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compiled by /u/dream-hunter

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Best Regards,

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July 15, 2022

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“All vaginas are the same size~!!11” and the Unequal Nature of Equality

April 6, 2015 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Men are universally able to separate all female acquaintances into two categories: women we want to fuck, and the rest.

The more of a beta-doofus you are the more likely it is that you want to fuck everyone you know, but for any man with a shred of dignity there will typically be a line drawn between potential fucks and “the rest.”

A female not being on our literal “to do” list doesn’t mean we want them to fall off the face of the planet or die in a fire, and it certainly doesn’t mean we wouldn’t lend a hand if they were falling off a cliff- *it quite literally means that we don’t want to have sex with them*. And it is this distinguishing detail that opens up the rather new, from a generational standpoint, possibility of becoming *just friends* with a woman.

“None of these girls want to be your girlfriend...”

It’s twenty years later and I still remember the uncomfortable feeling my Dad’s blunt assessment produced.

I had just gotten off the phone with *my friend* Christine (or was it Laura?)- a multi-hour gab session about music, high school, TV, and love interests (girls I liked from afar, boys she had been fooling around with).

My Father sat me down for a heart-to-heart; “They just want attention from you but *they don’t want to date you...*”

It struck a nerve for sure, but my teenaged self didn’t pay much attention to my father’s *old timey* advice. Sure, maybe that’s how *his generation* was with girls... but this was the punk rock, *social equality* generation! Boys and girls could be friends, share traditional gender roles equally, and respect one another fully!

So take that DAD- back in your box you go, and take your attempt at giving time-tested advice to your teenaged son, who sorely needed it, with you!

To understand how it was possible that my sixteen-year-old self had his head buried so deeply up his asshole, we need to look at how boys and girls are raised.

While boys and girls each hear the same message of *equality*, it is interpreted in two completely different ways, and these separate interpretations create the foundation for the social programming men and women operate on for the duration of their plugged-in lives.

When boys are taught equality *they are made to understand that boys and men are not inherently*

better, more skilled, or more capable than women.

Equality means that when your Grandfather demanded a male doctor *you rolled your eyes*; or when your Dad questioned why you bothered maintaining female friendships, you wondered why *he didn't get it*.

Boys are taught equality with a diminutive undercurrent; *they are to know their place and stay there*.

Girls are taught equality with the *omnipresent fallacy that female oppression dominated most of history* – it's a goof, it's a lie, it's a power grab- and most importantly it is the basis for the biased approach to how girls are taught equality.

If the idea is prevalent that females were oppressed until ~~the early twentieth century the bra-burning 1960s the girl-power 1990s the social-justice 2000s~~ *now forever*, little girls are able to be granted full access to entitled chauvinism.

You'd never see a little boy running around in a "Boys rule" t-shirt; the idea seems fucking absurd.

So if little girls are raised to be permissibly chauvinistic; that equality means "YES YOU CAN" (and if you can't, *don't worry*, everyone will help you along anyway); that all women are inherently as-capable as the most capable of men...

How are these little girls being raised to view men?

—

It couldn't have been more than ten years ago when Christine and I- yes, the same Christine, decided to split a bottle of Jack Daniels and shoot the breeze.

We had a lot to catch up on, a few years out from graduating college, and finally pursuing our "real lives."

There weren't any sexual intentions... gone was High School's wistful hoping that maybe something would develop between us...

We were definite chums and Christine had settled quite comfortably into the "and the rest" category; I saw her as a friend who was equal to the rest of my doofus male friends at that time.

So as the night progressed we decided to have the kind of conversation that a man and woman can only engage in if they *aren't* involved with one another: Intergender Real Talk about Sex...

And, of course, PENIS SIZE COMES UP HARD AND FAST and Christine is first to share her thoughts...

"It matters... Girls who say it doesn't matter, they're lying... of course it matters, *but it isn't everything*, you know?"

Translation: *"It matters at my discretion."*

If an interested man is Alpha-enough or a beta-man is wealthy enough... she can swallow the vomit she choked-up in her mouth at the suggestion of sticking his pathetic wang in her golden-vagina long enough for him to cum.

I remember finding this interesting and saying something like, "Guys are too hung up on penis size anyway... If a guy feels insecure over his dick size he can date a shorter, smaller girl, who has a smaller vagina!"

The conversation halted dead in its tracks. Her eyes sunk-in, her hair askew, her breath reeking of

cheap whiskey; she angrily retorts: “**All vaginas are the same size!**”

This didn’t quite jive with me. Nothing about girls’ bodies were uniform: their hands and feet were all different sizes; they had different sized breasts and hips; bone structure and muscle density- all different! Why *wouldn’t* girls have different sized vaginas?!

Now try to imagine if I had suggested that “all men have the same sized wankers,” like, you know, it’s been smoke and mirrors this whole time. I would have been laughed out of the fucking building! So I kept my mouth shut... I saw the rage in her blood-shot eyes.

If this scenario had played out in modern times, you might even say she was *ragey*. Maybe she would have posted to Tumblr about it. But the sentiment would have been the same... the sentiment is always the same...

Christine viewed me as a beta-male, and as a beta-male I was not permitted to have any unapproved opinions— and these opinions must be approved by all women at all times.

Yes, someone opinions are irrelevant to this new breed of female- like whether I prefer bologna or salami, what sports teams I like, or what video games I want to play... but when it comes to sex, gender, women, or politics a beta-male’s opinions are to be strictly monitored and controlled by any and all women. Dissent is cause for furious anger or immediate disposal.

Men and women can’t be friends in the way men understand friendship- the free and honest expression of ideas with mutual respect and tolerance for conflict because men and women were never raised to be equal.

After everything, my Dad was right on the money with what he had told me when I was in High School, wasting countless hours gossiping on the phone with these girls, only I didn’t fully understand what he meant at the time; **not only did these girls not want to be my girlfriend, *they didn’t respect me.***

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Sally Rapehoax and Fake Rape

May 22, 2015 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

It was third period lunch- a bit early in the day, yes, but if that's when you were given a lunch period, you were kind of fucked. So it's 10:15am and I'm dipping french fries in mayonnaise, because that was "so European," sitting with my friend Sally Rapehoax.

Sally was a boring and plain kind of girl, but in High School sometimes you're stuck with the people you befriend in ninth grade. Fine, whatever, but my jaw dropped when Sally casually mentioned, "yeah, I've been raped before," almost as if she's telling me about her homework, or her favorite Nirvana song, or how profoundly connected she felt to "The Craft." It all seemed the same to Sally, but my world slowed down just a bit...

My mind began racing. This was horrible. She was confessing something deeply personal to me- maybe she was reaching out to me, maybe she needed my help. I felt paralyzed with anxiety, a low-level panic attack; after all, this was the most intense, real world situation my sixteen-year-old self had ever encountered.

Life had stopped being polite; life was getting real.

And then Sally casually mentioned the second time she was raped; different person, different situation... and then the third, and I was flooded with an immediate sense of relief: **Sally Rapehoax was full of shit.**

So by the time I was twenty-two, sitting at a diner while smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee, I was unfazed when Amanda Rapehoax casually mentioned her rape... and not to be outdone, Jennifer Rapehoax enthusiastically chimed in, "oh, I was raped too!"

In the late-1990s, before rape accusations were able to "go viral," the *casual rape confession* was the equivalent of hashtags, and status updates, and media grandstanding.

But why might a girl lie about being raped? I mean, I wouldn't lie about getting beaten up or having my car stolen. Why lie about being the victim of a crime?

- **Claiming rape gives a girl immediate evidence for her unwitting ability to sexually attract and charm a man.** Every girl wants to appear sexy and convince those around her of her sexually credibility, and claiming rape implies that she was so incredibly desirable that a man was driven mad by lust and insatiability over her sexual presence. He was so overwhelmed that he was willing to commit a crime just to have her.
- **Claiming rape gives a girl immediate depth and life-experience.** Think she's just an empty headed dolt, watching "Dawson's Creek," and re-writing her name a thousand times over in cursive? Guess again, asshole.
- **Claiming rape gives a girl an undeniable victim status.** As a victim her shortcomings can be over-looked, her emotional breakdowns now have gravitas and meaning, and her

accomplishments can be magnified and endlessly applauded.

And the thing about Fake Rape is... it's socially despicable to cast doubt upon the accusation, and the accuser is aware of this.

So when you have college student Emma Sulkowicz dragging around a mattress that she bought on the Internet as a self-professed *art project*, even after being outed as a liar, the media will still label her a victim and a survivor— despite the stunt serving as an obvious career move for Sulkowicz, majoring in “professional victim.”

The use of Fake Rape by Sulkowicz to gain publicity, following the Rolling Stone scandal and Lena Dunham’s clumsy blubbing (Dunham, a Fake Rape expert, has offered support to Sulkowicz), consequently pushed the public rape accusation past the reaction threshold of detrimental insanity.

The rape accusation thrives on the empathy of a public-identity defined by the protection of victims, and the Fake Rape accuser takes advantage of that identity to the extent where it will be impossible to extend someone blind protection in the face of a accusation.

Shots were fired in the first pubic display of animosity toward Fake Rape; a rebel art project outing Sulkowicz (and Dunham) as liars... No longer is Fake Rape only decried on anonymous Internet message boards and in hushed whispers; Fake Rape is making it’s way into the forefront of public consciousness.

As public grandstanding becomes the norm for rape accusations... as the accused are outed before an investigation into the legitimacy of the claim, as young men’s lives are ruined even after the truth emerges, as the importance of the narrative supersedes factual reality... the bubble is going to burst, and when it does, reaction to all rape accusations will be scorn and disbelief- and the true victims of rape will suffer.

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Casey Anthony and Cocoa Puffs

August 10, 2015 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Casey Anthony epitomized something that I couldn't quite put my finger on as I sat on my couch, eating Cocoa Puffs and smoking a bong, watching the coverage of her trial during a comfortably warm evening in the Summer of 2011.

There was something missing from my life at the time... I wasn't conscious of it, but felt its weight all the same. It wasn't that I was *unhappy*, I was certainly comfortable; I had a passionless career with the faux-achievement of a master's degree, I had a fat girlfriend who was *a crazy bitch* but *I loved her anyway*, and I spent my free time *feeling good*... after all, life was about maximizing consumption while sleep-walking through minimal responsibility. The idea of ambition beyond this baseline, or the contribution of value to a community, were equally foreign and laughable to me.

But even still... alternating between video games, television, pornography, processed food, whimpering oxytocin, and marijuana left a fuzzy feeling on my brain that something wasn't quite right, but I wasn't quite ready to see it yet...

Casey's story would never have worked as a piece of fiction, it wouldn't have been believable. A pretty brunette gets knocked-up by a stranger on the Florida house party circuit and decides to keep the baby... and ends up missing the party lifestyle so much that she murders her own two-and-a-half year-old daughter to hit-up the party scene even harder than before.

A true story of dopamine addiction gone mad.

And as if to drive it into the realm of the surreal, in the month before her arrest she was so thrilled she had gotten away with the murder of her child that she got a tattoo to commemorate it.



A mother killing her child wasn't something new- Andrea Yates carefully drowned each of her five children in a bathtub (and was acquitted by reason of insanity)- but what struck a chord was the frivolity of Casey's motive.

Casey couldn't give up the decisively post-modern *college girl lifestyle* of bingeing on drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity to the point where she murdered her own daughter when faced with motherly responsibility.

She **killed to party**.

The media coverage would have tried to convince you that Casey was an anomaly worthy of social crucifixion, that her story may have been filled with *sound and fury* but it ultimately *signified nothing*; Casey was merely a *bad apple*.

But what if Casey Anthony exemplified the first fully-realized post-modern woman; a woman so determined to *break the shackles* of civic duty, gender rigidity, and social expectation that she *violently rebelled* against the system... Yes, there was blood, but this is rebellion; this was a *Feminist statement*, and in ten-years young girls may look back at the *courageous* Casey Anthony as a forerunner of *after-birth abortion* (toddlercide?)... after all, she didn't *feel* like being a mother anymore so she *changed her mind*; she *wasn't happy*.

Casey Anthony's story is symptomatic of a broken society. A culture which has cast aside duty and responsibility, replacing it with petty pleasure and obsessive narcissism. Individual experience over collective prosperity. And even if the average woman isn't going to murder a child to preserve her college girl lifestyle, certainly meaning has been lost in a culture that only teaches consumption.

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Primer (2004) and Masculine Identity

December 5, 2015 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Part of the beauty of Shane Carruth's Primer lies in its alienating density. Carruth doesn't care if you don't get it; nothing about Primer is inviting or accessible. You will not understand Primer the first time through, repeated viewings are necessary. Even with a timeline walk through, Primer is conceptually intimidating.

Unlike most films, the thematic of Primer are hiding in plain sight. The challenge of Primer is following the details of the plot.

When I sat down to watch Primer again with the idea in mind of writing about it, I decided to ignore the time-travel elements. Chuck Klosterman had already written an excellent essay on Primer's time-travel and I'm unsure if there's anything left to be said on the topic.

So, this time around, I pushed through the fantastically constructed physics and focused the characters.

I was shocked to find an entirely new movie emerge.

If you haven't seen Primer, it's the story of two engineers who unwittingly invent a working time machine. Overnight they go from middle class anonymity to being the most powerful and historically-significant humans of all time. Immediately our protagonists put aside the relatively modest achievement of public recognition through publication and concentrate on something more basic: using their invention to produce infinite wealth.

Theoretically, Primer could end there. What is there to want beyond infinite wealth?

It was only upon this recent viewing that something which felt urgent became apparent: Abe and Aaron never physically see any of the phantom money they acquire as bits of data attached to their names, nor do they enjoy the benefits.

You'd think it would only take a day or two of day trading to accumulate enough money to be sitting on a yacht in the south pacific with six dozen sorority girls, yet instead Abe and Aaron dwell in the life they're accustomed to- sitting on a dingy couch in suburban Texas and drinking cheap beer. Almost as if there was something too easy about using the Biff Tannen blueprint from Back to the Future 2.

If wealth can be understood as a barometer for power, their time machine trumps wealth as a means of holding power.

The time machine sets Aaron and Abe apart from every other person who has ever existed; the time machine represents an evolution, their very own shrieking monolith. Even if wealth is the first place the mind goes upon the suggestion of time travel, there is something that feels plebeian about such a modest goal.

Overnight Abe and Aaron manage to enter the realm the omnipotent... or so they think.

When Abe wonders what to do with life as a bored billionaire, Aaron suggests assaulting a former business partner who got one over on them.... thus bringing them back to Earth. Abe and Aaron aren't Gods after all, they only happened to stumble upon acquiring the power of one.

But what did we learn about desire? Identity trumps all else.

Wealth is pedestrian when you have a time machine which allows for infinite possibility.

Aaron doesn't get around to throwing fists with his ex-business partner, but instead sets his sights on a different goal entirely. Over the course of the few days which the events of Primer take place, Aaron attends a birthday party where a man rushes in with a shotgun and threatens a girl.

Aaron sees the party as an opportunity to look heroic- to bravely disarm a gunman and save a woman's life. This becomes Aaron's sole ambition for using the time-machine; a moment of Alpha male adulation for enacting our highest social priority- saving a woman, and more impressively, risking his life to do so.

Aaron's highest priority isn't wealth or comfort, or even sex, it's the rush of possessing an authentic masculine identity and the social respect which comes as part of the package.

This places the value of having a genuine masculine identity above possessing wealth. Would you rather be the bartender with an easy sense of confidence or the insecure, weakling millionaire?

Although Aaron first suggests asserting his masculinity through street-justice, getting revenge on his former business partner, the prospect of white knightng for a woman takes its place.

Beta-male Aaron believes that embodying the White Knight is the end-game of authentic masculinity and the foundation for male-identity.

Masculinity has become a demonized lost-art and a dirty word, yet its necessity remains. Men understand the value in cultivating a positive male-identity, but the methodology of building that identity has become esoteric. Men will search endlessly for guidance, for advice that works, and for a foundation to understand why some men happily succeed while others fail by merely doing what they thought was right.

It comes as no surprise that my blog dissecting the foundation of masculinity is my most read; men are desperate for guidance.

Aaron begins the Primer timeline as a highly-intelligent engineer with a family, ends up acquiring the power of a God, and is still most drawn to the good-feelings associated with having a masculine-identity. When everything becomes available to Aaron, he gravitates toward developing this identity in favor of infinite wealth or women.

However, Aaron's self-image as man has become so diminished that his deepest desire- this revealed inadequacy- is the public recognition of masculinity, and chasing this wish tears Aaron's life apart.

Now don't let anyone tell you that Primer is about time-travel.

Haven't seen Primer? It's fucking beautiful. Buy the HD digital copy at the official website.

Totally confused by Primer? I am too, every single time I watch it... it's part of the fun; check out this absolutely fantastic fanmade audio commentary track.

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Single Jewish Women

January 9, 2016 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Even if the dire unavailability of parking in Jeanette's neighborhood had made the task of meeting her at her apartment for sex seem daunting, only minimally rewarding, I always had a thing for girls who looked like the nerdy Chipette and this fact added a feeling of urgency to a situation marred with inevitable difficulty.

Parking matters; inadequate parking is as off-putting as a bridge or a toll, and I distinctly remember cursing the wind on an early August morning in 2006, drunk out of my skull, taking the parkway home because I was forced by law to relinquish my hard-fought spot, as per alternate side rules, and couldn't find a new one anywhere.

How would I have explained this to a dutiful officer of the law? Would he have been kind enough to understand the inadequacies of parking in that god forsaken, asshole neighborhood?

Luckily my intoxicated journey home was cunningly executed without police intervention, but the scars remained, and while I would have thought that no amount of implied sex was worth dealing with this asshole neighborhood again, she looked like the godamn chipmunk, so I felt compelled to piss in the wind and live out every Saturday morning fantasy I had clumsily composed in 1986.

Parking wasn't as arduous as imagined, and when I got to her apartment, I had immediately picked up on her game; she bamboozled me.

She met me at the door and suggested we get dinner. Yeah, that's cute. It was only twelve hours before that I had the chipmunk squealing like a pig over the phone. Phone sex is a lost art.

"You simply must come over and watch the fireworks." It was the forth of July. People would be out in the country having the kind of picnics that you only read about in books. Maybe at public parks with rusty, foil-covered grills.

If there was ever a time to find parking, this was it.

But it was a serious case of bamboozlement. I declined the dinner suggestion, which was certainly the correct course of action. You don't negotiate with a terrorist.

I should have found a way out then, really, but the perceived effort in parking lent a contrived gravitas to the situation. Even still, staying was the wrong move to make.

We go for drinks. I pay. She wants this to be transactional; I concede. What a shit reality we're left with when gender interaction is so adversarial. Pay for pussy. No price posted. How are your negotiating skills? Put in a bid and pay what you feel.

One drink.

Rejected. She wants a table. She wants dinner. I just have to try their Yoshi Tatsu spring rolls, she says. An appetizer, of course. Her drinks keep coming. Hayabusa's Exploding Anus for dessert.

When the bills comes I have her pay for what she ordered.

She's shocked. She's livid. She's having a low-key, passive aggressive fit.

Her attempt at a sexual bait-and-switch had failed. Turns out her pussy wasn't worth a hundred dollar tab at the Samurai King. Back to reality. Maybe next time I'll be invited up, she says through her teeth. Pulling a bait-and-switch didn't make the evening worth my time, really, but it still was

gratifying.

Single Jewish Women. Not a big deal, but I should have known. Domineering and aggressive. An inflated sense of self. Procedural. *Transactional*.

When I kept seeing the letters “SJW” pop-up all over the internet, I thought I had gotten the joke. I mean, I didn’t think it was such a thing, *Single Jewish Women*, but the internet seemed quite taken by it.

And when it got to the point where everyone was shitting on lonely Jewish women, I had to look it up.

Oh.

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The Cool Girl and the White Knight: Sexual Strategy and Identity

February 16, 2016 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Those other girls aren’t *real*.”

Christine went to great lengths to convince you that she wasn’t like *those other girls*. Her experiences had greater depth, her thoughts were more developed, her interests were more artistic, and her feelings were more genuine. Christine had esoteric qualities that made her special and unique, while those other girls were basic and shallow. Christine also had a bigger waist and fatter thighs.

She wasn’t fat, but Christine was conscious of her limitations and adjusted accordingly. If she couldn’t compete with *those other girls*, Christine would attempt to hijack and redefine what it meant to win and then try to convince men that what they thought they wanted was all wrong.

The blonde cheerleader with the big chest wasn’t cool like Christine. She didn’t like indie music, nor artsy movies, she didn’t read interesting novels, she didn’t have an ironic taste in fashion, nor would she be happy having a night-in drinking beers and playing Mario Kart. She wasn’t *real*, and Christine was; real is what you should want.

The results weren’t very interesting. Christine was able to be promiscuous with high-value men who probably would have fucked her anyway regardless of her advertised depth. She had beta-orbiters who masturbated her unique identity, but probably would have orbited her anyway. And, she had doofus boyfriends who respected her esoteric thoughts and opinions, but probably would have liked her regardless.

Christine thought she needed to leverage authenticity, in the form of a meticulously sculpted identity, to compensate for not being as aesthetically competitive as higher-value women. Christine thought that with enough salesmanship and authenticity she could land a rockstar boyfriend.

We are primarily animals who want to fuck and this is sexual strategy.

Traditional sexual strategy for women involves those cursed beauty standards which keep feminists up at night. Girly hair and make-up, a charming feminine demeanor, and a sexually alluring body-type; trips to the gym and a reasonably controlled diet. Not foul-language, not cigarette smoking, not beer swilling, nor an ego-obsessed girl bent on proving how cool and smart she is.

When women aren’t aesthetically gifted enough to organically attract the men which they feel entitled to, they attempt to change the parameters by-which men are attracted to women through trickery and sophistry. They redefine attraction and attempt to sell the redefinition. Women assume that since authenticity and identity are important qualities which attract them to men, in the name of universal equality, these things are at the forefront of what will attract a man to a woman- if only she can convince him that bikini-model measurements are embarrassing and unsophisticated.

Sex-positive women, or *sexperts*, attempt to swing their promiscuous behavior into the realm of intellectual savvy. The difference between a *dumb slut* and a sex-positive sexpert is defined by the

latter; a man should not want the unintelligent, unsophisticated dumb slut. Her promiscuity is inauthentic, she probably has self-esteem problems, or *daddy issues*; therefore the sex she provides is undesirable. Wait, what?

The increased emphasis on identity is intended to garner committed interest from desirable men, but will ultimately serve to coddle the woman's ego and feelings- she'll still have the same sex with attractive men, the same beta-male orbiters, and date men who exist somewhere between the two.

The white knight is the male equivalent of the cool girl, using a meticulously sculpted identity in an attempt to garner sexual interest. The white knight will rightfully understand that authenticity and identity are necessary for what will attract women, and like the cool girl, is conscious of his limitations and so he'll attempt to redefine the parameters of what women find desirable.

The difference between the cool girl and the white knight is that the white knight has to keep a keener eye toward what he understands as reality while the cool girl could dictate what she wants reality to be. The cool girl can say outright that a high-value male *should* want an authentic girl with admirable interests, regardless of what actually interests him. She's able to do this because she'll always garner the same results regardless- as long as she's just attractive enough, she'll receive some degree of sexual attention from desirable men while rationalizing their lack of sustained interest (ie: "he was a jerk"), all while her beta-male orbiters console her (ie: "he was a jerk... but I'm not" [crickets]).

The white knight doesn't have this luxury. While female sexual strategy is meant to capture the highest-value man, male sexual strategy is meant to capture the greatest number of women.

The white knight is a white knight because he cannot be competitive using traditional male sexual strategy- embracing masculinity, exuding confidence, exuding success, looking good, and understanding female nature; this is the way of high-value men. Since the white knight cannot compete on this playing field, he must attempt to redefine male value as the converse of these attributes.

While it isn't entirely his fault, trying to win by disqualifying the competition is certainly not honorable. The white knight is listening to the complaints of the cool girl who is upset that the masculine man only used her for sex. Since she isn't able to emasculate him to his face (and likely wouldn't if she had his attention again), she blows off steam to the white knight. The white knight hears her complaints and takes them seriously, and without a foundational knowledge of female nature, will come to the conclusion that what she really wants is the opposite of the masculine man ("he was a jerk, but I'm not!").

The white knight knows enough about women to understand the need to entirely buy-in to his persona as white knight- "authenticity" is necessary for a woman- so it may seem curious that men will white knight to one-another when there are no women present. Like Christine would use her cool-girl persona to coddle her self-esteem, the white knight will define himself, and derive positive self feelings, through his white knighting.

The white knight is a misguided and failed attempt at sexual strategy. Like the cool girl, it is sexual strategy by-way of disqualification. Unlike the cool girl who is able to leverage her youth and sexuality to garner interest, the white knight can only derive satisfaction from having the identity as white knight; he'll then reach a crossroads where he'll either angrily white knight even harder, like the broken gambler looking for that elusive big-score, or he'll pursue a different sexual strategy entirely.

Sexual strategy is like that scene at the end of Wargames where Joshua the computer tries to launch nuclear weapons and start World War 3; the computer cycles-through launch codes quickly while keeping the bits of code that are a positive match. Most people unconsciously allow their brain to do this work, matching behaviors with their positive outcomes, and bookmarking those behaviors while discarding the ineffective.

The cool girl and the white knight mirror the end of the movie, where Joshua learns the futility of nuclear war as a zero-sum game through playing itself in tic-tac-toe, a similarly unwinnable game. Sadly, the cool girl will never learn this lesson by misunderstanding her sexual success as a consequence of her identity, and the white knight is likely too far gone to ever figure it out.

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Sexual Selection and MTV's "Teen Mom" (2009)

April 28, 2016 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

While I haven't seen Christine in years, every time we catch up the conversation ends with her saying something like, "well, as long as you're happy..." She doesn't understand why I've never left the suburbs, nor have I had any real desire to do so. Even more troubling to Christine, the idea that I may be happy with this.

For a conscious man wading through the muck of modern treachery, yes, I am fairly happy. Living in the city never appealed to me; there is nothing better than a quiet summer night. Everything I need is a car ride away, and since I was never really much of a drinker, I rarely had to face the quandary of getting home from a bar.

But, like always, there was more at stake than what Christine could understand. We may as well have been playing out roles on a reality TV show- not exactly scripted, but *loosely scripted*. It was hardly a genuine conversation. Even if neither party felt the overt grasp of invisible puppet strings guiding our interaction- our thoughts, our feelings, our desires, our identity- they are deeply present regardless of our being conscious of them.

Understanding the presence of these puppet strings is what separates the conscious man from the unconscious man. Understanding the depth of their control dictates the level of consciousness. And understanding the true power of these influences can make a man omniscient.

Let's start at the beginning: we are animals who want to fuck.

When I was younger, sex seemed like something compartmentalized to me. Thinking back to an even younger age, "playing outside" had this same compartmentalization. "Playing outside" was an item on a list of possible things to do with free time; it wasn't something that took precedence over anything else. You could play Nintendo, you could watch WWF tapes, you could play outside, you could play with your He-Man toys, you could watch a movie. There was no greater depth of reality or separation between what was artificial and what was real; similarly, for years I thought the phrase *connecting with nature* was just bullshit hippy talk.

And when I got a little older, my initial understanding of sexuality had the same kind of compartmentalization. It was an item on a menu of ways an adult can spend his time; albeit, a not always readily accessible item. Adults got together because they liked each other- be it some kind of mutual interest, or maybe they got along real well like buddies, or they decided that having a relationship would be a *darn good fit*- and they had sex *because* they got together. I knew sometimes women were promiscuous and had one-night-stands, but, they said those were *mistakes*. I understood mistakes.

I'll never forget the morning this all changed. I was standing in front of her locker, before first period. This girl... I had liked her for weeks, but had recently said *fuck it*. Every other time I had liked a girl I found a way to mess it up. So I was just gonna keep to myself... read, work-out, have fun... and forget about girls, because I was unlikable and that's just what it was. This girl... just fucking beautiful. Big blue anime eyes, and an awkward smile... tiny waist but big hips and a full chest, just

screaming with teenage fertility.

And before first period, our eyes met... and the whole world seemed to slow down a bit. I couldn't really tell you how long we stood there, but it felt like a lifetime. My heart raced, and I got a throbbing fucking hard-on. I don't know if I've ever felt anything so real again; certainly not recently- there is a diminishing return on stuff like that. You only get so many tickets to scratch off.

Connecting with nature. This was *connecting with nature*. We are animals who want to fuck, and civilization was structured by using this primal truth to its greatest end.

I fucking love “Teen Mom.” If you ever hit a lull in conversation on a date, ask her about TV; all women love TV. So when I told the Single Jewish Woman that I fucking love “Teen Mom,” she rationalized it away by saying it was my “*guilty pleasure* TV show,” which would be the case if I were guilty.

But I fucking love “Teen Mom.” I think the godamn show is genius. If you want to talk reality, take a look at Amber's desperation as Gary attempts to erase her from her daughter's life, and the absolute delight he shows in manipulating her instability; there is a major case for sympathizing with Amber, but to what extent is she to blame for her own problems? Or how about the tremendous insecurity that Catelynn clumsily attempts to cover as she continues to gain weight despite getting diabetes! Watching Tyler become a fucking man with having to deal with his retarded family, his obese wife, and his recovering addict Dad... Butch's struggle with recovery, knowing the devastation it's caused his son. Maci, the Feminist Alpha Widow, still clearly in love with Ryan while exploiting cucks in his place and raising her son to be the cuckiest cuck of all time... and Farrah, the awful product of a beta-man with money mating with an aging beauty; she's half-pretty, half-goofy, calls her dickless father by his first name, and is a fucking train wreck to deal with... but as a faithful viewer of Teen Mom, you have enough distance to revel in her misfortune and certain doom- God bless the Teen Mom producers, they are always sure to show the bitch get hers in the end.

“Teen Mom” is slick enough to operate on three levels. On the surface, you're supposed to empathize with the *hard working single moms* who are doing *everything they can* in order to *make ends meet* and raise their kid. This is the typical “single mom narrative” that Hollywood started to push in the 90s, and was across the board in saturation (ie: Mrs. Doubtfire, Terminator 2). This is how an MTV executive would describe the show to you.

The subtext of this is making fun of white trash. The cast of “Teen Mom” was chosen deliberately, ranging on the far end of white trash- Honey Boo Boo territory- with Catelynn and Tyler, to mid-range white trash with Amber and Gary, to the least offensive bit of white trash with Maci and Ryan, which makes sense as Maci is meant to be the “hero character” for the show- or, in other words, she exists so you theoretically can't accuse of MTV of exploitation. Farrah, while not exactly white trash, is the show's villain- but, of course, still on a subtextual level.

The third layer of “Teen Mom” is synthesis and social conditioning: white trash people have kids young. The takeaway of “Teen Mom” is for the viewer to understand that young people aren't meant to have children; having children will get in the way of college, and career, and partying, and dating. Having children young will force a girl to relinquish freedom in favor of responsibility; and giving up freedom will get in the way of her desire to maximize selection.

I never felt that kind of emotional intensity again like I had with Jessica that morning by her locker before first period. We're meant to mate young; evolution doesn't care about college and partying.

Teenage love is a brain trip to get us out of our clothes and fucking like animals; sympathetic love is so that a man doesn't let his bloated and pregnant wife get eaten by mountain lions, and marriage is meant to keep us together after the intensity of youth becomes irritability and resentment.

We aren't these special unique portraits; we're more like paint-by-numbers. It's your job to find contentment within that paradigm.

Females desire the maximization of selection, and men compete with one-another to be selected.

Take that sentence and write it on your hand. Repeat it every night before you go to bed. Keep it in the back of your head when you talk to someone. This is the foundation for understanding people.

In this regard, "Teen Mom" functions as a cautionary tale where women unwittingly diminish their ability to be selective; stay away from kids, and commitment, and responsibility, says MTV, or you'll be like these icky white trash girls...

Christine liked living in a city because it maximized her ability to be selective. Her cool girl gimmick was a tool meant to disqualify the competition, and beyond that all Christine had to do was show up somewhere and stand there. Men would approach and she could either reject or accept their advances. This is sexual selection, and sexual selection is a woman's primary strategy for mating. This is why women love living in a big city; the greatest possible potential for selection met with the fantasy of the most desirable men to choose from.

When taken to its logical end, this is why women love globalism. Globalism represents the greatest maximization of sexual selection, even beyond city living; where the world becomes one big city, and all Christine has to do is stand there looking cool.

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“Ghostbusters” (2016) and the Myth of the Disposable Woman

May 19, 2016 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Someone working deep inside the Clinton campaign must really fucking hate her

guts. Old Hillary is gearing up for an appearance on the Ellen show alongside the entire cast of the smelly-like-farts “Ghostbusters” (2016) re-make. I am praying to Jesus that she comes out with the stupid uniform on, personalized with CLINTON across the left breast; she can have her own proton pack, maybe some impromptu CG will be employed. Please God, make her the honorary fifth Ghostbuster.

Don’t just finger me, God; I want it all the way in.

This stupid movie has the stink of death, and for Clinton to attach herself to it almost certainly means that someone working for her is either certifiably retarded or absolutely insane... but why is this movie so particularly hated?

After all, “Ghostbusters” is a movie and movies are bad.

After Hollywood dissolved the girl movie/boy movie formula and no one really seemed to notice, they got greedy and pushed so hard that the same internet nerds who cheered wildly for two-hours of a girl beating up Storm Troopers helped give “Ghostbusters” a historic million billion YouTube downvotes.

There was something different about “Ghostbusters,” and whether people had the language to verbalize it or not, the trailer managed to create a kind of subconscious irritation so profound that the same body which developed a heavy tolerance for trash and bullshit was able to successfully reject the damaged organ.

While this may happen automatically for the average person, someone who obsesses over bullshit- as I do- can pinpoint where this transition in the trailer occurs; when the body decides *no mas*, and a mind eager to move past the whole wretched thing forces an angry downvote.

It was when the fat one casually mentions how the girls had “dedicated [their] whole lives to studying the paranormal,” that we go off the rails.

Dedicated their whole lives, implying to the exclusion of everything else; the exclusion of socialization or romantic entanglement; the exclusion of comfort and fun.

Their whole lives, implying that women are as disposable as men... And I’d put a hefty sum of peanuts on this being the point where people check out of the trailer and click the misogynistic “thumbs down.”

And as the girls in grey go on to slug it out with pesky poltergeists it only feels increasingly ridiculous seeing women with laser guns risking their lives on the front line of a paranormal war; because women *aren’t* disposable. What kind of men inhabit this fictional New York City, anyway, letting women fight their battles?

Women aren’t forgoing social lives in the pursuit of science, nor are they acting as the first line of defense when shit gets real. These are masculine traits, and men realize both positive benefits and negative consequences of this reality.

We understand the inherent value of women and the disposability of men as cultural memes.

The disposability of men dictates that a man must either prove his value or understand he'll be cast aside in favor of the more valuable; this idea is what maintains the stability of Civilization.

In a world full of animals who want to fuck, men are worthless monkeys dying to stick it in practically anything, and women are coveted selectors who only allow the most valuable monkeys to get their dicks wet; this is ultimately the reason why you have an iPhone, or really anything else for that matter.

Existing with inherent value creates an environment of entitlement and expectation, where a woman doesn't have to work as hard to meet her needs. Women receive effortless attention and perpetual praise; with this foundation a woman may exert effort to further create an identity for herself- a doctor or lawyer- but it seems as though *scientist* has a quality of diminishing return; the amount of effort required exceeds the net high-fives received for even bothering. A scientist may spend their entire career as an anonymous link in a chain; hard work and long hours for results only other scientists might appreciate- this is hardly sexy, glamorous, or as effective a tool for identity building as the immediately recognizable Dr. Female Pediatrician would create.

Beyond existing as an unnecessary movie filled with awful comedy, this memetic rejection is why the majority audience will have an inherent distaste for "Ghostbusters," while a small minority will angrily see it with frozen smiles painted on their faces.

Hillary Clinton catering to this hardcore Social Justice crowd is a misstep for someone already so easy to dislike. She senses this, and is responding by hedging all bets on the idea that voters will feel obligated to vote for a woman. While this is probably her best bet right now, using "Ghostbusters" as a vehicle for this pronouncement is the same kind of detached arrogance that Hollywood had in thinking that an all-girl "Ghostbusters" would work in the first place.

And this will be Hillary's tank moment; the one misstep that sinks the Clinton bid for 2016.

All hail President Trump.

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Authenticity and “The Cable Guy” (1996)

June 9, 2016 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

There was a gleam in her eye when “Ghostbusters” (2016) came up in the group’s discussion. She corrected the speaker, a male, who didn’t make an elaborate point to reference the movie’s notorious gender component- “the new Ghostbusters” he offhandedly called it, but this was “girl Ghostbusters,” she said with pride. After all, she was a high school Science teacher and this was a victory with which she could attach herself.

This attachment was the point, existing independently of the movie. She may not see it, nor should she have to- her attachment to “girl Ghostbusters” had served to bolster her identity. The actual film is an afterthought- a big budget leftist talking point. Beyond all the fuss, “Ghostbusters” is a pile of crap with regurgitated jokes, so who really cares?

The modern addiction is identity. The impulse to create a large inventory of bullet points which can be used to detail an image of unique superiority. A strong and intelligent woman should like a movie about female vigilante scientists, that’s easy- a real no brainer, and then it’s on to the next talking point in a never ending continuum. And that’s why “girl Ghostbusters” will be dead in the water by the time it hits theaters- the audience has already cannibalized it and moved on.

All identities are not created equal. The game isn’t mutual acceptance, the game is superiority, and when the stakes are high there must be standards; judgment necessitates regulation. As the race toward becoming the smartest and most unique grows increasingly rigorous, so does our sensitivity toward the potential inauthenticity of the identity being crafted.

I went to a foodie kind of restaurant with a date. Date knew the chef. Afterwards, chef asked what our least favorite dish was. I was unaware, at the time, that this was a loaded question not meant to be answered. I told him I didn’t love the dark chocolate liver pate. Everyone around me got nervous. I got nervous. I said, maybe it was just me. They agreed.

