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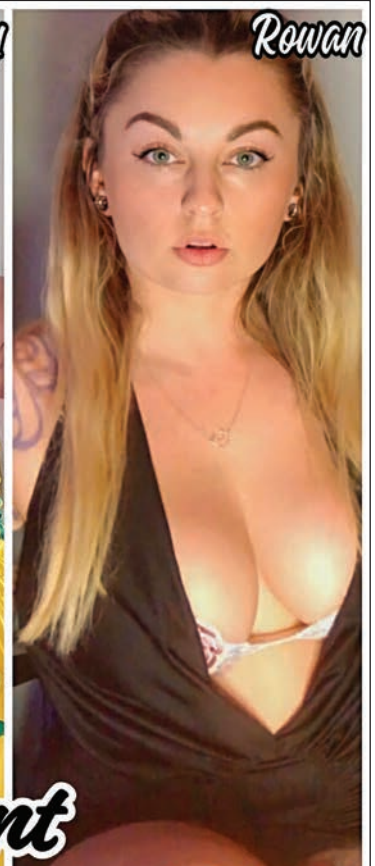
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Gossy
FROM
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your complete guide to pugging around in p-town

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part seven in a series about a star-crossed love story that confronts addiction, the struggles of long-distance relationships, and death

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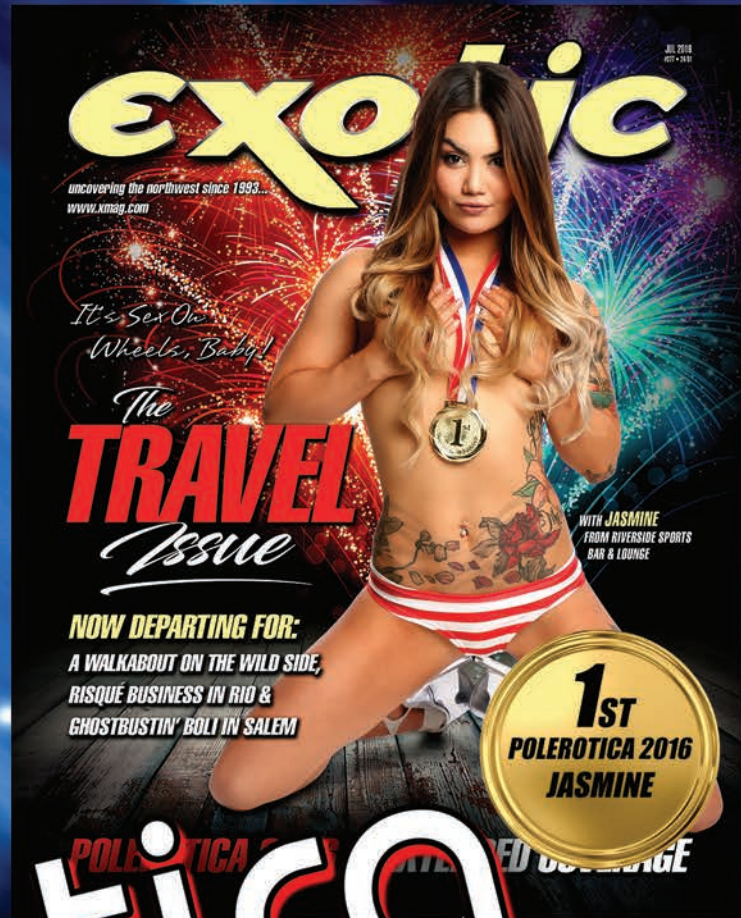
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QUALIFIER ROUND VI
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QUALIFIER ROUND VII
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DANTE'S

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BY BRYAN A. BYBEE

AMAZING APRIL

Okay, that was a totally misleading headline. When most of us think of April, it involves owing taxes, lots of rain, and April Fools' Day—one of the most useless unofficial holidays around. To keep with the negativity theme, did you know the Titanic sunk



in April? Apollo 13's problematic journey and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster are two more gems that April blessed us with.

Let's not be too hard on the month of showers, though. It brought us cool shit like 4/20, the very first Ford Mustang, and Leonardo da Vinci. (*Fun fact:* Leo was born out of wedlock, so



there's some motivation for all you lazy bastards from broken homes... [*"Get Up You Stupid Fuck" plays in the background.*])

Closer to home, there's plenty of modern-day cool shit happening, too. *Polerotica* starts this month, and we promise it will be pretty-fucking-cool, but we'll discuss that more in a bit... First, we'd like to wish Happy Birthday to Scott from *Guilty Pleasures!* Stop by on Saturday, April 9, for the celebration and mark your calendars because this isn't the only celebration they're having this month. We'd also like to congratulate both Scott & Julie on their 4-year anniversary! Being wise beyond their years, they knew the anniversary party would take two nights, and so it was. It's all going down on Friday, April 22, and Saturday, April 23—don't miss out!

