evening shows up, and you just point at the pile of speakers and mic stands in the basement corner. Someone has to be the point man. Even if it is just turning down the speakers when they feedback or letting the bands know where they can put their shit, trust me. They don't even have to be sober. They just have to remain upright and intelligible for the duration of the performance, and they simply cannot leave the pretend stage area. I mean, besides to grab another beer or catch a smoke break. It seems extra, but it's not. It's like the bassist. You don't notice when they're there, but you really fucking notice when they're not.

#### **Have More Than Three Bands**

Or really, have more than two. How much space do you have? It's gonna be a mess no matter what—the less warm bodies, the better. Coordinating young, drunk musicians makes herding cats look easy. Bars with actual staff have a hard time, so why are you and your housemates going to fare any better? If everyone's bringing their own amps and shit, then the house just becomes a storage unit with very little room for doomed sexual conquests. With setup and tear down and the singer not helping with any of that, the third band isn't going on till 1 a.m., when everyone has either left or is deep in the k-hole. Now that I'm thinking about it, why do you even have live bands at your house party? Just get a DJ instead. Everyone will have much more fun. Much less shit to move around. Plus, they'll actually play songs your party guests will like.







# EXOTIC PINUP OCTOBER 2021



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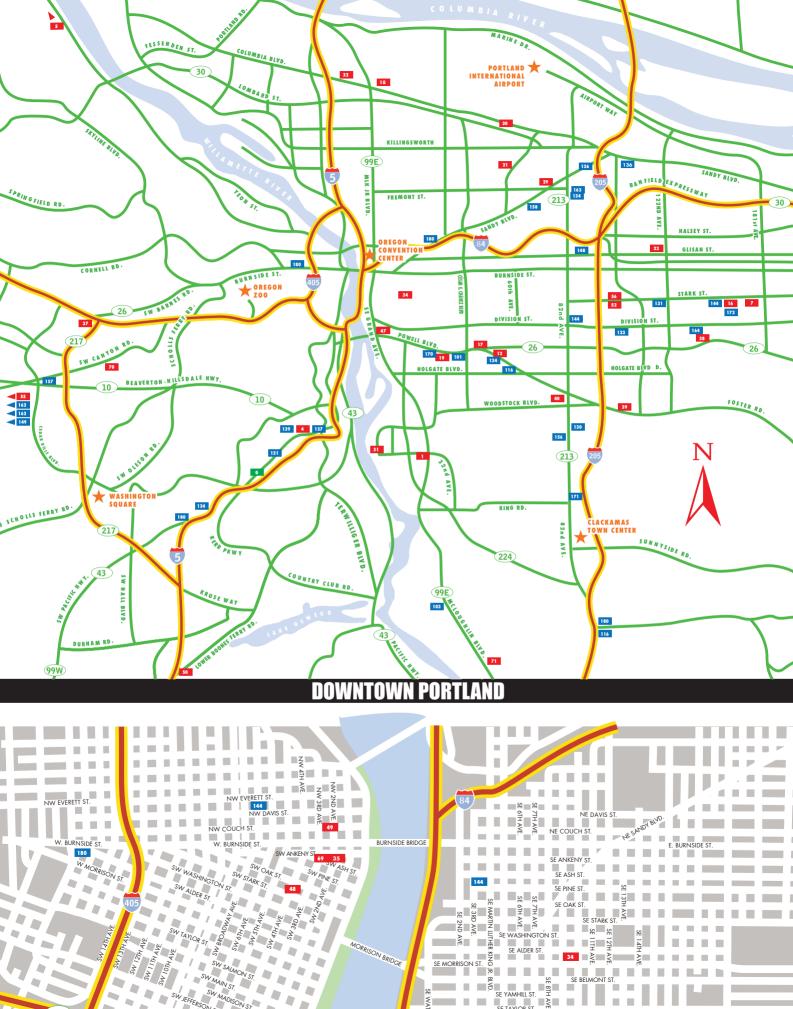
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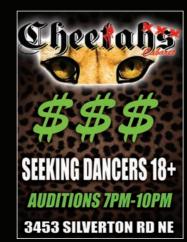
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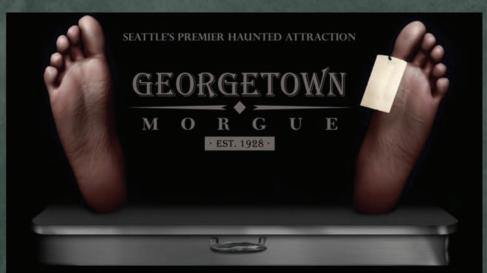




