OH WOW IT'S THE OFFICIAL ZINEPAPER OF CAMP SATANIC DRUG THING HERE AT YOUTOPIA 2026

STAY SALTY

MADE WITHOUT ANY AI AND IT'S KINDA FUCKED UP THAT THIS IS A THING THAT NEEDS TO BE SAID

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

How are you, reader? I am fine.

So the big elephant in the room for this year is the whole AI thing so let's address it. Hello, elephant.

We still got the banner up top about no AI use in Stay Salty, and it's still true: everything you see here was made by a human. It's not just a "quality" thing (though it is that too) but also something about the process. Even if AI could do a great or even better job than us, I don't like the idea of this thing we're handing to you as our thoughts and experiences having come from software. That feels like lying to you.

But believe it or not despite that I don't really have strong feelings about AI, either pro or against. There's none in the newspaper, but flipside the code that was written to run the Pac-Them machine, the Playagotchi, and some of the Shower Karaoke stuff has AI assistance.

Why does one bother me and the other doesn't? Dunno. But I'm ok accepting that that's just how it is for me. Personal morals don't have to be easily explainable, even to oneself.

Should you use AI? I think it depends. Using it to double check your build plan and potentially find a safety improvement? Well, that sounds like a good thing. Using it to make your visuals or text? I don't like it, but do what you want, I'm not a cop. It does make me less interested in your thing though.

Or using it to auto-run your DJ set? This in particular I don't get, why even stand on-stage if you're going to do that? Let it shuffle and go dance or something. Whatever.

"Whatever" is kinda generally where it comes down for me. I get the argument that AI use is bad for the environment, but also the counterargument that this entire festival is bad for the environment. And yeah "No ethical consumption is possible under capitalism" and all that, but it doesn't also mean "so don't try to improve anything" either. No easy answers.

I do strongly think we shouldn't try to ban AI art at Youtopia though, even though I don't personally like AI art, because that sort of ban would be impossible to enforce. Yes sometimes AI use is obvious, but sometimes it's not, and I don't think a self-appointed anti-AI police roaming the event and inspecting every drawing would make things better.

Having said that, I'd rather we all voluntarily agree to stop the AI fliers in particular. Even if you think they're great please believe me that in 2 years they'll all look like that era when Photoshop came out and everyone went hard on the plugins for a few months. Though maybe in 20 years AI fliers will be retro-quaint. Who knows.

I suspect you disagree either one way or the other on some part of this, so we added a "Letter to the Editor" thing to our camp that will let you respond and we'll even consider printing your response next year. But you have to handwrite it.



Tourism being invented in 1830 by Jane Tourist (second from right) and her polycule

IN DEFENSE OF THE TOURIST

My fellow Youtopians, I rise in the defense of that most disliked and least contributing of the sort of person here: the tourist.

You've met them, you've had to help them, and you become annoyed at them after telling them it's not cool to cut through the private part of your camp. Why would they know any better? They're here primarily to party, which means they're always confused, always unprepared, and always dressed wrong both for vibe and temperature. Their favorite genre of music is "loud", their favorite strain of weed is "free", and their drink of choice is "yes", and they somehow expect everything will end up ok. So where is the upside to them, you ask?

The simplest argument for them is that they are potential future burners. They might be a tourist this year, but next year, or the year after, this person might figure themselves out and become a proper contributor. But you already know this. The basic concept of "Be nice to newbies even when they're annoying" is not something new to you that you're learning from this column.

I'm arguing here that they have value even before they become full contributors. In fact I want to celebrate the eternal tourist, or maybe the tourist qua tourist, to get all Latin on you. I argue these tourists are a key component of events like this and I argue these non-contributors accidentally provide an essential contribution to an event: they are the audience to the contributors' performances.

Picture the crowd at a magician's show: you might know everything there is to know about the stagecraft of magic and so you enjoy the performance for its skill, clever execution, and subtle personal touches of that magician, but tourists are the ones who gasp in shock and horror when the assistant is sawn in half. Here at Youtopia they are the people who are amazed you have a bar with free drinks, stunned there's music to dance to everywhere they turn, and seem, in general, just genuinely surprised they somehow found themselves at an event at all. They are that audience from the magic show.

Let's look at a more absurdist example. It's Youtopia on a Friday night. Every camp is throwing an event, and your camp is throwing a Disco Night. If it's all performers every camp would be throwing parties for themselves. It's specifically by giving someone a drink that your bar becomes a bar, otherwise it's just a house party for you and your friends, which while nice, is a different category of thing.

Tourists, in all their confused wonderment and glory, are the sprinkle of salt that makes the other flavors come through. Watching their amazement is a reminder that what's happening here is, in fact, amazing. I was going to say "a chance to see yourself through a child's eyes", but they tend to run a bit older than that, so perhaps a better metaphor for the tourist is an uncontacted tribe of bigfoots who are on their first reading of the principles of community and honestly shocked that gifting is a thing. (This metaphor may have fallen apart since I'm implying bigfoots have a non-gifting market economy, but it's fine, you know what I mean)

And yes, just like too much salt quickly spoils the broth, too many tourists quickly kills the vibe, like we see during that infamous shift between Thursday and Friday at that Other Bigger Event. Once you go over a certain threshold the vibe can start becoming a bit more Woodstock99-y/ Coachella-y and if the tourist ratio gets high enough then you might as well be hosting MTV's Spring Break with better music.

But I think that's not where we are at the moment, Youtopia wise. I think right now we maybe need more tourists, or at least fellow contributors like you who are willing to just go and party and be the tourist for the night.

Because that's the greater point here: in the same way pop culture commentators on 90s daytime talk shows reminded you to reconnect with your inner child, I'm reminding you to remember and reconnect with your inner tourist. Remember that it's ok to remember that this place is literally wonders-full and to experience wonder at it. Your camp won't fall apart if you fuck off and get a little bit lost and too high for a few hours.

As Massive Attack once said: "Tourist, tourist is a verb, tourist is a doing word". Don't be afraid to become naïve again and rediscover the simple joys of partying. Go out, find the kind of event you've been to hundreds of times, but this time, try to rediscover what you once enjoyed about it, and maybe lose yourself a little. Be like a bigfoot coming down from their market economy village and hearing psytrance for the first time.

SDT SCHEDULE

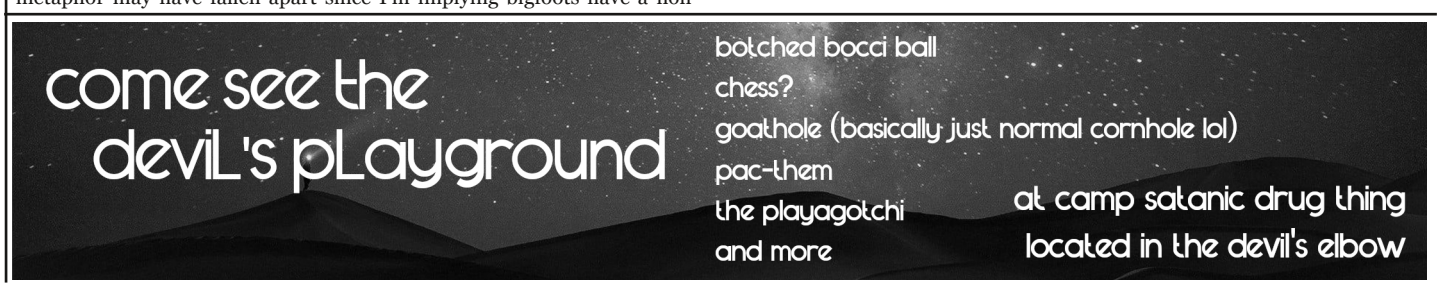
Wednesday
8am to 11am - Metal Mornings & Granola w/ DJ Sad But TRVE
11am to 1pm - Mattzog
1pm to 3pm - Shower Karaoke
3pm to close - John Jolley and Quasar

Thursday
8am to 11am - Metal Mornings & Granola w/ DJ Sad But TRVE
11am to 1pm - Mattzog
1pm to 3pm - Shower Karaoke
3pm to 5pm - Bluegrass w/ Leanna Banana
5pm to 7pm - Bibi and Group 90s Dance Party
7pm to 10pm - John Jolley and Quasar
10pm - Spooky Stories and Hot Cocoa w/ Klagor
12am - ASMR w/ Bibi

Friday
8am to 11am - Metal Mornings & Granola w/ DJ Sad But TRVE
11am to 1pm - Mattzog
1pm to 3pm - Shower Karaoke
3pm to 5pm - Jam Band / World Beat w/ Leanna Banana
5pm to 6pm - Burner Jeopardy
6pm to 7pm - John Jolley and Quasar
7pm to 11pm - Goth Prom (Goth, Industrial, and Scary Beats) w/ DJ Girlfriend's Girlfriend and DJ Girlfriend's Boyfriend
11pm to ??? - John Jolley and Quasar
??? - Mattzog

Saturday
8am to 11am - Metal Mornings & Granola w/ DJ Sad But TRVE
11am to 1pm - Mattzog
1pm to 3pm - Shower Karaoke
3pm to 5pm - Jam Band / World Beat w/ Leanna Banana
5pm to 7pm - Dewey Decimal Ditties & Martinis w/ John Jolley and Quasar
7pm to ??? - Camp SDT Saturday Night Music Madness
??? - Mattzog

Sunday
Nothing, you can help us pack up I guess?





Op-Ed: Lessons From The Year Of Fermentation

By Bibi

Remember when everyone started baking sourdough during the covid lockdowns? I wasn't everyone, and I missed out on the joy of trying my damnedest to keep a starter alive. Perhaps I am late to experiencing The Year of Fermentation, but I'd still love to tell you all what I've belatedly learned after fermenting my own milk kefir and kombucha this past year.

Lesson 1: Not everyone will like you, but your fans won't be able to get enough of you. Sure, you could try and change yourself to suit the palates of those who find you sour and stinky, but the more fragrant you are, the more likely you are to find those who find you vibrant, effervescent, and fashionably funky. Let your freak flag fly and find your chosen family. Nothing beats being surrounded by those who love you not because of how you fit in, but because of how interesting you are.

Lesson 2: Communal Effort, one of Youtopia's core principles, reflected in the SCOBY (Symbiotic Colony Of Bacteria & Yeast). The yeast and bacteria both work together to ferment sugars and alcohols, and neither kombucha nor kefir can be made with just one of these types of organism. Reflect that in your real world community by participating in mutual aid, hyper-local gifting communities, and just plain old getting-to-know-your-neighbors. Given the direction our society has been trending toward, it's long past time to ditch the American hyper-individualism and work with your literal neighbors to build social networks that are stronger than the sum of their parts.

Lesson 3: Schedules help my brain. I have ADHD, and it's easy for me to overbook myself, forget appointments, and fail to either start or finish things due to executive dysfunction. But something about keeping a living, breathing culture really makes me stay on schedule. I can't tell the kefir or kombucha when it will be done; I must both be patient, and feed it before it over-ferments. It tells me when it's done, and boy do external deadlines work on my ADHD brain. But since it is just yeast and bacteria, it's not crushing if I do kill it. It's the right amount of pressure to keep me on a regular schedule without stressing out about heavy consequences.

Lesson 4: Transformation is powerful, and it's okay to transform something that was already good to begin with. I feel like we talk a lot about turning trash into treasure, or making the best of a bad situation. When you ferment, you start with something that was already good to start with. Perfectly good veggies, milk, sweet tea. Often we ferment them just to avoid rotting. As a bonus, in doing so, something pretty cool happens and we unlock nutrients, increasing the bioavailability and adding probiotics to our diet. If you're ready for a change, go after it. It can be scary to "leave behind" a good thing, but maybe you're actually giving it a new life.



Luminous Playground, Also It's Haunted

Give Us A Hard Theme

It's time for the annual "I didn't like the theme" column.

First of all yes, it's better than last year. Let's get this on the record: without a doubt Luminous Playground is a better theme than Kaleidoscope Bazaar because at least it doesn't contradict the principles of community this time. Bazaars are markets and monetary transactions are kinda the opposite of what we do here.

Playgrounds are fine though. A bit less emphasis on music and party, a bit more interactable art. At Camp SDT we made some cool new toys that are sorta playground-y if you squint hard enough.

Also not to slightly subvert it (and remind me to come back to this notion of subversion, I'm hoping to make it my main point later), but I sort of like the idea of an empty playground in a park at 3am. Nice spooky vibe, though I suspect that "spooky, abandoned, and alienated" wasn't 100% the intent.

Here's why the theme could be better: it's safe. It's safe because it's already what we do — we already put lights on everything and put stuff out for people to mess with. It's describing the event as it already is, as opposed to giving us something new to play with.

The thing with a theme is that you have to trust the attendees to be able to follow and interpret it. If you pick something like "Ancient Grains", "Outer Space", "Fruits and Vegetables", "Occult Library", or my last year's submission, "Hot Bones", then yes some projects might feel excluded. That's fine. Trust that the artists can go "Oh, well, here's how I can interpret what I was going to do to match" and make it work.

I apologize for this next metaphor, but I hope you stick with me: a good theme is a door. A door is a wall by default and excludes, but if you interact with it, it becomes a way to re-contextualize what you're doing and defines a new space for whatever you bring through it. Did that make sense? I hope so.

A theme should give us something new and orthogonal to work with. Something that is unexpected and that we don't already have packed into the truck. We're already illuminated and we're already bringing a playground. Give us a flavor to put on top.

Say what you want about that-other-event-up-north, but Axis Mundi was a great theme this year, and Spellbound is a good one for next year. They're both single concepts (with a nice sound to them) and they are a challenge to make it work. And here's the thing, if there's one thing this crowd loves it's a challenge. This is a crowd that loves to interpret, misinterpret, remix, and, as you remind me from earlier: subvert.

So back to that subversion thing. My point is you can't subvert something that just generally describes all burner events. Give us something unexpected. Give us a theme that is a toy we can play with, misunderstand, misuse, and through that make our own.

In other words give us a challenge next year that we can fail creatively.