There are a few more birthdays to mention! Saturday, April 9, Azra's Birthday Party is at Devils Point and

then right back to Devils Point the very next Friday, April 15, for Kiki & Wednesday's Birthday Party! Happy Birthday you sexy devils! Moving on, Stars Cabaret (Bridgeport) is holding their Casino Night on Saturday, April 16, with prizes and specials, so come check it out. Also, on April 16, Pee-Wee's Burlesquehouse hits Dante's for two shows (8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.), and it's one of the most unique shows around. Think Pee-wee's Playhouse TV show of the late '80s, mixed with burlesque, drag, circus, and tease. It doesn't get more bizarre, and since we know PDX is all about weird, you don't want to miss this night! Wrapping up our April events is The One Moto Show After Party at Devils Point on Saturday, April 30!

POLEROTICA STARTS NOW

Without further ado... Are you ready for the largest and most established pole performance and dance competition in the nation? Yeah, a little



shameless promotion and bragging, but it's well justified. After two very long years, we're excited to bring you *Polerotica 2022*! It all starts on April 2 at Cheetahs XXX Cabaret in Salem and runs through the end of next month. Make sure to take note of all the important dates listed for you here and on page 16! You don't want to miss one of our industry's premier events and witness history in the making. See you there!

Stay frosty, folks—It's about to go down!

Audi 5000 ("Outies bro," for all you hipsters....)

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eroticcity spotlight

**SAT 02 – CHEETAHS
POLEROTICA 2022 QUALIFIER ROUND I**

**FRI 08 – KIT KAT CLUB
POLEROTICA 2022 QUALIFIER ROUND II**

**SAT 09 – DEVILS POINT
AZRA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**SAT 09 – GUILTY PLEASURES
SCOTT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**FRI 15 – DEVILS POINT
KIKI & WEDNESDAY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**SAT 16 – DANTE'S
PEE-WEE'S BURLESQUEHOUSE**

**SAT 16 – STARS CABARET (SALEM)
POLEROTICA 2022 QUALIFIER ROUND III**

**SAT 16 – STARS SALEM (BRIDGEPORT)
CASINO NIGHT**

**FRI 22 – GUILTY PLEASURES
4TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY (PART 1)**

**SAT 23 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE
POLEROTICA 2022 QUALIFIER ROUND IV**

**SAT 23 – GUILTY PLEASURES
4TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY (PART 2)**

**FRI 29 – THE LOUNGE
POLEROTICA 2022 QUALIFIER ROUND V**

**SAT 30 – DEVILS POINT
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**THE LOUNGE
HAPPY HOUR 2PM-4PM**

COLUMN

BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

THINGS TO DO WITH A DISCOUNT PUG

I'm not really a dog person.

I like dogs perfectly fine, but, much like children, I don't care to own one myself. I have a very burly housecat named The Ham™, and he's independent enough that it's more-or-less, just like having a roommate who will periodically wake you up with a dead rat in his mouth, which is half his size. Like whoa, okay pal, where'd you get that big fucker? Hopefully, the neighbor's yard and not mine. Damn. But thanks for paying the rent on time.

However, I've recently been charged to look after a discount pug for a couple of days. Its master calls me and says, "Hey, can you look after the discount pug for a week?" You know, dog-sitting. I could do nothing but say, "Uh, yeah, sure." Then I was faced with the question of what to do with such a creature. Well, I had no idea, but I found various things to do with her. You will now be told the tale.

Firstly, to address the question: why is she a discount pug? Does she provide discounts? No, sadly. She merely came to her master at a discount because she doesn't see very well. Does a pug, discounted or otherwise, really need keen eyesight? Are people taking pugs duck hunting? That sounds like a terrible idea.

So, before discussing what I did during "pug week," let's go over a few facts...

Pug Facts

- The pug was initially a dog species from China, brought to Europe in the 16th century. There are manuscripts in ancient Chinese from the Song Dynasty which describe Chinese proto-pugs.

- It was selectively bred by royalty, much like the current Queen of England's famous corgis, though not by the English. Where the Brits have Pembroke Welsh corgis, it was the Dutch royalty, specifically the royal House of Orange, who bred the pug into what it is to-

day, which is a squish-faced football of a dog.

- The breeding endeavor in the Netherlands is why they were initially referred to as a *Dutch Mastiff*. If you do a Wikipedia search for "Dutch Mastiff," it redirects to "pug," in case you fools think I'm playin'.

- In the late 19th century, British Queen Victoria picked up a pack of pugs, trending them among the aristocracy.

- The breed is described, in Latin for some reason, as *mulum in parvo*, which means "a lot of dog in a small package." Is this true? I intended to find out.

- Their breathing is loud and...snuffly. Why the Dutch royalty thought this was a great idea to breed into them, I cannot say. Basically, the dog has a short snout (brachycephalic, if you wanna get technical) and snores like your roommate when he gets drunk and passes out on the couch.

Pug Activities

So, what did I do with this discount pug?

Well, I did the usual dog stuff. Take her to the park, pick up dog shit with the little baggie, feed her pork rinds (which I bought for this purpose and called "pug rinds"), and you know, walk the dog around.

