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EXPLOSIVE INTERVIEW: EX-FEMA BOSS MICHAEL BROWN •
EVA LONGORIA SEXES UP 20Q • JOURNEY TO THE CENTER
OF A COAL MINE • PARIS HILTON'S LOOK-ALIKE NUDE •
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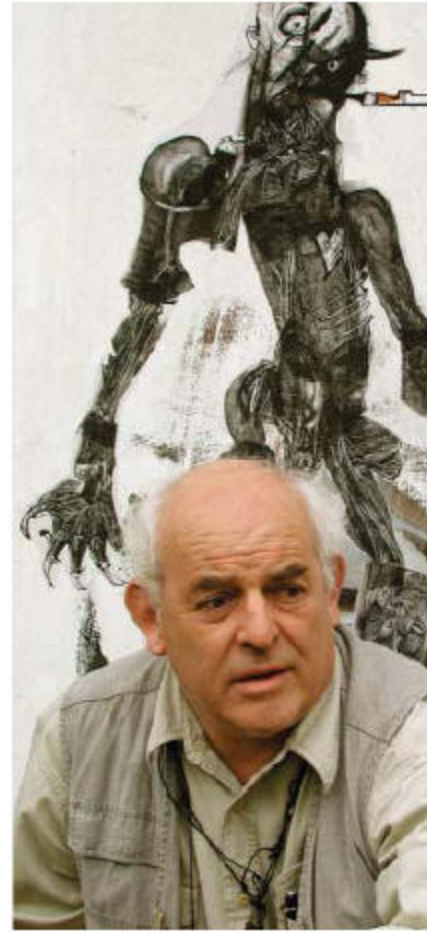
paris



Though set up to be the fall guy for the government's bungle of Hurricane Katrina, **Michael Brown** refused to play the president's patsy. Having weathered the storm, Brownie spoke about his experience to **David Sheff** in the *Playboy Interview*. "Normally people in government are very tight-lipped, so it was remarkable talking to Brown, who spoke freely," Sheff says. "One reason for his openness is that he wants to clear his name. I also think he did the interview because he still feels a moral obligation to protect the people of this country by informing them that the government is not capable of handling the next major disaster. On both levels he is the equivalent of a soldier who seriously questions his commander, only in this case it takes balls because it's the commander in chief."



Stephen Rebello had the pleasure of playing 20Q with **Eva Longoria**. "In person she is much more than just drop-dead gorgeous," Rebello reports. "It's as though an exclamation point is hovering over her head. Like many gorgeous actresses I have interviewed, she swore she bloomed late and wasn't so hot in high school. This pattern has led me to advise every young man I know to be careful of turning down less desirable dates—they all seem to grow up to be sexy starlets."



"**Hunter S. Thompson** infected me with an aggressive edge—or at least sharpened the one I already had," says artist **Ralph Steadman**. A little more than a year after HST's death, we publish *Smashing Windows* from Steadman's memoir, *The Joke's Over*. The piece is an exchange between the longtime collaborators, two fathers concerned about the pressure of cultural conformity on their sons. "Hunter did not play father in the conventional way. But for all his mindless self-indulgence, which is legendary and crude, he always impressed me with his blind, selfless urge to cut out the crony bestiality of modern society. I believed in him and was inspired by him."



Prestigious fashion photographer **Fabrizio Ferri** debuts in our pages this month with *Dress Smart*. "It is extremely rare that I work with people who are as passionate about their trade as **Joseph De Acetis** and the *PLAYBOY* fashion staff," Ferri says. "The creativity, time and effort we put into the shoot was astounding. Because we are all perfectionists it took well over four hours just to set up the first shot. The time, as always, was well worth it. We emerged with beautiful pictures that emphasize the clothes and also send an intelligent message. I think we made quite the bold fashion statement."



Mickey Edwards, formerly a Republican congressman from Oklahoma, wrote "Power Play" for the *Forum*, in which he expresses his disgust at the partisanship rampant in the legislative branch. "It is unconstitutional that members of Congress are putting their party's beliefs before our institution of checks and balances," Edwards says. "The American people must confront their local representatives and demand that they uphold the foundation of our system of government, or else we will cease to live in a democracy."

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COVER STORY

Hef's three girlfriends—Holly Madison, Kendra Wilkinson and Bridget Marquardt—return for our cover as *E!*'s top-rated series, *The Girls Next Door*, starts season two. Senior Contributing Photographer Arny Freytag orchestrated the simultaneous shooting of the front and back cover photos. Our Rabbit laces up on the front, then morphs into his distant German cousin on the back cover for a rear-window view.