# SO YOU THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE FUNEON HALLOWEEN, BUT YOU ENDED UP IN THE MORGUE BY HANNAH ONE CUP

There's a lot of things I thought I'd be doing on Halloween, but I can honestly say that I never expected a morgue to be in the cards. What's funny is that I was just making fun of the sign for Georgetown Morgue here in Seattle, and how I thought it was an extremely inappropri-

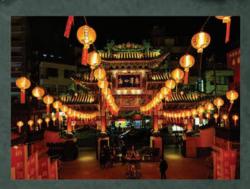
to steer clear of the Big Time. I mean, you should totally have fun, but maybe try not to accomplish as much as I had that night. So, without further warning, here is (what I believe to be) the fully complete list of things I had done on Halloween before I hit the sheets.



ate sign for a morgue (two soles of the feet with "Georgetown Morgue" in the middle of them).

I now know that it's not an actual morgue, unfortunately, but also, more unfortunately for me, this isn't the morgue I ended up in. No, sir, I ended up in the real deal. Less haunted, more sterile, the lighting sucks, people suck, greeting service sucks. But, whatever, I can at least forewarn you guys, so you can attempt

1) I started the morning of Halloween off with one foot already in the grave—a hangover from Hell and topped it off with a Bloody Mary. Choice (makes OK sign with fingers). What's more, the bartender remembered me from the night before because I had let them know they'd be seeing me again very soon, and I asked them to slip "somethin' fun" in on my next visit. I do not know what that somethin' was, but I can tell you consequences weren't a thing in my head that day.



2) Late a Rice Dog in China Town, and it was the most delicious thing I'd ever eaten. So, I ordered seven more and ate them all. I started to get really thirsty at this point, so I went to Joe's right next door, ordered four double whiskey Cokes, and one cider, then stumbled out proud and still alert somehow (but, I mean, I could have just been lying to myself... I also don't remember if I was kicked out or if I just left proud and inebriated, thirst having been quenched). I did not leave, however, before having my face properly painted by a girl at the bar, who was offering free face paintings. I accidentally wiped my eyes, forgetting about the paint, and made myself look like the Babadook.

3) I tried to pick a fight with a Seattle football fan. I don't know anything about sports, but I tried to tell them my team was better, anyway. This was when I got pushed into traffic. Unfortunately, this was not where I died, just where I got hit by a car, yelled at because I most definitely looked like a drunk, crazy person

with Babadook face paint, and stumbled off upset that I didn't win a non-existent fight.

A cop only looked at me for a slight second because there was only one of them in his car, and apparently, there need to be two in order to intervene safely and "legally." I think I was just too much for them to handle on Halloween (aren't I always? dead girl wink wink). I may be dead, but I can still make myself laugh.

4) I started to drive home somehow and had a near-death experience with the stupid train that has to go by literally *every time* I try to get *anywhere* in this city. WHY ARE THE TRAINS SO BUSY? WHY ARE PEOPLE STILL USING TRAINS SO MUCH? I like to have these "near-death experiences," though, so I continued this adventure by just grazing a telephone pole and driving close enough to give the guy I saw swerving on a scooter an aneurism. I yelled "FIVE POINTS!" out my window, which made him look up, hit the edge of the curb, and fall over. I laughed. I definitely belong where I am right now...

