



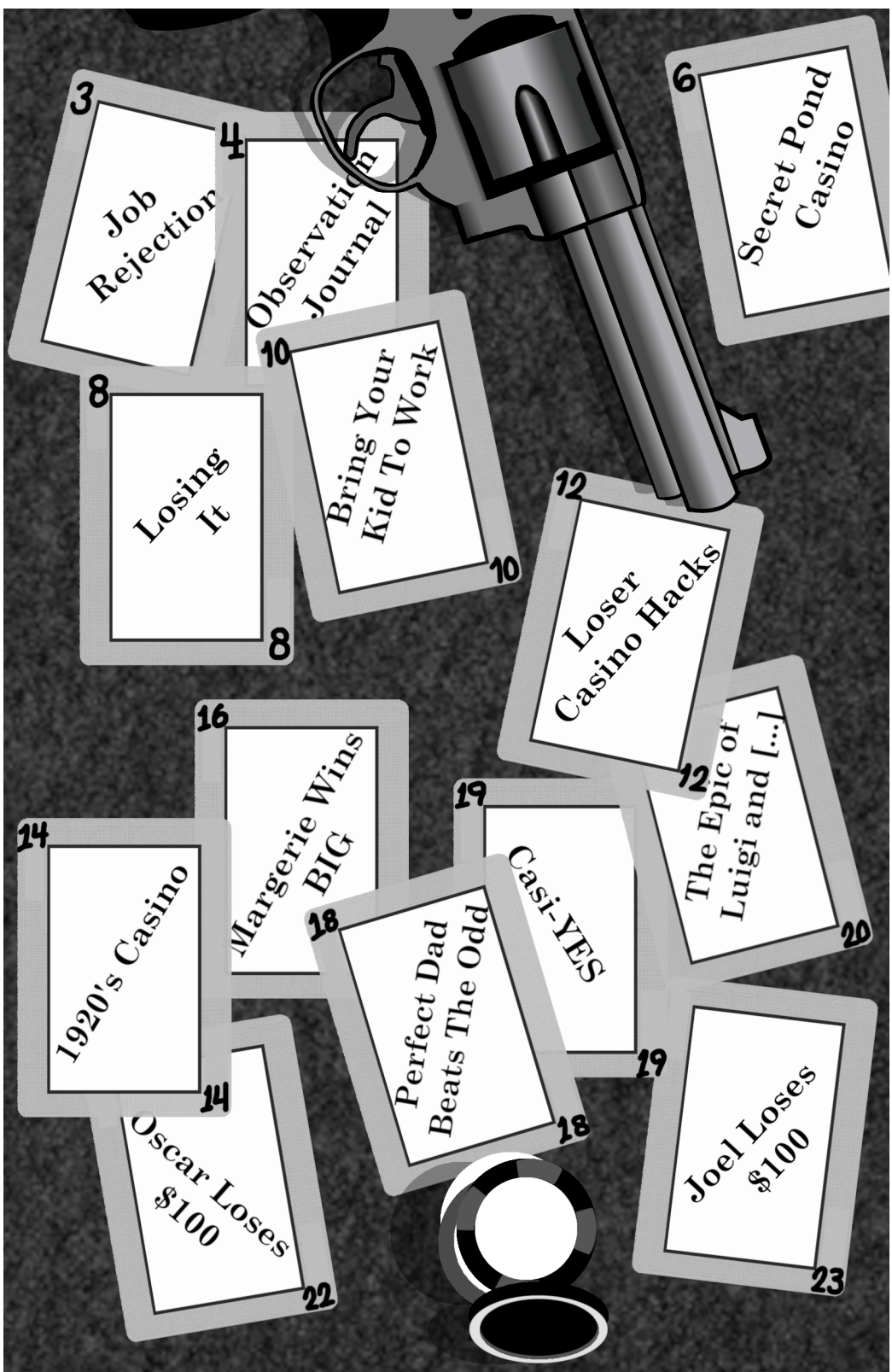
PHONY

LOSES

it all!

ISSUE NO. 47





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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

To our valued applicant,

We appreciate your interest in joining us as Social Media Intern here at the Department of Defense. You have impressive credentials and, according to our interviewer, would get along well with everyone in the office. However, there's just one extracurricular activity that you listed on your application that we took a look at and we have a question: what the fuck?

According to your paperwork, Phony Magazine is "the premier comedy magazine on UMN-TC campus," but if this is the best of what your campus has to offer we could classify all of Minneapolis as a primitive civilization. "Those who know?" Are you fucking serious? That's all you have? The closest thing even resembling humor in any of these things is just sexual innuendo and gay pornography. Are you twelve years old? Also, why are they called "zines?" Call them magazines you dipshit. They're pieces of printer paper folded in half. You don't get to be a pretentious asshole when you publish photo collages that look like they were used in MK Ultra. We had to send half of our floor to the hospital because they started scratching the number 11 into their desks with their bare fingernails. If I didn't think you were some moron that kicks their feet while drawing dicks on bathroom stalls you would have a case to join the CIA.

