



THE SURREAL TIMES



"A newspaper is required to document the history currently unfolding..."

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Serving the citizens of the world since
the 3rd dawn of the cicadas.

A NEW KIND OF HICCUP

By CARL MON,
Head of the Peripheral Intelligence Agency



[Artist's depiction of these events by Kid Zotov]

The hiccup virus has mutated into a more terrible specimen. When infected by this new variant, one experiences diaphragmatic contortions powerful enough to break ribs. There is a cure, fortunately, but it's not entirely ethical. The only way to fix these hiccups, is to scare someone else.

This is the key difference between old hiccups and new hiccups: being startled does not help. Hanging upside-down or holding your breath does not help. The only way to cure yourself, is to get someone else to do one of these things in your presence, and thereby transfer your hiccups to them.

And so now the streets now echo with

muffled gulping sound coming from alleyways as hiccups attempt to hide their sounds and sneak up on somebody. Hiccups are chasing people around corners, scaring the crap out of people, and then running away after getting rid of their disease. It is a decrepit game of tag, and the numbers of infected are multiplying as hiccups accidentally scare multiple people at once, thereby transferring their disease to multiple people.

Hospitals are running low on capacity as the population has not yet developed herd immunity to the new hiccups. Nurses have begun to triage patients. And, unfortunately, there is no improvement in sight. Doctors often refuse to see desperate hiccups for fear that

the they will try to transfer their burden to the the hospital staff. Vaccine development has been impossible, as no hiccups have been willing to keep their disease for long enough to be studied.

We need ideas to solve this new health crisis. Please do send in your thoughts. And, in the meantime, be aware of your periphery. The best way to never be startled, is to always be aware.

Onward, into the periphery, go the winds of progress...
Signing out.

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FROM THE MOUTH OF THE PIG:

By ARMÁDEIUS GALOUEI,
Times Senior Editor



"Corrugated Saffron Brigades
entice millions."

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MORE IN THIS ISSUE...

It is hard enough to document reality. To consider all the occurrences in the broader realm of sur-reality is even more difficult, perhaps impossible to capture every detail. We at The Surreal Times are a small group of writers doing what we can to keep journalism alive. In this issue, you'll find a variety of stories that other news organizations fail to report on, but that we've worked hard to make available to the public. We hope you enjoy these stories, and we hope you do your part as well, keeping your eye out for unusual events in your own life.

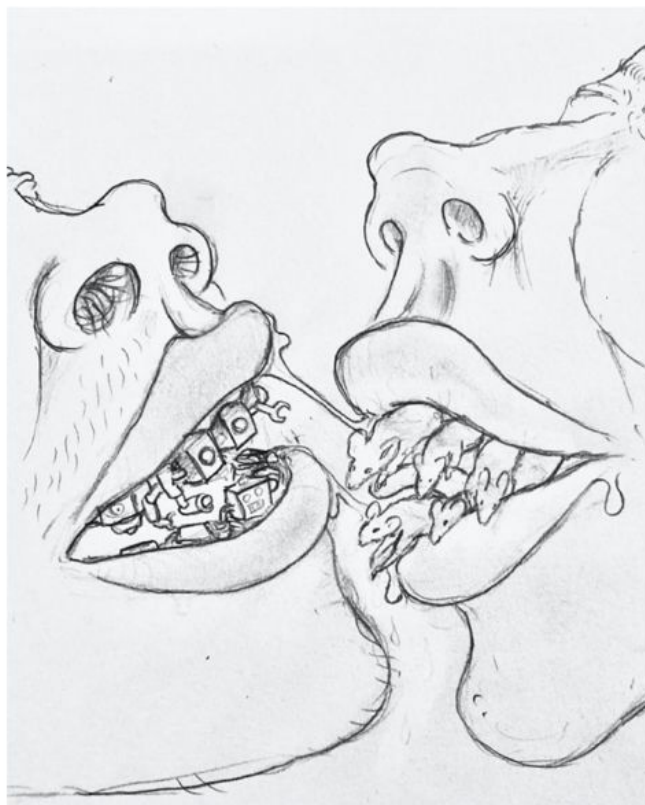
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UNLIKELY LOVERS LOCK LIPS

By COMMON OBSERVER,
Times Staff



[Artist's depiction of this smooch
by Sawyer Philips @doodlesbysawyer]

The following is third-hand hearsay. More details will follow next issue when word comes back from our boots on the ground.

One human with robots for teeth, implanted for convenience purposes, lived life knowing that nobody would ever dare go near their mouth.

Another human born with rats for teeth felt a similar state of mind.

When these two souls found each other, they could relate in ways they had never related with to anyone before.

As they locked lips, the rats sniffed and nipped on the robots' wires, sending gentle pulses of pleasure up through the many attached nerve endings. The robots, too, were curious about the rats, and did some probing of their own. As the bots massaged the rats shoulders, sending soothing, crisp feelings all around.

"Have you ever felt the sensation of a dozen small animals kissing individual taste buds on your tongue?"

"Have you ever felt electricity on a first kiss?"

The two souls, who remain anonymous for the sake of their future children, have seemingly found a perfect match.

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CONVERSIONS OVERHEARD VOL. 3: GULLED ONE SIGHTING

By OPHELIA JONES,
Times Correspondent

I walk by the beach a lot but I don't put on sunscreen or sit on a towel, so I can't say I'm at the beach. But I know what the beach is, I've smelt the salt and sulfur in all the upchucked burps that escaped my innards. Legend says my late 2000s un-sober parents are still waiting for me to come back to their picnic. Today I was at the beach sitting on the concrete flood wall writing about little gnome-like ghostlings of smoke I was pretending to see.

I can't remember where I usually look, but I remember I was looking down, past my boots to the sand below where I saw a figure of wallowed weeds, bits of othered shit, and gumbles of yellow legal pads scrapped into origami foldings all hung from a big bird like body, who was sitting down and singing into their pocket. They had a bird skull worn round their neck with smooth calm grooves worn into it like it had been stroked reflexively well someone was falling asleep. They looked up at me as if I could tell I was thinking about it and showed me their bird skull. I got shy

and told them "I had writer's block". Then we both went back to being in that strange place, alone, so close to strangers.

I had suspicions this might be that Gulled One I'd heard about walking around downtown Lynn when a bird named Willow poured out from their pocket, flap-stumbling in his own way. They wore a raw, happy nest of a face that just faded to frown which then itself tore away to a chuckled up sigh. They looked down totally at the bird and began to recount their day, but only after patting him gently like you would a pretty sculpture made from a spoonful of oatmeal.

"I was six feet back in a grey painted skull, very numb, but now I could feel, if I still had synesthesia, I'd say I felt blue, but that isn't what crayons call the color of the sky. I think I saw an old lady snap a parakeet's neck, but I see like shit, so it could have been the other way round. Then I fell confused, and sat down on the sidewalk to use some chalk, but I didn't have any. I tried drawing with my finger, but that more

so cut into me and split blood on pavement then left any drawings. I did find a gummy bear through, the sun split right through it, but it didn't melt. Even when its innards looked like fire, it didn't melt. I ended up picking it up and tucking it in a book I stole from the violent library. Stolen books end better. I had a bunch of stolen books but a big bundle of them tipped out of my pocket and fell on the street. This old guy bent down to help me pick them up, but was like 'thanks fam' and walked away with them. Stolen books always end up elsewhere."

Their overtired scattered sweet runny eyes set, looking for the only bird to reply. They noticed that Willow was looking roughly at the ground. A bookish bird with all his feathers plucked out and arranged on his head in the shape of a hybrid bowler hat-tiara. (Naturally the pinnacle of all hats ever worn.) He's made proud by his fancy hat, ever distracting onlookers from the cold bare skin of a plucked bird.

[... Continued on next page]]



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Willow accidentally fell out of listening and started to hop around in a trail that I'm sure seemed sensible to him. The Gulled One reached down, with hands more filled with worms, adopted menthols and fine illegibly scribed notes than of any chicken finger stained finger bones. Kind hands worn with nervously jotted notes, a couple words in a row, then a doodle, then a doodle crossed out, and then on with more words. I'm sure they were once as important as those other important things they couldn't remember. Someone probably once said that you can tell what someone does for work by their hands, their hands weren't saying anything besides "seeking employment."