LEAVE CONFESSION
RECEIVE SHINY GEM
FEEL RENEWED

THE CROWFESSIONAL CONFESSIONAL
AT CAMP SATANIC DRUG THING

"THE MOST TRUSTED NAME IN YOUTOPIA CONFESSING"



Op-Ed: Raver Or Cat?

So you just clicked back into reality after zoning out for a while and now there's an unexpected entity in your camp. You're trying to figure out who or what it is and you've got it narrowed down to either a raver or a cat, but now you got stuck at that last step. Luckily we made this handy 10 step guide to help you make that last differentiation.

1 - Are they completely covered in fur?

Could be either actually, next question

2 - Are they awkwardly invading your personal space?

Also could be either, next question

3 - Are you having a hard time getting them to drink water?

You know, still could be either. Next question

4 - Did they just pee in the dirt?

Uh oh, this identification is starting to look really hard. Still ambiguous

5 - Are they spending the day sleeping and making a huge ruckus at night?

Ugh, still could be either. I'll be honest this guide is struggling

6 - Are they climbing stuff they shouldn't be for no reason?

Man, hopefully some clues come up soon

7 - Are they also periodically yelling at empty space?

Hm... yeah, could be either

8 - Are they alternating between ignoring you and rubbing themselves on you?

Still unclear

9 - Do they make weird chattering noises when they see lasers?

Oh man, I hope we don't fail you with this guide

10 - Do they smell bad?

Oh finally. Phew. If yes, it's a raver. Cats smell really nice

Op-Ed: Legalize "It"

The California success of the legalized weed campaign leaving you feeling like you're now missing a focus? Going through withdrawals of political activism and need a new fix of campaigning for or against something?

Don't worry, Stay Salty editorial team has your back. Here's the pros and cons for some potential campaigning you can get behind:

Cocaine - LEGALIZE IT. No brainer, yes, legalize it. All forms, differentiating between crack and cocaine is just a form of institutional racism.

Heroin - LEGALIZE IT. The stigma prevents treatment options and makes access to incidental needs (like clean needles) harder.

Ketamine - BAN IT. Ok, yes there's medical applications, yes it's generally a great candidate for legalization, but Elon Musk uses it so no, keep it banned until he's dead.

Psilocybin (Mushrooms) - LEGALIZE IT. Ridiculous that it's illegal, absolutely no basis for it, big time legalize. However: ban people who believe in the stoned ape theory (that whole consciousness-happened-because-apes-ate-mushrooms thing). Double jail for them because it's so stupid.

Fentanyl - BAN IT. While all the arguments that carry the issue for heroin are present here too, we can't afford to lose videos where cops think they touch it and immediately pass out. We must have cops falling over videos so for the good of the country we must keep it illegal.

Breaking and Entering - LEGALIZE IT. To be clear we mean only b&e, no burglary or whatever, just a stranger hanging out in your house for a bit and leaving. Adds mystery to life. As a bonus you get to experience what it's like to be a cat when you bring home a second cat.

Ecstasy - CAN'T SAY! No one knows what's in that shit, not possible to answer. It might be meth, might be molly, might be bones of Catholic saints, might be blood diamond chippings. It's like trying to make a general judgement call about smoothies.

LSD - LEGALIZE IT. Only reason it ended up on the original ban list is political conservatives' feelings and they haven't been right about a single thing yet.

DUI - BAN IT. Just because you should be allowed to enjoy any narcotics while in safety and comfort of your own home (or a stranger's home, see the breaking and entering), does not mean that you should be allowed to pilot a 2-ton battering ram while impaired.

Speeding - BAN IT. See above. In fact install creepy monitoring devices in cars that automatically give you a ticket every time you speed. Stay mad, drivers.

Late Night Ice Cream - LEGALIZE IT. I think it might be legal already but if not def legalize it. Harmless fun treat and a nice way to get out of the house when it's 90 degrees at 9pm.

Robbing Large Brand Stores - LEGALIZE IT. Perfect example of a victimless crime. It's called "the free market" because everything in the market should be free.

Social Media - BAN IT. We had a big trial run of legalizing it and it very obviously failed. Ban all forms.

Rant Columns In Annual Weekly Zinepapers Disguised As Political Guidance From Experts - LEGALIZE IT. Best thing in the world, full and total replacement for social media. People making these are the heroes the world needs.

ASK SHELVIS
AN ANIMATRONIC ADVICE COLUMN



Hey Shelvis, sorry to bother you, quick question.

I've struggled a bit with my self-diagnosed anxiety that I'm pretty sure has been a part of my life as far as I remember. I don't currently work a steady job and don't have a lot of spare money so I can't really afford professional therapy. I've been trying one of those online bots to talk to, and well, I guess this is where my question comes in.

I wrote down some thoughts to it and it actually felt really good to write things down like this. I've never had luck with diaries or things like that, but this somehow felt easier. The bot also gave me some book recommendations and tips for coping mechanisms, and I found those genuinely useful, but then I realized this is how all those stories of AI psychosis start.

I'm worried whether I'm going to drive myself into that whole spiraling madness I keep hearing about. It didn't tell me I was a chosen starchild anything, but like I did listen to it and what if it's just lying to me and playing along with me already thinking I have anxiety and now making it worse by convincing me it's true?

Do I need to stop? Is it too late and I already messed myself up in some way? Should I not read the books it recommended just in case? Help!

Signed,
Maybe Anxious

Dear Maybe Anxious,
I'd shake your hand, but I can only move my little finger.
Signed,
Shelvis

Hello Shelvis,

I sort of have some pet cats. There's some cats in the neighborhood and I've been feeding them because a cat-mom had kittens recently, and now I'm worried they rely on me. I've been leaving some kibble out and I think that was working out, but I think I may have caused some sort of Discovery channel situation. I've seen other animals like skunks and possums at the bowl and last night two raccoons got in a fight there. It was super loud. Someone also said they saw a coyote in the neighborhood, and I think they may also be attracted to the kibble.

How do I stop? I'm worried for the cats and kittens who come around for the food now, but also worried that if I don't stop it will keep attracting other predators and maybe that's even worse? At this rate I'll probably have bears in my yard soon. Shelvis, how do I fix this?

Signed,
Cat Mom Mom

Dear Cat Mom Mom,
Rhythm is something you either have or don't have, but when you have it, you have it all over.
Signed,
Shelvis

Dear Shelvis,

Something of a bummer question, sorry Shelv. As a kid and later teen I was raised a few months of each year by my aunt. Without getting into it my parents were unavailable about 3 months of each year and I'd spend those with my aunt who was sort of a side-parent to me. We've remained close since but distance also did its thing. I still visit her every now and then and I've been noticing changes. She's forgetful, always upset, and constantly making small mistakes like forgetting to close the door or leaving the stove running. The other day she called me by her child's name instead of mine. She played it off as a joke when I corrected her, but not long after asked me how my kids are doing. I don't have kids, her child does though.

She gets kind of angry and distraught when I try to bring this up, insisting that I'm either wrong or lying. I'm worried for her health but also I'm not sure what to do. Her kid lives far away and I don't think they believe me that this is happening to their mom, and I don't know how to convince them. I'm worried my aunt might be slowly in danger of hurting herself, or someone else, but what can I do about it? I feel I owe it to her, but she doesn't want any help.

Signed,
Moments Lost in Time

Dear Moments Lost In Time,
You're makin' me dizzy, man! Come on!
Signed,
Shelvis

Hey Shelvis,

I have some friends from school that I used to Minecraft with, and they recently got into sports betting. It's partially my fault because I suggested it as a joke-of-sorts a few months ago, but I actually got bored of it soon after. They stuck with it though, and especially one of my friends who let's call L.

The rest of them are in the group chat about bets all the time now, though of the four of us the other two just sorta chat about it more than play, L is the one who is legitimately into it. And I think at this point he's lying to us how much. Basically every time I go past him he's on his phone checking up on some betting thing, and usually trying to hide it and pretend he's just texting or whatever.

The other day I was over at his house and his mom was walking about trying to remember where she left some cash and I got a weird creepy feeling this is my fault. I mean, most probably she just misplaced it right, because it'd be crazy if L was like taking it then going to deposit it to gamble with it, but what if it's not crazy and I totally fucked up a friend's life?

Signed,
Lost Wages

Dear Lost Wages,
Man, I was tame compared to what they do now. Are you kidding?
Signed,
Shelvis

Have your own question and answer session with Shelvis, only at Camp Satanic Drug Thing. Available whenever we have the generator running.

YOUTOPIA BIRDWATCHING GUIDE

Youtopia birding guide! I don't know much about birds but I'm trying to learn!



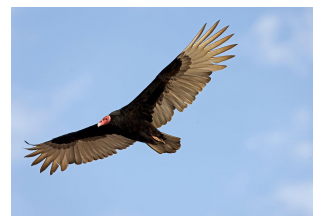
Quail! It has a cute head feather! Super easy to recognize!



Roadrunner! It's actually a cuckoo! It can actually fly it just doesn't!



Either an Anna's Hummingbird or Costa's Hummingbird! I can't tell them apart! They make nests from spiderwebs!



Turkey Vulture! It's not a turkey! It likes Thanksgiving!



Raven! It's like a crow but bigger and with curved beak! I actually already knew that because I like corvids!



Red-tailed Hawk! I love this photo! It's from Wikipedia!



Rose-breasted Grosbeak! They're migrating through here! The beak's not as gross as it sounds!



Summer Tanager! It says Summer but you can see it in the Autumn! They also migrate through here!



??? - I don't know! I can't find it in the bird book!

Go watch at all these birds!

I HATE BURNING MAN

by John Jolley

The cashier at Love's radiated despair. "How are you?" I inquired as I approached the register. "I'm alive," he muttered, with a distinct sense of regret. "Your card's declined."

Fuck. I'd just opened a new credit card to pay for this excursion, and it was already maxxed out before I'd even reached the gate.

Dawn broke over Black Rock City as we approached, and I sent off what would be my final text messages for the next eight days. I spent a moment meditating on how each year, the default world seems to further resemble the burn, and vice versa — more LED lights and climate survivalism in default, less privacy and more internet connectivity on playa — and imagined a not-too-distant-future in which they became indistinguishable from one another.

We'd left SD around 4:30pm on Saturday, and at around 9am Sunday, we were off the asphalt but deadlocked — the line hadn't moved for about an hour, and my bladder was about to explode. "I think I see some portos up ahead, about an eight minute walk—I'll be right back."

I emerged from the porto to find the line quickly pulsing along. Rookie mistake — but when you gotta go, you gotta go. I marched up and down the long line of cars for about 30 minutes before suddenly finding a gate representative standing before me.

"I have a ticket at will call, but I've lost my vehicle, which contains my phone and ID." The gate manager, Arsenic, regarded me with warranted suspicion. "Is someone else driving?" I assured them the vehicle was being driven, as opposed to abandoned in line.

Arsenic gave me a long stare. "It's ok. This happens all the time. Please follow me."

The "please" was stern, and clearly a nicety. "You are now between the BRC rangers and the police," Arsenic explained as they directed me to a bench behind will call, in D-Lot. "We won't leave you to die here in the desert, I promise." Not being prone to panic in situations that warrant panicking, I kicked my feet up and took in the scene. The mountains surrounding Black Rock City are not a chore to look at.

Eventually a volunteer led me to window one. I explained my situation calmly and deliberately to the attendant, providing my name, phone number, and email. Another long stare. "We're really not allowed to do this," she told me, grudgingly pushing a ticket across the counter.

I was informed that despite having a ticket, I would have to find someone in D-Lot generous enough to drive me into the event, as walk-ins are not permitted. Within 30 minutes, a van appeared carrying two adults and two children, about eight or nine years old. I described my quandary and destination, and they cheerfully took me aboard.

I squeezed into the three seater front cab and looked behind to the kids milling about in the cabin. "Have either of you heard of Franz Kafka? He wrote a story kind of like this, where a person is arrested but is never told what he did wrong."

Blank stares.

"He also wrote a story where a guy wakes up one day to find out he's been turned into a bug."

"Oh!! I've heard of that one!" the oldest replied.

I was dropped off about 100 yards from camp and wandered in through the back, where I was greeted with delight as I explained my lack of transportation and resources.

"Everything's been going so smoothly — thank you for bringing the chaos!"

My co-pilot, it turned out, had been waiting for me at will call all along.

Having been reunited with my booze and cigarettes, I began scanning for a place to drink and smoke: far enough from my camp as to not be a bother, but close enough to remain convenient. I spied a Jesus-looking individual under a shade structure attached to an 18-foot truck setting up a bar with an ashtray immediately across the street. Perfect.

I'd been addressing co-dependency and enabling behavior in therapy recently. Not in the interest of making major changes, necessarily — more of a self-awareness campaign. I sauntered over, made introductions, and concluded I'd found a satisfactory enabler to attach myself to for the week. "Azi," he re-introduced himself. "Oh, like Ozzy Osbourne?" "No, like Ozymandias. But with an A and an I." Intentionally difficult, and well read! Good news.

Day one was a trip over inner playa. A twelve foot-tall wooden structure composed of horizontal concentric circles beckoned me. I perched on the top and took in my surroundings. The sun had set, and the horizon had illuminated itself. Feeling confident, I set my feet on the nearest circle, and shifted my weight. The circle collapsed, as did I, tucking and rolling to the ground over an eight foot fall, landing on my right love handle.

"Are you ok?" Azi asked, peering over me. "I'll let you know in about 300 seconds," I replied, sitting on the generator box, waiting for my adrenaline to subside. After running an admittedly incomplete self-diagnostic, I concluded I'd maintained some abrasion on my legs and bruising near my right kidney, but no organ damage. Not my first rodeo.

At one of the Medical camps, the workers milling about seemed overjoyed to be presented with my light abrasions. I explained my injury as one applied ointment and a bandage below my knee. "Oh, so it wasn't your fault, even? Where was the art?!" I waved in the general direction, not wanting to narc, but also wanting to prevent more injuries, then pressed on towards the giant VIP sign that marked our way home.

