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At the end of every year, do you feel like a fucking failure? Ever feel like shit for committing publicly to lose 15 pounds, when, in fact, you actually put on ten? Are your kids still calling you by your first name? Do you feel bad for never getting your oil changed? Please read on:

Quit drinking (in front of others). Only drink alone. Pics or it didn’t happen. I’ve never had my dog get mad at me for drinking too much and finishing off the ranch dressing and all the tortillas.

Stop telling your friends that your beauty secret is “water and living clean,” when you know good and well that you bathe in Botox. Give up the ghost. Confess.

Drink more water.

Remember, not everyone who shares their pregnancy with you is looking for a long sorrowful hug and on offer to “go with her.” Sometimes, “congratulations” is the correct response.

Use/learn their appropriate pronoun.

Lose 15 pounds. I mean, you’re perfect just the way you are. I didn’t say lose 15 pounds at the same time. This is fucking easy. Okay, stay with me here: Monday, you’re down one pound, but on Tuesday, you’re up two. Only track the down days! Last year, I lost 345lbs and gained 355 lbs. It’s all about how you word things.

Get your oil changed. Okay, you really need to do this. It’s not hard—drive to your local rip-off shop, where the employees come to work on skateboards. Tell them you want your oil changed and that’s all. Just do it.

Stop taking the kids to the grocery store day-care before going to the bar across the street.

Start cooking “real” meals at home. Top Ramen counts and cereal counts. Fast food does not.

Stop drinking egg nog, ’cause that shit is gross.

Put gas in your car before you are on empty. This will make you feel like a huge winner.

Give a homeless person a dollar.

Be friends with someone who is not like you.

Bite the bullet and buy the big multi-pack of paper towels. Nothing will make you feel as successful as buying in bulk. Fuck those yoga-pant moms and their judgy Ugg boots.

Make time to go to the dentist—do this twice. They are your only teeth, take care of them (as a mom, I am obligated by law to say this).

Have the doctor check your genital hole(s). Your sex organs and buttholes are important. You need these forever. Take care of them.

Tell a woman that you admire...that you admire them! This will make you feel great and, if it makes you feel great, think about how it must make them feel. I can be reached on Twitter: @TiffanyGreysen

Make a new friend and don’t block them on Facebook.

Be the underdog.

Spend time with friends you’ve brushed off because you wanted to watch Golden Girls reruns. You love them for a reason and you miss them too. You won’t regret the time you spend with your friends. Remember...Prince and Bowie had friends too.

Watch more documentaries.

Ignore gossip.

Wear matching socks when you know others can see...or don’t. Socks don’t matter.
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So, 2016 was one of the more screwy years on record, but 2017 promises to be much better. We really judge our precious short time spent on this Earth by the quality of our entertainment and I just so happen to have inside contacts at several major television networks. I am here, now, to give you salivating TV watchers a preview of what to expect in the coming year on the ol’ small screen, as it promises to be better than ever.

To prefence this, I’d say “reality shows are back,” but I don’t think they really ever went away. Reality shows only seem to come in two flavors: the ones where there’s some kind of competition or adversarial situation the people are put into and those where it’s merely a 21st century freak show.

Scope out the new “competitive/adversarial” reality shows:

**Six Bitches Who Hate Each Other Share A House**

In this show, stuck-up, high-maintenance, spoiled suburban women (and, occasionally, one sassy urban woman) who are used to always getting their way...are stuck in a house with others just like them, because they’re trying to win...something. The meltdowns and shrieking alone are sure to pull you in!

**Look Who’s Banging!**

This show puts ten sleazy-but-decent-looking men into an open dorm complex with ten sleazy-but-decent-looking women, for a period of one TV season (at least). Did I mention there are 12 hot tubs and 40 night-vision cameras installed, with liquor and MDMA deliveries every three hours? When you want to watch awkward, amateur porn, but aren’t quite wanting to look up the real deal on SexTube (and, also prefer the genitals censored), we’ve got the show for you!

Of course, we also have to get to the trainwrecks which are the 21st century freak shows. The latest:

**The Hell’s Wrong With That Guy?**

Watch people with fascinatingly-complex fetishes and personality disorders try to experience real life, only to get crushed upon doing so and make you feel bad in a way that while, yes, you feel bad for them, you still wouldn’t want to be sharing the same room.

**White Trash You Can’t Stop Watching**

Trailers and Skoal are the order of the day as you watch undereducated, underprivileged people in Southern trailer parks deal with everyday life, in a way that makes you cry.

It’s not all reality TV this year, though. There are some fine new sitcoms coming up. Take a gander:

**House Of Hippo**

Opposites attract...and in this show, a woman, who hates large, semi-aquatic African mammals, marries a man in Vegas after knowing him for just one night...only to learn that he owns a hippo farm! Hilarity ensues as she tries to balance life between her needs, her man, his kids and a shitload of hippos!

**Someone Gave Paul Reiser Another Show**

Eternally dislikable character actor Paul Reiser has magically been gifted another show, after coked-out network executives somehow gift this monstrosity. Find out how long this one can stay on the air, because I bet it’s going to be far longer than it should. Fuck me, here we go again.

The saving grace of television, is always quality documentary series. I love documentaries, but their titles are always long. Here’s what’s coming up:

**David Attenborough’s Voice Saves Boring Subject Matter**

He could be talking about the efficiency of the sun-tailed monkey’s rectum or the way those little Candiru fish in South America get stuck in your dickhole—and I’d still watch it. Top pick for 2017.

**Neil DeGrasse Tyson Gets High And Talks About Carl Sagan For Like An Hour**

Says it all. Dude gets lit and talks about Sagan for about an hour and also periodically compares doughnuts to black holes. Still, a must-watch.

I hate to say it, but game shows are back—though, this time, they’re not lame ones like the Regis one or the boring one with the briefcases. Here are the hot, new game shows coming to prime time:

**Rat To The Dick**

In front of a specially-constructed pneumatic rodent cannon, five men compete in a battle of wits, knowledge and crawling through slime. However, if the five ladies doing the judging don’t like their performance...OOPS! Rat to the dick!

**Cop Or Prostitute?**

The wacky game show wherein contestants must pick between an undercover cop or a bonafide prostitute, after asking them a series of yes/no questions. Losers get a misdemeanor solicitation charge and a ride down the “Slide Of Shame;” but the winners get the suck (or service of equal or lesser value)! It’s likewise looking good for police dramas. Everyone likes a good cop show and all the old ones are stale. Here are the new cops on the block:

**Law & Order: Department Of Weights And Measures**

Thrill as this weekly police procedural show takes you inside the lives of the staff of the US Department Of Weights And Measures. From over-weighted produce scales scamming customers in supermarkets to bogus gas pumps skimming three cents off every dollar pumped, this latest show is sure to provide the same gripping, “ripped from the headlines” storytelling we’ve come to expect from the Law & Order franchise.

**CSI: Colonial Williamsburg**

The police in this small—but sordid—town of historical re-enactors must get to the bottom of the worst rapes, murders, thefts and witchcraft accusations Colonial Williamsburg has to offer. It doesn’t help that the CSI team are not historical re-enactors, but still have to deal with people in tri-corner hats calling them “constable.”

There we have it. Get your popcorn and whiskey ready.

-WSM

Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a writer, Kleenex evaluator, chimp taunter, Rubik’s cube sticker-rearranger and retired rapper from Portland, Oregon. He can be found at Wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @Wombstretcha503 and on Facebook by name.
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Getting lost in rural Humboldt County is not much different from being on the road in rural Humboldt while knowing exactly where you’re going; regardless of what your map or GPS says, you’re at least a few hours away from a decent gas station, cell reception or non-living food at any given time (notice how I used time as a measurement of distance from civilization, as opposed to mileage—it will come in later).