And don't even get me started on how we found issues of your magazine, the link you left us just redirected us to a Russian website that ended up being the source of a recent DDOS attack. We had to send in covert agents for two months just to get ahold of one paperback because you don't even print them on a proper schedule. Now I'm going to have to explain to my boss why 50 grand was spent on getting one paperback magazine printed on shitty 8.5 x 11 paper. Fuck you.

In short, we're scheduling your death for June 5, 2025 and moving on with another candidate. Strangely enough, he also seems to have a history with that godforsaken magazine of yours, but he at least had the common sense to get the fuck out of there.

See you in Hell,

Department of Defense Human Resources Department

Observation Journal

every year on may 26th there's a comet that passes by the moon that we don't see but it's there. it goes past really really fast so we can't see it but i swear it happens because every may 26th there's a significant jump in my electrolysisomagnetiospacialamnatron readings which can only indicate that there's a comet that passes the moon because otherwise i wouldn't get those readings. i'm going to go to space one day to see it happen. i'll build a rocket ship, not unlike one you would see in a movie. you know, they might say that those cartoony rocket ships aren't what will actually get you to space and that they're just a joke but that's what they want you to think so that you can't leave this earth, only the billionaires. you know what else is really interesting, there is air in space but your eyes don't have the capability to see it so your body thinks there is no air and forces you to suffocate and die, sort of like a placebo effect. i wonder what kind of other government secrets our bodies hide from us. when we were all babies, we're assigned a government official that disguises themselves as a licensed and registered medical doctor to administer our vaccinations throughout our entire lives. dont get me wrong, those vaccines prevent diseases and keep our society healthy, but what the government official doctors don't tell you is that they mix in extra biotoxicological compounds that turn off your brain's ability to see the air in space as an extra measure of government control so that you're discouraged from building a rocket ship and going into space where you can definitely breathe. i once cornered my daughter's undercover government official disguised as her pediatrician to ask which biotoxicological chemic

The Secret of Secret Pond Casino

This entire vacation I've felt out of my element. I am not one to walk the streets of Vegas, and I never have been. My gambling has been relegated to cheaply made games featuring cute anime girls. I have never felt the handle of a slot machine or watched the roulette wheel spin... this is all a new frontier. My friends have all "mysteriously" disappeared to a bar somewhere, leaving me alone and a bit peckish. Apparently I've been a "real bum" this whole trip.

Nevertheless a particular casino catches my eye. Something about its neon signs differs from every other neon sign. Pink water lilies compete with the gaudy gold background. Bold text proudly proclaims "Secret Pond." For once I am not overstimulated... I am allured. There are worse places to wait for friends.

The place reeks of cigarette smoke and I'm taken aback by the dizzying carpet and suspicious lack of windows. Machines blare loudly from every corner, almost as loud as the various crowds of people who cheer or boo at their games. In the center of the building lies a shiny new sports car, its neon red adding to the siege on my senses. I decide to blend in. "When in Rome," as they say. I approach a slot machine and stick a few dollars in. The brief rush of a potential win hits me, but it passes all too quickly when I'm left with nothing. Disappointed, I check my phone, hoping my friends have finally bothered to check on me.

Huh... curious.

My phone seems to have shut itself off. Attempting to turn it on does nothing. Surely this isn't the casino's doing? The cigarette smoke is making my head foggy, I should really get out of here.

That is until a small, unassuming machine catches my eye: a soda fountain with a large "FREE!" sign next to it. I can never say no to a free drink. I cross the floor and help myself. The drink perks me up immediately, making me more alert and aware. It fills me with a sudden motivation. Another game couldn't hurt, could it? I return to the slot machine with a new fervor.

The rush of pulling the handle and watching the numbers spin is almost more rewarding than the few paltry dollars it spits back out at me. I need some more liquid courage for this. I return to the soda fountain.

Mr. Pibb. Poker. Loss. Shasta. Roulette. Win. Diet Coke. Black Jack. Loss. Fanta. Slot Machines. Win. Hi-C. Poker. Win. More Diet Coke. More Black Jack. Loss. With every soda I feel more powerful. I could do this forever. I think I want to stay here forever.

Something's wrong... this isn't right.

Surely this casino is trapping me in, its walls closing in to numb my senses and digest me like the world's most obnoxious pitcher plant. The lack of windows and my phone dying? Clearly a way to make sure I lose track of time. The ever-present smell of smoke and that God-awful carpet? A way to disorient me. My whole body jitters at my realization. I must confirm my suspicions.