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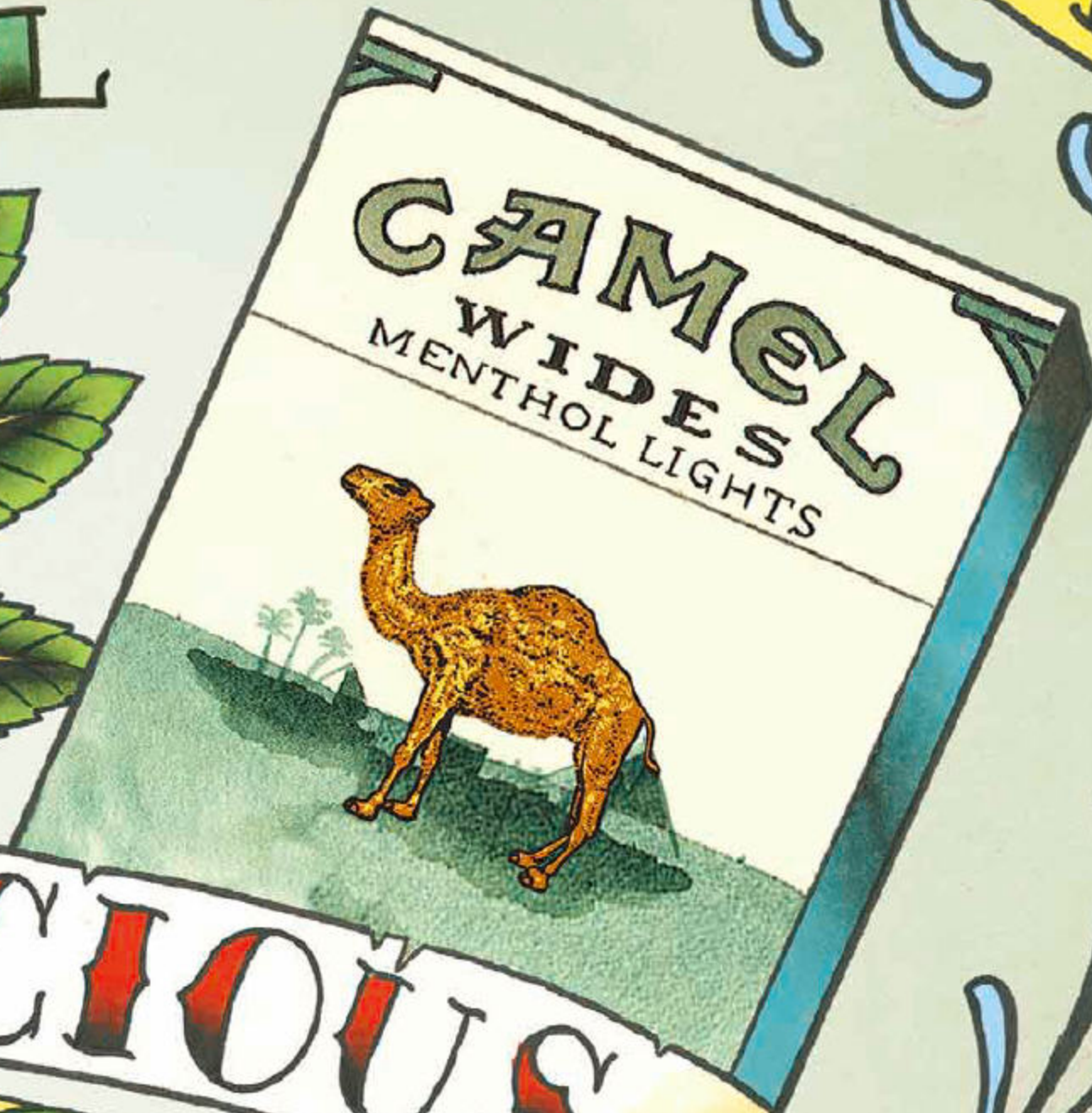
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F H O L



DELICIOUS

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SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.

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THE WORLD OF PLAYBOY

HEF SIGHTINGS, MANSION FROLICS AND NIGHTLIFE NOTES

BELLE OF THE BALL

Of all the events we anticipate each spring, nothing tops the unveiling of the Playmate of the Year. The 2005 PMOY, Tiffany Fallon, and her new husband, country crooner Joe Don Rooney of Rascal Flatts (below right), serenaded the crowd with their original ditty "Going to the Mansion" before Mr. Playboy passed the PMOY honor to Kara Monaco (left).



