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2023

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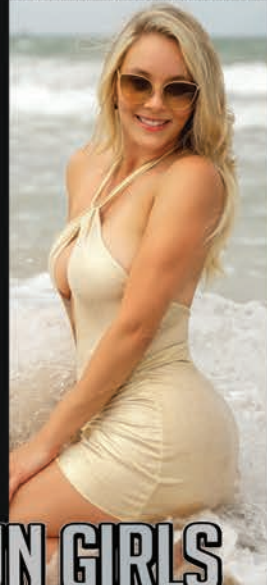
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**MISS EXOTIC OREGON  
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Telephone: 503.241.4317

Fax: 503.914.0439

Email: info@xmag.com

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Publisher  
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General Manager  
Bryan A. Bybee

Editor  
Barnaby Bandini

Copy Editor  
Adam J. Burt

Production Manager  
Shawna Stephens

Graphic Design  
VIDA Creative

Contributing Photographers  
HYPNOX

Advertising  
Adam J. Burt  
(503) 804-4479

Distribution  
Enrico Carrisco • Adam J. Burt

Contributors  
Blazer Sparrow  
Bryan A. Bybee  
Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle  
Hannah One Cup  
Wombstretcha the Magnificent

Cover Photography  
HYPNOX

Cover Model  
Nia  
Miss Exotic Oregon 2023

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Yes, folks, it's a brand new year, and I'd like to start it by showing my gratitude for our writers. If you're waiting for the drumroll and symbol crash of sarcasm, you'll be disappointed because I'm truly expressing my unfeigned appreciation and admiration.

That said, this issue marks a milestone for our very own Blazer Sparrow—his five-year anniversary! That's almost 60 different masterpieces from him (I say almost because there were a few months he never sent us a submission). One was when he went on a three-week CBD gummy binger through the rough streets of Sellwood. Then, there was the time he thought he could start a local Witch House band, but when the Space Room refused to book him, his dreams were shattered. Notwithstanding, we still love you, Blazer!

While we're at it, we'd like to recognize the rest of our writers! Hannah One Cup has been with us for over two years, Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle for over four years, and Wombstretcha...well...over ten years of tommyrot and shenanigans! A big thanks to all of you—we appreciate you!

**MISS EXOTIC 2023**

Once again, our industry's biggest night did not disappoint. The Finals of *Miss Exotic Oregon 2023* was filled with amazing performances, and the bar continues to be raised year after year!

A special congratulations goes to *Miss Exotic Oregon 2023*, Nia, representing Golden Dragon. Way to go, glamour-puss—you slayed it!

Be sure to check out our full coverage of The Finals, starting on page 34, with a special interview with Nia on page 36.

Happy New Year, and here's to an amazing 2023!

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

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**FRI 06 – THE LOUNGE  
PIRATE'S OF THE CARIBOOTY (ROUND 1)**

**SAT 07 – DREAM ON SALOON  
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY (ROUND 2)**

**SUN 08 – DANTES  
SINFERNO CABARET**

**SAT 14 – THE VENUE  
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY (ROUND 3)**

**SUN 15 – DANTES  
SINFERNO CABARET**

**FRI 20 – CLUB DETOUR  
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY (ROUND 4)**

**SAT 21 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE  
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY (ROUND 5)**

**SAT 21 – STARS CABARET (SALEM)  
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**SAT 21 – LUCKY DEVIL  
PIXIE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**SAT 21 – HAWTHORNE STRIP  
MEADOW'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**SUN 22 – DANTES  
SINFERNO CABARET**

**SAT 28 – GUILTY PLEASURES  
PIRATES OF THE CARIBOOTY (FINALS)**

**SAT 28 – DEVILS POINT  
AXEL'S BIRTHDAY BASH**

**SUN 29 – DANTES  
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**DEVILS POINT – 3PM-6PM**

**DV8 – NOON-3PM**

**LUCKY DEVIL – 3PM-6PM**

# Tiny Venues Mean “Bigger” Crowds

By Blazer Sparrow

Does anyone remember The Tardis Room? On Killingsworth? I don't mind talking shit 'cause it's permanently closed. The Tardis Room was never the name of an actual establishment, it was the name of a room *in* an establishment called The Fish And Chip Shop—literally, a room whose square footage was mostly occupied by large, wooden tables. There was an actual raised stage, but it took up half the room. Despite the neat, sci-fi vibe and good food, the space didn't really scream “live music spot” at first glance. Maybe for a slam poetry evening or a sad-boy, acoustic singer-songwriter showcase, but nothing much bigger and louder than that. Moreso, such a small, intimate space with a deep fryer sizzling in the next room didn't seem like it warranted a salaried booker who lived in another state—putting together ten-band bills and sending them each a multi-page confirmation email for shows.