I didn’t understand, at the time, that this was more than just a meal at a restaurant- an enjoyable intermission between one activity and the next- but, rather, I was an attendant to an experience.

My reaction to this experience said a lot about my depth of sophistication. The chef was testing the authenticity of that depth- was I *really* one of them? My answer suggested that I wasn’t. My date got nervous; I had potentially embarrassed her. The vibe became uncomfortable, and I recovered by outing myself as a tourist in an unfamiliar world; having a least favorite dish was *my own issue*— an issue hopefully born out of inexperience and not a lack of sophistication entirely, a mortal sin in this landscape.

Authenticity testing is the natural consequence to “identity as accessory” becoming part of the mainstream consciousness. To understand this shift, we can look to “Fight Club” (1999), when Edward Norton explains that he seeks to express self-definition through his consumer habits, asking “what kind of dining set defines me as a person?” Rather than starting at self-knowledge and moving forward, like Norton would have you believe, he’s instead thinking about how *he’d like to* define himself as a person; the assumption he casually makes is that the authenticity of these choices is inherent.

This observation would no-longer seem clever for a 2016 audience; we understand that our choices

serve to define who we *want to be* rather than expressing who we are, and this has created a paranoid feeling pop-culture where authenticity is always suspect.

There is a decadence to this obsession with authenticity. Our culture fosters a kind of Holden Caulfield-like suspended adolescence where wearing the Metallica shirt isn't enough, nor is it immediately permissible, but only after an undefined quantity of experience is your ownership of the shirt acceptable. Are you sophisticated enough to understand *why you should* enjoy chocolate liver pate, regardless of personal taste? Are you watching Mrs. Doubtfire *the right way*, ironically and detached, or following the film's narrative as intended?

If the obsession with authenticity is a luxury, indicative of a culture so problem-free that it's boring itself to death, to what degree is the expectation of authenticity reasonable?

Like Edward Norton in "Fight Club," Jim Carrey's lonely, television obsessed cable guy in "The Cable Guy" (1996) is never given a proper name, and like in "Fight Club," this is to imply that Carrey is both everyman and no-man simultaneously; a cultural composite and a blank slate. Carrey is useful to Matthew Brodrick's character of Steven Kovacs, an average-joe beta-male, throughout the course of the film; initially as an underhanded cable installer ready to work his magic and give Kovacs free cable- something of a 1990s urban legend- and later as a crucial element in Kovacs' ailing relationship. Throughout the film their motivations are always clear: the cable guy wants Kovacs' friendship and Kovacs wants to get rid of the cable guy- despite begrudgingly enjoying the cable guy's quirky offerings.

Kovacs immediately recognizes the cable guy's usefulness beyond free cable- when the cable guy tells him to "thirst for knowledge" of his ex-girlfriend's "complicated spender," Kovacs finds it "incredibly insightful" and implements it the following day, even after learning it came from an episode of Jerry Springer. The cable guy suggests Kovacs invite her over for dinner, "Sleepless in Seattle" was showing on HBO- Steven follows along here too and is met with a surprisingly positive reception from Robin, the frigid ex.

Although grossly overused, there is something to a woman's accusation of a man being a "creeper." Follow around a beautiful woman and you'll see awkward men fumble about while attempting horrifyingly contrived small talk- or so I've heard. Say what you will about female privilege in the western world, but this shit is fucking uncomfortable. These men stand out because their interactions are so boldly unnatural and *inauthentic* that their agenda is entirely evident- it isn't about connecting with the woman at all, and even if she's just an attractive sexual vessel for the more nondescript men she interacts with, they are able to hide their intentions and seem authentic while the creeper fails in this regard and stands out as icky.

Human's are wired with a social radar that rejects awkward or unnatural behavior that makes us uncomfortable. We require that our interactions seem natural. The audience is presented with Carrey as a social creeper; the cable guy is anything but natural. When he crashes Steven's pick-up basketball game his desire to be included seems too *pre-planned* for pick-up basketball which is meant to be spontaneous. This is like how the girl at the bar going home with the pick-up artist doesn't want to believe their interaction was set-up by a man looking for sex- she wants to think it was something special that *just happened*.

When the cable guy is included in the game his social inadequacies become glaring. If we dissect Carrey's thought process here it seems logically sound: the guys are playing basketball so he shows up in what he considers to be serious athletic gear, he plays harder than everyone- misunderstanding

the term friendly competition, and since Kovacs is his target for friendship he demands to be on Steven's team. To someone who doesn't understand the natural dance of socialization this would seem like how you'd ingratiate yourself into a new group, by proving your value and loyalty. When the cable guy shatters the backboard on a slam dunk, a scene straight out of the climax of a movie, he expects to be met with high-fives... but, of course, that isn't how real life works. Embarrassed, Steven makes it clear that the two aren't friends.

Until the next scene when Steven's television service is disrupted, without "Sleepless in Seattle" he seems lost with Robin, and he's happy to use his friend the cable guy to fix things. Throughout the rest of the film, Steven and Robin's relationship only progresses with Carrey's intervention which begs the question: what do these two really have in common? If a hollow soundbyte from the Jerry Springer show is enough to mend their relationship, what does it say about the relationship's authenticity?

And suddenly it seems as though Steven is the more inauthentic social creeper than the awkward and lonely cable guy. While Steven knows what to say and how to act in order to fit in socially, he lacks true depth- which speaks to his inability to maintain Robin's interest on his own. The cable guy may be inauthentic on this surface level, but he displays a raw emotion that the viewer can relate to.

A comedy is considered dark when it cuts too close to reality. The characters in a dark comedy are more complex; there is often a sadness beyond the laughter. A dark comedy can produce feelings of guilt- what does it say about us if we find Jim Carrey's portrayal of lonely desperation funny? And, what might be more troubling, how much of the cable guy do we see in ourselves?

How you view the scene at Medieval Times may answer this question. Are you like Steven, and find Medieval Times inherently embarrassing or would you be able to lose yourself in the moment and have a good time? And, if not, what would you think of the people around you who are there to have fun? In the war of identity superiority, our greatest weapon is judgment.

So what did we learn about authenticity? Get good at being cool, and people will like you- act socially retarded, and you'll be treated like a buffoon.

Oh, and always remember to like the dark chocolate liver pate.

The Narrative of Heartbreak and “Big” (1988)

September 4, 2016 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

In a flash Fake Winehouse was able to transform our hetero-normative experience back into something she was more comfortable with, her own safe space of gender neutrality, with the magic words: “get this shit off me.” Tossing her the tissue box, I chastised her for *breaking the narrative*, something usually reserved for slightly longer than fifteen seconds after sex.

Winehouse may have rolled her eyes, but the fact of the matter remains: sex is the *narrative of attraction*. For the red-hot 20 minutes I spent with Amy, she behaved like the ideal submissive- what she wanted in the moment. After, when her big girl brain came back, the feminist became disgusted with herself, and, “get this shit off me,” was her way of re-framing the mess she’d made by treating me like an alpha male.

Sex is like editing together a documentary film. Everything is based in reality, but it’s up to you to put together the story. Initial attraction may be there, but if you don’t string things together the right way, you’re not getting laid.

Both sexes have their role in building this narrative. It’s too easy to reduce the female’s role to that of a movie goer or theater attendee; “just start the damn show and hope I don’t walk out.” Although there is truth to that dynamic, the woman has her part in showing up *fit for the performance*.

If she’s had the bad luck of being out with a beta-doofus, only minimal effort is required. The slightest exertion of feminine prowess will allow her total control of the situation. These aesthetic stakes will rise along-side the value of the man interested. By the time she shows up to the date, he’ll already know if he wants to fuck her or not- from there, as long as she doesn’t commit an egregious, narrative disrupting crime of anti-sexuality, her job is mostly done- any further action on her part is for sport.

As a man falls under the aesthetic spell of a woman, he’ll construct the rest of the narrative on his own with very little input from her. Did she try to make a joke? It’s hysterical! Did she make a rather obvious observation? She’s so smart! Is there any kind of minor nuance to her behavior that can be focused on and doted over? She’s adorable!

His misguided interpretation of her qualities will remain until his attraction for her has been extinguished, which may be accompanied by feelings of sadness, guilt, shame, or even disgust, depending on the particulars of the situation.

Since anything beyond her aesthetic may be his narrative imposing on reality, there isn’t a lingering question of *authenticity*. Ironically, the authenticity of her beauty is actually debatable- women have an entire arsenal of weapons to deceive the gullible- however, most men are only looking for surface level approval.

Conversely, authenticity is a central question for her- an on-

going issue to which her attraction to him is contingent upon.

She will also see what she wants and lie to herself, but rather than constructing a false narrative based on his aesthetic, she magnifies the fragments of his personality that she finds attractive and comes to the conclusion that he “must always be like that.”

This is as much a naive fantasy as his personifying her beauty into the idealized girlfriend. While he’s putting his *best foot forward* on their date in an attempt to have a sex worthy alpha male performance, she’s going along for the ride believing that he’s *being himself* and this decisive, assertive, cool and confident guy is *just who he is*.

Only it isn’t so easy- women are savvier in this department than men. She’ll subconsciously match his behavior to what he *looks like* while trying to determine if he *should be* entitled to acting so decisive, assertive, cool and confident. And if this scan turns up negative, she’ll think he’s faking his swagger and aggressively test the depth of his authenticity.

If he’s able to hold this frame together for long enough, he’ll get laid.

All human relationships contain a degree of narrative, requiring effort and social pruning, because we’re really just animals on a dirty rock floating in space. But, yes, we have the capacity of forming intimate relationships with one another, and that can be a great experience... or a devastatingly disappointing experience... or something so torturous that it becomes mentally crippling. Even the bonds of family are held together by narrative- and if this seems inaccurate to you, you likely don’t know the pain of a distant mother or an absent father... or, even a murderous mother.

There is no greater emotional pain than of a narrative dissolving. Death, of course, is the ultimate narrative dissolution... but short of an ending so dramatic, there is an element of innocence lost for good when a relationship falls into disrepair. When you can take a step back and recognize the true peak, the trust and good feelings that went with it, and even if you’re not conscious of the narrative elements that engendered the connection, you’re highly aware of your new status as strangers.

If we can crystallize heartbreak to a single moment, it would be the intersection between confidant and stranger.

I find this moment to be the most pivotal scene in Penny Marshall’s masterpiece “Big” (1988), where the adolescent-in-an-adult-body Josh is with girlfriend Susan at Sea Point Park after having just crossed the metaphorical point-of-no-return, using the magical Zoltar machine to wish away his adult life.

Upon watching “Big” for the first time in years, this scene carried a tremendous emotional weight which I hadn’t remembered, nor prepared for, to the point where I found myself re-watching the scene so many times consecutively that I had to turn the whole thing off and compose myself.

This silly 1980’s Tom Hanks comedy had hit a raw nerve, unexpectedly, and I needed distance from it.

The moment, perfectly composed, between Hanks and Perkins manages to use the fantasy elements

of “Big” as a means to convey an accurate portrayal of the most heartbreaking moment of a break-up; the moment where it’s finally acknowledged that the point-of-no-return has been crossed; the narrative has been destroyed.

When the normalcy of yesterday becomes the reality of today.

We were in her car getting pizza. Her car, because mine was in the shop. Things didn’t feel strained as we waited for our pie to be made, but the ride home got heavy. After three years, the days blend together and it’s easy to get too comfortable. Although it wasn’t spoken of explicitly, we knew what was coming, but like a terminally ill patient hoping for *just another day*, it was easy to put off the inevitable... But something happened on the way home. I can’t recall exactly what was said, but something triggered a long conversation, with a hot pizza box on my lap, in the passenger seat of her car. And after saying our goodbyes, I tossed the cold pizza in the garbage on the way into my apartment and went to bed.

The fantasy element of “Big” allows for a rarely seen big-screen adaptation of the terminally ill break-up scenario- which is usually a bit too low action for Hollywood, but provides the opportunity for tremendous emotional depth.

Josh and Susan were forced by powers greater than themselves to end their relationship in a manner entirely irrevocable- Josh was living in a world that he didn’t belong in and was unsuited for; a thirteen year old can only fake his way through the corporate world for so long... and while this moment was sad for Josh, he liked dating Susan and screwing Elizabeth Perkins, there was certainly the tremendous upside of returning to his family and his comfortable adolescent life, more likely the better man for his brief glimpse into adulthood.

But like all good literature and cinema, the experience of watching “Big” will vary according to the age of the viewer... a child watching “Big” will understand the story as Josh’s journey into the esoteric adult world, with all adult characters in this journey acting as elaborate props, or accessories to aid Josh in his experience. With this framework, Susan serves as the “girlfriend accessory” for Josh to have a truly thorough experience.

However, an adult watching “Big” will understand the story as equally owned by Susan as a fully-realized character, and by the end of the film may be more in-tune with her character arc as Josh walks back home in his over-sized suit.

While their break-up may have been sad for Josh, it’s absolutely devastating for Susan.

To fully appreciate this, it feels important to understand exactly who Susan is. Susan is an unmarried woman in her early thirties who begrudgingly works in corporate America, a job which, like Josh, she isn’t well-suited for. Susan has had a string of failed relationships with co-workers, and is currently involved with a man whom she doesn’t particularly seem to like, but it’s alluded that Susan is drawn to the most successful men at MacMillan Toys... ideals that Susan was raised to believe: become the strong independent woman and date the most successful Alpha male. If Susan wasn’t raised in Manhattan- something impossible to know- she certainly came to the big city with these goals in mind.

And with these goals in-mind, Susan meets Josh- first as an invisible data entry clerk making less

than two-hundred dollars weekly. No matter how quirky and charming Josh could have been in this capacity, Susan would have never noticed him. It's only when Josh raises his profile at MacMillan, becoming Vice President in name-only, that Susan takes notice, and throws herself at him solely due to his corporate success.

But Josh, as a thirteen year old, doesn't *get it*. Josh inadvertently rejects Susan's sexual advances, while tapping into something much greater. For Susan, Josh has proven his alpha male credibility by falling ass-backwards into corporate success. But unlike what Susan has become accustomed to with the typical corporate sharks she dates, Josh has an easy presence and an obvious sincerity; Josh is genuine because that's all Josh knows.

Susan falls in love with Josh because he meets her minimum standard for a man whom she'd consider dating- career success- while not coming attached with all the baggage that career success usually brings: a boring, stressed out, alcoholic asshole. This was likely something Susan hadn't considered as possible as she's gotten older and more romantically jaded, and Josh manages to be so refreshingly different- while also necessarily the same- that Susan is able to take the qualities she likes about Josh and impose her own narrative to fill-in the gaps... almost as if aging Susan is intentionally ignoring the more childlike behavior which Josh exhibits, something comically obvious to the audience, in a desperate attempt to hold the whole thing together.

A similar dynamic exists between Josh and corporate boss MacMillan, a toy company veteran who is sick of working with joyless and ineffective corporate drones. MacMillan appreciates Josh's childlike sincerity and enthusiasm, promoting him to the top of the company, while willfully ignoring the rather obvious red flags of Josh's immaturity... imposing his own narrative on Josh.

The moment Susan acknowledges the impossible, that Josh is actually a thirteen year old body-switched into an adult, the "point-of-no-return" for a break-up has been crossed, and in this case, it feels like a strange combination of Josh's death, and the idea that Josh never actually existed.



When Susan reaches out to hug Josh one last time- the kind of hug where you don't want to let go- it serves as the transition point between the romanticized yesterday and the reality of today. Susan realizes that Josh only existed as her narrative, that she magnified the fragments of his personality

which she found attractive, while willfully ignoring what she didn't want to see...but the strength of reality intervened, destroying her narrative entirely.

And “Big” feels like Susan’s story when she laments how Josh won’t remember her, revealing the sad truth of the matter. While Josh’s experience with Susan was significant, it wasn’t significant in the *same way* as the experience was to Susan.

Like a child watching “Big,” Susan existed as an accessory for Josh- a gateway into a different world; the esoteric experiences of adulthood. For Susan, the narrative of Josh represented relief and salvation from that very same world; a world which couldn’t deliver on the promises it made to a younger, more innocent Susan. For Susan, Josh felt like her last chance to make good.

The Human Animal and “Of Mice and Men” (1937)

December 4, 2016 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“You give me a good whore house every time. A guy can go in an’ get drunk and get ever’thing outa his system all at once, an’ no messes”- George Milton, *Of Mice and Men*

Compared to male sexuality, female sexuality is surprisingly linear. While it’s true that men enjoy the typical signs of youthful fertility- large breasts, curvaceous hips, clear skin- a man’s attraction to a woman must be tempered by a sense of realistic accessibility. “The girl next door” archetype is sexy because she isn’t intimidating; she’s unaware of how sexy she truly is and this makes her accessible.

Female sexuality is more linear because women don’t feel indebted to accessibility as a component of attraction; for a woman, this would be like going to a movie and wondering, “do I deserve to be here watching this movie?” Since women don’t have this concern, a woman can feel entirely unencumbered with whom she’s most attracted to- which inevitably is the highest-quality male in any scenario.

However, defining *highest quality male* isn’t always what it seems.

People are primarily motivated by sex. Mostly in their fertile years, but try telling the old man renting the 25 porn VHS tapes that. Biologically, you have a single purpose- do what it takes to get laid. Men want to fuck the highest *quantity* of women, because his silly genetics haven’t caught on to the idea that he won’t be popping out two dozen kids, and women want the highest *quality* male to screw them for the same reason.

The solution, as it would seem for the male-end of the equation, is to become the *highest quality male*.

If you get anything at all out of this blog post, I’d like your takeaway to be not going to graduate school for anything outside of Science and Math. If the undergraduate experience can be crystallized as an introduction to leftist ideology, you can look to graduate school as the difference between Kindergarten and High School- in grad school, you’re not a kid anymore and you’re supposed to *know better*.

So, if you sign up for a graduate program ignorant to this idea, as I did, while thinking that an advanced level course load will provide more opportunity for nuanced discussion and outside ideas- after all, you’re a big kid now- you’re going to have a miserable time. You should *know better*, and have had any dissenting ideas bleached away by the angry cat ladies of your initial university experience.

Like everything, I learned this the hard way and unintentionally made every one of my useless geek grad school professors hate me for mistaking one-way ideology for discussion... and this was ten-years before I was more fully reality conscious.

But, when I realized this- that the ideology of graduate school was essentially the memes of a Disney movie deconstructed and taught to classrooms of idiots for the price of a luxury car- I couldn’t help but wonder: why I was doing it at all?

A friend was in a similar situation at the time, locked down deep in a terrible graduate program being

force-fed the same mickey mouse bullshit, and we'd joke about how great it would have been to work in one of those old mom-and-pop video stores of the 1980s instead.

Sitting behind the counter in the corner of a strip mall, handing out copies of "Ghostbusters 2" and NES games with *Wrestlemania V* on the in-house big screen; your biggest decision of the day would have been whether you wanted pizza, chinese, or deli for lunch. And you'd go home that night with a fresh copy of "License to Drive" and *Bad Dudes*, and there's your life- no fuss, no muss. Maybe you even sold a beeper that day and your boss will give you a validating high-five.

A totally bullshit free existence.

Only these kinds of video stores were extinct during the culturally deadened 2000s, and what girl was gonna date a video store clerk anyway? We were young virile men; we wanted to get laid.

And the myth we were fed was that a respectable, civilized man with admirable ambition and a professional career was attractive to young women- and so, we pushed forward.

To the uninitiated, those who buy-into this myth hard and are inevitably burned by it, the growing phenomena of a young female teacher screwing one of her twelve-year-old students is a real pickle of a problem, and is ultimately swept under the carpet with the label of *pedophilia*. If she's crazy- if she's *mentally ill*- this stupid motherfucker can get to sleep at night with his myth still in-tact.

But, what if it's not pedophilia at all- what if this speaks to the much larger reality of female attraction that contradicts everything we're taught to believe?

There is nothing inherently attractive about the civilized good-boy who sips his tea, speaks politely, and has an adorable little career with amassed resources. Any drug-addled bartender will tell you that, straight up- no graduate degree required.

When a woman scans her surroundings for the highest-quality male, the civilized man with the admirable career isn't on her list of priorities. Whether she's aware of it or not, her criteria is set to finding the highest-quality *human animal*.

The human animal embodies power; power is needless.

Take a young, fertile woman in her mid-20s. The men available to her are predictably boring good-boys with their silly beards and leftist talking points. She understands that she's supposed to like them, but something she can't quite verbalize is missing. And she has that one little asshole in her third-period English class who never wants to listen, has a bad attitude, and openly mocks her to her face; he doesn't *take her seriously* like her bearded good-boys and she can't help but feel attracted to his entirely authentic showing of natural, budding Alpha male masculinity. Even at a young age this boy embodies the power of the human animal.

The same confusion is sure to arise within the wimpy heart of the bearded boy-man when he realizes that Curley's Wife- described as a 1930's budget Hollywood starlet- becomes attracted to the lovably retarded Lennie Small in Steinbeck's dustbowl classic "Of Mice and Men" (1937).

Although the novella primarily reads as George and Lennie's journey toward tragedy, the character of Curley's Wife is the key in understanding why these pieces are in-place to begin with.

If you haven't read "Of Mice and Men" (you should), don't worry- I've got you covered:

George Milton and Lennie Small are traveling from one town in California to another where they plan to work on a ranch as low-paid farmhands. Lennie is retarded, and George is not. The idea is to save enough money in-order to buy their own ranch and not work as wage-cucks for rich landowners.

When they get to the new ranch they meet the rich landowner's son Curley, who immediately picks Lennie for an easy target to bully. We later find out that Curley is a beta-cuck to his new wife, and is convinced the other men on the farm are all screwing her. Curley's Wife is described as being heavily flirtatious, showing off her body to the other men, and it's implied that she's having an affair with the Alpha male of the ranch, Slim. Since Curley is intimidated by Alpha-male Slim, he decides to beat up retarded Lennie... who uses his size and power to crush Curley's hand.

When Curley's Wife learns that Lennie stood up to Curley, she becomes flirtatious with Lennie... who ends up accidentally killing her.

A far too basic reading of "Of Mice and Men" would be to consider Lennie nothing more than a large, clumsy, asexual child; this is typically how women teach the novella. While Lennie is certainly childlike- he's mostly incapable of following a conversation, looks to George as a father-figure, and has a passion for touching soft things- it's too simplistic to think that he doesn't have a fully realized sex drive; after all, the reality of Lennie is that he's an adult male. And so, when Lennie first encounters Curley's Wife he takes immediate notice of her beauty, commenting: "Gosh, she was purty" (32).

And when Lennie crushes her husband's hand with raw power, Curley's Wife is intrigued. Even if Lennie doesn't have the social acuity of the highest quality male at the ranch, Slim, Lennie has certainly proven himself to be the most powerful- and this, alone, is enough to attract Curley's Wife. It's something the beta-cuck is incapable of understanding. Lennie is low-IQ, uncivilized, probably beardless, and devoid of leftist talking points... and yet, Curley's Wife is attracted to his unwitting display of human animal dominance.

And this is where Curley's Wife makes the fatal mistake of misunderstanding nature.

“Just because you forget about nature does not mean that nature forgets about you”- Stefan Molyneux

Women are sheltered from nature, and thus will inherently misunderstand it. Historically, this was a privilege. Nature is cruel and dangerous; uncompromising, nature is the ultimate fascist. The responsibility of dealing with nature falls to the hands of men, who exist on the front lines of risk when shit goes down and man must protect his tribe. Man, as hunter, understands the unpredictable nature of the *wild animal*; woman as caretaker will only understand the cute and cuddly, cartoonish domesticated animal.

In modern terms, even if hunting isn't our primary method of sustainment, men are still tasked with the responsibility of understanding reality while women favor a socially acceptable, cute and cuddly,

cartoonish worldview; of course, this is problematic in an egalitarian democracy.

But when women decide to venture out into nature and poke a few bears, blind to the reality that nature is not something within their sphere of control, things can get ugly.

Steinbeck deliberately compares Lennie to an animal, describing him as walking “heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws” (2). With a severely limited cognitive ability and low impulse control, Lennie is quite literally a human animal. Throughout the novella it’s noted that Lennie accidentally kills any pets he takes on, although it doesn’t really matter so much to him as he only wants a pet for the tactile stimulation of its soft fur. This is important to note; the relationship between Lennie and the animal is entirely one-sided, as Lennie is using the animal- much like a wild animal uses its prey for nourishment.

Curley’s Wife is shielded from the reality of Lennie as something dangerous; she is only able to comprehend Lennie as cute and cuddly, assessing him as “just like a big baby” (90). And while Lennie is certainly adorable and childlike, misunderstanding the fact that he’s still an adult male, only plagued with tragic limitations, is just like thinking the adorable brown bear at Yellowstone is just dying to be canoodled.

Curley’s Wife had been used to situations entirely within her control; where she can taste a bit of danger by flirting and teasing the men on the ranch- albeit rugged but ultimately domesticated men- while relying on the dependable safety of the situation. Even if there were less than honorable men working there, they would understand that Curley’s Wife was married to Curley, the boss’s son, and would have them fired if they crossed any lines with the wife.

Only Lennie doesn’t have the impulse control, nor the full comprehension of the situation, to understand where to draw any lines. And when Curley’s Wife pokes the bear, having Lennie touch and stroke her hair, she isn’t able to control the situation as she can with the other men at the ranch. Lennie won’t let go when she asks, and when she demands he let go, Lennie becomes frightened and thrashes her about until he kills her- just like the asshole feeding bears at Yellowstone; nature gives no fucks.

Thinking about my video store fantasy now, I feel a lot like George Milton dreaming of a little ranch to call his own. Although we don’t know much about George’s history before the start of the story, we can surmise that he hasn’t had a lot of luck with women... and we can also surmise that he has a deeper understanding of female nature than he lets on. When he first meets Curley’s Wife he immediately gets the deal with her, saying “I seen ’em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her” (32).

George’s dream is a little ranch to call his own, but not for the benefit of a woman nor to start a family, but to live out the rest of his years comfortably with Lennie.

George understands the reality of female nature and chose to go his own way.

And in semi-modern terms, this would have been like saying fuck-it-all and taking up a stake at the local video store, getting Chinese for lunch, and taking home a bag full of NES games and VHS smut at the end of the day. It should be noted that graduate school wouldn’t have been something available to George, and that due to the poverty of the Great Depression, women were looking for wealth as a

primary qualification to marriage- so, George as a homeless, migrant farm worker was left out of the conversation entirely.

But even if resources were the primary for a woman's long-term interest in men, resources still weren't something *attractive* to the female animal. Remember, nature isn't something that changes; nature is the ultimate fascist.

Steinbeck understood this too, evident when Curley's Wife reveals why she's married to Curley in the moments before her death. Throughout the story it's obvious that the relationship between the two is one-sided; Curley desperately wants her acceptance, even to the extent of wearing a glove full of vaseline on his left hand to keep it "soft for his wife" (27), while Curley's Wife does everything she can to avoid Curley.

And in her final moments, Curley's Wife explains that she met a man from Hollywood who gamed her into believing that he could get her into the movie business and that she should wait for a letter from him inviting her to the studio. When the letter never arrives, Curley's Wife blames her mother for stealing it and keeping it from her. Was there ever a letter? Was he really someone from Hollywood? Or was he a sharp, 1930s style pick-up-artist looking for a cheap lay? I'll let you decide.

That same night she met beta-man Curley, and they eventually married as Curley was heir to a wealthy ranch and her ticket out of poverty. It should stand as no surprise that Curley's Wife finally reveals that she doesn't like Curley at all... because resources aren't inherently attractive to women, as every beta-cuck marrying a washed-up thirty-two year old will eventually find out; female attraction is reserved for the *highest quality* human animal, and everyone else serves as pawns in the game- a fact that George Milton implicitly understood, and maybe even what the guy renting you "Weird Science" knew a little something about.

It Used to be Better: The Death of Masculinity in Professional Wrestling

February 27, 2017 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“If you take a thing apart or modify it, there are certain aspects which must remain intact for it to retain its identity. Without certain parts, it becomes something else.”

So it's a lazy Sunday night, I did my dishes, tidied up, and I've got some time to kill. Time to hunker down in front of my TV and let the clown and puppet show melt my brain when it occurs to me- it's a pay-per-view Sunday, brother!

The pro-wrestling pay-per-view Sunday was a highlight of my childhood. Months of intricate story lines, peppered with plot twists, met with my own, personal, *mental preparation* for the big day which would ultimately culminate in.... nothing. My parents weren't going pay for a play-fighting television show (“pay for TV!?”).

But those times when I carefully wore away their resolve with begging and pleading- usually with highly detailed explanations of all the moments that led to this *happening*, where on this particular Sunday night *everything* would be coming to a head, and *nothing* would ever be the same in the entire world (wrestling federation).

I needed to be in front of my aging 27? to take it all in... and those times where they yielded to my lust for staged grappling were fucking beautiful.

But you have to grow up sometime. I stopped watching fake sports in my mid-20s; things just felt *different*. Main event play-fighting didn't hold my interest anymore... and it wasn't until the introduction of the beautifully nostalgic WWE Network that I gave the whole thing a second thought.

The WWE Network, where I could relive those childhood memories thought to be lost to the ages; a place where Hulkamania could truly live forever. Of course, at first, I told myself that it'd just be for the free starter month. I only really wanted to check out a few old Saturday Night's Main Events- maybe the time where Hogan suplexed the Big Boss Man off the top of the cage, the equivalent to Foley's dive off the cell for its time...

But then I realized it was *November*... why not check out Survivor Series '89, one of the few shows that my parents did, in fact, pay for TV and allow me to watch live. And, before long, I was waist deep in the build to The Black Scorpion vs. Sting at Starrcade 1990- a show that I had been so captivated by as a ten-year-old that I tuned-in to watch scrambled (after all, how could I have gotten to sleep that night without knowing who the dastardly Scorpion was?!).

It didn't take long for them to get me; I was back, in front of the TV once again, watching drug addict grifters stealing from children. And while I had joined the Network, to re-experience the warmth of my childhood, I had no intentions of checking out the current product.

I mean, right?

Until a cold Sunday in March- a pay-per-view night, indeed- but this wasn't any old ham-and-egger show... it was Wrestlemania; the true *Colossal Tussle*- the showcase of the immortal play-fighters. This was a big deal, and I knew it.

Just the word *Wrestlemania* produced a warm feeling unparalleled to others- conjuring memories of

the intense paranoia felt in the weeks leading to the show, scrambling for a venue to soak-in the spectacle while acknowledging the horrifying possibility that none of my friends' parents may be dumb enough to buy it.

Truth be told, it was mere hours before the start of Wrestlemania VI that I was able to secure a proper viewing location... I'll leave it to you, the reader, to imagine the whirlwind of emotions I faced that day.

But now, as an adult, scrambling to secure my spot in viewing scripted-history was a thing of the past: Wrestlemania came free with my Network subscription, and since I still felt some attachment to the mental images it drew, I felt a bit of excitement- it was pay-per-view Sunday once again, brother!

And when it was all over, I felt only confusion. Yes, the show was boring- but even during pro-wrestling's hottest periods there were bad shows too. I remember getting a loose hand-job during the midcard of Wrestlemania XV- a sure sign that something was amiss.

But this was different- this was confusion. What the heck did I just sit through?

On the surface, it looked the same. I mean, it was called Wrestlemania- the name on the marquee still says *sports entertainment*. There was a ring, and there were men pretending to grapple for fictional reasons- this much was certain. Even some of the names were the same; there was the Undertaker, and HHH .

If you were watching from across the room, half looking at your phone, half paying attention, maybe you'd have been convinced... but, not me. Unfortunately, I had made the ugly mistake of taking the fake-event *too seriously*, watching *too closely*; expecting *to be* entertained.

Watching closely, you see the little differences. Like how the steel guard rail has been replaced with pillows. Gone were the natural promos given by the likes of Jake "The Snake" Roberts and Dusty Rhodes, replaced with stilted, awful monologues. The fake grappling looked faker than ever; closer to a collaborative stunt show than an actual representation of two men pretending to fight.

There were no badass heels like "Ravishing" Rick Rude making the audience feel badly about their bodies. And, worst of all, everything on-screen was delivered with a wink-and-nudge- just in case anyone dare take the clown show too seriously.

It was almost as if you recreated an entire movie, shot-for-shot, using non-actors. Everything kind of looked the same while also looking horribly weird and different.

Which begs the question: how much of something can you change without entirely making it something else?

It was only after getting a look at the members of the audience, the "WWE Universe" (I'm throwing up), that something urgent and terrible had occurred to me. There were grown men wearing unicorn horns and holding up signs about hugging. Wrestling fans were never known for their *own* masculinity, but part of the allure of professional wrestling was being *drawn to the display* of masculinity.

When "Ravishing" Rick Rude comes out to the ring looking greased and ripped, as if he just fucked every girlfriend in a twenty-five mile radius, while calling you a sweathog, you were powerless against his heavy verbiage. You were forced into taking the only action available: booing and hurling

insults. When The Ultimate Warrior hits the ring as a paragon of positive masculinity, you're naturally on his side. If Rude cheats to win, it's intrinsically understood that his decision was based on the idea that cheating was a last resort.

Despite Rude being more masculine than the audience, Warrior had proven himself more masculine than Rude, forcing Rude to exploit Warrior's honor (and the naivete) to garner a cheap victory. So even if the audience is deficient in their own masculinity and unable to compete with Rude, they can feel both satisfaction and anger in how Rude was unable to defeat the Warrior without cheating. And when the Warrior finally gets his revenge, the victory is even more rewarding.

This is the basis of the emotional roller-coaster that is professional wrestling.

Professional wrestling fans are looking for a dramatization of combat where larger-than-life figures play out different masculine archetypes which the wrestling fan can attach himself to and interact with. This is why the hardcore wrestling fan will dress like, mimic, and act out the machismo of their favorite wrestler; they want to see themselves in the charisma of Ric Flair or the irresistible force of Hulk Hogan.

It's easy to compare bad guy wrestlers with the alpha male bullies the wrestling fan has encountered throughout his life; the quarterback who screws the cheerleaders, or the asshole boss who gives everyone a hard time. The undeserving characters who cheat to win and always manage to find a way to come out on top, like the Honky Tonk Man, are infuriating because we've all known someone like that. Professional wrestling can present these archetypes and also manage to end the story with the honorable wrestler triumphing.

“Men seek out substitutes for fighting...men ritualize play fighting with sport.”

In Jack Donovan's meditation on authentic masculinity, “The Way of Men,” Donovan defines masculinity as being composed of strength, courage, mastery, and honor. In looking to the archetypes of classic professional wrestlers, we can see where these qualities are either represented or deficient depending on the desired effect.

A wrestler may have strength as their signature quality, something surely masculine, but lack honor- making him the typical *monster heel* like Big Van Vader or Sid. He may have strength but lack courage, like “Hollywood” Hulk Hogan, or even strength without mastery- with which the Ultimate Warrior certainly comes to mind.

Courage is defined by the “will to act in the face of adversity” and is the hallmark of the good guy, babyface wrestler. When you see blood in professional wrestling, the idea is typically to make the babyface seem more courageous. We feel sympathy for bleeding “Stone Cold” Steve Austin as he battles through Bret Hart's sharpshooter at Wrestlemania 13 due to the depths of his courage.

When a babyface fights through the odds of entering the Royal Rumble at number one, we love him even more when he shows the courage to persevere- a storyline used again and again because it's just that effective. And when a heel exploits the courageousness of a babyface wrestler, like HHH leaving Mick Foley laying in a pool of blood, we hate them even more. Courage without strength is, of course, another hallmark of wrestling storytelling- the hapless geek who refuses to quit- and we've

seen that play out in pathetic old Mankind before transforming into his badass alter ego Cactus Jack. Having mastery over anything- be it a subject, skill, or art- is something which is revered in the masculine realm. This is why professional wrestling has a *World Champion*- and the wrestling fan will either respect (or fear) the champion who conquered the competition using legitimate (fake legitimate?) means to the title... or despise the cowardly villain who cheated to win. The modern fan can even look to the all-star ring technicians like Ric Flair or Bryan Danielson and respect them for their mastery of the carnival.

Another hallmark of the professional wrestler is their sense of honor, or lack of honor. Where they fall on the barometer of honor is what ultimately decides their fate as either hero or villain.

For these archetypes to be effective, and for the emotional component of wrestling to resonate, the wrestling fan must be given the chance to become invested in taking the show seriously. The current product lacks this depth, almost to the point of making fun of the viewer for bothering to try. Even if the classic characters of the old era had cartoonish personas, they were still believably human. Modern wrestlers do not feel like three-dimensional characters or *actual human beings*. Even if someone like Kamala had a silly gimmick, I was still able to believe that he was a Ugandan savage- and there was a sense of danger to that. I was able to believe that Mr. Perfect was really that smug, or that Macho Man genuinely had a screw loose. I was able to get emotionally invested in wins and losses, dramatic triumphs and devastating disappointments, because the characters ultimately felt human.

Maybe the overt masculinity of classic wrestling has become too venomous for a modern audience. Maybe advertisers need a softer product to sell. Or maybe times have changed, and all forms of entertainment are being stripped of masculinity as our cultural testosterone whimpers along on life support- while men dressed as unicorns try to capture the greatness of what has since faded.

When it used to be better.

From the Arcade to the Girlfriend Experience

June 1, 2017 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

If the months between high school and college represent a budding sunrise of emerging freedom, the summer between graduate school and real life becomes your last chance at tasting it; time to get sick on Halloween candy because tomorrow is the start of winter. I spent these months on a friend's couch playing "Mario Baseball" (2005)- I regret nothing.

Video games are meant to be played socially. The long extinct shopping mall arcades of the 1980s were social hotspots buzzing with life as teenagers would crowd around machines watching the cool kids do their thing amongst the flashing lights and buzzing sounds of games like Q*Bert and Centipede, telling their own kind big fish tales of forgotten high scores; "...if only they'd left the Frogger machine plugged in, then you'd see..."

