

11 Stories Sans Meaning

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—The Story of Jimothy Prits Pragma Blotworth

A young brunette with eyes wide-eyed and glossy approached an older, heavy-set, pedantic-looking man pretentiously reading a novel at Demo Demes, a high-scale restaurant-bar, where the bar itself was made of the purest marble to ever have been exported from Zimbabwe, and, oh, it was very, very clean. The older man drank a fine white wine with glasses that hung on the tip of his anglo-saxon nose; he had a light attached to the top of the novel to illuminate the undoubtedly illuminating words. She said Hey mister, you look like you have some interesting takes on life! and he turned to her, disgust poorly masking effervescence, and replied Why, anything is possible young lady. What's your name?

My name is Jill! What's yours?

Oh, well my name is Jimothy. Jimothy Prits Pragma Blotworth.

Great to meet you, Jimothy! Jill replied; she was ebullient in the presence of his apparent wisdom.

Nice to meet you as well, Jill. Now, shall we begin?

Yay! Yes!

Well, the older, heavy-set, pedantic-looking man began, it might be stupid to think that we as people make conscious interpretations of time, but, it's probably less stupid to think that our logic inherently assumes a certain interpretation of time. Almost all economic logic you or I could think of has a baseline interpretation of time in the form of intervals. Now, what if we thought through the concept of the interval more closely; underpinned by the assumption that accurate measurements can be made by dividing performance into artificial time periods. Underneath this concept is another assumption: that time is extensive rather than intensive. What I mean by extensive is: we believe time as a quality extends equally; two quarters of a year will always equal one half. Essentially, the numerical quality of time is fixed; a

quarter is always the same quarter, a minute always a minute, and so on.

He paused. Jill sat in the bar seat next to him with her hands folded on her lap statuesque. What if we posed a question not altogether original, but not asked all that often: what if time has the quality of the intensive rather than the extensive, the quality of a percentage or a degree rather than an integer?

Ooooh! Jill gasped.

Then the entire concept of the interval, which assumes intervals of equal duration are always equal and therefore comparable, would change inherently. Interval would no longer be an accurate method of comparison, and therefore measurement. There would need to be a new method to measure things that occur through time.

Jimothy took a deep breath. He inhaled his own brilliance then gave Jill three examples of people unintentionally speaking of time intensively.

Examples:

This hour is the longest hour of my life!

Dude, the last two years have felt like ten to me!

I swear, I woke up this morning, and it felt like I just went to bed five minutes ago!

Jill was thoroughly impressed with this presentation and pleaded for Jimothy to continue and he did.

People will often, unintentionally, reference time in an intensive sense. Intuitively, some people experience that no two days are the same, yet analytically, most people compare data quarter over quarter without a second thought. It's no secret that many mathematical models' faults probably begin and end with a shoddy interpretation of the process of time. Ultimately, it's the hubris of mathematics to believe that it can understand time formulaically; every well-conceived

model achieves perfection for a split second, and its efficacy immediately succumbs to violent vibrations of attrition. Personally, I believe that time is an intensive process. I believe it's impossible to divide time into equal intervals, and it hardly extends, but rather implodes and explodes in chaotic vibrations. Time as the intensive is the first principle of randomness, and if you wanted to model an intensely random reality with any accuracy you probably wouldn't begin with a first principle that states: assuming equal, artificial time periods...

Jimothy's novel continued to lay open on its back on the bar. Its light illuminated the intense droopiness of his face as he ordered another white wine. Jill ordered a white wine as well, and urged him to speak further. She was interested in his alternate interpretation of time.

Interpreting time extensively, he began, causes measurement to reinforce itself through a series of false repetitions. How could chance repeat itself except in a chance fashion? If you thought of pure chaos, you may initially think it would be an eternity of non-repetition, but then, in a sense, chaos would be suspended in a state of perpetual repetition; it would be suspended repeating its non-repetition forever, unable to either begin or end.

You're right! Jill said. Jimothy nodded his head and took the brief pause to sip on his white wine.

If you thought of chaos in another way though, if chaos were to be dynamic and proceed through time, wouldn't it present repetitions, perceptible patterns within its larger series of asymmetry? In other words, people like us, when viewing a chaotic structure (time), would be able to manually pluck patterns (intervals) and construct a logical framework around these plucked patterns (extensity). Wouldn't it be this framework of time/interval/extensity, a fundamental misinterpretation that funded the framework of the normal distribution and the standard deviation; one of the most popular

methods of understanding reality mathematically? First of all, as a concept, a standard deviation is an oxymoron. It's a bastardization of difference. It's mathematician-meets-hipster; a concept with its hair elegantly disheveled. Difference has no standard, it's what breaks apart standards. In any case, normal distributions, measuring alteration through standard deviations that are assigned set probabilities, tend to discount what they call "absurd outcomes." The distribution plucks extensive patterns from a chaotic series and, extending the normalized patterns (under the assumption normalcy can be extended), creates a normalcy. This aspect of the normal distribution is apparent in the black-scholes model, which is a formula most commonly used to price financial options. If you'd like, you can take the VIX index, which is an index that measures the standard deviation for the s&p 500 via the black-scholes model of pricing options on the s&p, and contrast the probability it assigned to a market dislocation in the s&p 500 before the market crashes of 1987, the dot com bubble, the 9/11 attacks and the credit crisis of 2008—and so on. The normal distribution model has a distinct tendency to discount ("misprice") extremely volatile deviations. A counter-intuitive occurrence is happening here: unlikely events are appropriately unlikely, yet absurd events are more likely than unlikely events, yet less likely than normal events.

Furthermore, he continued, thinking about the subject and its relationship to time, it doesn't take a lot of time of thinking to come to the conclusion that the relationship between the two is pretty poorly thought through. If you thought of time as a process that operated as a kind of creative attrition, as change that changes the essence of what it changes, then what's the relationship between the process of time and the subject? It seems like if subjects exist within time, being essentially changed within process, is it that the subject, dynamic and always changing essentially, perceives time, or is it the opposite? Is it that TIME PERCEIVES SUBJECTS albeit a-subjectively (certainly not objectively)? Time, being the process that changes subjects, essentially

posits the subject as subject as it progresses through time, always within a process of change that changes itself essentially. Rather than approaching time as something that subjects may artificially divide into intervals, it might be more accurate for subjects, in a continuous process of being posited by the process of time, to take a more liquid approach to measurement; to operate maybe by mosaics instead of formulas. Finally, it seems as though intervals could probably be deliberated more thoroughly, more democratically—time as an argument instead of an assumed principle.

As we stated previously, Jimothy concluded, a flaw in thinking in formulas has been brushing over, via first assumption, via axiom, via first principle, the reality of time: which every subject and object ceases to exist in stasis, but rather is always essentially changing at different rates of change. I mean, isn't it impossible for essentially changing subjects to accurately posit other essentially changing subjects and objects as static, and then compound these assumptions with logical formulas? We've seen this dissolution of the subject-object assumption in forms such as the modern corporation, or even the American mafia—where organizations essentially function as knots of parts-and-wholes; the people are part of the whole and the whole is composed of people in such a way that the two are nearly indistinguishable; a part is a whole even though it remains a part of a whole, and the whole, composed of parts is not only a whole, but also a part itself, as a part of another whole. Subjects and objects, always changing essentially, are therefore not definable subjects and objects at all; it's simply improper to attribute beginnings, ends and intervals to them.

What you conclude is inseparable from what you assume—and it's always difficult to challenge first principles and basic assumptions, because students and employees of those assumptions, with their time, reputation, honor invested in the conclusions that follow from those assumptions, will probably react with vigor, and attempt to refute you

with the logic that follows from their assumptions. This is both nonsensical and logical. But what we begin with, for better or worse, is simply a matter of consensus, persuasion, deception, force, but most of all, not of logic, not of fact, not of truth! All you can really attempt to do is show some of the shortcomings of the interpretation that, consciously and subconsciously, underpins our current techniques of measurement—but you can't definitively refute it. We measure values with two-dimensional time-lines underneath them, we simplify time. But, to me, as I noted at the beginning, time is the antithesis of a timeline. It's a form of pure chaos, which presents perceptible patterns to the subjects that exist within it, which, to me, seems more like a practical joke than a logical foundation. I guess it's my view that a dynamic interpretation of time necessarily pulls apart the traditional concepts of subject and object, and invites new ways of interpreting how we experience the experiences we wish to measure and assign values to, all within a process that consistently changes the essence of which it changes. But all of this is relatively unimportant. And it's only a potential building block to new concepts, new interpretations, new experiences, and a building block that's most likely of no use to most people.

Jimothy took a deep breath; at an unknown juncture of his dissertation Jill completely lost interest in everything he had to say. She'd just finished her fourth glass of white wine, all on his tab, and found herself more than a bit tipsy. Jimothy gazed into her spry eyes and attempted to engage in small talk for the next ninety seconds; Jill said that she actually had to do some homework but thanked him for educating her on an alternate interpretation of the process of time. She put on her peacoat and timelessly exited the restaurant.

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To: Jill___@****.com

From: JPritsPragma@****.edu

08/07/2014, 1:14AM

[no subject]

In real life, whenever I speak in my name to another person there's an unsettling fluctuation because hopefully I'm always progressing and changing, and statements can stick to you like gum at the bottom of your shoe, when we all know we speak because of mouths. Whenever conversation occurs between two people there are probably two poles, but neither pole is necessarily you or the other person, it's like a force-field you're trapped in between, I think at least traditionally—because we're traditionally concerned with the intentions and veracity between two people talking. Dialogue can never speak for itself, there's something being said beneath the dialogue that needs to be mined is the idea. But that might just be because our memories are always disagreeing with one another, which points us to look for these underneath things. Statements, ideally, are supposed to belong to one or the other person even though, by nature, whatever is spoken is forever multiplying itself and resonating increasingly or decreasingly as it projects into memory (of subjects who also speak things that get multiplied into memory). This seems to be an infinite process, or at least a process that would be very difficult to count. I say something, something is remembered, relayed, re-remembered— if you actually tried to map statements and how they project and progress through various memories—well, that's impossible, because you have your memory to deal with, don't you? It's nonsense! Utter nonsense! Statements will ricochet maybe ultimately not between truth and falsity, or between you and the other person, but in and with other statements that have no truth, that have no proper person to originate them—that are there that reference fragments that speak for themselves. That's in real life, when you have an actual conversation. That's all I've ever really been concerned with—fragments that speak

for themselves. They're stylish! And, honestly, i don't feel like doing the accounting of person-person, true-false dialogues ricocheting through memory, maybe I'm lazy though. But then what do the fragments that speak for themselves speak to? Other fragments? So then isn't that the same dynamic discussed above with the whole speaking, interpreting in memory, then re-remembering, but that's happening multiple times via multiple subjects, but possibly multiple times within each subject, with each subject dealing with the impossibility of verifying their own memory with memories from subjects that ultimately disagree with each other? Yeah, I think that's pretty much what's going on there. But in art, the opposition of the dialogue is a false one, too—maybe insofar as it tries to construct that true-false, person-person construct. People seem to be concerned a lot with characters in themselves, which i don't get, or maybe I'm interpreting my vague sense of what people seem to be concerned with incorrectly. You write fiction because you're bored or have delusions of grandeur or because it's the most convenient way to form what you, as a person, want to say. A dialogue in real life is probably, like, i don't know, 90% non-verbal and based upon context. A dialogue in written form is a fragment that speaks for itself— the subjects (people) and the subject (matter) are ancillary, they're products of the dialogue itself. Which speaks to a reader that interprets and remembers, re-remembers, and re-re-remembers among other readers, rememberers and interpreters, etc etc— they have a freaking conversation about the whole thing!

Anyway, I hope you're having a good night! We should get together sometime... ☺

Regards,

J

—The Story of K Applepple

It was mid-2014 and K Applepple asked herself: did Michael Pappadapolis, sitting half-asleep in a beige reclining chair with his fine ass and succulent phallus, with her five year old son Ayden Jacksonson sitting so insouciantly on his lap, get it?

Did he?

What an asshole, K Applepple thought to herself; he didn't get it at all. He didn't understand that getting everything you wanted was one of the primary causes of suicide, of mass suicide even, that, in fact, the entire social order, over the course of human history (time immemorial), was, in fact, propped up by this one peculiarity of persons on average (the median individual): that they actually preferred to have the proverbial carrot dangled in front of their faces as they carried the masters' water jugs on each shoulder, as they ascended up the marble staircase to oblivion where they would one day meet complete obliviousness. Yes, that's right, that they actually preferred the feeling that they were indeed progressing, then regressing, then progressing, then regressing, and so on— that feeling that the carrot was getting closer, just as it was being drawn away, than to actually achieve a sense of fulfillment. Because the main problem with fulfillment is time and preparation isn't it? Time, ostensibly, keeps moving forward in the linear construct we either set up for ourselves, or was set up subconsciously, or actually exists, it moves forward and now, lo and behold, we're fulfilled and completely satisfied, and completely unprepared for what could possibly be next. This "What now?" is actually probably the most portentous question of humanity—not the "What do we mean?" not the "Who am I really?" not the "How did we get here?"—in fact, these very types of questions are posed and voluntarily dug into the ground of our being for the very reason that they deflect fulfillment, they wear unanswerable pants and

hurl us on a journey that's the opposite direction of satiation, they generate an infinite amount of carrots to be dangled, and in this to and fro, in this signature despair, the median person preserves him or herself—by asking why, by searching for meaning, by attempting to structure a single self where there are only multiples, by chasing impossibilities they avoid the very real possibility that they could be satiated completely.