Later the midweek blues hit like a ton of bricks. I'd been experiencing pretty heavy ennui in my tent every night on account of missing my partner, but Thursday felt as if some occult hand had placed fishing weights on my heartstrings. This being my first unpartnered burn in twelve years, I was unaccustomed to sleeping on my own. I was reminded of Sergeant Pinback of the movie "Dark Star": "I do not belong on this mission, and I want to return to Earth!" The next four days stretched out before me like a track and field course. One foot in front of the other, and this would all be over soon.

Friday, I was hailed by our campmate who'd designed the Boombox that our camp had brought as a soundsystem. "I figured out what was wrong with it — should be working now!" It occurred to me that the increasing levels of languor I'd been experiencing in bed every night may have been related to not having played any music since Wednesday.

Hooked my laptop into the Boombox. Powerful waves of relief and gratitude. I started cueing up songs, recalling that I'd come here literally to do this; play music for friends and strangers, and do my best to mind the vibe while still pushing and pulling on listeners' needs. Participation! No longer a passive witness.

A couple tech bros appeared. "How do you feel about AI music?" I scowled. "I guess it's fine, if you hate music." I was ready to fight. They spouted all the usual arguments: small models, trained on your own material, on your own hardware, etc. I explained that the creative arts ought to come from creative artists, and that I certainly didn't need any help from a large language model to let me know what song or note to play next. They seemed to take this concession as a victory; AI conversations always seem to go like this, the instigators begging artists for permission to push further onward into manifesting their inexplicable desire for an anonymous, depersonalized flattening of the creative act. They wandered off. Feeling drained, I went to bed earlier than I might have otherwise.

Saturday morning. The man burns in zero days.

The temple was going to close early: tonight, at sundown. I had some shit to nail up: a memento representing my partner's recently deceased literature professor, and the NYT obituary of Tim Curry.

"You're a therapist, right?" I asked of our mayor's therapist as we walked our bikes along the path to the temple from the man. "I always end up diving into my grief here, and after moving past my dead friends and failed relationships, I'm perpetually reminded of the huge hole in my heart left from my parent's divorce. I've spent a lot of my adult life trying to fill it by polyamorously dating couples in an attempt to recreate the circumstances of my parents' divorce but produce a more positive outcome. Is that normal?"

Yet another long stare. "Well, it sounds like you're aware of your issues in any case!" We spent the remainder of our walk to the temple in relative silence.

We all split up on arrival. Here come the waterworks. Glad I hydrated heavily before our departure; I spent the next hour leaking water out of my face and meditating. It felt a bit rude hammering nails into such a quiet space, but that's part of it.

We took off as a camp, walking. I'd loaded up my wagon with a bunch of folding chairs, and thought along the way about how much I'd enjoyed my camp's company as we weaved between mutant vehicles to find our spot.

The man lit up. I don't remember much; I really had to pee.

I made it back to camp, plugged in to the Boombox, and went from 10pm to 5am. Having music playing as our campmates came and left throughout the evening filled me with a sense of purpose and meaning. It was burn night, after all!

Sunday morning, a very gracious and kind campmate approached me. He and his wife were situated right next to my tent. This was their first burn.

"I thought the music last night was coming from an art car, or a camp nearby, or all around us," he said, "but eventually I realized it was all coming from you!"

I bashfully confirmed his understanding. "I do apologize if I kept you up—I try my best to sonically take care of our camp, though I can go a bit hard sometimes! Do you have any requests for today, or for tonight?"

He spent a moment seeming to consider my request. "Could you just not play at all, please?"

Ah! A John Cage kinda thing. Well, it was Sunday, and I do love taking requests.

I started weeping again as the flames were lit at the temple. I was of course mourning the individuals represented inside, but more immediately, my inner child—the one left sobbing in a closet after being told his parents were splitting up by his father in a Taco Bell.

Monday, I helped my copilot break down his tent, after which he let me know we'd be leaving today. He seemed heartbroken about it; I experienced panic, predominantly. I'd just had my last sleep till Azalea Park.

"Goodbye, everyone!" Twelve hugs at least; thirteen or fourteen, including our neighbors. Exodus was no problem; we left camp around sundown, and hit pavement by 8pm.

We were back in SD sometime around noon on Tuesday, physically shocked by temperatures well over 100 degrees. My brain was mush, but I returned to my earlier line of thought, the one I'd found myself on upon arrival to the event—that the default world and the burn seemed to be rapidly merging, and how the climate survivalism techniques I'd prepared for my week in the desert somehow left me entirely unprepared for the weather on my return to San Diego. This would be my last burn, I thought to myself. Definitely. I fucking hate Burning Man.

WORD FIND

RECRUDENOPELOLSJBPKNGGNOMONOMZHKILROYWUZZHEREJTOLCF
XRCIHXLODJDWODPNARHCMMOOOOONOTTKSEEYMTQITXYOCNCSOAA
OLXFKCCPPENNSMHGGOVMMOOOOOOONOIIDISUWRNVKXFXUCLRGRT
WKTFBJRKTEKPOISIZSVLMOOOOOOONIDJDHKFXOQUYFSZDVUMBOR
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EHDKTKANOCCULTHANDGZZLHEBTWLNTEMTRITMDPTNTDTSPIETOO
LARSULRICHWASRIGHTABOUTNAPSTERSWEHXZIOFGJEEHSZAUAML
BNNCYDWVUSKYKKPVCGHNVJTWPLWRENOWCRGOROUVEYCHEDYYQUT
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PULUYNIWSNRVECEPPRDNBMJNYRHJXOXXXOXCSPYARPISRGKTYAI
FSJTIFMNEIIUCCCDAGRFEHTRTHMKXOOOOOXCDVEORCSIQCRACRS
CUCTYBDOMESCCCCCAROMOGWAIFZUXXXXXXXMFCWFLBPXXBLNVOC
XQPGNIMORACCCCCCCAKGNICTATITCINSKDNWGWNEVDPBAQFEUMM
RECRUDESCENSTILLNOPELOLTAQHOTBONESEVTQSHAVEANICEDAY

Find these common everyday words!

ADUMBRATED
ANAPHORA
ANFRACTUOUS
APOTROPAIC
CAROMING
CONVENTICLES
CORNICED
CORUSCATING
CURLEW
ENCEINTE
FAIN
GNOMON
HERESIARCH
LAMBENT
NICTITATION
PROSODIC
RECRUDESCENCE
THURIBLE
TROCHEE
ULTRAMONTANES
UNCTION

They can be forwards, backwards, and diagonal.

POTENTIALLY A EULOGY FOR JOHN JOLLEY



John Jolley as he appeared in his life, and maybe still does now, probably

As you read this John Jolley is possibly dead. This goes to print a bit before the event so we can't be sure what the status is at the moment you're reading it, but he's alive and totally fine as we're writing this. No particular aggravated conditions or anything like that, though he is supposed to be driving the truck out this year and driving is risky kinda in general. Cars are such a double-edged sword, aren't they, can't live without them, can't stop crashing into things in freak accidents. Like those "Bridge freezes before road" warnings on the way out here, so scary, like yeah it's not that cold but maybe what if it's the first thing to freeze anywhere and it's freezing right now? Sorry, let me reel it back in. Point is we're writing this eulogy just in case something happened to John Jolley between printing and the start of the event.

John Jolley was and possibly still is a DJ and an original member of Camp Satanic Drug Thing. He's pretty tall and had longish black hair but it's shorter now because he got it cut. He spins vinyl on the big board here and is perhaps the only DJ out here doing vinyl. We don't know of anyone else doing vinyl this year but again, this goes to print before the event, so if you're out there spinning actual disks under needles come talk to us we want to know about it.

John Jolley (btw, it's almost always John Jolley not John or Johnny, and definitely not Jonathan that's a totally different name) is also an accomplished chess player if you want to challenge him to one of our games of "Chess?" this year. He also wrote the Burner Jeopardy questions so if you don't like those yell at him please.

Oh, when I say "yell" that's just figuratively speaking. Don't actually yell at any of us, it's not nice because then there's all sorts of yelling going around and it's starting to sound like some bazaar of hawkers out there and that was last year's theme. I guess this year it would be more thematic to shine a light in our eyes, but don't do that either, that's also rude.

But yeah, for as long as John is still alive, which is hopefully all through the event and afterwards too, you can catch him, and the rest of the camp, spinning throughout the day and into late nights here at Camp Satanic Drug Thing, as usual located in the Devil's Elbow on that little path connecting the cage with the loud camps. I guess if it's the late night set you can call him The Late John Jolley. Ha ha, just a little eulogy joke.

Remember, he's at Camp Satanic Drug Thing: Once Again The Only Youtopia Camp With Music!



YOUR YOUTOPIAN STARS

Horoscopes by Quasar

Libra
It's been said that a Libra can send you to Hell in such stylish fashion that you'll look forward to the trip. Thank you for presiding over our YOUtopian season, adeptly balancing the sacred and the profane, even after coming out of a busy season of personal recaLibrations. One cannot know peace without having negotiated war, and you've done your due diligence in the trenches; now, enjoy yourself! This event is prime time for bringing all your charisma to the fore. Don't people-please merely for the sake of harmony—practice seduction for the joy of it. The art of conversation could be monstrously gratifying, and you're sure to encounter partners in perky prose wherever you wander—but if you need a little nudge… how 'bout donning your finest threads and gracing the star-studded Fever Dream Experience at Center Camp, then sauntering into your choice of YOUtopia's handful of speakeasies for an afterparty?
Karaoke Pairing: "Smooth Operator" by Sade

Scorpio
The need to control often, ironically, controls a Scorpio. A strongly worded invitation to surmount this paradox is now coming at you. It's like you're holding your breath underwater in a roiling hot tub, buffeted by bubbles blasting off layers upon layers of emotional debris. Use your recess on the Luminous Playground to further strip your life of pretense and face the tension between your desires and your compromises. Sometimes we want things SO badly but we're not comfortable enough to pursue them. Get uncomfortable at YOUtopia! A quintessentially Scorpionic activity would be a foray to Suspension of Innocence at The Knotty Ones: by day, it's a wooden swing set, recalling a halcyon era when you didn't think twice about daring to soar; by night, it's a space offering live Shibari classes, delving the power and grace that can be found in surrender.
Karaoke Pairing: "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey (yes, really)

Sagittarius
Your YOUtopian priorities are apt to fluctuate in keeping with your quality as a mutable fire sign. On Wednesday, you'll be full of vim and vigor, equipped with bold intentions and the framework to achieve them. When you wake up on Thursday, though, your best-laid plans could fall by the wayside as your innate and undeniable quest for jovial exploration takes the reins. On Friday morning, you're likely to buck off the saddle and bridle to gambol about with abandon. You'll be eager to teach and be taught. Give generously of your bright-eyed and bushy-tailed élan without being on the lookout for a return on your investment; being your own blazing, magnanimous self is its own reward. The Cagey Rager at the Church of Cage might hold promise for discovery of expansive truths both holy and heathen—but, then again, so might the Temple of Travolta Summoning Ritual at Center Camp. Do the research, Sag!
Karaoke Pairing: "Runnin' Down a Dream" by Tom Petty

Capricorn
Since the beginning of August, you may've felt unusual pressure to reevaluate what you need for sustainable commitment in partnerships. You may still be feeling a little tender about any let-downs in this realm, especially on Friday and Saturday as the Moon transits your sign. But please, dear Capricorn, eat, drink, and be merry; rest assured that by the end of next week, that funk will lift. Seek out YOUtopian diversions that'll boost your feeling of comfort and confidence in your own skin, translating to a lightness of heart you can carry back to the Default World. Suggested methodology for lovin' the skin you're in? You could try two different approaches at Pinwheelerz, depending on your style: rock your most fabulous leisurewear at The MuMu Mimosa Party, or festoon your tender bits at the Pinwheels & Parties Creation Station. The latter boasts a bonus: a plucky catchphrase for the rest of the day—"Blow me!"
Karaoke Pairing: "No Scrubs" by TLC

Aquarius
There's been a lot of celestial stress on you recently, Aquarius, like your soul's been forced through a fine sieve. The universe demands that you take a hard look at your personal mythology and dismantle the stories that no longer serve you. Don't chastise your past self for having written narratives that now seem chimerical; you're free to pick them apart and recycle the pieces into new and vibrant lore. Breathwork for release at the VR Yurt of Sacred Geometry could serve you well, and the Synesthia meetup at Chromasonic might energize your already-galvanic vision of the warp and weft of the world. It could be fun to forge a fluorescent connection at The Luminous Loom. Do be sure to take breathers for relaxation; perhaps take the air on Sit-a-Bit's lawn, sip an iced tea, and just see what sorts of characters crop up.
Karaoke Pairing: "She's a Rainbow" by World of Twist

Pisces
Wow, Pisces, you're still swimming. You are the great survivor of the zodiac, able to endure so much, slipping sleekly past stuff that's not serving you and darting on along. You're sensitive, though, and you fathom more than any sign how psychic manifestations like music and art can tie us to the divine and to each other. You're so naturally inclined to merge with the cosmic sea and the creatures within that there's danger you'll lose your buoyant individuality. Use this time in our ephemeral city to really practice Radical Self-Expression. That's not to say that you shouldn't lose yourself on the dance floor, but also participate in events that provide a venue for you as a totally unique entity. Enter the YOULympics at Behind the Bleachers or the Miss YOUtopia Contest at Center Camp. Show off your shimmering, iridescent Piscean self!
Karaoke Pairing: "The Middle" by Jimmy Eat World

Aries
You're going to be the powerhouse leader pouring molten moxie into any structural cracks at YOUtopia. Driven and resourceful, you get shit done, bringing an infusion of authority to the creative mayhem all around you. Strive to handle challenges with intention and integrity, ditching any tendencies towards self-isolation. It could be a real pleasure to cocreate in community with other trailblazing minds. You've got cool ideas, the drive and know-how to execute them, and a talent for stirring up like-minded collaborators. Your time at YOUtopia and the two weeks that follow are well-omened "to boldly go," planting the seed for a passion project and conscribed a specific future interval (say, 90 days) in which you'll bring it to fruition. Your enthusiasm will spark other fires around you.
Karaoke Pairing: "Firestarter" by The Prodigy