Consoles were originally packaged with two controllers for this very reason- video games were meant to be played together. In fact, a two-player mode was so important to the programmer who ported "Pac-Man" (1982) to the Atari 2600 that he mistakenly sacrificed game quality and playability to accommodate the game's social aspect, producing an atrocious home-version and ultimately killing the market until the rise of the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985- a console which also came packed with two controllers.

It wasn't until the Nintendo 64 (1996) that packing a new console with two controllers became a needless expense. The rise of the single-player gaming adventure wasn't necessarily a bad move- longer, more intricate stories were able to be told and players were rewarded with franchise games like "The Legend of Zelda" and "Final Fantasy," which took the genre to places unfathomable to those shopping mall arcade heroes. Experiencing the kind of dread and solitude a game like "Metroid" offers wouldn't be as effective with a second player- some quests are meant to be taken alone.

None of this would matter if the larger story wasn't so fucking sad. We aren't just playing video games alone- we're doing practically everything alone. To the point where normies are even red pilled on the topic. In September of 2015, "Scholastic Scope"- a leftist propaganda rag published for middle school kids- ran a story titled "Is Technology Killing our Friendships," citing the uniquely modern paradox of being more connected than ever through smart phones and social media all while feeling horrifically lonely.

You know it's a thing if normies are picking up on it; the rarely seen "woke af normie," who'd love nothing more than to sit you down over a root beer and tell you a thing or two about a thing or two. Fucking kill me.

While the larger story of the N64 became its beloved multiplayer games like "Mario Kart"- anyone who had the system surely has tales of all-night, code red fueled "Goldeneye" sessions (no OddJob!)- but this became the last gasp of true social gaming. The rise of the monstrous PlayStation 2 and X-Box consoles in the early twenty-first century placed the in-person multi-player game as a lower-priority in favor of the solitary experience. And when high-speed internet became affordable, the idea of social gaming was relegated to playing online- which is every bit as satisfying as using Facebook.

Along with gloriously dingy mall arcades, and all-night multiplayer gaming marathons, the gritty slasher movie had its heyday in the 1980s and was all but dead by the mid-1990s. As much as they'll try to revise the formula, go back to the drawing board, put a group of teenagers in the woods and have them hunted down by a madman, it doesn't work. The audience is too smart for a straight slasher movie, and the characters behave like they know they're in a movie; the modern slasher can't help but be tinged with an awful irony. You won't have that "what the hell are these things?" moment in a modern zombie movie because it's assumed that the characters have actually *seen zombie movies*.

Something like "Friday the 13th: Part 2" (1981) works because you don't get the sense that the movie is embarrassed to be *Friday the 13th: Part 2*; the characters aren't acting like they're *too hip* to be in Friday the 13th: Part 2. The movie isn't self-aware, and that's part of its charm- there was an earnest kind of innocence to it.

But even if I won't get another classic slasher movie in cinematic form, it's still possible as a video game. Given the mechanics of a video game, and how what we take for granted in a movie can suddenly become a selling point, like a spooky atmosphere, you can present the basics of what made the classic slasher great without seeming dated. The non-ironic, straight up slasher movie can live on as a video game- and it does exactly that with the newly released Friday the 13th game.

While I haven't touched a video game in years, I was super excited for the Friday the 13th game! It looked like everything I'd ever want in a Friday the 13th game; you are a counselor in the woods at Camp Crystal Lake, Jason is on the loose hunting you down, what the fuck do you do? It couldn't get more straight to the point.

And I was so excited for the game that I wanted to see some real gameplay footage in the days leading to its release, so I jumped on YouTube and found people playing it live! "Video game streamers," apparently that's a thing, where you kick back and have all the fun of watching other people play video games.

I clicked on a stream of a rather cute girl, doing her cute girl thing, while trying to evade Jason- and when he'd get too close, she'd squeal "don't do it! I'm a good girl!" and isn't that adorable? Admittedly this was entertaining, and I certainly got a look at the game... when something kind of funny happened. Someone tipped her \$10- for what, I wasn't quite sure- and she enthusiastically squealed "ten dolla holla," and then reminded viewers that for \$20 she'd write their name on a post-it note and put it on her wall. If you subscribe to her channel, your name even pops up on the screen! And would you believe, in the same stream, someone tipped her \$100?

Tits. I was certain it had something to do with tits, but as time ticked by and more money came in, there wasn't a single mention of tits *nor* ass. Not one. I had to investigate.

So why are people throwing money at a girl for playing video games on the internet? If you go to her website, she says:

YouTube allows me to combine all of my **passions**: people, gaming, and making videos. But I believe I'm *different* from most YouTubers out there. I have been given a platform and I want to use that platform to **change** people's lives for the better. I want people to know that whenever they click on one of my videos, that they'll **laugh**, they'll feel **encouraged**, and they'll feel like part of a **family**. I want to inspire people.

And suddenly we take the giant leap from “video game streamer” to cult leader.

Lets closely examine the language she uses. She starts by stating that this is a *passion*, which is a stab at claiming authenticity. To further drive this to the point of absurdity, she says she’s “*different* from most YouTubers out there,” despite being pretty much exactly the same. This type of claim is not unlike the cool girl who has “esoteric qualities that made her special and unique, while those other girls are basic and shallow.”

But not only will One_Shot_Gurl let you watch her play video games, she’ll also change your life for the better! By watching her play video games! You’ll laugh, and feel *encouraged*, and feel like you’re part of a family.

Feel like you’re part of a fucking family.

What she doesn’t need to mention- it’s as self-evident as a vagina- is that she’s really selling lonely men the *girlfriend experience*.

The girlfriend experience is a uniquely male desire; there is no female equivalent, or *boyfriend experience*, as most women are able to garner beta-male orbiters to effectively serve that purpose (or gay men for the fat ones). Think of the girlfriend experience as the x-factor that separates a good stripper from a bad stripper- it isn’t her body, or her dancing skill- it’s if she can make you *believe* the fantasy is real. That her flirtation with you is genuine, her desire matches your own, and the fleeting moments you spend with her are *different* and special.

It’s a lot easier to sell sex than it is to sell a fantasy, and while One_Shot_Gurl is keeping her clothes on she’s selling you the fantasy of friendship, family, and the idea of having an adorable gamer girlfriend who makes you feel special for \$10 \$20 (you want your name on a post-it note stuck to her wall, right?).

When asked during her show why she likes being a streamer, she said it’s because she can “set her own hours.” After all, this is her job. And while she isn’t a stripper or a prostitute, she’s selling the same fundamentals, only dishonestly.

For the record, One_Shot_Gurl does seem quite genuine and really very nice, and I felt a slight tinge of guilt writing this post being critical of her... that maybe I’m wrong, and maybe her streaming really does come from a place of sincerity and passion and maybe, just maybe, that stripper really did want a piece of old “Bad” Billy.

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Forgiving Your Father and “Return of the Jedi” (1983)

August 12, 2017 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“All the times that I cried, keeping all the things I knew inside. It’s hard, but it’s harder to ignore it.”

Re-watching “Return of the Jedi” (1983) as an adult makes the scene where Luke burns the body of his father stand out as the true climax of the original trilogy- the culmination of Luke’s journey. While it may seem tragic that sister Leia wasn’t there beside him, this was something Luke had to do alone. After all, it was only Luke who saw the human face of his father and felt his humanity- and aside from the situational limitations of the movie’s plot, only Luke would have ever been able to understand his father on that level. Luke delivering his father’s funeral was his final rite of passage into manhood, and the true return of the Jedi.

Every man will have to bury his father, but will every man have understood his father when the time comes? The evolution of a man’s relationship with his father mirrors Luke’s struggle with Vader throughout the course of Star Wars- from not truly knowing him through the inevitable conflict of a young man’s teenage years. If you’re lucky you’ll have a moment where the pieces come together and you see your father as a part of yourself- but not everyone gets there... and, unlike a Hollywood movie, the story may end first.

Luke learning his father was Darth Vader, galactic overlord, was shocking enough to cause a suicide attempt. The perceived failing of his father was more important to Luke than Vader’s *identity* as father. Culturally we understand men primarily through the contributions which they offer- only women are bestowed with inherent social value. Vader failed Luke by virtue of running the Empire- to silly Luke, this was the antithesis of value- and thus invalidated Vader’s status as a father to him. Of course you would have jumped at the chance to “rule the galaxy together as father and son,” but Luke was a stupid motherfucker.

Our modern conception of fatherhood may be less dramatic, but it’s not very different. When a respect for fatherhood isn’t something institutionalized- ours is a world where *Father Knows Best* is treated like a bad joke- we default to a father only being worth what he’s able to contribute. Problematically, this contribution is judged by those who may not be old enough to understand the bigger picture- the reason why unpopular decisions are necessary.

Women raise children, men raise adults.

The connection a child has to their mother is drastically different than the relationship *developed* with their father. Like a woman’s social value, the relationship she has with her children is inherent- bestowed by nature. Biologically, a man is a sperm donar- fatherhood is a social construct.

So it follows that a boy will first get to know his father through the lens of his mother. The purpose of the patriarchy as a familial structure wasn’t male dominance through brute force, having women relegated to a role somewhere between sex slave and house keeper, but rather a way to guarantee that fathers wouldn’t be excluded.

The expectation for a wife was to respect her husband- “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health”- in our modern world it even seems appropriate, and rather pressing, to add “in times of alpha” and “moments of beta.”

The father you knew wasn't the man who attracted your mother- attracting a woman is the easy part. You put your best foot forward- you accentuate the positives and hide the negatives; you do everything in your power to embody the fantasy she has of the *perfect man*. It isn't an act- this man is someone you'd like to be, and her attraction makes you feel confident in that identity- you strive to be her rock.

But life is hard, and every man will stumble; he'll feel defeated, he'll question himself- and he'll find it increasingly difficult to hide these feelings from his wife. When respect was her responsibility it may have encouraged him to fight, but in the wild west of a post-patriarchy, she'll more likely resent this weakness. In the dance of mating and courtship, women are those who select, and she'll be irritated that she chose a buffoon. In a world where divorce is an easy escape, she'll wonder *what if*.

I remember standing next to the eggs, at the supermarket with my mom, when I was twelve. We ran into my best friend's mom. She was buying eggs too. They got to chatting, and within a minute or so, she tells my mom that she never wanted to marry my friend's dad- he was a good guy, but he was *boring*- he was her back-up plan. Her main choice wasn't interested, but now she wonders *what if*. Then we picked out our eggs and went to the check-out.

In all fairness, the guy was seriously boring.

The father you met was a man who had been through a lot- was the mother you had the type to respect him through his struggles, or wonder *what if*?

Maybe I'm a cynic, but the latter seems more likely- in which case, a son's perception of his father will be initially tainted by his mother's disappointment. As a teenager, and the inevitable conflict those years contain, a poor foundation for this relationship will only worsen. If you think your father is a weak loser, suddenly a weak loser is telling you what you can and can't do- for reasons that aren't immediately apparent to you.

And that's if your father was strong enough to not mentally check-out of an unwinnable situation. Shaping the image of your father through the eyes of your mother created a man only worth what he could do for you. His failings became magnified; you defined him through his shortcomings. As implicit as these feelings may have been, they seeped into the cracks of your relationship and weakened it. This may have further damaged a man already struggling to be the father and husband he needed to be.

You surely had a moment, as a young adult, where you saw parts of him in yourself and were horrified; like Luke in “The Empire Strikes Back” (1980), when he sees his own face in Vader's mask- the *fear* of becoming your father. This was something you wanted to fight against. Your father was a weak man, your father was the villain.

I remember when I first saw things in my father that my mother couldn't see- maybe things my father, himself, couldn't understand. As I got older, I became more in touch with not only my

feelings, by what was under the surface of particular emotions- *why* I felt the way I felt. The insecurities, the sadness, the self-doubt. A marker for adulthood can be understanding the true challenge of adulthood- understanding that a man's life is defined by struggle.

Take a moment to recognize that your father was alone in that struggle. He didn't have the connectivity and resources of modern technology which has served to foster a re-emergence of masculinity and an understanding of gender dynamics. He was taught that his generation embodied a better way of thinking, and a good man was one who embraced this progression. Gone was the responsibility to lead a relationship- his generation would *listen* to their women and treat them as *equal partners*. A good man was a compassionate man who respected his wife's strength and independence, and in-turn she would forgive his moments of failure and weakness.

Just like you, all your father wanted was to be a good man.

And as this way of thinking slowly destroyed him, it was all he knew.

When Luke looks down at his robotic hand, reminiscent of his robotic father, after striking him down as the Emperor cackles, he finally gets it. Life is hard, and Vader was only a man- not an impossible ideal to embody, nor a man only worth the sum of his contributions. Vader was a man, like Luke, and a man only Luke could understand- if not for Luke's empathy and compassion, Vader was alone in the galaxy.

It may not be as dramatic, but it's just as heroic- your father only has you.

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The Entitled Boomer and “Vacation” (1983)

November 11, 2017 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“I found out long ago, it’s a long way down the holiday road”

Believe it or not, Clark W. Griswold was pretty fucking masculine. Sure, “Vacation” (1983) featured a kind of proto-idiot Dad, a trope that would become the standard by 1990- but Clark was a different kind of idiot Dad.

Clark was a masculine idiot Dad.

“Vacation” relied on one-joke with Clark, but luckily it was a good one. When Clark would do something stupid, royally screwing things up or putting his family in danger, he would say “I meant to do that” and move on.

This took many different forms. When Clark goes to trade in his car for a new station wagon before the trip- one he surely researched meticulously (my own Dad has a “Consumer Reports” subscription to this day)- he gets the old “bait and switch,” being forced into buying an ugly clunker after his own car is ~~traded in~~ destroyed. To dispute this by waiting for the car he ordered to come in would ruin his family’s vacation- so what does Clark do?

He sells his wife on the ugly clunker by using the same line that the scam-artist car salesman used on him: “*You may think you hate it now, honey, but wait until you drive it.*” Or, in other words, “I meant to do that.” He isn’t apologetic, he doesn’t admit defeat- he takes inventory of the situation and moves forward. This is the masculine approach- yes, even if you’re an idiot.

A masculine man makes the best of every situation. He doesn’t whine, or complain, or wish things had turned out differently- he understands his surroundings and takes things from there. A man need not admit his mistakes when he’s ready to deal with their consequences. That was five minutes ago, get over it, and let’s figure things out.

Using this formula, Clark manages to get the family from Chicago to California. The traditional family odyssey to a big, ostentatious, tourist trap theme park- a vacation staple for the Boomer. If you had two weeks off from work, you took the clan to Wally World. It’s just what you did.

Only for the Griswolds, things go south when they find Wally World closed for repairs- and this is where Clark goes off script, breaking his implicit philosophy of the glass being half-full. Instead of making the best of a bad situation, Clark buys a gun, takes the park security guard hostage, and leads a rogue tour of the park.

Because Clark is not only a masculine idiot, Clark is also an entitled boomer.

Boomers were the first generation to be told that their feelings mattered- and, of course, that they mattered a lot. Their parents weren’t just *their parents*, but rather a subject of critique and derision. See, the Boomer was sore that their parents weren’t quite the parents that they would have liked. Instead of moving on and making the best of it, they bitched and stewed because of *feelings*.

The consequence to this became the burden of consciously beating their parents at everything. While Mom and Dad may have been working class, the Boomer went to college and got a prestigious office job. While Mom and Dad may have let gender roles dictate their marriage, the Boomer's relationship was an *equal partnership*. While Mom and Dad may have been distant and authoritative, the Boomer parent was flexible and accommodating.

Boomer parents understood that part of growing up involves access to a variety of experiences- experiences which their own parents may have overlooked or denied. Childhood shouldn't be disciplined- childhood is about fun, and letting "kids be kids." Teenage years are about expressing individuality, and "finding yourself." Sending your kid away to college isn't about classes, but rather *experience*.

If Boomers understand anything, they understand entitlement.

Boomers found out the hard way that it's all much easier said than actually done. They were more like their parents than they wanted to admit, but unlike their parents they became a bastardized mixture of tradition and progression- often retaining the worst of each paradigm.

To support the suburban mansion, both Boomer parents worked long hours at their prestigious office jobs. MTV handled their parenting duties, and to their befuddlement, their kids matured into detached and apathetic jerks. Despite their encouraging individuality, it was expressed in ways that horrified and confused them. And, on top of everything, their kids even had gripes with their progressive parenting and feelings of their own- and they mattered *a lot*.

Boomers quickly learned that despite trying to embody the polar opposite of their own up-bringing, what they created for themselves was a hot mess. The Boomer expected to "have it all" at bargain prices- the lucrative career, the gorgeous house, the successful children- and ended up with miserable chaos.

If day-to-day life was a losing battle in creating the perfect home life, they scaled their expectations back. If they couldn't have it all, they were willing to settle. A few days strewn throughout the year, the hapless Boomer would put the pieces together in an attempt to experience blissful perfection: holidays and vacations.

And this is what Clark Griswold- Boomer dad extraordinaire- had in mind with the doomed journey to Wally World. When wife Ellen laments the decision to drive, Clark remains insistent on the road trip. This wasn't about convenience- this was tradition.

Clark wasn't going to be a travel cuck.

There was more at stake with the trip than family time. For Clark, the vacation was about validating his identity as a father, and his identity as a *man*.

Clark wanted to feel like the true patriarch of his family- a feeling that had almost certainly evaded him to that point. Clark wanted to be the kind of man who drove his family cross-country; captain of the ship and architect of memories. He wanted to bask in the glory of bringing the ideal vacation to life on the highways of America. Clark was searching for his masculine identity; a feeling which Clark felt *entitled* to having.

When I was growing up, my friends and I would talk about the future as if it were paint-by-numbers: *when* you're married, *when* you have a house and a family, what life would be like *when* you have kids. There wasn't any talk of *how* one would arrive at the destination because there didn't seem like there had to be- these things just happen on their own. They have to happen; they're *supposed* to happen. Like Clark's own belief that a family road trip had to be perfect, we felt entitled to a comfortable life unfolding gradually as we enjoyed the ride.

And here I am, on a Saturday night, in an empty apartment, writing an essay on a thirty-year-old comedy. You think Boomers are bad? Gen-X is just starting to feel the sting of disappointment, and this shit is gonna get ugly.

Celia Shits: Pre-Modern Portraits of Men and Women

November 26, 2017 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Oh, poor Tim the ostler! The humble stable buck hopelessly in love with his boss's gorgeous, red lipped daughter. Like that was ever gonna happen, and she's in love with the bad boy Highwayman anyway, a dapper thief with a taste for the high-life; the ostler never had a chance. So, what does our scorned, low-born, beta-male do? The only thing he can- Tim calls the police, another group of men more masculine than he, to properly dispose of the Highwayman.

Thus is the premise of Alfred Noyes's narrative poem "[The Highwayman](#)" (1906). You may have guessed that our poor, law-abiding ostler isn't quite the hero of the story- that role is more closely filled by the titular scoundrel, with the lesson being that we don't judge the morality of actions as much as we judge the value of those committing them.

And Tim, as a poor stable-hand, doesn't have much in the way of value- he's disposable and invisible. In modern terminology, which is ironically also Old English terminology, Tim is a *cuck*- and if you want any chance at sexual success, you can't be a cuck.

A common misconception for those newly introduced to the reality of how men and women interact is thinking that this understanding is a product of modernity- perhaps an outgrowth of psychology, or an unintended side-effect of the social sciences. While the internet certainly provides a forum for discussion, the basics of what we know as *the red pill* have been spread in hushed whispers and over chilled ale at men's clubs throughout the course of western civilization. And while there was certainly a higher tolerance for discussing the reality of the world the way it really is, as opposed to our hilariously heavy-handed modern tropes painting women as *brilliant warriors* and *benevolent scientists*, it still wasn't considered polite conversation. Even if you were treating women like children in the Eighteenth Century, you probably still wanted to pretend like you weren't.

These lessons were peppered through our history and literature- as long as you know what to look for, as I do. Take Curley, son of a wealthy land-owner, in John Steinbeck's dustbowl classic "[Of Mice and Men](#)" (1937). To the uninitiated, or the majority of high school English teachers, it's easy to write Curley off as a one-dimensional antagonist- an entitled bully lording his privilege over the wage-cuck farm hands. While that isn't exactly untrue, *why* Curley has such a nasty attitude is never addressed, which becomes a lesson onto itself. Culturally, we don't allow disposable men to have such depth, we don't rationalize their actions, with the belief that being an asshole is an end in itself. Hitler was *just an asshole*- nothing more to see here, folks.

But Curley's problem was the same thing types like Harvey Weinstein and Louie C.K. are finding out the hard way (okay, maybe not *exactly* the same)- money and power aren't a substitute for *being attractive*, a quality which can't be bought. Sure Curley was able to snatch up a budget starlet for marriage, his kind of wealth was a rare find in the depression, but that still didn't mean she wanted to fuck him. That privilege, true privilege- the genetic kind- was reserved for resident alpha-male cowboy Slim. And while that pissed off poor, old, beta-boy Curley- just like Tim the ostler- he was rather impotent in his ability to take on the ranch's dominant male. And, so, he was a prick to everyone else. As the Manosphere saying goes, "alpha fucks, beta bucks"; the poor bastard was sexually frustrated.

"Of Mice and Men" is littered with red pill realities, from alpha-male Slim getting sexual access to

Curley's Wife, as cucked Curley foots the bill, to proto-MGTOW George Milton who thinks women are more trouble than they're worth; "You give me a good whore house every time. A guy can go in an' get drunk and get ever'thing outa his system all at once, an' no messes."

Modern black magic is understanding human nature. In a world of unreality where people are unconscious of the invisible currents that guide them, having the ability to identify these forces can allow you to tell a tremendous amount about someone from a few scant details. Street hustlers and psychics have exploited this idea for years, because it works; we are not unique snow-flakes, we are predictable animals.

As you develop a greater understanding for the quirks of human nature, you end up feeling more connected to our shared history of being rather nasty human animals. TLDR: Men want to fuck, and women want to get fucked by someone better than you. Your best bet is hoping she'll settle.

While it's tempting to believe that modern women are wildly off the mark- pouting at their iPhones in Snapchat selfies- compared to their Victorian counterparts, it's really more or less all the same. Women take what they were given genetically, and make up for any deficiencies with manipulation. Reality is only the foundation, the rest is *smoke and mirrors*. And just like professional wrestling, only the most naive are clapping wildly thinking it's all real.

But what would we have done before the internet? How could we have spread the word most effectively?! By writing a poem, obviously, and Jonathan Swift did just that with "The Lady's Dressing Room" (1732)- reminding us that women wear tons of make-up, and take big smelly dumps.

The naive Stephron bumbles his way into his girlfriend's bathroom and is shocked to find that it's fucking disgusting, a fact that any man who's cohabited with a woman can certainly attest. Tons of make-up, and Stephron thought she was a natural beauty, dirty towels soaked in sweat, and a chamber pot filled with shit- a revelation indeed: "Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!"

So, quite a day for Stephron. Swift takes us home at the poem's end by reminding us that even tulips can grow in dung- and what a feat that is. Even if it's deceptive, it isn't malicious- despite late night Manosphere message board conspiracy theories. A woman's role is to attract the highest quality of man to ensure the best genetics for the continuation of our species. Men want the big show, they want the smoke and mirrors- they want to clap wildly for the unrealistic, partial reality of female beauty. It's such beauty that push men to be their best, and build civilizations- just don't get too caught up in thinking it's all real, or you'll look like an asshole.

Underachievers: Nirvana, Green Day, and Generation-X

May 10, 2018 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Toward the end of 1990, you couldn't get away from Simpsons merchandise- from posters, to pajama sets, to pencil toppers- mostly featuring Generation-X's very first mainstream media icon, Bart Simpson. You see, before "The Simpsons" became obsessed with Homer's gradual decline into retardation, the show's initial protagonist was skateboarding prankster Bart- the country's first take on their next generation.

And those savvy Simpsons writers seemed to have nailed it. While Bart's driving characteristic was apathy, it was a kind of *self-aware* apathy. Bart wasn't stupid, he was an "underachiever"- he was capable of more but consciously chose less. This hyper-aware apathy would become the generation's defining trait.

The following year Kurt Cobain was hailed as the "voice of Generation-X," releasing Nirvana's seminal "Nevermind" record. The stand out single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," served to define the generation with the very same Bart Simpson-like feeling of self-aware apathy: "I feel stupid and contagious; here we are now, entertain us."

Generation-X was most proud of the *understanding* they had that they were disappointing. Not only did this understanding negate the negative implications of being so disappointing, according to them- if you know you're a loser, you're not really a loser- but it was also the foundation of their identity. Generation-X was too cool for their own good.

And even if that line in "Teen Spirit" seemed to sum up the zeitgeist of the generation quite nicely, it turned out that Cobain wasn't actually their spokesman after all. You wouldn't know it if you didn't live through it, but Nirvana took on a *mythology* after Cobain's suicide in the middle of 1994. This was understandable- as grim as it may be, is there anything more authentic than suicide? And authenticity was the holy grail for the detail-obsessed, Holden Caulfield-like Gen-Xer; Cobain offing himself put Nirvana miles ahead of their peers, and gave their music an added dimension of reality.

But the truth is that Nirvana had already begun to fall apart in the months leading up to the suicide. Their third studio album, "In Utero," was met with a disappointing reception- partially by design. Cobain had become obsessed with the type of person who would buy a Nirvana record. Never before had *audience* been a consideration for a rock star, who usually only cared about pushing enough records to sell out suburban ice-hockey arenas. No one stopped to consider who was actually *buying* the records, because, why would any sane person care?

This type of anxiety was unique to Generation-X; success in itself wasn't enough, it had to be the *right kind* of success- just as unconscious apathy may be losery, but self-aware apathy suddenly takes on a sheen of hip irony. Since Cobain wasn't selling records to the *right kind* of Nirvana fan- something he had already cried about in the liner notes to "Incesticide"- Cobain would consciously write a shitty, off-putting record with vocals infamously "low in the mix" in order to whittle the band's audience down to a personality type Cobain was more comfortable with.

Maybe Cobain earned Nirvana's place in the rock-and-roll pantheon by sheer will and determination- he was authentically obsessed with authenticity. It was around this time that old man Axl Rose tried to compete with this updated- albeit neurotic- conception of cool by covering a Charles Manson song

on his band's rather terrible cover album, "The Spaghetti Incident?" Poor Boomer Axl was out of his depth, although it's tough to compete with someone who has nothing to lose... as if you'd want to. Kurt Cobain was too cool for his own good.



Green Day will go down historically as the less regarded rags-to-riches alternative rock Cinderella story of the 1990s. Emerging from the shadow of Cobain's suicide, Green Day shot to stardom over the Summer of 1994 and by the end of the year were selling out suburban ice-hockey arenas. So popular were the Berkeley trio that they single-handedly resurrected punk rock, transformed it into something commercially viable, and gave an entire generation of misfit teenagers their first job at Hot Topic. Even old Johnny Rotten owes a debt to Green Day- in the wake of punk rock's anything-but-chaotic return, the Sex Pistols cashed in on a glitzy, establishment-approved, MTV-promoted reunion tour. God save the Queen indeed, only this time they really meant it.

Thematically, Green Day had a lot in common with Nirvana. Both were fascinated with nihilism, melancholy, and angst- a hallmark of the generation. However, unlike Cobain who felt a sense of loss and betrayal when confronting what he considered the meaninglessness of modernity, Green Day reveled in disaster. Imagining them both as teenagers at a house party- Nirvana is sulking alone, smoking cigarettes and Green Day is taking hits of canned air and giggling wildly.

So suicide wasn't in the cards, an idea that must have thrilled their record company. However, it wasn't all giggles and huffing; despite signing to a corporate record label, filming music videos for MTV, and booking an arena tour- surprise, surprise- like Cobain, Green Day suddenly had a problem with the kind of person buying their records. On their first arena tour, to punish those in attendance, the band booked the aggressively homosexual, "queercore" group Pansy Division to open for them and taunt the audience with songs like "The Butt Fuckers of Rock and Roll," and "Smells Like Queer Spirit."

Like the bratty teenager who didn't get the right kind of Corvette for their "Super Sweet Sixteen," despite their quick and easy ascendance to the top of the alt-rock mountain, it wasn't the *right kind* of success. And just like Nirvana, Green Day penned their very own audience shedding record. Released

a year after “Dookie,” “Insomniac” did its job rather well- it wasn’t great, didn’t have a hit single, and ultimately turned their audience against them.

Despite all the nihilistic posturing, it’s important to remember that Generation-X wasn’t the one with all the school shootings. To an extent, the murky attitude was as shallow as the cuts on their wrists- it was a fashion accessory, it was an act, it was LARPing. Even if they didn’t become noteworthy go-getters, Gen-X eventually had to grow up into lame adults.

A few years after Green Day did everything they could to torture their audience, they had a song featured on the finale of “Seinfeld” which was viewed by over seventy million people. If selling out is inevitable, you may as well cut the best deal you can and get on with it. Just like Gen-X, Green Day were growing up into lame adults- turns out they weren’t very cool after all.

Green Day continued to be the voice of the generation as they all hurdled toward taking center stage as the world’s grown-ups. When Generation-X thought making fun of George W. was the height of woke political awareness while rolling their eyes at Fox News, Green Day released “American Idiot.” Gen-X was still bent on thinking they were the coolest person in the room, only now with a different definition of cool to keep up with.

Generation-X became the first generation to be obsessed their own identity. Whether wanting to be perceived as self-aware, ironic losers or “woke” political analysts, thinking they were the *right kind* of cool was very important to them. And if aging Gen-X wanted to see a gaudy Broadway musical, as all lame adults inevitably do, Green Day was there for them again- “American Idiot” was transformed into a musical and had a run on Broadway for the Gen-Xer who thought they were too cool for “Guys and Dolls.”

There will never be a Generation-X president. They weren’t a generation interested in changing the world- as long as they have the right emoji reaction to this week’s tragedy on their Facebook profile, that’s good enough for them. Gen-X is neither the hero nor the villain of the story; they didn’t do as much damage as their big-brother the Boomer, nor are they on the front line of the culture war like their sister, the Millennial- they’re much too cool for that, anyway.



Horror and Fairy Tales: “Halloween” (1978) and “Wes Craven’s New Nightmare” (1994)

November 24, 2018 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Perhaps the most important lesson for a young girl is on her emerging sexuality- like death and taxes, the biological clock cares not if one is ready for it to strike. When a girl goes through puberty, suddenly making her sexually viable for adult men, not only does her body change but as does the way the world reacts to her. It becomes possible that the same man who had treated her with genuine care and empathy now has his own biologically-driven agenda- complete with duplicitous intentions. Watch a clumsy man talk confidently to a child but fumble nervously with a sexually mature woman- also with puberty comes power.

However, not every lesson can be taught. One learns to be patient only through experience- patience is a lesson that *cannot* be taught. While you can try to tell a little girl on the cusp of puberty that her world is about to change, drastically, and that this new world comes with its share of dangers, it may be easier for her to process this through the subconscious language of the fairy tale.

Fairy Tales are written to speak to the emotional language of children- to present a problem that is both vague and foreign on the surface, but highly relatable to the child’s subconscious fears, and then to provide the child with practical, cautionary advice for problems yet to come or coping strategies for problems which have no solution.

In John Carpenter’s horror masterpiece “Halloween” (1978), Laurie Strode may not be ready for male sexuality, but it’s certainly ready for her.

Unlike movies that came after “Halloween,” Carpenter wasn’t trying to moralize sexuality- Laurie’s friends aren’t killed *because* they have sex, but they have sex to draw a contrast between teenage girls who are sexually realized and the virginal, pre-sexual Laurie. At seventeen years old, it’s possible that a *late-bloomer* may have only just become biologically mature while her friends had gone through puberty much sooner- thus having more time to mentally process the shift from girl to woman.

While Laurie is interested in boys, she doesn’t yet possess the sexual confidence to interact with them *as men*. When she learns that friend Annie told Ben Tramer of the crush Laurie has on him, she makes Annie promise to tell Tramer that it was all a big joke- despite Tramer’s interest in her. It isn’t that Laurie fears rejection- it’s the interaction itself, and all that comes with it, that makes her uncomfortable.

Michael Myers serves as a stand-in for male sexuality. Unlike the inescapable dread of Freddy Krueger, or the force-of-nature that is Jason Voorhees, Myers is a voyeuristic stalker as much as he’s a murderer. Before attempting to kill the girls, he follows them around Haddonfield and watches them from afar- always with exaggerated heavy breathing, as if he’s sexually aroused. The act of murder is Myers’ replacement for rape- he penetrates his victims with a butcher knife.

“Halloween II” (1981) slickly makes reference to the original’s dynamic of a virgin being stalked by a rapist with its ironic use of “Mr. Sandman” as the movie opens:

Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream
Make him the cutest that I’ve ever seen
Give him the word that I’m not a rover
Then tell him that his lonesome nights are over
Sandman, I’m so alone
Don’t have nobody to call my own
Please turn on your magic beam
Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream

In a perfect world, Laurie would have been matched-up with an equally inexperienced Ben Tramer, going on ice cream socials and movie dates, as Laurie slowly grows comfortable with male interaction. However, our world is too often *imperfect*- and Mr. Sandman brings her Michael Myers instead.

“Little Red Riding Hood” also serves as a cautionary tale for pre-pubescent girls warning against the dangers of the adult world. On the way to her grandmother’s cottage, Little Red Riding Hood encounters the Big Bad Wolf- her first experience with danger- and curiously tells him where she’s going. By the time she gets there, the Wolf has already eaten her grandmother and dressed-up in the grandmother’s clothing to trick her.

Although the wolf could have immediately eaten the little girl too, he doesn’t, and instead begins a kind of flirtation with her as she gradually discovers that it isn’t her grandmother at all:

“Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!”
“All the better to hear you with.”
“Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!”
“All the better to see you with.”
“Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!”
“All the better to grab you with!”
“Oh, grandmother, what a horribly big mouth you have!”
“All the better to eat you with!”

Like all children, Little Red Riding Hood has a complex relationship with the adult world. Equally afraid and intrigued, she invites the wolf to pursue her. Similarly, there is a *fascination* in her fear as she realizes that it’s not her grandmother- the caregiver- at the cottage. Little Red Riding Hood subconsciously wants to break away from the safety of her life as a child, but is unaware of the new dangers present in womanhood- the adult world- which time is pulling closer, and like Laurie Strode, doesn’t care whether she’s ready or not.

While some fairy tales function as cautionary advice for the pre-pubescent child as they grow toward adulthood, others serve as coping strategies to manage a child’s emotions. Speaking to a girl’s unconscious emotional state, “Cinderella” is meant to diminish a younger sister’s anxiety in seeing her older sisters blossom sexually and attract mates before she has her own chance to do so- *before* the biological clock has a chance to strike.

“Cinderella” still resonates with girls because it’s written in their own emotional language. What girl *doesn’t* feel like Cinderella- unfairly put upon and abused- even in-spite of typical living conditions? “Cinderella” can be translated into a far more realistic story once the emotional language is decoded:

Cinderella, the youngest of three sisters, feels alienated from the women in her family due to their fully-realized womanhood- a journey which she is only just beginning. To Cinderella, this feels unfair, at best, and cruel and abusive, at worst. In looking at her older, sexually-realized sisters, Cinderella has anxiety over the possibility that she won’t grow into womanhood and thus will never have the chance to attract a husband.

As time progresses, Cinderella eventually goes through puberty and is allowed to attend local mixers. However, since she is between childhood and adulthood, there are limitations on her freedom- Cinderella has a curfew. Like all teenagers, she hates this and is sure things are “just getting good” by the time she has to go home. No matter, though- despite everything, her Prince still finds her, and like most women, Cinderella gets married and lives “happily ever after.”

For young girls, whom everything will very likely work out well for just by virtue of their own existence, the story of “Cinderella” serves to sooth their emotional state and diminish anxieties over their future. While not every young girl will meet a literal prince, or even a princely young man, it’s best she view her husband like one anyway- “Cinderella” was not written with a divorce-culture in mind.

The take-away of “Cinderella” is for a girl to realize that everything good will come in due time, that a quality man will find her interesting and unique, and their wedding will cause bells to “ring throughout the land.”

The deeper end of emotional trauma for children is a fear of death and of the loss of a parent.

While there doesn’t exist an easy way to bring these fears to manageable terms- even for adults- a child can begin to internalize the reality of death and loss through story.

The modern world has made no room for death- and thus, leaves little space for the modern human to understand and internalize death as a part of life. Death doesn’t fit the consumer narrative or the modern aesthetic, and as such, we are ill-prepared to handle notions of our own eventual death or the deaths of our parents.

When Don Bluth made animated movies for children, he would intentionally write an emotionally draining second-act. When I saw “An American Tale” (1986) as a kid, there wasn’t a dry eye in the theater when the little mouse is lead to believe his parents abandoned him. Parental abandonment, of course, is every child’s greatest fear- in addition to being a difficult eventuality. While things work out for the mouse, dealing with the sadness and dread this issue demands, even in the short-term, is ultimately healthy for a child developing emotional resiliency. Compare this to the modern children’s movie where the anthropomorphized airplane who’s ill-suited for racing wins races, or the little bunny ill-suited for police work becomes a police officer- gone is the idea of using the ninety-minutes to aid in developing an emotional tool-kit, replaced by monetizable self-esteem infomercials.

Horror movies can give a child space to deal with their fears in the realm of fantasy while they subconsciously work on bringing the eventual reality of those fears to manageable terms.

In Wes Craven's forgotten masterpiece "Wes Craven's New Nightmare" (1994), the hidden-narrative presents a child who is able to move toward coming to terms with the loss of his father through the use of story and fantasy.

A forerunner to the meta-horror trend that Craven would help launch with "Scream" (1996), and serving as one of the era's last slashers (if it could even truly be considered a slasher), "Wes Craven's New Nightmare" takes place in a world where Craven, Robert Englund, and Heather Langenkamp- looking absolutely stunning- are playing themselves; a world where "A Nightmare on Elm Street" is just a horror movie franchise. Heather begins having Freddy nightmares when it's revealed that her husband, a movie effects artist, is helping design a new glove for a Freddy sequel that Craven is writing.

Things take a dark turn when husband Chase dies in a car accident. Heather believes he was murdered by Freddy, who is coming for her son, Dylan, next.