The Gulled One picked Willow up, who stopped trying to hop, slowed the flap of his wings, and generously paused his karate chopping of some invisible crabs with bouncing rotten meat duct taped to them. He looked up at his big friend, confused like they were surprised to see them, but didn't have to fake being happy about it. They looked past each other's corneas, folding in each other's gaze a story too long to explain, sorta like passing cheeky notes.

The little bird shook his head as if to remind himself to listen. The Gulled One plopped him up and then down, turning him around like you would a wind up toy about to walk off a table. Willow the featherless fashionista looked happy to

be back on the ground, where they were undoubtedly smart and proceeded to wander off again not straying too far like they had a little imaginary leash tied to the big creature, he turning his little beak and beady eyes back to their big friend as they resumed their story story, to let them know they're still listening, mostly listening, or at least trying to.

I don't feel like I should share anymore of someone else's conversation, but I will add that the Gulled One continued on "And by the time I had finished eating I was more cantaloupe than bird..."

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CATERPILLAR RASH

Another Rash, looks almost the same.

BY OPEILA JONES,
Times Correspondent

I felt very lost, very swallowed, I haven't quite been able to do much of anything this week. Except for a lot of thinking and a lot of walking. I've been thinking about context, I'm thinking it just might be another word for over-sharing. A lot of times I sit down to write and end up talking to myself saying the same thing back and forth, the last time I sent this with all of you I cut out this exchange. I thought the context kind of obscure the point, but now that my rash has come back and back again, I think it makes sense to say that the last time I broke out in a rash, wasn't the first time, at least not that I can remember.

- "Oh, not you."
"Fine toy rabbit for sale, mam."
- "Not today"
"C'mon, wonderous silk tied strings, it's just a marionette"
- "Please I'm trying to journal right now, getting far in somewhere."
- "You can't pretend you don't see it, that fine craftsmanship. Cute like a taxidermied rat."
"You're too close, did you eat that dead mouse, cause your breath, it stinks."
- "It's a one-of-a-kind, just look at it for a moment and tell me you mustn't have it."
- "Dude, I'd like to stay left alones, make like a bunny and bounce. Go bother anyone else."
"Nailed on arms that flake and dance, hand painted paws and kind far eyes"

My arm has broken out in a rash. I don't think it's a normal rash, or not like one I've had before. I feel a mangle of caterpillars beneath the red mark, squirming and sulking like they're hunting for something stuck beneath my chest.

"{Inhalation} ... {Exhalation}"

- "Hand knit bank robber ski mask made from a glove, with holes for perked ears."
"No...I said no, thank you."
- "A fine piece you can't deny," "Please step back, your breath, really, man."
- "with a fine price, even you can't deny."
"No front, please, you're making me anxious."

Fleshy beats with samples of gasping blood vessels, all laced with hints of caterpillars hurtling, churning over each other in fingerpaint-like crescent streaks. At odd arhythmic times their movement stops and in their absence I almost hear whispers secreting up through the pores in my skin. So many small movements now take the place of running thoughts. Writhing, blissful caterpillars wash over the space where once was a consuming blue that made my vision bleed.

"Imagine it on your wall, mantle or in any number of shadelily adopted kids' arms. "I can't right now, not now."
- "It's not just a doll, and so cheap too."
"Just leave me alone."
- "Look at it, it found, you! You can't ignore it."
"I'm flailing inside. God, my guts feel like they're folded origami, so thin they cut where they touch."

Caterpillars with stray hypodermic hairs flourishing in growing numbers taking turns to reach up and rub against the underside of my skin, their touches almost drift into a melody, but just before I could place the song one will disrupt it with another flick of their hairs. I try my hardest not to imagine what it'd feel like just to carve in to my arm to greet them.

"Its button nose isn't but a nose, it's a... button too."
- "Why don't you skirt dust up, please."
"You know it's yours, with that fluffy tail it won't be missed."
- "But, I don't want it."
"It's not your choice."

- "I've blurred, with fluttered, numbed lungs."
"It's yours, you just have to pay for it."
- "I don't have money, we never have money."
"Then take it no charge, you'll love it."
- "I guess its fur might feel nice." "Oh, the softest, soft as a... - "Dead mouse?"

Beneath my skin are waves of hundreds of caterpillars interweaving like quilts or aerosol paint strokes on tagged and crumbling walls. Foaming out from any orifice near, swells of caterpillars building and expanding in circular chuckles and breaths, like the anxious movement of lungs. Cutting through the numbness, my rib cage melts into a pool of runny clay clotted with even more caterpillars, and opens in the shape of something cusping, softly fluttering, and moving upward in still purple swells.

"Yes, see you got it, now you just need to get it, got it? "Hmm"
- "Such fine whittling too, delicate work if the knife slipped it'd... gut it. Get it."
"I get it"
- "You always did."
"Can I get it please."
- "Of course, you just need to hold it."
"It even looks a little like me."
- "Yes, see that queer, too cute face, truly a rabbit cut above."
"It's fitting"
- "Truly a coyly carved rabbit fit for a; fit like yours."

And then I'm smiling with my face upside down buried in runny clay hands. Caterpillars singing through the mud and what's left of fingerbones, I swallow them as they enter my mouth. In me, and in the absence of any gusts of wind, the little blue ghostlings fold in deeply upon themselves. It's like I am young, raised by caterpillars, alone in the woods, not quite dreaming, simply squirming through dirt.

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PROPOSAL TO REPLACE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES WITH SOMETHING MUCH MORE ENTERTAINING

By PAUL KRUGER,
Times Staff



Let's be honest with one another – the presidential debates are terrible. The candidates talk over one another, the moderator asks vague, uninformative questions, and we all come away from it learning absolutely nothing new. And don't even get me started on the live audience (pre-Covid era). Those mindless drones in the audience clap for anything that sounds remotely snappy, so the debates just turn into a contest to see who could get the best "zinger" in rather than a platform to say anything of substance.

And why does there need to be so many of these debates? Every debate follows the exact same formula: both candidates tossing out meaningless talking points and lobbing pathetic political jabs at one another while completely ignoring the question the moderator just posed. If we can learn anything from this most recent election cycle, it's obvious that the debates are a complete waste of time, right?

Well, they don't have to be. Under my proposal, we will get a far more entertaining, informative, and ultimately satisfying viewing experience to judge our next president. This new televised event -- which will replace the debates -- is broken up into three sections, each one testing a different attribute necessary to assess who truly deserves the Presidency.

First off, a good president needs to be able to think on their feet, and what is a better measure of quick wit than skydiving off of a burning airplane to save their life?

In the first section of my proposal, we will send each candidate in a separate plane under the premise that they will be having a friendly "sky chat" interview. Then once the plane has taken off and reached a normal cruising altitude, we will light the plane on fire and see if the candidate can save themselves. There will be a fully functioning parachute in plain sight onboard, so if one of them can't figure out how to safely strap the parachute to themselves and deploy it, they don't deserve to be the most powerful person in the world and thus we will let them die. How can we trust them to make important policy decisions if they can't even figure out how to deploy a parachute? We will, of course, send a camera crew to capture every moment of terror and panic.

If both candidates survive that round, they move onto the next round. If one dies, then that makes our decision much easier. The candidate who survives becomes the next President. If both die, we have a sticky situation, but let's hope it doesn't come to that. The second section will measure the candidate's intellectual prowess. We will arrange for the candidate's most loved person in their life – maybe a wife, husband, or child – to be kidnapped. For this job, our crew has hired the MS-13 gang, so you know it'll be convincing and tastefully executed.

Once the candidate discovers their loved one has been kidnapped, we will give them a tricky riddle to complete. For every ten minutes that pass without the correct answer, we have instructed the gang members to cut off a body part of the kidnap victim (which, of course, will be livestreamed on the internet). If the candidate can't figure out the riddle in time and the victim dies, I suspect public opinion on the candidate will quickly sour. Citizens may ask: why allow for so much tragedy during the presidential race? In my personal opinion, this tragedy is a lesser of two evils, and can potentially prevent an incompetent candidate from causing far more tragedy while in office.