I headed toward my destination, a town called Willow Creek, made famous by the most “legitimate” (quotes emphasized) evidence for sasquatch. Apparently, “squatching” is a well-respected vocation in the confines of the Emerald Triangle, with local legends, such as Discovery Channel’s Bobo, making millions out of nonexistent, mythic creatures (further proof that the weed game doesn’t pay that much, when put into perspective). Economies Of Scale 101—you now have four credit hours to apply toward a bullshit liberal arts degree.

Anyhow, I had just gassed up at a convenience store that had no less than a dozen slot machines scattered around, but only one variety of coconut water; this meant that I was on Native American land, which is much different than the typical variety of Humboldt “earth-friendly” culture. As in, it’s real. And reality checks can be both refreshing and terrifying. As opposed to students living on organic flax seed, Natives in the Northern California area are among the most impoverished, having been dealt worse hands than most other tribes. To put it simply, reservations in Humboldt (each of which locals refer to as “The Res”) make urban American ghettos look like gated communities. This is not the fault of the Native population, but rather, a legal system that has forgotten the indigenous peoples who kept Humboldt’s ecosystem in such a pristine state for years—well before the hippies turned it into a reefer refuge. The irony of tourists purchasing “genuine Indian souvenirs” from the Trees Of Mystery gift shop on the way into the county is among the more glaring examples of white privilege (a habit that goes unchecked in uber-left communities).

To be white (or black, Asian...anything non-Native) on a Res is straight up dangerous. You will get jacked, beaten up or worse. Each Res has about one police officer for every few hundred locals and if you think black-white racial tension is serious, imagine how it would be if slavery were currently legal in random enclaves of the woods. I had the option of driving east (rocks and mountains) or west (mountains and rocks), according a map I had purchased (it was geared toward elderly couples on RV road trips, as indicated by the pull-out section that had Denny’s listed as an “attraction”). The only visible difference was about sixty miles of road, so I opted for the shortcut.

Shortcut: are always a bad idea in Humboldt. Thirty miles could mean thirty minutes or thirty hours, depending on the backroad.

Once the gravel road got down to a single lane, I noticed that I was only two miles into my fifteen-mile “shortcut,” but had experienced about a dozen reminders of my previously-ignored fear of heights (or, possibly, it was the thought of instant death at the hands of a semi-truck-driving sasquatch hunter). After a few miles of driving cliffside, on gravel, with a “check engine” light on (a sign of shitty gasoline—why I never opt for the ten cents more it takes for premium is a mystery to me) and a lit blunt I had obtained from a dispensary that came in a package labeled “Tour Of Humboldt” (which turned out to be comprised of anything that fell out of the dispensary’s grinder over the course of the last week (aka an unsafe blend of sativa, indica, bits of candy and human and/or animal hair), shit got tense.

Turning a corner, my blunt smoke appeared to be turning black. However, as the smoke from around the approaching curve became thick-

A handful of volunteer firepeople—each of whom appeared to be equipped for battle against anything smaller than a kiddie pool’s worth of danger—stood alongside a fire truck that once doubled as a school bus (which obviously doubled as a mobile home for Rainbow Family alumni). Watching them attempt to battle the forest fire was the equivalent of rooting for the first black character to go lurking around the dark in a horror movie. I mustered up all the stupidity my brain could handle and asked the least-unprofessional-looking of the volunteer fire-observers if the road would be open anytime soon. Their answer was a simple shake of the head, followed by gradual laughter that eventually served as a source of entertainment for the whole crew.

So, there I was, with instant murder on each side of me, enough supplies to last for however long a bag of almonds and two cigarettes buys me (one hour) and nothing but the promise of a few hundred bucks per pound of processed vegetable keeping me from turning around and saying “fuck it.”

This is the red pill moment that every weed grower/trimmer/dealer has at some point in their Humboldt County life. Yes, there is some attractiveness to the counterculture and lore that surrounds Mary Jane and her wondrous world. Still, the old argument that it’s just a plant, when taken beyond the courtroom, can be sobering. You could not convince your average weedhead to get into the tomato industry, especially if tomatoes were grown on the side of Death Mountain, CA, so why do we cum ourselves over the idea of getting into the *wink* tomato *wink* industry? It’s fucking legal now (at least in Oregon and Washington, with California on the way). This is manual farm labor, with a much higher pay-out, but manual farm labor nonetheless.

I decided to opt out of making the trek to Willow Creek, partially out of impatience, but mostly due to a nagging voice in the back of my head that, beyond gravel roads and dangerous gas stations, an entirely different danger was lurking in the shadows behind the redwood curtain. As it turns out, the trim scene I was headed to didn’t end up being the place out-of-town gangbangers decided to target for a robbery, the spot I was headed toward—where I was to meet my buddy—was.

(To be concluded in next month’s Green Room Diaries)
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Pleaser
Anyone who’s ever been to a Miss Exotic Oregon competition knows that there’s something wildly special about each winner. As we watch these ladies compete on stage and as all of the creativness and hard work that goes into the performance unfolds, it’s clear that winning the crown doesn’t come without hours of hard work and tedious planning.

We may think we understand the woman wearing the crown as an entertainer, but I’d like to uncover more about 2017’s Miss Exotic Oregon, Shelli Stark.

We all have a story to tell—one that’s unique to ourselves and that explains our journey into the sex industry spotlight—as a fellow entertainer who is well acquainted with some of the previous Miss Exotic Oregon winners, I can see a common thread that connects each of them.

Let’s take a journey inside the head of Miss Exotic Oregon and learn a little bit about the woman behind the masterpiece, who we all witnessed on stage during the last competition.

Okay Shelli, you must be pretty overwhelmed with all of the excitement from winning the competition, yes? During your performance, was there one singular thought that was going through your head at the time—one that identified exactly what you were doing—that might have brought you to win the title?

Wow! Yes, it’s crazy. I actually had no ideas in my head about winning or even placing, but as I followed the qualifying rounds, I was excited to be in the same show as many of the performers I’ve been following over the years. In the end, I just thought “fuck it,” poured some tequila and had fun with it.

It was very obvious that you had a lot of love and support from your fans and friends who were there that night. As we know, in this community, that type of support is a valuable part of our drive to continue what we’re doing. After
your win, I went and congratulated not only you but every person who was on stage with you. Each one of them said, “It was all Shelli. This was all her work.” Can you tell me something about your creative process and how you come to choose the themes and performances you do?

Oh man, that’s sweet of them to say, but it couldn’t have been done without them! I relayed the general idea to everyone, but without having those creative, crazy motherfuckers in my group bouncing ideas off of each other, it wouldn’t have gone anywhere. They LITERALLY held me up! As far as how I choose themes, I guess I have a stranger idea of what is sexy to me and it’s fun trying to bring that to life.

After seeing you perform on stage a couple times, I’m noticing that you like the darker side of the arts. And, by that, I mean your costumes are more grotesque and horror-related. I think it’s really incredible that you can break down the walls of strippers always having to be “pretty” all the time and show a different side of things. Do you have a fascination with horror films?

Yes, absolutely. I grew up watching horror films instead of cartoons and learned to draw and paint, copying the movie covers. I didn’t start being more comfortable on stage until I let that side come through and it makes me feel more genuine with my performances. And, of course, fake blood is just FUN!

Ok, so now I want to go a little further into who you are off stage. What’s an average day like for you?