Shakily, I find an unsuspecting patron by the Black Jack table, attempting to hide my haggard demeanor.

“H-hey... dude... how long have you been here?”

He looks at me quizzically and sighs. “I dunno man, ‘feels like forever.”

That does it. I need to get out of here.

Just exiting through the front door won’t do, they’ll do everything in their power to keep me trapped here. They can’t let their secret get out... they can’t—

“Excuse me sir, are you alright? You’re looking a bit shaky.”

Shit! The Black Jack dealer has come to check on me. No time to think. I sock the guy right in the jaw and book it. He yells for security, but I run as fast as my legs can carry me, the door is just within reach— until the guards come and block the door.

“Sir, please remain calm, or we will have to escort you—”

“YOU’LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE!” I scream, evading their grasp like the slippery little snake that I am. But this is only a temporary victory, I have to find a better solution.

The bolt of red catches my eye. That’s right! The sports car! Dodging more guards, I maneuver to the car, hopping in and locking the doors. The security guards pound on the windshield, but I’m safe in my scarlet forcefield. I turn the conveniently placed keys and floor it. The car leaps off its pedestal as I make my grand escape.

However, the path to the exit is less of a straight shot than I thought. I swerve to avoid the machines and various patrons. No matter, I’ll drive straight through the wall like in the movies! I slam the gas even harder, cackling knowing the guards will never touch me now.

The car slams straight into the wall, crumpling as it makes a sizable dent, but it’s not enough to breach the building. Amidst the chaos and the smoke I manage to open the door and roll out of the vehicle, running for the door as originally planned. The guards shout incoherent things, clearly trying their hardest to keep me in! But I’m gone in a flash as I sprint down the streets of Vegas, a mere shadow amongst the neon signs.

I don’t get more than two blocks before colliding with someone on the sidewalk. As we gain our bearings once again, I realize it’s one of my so-called “friends” who disposed of me at that wretched place.

“Dude! Where the hell did you go? It’s been an hour!”

An... hour...?

My vision goes blurry and my legs buckle under me. They must have shot me with some kind of tranquilizer on the way out. My hubris betrayed me, nobody can know the secret of Secret Pond. Not even me.

Losing IT.

You hear people throw around the phrase “I think he’s really lost It”. After what I’ve gone through I’m not sure anyone could really understand just what that means.

It was any other day at the library. I hadn’t seen much action. The most I had to do was give Mr. John Paul Stickyfingers a library card. He better not get his infamous sticky fingers all over my precious literature.

But it all came crashing down when Florence told me the news.

“Bernard, we’re missing a book.”

Holy. Cripes.

Out of all of my tours of service with the Hennepin County library system, under my leadership we had never lost a book. Sure someone would be late turning it in or whatever, but we always knew where the book was.

This one time I saw a certain Montgomery B. Chegger had “The Mothman Prophecies”, “UFO’s For Dummies”, Season 1-5 of “Ancient Aliens” on DVD, “Kentucky Cryptids ‘Monsters of the Bluegrass State’”, “My Girlfriend was eaten by a North American Wood Ape!!”, “Freemasons: Did They Really Turn My Oven On While I Was Away From Home?”, “Looney Tunes: Satanic or Not?”, “The Man who Killed Hitler and Then the Bigfoot”, and “My Trip to Antarctica” all checked out and were overdue by at least two weeks, so Prudence and I went to his address strapped with a glock 19 and one of those long planks of wood with a rusty nail sticking out. We got him to turn the stuff back in, but not without a little bit of spooking the guy.

You dont. FUCK. with hennepin county libraries.

Anyways, now you understand why I was so shocked when Florence told me we had a book missing. We NEVER have missing material. We know where EVERYTHING IS!!!! GRRRR!!!! ROOOOAARRRR I’M SO HOPPING MAD!!!

Sorry. Sorry. It’s just... really hard.

So after I recovered from collapsing on the floor in tears, I jumped up and took action.

“MURIEL! What section was this book from?”

“Uhhhh..... Adult Horror,” said that lovely woman.

“Holy mother of God. We’ve got a scary guy on the loose.”

I jumped over the counter and sprinted to the fiction section. I'd been here many times before. After the gay hillbilly craze, a bunch of people wanted to check out *Deliverance*, so I had to show people where it was.

I made it to the horror section, and I immediately started sniffing out the missing book.

“Ooh.... it's in the K's.....”

I lumbered and drew my finger over each and every book. All the stories... all the creepy ghouls and evil spirits.... My spine shuddered and my wiener tickled just thinking about them. Ooooooh! Books just get me so darned excited you know.

But there, I finally found the missing book.

I could tell, the rest of the books were leaning in just a way that I could tell a paperback about two inches thick was missing.

“INGRID!!!! FIRE UP THAT COMPUTER!!! I'M COMING ON BACK!” I screamed as I ran back towards the check out desk.