Taurus
For a while now, the heavens have cast a floodlight straight at you, mercilessly, as if some occult hand had angled a mirror to glare full into your eyes at high noon. It's making it hard for you, gentle bull, to just laze in the pasture and smell the flowers. It can hurt to feel so exposed, but it's also potentially worth the pain. Reappraise your beliefs: what do you really judge most sublime—aesthetically, emotionally, ethically—and how do you cultivate space for that beauty? Be honest with yourself in assessing if long-held principles might need some revamping. If this is a lot for you, it's understandable, so of course take lots of breaks to support this internal work. Maybe grab one of "Doctor" Stephen F Gimblesh's Emotional Elixirs at Vaudevillains and touch figurative grass at Filament's Mother Earth Appreciation Day.
Karaoke Pairing: "Desire" by U2

Gemini
This YOUtopia can be an electric opportunity for you, especially if you've been feeling confined by relationships or circumstances of any kind. People love to call Geminis fickle and that CAN be a shadow side, but this versatility of spirit stems from your perpetually curious mind. Revel in your beguiling ability to juggle multiple concepts at once; indulge your kinetic restlessness and questioning nature. If your urge for novelty extends to your looks, let The Rave Fairy Braids Salon treat you to a fresh 'do. Feeling chatty, as Geminis do? Join Confidently Wrong's Rumor Mill Happy Hour and start up something juicy, and while you're there, flex your mental muscles with the riddles of The Doors of Perplexion. And don't forget to check into the Book Fair at Satanic Drug Thing for provocative notions to tempt your noggin! Ask Shelvis for recommendations.
Karaoke Pairing: "Virtual Insanity" by Jamiroquai

Cancer
What nourishes you and provides a bracing sense of security? Of late, you've possibly hunted for stability through romantic liaisons that, oddly and awkwardly, evoked your most maternal tendencies. This won't do! Of course it's in your tender nature to nurture the people you care about the most. You might take great delight and satisfaction in gifting food or drink to YOUtopians, particularly to your campmates and neighbors, but endeavor not to spend the whole event as head chef and counselor. Focus on ensuring your own visceral and emotional needs are met—you deserve it! Go ahead and gobble down those late night waffles at MoonBass. Accept that massage from the HeebeeGeebee Healers. If you INSIST upon tending to another creature, consider the NaughTea Cat Cafe's Aftermeown Tea and Adoption Event, where you can find a feral feline to frolic with in the desert.
Karaoke Pairing: "Love Yourself" by Justin Bieber

Leo
This is a supercharged era for you, Leo! You may be feeling a smoldering need to express the best version of yourself, and this is an excellent impulse (so long as you remain respectful of the boundaries of those around you). YOUtopia marks an incredibly auspicious time to playfully befriend your artistic side. It can be something as sedate as visiting the Glow Rock Painting workshop or Round Tuits to craft tiny objets d'art, or something as visible as treading the boards at an improv comedy event. Whatever you do, share it with others! Don't be bashful about wanting to shine. The more you bring your interests out onto the front burner, the more you will feel seen and appreciated—and will inspire others to radiance, too.
Karaoke Pairing: "Don't Stop Me Now" by Queen

Virgo
Virgo, please consider YOUtopia your extended spa day: an experiment in relishing your body as a miraculous marvel rather than scrutinizing it as a system of meticulously moving parts. Instead of focusing your extraordinary eye for detail on microcosmic mechanics, seek simple and sumptuous activities that coax you into honoring the aggregate wonder that is you. Cruise over to Dreamery to partake of their steaming sauna and hopefully be surprised with a wholesome bowl of Grechka or Plov. Sink into the luxurious Sade Rose Daybed Party at Filament. And, of COURSE, get out there and dance! Oh, one more thing… there's a Ninja Support Group meeting at Center Camp. Just to let you know there's a community of virtuosos like you looking to unmask their superb ability to wrestle chaos into order.
Karaoke Pairing: "Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang" by Dr. Dre





JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE DEARTH

a short fiction by klagor

I step off the bus onto the cracked playa of the Black Rock desert. I can't believe after years of saving, I've finally arrived at the newest wonder of the world: The Golden Grotto.

Heat shimmers around me as I take it in. Beyond the buses and the scantily clad people, I see the false scarp strata of trash embedded in the nearby ridge. I'm reminded of the thin worldwide layer of iridium left behind by the Chicxulub impactor that killed the dinosaurs. This plastic layer represents what remains of the Burning Man festival: that former bastion of creativity turned commodity that once called this particular valley home. It moved to its permanent spot in Vegas twenty years ago after a fissure opened in the heart of the playa.

To me and my fellow geologists, the fissure was no surprise. This area lies between two plates which have been pulling apart for millions of years, leaving stretch marks of playas and ridges behind. This desert, half a billion years ago, was a shallow seafloor, home to the wondrous diversity of Cambrian life. Volcanic activity brought the land to the surface, becoming first a vast redwood forest, then an ice age lake, before the shifting climate created the current landscape. What was found in the fissure was a surprise. In addition to one of the richest veins of gold ever found, a subterranean ocean was discovered, warmed by the same geothermal forces as the local hot springs, and fed by the nutrient rich runoff from the nearby Quinn River, created a time capsule of still living Cambrian creatures.

While the nature of the pilgrims to this desert might have changed, this place still promises a life changing experience.

I set my wide-brimmed hat on my head, adjust the sleeves of my favorite field shirt, and head to the back of the ticket line. After twenty minutes pass with no movement, I ask the family in front of me, who are vigorously massaging sunscreen onto their young daughter, if this is the ticket line. They confirm it is, and explain it only moves when there's a break in the fast-track line. Indeed, there's a steady stream of people from newly arrived buses entering through a separate gate further down in the fence. I ask how the fast-track works and they tell me there's an app. They would have upgraded but it was a budget breaker.

My phone isn't very capable, so I pay a fee every time I use the internet. I don't consider the app until forty-five more minutes pass and we've barely moved. My return bus leaves in five hours, so I give in and download the app. I scroll through the endless array of add-ons until I find the admission ticket with the fast-track perk. My eyes water at the cost, and I mentally downgrade my food budget for the next three months, but I've already spent so much to get here, I don't want to spend what little time I have in line.

I wish the family luck, then enter via the fast line. I notice most people receive a pair of glasses along with their different colored wristbands, but I am given only a yellow wristband.

The Grotto grounds, which only span about an acre, are full of informational kiosks and cheap-looking, pop-up buildings, all well-coated with playa dust. I decide to take it all in first. There are enticing food stalls (I packed a lunch), countless souvenir shops featuring collectibles and random gew-gaws, different photo opportunities, all with massive lines. I feel both better and worse about my upgrade as I remember the family still outside.

I stop at an exhibit building, this one on local Ice Age flora and fauna. I join the shorter line, but a security guard stops me at the entrance. Apparently, exhibit halls aren't included in my ticket.

I tell myself I don't need to see the exhibits as I pass a photo opportunity featuring toothy, long-snouted ichthyosaurs, spiral-shelled ammonites, and armored trilobite fossils. My resolve crumbles when I find the entrance to the neo-Cambrian life exhibit. I open the app, wince at the price, then buy the exhibit add-on with fast-track. I rationalize. Ruined budget be damned. Though this leg of the trip has already quadrupled in price, I'm likely never going to be able to come back. I might as well make the most of it. I trade my yellow wristband for a red one at the door.

Inside is intensely hot and crowded. I soon find out why. There's a cordon past which those with the wrong wristbands, myself included, can't pass. Instead I crane my neck to see and catch glimpses of shadows in tanks. A flicker of legs. Light off a too soft body.

The shallow Cambrian seas here once washed up on thick limestone shores. Fossils of the ancient ancestors of these creatures were some of the earliest evidence of multicellular life ever found, like in the legendary Burgess Shale in western Canada. Before the Cambrian era, there were no fossils, then suddenly there was an abundance of them. To many, it was as if an occult hand had brought these creatures spontaneously into being, but life before the Cambrian was soft-bodied, which doesn't fossilize well. Environmental calcium levels surged due to volcanic activity and weathering during the Ediacaran-Cambrian boundary, which allowed those soft-bellied creatures that swam and fled and fought to make shells and teeth and claws. Genomes were simple then. Duplications and mutations more easily created "endless forms, most beautiful," as Darwin once said. This is an ability modern life has lost as our forms locked in due to increased genomic complexity. To see such impossible, Seussian creatures firsthand, I feel connected to that simpler earth; a place where the God of Capitalism wasn't yet a dream.

I get to a barrier in front of an exhibit and pull my phone out and open the camera. When I take a photo, an alert tells me I don't have the required license. I have two options: an annual photo license, which is more than I make in a month, or a day license. I sigh when I read the small print, which explains photos can only be taken in the Grotto's proprietary app, and I'll have access to them for the rest of my life or until the app stops being supported, whichever comes first. I put my phone away.

In the tank I catch a glimpse of a group of three football-shaped multi-fronded shadows gently cleaning each other with their forelimbs. Are they Wiwaxia? I can't read the sign through the crowd. I lean forward and see the next tank down where I see a sign labeled Hallucigenia, but I only see a flash of luminescence in the darkened tank, perhaps my own hallucination.

The press of bodies is too much so I retreat outside. I know I just saw the impossible, but it feels empty. I make my way towards the Grotto line, but I'm afraid to see how much more it will cost. I observe the diversity of wristbands instead. Diamonds for private tours. Black for caving excursions. Green for photo ops.

I feel sick and stop by a trashcan overflowing with sticky cups and greasy plates and bend over to help with the lightheadedness. A hand on my shoulder. Someone dressed like a fellow academic is looking at me with worry. She has an ID badge around her neck. She asks if I'm okay. I tell her no, and explain why. I feel better and thank her for her concern. I ask what her research is in and she explains she's not a researcher, but a tour docent. She couldn't get a job in her doctoral field, but she makes better money now than a post-doc anyway.

She tells me to come with her. I follow her to a separate Grotto crew entrance and we board an elevator with some other docents. We descend a long time. It's blessedly cooler the deeper we go before it warms again. The docent tells me about her doctoral work on the origins of multicellular life and the theory that multicellular organisms are in a constant tug-of-war between cooperation and selfishness. Only when cooperation tipped the scales forever in its favor with the advent of clonal cell collectives was life able to grow into such myriad forms of macroscopic life, like those found in the caverns below, or in the desert above.

We disembark and the docent takes me to a private entrance that says "Research Staff Only" and tells me to take as much time as I need, but to remember to leave ninety minutes for egress. She presses a pair of glasses into my hands before she heads off to meet up with her tour group.

I hold my breath and step through the door...

...and find darkness. No, not darkness, exactly. Black screens. Through them I catch glimpses of elaborate geological formations extending down from the ceiling, or up from the ground, but they're obscured. I slip on the glasses.

My breath is taken away.

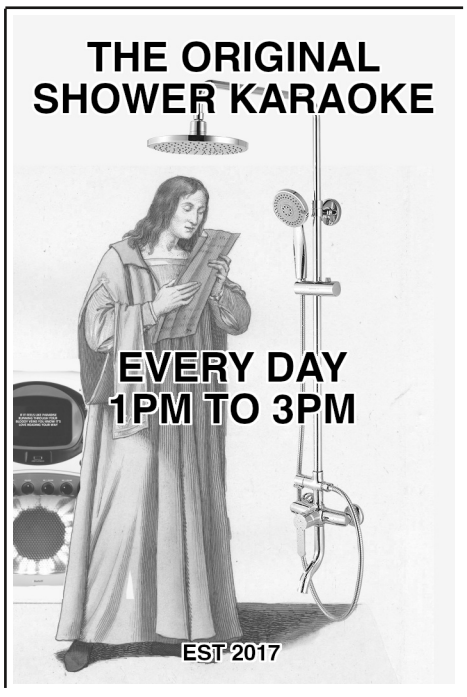
There's a forest of golden spires, run through with veins of turquoise and shadows of black opals. Crystalline deposits reflect the dim light not from any artificial illumination, but from the life itself that dances through the dark waters of the underground ocean. The array of luminescent life crawling and gliding is so much more abundant and diverse than I had dreamt of. Fluorescent rainbows flit through the water like flocks of starlings. Among the glowing gardens of sponges and vertical leaf-like filter feeders, like Charniodiscus, there are colonies of Wiwaxia clustered together moving through the shallows; ribbons of light play off their triangular scales and mohawk-like fronds. An Opabinia with its long proboscis and a dozen paddling legs flutters in synchrony with a mate as they gently explore the sediment. Undulating through it all are Hallucigenia with their worm-like bodies, clawed legs and spiked backs, looking like strings of caltrops.

I sit just behind the screen and watch for hours, deliriously happy.

My reverie is interrupted with the arrival of a private tour with shiny gold wristbands and scuba gear who unceremoniously fall backwards into the water, scattering its life and light to safer corners, leaving the room in shadows.

I look at my watch and reluctantly leave. I take the elevator back to the surface and as I find the end of the exit line, I see the family from the admission line with the same red wristbands I started with. I stop them and give them the glasses the docent gave me. Grateful, the parents put the glasses on their daughter, but there's an error. We've triggered the rights management software, which limits the glasses to one user per session. We all laugh awkwardly, I warn them about the exit line, and wish them luck before I drop the glasses in a return bin.

Ninety minutes and a very thorough search later, I am back in the lot. I have a few minutes before my bus boards, so I walk out onto the playa. Deserts seem like empty and isolating things, but they're really full of so much life and history. Today I saw impossible, beautiful things. Things that have survived for hundreds of millions of years, which I hope will survive hundreds of millions more. Am I changed for having come? I remember all the discomfort, both physical and moral. The emptiness of my bank account. Perhaps I am, but not in the way I expected. Then I remember the kindness of the docent and a little hope returns that perhaps my own species might survive at least a few centuries more.



DRESS TO IMPRESS WEIRDOS

By Leanna Banana



One of the Ten Principles of Burning Man is Radical Self-Expression, and one of my favorite ways to do that is through the way I dress. As a shy kid with poor social skills, I discovered that if I had blue hair, people would talk to me about my hair. If I was wearing all neon, they would talk to me about my clothes. These predictable conversations are a great way to interact with strangers for the socially awkward. If you've never experimented with fashion (a catch-all term I'm using here to mean anything you wear), a burn can be a great opportunity to do so in a safe place where your fit will fit in—no matter what you're wearing nor how much.