Not very exciting, actually! Get up late, procrastinate doing anything important and hang out with my dog mostly. Someone just introduced me to snowboarding, though, so I think that will be getting me off my ass a bit more.

If you went back ten years and told yourself that you’d be rocking it on stage, entertaining the masses and eventually win Miss Exotic Oregon, would you believe it?

I doubt it!!! I was working for the railroad, in Texas, back then and thought I always would be. Crazy how life changes!

Can you please tell us how winning the title has changed your work? I mean, this is a pretty big win for you!

Well, it’s still early on, but I am excited for the opportunity to be in feature performances and explore more of the Portland strip club scene. I had no idea I could win this, so I’m still processing, honestly. This gives me a reason to bring some of the ideas I’ve had for bigger stage pieces to life! I will never be able to leave my family at Spyce, but I will definitely be venturing out to learn from all of the amazing performers we have here.

Well, I certainly want to see more of you in the upcoming year and I’m sure your fans do, too! Are there any upcoming events you’ll be doing for 2017 or places in the industry you’d like to explore?

(I love this question, but I’ll have to skip it because I’m still learning about what events and things happen here).

Thank you, Shelli, for letting us peek into your world. Once again, congratulations on your win and I look forward to seeing you on stage again soon!

XOXO,
- Ivizia
2016 was, for all intents and purposes, one of the worst years ever recorded. Even worse than that album “Years” by Ringo Starr (admit it, you genuinely don’t know if I’m being facetious or not). We lost many, many people who were loved by various demographics, including David Bowie, Prince, Lemmy, Leonard Cohen and Harambe. Pop culture took a moment every few days to commemorate the departed, with Facebook profile picture changes aflutter. However, aside from lame jokes and half-empty remembrances to people who were never short on ego validation, there are people who, although lacking in TMZ celebrity status, were just as endearing (if not more so) to hundreds, if not thousands, of actual friends and family.

R.I.P. To Those We Have Lost

The entertainment industry is a weird one, because performers spend most of their careers putting on a show for others, while masking their true selves behind whatever roles they play on stage. Rarely, though, will one encounter performers so genuine and real that you wonder if there's any separation between the person they portray on stage and the real self that their friends and family are exposed to.

Last month, the comedy and strip club communities lost two very, very real and important people—neither of whom were able to put on a “fake” persona in any sense of the word. In the comedy world, we lost a man named Will Woodruff, whom I have known since grade school. Quite possibly the most unapologetic and honest performer in Oregon comedy, Will was also an extremely kind, morally-upstanding and likable dude. If he knew his name was going into the column of an adult magazine, alongside many of his old comedy buddies, he'd probably threaten to kill me, before asking for a few dozen copies. Will, I'm gonna kick your ass in chess, when I finally make it up there.

In dancer land, one of the brightest and most unshakable spirits I have ever encountered, Strawberry, left this mortal coil with a cult fan base of friends and admirers—the size of which barely begins to reflect the impact that she left on everyone who was lucky enough to share a smile with her. As with pretty much everyone to be taken away from us in 2016, Strawber-ry was larger than life and indisputable. Strawberry made everyone she met feel as if they had been friends since middle school, while being the type of person whose side anyone would take in an argument, regardless of circumstances. Bizzle, you will be missed more than you could ever imagine.

I really wish it would have been Dane Cook and one of those scummy drug addicts from Idaho.

Basically, we lost our own Prince and Bowie in comedy and stripper world, with both Will and Strawberry dying at a too-young-what-the-fuck age, of virtually unpreventable circumstances. This may sound cliche, but there is very, very limited time on this planet. And, if you’re lucky enough to live it out as long as Keith Richards or Tom Waits, you will encounter many people whom you may take for granted (or, just never consider viable candidates for being taken away so early). You don’t need to put down the bottle, find God and call your mother in one afternoon, but it’s not a bad idea to at least introduce yourself to your neighbor or, better yet, spend some time with that person you take for granted.

Mad Props To Those Who Have Won

On a much lighter note, it is with great honor that Exotic crowns this year’s Miss Exotic Oregon, the undeniable Shelli from Spycer! I don’t want to take sides or play favorites, but I’ve never, ever seen an un-attractive woman compete for Miss Exotic, nor have I ever met one at Spycer. Both the establishment and the woman representing them deserve this title, which is more than we can say about the recent presidential election.

One thing that made 2016 at least slightly better than we remember, is that the Miss Exotic pageant went down without a snag and, being friends with a few thousand strippers on Facebook, I didn't see a single, negative post from runners-up. This is dope, considering the sheer amount of competitors, fans, sponsors, club owners and Exotic staff who all came together, under the banner of competitive nudity, to elect our new queen.

Isn’t it odd, that the Portland strip club scene runs in a smoother, more progressive fashion than our political system? How’s that for a dose of Northwest irony?

Either way, here’s hoping that this year turns out to be as beautiful as our covergirl.

Rogue Pun

If you haven’t seen the new, stand-alone “Star Wars flick,” Rogue One, be prepared to meh. The action? Meh. CGI? Meh. Story? Meh. It is undeniably better than the prequels (and actually does a nice job of legitimately connecting a bunch of missing time between III and IV), but is in no way Force Awakens, in terms of epic level fanfare. The thing that bothered me the most, however, was the fact that Darth Vader is suddenly a shitty stand-up comic. “Try not to choke” (spoilers above) is one of the worst puns I’ve heard in a long time...ago, in a galaxy far, far away. See? Puns aren’t fucking funny, but they’re addictive and anyone who engages in them should be put to death...star janitorial assignment. God-fuckin’-damnmit, I swear this will Obi over in a few. Luke, I haven’t been Leia’d in quite some time and Yoda understand. Maybe I need to get a new Tatooine, or take Ewok.
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SAT 7 – THE NEW HAWTHORNE STRIP
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SAT 7 – SPEARMINT RHINO
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SAT 14 – SHOTSKI’S (SALEM)
COMEDY W/ BELINDA CARROLL
MON 16 – SAFARI SHOWCLUB
SOUL NIGHT
WED 18 – SPYCE GENTLEMEN’S CLUB
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY ROUND 1
FRI 20 – KNOCKERS (EUGENE)
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY ROUND 2
SAT 21 – DV8
STREET CLOTHES STRIPPERS (7–10PM)
SAT 21 – STARS (SALEM)
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY ROUND 3
THU 26 – CLUB SINROCK
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY FINALS
THU 26 – DREAM ON
COUNTRY NIGHT
THU 26 – SPEARMINT RHINO
POLE PRINCESS
FRI 27 – SAFARI SHOWCLUB
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Robotics have integrated themselves into the lives of humans for decades. Self-driving cars, drones, Siri, Alexa, Cortana...not to mention all of the beloved (although fictional) androids of Star Wars. But, for the first time, in real life, humans will be able to act out all of their desires with a functioning robot who looks and feels almost the same as a real partner.

For twenty years, Abyss Creations has manufactured life-size sex dolls called RealDolls, made of poseable PVC and silicone. The dolls are beautiful to look at and it takes the company 80 work hours to create each doll for customers. Abyss Creations offers the dolls made to one-of-a-kind specifics and also have generic offerings of male, female, light-weight petite and licensed porn-star dolls. The dolls feature seven-inch-deep mouths and removable vaginal inserts for easy cleaning. Sex doll concepts are nothing new, but RealDoll founder, Mike McMullen, announced that, later this year, the dolls will feature built-in heaters to mimic human body heat, sensors that will respond to the dolls being touched and artificial intelligence programming.