I'm not just picking on The Tardis Room (Rest In Power). This is a trend I've noticed in Portland—taking cramped, awkwardly small spaces and rebranding them as a trendy, live music space. More of an “art” space? Bookstores are one of the oddest choices since most folks usually associate those spots with peace and quiet. One of my all-time favorite “why the fuck is this a venue?” spots was the Burgerville on Hawthorne. Woe to the stumbling drunks who wandered in on a Friday night just to satiate their strikeout drunchies.

If you squint, it makes sense. One of the biggest bums of the local music scene

is people not showing up. If you can't get more people to come, the next best thing is to make the space smaller so the venue “looks” packed. Is this the NPR tiny desk concerts' fault? If you're cultivating an “intimate” vibe, the drumset that's pressing up against the front row's noses doesn't exactly facilitate that.

I used to think that Portland's biggest issue was too many bands, but maybe the real problem is too many venues. The demand is *not* there since ill-attended local shows have become a meme at this point. Is this yet another example of the criminally under-regulated free market allowing for a hyper saturation of products we don't need, simply because everyone wants to be a “small business owner?” Maybe. I mean, who *really* has a small pile of money and means and says, “You know what this town reeeeeally needs is another small, quirky music venue.” Yes, I get it; the idea of starting a band there is equally unnecessary. Or doing anything artistic. See, the cat who opened up the semi-legal psychedelic mushroom shop (Rest In Power). *Now there's a unique, new idea for an untapped market!*

But I'm not here to solve problems; I'm here to make jokes—edgelords who go against trends just because, are the definition of cringe. We can't stop cute little capitalists from wanting their wafer-thin sliver of the ever-shrinking pie. So here are some ideas for Portland's next “why the fuck is this a venue” venue.



Mill Ends Park

You've heard of music in the park. What about music in the tiniest park in the world!? Feasibility be damned. Since every-

thing in the arts has just devolved into an attention-grabbing gimmick, might as well go for broke. The arbitrary-to-the-point-of-pointlessness of having a “word's smallest park” should be taken to task as to whether or not it can actually be considered a park. In order for it to be considered a park and not just a circle of dirt, you have to be able to do some classic park thing “in” said park. Whether it's Shakespeare, a playground, or a mediocre cover band, I will leave it to ambitious, trendy promoters to figure out how to do this. Maybe every band member has a foot in the circle? A phone displaying said band placed against the little tree in there? I dunno. It's a stupid idea for a stupid park.

## Literally Any Strip Club (Preferably a Small One)

Similarly to how many tiny little bars think they can just scale down the experience of a live band to a smaller setting, I am confident that one of the smaller and less successful strip club owners is one line of cocaine away from trying to do the Dante's thing, but on a smaller scale. Now, Dante's works as a venue cause it has A) a large stage and B) a removable pole. Also, all the proper staffing and equipment to host live music. Still, I imagine some desperate or delusional club owner could look at their tiny corner stage of their little flesh house past 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and just figure, “Look, that's a stage. It'll work.” It won't, especially if they can't move the pole. But I'm here for it, and I'll go see a show there 'cause I'm all for watching dumpster fires.

## Departure (On Top of The Nines)

Someone once told me you could see shows at Pioneer Square from the outdoor patio of Departure, the swanky bar atop The Nines—kitty-corner from said square. You can't. You're way too high up, and all the reverberation amongst the tall buildings just gives you the vague impression that some noise is being made down there. However, the time I was stupid enough to try this, I realized that maybe Departure could capitalize on the nice view of the city with a loud



rock band to interrupt patrons' expensive cocktails. I've seen bands in more inappropriate spaces.



**Yamhill Pub**

Possibly the only serious entry in this listicle. Yamhill Pub is perhaps the divey-est bar in Portland, in the traditional sense of the word. There are definitely dirtier bars, more local bars, etc. But if you look up "dive bar" in a normie dictionary, you'll see a picture of Yamhill Pub. At one point, their restroom not only had no lock on the door, but they didn't even have a toilet. Just a hole in the ground that I assume led to some sort of sewer system. There is literally no place to put a band in this bar, and that's why I absolutely want to see it happen. Hell, they can just put the band in the bathroom. Just rip off the "door" and tear the toilet out again. Put a plank down. Make this the place where touring crust punk bands play in Portland. Don't just play in the basement of some punk squat. Play at Downtown Portland's most iconic dive bar instead! A PA System? Bah! That's for rich posers! Use this megaphone instead!