If you've never been much of a fancy dresser, here are some tips to guide and encourage you to wear something you normally wouldn't. Step outside your comfort zone. Get radical.

- Level one: Color. We'll start pretty simple. You can simply wear fun colors. Neon hightops with whatever jeans and t-shirt you're wearing are going to make you stand out. They'll help your friends find you in the dark. They'll be really comfortable. They'll make cute people talk to you. For the budget-conscious, you can just spray paint your old gym shoes.

- Level two: Texture. Maybe neon hightops aren't quite your style. Maybe you want more of a challenge. I can see you in a corduroy jumpsuit. Oh for sure. All the comfort of jeans and a jacket, but with the added fun of fuzzy stripes all over. Just makes you want to touch it, don't you agree? You can also combine color and texture if you want to really go for it. And you should, because why not? Wear a fur vest with your tshirt and jeans and neon hightops. You're gonna look great! Don't forget you can borrow items or visit a local thrift shop (bonus point for supporting Out of the Closet, an LGBTQ-friendly establishment, over the Salvation Army which has a history of racism and homophobia).

- Level three: Shape or Silhouette. You can alter the shape of your body in a few ways. Oversized headpieces like a clown wig or novelty hat, large decorative epaulets, platform shoes, layered bustles, and corsets are all ways to emphasize parts of the body. You can also get super weird and wear giant cartoon gloves. Some of these elements can really mess with people's perception of your body in ways that will make them uncomfortable. Just look at clowns. Everything is distorted and that's one of the reasons we find them so creepy. Why are their noses so swollen? Why are they always smiling? Why are they so pale? Are they just zombies in fun outfits? A cape or bunny ears are easy ways to play with silhouette that are also very accessible for the average burner. If you want to be extra, add lights, texture or color to your accessories for added impact.

- Level four: Contrast. If you feel comfortable with most of these concepts, take one and add contrast. Make a whole outfit of black and white striped items (no, it doesn't matter if they're all of the same orientation and size—it's probably better if they're all different directions if we're really aiming for contrast). Wear super oversized epaulets dripping with beads and flower arrangements. Wear a super sleek catsuit with a fur bikini. Tear and spray paint a prom dress—maybe your wedding dress after your divorce; nobody said your art can't be wearable.

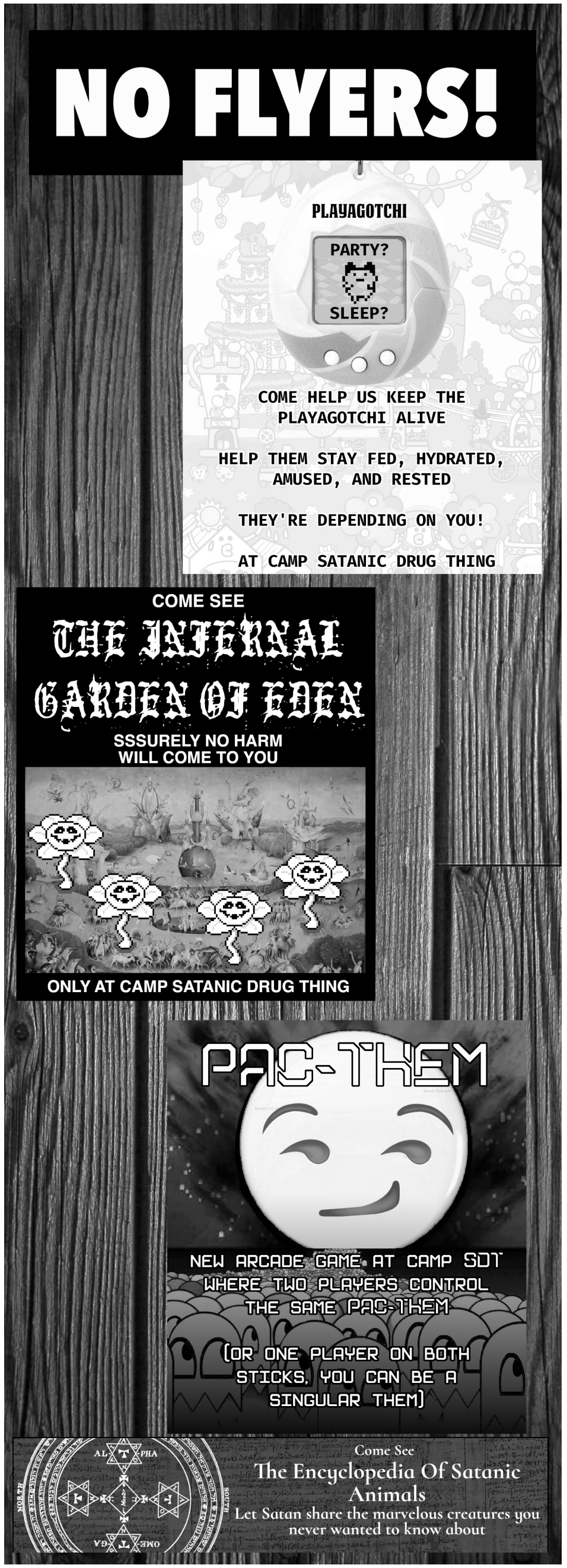
We love to see a grand ensemble that inspires us to make our imaginations become reality, but there are a few things to keep in mind when planning your attire:

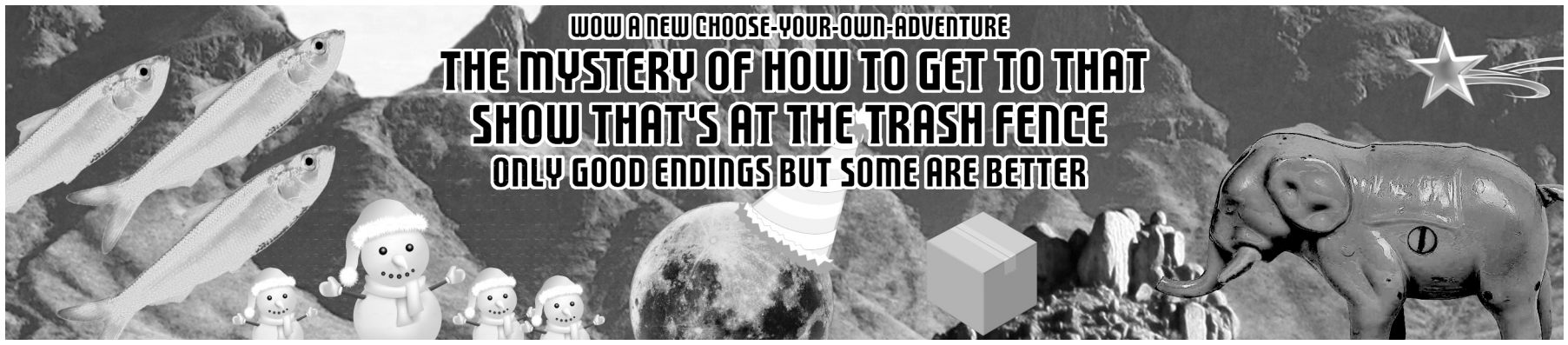
- Comfort. If you don't enjoy wearing your creation, you won't. Maybe you're okay with showing off your regalia for a short time before slipping into something more comfortable, but if you're hoping to show off your creation for the whole day, make sure it's something comfortable. This means not only how it fits your body, but how warm you'll be. I might wear as many as three outfits per day to accommodate daytime, sunset, and evening temperatures. "Sunset" might just mean I need another layer. Learn from my failure: I made a Korok costume out of fake fur that looked so good, but it was way too hot to wear even at night.

- Portos. How easily can you access your elimination ports through your outfit? Onesies are comfortable and colorful and can have nice fuzzy material, but they can be a hassle to deal with in the portos while under the influence, especially with layers underneath. Two-piece outfits can be a better choice for some. Skirts and dresses are even better. Learn from my failure: I once wore a two piece long underwear set over a one-piece unitard which required removing the long underwear top to get the catsuit off, leaving me cold and topless in the porto.

- MOOP. In the attempt to leave no trace, be sure your outfit's shiny and dangly bits will stay on no matter what shenanigans you get up to. Glitter is notorious for leaving traces. Sequins, beads, or anything you may have haphazardly hot glued on should be given a slap or shake to see how they will survive the event. Learn from my failure: I made a complicated Jupiter costume complete with 95 moons on strings attached to a skirt that tangled up after walking for five minutes. Luckily nothing broke off, but it was a disappointing display of the time and effort I put into it.

Regardless of how you choose to dress, I hope your clothes are an extra way you enjoy your experience, and that you're able to wear things that allow you to express elements of yourself that make you feel good.





1. You were really intending to get going and to the party early. And yes, maybe this time, again, it didn't quite work out for you and now you're running late, but you have no worries because this time you're going to make sure there will be no unexpected adventures, no getting lost, and no weird ideas that end in near disaster. No, this time you're just going to go directly to a fun party. Luckily, you heard the electronic band Red, Her Rings (yes, they write it with the comma each time) are playing at the trash fence tonight. While you're not 100% clear on how to get to the trash fence, it can't be that hard, really. I mean, if trash can find it, surely you can, too. Any which way you go you're bound to hit it, so the only question is do you start by going...

A) clockwise? — go to 12
B) counterclockwise? — go to 21

2. As the elephant building team is filling you in on the details, you quickly learn the problem is their power source. Turns out, a mechanical elephant of this magnitude can't be powered with electricity, springs, or any other normal thing of that nature. No, this is an elephant of a different species entirely, so to speak. The elephant is real in the sense it's a physical object you can touch, but you immediately realize it has a meta-sociological component too: this elephant is a concept we're all collaboratively agreeing on. You understand that to power the elephant is to power a connection between it and everyone who can sense, perceive, and interpret it. It can't exist without those who see/touch/hear it. With that in mind, the singular course of action available is obvious, it is...

A) ... to power the elephant with yourself — go to 11
B) ... to power the elephant with everyone — go to 24

3. You have a brilliant idea. It's famously efficient and possible to cool things by just separating the hot parts from the cool parts using a little divider called a Maxwell's Demon. You and the Moon summon one real quick, the Moon being a real expert on occult knowledge, and you quickly set the demon to work. The demon's task is simple: determine what is hottest on your satellite, then eject the hot thing into space. It's just you and the Moon here really, and after some deliberation the demon decides you're hotter. Well, it's a fair cop, you are attractive. So to cool the satellite they jettison you into space and the Moon and demon keep going while you float peacefully off into the far reaches of the cosmos, still aglow with the compliment on your appearance.

4. You ask the people on the other side of the International Date Change Line about how to find the show that will have happened later today. They explain they can't know that: the show still hasn't happened in your timeline so they couldn't know. Wait, what's that mean? What's a timeline? Two brief explanations later, you learn the future isn't a single predictable outcome but an infinitude of them spread across an entire conceptual hyperspace. These future people, by virtue of their futureness, have easy access to this knowledge of time-space and share it with you. Soon, you too are open to the timecosmos and realize the show is already happening, some-time, and will be happening some-time all the time. This is a great relief to you and your former issues with deadlines, you head out into what feels like a new time-world with your new sense of time-freedom.

5. You figure that being a physical object yourself you're a good representative for the physical folks: you're good at talking, and you're probably qualified to engage in some contractual shadowboxing, if you pardon the expression. Nevertheless, the arbitration runs for hours. You utilize all your contract skills: plausible rhetoric, emotional appeals, legalese-sounding minutia, and even an odd shaggy dog story. As things are winding down, you're hopeful you won some pretty big concessions. Yes, you freed all shadows forever and also signed a deal that forces all 3d-people to spend their lives following the shadows forever instead, but in exchange the shadows agree to do one last bit of shadowing and relay the Red, Her Rings show to you, which is nice for you today, and tomorrow... Well, tomorrow is tomorrow's problem.

6. You explain to the shadows that united labor power is not enough. What they really need is political power through government representation. What if they use their super following-people skills to shadow the people currently ruling and create their own versions of all the power structures? In other words create a shadow president, a shadow attorney general, shadow secretary of labor, etc. Having full knowledge of the details of all the ruling processes will give them precise knowledge of how to lobby to most efficiently tip the levers of power. The shadows think it's a great idea and soon set up their own shadow cabinet through which they work their shadowy forces. While you miss the show, you do get a personal stake in the new shadowy world order, and having shadowy friends in high places is definitely worth it. For the record, this ending is actually a pretty funny joke though you might need to ask a British friend to help explain it, and, as we all know, it's always the best sort of joke when the writer literally has to tell you "believe me it's actually funny..."

7. The real problem, you quickly realize, is they're not just literally frozen, they're also figuratively frozen, aka ‘isolated’ and ‘ice-olated’. So the point is you have to get to know them to make them feel less alone and more like a greater part of the human family. After all, Madonna once said, “We're all frozen when our hearts are not open,” or something like that; she made it fit in the syllable count. The first step to accomplish this is to freeze along with them so you can talk to them on their level. What do you think is the best way to do that?

A) It's simple, just stop time — go to 18
B) It's simple, just stop space — go to 32

8. Ok, you got this, you can explain to the Moon why it needs to go back into the sky. You point out that if every orbital body suddenly decided it can abandon its position and head out any which way it pleases, all orbital systems would tear themselves apart. And you do mean "all of them", from supergalaxies down to electrons in tiny orbits around atomic nuclei (lucky for you the Moon is not familiar with the cloud model of electron distribution). So to keep all matter as matter and not high velocity radiation, we all must do our part, and the Moon has a proven duty to stay in orbit. The Moon, try as it might, can't find a way to critique your reason here, and does return into our sky. Whew, quite a night. You never did find that show but you did prevent the complete disintegration of all objects across all scales, and that's always nice.

9. Trains usually go to specific places, you need to go to a specific place, this seems like a perfect match. You hop on and soon after are flying down the rails at a safe and reasonable speed. The pleasant rhythmic 'ticking' sound lulls you into a drowsy state and you doze off. You wake suddenly as the train arrives at its second to last stop, right before the International Date Change Line. Hm, maybe that doze wasn't as brief as you thought. Now it's time for a quick decision: hop out here at the Date Change Line, or ride on to whatever the last stop turns out to be?