“We are building an A.I. system, which can either be connected to a robotic doll or experienced in a (virtual reality) environment,” said McMullen in an AMA (ask me anything) on Reddit. “I think it will allow for an option that never existed before, and for some, may represent a happiness they (users) never thought they could have.”

Sex with robots is a subject met with both admiration and downright disgust. Robot Ethicist Kathleen Richards has headed up a very vocal campaign against sexbots. “Sex robots seem to be a growing focus in the robotics industry and the models that they draw on—how they will look, what roles they would play—are very disturbing indeed,” Richards told the BBC. “We think that the creation of such robots will contribute to detrimental relationships between men and women, adults and children, men and men and women and women.”

[Ed: It’s nice to see that discrimination against A.I. is gender-inclusive in nature]

David Levy, author of Love And Sex With Robots, has imagined a more positive world with sexbots. “I’ve no doubt some will find it creepy,” said Levy in an article he penned for U.K.-based DailyMail.com. “But, we can be clear on this: the arrival of sexually-responsive robots will have enormous consequences. We have already seen rapid changes in human relationships thanks to the internet, mobile devices and social media. That same proliferation of technology has also brought about an explosive increase of intimate encounters of every kind that we can experience on our screens.”

“There are many millions of people in this world who are very lonely because they have no one to love and no one who loves them. This might be for any of a number of reasons. They might be shy. They might have psychological or psycho-sexual hangups. They might be socially unacceptable for one reason or another—ugliness, personal hygiene, totally lacking in social skills, unable to make interesting, amusing conversation at the right level with those who they find attractive. For these socially-challenged people, a more appropriate question to ask is not ‘Why is it better to love or have sex with a robot than with another human?’ but, ‘Is it better to love or have sex with a robot or to have no love or sex at all?’”

Levy has some good points. The RealDoll.com website is filled with testimonials of many happy customers. Customers who currently pay over $5,000 for their dolls and will pay up to around $15,000 for a sexbot, when the company starts producing them. “I am so happy that I bought my Real Doll,” writes a satisfied, anonymous customer on the RealDoll website. “She is not just some thing that (I) use and then put in my closet. She is my actual girlfriend. I love her and she is my princess...I am so excited for the new realbotix (sic) to come out.”

And, with television shows like HBO’s Westworld gaining viewers every week (the series takes place in a fictional Western amusement park, where humans act out any fantasy they choose with robotic droids) and its first episode debuting to two million viewers (according to the Hollywood Reporter), it seems like the collective consciousness may be ready for more artificial intimacy.
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“I will resist this psychic death / I will resist with every inch and every breath…”

-Bikini Kill, “Psychic Death”

Strippers inevitably deal with violence. We wear our sparkly bikinis like armor and apply our lip gloss like warpaint, but when it comes down to it, we are front-of-the-line on the war against women.

Since Trump got elected, things have been unmistakably shaky in the club. Sure, you’ll still hear James Brown and Bowie, Biggie and Tupac, Stevie Wonder and Prince, Journey and AC/DC—all the usual suspects (male voices, no surprise there)—but, things have gotten...darker.

Vicki Vengeance, a Portland stripper, describes an assault she experienced in the club two days after the recent election, in which a customer grabbed her and another dancer three times each “in the pussy,” during a double-trouble private dance. The strippers both stopped the dance—after several warnings—and the customer said, “Well, Trump’s President now, so what’s the big deal?” Vicki Vengeance said, “Did he really just say he can assault us because Trump is president now? That night was a sea of similar experiences. Maybe not directly insinuating that because of Trump’s election, I have no rights and am not a human being, just an object, but...in the four years I’ve been dancing, I’ve never had so many men try to touch me after clearly saying ‘NO’ in one night. Coincidental? I doubt it.”

The violence is taking a toll. Dancers are dealing with fallout from the election and it is traumatizing. We are unable to keep our composure and it is affecting our performance. “Girls” are showing up at work bleary-eyed—no amount of concealer, nor Visine, is fixing that...but beauty is the least of our worries. We have mouths to feed. Families to love. We want kept safe. We have brains, souls...and, we have PUSSIES.

And, they are being grabbed—waaaay more than usual.

November’s brought an onslaught of violence to the stage. Usually, most ya’ll check your problems at the door and enjoy our stage sets with awe. But, lately—no, that isn’t the case. Jane Stain, who had to take time away from the stage before the election, due to being...too anxiety [and] terror ridden,” describes the dynamic in the club: “I am literally expecting to be sexually, verbally or otherwise assaulted in public, because [there are] a bunch of raping, bigoted fucks, who now think they have a mandate to physically control sexual and gender minorities in public and private spaces.”

The violence has increased at a relentless rate. It’s a topic of conversation in locker rooms. We dance a stage set, do a few tricks on the stage and—sometimes—return to the back room to cry. Tears are not what you deem sexy.

So, we fix our mascara.

We cover shifts for friends too drunk and depressed to take the stage. We sweat for our sisters. Love for our sisters. Love for our country...

Shame for our country...frustration for our country...

We hold onto tips like they are the last bits of remaining hope, for we do not know how long the club-economy will be stable enough to keep us in clear shoes. On stage, some of us try to make the best of it and embrace a “protest-aesthetic,” hoping it will turn into dollars. V for Victory—wearing combat boots and political tees on stage, camouflage in the stage lights. It is easier to kick ass if we can run away (although strippers are the Olympians of running-in-heels).

And customers? The election is all you want to talk about.

You complain about traffic...about how the protests are “ruining everything.” Some try to hold us captive by the pussy, forcing us to listen to half-spun theories of why Clinton wasn’t an option (“She’s a WOMAN! And, WOMEN GET PERIODS!!!”) and deluded reasoning about Trump. And, the Bernie Bros still come in and shout “Bernie! Bernie! Bernie!” like a crazed, enchanted sheep herd on Adderall. Then there are those “progressives” who try to win our affections by slut-shaming Melania. You disgust us. Your behavior is disgustedly un-feminist and will not change the election results.

The stupidity amazes us. We emotionally labor. We strive to listen, but now, it’s just too much.

People—you’re killing us. We just wanna dance!
When this happens, we tune you out. You know you can’t blame us...we twerk it and work it and still can’t relax. The money does come, but it’s coming at a cost. The violence. The violence...

**The pussy-grabbing violence.**

This is a thing we’ve ALWAYS had to deal with. Roving hands, biting teeth, slurping sounds, titty twisting. Hands on our legs, hands on our thighs, hands on our hips, hands on our asses.

The violence is the trade-off. It is what we dance AGAINST. And, what are we fighting FOR?

To keep our bodies safe. With money on our stages, we bend at our own will, to pick up the pieces, to move on—we resist.

We are not on stage for you to victimize us. We are here for you to appreciate. To bring you joy. For you to WORSHIP.

We are here to DANCE.

The fuckers with their fuckery, and the trauma they provide, are making it difficult for us to feel beautiful. Sure, we still look pretty, but we may not feel sexy inside...the stage may be the landscape of your dreams, but it also can be the setting of our nightmares.

Customers, you love us? Wanna do something right?

**KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE WE CAN SEE THEM,** like, right by your side.

Don’t touch us once. Don’t touch us twice.

Don’t make jokes at our misfortune. Don’t pity us. You are not a white knight—stop trying to be our savior.

We don’t need your saving! We need your SUPPORT. We need your assistance, in the club and out...

In the streets or onstage—boundaries exist. Sex workers deserve to be respected, believed and valued like everyone else. We demand OUR EQUALITY.