Certain that Freddy Krueger is going to kill her son, she goes to Wes Craven for help. Craven explains that Krueger is an ancient supernatural entity that was drawn to the "Nightmare" films because he liked the raw evil of the Freddy Krueger character- which served to contain it. The entity was content existing in a treacherous, frightening fantasy realm- but this fantasy was watered down and became too familiar and not very scary, so the entity escaped to reality.

If it sounds like Craven is taking shots at the Looney Tunes-inspired "Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare" (1991), that's because he is- Freddy had gradually become a joke. What had began as a truly frightening modern monster had become sanitized for commercialization- Freddy Krueger squirt guns and stuffies, waving to an audience of toddlers, with a knife-glove meant for molesting them to death, at the Universal Street Parade- imagine a bumbling Wicked Witch of the West taking pratfalls; it doesn't work.

Because Freddy wasn't contained in fantasy meant to scare us, he's become unleashed in reality able to harm us.

Craven is again pointing to the efficacy of horror as a modern means of dealing with the anxieties connected to our fear of death- and modernity's refusal to acknowledge the reality of death. When Dylan begins having bizarre psychotic episodes, the doctor's chief concern is if Heather is showing Dylan her horror movies- not the obvious source of trauma.

The ending of "A Nightmare on Elm Street" (1984) has Nancy turning her back on Freddy, taking away the power Freddy had over her, acknowledging that Freddy only ever existed as a dream. And Nancy was right, if you didn't already know- "A Nightmare on Elm Street" in its entirety is Nancy's nightmare. Like a fairy tale, Craven had a simple lesson at the core of the movie-

don't let your fears control you.

And, if you didn't know, Craven plays the same hand with "New Nightmare." The bulk of the movie is Nancy's nightmare as she grapples with the death of her husband- something so overwhelming that it's easier to initially deal with by framing it in terms of fantasy, and creating an evil puppet-master for her and her son to come together and defeat.

Life without story could be broken down into a series of bullet point instructions, which may seem efficient but would prove ineffective- people need the space and distance that that fantasy can provide. That same space and distance can afford someone the time to mentally process the fears, anxieties, and grief which are overwhelming and incomprehensible. Stories for children need to be more than losers winning despite being losers- stories for children need to begin helping them develop their emotional tool-kit or else there will one day be a world of adults unable to cope with everything that is inevitable.

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On Writing and “The Pussy” (2016)

December 8, 2018 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

When asked for writing advice, Delicious Tacos likes to keep things simple: get up early every morning and write. And there is something to that- the foundation of writing is interpreting the disorganization of the writer’s internal world through language and bringing those ideas to a place of external organization- coming to terms with what is initially termless. This is why keeping a journal is often recommended as a form of therapy.

However, this only explains the *process* of writing- the easiest and most direct way to *become a writer*- rather than explaining what the goal of a writer really is, something that warrants equal examination.

A good writer is tasked with splitting his veins open with a razor blade and covering his keyboard in blood- a prolonged and terrible ritual. You’ll know a piece is finished when your face is numb, eyes unfocused, and body trembling.

You’d think Delicious Tacos would have mentioned something like that- the horrible reality of being on the writing grind- considering I learned it from reading his work.

The only writer worth reading is an honest writer. How close can he cut things to actual reality? *Actual reality* may seem like hyperbole to those who read garbage, but anyone worth being a member of your audience understands that reality is layered and access takes teeth-gnashing grit. How long can you keep your face in a bee’s nest? How long can you last underwater- acknowledging that loneliness and despair are part of the toxic cocktail of progress. You’re a fat woman eating ice-cream in front of her bathroom mirror. Look away and you lose.

You need to understand yourself. You must come to grips with your genuine intentions- burning away the lies you tell yourself to make it past midnight. Understanding who you really are, unless you’re awesome, is going to be fucking awful. Chances are that most of what you know about yourself and your relationships have been total bullshit- fanciful stories and forced narrations which have little relevance to *actual reality*. An honest writer is brutally familiar with the awful person he really is and the meaningless relationships he’s forged.

Once you’re ready to move beyond *the self*, an honest writer must maintain a consistent and accurate understanding of the *outside world*. “You must become a master of human nature,” says Robert Greene, and he’s right. However, understanding this really sucks- long story short, it’s all horrifying and uncomfortable. People are massively flawed, entirely selfish, and have very little autonomy- this includes you (remember, you’re awful), but it also includes everyone you’ve ever loved or respected.

You can now fully diagnose your father’s insecurities, and trace their root to when your mother began chipping away at his sense of masculinity and self-worth. You can understand how your mother was toxified by elements that have nothing to do with your family or community, and were thought up by people whom you’ll never know.

You’ll understand what your ex-girlfriend really thinks of you, even if you remember your time with her “fondly,” and still believe you “had something special.”

You'll come to know the duplicitous nature of everyone around you. You are the only one in-touch with reality and everyone else is to be studied, criticized, and written about.

Being an *honest writer* comes in two parts- both of which must be mastered. Self-knowledge and a firm grip on the way things work are non-negotiable- these are items on the *front-end*. They often exist in fragments within the mind of the writer. Writing is about bringing these fragments to proper form through language- the job of the writer is doing this with elegance and authenticity.

Writing with authenticity, or writing with a *distinct voice*, is what separates the adequate from the potentially great. Having good *content*- having the dibs on how shit really goes down and blasting your audience with hard doses of heavy truth- is cool and all, but doing it with a form so beautiful that the words sound like they're singing to you when read aloud is breath-taking. An authenticity so earthy and visceral that the truth held within seems tangible and so intimate that it feels as though the writer directed the piece to you personally; a truth you can almost hold in your hands.

I'm sure I fuck a ton of girls with herpes. But I punish the good ones for not lying. For doing the right thing. Not only are they cool, always. Not only are they the exact sort of bohemian libertine I want to date. But they do the right thing and they take the hit for it. That's *balls*. A person who suffers for honesty- that's what "hero" means.

I don't remember her name, but I know that she had herpes. No, that isn't the title of a *Japanese porn*, it's real! It's true! I swear it happened, and it was serendipitous. It was beautiful. Beyond coincidence. As if God knew that I had to interact with this sexually compromised woman so I could fully tune into the high-frequency signal that Delicious Tacos was quietly broadcasting- real, genuine truth. Total authenticity. No bullshit veneer between the reader and his words.

You have this moment when you meet a woman with herpes where you think you've really lucked out. Before the big reveal, of course. Where you think you've found this super down to Earth girl who could just shoot the shit with you- no games.

Where you feel comfortable *being yourself* yet still feel as though you're respected as a man. Who has the same sexual proclivities as you; who seemed to have a thing for being humiliated- a shame fetish, I suspected. You think to yourself, *could this be what it means to find a soulmate?* Could this have been my "one and only someone"?

No, stupid, she just has herpes- and much like the burning and irritation it causes her genitals, such is the guilt she feels when she meets someone new.

So, she tells you. She confides in you. You've already built a rapport. She's shown you that she's *different*. She's cool. No pretensions. She thinks it's interesting that you'd get turned on by watching her cry- this is new ground for her. Yes, you could verbally demean her. She's hated herself for so long that it's become intertwined with her sexual identity. Then she tells you about her herpes

because she thinks she's built up some kind of equity with you.

She tells you that you probably already have it- "most people have it," if you didn't know. And if you (somehow) don't already have it, you definitely won't get it from her- she "hardly ever has an outbreak," and when she does it's "barely noticeable."

She tells you these things because she can't bear to lie anymore. The countless men she's spread her leprosy to through silence and omission haunt her dreams. So she's cultivated the *perfect girlfriend* personality type. Had she only done so before infection, maybe she'd be married with children, but she won the unlucky lottery and here we are.

The perfect girlfriend. Everything you've ever wanted in a woman, with one little defect, but how about it? You had your Mom buy you that pair of Air Jordan's in 1992 with the tiny red dot on them, that you'd hope your sixth grade class would never notice, and that worked out okay, so isn't this the same?

Sorry. Fuck no.

A few days later I found the Delicious Tacos blog-post "Girls with Herpes," and it was all there- everything she had said, presciently described by Tacos, written years before I had met her, as if he had peered into my future and told my fortune. Tacos was in touch with the kind of reality that typically falls through the cracks and goes unforeseen- the horror that lies between the lines. This was a deeper reach into *actual reality* than I had ever experienced. Tacos wasn't afraid to find these depths and exploit them.

Delicious Tacos is more than a dating blogger- he's a modern prophet.

Writing a "fuck blog" is a clever cover for a heady examination of reality- and Delicious Tacos is a master of reality. He's come to terms with himself and his own intentions and he's integrated his self-knowledge into the foundational truth of all writing that follows: men are primarily horny.

And since society has stigmatized male sexuality as something inherently evil, the average man will jump through hoops to prove that *he's different*- that he's cool, that he's the perfect boyfriend, he's *not primarily horny*- unlike the others.

How you respond to this will reveal level of delusion.

Take, for instance, his "Lunch Break Diary: What's on Your Mind" piece (available in ["The Pussy"](#)), where Tacos describes his platonic friendships with women:

I would like you to stop talking and come into my bedroom and have unprotected sex with me immediately, every girl I have ever known. I have jerked off to the thought of date raping you many times, and making you pregnant against your will, girl who thinks of me as a close and trusted friend. ... If I could date rape you and get away with it- if some genie said go ahead, I guarantee you won't get in trouble- I'm not saying it's a "yes," but it's not quite a one hundred per cent "no," girl who thinks nothing of being alone around me while drunk. When the bombs fall and we all turn into Mad Max, don't think you're gonna get my clean drinking water for free.

Where you stand on the idea of “wanting sex with every female friend and acquaintance you’ve ever had” has everything to do with how honest you’re willing to be with yourself. The mainstream idea of platonic inter-gender relationships is like a never-ending episode of *Friends*- just sitting around a coffee shop, dishing gossip with your gal-pals, who are dating men more successful, handsome, and masculine than you- but that’s okay, you’re just dying to hear about it.

No! Bullshit! You lie in wait, carefully biding your time like Montresor in “The Cask of Amontillado.”

If you dare say that isn’t you, half-crazed, ranting to yourself as she tells you about how her boyfriend only *seems like* an abusive asshole, but *really* has a “sweet sensitive side,” you’re a liar- and reading “The Pussy” will make you feel like an asshole.

You’re a horny monster and Delicious Tacos knows it.

Purchase Delicious Taco’s beautiful, convenient, and affordable anthology- “The Pussy”– on Amazon and get used to the idea that you’re awful.

Oh, and “get up early every morning and write”- maybe then you can be a writer too.

Defiance on the Road to Decay

December 16, 2018 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Old elephants limp off to the hills to die; old Americans go out to the highway and drive themselves to death with huge cars.”

“I’m not dead, and I’m not for sale.”

The waning days of August. After midnight; 2AM about to roll around as inconspicuously as the 80,000th mile on the odometer of an old girl who won’t quit. “Not quite ready to bring it down just yet.” Miles of quiet. Last man standing. Watching the tide roll in. Everything leading to this feels weighted and opaque- a dull ache only noticeable in moments of stillness.

When you’re young, there’s a timelessness to the hours before dawn. They dissipate in the moonlight. The keys to your dad’s old beater open up the world around you like never before- possibilities expand beyond the infinite. Everything takes on a veneer of significance. Sitting at a diner and only ordering coffee. Telling ghost stories on old country roads. Hopping fences and exploring graveyards.

Once this is lost, it’s gone for good. You get to an age where late nights just feel late. But you search for little bits and pieces of it. Maybe you drink to forget that the clock is always watching; a grim, invasive specter.

I like teaching because it affords me summers off to do as I please- so I can have moments where the clock is less relevant. Even still, you never manage to forget that your time is almost up.

If you have anything left to give- any mark left to make- you’re coming up on “now or never.” This is something an adult can never forget- no matter how many drinks he’s had.

But on the beach at 2AM, I can dip my toes into the realm of the timeless. Close my eyes and for a scant moment feel at one with the world around me. If you’ve never felt it, even if just for a moment, you’ll think I’m selling you on some bullshit- but it’s true and it’s beautiful. And it’s only for a scant moment until I’m reminded of why I’m at the beach at 2AM, as electricity pulses down my spine and my legs anxiously fumble about the sand.

I’m at the beach at 2AM because I’ve been awake for the past forty-eight hours.

If masculinity is power, there is a defiance in masculinity. The masculine man lives on his own terms, resisting the world’s inertia insisting he conform. He assesses risk and reward, and takes pride in making his own decisions.

No better a glimpse of defiant masculinity than the combat sports fighter. He understands the game- he evaluates the risk, he visualizes the reward. Even the losing fighter garners the respect of *participation*- the only participation trophy that matters- and walks away with a warrior’s honor and the gorgeous women who find that irresistible.

The feminized world cannot come to grips with the defiance of masculinity. It misunderstands the high-risk/high-reward dichotomy and believes the participants are *unaware* of the risks or else they wouldn’t hunt for rewards. The feminized worldview is steeped in consumerism- the proverbial activity punch-card at summer camp; the bucket-list life- where the longer life is understood as the better life. If not for a long life, how else will you enjoy food, wine, and travel?

This worldview is ideal for women, who are natural consumers. Western civilization has always been

arranged for female comfort, and without the constraints of expectation- modern women are no longer expected to be... much of anything- life becomes an endless summer camp.

The bugman exists as an infection of consumerism. To the bugman, there is no higher degree of satisfaction than money and women- not wicked in their own right, but neither should be ends in themselves. The masculine man will demand a deeper experience, spitting in the face of risk to attain something which transcends what the bug can understand. When a bug's goal is money and women they'll settle for achieving either with the least amount of energy exerted- leaving them enslaved to a master both at home and at work.

When Robert Frost wrote “A Time To Talk,” a reminder that there is more to life than working, the perspective was masculine. It is the masculine inclination to use the time you have for productivity. The masculine inclination is not to consume but to *produce*, so much that Frost felt as though a reminder was needed that there is *value in moments of rest*– that a man entirely consumed with productivity is a man living in isolation. There exists both a time to work and a time to talk. The bugman, as infected by consumerism, does not understand life this way- always looking to minimize effort and maximize pleasure- the bugman cannot stop talking.

“A Time to Talk” is critical for the masculine man- a necessary reminder that productivity can be an abyss.

I have this moment when a co-worker asks me what I did over the summer, and inevitably tells me of some week-long cruise or trip to Wally World, where I think of loperamide hydrochloride. If you didn't know, loperamide hydrochloride is more commonly sold as Imodium AD- an over-the-counter diarrhea remedy. And I have this moment, where I think of 3AM, lying in bed, and reading about the dangers of taking Imodium to treat opiate withdrawal.

It's a funny story, I swear.

When a man transcends the feminine, summer camp, bucket-list life and becomes attune to looking at his time on Earth as productivity maximization- pure creative output, total content-mindset- he looks for ways to squeeze the most blood from a stone. How can I sleep best, when it's time to sleep, and work hardest when it's time to work- risks, be damned. It was toward the waning days of Spring when I discovered Kratom.

Kratom is the darling, miracle drug of the self-improvement community. “I credit Kratom for helping me to accomplish just about everything I've achieved in the past six years,” explains a popular internet guru, “unlike many natural dietary supplements that do nothing, Kratom can seriously help anxiety, depression, addiction, motivation, sleep, etc.”

Wow, all of that and *etcetera* too?

“Kratom works by stimulating your opiate receptors. It has ‘opiate-like’ effects. However – Kratom is NOT an opiate... This is what makes Kratom far safer than all other ‘opiates’ that are addicting and subject to overdose... Less “lethal” than alcohol and even Tylenol – which kills almost 1000 people a year.”

Less lethal than *Tylenol*? What's the worst that could happen? I mean, it's not an opiate- it's *opiate-like*. It's not a drug, it's a *supplement*.

What the anti-drug crowd never mentions is the difference between drug use and drug abuse.

Conceptually, these are separate and distinct- however difficult it may be for the drug user to *avoid* abuse. The masculine man, captain of his own ship, can assess the risk and visualize the reward.

There are upsides to drug use for the masculine man, looking beyond the depth of consumption, to maximize his productivity and creativity. There's a reason writers are alcoholics, opiate and cocaine addicts- because it works. Snort a few lines and open up your word processor; get into a flow state, feel your own presence, laugh like a maniac at your own jokes, enrich your mind-body connection- pure creative output, total content mindset. The masculine drug user isn't looking to masturbate his emotions with an artificial light show- the masculine drug user is obsessed with squeezing blood from a stone.

Arguably the best Stone Temple Pilots album is "Purple" (1994). Maligned for being a few months late to the grunge party, and maybe edging too close to parody with their debut, "Purple" redefined STP's sound by replacing the darker, grungy riffs with trippy, psychedelic rock. More was possible with this lighter, experimental version of the band- gone was the joyless sludge of "Dead and Bloated," replaced by the radio friendly "Interstate Love Song." Gone was the histrionic "Wet my Bed," replaced with the understated "Vaseline." The Pilots no longer had to explicitly sell you on their dark intentions- they would allow the music to convey it organically, as with the subtly haunting "Kitchenware and Candybars."

The cover art to "Purple"- a smiling baby, riding a dragon through the clouds while a group of angelic ladies look on with wonder- was found printed on the first bag of heroin Scott Weiland ever bought. In fact, a lot of "Purple" is about Weiland's heroin use which began on their first tour; "Unglued" hits on the manic height of experimentation while "Vaseline" confronts the sobering reality of addiction.

According to his own account, *Purple* was recorded "outside of time and space." With heroin, Weiland was able to tap into the *timeless space* of youth- a place of pure creativity. Maximum possibilities- pushing things *beyond the infinite*.

“Moderation is masturbation”

Finding my sweet spot with Kratom took a bit of clumsy trial-and-error. The powder tastes like dog shit, so the flavor needs to be masked. I fell into a groove of taking it toward the late-afternoon into evening; this quickly became, very precisely, 5:15pm. I would time my after-work gym session to finish around 5pm, so I could be home by 5:15, mix my fifteen grams of Kratom with almond milk and flavored protein powder (a bolder flavor, like chocolate-malt or rocky road worked best), and get to work.

Kratom was fantastic for productivity. I'd sit down to write and let the words take on a life of their own- outside of time and space- pure creative output, total content mindset. I was happier on Kratom and more social. Soon I was taking Kratom before social obligations and dates with women (something I did at this time).

I was better with girls on Kratom; I felt one with body and mind. Moderation is masturbation; I went from “once-in-a-while,” to *every other day*, to every day. As addictive as Tylenol and as safe as coffee. I had found a way to squeeze blood from a stone.

A concrete, static timeline is inherent to drug use- heroin is not known for its generosity. After producing a fantastic third album with Stone Temple Pilots, Weiland had hit his creative peak and came tumbling down. Within months of releasing the wonderfully bizarre “Tiny Music... Songs from the Vatican Gift Shop” (1996), the Pilots had to cancel their supporting tour, pulling out of a coveted spot opening for the KISS reunion, and would soon disband entirely.

Weiland had traded long-term stability for short-term creative mania, like finding the invincibility star in Super Mario Brothers, and was saddled with a debt to repay.

I began feeling awful so gradually that it wasn’t immediately noticeable- it felt more like a new normal. Kratom isn’t heroin. The decline isn’t sharp- it’s subtle. I noticed that I was losing my trademark, high-energy morning enthusiasm; getting to work was becoming a drag. A symptom of getting older, I thought.

I was more irritable, more prone to frustration, more prone to insomnia, more prone to constipation- getting older *sure is weird*. My legs began to constantly ache- was my leg-day really that strenuous? I found myself counting down the hours until 5:15... and when summer rolled around, I figured that I’d dose earlier and then hit a second batch after-five.

Double the dose, double the productivity. Total content... something or other? Actually, I was shitposting on Twitter more than I was doing any real writing- I wanted that hard, immediate dopamine hit. I was distracted and aimless.

I had gotten what I could from Kratom and it was time for a break. No problem, I had thought- a few weeks off to clean-up and recharge the old system- then I could get back on and get back to work.

Pacing my tiny kitchen at 10pm- heart racing, legs aching- dealing with denial over the heavy dose of reality that was overwhelming me. The worst case, I had assumed, was some kind of psychological attachment- addiction for the weak- something that I could push through with sheer will. I had quit smoking earlier in the year, and yes, I had spent the week compensating with pizza and ice cream, but I took care of the fucker. Will and determination- I could push through anything. But I was never expecting a *physical addiction*. Fuck, I’d never been physically addicted to anything- I didn’t know *what* to expect.

Kratom came with a debt to be paid.

Turns out Kratom is highly addictive- funny, right? It’s not a supplement, it’s a *drug*. It may come on slowly but it ends up mimicking genuine opiates- *opiate-like*, indeed.

It was the beginning of July and it suddenly became clear exactly how I would be spending my summer vacation.

Scott Weiland would fall between relapse and recovery for the rest of his life. His work would never again reach the height of the mid-nineties. Each relapse took a little more out of Weiland, chipping away at him so gradually that it was hardly noticeable at first. He would re-unite with the Pilots only to be fired a few years later- he began losing his voice and wouldn’t be able to get through

an entire show.

Compensating for his failing body, Weiland doubled-down on his drug use- but what had worked in the past to push him to his spiritual limits had only served to destroy what was left. Weiland died a shell of himself, a walking corpse– he had pushed things as far as they could go, he had ran out of content; he passed-on with nothing left to give.

The moral of the story is that there is no moral. Real life doesn't work that way, Charlie Rose. Two-thousand words later, and I don't have some grand conclusion or massive realization. Know the rules of the game and decide how you want to play- a long life of potential mediocrity or a creative energy that burns with the fire of one-thousand suns. The defiant man can make this decision for himself and deal with the consequences of his actions- both short and long-term. Dip your toes in the water of creative-mania and maybe you can get out alive- fully immerse yourself and watch it kill you.

“Today I saw the sea. I'm no longer afraid.”

Suburbia

January 13, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Whatever happened to all this season’s losers of the year?
Every time I got to thinking, where’d they disappear?”

There is no place I’d rather be than walking beside a well-groomed front-lawn on a suburban street in mid-August. Late afternoon, when the sun is just beginning to set- tired from a long day’s work- making its march toward a warm hue that feels like a soft blanket enveloping your soul. The sound of distant lawn-mowers, and the scent of cut grass- really, to properly maintain the admiration and respect of your neighbors, twice per week is ideal for lawn-care. American flags next to empty mailboxes. Dogs barking beside hamburgers on propane grills.

When you’re in eighth grade, suburbia is your canvas. You burn things in the woods and throw eggs at houses. Hop fences and explore backyards. Stand atop a hill overlooking the town below and throw-up a double middle-finger. You let the girls hang out and you act like it’s this *big deal* and if they’re not cool enough they’ll have to go home. You probably could have seen their tits had you been more socially adept. You’d be star gazing had there been stars to see.

There’s a beautiful quiet to suburbia at night. I never wanted to live anywhere with a *nightlife*- I want the late-night streets to be cold and lifeless. I want to hear crickets, between faint sounds of traffic imposing from the highway. I want to sit on the baseball bleachers of the local high school and look out into the vacant soccer field. I want to walk down Main Street, past the charming specialty shops who are closed for the night. The little hardware store that you visit to make a statement against big name retail. The model train shop that you know stays open as a passion-project rather than a money-maker. “Art by Alison” with the ever-present sign on the door advertising *open classes, starting soon*— where good vibes are taught in equal proportion to artistic technique.

First time I had heard from Christine in a long time. She knew I’d be somewhere close to the old neighborhood- a fact that I always felt needed defending when I saw her. Seeing Christine meant she was in a place between the panels of her comic book adventure- coming home was only transitional. It was between teaching English in Brazil and working at an orphanage in China. She considered working at a school in some African country, but then found out it was being set up by missionaries, and felt that was *too imposing* on “organic African culture.” Home was never a destination, it was stopgap for gift-cards and praise.

She’d always ask if I were happy with how things turned out. What a question. Where do you begin? “Well, not because I stuck around... not because I didn’t go on these inauthentic, *pretentious* adventures...” Where do you begin explaining the sexual marketplace and its awful implications? That to a highly-trained eye, which I possess, there are major differences in the singles-market of 2013 compared to the cursed singles-market of 2018. How modern men are more disposable than ever... Where you like your little fucking town and you never wanted to leave. Has she seen the little fucking art studio and the toy train shop? Does she not get that it’s all so fucking charming?

Christine was pregnant. She was getting married. They were looking for a house. You’d think that, in a fair world, the country-hopping was at the price of long term stability. That there would be a *cost to the experience*— this is what felt fair. Every time we’d catch up, there was a new story; the guy in the

indie rock band out in Austin, the soccer player in Rio. But, of course, this was not the case- she had met a lovely boy in Portland, where she ended up after the work-visa expired in China- a “crazy story,” I was assured- and now her next adventure was having a family. It sounded like a movie trailer.

You have these defensive moments, but they pass, and it’s back to the empty soccer field at midnight- with your notebook, making words into art.

My favorite movie, as a kid, was “Clue” (1985)- so much that my parents got me a real-life singing-telegram for my 7th birthday. No, I didn’t get to kill him. Yes, I’m still unsure how to properly respond to an adult singing to me. There was a line in the song about how much I loved watching the singing-telegram get shot. I wonder how that made him feel.

I was obsessed with the “Clue” mansion- a gorgeous, authentic looking Tudor with a classic black-and-white tiled kitchen. A study to provide the feeling of quiet solitude, even in a house brimming with life. A billiards room to swill brandy and smoke cigars while entertaining colleagues. A conservatory to enjoy the picturesque garden, leading to the partially cultivated acreage of which your home overlooks. Secret passages and hidden rooms; candle sticks and daggers.

When you’re a kid, you think anything’s possible- even if your future is genetically etched into the hollows of time- but you’re sold the lie of life as a big slot machine and everyone getting a turn. Line up three cherries and get a model wife and a million dollar home. It could happen to *you*, as if life is a movie that unfolds and branches out with a will of its own.

There’s a premium to suburban authenticity. The most you’ll ever get is to enjoy it from afar. Close your eyes and take in the cold December air; the taste of midnight. They say it’s best to ignore what you can’t have- to *hold it in disdain*. You’ll never get the Lamborghini- bitcoin was a plebeian fantasy. A day late and a dollar short on that too- what else is new?

But walking past an old Tudor home, you can close your eyes for just a moment, and pretend that it’s your life- that it *could be* your life. Another round, another hand of cards- play it right this time. By the fireplace, under the arching roof, watching the wintry mix fall from the wooden framed windows. The light switch on the wall is the kind with the two-buttons- true “pre-World War II” architecture.

Don’t feel too badly, it was never gonna happen. You were never going to transcend the working class, even if yours is a job only made possible with several college degrees. There are comfortable dwellings for your type, but the architecture is different for reasons I refuse to accept. Middle class homes are “standard-issue life-boxes” set on small plots of land. There is no personality to a middle class home in modern suburbia. If you want something unique and authentic, you’d better know that it comes with a hefty price tag attached. When you get back home, after taking in the crisp December air, and admiring what you’ll never have, you can sit by your electric fireplace and listen to “March of the Wooden Soldiers” on FM radio.

Sweet Jane’s out with some other asshole, if you didn’t already know- everyone becomes interchangeable eventually. Young love is the only true love- a fact you learn long after the wave’s crashed and the tide’s receded. You found tons of petty reasons to avoid a relationship with her,

anyway. Too many buyers on the line when your phone still rang. Little things to nitpick. You leeches off of her like a vampire and now you sleep alone.

Growing up in suburbia engenders an obsession with minutia. The tendency toward authoring your own experiences with an iron fist- molding things until they're photogenic, often by sheer will. This desire has superseded what's practical and comfortable- all that matters is *perception control*.

When Alex moved to the city after graduate school, what you'd think was undesirable suddenly became *shabby chic*. The railroad style apartment with few windows and impossibly hot summers was a self-imposed hardship to fondly remember. The stench of the street, awful at face value, carried with it a kind of *otherness* that was vacant in the sterile suburbs. Teenagers on bikes smoking pot and blasting music- this was *authentic*.

The engineers of suburbia would have thought he was fucking retarded. The suburbs were designed as an *escape* from the filth of the city- and only for the highly privileged.

The idea was for suburbia to look as though a sprawling, well-groomed public park had sprouted beautiful homes. The transition between park and home was to be seamless- country living within reach of city convenience- a scenic middle-ground between wilderness and civilization. The suburban zoning laws would be strictly enforced- front lawns exist today due to laws preventing a homeowner from extending their home to the property line. The suburbs were meant to have a quiet dignity. Even the nicest areas of the city were *close enough* to slums- the suburbs could be beautifully segregated. Clean streets and quiet nights. Barking dogs and charcoal grills. American beauty.

She wasn't sure if she was ready for any of this, she tearfully confessed. I knew Christine better than she could fake it. The cool girl thing was a pose to get fucked by cool boys- the country hopping was for Facebook. I can close my eyes and remember the awkward girl on the transfer bus with the lisp and torn stockings. There was a comfort in my knowing who she really was- even if it was hard for her to remember. There was a reality below the surface and now she was afraid. She was afraid of what she was giving up. She was afraid of committing to the normalcy of family life- something she would inevitably view as defeat. Even if she had enough "crazy stories" for a lifetime, she'd be settling into what she railed against. She was back for good so her parents could help take care of the kid- along with their gift-cards and praise.

The joke about growing up in suburbia is that there's nothing to do.

If you weren't part of some highly-structured after-school activity, like being on a sports team or writing for the school newspaper or taking piano lessons, there was a kind of inertia pulling you toward destruction- like a suburban black hole. Interacting with the world as an emerging adolescent became a pissing contest in who could be the biggest prick. And once you figure out that girls like assholes, if you wanted any chance at getting a hand-job, you'd better be the biggest punk in your neighborhood. "Dennis the Menace" (1959) was shockingly prescient- suburbia breeds assholes.

Kurt Cobain was the poster boy for growing up in suburbia. When touted as the voice of his generation, the implication was that he spoke for *suburban youth*. His music reflected the directionless feeling familiar with any kid not on a sports team or taking piano lessons- the empty spaces of suburbia. You could buy a CD single of “Smells Like Teen Spirit” a few aisles away from Teen Spirit deodorant- there was a kind of murky egalitarianism of symbols rendering everything meaningless. Suburban youth only understood consumption- “here we are now, entertain us,” Cobain snarled- and destruction.

Nirvana liked to destroy their equipment at the end of their set- a serious issue in their early days which gradually became more symbolic. The takeaway was an intense focus on the present- there would be no tomorrow- but only as a consequence of having lost hope for the future. There was only today and today was to end in destruction- something every kid growing up in suburbia could understand.

“When I woke up, mom and dad are rolling on the couch.
Rolling numbers, rock and rolling, got my KISS records out.”

Christine moved into a small apartment with her boyfriend and child not too far from where she grew up- a new adventure indeed. The final iteration of our *cool girl* is a fat Kindergarten teacher at a private school tiny enough to hire help without the appropriate degrees. Now she posts awful Facebook memes like, “I’m a Teacher... So What’s Your Superpower?” This is how things were always going to end up for her- etched into the hollows of time. Ride the bus until the wheels come off and then hit the emergency exit. When your culture never promised you a future, you take what you can get from the present and destroy the evidence.

Elizabeth Warren and the Death of MTV

February 10, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

You smile like a cartoon, tooth for tooth
You said that irony was the “shackles of youth”

If you're someone who likes getting the ending up front, I'll spare you the details: the hero of the story is Bill Berry. I had gotten a copy of R.E.M.'s “Automatic for the People” the week of its release- the cassette was yellow- and immediately fell in love with the record. While it would be years before I could appreciate the clever writing of singer Michael Stipe, the album served as a welcome departure from what I understood as music in the early 1990s.

While Axl Rose and Metallica were producing work of equal measure, R.E.M. was my first exposure to the idea that things didn't always need to rock- R.E.M. wasn't afraid to give a moment space and allow a song to breath- this gave “Drive” room to brood ominously and “Everybody Hurts” time to emotionally settle. “Nightswimming” is still one of my favorite songs and always manages to make me cry.

As much as I loved the record, at twelve years old, I had this awful hunch that I was being duped. I had thought of myself as a kind of emerging rock critic, a junior Robert Christgau, compiling my own Consumers Guide to Rock; I knew what *rocked* and what *sucked*.

But there was something fishy about 1992- everything rocked.

Metallica put out their classic self-titled the year prior. Guns and Roses had their epic “Use Your Illusion” double-shot. Nirvana and Nine Inch Nails were changing the rules of the game by the minute and getting anyone still using hairspray hooked on Xanax. Tori Amos released her beautiful debut, “Little Earthquakes,” and further expanded what I thought of as music. Blind Melon had a hit single that was loved by all. Stone Temple Pilots and Pearl Jam had incredible records. In every direction there seemed to be the future of classic rock etching its name into the hollows of time.

But it all seemed too good to be true. Maybe I was too young to understand music- maybe the promotional forces behind the commercial success of the rock groups I loved were so strong and savvy that I wouldn't know the difference between rocking and sucking.

What if there really wasn't anything special about any of this?

MTV was able to marry music and image in a way that wasn't possible before. Even if they didn't *invent* the music video, they presented it with *aggression*. In the channel's purest form, MTV was an assault on the senses. They kept their stars in heavy rotation- you'd lose count of how many times “Smells Like Teen Spirit” was shown in a single day.

It was television programming without a beginning or end, that didn't necessitate undivided attention. It was something you'd be inclined to keep on all day- running in the background, feeding you a constant hum of subconscious messaging. The brand itself became a part of your identity- in 1992 it was cool to like MTV.

Every rock group I liked in 1992 existed as a star of MTV.

The old-timers, your friend's dad with his collection of Zeppelin and Sabbath vinyl, would take shots at our beloved, monotheistic rock culture as being *too commercial*- a shot that stung, especially to a twelve-year-old bent on scraping through the commercial sheen of modern rock to access the reality underneath- increasingly worried there wasn't a reality to access. There was cross-talk, of course; we loved spinning his old Sabbath records- Iommi's guitar had an earthier crunch on vinyl- and he loved Alice in Chains and Metallica.

Still, the presence of MTV- its watchful, deadened eye humming along in the background- had to be reckoned with.

To what extent did what I like reflect how I wanted to be perceived? Even if projecting an image wasn't the primary concern, it certainly existed as a welcome consequence. You wanted your choice in music to shape who you were. You followed the admirable qualities of the rock star in order to mold your swagger.

MTV served as a starter kit in building an identity from the ground up.

As she daydreams, Elizabeth can't help but imagine her face tear-stained and her eyes bloodshot. She never bought into being the hero of her own story. Only in fantasy can she come to terms with what she's desperate to hide.

I get it. I used to have a reoccurring nightmare where I'd show up to elementary school in my underwear. I'd realize it mid-way through the day, horrified, glimpsing at my bare legs under the desk. Once I noticed, I knew others would too.

I had a professor who encouraged us to share our nightmares- undoubtedly to farm masturbation material under the guise of something Freudian, something that became apparent after a girl in our class revealed that she often dreams of an aggressive man preventing her from urinating- I relayed my *underwear at school* story, and he made a lame joke about "body shame."

This was likely done, in retrospect, to curry favor with the pee girl- the college professor equivalent of giving me a wedgie and stuffing me in a locker.

But he was wrong, it was never about body-shame, it was tied to a subconscious fear that my ineptitude will eventually catch up with me- it felt hauntingly inevitable. When a problem begins as something that's easily ignored and grows into something encompassing and destructive.

Elizabeth was never invited to the cool kids' table. While she tried to get on the wavelength of the hip, she could never find the right frequency- a craft that should have been honed in her college days, when a young girl looking foolish comes off as adorable, and any misunderstanding could be forgiven with a blushing giggle.

But that ship had sailed long ago for Elizabeth, and she knew it- now finding her only solace in imagining herself sitting on the chest of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, stifling her breath, and dropping heavy fists into the bridge of her nose. Her sobbing cries alternating between "I never understood" and "don't fuck with me."

AOC understands that the new era of politician must seem relatable in a highly specific way. Young voters want to see themselves reflected in their politicians. They want their political representatives to participate in social media image-management, which compromises the bulk of a millennial's daily

activities. The authenticity put forth must be carefully crafted and controlled- a concept that AOC intrinsically understands and a language that Warren doesn't speak.

The transition from MTV to YouTube was ultimately a by-product of Martin Luther's "Ninety-five Theses." This should have been something obvious to Warren, still trying to cater a heroic image to an MTV audience gone extinct. When Luther granted the average person a direct line to the Divine, his intent was to destroy the hierarchy of the church. It was here that hierarchy took a negative connotation- a ripple effect that we're still experiencing today.

The purpose of MTV was to define what was cool and sell you accessibility to it. The rock star sat at the top of the pop-culture hierarchy. This relationship was one-sided: you were meant to emulate the rock star who considered you a peasant. Arena rock culture was the modern day King's speech- where you were given commands, dressed down for not executing them to the King's liking, and, finally, given token bits of hollow praise. Paul Stanley tells you when to sit and stand, chastises you for being "too tired," taunts you with possibly ending the performance, and finally sends you off telling you that he loves your town.

Warren is still running on the old MTV arena rock formula- she wants to tell you the story and she expects you to believe it.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez understands that the path to power is no longer linear- something that now comes across as alienating and fascist. Millennials don't want a rock star, they want an *anti-rock star*. They don't want someone to admire- they want someone who will make them feel comfortable. They want a politician who will wear sweatpants, admit that "adulting is hard," and eat processed food. The groupie fucking, hotel room destroying, controlled chaos of Axl Rose would only upset them. The new authenticity is in selling you an admirable loser.

It's ironic that liking an R.E.M. record led to me questioning the authenticity of the entire system. They were probably the least likely rock group to skew inauthentic- in 2011 they quietly disbanded, believing that they didn't have it in them to make another great album.

And this is where we circle back to Bill Berry- R.E.M.'s original drummer, who left the band in 1997 to become a farmer. Berry did not have a falling out with the other members, nor does he carry any ill-will- he only wanted a career change. He was able to stand at the core of the machine and back away by choice, the ultimate in authenticity- an authenticity without the consciousness of managing perception; an authenticity without an ulterior motive. Something foreign to Elizabeth Warren, Bill Berry just needed some time alone (and he feels fine).