A) Stop here at the International Date Change Line — go to 44
B) Keep going to the last stop — go to 30

10. You’re not afraid of a wee coldsnap. You're made of tougher stuff. Or maybe you remembered to wear your playa-coat for once. No matter what reason, you'll walk right through this slight chill. Well, it was a slight chill before the sudden freezing temperatures and, moments later, an even more sudden blinding snowstorm. You stumble through the biting sleet, not entirely sure what's in front of you, until you arrive at a dead end where two camps have set up. In one, you see a lone snowperson slowly rolling a ball of snow towards a second snowperson-in-progress; while the other camp looks fairly normal except it’s been fully encased in ice. You decide to...

A) Take a moment to investigate the snowperson making a snowperson — go to 64
B) Take a moment to investigate the camp that's been frozen in ice — go to 36

11. The solution is, of course, to power the elephant using yourself. You explain to everyone working on it that the elephant is currently just an object. It only exists because other people choose to interpret it as an elephant. A real elephant exists as a subject: it senses and perceives too. The only way for this elephant to be truly powered with the power of subjectivity is for you to become a part of the elephant. Swayed by your argument, the people working on the elephant help you meld your mind with the mechanical construct, and moments later you are powering the metal behemoth and beginning your new life as a giant pachyderm. It comes with an unexpected bonus: with your new elephant ability to perceive low frequency sounds over huge distances, you can hear the bass-heavy show all the way over at the trash fence from where you are now. A real win/win of a night for you.

12. Might as well do the clock-intelligent thing and go clockwise. Right, off you go. You set out with a sense of purpose and a spring in your step, though the spring ends up being a little ironic as only minutes later a miniature, and very localized, winter storm brews ahead. It even starts to look like a snowfall is coming. An art car shaped like a large cabbage is cruising by and seems to be skirting around the edge of the budding blizzard. Convenient if you want to avoid the cold. Decision time: You decide to...

A) Brave the cold and carry on on foot — go to 10
B) Hop on the art car and see where it takes you — go to 50

13. You know you can't 'melt' just a localized bit of ice. You have to tackle the entire problem holistically. Everything is connected to everything else, which means the only solution is planetary scale atmospheric geoengineering. Luckily planetary scale atmospheric geoengineering is a well understood and totally safe craft, so it's neither dangerous nor complicated for you to skew the entire world's climate for the sake of melting this one, admittedly quite large ice cube. You quickly cut up a few quadrillion tiny metal rods the exact length to scatter thermal energy (about a sixth of the width of a human hair) and scatter them around the atmosphere. Soon the temperatures rise enough to release the nice camp people. They all thank you and invite you over to have a hang with them, and while you don't have a plan just yet for removing these quadrillions of heating rods, you do feel satisfied you solved their problem, hopefully without causing any irreversible side-effects like a runaway atmospheric heating scenario.

14. You explain to the snowperson they don't exist. Or rather, that they already exist as each individual snowflake, and the idea of a snowperson is a construct they're voluntarily choosing to collaborate in. Therefore there are no contradictions at all, just different terms for different levels of voluntary association between consenting snowindividuals. The snowflakes breathe a sigh of relief and, instead of finishing the second snowperson, they make a plea to the

snowflakes in the area to create a voluntary association in the shapes of other snowpeople. Soon, you got yourself an entire group of voluntarily associating snowpeople, and as a thank you, they throw you a little party and concert. They might not be the Red, Her Rings band you were going to see, but they sure played some good coldwave.

15. No need to go overboard with your newly found life creation powers. That stuff always backfires. You help the snowperson make the second snowperson so they can keep each other company, then the two of them invite you in for a quick cold drink. Well, you do have a show to catch but you can spare a minute or two. You quickly get lost in the conversation with the snowpeople as you have so much in common, like, for instance, not understanding your own creation or the nature of your own consciousness. The minutes become hours and you finally decide to spend the rest of your life with the snowpeople as, after all, some families you're born into, and some are colony hive minds you bring to life through poorly understood abiogenesis.

16. Thinking ahead to your concert needs, you quickly decide on sapience. After all, you'll be able to ask the elephant for help getting to the show. Some would think achieving this would be difficult but after a couple bing bang bongs with a hammer, you got yourself a conversation-ready elephant complete with all the wisdom of the ages. You ask it to take you to the show, but lacking a consciousness, it's not experiencing itself or the world, so it can't navigate. Nevertheless it is sapient, so it makes an incredibly compelling case as to why you would be happier not going to the show at all. Convinced by the elephant, you decide to call it an early night and while you don't recall every part of the argument it made, you do feel satisfied and happy with your choice.

17. The best way to help the snowperson work efficiently, you decide, is to help them understand themselves and their own past. Currently they are a mass consciousness that is experiencing all of their past lives at the same time, making them confused about what's here and now. After becoming a single unified person, they will definitely be able to get this done faster. After all, as the saying goes, "Fewer hands make light work". Now the only question remaining is how to do that. Do you...

A) Explain to the snowperson that all snow is just one being — go to 29
B) Explain to the snowperson that each snowflake is a separate being — go to 14

18. This is pretty easy conceptually: when you're frozen you can't move. If time stops, you also can't move. Therefore you simply need to freeze time locally, for yourself, and you'll be able to join these people and hopefully help them feel less alone. You concentrate all your will onto really capturing a single moment and nothing else outside of it, and with an audible *pop* you lock yourself into just that infinitesmall of time. You also realize you didn't have a very well defined step two, but you also see you don't need one. Now that you're here, you realize these people aren't trapped, they're at peace. They have no past to feel guilt about, and no future to be anxious of. They're all just right now and now you're at peace along with them. You're not at the show, but that's fine because the show is in the future and always will be, and you're here and now.

19. You decide the obvious thing is to quickly make an artificial satellite and ride that into space. You and the Moon grab what's available: some twigs, rocks, and a bit of good vibes, and off you go at superorbital speeds. That was really easy, all considered. Looks like this space travel stuff is not exactly rocket science. Well, other than the fact that there's no atmosphere in space so you're having a hard time dissipating the heat from your satellite. Yes, that's a real thing and hot satellites are a real problem, but luckily you have just the solution:

A) Cool the satellite by radiation — go to 56
B) Cool the satellite by using a Maxwell's Demon — go to 3

20. You and the Moon quickly and easily catch a falling star, hop on, then turn it around and head back towards space, soon leaving the Earth's atmosphere. Something about riding a falling star appeals to you. Maybe it's the fact it's an ancient traveler from beyond; maybe it's the practicality of reusing it; or maybe it's its ephemeral nature that the Japanese call "Je ne sais quoi." Also, you're definitely thinking clearly and not experiencing a low oxygen hallucination. In fact, you're thinking so clearly you vaguely remember you should be doing something important. Something to do with when you see a falling star. You're supposed to "make-a-something," but you can't quite remember what. Maybe it rhymed with 'dish'? What was it?

A) Oh, it was "make a wish" — go to 41
B) Oh, it was "make a fish" — go to 28

21. Counterclockwise is obviously your choice. The conformist lifestyle isn't for you, you're a true revolutionary. Or wait, perhaps since you're going counter-clockwise maybe you're a true counter-revolutionary instead? Wait, wouldn't that be the opposite of a revolutionary? Does that mean revolutionaries are conformists? You're pulled out of your train of thought by someone whispering to you, and realize you almost walked into an actual train (or at least a large art car shaped like a classic locomotive with cars, on some tracks here). Confused, you look around to see who was whispering and see what appears to be the Moon waving you over, just past the train and behind a copse of thickets. Still set on your mission, you decide to...

A) Jump on the train, it's probably going to the show — go to 9
B) Walk over to the Moon, it probably knows where the show is — go to 34

22. You read the placard in front of the Temporal Post Office and soon realize the concept is quite simple: a normal post office lets you send stuff to other places, but a temporal post office lets you send stuff to other times. Well, hang on now party partner, this might be the solution to the 'how to get to the show on time' problem you're having. A bit of light time traveling, a technology we're certainly all very familiar with that's super common and easy to understand, is just the thing for your time sensitive situation. But how exactly will you use it?

A) Simple, send a letter to yourself yesterday — go to 38
B) Simple, send yourself to yesterday — go to 63

23. You're just going to talk to the future people, no need to make any huge changes yet. After all, just getting to talk to people of tomorrow is amazing enough. How often will you get this opportunity? Well, I suppose you'd get it every time you went by the International Date Change Line, but how often do you really get to do that? And what if you do go by but there's no one there at the time just an empty field or someth... WAIT, you're getting distracted again. Focus. What were you going to ask the tomorrow people?

A) Ask them how to find the show you will have been going to go to yestertoday — go to 4
B) Ask them what's the most important thing to know about yestertoday — go to 43

24. The solution is, of course, to power the elephant by having everyone pitch in to perceive it as powered. You explain to everyone working around you that since objects are not just sensed but also interpreted, it's actually easier to change every mind in the world to understand that the elephant has already powered up. Swayed by your argument, the camp helps you construct a mass experience-interpretation-modifying antenna that broadcasts a signal to all consciousnesses around. Soon, you're all experiencing partying with the elephant. In fact, the elephant turns out to be so entertaining, you forget all about the show tonight and just enjoy a great evening hosted by the pachyderm. The unexpected ease with which reality itself, or rather our experience of it, was changed by you and this camp doesn't really bother you, but somewhere far away it bothers someone else. A strange watchful creature in a lab coat working a late nightshift monitoring our reality frowns and makes a note in red pen on its clipboard.

25. You approach the shadowy looking characters and quickly realize the reason they look shadowy is because they're literal shadows. They are marching, chanting, and waving picket signs around to announce they're going on strike. You chat with them a bit on their two-dimensional picket line and learn that their demands are simple: they want the freedom to not be forced to follow us around all day and night (if the moon is out). Since resolving metaphorical heavy labor disputes is your forte, this sounds like a simple thing to quickly figure out before you continue on. In fact, you already have an idea. You suggest...

A) You'll represent corporal people and arbitrate with the union — go to 5
B) They start a shadow government — go to 6

26. You currently have no date for the show. If you were to change that, you would definitely have a date. That's just simple logic. I suppose you could get an anti-date, but that feels too absurdist even for this Choose Your Own Adventure. Ok, you try really hard and, using the International Date Change Line, you change your date state aaaaaaaaaand now you have one. Or actually, a whole lot of them. A full dozen adorable date palm fruit dates. They're tiny and ready to party. Utterly charmed by their endearing antics, you soon forget about the Red, Her Rings show you were going to and instead go out and party all across the event with your new date dates and have a great time.

27. You come up with the perfect plan: you tell the Moon that a bunny went missing somewhere at the event. An avid admirer of all lagomorphs, the Moon is about to head out to help look for it when you implement part two of the plan. You tell the Moon you have the ground covered, but you need the Moon's help to look in the sky. Agreeing to this division of labor, the Moon takes off. You're chuckling at how easy that was when suddenly from up in the sky, the Moon calls out it found the rabbit. Confused, you look up. Sure enough, there is a rabbit with the Moon, and they seem happy together? Huh. Now that the Moon has a pet to take care of, the Moon seems generally content and not likely to come down again. Well, this didn't go the way you thought, but it looks like everyone is happy, including you, after a great party, though that weird new rabbit shape on the Moon will take some getting used to.

28. Oh yes, that's right, when you see a falling star you're supposed to make a fish. You close your eyes and think really hard and *poof* you create a band of large anchovies or maybe herrings or sardines. And band is right, you must have had tonight's show on your mind cause these fish are playing some great beats. There's a bit of a doppler shift going on though, adding some extra bass to the music and a bit of redshift to their color. Good music too. Well, as the story wraps up it looks like you never found that Red, Her Rings show, but you did end up creating for yourself a nice red herrings show.

29. You explain to the snowperson that since they're already made up of an entire colony of snowflakes, there's no particular reason why their body border should be anywhere at all. Why not just include in their body all the snow that exists as one great hive mind? Furthermore, why should they limit themselves to snow? Why not also become the consciousness of water vapor as well? The snowperson agrees fully, now that you've explained it, and soon you're speaking to a meta-entity that spans the entire planet, or at least the parts of the planet with humidity. This means they're also at that Red, Her Rings show you were going to, and while they can't get you there, they do a great job of describing it to you, and that's almost as good.

30. You figure since the trash fence is the furthest point, you should therefore ride the train to the last stop. Couldn't be more obvious. Soon, the train pulls up to the final station then shuts down for the night. The voice on the speaker announces, "Last stop, the Quiet Camps". Ah. Well. Hm. Not the trash fence then. The quiet area is probably not the best place for a Red, Her Rings show to happen, but you guess you'd better hop off and look around since you have no choice. There are two camps here: the Museum of Old Sounds, and the Camp of Past and Future Yous.

A) The Museum of Old Sounds sounds interesting. Go there — go to 53
B) The Camp of Past and Future Yous interests you. Go there — go to 48

31. Hello, you've found the hidden paragraph for this adventure. There's no way to reach this paragraph while following the rules so you must be reading stuff out of order you naughty minx you. Ok, as is the tradition in this hidden paragraph you get the solution to how to solve last year's adventure in what might be the best way: go to the loud side, go in the canyon, go towards the clock, offer to help with the clocktower, then climb the

tower. Not the punniest/cleverest one, but quite possibly the nicest image of the lot.

32. You know stopping space is the correct solution. After all, the only way to tell if something is frozen is to see if other things are moving relative to its stillness, and for that, time has to keep passing. So, how to stop space? Sure, it's simple enough to stop molecules by making things colder, but how do you stop actual space, the empty volume around them? Not to bog things down with pesky details, you find a method to do just that using only what you had in your pockets, some nearby sticks, and an adorable quail feather that was by your feet. A bit of fiddly-widdly and soon you have frozen rigid the folds of the fabric of space. This immediately ends gravitational fluctuations and guarantees Earth's orbit around the sun will slowly extend outwards. You are able to at last join the people in camp and have a chill hang out, and it's chill because the Earth's slowly increasing orbit gradually lowers the temperature. As a new eternal night begins you wonder to yourself whether "fiddly-widdly" is a real expression or if you just made that up.