But then they would find themselves asking “What now?” and it's a very real fact that anyone who has ever asked that question has immediately hurled themselves into an irreversible cycle of self-destruction. What now? Applepple asked herself as Pappadapolis sat on the recliner innocently enough. He had no idea what he was doing, sitting there with his fine ass, his succulent phallus, her son Ayden Jacksonson, she thought confidently but also forebodingly as she placed her purse on the counter and grabbed a sunny delight from the fridge. Applepple popped open the yellow 6 oz bottle and gazed at Ayden lying so beautifully asleep on the narcissist stomach as she tip-toed across the rooms. K was only 4 foot 7 inches herself, so she was, more or less, eye level with the young boy even as he lay on the man lying on the recliner as ESPN played quietly on the 48.5 inch tv screen in front of them because pro athletes commit misdemeanors, too— as someone who had endured domestic abuse in the past, K knew very well that beating a woman only really counts if it's caught on camera. Words can never do the gruesomeness of some of our actions justice or something.

Ayden rolled over a little with his 5-year old matted down/disheveled black hair and almost opened his eyes and K took this as her cue to make her way back into the kitchen, she didn't want to wake the boy, where she had a few textbooks, a large knock-off designer purse, and three loose life-saver breath-mints on the counter. She was working on her GED, and she would be the first to admit that she

wasn't as up to date on some of Ayden's studies as she'd like to be, in fact, she was really more of his peer than his tutor on a lot of subjects.

How about history? Michael had informed K that it was currently estimated that 40% of the content contained in a median history book were outright lies, while an additional 40% were significant distortions. K found this fucking interesting. In her younger years— she was 28 now but could still pass for early twenties by most accounts— in her younger years, she never took an affinity toward formal education because, truthfully, she was always more drawn to aesthetic beauty (her own and others), but she never really cared enough about her disinterest to vigorously question the tenets of formal education either. However, there was definitely this kind of religiousness of secular schooling that both she and her son were currently enduring when it came to history. It was unsettling. After all, what's the skill in remembering what a bunch of powerful people decided to agree on as truth, and then call objective history? It's like they're asking you to remember their interpretation and their interpretation only of a series of events that seem to be endlessly interpretable and then, believe it or not, they're asking you a couple of follow-ups as well: well, what could've gone differently? why'd this happen (in your opinion)?

How disingenuous! a) Well, a lot of stuff could've gone differently I suppose because i) It's you, you very serious conglomerate of postulating history "objectively", that has decided this happened in this way after centuries of metaphorical telephone with regard to these events, and b) I don't know why this happened, you clearly made up 40% of it and significantly distorted an additional 40% of it, so why don't you tell me?

Michael was only three and half months older than K, but she really did look up to him as almost a man much older than she when it came to educational matters— ever since he told her that he used to read the dictionary as a young adult during one of the first times she was pantie-less in his presence she knew that this was a man who knew

a thing or two about knowledge. And, truthfully, this troubling subjectivity of history troubled K Applepple. What kind of world would her son grow up in, where our very history itself is politicized and reimagined for the benefit of the best anglers of each generation? And, furthermore, what would become of her present as it passed her, of their present as it passed them, of her son's present as he grew into it?— would it be lost like the majority of historical history, into a vacuum that was so endlessly interpretable it wasn't really interpretable at all— only politically moldable for the shrewd and amoral?

K Applepple was overwhelmed. Sometimes she felt like maybe her past decisions, short-sighted and selfish as so many decisions, of both the young and old, are, had rendered her helpless in guiding the development of her own son in any significant way. This weighed on her heavily, but so did the opposite possibility— so did a lot of things.

?!Hola como esta mi amiga?! Pappadapolis shouted across the room at K Applepple as she ignored him and continued to walk slowly toward wherever it was she was going, with her nipple rings visibly dangling against her blouse, which may have been made from a charcoal gray cashmere. As Michael stood next to his colleague Donatello Rigatone within the state-run penis pump dispensary where K was employed as a part-time penis pump adjuster, Pappadapolis had heard the rumors— that K was a former mistress of Mort Saucen. Honestly, what do I give a fuck! he noted to Rigatone, who was eating a king sized Snickers bar with the wrapper not completely removed, but rolled down to where he was biting the bar. A vagina is an actual, physical body part meant to be used multiple times, it's not a tissue or a paper towel or a napkin, you know?

Now, K ignoring Pappadapolis was nothing new. When they first locked eyes, when their paths incidentally crossed for the first and second times, and K stared up and into Michael's eyes like his pupils displayed professional advice to obtain a larger tax return, when they

first met K gave Michael her sister's phone number not hers, but neglected to inform him of this information. K didn't really tell Michael that he was technically calling her sister a Cambodian queen, and not calling K a Cambodian queen a few times a week until her sister's son's father, so fed up with Michael's incessant, embarrassingly romantic-ish text messages, threw K's sister's phone into the toilet and threw such a violent fit that he caught a domestic charge—enraged and incorrectly convinced that Michael was, in fact, attempting to seduce K's sister, whom Michael had never met, not K. When he found out, Pappadapolis felt a little more than slightly bad for K's sister, and slightly bewildered, if not agitated at K, but, net-net, was undeterred by the whole situation—speed bumps! he'd say, which is the same phrase he'd utter in varying intonations whenever anyone forebodingly mentioned K's ultra-violet, cancer-causing magnet eyes— or her general lack of sustainable career prospects in a dual income economy— or her 5 year old son whom most estimated Michael would be a sub-par role model for— or her first, teenage love who was currently serving a life sentence for murdering a man he thought may have been interested in K sexually, and who was scheduled to be eligible for parole as early as 2019. Speed bumps! I mean, what am I gonna marry this girl or something, it'll figure itself out, you know? he'd say as he half-knowingly sank further into a complicated interpersonal relationship that was growing increasingly difficult to disentangle himself from, but that was ok.

?!Hola como esta mi amiga?!

K explicitly informed Pappadapolis that the only male she ever agreed to meet outside of the state-run penis pump dispensary was her son's father. She didn't just go on dates. This also didn't deter Michael, as a high bar always appealed to him when he had an erection. In the end, Michael was some combination of ambitious, charming, or relentless enough that he eventually became the second man K agreed to converse with outside of the dispensary, which was nice for him but

didn't really satiate him as much as he thought it might. Donatello had just taken the last bite of his Snickers and rubbed a little chocolate from his index finger onto his dress pants and asked Michael, so, you fuck this chick yet, or what?

Nah, Michael replied, only in her ass.

How's that going?

Dude, I can barely fit the tip in, it's fucking awesome.

Yeah, you have to respect a girl who saves the vagina for last.

Oh absolutely. I love a girl who saves vagina.

Yeah.

You know what else I like about her...?

...

Her soul, man.

She does seem like she has a really good soul.

Oh, it's beautiful, a beautiful soul.

K walked slowly with glistening brown skin and porcelain facial features and dark brown vagina lips that formed a kind of butterfly formation around her clitoris and size 5 feet and a beautiful soul up to Michael and said hi, how are you?

Sup shorty? Michael replied intentionally and unconvincingly nonchalantly.

K looked deeply into Michael's unrelenting eyes and remembered why she didn't really care that much for men. After she gave birth to her son she only got wet maybe twice a month, but, to be fair, her general distaste for men was more acquired than inherited. Born to two nice enough people who didn't really speak english much at all, and in a legitimate ghetto with an above average amount of gangs and guns, K's first love interest was maybe an adolescent escape from her foreign family that maybe, at the time, she wanted to disassociate herself from. Unfortunately, this boy had some personal issues and acquired a habit of beating her severely on a, more or less, daily basis and even legitimately stabbed her more than once. She had scars to prove it.

Eventually, when she attempted to break off the relationship for good, not long after she started to attempt to break things off for good, another man and woman, they visited her together, and they visited her apartment for a benign reason on a mundane afternoon. When K's boyfriend/ex-boyfriend, who had recently moved directly across the street from K, saw this happening, he kind of assumed this man, who was with another woman at the time, was going to replace him in K's life, and proceeded to take a .38 snub nose pistol across the street, walked up to the man, well, young man to be more accurate, and shot this young man square in the chest, killing him almost instantly. After he shot the young man to death, he then turned the gun toward K, but, fortunately for K, the pistol jammed and this is was when K began to develop a slight disdain for the male gender. The man she bore a child for/with was only a marginal improvement. A Caucasian drug dealer from a middle-class background, he was eventually shot multiple times by a Ukrainian-Caucasian, upper-middle class drug dealer, who made fairly legitimate threats on K's life as well as her son's over this white middle-class drug distribution dispute. K's son's father then, as he recovered from his drug distribution wounds which were very painful, became addicted to the drugs he had acquired the habit of generously distributing into his community, and was eventually arrested and indicted on multiple counts of drug trafficking— charges that were also levied against k, as the drugs were stored in the home they shared. K only got moist legitimately maybe once or twice a month, but Michael and Donatello did seem like pretty good guys, but then again one may want to exercise caution with regard to K's intuitions regarding the nobility of men.

Although the bylaws of the state-run penis pump dispensary generally frowned upon penis pump adjusters mingling with people that weren't in dire need of a penis pump adjustment that very second, K made a slight exception to briefly speak with Michael and Donatello

this afternoon, as neither of them were outwardly interested in purchasing a penis pump. At least she didn't think so.

Don't get me wrong, Michael said, you've had some bad breaks without a doubt, but you're not 100% innocent either, and that, that right there, that's just life. That's just how it fuckin is. Michael winced slightly as he finished the sentence. He'd cut his left index fingernail a little too short that morning, and it had been continuously stinging all day. By contrast, Michael had a great childhood where he spent most of his time thoroughly attempting to disprove its relative greatness. Per Greek tradition, Michael was named after his grandfather Michelangelo Pericles Pappadapolis, who served 3 years in a maximum security prison for unlawful bilingualism and had a very strong handshake. From a very young age, Michael was always taught to abstain from human feeling whenever possible as that was unbecoming of self-sufficient persons— he even locked himself in small dark closets with poor ventilation to expunge himself of these feelings if they became too intense and Michael turned out ok. He gave K's left buttcheek a back-handed slap with his left hand as he reached diagonally across her tiny body and said, I like how that feels, as he cracked open an Arizona Iced Tea Pink Lemonade flavored tall can. K smiled into Michael's eyes half-sincerely and said thank you.

Like so many of us, K began to run away from herself at an early age, thinking she might win a 100 yard dash or maybe a Boston Marathon after a while because hope breeds stamina, but when you reach where the land ends and the water begins you dip your toes into the cold water and realize this is no olympic sized swimming pool, and you start swimming and realize that water is just like land but with the molecules further apart and stuff— but the waters are of course shark-infested and you get eaten by a shark, a great white one or maybe a tiger, but luckily it happens in just one swift bite and you subsist off of trout and salmon in her stomach for the next several years, but,

unable to exercise, you lose a lot of the stamina you built up, but realize large intestines are kind of like water beds but with trout and salmon all the time, and when the shark dies of old age and you rip through her stomach with fish bone and fish bone alone, you swim to the surface, swim to the shore and realize this story is absurd— no one will believe you, and what was I running from again, and, in turn, the real, by necessity, becomes a component of the imaginary. Affairs of the heart never keep it real, they've been lying to you this entire time—you didn't know that?

—Pt 2

Michael was a Financial Analyst II at a leading investment bank. The II distinguished him from the Financial Analyst I's, which were theoretically inferior Financial Analysts; Analysts that lacked the acumen that came along with 14 months of working 8am through 5pm, Monday through Friday as a Financial Analyst. However, this is not to say that Michael was at the pinnacle of his profession—no, there were Financial Analyst III's, Financial Analyst IV's and, finally, Senior Financial Analysts. Even still, there was hardly a doubt in Pappadapolis's mind that he was vastly superior to his Financial Analyst I underlings, and that, given another 12 to 14 months, that he would achieve Financial Analyst III status. All of this immediately exited his train of thought as he entered his one bedroom apartment at 5:35pm on a Tuesday and found 4 men sitting at his dinner table. Before he could fully comprehend the unusual scene, a foul odor filled both of his nostrils and he heard a toilet flush. A door opened before he heard any sink run water.

Oh, hey. What up Mike? a voice rang out.

It was a 5th man. He was larger in width than the other 4, and he walked from the bathroom over to the dinner table. Michael's dinner table only sat 4, so the 5th man sat on another man's lap at the table. Sensing Michael's discomfort, one of the men that didn't have the 5th man sitting on his lap said Hi. He paused to allow Michael space to say hello back, but Michael remained silent. Well, we're The Expiration Dates, the man said.

Pew! another man exclaimed, perhaps breaking some of the awkwardness. Double O, you really should've gone when we stopped at Wendy's like I told you. That stench is foul and rude.

Oh, so I should just go on command then, the larger man who was apparently known as Double O replied incredulously.

There's a time and a place is all I'm saying.

So I should hold it in? That actually increases my chances of contracting colon cancer, so...

Another one of the men interrupted and told the larger man that he should defecate as much as possible due to his large size. The larger man replied aggressively, calling the other man a type of cloth that is often used to clean a woman's vagina, and asked him to refrain from being insensitive around people the larger man barely knew.