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# Parenthood; a Cautionary Tale

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE

Some of you have or will end up with, biological progeny. Like it or not, this is a fact. Some look forward to it as their greatest potential joy, and some dread the prospect more than bubonic plague. Nature is not kind to parents in many ways; it shortens lifespans, drains resources, and requires years of labor—which is often repaid with a “Fuck you, I’ll join a suicide cult if I want to!”

Yes, it may be written into our DNA to reproduce, but free will and sentience have allowed some of us to say “Oh, *hell naw*” to parenthood. Other animals don’t have the option to use prophylactics or abortifacients—Sally the Sturgeon’s only recourse is to find a fisherman who will sell her salty roe for an exorbitant fee and leave her corpse forgotten.

With that in mind, let us examine some of the shittier parental experiences to be had in the world of fauna.

## The Octopus

There’s a lot to be said for being an octopus. You can pick Davey Jones’ locker, clean your glasses, masturbate, catch a crab mid-crawl, use the remote, smoke a blunt, hold a beer, and still have a tentacle left to pick your nose (though you wouldn’t have a nose or most of this stuff, but you get the idea) at the same damn time. You can fit through just about any aperture that’s larger than your beak, so,



*Zoidberg noises*

like, squirming through a glory hole to give a heart attack to any would-be visitors would be on the table, if you felt like it. You can shapeshift and color change and all kinds of cool shit. What you can’t do is live very long. If you’re a male octopus, you fuck, you die. If

you’re a chicktopus, you mate, lovingly care for your brood of eggs, and die, just as they’re about to hatch. If you’re lucky, you may live long enough to see one of the ungrateful brats swim off into the unknown.

## Emperor Penguins

You’d think living in Antarctica would be shit enough, that Mother Nature would maybe ease up in some compensatory way, but nope. That nasty bitch just can’t let anyone have fun. Emperor penguin males carefully tend to the egg their female counterparts laid over a period of two months, in temperatures as low as -40 degrees Celsius (-104 degrees Fahrenheit), without eating *once*. Mom is busy carousing around, fattening up, and getting ready to share her slice of familial misery. By the time she gets back to her dude, he weighs half as much as he did when she left. At this point, the male penguins go off, presumably to Olive Garden or something, because of endless pasta and breadsticks, amiright?

## Crab Spiders

In what may be an attempt to placate a horrific practice, crab spiders (*Diaea ergandros*) offer their spiderlings unfertilized eggs (called “nurse eggs”) to eat, but when these are inevitably not enough, the ravenous young slowly consume their own mama. Over a period of weeks, they gnaw and pick away at her until she dies, and probably some more after that, too. It’s known as matrophagy (the act of eating one’s mom) and is found in a few species, including scorpions, nematode worms, and some spiders, but this one stands out as truly grotesque.



*The joys of motherhood*

## Koalas

To be fair, this one sucks for everyone, but you don’t remember what happens when you’re a baby, so fuck ‘em—I pity the moms here. These smooth-brained dipshits have decided to subsist entirely on eucalyptus, which, if you don’t know, is fucking poisonous. It’s even poison to koalas, at least at first. So, to acclimate their bebe’s digestive system to this toxin, they have to feed their babies *their own poop*. Think of a nightmare version of Westley in the Princess Bride, acclimating himself to poison. As an added bonus, they feed their babies poop from other koalas as well, for variety, I guess?



*I mean... I know a good dermatologist if you need one*

## Surinam Toad

In what may be the *worst* cause of tryphobia to exist, the Surinam toad also wins the award for “ickiest birthing process ever.” During their bizarre, acrobatic mating ritual, the toad couple manages to somehow get all the fertilized eggs strapped onto mom’s dorsal epidermis. Over the next day or so, the eggs slowly sink into (yes, into) her skin. Think of, like, the nopiest backpack imaginable. Once in place, the eggs develop, hatch into tadpoles, and eventually develop into toadlets—all inside their grotesque little pods. Finally, after 12-20 weeks, the baby Surinam toads emerge from their mother’s flesh (which can’t feel good—though it’s probably better than having wads of squirming babies living under your skin). Eventually, the mother toad sloughs off the extra skin that the babies developed in, at which point she can start the repulsive process all over again... Oh. Sounds great.

## Mayflies

Mayflies are here for a good time, not a long time. With lives as brief as a day or two, they're basically just here for long enough to participate in a big, wild orgy. Once the pipe has been laid, so to speak, the mother mayflies kick around long enough to lay their eggs—the males may drop dead even sooner than that, though, as they pretty much did what they were there to do. Their lives as larvae are somewhat more placid, eating algae and chillin', but once they emerge as adults, the party is *on*. In fact, they live such short lives after reaching maturity that in their final form, they don't even have *any mouths at all*. Guess no cocktails at the sex party. Lame!