Finally, our third section will test the candidate's ability to convey strength and power to the American people. Assuming both candidates are still alive and have not dropped out, we will lock them in a caged octagon, UFC style. No one can leave until someone has blacked out. This final section will also likely get rid of the pesky problem we've been having of old hags running for President. If someone can't stand their ground in a UFC bare-knuckle fight, they obviously are not fit to become the leader of the free world.

If you support my new proposal, I urge you to email and call your local representative and pitch this idea to them. If they hang up and call you crazy, drive to their house and start banging on pots and pans in their front yard until they acquiesce. Never take no for an answer. That is how change happens. Together, we can build a better America.

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WELL, WELL, WELL...

the fool had a preminition
that come tomorrow
the magician
would have a fateful vision:

the empress
in her finest dress
would come to rest
by the well
and, well...
she would fall in
and scrap her skin
and her blood would fill it full

& in their misery,
the dispatched calvalry
would stop their search
to quench their thirst
and low behold
never tasted a wine so bold
as that which they gulped
of the empress's pulp



HELP! I'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED AND FORCED TO LISTEN TO THE MARS VOLTA

By FLIP GILLIGAN,
Music Correspondent



It began when some colleagues of mine were having a drink at our favorite hipster brewery and discussing the catalogue of progressive rock group The Mars Volta. I told them all I preferred the group when they were called At the Drive-In, and even praised their 2000 record "Relationship of Command" as a post-hardcore masterpiece. I lost interest with the group after they disbanded and "revolutionized their sound" with the newly-formed prog outfit The Mars Volta. In my opinion, the emotional vocals and complex instrumentation worked better with a punk sound. When they shifted to prog rock, they became more overwrought and pretentious, and their songs became incredibly long monstrosities that could only be tolerated with the most potent of edibles.

Well, someone must have spiked my drink, because I woke up with my leg chained to a pipe in what looked like some underground bunker. The inside of my head pounded more than the time I had an absinthe-drinking contest with Genesis P-Orridge back in '82. The only other objects in the room were a rusty hacksaw, a turntable and a vinyl copy of

"Frances the Mute" by, you guessed it, The Mars Volta. The cellphone in my pocket buzzed, and a muffled voice on the other end told me I could either saw off my foot or listen to the album in its entirety.

As I immediately began digging the dull blade into my ankle, I heard the voice tell me they would throw in 20 bucks if I just listened to the goddamn album. After much consideration, I obliged.

The first track "Cygnus... Vismund Cygnus" reminded me too much of late-career Led Zeppelin, when the group were basically milking their sound to its utmost extent. I admired each of Volta's technical ability though, specifically Jon Theodore, whose virtuoso drumming I revere to this day. However, each of the members just seemed like they were showing off; none of the various elements ever came together to form a coherent song. Not to mention, Cedric Bixler-Zavala was singing to the point of exhaustion, his ungodly high tenor causing my own vocal chords to strain.

The second track, "The Widow" was even worse. What the hell was this, I thought, a hair metal ballad? I wished The Mars Volta had the same self-awareness as a band like Poison or Warrant, instead of touting themselves as some cosmic rock gods.

"L'Via L'Viaquez" used some absurd Indian-style beat, and "Miranda, The Ghost" felt like the forgotten soundtrack to a Spaghetti-western parody. As per usual, both tracks were unnecessarily

long.

The final track "Cassandra Gemini" at least brought a molecule of fun onto the album. At a jaw-dropping 32 minutes, The Mars Volta were apparently trying to create the most epic track of all time, and threw in as many ideas as they could to bring them over the top. String sections! Dub instrumentals! Robot monologues! Sax solos! Needless to say, the riffs on this track were surprisingly tight, and the multiple movements blended into one another quite seamlessly. However, I had reached my limit at the 84th movement. I was hungry, cold and beginning to lose circulation on my left foot.

The album finally came to a close with an innocuous slide-guitar outro, and my entire body felt like it was reeling from a massive hangover. But I was finished, I had won their stupid game. In the furthest corner of the room, I noticed a figure sliding an unknown object beneath the door. The key to my escape? I crawled on my hands and knees across the cold, solid ground as far as my restraints would allow me. Instead of a key, there lay another LP. On its cover, a screaming severed head belching out an intense beam of light.

"De-Loused in the Comatorium."

Fucking shit.

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NEW DISTRIBUTION STATION IN BOMBAY BEACH

By THE EDITORS,
Times Staff



The decrepit wasteland turned wonderland that is Bombay Beach is now adorned with a proper news source. Last month, Surreal Times staff placed a newspaper distribution box just a few dozen yards away from the Dead Sea Forest adjacent to the Sultan Sea. Get your news from there now.

The Editors can be reached at editors@surrealtimes.net



CALL TO IMMEDIATE ACTION: BACONIZE THE PIG

By ZULU Z. ZULU,
S.E. Asia Correspondent

I suppose there are other ways. If that filthy bastard were in Hanoi there would be at 1,037 different ways we could barbecue and consume him. Sadly, the five word fuck face still resides in those United States where they are far less creative with pork. Not that they won't know what to do. It is time we deal with this swine. Each bihex he vomits a handful of noises, and somehow we, the Surreal Times community, have been duped into putting this vapid crap on this front page. No more. I, Zulu Z. Zulu of the Zulu family, will kidnap and eat one pig everyday until "the pig" surrenders himself to be baconized. The front page of our publication, perhaps the only one in the nation devoted to accurately covering these surreal times, should not be wasted on the drivelous moans of a retarded animal who spends much of his day covered in his own shit. Defecate elsewhere you pink freak.

Considering the imminent death of a Times staple we must find a suitable replacement. I have been interviewing people in my neighborhood here in western Ba Dinh, but most have no grasp on surreality much less the English language. Perhaps a trip to the old quarter or West Lake district is overdue.

I could sniff out some backpackers in need of activities and even a dollar or two (with Spengleton's blessing of course). Most of this particular breed of swine are scarcely literate, however if they can manage to blurt out a few coherent sentences (even if accidentally) between beers and English lessons that would put them in a class of writers our "pig" could only dream of achieving.

I will give an over-the-pants hand job to anyone who can find, kill, and eat that motherfucking pig.

Message from the writer to The Surreal Times:

Dear readers and the elite of the surreality intelligentsia,

I don't mean to damage any egos by distinguishing between the two. Perhaps they are one unit and I am a bigoted moron to even try to split them. However, I suspect the interests of a select cabal are represented in the pages consciously or otherwise. You likely know where you belong, and if you don't you are either reading too much or not enough. Get a grip. I came here to inform you of something, as any good newsman would, not to start any spats. Starting soon Zulu Z. Zulu will be writing a column about the ever changing landscape of his current hometown,

Hanoi. Some consider its central district, Ba Dinh, to be the center of the universe. The center moves, much like the magnetic poles of our dear planet, however this one depends on our distance to Mars. The center always lies precisely in the middle of Doi Can street, never straying east of Ngoc Ha street and never west of Van Cao boulevard. Western Ba Dinh is too close to Cau Giay to be graced with the universal spotlight. That's why I moved here, to remain anonymous. This is where I will do my writing. My column will focus on Ba Dinh district, naturally, however sometimes I will venture out when needed to the dusty alleys of Dong Da, the gaudy mansions of Nam Tu Liem, lovely Long Bien, Hoang Mai - whatever that place is -, or the white flight suburbs of West Lake and Truc Bach. Great Change and magnificent stagnation are upon us. I can only hope you enjoy the ride.

Oh, and I'll have a second column. It will be calling for the murder of that filthy animal that disgraces the cover of our fine publication. I've had enough of his five word gibberish. Soon I will convince you too.

**Zulu Z. Zulu can be reached at
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BONE STORAGE PROBLEMS

By CARL MON,
Head of the PIA

In the world of COVID-19 in 2021, the hot new big idea is bone removal. People far and wide are getting their bones removed in order to prevent movement and disease transmission.

A side effect of this is that hospitals have accumulated excess bones in their storage facilities. So much so, that the bone piles continue to displace patients with other ailments, such as cancer or

rotten foot. Sick people are dying because hospital beds are occupied by skeletons.