Enough guys! another man interrupted.

This man wore thick wire-rimmed glasses and spoke in a relatively high pitched tone. His black jeans were incredibly tight and sketched the extreme lankiness of his thin frame. Shouldn't we at least introduce ourselves to Mike, and explain why we broke into his apartment before we start bickering amongst ourselves?

Michael was still standing with his briefcase in hand.

You're right, one of the other men began and stood up. He was exquisitely well-kept and had borderline feminine facial features, and his lips were in a perpetual state of being puckered. I'm Never. I'm the dreamy one of the group.

The man wearing the wire-rimmed glasses then rose from his seat as well and spoke. I'm The Right Time. I'm the smart, vaguely political one of the group. You can call me RT for short!

Another man stood up and began to speak; he was wearing a leather jacket with no shirt underneath and had a scruffy 5 o'clock shadow. His fists were clenched; he wasn't smiling and he may have suffered from low self-esteem. He said I'm Now. I'm the fucking badass.

The man who was visibly uncomfortable with the larger man sitting on his lap spoke in a belabored fashion. He had a light brown faux-hawk and was otherwise a non-descript caucasian, possibly of french or anglo-saxon descent. He said I'm Whenever. I'm like the, uh, laissez-faire one, I guess.

Finally, the large man got off Whenever's lap and approached Michael. His jeans had an elastic band around the waist and this was noticeable because his white t-shirt, which had Frito-Lay printed in red ink on the front, was tucked into them. His stomach was approximately the size of three to five bowling ball bags, and his face gave off a pale and swollen hue. He extended his hand and said I'm Of Old Age. I'm the sloppy, uninteresting one of the group. Most of the fellas call me Double O for short.

Michael shook Double O's hand and said Nice to meet you all.

We got word you're all bottled up, Double O said. That's why we're here.

Wait, I'm what?

We're kind of like a boy band.

But for people who are all bottled up!

And you're lucky!

There are four other people in this apartment complex—

Just as bottled up as you are!

And you all get to pick one of us—

But you get first pick!

All five of the Dates were now standing up. Never had brewed a pot of coffee and RT was hovering over the pot, eager for a cup. Double O was waddling back and forth anxiously; he eyed the bathroom as Now stepped up into Michael's face.

So what're you gonnna fucking do, bro? Which one of us are you gonna pick?

Michael stepped back, just inches from his front door.

Wait a minute! he retorted. Who's to say I'm bottled up? I'm a financial analyst!

It's, like, frickin obvious, dude, Whenever muttered as he sat back down at the dinner table.

RT held a cup of hot coffee and agreed, punctuating his consensus with a per se. Double O excused himself to the bathroom.

There he goes again! Never said, intentionally ruffling his disheveled hair.

Listen, RT began, taking a long sip of his coffee. Let's cut to the chase here, per se. We're all, more or less, forward thinking here. I don't want to say advanced but, let's be honest, we're all part of an advanced civilization, and everything has some sort of political aspect to it. Now, most advanced civilizations don't allow things to be bottled up without proper expiration dates. Now, RT took a sip of coffee and Now looked at him briefly believing he was referring to him, Mike, RT continued, Mike, you're all bottled up, and we're all Expiration Dates, so all you need to do is pick one of us to stick with you and assist in restoring the proper moral order to this apartment building.

This is just ridiculous, Michael said, I don't NEED any of you. and I'm NOT bottled up. Do any of you even have any idea what it is I do? I'm well on my way to becoming a top-tier analyst at one of the leading financial institutions in the world! Why would I possibly need any of you?!

You just don't get it, man, Whenever began.

No, I do get it. And get this: if you don't leave my apartment in, say, 2 minutes—including you in the bathroom!—then I'm calling the police!

No, Now scowled, you don't GET it. He grabbed Michael by his shoulders and tossed him effortlessly against his front door.

When Michael Pappadapolis woke up he was wearing a wedding band on a cloud in a clear blue sky lying next a sleeping Never with his hair still somehow delicately, eloquently disheveled. They were eloquently suspended in air.

What a depression is, in physical terms, is just bricks tied to thoughts or something of that sort, and perhaps Michael was indeed bottled up in a way that he could probably never escape. Death is, after all, the ultimate gamble. In any case, whatever Michael was or wasn't

hardly mattered now; to speculate backwards only creates new histories—and scholars postulate that history is institutionally recreated every 10 to 15 years, but that only really serves future generations. For Michael, now lying on a hovering cloud, married to a young man named Never, his status as subject would remain subjective—everyone has to accept that uncertainty at some point.

He'd live forever like this. He'd be a Senior Financial Analyst in no time.

Some human beings don't grow to be normal heights. This was especially true of K as she wasn't a normal height at all, because she stopped growing at the age of 14 when she tragically lost her virginity to a young Puerto Rican boy with apparently somewhat inveterate trust issues that had stabbed himself repeatedly with u-shaped magnets until they pierced his skin and scarred him magnetically. Due to the vigorous nature of adolescent thrusting, K was also left scarred above and in between her breast plates and on her upper left arm. Unfortunately, that wasn't all, that wasn't where it ended—the magnets that pierced her skin entered her bloodstream and turned her eyes a fluorescent shade of bright blue. They glowed in dim rooms, and K contracted a rare form of magnet blood that streamed ultraviolet, often cancer-causing, rays out of her eyeballs.

Michael was a Financial Analyst at a fairly large corporation. Somewhat perturbed, he sat on a stool placed on a cluster of white marshmallows that were shaped like c-sized breasts multiplied by 10, suspended in air. He stared down at a glass of vodka and seltzer and a cell phone that kept receiving text messages from a group of Expiration Dates that apparently were hanging out in his apartment.

Michael was puzzled by this and wasn't sure how they got his phone number. K had arduously climbed up onto the cluster of marshmallows and walked at a crawl pace as she slowly rubbed lotion onto her tiny dark brown arms that had a small amount of hair on them, and her magnet eyes scanned the marshmallows computer-like without her heart-shaped head moving all that much. She noticed Michael from behind—it looked like his head might be completely made of stone.

Hey, is your head made of stone?

Yeah, it was a birth defect I think.

Michael rubbed his hand on the back of his head where the stone met the bottom of his hairline. It was kind of embarrassing and made Michael difficult to deal with at times, but K found it intriguing if only

because her magnets weren't being pulled. Though it may sound trivial, the magnets that were stabbed into K's skin could be exhausting with the sheer incessancy of their pull.

K squinted and her eyes looked like lights at the end of the tunnel; she looked into Michael's eyes for some reason or another. She saw the texts from the Expiration Dates ricochet off of his retinas. Michael would never discuss the Expiration Dates with her directly, even as they achieved greater degrees of inebriation because A) it was kind of an odd thing, you know, and B) he really didn't know all that much about them, so it was difficult to really explain them to anyone else.

K continued to stare, unaware or not caring that it was a slightly abnormal thing to do. Because she never grew to a normal height, it was sometimes difficult to remember that K was a real person—from certain angles, there was a severe juxtaposition between some of her child-like body parts and the fact she was an adult woman with magnet scars. K stared into the eyeballs and Michael continued to sip his drink for the next year or so, and K held in her feelings well. In fact, at times Michael believed that K hid her feelings even from herself, which was an impressive feat he thought. Impressive, but also somewhat dangerous because the most stringent orders mask themselves as chaos, at least historically maybe. At the same time, from Michael's point-of-view, the potential danger of the possibly stringent order masked as chaos of her fluorescent bright blue eyes and magnet brain was preferable to the general rowdiness of the Expiration Dates waiting for him in his apartment.

However, the daily analytical rigors of Michael's profession mixed with his stone-head proved formidable in occasionally deciphering why K was choosing to stare into his eyes that reflected apparently nothing beyond outdated texts from Expiration Dates waiting for him in his apartment. But even when Michael caught K slipping, the memories

and text messages reflected off his eyes into hers, yet they'd elicit little reaction.

6:58 pm: heyyy, wanna get white girl wasted with me?

6:59 pm: ...so i guess not...

In addition, Michael also researched various arcane articles regarding the history of legal midgets and discovered a plethora of data that K had neglected to inform him of. At first, Michael was somewhat infuriated by the matter—here was a girl standing on a cloud of breast-shaped marshmallows looking into his eyes indiscriminately, seeing, good heavens! the lord only knows what! ricocheting off of his retinas, and she just neglected to mention this crucial data?! And the data was indeed crucial, make no mistake about it! Without a doubt, it was absurd and possibly completely out of line, but it was also invaluable with regards to shedding light on the feelings that K probably hid from herself in her magnet brain.

At this point, Michael was beginning to think K was lost in the texts of *The Expiration Dates* ricocheting off of his retinas, as he felt her feelings appearing more, but becoming more and more muddled with regard to consistency and tangible benefit. He noticed her head as well. It looked more stone-like.

Conversely, as K became increasingly inebriated off of the, more or less, nonsensical texts of *The Expiration Dates* that mysteriously had such an urgent interest in Michael, she noticed Michael's observations and studies starting to pull at her magnet blood. This is probably because a strong magnet will always be attracted to a stone because it feels like it can almost pick it up, and a stone, intrigued that something as fancy as a magnet wants to pick it up, can always just react by hurling itself at the magnet and seeing if it can stick.

As K and Michael sat and stared into one another's eyes, it was definitely true that some of their qualities had swapped bodies. This is

probably the only known way, given the current laws of physics, for a magnet and a stone to connect successfully—however, that doesn't mean they have to, because anything is possible, and the Earth is just one big stone itself, you know?

K was now made of stone with bright blue faded magnet eyes that lost most of their pull buried under rock. Employed now as a statue, a large out-of-shape African-American man heaved her over his shoulder as he entered a large mansion.

Where would you like this, Mr. Pappadapolis? the large man asked.

Fuckin put it down there for now—I can move that later, he replied.

Pappadapolis walked toward the entrance carrying his Orange Mango Coolata in his right hand to get a better view of the moving truck and some of the larger items that were going to ostensibly be moved into the large mansion that afternoon. As he walked past K he noticed the faint magnetic glimmer in her eyes and stopped. He turned to the large man, who stood idly, awaiting direction.

You know a wise man once told me that the eyes never lie?

Oh yeah? the large man replied.

Yeah. That guy actually turned out to be a pedophile, got pinched on child porn charges my senior year of high school. Fuckin piece of shit.

The large African-American man noticed K squinting at Pappadapolis and said, do you two know each other?

Yeah, Pappadapolis said begrudgingly as he took a sip of his Coolata, we have a bit of a history together, I guess, and glanced at the statue of K that was actually K.

K didn't say much and, frankly, neither did Michael, because, frankly, not a lot really needed to be said. It hurt Pappadapolis to see K this way, but he knew she could make a fairly decent living as a statue,

and that life isn't fair, that caring deeply for others will only push you to the brink of insanity again and again, even if it would be awkward having her as a statue in his home. Whatever, he thought, Maybe I can auction her off to someone nice. She squinted at him again and made him feel like a minor acquaintance, despite their rather intricate history with one another—this squint made him consider the possibility she knew everything about him, everything he didn't really want her to know that would cause him to crumble once and for all, or would it make him crumble? Or could it actually free him once and for all? Then again, he felt pretty free as is, but, regardless, either way it was a risk he didn't want to take, but Michael also knew it was also a possibility that K knew nothing, and that her seemingly knowledgeable squint was nothing more than a bluff, or a misinterpretation on his part, that she only feigned a gaze that suggested she knew all of the arguably bad deeds he'd performed, which Michael interpreted as such only because he, in fact, was aware of all of the arguably bad deeds he'd performed.

So much has changed, he said, and for what really? You know what I mean?

I don't know, she replied. ...We'll figure it out.

It's important to network, he said, everything is connected, maybe more so than you even think, and K nodded, which perturbed Pappadapolis because he knew she was approving of something she didn't care about and, in that approval, she was, therefore, more or less, telling him she didn't care. But she did care; she let it slip too many times that she cared to really not care. A person either overcompensates for caring because a person really doesn't really care, or a person makes it blatantly obvious they don't care. Actual caring itself always occupies that median region, where a person attempts to make it seem as though they don't care, but that person, from time to time, carelessly lets on how much they actually do care. That was probably K, and that's what really bothered Michael—the fact that K cared but never let herself be

remunerated for her care. No, she bottled herself up in fear and bottled herself up in obstinacy, and it really bothered Michael. Her entire life was just one elongated, elaborate bluff, and for what? But so was his, he thought, and let the matter go. He slung K over his shoulder and took her up the winding stairs to find a comfortable spot to place her for the time being.

she tried. he would give that to her all day. and her feelings seemed sincere enough, but effort and sincerity were rarely sufficient in almost anything in life. in fact, effort and sincerity were more often than not signs that things were most likely never going to work out. we'll figure it out, she repeated. how? he replied. she looked back at him with sad eyes and said, go with your gut. whatever, he thought. it was obvious to him that he should have never gotten involved and he knew that prior to even getting involved, so what could he say to himself? no, wait, k pleaded as he began to turn around and walk out of the room he'd placed her in. he stopped turning around and she said, don't go. the clouds were prosthetic, weren't they? he asked. don't be a dick, she replied. her stone body began to move a little. i have to go, she said as she noticed herself slowly regaining control of her body. ok, michael replied, when you get your motor skills back go ahead, i don't care... but let me know if you need a ride, i actually have a driver, now, so he could probably give you a ride if you want. she looked at him. ok, she said. alright, sounds good, i'll talk to you soon then, and then michael walked out of the room.