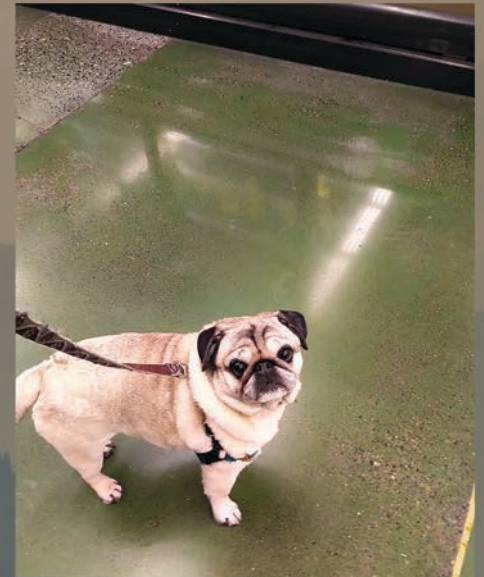
But this did not satisfy me. I had to find more interesting things to do.

So then, what else do you do when you're in charge of a discount pug for a bit?

Follow me on a photographic journey!

At first, I decided to see if I'd get kicked out of the grocery store when bringing in the discount pug to get stuff for dinner. My dinner, that is, not the pug's. She has kibble provided by her masters. Also, pug rinds.

I did not get kicked out. Interestingly, people seemed quite on board with pugs tooling



around and acting real dumb, including security personnel. Acting real dumb is their default setting, by the way. Fortunately for me, this is not the kind of dog that shits or pisses all over stuff...rather well behaved with bowel and bladder. So, we'll add a +1 point for the discount pug for that.



Next, we went to the craft store. Someone actually did crab at me. An older lady working at the craft store (whoa, that's a surprise) says to me, "is that a rescue dog?!" Assuredly, she meant to ask if it was a service dog, but the letter of the law is the rule of the law. "I think so." "Oh...okay then."

Well, that wasn't so bad. Live, laugh, love, fucker.

Yes, this discount pug is grateful, thankful, and blessed...I guess.

So now, it has become my point to buck societal norms and live that thug life pug life.

Onward and...pugward!

Next stop, well, we could both use a break. Let's go to the bar.

We went to Nick's Famous Coney Island, a place in Southeast Portland, which is oddly not a strip club, contrary to my usual habits. However, they serve a top-notch chili dog, and no, I'm not getting paid to talk up their chili dogs or anything—this is from the heart. They're a Portland institution, in that they've been there for nearly a hundred years, and a friend (a former stripper, whom I believe was featured in this very magazine, in a state of undress, some years back) provides administration for the joint on certain shifts, and they love dogs of the non-chili variety, such as discount pugs.



Whew! Busy day for a discount pug.

What's next?

Well, buckle up, fuckers. We're takin' the ol' discount pug to the Asian shopping mall.

Don't make the joke. It's tired. Nobody's gonna try and eat her, scrumptious though she may seem.

I'm there to buy that killer dumpling sauce in the square bottle, potstickers with weird fill-

ings, and soft drinks with no English on them.

Tally ho, discount pug! On to further adventure!



Assuredly, I did get the items I was in search of. Nobody cared about the presence of the discount pug, save for an older Asian man who asked me what her name was. "Daisy." "Oh, good name." "Yeah, she came with it, from the factory."

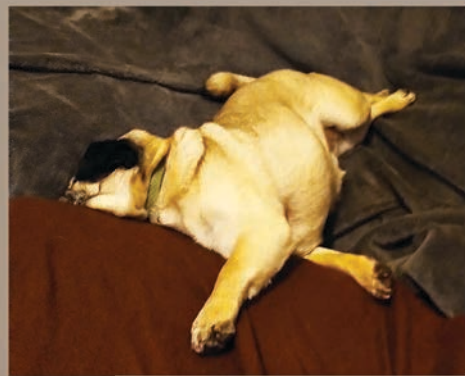
However, they have those move-and-shake kiddie rides there. Thus, I had to stick her discount ass on the Dumbo ride.



A hard day's pugging, to be sure.

After all that adventure, I took her back home, and she slept the sleep of angels. Angels who snort, snuffle and snore...and wedge themselves in between the sofa cushions I put blankets on, in an effort to keep pug hair off the couch.

While this may be an odd article, I feel it is instructional. After all, you all never know when



you yourselves may become the stewards of a discount pug or pug of another value rating. It can happen to *anyone*.

I also tried to scan her at the self-check once. Sadly, no discount is provided when you run a discount pug butt over a laser. It did beep, though, which has me asking questions—questions to which there are no good answers.



She was subsequently returned to her masters, who were none the wiser in regard to our escapades.

Take care, and pug on.

-Wombstretcha

Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a temporary pug shepherd, chili dog enthusiast, stripper patron, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe (yay!) and Facebook (boo!), as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."

INFLATION IS OUT OF CONTROL!!!