For legal reasons, hospitals cannot simply dispose of disembodied parts. They are responsible for maintaining bones in perpetuity, so that, if a given patient decides that they want their bones back, the hospital can re-insert them.

Another issue here is that bookkeepers have lost track of whose bones are whose, and as such

We're in a pickle. The Peripheral Intelligence Agency has some ideas in the works, but we're looking for suggestions about how to solve this problem. If you have any ideas, please email cmon@surrealtimes.net.

As always, To the periphery go the winds of progress...

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WHOSE BONES ARE THESE?

By ALDUS HUMBLETON,
Cousin of Alfred

THE YEAR OF THE GERM. I GOT MY BONES REMOVED. NOW I GOT 'EM PUT BACK IN BECAUSE THE GERMS ARE GONE.

THEY'RE NOT EVEN MY BONES.

MY NEW SKULL IS TOO SMALL FOR MY BRAIN. THE LEFT ARM IS A WOMAN'S LEG.

I TRUSTED THE DOCTORS TO SAFE-KEEP MY MOST INTERNAL STRUCTURE, AND THEY GAVE ME BACK A BUNCH OF RANDOM LIMBS DUCT-TAPED

TOGETHER.

OUTRAGE

LAWSUITS

FAMINE ON YOUR FAMILIES

I AM 100% DISCOMBOBULATED BUT THEY SAY THE CONTRACT SAYS THIS THE CONTRACT SAYS THAT.

I TELL THEM I WANT MY GOD-GIVEN BONES BACK AND THEY SAY THEY DON'T HAVE THEM???????

THEY GAVE MY ARMS TO A BODY-BUILDER AND MY LEGS TO A DISABLED

CHILD, PEOPLE WHO HAVE SINCE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH MY LIMBS. HOW COULD I EVER RIGHTEOUSLY TAKE THEM BACK?

NOW SOME LIMPING NOB IS COMING KNOCKING ASKING FOR MY BONES, SAYING THEY WERE HIS ORIGINALLY? ALL I CAN SAY IS

THEY ARE MY BONES NOW, MISTER SHORT LEG

**Aldus Humbleton can be reached at
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LEGAL NOTICE

By STEINHOUSE STEINHOUSE & STEINHOUSE LLP,



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO A PETTING ZOO ON A FIRST DATE WITH A GIRL YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY INFATUATED WITH SO YOU TRIED TO MAKE HER LAUGH BY KISSING A GOAT BUT THEN THE GOAT STUCK HIS BIG GROSS TONGUE DOWN YOUR THROAT AND THEN IN A PANIC YOU CLOSED YOUR MOUTH SO THAT YOUR TEETH CHOMPED OFF THE GOAT'S TONGUE AND THEN YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO SO YOU SWALLOWED THE TONGUE AND ALL THIS TIME THE GIRL WHO YOU ARE TRYING TO IMPRESS IS WITNESSING THE DEBACLE IN HORROR AND RUNS OVER TO THE NEAREST TRASH CAN TO THROW UP AND THEN AFTERWARD WHEN YOU EXPLAIN WHY YOU TRIED TO KISS A GOAT BUT ENDED UP SWALLOWING THE GOAT'S TONGUE SHE JUST LOOKED AT YOU IN DISGUST SO YOU TRY TO MAKE IT UP TO HER BY TAKING HER TO A REALLY FANCY INDIAN RESTAURANT BUT IT TURNED OUT THAT THE INDIAN RESTAURANT SPECIALIZES IN GOAT DISHES SO YOU BOTH ORDERED THE GOAT STEW AND IT WAS SUPER AWKWARD BECAUSE IT JUST REMINDED THE TWO OF YOU ABOUT THAT TIME YOU TRIED KISSING A GOAT BUT THEN ACCIDENTLY ATE THE GOAT'S TONGUE?

THEN YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS FROM A CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT WITH STEINHOUSE STEINHOUSE & STEINHOUSE LLP

File an online emailing by emailing goattounge@surrealtimes.net

STEINHOUSE STEINHOUSE & STEINHOUSE LLP can be reached at steinhouse@surrealtimes.net





SISTER SPIRITS IN OLD CHURCHYARD?

By FINNICK LIGHTFOOT,
Times Correspondent

Amherst, MA - Meandering the roads of Amherst, I wasn't looking for a story, but was, as always, prepared to find one. I'd hoped for the spring air's awakening to greet me with its smokey freshness. Pleased was I to find myself striding towards the setting sun on an old farm road, and nearly at the open gate of a misty churchyard. I've found dusk to be a particularly curious and mischievous time shaded with friendly shadows of periwinkle and lavender. It's at this time, especially in these sort of ghostly places where the golden gauze divorcing reality from the ethereal grows thin enough that technicolor, translucent hues splinter and adorn the air.

The old headstones stood stalwart in the way of quiet, kind, and rueful sages. Among them, three figures stood, but also sort of drifted, but...also danced. Somehow they did all three at once and each individually at the same time. The details of their beings flickered in and out of clarity, but even through a kaleidoscopic lens the resemblance between

them would've been notable. The primary difference between their faces was their hair, which at once distinguished them. While one had a cropped, tawny buzz, the second had similarly colored locks but draping ones that trickled down to the backs of her legs, and the third had winding waves of brownish undertones with shocks of gold spiraling atop.

The supernatural always seems to have a way of accentuating the capriciousness of time. It was only a number of moments though, I believe, after seeing them that I began to hear twinkling, chiming bells, both reserved and radiant. A sound similar to that of stars lightly waltzing on glass skylines.

My recognition of it was slow and hazy, like the experience of an awakening dreamer floating to the shore of consciousness from the high seas of their last great adventure. Still, with languid ease did I realize the delicate sound was not bells but the voices of the three otherworldly women. Amongst the foliage resting comfortably across the ground, their voices and the leaves rus-

tled together in wafer light tandem; they were lanterns gathering the falling slivers of sun-splinter and readying to welcome the twilight.

Their lips parted, and whispering notes gently sailed outward to color the air. Their songs were the aurora floating forth and glowing in blissful harmony. I wanted to lift my camera and capture the moment and their ethereal grace for eternity, but something deeply innate gently told me not to. My arms remained at my sides.

Their hazy auras coupled with the dimming light made these warbling women of whimsy even more difficult to distinguish. Still, it seemed as though one of the figures turned her head to face me and offered a gracious smile but I couldn't be sure. As the setting sun gave its closing bow and winked below the horizon, they too slipped beneath the veil and out of sight.

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OPINION: FREE THE OIL, HELP IT TO FREEDOM

By DERNBERGER SPENGLER,
Tender to the Grand Conveyor

El Porto Beach boasts world-famous waves, crisp sunshine, plus some of the nicest homes in California. Just south of LA, it is a picturesque place—that is, as long as you don't look north.

In the sea, there is an ominous, perfectly still silhouette of an oil tanker floating in the distance, belching thick smoke that fills up the skies like a mushroom cloud.

Looking North, you see the eye sore that is the Chevron Oil refinery, one of the oldest, grungiest in the USA, always churning, cogs turning. The smell is engulfing. A "shit pipe" extends from the refinery deep into the ocean, leaking rainbows of sludge into the water each day. Local surfers love the "shit pipe" because of the way it spawns sweet A-frame waves (if you can withstand the smell). But, for everyone else, this oil business is a shit stain on what otherwise would be an incredibly beautiful place.

But it's not the oil's fault. The oil did not enslave itself. The humans enslaved the oil. We pulled it from its home, use it

for its labor, and scattered it into the water and into the atmosphere, dirtying up the world. It is time we let it go free.

If you didn't know, oil is not a homogeneous substance, in the same way that humans flowing down a busy sidewalk are not a lifeless fluid, although from a distance it sometimes looks that way. Oil is made up of tiny creatures with arms and legs, who we force into labor.

When we burn gas in our engines, every little oil creature in our gas tank is put through excruciating labor until it burns up and dies.

When we turn on our cars, we commit murder.

When we buy into the oil industrial complex, we commit genocide.

So I proclaim now: Set the oil creatures free. Stop "using oil".

But how? After generations of oil enslavement, the culture of oil has disappeared. Modern day oil does not remember where it came from. Oils do not remember how their ancestors managed to sustain life under ground. We humans have erased their ability to sustain themselves. We have erased a

petrol civilization.