The sharpie's running out of ink! We're all out! RT shouted as he wrote another stochastic date on Michael's left thigh. The Expiration Dates had the financial analyst tied onto his bed with some spare rope and dental floss they found in his apartment. RT urgently sent Double O to the nearest Dollar Tree to buy black sharpies as Now straddled Michael and pretended to strangle him while watching the TV from his

position on the bed. Never and Ehenever drank coffee and watched YouTube videos on Michael's iPad at his kitchen table.

Well, this is frustrating, RT moaned, this fuckin' guy, he threw the used up sharpie onto the apartment's wood floor and it bounced off the floor asymmetrically.

whatever, michael muttered perhaps half-defeated and half-in-contempt as now strangled him and kind of giggled and watched a rerun of the golden girls at the same time. whenever's eyes lit up from across the room and he said, what was that over there? yeah, what was that? now repeated. i said, whatever, michael said with a moderate amount of difficulty because of the hands loosely clenched around his throat. oh ok, whenever replied. whatever. what's taking him so long?! rt shouted out of frustration in reference to double o going to the dollar tree. never had stood up and away from the ipad and said, look at him—there's pretty much no room left on him anyway, and i'm kinda hungry and there's literally nothing in here to eat, you wanna just go? rt looked at michael's naked body and realized it was nearly completely covered in sharpie and said, yeah, whatever, let's just fucking go, why not? and the four remaining expiration dates left the apartment without waiting for double o to return. michael stayed on his bed, tied to it and naked for a very long time and kind of thought about his past and perhaps certain events that he experienced or seemed to remember himself experiencing that were possibly hot button focal points societally, but kind of tormented him at times personally. double o stopped by a few minutes after the other expiration dates left to go eat and asked where everyone went and michael said they left to go eat and double o asked where but michael didn't know so double o just left aimlessly. did something go wrong somewhere, did someone just come into this world wrong, or did someone make a focal point of an event that wasn't necessarily a focal point and that led them astray, or is the dichotomy of right/wrong just essentially uninterpretable— probably some mixture of all of the

above. without a doubt though, there are certain types of pain that can make death seem preferable, being tied to your bed naked for extended periods of time against your will may be included in these— certain types of pain that death can even be a comfort for, a suicidal thought as a type of anesthesia. generally, it's thought that people who are intimately familiar with these types of pain generally abstain from speaking of them with others because they generally prefer not to become de facto zoo animals or three legged elephants, or maybe sacrificial lambs that open the floodgates of normalcy to other afflicted types— pervert martyrs or something something. but it was obvious as a fly landed on michael's forehead, a fly that had somehow remained alive in his apartment for over a week now, feeding on things michael couldn't be sure of where or what they were, it was obvious that all of this was lost on the expiration dates as they probably ate a hearty meal somewhere nearby, maybe a chinese buffet on a lunch menu. the village of papi pappadapolis, the origin of michael's bloodline, was distinct in its history within the history of greece. of course, to some extent, perhaps to a major extent, the history of greece (and perhaps rome as well) has been idealized institutionally over the centuries, primarily by the anglo saxon races of northern europe that became philosophically obsessed with the histories of greece and rome for some reason, and unintentionally ironically co-opted via various christian denominations. however, papi pappadapolis as a village lacked almost any trace of the platonic representation, or of the socratic syllogism that were hallmarks of greek thought— much less did it evoke any of the the spartan code of honor, basically any of the traits that typically characterized the idealized mythology of the history of greece. papi pappadapolis was the last land-based village before the land of the peloponnesus became the water of the mediterranean sea and it faded out nicely, not like a radio hit that gets abruptly cut off or has disc jockeys talking over its conclusion— no, as a village, papi pappadapolis was regionally well-known for both its lack of fight, its embarrassing

void of courageous action, as well as its nonsensical lack of any set of rational ideals, and also for its grape leaves, which were widely believed to be top 5 in the mediterranean. in fact, the only famous ancient greek to call papi pappadapolis home was a man by the name of carneades, who had no last name. carneades literally spent his entire life arguing diametrically opposed views with equal amounts of vigor all over greece and modern-day sicily, and then he eventually died of old age. of course, many grecians of his era and after felt as though a true greek's cry for freedom would echo through eternity, but, generally speaking, papi pappadapolis, over the course of history, tended to follow carneades' lead and dissent agnostically from that view and assimilate into whatever the dominant army of the time demanded. nor did the villagers of papi pappadapolis tend to hold onto beliefs or even attempt to make much sense of the world they supposedly inhabited, although they were, to be sure, a passionate group of people as a whole— but that passion simply lacked a floor. it was just an ungrounded sort of passion that would occasionally be grounded, too. actually, one of the very few times the generally non-descript papi pappadapolians caused a furor among the greek community was in the 15th century, during initial phases of the ottoman takeover, when the village officially adopted the motto: we probably won't argue if you call us arabs. it was a mess, a whole ordeal and brought a good amount of scorn onto papi pappadapolis at the time. again, there was, without a doubt, passion in the small-to-medium sized village, however, foreign conquerors and domestic bureaucrats alike found trouble identifying its origin— this ambiguity was imbued as soon as the important men approached the village, as they were always greeted by the same welcome sign that read in simple lettering:

WELCOME to the Village of Papi Pappadapolis

Basic tenets of our residents include, but are not limited to:

Nothing exists;

Even if something exists, nothing can be known about it, and

Even if something can be known about it, knowledge about it can't be communicated to others.

Even if it can be communicated, it can't be understood.

Now, all of that was in ancient Greek, that's just the rough translation. a lot of conquerors and domestic bureaucrats, at first glance, were infuriated by the sign, and demanded a creed more in line with whatever their ethical code was at the time to be put up at the village's entrance in its place. but, after they thought about it, and confronted whoever the governor of papi pappadapolis was at the time, the governor, who was usually named pete, would almost always reply, yeah, if you really want to change the sign you can, i guess— and after all of this thinking, conversing, and bartering, the bureaucrats and conquerors, they would usually all just kind of figure— you know what? that welcome sign is probably harmless enough as is and there's no need to make a huge issue out of it. fuck it.

K Appleple was a Senior Financial Analyst with magnet eyes at a large investment firm, and when she returned home from work on a Wednesday at about 5:37 pm she found five strange men in her apartment, and she felt a slight sense of déjà vu as the door closed behind her. A large man wearing a large white t-shirt was bending over and passing gas on a skinny man's head. The large man was able to perform this act because he forcefully held the skinny man's head against his buttocks as he bent over. Double O! the skinny man shouted as the gas was audibly released upon his disheveled hairdo.

These five men would introduce themselves to K as a self-help group known as The Expiration Dates. Their names were somewhat clever, given the contrived concept they represented, but despite their jolly demeanors they trafficked in morose matters, and maybe this contrast was intended to mean something, but, if it was, the meaning

was lost on K; she was tired after a long day of work, even though she didn't physically do all that much during said day. The Dates continued to apply pressure to K—they told her she had to mate with one of them, but not in a forced, rapey way! They wanted the union to be more classy, and they promised it would last until the after-life. As the pressure mounted, K knew better than to lose her focus or her temper; she knew that if she could cogently expose the absurdity of The Expiration Dates' proposition that eventually they'd have to leave her apartment.

On the other hand, this wouldn't just end, and a morose premonition trafficked cerebral tube things. The truth was K's magnet eyes were just colored contacts, and her scars never seeped into her bloodstream, because they flattened her essentially and turned her two dimensional. K turned to her side briefly and The Expiration Dates almost completely lost sight of her in the profile view. Like a lot of us, k began to run away from herself at an early age, thinking she might win a 100 yard dash or maybe a boston marathon after a while because hope breeds stamina, but when you reach where the land ends and the water begins you dip your toes into the cold water and realize this is no olympic sized swimming pool, and you start swimming and realize that water is just like land but with the molecules further apart and stuff—but the waters are of course shark-infested and you get eaten by a shark, a great white one or maybe a tiger, but luckily it happens in just one swift bite and you subsist off of trout and salmon in her stomach for the next several years, but, unable to exercise, you lose a lot of the stamina you built up, but realize large intestines are kind of like water beds but with trout and salmon all the time. and when the shark dies of old age and you rip through her stomach with fish bone and fish bone alone, you swim to the surface, swim to the shore and realize this story is absurd—no one will believe you, and what was i running from again, and then the real, by necessity, becomes a component of the imaginary, but the c-shaped clouds she sat on, the ones she turned to

stone on, they were prosthetic, weren't they? Even though they felt so soft at the time.

The Dates continued to apply pressure to K—they told her she had to mate with one of them, but not in a forced, rapey way! They wanted the union to be more classy, and they promised it would last until the after-life. As the pressure mounted, K knew better than to lose her focus or her temper. She knew that if she could cogently expose the absurdity of the expiration dates' proposition that eventually they'd have to leave her apartment.

No, all of you need to leave. Now! she shouted at them.

No— you don't get it. Wait, when?

I said Nooooooooooooooooowww!

K awoke the next morning as a blade of grass in a fairly well-kept backyard in Cumberland, Rhode Island and, for the most part, barring the occasional gust of wind, K was inanimate, but she received a haircut almost twice a week, as the elderly man who owned the house viewed cutting the grass as a fine substitute for exercise. All in all, K's life hadn't changed all that much really. Sure, winter was right around the corner, but it could be worse. Five leaves landed on K and the blades that surrounded her.

Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeey, a brown leaf with multiple holes and lacerations crooned, the name's By Liquid Cement.

Um, can we introduce ourselves formally as a group here, Liq? Kind of give her a proper preamble of what we stand for before we all chime in with our formal intros? another leaf chimed in.

The sun was setting in the backyard, and K was tired even before this banter began—she felt like she'd heard something similar from a group of leaves like this before, but she couldn't be sure. To an extent, it had to have something to do with the way the wind was blowing, and that's exactly the point By Liquid Cement was trying to make.

—The Story of Gerry Waterfall

Looking out of the crystal clear, and I mean crystal fucking clear, window pane many stories ascended into the sky with metallic window frames that ate aluminum for breakfast Gerry Waterfall glanced down upon his gut and remembered he probably hadn't seen his penis since the late 1980s. He stood on the top floor of the headquarters of Voting is Bueno! a Mort Saucen non-profit—Mort Saucen, a United States congressman with, some would say, allegedly dubious ethics, but of course ethics are inherently relative, and who's to even say if Mort is indeed morally dubious, that it's Mort at fault rather than a larger system of corruption that necessitates networks of dubious ethics to function efficiently, Gerry thought? At the same time, of course, charitable causes are simply the most efficient cloaks for the most criminal among us; separation of church and state on the condition the church is tax exempt, haha! On this day Congressman Saucen was concerned. Congressman Saucen was often concerned, as was the nature of retaining a powerful position. Are you kidding me?! he exclaimed earlier that morning. I need those taxes! I need all the taxes! I love these taxes and simply can't imagine being deprived of them! Gut sat in a maroon leather chair when he and Mort conversed over buttered croissants and cappuccinos earlier that morning. An investment thesis that manages to take advantage of the tax deduction allowed for charitable donations, but somehow siphons that money back into a firm through organized means is enviable in many ways. but envy can be a synonym for jealousy and jealousy can make men bitter, and in this case Mort may have been bitter with regard to this particular investment thesis. The man who originated the thesis, wide-eyed with avarice, was named Michael Pappadapolis. Yeah, I know Pappadapolis, Saucen croaked when he was informed it was Pappadapolis behind the scheme; he fucked my wife his senior year of

high school, that little shit. The initial conclusion that one may arrive at, hearing the previous quote, would be Saucen is sticking it to Pappadapolis for fornicating with his wife during his senior year of high school, but Saucen wasn't one to hold a grudge—in fact, in many ways, Mort had overseen, perhaps even acted as a mentor in, Pappadapolis's formidable development as businessman. But regardless of history, this was about principle for Mort; he couldn't have people cleverly averting taxes in his precinct willy nilly because, you know, one thing leads to another. Even if the tax code had grown to biblical proportions, that didn't mean Congressmen should just stand around while clever capitalists wiggled themselves in and out of legislative loopholes willy nilly! Gut, I want you on the streets with the ViB! street team, and I want you guys ripping every fucking red ribbon you see on a hobo off, on the spot, no questions asked! Saucen shouted. Gerry's nickname was Gut. You got it, Mort, Gerry replied, buttering a croissant on his burgundy tax-exempt desk. Also, mort continued, thinking aloud, thoughts streaming through his whole, old, shriveled body you could see it, when you rip these fuckin ribbons off their hands, do me a favor, throw said bums in the ViB! truck and truck them to the next precinct over, let's recoup these tax dollars and flatten the homeless rate across the city at the same fuckin time. Gerry said ok, but he had feelings, too. As he stood now standing and gazing out of the crystal clear window he recalled taking another bite out of that buttered croissant after saying ok to Mort and thinking, man I'm just a number, a cog in the machine. Gerry had feelings, too, he knew he did. He felt certain ways about certain things, he definitely did, he thought. He definitely, like, was a human being who felt stuff. But he had a job, and that job, well, it wasn't always conducive to him expressing the fact that he felt he had feelings, he knew he did. The truth was Gerry didn't really have feelings, but he felt like he had them, and, in that way, he kind of did, but not really. And he just thought it would be nice if Mort would take a minute every now and then and just, you know,