Dissent when strippers are stigmatized, fight back when we’re attacked. Support everyone at the intersections of violence, every single day—out in the streets and in the warm club. Tell security if you see someone harassing a stripper. Keep your hands to yourself— and stroke us with your eyes! And, remember— grabbing our pussies will always get you 86’D.

Show us strippers love. Show us RESPECT. Be kinder to us. Ask US how we’re doing.

**You listen, for once.**

It’s not an easy job that we do. Dancing, on stage. Ass-naked, glittery. Our goddess illusion. Suffering the fools...

How do we stay safe and hold boundaries, in and out of the club? Dancers need to look out for each other—always. But, now is the time to be extra vigilant. Trust your gut. Make sure you have security escort you to your car after each shift. If you take Tri-Met to work, carry pepper spray in-hand as you wait for your ride; consider taking a cab home if it is dark. Text a co-worker when you arrive home from a shift. If possible. A buddy system to ensure safety is ideal—although not necessarily realistic, in an industry where there is such fierce competition between workers. And in the club? Portland stripper Elle Stanger suggests to workers, “Don’t be afraid to walk away from someone who is pushy—or unresponsive—of your setting boundaries.”

Yet, regardless of precautions, sex workers deal with unsafe conditions in all sorts of ways. Do not blame yourself if an assault has occurred. You are not to blame. Our society is.

Customers, you love us? Wanna do something right?

**KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE WE CAN SEE THEM,** like, right by your side.

Don’t touch us once. Don’t touch us twice.

Don’t make jokes at our misfortune. Don’t pity us. You are not a white knight—stop trying to be our savior.

We don’t need your saving! We need your SUPPORT. We need your assistance, in the club and out...

In the streets or onstage—boundaries exist. Sex workers deserve to be respected, believed and valued like everyone else. We demand OUR EQUALITY.

Dissent when strippers are stigmatized, fight back when we’re attacked. Support everyone at the intersections of violence, every single day—out in the streets and in the warm club. Tell security if you see someone harassing a stripper. Keep your hands to yourself— and stroke us with your eyes! And, remember— grabbing our pussies will always get you 86’D.

Show us strippers love. Show us RESPECT. Be kinder to us. Ask US how we’re doing.

**You listen, for once.**

It’s not an easy job that we do. Dancing, on stage. Ass-naked, glittery. Our goddess illusion. Suffering the fools...

How do we stay safe and hold boundaries, in and out of the club? Dancers need to look out for each other—always. But, now is the time to be extra vigilant. Trust your gut. Make sure you have security escort you to your car after each shift. If you take Tri-Met to work, carry pepper spray in-hand as you wait for your ride; consider taking a cab home if it is dark. Text a co-worker when you arrive home from a shift. If possible. A buddy system to ensure safety is ideal—although not necessarily realistic, in an industry where there is such fierce competition between workers. And in the club? Portland stripper Elle Stanger suggests to workers, “Don’t be afraid to walk away from someone who is pushy—or unresponsive—of your setting boundaries.”

Yet, regardless of precautions, sex workers deal with unsafe conditions in all sorts of ways. Do not blame yourself if an assault has occurred. You are not to blame. Our society is.
Portland may be cutting-edge in terms of vagina pageants and vegan strip clubs, but how can we call ourselves progressives when we're running DJ software from a laggy Windows 98, from a refurbished computer that doubles as a table for pint glasses, old CDs and stripper ass? We're all in this cash-for-gash game together, so I say it's time to evolve accordingly.

**Club Owners: No More Strict Rules Regarding Music Selections**

Mainstream music only. Strictly 80s rock, 90s hip hop and nothing else. These are great options for road trips, but they don't fare well as rules in strip clubs. With the notable exception of clubs that depend on a genre of music to fit their advertised theme (rock-only clubs like Rose City Strip, for example), there should be absolutely no hard-and-fast rules regarding what songs DJs are allowed to play for dancers (outside of theme nights). Sure, there are club owners who have a particular distaste for a specific song or artist (“My Humps” by Black Eyed Peas stands out, as does every other song by Black Eyed Peas released post-Fergie), but aside from the obvious exceptions mentioned here, customer tips are often highly dependent on music.

If a crowd of hip hop fans come walking in (especially the suburban white boy types, who want to make their lawyer dad’s money rain like the guys in the rap videos they watch in their Escalades), you’re not gonna make them happy by explaining how rap music isn’t allowed after 9pm, but you can give them as much Nicki Minaj to stage late and attempting to position your bra strap while doing so. It’s a lot easier than having to stumble up the steps of the DJ booth or telling the DJ to play “anything” (before proceeding to get pissed off about his or her selection). Flash drives are basically pugs you can bring into the club—they’re cute, portable and you can even name them. Owning multiple ones only makes you a more desirable and professional dancer, but you need to remember not to leave them with your DJ, or they will get used and/or sold.

**Strippers: Buy A Flash Drive And Fill It With Music**

It's the current year. If you’re still handing a half-working, scattered-screen-laden iPhone 3 to your DJ, you’re doing it wrong. Most (if not all) Portland-area DJs are equipped with a laptop and a hard drive full of everything from ABBA to Zapp. The best way to earn your DJ’s respect is by filling a five-dollar flash drive with a selection of your favorite MP3s (or MP4s, or M4Ps or whatever Apple is slanging these days). YouTube links sound like shit. The word “remix” means nothing, when attached to a file that may or may not have been molested by a low-rate producer. Asking to hear a preview of the song would be possible in a standard dance club, but your DJ is likely stuck using a single-jack input, with no way to cue songs. Did that last sentence make any sense? Then take my initial advice and buy a fucking flash drive. You can earn the money for one in the length of a set.

After filling up your new flash drive, have your significant other (current roommate?) play the flash drive on their laptop. Bonus points if it opens up on a PC. Files with names like “k58wK31f.mp4” need to be renamed, even if incorrectly (i.e. NIN - “Fuck Poo Like Manimal”), so that you can properly request them while hobbling to stage late and attempting to position your strap while doing so. It’s a lot easier than having to stumble up the steps of the DJ booth or telling the DJ to play “anything” (before proceeding to get pissed off about his or her selection). Flash drives are basically pugs you can bring into the club—they’re cute, portable and you can even name them. Owning multiple ones only makes you a more desirable and professional dancer, but you need to remember not to leave them with your DJ, or they will get used and/or sold.

**DJs: Start Filtering Underground Music Back Into Your Sets (And Trim The Garbage)**

The job of a disc jockey—whether in terms of early 80s Bronx or late 60s radio towers—is to filter up-and-coming music into the greater aural lexicon. The three-song set format of NW strip clubs is a perfect environment in which to expose unheard-of-acts, sandwiched in between two sure-fire bangers. I’m not talking un-mastered mixtapes CD-R, purchased from the guy outside of the pizza window on Burnside. Rather, I’m referring to established-but-noncommercial local acts. If a stripper asks for Kings Of Leon, play her some Dead Moon in between the two songs that K.O.L. has rotating every six minutes on alternative radio. When a dancer asks for sample-heavy hip hop (like, the kind that doesn’t just yell “swag, bitch, cunt, money” over an EDM beat), play her some Mike Crenshaw or Eastern Sunz. If you don’t know who these artists are, you shouldn’t be a fucking DJ in Portland. Look ‘em up.