By A Concerned Local Music Consumer

Dear Fellow Outraged Denizens of Portland,

This is ridiculous! I understand that some of you social justice warriors will hit me with cookie-cutter, bleeding-heart internet rhetoric about how artists need to be paid and their performances count as labor, but come the fuck on! Ten whole fucking dollars to see some shitty garage band at some bar that already charges ten dollars for a fucking cocktail? Miss me with that shit! I have ticket stubs I bought on eBay for Pink Floyd at Madison Square Garden for five whole dollars in 1973! Do these snot-nosed punks think their barely rehearsed set in some dive bar is worth twice as much as Pink Floyd in the '70s?! No, I don't know how inflation works!



The point is, ten dollars is a lot! As I said, that's like one cocktail. That's one gas station sandwich. That's one gallon of gas!

Are we poor, humble patrons of the Portland arts really expected to keep this pitiful so-called music scene on life support by shelling out our hard-earned dollars to see something we could just hear for free by walking through inner southeast neighborhoods? Make it make sense!

Don't give me that bullshit that the band has expenses to pay. Don't give me some sob story about how their loud, out-of-tune, unoriginal, boring set really warrants the price of a side of fries at Burgerville. Bullshit! You realize most of that money is going to the door person! It's all a great big pyramid scheme, and you get nothing in return! Am I to believe this crisp Hamilton is going to a good cause when I give it to the door person? What? Am I funding some burgeoning talent at the beginning of their career? Am I supporting some starving, underrated artist? Am I contributing to a community of performing arts that has the possibility to flourish! Hell no! Those greedy, untalented posers taking up a corner in the basement are just going to spend that money on strippers and cocaine. Why should I support bad habits? I'm just trying to enjoy a ten-dollar cocktail without it being interrupted by a band playing too loud.

Come to think of it—these so-called

bands should be paying *me* to watch them perform. We all know they're just a bunch of immature narcissists who need an audience to tell them they're special. Why should I subsidize shitty parenting?! It's not just!

Look, not to sound like some boomer pining for the good ol' days, but let's face it...before the pandemic, it was the golden age for us Portland music fans that make the scene what it is. Whatever happened to the sliding scale? What happened to "donations appreciated?" What happened to the fucking tip jar in front of the stage, with some dumb joke duct-taped onto it? Seriously, why should I pay upfront at the door for bands if I don't know what they sound like? They should *earn* their wage. Like a stripper or a blackjack dealer. Do I pay for my meal at a restaurant upfront? No! If the waitress didn't respond to my flirting enthusiastically enough, then I refuse to pay. And naturally, that bitch doesn't get a tip either. Why should musicians be treated any differently?

Pre-pandemic, most shows were free anyway because the bands knew no one wanted to see their sorry ass in the first place. Or, with their pitiful sliding scale requests, you could usually get away with giving the doorman three sweaty pocket dollars. That, or use the ol' "I'm with the band" trick to get in for free.

These lazy, entitled brats just used the pandemic like every other

greedy business owner as an excuse to shaft us. Ten whole dollars to get into a dive bar? What is this, Studio 54? No! It's the same mediocre bands from before the pandemic. This isn't due to supply chain disruption or labor shortages. It's just the pure, unfettered greed of your local "talent."

It won't stop here. We gotta fight like hell, fellow music consumers! Before you know it, they'll start charging twenty dollars for their t-shirts and thirty dollars for their shitty vinyl vanity press! When does it end? What more do these money-grubbing frauds want from us, common people?



I say we rise up and storm the door. Knock over that pretentious door person before he can even ask for the band's blood money. Cover charges are theft! We will break through the entrance to stand in front of the stage with our arms crossed and a blank expression on our faces! Only together can we overcome this tyranny. Who's with me?

Sincerely,

The Guy Who Just Sits At The Bar At The Strip Club

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THE DALLES · SALEM · ALBANY · CORVALLIS · EUGENE · RICE HILL · MEDFORD

FANTASY

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black leather outfit with multiple cutouts and a choker. She is holding a black whip. The background is white.



Gossy
FROM
STARS CABARET
SALEM

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, lying down. She has pink eye makeup, pink lips, and a nose ring. She is wearing a thin, silver hoop earring. Her left shoulder has a tattoo of a leafy branch. The background is white and scattered with various flowers in shades of pink, purple, and blue. A black rectangular box with a pink border is positioned in the upper right corner, containing the text 'EXOTIC PINUP APRIL 2022' in white and pink.

EXOTIC
PINUP APRIL
2022

Gossy

FROM
STARS CABARET
SALEM





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Daily 11am-12am

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Tue-Sun 12pm-12am

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Daily 2pm-2:30am

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215 W Burnside St | (971) 385-1896
Wed-Sat 7pm-2:30am

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403 SW Harvey Milk St | (503) 227-3936
Mon-Sat 11am-2am, Sun 2pm-2am

CLUB SINROCK 23 **FOOD LOTTERY**
12035 NE Glisan St | (503) 889-0332
Daily 6pm-2:30am

CLUB TEASE 21 **FOOD**
4523 NE 60th Ave | (503) 288-9771
Mon-Thu 11am-12am, Fri 11am-9pm