“I figured out what book was missing! What we lost!” Ingrid said to me.

“What... what was it....”

“Stephen King's....” she was stuttering with fear.

“What? WHAT? SPEAK TO ME WOMAN!!!” I yelled as I shook her with my arms (which are really strong... ladies).

“We lost.....”

“We lost IT.”



Bring Your Kid to Work Day

Bring your kid to work day, what a joke. You're telling me this 6-year-old belongs in a casino? I run a goddamn roulette table for fucks sake. But national holidays are national holidays, and if I don't bring him, the government will probably castrate me or something. At least then I wouldn't have to do this shit again.

Usually, Linda takes him. She works at a school, so it's basically just another day for her, but she's "not feeling well" today. I know she's lying, but I don't really have the energy to argue with the lady that tossed my ass to the curb just because I wouldn't stop slamming a bottle of cuervo especial every other night and dragging her to karaoke with me. I thought we were having a good time, but apparently she thought I was acting childish and couldn't grow up. She's a coldhearted one; I can tell ya that much. That was just Tuesday for us back in college. In fact, after I drop Tommy off tonight, I'll probably slam two!

Anyway, the little tyke keeps tugging on my sleeve as I'm getting situated at my table and asking for his iPad or whatever gizmo his mom bought him to shut him up. I keep trying to shove him under the table so people don't see him, but he keeps popping out. So I gave up and handed it to him. His eyes immediately lock onto the screen, and he's gone. It gives me the willies, but at least he's quiet.

So people start trickling in, and eventually, I've got an older woman at my table. Of course, this is when Tommy decides to pop out and tell me he has to go to the bathroom. The woman sees him and I watch her face flip through a bunch of different expressions. She settles on surprise and asks if he's mine. Now, while I know what day it is, she doesn't seem to, and that kinda freaks me out, so I panic and tell her no. I think that was the wrong answer though, cause she just kinda squints and walks toward the office. All the while, the kid is still yellin' at me. Finally, I tell him to just go and he waddles off toward the bathroom.

Now I know what you're thinking. Why would I tell him to go on his own? Well, to be fair, when I was his age, I think I was already driving, so exCUSE me for thinking he could handle himself. But yeah, after like 30 minutes I do start to get a bit scared he's gonna bite someone and give em cooties or rabies or something, so I call Todd over to take my place while I go look for him. Good ol' Todd, always lookin' out for me.

The other night, I invited Todd out drinkin' and croonin' with me. We hit the bar and sang the pina colada song. You know the one, "If you like pina coladas, gettin' caught in the rain." Yeah, that one. Anyway, he was lookin' real sleepy, so I invited him over to my apartment since it's closer than his place. My couch got repo'd last week, so there was only the bed. I offered to let him have it, but he said he didn't mind sharing.

Problem is, I can't sleep unless I'm totally naked, so I told Todd that, and get this, he said he was the same! I thought that was mighty cool, and so we both stripped and laid down next to each other. This was primo bro time. Then Todd started asking me questions. Just silly stuff, like my favorite color and whatnot. We went back and forth, and then he asked if I was seeing anyone. I told him no, and he said the same. Then he asked if I was lonely over where I was, and I kinda was, so I said yes. He got a little closer, and I put my arm around him. He told me he had a really great night and I told him I thought so too. He let out a really sweet-sounding sigh, and we fell asleep just like that. Never felt more connected to someone in my entire life. Not even with Linda back when we were together. I've been thinkin' about that night a lot, but... yeah, I dunno.

Anyway, so i'm runnin' around lookin' for the little rugrat, and where do I find him but sitting at the blackjack table talkin' to Rob. Rob kinda makes a face and runs to the back room and grabs the boss. Boss man sees me quick and zips over and calls me into the office. Apparently, bring your kid to work day ISNT a national holiday (FUCK you Sammy from high school, I knew you was a liar). And I got fired. Linda also laid into me for bringin' the kid to the casino even though SHE'S the one that told me I had to watch him. She told me she thought I was still unemployed, which I guess is true now. Visits with Tommy are probably gonna be gone soon...

But... I did get a call from Todd askin' if I wanted to go to half price Tuesday at Olive Garden tonight so... guess it ain't all bad.

Loser Casino Hacks

“Listen up, kid.”

You're just minding your own business at the blackjack table when he approaches you. Hair like a rat's nest, tuxedo buttoned one hole out of alignment, and smelling distinctly of booze and gunpowder, he steps between you and the player on your right. He points at your cards and whistles.

“You've got a soft 17. You always hit on a soft 17.”

Before you can tell him to stop he reaches across the table and draws a card for you. It's a 2. He pumps his fist in the air, causing his phone to fall out of his pocket.