THE GUMBALL RALLY

The Gumball 3000 intercontinental road race began in London and finished eight days later with a party at the Playboy Mansion, where organizer Max Cooper cited Swizz Beatz and Travis Barker for their automotive prowess.



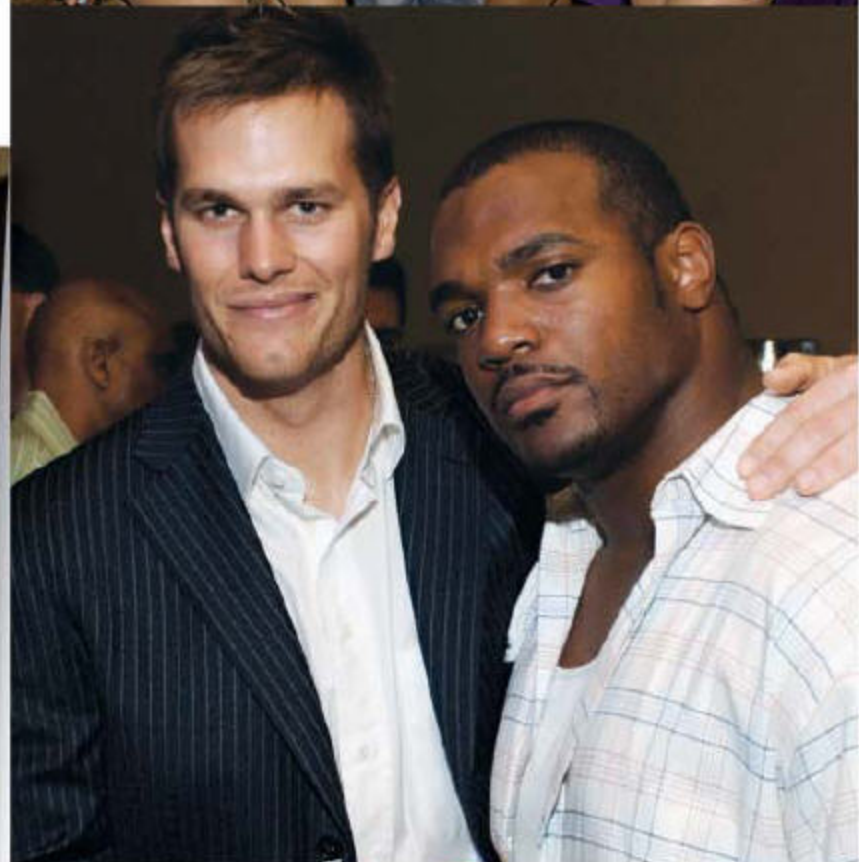
KID ROCK

On the L.A. music scene, once you've played the Whisky a Go Go on the Sunset Strip (above), you've officially arrived. Cooper Hefner's band, the Skips, made its first public appearance at the legendary club, where Hef and Cooper's mother, 1989 Playmate of the Year Kimberly Conrad, cheered the teenage drummer on.