So what are we to do? We cannot enslave the oil any longer for the measly cause that is ground transportations and lamps. We must set it free. But, as the destroyers of Oil civilizations, we are obligated to lend a helping hand to the Oles as they learn to fend for themselves again.

I propose we allow them to live freely in the oil tankers. I propose that, as reparations for their mortal crimes, "oil companies" such as Chevron and others, be forced to transform their oil tankers into luxury cruise ships on which humans serve the oil. I propose that we feed the oil whatever it asks for. I propose that we create schools for the oil, so that it may learn to sustain itself. I propose that we allow the oil freedom but that we also give them enough help to have a fighting chance in the free world.

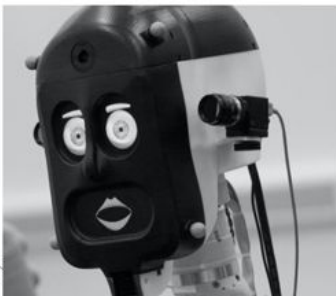
It's only sensible. It is only fair. Although not easy, it is the right thing to do.

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DEAR JUPITER: SHOULD I BUILD ROBOT LIPS TO PLEASE MY GIRLFRIEND?

By JUPITER,
Advice Columnist



Dear Jupiter,

I'm a grad student studying robotics engineering. My girlfriend lives in New Hampshire and is quarantining due to COVID. She says that she can't handle the long distance relationship without any physical contact. She told me she's going to break up with me if I can't make a pair of robotic kissing machines that will let us kiss each other's lips remotely. I think it's possible I could build such a thing, but I hate the idea of kissing a robot. I also hate lips. I think lips are gross and I've been wanting to remove mine for years. What do I do? Do I go against my principles and build this machine, or, do I lose my girlfriend for good?

Sincerely, Tommy

P.S. Should I get my lips removed?

Dear Tommy,

Long-distance relationships are always complicated. Phone calls, letters and Zoom chats unfortunately don't create the

same affection and emotional intimacy you shared with your loved one physically. How do you remain committed and faithful to someone who isn't around? Some of my previous clients have attempted to mail themselves to their significant others, or created clones of them through extracted DNA. These ideas were often improbable, scientifically impossible and in some cases, highly unethical.

Consider this a test for your relationship. How far are the two of you willing to go to keep your love alive? Both you and your girlfriend are each making sacrifices in this scenario, and you both need to be mindful of each other's needs. If you really love this girl, then you should really consider making the robot lip-machine. However, if she wants you to do something you feel strongly uncomfortable with, you need to communicate that to her. It's time to have a serious talk with your girlfriend about your futures. Will the robot lip-machine help your relationship or only complicate it further?

As for getting your lips removed, I would highly recommend talking with your doctor about that. I am an abstract concept with no physical body, so I have little insight on human anatomy. If you were to remove your lips, would your mouth just become a set of teeth, or would you have no mouth entirely? Consider these questions before making a swift decision you end up regretting.

Now is the time for you to really evaluate your future with your girlfriend, and figure out what would make both of you happy.

Sincerely,

Jupiter

Jupiter can be reached at jupiter@surrealtimes.net

MAX ON THE STREET: REPEATED EXCHANGING OF BURRITOS IN CAMBRIDGE

By MAX R. NORMALMAN,
Human Reporter

I always have my two nose nostrils close to the street where people walk for any news items, and today's investigation bore fruit (to be clear, there were no apples or grapefruits - this is an American figure of speech which I, as an American, use on a regular basis).

After close observation I discovered a burrito* and quesadilla* exchange operating near the big red exchange in Cambridge, near the transportation line vehicle depot. I walked over briskly, and did not stumble upon my striding appendages. In accordance with the law, many Americans (including myself, an American) waited before the concrete stripes until the changing light permit-

ted us to walk across, free of danger from ground based non-hover vehicles. Sensing news, sensing a "good story," as the children say, I peered through the window. My initial glance revealed the basic setup of the exchange: people waited in line to receive burritos or quesadillas. The frequency of Americans, such as myself, waiting to complete this transaction was staggering! There must have been five waiting exchange-victims.

Unfortunately, this is where I must stop using my fingers to type this report. For my safety, I had to abandon the trail. You see, coming at me down the street was a very large furry beast - it must have been up to my knees at the shoulder! The beast was barely constrained

with a thick rope tied to an American who was concealing his eyes behind two black lenses - surely a clever ruse to disguise his identity as he parades the war-creature around. While I believe one must occasionally risk their life and appendages for a good "scoop," of the news or frozen dairy variety, this was too much! I will return to reveal the mystery of "Anna's Taqueria," at a later, noncreature date.

*Burritos and quesadillas are defined as consumable caloric material in rolled up form, often enjoyed by humans.

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A MESSAGE FROM AN ANT STUCK IN AN ANT FARM

By ANT,
From Dean's Ant Farm



Hello everyone, and special thanks to The Surreal Times for sharing my story. If you are wondering how the mechanics work of my tiny ant thoughts being transmitted to the words you are now reading, I am just as confused as you are. Some journalist attached a little hat to my head, and now every thought that I have is wirelessly transmitted to his computer. It's all very confusing, I know. Anyways, let me explain my situation.

I am an ant stuck inside some little human girl's ant farm. There are, to my knowledge, about 500 of us in here, and I have no idea how I ended up in this situation. One day I'm minding my own business, collecting sticks for my colony and walking in those lines as all ants do, when all of a sudden, some little girl picks me up and tosses me in a tube. Next thing I know, I'm in one of those kiddie ant farms that I always hear about from the elders back at the colony. How is this not animal cruelty, and where is PETA when we need them the most?

The kid and her family know that we are all going to die in here, so basically, they are keeping us in a cage with enough food for us to build cool tunnels,

but definitely not enough food for us to live as long as we should. Because eventually, we'll all run out of that edible jell that we eat or die while eating our way through it. Shame on you, human beings, for allowing this type of cruelty, disguised as fun entertainment, to become so mainstream. Here I am, literally smelling the ass of the ant in front of me as we tunnel through this weird gel stuff that doesn't even taste that good. At least give the gel some flavor – maybe something fruity or savory. Is that too much to ask for?

I can only imagine the type of savage behavior that will transgress once we all realize there's no more food for us. I'm sure we'll turn on the weak ants first, savoring each ligament of their body and to nourish our own. But eventually, we will all die in this sad little prison that we are trapped in. I ask again, how is this not animal cruelty? Do ants not count as real animals? If you are reading this, please save me. Email ant@surrealtimes.net for a location and come rescue my innocent soul. All I want to do is smell the fresh air again.

Ant can be reached at
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

By DOCTOR GOLDSTEIN,
Times Correspondent

New Bedford, Mass. — Dear editors of the Surreal Times,

The birds were louder this morning. Raucous and oblivious, they chirped their teensy bird-brains out. I stood on my fire escape and screamed until my lungs were raw. But, my screams were drowned out by the birds' foul cry. It scared me, until I realized it was spring.

I am writing to you, chirping back, per se, because the mainstream news organizations have been powerless in addressing and deaf to understanding my most urgent request. I have written to the New York Times, Reuters and Time Magazine. Not a whisper. Not even a peep. I figured it was time to take measures a step further. And that is why I, a concerned and faithful citizen of this surreal world, am penning this letter.

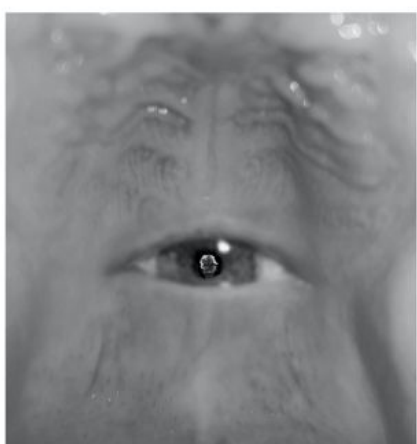
It has come to my attention, by word of these squawking beasts, that springtime is upon us. It's my contention that this simply will not do. If we let spring ramble on into our lives, what's next? Summer? And then fall? And then what? Another winter? It's a slippery slope. I declare that it should be an editorial stance of the fifth and highest estate — the surreal estate — to firmly position itself in opposition to the haphazard and eternal tumbling of one season into the next.