“C'mon. Time to carry that 19 across the river. You need a 2 to win and there aren't any aces left in the deck. It's guaranteed.” He drags the last syllable out between gritted teeth for emphasis.

The dealer firmly tells you you're cheating and asks you to leave. Your new friend stares down the dealer with contempt, but then eyes the pair of men in suits strolling to the table. He slaps you on the back and says, “Let's blow this joint.” You let him escort you away. He forgets to pick his phone back up.

Slot machines are next. As soon as you feed a bill into the machine he grabs the handle and cranks it. Offended, you tell him to put his own money in if he wants to play.

“Hey I'm helping you. See, it's all in the handle. You gotta exert a specific amount of force to get the payout. I got a feel for it. Here, let me show you.”

He pulls the lever with a grunt. It doesn't work. He tries it a couple more times.

“Don't worry, that's normal. They're all calibrated a little differently so it usually takes a few tries.”

He pushes you out of the way and keeps yanking the slot machine. You tell him louder than before that he's still using your money. He doesn't respond. You give him a minute, then ask him if he knows what he's doing.

“Okay at this point I'm giving up on the psi thing. They must've figured that one out and changed it. But what they can't change is how these things work.”

He gently caresses the side of the slot machine to emphasize his point.

“The fatal flaw is that the random number generator in here isn't actually random. There's a pattern. The patterns tell you when you're about to score. Here, I'll bet a hundred on this one. Don't look at me like that, just trust me.” He feeds a crisp one hundred dollar bill into the machine.

It doesn't work. He starts kicking and slamming the machine and cussing it out. An employee walks over and asks him to leave. He tells them to ‘fix their damn code’ and storms off.

Still wanting to salvage your night, you head over to the racetrack. You've never been to one before, and find yourself dumb-founded by the tables of odds and payouts behind the cashiers. Just then, you feel a familiar presence looking over your shoulder.

“Betting on Seafoam the Thoroughbred, huh? Don't make me laugh. There was a thunderstorm yesterday so they won't be at their best. Winds are going east so Clydesdales are a no-go. What's the dewpoint?” He licks a finger and holds it up. “Perfect. Here's a little-known fact: Appaloosa horses don't have sweat glands. They're gonna crumple in this humidity. Don't give me that look. Trust me, I learned this all from my dad. R.I.P. I don't wanna talk about it. Look, long story short, you gotta go with Starlight. Sure she's only got three legs, but that just means she tries that much harder. Here, I'll put a hundred on him for you.” He slaps another crisp bill onto the counter.

You're doing everything you can to avoid this guy but he is too persistent and you keep losing money. You decide to cut your losses and head home. You get about three blocks before you spot him again. Standing on a street corner, he looks like he's gazing up at the stars. You try to turn and avoid him but it's too late. He notices you as you're about to duck over to the other side of the street

“You get any wins in there?”

You tell him no.

“...Me neither. It's... been a while since I've gotten a win. You want a cigarette?”

You might as well take it. He seems harmless now, so you join him on the corner.

“You ever like, think about life, man? Like, really think about it”

You nod.

“You and me? We're winners. We know how to play the game. All those other people in there, they're completely clueless. They'll never know what it feels like to be on top.”

He looks back up at the stars.

“Doesn't always feel like we're winning though, huh? But I think sometimes winning is just making it another day.”

There's a long moment of silence. You look up at the stars with him.

“Holy shit.”

You ask him what. Maybe he finally realized his phone was missing.

“Look” He points upwards, “Jupiter’s moons are in perfect fucking alignment! Dude, this is our chance. We gotta get back in there”

The casinos wouldn't let you back in, so he brings you to a 'laidback joint where the winners play and the players win'. Illuminated by a single bulb hanging from the ceiling, him and five others sit blindfolded around a scratched felt table. A revolver sits in the middle. High risk, high reward. A real game.

He's up. He spins the barrel. Then again. He keeps doing it. The room is dead silent, but he speaks out to you.

“See, there's a $\frac{1}{6}$ chance I get the bullet. Spin it again, the chance is $\frac{1}{6}$ times $\frac{1}{6}$. Three times and it's already only 1 out of 216. The limit approaches 0. In fact at a point it becomes statistically impossible. You ever hear of the Monty Hall Problem?”

He puts the gun up to his head, puts his finger on the trigger, and smiles.

“See you on the other side, kid.”



Casino in the 20s

Everything is bright, and flashy, and loud, oh my! The Gimmeyourfuckinmoney Casino (Pronounced Gimme-Your-Fuckin'-Money Casino) is bustling with a wild, lively energy, as dice are rolled and slot machines chime. It's the roaring 20s (1920s, not 2020s, ya dingus), so you know what that means! That's right: it's full of old white men!

However, amidst these gambling men are a group of rousy ruffians, and they don't have their eyes on the chips or cards. No, they've got their sights on the backroom, where they know that a giant safe with a bunch of money is.