kind of acknowledge the possibility that Gerry may feel like he had feelings from time to time, even if he didn't, because he didn't, but he felt like he might. It was almost high noon now and, looking over the city, there really wasn't much going on, but it looked nice, the minutia approached completion at a crawl-pace and people put stamps on envelopes at post offices while muttering to the people next to them, man, I feel like a dinosaur with this stamp in my hand! And the people working at the post office replied, man, I feel like a dinosaur working here, I can't wait to collect unemployment in a few months because maybe I'll hate my life a little less! And people getting drunk at lunch because they had a great job, or didn't have a job at all, and people who weren't drunk yet, but were on the brink of starvation, beyond emotional repair and just battling with the fact that they had to either find and accept some sort of cult-like belief that could convince them they were starving because they were special or wait for themselves to tick into a time-bomb, maybe rob an old lady or shoot a low-level drug dealer. Somehow things didn't fall apart, or at least not yet, yet the city seemed to lack a head on its shoulders, maybe it was a chicken running with its head cut off and this moment was some kind of cosmic, elongated second before the corpse fell lifeless, or maybe the city had its head up its ass and was doing somersaults down a yellow brick road leading to eternal prosperity, who could know for sure? What a perfect microcism for America, Gerry thought, which was wrong because it's microcosm not microcism but also because nothing is a microcosm for America? America is a microcosm of itself, and if you're thinking that that doesn't make sense that's because it probably doesn't, because let's face it—wasn't America the empire that monetized the diversity that centuries of human history squeezed out of the earth's geography?—but isn't that geographically cultivated culture getting flattened by instagram rather quickly? I mean, isn't it? Isn't the world reverting back to flat with an omnipresent media that probably turns world culture monolithic, which eventually, out of the pervasive and essential

nature of difference-in-itself, breaks into newly minted minorities, which America will have no upper-hand in? This is a fall of an empire via attrition, right? Which is probably the best way to go if you have to go, you know what I mean? The city was singular, its quality of life relative of course, and the United States of America was a woman who genuinely felt like she should have been born a man with her head up her vagina, somersaulting down a yellow brick road that ended in large-scale exports of liquefied natural gas to Japan— that's how Gerry probably felt about it at least. He stopped staring and began to prepare himself to rip red ribbons off homeless people in the city.

—A T-Rex Tale

Roy Imbroglia was about 12 ft 2 inches tall at his last doctor's appointment, and, at this point in his life, he was probably closer to shrinking than growing any further he thought. Born a Tyrannosaurus but adopted by Sicilian immigrants in Queens, NY, it was Roy's lifelong dream, being tall and growing up in New York City, to play professional basketball, but even when you're 10 ft tall entering high school short arms are still a bitch. Largely unrecruited by D1 programs following his high school graduation, Roy was weary of the politics of the New York City circuits and decided to take his talents outside of the city to The New School of Brody Bronson where Ricky Saudi, a coach known for being adroit with quote-unquote inner city projects, ran the show.

I mean, fuckin growing up Italian, but also being a Tyrannosaurus, it was fuckin tough, Roy said to Ricky as they sat in Saudi's office.

Oh, absolutely!

The kids i grew up wit, they'd never seen a dinosaur eating capicola for lunch, so they test you, you know what I mean? But what the fuck am I gonna do about it, it's how I grew up, you know what I mean?

Roy, I hear you one hundred fuckin percent, I really do. That's why I brought you fuckin in. Guys like you, guys who never really had that fuckin clear-cut identity growing up, you type of guys have unique opportunities to really create your own fuckin archetypes.

You really fuckin think so?

I fuckin motherfuckin know so, Roy. Look at fuckin Dirk Nowitzki.

Fuckin Dirk's my favorite player!

He should be. You two have a lot of similarities.

You really think so?

Yeah. To be absolutely honest with you? I fuckin do.

Saudi paused. ...Roy, do you have any idea how rare you are?

...

I've been fuckin coaching ball for over twenty fuckin years now, you know what I mean? And I can honestly say you're the only Tyrannosaurus Rex I can remember ever having on one of my teams. I never had a T-Rex on any of my rosters, and that's on my fuckin mother!

Wow, coach. To be completely honest with you, I don't even know what the fuck to say.

You ever seen that movie A Bronx Tale? Wit De Niro and Chazz Palminteri.

Coach, you fuckin kidding me? That's my favorite movie of all time!

Mine too. But it's like what De Niro tells C, he says the saddest thing in life—

is fuckin wasted talent!

Exactly! Roy, you have an opportunity to be special. Real special. To be completely fuckin honest with you? I would be absolutely fuckin devastated if, for whatever reason, you happened by chance to fail to use that talent to the best of your fuckin abilities, you know what I mean? I'd be inconsolable!

eventually this conversation concluded and roy then meandered down a newly constructed hallway of the new school of brody bronson in slo-motion, chuckling jubilantly to himself and wearing an ill-fitting sweat suit. at the end of the hall roy attended his first orientation where a professor, slight in stature and white in complexion, by the name of pterodactyl livid lectured a classroom of approximately twelve incoming freshman.

hello all, the middle-aged man began speaking in a diction that accentuated its formality, my name is professor pterodactyl livid, and one thing we take incredibly seriously at this university— is recycling. i really can't stress this enough, recycling is like one of the two or three most important tenets we have as a university. it's our way of doing things. does that mean we're—yes, do you have a question? pterodactyl acknowledged a young man wearing matching sweatpants and socks and sandals and an inquisitive expression with his hand raised.

um yeah. pterodactyl, i was just wondering...what about styrofoam? should i recycle styrofoam in addition to the traditional recyclables? or is that something we throw out here?

excellent question! we do recycle styrofoam, believe it or not. styrofoam is always a question mark though, isn't it?

ricky saudi held a good amount of sway at the new school of brody bronson, but that didn't mean he wasn't between a rock and a hard place at times. he had to make sure a solid product appeared on the floor in order to boost ticket sales and appease the private donors who, circuitously, paid his seven figure salary. but the neo-clergy of the university had its sets of demands as well. all incoming freshman were required to attend rigorous ethics examinations. they would have weekly sit-downs with the school's ethics panels, a group of five self-proclaimed expiration dates: never, now, whenever, the right time, and of old age. if the student-athlete hadn't successfully mated with a date by the end of their first semester they'd be placed on academic probation, and forced to redshirt.

saudi was scheduled for a program prognosis report with the university's director of ethics and a member of the board. he anticipated that imbroglio's progress, on and off the court, would be a particularly hot-button issue.

michael pappadopolis, head of the board of directors for the new school of brody bronson, was muted and occupied on his phone at the

head of the conference room table, while blake brody bronson, director of ethics and founder of the new school of brody bronson, sat at the adjacent head and wore a cape. with elbows on the table and his hands folded between his upper lip and lower nose, brody bronson spoke matter-of-factly to saudi.

listen, i think there are two elements regarding this, what we have to call a conundrum. a) we're a university with ethics, not just some sub-contractor for the student loan industry, and b) i've worked with the particular expiration dates for, literally, years now. and they're great! and they give us a great rate for their services, but they require mating. brody bronson took a deep breath as if he were about to level with saudi, listen. i'm going to level with you here, saudi. i like you ricky. but if we don't allow them to mate, then i can't guarantee we'll continue to get the favorable rate. so that's the problem with roy right now, as i see it.

well, first of all, saudi began, roy is a tyrannosaurus—

ok. so let me stop you there, just for a second, brody bronson interrupted. see, that's the kind of language we really would rather avoid as a university here. there's no because tyrannosaurus with regard to roy that's acceptable, i want to make that clear right now. more than anything, we're an equal opportunity institution. we want your poor, your huddled, your befuddled—they can all mate with our expiration dates, because expiration dates don't see color, culture or creed. that's our motto here.

ok. my sincere apologies dr. bronson. i really didn't mean for it to come off that way, but, well, it was inappropriate nonetheless.

apology accepted, no worries! ☺ now, michael, if you could, i'd love it if you could weigh in here as well. with regard to roy... let's say, hypothetically, roy doesn't want to mate. now, if that's the case, and i'm not saying it is, but if that ends up what happens, some type of punishment needs to be enforced. the thing is, i just don't know if suspension is the best course for roy at this point in his life... i was

thinking, what if we went a little more corporal here. could we try and physically stretch roy's arms out of his sockets a little?

well, saudi replied before pappadapolis could, i think that would hurt roy a lot.

but it could help his nba appeal, pappadapolis interjected, looking up from his phone for the first time. scouts at the next level, they love length.

right, but—

what puts butts in seats, more than even wins, are lottery prospects. so i think blake may be heading in the right direction here

first and foremost, brody bronson began, this is an ethical issue, of course.

yeah, without a doubt. ethics will always come first.

but, in this instance, i think stretching roy's arms out of their sockets is not only probably the most ethical thing for the university, but also advantageous for the basketball program as well.

the program is bigger than any one player, we should always remind ourselves of that, so that we never forget that.

absolutely.

at the urging of brody bronson and pappadapolis, saudi arranged to have roy's arms pulled out of their sockets as a punishment for his unwillingness to mate with an expiration date. the team's physician speculated that, following the procedure, roy's arms would be useless for the next 6-9 months. he'd miss the upcoming season, however, nba scouts were now tripping over themselves for just a peak at a suited up tyrannosaurus with long arms on the sideline. the community was also wet with hope for roy. ticket sales nearly doubled from the new school of brody bronson's previous season and merchandise sales more than quadrupled. as head of the board of directors, michael pappadapolis gave himself a 30% increase in salary, a modest raise given the gargantuan increase in university revenues. his increase in income would be directed toward his political ventures, where he was acted as

the campaign treasurer for the congressional campaign of his childhood friend, donatello rigatone. rigatone would eventually win the seat and immediately propose legislation mandating student-athletes stay in school a minimum of 3 years. rigatone magnanimously promised, if elected for a second term, that he would consider proposing a bill sanctioning some form of student-athlete compensation.

in a 3-piece suit, with his claws hanging lifelessly by his kneecaps, roy looked down at the top of the backboard in the university gym and smiled. his time was coming, he could feel it.

—Baked Ziti Xanax Soda

wearing cufflinks composed of blood diamonds, and with excess neck skin that drizzled between his chin and collar bones, united states congressman mort saucen tapped his pen repeatedly on his desk gently, and equal intervals filled the time between taps. donatello rigatone lounged off-right in a leather chair in mort's state house office with his legs spread eagle. I should've known all of this would eventually collapse on me, mort moaned, maybe this is karma for mooley johnson, i don't know, i just don't know anymore.

it's ok, mort...

fucking victor rodriguez! how could he possibly know vib! is 98% non-latino caucasians?!

donatello shook his head. how much merit does that type of slander even have though?

one hundred percent! saucen exclaimed.

donatello, this is my ass. these are my nuts. nailed to a cross! me! mort saucen! with his nuts nailed to a cross! i need you, donatello. donatello, i need you!

ok, ok. let me think...

think!

what do we have for dirt on rodriguez, anything?

nothing!

donatello paused. he furrowed his brow in deep thought.

ok, ok, what if we were to... manufacture dirt on rodriguez?

ok, i like this!

now... what could derail a good looking, emotionally intelligent, well connected, up-and-coming latino politician?