Success (tfw)

February 18, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Offer me solutions, offer me alternatives, and I decline.”

I had this incredible moment of content while kissing Sarah in the backseat of my car. “Heroin” was playing on the radio. She had asked me if her breasts were as big as I was expecting- that perhaps her nudes were deceptively angled, the old MySpace trick. She was so nervous I wouldn’t like her that she needed to hold her wine glass with both hands, to prevent spillage.

This worsened when I told her to cut the shit with the sterile, first date, *getting to you know* chit-chat- the last bold move I’d ever make. She had to put the glass down entirely.

Once in my car, she sat up straight, arched her back, and asked again- somewhere between seductive and genuinely worried. I told her that I’d need a closer look and took the straps of her dress off her shoulders.

And I had this moment, in the back seat, of true connection. I liked her- dark hair, large breasts. Insecure and she didn’t bother to hide it. A kindred spirit left behind by the dating market, looking for something real. This felt different. This felt special.

The day after Christmas, 2016, was the last time any of this were possible.

Even then, we were late in the game. Any semblance of success had passed for the well-intentioned, common man. Meeting Sarah was catching a shooting star on your camcorder- standing in the right place at the right time and having the prescience to hit *record* on gut-instinct alone. It could have been anyone, but it was you on the evening news, proudly showing your footage.

Success is hollow in a world without sex. You become a kid selling candy bars for a shot at a 13? color TV in the prize catalog. If you take the idea of having nice kitchen appliances purchased to impress women out of the equation, it turns out, you don’t need very much. A notebook and a pen. A freezer full of steak and heavy things to push around. A car with enough gas in the tank to drive yourself to death when the time comes.

Dark thoughts. A text from Amazon cuts the tension. Your package is nine stops away- a blu-ray copy of “Ghostbusters 2.” How could you have lived with this hole in your collection?

You get through another day.

The trick is to recalibrate- *redefine* success. Make money less relevant. Work for sustenance. Bitcoin was a psy-op to keep your type in line, you’re sure. False hope for those ready to unplug and get off the grid. A hundred acres in Montana with your Bitcoin wife, starting a Bitcoin family, watching your net-worth skyrocket effortlessly. “I think they call it *passive income*,” you tell your no-coin friends who wouldn’t listen. Entire notebooks of writing to be found when you’re gone- to be cherished or burned, you’ll never know.

It wasn’t meant to work out. There’s a power structure in-place so deeply invested in the prevention of a new world order that any deviation would be the equivalent of breaking a law of nature- as much a fantasy as comic book superheros. Believing in anything but an inevitable status-quo path to destruction is like standing in an arcade pumping quarters into Donkey Kong- no way to win the game, but stand there long enough and you’ll make it to the kill screen.

So you redefine success. You work within the system. You rearrange things quietly, when the warden isn't looking. Removing women as the end-goal presents such a radical freedom that it's shamed by the mainstream culture- men aren't meant to be free. You don't understand this because everything you've ever done was in the interest of getting laid. True freedom is to excise this tumor and see what's left. Committing to this fully is the only way you'll have sex again, so it's win-win.

Letting go is the foundation, expression is the goal.

Not success.

Artists shouldn't be successful and success is antithetical to art- is what you tell yourself. As you grind away, producing your best work to a "modest audience of dedicated readers," sacrificing sleep and sex. I'd pass on getting laid to write an essay on Elizabeth Warren- a string of words no one has put together before in human history. Madness by any other measure, but an artist must be obsessed with the creation of art.

Success only muddies the waters, becoming a barrier between artist and work.

Success is toxic and must be avoided, says the unsuccessful.

Metallica was never the same after selling a billion copies of the black album. They were burdened by expectation- to replicate what worked and magnify those elements times infinity.

The self-conscious artist is doomed to fail, betraying the instincts that led to their success. After the follow-up was met with a fraction of the sales, the band flailed wildly- chasing approval like desperate drunkards- culminating in a documentary where they all cry.

Modern men have no war to fight so modernity has taken arms against us.

The herd must be thinned. There are deep, esoteric reasons for why even fat women won't reply to your messages now on Plenty of Fish. Men have become weak and nature hit the emergency brakes. Now only the most genetically fit will get easy sex- for everyone else, the long-game has gotten so long that it's no longer worth playing. To think that clever banter could have gotten you laid five years ago is astounding- to think that ambitious nerds had girlfriends in high school twenty years ago is the stuff of legend.

In 1992, schlock-rock metal band GWAR put out their relative masterpiece, "America Must Be Destroyed," but they were right for the *wrong reasons*. They argued that the country was naturally heading toward a wonderful, degenerate utopia but getting stifled by a gate-keeping Christian majority- a laughable take in hindsight.

Now when Tom likes Mindy at the office, he doesn't sidle up to her at the water cooler angling for Friday night drinks, but instead navigates to her premium Snapchat- his only hesitation in potential budgetary constraint. Maybe then, through private message- her response enticed by gifts purchased from her Amazon wishlist- can he offer drinks? No, he decides this sounds too pedestrian. She already has rogue millionaires- those who got into Bitcoin when you were too lazy to scan your driver's license into an exchange (yes, really)- offering her weekends in Vegas. He needs to go *big*

budget, if only he could after all the high-end kitchen appliances he purchased to impress her.

Impossible to talk to her at work, he concedes, as he settles for gawking at her tits for \$25/month under the pseudonym *SneakyTim*— a necessary complication is his long-con courting game-plan. There must be a slow reveal, the bandages must be removed with patience- any haste in the reveal that Tom is, in fact, a loyal subscriber with a commendable accumulation of gifts purchased anonymously would result in a swift “#MeToo” accusation, and the loss of all present and future employment. Moves must be made with gentle and conscientious precision, thinks SneakyTim, as he sends Mindy the requisite \$30 for her long-form masturbation video- for *fans only*, of course.

The problem isn’t a prudish morality, but I can’t blame GWAR for being wrong. They acknowledged the problem- that the modern world is diseased beyond salvation. All valid modern art must stem from this foundation.

The cocaine addled *brat pack* of young, hip authors couldn’t get past the nihilism of 1980’s party culture. The excess of sex and drugs- the tail end of the KISS concert with its fireworks and confetti- was the pay-off for what was built by the Boomers; its spectacular finale. They were overfed hamsters, rolling around in their own filth.

The modern writer was sold the promise of decadence and pays the debt of decay.

The silence felt awkward. I knew my mistake the moment I had made it- it sat cold and moist on the upper part of my thigh. We were getting to know each other now as if what we had was in the past-tense, like a post-game show on ESPN. She spoke without the constraint of keeping in-character, telling me about the time she dated a rock star and her abusive ex-boyfriend.

Women don’t respect condom use. Even if you’re still fucking her, it’s the shareware version of the full-product. Limited functionality. They’ll always hesitate before conceding- you must anticipate this and remain strong in your resolve. I had a good run before Sarah, but like an aging fighter, I got caught in a moment of weakness.

“Sorry I’m such a slut,” read her text the next day. Her way of tying things up. You’re left wondering what the best case scenario would have been, or if this was it.

So you redefine success. You realize the value in dwelling at the epicenter. You retch at the idea of becoming complacent, spouting naivete like you’re handing out recipe-cards to the secret sauce. You’re resigned to staring at the sun.

You create art with a high degree of authenticity. You put integrity before all else. You never write with consideration for audience, and you find even the promotion of your own work to have minor hints of insincerity, just like the minor hints of dark chocolate and citrus in your favorite cold-brew coffee blend- not pronounced, but palpable.

People find this approach refreshing. Your work effortlessly find an audience. You’ve come to a beautiful intersection between honesty and success- something you didn’t think possible. Those in the mainstream take notice and become upset by your defiant take on modern life.

Your popularity continues to grow. You appear on podcasts; people analyze your material. Your follower count on Twitter makes panties wet. Hundreds of retweets for a few throw-away words. You title an essay “The Modern Rock Star,” but are never quite brazen enough to publish. You feel bulletproof.

And then, one day, your tweets are blown-up on a poster board in front of Congress. The Huffington Post publishes your most unflattering pictures. “Ashamed” is the key-word most repeated

in your mother's interview with *The New Yorker*.
Success.

Chasing Ghosts

March 22, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

| When you're gone, here's a song, I'll be thinking about you

I've never experienced anything more ethereal than when our eyes met before homeroom. It couldn't have lasted more than a few seconds, but it hung in the air like an eternal sunrise. Nothing I've experienced since has matched this feeling- for only a moment, I stood before the face of God. Drug people lament the way it *used to be*, before things were cut with laxatives. The first semester at college, and you're popping pills at a party- throbbing waves of intensity.

And you think you'll take it with you, like you finally won the ring-toss at a carnival. This is your big pink elephant. You think it's going to feel that way every time, but every time you go back, there are more pieces missing. The fifth time you've gone through the haunted house and the foam skeleton doesn't have the same resonance. You become the old pothead, rolling your eyes at kids and their stoner stories.

Our first movie date and I get her a yellow, plastic ring out of the quarter machine. Someday, Jessica, *someday*. It's not that it wasn't meant to be ironic, but that its irony was so genuine that it'd never work today. The world has moved beyond sincerity.

In another life we'd be married now- two kids, in a house with a two-car garage. Yard work on the weekends while she shuffles the kids between soccer practice and kung-foo classes. At night we laugh over Chardonnay, remembering how Sister Eileen would catch us making-out in the hallway and then try to embarrass me about it during math class. You don't realize how much that means until you can never have it again.

Pressing her against the wall when no one's looking, biting her neck and grabbing a breast. We never lost it, did we?

No one expected me to break up with her. She was gorgeous, but we drifted apart. The sun had finally set. Seeing her would only feel empty. And she got really annoying.

It was an integrity move. I didn't have another girl lined up- I wouldn't have even known how to do that. I didn't like her anymore, and isn't that why people break-up?

Paint the house to burn it down. Allow the perfect to get in the way of the good. I'm the captain who's playing by the rules if shit happens in the middle of the Atlantic. A modern, suburban Samurai with an unbreakable will to do *what's right*, even to my own detriment.

In my mind, I'm Lou Reed. Life is performance art, and you never settle for less than authentic. When Reed walked away from The Velvet Underground, having produced some of the best music of the decade that no one gave a shit about, he took a job picking up garbage on the beach. "Lou fucking Reed, collecting trash," is what David Bowie must have thought when he offered to produce a solo-record, the incredible "Transformer" (1972), which provided his only mainstream hit, "Walk on the Wild Side."

With unprecedented career momentum, Lou cashed-in with "Sally Can't Dance" (1974)- a terrible record that hit commercially. This rather common dichotomy, an awful record that awful people with awful taste seem to like- something that wouldn't have registered with a band like KISS- tortured

Reed.

Feeling compromised, thinking his career couldn't be salvaged, he did what anyone with autism would do- he burned it all down. Releasing an album of pure noise, Reed attempted career suicide. "Metal Machine Music" (1975) is nothing but guitar feedback- there is no melody, there is nothing enjoyable. Anyone who's said they've listened to the whole thing is either lying or retarded. Not only did putting out a self-destructive record take balls, but Lou even had the balls to make it a *double album*. If you're going down with the ship, you may as well sink the Titanic.

Lou didn't like his career anymore, so he broke up with it. It was an integrity move.

Even if she were gorgeous. Even if we were hitting our sexual stride- where Friday nights were pizza and root beer, and fucking her on the floor of her living room. Even if she loved me with a teenage intensity they all say is bullshit, "you don't know what love is"- but like everything they've ever said, the polar opposite is true. The only real love is teenage love, and even if she were the only girl who would ever love me.

She got really annoying. So I called her one night and broke up with her.

I ran into her at a club after our first year of college- she was in black fishnets. There was a dumb luck to her growing up in the salad days of Hot Topic. A slender frame where the biggest things on her were either her eyes or her tits, Jessica was the goth girlfriend you've always wanted.

Back on the floor of her living room- her parents were on vacation. We never lost it, did we?

She tells me she loves me with a hopeful insecurity. I say nothing. She starts to cry. I'm too drunk to leave but it's time to go. Hands around the wheel; ten and two. Keep your eyes open and try to look straight. A half-hour home. Choke the vomit down, this train's not stopping.

The few times we've spoken since would end with her cursing at me. She liked calling me a "bastard," language I'm certain copied from her mother- she never liked me. I'd resist the urge to point out the inaccuracies of this accusation and assume she was pointing to something more colloquial. I'd sit and take it because I thought I deserved it.

Dawn of the Dead

July 22, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“We are the end of the world. Goodnight, farewell.”

She told me that she never likes the ones who call her pretty. A mistake made in earnest, a fleeting desire for something real- not playing teenage costume party with another aging woman over cheap drinks. When the fantasy is all that's left, the impulse is to get lost in it. You want to forget that you're an arm above the water and your legs are giving out.

You want this to be what it isn't- it's been too long, and you're too far from the shore. You want to pretend that you've lucked out and the prom queen agreed to a Saturday night at the drive-in. That isn't what this is, and you know it, but it's more satisfying to spend time pretending rather than going through the motions where you say the right words at the right times like you're punching in a Nintendo code, to skip to the end and pump rockets into Mother Brain.

Better get out before the whole thing explodes.

She doesn't want you to think she's pretty. That's not part of her fantasy and her fantasy is all that matters. This is your first date, and you're a sucker if she thinks you like her. She wants to feel your contempt. She wants to think you were busy with a girl ten years younger the night before and that she'd be lucky to suck your dick. She wants to work for it. She wants someone who hates her. This was your shot and you blew it.

This is what you get for being single over thirty-five. Meaning dies the further you get from your teenage years until you're whisked off into the middle of the ocean to drown. Middle-aged women read books about being brave while starting inspirational instagram pages- men learn the right words to say, in the right order, to get to the end of the game.

If you're looking for meaning in any of this, you lose.

Teenage love is only real for you to stick around long enough to make sure the girl you knocked up isn't eaten by bears. It's evolutionary. You're a tool for the survival of your people, and you're dropped like a rock when you're too old to be useful.

You're the walking dead- a vampire- and if you dare look for meaning you'll be starved out of existence. Only the savvy get laid here, bucko, so get with the program or learn to go hungry.

A genuine moment of breathless eye-contact feels like a lifetime ago. Now everything has the sheen of production. You know exactly how long to wait before looking away, the right pauses to take, how to use your breath- you're ten times sexier, but even the moments you want to come off as genuine are only performative.

Once you sell your integrity, it's gone for good.

The rock band reunion is a misnomer. Their legacy is cemented in time- anything else is something new and different. The reunion *matters less*— people get old, things get muddled. You can't capture the innocence of the original- you can only exploit it.

You take what you've learned about women and you use it to fuck them. That's the game, Vlad. You've become a cannibal in a world where you either learn the rules of the dead or sit on your hands thinking you're pious. Guess what, no one cares.

You had your shot at a story and you blew it. In another time, in another life, you'd have that two-car garage. Where are the kids, kung-foo soccer? She keeps her phone face down because she spends her nights *reconnecting* with friends from High School on Facebook. Kevin's married now too, but she doesn't want you to get the "wrong idea."

You had your shot at a story and you blew it- the best you can do is latch onto another disaster, where you tell people that you found each other "*later in life*" and nod as they tie it together with "*everything happens for a reason.*"

You're not Scott Weiland, you're Jeff Gutt. The real singer O.D.'d and you're just the replacement, so shut up and sing "Plush." Gutt knew it too and penned "Meadow" for the Pilot's comeback record- a clever song about *survivor's guilt*- where Gutt promises old, dead Scott that he's "*just killing time and having fun.*" Nothing to worry about, even for a corpse- Stone Temple Pilots was Weiland's story, Gutt's just "*holding the wheel.*"

Pretty like an aging Barbie doll, is what you tell her. You've realized your misstep and all you've got left is a hail mary neg, but the damage's been done. You called her pretty and now you're not going to fuck her. This will bother you for the rest of your life- you'll lie in bed, jacking off to the idea. Because you couldn't fuck her, she's ten times hotter than any girl you've ever fucked, and you'll be chasing that ghost forever.

You're Dave Mustaine and what could have been will always matter more than what was. Nothing you have will ever compare to the ones who got away. You can't tolerate hearing "no." You have inexplicable confidence. You're incredibly entitled. You think everyone should be kissing your ass.

Even if you have a sold out club with people chanting your name, you spot the one guy in the "Delicious Tacos" t-shirt and have security kick him out- Tacos is playing the hockey arena down the street, buddy. "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven," is what you tell yourself to justify your fragile ego. Say no to me and it's a lifetime of masturbation, dream girl- hope you can deal with that. She'll never know, and she'll never think of you again because you called her pretty instead of making her feel like dog shit.

Never Called Me Back

August 31, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Some wine, some wine, she’ll never decline some wine. She sees her ship is sinking so she’s drinking all the time.”

Things just didn’t go as planned, she told me, her face stained with tears. I knew she was talking about me. She was naked and crying- something that would’ve turned me on, but I wanted to be there for her.

It just wasn’t in your cards, baby. I thought this was comforting. Confront reality like a stoic- always have a love of fate. The stars brought us together, baby. Your life crushed from divorce, my eternal adolescence- if that isn’t a love story, what is?

She swore she didn’t drink at work, but she called this her *downward spiral*, so I always wondered. She’d get nervous when it was closing time at the liquor store and she was running out of wine. By three in the morning, she’d tell me she loved me.

I dismissed this as *drunk talk*. I knew she’d never remember. It felt vapid. This wasn’t love, this was *mind-blowing chemistry*, code that girls on dating sites use for “hot sex”- her face would blush with orgasm. This was a momentary connection so deep that the coalescence of energy between us felt tangible. Even if it were only temporary, the reality of it carried a gravity so strong it held us to the bed.

And even if she were only a year older than me, she was tuned into a frequency that I didn’t yet understand.

We were together because her husband left her. She had “daddy issues,” he was twenty years older. You’d think that would buy loyalty but not this time. When I wasn’t with her, she’d get drunk and watch her wedding video.

You end up with people because their trajectory matches your own. Her line going down the graph to the left met with mine going up to the right. We are not parallel lines- we intersect.

I was good enough to meet a recently divorced, alcoholic lawyer bent on self-destruction.

In my “unemployed and laughing about it” phase- a designation sadly not available on dating site profiles- my options were wide open. Women love the unemployed asshole. Everything in hell is the opposite of what you think it should be. If you want to get laid, quit your job and message thirty women at 2AM- you’ll be surprised at what you find.

I liked Abigail. She was cute and Irish- dark hair, large breasts. Vulnerable and she didn’t bother to hide it. Men like vulnerability because it reinforces their identity as masculine. No one wants a *strong woman*.

I romanticize broken women to make sense of my own choices. Their failures bring comfort to my own. We are the same- trying to make due in a toxic world, like when your character in Final Fantasy gets infected and every step kills a little bit of your health.

It makes for a better story, anyway. Years later, you can have a blog where you share these stories as a way to craft a narrative about your own life. You need this because these stories are all you have.

She’d say, “it’s an escape from mistakes that we make,” with a sly smile and finish her glass. She

was talking about me again. Maybe Abigail was my crazy summer fling- where we'd wander the streets of her neighborhood at midnight and make-out under the stars, laughing at anyone who didn't get the joke- but I was something different to her. I was part of her *downward spiral*.

"Oh Billy, if and only if..." she'd say with wistful regret. Lawyers tell jokes rooted in symbolic logic- a class we'd both taken in college. *If and only if* because it was never meant to be- it was doomed from the beginning. We were on borrowed time- the eye of the storm before our lines on the graph separated for good. Our trajectories were never destiny.

She'd get drunk and tell me she loved me because she understood that love didn't exist outside of momentary glimpses and flashes. When you're sold love as a verbal contract, you'll have learned your lesson by the fire sale. You can marry your high school sweetheart and never know the difference or meet a vampire and get taken over the coals. In a cold world, people take what they can get and move on. People are flawed, people are selfish.

He wasn't the man she thought she was marrying- he turned out to be something different. He sucked her blood until there was nothing left and then disappeared into the night. He left her dead inside.

But during those moments, I existed as her salvation and she loved me for it. This was love without expectation- love without narrative. We didn't need to pretend that it was something more than it was. Love is a precious moment where the energy in the room is so urgent that it can't help but be labeled. If you think love is anything more, I'll meet you at the fire sale.

She'd get drunk and tell me to cum inside her. I never would- which was only the right answer depending on your perspective. Days later, she'd have her kitchen table lined with over-the-counter pregnancy tests. I couldn't tell if she was disappointed by the results. It just wasn't in our cards, baby.

Every summer has to end, even if you don't want to let it go. The end of August, lying naked in her bed- we never could escape its gravitational pull. She gets a phone call and excuses herself. Twenty minutes later, she's crying in the kitchen. It's the guy she's seeing when she isn't with me. He's on his way to her place to kick my ass. She's sorry, she tells me. Downward spiral, I say. We share a smile. I give her a hug.

I'd never hear from her again.

Chubby Set of Bones

October 5, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“These words: you will be mine, all the time.”

Like buying bitcoin for pennies, the peak time to meet a girl on the internet came and went before you ever knew what you were losing. Before anyone would have thought to use a term like *early adopter*— a time so raw that it couldn’t have been confined to language. Before they called it the “wild west.” A time without shape or form.

Forget selfies, rewind past digital cameras- when scanners were still *exotic technology*, the most pressing question after “ASL” became asking what she looked like. The description of her body would ignite the imagination. You’d never have guessed that this primitive fumbling would yield more honesty than digital pictures, twenty years later.

I knew I was in over my head when I heard Kristen’s voice. She spoke with the easy confidence of beauty. I always came out of left field. The outsider art of trying to get laid. A punchers chance, but give me enough time and I’ll land a clean left hook. There was a crazy charm to this and Kristen picked up on it. She didn’t know what to make of me, but she knew I was unlike anyone she’d ever met. I spoke with the easy confidence of insanity.

We met on the cusp of Autumn turning cool- where the air feels heavy and frames the night for romance. Parked under the tracks, we made out to the sound of passing trains. She was the prettiest girl I’d ever kiss- when I thought that kissing the girl meant riding off into the sunset.

You thought that was the end of the movie.

Our drama would only last a few weeks. Kristen was the first girl I’d kiss after Jessica. She was the kind of girl who had every guy in the room gawking at her wherever we went- dark hair, large breasts. She was the hottest girl in the club out with a kid in a Misfits t-shirt.

She’d never had known I existed without the internet.

I was too invested emotionally to compete with her game playing, but like the drug dealer in an after school special- she gave me a taste and I was instantly hooked on the kind of emotional warfare that would define all of my future relationships.

I did my best to keep up with her. I wrote taunting poems accusing her of being emotionally dead and kind of fat (she wasn’t) while implying that I was fucking another girl in her absence. This bought me a few more hook-ups, but I was ultimately out of my depth. Still, she’d remember the poems years later.

When you start down a road of emotional manipulation, you end up an addict. You get hot for the process. Coming up with jabs and tuning into the subtle reactions that she thinks are hidden. When you find a sore, you pick at it. You’ll end up getting off on this harder than you get off on sex.

Later, I’d tell Abigail that she had cute knees. And she did- petite in stature, she had the thighs of a woman who had not yet borne children and the knees of a teenager- untouched by time. But when you play these games with a smart girl, you get called out on your bullshit- something that would always make me smile. If you’re smart enough to pick up on it, you deserve to win.

You like to break women down so that you could rebuild them in your own image, she’d tell me.

Your compliments are backhanded- insults by omission. You want her confidence dependent on you; reliant on your permission.

You want to own her.

Cannibalism and “Joker” (2019)

October 20, 2019 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

Reality struck Matt Kennedy Gould in a flash as every cast member of the show created for his destruction revealed themselves as an actor hired to manipulate him. Every cast member but one, Brian Keith Etheridge- cast as Gould’s *best friend*, tasked with staying close to him throughout filming and becoming his confidant- remained cautiously silent.

When Gould turns to him, able to digest that the rest of the cast were maybe a lot of Hollywood phonies, out of work actors lowering the bar for a reality gig, he asks Etheridge, with genuine hope, if he’s as much of a liar as the rest.

And you’ll never find a more genuine moment of terror on reality television than the look on Brian Etheridge’s face, as he struggles to explain to his new best friend that he’s just as full of shit as anyone else- that he’s of the elite, Hollywood caste getting paid to make poor, working class Matt look pathetic.

This is where the Joker would pull out a gun and shoot Etheridge in the head- something Etheridge, with emotions and adrenaline running high, feared was possible.

The producers of “The Joe Schmo Show” (2003) were looking for a loser to crucify when they met Matt Kennedy Gould playing basketball on a weekday afternoon at a community center in Pittsburgh. Gould, a law school drop out, had a job delivering pizza and was living with his parents- depressed and directionless, he auditioned for a cable television reality competition he thought was called “Lap of Luxury.”

Tricking people on television wasn’t a new concept- hidden camera shows had been around for decades- but a series modeled after “The Truman Show” (1998) hadn’t been attempted, at a time when reality TV was an exciting concept ripe for experimentation. While there existed reality TV before, MTV’s “The Real World” (1992) modernized the concept, it was the breakout popularity of “Survivor” (1997) that cemented it in the public’s consciousness.

And while other reality television shows existed to humiliate their contestants, never before was there a single series created to humiliate a single person- something the New York Times called “wickedly funny.”

“The Joe Schmo Show” must have been the greatest reality pitch of all time. A series created for the destruction of a single person- building to a climactic reveal in the series finale, where we find out just how much of a Joker was cast as the lead- a finale which did gangbuster ratings for host network SpikeTV as their highest rated (non-wrestling) telecast in their otherwise uneventful history.

The cast of actors were made up of reality TV tropes, like *the asshole* modeled off reality’s most infamous asshole, Puck from the third season of *The Real World*. There was the wacky, over-the-top gay guy Kip, the *rich bitch* Ashley, the *virgin* Molly (whom I suspect was modeled after *Real World* 2’s country boy, Jon Brennan), the old guy, the schemer... and, the buddy, Brian Keith Etheridge, who existed to keep everything grounded in some semblance of normalcy for Gould as he got lost in the show’s drama.

So it was fitting for Etheridge to feel a tinge of fright as the truth was revealed to Gould that all of his new friends were assholes- if he was going to lose it and attack anyone, it would have been

Etheridge... but that isn't what happened. Gould got caught up in being the center of attention, and before he had time to process any of it, the smarmy host pulled him aside to explain the cash and prizes he had won for being a good sport. Moments later, a highlight reel is played for sad sack Matt where each cast member verbally masturbates him- the hack actress playing hot blond Molly laying it on so thick as to imply she had some kind of subtle sexual attraction to him. Matt weeps at the flattery, and any negativity in the unspoken reveal that he was actually exploited and humiliated by a faceless television network washes away in a haze of balloons and confetti.

A year after filming, Matt Kennedy Gould would be holed up in a cheap apartment in Santa Monica, blowing his show earnings on drugs.

It's too easy to dismiss Gould's cautionary tale with jaded nonchalance. Big Hollywood has always been run by a cult of demonic cannibals. You could hardly blame the middle management producers directly responsible for knowing goddamn well what they were doing to Gould- they had to eat in a system that has no use for those without a human to sacrifice... but there remained a feeling of unique filth to "The Joe Schmo Show" that I wasn't able to shake.

In what was the first *found footage* movie- the film genre closest to reality television- director Ruggero Deodato examined the nature of exploitation in his epic "Cannibal Holocaust" (1980). With a tagline the uninitiated would assume was the typical hyperbole, "Cannibal Holocaust" is arguably *the most controversial film of all time*. Gut wrenching and realistic, ten days after its premiere Deodato was arrested for obscenity and investigated for murder- the violence is brutal and unrelenting. Muddying the waters was Deodato's insistence on actually killing animals on screen- deliberately blurring the line between reality and fiction.

The movie follows a group of documentary film makers into the South American rain forest- dubbed the *Green Inferno*- to get footage on the more esoteric cannibal tribes. They act like dicks, antagonizing the cannibals until they're raped and murdered. Play stupid games, gets eaten by cannibals. Their footage is found by Professor Harold Monroe, played by porn actor Robert Kerman- whose other bit of notoriety was getting to fuck Bambi Woods in "Debbie Does Dallas" (1978) before having a tiny cameo in "Spider-Man" (2002)- who comes to the realization that the film makers were dicks who got what they deserved.

Kerman's left wondering who the *real cannibals* were.

Tony Soprano would boast that mob morality dictated that *only soldiers kill soldiers*- civilians were meant to be left unharmed in gangland violence. Anyone knowingly climbing into the dirty bathwater of Hollywood gets what they deserve- an incestuous, demonic, exploitative system always ready to tear the flesh off your bones when you become too weak to survive- ready to make you a murderous whore to keep from being eaten.

This was not Matt Kennedy Gould- he was a civilian. "The Joe Schmo Show" is uncomfortable because it pulled the curtain back just a bit too far- it revealed to us explicitly what we've always known but have never said: that the people curating the content fed to the screens invasive in every room of our homes, lighting up the insides of our pockets, lurking on our wrists... the screen I'm watching now, typing this... are all horrible, amoral ghouls. This was the first time the television existed as a reminder that it would eat us too if given the chance- we are all Matt Kennedy Gould, only he was unlucky enough to be chosen.

It may help Tony Soprano get to sleep at night thinking the mob only goes after their own, but he's as

deluded as anyone- the entire infrastructure of the mob relies on the exploitation of the ignorant. The mob is a symptom of capitalism, a system designed for the strong to feed on the weak. We're encouraged to deny the humanity of the less capable, to become Ed Gein at a blood and guts clearance sale- never let anything useful go to waste.

To deny the inertia of this system is to allow the hungry to pick your bones. Refuse to comply on the basis of morality, and you're only letting blood in the water. Getting caught up in the philosophical entanglement of thinking anything is sacred in a profane world is time spent letting your guard down- a luxury only for those who can afford walled gardens. The rest of us must act swift and viscous- selfish in a selfish world.

A lesson learned by Arthur Fleck at the end of "Joker" (2019). No longer existing as meat for the grinder, Fleck joins the game by competing using the only means he has- a loaded gun. After killing his mentally ill mother for abusing him by proxy, he whines about the lack of social empathy for the mentally ill. If that sounds like hypocrisy on the part of Fleck, it is- only Fleck doesn't care, reminding the viewer that he "doesn't believe in anything."

He's fully bought into an awful system where you either take what you want or have everything taken from you- you're either on the right side of a smoking gun or getting eyed over by a pack of Ed Geins.

Who are the real cannibals? We all are. And everything must go.

Adolescence and “1979” (1995)

March 7, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Faster than the speed of sound. Faster than we thought we’d go, beneath the sound of hope.”

For the bulk of the past year, I enjoyed getting to work an hour before everyone else. Often, I’d be the first in the building- the motion lights of the hallways clicking to life upon my arrival. It felt important to settle into work. Wake myself up fully from the shit sleep I had gotten the night before. As I age, my brain seems to take longer and longer to heat up- like one of those old IBM computers, with the turbo button on the yellowing plastic shell, that would only display green type on a black screen. Back when computers held mysteries and nerds were the only priestly caste who could access them. Now computers are vehicles for advertisements and nerds are the consumers happiest about it. I enjoyed getting to work early because the roads were empty and I could speed. The highway I’d choose was wonderfully twisted, lined with trees, and toward the end of the school year my backdrop would become a gorgeous sunrise. It felt like playing Outrun, and just the idea that a wrong move could flip my Honda Accord (I chose the “sports model”) and send it bouncing across the road made me feel *alive*.

What was the only risk embedded in my daily routine was cut short by a speeding ticket. The officer was polite and reduced my seventy-eight in a fifty-five to a seventy-five- citing major differences in consequence. I appreciated that. I plead guilty by mail, and got a reasonably prompt reply that my guilty plea was rejected. A court date was *to be determined*.

But I wouldn’t get to work early to do actual work- it was genuinely about swimming through lanes to cut-off the guy doing sixty-five in the left. Send him a message about my *superiority*. Maybe an intervention of sorts, a message that he needs to up his game to the point of being fucking competitive in a world that will eat anything less than alive. Feel the torque of your goddamn pick-up and become who you are.

I’d get to work and watch old MTV videos on YouTube. Stuff you couldn’t have appreciated upon initial airing. When I got around to “1979,” I found myself watching it on repeat, as my eyes would well with tears, for the rest of the year.

There’s a complexity to adolescence that becomes forgotten in adulthood. Like the ability to truly fall in love, once it’s lost, it’s gone forever. People who shit on adolescence- who mock those who miss high school the most, who swear they’d never go back while laughing at the cynicism they’ve developed over the years like mold on forgotten jelly- are completely dead inside and are to be avoided, because, if you’re so far gone that you can’t remember a time more lofty and wistful... you may as well give yourself over to the system entirely, work your bullshit job until you’re dead, and, if you’re a woman, get pounded out by every shithead with a decent opener on Plenty of Fish until you’re too old for that too. Most men don’t have that luxury.

If you do have fond memories of adolescence, you’ll end up doing all that just the same, but at least you’re not an asshole.

Adolescence is the intersection of childhood and adulthood. Childhood isn’t terribly interesting, even when romanticized, and adulthood is like a sitcom that’s been running for infinite seasons too long-

every year becomes a rehash of the same- everything devolved to parody, where Kramer and George are building a rocket ship out of couch cushions because George got caught masturbating at the library.

The manifestation of sexuality is what makes the human experience interesting, but too much sexuality gets old quickly. There is nothing romantic about a twenty-two year old trying to fuck everything that moves- in another time, in another place, that energy could have been harnessed to build bridges and craft beauty, but in hell we spill fluid on hormonally altered women and consider that success.

But there's a beauty to the emerging sexuality of adolescence. Taking a closer look at the pool scene in the "1979" video, we find the play and exploration of childhood, as a boy and girl leave a house-party to hop the fence of a neighbor and swim in their in-ground pool with freedom and ease, before a fleeting moment of eye-contact becomes a welcome kiss- we have a moment where the girl smiles with elation- and, as if this was too much, too soon- the characters are next seen throwing patio furniture into the pool; the kind of aimless destruction associated with the boredom of suburbia.

There's a greater depth of meaning and reality to that kiss than every OkCupid date you've ever been on. In a perfect world, they'll marry and share variations of that first kiss for the rest of their lives- taking the form of spending the first night in their new house, giving the first bath to their newborn daughter, the disastrous first Thanksgiving they host- everything will carry the newness of that kiss, and for a lifetime, they'll never fully step out of that moment.

And I'd be lying to you if I told you that my eyes weren't welling with tears just now, dear reader, as I type this, because I know we live in hell- and the reality is more likely that they'll be chasing ghosts forever.

Adventureland

March 10, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“If you’re gonna scream, scream with me. Moments like these never last.”

I ended up with the plaid button-down because I needed a nice shirt to go on dates— I was single again and recently set up a new OkCupid profile. I had found success on that platform in the past, although it felt like a thousand lifetimes ago when I was dating the daughter of a colleague in my English department while screwing her best friend on the side. All through the magic of online dating, but stay in a lecherous, testosterone sapping relationship long enough and all you’ve learned gets lost to time- too many diet Cokes in BPA laden plastic cups at Friday’s, too much time in front of network television, an unwilling prisoner of your girlfriend’s viewing habits. Why are women obsessed with TV? Modern relationships are inherently toxic.

Women like preppy men, a friend’s girlfriend had told me. Read their profiles and find something you have in common. “Mutual interests.” Perhaps our values will coalesce. Women in their thirties are different, she told me- you can’t talk to them like everything is just sex. They want a caring, intelligent man. They’re over their *asshole phase*.

Years later, I had the same plaid shirt laid out on my bed. Three months into dating Jennifer and suddenly I was on the losing end- playing catch up, trying to stitch things together. I needed her to see me again. One date would change things- a real date. Something we hadn’t done. You could have convinced her that I didn’t exist outside of my apartment because she had never seen me anywhere else. From Plenty of Fish to my front door- a short stop for phone calls in between; I guess I’m old-fashioned.

Plenty of Fish because OkCupid has too many pseudo-intellects- a serious misalignment between the lies we tell ourselves and reality. Girls who believe they are what they’re not. Expectations derived from fantasy. Women on Plenty of Fish have experienced life’s bitter winter. They know disappointment. They’re looking for a man with a car and a job- the latter, of course, is optional.

Do it long enough and you get hot for the process like a junkie with a head buzz just looking at the bag. She’ll tell you that she doesn’t send *those kinds of pictures* but this is never true. Getting her older nudes is a victory, but having her take new pictures is a conquest. Big tits look their best in white tank tops (spaghetti straps, *not a wifebeater*), braless with hard, poking nipples. You want her in a thong, but specifically a g-string- strings on the side that press into her hips. This is important.

The pictures are less important than the fact that she did what you asked. The high comes from control. You don’t bother jacking off to them but you keep them to fluff your ego. Like her enough and you invite her to your place- another bit of compliance that’s hotter than the sex you’re going to end up having.

Only that wasn’t the case with Jennifer. Every girl will tell you she gives the best head- an adorable white lie that you appreciate for the intentions, but Jennifer wasn’t kidding. Sex with her became addictive. She got off on your control. No one had pushed her like you had- you enjoyed watching her squirm. When you play the game long enough, you can pick apart exactly what you find attractive- reality and control.

In a world of performance, you get off on the genuine. You want her to drop her guard. Destroy her

ego. Show you who she really is beyond the false-self she projects. This is true submission- not the silly role playing that people take for dominance. You don't wait for a woman to tell you that she loves you, you look her in the eye and make her say it.

Jennifer played these games with me, skating such a fine line between fantasy and reality that it was easy to get lost. Make her tell you she loves you for long enough and one of you is going to start believing it. Then one night, I maybe pushed too hard and she told me about the other guy she was seeing. Check.