## Caecilian

More matrifagy. It sure looks like a worm, but nope, these limbless amphibians are actually vertebrates who thought worms were the coolest fucking things, and then, like, the very next day, started copying the way they dress and act and everything. Like, guh, get your own personality or whatever. One thing that makes being a caecilian significantly suckier though, is their cycle of parenthood. These creatures are viviparous, which means the eggs hatch inside the body of the animals. While they're up in there, the babies scrape off the lining of the oviduct (kinda like a fallopian tube) with their tiny little teeth. In another species of caecilian, the babies eat hunks of the body of their mother after being born for nourishment. Fucking yikes. The flesh does grow back there, but this feels like cold comfort because it just means you might have to go through that again.



*Being a worm but on hard mode*

So, there are some very good reasons that "parenting is hard" isn't a specifically human thing—in some cases, our own species' hardships as genetic Petri dishes are severely overshadowed. Either way, don't forget to bring a rubber next time you think you might get lucky, 'cause even if we don't get consumed by our young, babies are loud, and child support is expensive. Also, you should probably call your mother and thank her at some point.

*Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle is a proud parent of the future dictator of Earth and an occasional writer. She can be found on Instagram @esmeraldasilentcitadel and Facebook as Esmeralda Marina.*



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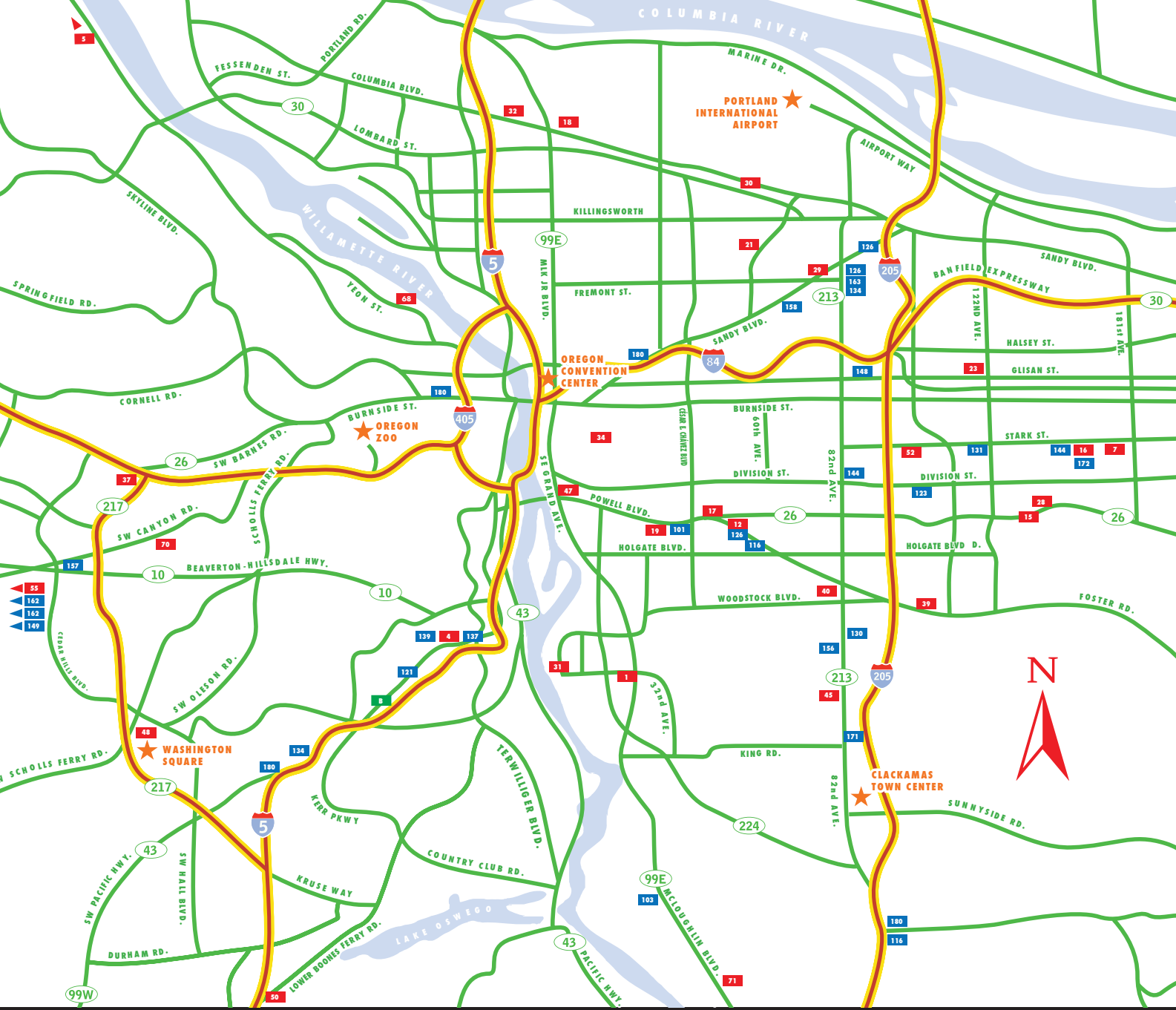