COLUMBIA STRIP 32 **FOOD LOTTERY**
605 N Columbia Blvd | (503) 289-1351
Sun-Thu 12pm-1:30am Fri-Sat 12pm-2:30am

DESIRE 16 **FOOD LOTTERY**
535 NE Columbia Blvd | (971) 339-2198
Daily 12pm-12am

DEVILS POINT 12 **FOOD LOTTERY**
5305 SE Foster Rd | (503) 774-4513
Daily 11am-2:30am

DREAM ON SALOON 16 **FOOD LOTTERY**
15920 SE Stark St | (503) 253-8765
Daily 11am-1am

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5021 SE Powell Blvd | (503) 788-7178
Daily 12pm-2:15am

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17180 SE McLoughlin Blvd | (503) 908-1177
Daily 12pm-12am

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13550 SE Powell Blvd | (458) 253-5534
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13639 SE Powell Blvd | (503) 760-8128
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Sun-Thu 4pm-1am, Fri-Sat 4pm-2:30am

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Daily 2pm-2:30am

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Daily 2pm-2:30am

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927 SE Morrison St | (503) 231-1606
Daily 10:30am-2:30am

SHIMMERS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB 40 **FOOD LOTTERY**
8000 SE Foster Rd | (971) 230-0047
Daily 10am-2:30am

SPYCE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB 49 **FOOD LOTTERY**
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Sun-Thu 6pm-2:30am, Fri-Sat 3pm-2:30am

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Mon-Fri 11:30am-2:30am, Sat 4pm-2:30am, Sun 5pm-2:30am

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9950 SE Stark St | (503) 477-9523
Daily 10am-2:30am

X EXOTIC LOUNGE 35 **FOOD**
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Tue-Sun 7pm-2:30am

XPOSE 70 **FOOD LOTTERY**
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9220 SW Barbur Blvd #115 | (503) 224-1604
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14555 SE McLoughlin Blvd | (503) 652-2004
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Daily 12pm-8pm

15536 SE 82nd Dr | (503) 203-6969
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6440 SW Coronado St | (503) 244-6969
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20625 SW TV Hwy, Aloha OR | (503) 356-5624
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Portland: 237 SE MLK Blvd | (503) 239-1678
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Portland: 2330 SE 82nd Ave | (503) 206-4708
Daily 10am-2am
Portland: 14712 SE Stark St | (971) 888-5159
Daily 10am-2am
Vancouver: 4811 NE 94th Ave | (360) 254-1126
Daily 8am-11pm

TORCHED ILLUSIONS 149
17935 SW Tualatin Valley Hwy | (503) 259-2310
Daily 6am-12am

TORCHED ILLUSIONS II 169
12963 SW Pacific Hwy | (503) 430-5140
Daily 11am-10pm

THE VELVET ROPE 101
3533 SE César E Chávez Ave | (971) 271-7064
Thu 8pm-2am, Fri-Sat 8:30pm-4am, Sun 8pm-2am

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REASONS TO CONTINUE LIVING THIS MONTH

BY HANNAH ONE CUP

I was at the gas station two days ago and paid \$41 to nearly fill up a 10-gallon tank on my car. You do the math on what that equates to per gallon at that point. Anyway, before being at this particular Chevron, I perused the neighborhood for a good 15 minutes, thinking I could outsmart the system by just a few moments and sneak into a pump before prices increased again. But, alas, no...this was as cheap as it got.

I then started thinking about what this might mean for me in general. Gas goes up, and my groceries go up—I won't be able to think about traveling anywhere (not that I really...could right now, anyway?). Literally, the only thing I won't ever compromise on during hard times is the quality of dog food I buy. So, maybe I'll start eating that. It can't taste worse than the majority of my poor-ass pantry cooking. "Raw garlic? I don't have the money for that—just get me the garlic salt." That's what poor tastes like—Lawry's seasoning and garlic salt. Maybe some really old Dollar Store paprika, if you're trying

to "travel the world with taste!" since, you know, I can't afford to travel the world right now.

I already drink bottom-shelf whisky and Coke; I don't think I can go lower than that. So really, this month has forced me to evaluate why simple things that I'm taking for granted should be considered "pleasures" nowadays. At first, this thought made me extremely depressed. I felt like I was compromising on something I already didn't have the option to compromise on. Then, I made my dog a TikTok to try to get "TikTok famous" before the old boy turns 10...we have 400 followers. Then, that surge of serotonin ran dry. I then watched a bunch of stupid videos of people eating tons of fried food in one sitting, which really just made me wonder why my dog only had 400 followers and made me more depressed. Then, I watched the episode of Futurama where Fry tries to bring his dog back (best episode and makes me cry the most), then I read a friend's writing, who quite honestly is about on par in terms of their outlook on most shit

in life, and I sank so deep into depression that I really wasn't sure how I was going to get out.