On the flipside, let’s all agree that it’s time we take out the trash. Everything from outdated nu-blech like Linkin Park, to never-should-have-happened-at-all crap like Macklemore, needs to go. All it takes is a simple right-click, delete, blame-it-on-the-part-time-day-DJ to clean out the house computer (and if you have this shit on your own laptop, get rid of it now). Whenever someone blames the shit that gets played on mainstream radio, they’re indirectly placing responsibility on the DJs who control the filtration system that occurs in the booths. Consider the fact that, when juxtaposed against a backdrop of naked women and alcohol, any song will sound better (or, worse, if the dancer reacts to it in a negative fashion).

...**In Conclusion**

As strip club owners, dancers and DJs, we really can’t do much to shatter mainstream beauty standards. Sorry, but the economy of cash-for-gash doesn’t lend itself to a discussion regarding how all sizes and shapes can be considered beautiful, put simply, archaic instincts like youth, health and symmetry still rule in the land of poles and panties. However, we can alter the perception of music (and everything that falls in between dumbed-down, mainstream trap and over-hyped dubstep remixes). The best way to remove something from the realm of pop culture acceptance is to get swarms of attractive women to denounce it. See also: mainstream beauty standards.

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And, let's not forget that I will be upgrading my own carrier (body) as new technologies allow. I'm really, really looking forward to cranking my Robo-Boner™ up to 11 and setting the world record for multiple cyborgasms. You know, I will... surrrrrre, like YOU have never fantasized about the perfect robot girlfriend (or, gender/sub-species of your choice), Whatever.

Okay, let's break this down. How am I going to design and build Mrs. Terriblebot? First, she needs a personality. And, that means AGI…

Artificial Intelligence is old news. Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is the new paradigm, under which we are teaching robots and machines to think and act on their own, to be cognizant of their environment and to respond to changing conditions in real time (and possess the entire knowledge of the fucking internet). No longer will we program robots just to perform specific, simple tasks, but we are now creating sentient beings who can teach themselves new skills and abilities. Some would say we’ve already achieved AGI; other experts say we’re a few years away from seeing its true power. What is apparent is that we need to have a new discussion on what constitutes “intelligence” and “consciousness.”

Ben Goertzel, a Mathematician and Cosmist from Eugene, is at the forefront of this god-creating technology and, if he’s even remotely correct, we can look forward to a world that is full of walking, talking, thinking robots. And, it very well may be here, in as little as ten years, with how many billions of dollars Google, Facebook, Baidu, DARPA, China and the USA are all dumping into advanced A.I. research. The implications of an intelligence that is orders of magnitude more advanced than all humans combined is... well, it’s probably the end of humanity as we know it. But hey, we will have created gods and that’s pretty sick (sorry, Jesus, it’s not the meek who will inherit the earth—it’s the robots. They’ll take great care of it. Better than you did, anyhow).

Regardless, the end of humanity is upon us and I’m ready to fuckin’ party. Our species will not end in mass pandemic**, nuclear holocaust*** or rapture****. No, it will gradually end this century as we transcend 200,000 years of homo sapien evolution by natural selection, entering the era of unnatural evolution, where we transform our existence into all-new forms of beings and consciousness.

Don’t worry, I fantasize about human women sometimes too. Although, unfortunately, I’ve found it difficult to find any cute geneticists who are willing to let me bend them over an autoclave to “perform my DNA experiments” Boo. Now you understand why I must create HER, I’d tell you about my design plans for my robot girlfriends body, but… I wouldn’t want to bore you with the tentacle details;)
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I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that you've finally decided to learn how to do a good internet, but the bad news is you don't know how or where to start! Fortunately, tech gurus such as myself are here to help. Follow these simple steps and you'll make internet successfully in no time flat at all.

1. **What is internet?**

First things first. You're going to need an internet. Most people think you have to go to an internet store, but this isn't true. Many people have spare internets lying around that they would more than happily give away for free—if not pay you—to take off their hands. But, instead of spending your entire day driving from garage sale to garage sale, hoping someone has an internet in your size, you should save time by combing through the phone book ahead of time and asking which houses are having yard sales today.

2. **Research.**

See if anyone has written good articles on how to do a good internet. See? I told you, you're on the right track! You don't even know what you're doing and you're already on step two. Most people don't make it this far. You are now part of an elite group, and to exhibit this much prowess so early on is both exciting and foreboding. Remember, with great strength comes great responsibility. The only way to truly become a master is to first become a servant.

3. **Go get that internet.**

After calling from house to house, you finally reach a stranger who says he will give you his internet, but only if you agree to meet him at midnight, behind the Goodwill. You eagerly agree. When you arrive, an old man gives you a black plastic bag full of something heavy and smelly. "What is it?" you ask.

"It's the internet," he says. Then, he gets in his van and drives away, yelling, "Don't look in the bag!"

4. **Install an internet.**

Drive to a different state and bury the internet in a field. Make sure no one sees you. Do not take your cell phone with you. Do not tell anyone where you are going. Remain deliberately ignorant of details that might help you remember how to return to the field at a later date, such as road signs and geographical markers. Forget that the internet ever happened.

5. **Make your wife some tea.**

Make your wife some tea. It is now two weeks since you buried the internet. You are married and are enjoying a calm Sunday afternoon with your wife, who is pregnant. "Can I get you some tea?" you ask your wife. Suddenly, you hear a knock at the door. You answer the door. It's the FBI.

6. **Picking which bandwidth is right for you.**

"We've got some questions for you. Would you like to step outside?" You give your wife a calm glance to convey that everything's fine, but she instinctively places a protective hand over her enlarged womb. Now you go outside with the FBI. The FBI looks familiar, but you're not sure where you've seen the FBI's face before. "Do you know anything about a buried internet?" the FBI asks. You say nothing. "We know the truth, regardless of whether you're willing to admit it, so you'll be better off if you play ball," the FBI says.

"I was just following directions," you reply. "Very good. We have more directions for you, if you so choose to accept them."

7. **http.com/**

Accept the FBI's directions. The FBI tells you that he's got some more internets for you to bury and asks you to follow him out to his truck. You follow him and start loading internets from his truck to your garage. Suddenly, a car pulls up. The car says "FBI Car" on the side. A liar gets out.

"Don't listen to him," the liar says, pointing at the FBI.

"Why?" you ask.

"He's not the real FBI, we are," says the liar. Suddenly, you realize that the FBI looks just like the old man who gave you the first internet. He hands you a pistol and says, "you know what must be done."

8. **Ok**

You clutch the weapon in your long, sinewy hands. Then you hear a woman's voice.

"Who are you talking to?" she says. It's your wife.

You look over your shoulder, but the FBI and the liar are gone. "No one," you reply. It's too complicated. Women don't understand anything about the internet. Go back inside.

9. **Rebirth**

Your new secret name is Kelandro. If someone calls your house and asks for Kelandro, it means you are being summoned. Go to the location given to you by the voice the following midnight. Go alone. Do not ever speak of this to anyone.

10. **Congratulations!**

You are now on the path to do a good internet. You will have Bill's gates in no time!
Happy New Year

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The roar of the fan mesmerizes me deeper into post-coital bliss. It cools my bare skin as I lie on his firm bed. The sweat dries. Mister Mister is in the shower with the door half open. I can smell his cologne on me.

He comes out in a towel, grabs his boxer briefs from the closet and goes into the other room to change.

"Haven't I already seen you naked?" I say.

"Yeah, but I'm trying to be polite," Mister Mister says.

I pull up my jeans, snap my bra and yank my shirt back over my head, punching my arms through the sleeves.

We sit on his bed with his dog and get ready to venture out into the Indian Summer.

I kiss his neck and he quivers.

"I really like spending time with you, yo," I say.