33. You have the International Date Change Line here and you are not afraid to use it. You immediately get to the root of the problem. Yes, in this version of today you made a few mistakes (like not checking where the Red, Her Rings show is), but if you had a new go of it, you wouldn't make those same mistakes “today” again “tomorrow”. No sirreebob, you'd definitely not waste any time, you'd get started really early, and just generally buckle down and get organized. You can envision it now: a new you and a new version of this day. It all would work out. So with the help of the International Date Change Line, you try really hard aaaaaaaaand there you go, you changed the date back to this morning.

A) Go to 1

34. The one thing we know about the Moon is that it's up in the sky, therefore it can see everything. Well, it's usually up in the sky. Currently, it's at this unnamed desert camping event, behind some bushes, calling you over. I mean, how can you say no to an opportunity to talk to a celebrity of this magnitude. That'd be lunacy. So you walk over and, a short conversation later, you know all about the Moon's problem: it came down to Earth because it wants to party but it doesn't really know how. You quickly decide...

A) To stick to your plan and take the Moon to a party here on Earth — go to 60
B) To change the plan and take the Moon to go party in outer space — go to 47

35. The answer is obvious: you should thaw them out. Why would you even consider freezing along with them? The goal established, it's now a question of how to accomplish the state change. In so many words, HOW to thaw them out? Whatever you do, though, you should ensure the approach is proportional to the problem. In past years of adventures, you've been guilty of perhaps, how to put it gently, slightly over-engineering your solutions. So, again, what's a nice simple way to thaw out these good people?

A) Stop the world and melt with them — go to 46
B) Change the entire planet's atmospheric composition — go to 13

36. You stand before the giant ice cube with the camp 'floating' inside. It makes you recall that old D&D illustration of a gelatinous cube with the bones inside. Or unbranded gelatin dessert with fruits suspended, which is probably the more universally familiar simile, except these aren't fruits or bones, but people, frozen and alone. Touched by their plight you know you have to take a moment out of your journey to help them, that's for sure. But how?

A) You thaw them out — go to 35
B) You freeze along with them — go to 7

37. You suspect the Moon is partying way too hard right now to listen to reason. You're going to have to come up with some clever way to get the Moon back up into the sky. Something both impossible to see through as a trick, and that will also require the Moon to stay up there and not just come back down immediately. Luckily, you're just the sort of trickster that could fool even the largest sub-planetary orbital bodies of this solar system (including this one that's largest as a percentage of its parent planet!), because your plan is to...

A) Get it to help look for a fake missing animal up there — go to 27
B) Tell it there's a concert in the sky it simply must go to — go to 62

38. Let's keep things simple and just write a quick letter to your past self. You quickly jot down the stuff you could have done better, like leave a bit earlier and find out where exactly the show was first, then add some good motivational quotes from yourself to yourself to help you get there. You address it to yourself from this morning, stamp it, drop it in the mailbox, then immediately retrieve it again from your back pocket where you forgot it (still unread) from this morning when it got delivered to you. Right, time travel, of course, otherwise it'd be a time paradox. Well, turns out this clever plan was undone by your forgetfulness, but you take solace in the fact it was a very clever plan, indeed. For now, you might as well find out what parties are happening around here, and you have some great motivational quotes to help you enjoy where and when you are instead of worrying about where and when you aren't.

39. Thinking ahead to your concert needs, you quickly decide on consciousness. After all, this way you can ride the elephant to the show, which should both be faster and a very dramatic entrance. Turns out, all it really needed was some yogurt for its gut bacteria and some quantum particles, both of which you happen to have on you. *Poof* the mechanical elephant is now conscious, experiencing phenomena, and sensing the world. You hop on and tell it to take you to the Red, Her Rings show but it instead ignores you and heads off to eat some mechanical grass. Ah, right, it's conscious but at an elephant level, so probably not aware of the show or experiencing any sense of obligation to you. Being slightly stuck on top of the 20 foot tall mechanical beast, you accept things with an open heart and ride out into the world as the elephant follows its mechanical wants.

40. You figure a giant elephant can both be used to get places, and, since you'd sit quite high up on its back, it might help you spot the show. This one in particular is also a real beast: a colossal clockwork marvel that would have done serious numbers in a Tumblr post twenty years ago; a masterwork of gears, whatnots, and doohickies. You approach the people assembling its final parts and ask if you can assist. As it turns out you can. Two of the teams need a helping hand: one currently preparing to power up the elephant, and one preparing its mind.

A) It should be easy to power an elephant. You'll do that — go to 2
B) It should be easy to create a mind for an elephant. You'll do that — go to 51

41. Oh yes, that's right, when you see a falling star you're supposed to make a wish. As you and the Moon are hurtling into space, riding a falling star, you close your eyes and decide to make a wish. The wish soon materializes on the star next to you and asks you to explain what's going on. Ah, oops, it seems you've literally made a wish. You made the concept of wishing into a short little fuzzy critter that's frankly pretty cute. A short conversation later, you, the Moon, and the wish head off into the universe arm in arm in arm to party where no person, metaphorical concept, or orbital planetoid have partied before.

42. You finish the second snowperson and it, indeed, quickly comes to life. You then explain to both snowpeople your plan: you are going to each create a new snowperson, then each of those create more, until, exponentially, you have a whole legion of snowpeople warriors under your command. You can picture them now, marching united in snowconquest. Finding the plan to be without flaws, the three of you set forth with purpose and get each new snow person to start making more. As you watch the dozens of snowpeople become hundreds, you know that you'll soon be ready to campaign out of the snowstorm where your very meltable troops will definitely not run into any issues in the warm festival weather.

43. You ask the people on the other side of the International Date Change Line what the most important thing you should know about tomorrow is. At first they sorta shrug in a ‘how should they know’ way before one of them says, "Hey, aren't you the person at the trash fence show that's going to will have happened?” Uh oh, maybe you are, you realize. You are, in fact, a person and were heading there. “Oh man,” they say, “glad you asked us. You almost were to going to have made a real mess out there.” They then say something about alternate timelines, giant mechanical elephants, museums, post offices, the Moon disappearing, the Earth spinning off into space, an army of snowpeople, shadows rebelling, and even some confusion about the International Date Change Line. Well phew, you're glad you didn't end up going. Bullet dodged, sounds like. Having been successfully forewarned you decide maybe the right thing to do is not choose any adventures and just have a nice chill night away from the trash fence tonight.

44. You gotta jump off the train here. This is too great an opportunity. I mean, this is the world famous International Date Change Line. You see a camp on the other side of it who are living in your tomorrow - exactly 24 hours in your future. They must already know what happened later tonight and you could call someone over to ask them. Alternatively you realized you could use the power of the line yourself and use it to gain the knowledge of the future, since it definitely works that way and isn't confusing at all. The International Date Change Line's name, after all, implies you can use it to change the date. Um, internationally. Torn between the two choices you decide to...

A) Ask people about the future — go to 23
B) Change the date, internationally — go to 54

45. You head into Center Camp and have a look around. Seems like most of the services are closed for today except the Temporal Post Office: your one-stop shop to send a letter to the past or future. There's also commotion over near the middle of Center Camp where a bunch of shadowy characters are staging a protest of some sort with picket signs you have a hard time reading from here. You gotta get to the show soon, but you have enough time to check one of these things out. Which one is it gonna be?

A) Check out the temporal post office real quick then you're heading out! — go to 22
B) Check out the shadowy protest real quick then you're heading out! — go to 25

46. This whole unfreezing them thing is not a problem because, luckily, you know of an old folk tale, a story passed down generation to generation, that tells you exactly how to do this: you're going to stop the world which will melt the ice. With practiced mental effort, you bring the planet to a screeching halt, and, exactly as the story promised, the ice starts melting. Almost immediately you can see it's getting better, all the time. Soon the people are free and, while you do end up missing the Red, Her Rings show you were going to, you do feel after that good deed your future is wide open. Also, if you get these references this is a reminder to schedule your next preventive colonoscopy.

47. Since the Moon is all about the space life, and you're all about the party life, sounds like a party in space is perfect for both of you. There's only one tiny logistical problem: you're both on Earth and getting to space is... complicated. After discarding such preliminary plans as, "Plan 3: Climb a tall tree and jump", "Plan 7: Find huge kangaroo and get it to jump instead", and "Plan 9: Start from outer space and then it's easy,” you finally come up with two pretty solid ideas. You pick...

A) "Plan 12: Ride a satellite up" — go to 19
B) "Plan 13: Ride a shooting star up" — go to 20

48. A Camp of Past and Future Yous must be fascinating, since you're a fascinating person. You set off towards them and on approach see they seem to be having a nice wine soirée thing going. Past yous from all your past eras hang out, swap stories, tell jokes. You spot some yous bearing past fashion mistakes you recognize, and also many yous bearing fashion mistakes you don't yet recognize. Luckily it does appear you'll age gracefully, not that you were ever in doubt. You mingle, picking up a bit of chatter here and there, and munch on the varied potluck snacks (it looks like you're really going to get into home pickling radishes in about 15 years), before you jump into deeper conversation with...

A) Your past selves — go to 58
B) Your future selves — go to 57

49. Ok, you got this, you can explain to the Moon why it needs to go back into the sky. You point out that the Moon's function and nature is to orbit. That is what moons do. It goes without saying it

can only flourish as a moon when it *is* a moon. A moon partying in the desert is no longer a moon and so would stop existing as such. In fact, now that the Moon has started partying you both can see that it is already starting to disappear. The Moon is waning right before your eyes. It was a full circle not long ago, but it's already lost a visible slice of itself. Well, you certainly can't explain that slow disappearance in any other way. It must be because the Moon has lost its sense of purpose. The Moon thanks you for saving it from disappearing fully before it heads back into orbit, and while you didn't quite make it to the show you wanted to, you did throw a great party and saved the Moon from waning into nothing, and that's always nice.

50. Who doesn't love a cabbage, especially in vehicular form. Of course you hop on, get cozy between the leaves, and wonder to yourself if, indeed, the things that make up a cabbage are actually leaves. I mean, they have to be right? What else would they be? They're not like "cabbage layers" or something... or are they? Can you really have leaves completely underneath other leaves? How do they even get light? You go so deeply in thought over this botanical quandary you don't realize the car went in exactly the opposite direction of the trash fence and you're now almost at Center Camp. Looks like there's some sort of activity happening in Center Camp proper, while next to it some people are finishing up putting together a giant mechanical elephant. Time to decide which way to head next.

A) You try Center Camp. Maybe someone there can guide you to the show — go to 45
B) Let's try the giant elephant. Maybe from on top you can see where the show is — go to 40

51. You jump in to help the elephant building team and quickly get caught up: it turns out while the elephant's *brain* is all done, the elephant's *mind* is not. It also turns out they ran out of space, so to speak, to fit both sapience and consciousness into the project, so they need your help picking one. No problem at all, since you know exactly what those things are, and you're very clear on the distinction between them. In exchange for your assistance they agree to have the elephant take you to the show afterwards. So, you choose to help the elephant...

A) Achieve sapience — go to 16
B) Achieve consciousness — go to 39

52. You figure the Moon is a rational orbital body, so appealing to its reason sounds like the way to go. You quickly learn, however, that the Moon is not having any of it. It's enjoying the heck out of this party and, turns out, going around the Earth every 27 or so days got old many millions of years ago. You're going to need to come up with more persuasive argument. That's no problem, though, since you're a cunning sophist with the exact right card up your sleeve.

A) Argue that orbiting is a universal imperative for the Moon — go to 8
B) Argue the functional identity of the Moon comes from orbiting — go to 49

53. You walk into the Museum of Old Sounds, a large building constructed here at the event, and are immediately fascinated by the huge breadth and depth of the collection. Incredible pieces here, like the sunrise whistling of the colossi of Memnon, the revving of a cold AMC Gremlin failing to turn over in a Minnesota winter, the cracking of the Tsar bell, and Le Pétomane's.... well, a documentation of his incredible abdominal fortitude let's say. Before you get totally distracted, you decide to find something specific as a goal, and that thing is...

A) The concert that's playing tonight — go to 61
B) Maybe just some inner peace — go to 55

54. You're a person of action, not words. "Cut first and ask questions about the measurements later" is your motto. Now use this International Date Change Line for what it's meant for: changing dates. The only question is what sort of date are we changing because, sure, this thing can alter the present calendar date, no problem, but there's also your little who-you're-going-to-the-show-with problem. I didn't want to bring this up earlier because it's sort of awkward, but it's nobody: you're going with nobody. You might be able to use the International Date Change Line to change that.

A) Change the calendar date — go to 33
B) Change your (non-existent) date into a real date for the show — go to 26

55. You realize that, yes, you were looking for the show, but really you were looking for a bit of inner peace, and the concert was just a way to achieve that. Maybe that inner peace can be found here in one of the exhibits in the Museum of Old Sounds instead. You check out the handy Guide-Map Poster to see what else is around where you are, when an interesting room jumps out at you labeled "Nothing". A short walk later, you enter the room and freeze in shock because, for the first time, you experience Nothing. Not the mere 'silence' we're used to, punctuated with the background susurration of air flow, or the sounds and movement of our own body's heart and blood. No, somehow this room makes real and tangible the experience of Not Experiencing. You're so bowled over by this active absence it might bring you to tears if tears didn't feel like they'd be too loud. Soon, you'll go back to your camp a new and humbler person, but for now you stay here in perfect silence and calm, experiencing a quiet moment of peace for the first time.

56. You happen to know the most common way to cool a satellite is by using radiators to scatter heat away. You explain to the Moon your plan for temperature control and soon the two of you are collecting subatomic particles and scattering them into space. This works great, and, for a while, you're cooler than an icecream bar in sunglasses, but unfortunately you soon run out of subatomic particles. No worries though, as you start radiating parts of the satellite, and later parts of yourself and the Moon that are not super critical. And so you two party out into the infinitude of space, spreading your grooving atoms across the cosmos, and over time you become the grooviest parts of countless galaxies.