5) I never made it home. I actually ended up going to some strip club, confusing it for an equally shady spot in Portland, ish puking out of my mouth as I also vomited. Word vomit followed by real vomit. Rad.

hungry. So, I grabbed someone's fish and chips they were eating on the dock. They didn't like that, and some guy punched



6) At this point in the night, I'm pretty sure I am close to my final evolutionary state. That is, somewhere along the lines of a raccoon scrounging the ground for cigarette butts, a Gorton's Fisherman representative (I try stealing someone's crab traps and fishing pole), and sloth. I am leaning more towards sloth by the end of it—a chipper, crazy sloth. Anyway, seven cigarette butts (so, one whole cigarette) and five random open bottles filled with liquid of some sort later, my car is parked at Pikes', right in front of the Ferris wheel. I think, "Awesome. Good parking job! I al-

me in the face, and I proceeded to tell him that my football team was better than his. He said he was from California, to which I then reiterated to him that my football team was definitely better than his and fell off the dock.

And that's how I ended up here. Not elegant. Not unique or artistically created. No, I just drowned a drunk sea creature. A sea creature so pickled that when the police or whoever grabbed me (why would I care or notice), I was still perfectly intact. I mean, it was also really cold water, but still.

Anyway, the moral of the story is, if you drink enough and die in frozen water, you can still leave a sexy corpse. Also, wear black underwear. Or, I guess the other moral of the story here; do at least one of these things on Halloween, but don't do them all. Unless, of course, you want to be my buddy in wherever-this-is-land. It isn't great, but hey, I am pretty funny.

Hannah One Cup is currently still in the morgue. Her body is being studied by science nerds to help figure out how she survived that long and how her body still looks so damn hot. After they are done with that nonsense, she will be placed in someone's woods for the coyotes to eat. Mmmmm. Like rum ham, but a person. She still thinks she's funny. Although she's dead, she can still be found on Facebook under her name.



asked where the alcohol was, was told there was none, so I scowled at the attendant, looked at the pretty lady, said I appreciated what she did, that I was sorry I wouldn't be attending and left. I don't think she heard me; in fact, I don't think what I was saying constituted English or any other spoken language. Just gibber-

most never get this close to anything!" I hop out of my car, hurl, and tell the Ferris wheel guy, "one ticket." He attempts to veer me in the other direction, takes my car keys—which I murderously stare at him for—and sends me on my way.

7) The dock is pretty long, and I'm pretty

# **ORPHEUS:** DREAMS COME **TRUE**



The white sedan rolled under a tree in the parking lot. Eurydice parked the car away from the illuminated Motel 6. She smiled so much on the way to meet Orpheus that her face hurt. She pressed cold hands against flush cheeks, then took three deep breaths to calm her jittering mind and chest. Her gaze fixed on the brochure palette in the bright lobby, across from the car. Vibrant reds, oranges, and greens caught her eye as she skipped toward the building. What was there to do in the drab town of Centralia, Washington? Other than uniting with your twin flame for the first time at a seedy hotel, late at night.



I don't know who usurped my story, but it happened to me, Orpheus happened to me, so it's best if I tell it, verbatim, like he asked me to before he died.



Eurydice ascended the cement stairs stained with extinguished cigarette butts and pigeon shit. She followed the cracks in the steps with her breath. She stuffed her anxieties into the crevices, discarding fear of rejection there with the weeds and broken concrete. The outdoor walkway on the second floor of the motel stretched on and on. Eurydice got fed up with the distance, great and small, so she jogged the length of the building, then turned a corner. Light spilled out of the open door to room 213.

We actually joked about that later because Jeffrey Dahmer lived in apartment 213.

Eurydice barged into the room, giggles first. A pair of black Dr. Martens boots rested neatly next to the door as Eurydice

closed it. The mirror reflected Orpheus lying down, with dark hair and eyes, clad in a faded black sweater, black jeans, and black socks atop all-white linen. He leaped out of bed. Eurydice turned around to Orpheus, who lunged at her with wild abandon. He cupped her hot cheeks in his soft hands. Orpheus lovingly locked his dark orbs into Eurydice's doe eyes. They kissed deeply at the door, with eyes half-opened, as if in tantric meditation. Cloud-lips connected with lightning smooches into a mutual melt. Their cells melded. Their desires uncoiled in embraced limbs, buttery and warm. Electric.