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# A Conversation With the Crown

## Miss Exotic Oregon 2023 - Mia

INTERVIEW BY BRYAN A. BYBEE  
PHOTOS BY HYPNOX

**First and foremost, congratulations! You absolutely killed it, and your theme was very unique! Why did you choose the theme you chose, and had you considered other choices?**

Thank you so much! I chose the boxing and Latin theme because I felt they were two things that truly represented me and my journey here in Portland. The boxing part was to show that I was here and ready to kick ass, despite any obstacles, and I just honestly thought it would be badass. When I was considering themes, I wanted to choose something that I was proud of. With it being my last competition, I wanted it to be authentically and unapologetically *ME*, regardless if I won or not. Growing up a first-generation Mexican-American and being from California, I've always been deeply immersed in my culture, and it's always been a huge part of me. I wanted to show my love and pride for my community and my roots, as well as reject the narrative that having the Portland alternative aesthetic is needed to be successful in the industry.

**Thinking of the time during your actual performance, what do you remember thinking about or feeling while on stage?**

I remember thinking that I was having a great time and loving the energy from the crowd. I remember looking over and seeing quick glimpses of my best friends and my sister cheering. It felt phenomenal, and since it was my last competition, I felt a very all-or-nothing energy toward it. I feel like I was just letting myself enjoy my performance and having fun doing what I love.

**Many people may be surprised to hear that you actually hopped a plane to Portland to perform twice, to qualify and compete in the finals. Why did you decide to join the pageant, despite the distance?**

It was kind of a spontaneous decision because, with the distance, school, and my

personal life, I didn't know if I'd have time to prepare different themes for two rounds of competition, let alone travel for it. But the competitive me wanted to try one last time at Dante's, and luckily it was around Thanksgiving, so I decided to just make a big trip out of it. I did the second to last qualifier round, so I could just stay for two consecutive weeks. I was able to qualify, dance some shifts, see my family in Seattle, and then, of course, compete. It all ended up working out with perfect timing, and I'm so glad I did it! Funny enough, I didn't think it through on taking the trophy on the plane—LOL—but it's in the best of hands! It's currently at my sister's house in Seattle!

**Describe your other experiences competing in our events and how they shaped your preparations for Miss Exotic Oregon 2023.**

I've always (generally) had a great time competing, but I'd felt like I kept falling just a little short. When I first began competing, I didn't realize the extent of creativity the judges and the crowd expected, so I didn't do themes for a while. When I placed second in *Pirates of the Caribooty* in 2019—without a theme—I realized I needed to up my game and get creative. This year, I began taking different things into account, such as picking the right music, inviting friends to support me, making my performances more interactive, using props, etc. My experiences helped me prepare a well-rounded performance that I could enjoy for myself while also aiming to check those boxes and create a show I was proud of. I'm very competitive with myself, so I wanted to give it 100% and walk off the stage confident that I didn't fall short of my own expectations—even if I didn't win.

**What advice would you offer to other performers who are looking to win it all at an Exotic event?**

Be unique and choose your strongest skills to showcase. Let your performance represent





you as a performer and what your art means to you. It doesn't have to be anything complex or deep, but making it your own, as well as having a signature style, makes you stand out and makes it exciting. We can connect with each other so well through art, so by being unique in your own way, people will feel you and connect with you through it. Also, focus on the little things to avoid losing the crowd, such as smiling, choosing familiar music, interacting with the judges, showing a variety of skills, and, most importantly, genuinely having fun with it. People can tell whether a performer is having fun or not, so just let yourself enjoy what you do, and trust in your abilities!