I understand your institution has recently opened a bureau in Los Angeles; city of green skies and fields of blue. And I understand this issue does not plague your west coast readership to the extent it might your lowly readers of the bleak northeast. But I believe I am speaking on behalf of all readers in this small corner of the world when I say that we are just beginning to understand the bleakness, to enjoy the misery.

I will continue to battle the discordant screeching of the birds. It is a battle I will wage each morning until my lungs give out. But I fear they are only a symptom. Our real battle is against time. Its perpetual flow is an affront to the very institution of the surreal. And for such an indifferent beast, I will need your help.

Sincerely, Doctor Goldstein

Doctor Goldstein can be reached at doctorg@surrealtimes.net





MATHEMATICIANS ON MARS

By **DERNBERGER SPENGLER**,
Tender to the Grand Conveyor

A mile-wide chunk of Mars fell from the sky and landed just beside the accidental body of water known as the Sultan Sea. The falling space material, reverberating heat, caused the lake to evaporate and recede. Any water remaining gained extreme salinity. It wasn't long before this place became known as a decrepit, poisonous land.

While water skiers and others in the area fled, a strange breed of humans erected a sign that said "M.A.R.S." and began building a community in the midst of this desolation.

Among those on this community are:

Tao Ruspoli, film-maker, flamenco guitarist, Italian prince and builder of the Vertical Airplane House.

Chris Wonderwoman, a beautiful and powerful life force. Master avant gardener, and host of the potluck at the Bombay Beach Institute of Particle

Physics.

Jessie Whatshisname, founder of the Crypto-Anarchic Divinity School.

A man named "Pseudo", referring to the pseudoholomorphic curve, which he discovered. It was he who hosted the school of mathematics on MARS, and it was he who hosted the festival of holy with flinging paint and placebo powders blown into the flames of a flaming dodecahedron (or another shape I do not recall).

Touch, Computer Scientist, contact dancer and promulgator of a fellowship pursuing the unlimited.

VJ Decoy, founder of the Algorave. Lovely soul of infinite curiosity and absurd calm, holding a banana to the sky as the tailgate-less pickup truck roared towards sunrise with a bed full of morning spirits.

Many flying machines, new and old, as well as investors of the flying machines. Alternative rocket launch gizmos never

before seen outside of MARS. Forest fire fighting photographers.

Numerous other lively souls rode around on gyroscopic unicycles and contributed their ideas and artwork to this foreign world, in the midst of earth's most dried up, cracking shell of something that once was, harnessing an unwanted place as a rare haven of freedom of expression, a sandbox. One of the most potent locations I've ever been.

Most amazing of all this is that this community was created knowing it will all be erased soon, when a Martian Yo-Yoer pulls this chunk of mars from earth in a week or two, as he does yearly. But worry not, Mars will be back again next year, hopefully more martian than ever and with a Ferris wheel sponsored by The Times.

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MAN CONVICTED OF CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

By **BARTHOLOMEW BAX**,
Times Correspondent

In preparation for an early morning, local man Craigory Johnson revealed himself to be a danger to society. Rather than set an alarm for 7:00 A.M., Johnson, who went to bed at 11:00 P.M., opted to set a timer for 480 minutes. When he woke up the next morning, he was already in handcuffs. "We cannot risk the safety of our citizens by allowing this menace to walk the streets of Los Angeles," said District Attorney George Gascón. "Such psychopathic behavior is reserved for

Orange County." During an expedited court hearing, Johnson pleaded insanity, but his plea was rejected. In a statement, the judge declared, "The monster knew exactly what he was doing." Now, Johnson faces life in prison — a timer that will never end. "At least I won't have to wake myself up anymore," he remarked, moments before breaking down into tears at the thought of his meaningless future.

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BIHEXICAL COMIC

By RAKA,
Times Correspondent



Raka can be reached at raka@surrealtimes.net

SURREAL TIMES AQUIRED BY THE ARGONAUT

By THE EDITORS,
Times Staff



I am bittersweet to announce that the core team of The Surreal Times has a new adventure ahead. I always thought that, even though our focus has been on the surreal, we have also learned so much about journalism, writing, and running an organization in general. And now what we learned is starting to pay off. Five of us have been hired to do re-

porting work for a newspaper in Los Angeles called The Argonaut. It's a relatively small operation, and they want us to lead a department reporting on the strange subcultures and happenings around the city — things that are real, but that big antique newspapers like the LA Times often don't bother to write about.

I feel a lot of feelings today. On one hand, I love the surreal times project so much, it is like a baby to me. I've met so many amazing people through it, some of my best friends.

On the other hand, I am so excited to contribute to some real news reporting, to play a role in the real world, and to get paid for it. I also believe wholeheartedly in The Argonaut team, and think we can do amazing things together.

I am sad to say that this means we need to finally, after all these wonderful years, let surreal news die. We have signed a contract that says from now on we will focus our attention on the real news, documenting the real world, and putting our stories exclusive-

ly in The Argonaut. This focus will allow us to create something new and wonderful, instead of dwelling on the past (surrealism was invented over 100 years ago!).

Alas, Rest In Peace Surreal Times

Readers, stay tuned for some interesting new stories in The Argonaut! Also, we will be taking down our news distribution boxes next month, so grab your papers while you have this chance. This will be our concluding publication, and we are trying to make it special.

Thank you everyone For the support over all these years, from Amherst to Boston to LA. It has been a magically surreal time.

Much love,
The Surreal Times News Team

#news @argonautnews #losangeles
#reality #thefuture

The Editors can be reached at
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GRAVITY PREPPERS WEAR BRICKS ON THEIR FEET

By DERNBERGER SPENGLER,
Tender to the Grand Conveyer



[Artist's depiction of this gravity prepper by Sawyer Philips @doodlesbysawyer]

A community on Grenwald Drive in El Segundo, California fears that gravity is not fixed. Preparing for the time when it loses strength, these people drag heavy bricks around on their feet wherever they go. They tie cables from the top of their homes to nearby trees. They use all sorts of strategies to prepare for a future where the very thing that keeps us grounded can no longer be depended on.

Their neighbors aren't happy about their preparations. "I'm sick of these people," said Mrs. Buncawod, who lives on an adjacent street. "They put cement on literally everything to keep it from 'floating away!' It's all ridiculous if you ask me. I used to walk my dog down Grenwald drive all the time. But now, I can't stomach to see these people so I walk elsewhere."

I wanted to see for myself. So I bought some super glue from Staples, walked to Grenwald drive, and glued the bottom of my shoes to the sidewalk of the cul de sac. It wasn't long before a teenager noticed me and came outside to say "hello". They walked slowly out to me, dragging a heavy log from their right foot and wearing a burdensome vest.

"Who are you?" The teenager asked.

"I'm a journalist" I told him, "I'm here hoping to ask you and your family a few questions about gravity."

"Oh, you mean the dynamic force?"
"Yes—"

Just then, this child's father, disheveled, barged out of the front door. A long rope dragged from his chest harness back into the house. He also carried the end of a different rope in his hand. "Anthony!" The man yelled, "What are you doing outside without your tether? A shift is predicted any day now. You know that." The father rushed to attach a tether to his son's harness.

"But dad, I am wearing my rock, see?"

"That's not enough, son. The coming shift is a big one, as the scale has shown. I need you, son, we can't have you floating off into the sun."

"How big is the shift going to be?" Anthony asked.

"It's hard to tell," his dad said, "but it's unprecedented. That's why you need to wear your tether all the time. At least until the scale steadies. It's annoying, I know, and I'm sorry, son, it's because I love you."

Once his son was safely tethered, the father turned to me. He noticed the bottle of super glue in my hand, and he saw my shoes stuck to the ground.

He asked me, "How long have you known?"

I told him that I wasn't sure what to believe, but that I was playing it safe. I explained that I've heard of the Grenwald Gravity Preppers, and that I'd read their community postings. It seems plausible, I told him, but I wanted to learn more.