Three men. Tony, Vincent, and James. Three thugs hoping for any chance at some dough. They walk forwards, heading towards that door, and open it, stepping inside. The vault is right there, the size of the entire wall in front of them, something you would see in Looney Tunes

"...Well, that was easy," Tony grumbles, but then he shrugs, turning to Vincent. "Alright, Vince, you got the can openin' tools and the bean-shooter? In case the fuzz comes, you'll do some Chef Boyardee action, plug 'em up, let the sauce flow, serve some meat sauce lasagna, ya follow?" Vince frantically nods.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah! I got 'em right here!" He digs into his pockets, pulling out a can opener—you heard that right, an actual can opener—and some weird stringy thing. He holds out the weird stringy thing, grinning proudly. "If the cops get here, I'll go BOP BOP BOP!" He shoots the weird stringy thing, and—wow, this is embarrassing—real, actual beans come out, splatting harmlessly against the wall. Tony just stares at him for a moment.

"...You're a moron," he says, "that's not what I meant. You think a can opener is gonna crack this box?" Vincent goes from :D to D:.

"I'M SORRY, BIG CHEESE!" He wails, but Tony only pinches the bridge of his nose, muttering, "what a palooka..."

"I've got it all right here, boss," James then speaks up, holding out a pistol and a jar of goopy nitroglycerin. "Just the right amount for a soup job." Tony nods approvingly, a flicker of relief in his eyes, and pats him on the back.

"You always were the best peterman, James," he murmurs, and Vincent goes ;o.

"Hey! I am, too!"

"Nah, you're a yegg," he retorts.

Anyway, the nitroglycerin is quickly applied, everything perfectly set for the heist of the evening. Eventually, James steps back, and Tony nods.

"Let's blow this keister."

And then BOOM! Explosion! The three head in as fast as they can, nabbing whatever money they can fit in their pockets, bags, and other places.

"Look at all this cabbage!" James crows, and Vincent perks up.

"Cabbage? Where?!"

"Cabbage is money, Vincent."

"Oh :c."

But then, off in the distance, the sound of sirens can be heard coming closer. Tony stiffens. "It's the coppers!" he shouts. "The elbows! The elephant ears!"

"The hammer and saws!" James adds, and Vincent just scratches his head.

As the three scramble to escape, the door is kicked down, a bunch of police swarming the room. And amidst them was Johnson. He's the big wig, the bee's knees of the police, and when James sees him, the two go still.

"...Bro!" Johnson yells, exasperated. Tony raises a brow, and Vincent dramatically gasps, whipping his head to James.

"Woah! James, you're... you're Johnson's brother?!" he screeches. James doesn't respond, tightly crossing his arms, and even the police are flabbergasted, murmuring and muttering to one another. During the distraction, Tony suddenly charges forward, socking one of the police on the jaw. James joins in, though he's sure to avoid Johnson.

"Kiss 'em, Vince! Kiss 'em!" Tony roars at Vincent, and in response he slowly turns, eyes wide like 0_0 with a hand on his chest, blushing a bit.

"Woah, big cheese... love is love, but I don't really roll that way—"

"KISS THEM WITH YOUR FIST, VINCENT!"

Eventually, with some POWs and BAMs and even a few BONKs, the three manage to escape the clutches of the bulls, fleeing from Gimmeyourfuckinmoney Casino and out into the alleyways, the cops on their tail. James shoots his pistol to deter the police, and Tony knocks a few trash cans over behind their path.

But then, Vincent throws the weird stringy thing he had in possession. It splats onto the floor, seemingly useless, until Johnson steps on it and slips as if it were a banana peel. He stumbles, arms flailing and windmilling frantically, before he falls flat on his face. The others, not expecting such a thing to happen, can't slow down in time, and every single one of them trips over him, falling slack onto the ground in a great pile of bodies. It's a glorious sight, really, if it weren't so absurd.

The three hooligans continue their retreat, and it's not until they're sure the threat is gone that they stop, gasping and panting. Tony takes a moment, before he turns his head to Vincent.

"Well, you... You got 'em off our tail," he mutters, bemused. He hesitates for a moment, before awkwardly patting his shoulder. "Guess you're more of a wise head than we thought." Vincent smiles, a great big :D, the happiest and proudest he had been in years.

"Yay!" He cheers. James smiles as well, patting his other shoulder, before he looks down at the money they had nabbed.

"With all these berries, we could celebrate," he offers. Tony nods, and Vincent gasps, looking around.

"Berries? Where?!"

"Berries are dollars, Vincent."

"Oh :c."