I did get out, magically, with the help of lots of sleep and cheese and booze. I'm functional, at least. So anyway, here's to being functional, and here is a list of reasons I came up with to continue living (this month):



Everything is only going to get more surreal as time passes. Remember watching the Twilight Zone or any of those 1980s sci-fi movies, or even Star Trek? Well, a lot of the things that oc-

curred in those shows have already happened, and then some. Right now, I'm waiting for pig noses to be the sign of true beauty, since fish lips have continued to grow with time. Let's just see how distorted we can make our faces. I also want to know how kissing happens when you have said fish lips and pig noses. Will it be more of like, a nuzzle and grunt? Oink oink? I don't know, but I wanna find out.



I'm supposed to get my bonus from my job this month—but we'll see. I'm curious how much gas I can buy with it and if it could take me anywhere worth visiting. Like, maybe...Idaho? I mean, I like potatoes. And that honestly might be the furthest my money will get me at this rate. But really, I do love potatoes, so this isn't a bad thing to look forward to. I should start planning my trip...

The crows I started to feed are actually actively following me—and I'm waiting for a full-on murder of crows to be at my back whenever I walk my dog, George. I want the sky to be black and for people to fear me as they walk my path, right after saying how cute my dog is. All I need is two pocketfuls of walnuts to toss along the way. Like Hansel and Gretel, but I'm not leading them to a furnace. And I'm also not lost. So, not at all like Hansel and Gretel. More like crazy lady feeding crows, hoping for friendship in return and nothing more. That's more better.

My dreams have been extremely active lately—and I'm just waiting to

see if I follow through with any of the death threats I've been giving to someone named "Emily" in my sleep. I also want to make sure I've figured out that threatening to punch them is not the same as kicking my leg out of bed. Gotta get that hand-eye coordination down before I go take care of Emily. But when and if it happens, you better know I'll go down with a fight—and eyes closed because I'll probably also be sleep-walking. Anyway, please watch the news for anything that sounds vaguely familiar to this, because I might need some bail money—my dog isn't famous yet, and no one has decided to give me money just because.

I made my dog a TikTok—as I had mentioned above—and I really want to see if I can get him famous by his 10th birthday, this September. Really no good reason, other than I think the videos I post of my dog are more entertaining to watch than 87% of the crap out there. I saw a grandma state her 'red flags' on Instagram, and it had over 1.2 million views, and I don't understand why. Is it because she's old and figured out how to finally be humorous on camera? If so, Jesus, do I have to wait until I'm 85 and still filming to be considered worthy of that many views? Honestly, I don't even care. Humanity's brains have been slowly shrinking since they plateaued some time last year, er...maybe it was 70,000 years ago. I don't remember—

time is pointless, as are most people's opinions and brains.

So yeah, these are just five reasons why I'm going to keep trucking along



(Koala brain—future human brain?)

this month. Why I'll have a reason to wake up and get out of bed in the morning: I'll rub my eyes, look at my phone updates to see if anyone has converted to being a pig-nosed fish, see if my dog is famous yet, and maybe...just maybe, see that I'm a wanted criminal for that whole "Emily" thing.

Hannah One Cup can be found drinking her cares away at Joe's, taking videos of her dog to make you people go "aw-www" (find George on TikTok: @space.armenian), and complaining that her food isn't garlicky enough. She needs to remove the blood from her clothes that she mysteriously found this morning. I guess she can also be found on Facebook, by her name, or sleeping in bed. She is also a firm believer in #mental-healthawareness. Hashtag. Hashtag.

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George the boxer & Hannah One Cup's profile. Make George famous by his 10th bday



THE GHOST OF ORPHEUS: LUST AND OTHER SINS

by *Elise Fontaine*

As I scribble these words, I imagine what it would feel like to be in the arms of Orpheus again. I wonder if he's half-rotted in Hades. Would his flesh peel off in chunks as we embrace? Would I sip rancid puss in our kiss? He's dead, after all.

Regardless, we'll find each other again. We can't help it. We're magnetic beyond the constraints of worlds. Truly, the connection I had with Orpheus was stronger than anything I've ever experienced in my life. Even though he's deceased, the link still feels more intense than any other I've had with another human.

Because unconditional love and connection is greater than superficial, officious transaction, says every stoic part of me when a toady attempts to touch me with their wallet.

Everyone tells me I need to find a brand new lover, like that Dead or Alive song. When I ask them what's the point of dating, when I'm waiting to find out if necromancy is a valuable science, they usually back off.

Despite my silliness, the harrowing sorrow of Orpheus catapulted from hell to here, causing my bones to ache in empathy.

"Save your apologies for when you see me," I'd say to him if I could.

"And aside from my emotional missing you, I want your insides to melt at the thought of me," he says to my mind.

Little does he know, they do all the time. Gushing and gooey, each cell plots how to transform the physiological response to thoughts of him into a reality of being with him again.

"I'm selfishly glad you still think about us. Nothing's worse than memories unremembered," I say to him, but maybe to myself, wishing he could hear me as I squeeze a mountain of pillows on my daybed. Nothing says celibacy like

a daybed. Not that I ever bring anyone home.

Because unconditional love and connection is greater than superficial, officious transaction, says every stoic part of me when a toady attempts to touch me with their wallet.