I always loved it when he said we had enough electricity to light up a city.

Orpheus guided Eurydice to the bed, slowly swaying and gently pulling her toward the mattress framed in chipped pine. He lowered himself down, back first, and settled her on top of him. She lifted their tops to feel flesh against flesh. Orpheus plucked the shirt off of Eurydice and then his own. He clasped her waist as he did so, which kept her positioned on his lap. Eurydice brushed the dark curls from Orpheus's X-ray eyes that scanned her soul for lust and love.

"Tell me that you need me," Orpheus said as he sucked on Eurydice's hard nipple, biting just enough for her to feel a jolt of pleasurable pain.

Animus just left, thankfully.

Orpheus slides his velvety tongue into my eager mouth. We kiss like the world

caresses my clit, igniting every single cell in my body. Little taps and swirls in the most controlled way. He massages my pussy with his Midas touch until amrita drips down my thighs and onto the sheets. He enters me, and it's every bit of magic we expected, but more divine and sweeter. The ecstasy is so profound that we don't know where the other begins or ends. For the first and only time in my life, I have an orgasm the first time having sex with a lover, instead of it taking a few times to a few months.

In repose, we share stories. I tell him about my hometown in Florida, and he tells me his most vivid Florida memory.

"I went to a shack with this guy. We smoked crack in the dark for what felt like hours. When he eventually turned on the lights, palmetto bugs covered literally evlimited time together, which he was wasting on a phone call he could've ignored. Neither of us could stay the night in the hotel room because we had to work too damn early in the morning. As annoyed as I am that he's blabbing on a call, I find comfort in his absolute transparency at the same time. The thought calms me. and I sink into his skin. He hangs up the phone and apologizes, then kisses me.

After finally being with Orpheus in person, I knew I needed to keep meeting him for romantic rendezvous, no matter the difficulty. Even if I sometimes created hardship between us. Like then. A couple of weeks after we met that night. I called off the relationship. My ex had re-entered my life apologetically, and Orpheus had gradually withdrawn from me. We hardly talked. He was aloof. It became confusing to have love for two people who were in-

"We kiss like the world is ending—writhing all the way to dystopia, where smug hipsters raise their small dogs and sugary coffees, as a tsunami destroys their imploding metropolis, commonly loathed for growing beyond most people's means."

is ending—writhing all the way to dystopia, where smug hipsters raise their small dogs and sugary coffees as a tsunami destroys their imploding metropolis, commonly loathed for growing beyond most people's means.

Orpheus kisses and licks his way down my torso, covered in a faded, colorless tattoo of snakes entwined. I watch him in the mirror on the dresser in front of the bed, as he slips off my leggings and thong.

"You don't care that I'm bleeding?"

"Do I look like I care?"

Orpheus tugs the tampon out of my yoni with his teeth. He flings the tampon across the room, where it thwacks the dresser and rolls onto the carpet. Luckily, there wasn't much blood.

Orpheus licks spit onto the tips of his index and middle fingers and so very lightly



erything in the room. You could hear the roaches slither into hiding."

Just as Orpheus tells me this anecdote, his baby momma calls. He holds me as they talk about their kid. After 15 minutes, I get antsy and pull the hairs on his chest, hoping it's true he's been sober for a couple of years. He smirks at me but still talks for another 10 minutes or so. A 25-minute call interrupting our hilarious and grim pillow talk was way too long to accept when he drove farther than I did. Plus, we had very terested in me. I had to choose one, and I chose the person closest in proximity to me because I knew him better and trusted his fidelity more than Orpheus's.

I called Orpheus and told him that I needed to give Eros another chance. He wasn't happy about it, of course. But the beautiful thing is that sometimes I was a jackass, like then, and Orpheus never held it against me. He'd get a little miffed in the moment, but he never stayed mad long. He always left the door open with me, even if I didn't deserve it. Like that first time when I called it off instead of asking for us to figure out how to navigate a long distance relationship that required crossing a border between countries.