**If you could travel back in time and talk to baby stripper Nia, what would you tell her?**

I would tell her never to be afraid of being extra or loud about her skills because there are so many people that support her and are rooting for her. And that being confident sometimes intimidates people or can be labeled as "cocky," but who cares? Because it inspires even *more* people, and there's nothing wrong with believing in yourself! I would tell her to keep going hard, take up space, and pursue things she wants to do in this industry, even if they sometimes seem far-fetched.

**What if our readers are interested in seeing you perform? Do you plan on making any special P-Town appearances? If so, where can they catch you on shift? Drop your social media, too!**

I don't think I'll be performing in

Portland in the future (besides my step-down performance next year), but I'll probably be back sometime to visit. When I visit, they can catch me on shift at Golden Dragon, and they can also find me on Instagram (@niagiselle\_). ☺

**Switching gears for a moment, tell us all about some of your future aspirations, industry-related or otherwise...**

I'm currently a biology major in college, studying to be a P.A. In the meantime, I plan to dance until I no longer enjoy it—which I don't see happening anytime soon! Once I get more settled in L.A., I'll be teaching pole for PYT Fitness locally, as well as traveling to teach workshops, and if I have extra time, I do want to focus on pole bookings for events and artists too. I also plan on travel dancing in major cities from my stripper bucket list, as well as property acquisition in the near future.

**Lastly, what consumes your time when you're not slaying it on the pole or otherwise kicking ass in the industry?**

Aw, thank you! I'm very extroverted, so I spend a lot of time going out with my friends—whether it's brunch, traveling, clubbing, girls' night in, axe-throwing, concerts, hiking, etc. I also love spending time with my family, and I hang out with my sisters a lot! I have a few different hobbies like makeup, sewing clothes, going to the dance studio, making resin art, working out, etc. I also have a lot of plants and an energetic little cat at home that I love!

XOXO Nia





## THINGS THAT HAPPENED IN MY LAST MONTH AND HOW YOU CAN STOP BEING A FAILURE

by Hannah One Cup

I enjoy updating you all on what occurred to me the previous month of you having your hands on this magazine article; it gives me a chance to let you all know what kind of person I am, which will then encapsulate most of the reasons I write what I do. I also really enjoy telling people how they could better their lives by listening to some of my sage advice. “Do as I say, not as I do” sort of thing—which is what brings us to this article at hand. I’d like to tell you all what happened and what I’ve learned this past month, and also give you some tips on how to stop being such a failure, because we all know you probably didn’t win the lottery, which doesn’t make you a winner, now, does it?

1. My dad fractured his femur—which caused me to stay in Roseburg for roughly two weeks with my dog, Bob, while I assisted in my father’s annoyance by telling him what to do. I learned that trying to tell a parent what to do, whether or not it’s actual medical advice, should not be attempted. It’s best to just let them break their leg again rather than have them give you the silent treatment for two weeks, remain angry, and with a healed leg.

2. My partner and I moved into our new place—it’s a duplex on the upper story of an old Victorian house. Our downstairs neighbor is from California, and no, I do not remember their name. I only remember a pair of nerdy glasses being pushed up their nose while they tried shaking my hand with the other while I was putting away trash. I learned that many from California do not know about gravity or that leaves actually fall from trees and aren’t magically cleaned up by the leaf fairy. Some from California may remain in this blissful ignorance of fall beauty not requiring clean up...until they meet me and I inform them otherwise. See? It’s fun telling people how to live their lives sometimes!

3. I fractured my ankle—and yeah, I don’t even know what happened here. And no, I don’t know why there had to be a subsequent fracture of my own right after my dad’s fracture—all in one

month. I just wanted to go down the stairs! I learned that it takes a lot of arm muscle to propel your body up the stairs when you aren’t able to use your ankle and are instead crab-walking like a lunatic. I also learned that you can strain your shoulder doing this too much or improperly. The more ya’ know, I suppose. I also learned how to stare out the window more and practice looking morose to those around me (practice...ha). I also learned that when you are a younger person walking with a limp and a cane, people tend to move away from you. Take that information as you wish, but I plan on keeping this cane around for a bit...



4. I learned about Korean Jesus—and it’s changed my opinion on what the person you’re worshipping should look like. I’m just saying if your satanic overlord isn’t cutting it for you, physique-wise, and you aren’t certain they can actually hold up their end of the bargain—what with granting you wishes and beating up bad guys and such—come to the church of Korean Jesus, or I guess commonly called “New Heaven and New Earth”! You might not agree with everything discussed here or understand reasons for some things, but you can be assured in the knowledge that this Jesus knows a thing or two about body fitness, can probably carry a large amount of wood on his own, and be there to kick some non-believer ass.