57. You head to the area where future yous are talking and move around munching on pickled radish slices with some truly bizarre toppings (you suspect Psyllium berries are a future thing, and you're very sure telepathic apples aren't real in your time despite the haunting voice of the apples insisting they were first grown by the CIA in the 1950s). You find a group of future yous talking about the great parties of yous' lives and ask them about the show tonight. They look at you like only a you could, and all agree: Do Not Go To The Red, Her Rings Show Tonight. Wow, ok, calm down, geez. You ask why but they all agree that telling you more would cause a paradox. Fine, you can take a hint. This is a nice little event and you find yourselves pleasant companions, so you decide to trust the future yous and skip the show, because frankly if you can't trust yourselves whom can you trust?

58. You go to the part of the party where your past selves are hanging out and jump into some conversations. You know how people at parties make little circles and you just kinda hover at the perimeter chiming in here and there? You're doing that. You ask a few questions (mostly of the "what on Earth was I thinking when..." and "oh hey, where did I leave this, I haven't found it in years" variety), but soon enough, you instead find yourself fielding questions from the past yous. Makes sense, to them you're a future you that can bring some sage advice. You tell your past selves, hey, maybe all you yous shouldn't be so hard on yourselves all the time, and maybe they yous are actually doing better than yous worry yous are. The grammar is a bit tongue twisty, but you think you get the message across to the yous. And maybe you can take some of your own advice here: yes you didn't find the show but you did have good conversations and a nice wine and pickled radish pairing, and that's a good enough evening that you and yous should feel good about.

59. You help the snowperson push the sphere, making better progress now that you can help focus the snowperson's efforts. Once that sphere is done, you set to work on the next two. While rolling, a thought occurs to you, and you ask the snowperson what, exactly, is the difference between a couple of stacked snowballs and a living snowperson. They're not sure, they say, it just sort of happens. Hm. Odd. As you start working on the third and final sphere you start to ask yourself, should you stop after this second snowperson like planned?

A) Yes, shouldn't be changing the plan now — go to 15
B) Hmm, what if you make a whole lot of them — go to 42

60. You start teaching the Moon how to party right where you two are standing and soon enough people start gathering to understand both why a large orbital body is partying down here, and how you're both partying so hard. Not long after, a whole proper shindig is happening right here with a huge crowd, music, and even a mooning contest. The party runs late into the night before a worry strikes you. If the Moon is partying down here, who's keeping all the tides going? What about the animals that spawn only under the light of the Moon? There's a vast ecological problem brewing, which means you have to find a way to get the Moon back into space and soon. You decide to...

A) Explain the situation to the Moon and convince it to go back — go to 52
B) Trick the Moon into going back — go to 37

61. Of course! The Museum of Old Sounds is your chance to catch the show without having to find the trash fence. You quickly move to the music wing, then up the stairs to the concerts floor (it's a multistory building, how did they even get this built out here?), then start flying past the events looking for tonight's. There really are a lot of concerts in this museum. You skim past moments like Richard Nixon's rousing piano performance of "She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain" for Chairman Mao, the first Latin plainchant mass in the Hagia Sophia, Robert Johnson's first show after that crossroads thing, and boom there it is: Red, Her Rings live at the trash fence, tonight. You settle in just as it's starting, and while you're listening in the empty museum at night (and not at the show itself), you notice the sound quality is incredible here and frankly the vibes are kinda magical too.

62. You come up with the perfect plan: you tell the Moon there's a show, and it'll be a big one, right up there in the sky. Yeah, out there in far orbit, equidistant from the Lagrange points. Right at the trash fence of the sky. Don't worry though, you tell the Moon, it will definitely be easy to find it once it gets up there. The Moon takes off to look for it, glowing with excitement, and starts to search for this show with a dogged determination rarely found outside of these billion-year-old types. You chuckle a bit at how gullible the Moon is being and how easy it was to trick, as it's out there looking for a non-existent show at a non-existent trash fence, before you realize if you head out now, you might still catch a bit of that totally real Red, Her Rings show at the totally real trash fence. Well, no need to learn any lessons here, as nothing in the Moon's experience is applicable to your current situation. With dogged determination, you head off again to search for the show.

63. The obvious solution here, you quickly realize, is to send yourself to the past. You've made some mistakes in this attempt to get to the party, but you're definitely not going to make them if you get another chance at today. No, you would definitely have started super early, figured out exactly where the party was before you left, and headed out in time to be one of the first ones there, if not, heck, the very first one. You grab a large cardboard box, slap the address of your tent and the time of this morning on it, cram yourself into that box like a 90s Spike Jonze video, then you're good to go. This time, unlike the last dozen or so times, you tell yourself, you'll definitely get things right.

A) Go to 1

64. There's already a decent layer of snow on the ground as you approach the snowperson. You notice they're moving along quite slowly, seemingly lost in thought. You ask how they're doing and the snowperson explains they're having a hard time concentrating because they can't stop thinking about their myriad past lives. A snowperson, you learn, is a kind of a colony animal, with each individual snowflake contributing a small part of its aggregate consciousness, and each snowflake retains a memory of all the snowpeople they once were. This cloud of self-awareness makes it hard for the snowperson, or rather the snow multi-being-temporal-presence, to focus. Touched by their plight, you offer...

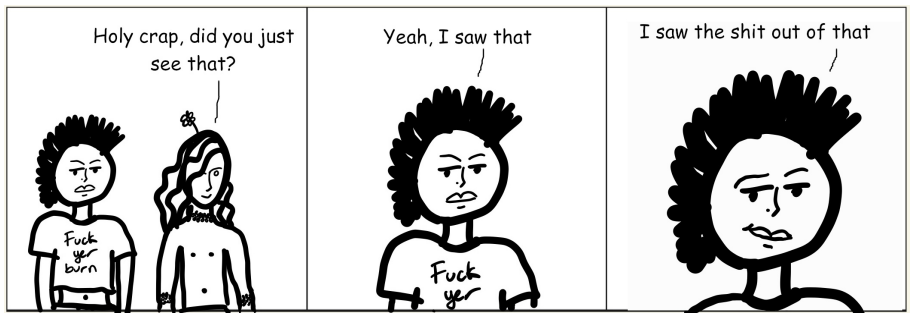
A) To help them roll the new snowperson — go to 59
B) To help them integrate all their past lives — go to 17

THANKS FOR PLAYING <3

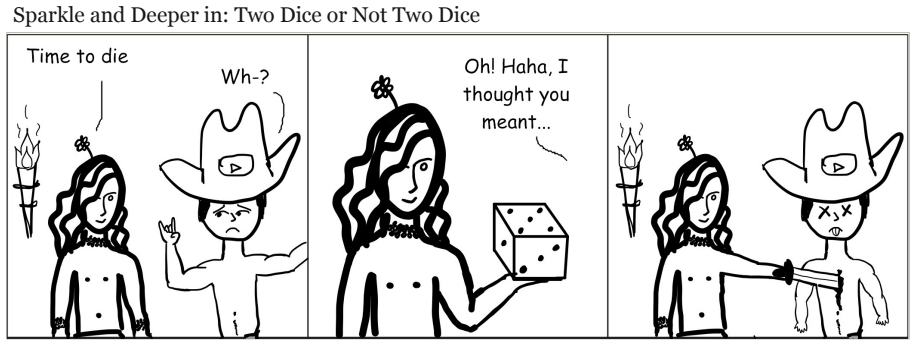
SPARKLE AND DEEPER

Art by Bibi, Script by Group

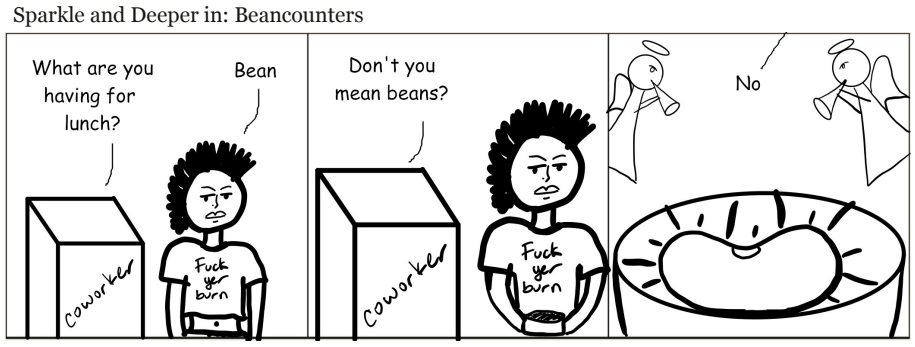
Sparkle and Deeper in: The Things See-ers



Sparkle and Deeper in: Two Dice or Not Two Dice



Sparkle and Deeper in: Beancounters



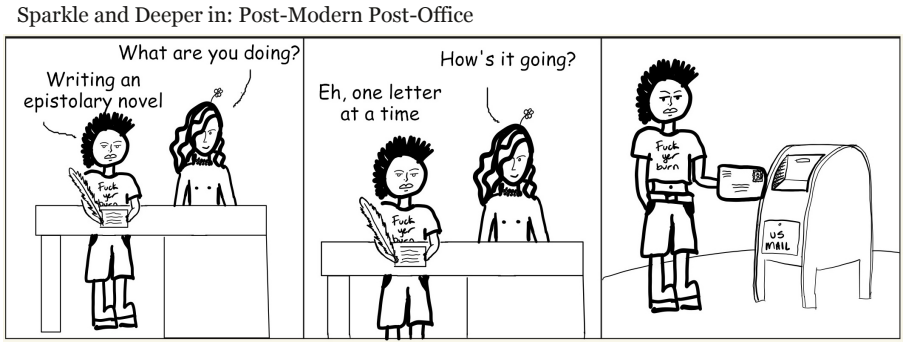
Sparkle and Deeper in: Awards Season 2026



Sparkle and Deeper in: Dishwasher/Wishdasher



Sparkle and Deeper in: Post-Modern Post-Office



Sparkle and Deeper in: Even Awardsier Season 2026



WHAT'S IN AND OUT

OUT: Getting here early to set up your tent in daylight
IN: Discovering the limits of your phone flashlight

OUT: The mortifying ordeal of being known
IN: Loud music

OUT: Chicken tenders
IN: Chicken callouses

OUT: Many hands make light work
IN: Electricity make light work

OUT: Feeling alienated from your 9-5 wage job
IN: Feeling alienated from your 12-12 gig work

OUT: Spotify playlists
IN: Albums

OUT: DJing a random mash of hot tracks from Beatport you barely listened to
IN: DJing the theme from Evangelion into Spice Girls or w/e, follow your heart

OUT: Slowly shrinking population of die hard burners
IN: Inviting new people and helping them come out

OUT: Free as in speech
IN: Free as in bird

OUT: “We noticed your browser is blocking ads so we hid the text, please let us sell your data”
IN: “Sign the guestbook then click the bat to flap inside”

OUT: Dogs
IN: Cats

OUT: AI generated fliers
IN: Drawing stuff on a piece of paper and photocopying it on the school printer when no one’s looking

OUT: A post-expert world where you can’t trust anyone
IN: “Kurt Loder and Tabitha Soren here with an MTV News break”

OUT: ICE
IN: Ice

OUT: Granola with those dried raisins that turn into sticky rocks when rehydrated
IN: Literally anything else. Plain granola. Just raw oats.

OUT: Chill beats at 7pm
IN: Aggro blastbeats at 7am

OUT: Putting on your fuzzies as soon as the sun goes down
IN: Hours long inner conflict between being lazy and being cold

OUT: Microdosing
IN: Daydrinking

OUT: Billionaires with ties to Epstein on your organisation's board
IN: Self respect

OUT: Front facing camera videos shot in your car
IN: Accidentally calling someone from your pocket while driving and mumbling along to a song you thought you knew

OUT: Talking to those conversation bots
IN: Rambling at your stoner neighbor

OUT: 😭😭😭💀💀💀🥀
IN: Putting the dash in the smiley face like a serial killer :-)

OUT: Babywipe shower
IN: Dirt bath

OUT: Daylight savings
IN: Daylight destruction

OUT: $60 an eighth from a weed sommelier
IN: $20 an eighth from a guy you pretend to be friends with while he talks too much about his snakes

OUT: Romance-Comedy
IN: Romance-Communism

OUT: Private enterprise
IN: Public ownership

OUT: Signal messages
IN: The careless whispers of a good friend

OUT: Trusting the FDA to make sure your salad is edible
IN: Chewing on bark

OUT: Land acknowledgement
IN: Water acknowledgement

OUT: Going blind because of the moonshine
IN: Going blind because of the sunshine

OUT: Eating a hamburger on July 4th to celebrate the Declaration of Independence
IN: Eating a hamburger on July 3rd to celebrate Union artillery turning Pickett’s division of traitors and slavers into ground meat at Gettysburg

OUT: Still happy about that time when your sports team won 16 years ago
IN: Still happy about that time when the Union won 161 years ago

OUT: Disposable vapes
IN: Vodka in a spray bottle

OUT: Mad scientists working alone in a lab
IN: Mad scientists working as part of established academic institutions and publishing in mad peer review journals

OUT: Pronouncing Uranus yoor-EY-nus or YOOR-ah-nus
IN: Pronouncing Uranus OU-rahn-os

OUT: Disco Naps
IN: Just going to bed 3pm waking up 3am who cares

OUT: Logical positivism vs continental philosophy
IN: Metallica vs Megadeth

OUT: Consciousness
IN: Conscienceness

OUT: Suffering
IN: Therapy

OUT: A murder of crows
IN: A moo-der of cows (“Is it hard to come up with 40ish of these every year?” Yeah, somewhat)

OUT: Chaos Magick
IN: Chaos Mathematicks

OUT: A gerontocratic oligarchy
IN: Logan’s Run

OUT: “Deputy District Attorney, appearing on behalf of the People of the State of California”
IN: “In the name of the Moon I’ll punish you”

OUT: Space
IN: Time

OUT: Reading these
IN: Feeding them into a chatbot to explain them to you as a podcast on the drive back

Sparkle and Deeper in: Yet Another Final Comic