I never shook that perpetual need to be near him. Death makes that a fun game, but dreams have a funny way of being real when someone dies.

To be continued...



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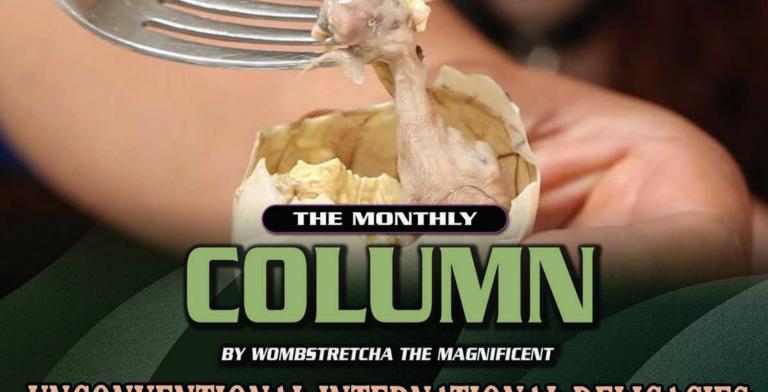












## UNCONVENTIONAL INTERNATIONAL DELICACIES

Okay, hear me out. Lists of "weird" or "gross" foods are generally an excuse to mock people in places you've never been, on account of them eating bugs or whatever. That's not how I'm choosing to play this article. I assure you, if I want to mock Uzbekistan, I will straight-up write an article called "Uzbekistan is Very Unpleasant, and Everyone There Has Hairy Knuckles." I do not need to bring their cuisine into it. This isn't necessarily a grossout article, either. It is, instead, a list of unconventional but intriguing dishes from around the world.

That said, let's get started.

## Qarta (Uzbekistan)

Okay, Uzbekistan. This is me being non-judgmental. Qarta is a dish comprised of pan-fried horse rectums. No, I don't just mean "intestines," and I'm using creative license. It is actually just the section of them that comprises the rectum. To prepare it, one washes the tube of the rectum first—preferably for a good, long while. After it's washed, it is smoked for a whole day



and then dried for another two. It is then very thinly sliced, seasoned, boiled for a bit in bouillon, pan-fried, and seasoned with dill. That's a lot of work for what is essentially fried buttholes. Would I, personally, eat this? You know, I think I actually would. I've eaten SPAM, Bar-S hot dogs, and chorizo, all of which are buttholes or butthole-adjacent, so why not?

## Casu Marzu (Sardinia)

The Italian province of Sardinia is a pretty laid-back place. The locals take life as it comes and enjoy good food and drink as often as they can.

Casu marzu is a gourmet form of cheese that is "processed" by insects.

You see, they will take a large wheel of pecorino cheese and remove some of the rind. They then set the cheese outside and let cheese flies (Piophila casei) lay their eggs on it. Cheese flies, like most flies, lay hundreds of eggs at a time, and the Sardinians soon find their pecorino teeming with maggots. The acids produced by the maggots'



digestive process break down the fats in the cheese, making the cheese incredibly soft. Given that the cheese is considered "unsafe" by the time the maggots die naturally, the logical course of action is to eat it while they're still alive. Because the larvae can project themselves several inches if molested by, say, a fork, enthusi-

asts will typically hold their hands over their plate to keep the little buggers from jumping up in their face. And, no, you don't have to leave the maggots in. You can put the cheese in a bag, and they will extract themselves as they run out of oxygen and leap from the cheese to the bottom of the bag. You may then consume it maggot-less. Would I eat this? This has long been a food I wish to try, honestly. I just gotta KNOW, ya know? Sadly, it is prohibited by the import laws of most countries and is even only quasilegal in Sardinia. So, to get my hands on some, I'd have to go not only go to Sardinia, but then I would have to try to figure out how to find a forbidden cheese hookup. It's on the list, though.