His body recoils as he looks at me askance with eyes wide in clear, obvious repulsion.

"What?" I ask.

He shakes his head as he loads a bowl of Gorilla Glue into a glass chillum.

"Sometimes, I don't know if we're going to kiss or chest bump, yo," he says.

My cheeks burn. My throat constricts. I'm taken aback by his words—they slice me deep in the psyche. I thought we were both the rare combo of street-smart and smart-smart. The hood chick in me stuck out her neck and here it is, getting lopped off by a B-boy with brains.

He penetrates a part of me I wasn't even fully aware of yet.

I take a deep breath to squash the ghetto bitch in me and try to see where he's coming from. I pet the soft, curly fur of his cute dog to ground me. I glance over and follow the webbed lines of one of the three dreamcatchers near his bed. I probably don't even make eye contact.

"Man, that's just how I talk," I say. "I'm comfortable around you because you're street, too, yo."

He laughs and we debate. I still don't fully understand what he means, but I want to.

"That's how heshers talk, you know, the skaters who wear jeans that are frayed on the hems and say they used to breakdance back in the day," he says.

Flabbergasted, I tell him that's how I grew up talking in South Florida. He says something about surfers, and I'm like, "Nah, dawg. Wasn't a surfer. Fully ghetto goth."

We laugh. And, respectfully, hash it out. But, I only half understand, despite my efforts. Even though I mean all the "bro, yo, dawg, man, dude" talk as endearing and established comfort, he hears it as an electric fence around my heart and soul that shouts, "Keep out!"

When it comes time to say goodbye for the night, it all clicks for me.

We stand at his door. He hugs me, but keeps a foot or two between us and bro-taps me on the back, with a lite triple pat. "Have a good night, yo," he says.

The distance between our physical bodies represents the moat I inadvertently dug between our emotional bodies.

The half-hearted wannabe hug said it all. In that moment, he treated me like a friend and not a lover, to drive his point home. I admire his clever style—because it fucking worked.

"So, this is what it feels like," I say. "Oh man. I'm sorry."

I lunge forward and grab his waist and pull him close to my body and previously-closed-off aura when I realize the very thing I thought was a sign of affection—all the brospeak—was actually a defection of intimacy.

He clowns on me and hesitates at first, but then laughs and hugs me back before I leave his apartment.

Later that week, we drive to Fred Meyer to grab snacks. He asks me to lock the door.

"Just push this button after you open your door and I close mine," he says.

"Sure. I can get the door, yo," I say, as he gets out and shuts his door.

He walks over to my side. Still seated, I step halfway outside the car and look up at him. My body contorts into an amalgamation of a feral cat and a deer in the headlights.

"Oh shit," I say. "See?! I can't NOT say it."

It takes him a moment to register what I'm talking about.

"That's not what I meant," he says. "It's not the same context. Of course that's fine, I'm not an asshole."

I get out of the car and shut the door.

"Just don't tell me how much you like me, then say 'yo', you know?" he says, then offers me his arm to hook mine inside. I do and we laugh, then walk into the store together.

Him calling me out made me look at myself and how I choose to communicate my emotions. I'm more open and honest about how I feel and it's made me more willing to be vulnerable around him. What I once saw as a weakness, is now a strength. That's an invaluable life lesson I'll never forget.

And, now, when we have sex, he gets dressed in front of me and I tell him how much I care about him, without calling him "dawg" or saying "yo."

Jaime Dunkle mixes the profound and the profane in her prose, with an altruism that stems from her background as a journalist. Her stories range from fiction to personal narrative and often blur between the two. For more info, go to JaimeDunkle.com or @JaimeDunkle. No creepers allowed.
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The Winter Victim Olympics will feature an all-star cast of liberals, competing against other liberals, at the expense of every group they claim to speak on behalf of. Join us, as we tune in...

Liberals are just as quick to apologize for things as we are to become outraged over them. You’re not gonna see too many Trump supporters turning on their man for making misogynistic comments, but if Stephen Colbert makes an intentionally-ironic, in-context joke regarding Asian people (that actually defends them, while satirically poking fun at ignorant racists), he ends up apologizing in the face of a #CancelColbert hashtag. Much of what the left wants to accuse the right-wingers of—but cannot because of ex- tenuating circumstances (facts, statistics, logic, etc.)—we end up tossing in each others’ faces. It’s like a pissing contest of sorts, trying to one-up each other, in not-so-passive-aggressive displays of in-fighting. Further, we usher in our own worst enemies. Hitler wasn’t because of the female vote (Google it), so it only makes sense that progressives will be destroyed by liberals in the realm of politics, we are usually the architects of our own demise.

The accusation of cultural appropriation falls into this category, because it is usually a crime brought against one liberal by another (save for lengthy columns penned by porn magazine writers). As opposed to, say, racism or homophobia—crimes which the left rarely accuses each other of, regardless of how ironically guilty we are of in- directly endorsing them—cultural appropriation is similar to privilege-checking, in that only leftists will bother with complacency. So, save for Native head dresses worn by drunk EDM sluts at Coachella, or blackface parties hosted by campus chapters of Future Klansman Of America, if you hear about “cultural appropriation” it’s likely going to be in an article written by Gawker bloggers, for Gawker blog- gers. Rachel Dolezal, the white girl who pretended to be black for decades (so she could steal college money from African-American women) and Shaun King (the 3/4ths white, self-proclaimed face of #BlackLivesMatter) are both examples of what cases have in common, besides professional victimhood? Cultural appropriation. Only, instead of dreadlocks and head dresses, we’re talking about (sub)cultures that are associated with a particular handicap, grievance or other- wise victim-ready status.

Gamer culture (read: Asperger’s and social awkwardness) and PTSD (the kind acquired overseas with a rifle in your hand and a dead friend on your back) were co-opted by self-proclaimed activists. Fuck Halloween costumes, the left decides to go all out and co-opt entire cultures. In a nutshell, when Anita Sarkeesian stormed into a cave with a plus one danger, expecting to get a few thousand XP from simply button-washing against orcs, only to get owned by zergs, but she wouldn’t understand that analogy, because she’s not a fucking gamer. Melody Hensley would spend about two hours in ‘Nam, before turning around and beg- ging to return to the land of retweets and rape threats (which are no laughing matter, but statistically less likely to be followed through with than terrorist threats made by Amish teens). One person’s trauma becomes another person’s income, while any attempt to negate such behavior is instantly met with buzzwords (I, for instance, am now an “insensitive cis male pig” for suggesting that going to battle and logging in to an app are not the same thing).

Co-opting, in the case of professional victimhood, is done without consequence (and, often times, with reinforce- ment from in-group peers). In fact, it’s almost as if there’s some ‘privilege’ that needs to be ‘checked’ or something. Cops won’t pull Rachel Dolezal over for driving after dusk and Anita Sarkeesian will never spend her night alone, cry- ing into an empty bag of Cheetos while ashing cigarettes into a half-empty two-liter of Mountain Dew. Melody Hensley won’t end up committing suicide because of what @DipshitEggBot said about third-wave feminists and, if Shaun King is related to Rodney, he’ll know better than to turn the #BLM movement into an ad revenue funnel, fu- eled by false identity politics.