Orpheus was never materialistic like that, and neither was I, but we attracted the insipid and cruel. We deserved better but didn't really believe it—I don't think.

By the way, if Orpheus *could* hear me, I'd plead with him that we cannot be in a constant state of in between. It's time for our reunion and the sexiest of whimpering shambles. We've suffered far too long, coexisting as distant pairs in incessant longing. But that's just our fervent electricity, without bodies to exchange the current going all haywire in me.

I'm beginning to think it's time to start letting him go. I can already feel him dancing in the light, beyond galaxies, but still within earshot.

One day, I'll break free from this matter. When I do, Orpheus, I need you to be ready for me because it'll be a quantum marvel when I launch from Earth to wherever you are. My soul glides down your remorse, and we embrace in a bed of starlight. Hope you're not too tired when I arrive, my love. Picture this: I'm outside your door wearing only a trench coat and time travel. The bangles on my wrist resemble Saturn's vanishing rings—ephemeral markers of the times we were together.

"Fuck me, please, I want more of you to make up for a lifetime without feeling you," I say, as I lower myself onto his erect regrets. Bouncing through each missed opportunity. Honey covered and swollen with the desire for realness.

"Yes, please bite my nipple just a little," I say, so I know it's not just another dream.

Orpheus, can we find a way to reconcile the loss of each other? Because it's

what we need. The only emollient that occurs to me is to bleed my lamentation onto these pages until I'm all cried out, or the heart stops beating altogether, whichever comes first. I hope it's the former because dying of a broken heart sounds utterly miserable and too tragic, even for a poet.

Orpheus, be quiescent if you dare; we both know our magnetism pulsates beyond space and time. It's kind of driving me a little batty if I'm honest.

So at night, when I should be asleep, I cut up our printed messages and weave them into our story. It has officially been a tsunami of release and healing—a mess of ink and stain.

"I want to drink you up," we'd say to each other. It's been too long, and I need as much as I can get, so send me love letters in seraphic dreams, my dear Orpheus.

"Just surrender to my pussy as we rock," I'll say when you haunt me next, your head buried in my thighs, our eyes glinting sparks of lust and love, emitting swathes of light, we circulate on a cloud of sublime extasis.



I want you now more than ever, but you've gone to somewhere unknowable.

Have you ever had a crush on a dead guy? I mean, one you knew when he was alive, of course. If you haven't, don't. Mourning for the dead is normal; wishing them back between your legs is delusional.

Fantasy and prose poetry offer solace, but the ghost of Orpheus still makes a mess of me.

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Diary of a Pet Fiend

Memoirs of a Veterinary Assistant (Part 1)

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE



Many, many moons ago (20 years!), when the Earth was still young, I had the opportunity to function as an assistant at a veterinary hospital in Washington state. I'd been hired as a receptionist, but the line became foggier and foggier as months turned into years. Within the first week of being hired, I knew I would have to keep a journal of the absolute madness I had become a part of—so, I did. I would write daily, recording every idiotic decision made by inept owners, every unwisely ingested sock or chocolate bar, every Kamikaze cat, and every curiously amicable turkey vulture (to be fair, there was only one of those).

Some salient information: Firstly, there were three vets, one of whom specialized in birds and exotics. Secondly, I had started there with no experience other than having grown up with *too many cats* (between 7-13 at any given point, so yes...too many). Probably why I approached these situations with such amazement—I hadn't become jaded to it all. Lastly, the vet who specialized in birds and exotics did a fair amount of pro-bono wildlife rescue.

Here are some notable entries from said journal, modified only slightly for spelling, grammar, anonymity, etc.

Apr. 25

Today someone *injected* their cat

with topical flea medicine. This spectacularly moronic blunder was made by a lady who had a whole mob of cats and was trying to be frugal by buying large, dog-sized flea medicine (as per ml it's cheaper this way, apparently), draw it into a syringe, *remove the needle*, then distribute it amongst her feline pack. Since she had neglected arguably the most important step, when ol' Socks inevitably objected to cold, wet gunk being put on his neck, he ended up being stabbed with the needle instead. He got a small measure (less than a cc) of the pesticide injected in him thusly but was extremely fortunate in that the only side effect he ended up exhibiting was a nightmarishly grotesque case of excess salivation, and he suffered no long-term ill effect. I thought it was funny to put "rabies" on the kennel cage label, but sadly the doctor disagreed. Narrowly avoided being put on diarrhea duty.



Apr. 27

Today a woman walked into the office with a cardboard box, which she

handed to me rather brusquely while offering the following explanation:

"Seagull"

"Excuse me?" I asked, rather gingerly trying to prevent the contents of the box from jolting around so much.

"Seagull," she repeated and left hurriedly.

I was, and remain, nonplussed.

Apr. 30

Things I wish I could respond with #73:

"I don't want my cat to receive pain medication during his neuter. If I gave birth without any, I don't see why he needs any."

"Look, lady, just this one conversation with you, and I needed four ibuprofens. If it were up to me, I'd give that cat enough morphine to open a goddamned opium den, just to make up for having to live with someone as horrible as you."