If you aren't exclusive, she's seeing someone else too. That's the reality of living in hell. She had gotten me. This is the kind of blowback you get from making a woman say, "I'm just a fat slut" during sex. Try it and you'll cum harder than you ever have before, but don't let her change the verbiage- *just* is important because it's reductionist. She needs to know that she's nothing more, at least in that moment- the moment your values coalesce. If she adds words like *I guess* or *kind of*, this means you hit a nerve, like striking gold, and suddenly getting her to say it becomes ten times hotter. But this is a dangerous game- and even if she cums just as hard as you in the moment, she's going to hate you a little bit later on, no matter how many times you get her to say otherwise. Jennifer was fucking someone else, some guy she went to high school with, and used this as a jab at my ego- something which was unwittingly welcome. No false-self here; I pushed her to reveal the reality of modern womanhood- a perpetual 1970's key party- and we wouldn't need to pretend otherwise.

She had gotten me, this was true, so I told her about Alison. She didn't like that. Check.

I didn't meet Alison on Plenty of Fish, I met her on Craigslist. Before they stopped hosting personal ads, a secret of the universe was that you could find much hotter girls on Craigslist, with a well-written ad, than any of the online dating apps. Leave your ad up and watch the replies slowly roll in- this was the passive income of internet dating. Alison was a decade younger than Jennifer, with blond hair and a modest bust- not necessarily my type, but with a girl under twenty-five, who really cares?

The irony is that I liked Jennifer more, of course- after all, this isn't about Alison, but like hell I wasn't gonna use her as collateral. When Jennifer tried to ratchet the game by daring mention details, I pushed harder by leaving Alison's hair-clip and necklace, left at my apartment, on an end-table for Jennifer to find... and I won that round too.

Like all victories, though, this was short-lived. The empire eventually strikes back. The true loser in a modern relationship is the one who takes it too seriously- an inherent falsehood, they're parody at best. My mistake was deciding that I wanted to do things right with Jennifer.

You don't politely ask to step off a runaway train. It's not for you to decide when the game is over. In one of those Alanis Morissette moments, the day I cut things off with Alison- seeing her had gotten stale anyway- to get serious with Jennifer- because I was falling for her- was the day she told me that she had met up with one of her Tinder matches. Tall with a big dick. Worked at a gym- she met him there and fucked on the massage table. More blow back from the hair-clip. Maybe overdid it with that one. Isn't it ironic, dontcha think?

Like a wounded animal ready to die fighting, I didn't chose *flight*. I spent the next week berating her over text- telling her eternal truths that have become obscured by a world too happy to lie. Men don't think much of women who are *easy sex*. If she didn't already know that, she got to hear it three-thousand times.

And it made me hot. I get off on being mean. The angry voicemails, cursing me for not picking up,

followed by long messages of crying and begging. Her pleas for forgiveness. Her profuse apologies- she'd do anything to fix things. I'd get a head rush just seeing her name pop on my phone at work. This was a million times sexier than the world's hottest porn.

I'd like to think she planned the rest- clinch her victory and ride off into the sunset knowing she beat the asshole; just a fat slut? Not this time... but I know that isn't how it happened. Women as less calculated than people think- they follow the tide and drift with the wind. Your actions rarely dictate their behavior- they'll either put up with you, or they've found a better deal.

A week later we had the hottest sex of our entire run. All of the tension had led to a crescendo that exploded like a lightning bolt striking an earthquake- a thousand atomic bombs imploding on my broken, black leather couch.

Two weeks later, she's on the phone and I'm begging to see her. Let's meet at the beach. Find a bench and watch the tide roll in. Make out like it's our first kiss. No, she told me. She met someone else. Another guy from high school- one she'd never have considered dating when she was gorgeous and young, but like incubating in a pod, he emerged at thirty-five, maybe not any better looking, but a doctor with a sports car- and someone who wouldn't make her "feel like shit about herself."

But we were in love, I told her... before realizing that I was alone in that sentiment. Say it enough and one of you is going to start believing it. Our values did not coalesce.

Checkmate.

Don't Fear the Reaper

March 13, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Baby, I’m your man.”

Nothing ends well. I hate to be the one to tell you, but if you didn’t already know, romantic endings are for Hollywood. Real life is dull with a shit ending. I’ve never watched someone die, and my hands carry the softness of a man with intellectual savvy- I’ve never known hard labor, and this is something I appreciate. After I scrub diligently for twenty-seconds and dry thoroughly, I enjoy the soft touch of my fingertips on my reasonably ageless face. People are shocked that I’m forty- and with a baseball cap turned just slightly askew, I can still fuck reasonably young women.

But this isn’t going anywhere. The joke is that once you hammer out the formula, in your Henry Frankenstein fuck laboratory, you’re already halfway bored by the results. They say the journey is more satisfying than the destination, but once you slipped into the realm of hindsight, you wonder if that’s just another bit of Hollywood bullshit.

You have so many of the same interactions that it all blurs together and becomes part of your muscle memory- like realizing Punch-Out is a rhythm game- you could do it blindfolded. You thought you were Tony Soprano, a playboy with a dark side, but you’re really Livia- “it’s all a big nothing,” something you understand now more than you ever thought you would.

So you resign yourself to wanting something real. You think you’ve finally come up with the right equation for it, and even if you understand the immutable fact that *genuine relationships don’t exist in hell*, you’re still going out to slay demons with your spear and armor until you get the girl- even if you have to play through the game twice.

But nothing ends well. Hollywood endings are called that for a reason. I never took my dog for the walk I was too busy for before his liver failed. You won’t say the right things to resolve the years of tension you’ve had with your parents before they die, even if you come close. You won’t find the right girl to ride off into the sunset with- “all a big nothing.”

When she told me that she wasn’t sure how she felt, I knew it was time to go. You never want to get jobbed out of a territory- the idea is to leave on your own accord. It was time to go, and I told her I wasn’t going to stay the night- something that struck a nerve with her. She felt comfortable sussing out her feelings in language that could hang in the air and be arranged and rearranged like refrigerator magnets- this was the kind of control she expected; her decision and her terms. But the ultimate sin in a relationship is forgetting that it’s a perpetual game of chess- even when it feels like it isn’t, there’s no rest for the wicked.

I was sincere in leaving- it wasn’t a game to sway her feelings. I collected my things and she walked me to the door, where I took one last look at her. I thought she was beautiful, another sin when you’re living in hell- and took a second to linger. I wanted to feel something. You want to *feel* a goodbye. It may be the last time you ever feel anything remotely close to love for a woman, even if this were only in bit-sized pieces with artificial flavoring- *love adjacent*, maybe.

You wait to feel something, but what you want is acknowledgment that she’s there with you in the moment. You want a look of presence in her eyes. Only men are fools enough to get caught up in nostalgia- romanticizing the past- women are too pragmatic for that. Like hungry wolves, they

understand picking bones and moving on. Cut out at the right time, and she'll still care- you'll get that look in her eyes, and you'll feel your goodbye.

I told her I'd see her around- saying goodbye felt too real. She had a moment of fluster, a minor stutter when she'd get too nervous, then smiled and said 'maybe at Target,' a joke we shared, that I was always running into ex-girlfriends at Target. I took another pause, touched her face, returned her smile, and left.

So perfect an ending to tidy-up a good-enough six-months that I would have been able to reflect fondly on it for years; so perfect that it couldn't have really been the end. If endings seem too emotionally charged, you end up going back to them. Things only truly die in cancer ravaged hospital beds- black and stinking, shit and piss.

That is reality, not storybooks; not Hollywood. The zombie invasion end-of-the-world meme, where we go out defending civilization with homemade weapons and combat cars, was never going to happen. Coronavirus is the reality we deserve- death by the neo-liberal, consumer hellscape we created- death by Amazon Prime, death by Travelocity- death by *wanderlust*, death by modern sin- holed up in our homes, being lied to by our governments, while our lungs collapse. There is no perfect goodbye.

We saw each other until that look in her eyes was gone. This is reality- you drive a relationship into the ground trying to make it work, trying to play catch-up, and you go out counting the lights. You realize it's over two weeks too late, and your last memory of her is only coldness- all a big nothing, and you'd better get used to it.

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Dating and Reality (picnic, lightning)

March 16, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“The only convincing love story of our century.”

Like getting a glimpse of a video game’s final boss before your own destruction, unless you’re a real stud, you never get much experience having threesomes. Those who romanticize it have either never done it, or done it so many times that listening to them in the first place would be like taking financial advice from a trust fund kid. It’s nice to be rich.

But outside of a resume piece that only comes up in the screening interviews you have with new women you’re trying to fuck, who’ll assume you’re lying anyway, or a sexual bucket list that you only understand as meaningless once it’s all checked off, threesomes are mostly silly.

This is the reality that every internet guru, selling you thousands of dollars of bullshit and filming those ridiculous looking three-way kisses at foam parties in Cancun, will gladly lie about.

Her name was Candace. We met her on Craigslist. I wrote the ad for my girlfriend to post- I had her screen the replies, and she’d have the decent ones text me. We had a good cop/bad cop dynamic- she was friendly with these women, I was demanding.

Candace had a boyfriend but he was *too nice*– he lacked grit. She liked that I was in my thirties dating a nineteen year old. This is what women say they hate, and maybe they do on some level, but they’re lying if they say they don’t find it intriguing. After all, what kind of thirty-four year old asshole is dating a teenager? The kind they want to fuck.

As much as the girlfriend tells you that she’s okay with everything, seducing another girl in front of her is going to feel strange. Don’t forget to take mental pictures because this will be the best part of the evening. You watch them make out, and you feel accomplished- I created this, and *it is good*– but anything after is an awkward mesh of bodies. I defy anyone to find a good way to do this- a queen sized bed isn’t meant to contain this level of idiocy.

I came on her face thinking about how fucking awful it all was- sending her home to her boyfriend after she met some dipshit on Craigslist. The hot shower she’d have to take before getting in bed with him and acting like it was ladies’ night at *Barnes and Noble*– just coffee and chitchat with the girls, that’s all. I couldn’t decide whether I wanted her to be masturbating in the shower or crying- but one of the two seemed inevitable, maybe both.

And when she finally leaves to take that shower, you feel a tinge of existential horror. You take a beat to wonder why you did it in the first place- what were you looking to get out of fucking a stranger in front of your girlfriend? *Threesome* is a misnomer- it isn’t chaotic like *Final Fight*, it’s slower and turn-based like *Final Fantasy*. Did you really just do it to say you did it? This thought haunts you.

You all shared in the experience, but you each saw something different. You were bent on validation, having something to prove after hitting rock bottom several years prior, breaking your engagement, and returning to the world of the living- but now your victory lap felt flat. Candace was rebelling against a boring boyfriend with the most scandalous and pornographic scenario she could find. Your kid girlfriend was dipping her toes in what she presumed the adult world should be- maybe after too much time on the internet, too much time watching cable TV.

We were all there for different reasons, and none of them were genuine- we did it just to say we did it. We were objects to one another, and each used the other to reach their own end. The sex was necessary but ultimately perfunctory. This bothered me for a few moments before I jacked off and went to bed.

If you couldn't guess, having a kid girlfriend is fucking hilarious. If you're riding a wave of indignation, where you suddenly feel righteous flipping a double-bird to the world around you, there is no better way to do it. People will stare and if you're not ready to play to it like a bad guy pro-wrestler, this type of social norm bucking isn't for you- and maybe you're the guy waiting while she's doing "girls' night at the book store." The married couple with the stroller will shoot dirty looks, but you'll catch hubby stealing a glimpse of her ass every time. The blue-haired checkout girl at Target won't hide her disgust; the lonely boy working the deli counter at the grocery store will stare longingly- another dagger through his heart.

She was here on loan from down south. Got a gig as a live-in babysitter. The dad would try to get with her when the mom wasn't around- the perks of having a live-in babysitter, I guess. She moved in after she quit and we spent two weeks bouncing around Mexico to celebrate. Guys would try to hit on her thinking I was her father. We'd drink liquor in the ocean by moonlight and laugh at anyone who didn't get the joke. We were living in our own world and writing the rules for it as we went along.

Once you realize that men are the only ones held to a social standard, and women are given a pass for morally gray behavior, you're happy to tell the system to fuck off entirely. When your fiancé's father sits you down and gives you a speech about *male responsibility*, which translates strictly as *paying my daughter's bills*, and the open-ended question that hangs in the air, never to be addressed, is "what should the man expect out of the deal?" What you can expect to hear are crickets.

So men on the street suckered in by lecherous wives, blue-haired retail employees emboldened by a system happy to endlessly masturbate them- I invite you to stare at a man who's found freedom in not giving a fuck.

A month later we took off to rural Washington state, on a hiking trip where I rented the biggest truck I could find and we climbed mountains and picked blue-berries in deep solitude. Marijuana had just been legalized, so we loaded up on pre-rolled joints and spent our evenings getting high in the jacuzzi tub- and I've never felt more alone in my life.

So far out in sticks that the nearest fast food place was staffed by happy people and your meal looked like the picture on the poster. Hundreds of miles from civilization; thousands from home. Far enough away that you didn't have any rules left to defy.

Far enough away to realize that you were two different people with absolutely nothing in common. She couldn't hope to understand you, and you never bothered to try to understand her- the *real her*, the genuine her; beyond what you wanted her to represent. She was an object to you, and now, in total isolation, it became pressing and urgent.

You're so high that you confide in her the horror you feel watching your parents get old- you've always known what was inevitable, but you've only recently began to *feel* it. This angers her- you aren't supposed to have feelings; you were never supposed to be a fully-realized person. You were always the embodiment of a fantasy- the older man- as a sex object and father figure. She wanted you to stay that way.

We never saw each other as people- we only served as flat images to one other; characterchens on a

page, reduced to our defining features; exaggerated and cartoonish. We never saw each other as people- we only saw what we wanted.

Steal Away the Night

March 20, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Runaway with me tonight, dream the dream and light the light.”

Maybe it's just part of growing up, feeling the depth of responsibility which that role entails- or the side effect of a tendency to lean toward narcissism- but I've never been able to let go of guilt. Lying in bed at night, thinking, *how could I have been better* or *what could I have done differently*. You put pressure on yourself to live up to an arbitrary ideal, and when you don't, you never let yourself forget it. Maybe this is why I can't sleep at night.

And when I'm lying in bed restless, I'll often think about Christmas 1983. I don't think I have coherent memories earlier than 1983, and if I take a moment to really focus, I can remember the feeling of newness and exploration I felt at that age- almost as if I were conscious of it at the time, but I know this is probably only how I see things in retrospect. I was obsessed with *Masters of the Universe*— captivated by the cartoon, and there were no better days than going to *Toys R Us* and getting to pick out one of the figures to take home. Of course, I preferred Skeletor to He-Man; even at three-years-old, I wanted to be the bad guy.

It's amazing how quickly kids understand the concept of Christmas as an orgasm of consumption- like a beagle who's found his way to the top of an unattended breakfast table; I felt entitled to a massive bounty of molded plastic just for being me. Still a few years out from when the holiday would take a sharp turn to video games, 1983 was the year for He-Man toys- and I knew that Christmas would be my only chance to pick-up elusive, top-shelf items like the awesome Castle Greyskull or the Battle Cat. If you've seen the commercials, you'd know that the only proper way to play He-Man was to have more figures than you'd be able to play with at one time, so come December, my expectations were high.

And on Christmas morning, I threw a fit. My parents were hard-up for money by the end of '83- my father had gone from a lucrative managerial position at a prestigious company to unemployed; my mother was recovering from cancer treatments, and I think he folded under the stress. You wish you could go back and tell yourself these things- act as the embodiment of why your parents wanted to have children. A symbol of hope, to light their way during dark times.

As an adult, it's difficult to separate the role you've taken on for them- as caregiver- from the role you left behind as a child- and it's easy to blame yourself for what you should have done *had you known*. Thinking about it for long enough, on those sleepless nights, you can't help but cry. You could have saved them.

I threw a fit because I didn't get what I wanted. I'm sure every bit of He-Man paraphernalia in my Sears Christmas Wish Book— consumerist pornography for children- had been circled and re-circled. There was no way my mother didn't know what I wanted, but she hedged her bets on thinking a three-year-old doesn't know what the fuck's going on and went with Remco's knock-off line, The Warlords.

On its face, this wasn't a terrible idea. Notorious for being cheap toys for budget conscious shoppers, and having a keen-eye for ripping off trends, Remco secured the Warlords license from DC Comics in order to compete with the early-80's hot property, *The Masters of the Universe*. On its face, this

made sense- even if He-Man had the backing of a cheaply made Saturday morning cartoon, which functioned more as an infomercial for the toy line, the Warlords had the support of a comic book—and kids love comic books. Each figure line was mostly indistinguishable from the other- had the same scale and points of articulation, the same heavily muscled physiques, and the same lot of eccentric character designs- instead of a yellow skeleton in a purple hood, you had an anatomically correct, hoodless white skeleton. To an adult looking to give their only child a memorable Christmas, while cutting costs, The Warlords seemed like a smart buy.

But if you were a child in the first half of a decade defined by consumption, you'd surely understand the horror and disappointment I felt waking up on Christmas morning to find thematically similar characters whom I had never seen on television.

Even if imagination could have bridged the gap between sets of similar toys, the television exposure of one made the other insignificant. A lifeless comic book, even if I had heard of it at the time, could never compete with fully animated images- forcing characterization and directing play. You didn't want to create your own fantasy adventure, you wanted to re-enact what you had seen on TV.

After ruining Christmas in what was surely a barrage of tears and screaming, my mother returned the toys and learned what would ultimately define my generation: we take our cues from marketing and media- a trend that would follow us through adulthood. We wanted to experience the ebb and flow of romance and heartbreak alongside John Cusack and Matthew Broderick, one crazy night like in *License to Drive*, college hijinks while evading the crusty old dean- our adult lives would be like *Friends* or *Seinfeld*, perpetual dormitory living, purposeless dating and meaningless sex. Television created these expectations for us, and certainly life wouldn't turn out anything like Christmas 1983.

How could you have saved your parents when you couldn't save yourself- a thought that doesn't provide comfort as much as resolution; it helps you get to sleep for another night. There were intrusive forces set against us- at least one part of which was maybe even purchased at Sears, set in the living room, and used voluntarily. The rest was a combination of bad luck and human weakness, but you can't help but dissect how things could have been different- like Bruce Wayne replaying that night at the Opera again and again, obsessed with action that he couldn't have taken.

You say it shouldn't haunt you, but it will- and maybe the only thing you have left is to protect them from accountability- and maybe that's what will absolve you from your own sins.

Back to the Future

March 24, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“On Marty’s right was dear old Mom, who was once very attractive and bright. Now, at forty-seven, she was overweight, drank more than was good for her and had more food on her plate than anyone else.”

I wasn’t trying to have sex with Christine, but I wasn’t opposed to it. She was in town visiting from some far off country where she had gotten a job teaching English, picked up a relationship, burnt through it, and came back to her hometown to regroup before doing it all again. She’d come back home for gift cards and praise, for being courageous and a *free spirit*, to have a few parties in her honor- maybe hook up with some old flames- and leave before it starting feeling too familiar. I never left our hometown; I was neither courageous nor a free spirit.

We were the first generation to explore our late twenties as unmarried. As it turns out, this only extends adolescence, creates expectations that life won’t likely meet, and will give you a handful of addictions to grapple with for the next ten years. If you’re lucky, you’ll have your head screwed on by forty, and then spend the rest of your life playing catch-up like you’re running out of time on a level of *Super Mario Brothers*– the background music obnoxiously fast so you don’t forget.

The first generation where men and women have friendships with one-another- where the sexes aren’t diametrically opposed, constantly playing out like Biff Tannen chasing Lorraine; the perpetual antagonist meeting the perpetually antagonized- until one is stubborn enough to win. Christine was coming over for drinks, and I knew, sometimes, that men and women had sex- even as friends, even if I hadn’t ever experienced that myself.

I’d had girlfriends, and I’d had dates- I’d had dates that turned into girlfriends, and dates that turned into sex, but never a friend with supposed *benefits*. While I knew what these benefits were, I wasn’t sure how they were secured- nothing about a friendship screamed sex, that kind of dangerous, animalistic tension; this was more like a cockerspainsel playdate.

But friends had sex- I was sure there was a precedent for this- and I wasn’t opposed to having sex with Christine. Men don’t waste time with women they don’t vaguely want sex with- and this was probably the bulk of guys lining up to make plans with Christine.

It’s not that she was ugly, she was just painfully average. Never the prettiest in any group photo she’s taken, she had a kind of toothy smile and uncharacteristically flat nose for an Irish girl. Perpetually twenty-pounds overweight, but it usually “went to her chest”- a luxury men don’t have. We went to the same high school, and in another world, it wouldn’t be such a far-off idea that we’d have married- the same kind of unremarkable, though not necessarily undesirable, aesthetics would’ve produced some equally average kids, who’d have gone to the same school as us, played on sports teams we were too cool to join, and gotten eventual office jobs, meeting their own unremarkable mates, and starting the process over again. Not bad at all, just *unremarkable*.

Of course, Christine and I thought we were too special for that trajectory. It wasn’t cool to marry young, and certainly not to have kids before *experiencing life*– as if having children was a death sentence. How else would you have these drunken nights, anyway?

We didn’t have sex, that notion died fairly early in the evening, and it shocked me when she told me

about the kind of guys who *were* having sex with her. Cool guys, athletic guys, rock band guys, frat guys- guys whom I'd have thought wouldn't waste their time on Christine- someone who was a vague, "I guess if it *just happens*" type of notion for me. She'd spend more time talking about the ones who must've gotten her goat- they were always *little boys* with *small dicks*.

I didn't know it then, but I'd made the mistake of thinking men and women could be friends in the first place. Just like I was only hanging out with her because *you never know*, she wasn't sitting in my apartment looking to have a genuine conversation. Just like when she first gave me her phone number ten years prior- and my father had sat me down, after overhearing one of my long telephone calls with her, to tell me that none of these girls would want to be my *girlfriend*, and I still feel guilt over reacting like a total shit to what must have been a difficult conversation for him because I was fucking embarrassed... Just like all of our interactions, she was using me as an audience to complain about boys who'd fuck her but not want to date her, while not wanting either with me. My father was right.

But, even if sex would have been vaguely welcome, it wasn't pressing- I genuinely thought we were old friends first and, as single friends in their mid-twenties, we were talking shop about the complex sport of male & female relations. She brought up *small dicks*, so I had mentioned in passing that guy's with small dicks should just match up with *smaller women* who have *smaller vaginas*.

Her face turned red, and she shouted "all vaginas are the same size!"

Which became the very first post on Kill to Party- started five years ago, when I wasn't sure what this space should be or where it should go, but I knew that night in 2006 would need to be the starting point- where I wasn't sure what the implications of it were at the time, or how deep the rabbit hole would go, but I understood that men and women could never be friends.

Christine didn't end up marrying one of her Biffs. Just a few years ago she met her George McFly, an Asian boy with a nice smile, gained thirty pounds and started having kids. Her last *great adventure*, she told me, the last time I'd probably ever talk to her- and I let her words settle into the atmosphere- I didn't want to screw Christine anymore, so there wasn't much reason to keep up the conversation.

Zenith (the low hum of a blank screen)

April 1, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“This is a warning: here comes the morning.”

She had done her part by having a kid. Something anyone could point to as making her *accomplished enough*— anything on top of that is a victory lap. No one would fault her for keeping things quiet- drinks on the weekends, maybe a date, vacation time over the summer. This is how she eased into her forties, and there was nothing terribly wrong with it- even if her only wish were to politely color within the lines and walk away with a terrifically neat and tidy picture of a live well lived.

First time I had dated someone so incredibly *settled*— she even had a house to go along with the kid. Only a few years older than me, but it felt like decades. With my baseball cap turned slightly askew, I still think I’m a twenty-five year-old rock star with a full road ahead of me. This is the fantasy you indulge in when you’ve never chosen a path- you pretend that you still have choices, and that you could be smug about those boring types with their suburban homes and vacation clubs.

Only a few years older than me, but I called her my *old lady girlfriend*— for reasons that are more clear in retrospect. Maybe I needed a feeling of distance from how quiet things were for her- maybe I felt a degree of insecurity about how *unsettled* my own life was, as if dating her made me confront my own reality; sideways cap and rock star fantasy be damned.

Maybe I felt the need for distance because this wasn’t my life and it never could be- I was just filling in. Her Scott Weiland had checked out years ago- I was only a hired gun, her Jeff Gutt; let’s do an album and a tour, and call it a day. This wasn’t my story- and the space between us made that fact immutable. This wasn’t my story, something one of her friends explained to me on a drunken bar night- as if to skew my expectations- “she cares about you as a person, but you’re not the love of her life.”

This wasn’t my story- and we had no reason to pretend it was. There was a comfort in understanding that it was *good enough*. It was functional. We got along. We had incredible sex. What else could one hope for in the land of the dead?

I didn’t choose a path, so one was chosen for me- like I let the menu screen run for too long, and the game booted up on its own. *Unsettled* is my path, and it ran diametrically opposed to hers. We were different people with different lives. She was a good kisser; we spent most of our time in the orbit of her bedroom- after, she would talk about whatever cruise she had planned, and I’d talk about my writing.

She’d tell me that she didn’t understand why I liked writing. She didn’t understand why I bothered or what I was looking to get out of it- why I took it seriously; why I’d be so hard on myself over it, why I never thought it was good enough. I’d talk about the ideas I’d have for pieces- the frustration I felt in my attempts to bring them to the proper terms- and she’d stare blankly and tell me that she didn’t *get it*, which I suppose was slightly more polite than telling me to shut the fuck up.

She didn’t see the value in any of this because it wasn’t part of her world- a very tangible world of cause and effect. You work for long enough to cash in your tokens for a week in Florida. A localized world where you meet with friends at a pub and order an Uber for the way home. A world where you

can rest easy at night knowing that you had a kid, created meaning in what is inherently meaningless, and can enjoy the blank spaces that life will offer.

I don't sleep well at night, and I haven't for a long time. I'll often wake up with feelings of an unidentifiable, shapeless dread- a subtle haunting- which I can't immediately suss out the origins of, that will cause me to stand in my kitchen for several minutes, long after midnight, composing myself. These feelings were stronger when my life was a disaster- after my engagement and career blew up at the same time, when I had given up on *long-term planning*, when I had suicide as a potential endgame, where I'd go out with two middle-fingers up to the world that betrayed me. This felt like being on fire, which had since been extinguished, and now the remaining embers caused a dull burn.

Writing is the pursuit of truth- this is what I'll say when asked why I write. Not all writers are genuinely pursuing truth, but they think they are, and that counts too. One can either pursue family or pursue truth. While it isn't necessary for those who pursue family to also pursue truth, the option is available- however, for one to eschew family, one *must* pursue truth. Nothing else matters, and every little bit of consumption distracts from this pursuit.

This is why you spend your time grinding away- this is why productivity is all that matters to you. This is why bouts of creative impotence keep you up at night. This is why you can't picture yourself settling in to a week aboard a cruise-ship or hidden away in some resort hotel in Mexico- the anxiety of spending time doing anything but turning eternal truth into art, like an intellectual alchemist- Henry fucking Frankenstein, half-mad, looking at your best work and swearing you know what it feels like *to be God*- nauseates you.

Greatness lies just beyond your reach, but it's there and you can feel it. Even starting with nothing, you can take what's needed from your surroundings and make from it something more. On your best days, you might even feel justified in being called *clever*.

You can make up for mistakes made along the way; time lost; hearts broken. You can stitch things together- make sense of what went wrong- bring meaning to what is inherently meaningless, and condense things to their proper terms- where those around you can look past the mess you've made, and only see how you've come to frame it- in terms that are brilliant, clever, and meaningful. You create beauty in meeting dead-end girls, and having dead-end sex, in dead-end relationships- this wasn't time wasted, this was time *making art*. This is what you tell yourself, in your kitchen, in the middle of the night, as the clock ticks away- and this is the part you leave out when asked why you write.

Nightcrawling

April 11, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“I’ll be the last to say, don’t follow your heart, but there’s more to what it takes to be a man.”

There were others before her, but she was the first. I found her on MySpace. She liked taking pictures; she was an early adopter of *digital photography*. Specialized in self-portraits- different angles, tight zoom.

You thought she was beautiful. A carbon copy of every girl-next-door you ever wanted in high school. This was your moment. You spent a year in the gym- miles on the treadmill, throwing around dumbbells- training for this like Rocky Balboa looking for a comeback. You had girlfriends before- but this was your moment; experience, swagger, and fitness- you finally felt like a complete package. If out-of-shape guys date average girls, then fit guys have their pick; it’s a logically valid equation.

It had been a year since Kasie- and there wasn’t anything terribly wrong with her outside of her being terribly average. Friends teased about dating a chubby girl; fishnet stockings squeezing thighs with a *maybe too-short* plaid skirt. She’d have meltdowns when she drank too much. There was one night at a club that anyone close to her nuclear epicenter will never forget- even fifteen years later.

But that wasn’t the problem- you just thought you could do better.

People don’t marry young anymore- before us lay a world where our value could be tested; refined and maximized. We had time- we didn’t need to *settle*.

You thought she was crazy for showing up to your door the way she did. You thought she was fat. A modest waistline met with a big ass stuffed in *maybe too-tight* jeans. The prior decade’s aesthetic of thin-with-large-breasts still hung in the air as ideal and Nikki existed as the polar opposite. You didn’t know if she was intentionally deceptive with her pictures or if you were fool enough to deceive yourself.

She wanted sex, and we watched a movie. She was sweet. We’d keep in touch- *just friends*, because I was fit, and charming, and swagger, and all that shit. I was too good to stick it in a fat girl- our values did not coalesce; our lines on the graph did not intersect. And even if I hadn’t been with anyone since Kasie, a fat girl certainly wasn’t going to be my starting point.

After a few months of nothing, I sent her a text. Since we weren’t ever gonna be *a thing*, she loosened the veil- I was the only one she’d met who didn’t fuck her. This shocked me- what desperate losers she must be meeting! Poor girl.

Kathryn wasn’t ideal, but she was available and younger than Nikki- straight out of college and with an English literature degree. I worked with her father, which was something she loved, getting off on the vaguely scandalous overtones of it all. Only a few years older but to her it was dating the teacher. Kathryn was average and Kathryn was boring, but meeting Kelly wasn’t.

Kathryn introduced me to Kelly on a night at the pool hall. Recently dumped and needing to get out of the house, she tagged along. When Kathryn hit the bar for another dogshit cocktail, I joked with Kelly that we were all gonna end up in the backseat of my car- a physical impossibility that didn’t seem to bother her when she told me that she’d be down but Kathryn *would never*.

Which was probably true- so we didn't bother asking. Kelly scribbled her address on a tiny piece of paper and snuck it into my hand as we said our goodbyes with the words "fifteen minutes" written above. Twenty minutes later we were in my backseat.

Kelly had a charming spunk to her. She was going to school to be a librarian and told me that her grandmother would buy her a new winter coat if she managed to lose twenty pounds. Seeing her was exciting at first but had diminishing returns as we drifted from forbidden to routine.

We couldn't date because Kathryn's father was a colleague in my English department, and even if Kathryn and I fizzled amicably, it would still be detrimental to date her best friend- is what I told Kelly. But I didn't want to be tied down; long term relationships leave post-traumatic scars. Three years in the clink. Like getting home from war and thinking you should re-enlist. Even if it makes sense, your body won't *let you*- is what I told myself.

I didn't date Kelly because I thought I could do better- and I wasn't gonna wait around for her to get a new coat.

The gambler doubles down because he thinks the win streak will never end. Ace Frehley never stopped spending- why, when there's always another hit record? There isn't room to lose when you know how to win. So, the long months of nothing will be confusing at first- an adjustment period. Quiet reflection. You try to get used to rejection, but you never quite get there, like stepping into a cold shower- Wolverine and the claws coming out, puncturing his knuckles, blood on his hands; it hurts every time. You text Nikki and get no answer.

You become the hungry coyote hoping to eat out of a dumpster. Lou Bloom stealing manhole covers to sell at thirty-cents per pound. Your next meal isn't guaranteed- entirely possible you'll never eat again.

I met Lizzy a few months before she skipped town- a pallette swap in place of something truly new; a different cast of characters but the same old problems. Instead of the purple-and-black ninja, now they're red-and-blue; she wanted a husband, but only met wolves- well fed, but when is anything ever enough?

Women are more pragmatic than men. They understand value. They'll cash-in for a good enough deal. Left to their own devices, men get caught-up at the blackjack table- drunk on the possibility for more. Female charm is an evolutionary strategy to get men away from the casino- take the needle out of their fucking arm. Left to their own devices, men will run this lifestyle into the ground- and this is why we have women.

She lucked out when she met a big fat motherfucker who invented [REDACTED] and was filthy rich. Suddenly, her way of talking about relationships changed entirely. No longer framing things in terms of passion and chemistry, Lizzy had now "found her best friend," and "discovered what love really was," which I supposed sounded better than "he's fucking disgusting, but he's a multi-millionaire."

It was around this time that I met Marisa. I wasn't rich, and she wasn't Lindsay Lohan, but a close enough approximation- the budget version- made it a love story. She was smart enough to get her claws in, like the raccoon who manages to open up the old pizza box while the others just stare. She got what she deserved. We both did.

It didn't work out with the fat motherfucker- maybe was a little too good to be true; maybe he was just another wolf, but one who had come up with his own way to get it. Back to the drawing board; ground zero- she started reading books on being *brave*, just in case.

Years later, she managed to meet someone in-between hungry coyote and master wolf; tall and weathered, overweight with high school sports achievements close-enough in the rearview for a few stories on a Friday night. If things were different, this is who she'd have married out of high school- two kids, a two-car garage; yard work, soccer practice, kung-foo classes, and all that shit.

She took the long way around, but she didn't time the market right. She had to catch a falling knife, and this is where she ended up- knuckles punctured, hands bloody. For Valentine's Day, he bought her designer shoes with a note attached: "a reminder to never settle for anything less than what you're worth ..."

As if she didn't already know.

This Space Between Us

April 13, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Look boy, either Michael Jackson is some guy working in a recording studio in L.A. or he’s here with you willing to work on this song. It’s your choice.”

It used to bother me thinking I didn’t exist outside of how others perceived me. The moments I spent alone, while significant to me, felt shapeless- as if what’s experienced in solitude existed on a plane between dream and fiction. The inner world can only be represented in close approximation- and that representation is all that exists; you are who others perceive you to be. No one is interested in *you* beyond the value of your public face.

You are nothing.

The coldness of deep space.

In “Videodrome” they had the homeless watch television- the most pragmatic form of charity- food and shelter would only be a temporary fix. The socially discarded- those without a public face, who *no longer exist*- can only be brought back to life learning the etiquette of public existence. Erase the lunacy of authenticity- speaking without a veil is feral behavior- your personality needs a high-degree of digestibility. Good morning, America, *Coke is it*. Like that.

Only that isn’t it- it’s a starting point. The difference between something and nothing- being “patched back into the world’s mixing board” and existing as a walking corpse. Social intelligence is acting within the scope of acceptability while pretending as though you aren’t- that you’re the brand, the influencer, and the genesis of memes.

Even if the counter-culture is where you find yourself settling- the alternative, Pepsi instead of Coke, or *RC-fucking-Cola* for the real crazies- there is still a mixing board to find, and a set of unspoken rules to follow with only a small allowance for authenticity.

The greater degree to which you’re able to find originality within the narrow band of acceptability, the higher degree of social intelligence you’ll be regarded with. Making a Borat joke at a party in 2020 isn’t exactly a faux pas, but would serve as a dog whistle to anyone hipper than you that you aren’t part of the club- making an Austin Powers reference, even worse. When aging content creators don’t understand how they were left behind, it’s that the unspoken language of the mixing board changed without their notice.

“We are who we choose to be,” is what the Green Goblin tells Spider-Man. The reoccurring theme of “Master of Puppets” is how little control we have over these choices- manipulated by forces from both outside and within. Tyler Durden thought it better to be defined by destruction if the only other choice is consumption. To Shane Carruth, our identity is shaped in ways that are so distant- so far *upstream*- that they’re unknowable.

When Laura Loomer was kicked-off the internet she was pulled away from the only reality she had come to know. A bag of guts resembling *Laura Loomer* cried and screamed on talk shows, threatened suicide, and hand-cuffed herself to an office building- but none of this mattered, because Loomer was already dead. If the self is meaningless when not translated to a language that can be understood by the other, then Laura Loomer was erased. She’ll survive, but she’ll need to become someone new- a different mixing board, a new set of social rules- but one without all the Twitter followers and

attention. Only she can answer whether that's a life worth living.

The decade of peak American excess pushed with vigor the idea that all people should be photogenic while simultaneously eating a diet of processed foods- this is what was considered *progress*; beauty and convenience. Of course, these ideas existed at odds with one another, which brought the diet industry to the forefront of American life. No longer were already trim girls chasing an ideal and a husband- now obese Americans were playing catch-up, and late-night infomercials promising beauty and convenience were there to exploit them- this is where Richard Simmons enters the story.

Simmons may have sold different products over the years, from *Deal-a-Meal* to *Sweatin' to the Oldies*, but really, Simmons *himself* was the product. Simmons had tremendous charisma that popped off the screen- a ball of kinetic energy who was constantly screaming with joy, or breaking down in tears, depending on what the situation called for. Most of all, Simmons conveyed an incredible sense of *authenticity*- when he cried, relaying his own struggles with self-image, you knew he'd understand you- when he shouted that *you too* could do it, you believed him.

It's easy to think that Simmons was the ultimate used-car salesman, but the curve-ball to the story is the friendships he formed with clients along the way. Simmons would meet obese women, desperate and depressed, and provide free personal coaching- which turned into soft-therapy- which often became late-night phone-calls with Simmons having his own emotional breakdowns; needing his own support- these relationships went both ways. Similarly, Simmons would use his exercise studio- *Slimmons*, where he would personally lead classes for twelve dollars per session- as a form of group therapy. His breakdowns, and the resulting sweaty hugs, became a part of the experience.

And then one day, Richard Simmons disappeared.

He stopped making talk show appearances. He stopped teaching at Slimmons. He stopped coaching obese women over the phone. He stopped talking to friends. He stopped leaving his house.

Richard Simmons stopped being Richard Simmons.