Kopi Luwak (Indonesia)

Okay, anyone who knows about this stuff probably knew it would make this list. Having made a splash a few years back when every hipster wanted to get their hands on some, this is a specialty coffee, wherein the beans are also naturally processed by an animal. In this case, the palm civet, a small, cat-like mammal. They process the beans by eating them and then shitting them out, fermented. Yeah. That's it. I want to know who the first guy was to look at a cat turd and say, "those coffee beans I see in there... they gotta still be good." It fetches a pretty penny on the open market, ranging from \$100/kg to up to \$1,300/kg for "wild-caught" civet shit. Would I try this? No. Even if it weren't ludicrously expensive, I draw the line at eating shit or drinking it. I don't care if it tastes like angel pussy; that's a hard line.



**Cheez Whiz (United States)** 

One of the few countries to routinely eat foods in whiz form, the United States is known for its passion for junk food and convenience. Cheez Whiz is both of those things. It is not really cheese, as such, instead being a collection of oils and milk proteins. Invented in 1952 by a team of food scientists who were trying to beat the Soviet Union in the equally intense but lesser-known snack equivalent of the space race, Cheez Whiz quickly cemented itself in American dietary culture. When offered to foreigners who are unaccustomed to radioactive yellow whizzes, it's often met with reluctance and is considered an acquired taste. Would I eat this? Well, I have before. I'm sure it's still inside me, somewhere, leaching vital nutrients from my bones.



**Huitlacoche (Mexico)** 

Huitlacoche (weet-la-coh-che) is also known as corn smut. We love smut of all sorts around here, so let's begin. Corn smut is a fungus that infects corn and presents as a kind of puffy mold on the kernels. In another instance of someone deciding to eat something that looks (or is at least conceptually) foul, it turns out that this moldy corn is supposedly delicious. Said to taste like truffles and earning its (other) nickname of the "Mexican truffle," you can find the stuff as street food in Mexico or for sale in the produce section of many grocers. Would I eat this? Sure. Shame it never really caught on in the USA.



Hákarl (Iceland)

Hákarl is an Icelandic national dish, and much like every single goddamn thing that has ever or will ever come out of Iceland, it's very strange. First off, it's fermented shark. The varieties of shark you catch around Iceland are generally not edible, so this is a hack of sorts. You catch you a shark, gut it, and chop its head off. Then, you put it in a shallow hole in a bed of gravelly sand. The shark is then covered with sand and gravel, and heavy stones are placed atop the mound to squeeze the liquids out of the body. They let it ferment in this way for two to three months, then they cut it into strips and hang them up in an open-air structure. Imagine being downwind of this thing. As it dries, a brown crust forms on the surface of the meat. The brown crust is cut off, and the remaining meat is cut into small chunks for consumption. It has a strong ammonia smell and is traditionally accompanied by aquavit, a very strong liquor. It has been described by the late chef and TV personality Anthony Bourdain as being "the single worst, most disgusting and terrible-tasting thing" he had ever eaten. Would I eat this? I have eaten this. I was able to obtain some from an associate who visited Biorkland. It's like eating a pencil eraser dipped in floor cleanser. The liquor is an absolute necessity; otherwise, you'd probably want to hurl.



Balut (Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, 'Nam)

Native to Southeast Asia, and looking inconspicuously like a boiled egg, balut is a fascinating snack food. You see, it IS an egg, a duck egg to be precise, but much more so. Most of the eggs we eat are unfertilized. Thus, they're just an inert yolk and white. Not so with balut, for you see, the egg is fertilized, and the embryo is allowed to grow for 21 days, at which point, they are then boiled and served. The duck fetus is eaten directly from the shell, giving you a dead-eyed stare until you gnaw its face off with a little salt, vinegar, or chili sauce. The bones of the formed proto-duck are supposedly firm but tender, and it is an inexpensive source of protein and calcium. Would I eat this? I can honestly say I don't know. I know I wouldn't seek it out like with the maggot cheese, though.

That's my top seven. There is an abundance more curious delicacies out there, and perhaps another time, I'll chronicle some more of them.

In the meantime, bon appétit!

## -WStM

Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a fermented animal product connoisseur, embryo analyst, ghost agitator, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe (yay!) and Facebook (boo!), as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."









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