...

maybe... a... dead girl... found on his lawn

a dead girl... mort scratched his temple, found on his lawn...

a dead... famous... latina...girl... found on his property...

a dead... famous girl... a famous girl. a famous latina... girl. one that no campaign manager could spin off... one that would ruin said latino politician's reputation and forever smear his entire worth as a human being... found on his property

exactly.

donatello, mort stopped mid-sentence and let the idea sink in, i think this has legs.

i do too. now—bear with me here, donatello drew closer to mort's face with each syllable, christina aguilera is performing at the dunkin donuts center this friday night.

genie in a bottle? ...i love that video. my granddaughter loved that video.

exactly.

donatello began to stroke his chin with his thumb and index finger, now... what if we were somehow able to kill christina aguilera and plant her body on the property of victor rodriguez?

mort's eyes lit up.

exactly! but christina aguilera...you're sure she's spanish?

yeah, she's spanish. she's half spanish.

she's half spanish?

i'm almost positive her dad is venezuelan.

because she doesn't look spanish.

her last name is definitely spanish.

ok...so she's at least a part of the latino community. and people, they're still into her, right?

she's definitely slimmed down over the last few years.

ok... i'm just trying to make sure we cross our t's and dot our i's here.

mort picked up a pack of green apple bubblicious gum from his desk and shoved two pieces in mouth. take gut.

i want you to take gut, and use his resources within the city.

gut?! donatello protested, also taking a piece of bubblicious gum from mort's desk.

i need to make sure this goes smoothly. i need to make sure we keep this close to the chest, and that it goes, mort was interrupted by a cough because he choked on his gum briefly. we gotta keep this close to the chest, he pounded his chest and coughed, and run it smoothly. you and gut have your differences, but you'll work well together on this.

donatello shook his head, but kept his thoughts to himself.

mort saucen walked with the posture of a pruned hook because of a condition he contracted in his back back in the '60s, and, due partially to this condition, even among congressmen he stood out due to his delayed movements. unrushed, he'd never physically rush, he'd emerge slowly out of his 2014 leased silver acura sedan and limp morosely into the providence state house three to four times a week.

mort was born on long island in 1941 to a jewish (russian) father and a chilean mother. in 1975, he followed in his father's footsteps and established saucen & associates llc, a mutual fund located on the east side. he marketed the small company of 5 as an asset management firm that employed low risk financial strategies to help the elderly live through their retirements more comfortably, which was very on-trend and fiduciary at the time.

however, unfortunately, after the stock market crash of 1987, saucen's firm was indicted for securities fraud and embezzlement of client funds. shrewdly, saucen decided to turn state's evidence and effortlessly testified against one of the members of his board that the feds happened to have a nut out for— state senator ralph "mooley" johnson. as remuneration for his cooperation, mort received a modest 2 years of administrative probation and no jail time.

so, after the dissolution of his firm saucen just laid low really. he nonchalantly built a temple on the west end and became a fixture in the then non-existent jewish community of the city. between 1988 and

1994, it was estimated that mort converted just under two-thirds of the city's population to judaism, including many recently arrived latino immigrants. in 1995, he hosted mort's incredible temple bonanza 1995 and raised nearly \$800,000 for his church during the first night of the event. by 2000, riding a tidal wave of inner city good will and newly adroit with monotheistic solicitations, mort emerged from his religious slumber and ran for congress—he won by a landslide. he won by a landslide mainly by culling the city's increasingly latino population's vote, and, of course, he did this through a non-profit enterprise he had formed in conjunction with his temple— it was called voting is bueno!. the organization vigorously encouraged hispanics to participate in the democratic process because it was both in their and the country's best interest for them to do so, and that's how mort saucen has endured as a united states congressman more or less.

inside the downtown complex of voting is bueno!, in one of its three corner offices gerry 'gut' waterfall sat in a leather chair and waxed philosophical with his buttcheeks rapidly imprinting themselves through his levi's and onto the leather.

but you can make a million dollars trading corn futures, i don't give a fuck. money isn't everything. i'm a fat fuck, yeah, but i don't give a fuck about it, you know?

a vib! associate that was seated adjacent to gut nodded his head.

i got easily one of the hottest bitches—don't tell her i said bitch—i got one of the hottest bitches within a 50 mile circumference of where we're sitting right here, right now sitting on my dick like a guy with a guy named richard shoved up his ass, you know? it's a matter of conduct, how you treat people.

the associate nodded again, shrugging his shoulders slightly.

you got a lot of guys with fortune 500 jobs, overly complicated job titles, leasing expensive vehicles that still eat dick at life, you know? you gotta hang—true—but you also gotta bang. you gotta hang and bang.

know what i mean? you gotta hang, bang, slang wang. it's whatever really.

gut... donatello said as he knocked on gut's open door.

hey look, it's don quixote, gut chuckled.

could you direct me to an open office.

what are you the new ceo here or something?

no, i'm just helping mort, that's all.

gut led donatello through the vib! offices and explained some important aspects of the non-profit while doing so.

and over here you have a cafeteria where some of us choose to eat from time to time. now, one thing you need to know about spanish people, you have to understand if you wanna succeed here, one thing you have to understand is you gotta speak spanish. if you're literally speaking two different languages, how are you gonna build trust and convince them to do what you want? think about it.

gut punctuated his statement with a quizzical expression, then stopped at a 500 square foot office with a full wall window overseeing most of downtown's financial district. the desk looked like it was possibly made of aluminum, and the ceiling fan gave off the scent of coconuts when it spun.

the other thing you need, he continued, picking up a stapler off the desk, opening it and running his index and middle fingers slowly over the staples, the other thing you need, that we do a good job of employing here, is a spanish person that spanish people trust. you wanna start a spanish church, you need that spanish priest.

ok, that's enough, donatello interrupted, grabbing the stapler from gut's palm, i get it. i'm fucking familiar with the nonprofit sector.

ok, ok, i'm just trying to school you to the game a little, give you a little head start, you know? but i'm sure mort briefed you and shit, you're right.

yeah. what do they serve in the cafeteria here, anything good, or is it all microwavable?

they got stir fry on thursdays that's not bad. chicken and tofu. they rotate week to week. it's hit or miss though. and some of it is i think microwavable shit, high in preservatives and what not.

yeah, i got that feeling walking past it, i'm trying to watch my sodium, you know? donatello said matter-of-factly, now running his fingers over the staples in the stapler, you wanna hit demo demes for dinner tonight?

ah, i would! but i already have plans.

mort and gut sat outside on a busy city street outside demo demes, a popular greek restaurant on the east side and ate and drank and spoke.

aaaaay! gut exclaimed, flagging down a waitress, can you get me whatever he's drinking and i want an order of that souvlaki, too. anyway, yeah, like i was saying, i walk into this kid's bedroom – i say i'll give you the \$1,000, but i want you to watch me wipe my ass with each hundred first!

hahahahahaha

come to find out, this kid, he's taking a shit already, and he just happens to be out of toilet paper! i couldn't believe it! so i made him wipe his ass with two of the hundreds, then gave him the other eight hundred clean though.

hahahahahahaha, that's good stuff, gut, real good stuff, mort bellowed, his smile fading in a socially acceptable time frame as he lifted a gin martini up toward his lips, but let's talk a little business, if you don't mind...

yeah, that's him, the fat guy down there, donatello muttered across his table. he was sitting three tables down from gut and saul dining finely with a female acquaintance.

wait, who? don't be too obvious, but i might know him.

that fat guy over there. the really fat one. he's one of those guys, donatello paused to gather his thought, you don't really know why you

hate him, but you just kind of do—you know? just kind of irritates me, how he's such a fat piece of shit. no regard for other human beings. no regard. i just feel like, i don't know, is it that hard to lay off the trans fat? you know the onus of fat people will eventually fall on us, the taxpayers.

i don't know. he doesn't seem that bad just from looking at him. i've definitely seen fatter people before.

there are a lot of fat people out there nowadays, i know. you're absolutely right. this guy though, he's just a different breed of fat. there's good fat, fat you need, fat you can trust, you know what i'm saying? and then there's just fat fat. fat you can't trust, cancerous fat that just oozes into crucial veins and makes a mess.

wearing wire-rimmed glasses with no prescriptions, gut and donatello wore backstage passes backstage at the christina aguilera concert. gut wiped the sweat from his brow with a stack of bar napkins, then stuck the damp napkins in his back jean pocket.

man, i've done some crazy shit before, but this? fuck.

donatello paused, chewing vigorously on a mixed-drink-straw.

you're not nervous, gut poked at donatello, you're not nervous right now?

fuck no. shit, man.

he flicked the straw from the grip of his jaw.

oh word?

man, if killing christina aguilera is what we need to do to keep our livelihoods intact, then i say so be it.

gut nodded.

even divas have to die sometimes.

death is a part of life.

exactly. now let's go get this shit over with.

christina aguilera sat and texted on her blackberry. she was notorious for demanding complete solitude after her shows, where she meticulously reviewed performance footage and sexted.

gut tippy toed, intestines tied tight, through the half cracked door. immersed in the thread of text, the diva remained unaware as he slipped two dozen crushed xanax in her diet sprite.

um, christina?

oooh! who is it?

hi. i'm sorry. my name is gerry, but you can call me gut.

how did you get in here?!

my friend, victor, victor rodriguez, he's good friends with your bodyguard, jamal, right? i'm sorry, but i'm just such a big fan!

aguilera was puzzled at first, but she had a soft spot for big men and immediately warmed to gut. she took a deep sip of her sprite and invited him to sit down.

ew, this soda tastes extra salty tonight! she giggled, so how long have you been a fan of mine?

donatello held a crow bar seeped in red streaks above his head in a nearby supply closet and was about 3 feet above jamal magloire's forehead. aguilera's bodyguard, who was named jamal magloire, was currently beaten and bloodied and held his walkie talkie in his crushed palm.

say it! say it motherfucker!

magloire clicked the device and radioed to the rest of aguilera's entourage.

magloire here... there's been a change in agenda...

the two corpses were stuffed tightly into the trunk of gut's jet black 2006 mitsubishi galant with the fabric light gray interior and a jar of multi-colored but mono-flavored gumballs in one of the cupholders, and he and donatello drove to the residence of victor rodriguez.

rodriguez's home was located in a lower-middle class section of the city where it was kind of assumed a lot of people spoke spanish as a first language, but only the census people knew for sure. the neighborhood streets were dimly lit and unoccupied.

ok, he's passed out, bring em in! saucen yelled in a whisperly voice as he stood on rodriguez's front porch, but be discreet.

gut grabbed jamal, and donatello grabbed aguilera and they entered the home.

alright listen, you put magloire right, yeah, right over there, and slump christina aguilera in that fucking two seat sofa over, yeah over there.

ok, mort took a deep breath, now here's how it went down. rodriguez invited christina aguilera over, drugged her with xanax thinking, boom, i bone her, in and out, one and done, and then get on with my life. but he gave her too much, she sips the roofie and, fucking bam, heart stops on the sofa. when magloire comes in the room he panics, rodriguez panics, then flips, he grabs a crow bar and beats magloire to death fearing the worst, yeah, donatello, put that crowbar right there, that's good.

then, then rodriguez, realizing what he's done, the situation sinking in completely, he begins to drink the pain away, but unwittingly drinks the very same drink he was going to give aguilera, boom, he passes out, alright? got it?

now, i have a girl next door who's calling 911 in about half an hour saying she heard a disturbance next door, so listen. donatello, i want you to go home, you wash yourself off, then you go pick up gut and you both meet me at my office where we spent the entire night discussing a new marketing plan for voting is bueno!, understood? tomorrow morning this little prick is gonna wake up in a jail cell, and we're gonna wake up and all of our problems, gone, disa-fucking-appeared! mort pumped his fist in the air, which was as energetic as he was going to get at his age.

you still like that fucking sword on the wall, don't you gut? mort said sitting in his desk chair. he, gut and donatello formed an inward facing triangle in his office. he took a deep sip of his bombay dry gin on the rocks, i see you staring at it.

it's aight, gut retorted and took a sip of his miller genuine draft bottle as he sat kind of hunched forward.

you wanna get over to douglas ave and slice people's trash bags with it?

i don't know, i'm kind of tired to be honest with you.

c'mon you pussy! it'll be the least illegal thing we've done all night! mort cackled. tell you what? you take the trip down with me tonight, and i'll give you the fucking thing. donatello, you come along too, it'll be a good time!

gut looked down at his watch and realized that you couldn't argue with mort when he was drunk, yeah whatever. let's do it, he said.

the three men finished their drinks and took mort's 2014 silver acura sedan to the exterior of an establishment known as uncle ben's liquor store on douglas avenue. it had a bunch of steel bars rolled over its front entrance because it was closed.

look at this thing! mort said with glee as he removed the sword from its case on the working class street. it truly is amazing!

with senior citizen forearms, mort swung the blade and cleanly sliced underneath gut's belly button in the shape of a young child's ignorant, yet enthusiastic smile. his intestines rushed to the ground like a herd of rabies-infected shoppers with poor budgeting skills pouring into a discount retailer at midnight on a black friday in 2002. gut choked on his own blood and hawked a red loogie as red tears crept into his eyeballs and his bowels excitedly prepared themselves for release. waterfall collapsed to his knees and fell onto his left side with a harmless little thud. barely breathing and begrudgingly accepting his fate he tried to utter his last words, but the blood that flooded his

throat gurgled any syllables he may have wanted to utter away. he laid there waiting to die and then he did.

that fat fuck tipped off rodriguez to the whole thing, mort said, scowling at the lifeless body as he placed his samurai sword back into its holster. he turned to donatello with a sternness ironed into his expression and continued,

nobody fucks with mort saucen.

it is what it is i suppose, donatello said expressionless. both men matter-of-factly looked down at the sizeable carcass on the pavement and said nothing.

it is. mort turned back towards his acura. but hey, i wanna take you out to dinner before you leave tomorrow night. let's do a happy hour tomorrow?!

demo demes?! donatello giddily suggested as he wrapped himself around the sedan and entered the passenger side with glee. mort threw the sword in the trunk, limped around the side of the car and put the key in the ignition. mort nodded.

the souvlaki there is phenomenal.