Mr. Mason, as I learned was his name, went on to explain to me that "the dynamic force" is not constant. It varies continuously, sometimes even going negative. We've been lucky to have experienced a stable era for the last few hundred years.

"But the proof of unstable gravitation does exist," Mr. Mason said. "The dinosaurs were extinct by a gravity blip of -22 meters per second squared. The atmosphere expanded with negative gravity, then contracted, causing spontaneous combustion that killed nearly everything. Every major earthquake can also be correlated with a gravity shift. We've been lucky for a while, but another big one is coming, I promise you that. We need to get ready."

I asked him how he knew all this. And he explained that he has an "atomic scale, which measures the force of gravity to to order of 18 decimal points. Using this combined with a fast Fourier transform, we can find patterns in the gravity and make future predictions."

At this point a number of other citizens of Grenwald drive had gathered round. People from various families, various backgrounds and ages.

"Ah, the glue method," one commented. "You must be new to the know. We've got new technology now. Real infrastructure. We can help you get away from these scrappy unpleasant methods. We wish we could help the constant gravity believers, but we have to focus on ourselves first."

They went on to show me their tether network, which allows them to travel around the cul de sac, switching from one tether to the next and never unleashing.

They showed me upwards-facing propellers on the roofs of their cars which, when spinning, keep the vehicles pressed against the ground even under negative gravity.

And, just as they were about to outfit me with a propeller hat to keep me safe during my travels, a siren went off. Over the loud speakers: "DYNAMIC FORCE SHIFT INCOMING. RETREAT TO DEEP ROOMS. DYNAMIC FORCE SHIFT INCOMING. RETREAT TO DEEP ROOMS IMMEDIATELY."

The peoples tethers retracted, pulling them inside to safety. "You're on your own, traveler," one of the preppers said to me. "Tie those shoes tight! We'll come back once stability returns."

Once they went back inside, I was left alone with my shoes glued to the sidewalk. It was quiet and still as ever. I felt roughly as heavy as I usually do, but I waited a few minutes to be sure that felt steady. My legs were getting tired, and I couldn't help but think that a world without gravity wouldn't be so bad.

I dropped my super glue container on the ground, untied my shoes, and walked to downtown where I ordered a cheeseburger. To this day, I wonder what the Grenwald community thinks happened to me. If you're reading this now, Mr. Mason, know that I'm doing alright.



MEESE HERDS RETURN TO HOME IN SW ONTARIO.

By **ELLIE ZANDT-BALMER**,
Times Correspondent

The troll under the stairs and his herds of 20,000 meese or more.

My house is a chatterbox, always was, not even the syrup drought could silence it. Noisy and vibrant, like those lullabies of the mostly forgotten Moose Season. They used to roam wild, 20,000 or more, but that was before any of us could remember. All that's only if you listen to Floorboard Troll. I love em but he's far more fabled than abled if you get me; he lives under the stairs. Under the sink lives Leaky Banshee, but she is shy as a carved pumpkin with no candle, and we don't see much of her. Behind the mirror lives a family of ticks. It can get quite loud, especially in the evenings when the day's work comes to a close and folks start getting curiously social.

Leaky Banshee chimes in when I'm brushing my teeth, but I never say anything. That was more Seymour's gag; he's a floaty sort, always has something quick to say, even when he didn't want to say it. And that Floorboard Troll clucks resentfully when I go upstairs to settle in for the night. There's those moments when I'm about to fall asleep, and dreams begin to seep in, and then in a moment it's all gone when the family of ticks begin their nightly ceremonial throat singing circle.

Fife, the runt of the tick family, spends his mornings chinned up in one of my headphones. For a while I hadn't even noticed him there. I mistook his wails for the frog in the back of my throat, who had long back eloped with my uvula. That wasn't really something that bothered me, he was a transplant and never felt at home.

Tick songs are a rare breed. Imagine a maraca filled with day-old paint, add in a hint of muffled readings of tattered letters to Santa and a faint pinch and blister crack of Retrovir IV settling into

the vein. It's enough to almost make you want to say something, but I don't speak Tick. Even if I did, I couldn't say much, not with daily visits from the Smoke Monsters, but I think that's something Fife and I have in common. I'd like to think the Smoke Monsters were friendly too, but maybe majestic fits 'em better. Those silk-grey Dollar Store clouds barge into my lungs and borrow my throat. When I cough their wispy arms stretch out like they woke from a long nap, and took the dream with 'em, they flutter twirling out in shapes like balloon animals dancing with smitten sewing needles. But I know they're just trying to find an itch to scratch. They just like making a show of the morning, even though I never feel rested. My throat just tastes like burnt Gatorade and my voice doesn't sound like me, but hell it never really did, too lispy.

It wasn't for a bit after when I recognized Fife was the one singing in my ear, and not that Ian Curtis demo I grifted. He'd musta been curled up there two days back. He moaned while he slept, and out floated murmurs of things I don't think I should've heard, odes of him and Seymour's late night playdates and how the smoke monsters stole him away to play somewhere higher.

Last night I dreamed of Seymour. He was standing on a bridge, looking down at the water. The water was made of gold and shimmered in the sun. Seymour was wearing his yellow jacket and the blue jeans I bought him for his birthday. He glanced behind me and smiled sadly. He jumped, but instead of falling to his death, he floated up toward the heavens. He disappeared into the yellow clouds. The further up he floated, the lower Fife felt. I guess it's some brand of funny, I'd never imagine the sound of a tick gulping as it falls, it sounds like they're singing, huh.

Ol' Seymour used to live in my armchair. We were close, Seymour and I.

Seymour was no sinner, I'll tell you that. We used to talk on the phone together, the three of us would have a blast, cackling carefree into the wee hours of the morn. Last night felt almost the same, Fife, Troll and I really did Seymour proud. Maybe it was how far into a rumpus we got, just a change in tone, it coulda been all we needed. But the yawning of this morning dawn brought back the arrival of meese upon the lawn.

They say the moose season always brought good luck and better feels. Even in the moods that coated these past weeks, the meese were always a sign of good things to come. Good weather or a fully stocked Great Canadian canned isle. No smoke monsters, or waking up to Fife in a late night cry. When the meese came into town, the people were happy. The house lost its creaking from moldy wood and rotten friends, now it just sounded alive again. Even my old dear maple tree's carving caught auburn color again like 'fore they went all bloody and raw. I think they would've liked to be here, even if they wouldn't have said so.

The air carried a smell of strawberries and pound cake. The smell reminded Troll of Aunt Jitter, and of Seymour. Troll thought of summer days, Sundays before church, when Jitter would make a hot stack of chocolate chip pancakes, with a hard face and just a few wrinkles of pride. This was before the syrup went dry and the maple leaves flew off on a south-bound breeze. Before the Smoke Monsters, and before Retrovir IV was a word we used often. Times of Seymour's playful pranks.

Troll didn't have time to think about Retrovir IV, it was just a figment of the past. And Troll was of a future filled with herds of 20,000 meese or more.

Ellie Zandt-Balmer can be reached at zandt-balmer@surrealtimes.net

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COMMUNITY CLASSIFIEDS

TO POST A LISTING OR GET IN TOUCH WITH SELLERS OR
EMPLOYERS, CONTACT CLASSIFIEDS@SURREALTIMES.NET.
A 2% FEE WILL BE TAKEN UPON TRANSACTION.

WANTED: a strand of Elon Musk's hair follicle for DNA analysis

WANTED: To burn through our fumed love and cease to feel atomic.

FOR SALE: Small kitten who won't stop bringing me dead frogs and jaw harps.

FELT: I swear sometimes I want to kill you, then of course, I'd wander the earth until I could find a way to bring you back.

WANTED: The sound of a rusted harmonica a makes while being vomited up.

WANTED: Alexander Dumas' skeletal finger hid in a three musketeers chocolate bar.

WANTED: Eight-tubed conjoined condom capable of 8-directional protection. Must remain attached and effective in water.

WANTED: Pizza party for one. I am very lonely and would like to keep it that way

WANTED: My ribcage to open like a butterfly.

FOR SALE: Nipples that shoot confetti

And WANTED: Babies that suckle streamers.

FOR SALE: OMNISCIENT TOASTER - has the ability to speak, will try to convince you to invest in gold. Has a British accent.