Margerie Wins Big

email #67

March 12, 2017

Dear Carol,

As you know, every Wednesday my girls and I go play bingo at Big Wave Casino. Margaret got us into it, you know, and she takes her bingoing VERY seriously. Well, last Wednesday, Shurley won BIG and we were all so happy for her, but to be honest, I was feeling a little jealous. So, Thursday night, while still high on the thrill of Shurley's big win, I decided to go back to Bingo alone, buy two sets of cards and test my luck! Bill doesn't like me gambling, but I told him the book club was meeting to watch the newest Hallmark movie and he didn't ask questions.

Now, I know what you're thinking, "Marge you dirty girl! Going gambling 2 nights in a row and not telling your husband!". Yes yes, I will admit this night was already off to a somewhat unorthodox start but you remember me in the old days, I may be 60 but I still have some of that crazy girl in me!! But anyways, I haven't even gotten to the best part yet!

When I arrived at the bingo hall, it seemed like they were setting up for something big. The lights were down and the caller stage was lit up all fancy like. I usually bought my cards at the door but since I was a little early and wanted to get a good spot I just went in and sat right down. The women sitting all around me were talking very excitedly so I assumed it must be a grand prize night! The thing is though, as I was sitting there I noticed there were no bingo cards in sight, and no bingo balls on the stage, I also realized I was the only one with a dopper.

Suddenly the feeling that I was NOT in the right place came over me. It hit me that I had never been to bingo on a Thursday, and maybe there wasn't bingo on Thursdays? I must have stumbled into a local concert or magic show or something, and you know I am not a fan of modern non-religious music, and after the incident of 02' I DO NOT trust magicians. I had to get out of there, but as I was getting up the doors closed and the lights went down. I was officially trapped.

When the music started, it was so loud it blinded me for a second. When I came to, I finally saw what the women beside me were excited about. Dancing on the stage were about 12 extremely scantily clad men. As any good married christian woman, I was immediately appalled by the tight leather shorts gyrating in front of my face. I tried to look away, but suddenly something came over me. A feeling I had not felt since college. Something I hadn't realized I was missing. Something Bill certainly hadn't sparken in me in years. Their rhythm was something hypnotic, their choreography top notch, their abs... Oh! I shouldn't continue on like this, or I will surpass PG too fast.

Anyways, I quickly decided it would be best for me to stay seated so as to not distract the dancers with my movement, of course. As the end of the show approached, the lead dancer, Brian, made an announcement to the audience. One lucky lady was going to have the opportunity to get a "treat" from Big Samuel and they would choose by drawing a seat name from a jar. The crowd was silent as the number was read. "N34". "My lucky bingo number" I thought, but I also realized it was my seat number! I had won. Carol, I had won!!!! I couldn't help but let out a little scream of joy when I saw Big Samuel making his way to my seat to escort me to the stage. I won't say what happened next, but I will tell you I think Thursday night "bingo" might just become a weekly tradition! wink

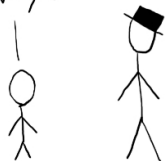
LOL(Lots of Love)

Your Best friend,

Margerie

Okay, we're almost there, listen up. Don't roll three doubles.

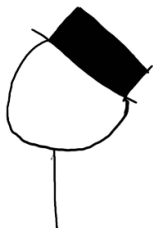
Why?



I've got a 12-leg parlay going and you just can't do that. Pull this off and we have Bezos groveling at our feet.



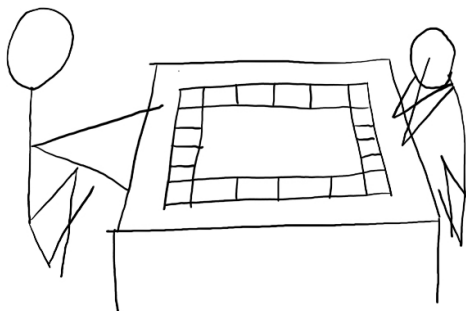
But if you go to jail, I go to the streets. Don't botch this.



Soon after...



Ha! Go to jail, don't pass Go!



Oh god...



STEP 1: GO TO CASINO



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STEP 2: REALIZE IT'S ACTUALLY A CASIYES



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STEP 3: HOUSE ALWAYS LOSES



STEP 4: PROFIT



NOT BAD

WIN

IT'S LIKE YOU PUT AWESOME

ON AN EPIC PLATE OF
RODACIOUSNESS

The Epic of Luigi and [redacted]

Picture, if you will, a middle-aged woman who doesn't look like she's fully aware of her presence on Earth. She has long, blonde hair and a smug blue-eyed stare that's unnerving to view. She has built an empire on hypocritical lies regarding healthcare, and she has been brought to court several times on the basis of said falsities. Some call her the devil in disguise, but I call her Gwyneth Paltrow. My name is [redacted], and I present to you the story of how I became involved in an illegal gambling machine and crayfish racing operation.