What’s worse...co-opting a culturally-specific style of hair and music, or adopting a lived experience that one can- not truly empathize with? What, for instance, hurts the aggressive comments, but if Stephen Colbert makes an intentionally-ironic, in-context joke regarding Asian people (that actually defends them, while satirically poking fun at ignorant racists), he ends up apologizing in the face of a #CancelColbert hashtag. Much of what the left wants to accuse the right-wingers of—but cannot because of ex- tenuating circumstances (facts, statistics, logic, etc.)—we end up tossing in each others’ faces. It’s like a pissing contest of sorts, trying to one-up each other, in not-so-passive-aggressive displays of in-fighting. Further, we usher in our own worst enemies. Hitler wasn’t because of the female vote (Google it), so it only makes sense that progressives will be destroyed by liberals in the realm of politics, we are usually the architects of our own demise.

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However, aside from self-imposed racial ambiguity, the Twitter celebrities mentioned above share something else in common; professional victimhood. Now, I’m not saying that Shaun King deserved to be assaulted, nor am I imply- ing that his assault was not racially motivated. What I am saying, is that Shaun King and Rachel Dolezal’s equally-shameful notoriety was founded on professional victimhood, next to a white chick making an analogy about a trans kid being bullied by their black neighbors, you’re doing it wrong.

Whenever a first-year college student compares her ag- ing professor’s creepy smile to rape, she causes one more campus officer’s eyes to roll the next time an actual sexual assault charge is called in. Every time a man dawns eye- liner to fuck a woman, a teenager in Texas is lynched for talking with a lisp. And as far as Feminists Against Islamaphobia, well, that’s right up there with Jews For Hitler (read the goddamn text before you preach it). The bottom line is that assumed victimhood lends itself to actual victimhood, indirectly aimed at the group from which said assumed vic- timhood was co-opted. In other words, every time a Port- land activist camps outside of an Apple store to protest the man, he’s reminding homeless people that it’s only okay to sleep outdoors if you’re doing so for an article in the Port- land Mediocitv.

When your gluten-free, safe space dinner prices out the black neighbors, you’re doing it wrong.

I’m not gonna defend the Redskins or drunk chics who wear warpaint to Coldplay festivals. However, I will point out that Native Americans and other indigenous people were wiped out through a process of white-washing, cul- tural cleansing, co-opting and assimilation at the hands of the dominant class—the exact mechanisms by which modern liberals co-opt legitimate victimhood and make it into a career path.

Before you take to social media to “raise awareness” about a so-called oppression that conveniently fits your skewed, bubble-raised narrative, ask yourself if you’re raising more followers, donations or eyebrows than you are awareness.

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NEW YEAR'S TAROT READING

BY CHRISTIAN RICKETTS

This reading was drawn using the 22 Major Arcana from the original Tarot de Marseille, as it was restored by Alejandro Jodorowsky. The method of reading is an approach called Tarology, which is different than divination. The tarologist (me) draws the cards in a trance state after contemplating the query, or in this case, prompt, in order to read them. The spread here was initially intended for only 4 cards, but was increased to 7, as others caught the attention of the Tarologist (me) during their ‘trance state’ (BAC .09).

The significance of the 7 card positions are as follows:
1 - The Questioner
2 - The Question
3 - The Collective Experience
4 - The Individual Experience
5, 6, 7 - Atmosphere, Theme, Astral Influence

The Questioner: 9, The Hermit

Arcanum 9 uses the archetype of The Hermit; a cave-dwelling old man, who has removed himself from the world, in order to better understand it. His voluminous robes could be for warmth, concealment or simply garments found in a free box. While this is likely a representation of Exotic’s inscrutable Editor, who notified me of this issue’s theme, it may also represent you, the reader, who has taken a moment to consider the upcoming year between vicious masturbation sessions, conducted to one of the many enticing photographs of this month’s centerfold.

The Question: 23, The Fool

My understanding is that the theme of this month’s issue, New Year’s Evolution, is, for the most part, concerned with personal resolutions as well as predictions of what 2017 will be like. So, for the purposes of clarity, we will say that the question is, “What is going to happen in 2017?” Or, more specifically, “Will 2017 suck as much as 2016 or are things gonna get better?”

An alternative interpretation may be that I am going to end up homeless by the end of next year, after driving myself insane with this Tarot shit.

The Collective Experience: 14, Temperance

Generally considered to represent the Guardian Angel archetype, Temperance here suggests that our culture is going to be in the midst of repairing itself. It is easy to give into despair when reading the news—but, it is not chaos, nor meaningless destruction. Our culture is passing through the gauntlet, so that it may become stronger, more even-tempered.

The Individual Experience: 16, The Tower (aka The House of God)

Amongst the more popular interpretations, The Tower is seen as entirely negative: poor health, death, failed relationships and natural disasters are common themes. In the original Tarot de Marseille, these themes are suggested—but not entirely as bad things. The Tower indicates a prison break of sorts. A sudden annihilation of the ego’s holdings. Amidst the continued theme of death, divorce, struggle and injustice, a peeling away of erroneous beliefs will occur. The awareness of ourselves in the other will deepen, which will result in a moving away from using labels in how we perceive others. The combination of this card and Temperance promises Good Medicine for the individual. It is also worth pointing out that the cards of the Major Arcanum are also referred to as “trump cards.” You know, like Donald Trump...who lives in Trump Tower. Like many, you are reminded on a daily basis about the reality of President-Elect Donald Trump. And, like many, you can’t fucking believe this is really happening.

OR this card simply means that you, esteem-able reader, will momentarily achieve orgasm, because you continued to masturbate after turning to this page.

Atmosphere, Theme, Astral Influence: 8, Justice / 17, The Star / 21, The World

As these three cards were drawn simultaneously, they will be read as one card, or rather, as a single phrase. You could also think of it as that time when you invited that one person to the thing and then they brought three other people, who you didn’t know, without asking and didn’t think to apologize.

First, we have Justice, which represents the presence of the infinite in the present, which manifests in our awareness as cause and effect. See also: Karmic Law, which, among other things, punishes baristas who write “karma” on their tip jars.

Second is The Star, which follows the Tower. The Star is an expression of that brush with cosmic awareness that one attains after experiencing intense and sudden change, like a car accident, death in the family, loss of fortune or cancer diagnosis. Where once you were lost in the wasteland, you have now discovered a way forward. Visit www.AA.org for more information.

Last of the three, is The World. The World card is an expression of everything that the Tarot is about; the mature self. The figures in the corners of the card represent the four aspects of the individual: Physical (Pentacles), Sexual & Creative (Wands), Intellect (Swords) and Emotion (Cups). A person who is imbalanced in these four aspects lacks awareness and is thus not connected to reality. Most of us, myself included, are in one way or another out of touch with reality. The female figure in the center of the card appears to be dancing forward while looking to the past—expressing an even flow of active and receptive energy. She could even be an exotic dancer who is surrounded by weirdos, but doesn’t give a fuck as long as they tip.

Taken together, the appearance of these cards suggests that while this country is in the process of tasting all of the bad karma it has generated over the past few decades, this is a good thing in the long run. Like a junkie, our society needs to hit rock bottom, before it can begin to get its shit together and start playing basketball again. That was a reference to The Basketball Diaries.

Synthesis

Yes, 2016 was full of crazy shit and this trend will continue into 2017. However, thanks to the unavoidable disasters to follow in the wake of every decision made by President Trump, the value system of the American status quo will naturally drift away, from individualism and demonstrable signs of success to, compassion and responsibility. You and everyone you know will be quietly inspired to be more kind, honest and patient. Climate change is going to get worse, the Trump administration will attempt enforce caveman ethics and you will probably get priced out of the place you are living at right now. If one adopts a growth-oriented narrative of their life, then these supposed calamities are good things.

Or, it could simply mean that you, the reader, have just been arrested for masturbating in the parking lot outside one of Portland’s many fine and reputable strip clubs.

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