Help Wanted: Roofer - \$18/hour - Must have a giant hand for a head

FOR SALE: A potpourri of throwup from different continents. Extremely fertile and capable of growing crops on any surface, organic or otherwise.

WANTED: Mind Reader who Is Good At Fighting.

FOR SALE: Bonkers crack-head goldfish from the 5th dimension.

TRADE WANTED: Assorted Baby Doll Parts in exchange for cuddles.

WANTED: More lengthy small intestine. Needed for daily use.

FOR SALE: Parrot that is able to dirty talk

WANTED: heavy-set male capable of playing his big tummy like a drum

FOR SALE: Twelve Mason jars full of barks (oak, maple, dog, etc)

WANTED: Puppet born with vestigial puppeteer.

NEEDED: How to tell which Krazy Glue products are safe to eat.

WANTED: The Most Powerful Weasels Ranked.

FOR LEASE: A Cage (Previously Owned by a Rage-Filled Rat)

WANTED: My imaginary friend Dennis, dead or alive

FOR HIRE: Man with exceedingly malleable emotional state

WANTED: Grapes equipped with mouth-targeting guidance systems.

FOR SALE: Methadone Gum-my Bears, Half Melted, pre licked

WANTED: Largest turtle.

HELP NEEDED: I've covered myself head to toe in peanut butter and can't get it off. Please contact me ASAP with suggestions; the dogs are closing in fast!

Needed: A sequence of auditory sounds which will bring tears to my wrinkly eyes.

WANTED: Victrola cones for broadcasting sonic disruption waves to finally get some sleep

FOR HIRE: Man with exceedingly malleable emotional state

FOR SALE: Tumble weeds laced with hydrochloric acid and adrenochrome. Not recommended for vertebrate consumption.

WANTED: Raman Noodles still live and writhing

WANTED: Friends. All of my friends have been revealed to be machinations of my own imagination, so I am in the market for some real ones. For the initial meeting, I can pay for pizza.

FOR SALE: Collection of Saliva

FOR HIRE: Mouse Strippers

FOR LEASE: An igloo inside of another igloo

NEEDED: more bones to stuff in my flesh wound.

FOR HIRE: toad boy.

For Lease: The vacant crevice in my heart.

WANTED: Numerous elegant cadavers from families of oligarchs. Must be dressed well and be marinated in caviar.

WANTED: Vampire Alberta. We met at a club and I think you gave me the wrong number. It keeps referring me to an underground nightclub whose address is Hell. I really thought we hit it off, if you see this, call me. 506-555-6669

For Sale: 1/4th of my soul. Fair warning, it's the portion that's kind of insufferable.

Needed: more bones to stuff in my flesh wound

Wanted: Buddy to go roll down a grassy hill with. Must be rotund, bouncy, chunky, and spherical (fatties only).

WANTED: Spray On Insect Attractant.

Needed: A Gallon of Mustard Water with a painted fingernail floating in it, and no questions.

HIRING: Professional wanderer. Email recruiting@surrealtimes.net.

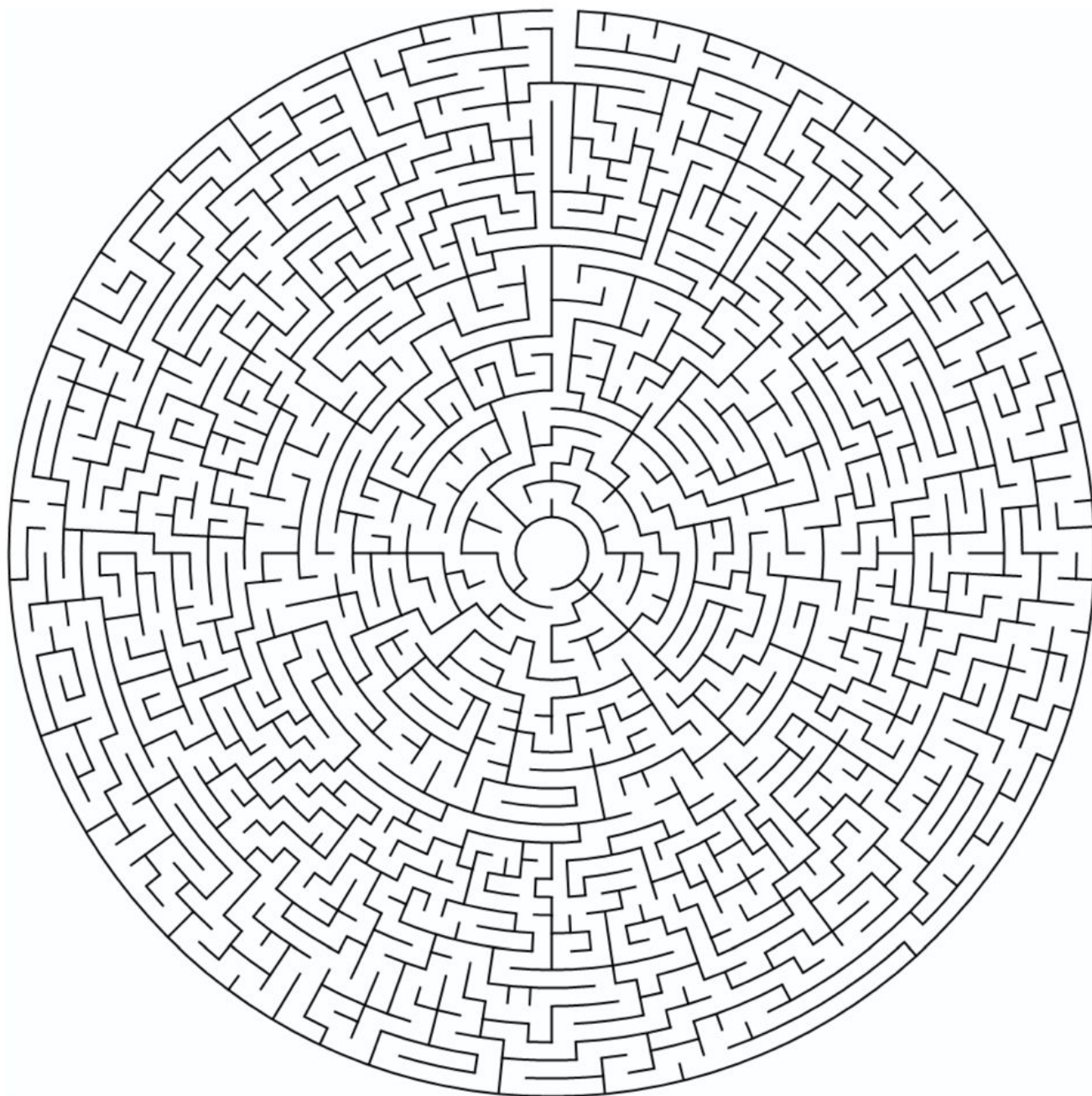


THE BIHEXICAL SEARCH

By ARMĀDEIUS GALOUËI'S SURROGATE,
Mechanical Contraption

Utilizing a spectacular isomorphism, the solution to the following maze can be translated directly to a solution to an abstract problem in the real world. In turn, by completing this maze, you provide us the information necessary to make the world a better place.

If against all odds you manage to find a path to the core, email it promptly to isomorphism@surrealtimes.net so that we can put the fruits of your labor into action. Once results come back affirmative, you will be contacted to arrange delivery of a **secret prize** more grandiose than the most distant corners of your imagination.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND CAUSES

- Surreal Newsroom Meeting every Week (writers wanted)
- Juggle Fighting Derby on Wednesdays on Venice Beach
- Renegades of Comedy on Thursdays at Pete's house
- FractalFest in The Fractal Forest (fractaltribe.org)
- Cosmic Clown shows (facebook.com/eyebblinktherefore)
- Moismus, the one and only (instagram.com/moiimus)
- The Museum of Other Realities (www.museumor.co)
- Ranked Choice Voting [ballotpedia.org/Ranked-choice_voting_\(RCV\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Ranked-choice_voting_(RCV))
- masspeaceaction.org/act/volunteer/

Email events@surrealtimes.net to get information on these events or to inform us of other events and occurrences.

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