May 1

Our hospital shares its suite with another vet, who specializes in small mammal eye surgery. Today, I met one of their very special clients, an incredibly sweet cat born without eyelids. The doc had created/grafted new ones for him, and he was simply back for a check-up. Though he remains rather funny-looking, he's in good health.

His name, unironically, was Blinky.



May 3

Today one of the vet techs brought in her resident corvid, Frankie the crow. He'd had a brother, Johnny (of course), who'd sadly passed away recently. Frankie had been rather despondent, so A (the tech) opted to just tote him around with her. He has a degenerative muscle disease, a poorly healed broken wing (so he cannot fly), and is missing an eye—but for all that, he's



quite an active chap. His favorite pas-time is apparently Tai-Bo, which he mirrors his mistress (or anyone) doing with astonishing accuracy. I got the opportunity to hand feed him, which was both exhilarating and terrifying. That tiny dinosaur looked at me, and I swear if he was big enough, he'd have just eaten me whole, with nary a second thought.

Side note: I learned there is a product made specifically to discourage dogs from eating poop. The fact that this is necessary is just...there has never been a day that I have less wanted a pet dog.

May 7

Angus, the morbidly obese dog, was in today to have his massive lipoma (fat tumor) removed. Before its excision, it looked like nothing so much as a massive goiter, so I'm sure it will be a great relief to be rid of. The operating team had left it (the tumor), a 4-lb blob of tissue, sitting out in a large, nondescript, blue plastic bucket. When poor, unsuspecting me walked into the treatment area, I was quite taken aback by the sight. I did notice, though, that there were little quart marks on the side of the bucket, and this tumor in a bucket was almost precisely at "1." I wish I could say I expect never to see such a ghastly thing again, but I know that is the antithesis of truth.

May 8

Fed a barn owl today.

It was rather gruesome to watch this elegant, mighty creature hork down roughly dismembered, thawed mouse hunks like some kind of feathery shark, yet somehow it made me feel rather motherly to hold them out to him via tongs. He made this funny clicking noise and turned his head alarmingly when I tried to imitate his sounds. I couldn't tell if he thought I was annoying or just an idiot.

Also, we are hosting a seagull who's got the charming habit of bashing his head relentlessly against the walls of his small enclosure—apparently enraged at his inability to fully extend his wings. I told him to cut it out as I passed, but he just screamed and thumped some more.



May 12

Well, this is something new. This afternoon, we had a bald eagle come in. Someone had shot him with a BB gun, and he was covered in blood. He also has a terrible case of mites. I feel like there is some kind of analogy to be made here about the state of our nation, but I'll leave that for the philosophers.

May 14

There's a woodpecker periodically thumping on the sides of his wood-ed (who's bright idea was that?) cage (thumpathumpathump), a cockatoo who's picked up an empty water bottle and is repeatedly running it against the bars of his enclosure (thwackalackalacka), a cat named "Buzz" (waking up from having his troublepuffs removed) that's joined the song (MROWRRRRR), and of course, a whole chorus of dogs from the back room. Everything from the wee ankle-biters (yipypip) to the baleful hounds who feel they've been abandoned forever (hooooooooooooo). It's like if Stomp was all transformed into pets. Anyway, it's definitely the perfect time for a staff meeting.

Jun. 14

Angry Moluccan cockatoo ≈ rabid, frenetic monkey

Jun. 15

In my hiatus from writing this last

month, I neglected to recount a curious tale, which I will do so now, as it's so wonderful I don't want to forget it. Dr. B had randomly happened across three baby Canada geese alone on the road. They appeared lost and distressed, so she merrily piled them into her car and dragged them into the clinic to ensure their well-being.

Dr. B is worth commenting on.

As a woman of extremely slight stature (4'11" on a good day, maybe 95 lbs soaking wet), her diminutive exterior belies an intense and ferocious interior. Full of power and willfulness, spit and vinegar, she can come across as brusque or even rude, though one could never doubt her skill or devotion to her craft. She tends to inspire either enormous respect or seething resentment in people—I find myself (mostly) in the former category, though it will always be tinged with humor after witnessing the events that transpired around these birds.

She'd let the three goslings out to wander independently in the treatment area, as their cage was being cleaned—and I imagine—to give them a bit of exercise.

After their cage had been scrubbed and sterilized, she was trying to lure them back—advertising the amenities of soft towels, a large container of fresh water, and so on. They showed no inclination to return, though, so Dr. B was trying to herd them towards the kennel, suggestively waving a handful of spinach, alluringly wafting it near them to absolutely no avail. I was just leaving the room and heading home for the night, and the last thing I heard before I shut the door behind me was a long string of creative expletives and

"WHO WANTS SOME SPINACH, GODDAMNIT?!"

This will be etched in my mind forever.

This is all I've room for this month, but tune in next time for more of my 20-year anniversary celebration of not getting my hand ripped off by an angry Belgian Mastiff.

Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle is an artist, writer, and professional weirdo. She can be found on Facebook as Esmeralda Marina, MeWe by name, or Insta @esmeraldasilentcitadel.

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