It's easy to think that this serves as proof that Simmons was a fraud- a late night, infomercial hustler- using the perception of authenticity to make millions. Maybe he needed the ego fluffing of obese women in middle America being dependent on his phone calls and his friendship. Maybe he felt safe using them for his own therapy, late-at-night, when there was no one around to perform for.

What seems more likely is that Richard Simmons *couldn't be* Richard Simmons anymore. The animating spirit that embodied the bag of guts that became known as Richard Simmons had left the body- and this public face had become so strong, that Simmons is effectively dead without it. All that existed was the public face, and now there is nothing left.

There's a feeling to things slipping away with someone. It happens so gradually that the bits of progression toward the end, taken individually, are mostly invisible- only at the end does it all comes together like an Agatha Christie novel- but, if you close your eyes and *reach out with your feelings*, it's all there; certainly in retrospect. She doesn't respond to you like she did; she doesn't have the same look in her eyes. These were things so strong and immediate at the beginning that you could have almost touched them.

Sex with her had felt choreographed. I guess they call that chemistry. The way our mouths would move in-synch; the way our bodies would entwine. Flowing from the bed to having her pressed against the wall in what felt like a single motion- the softness in her eyes during the pauses we'd take

from kissing.

Your act will turn parody by the third month. You become Bob Crane flubbing his lines while doing dinner theater. To you, it's all the same, but the audience will notice. By the time she was mirroring my pout, repeating my signature "baby..." with exaggerated emphasis, I should have known it was over. Dates went from fucking all night while forgetting about dinner, to fucking before dinner dates because who wants sex after? All deliberate clues that the attentive reader would catch on a second go-through, but indistinguishable the first time around.

I made up for my Christmas gag of only getting her gifts that were actually for me- the plaid mini-skirt, the perfume I wanted her to wear- by making Valentine's Day *selfless*. A hand-written love letter and a movie gift card for her and her daughter- where they could, "talk about how great I am," I joked in the letter. When she took the envelope she had a minor look of terror as she felt it thoroughly for the outline of a ring. Another bit of foreshadowing- now you know why Mrs. White had the candlestick in the study.

The last time I saw her I asked her to see me again. One last time would change things. "Why," she asked, "what would that do?"

And, with that, we were strangers again. Slowly, over time, the person she had known disappeared. I had become a bag of guts wasting her time on a Wednesday night. I discarded the script we were using and started to ad-lib my own. I unplugged from our mixing board and fell too deeply into the lunacy of authenticity.

I had stopped being me.

Some Time Alone

April 24, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“And I’m in so deep- you know I’m such a fool for you. You’ve got me wrapped around your finger.”

She kissed my cheek and excused herself to the bathroom. Alone in her bedroom, I walked over to the shelf with her wedding picture. My peripheral vision had picked up on this when I entered the room- my eyes developed the keenness of a hunter. Her husband finally moved out that morning, she told me. Time to party.

Two weeks since I’d sent a text that read “no one fucking breaks up with me,” a few days after which I was sitting in the backseat of my car with a brand new girl on my lap, hunched over with her arms around my neck and the small of her back pressed against the driver’s seat; my hands in her hair and her breath on my cheek, as she sang along to “Pretty Good Year” while quietly crying. Puzzle pieces that would’ve seemed foreign to anyone who walked in late- who didn’t see her response to things I’d written that resonated with her, who didn’t see the video she took of herself singing “Linger” with the word *fucking* inserted in the chorus- a little something I always thought would intensify the emotional impact of the song- just to impress me.

She texted me to meet her in a coffee shop where she was working on her graduate thesis. Before the world ended, this made sense. She asked about different pieces I’d written- she was facinated. This is what you get for writing things that aren’t repulsive to women- something, I guess, every other writer instinctively understands. Why do anything that doesn’t get you sex? I’ve always been a slow learner.

I wanted to know about her life. This was the wrong move if I wanted sex, but I guess I’d rather write than get laid after all. Slow learner. She told me that she met a guy on Ashley Madison, and after a few of months of talking, she left her husband. Turns out the guy was a liar, but her husband was still a pussy, so this is where I entered the story. She’d been married since her early twenties- never cheated until she met the new guy, and never experienced heartbreak either. Her lips were cold when we kissed. She cried about being abandoned as she silently plotted to find her way back.

She thought she was tricked into falling in love, but this is as real as it gets in hell. You experience a few perfect moments that you want to keep, but they always manage to sneak away as you’re settling in. Love is allowing these moments to pass. Acknowledge that you have nothing and it won’t be such a shock to find out that you don’t get to keep anything.

Her husband moved out that morning, and she didn’t want to spend the night alone. She texted me to meet at her house where she had spent the day drinking. I was settling into my own evening- the sun had gone down and my dinner was almost ready- but these are *opportunities* you’ve learned to *never turn down*. Be positive; come from a “place of yes.” It didn’t feel as adventurous as it would have just a few years prior, but you weren’t going to let the world’s inertia drop any hints. You still felt young, and young men don’t turn down sex- they go on adventures.

After a few minutes of the kind of small-talk that Japanese business men make before trying to slit each other’s throats, she kissed me in her kitchen before leading me to her bedroom and excusing herself to the bathroom.

No one fucking breaks up with me, is what I texted her. I don’t do well when situations spiral out

of my control. Axl Rose wrote “One in a Million” when he bought the idea that rock stars were bullet-proof and wanted to test this theory- and when the results came back negative, with a media backlash, he tanked his own band. A control freak won’t play the game when he can’t make the rules. Rose emerged twenty years later with an album examining the limits of control- *Chinese Democracy* was only a metaphor.

No one fucking breaks up with me, and when they do, you escalate with napalm. Time alone is for suckers- you don’t mourn what’s dead, you watch the corpse burn in the rear-view. You meet girls that fucking weekend; *that fucking night*– as many as you can- and use every bit of charm that she took for granted, that you know she’s going to miss, and you make every girl you meet pay for her letting you go. You drink at night and write about it- examining it from all angles. You were too good to her; you made things too easy for her, she didn’t know what she had and she threw it all away. Axl Rose spent twenty years writing about being taken for granted, abandoned- no one fucking breaks up with him.

No one fucking breaks up with me, and you don’t care, because you did. Now I’m waiting for a stranger to finish pissing, to have sex with, to spite you, and looking at her wedding picture, on the shelf in her bedroom, I wonder if she’s meeting me for the very same reason.

KILL TO PARTY

May 3, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“‘Cause we came here to set this party off right, let’s bounce tonight. And if they don’t let us in through the front, we’ll come through the side.”

She had me drive her to her mother’s apartment so she could steal money; behavior I never endorsed outright, but I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t complacent; an accomplice, if we ever got arrested, which we wouldn’t, her mother was a dingbat. She’d keep loose cash in the drawer next to her bed, and every few weeks Marisa would dip into it like a broken ATM. Hundreds of dollars missing; thousands over time. Her mother had alimony coming in from Marisa’s lawyer father- when shit hits the fan, everyone’s a thief.

She’d take enough to get a half-ounce from our dealer and have some left over to go out to dinner with. Sitting next to a Family Dollar listening to “Waiting for the Man.” He’d text you that he was “just pulling in to the parking lot” and show up an hour later- he knew you weren’t going anywhere. *First thing you learn is that you always have to wait...*

Brought a bagel sandwich and bag of chips back with me- the indie label, kettle-cooked kind that you pay a dollar more for but is more heavily saturated in a higher quality oil- saffron, which is less likely to cause heart disease; something I can only appreciate in retrospect.

We’d get high and watch the Casey Anthony trial.

Casey had a luminous screen presence. She had an emotional range that Hollywood starlets had to envy- that corporate types spent late nights trying to come up with ways to exploit for the millions she’d be worth if only the public found their method semi-palatable. They knew there’d be backlash, but *some amount* of that is a good thing. With too much, heads roll and jobs are lost. Finding a way to use Casey was like dismantling an atomic bomb, but with rewards high enough to make solving the riddle worth the risk.

She had an understated sexuality that was ever-present. Casey was beautiful- dark hair and large breasts- with the disheveled look of a woman in need. Part of you wanted to save her- part wanted to punish her; emotions that somehow co-existed in an intoxicating swirl. She killed her daughter for cheap sex- she was lost, she was overwhelmed, she was scared- but you’d feel comfortable pulling her hair until she cried; until she begged for forgiveness, which you’d reluctantly grant and she’d be grateful. She’d love you.

Her story existed at the intersection between moral condemnation and empathy. How could a progressive culture rightfully find outrage in any of this while using “health care” as an awful nomenclature for abortion, something that even the most ardent baby-killers roll their eyes at behind closed doors... but you were still able to get that fuzzy feeling in the back of your skull as Nancy Grace barked about the monstrous Casey Anthony, with her dark hair and big tits, as you finished your blunt just past noon and fucked your hormonally-altered fiancée on your broken, black couch.

Another wonder of the modern world- she couldn’t get pregnant. Nature disrupted by science; sex detached from meaning. She’d let you look at bikini pictures of her old sorority sisters posted in private Facebook groups on her MacBook Pro as you fucked her, which you thought was hot. Take every situation to its peak- push every sensory experience to its breaking point with drugs and tech

and food. This was the future we deserved- the organic tension of our first kiss felt distant and obsolete. Everything escalating to parody- she's blowing you as you talk to cam-girls, you're watching Carmella Bing get fucked while she uses her industrial-grade Hitachi *magic wand* to get off- next she'll need a chainsaw. This was life's purpose- you kill to party.

After things fell apart, I'd tell people that I only *thought* I was in love with Marisa. That I was clearly wrong- that somehow *love* is this objective truth, that we haven't quite developed a blood test for yet, and is something that only exists in eternal form, written in all-caps and bold type.

But there were these momentary flashes, like feeling the tingles of an acid trip peaking, where things couldn't be described with anything less than capital letters and bold type. Sitting on my couch, well past midnight; emotions swirling with the force of a Gravitron spinning at a local church carnival- dangerous enough rattling where you could rightfully close your eyes and believe you'd take off into outer-space; suspension of disbelief not needed. Yes, I want to marry you. Her tears came harder than a chainsaw induced orgasm. This was our moment- private and meaningful. Let's keep this our secret. Let's build toward it and earn it. No ring; not yet- just know that I'm in love with you, and I want this more than anything, and I'm serious.

But she was engaged now. She had to tell her parents. Just her parents- who wanted to know why she didn't have a ring. They didn't understand *private* and *meaningful*, words seemingly not in their vocabulary. *If he wants to marry you, he needs to pay your bills*, this was more their speed. I picked out ebay's finest- a hundred-forty-nine, postage paid. A token- which her mother rejected, and if I wasn't going to *do the right thing*, she'd take Marisa ring-shopping herself and send me the bill. Opening non-stick cookware at the engagement party- how thoughtful, thank you. My parents, or anyone else even remotely related to me? Well, they couldn't make it...

If there were luck in any of this, it was that it all fell apart before I could render the first payment. Marisa has lost her job too- something about a boy with an emotional disability getting loose on her watch, running through the neighborhood shirtless, found urinating on an herb garden- which wasn't exactly her fault but it didn't matter. You're staring at the chess board, and you don't want to concede defeat, but you don't see an apparent *next move*, so the trick is to take as much time as you can between turns.

I'll never forget the night we met. The moment I noticed her. The kind of full-body electricity you feel when you first get a look at someone you're inexplicably drawn to- as if you've found a way to tap directly into a hidden wavelength making you extremely physically attuned to something you don't immediately understand, but if you close your eyes and let the current take you, you'll end up being carried by invisible forces in the direction of all that is beautiful and true.

I thought she was beautiful- the only girl I've dated that I consistently jacked-off to throughout the entire relationship. The actress who played Punky Brewster grew-up to look nothing like Punky Brewster, but if she had, she'd have looked like Marisa. Freckles and big brown eyes. A childlike naivete that bordered on stupidity- a mystery that never needed closer examination; one that could just be. Like everything she did that was pushed to its breaking-point, she was always on the far-end of any emotion- always emoting with screeching intensity. Up all night on ecstasy, navigating bouts of crying, fending-off bouts of screaming- intense bouts of sexuality.

There wasn't a next move to make- only moments where I knew things had to end. Moments that I wanted to soak-in and crystallize- that I wanted to hang in suspended animation and expand far out into the galaxy. My parents were healthy. My dog was alive. If I got stoned enough, I wouldn't

have to think about the mess I'd made- and at my weakest, I'd rather have ridden the flaming balloon down to a fiery heap rather than figure out how to pull myself out of the grave I dug.

And one Sunday morning, I woke up and told her it was over.

Graduating College and “In the Bedroom” (2002)

May 15, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

It was my last semester in college, and I wanted to re-take “Intro to Creative Writing” because I had gotten a C- in it the first time and I couldn’t allow that on my *permanent record*. It’s hard to imagine caring about such things in retrospect, but in the early aughts I had it in mind to go all the way to my English PhD, and what kind of *doctor of literature* would have gotten a C- in a fucking beginners creative writing class- where the girls write about boys they’re fucking who don’t want to date them and the boys write about girls they like from afar- who are sometimes sitting in the very same class.

It was this very same class that I met Kasie, who had written very adorable stories about her boyfriend not calling her on Easter Sunday and an entire five-pages as a thinly veiled excuse to bitch about one of her girlfriends- *whom I knew*, even if she had changed her name to something innocuous, she included enough catty details that made it obvious. I leaned over to her desk and said, “I know who this is about...” and watched her turn beet red- our meet cute.

I wanted “In the Bedroom” to be the opening to a long and ambitious, post-modernist, suburban fantasy novel- think Pynchon meets Ellis meets Final Fantasy. Where the story would begin as something very narrow and contained- a single character, lost in thought, in a small room with a few friends watching television- and somehow end up large and sprawling- encompassing the entire world and beyond; all while maintaining the minimalism of Ellis and the close attention to language of Pynchon.

The piece focused on growing up- the place in-between adolescence and adulthood- where people become who they are and relationships change. This was my world at the time. The irony to the protagonist’s refusal to let go was that it mirrored my own- and while writing this, I had no idea how difficult the next decade would become; heartbreak, depression- it would be ten years before I didn’t feel metaphorically confined to my own bedroom.

“In the Bedroom”

Ten looked at the table with an almost lively gleam, and after taking a second or so to thoroughly inspect the situation he blurted out the word “Titleist.” With a slight sense of apathy, I slid a synthetic colored tablet under my tongue. Ten took the appropriate amount of off-white scrabble pieces scattered on top of the muggy bridge table and formed the word. Kristen looked at the new formation suspiciously, like a curious puppy. After seconds, or even minutes, of inspecting and reinspecting, she exclaimed “that’s not a word, Ten,” with the enthusiasm of uncovering a fantastic mystery. Ten fired back, “It is so! Titleist... Triple fucking word score”.

“Well, use it in a sentence”

“Titleist... Like, Arnold Palmer is a *Titleist*”

With that, Ten ended the argument. Kristen was satisfied. It was July. It was humid enough to be July, at least. Even in Kat’s bedroom I could feel it blanketing me. My first summer vacation from college was about to end, spent with the people I grew up with. While physically the same, their roles had transformed. Kat was my dealer, Drew joined a band and became Ten, and Kristen became

his pet. Time bound us together. It felt awkward but seemed right. The tablet fizzled under my tongue.

Kat's room smelled like dirt. The crickets were so loud that I wondered if there were a few under her bed. We always seemed to be waiting. Last week it was for Kitty's music video. Last month we waited for the "Real World" marathon, and tonight we're sitting anxiously for the new Pepsi commercial.

The spot stars Kitty America, the latest pop singing sensation. Kitty was electronically rendered by some of the top computer engineers across the country. She could change with the times but she couldn't grow old. She couldn't get sick, and she couldn't run away. She could be a logo forever. Kat and Kristen envied her beauty, and Ten was surely in love. The room swayed and tilted. Under my feet sat the broken up scrabble board Ten had destroyed weeks ago. For a moment I contemplated researching the validity of his "triple word score," but I let it pass. The bridge table was littered with different words created with scrabble pieces, most of which involved or stood for products available at Wal*Mart.

Kat lied motionless on the couch behind us. She wasn't saying much, but she never really did. The walls of her room were decorated with different posters and pin-ups of MTV stars. Her most prized decoration was on the wall directly behind her couch, a poster for the film that launched Hollywood's fascination with eastern religion, "Dude Where's My Moksha." After its release, Hinduism was everywhere. Bands wrote songs about it, families celebrated its holy days. Cartoonish looking deity novelties were sold back to back with Santa accessories. Kat treated the film as if it were enlightenment in itself. The television buzzed, at which Kristen and Ten stared blankly.

A surge came over the group. Immediately it was certain that this was what we were waiting for. The television flickered distinctively. With reborn awareness we watched the screen as it lead us, all in the room together singing: "bada, ba ba ba – bada, ba ba ba." As one, Kristen, Ten, and I all said the words along with Kitty: "The joy of cola." Our attention suddenly turned to Kat, as she was motioning to speak. Words began to curl off her lips, "The Freshmaker." We laughed.

I went along with the others; I said the words. It didn't have the same effect on me as it did on them. There was no reassurance or joy. I felt no connection with the television, or Kitty's lips and eyes. The lights danced. The only thing clear was the door to the room, its knob, and me. Ace Frehley's solo to a KISS song I didn't remember pulsated and shot straight through my head. On a rocket ride.

The top was down, the air was cool, and the highway was empty. In the middle of August dusk begins so late. We would drive around the east end for hours, and end up parking right up on the water. Kristen would play with the radio. We sat on the hood of my car, and threw rocks into the Sound. When our eyes met, it would feel like the night could never end. We wondered where the purple sand came from. We wondered how sand always got in food at the beach. We spoke about the future as if we could write it. She tugged and tugged the sleeve of my sweatshirt until I was close enough. She kissed me. We could feel the wind, we could feel the night. We slept in my car.

There was just me now. Kat was asleep on the couch. Ten and Kristen were fucking while Kristen kept her eyes fixed on Ten and Ten watched MTV. A video from a band called "The Unnecessaries" glared off the set. Their song was loud and obliterating. Ten followed every motion lead from the screen. I felt dizzy and sick.

There were about three motions separating me from the outside of the room. Probably hundreds of individual movements just getting to the door. I wasn't sure what it mattered anyway. The street

would be dark, and I would be alone. It could be filled with people. I would see their faces. They could reach out to me; for me.

Everything blurred and colors ran together; iridescent. Kat's room, my future, Ten's motions, and Kristen. Sometimes things change before you can even take notice. My head hit the floor. I could feel Kat's florescent white lights as they blended into darkness.

Stoned at Wal*Mart and “Being Johnny Tangle” (2006)

May 16, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

A few years after graduating college, with the idea in mind to become a literature professor, I found myself going to graduate school for a degree to teach high school English. Not a terrible idea entirely, but I was entirely unaware of what made it terrible; I was expecting it to be something that it never was- genuine- and this slight misunderstanding would set me back years.

At the time, I really liked getting stoned and going to Wal*Mart- in a way where, if I let my mind wander, I have fond memories of it like people will of past vacations. It was equally surreal and it was comforting- handfuls of snack food and clearance DVDs; the horror of walking through the heart of consumer culture while acknowledging that you’re enjoying it just as much as anyone else. Like how people try to posture that they *don’t like fast food*- you’re a liar if part of you doesn’t enjoy the spectacle, even if the relationship is *complicated*.

“Being Johnny Tangle” (2006) was born out of this complicated, love & hate, relationship with nostalgia and consumer culture- and is a spiritual prequel to “In the Bedroom.”

“Being Johnny Tangle”

“But Mom, seriously, you promised,” cried a bewildered Johnny Tangle. Mrs. Tangle gazed into her web of stringbeans, “Not tonight, Johnny, you know better... Tonight is stringbeans and meatloaf night. It has *been* stringbeans and meatloaf night for weeks now! You should know this, Johnny, really... and when did I ever promise McDonalds?”

His mother’s words shot through Johnny like a spear impaling a lightning bolt. When did she promise McDonalds? He was sure she did, as Dally provided a callous glance from his muted television and MTV. But maybe, possibly, could Johnny Tangle, in a fit of derangement, have imagined that his loving mother of eight (mostly) wonderful years had promised to buy him three happy meals?

Three happy meals were an absolute necessity in this situation, as Mcdonalds had finally began giving away Hot Wheels in their happy meal combination, and there were three variations of the miniaturized model car. Johnny knew there would be three different paint schemes, three different sets of tiny plastic tires, and three different character decals on the hood. How could little Johnny Tangle be expected to choose between Ronald Mcdonald, Grimace, and the eccentric Hamburgerler? It was a choice Johnny knew he wasn’t prepared to make.

And then there was the food, the glorious food. Since the first time his mother took him to Mcdonalds, over the summer for a birthday party, Johnny has craved Ronand’s unique blend of sugar and fat. Johnny sat close to Dally, watching his silenced television with ear-muff headphones on and a cord extending all the way to his room down the hall. Dally would sit watching MTV with the sound turned down for as long as he could while listening to records playing down the hall.

“You know, Dally, your father is gonna break his neck one of these days on this freakin’ cord,” Mrs. Tangle said mostly to herself. She knew Dally couldn’t hear her, and Johnny only cared about Mcdonald’s. She returned, defeated, to her stringbeans.

Dally started collecting dust, as Mrs. Tangle put it, when he asked for and received, his ear-muff

headphone cord-extension set for Christmas 1983. With this special item, Dally would be able to sit in front of the television while listening to his record player running in his room. He rarely moved, and if you watched closely, he rarely blinked. Johnny never understood why Dally wanted such a boring gift, as Christmas was a time for action figures and mystery-goo, and when he asked his father, Mr. Tangle offered, "Son, when you grow up you'll find that a lot of guys want cord extensions." Mr. Tangle's explanation, which may have been the result of too many rum-zingers, didn't serve to clear up Johnny's bewilderment.

And bewilderment was an emotion that Johnny was becoming too familiar with on that unusually cold September evening. Johnny scanned the television for the time, finding only flashing lights and blinking colors. "We have to act fast, Dally," Johnny said with unnecessary anxiety, "Mom is almost done with the meatloaf! And then I'm going to have to set the table. And I don't wanna set the table for meatloaf, which should really be called *grossloaf*, and I don't want grossloaf." Dally seemed unfazed, even by his brother's accusation of the night's meal being "gross."

"Someone is calling my hard work gross," Mrs. Tangle said hotly. Johnny peered into the kitchen, as his mother slumped down in Mr. Tangle's seat at the head of the table with her head in her hands. Johnny watched as she sat in silence and plotted his next move. He considered a casual suggestion, to the effect of something like, "say, I wonder if Mcdonald's would be any good tonight," or maybe more along the lines of, "I wonder what's going on at Mcdonald's?" Johnny figured a question would warrant an answer, and the only way to answer such a question would be to pick up and go to Mcdonalds. Before he could make his move the door slammed and Mr. Tangle entered the kitchen sweaty and smelling like Old-Spice.

"Meatloaf tonight," said Mr. Tangle said with defeat, "gross." Mrs. Tangle's head sank further into her hands, "...you could always come home and make dinner if you don't like my cooking." Mr. Tangle laughed, and Johnny wondered if he didn't get the joke. Now was his chance, and he knew it. He began by straining for indifference, "Guys... we all know the meatloaf's gross, so why don't we go to..." Johnny stopped as his mother's face began turning red. The room fell silent. Johnny could almost hear the KISS solo to a song he didn't know pumping through his brother's ear-muff headset.

"Go to your goddamn room, Johnny Tangle. Go to your room and stay there!"

Johnny couldn't help but wonder what he had done wrong. His own father had even agreed that the grossloaf was really, really gross! Johnny kicked the door to his room closed. Behind the door was his brother's old KISS poster, which Johnny never took down when he changed rooms on the account of how neat the guys in their superhero costumes and makeup looked.

His eyes fixed on the bunch of "old junk" (Mrs. Tangle's words) that Dally had left in Johnny's new closet. As he gazed, Johnny felt his vision come in and out of focus. What a bunch of junk Dally left behind; the closet was filled with outdated toys, partially completed crossword puzzles, and the golden arches. Johnny repeated the last part to himself again, this time slowly: "...and the golden arches." What were those beautiful, yellow, curvy arches doing in his closet, in his room, where he sat on Bernard Street, blocks and blocks from McDonald's? With a new hope, Johnny Tangle reached into his closet and pulled out an old dusty box which read, "The McDonalds Brand® Play-Doh Food Factory™." With reborn awareness, Johnny Tangle had a solution.

As he assembled the old factory, he smiled to himself. This was quite the educational experience- so, this is how they make McDonald's. They must have tons of these suckers in the back, just

pumping out food. Johnny opened up the old canister, shocked that McDonald's was actually made out of Play-Doh. This was much more interesting than science class ever could be.

For the first time in his life, Johnny felt a sense of control as he put the Play-Doh through the factory. His mother didn't matter, Dally's indifference didn't matter, and the grossloaf certainly didn't matter. Johnny had a secret weapon buried right in his closet. Whenever he wanted McDonalds he could have it.

The purple french fries didn't smell like McDonald's. Johnny feverishly checked over the box. There was Ronald, there were the arches, and even old Grimace was hanging out. It wasn't hot and greasy like Mcdonald's either, and Johnny certainly didn't feel inclined to mindlessly devour it like he would if he were actually *at* Mcdonald's. The difference, however, is that this was *his* creation. Johnny wanted Mcdonald's and, Johnny found a way to deliver. He held his Play-Doh hamburger carefully in his hand, with the attention a parent would bestow upon a newborn. This was his and it was beautiful.

Although Johnny quickly had produced his Play-Doh food, he felt hesitant to eat it. Down stairs he could hear his parents fighting over something, loud and cursing. It could be dinner, it could be Johnny. What he wanted, more than anything, was to show his parents the food he made. Maybe he could be making dinner every night? No more grossloaf, no more fighting. Johnny gripped his Play-Doh tightly, waiting to see his parents again, as he drifted off to sleep.

Better to Reign in Hell

June 2, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“I dressed up in scarecrow, she dressed up in white.”

She told me that she likes “fuck boys”- a terrible, disingenuous cope of a nomenclature; a way for women to *reclaim power* in an otherwise powerless situation, thinking that, in our modern landscape of gender equality, a slur designed for a man who has too much sex will have the same sting as one made to shame women- *fuck boys*, she said, because she likes the way they talk to her. She was almost forty with three kids; when she ditched the hubby, she got herself a personal trainer and breast implants- which was probably the most sensible thing to do. Ride the midnight train out as far as it will go- better to have your pick of *fuck boys* than to get a look at the kind of loser who’d take you seriously.

She had fake tits so I felt compelled to continue the conversation. Breast implants are sexy for everything but their aesthetic value- they rarely look good, with the exception being implants that look so good you’d never know they were fake, surely a secret taken to the grave, but typically they’re closer to bad 90’s porn. There’s an unspoken symbolic value to fake tits- signaling an intense vanity combined with a deep comfort in promiscuity, where even if her tits are fake, her willingness to exist as a sex doll is more real than any woman with “*no hook-ups, not looking for a one-night-stand*” at the bottom of her profile. There’s a refreshing purity to this approach- only a woman with fake tits will tell you that she likes fuck boys.

People rather hear bullshit than anything genuine. KISS floundered in obscurity, bankrupting their record label with their most sincere and artistic work, that all bombed commercially until they released a *live record* that hit big and made them celebrities. Since their live shows were packed and their studio albums were duds, why not go into the studio to record a live album- a total fake, disconnected from the performances that made their act a success. *Alive!* bore little difference from their already recorded studio material- the same songs but now with a bed of crowd noise ripped from a Monday Night Football game. This is what people want- people want you to lie.

If you want to know her number- her *real* number- you need to approach the conversation delicately. If you lead with how you’re “sick of the sluts on Plenty of Fish”- land of the washed-up party girl- she’s going to throw you a number impossibly low for an eternally single girl edging forty. You could take a beat, close your eyes, and allow yourself to believe the lie- you could let this narrative form the foundation of a relationship, your own personal mythology; two crazy kids who *finally found love*- the fair maiden waiting for her white knight- the jaded bachelor who never believed in romance, but her incredible inertia and inexplicable energy *proved him wrong*. You could let yourself believe you’ve found something more valuable than all the money in the world- life’s reset-button, a chance to start over.

The best way to sell anything is by giving it a deep and engaging origin story. “Star Wars” (1977) was a successful, stand-alone movie with a beginning, middle, and clearly defined end- successful enough to warrant a sequel, that George Lucas smartly spread over two additional movies. When it came time for Lucas to make even more Star Wars movies, he understood that an origin mythology *outside of the story* was just as important, if not more so, than the actual contents of the story itself.

The idea that Lucas had all six Star Wars episodes written prior to making the first one gave the stories a sense of biblical grandiose- ancient texts being rediscovered. No longer was Star Wars the coming-of-age tale of a farm boy turned war hero, but the fall-and-redemption arc of Anakin Skywalker. When it came time to sell the prequels, Lucas repurposed the franchise as *the story of Darth Vader*, a political drama with laser-swords. The mythology eclipsed the product, infused it with a kind of *historical value*, and carried the films to monetary success when the actual product being sold was a critical failure- the lie shaped our perception of the truth.

But you're too far gone to let yourself believe her. If you want the real number, you'll need to speak her language- a *non-judgmental* perspective. You're hip enough to have your own crazy stories, you're on the warm side of the pool, sitting at the cool kid's table- this is the only way she'll feel comfortable telling you something more closely resembling the truth. Knowing this will ruin any prospect you had of having a relationship with her- at best, you'll be another notch- and if you liked her enough, you'll have wish she lied- people want you to lie.

She asked me why I write and I liked that she really wanted to know. I explained the *intrinsic satisfaction* of creating art- how this comes before all else; how audience is *irrelevant*; how there's a purity to this approach. You'd rather a small handful of dedicated readers invested in your work than a wider, *disingenuous audience*. She called bullshit on that. She said I write because I like attention- this is how a woman with breast implants will understand the world; feedback as the only currency that matters. You're taking time to study the *rules of verse* and she's rolling her eyes. You'd sooner fill a thousand marble notebooks and bury them all if they contained the right words in the right order. This is why you write- the intrinsic satisfaction of *creating art*. These are the lies we tell ourselves.

The lies we tell ourselves. No one fucking breaks up with me, and the ones who do will never find anyone that comes even close. This was your shot and you blew it. I was too nice and you didn't appreciate it. You were only the handful of qualities I projected on to you- you could have been anyone, and I can replace you in a heartbeat. You were an empty vessel when we met- you were nothing- *you were roadkill, baby, 'till I held you in my arms*.

It's better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. You were never the relationship type anyway- walking through the Strawberry Festival, holding hands, in your pink polo and khakis. Big smile for the selfies she's taking for Instagram. An overpriced engagement ring to show the world that you're the sucker who thinks he finally found the right castle, and saved the right princess, when how many assholes has there been? Big wedding with a gaudy DJ who put wacky sunglasses on grandma. She'll hate your guts in two years. The lies we tell ourselves to justify a lifetime of nothing working out.

She told me that she likes "fuck boys," and I thought I'd finally connected with someone- that we shared a *mutual understanding* of things. That maybe a woman needs to go as far as getting breast implants to finally be able to access truth- a strange condition to meet, falsify the body enough and free the mind, perhaps. I told her that it's curious how we all prefer to be lied to. Not her, she objected- dishonesty is a *big turn off*, she explained- and if I wanted a date, I'd better take her to the Strawberry Festival.

Purity and Mayhem

July 18, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Money, like, there’s an unlimited amount of capital in the world, you know?” Anna said to me at one point. “But there’s limited amounts of people who are talented.”

She said she wanted a fairy tale. Not something fairy tale-like, or fairy tale-adjacent; not the kind they sell at Target, or the Magic Kingdom version with the anxious college girl sweating to death in her ballroom gown while telling you about all the books she read before the gnarly beast swept her away. Something where you’d never dream of compromising things with the words *good enough* to control expectations while still acknowledging the positive. She wanted the real deal.

Where it wasn’t good enough to spend your nights together laughing at jokes that only you’d both understand, between bouts of incredible sex, and looking into her eyes and telling her that she was beautiful and really meaning it. This wasn’t a fairy tale- this was something else- and if this weren’t a fairy tale, what was?

Too much of this and you’re burning churches. Nothing is real until you’re willing to destroy everything and sift through the ashes. Cut the throat of your father because he couldn’t be what you needed. Never let the lie settle; walk away from the inauthentic.

Tony Iommi didn’t understand why Rob Zombie never changed out of his stage clothes- *stage clothes*, a foreign concept for Zombie who knew you either lived your act as performance art or that it doesn’t mean shit. Venom didn’t understand why every Black Sabbath song wasn’t about the devil- what kind of *black sabbath* was that? Mayhem didn’t think you could write dark music without making it a lifestyle and burnt churches along the Norwegian country side- there was a purity to this.

You aren’t a real writer if you consider what the reception of your writing might look like; a writer must disregard the idea of audience; there is no audience, there is only art. If you write for an audience, you may be writing words, but you aren’t *making art*. Art can only manifest from the artist’s subconscious, in a flow-state, containing subtle and unintended nuances which even the artist may be ignorant of. This is why those who create art consider themselves conduits for God, or vessels for fairies and muses- art can only come out of the unconscious mind as a performance of self-expression. It may be cleaned up and stitched together later, but the foundation must be unconscious. If any space is surrendered to enhance the experience for an audience, you’ve already lost.

Black metal originated as a response to heavy metal gaining mainstream attention with artists suddenly wanting to write songs for radio airplay. Grit was lost and turned to gloss in million dollar recording studios with smooth repeating choruses and non-threatening lyrics. Norwegian black metal artists rejected this as *inauthentic*. Heavy metal shouldn’t be polished- it should conjure primal images of being alone in the woods, in late November, after midnight, with only a battery powered cassette deck, naked and covered in animal blood... or is it your own? It should sound cold and dark.

The barrier to entry is high- Norwegian black metal is purposely abrasive. Songs cut in and out with drums loudly blasting in the foreground- there is often no discernible song structure. Vocals are sometimes used as an additional layer of sound- not its driving force- and are typically buried in the mix. They don’t care if you get it or if you like it; artistic integrity devoid of concern for audience. Kurt Cobain wishes he had their balls.

The best writing should be complex. Complicated and unrelenting. No *easy reads*; no bits of light fiction, nor should there be books meant to be read on the beach. Writing should challenge the reader to meet the author on his terms only. Meaning for entire pieces- entire novels- contingent on obscure references woven so seamlessly into the larger narrative that only a small percentage of readers will notice and understand. Thomas Pynchon includes a scene in “Inherent Vice” (2009) where stoner protagonist Doc Sportello charts the novel’s 130 characters, and their complex relationships, on the wall of his apartment with a marker- Pynchon’s way of mocking the reader. What, you can’t keep up? This girl, she lived in a house on the beach, where she hid herself away from the nasty virus. So close you could see the water from her window, in a town that seemed perpetually alive, chatter in every corner, all hours of the night. Beach houses built on the corpses of hippies, with signage proclaiming an eternal summertime and promises of *living easy* hanging in manicured, million dollar love shacks. A never-ending Halloween party with ghouls coming from their humble abodes, costumed as *beach bums*, looking for jolts from electrodes. Symbols disconnected from meaning. Only the wealthy can afford the fairy tale of pretending to be poor.

Her fairy tale followed a trail of breadcrumbs into the witch’s oven. You only get one Weiland. Effort can’t change the immutable. When Selina Kyle tells Batman that he doesn’t owe the people anything, that he’s already given them everything- he replies, “not everything; *not yet*,” which is more rousing a moment for men than even the hottest pornography. Men want an excuse to give every last bit of themselves away; a destructive purity; pure mayhem- something Catwoman couldn’t possibly understand.

Even if the sadness in her eyes, that maybe only you could see, weren’t enough it was the way she spoke of the past- how when she said “it was a long time ago,” the inflection in her voice betrayed her.

You thought you could storm in and start tearing down statues. Inexplicable confidence. Recreate the world in your own image. Talent. But no one can compete with the idealized dead. The past has been decided- fairy tales written. Welcome to hell- there’s a purity to this.

Eternal September

September 19, 2020 | by Billy Pratt | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“A week without you, thought I’d forget. Two weeks without you and I still haven’t gotten over you yet.”

She didn’t like it when I teased her about her house. Put politely, it was unfinished. What was meant to be the baby’s room, with its careful design of overlapping squares hand-painted on the walls, had become a storage-space; miscellaneous items suffering a slow transition to the garbage. Her hardwood floors had stains. Light bulbs dangling from fixtures. Things in the yard that hadn’t been moved since they were put down fifteen years prior. A storm destroyed the fence, with only the posts a reminder that her yard had once been enclosed. The front lawn with crab grass and mushrooms.

Not that one needed to be tremendously perceptive to realize that the house, more or less, had ceased any major evolutionary activity- the kind where the first time homeowner is gifted a Time-Life “Home Repair & Improvement” book set, with plans made that foresaw holiday duties on the path to grandchildren.

She wanted me to love the beach like she did. Reminders of this- some purchased at home furnishing stores, some given as gifts- served as the main source of decor; reminding me that the beach is her *happy place* while encouraging me to *keep calm and sit by the ocean*.

If there’s anything certain left to believe, it’s that we’re living in hell. She didn’t understand why I went on about this- falling short of obsessive but with serious overtones of urgency. The greatest misconception about hell is the fire. People think hell is alive, molecules buzzing anxiously. There may be a cinematic quality to this but it isn’t accurate- it isn’t hell. Hell is cold and dead. Hell is subtle enough for you to doubt that it’s surrounding you.

I liked the beach, but I didn’t love it like she did. I’d meet women there for first dates, where we’d find a bench and watch the sunset as the crashing waves create an ambient soundtrack. I can’t spend my days sitting on a beach, it makes me nervous to not use my time productively- a horrible consequence of too much time wasted- but at night I like listening to the stories of women.