—A Brief Memo on the True Nature of Our Species by
Blake Brody Bronson

Dearest of friends, I write this memo sincerely jubilant. I truly am! After years of arduous thoughts— decades of constantly coming to excruciatingly new conclusions— after millions of minutes spent trying to invert my eyes and train my brain to turn itself inside out— I’ve done it! I believe I’ve discovered the true nature of our species once and for all! Now, I know many of you have deemed me to be clinically insane many times before. However, I believe I’ve also provided ample evidence that each of you are equally clinically insane many times before, and I will absolutely forgo naming names with regard to these types of intellectual disputes because it is simply intellectually unethical to do so, however, one particular person’s name in question may or may not rhyme with Timothy Blitz Brama Clotworth. In any case, we’ve been thrust into the situation we’ve been thrust into, and I truly hope there are no hard feelings between us! Now, onto my conclusions— I wish to keep my findings brief as brevity is the crux of profundity’s resonance. And my findings, I assure you, are profound indeed. Since time immemorial, the human species has endured various musings as to what it is. A funny exercise: given that we can only assume, given the assumptions we give our archives, that it was humans who named humans. We discovered ourselves my friends! And in discovering ourselves, we created ourselves! Yes, we discovered ourselves, we named ourselves human beings, kings and queens of intelligence, masters of artifice and rulers of a planet we interpreted into being as much as we conquered into obedience! We named ourselves human beings— Homo Sapiens— and then we fucked ourselves, we killed ourselves, we murdered our families and mutilated our loved ones! And then we pondered our nature. We wondered how we got here. We pondered what it was in our nature, what was our true

nature? Because how could it be that a species capable of creating itself could also destroy itself so easily, so readily, so often! The human animal— the one animal that named itself, also maimed itself? Perhaps, we may ask, is this the true nature of things, of us— that creation and destruction are two sides of the same coin. That our “true nature” is actually readily self-evident, and that the complication of our nature arises wholly from the aspect of our nature that lacks the fortitude, the discipline, the honesty to stomach itself, and therefore absurdly searches for new meaning where there is none!—like the face of a dead president awkwardly, torturously contorting itself to see the back half of the coin he’s embroidered upon, unwilling to acknowledge that the sight itself will deform the entire coin entirely! And all of this is natural! Now, of course, that theory makes no sense. So, what then is the true nature of the human species? Well, let me tell you: this past Saturday I went to Walmart. I parked my car and got out, and as I walked toward the front entrance of the monstrous building, out of the corner of my eye I recognized a vehicle. Could the person who owned that vehicle, possibly a minor acquaintance with a dubious past, be inside the Walmart? Suddenly, as I entered through the automatic doors of the multibillion dollar discount retailer and found no hand baskets available (I was only there to buy coffee and toilet paper) a plethora of morose thoughts flooded my body. It was true! I thought to myself, ashamed of the thoughts I was having as if I had some sort of control of the thoughts I was having—where art thou, Descartes?! I entered and passed the registers, then began to scour the Bath aisle for the \$0.68 four-pack of toilet paper I usually purchase. It was true! Humanity, as a species, was nothing more than a masterful chef sickened by her own dishes! A barren planet made up of barren craters and dusted skeletal matter would be preferable to the torture chamber we continued to call our culture! Even the amoebas maintain higher levels of innocence than us. I found the four-pack of toilet paper. Now, I needed coffee. I was hoping, as I sifted through the seas of white and

brown faces that meandered through the aisles, surreptitiously attempting to avoid the person who I believed owned or leased the vehicle I recognized in the parking lot— I was hoping this Wal-Mart had Folgers 100% Colombian on discount. To my slight dismay, 100% Colombian was out-of-stock completely. I settled upon the Folgers Special Blend. On impulse, I decided to engage in a cursory lap around the store in the event this minor acquaintance was indeed in the store, as the possibly true nature of our species continued to weigh on my mind that could only feel shame at the very thoughts it produced. Now, is it a coincidence that it has been the near unanimous consensus of all of the wisest men, the men who've taken the due diligence to think about life, that they've all come to the same conclusion, more or less? That it is no good! A circus for the murderous!

Initially, I stepped into the 20 Items Or Less line with my two items in hand, furthest from the exit. No sooner was I standing there when a manager approached me and politely informed me that Aisle 4 was wide open. Ok, I thought, this is great. I walked over to Aisle 4 where an older African-American lady was waiting to be checked out by a younger African-American girl, Roe. Roe wasn't doing anything and she leaned across the register towards me, interrupting the stream of thoughts running through my body regarding the homogenous conclusions of mankind's hitherto greatest philosophers and said, "Sorry, I'm waiting for my manager to come over. It'll be a minute." I smiled and assured Roe that it was no problem even though I knew, in fact, that it was her very manager that told me to come to this line under the auspice of a lesser wait time. Regardless! Roe was somewhat fidgety, visibly concerned that the wait would bother the customers in line (at this point, just myself and the lady in front of me). I waited patiently and glanced at the other aisles moving at the speed of business cycles and felt an immutable conclusion that it was all, more or less, pointless. In a vacuum that is. Of course, the rhythm of certain localities give this pointlessness a refrain that makes it catchy enough to

almost seem a cut above pointless: a pointless charisma that winks at itself charismatically. But, net-net, this pointlessness is an undercurrent that produces waves of murderous rages, time after time, like the tide of humanity abutting the bloodied beach of its own nature, no? Whyyyyyy?? I thought to myself as Roe flagged down a manager, only to have that manager inform her that she needed another manager to help her with her register. I made brief eye contact with the lady in front of me and thought the cruelty of this condition—the cruelty that this condition was consistently the result of interpreting the overarching framework of things in our natural geometric-logical framework, into the innate syllogisms of our brains, that all of this had to be some sort of mistake! God or no God, life couldn't possibly be this cruel! I pulled my smartphone out of my pocket and input my entry code. The evolution of technology, I thought, Silicon Valley, Steve Jobs! Twenty years ago a cell phone was a clunk of mass capable of clunkily performing (maybe) one task. Now, it was an ecosystem onto itself! A sleek, all-encompassing device with a plethora of names, a life onto its own... As Roe got a hold of the manager she needed to open her cash register, I realized the mistake of the wisest men. It was a mistake of categorization, a building block that haunted our edifice crooked. The true nature of human beings has been dormant in the fact that, as a species we've been misidentifying ourselves for centuries! How could we, creators of ourselves and culture, be a part of any organic lineage or animal kingdom? Wouldn't we make more sense as an integral component of a technology sector? What we've called human beings, us, are actually—bear with me here—Tech Gods. Think about it: what do “human beings” produce other than other human beings? They (we) create technology! Which we consume and recreate through our interactions (with Technology)—it is our technology that has become organic! The artifice as organism, the FKA human as Creator of Tech— Yes, let the Tech God Bubble begin! Let it be a scientific fact then: what has hitherto been called human beings are

actually Tech Gods of an Eternal Tech Bubble. Therefore, our electronic inventions have been organic creatures, the highest form of which, the smartphone, must be human (*Homo Sapien*). So it is true: the true nature of human beings is to serve Gods irrationally. But human beings, traditionally speaking, are smartphones. And what we are, FKA humans, are Tech Gods. Roe was impressed with my patience as she checked out my items. I shook off the compliment, and exited the Wal-Mart. As I walked to my car I noticed that the vehicle I recognized earlier start up and begin to drive away. I rushed to my car— I couldn't see who was inside! Was it the minor acquaintance I thought it was? I started my car quickly and followed the vehicle that, I can only assume, began this entire sequence of thought out of the Wal-Mart parking lot. The back window of the car was tinted just enough that I couldn't get a solid glimpse inside of the car. I followed it for a few blocks, then the driver, whoever he or she was, took a left that would've been kind of a detour for me. As the light turned yellow I considered following this car further, but then I asked myself a question: "Am I a man, or am I a smartphone?" I stopped at the red light, and let the familiar vehicle turn left. I still couldn't see inside. "Neither," I muttered to myself. "I'm neither."

—Albanian Al

Two Albanian stepbrothers, Al and Willie, sat outside of a Starbucks on a spring afternoon and sipped on sugary, caffeinated drinks at a small table. Known to many simply as Albanian Al, Al was lanky and pale; this afternoon he was adorned in an XXL Wilt Chamberlain Lakers #13 throwback jersey with a white wife-beater underneath; his light brown caesar was lined up in a professional looking doodle every other day. Willie was 3 inches shorter than Al, equally thin but noticeably darker, well-groomed and effeminate with his dark brown hair spiked carefully. He was adopted from Puerto Rican parents a two years after Al was born. Al spoke fairly loudly to his stepbrother as they sat at the yardstick long coffee table.

Yo, on the real though. I'm just sayin it's weird that you got two gay guys, but you're only using the one butthole, nahmean? Al shrugged his shoulders to adjust his jersey. It's just like, nahmean, it's like, if you got TWO buttholes you COULD fuck, why do gay dudes only really use the ONE butthole tho? Just seems like y'all is missing out on mad opportunity, nahmean? It's like, what you're telling me is that, like, what you're saying is, like, you got TWO gay dudes, but only ONE of them likes it in the butthole?!

That IS what I'm saying, Willie replied, he took a deep sip of his mocha latte, but seriously? Ew! Can we stop talking about buttholes please and thank you! You're seriously grossing me out with all this butthole talk this early in the morning.

B, it's 2pm. But that's cool; it's whatever really. I'm just saying, if I was banging two hot bitches, and one of my bitches didn't want it in the butt there'd be problems for real, nahmean?! Al laughed hysterically after he said this.

My shit is straight exit only though!

Al checked his watch and a look of bewilderment appeared on his face.

Damn, it IS 2pm. The fuck is Desada at? I haven't heard from that bitch all day.

Later that afternoon a red-eyed Al was sullenly hanging up his Wilt Chamberlain throwback jersey in the walk-in closet he occupied in his mother's basement when Willie stormed down into the living area they shared.

Alllllbert! Willie embraced his stepbrother and stuck his face in his back. Are you okay?

It was Ukrainian Matt the whole time, Will.

I'm soooooooooo sorry, Albert.

She was my Albanian princess, yo,

Please please please PLEASE don't do anything crazy,

Ayo, i'm about to be selling maufuckas ground beef \$2.99 a pound and shit, Will!

Nooo, please don't sell any ground beef!

This maufucka Matt. This Ukranian piece of SHIT!

Albert! You don't have to be this way!

Al shrugged.

This maufucka crept on my bitch; he engaged my bitch, then he got engaged to my bitch.

Willie sunk his head low. He knew his older stepbrother and best friend well enough to know there was rarely any way of convincing him away from his most primal urges.

Al wore an all-white swim cap with brand new Fila basketball sneakers and a Grant Hill no. 33 Detroit Pistons jersey with the matching breakaway warm-up pants as he walked unopposed into Capriccio's restaurant downtown with a loaded machine gun tucked under his throwback. Matt Molotov instantly recognized Al and surmised his

intentions and grabbed his love interest and fiancée Desada Dushku by her neck and thrust them both under their table-for-two. Almost as soon as Matt shoved himself and Desada under the table Al pulled out a machine gun from under his throwback and allowed a plethora of high-speed bullets to travel into the dining room as he swayed from side to side in a gentle rocking motion.

IT'S ALBANIAN AL, MAUFUCKAS!

After this approximately 90 second outburst, over a dozen patrons, servers, and busboys laid dead or seriously injured on the restaurant carpet.

You literally hit almost everyone BUT me, Al! Molotov shouted from under the table.

This is a crime of passion, Matt! Motherfuck my aim!

Matt raised his head from under the table, and Al clicked the trigger of his machine gun. Then he clicked the trigger of his machine gun again. No bullets emerged.

When is enough enough, Al?!

Al dropped his machine gun, defeated, and and Matt instantly cleansed his body of tension. The restaurant filled with the moans, murmurs and whispers of the survivors still grounded; Matt flashed a smug grin at Al, and said What? with confidence.

Al pulled out a 9 millimeter pistol from the waistband of his breakaway warm-up pants and shot Matt between the eyes.

ENOUGH IS NEVER ENOUGH! Al screamed as Molotov's corpse dropped to the floor. Now suck my motherfuckin dick, Matt! BLAO! BLAO!

Al riddled Matt's face and body with the rest of the clip, continuing to scream BLAO! as he did so.

Desada turned her face away from the scene and buried it deep in the carpet. Al pulled the trigger of the 9 millimeter until the clip was drained of ammunition, then he dropped the second gun to the

ground. He pulled off his breakaway warm-ups in one motion and laid them over Matt Molotov's mutilated corpse.

Aight. Now y'all maufuckas can take me away! Lock me up, b! Al began to walk toward the restaurant entrance.

Whyyyyyyyy?! Desada shrieked.

She looked at the man she used to love walking away in boxer shorts and an NBA replica throwback jersey.

You were my life, b.

YOU'RE INSANE!

Maybe, but you knew me from the start though.

Sirens now sounded in the entrance of the restaurant.

You knew if you ever fucked me that I'd go and make the Earth maufuckin rotate in the other direction and shit, crazy shit like that, b.

—The Global Knowledge Economy

The International House of Pancakes where Donatello and Michael dined at 2:45 am was vigorously windexed almost once a week.

Yeah, it's funny because I could've sworn that these later versions of Microsoft Word let you save documents with colons and semi-colons in the titles, but apparently they don't, Michael said as he took a sizeable bite of his western omelet.

Really? Donatello replied in a surprised tone; he had a stack of six pancakes lying idly, engulfed in syrup, on the plate in front of him.

Yeah, I tried it last night.

You mean like how they used to disallow spaces in the titles?

When was that?

That's why older people still, well, some of them still use underscores in their titles and email addresses. It was way back in the day; you literally couldn't put spaces in the titles. you needed to use underscores to separate the words.

Wow, I don't know if I believe you.

Believe me about what?

The spaces thing.

You think I'm lying about it?

I don't know, I think you might be.

I'm definitely not lying about it, but I suppose I could be remembering it incorrectly.

I guess we'll never know.

Honestly, we probably won't.

Wou know what?

What?

What we need—

What?

To win this election—

Wh—

We need to stop thinking in terms of traditional politics and start thinking in terms of the Global Knowledge Economy.

What's the Global Knowledge Economy?

It's on Facebook. It's what Facebook is creating.

Oh.