It was a quiet Tuesday in the small town where I grew up and also live. Not many birds in the sky that day. There never are. Now, on a regular day, my modus operandi would be to stay inside and chillax until the cows come home, but that day, the cows were not going to come home. As such, I was left with no choice but to expand my horizons beyond my townhome and make a run for it, so to speak.

I pulled on my galoshes and nothing else and began the trek through downtown. Main Street was deserted, but what else was new? No one wants to hang out on a street that could have been cut and pasted from any other Midwestern small town, especially not me. Especially not on a day like today.

My stomach rumbled. Drat. I had forgotten to eat breakfast. Well, I supposed that was my signal to go hunting. Swiveling my head, I appraised my options. Doherty's Pub? Too heavy, I'd surely be up all night with the chills. Mandy's Pies? A good choice if you don't value your gastrointestinal well-being. Olsen and Olsen Antiques? Hm... No, unfortunately not edible.

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I spied movement across the highway that cut through the cornfields. A man, about yea-high with hair somewhat like that of 1996 Owen Wilson, had slipped inside a small shack that I had never noticed before.

Consider my interest piqued.

Looking both ways to ensure my safety before crossing the highway, I sprinted as fast as my stubby legs could carry me, dodging semis and escaping with only one hit-and-run incident.

I—oh, my arm? No, it's fine. I was planning on selling that one anyway.

I reached the other side of the highway, panting and arguably disemboweled, but ecstatic for having made it to my destination. The shack, in all of its tin-roofed, poorly painted glory, towered over me, a neon sign proclaiming that they were "OPEN." There was no indication of what services they offered, and I had no reason to enter, so indubitably I was required to enter.

I was greeted by a pungent odor not unlike that of a Goop coffee enema (I suppose Gwyneth Paltrow does have something to do with this story), as well as by a stunning man with a nametag reading "Luigi" at the front desk. We locked eyes and my world stopped for a moment. Hel-lo, beautiful hunk!

That was when I fell in love for the first time. His eyes were an orgasmic hazelnut shade—he could have violently strangled me to death in those chocolate pools and I would have thanked him. He grunted at me to take a seat at one of the dinged-up metal tables scattered around the space, and I peed a little.

Now, the plot gets good. Not only did I meet the love of my life, but I realized that he was staring at me with murderous intent (not that I like that, haha!), which was my first sign that maybe this place wasn't going to have the best food. I ordered eggs (without the yolks—I'm not a psychopath), and he brought me a plate of them, yellow and scrambled. I guess he didn't hear me when I asked for no yolks. He's so silly!

As I sat there admiring the dingy atmosphere of the shack, I noticed some cutesy little machines that reminded me of my Vegas days, as well as an oblong plastic pool filled with crayfish. When I asked Luigi about the crayfish, he said something in Italian that sounded vaguely like "Don't ask questions you don't want the answers to. I can have you shot and taxidermied and no one will ever know." Seriously, romance languages make my legs go weak!

What? Shut up, you're so overanalyzing. Why would he say that?

Anywho, the machines had silly little handles that you could pull and spinning wheels with funny pictures. I had a lot of fun with one themed after the 2009 blockbuster comedy film *The Hangover*—I must have been there for several hours, but I can't remember, lol!

Snapping out of my reverie where nothing hurt and there was no suffering, I turned as the door to the shack opened, curious to see the newcomer's highway injuries. The man who entered had this sexy navy blue uniform, a belt with a bunch of fun gadgets, and yellow badge-shaped badges on either sleeve. He yelled at Luigi and told him to "put your hands up," then handcuffed him (it was incredibly intimate, but if that's what Luigi is into, I'm certainly not one to kinkshame).

The man in the uniform brought me into the local police station and questioned me—you know, stuff like "what relation do you have to Luigi," "were you aware of the nature of the establishment at the time of your arrest," "how many eggs did you eat, I mean geez, dude."

I got a court summons the next day because apparently they found hard drugs in my system (must've been in those damn yolks), which apparently is illegal? The judicial system is so corrupt, man.

Found out from my next-door neighbor that apparently my one true love was running an illegal gambling machine operation and illegal crayfish racing fronting as a cute family restaurant. He's so bad! Oh, there's a suspicious black vehicle outside of my townhome. I should probably go make sure they know not to cross the highway on foot—goodbye!



One time Oscar put 100 dollars on black and lost.

THE

END.

One time Joel put 100 dollars on the U.S. Presidential Election
and lost.

THE



END.

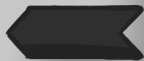


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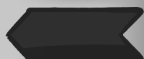
PHONY
MAGAZINE



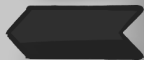
Andy, Calla, Evan



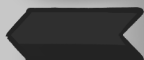
Hayden, Jennifer, Joel



Lena, Madeline, Oscar



Seth, Shannon, Skyler



Tate, Zora