Typically divorced, but not always- the ones who were married are usually the more mentally stable- they’ll cite a dead bedroom and an unmotivated husband as their chief concern for initiating the separation. There will usually be a pang of regret over disrupting the lives of their children, and the inconvenience of sharing custody, although this is understood as collateral damage. They had all heard of Tinder and were “excited to try it,” with the initial burst of male interest serving as enthusiastic confirmation that they had made the right decision. You’ll know how long a woman has been on her own by the way she talks about meeting men.

A woman new on the scene will be enamored by the attention- so many *options*, often exceeding her wildest fantasies. A gym-rat in his early-thirties, looking to relieve a bit of stress after leaving the office; the twenty-four year old bartender; the frat guy cheating on his teenage girlfriend- all chasing a woman over forty. She always knew she could do better than her husband- and with the maturity of age, she’s now comfortable enough with her sexuality to indulge without regret.

And even if she had more fun than she ever thought were possible on those lonely nights, sitting

under the glow of her television, with an open bottle of wine, playing and replaying the eventual conversation she'd need to have with her husband; even if she had gotten to live out the female version of every man's fantasy, with the only limit being a time predestined by her own genetic code, a threshold causing the attention to taper-she'll one day realize the coldness that had always surrounded her.

The beach became her happy place when she found her high school sweetheart overdosed in their bathroom— the beginning of her eternal September. She took their infant daughter and wouldn't return to the house for three years, where she sat in her decaying castle and did the best she could. No one could blame her for any decision she had made there after. This is how she eased into the rest of her days, and there was nothing terribly wrong with it- even if her only wish were to politely color within the lines and walk away with a terrifically neat and tidy picture of a life well lived.

The King of Hell

November 7, 2020 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“And the world spreads its legs, and the world spreads its legs for another fucking star...”

She wouldn't let me fuck her before she went on dates. Losers she'd meet from pay-to-play dating apps- ones that supposedly offered a more serious assortment of romantic candidate. The kind she'd want to bring home to mom, assuming mom were still alive. Maybe, more accurately, the kind she'd introduce to her children- on a day trip to Adventureland, where he'd spend big money on faux-artisan iced cream and carnival games skewed against the player.

Big smiles while riding bumper boats. This could be something real- like they advertise on TV, where aging singles find their *second chance*; the one *that counts* as insinuated by the complex smiles on the faces of couples in their forties, sipping cocoa in cozy, female-owned coffee shops; discussing *life after marriage*.

This is the one that counts. His kids are with the ex-wife, and he's booked himself an audition for a new family. He's taken her on thoughtful afternoon dates- the kind that involve pedal boats and wineries.

I wanted to fuck her before these dates, when just fucking her didn't seem like enough. I wanted my cum dripping down the inside of her thigh while she's holding hands at the strawberry festival. Getting laid's not enough- you need to snort a line of pure ego alongside your serving of pussy. Only decadence gets you hot. You get off on chaos. You're Bob Crane on a cooking show. You want to push things until they explode.

She called me crying when she found out that her ex-husband was getting married. She didn't know where she went wrong. Let me fuck her on the first date without a condom. Girls think that's a deal breaker- that it's *why* they can't get a steady boyfriend; that the relinquishment of the completely unnatural and counter-intuitive modern notion of *safe sex* signals a moral deficiency so alarming it frightens away potential mates. Make things too easy and no one sticks around.

She doesn't realize that she's Alice in Wonderland, alone in the candy store, grabbing at tonsil ticklers with both hands. Men would kill for this experience- alone in the woods with a whittled tree branch. Covered in animal blood, or is it your own? Wit, adrenaline, and moxie- you'll need all three if you're ever getting laid again. Her ex took home the first boar he speared. Low expectations and zero confidence. The meek shall inherit the earth.

She didn't understand why he's getting married and she's getting fucked. I ruined her, she told me. Now she needs a man who makes her call him Daddy. She's *further exploring* her submissive side. She's getting “very anal.” She got a purchase confirmation for an engagement ring sent to her phone. Either their accounts are still linked, or her ex has a nasty sense of humor. Guy she's seeing calls her a *fuck buddy*.

Lungs have felt like shit for a while now. Years of abuse. Catches up to you. Now's as good a time as any. Can work around it at the gym. Pace myself differently. Compensate with caffeine. Wit,

adrenaline, and moxie. Pulmonary says it's asthma- have always had it, but now it's *more pronounced*. Probably being polite. Too hard to explain it as a time-stamp: the remaining years are now spelled out explicitly. Timer winding down. Music intensifies, and you still haven't found the secret door out of the Forest of Illusion.

Hack garbage; too many video game references. Everything falls apart; becomes parody. Write what you know- pop-culture and easy women. Married men go out on weekends with their ring in their pockets and their fingers crossed; fall asleep at night wishing they could do what you do. Wishing they were the king of shreds and patches. The King of Hell.

Handful of pills to get to sleep- *not for daily use* but it's been years. Enough coffee in the morning to kill a small animal; gradually heading toward a heart attack. Kidneys raw and irritated. Years of abuse. Right ear feels off- a warning sign. Agonizing stillness of early morning with screaming tinnitus. Too much time in headphones, at the gym, teeth-grinding black metal- but how else will you feel *good enough* about yourself to exude the kind of immediate confidence on first dates that you've come to get off on? Body held together with tape and glue. Push things until they explode.

Where were you when I was still good? Dating your high school sweetheart; college romance; first husband. Lines on the graph inching their way to the right; on the ascent. New house; thirty-year mortgage. Fixed rate. We can do it, baby, *us against the world*. Time-Life "Home Repair & Improvement" book set- gut the house, make it our own. Grandchildren and holidays; *a life well lived*.

She wants her daughter to make her ashes into a gemstone. They do that now, she told me. On a necklace, passed down generationally. I'll end up in a dumpster. Possessions trashed. My death as a bit of afternoon gossip. I can be made into a tree, she told me. They do that now, she said. Maybe that will be nice?

At my best now, even with the wheels coming off. A circumstance of modernity- as unnatural as anything else. You shouldn't have gotten so many chances- game resets, save spots. You would have been killed in a war; fallen off the girder of a high-rise; hunting accident- torn apart by wolves; hanged for stupidity. You hardly deserve to have made it this far, forget soccer practice and kung-foo classes.

You were never going to be the Heartbreak Kid; you were always Cactus Jack. Spend years tearing your body apart to get to the big show, but only once you've made it do you realize that it always had to be this way. There's no winning- only consolation; scraps cobbled together. The King of Hell.

You need a tour rider to spend a night with a girl. Cold room for sex. If the room's too hot, show's over. Won't perform. White noise for sleeping- preferably an air filter, but a loud fan will do. I don't like "white noise machines"- be it dedicated or through Alexa. I can hear where the track loops, and will subconsciously internalize it- wake-up every time. Need a full stock of zero-sugar late-night snacks. Need my own pillows and sleep-mask. Need to pick the side of the bed. If I don't like the comforter, I'm walking. I sleep on a diagonal- this is important. The girl must compensate for this.

When they do, you realize that maybe everything has been for the sake of this moment. Maybe this wasn't your back-up plan, maybe this was by design. Maybe you wanted desperate women looking to

you for their last chance.

Wait long enough, and their line on the graph drops low enough for you to be their savior. The king of terrified women. Terrified of aging; of smile-lines and crows feet; of sagging breasts and tight jeans. Terrified of being alone. The King of Hell.

She did all the right things this time around. She went through a phase where she'd have men from hook-up dating apps meet at her house- a kind of *post-divorce mania*. She'd be drinking, of course- she couldn't meet strangers for sex otherwise.

Not this time, she told me. She wanted to take things slowly; go on *real dates*, pedal boats and wineries. The strawberry festival. Long conversations in female-owned coffee shops about travel. This was how to get a boyfriend. This was how to fall in love.

And once enough flowers were gifted, enough day-trips to the country were taken; walks in the park and train station county fairs. Once there was enough for it not to seem cheap, she had him over for sex. Text the next day, like clockwork- likely pre-written, copied and pasted; he doesn't feel a *strong enough connection*. They don't have the *kind of chemistry* he's looking for. He wishes her *luck*.

He knew what was needed to get sex- money to spend, expectations to meet. He's NASA developing the astronaut pen because he doesn't have the balls to be a Soviet, alone with a pencil. Cost of doing business. Rats on a sinking ship- grabbing at what we can, both hands, blood everywhere. She learned her lesson this time, she tells me. Come by and fuck me early, she texts. She had a date that night.

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Set it and Forget it

November 26, 2020 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Row like a felon, drown like a captain’s son. But say, how long can this go on?”

The goal is a clear stretch of highway long enough to keep your cruise control set at seventy-eight. Detach from the minutia of traffic while feeling connected to the reality of *journey*— wheels groping pavement, cutting through morning air. Not only does your attention to speed management ultimately save on gas mileage, but more importantly it provides space to sharpen the mind/body connection that’s crucial for when you walk into work at 6am- each motion light clicking to life as you pass- to sit at your desk and write in a spiral-bound notebook for twenty-five minutes before starting work for the day.

Cafeteria duty has become dedicated to reading and tuning out co-worker chatter about meals past and upcoming- Steve pursuing the perfect combination of pizza toppings, Larry the Security Guard having meatloaf *again* but it’s *okay* because Larry *loves meatloaf*. You can’t ask them to stop talking, but you’d like to, as if only to emphasize the importance of finding time to read every day.

Reading is like the leg-day of writing- it’s easy to skip a few times, and then walk away all together thinking you don’t really need it, which is when your writing turns to shit. You could read things you enjoy, but you’re better off finding something that helps organize your thoughts into stronger prose- if what you’re reading doesn’t strengthen your voice as a writer, sorry bucko, put the comic book down and find something better suited to maximize productivity. Idiot thought reading was supposed to be enjoyable?

Lunch isn’t about eating lunch- actually eating lunch is for suckers. People with their lavish, restaurant style meals- plates getting heated in microwaves, an army of Tupperware coming out of satchels, menus and take-out. You don’t need any of this- you need a pen and a printed copy of what will be your first book; reading print and editing by hand has a different feel than sitting in front of a desk top- a different perspective. Both necessary to end up with a product that will make sense of an otherwise wasted forty years. There is nothing more important than this.

You try to get all of your actual work- the work you get paid for; the work you disregard as bullshit- done in one shot. You’ve front loaded your school year with large, time-consuming projects so you can spend the rest of your time writing- work you will never get paid for; work you consider with dire importance. Writing gives you a sense of relief when feeling anxious- purpose when feeling like you’ve ruined your life and wasted your time- meaning when thinking about the meaningless of your death.

I killed my teacher, she told me. She was excited. Her math teacher died after sending her father an email about how *disappointed* she was in the kid’s lack of participation in class- supposedly she died, like, within an hour of sending the email. Last thing she did. Maybe the last thing she thought about. Class participation. A funny story for the kid to tell people. No one cares and you’ll end up in a dumpster with some asshole laughing at you. That’s your life.

After work, you rush home to get your gym gear on. You’ve settled on a two days on-one day off-

three days on-two days off lifting schedule, with your days set at chest and shoulders, legs and abs, back and arms. You learned the virtue of rest days during quarantine. You also learned that a weighted vest maximizes your time spent walking after the gym, which is anywhere between four-and-a-half to ten miles per day.

Dinner is your *one meal per day*, and is usually some combination of steak, eggs, pork, and chicken. You feel guilty indulging in Quest cookies before bed, which have become the bane of your weekday existence but also what you most look forward to- the gift and the curse; the sacred and the profane. You spend a lot of time thinking about processed, low-sugar protein cookies. This is your life.

Don't message me for fitness advice, because now you know everything I know. That's the only way I know to do it. I only know the hard way, every time. I've been fat- women treat you like a leering retard and people at work talk down to you. I'd rather drop dead from my awful schedule than deal with another second of that ever again.

You actually tell people you go to bed at 8 o'clock, she enquired. Earnestly. She thought this made me *look crazy*- that I don't spend my free time watching streaming TV shows that remind me of the inherent badass nature of white suburban women; drinking wine; *enjoying my time* in a kind of free-floating, unscheduled manner. Unproductive. Repulsive. Enjoy your time off the work farm, plebs- I'll be here grinding myself to death.

I have nothing in common with people who don't understand the urgency of getting to bed early; sleeping away my two hours at the gym, ten miles walking with twenty-pounds on my back, the 3,000 calories of meat- sleep substituting for meditation; dreaming productively; waking up with total mental clarity and peak creative energy. Racing to work to write in a fucking notebook- the most important thing you do; what must be guarded before all else. Avoiding morning greetings and polite chit-chat from well-meaning co-workers; vicious mind-erasers and creative vampires, all of them. Everything in service of writing in the fucking notebook because writing in the notebook is all you fucking have.

This is a test from God, he said to himself. He wrote this on his Internet web-log. Autocorrect, always sure to capitalize the i-in-Internet but never the g-in-God. He tried to feel the presence of God in his daily life, but he settled on the idea that it were better if he didn't. Faith is a test of your mettle. Better that he stay hidden. I can take it, he thought. Meaning, slipping through his fingers like sand. Body falling apart. Watching his parents die. I can take it, he thought.

Grinding away, expecting something to click- to make sense, just once. Stay hidden, God- faith is having belief despite insurmountable energy urging toward disbelief. Faith is a challenge; faith is a choice. Easy to believe when everything is handed to you- money, women, meaning. Don't make sense of this for me, God, I can take it; I can do better- I can start getting to bed at 7:45.

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Youâ€™re Just Like Delicious Tacos

December 13, 2020 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“Whoever thought you’d be better at turning a screw than me? I do it for my life. Fuck yeah!”

You’re just like Delicious Tacos, he told me. He was messaging me for advice. Girl problems- but, more than that too, he said. His life felt empty. He was lacking direction; depression, anxiety. There’s something about my writing that suggests I could offer intervention- a quick series of bullet points or if/then statements. Something about my writing that’s aspirational.

I’m willing to believe this. Despite the failures which I’ve grown comfortable sharing with strangers, I’m a happy and centered person. I have positive habits- and even if my addictive personality will merely cut and paste beneficial habits in place of those destructive and pursue them with the same psychotic vigor, they’re at least contributing to my overall health and well-being. I read and write regularly. I lift weights and take long walks. I meditate and enjoy stillness. I love nature. I believe in God.

I’m just like Delicious Tacos. I write about getting laid, as a single man, in realistic terms. No big fish stories; the raw honesty of average women. This lends me credibility with those hard-up enough to find something like that impressive. Scarier are the types who take jabs and call it “fan-fiction.” Sex alone has become the *big fish story*, with the same anxious energy of when you would’ve killed a small animal to see tits as a thirteen-year old; relentless and aching.

They all want magic’s biggest secrets finally revealed. As if the plethora of Internet content describing it in detail has become too slick- too Hollywood; just as detached from reality. Average men spend a lifetime studying bullshit to screw a fraction of what the dirtbag bartender is pulling strung out. The quickest way to cut the line is a bag of coke. I know this because Delicious Tacos knows this.

Stay single long enough with your eyes open, talk to enough women, and you’re going to come to the same conclusions. Once more men get it, society will fall. The trick is to have your interests align with what women find attractive- interests so personally fulfilling that if you never get laid again they become spiritual quests. Without sex, lifting weights takes on a more *authentic gravitas*. The creation of good art- good, as defined by your own standard, will mean more than any woman’s opinion of you. A deep connection to nature. Reflections on philosophy, history and morality. The ability to make yourself laugh. Good food. Presence. This is the advice I would give- or just get a bag of coke.

You’re not like Delicious Tacos, she told me. I had lent her “[Savage Spear of the Unicorn](#)“- I wanted to hear her thoughts on what I consider *true contemporary literature*. She has a masters from an Ivy League, she reads Pynchon, she tells me I’m great. She’s smart. She liked Tacos, but she doesn’t see the similarities, and maybe I don’t either. Tacos is taller with a full head of hair; in better shape despite us both spending years at the gym, twenty-thousand Twitter followers, multiple books and fucks way more women- even if he’s paying for some of them.

I aspire to be Delicious Tacos, in a one-sided competition, existing solely in my own head. I’m Dave Mustaine to his Metallica- and maybe “Rust in Peace” is the technically superior heavy metal record, taking thrash to its logical conclusion. Maybe the Megadeth listener is the more sophisticated music fan, sipping chardonnay and discussing the subtle intricacies of Dave’s *deep in the mix* guitar fills. Pointing out how “Youthanasia” was recorded completely live in the studio as a fuck you to

Metallica's partial live recording of the black album- a fact that was presumably only for Mustaine's own mental satisfaction- that he's *better than Metallica*.

Even when the hard reality of metrics- sales figures and tickets sold- don't agree. That Dave can be a better lead guitar than Kirk, a better song writer than Hetfield/ Ulrich, a better leading man than James- at least in his own head, where he can set the parameters and claim victory. You're not like Delicious Tacos, baby- lending her books with a gun to her head. You're better- *it should be you*.

Online content is mostly bullshit. The impulse is to fill dead air. If enough *empty space* elapses, you end up firing whatever you have in the chamber- sound and fury, signifying nothing- into cyberspace like a drunk frat boy feeding quarters into a Space Invaders cabinet at a dusky college bar in 1982; haphazard shots fired into the night sky; just hoping to hit *something*. Just like what I'm doing right now- lit quote to seem smart, video game reference to seem hip. Paint a picture of fuzzy nostalgia- people like that. Write about someone more popular than yourself- maybe the uninitiated will be baited to click? Maybe Tacos will retweet? Maybe he'll be flattered and say, "That Bad Billy- not so bad after all?"

I told him to find peace within himself. Partake in things he enjoys. Realize his passion and pursue it with psychotic vigor. Consider himself dead, right now, and think about what he would've liked to have left behind- now, work backwards, and find a way to achieve it. This is all that matters.

You get enough sex and you realize that the girls you jerk off to are wispy fantasies- something that reality will hardly ever match. The percentage of truly great sex you end up having is so miniscule that it should be disregarded on its face- living for the weekend, teachers obsessed with the school calendar; focus on sex and you'll never stop missing your life. Thanks, he told me. He'll think about it, he said. And in the meantime, he'll shoot Delicious Tacos another DM- maybe this time Tacos will write back.

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Razor Blades and Shame

December 21, 2020 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

There are moments in life, however brief, that an unspoken sentiment is shared by so many that it becomes an energy unto itself- the kind of energy that's propelled nations to fight wars and outsider candidates to win elections. At the end of the decade, professional wrestling- fans, wrestlers, and promoters- had something to prove. It wasn't enough to kindly explain to the uninitiated that *despite the predetermined nature of match finishes* that this shit- the battering taken on the bodies of performers- was, actually, far more real than anyone knew. To chase the respect of those who will never care, violence needed to be amplified.

The rise of Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) may have been the direct result of this coalescence of energy. The convergence of two deeply felt sentiments: that a) professional wrestling was embarrassing *because it was fake* and the wrestling fan was an idiot for not understanding this, despite gladly acknowledging it any chance they had, and b) all those working in professional wrestling were performing on a *show for children*. The idea behind ECW was that they would explicitly define their show as *one for adults*, with a hard-R rating, and use profanity, sex, and violence as a means to achieve this end.

If Hogan's transcendent moment of betrayal was enough to secretly engage the lapsed teenager, ECW became something they could proudly identify with: Sabu smashing tables, Rob Van Dam diving into the fifth row, Balls Mahoney destroying chairs on unprotected skulls; barb-wired and thumbtacks. Even their thirty-second commercial spots for mail-order VHS tapes screamed with sinister brutality, and was always sure to cut-out seconds before an act of horrifying violence was committed- tantalizing and enticing the blood-thirsty teenager- who'd dare his friends to sit through a "taipai death match," giddily pointing to the explicit gore- what's fake now, motherfucker?

The violence was what offset the shame. The violence was what made wrestling cool. The violence became addictive.

Two years later, there was a silent understanding that John should be the one taking Eric to the hospital- after all, he was the promoter of our very first JBW show; "John's Basement Wrestling"- use of the basement meant to differentiate from every other idiot who thought they'd play wrestling by throwing terrible punches and denting cookie sheets. The basement, not such a bad idea; something that could be used year-round, with walls acting as pretend guard railing, miscellaneous items around for foreign objects- board game boxes as faux steel chairs, TV remotes for microphone headshots- a couch for *high spots*. We even had two older kids- local wrestling school trainees- who could be featured in our *main event*.

Like comparing the old monster movies- the Mummy, wrapped in toilet paper and Frankenstein with bolts in his neck- to the bloody slashers that came after, the contrast between our goofy headlocks and Earthquake splashes became jarring when Eric and Joe took the stage; jaws agape watching snap-suplexes on the concrete, powerslams and powerbombs- moves that men with more experience, more pay, and more motivation wouldn't take in front of twenty-thousand people, happening ten feet away, in front of a dozen horrified on-lookers. Guided by adrenaline in calls that must have been made on the spot, heavy-weight steel chairs were dented over skulls... which is when Eric, as slyly as he could, produced a pair of scissors.

The blood was real, I excitedly told the girls we invited- the premise was a party in John's lavish upper-middle class home; his parents on vacation; booze and beers to be had in the absence of supervision. The girls, single and ready to mingle, and now you're the kid eating worms- and just as dopily unaware.

What was rightfully horrifying in retrospect only produced a sense of misguided pride. We had done it- we had put on a wrestling show- we had a match that rivaled anything on TV, even if only in brutality. The girls left us to it that night- to sweep thumbtacks and mop up puddles of blood- high on what we accomplished, high on professional wrestling. Their seats, empty at our next show.

[Excerpt from **Razor Blades and Shame: The Emergence of Extreme Violence in Pro-Wrestling**]

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Ghostbusters 2

December 29, 2020 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“The ghosts that roam this house, like winter air right through our souls.”

You don't have to write about my stairs, she said, and we can only be friends if you stop hurting my feelings. I didn't have to be in the room to know what her eyes would have looked like- desperate to hide the depth of her vulnerability- but like every other time, no matter how hard she tried, the way she looked at you betrayed her. This was what made you fall in love with her.

She stopped talking to you when you posted the piece about her house- her house as a metaphor for every bit of hurt, every battle scar, every coping strategy and defense mechanism; walls and coldness- circles that needed squaring. Parts of her life to be compartmentalized; some locked-away, some delicately framed with self-talk.

It was a long time ago, she'd tell me- with just enough hesitation, half-seconds further halved; moments so brief that you were certain you were the only person to ever notice, like Meriwether Lewis crisscrossing the uncharted west. New territory to discover and examine and critique. To write about- a loving tribute, as if to say: I see who you really are and I want to use every bit of energy I have to protect that.

She didn't see it that way- over the course of our time together, but also in the piece about her house. Like tricking Rocky Balboa into being on a news bit meant to humiliate him, she saw it as a *cheap shot*. Come laugh at the sweet, entirely normal woman- who never wanted to be written about; used as fodder for Internet web clicks- the entirely normal woman, who takes comfort in the “My Heart is at The Beach” throw-pillow; the entirely normal woman, with the dead husband and the unfinished house, who never felt she had anything to prove to anyone, and now you want to rub her face in it. And even if you explained that it was meant to make her seem sympathetic in the face of awful people who make awful decisions, this was sympathy she never asked for.

It's funny, but it's not a joke, Blair explained to me. I have a difficult time with this distinction. Blair's good for things like that; smart, Ivy League whatever, IQ likely a standard deviation above average. I think you're emotionally abusive, she told me. She sent an infographic explaining the qualities of a manipulative narcissist; red flags, she told me, with the wide-eyes of sincerity.

It's not funny, she insisted. I told her that I'd cut-and-paste the list to my OKCupid profile. OKCupid, because anyone who hasn't switched to Bumble is expecting a little abuse. You're doing it again, she told me- this is *emotional abuse*.

And maybe she was right- it read like a personality description of someone awful enough to be me. I never shy away from *conflict*, especially when I'm “fighting to be right.” I try to get women to *think exactly like me*, and will not accept conflicting narratives. I often tell women that they love me and ask them to repeat it. I prefer when a woman mirrors my emotions- if I'm laughing, I didn't hurt your feelings, it was *just teasing, you big baby*, and you should be laughing too. In this regard, I will *deny someone's experiences* if I don't agree with their emotional reaction, using phraseology like “*it wasn't that bad*.”

I always prefer women to read my *mind, mood, or body language*— my mood which will shift, erratically and arbitrarily, throughout the day. I talk about myself incessantly- I have a fucking blog where I expect strangers to be fascinated with me; I am *self-obsessed*. In this regard, I am always sure my needs are being met- even if only on a subconscious level- before *checking in on her*.

I'm *insensitive*, I told her. It's my worst quality. Please try to be understanding.

You can write about my stairs if you don't use the picture I sent you, she told me. I don't do well with *if/then* statements. I can't be told what to do- natural inertia forcing decisions to be made in the opposite direction, even to my own detriment. I couldn't understand why she didn't just sell the house, anyway. The past died on its own, no killing required- board up the old place and forget about it. She had the market on her side- riding the tide of an inflating bubble; photogenic good looks. Burn the boats on your way to a second life.

I have to use the picture of your *actual stairs*, I explained to her. For purposes of *authenticity*. Like the most damaged ego-maniacs of my generation, I'm obsessed with authenticity. Every bit of output- words written, social interactions had, emotions expressed- must be organically sensed with a blind, Jedi-like intuition. I am not someone who enjoys *small-talk*— pitiful social grooming for the lesser intelligent. I like to *discuss ideas*. Everything I've written about- personal lives dissected, women scolded for making what is *quite clearly* the wrong decision in retrospect- is exactly how it happened; at least, certainly, a close approximation. From my own perspective- from my throne at my computer.

She stopped talking to you when you posted the piece about her house, and you thought she was being a big baby. She said her feelings were hurt, but you thought she just wanted to *get her way*; that she was being *manipulative*. Exert a little bit of power; have you take your piece down; she always made snide comments about your writing. Started seeing her again during the summer- had broken up right before quarantine; it felt like ages had passed but also no time at all. Was already seeing other women, and you wanted her to know. *No one fucking breaks up with me*. Now was your time to rub her face in it.

I started working on my house, she told me. She was proud of the changes she made; *home-improvement*, they call it, and she did it all on her own. But it was when you got the picture of her freshly stained stairs that it hit you- so hard that you needed a minute to compose yourself.

Stay alone long enough, you learn to only trust yourself- not other people; their motives seem disingenuous. They are *inauthentic*; unlike you. Perfect son of God; purity of heart; purity of intention.

A writer; an artist- this must come before all else, at the expense of feelings being hurt, relationships damaged beyond repair. This is what you tell yourself to get to sleep at night- still necessary, even after the handful of pills. This is what you tell yourself when you know you're just a selfish asshole; a parody of a human being; a bad sequel. The King of Hell, on your throne at your computer.

I have to use the picture of your stairs, I told her- I'm a writer, I'm an artist, I'm an asshole- anything else, of course, would be inauthentic.

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Only Death is Real

January 16, 2021 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“You’re holding on but letting go, I’m missing Cleveland and the snow; and lonely thoughts where everybody knows the truth and lets it be”

It’s the same thing every time, she told me. It’s an act, the whole thing; it isn’t real. The eye contact, the pursed lips, hands in the hair, the inflection in tone- “*baby, baby...*” She’ll pick up on this and mimic it back to me- same eye contact, same pursed lips: “*baby, baby...*”

When you’ve lived what feels like a thousand lifetimes compared to the high school sweethearts; you’ve figured out every bit of the female algorithm- missile launch codes carved into your skull like the password to skip to Mike Tyson; right to the bedroom; right to *true love*, scientific discovery at the price of normalcy; at the price of family.

At the price of outliving your parents- at least numerically. Without anything else- anything to provide perspective- the single man will either self-destruct in addiction or grind himself into the ground; defiance, on the road to decay; defiance in the face of genetic limitations- trying to get muscle car performance out of an economy class. Your parents were shopping on a budget- who knew how bad things would get?

The cold void of an endless January seems even crueler when juxtaposed with the colored lights of December. It was a December morning, before first period, that our eyes met in front of her locker. In what couldn’t have been planned, at least consciously planned- perhaps, more like the march of the penguins, or a rosebud uncoiling before the relentless morning sun- perhaps, something guided by nature and etched into a plan that wasn’t within our power to modify. Our eyes met, guided by invisible forces so strong that they had almost revealed themselves- a proof for God, had we been more conscious of it in the moment- our eyes met, and hung in the air frozen. No words exchanged. Even a kiss would have spoiled the purity of the moment. We had all that was necessary, and we could make from it something more.

We stayed after school that day and spent the afternoon talking about what we wanted the future to look like. Too shy, of course, to include one another in these plans- but we spoke in ways where this acknowledgement wasn’t necessary; that it was maybe so pressing and obvious that it could be left unsaid.

That night, December 16th, 1996, I took the late bus home from school- and that night was the only time I wore a seatbelt. This was the greatest day of my life, and I couldn’t let anything ruin it.

You’re just like Stanley Kubrick, is what people must have told Shane Carruth. Absolute darling of the independent movie scene at the dawn of the new millennium, Carruth did what would have been considered impossible- made his first movie, with a seven-thousand dollar budget, and won the grand-jury prize at Sundance. To put this in perspective, it’s like your friend’s student film winning an Oscar- like breaking a law of nature, this was something that *couldn’t happen...* but it did, because *Primer* (2004) is incredible. Breathtakingly incredible- even with its flaws; flubbed audio and blown-

out lighting; there is nothing like *Primer* and *Primer* is fucking incredible.

And even still, I can never decide whether I prefer *Primer* or Carruth's follow-up *Upstream Color* (2013)— a film so uniquely outside the box that I wouldn't know where to begin describing it. Part science fiction, part cold realism- broken people with interdependent relationships- *Upstream Color* examines the connection between identity and trauma, how the latter inescapably shapes the former- and, more so, how these elements, so crucial to how we understand the world around us, are often invisible.

Absolute darling of the independent movie scene, for a short time Carruth had tried to work within the Hollywood system- to the point of even pitching a Batman movie. When he couldn't get funding for his big budget, trippy sci-fi adventure *A Topiary* he pivoted back to realism with *A Modern Ocean*— which caught a bit of fire, even making it to the casting stage... and then nothing.

Absolute darling of the independent movie scene, which is ultimately meaningless. No one wants to finance difficult, obtuse art. No one cares how good you are. No one cares if you're just like Stanley Kubrick, or just like Delicious Tacos, your inaccessible art- your brilliance- means nothing in a world of Mickey Mouse superhero bullshit. Beauty means nothing in hell.

It was in the cold void of January that Kevin had slipped you the little blue sheet of paper, folded up with your name across the front, during second period Theology. You had nothing to worry about, he said. He wasn't interested, he explained. He was already dating Michelle- a fact you all knew, but Jessica had still called him the night before, just to be sure.

There's this interview with Joseph Gordon-Levitt where he doesn't say the name *Shane Carruth*, but in my heart, I know he's talking about Shane- who interrupted him during an audition to tell him that his performance was shit. I've seen enough of Shane's acting- his screen writing, interviews given by him. I have a sense of his personality. This was Shane. On the way out, Gordon-Levitt still wanted to have his fanboy moment with Shane- this will be the impulse for anyone in-tune with what Carruth is doing; you're in awe of his work- and he tells Shane how much he appreciates Shane's two movies- to which Carruth replies, "*I don't buy that either.*"

It is only in the cold void of an endless January that all can be laid bare. Only in the absence of the ornate, and the emotions inherently consequent, that proper assessment can be made. Only after New Year's Eve, 1996, making out with Jessica in her living room; Dick Clark with KISS ringing in the New Year; "I wanna rock and roll all nite and party every day"; drunk only on each other; hands in her hair, looking into her eyes- *this is gonna be our year, baby*— only in the absence of this can things be properly contextualized.

Terms and conditions; hypothesis and conclusion; the manager who won't let the artist pursue their passion project for *practical reasons*. Hollywood who won't give Shane Carruth money to make pure art. She was the prize and you were the runner up- second choice. She had negotiated for a better deal but chose to accept the offer on the table. You bought what you could afford and were happy with what you got. One little blue sheet of paper later, and it was tainted- like finding a horde of ants behind the wall of your dream home or the new car that never leaves the shop. A heap of junk who'd tell you that she loved you but you *weren't buying it*— it's an act, it isn't real- who cried at your

coldness and sucked your dick on Friday night. You wanted a fairytale; you wanted purity and you got mayhem.

The punchline is that Jessica loved me for years after we broke up. For years, she'd do her best to find me- in the years before social media, this wasn't easy. Messages sent through friends. Showing up at the same goth clubs. Desperately seeking Susan; always a step behind, always on the prowl. She'd let a guy hit on her and I'd swoop in and pull her away by the waist.

No one could understand why I wouldn't just date her. If you saw the dress she'd wear to Equinox, you'd have wondered the same thing, but she just had the dumb luck of knowing me. She had the dumb luck of buying all those Seattle stocks at their IPO; an early adopter- commendable, but now she could step aside 'cause this rocket's not stopping 'til we hit the moon. Thanks for playing, baby. Maybe next time.

Writing is the pursuit of truth- this is what you'll say when asked why you write. Greatness existing within your reach— brief glimpses of its Platonic form, so brief you can only sketch them from memory; scribble out words, inadequate substitutions for what you're trying to impale with your ball-point spear; feel the juices stream down your neck as you indulge on the progress you've made. The pursuit of truth- there's a purity to this.

Internet fame, a substitute for your relationship with God. This is what you say matters. This is how you get to sleep at night. This is how you justify a meandering existence, never having to commit, always thinking you could do better; you *should* do better. Incredible truth to be found in meeting desperate women on dating apps. There's no room in hell for the happily married; only the dead walk the Earth.

As if David Foster Wallace's suicide doesn't haunt you. Poke holes in your theory. You'll never be as good; you'll never be as acclaimed; critically well-received; famous- both Internet and *real life*. Even this, what you woke-up early to write, before work, in a spiral-bound notebook that you bought for a quarter; even this, your recent work- which you believe shows a *significant evolution* from when you started; your stylistic prime; your best, which you feel justified in labeling as *clever*— will always be shit compared to Wallace's worst... and even if you want to believe that turning words into art is enough to justify an otherwise meaningless existence, DFW's hanging corpse is somewhere laughing at you.

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Jennifer Lost the War

January 30, 2021 | by Billy Pratt @ Kill to Party | [Link](#) | [Original Link](#)

“...but will the morning headlines even say that it’s a shame?”

They’re all liars, she told me, all of them. While we had spoken a few times, only through text, in the years since things had come apart violently, I finally chipped away at Jennifer enough for a phone call. Years had passed, and maybe the resulting body image issues- collateral damage from getting off on calling her fat- had faded enough for the sound of my voice to be somewhat less nauseating. Or maybe it was the *mid-August blues*; five months into quarantine and just about any option seems great- a fact that I greatly benefitted from over the summer- but even if I had been excited to catch up with Jennifer formally, this wasn’t what I was expecting.

It was only a few years prior, the summer of 2018, where she had told me to “fuck off” on account of how she could “fuck anyone she wanted” and wouldn’t consider wasting her time “fucking me”- a point I half-heartedly attempted contesting but would ultimately concede. If I could *fuck anyone*, I wouldn’t be spending time doing any of this shit- dear reader, you’d be the one “fucking off.”

But, luckily for us all, I need this and I need you- *desperately*- so here we are together. I never flew too close to the sun because I never had the option- eternally shackled to hell’s version of Marley’s chains: the curse of the average man. But the average single woman in her thirties won’t feel the swirled cocktail of *gift and curse* that sexual restrictions bring and will typically indulge in ways that’d make her bright-eyed twenty-four year old self blush like she’s at Plato’s Retreat.

Jennifer was at the end of this ride- spent all her tickets on the log flume at [Adventureland](#), and even if she had a great time, now she had to sit in her wet jeans on the ride home- they’re *all liars*.

The election didn’t come up this time around. Four years prior it may as well have been foreplay. Deliberate triggering and antagonization. The last time a presidential election will feel significant; subversive; defining. What we had before us was space to make our own. Space for like-minded people to feel less lonely; less disconnected. There were people like us all around, quietly noticing things about the broken modern world- buzz like a Bethesda message board on the first day of release. Coming together and creating energy that was impossible to ignore; madness in every direction: blogs and memes, even better than our *wildest dreams*. A decentralized, meritocratic culture war was one we could win. This was our time and we weren’t going to let it get away. Our time, where fucking Jennifer while wearing a Trump hat felt significant- subversive and defining.

There was a definite thrill to having sex in a Trump hat- of conquering and winning. Part of the energy wave that we created together- each contributing a fraction-of-a-fraction until it took on its own electro-magnetic momentum; one that we were able to tap into on the back end like a perpetual motion machine- bumps of highly potent, 140-character at-a-time *good shit*.

We had won the election- we beat the establishment; David kicking Goliath in the balls; Little Mac knocking Super Macho Man the fuck out. We were all Ricky Vaughn and Ricky Vaughn was emblematic of us all. We could fuck anyone we wanted, at least spiritually; symbolically.

The crest of a high and beautiful wave.

They’re all liars is probably what she wasn’t expecting- but like the song quote Ellis used to set up *Less Than Zero* (1985), “this is the game that moves as you play,” and, more often than not, faster

than you're able to notice. While she's screwing Mr. Exciting- the guy she knows will never commit- she's betting the house on the idea that those who are *less exciting* will be there for her when she's done sowing the last bits of her post-divorce *wild oats*. The real shock hits when Mr. Dependable starts playing games too, and the only way he knows how- the long con- pedal boats and-hand holding; boring, limp-dick sex that she has to grit her teeth through just to say she has a boyfriend- and then he treats her like shit all the same.

The election didn't come up this time with Jennifer because the energy had already dissipated. The game's been rigged with the conclusion forgone- this wasn't what we were expecting. Biden would stand as a puppet for the Neo-Liberal world order; Ricky Vaughn in hand-cuffs. This was the end of the beginning- a comfort to Jennifer who was someone outside of Internet culture; who liked Marvel movies and sharing memes about Mondays; who had thought that as long as there was a woman present in *places where decisions were being made*, all was right in the world. That as long as we send the orange man packing, we can resume a life of corporate approved consumer experiences- and with our pictures on all the requisite dating apps, we can become the product- for all the liars to consume.

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