Okay, now that we covered the few things that happened to me and what I learned from them this month, let’s get into how you can be a better person than this and stop failing miserably at things you are doing wrong.

1. Stop trying to control every situation you find yourself in when you’re invited to go have a good time. We all know that “being invited” to anything is usually not fun, let alone does it breed a good time. You’d rather just have had the thing happen without needing to plan in advance for it. Well, too bad. Sally’s having a WWE Party under the Burnside Bridge, and she asked you to bring the deviled eggs. Sure, this sounds questionable—at best—for an event, but just go with it. You’ll cause yourself fewer headaches in the long run if you just stop asking questions. Maybe consider your friendship with a person like Sally, also.

2. When you have the option between Taco Bell and that wonderful, older Hispanic family’s restaurant that is just across the street, *do not choose Taco Bell*. First, we all know what happens 28 minutes after eating Taco Bell, and second, giving family-owned businesses your patronage ends up being good for you short and long term because they generally tend to remember repeat customers (and we all know you’re a repeat customer of Taco Bell). They tend to give you an extra taco or bag of freshly made chips sometimes because you’re paying for their rent, and they don’t want the cash cow to stop flowing from your greasy, less failure-ridden pockets.

3. *Do not* put a raw egg in your bowl of hot Top Ramen, and expect the egg to magically turn into a restaurant-style egg. You’re doing two things wrong here: (1) you’re eating Top Ramen when the superior “at home” ramen-like-substance is obviously Chapagetti, and (2) you thought logic wouldn’t be necessary when making instant noodles (it usually isn’t), and thought the egg would perform magic. If you have to have an egg in your instant ramen, at least look up how to do it, or go buy some real ramen from a restaurant. It’s not that much money and tends to be two meals’ worth of food.

4. Stop sharing Facebook articles with your boss on your work chats. Unless your boss is paying you to do vital research on what article taught you the most, based solely on the title. Sharing an article with the URL “says-magic-mushrooms-made-him-more-productive” is probably not something you should be bringing up to Mr. Manager. Like I said...unless you’re cool like that with your boss, and your job doesn’t require you to save lives. Mine does not, and I am cool like that, so I do. But that’s also probably why I’ve never received a promotion in three years. Who knows? Maybe they just don’t like my eyes. Don’t take this chance, be smart, and make them like you—always. That’s where the money comes from.

So there you have it...four truths about me and four truths for you on how to make your life better than it is, and maybe assist you in not failing so hard. I hope you enjoyed this and took down some notes. But, who are we kidding, you are nowhere near a pen and paper, and you have no idea how to use the notes app on your phone. Just take the magazine.

*Hannah One Cup can be found staring morosely at people while walking with a cane. Her ankle is healed. Thanks to KJ. Amen.*

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# THE MONTHLY COLUMN

BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

## PHOBIA PHACTOR: A GUIDE TO UNUSUAL FEARS

Everyone's afraid of something. Most things ordinary people are afraid of are easily understood and typically present a more-or-less justified threat to well-being or safety, like a fear of heights, spiders, flying, or gorillas who just did a pile of cocaine. These commonplace fears aren't the same as a proper phobia, though.

"What's the difference between regular fear and a phobia?" you may ask. Well, a phobia is *irrational*. It doesn't make sense, or even if it might, it affects the phobic person in a disproportional, drastic, life-affecting way. Most of us can muster up the courage to climb a tall ladder, squash a spider, get on a plane, or soothe a gorilla by playing the clarinet, even if these things unsettle us. Someone with a real phobia could not move past their fear at any cost—even if threatened.

The criteria that define a real, diagnosable phobia are as follows:

1. You must experience severe fear or anxiety about the condition or object.
2. You must have an immediate fear response, such as running away, screaming, or sobbing helplessly in the corner of an Arby's.
3. The fear you have must be excessive, as related to the actual risk factor.
4. Symptoms of your fear must last six months or longer.
5. Your fear must cause intense distress or dysfunction.
6. Your fear must not be better explained by another mental problem. No twofers.

Now that we have established what a phobia

is and how they affect people, let's go over a list of some rather unusual phobias I've come across in my research. This is not like the *Guinness Book of World Records*, where you can just get in there for doing something nobody else would have ever thought to do, like stick 100 clothespins on your face while smoking five cigars and singing *Ave Maria*. No, all the phobias on the list have indeed been diagnosed by actual mental health professionals on many occasions, even if some seem quite intensely specific or remarkably silly. Listed in no particular order...



**Alektrophobia – The fear of chickens**

Most phobias are caused by a triggering event, such as a bad experience in life which relates to their fear of that situation or object. Indeed, the notes I found on one reported case of this, a young woman was diagnosed after having a "terrifying childhood experience" with chickens. Whether or not 11 herbs and spices were involved, research does not record.