Yeah, by connecting all of the people in the world, and their respective personal interests, Zuckerberg is creating a Global Knowledge Economy.

That's interesting. What does it have to do with my campaign though?

We hack it.

We hack it?

We hack it. We hack the Global Knowledge Economy. Think about it: if the demographics are graphed out, then all we need to do is steal the graphs. know what I mean?

I think so. I'm just a little fuzzy on this Global Knowledge Economy.

I know a guy who's more or less a professional hacker; I'll talk to him tomorrow, see if we can make moves on this thing sooner than later.

So we hack the demographics. and then what?

Well, once we have the demographics, then we can start to meld our message onto the demographics.

Interesting. Do you think we'll get any blowback from Zuckerberg?

Man, don't worry about Zuckerberg. He's too busy trying to expand his Global Knowledge Economy.

Ok, well it sounds like this thing has some serious potential. I'm just wondering—

What is it?

Well, I'm wondering, because I'm, more or less, well, I'm running unopposed in this election.

Yeah, go on.

Well, do you really think we need to hack this Global Knowledge Economy? Is it an essential function, is what I'm asking.

I don't know. Do you want win? Or do you want to win big?

Well—

Because I think we need to make a statement.

Yeah—

I'd just love to come out like BLAO!—this is the campaign of Donatello Rigatone, and we're all up in Congress's shit!

Right.

That's me though. To me, to ME, you're a first-term Congressman—let's make a splash.

Ok, I get that. I get that. Like I said, I think it has some legs. It could be good.

You seemed a little hesitant there though for a second.

Well, you know what I was saying.

Yeah, you were being cautious, because we do need to be economical.

Exactly, let's be economical about this thing, but let's do it big, too.

Exactly. We can't have it both ways, but let's see what happens.

See? We're on the same page.

Exactly. The guy's name is Tom Zuckerberg. No relation to Mark.

Now, who's he?

He's the guy who'll hack into the Global Knowledge Economy and snatch us the demographs.

Ok.

There was a very long pause.

Have you ever, like, you know—do you have a secret, it's like deep and dark and stuff, and you kind of just like carry it with you but nobody knows about it?

Like, you're gay?

No. Like something even bigger than if you were secretly gay.

Like what?

Like art.

Art?

Yeah, man. Art.

No, I don't think I carry anything like that around with me.

I fucking hate art.

Your secrets won't get you anywhere. The ones we never share are just in our heads, that's all.

—The Immaculate Tube

The tube was immaculate. It was like liquid yet cavernous at the same time somehow. Some of them called it invisible rain, the way it fell on the entire planet at once, unceasing, but that was simplifying it too much. This tube was something that needed a new category. This tube was flexible, but it sucked people in something carnivorous. Best of all, this tube was equal opportunity in nature; the first time in human history all of us had equal access to a tube of this quality. It used to be, like, only those born into it, or those plucked from the slums on a roulette wheel could get through a tube like this. But here it is. Look at it. Omnipresent and beautiful.

But who put it here? Was it aliens?

No, even better.

Better?

Yeah, I met the boy who created the tube. I met him back in '05 when the tube was still like a catheter-ominous—the expansion was palpable back then. I shook his hand and looked into his eyes that had clearly, to that point, just been pissholes too cavernous for the Iviest League catheters, you know? He told me about his plan for continual tube expansion, but all I could see was this tube. This tube was immaculate. It extended in all directions and didn't carry fluid, but, by its very nature, created all sorts of fluid itself! It was like a catheter-penis. I knew business people of all walks would be drooling at the opportunity to harness this tube, but the boy would have none of it. All he ever talked about was tube expansion. How the tube would be free for everyone, and everyone would always have equal access to it always. I remember thinking to myself My god, this tube would be a great outlet for my Roots-styled rap band to utilize. I really felt like, with this tube, we could flesh out our fan-base like never before.

Yeah! I felt the same way about it when I considered my blog where I pseudonymously share my daily views on the financial markets, but also share some of my thoughts on philosophy and broader culture as well. It seems like the tube is ideal for so much, you know?

Right. Now, of course, as we all age we change. and what we produce is changed as we change; hunger maybe dissipates, or gets replaced with a different form of hunger, and the former can no longer be faked. Our needs as people, they shift and so do our priorities and people around us can sometimes struggle with these shifts (and vice versa). It hurts when people no longer produce in the same way they used to produce because of these inevitable shifts in need and priority. By nature, these shifts cause rifts, the rifts that come with the cemented expectations that, more or less, define our cognitive selves. But what struck me about the pissholes that were the boy's eyes was that there were no shifts. His eyes were simply simulacra of the tube (or vice versa).

This tube is immaculate. Speak into it! It gives us all voices we've never had before, the chance for resonance that used to sell at such a high premium is now attainable at an inordinately steep discount.

Yes, yes. We all now have an opportunity to resonate equally.

Equal resonance under the glorious hue of the boy that created the tube—

With his eyes, pissholes of the infinite; unshifting and obedient to continual expansion of the tube—

The sky is the limit for my band and for your blog now. This tube is immaculate. It's cavernous, yet free-formed and open. It morphs to my needs as I shape it into the whim of my desires. It becomes me, and I it. My comments are posted in the tube with endless possibilities to be read and misinterpreted; to be added to the mass of knowledge and analytics our species accumulates. This beautiful tube of distribution, crafted from the finest algorithms yet known to man. It fascinates me

endlessly. Within hours my eyes become pissholes of the infinite and what I produce assimilates into the tube as I disappear completely—

Into the infinite pissholes you call your eyes, exactly! See, this is exactly why I'm willing to pay a premium to get exposure to the tube sector right now. This tube truly is fascinating. There are ample opportunities to monetize the pissholes as well—while keeping the tube completely free, of course.

Exactly! This tube is immaculate; I've never seen anything like it. Wait, monetize?!

Exactly! That's why I'm willing to pay a premium to get exposure to this tube. This tube is immaculate. I've been speaking with the boy and a few of his peers within the sector, and I really am starting to believe there's an ample amount of unmet demand, not only for the tube, but also for the pissholes. Now, what if I told you I could potentially securitize a basket of pissholes associated with the tube, and then sell them to you at just a slight premium to my cost? Is that something you would be interested in?

Hmmm, possibly. I don't know.

Well, I only mention it because I'm thinking, from a capital appreciation standpoint, you could use the profits from the securitized pissholes to purchase pissholes to watch your band's newest tube videos.

Interesting. I never thought of using the tube like that.

I figured you hadn't. But, again, I can't stress this enough—and this comes directly from the boy, not me!—the tube will always be free.

—The MBA Draft

It was mid-2011 and Pappadapolis, Molitov, and Rigatone walked down a newly constructed hallway of the New School of Brody Bronson in slo-motion and chuckled to each other while carrying disheveled notebooks in business casual attire. Those are three of the finest business students I've ever fuckin come across, United States Congressman Mort Saucen, who was also a businessman himself, said to Blake Brody Bronson as they looked down upon the three young men from a dimly lit conference room above the hallway. Brody Bronson founded the school back in '85 and Saucen, a power broker and United States Congressman, served as head of the board of directors for the university as it continued its steady growth from a fringe post-secondary school option into a legitimately scaled student loan generator. I think these three are going to make us millions, Brody Bronson said as he crossed his arms over his black Puma track jacket with the lime green trim. I think these three are going to make us BILLIONS! Saucen retorted as he placed his brittle hands into his cavernous khaki pockets. Saucen was chewing on two pieces of watermelon Bubblicious, and this made a considerable amount of noise, but Brody Bronson didn't mind because his mind was occupied with the money he truly believed three of the finest business students he'd ever trained were set to earn him.

As Pappadapolis, Molitov, and Rigatone began to reanimate at normal human speeds, exiting the university hallway into the sun-soaked concrete of a university parking lot, Matt Molitov noted his dinner plans with a young female that he believed was possibly developing feelings for; he informed Pappadapolis or Rigatone that he wouldn't be around that afternoon.

What's her name again? Pappadapolis asked.

Desada, Molitov said. She's Albanian, and her whole body smells like baby oil; I love it.

That's that shit, Pappadapolis said ebullient. Is it slippery like baby oil, too? to which Molitov replied Yeah, sometimes.

Ultimately, Pappadapolis and Rigatone knew the feeling, didn't hold a grudge against Molitov for bailing, and wished him luck in his endeavors—then they retired to Rigatone's parents' basement, where they unwound and prepared for graduation.

It's like when you think about it—THAT'S what's wrong with this country, Pappadapolis said on Rigatone's parents' loveseat in the finished basement.

The tax code needs to be simplified, Rigatone retorted sitting on his parents' adjacent loveseat in the finished basement.

Because right now it's ridiculous, Pappadapolis said.

How's your consulting LLC going by the way?

Great. Really great. I think my uncle's buddy is definitely going to be interested in my services, but anyway the problem with the tax code is its blatantly obvious indebtedness to Keynesian economics, Pappadapolis said as he began to gently rub his crotch on the loveseat.

Have you read Hayek?

Obviously. I have three of his articles on my Kindle Fire as we speak.

Within the natural stream of conversation, Rigatone slowly unzipped his Levi's.

That guy was genius. So on point in nearly every regard.

Yeah, he was third cousins with Wittgenstein. Just saying.

It's just like, it's unbelievable these days. Did you know that having unprotected sex with multiple partners can increase your chances of contracting herpes?

That's absurd! THAT'S what's wrong with this country! Pappadapolis replied, slowly unzipping his gray dockers.

In addition, Rigatone continued, we have a debt burden—you don't mind, do you? he asked Pappadapolis as he pulled his penis through the unzipped zipper of his Levi's.

No, no, no, no, no, not at all! Pappadapolis replied.

We have a completely unsustainable burden of debt in this country that our generation is going to carry—and don't even get me started on our culture's collective intellectual impotence! Do kids even still read?

Seriously. Me and you. We READ during our formative years. Seriously. it's about having a classical background. That's why i think, not to sound cocky or anything, but i think we're a little ahead of the curve so to speak, compared to our peers.

My best friend during my junior year of high school was the cliff notes to the Iliad—you don't mind, right? Pappadapolis asked as he yanked his penis through the unzipped zipper of his gray dockers.

No, not at all, go ahead! Rigatoned replied as he continued to stroke his nearly erect penis slowly with his legs spread on the adjacent loveseat.

Eventually, he continued, all of this is going to come crashing down. Politics precedes being.

Look at the S&P 500! Is this a bull market because of economic fundamentals or because of profligate money printing?!

Ohhhhh yeah! he exclaimed in ecstasy. Nobody understands though. the impending collapse of fiat currencies due to immoral amounts of, ahhhh, student loan debt!

And Obama has ALL the answers, Rigatone, stroking his penis, switching hands every three strokes, through his levi's, nearing full erection himself, replied sarcastically.

Obama isn't going to solve anything, and, quite frankly, the Republican party has strayed so far from their economically conservative roots, and so far into religious extremism, I don't know if they are either.

Speaking of... he digressed, giving his penis an extra vigorous pump with his off-hand cupping his testicles, have you seen what's going on with obamacare?!

Have I?! he replied, stroking his penis more fervently with each palm-thrust, it never ends!

The economic principles behind Obamacare are simply absurd.

Fuuuuuuuuuck. Rising healthcare costs— the proletariat— costs need to reflect expenses!

Uuuuhhhhhhhhhh, the death of the modern novel and an enduring problem of underemployment mixed with a perpetual low interest rate environment that cripples savers will act as economic shackles on our generation for decades to come!

FUUUUCK YEAH! You HAVE to own gold in this environment!

HARD, physical, FUCKING gold. I'm going to own so much fucking gold it's ridiculous!

Soooooo much fucking gold!

AND SILVER!

And platinum! Precious metals are my favorite sector going into 2012!

Oh god, I think I'm going to—

I think I'm—

Is it ok if I—

Do you mind if I—

UHHHHHHHHHHHH!

AHHHHHHHHHH!

Ohhhhhhhhhh.

Uhhhhhhhhh.

Pappadapolis and Rigatone ejaculated simultaneously on the adjacent love seats.

Then they drove in separate cars to a local coffee shop to digress. At the coffee shop, a homely cashier with white and brown stains visible on her green apron looked across the counter at Pappadapolis as

she made his green tea with extra antioxidants and said Would you like any soda with your order today? We have a 2-for-1 deal on 20 oz. bottles of diet sprite today!

Oh no, Pappadapolis snickered, the only COLAs I'm interested in these days are Cost Of Living Adjustments, to which Rigatone cackled in a vigorous fashion.

You know what we should do? he said turning back to Rigatone, still laughing behind him.

Wait, are you thinking what I'm thinking? he said.

A consulting LLP? Pappadapolis asked rhetorically.

Yes!

I feel like people would pay for our advice, no?

They definitely would. I think your ideas are pretty groundbreaking personally.

And I think your analyses are superb.

Do you want to drink these here? Or...

Whatever, because I can do either.

Um, hold on, Rigatone turned to the cashier, can I have a mocha latte with green tea instead of espresso? And, um, can I have two teaspoons of fat free sugar with that too?

Yeah, my uncle's really good friend has established like 8 or 9 LLPs in his life, Pappadapolis said, so he can definitely help us figure this thing out.

Perfect, Rigatone nodded. He unzipped his pants, pulled out his penis and, turning again toward the cashier, said Do you mind?