**Chiclephobia – The fear of chewing gum**

With this phobia, anxiety and panic happen when people think about chewing gum, though it may also involve seeing *other* people chewing gum or even seeing previously-chewed gum. I have to wonder what extreme



circumstance would precede such a fear, apart from maybe being a janitor at a grade school and having to clean under desks. No matter how you slice it, though, Hubba Bubba needs to be held accountable for its role in this culture of fear.



**Xanthophobia – The fear of the color yellow**

This is one that actually seems like it would seriously affect your quality of life were you to have it. It's easy enough to avoid gum or chickens, but yellow? Driving a car would be impossible; going outside, in general, would be an exercise in ridiculousness, and forget about getting a job feeding monkeys.

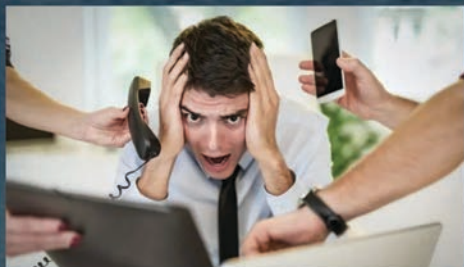


**Pedophobia – The fear of children**

Not discussed as often as its revolting coun-



terpart, pedophilia, since it seems more silly than vile. Pedophobia does indeed exist, though, and it is exceedingly rare. Recall, this is not just an “oh, I don’t like kids” thing...this would mean that they completely frighten you. Watching a grown man panic and flee a room full of toddlers in terror sounds like quite the sight, though.



**Ergophobia – The fear of work**

Ever had a bad job? I mean, a *really* bad job? How about a job that fucks with you so hard that the thought of ever toiling again makes you freak out and commit yourself to a life doing anything but? A truly awful job is the typical cause of ergophobia. That, or career burnout. Regardless, you’re not born being afraid to work, and this phobia is more common than most on this list but still relatively uncommon overall. However, taking a look at half the population of Portland, you wouldn’t think so.



**Pogonophobia – The fear of beards**

In the research I did on this one, I couldn’t find out if they had to be full beards or if mustaches, soul patches, and possibly even muttonchops would also fall under this phobic umbrella. Regardless, though, best to avoid ZZ Top shows, craft beer festivals, and the Pacific Northwest in general, if you have pogonophobia.



**Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia – The fear of long words**

No, I am, in fact, not joking. The Greek words for “fear of long words” do combine into one of the longest words, if not *the* longest word in the dictionary, edging out *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* by one letter. Why *that* is in the dictionary to begin with, I have no idea, but Julie Andrews has deep pockets, I suppose. That said, this word of words is more properly referred to in professional circles, when referred to at all, as *sesquipedalophobia*, which is still a bit of a doozy if you have a phobia of lengthy language. Imagine having this phobia but not being able to tell anyone what it’s called.



**Trypophobia – The fear of holes or clusters**

This one seems to be discussed quite frequently among internet communities, wherein those persons discuss how a series of small holes will unnerve them. This is a recent entry, the term only having been coined in 2005. It’s on this list despite online discussions and widespread knowledge, simply because...it’s not actually a phobia. No scientific body has recognized it as such, and being unsettled by clusters or holes doesn’t quite have the debilitating impact of a real phobia,

so this entry is a “the more you know” sort of thing. Therefore, if anyone you meet ever says they have trypophobia, you can feel free to tell them they’re full of shit. Clusters of shit.



**Phobophobia – The fear of...fear**

As FDR famously paraphrased from Thoreau, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” For the poor souls with phobophobia, this is their life. I’m not entirely sure what might cause someone to have this phobia, but a fear of fear (or of being afraid) seems somewhat redundant. I’m guessing they don’t tend to enjoy Halloween and probably don’t ride rollercoasters or watch horror movies. Seems to me that living your life in fear of fear would cause some kind of fear loop, where you’d just be upset and scared all the time. Case notes would seem to confirm that these are very anxious, constantly unhappy people. Generally, if you have such a condition, the treatment appears to be that they simply drug you up real good and say, “best of luck.”

Well, those are the cream of the phobic crop. If you or anyone you know displays symptoms of any of the above, seek the guidance of a professional drug dealer.

Don’t be afraid of life. Or chickens.

-Wombstretcha

*Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a gum chewer, clinical beard examiner, poultry fearsomeness evaluator, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe.com (yay!) and Facebook.com (boo!), as “Wombstretcha the Magnificent.”*

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