PLAYBOY AT THE DERBY

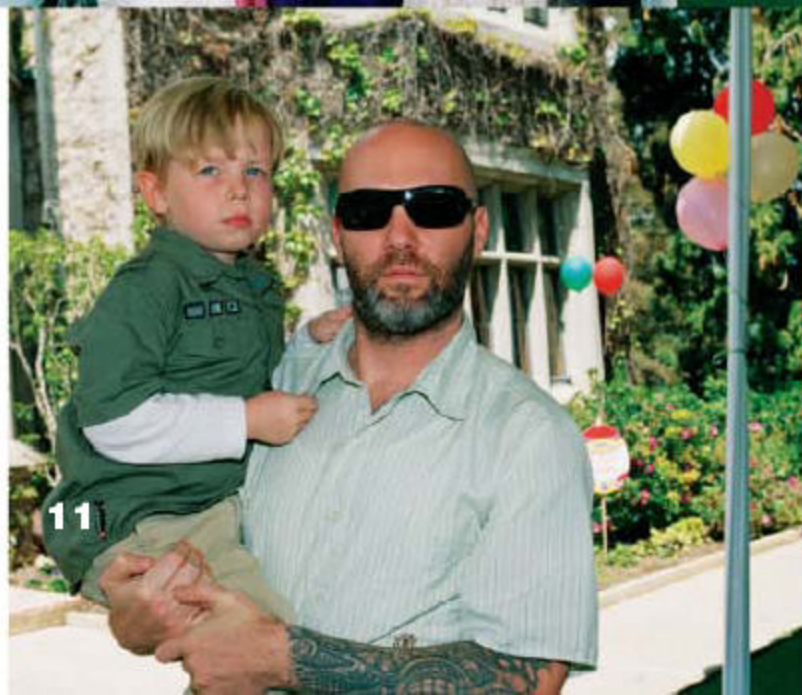
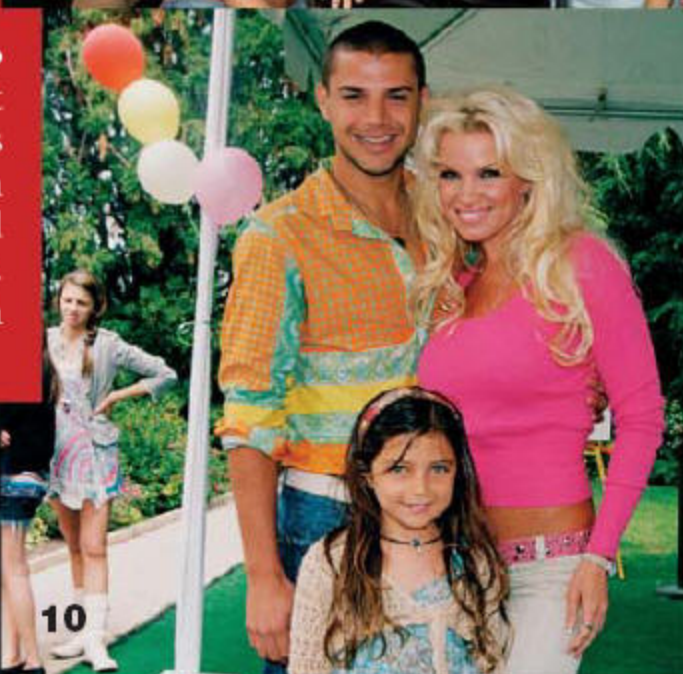
Playboy's Kentucky Derby party posted stars from all fields, with actresses Essence Atkins and Gabrielle Union (left), ESPN host John Salley (below), gridiron greats Tom Brady and Dwight Freeney (bottom right) and rapper Ludacris (top right).



HANGIN' WITH H&F



A Playmate slumber party, television interviews, visits from celebrity friends and the annual Easter egg hunt were part of the Mansion social calendar. (1) Hef plays chaperone to 13 gorgeous girls at a slumber party for PMOY Kara Monaco that began with dinner at Geisha House. (2) Al Pacino scouts the Mansion for a movie. (3) Pamela Anderson visits the Mansion zoo with her children. (4) Donny Deutsch interviews Hef and his girls. (5) The world champion Chicago White Sox visit Playboy Mansion West. (6) Pal Tony Bennett pays a late-night visit. (7) Hef and Whoopi Goldberg at *Sunday Morning Shootout* on American Movie Classics. (8) Captain and crew are in the Grotto for a segment of David Letterman's "Will It Float?" (9) Hef and his girls greeting guests on Easter. (10) MTV's Vinci Alonso with Tina Jordan and her daughter. (11) Fred Durst and his son. (12) Victoria Fuller collecting eggs. (13) Hef and fellow legends Burt Bacharach and James Caan, enjoying the holiday.



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SHEPARD SMITH

As one of the creators of the website NewsHounds.us (our motto is "We watch Fox so you don't have to"), I find it telling that Shepard Smith never denies in his *Playboy Interview* (June) that Fox News Channel has a conservative bias. While Smith is one of the more balanced of FNC's personnel, he faces less of a challenge because his job is essentially to introduce the news. The actual reports are loaded with bias. For example, the same day President Bush said he prefers to call his NSA eavesdropping program "a terrorist-surveillance program," anchor Harris Faulkner immediately adopted the terminology. It's also telling to compare the number of Fox reports on Democrat Cynthia McKinney's scuffle with a Capitol Hill police officer with the number of times Fox has reported on the CIA leak investigation.

Ellen Brodsky
Las Cruces, New Mexico

It's ironic that in the same issue in which you attempt to rake Smith over the coals for the alleged right-wing bias at Fox News Channel, you also publish a joke with a punch line that says



Shepard Smith balances his responses.

Bill Clinton "almost" got impeached. There's no almost about it. Stop trying to rewrite history. The real joke is the transparency of your liberal bias.

Benjamin Chan
Lawrenceville, Georgia

In all his bloviating about the blame game after Katrina, Smith never mentions Ray Nagin, the mayor of

New Orleans, who basically disappeared along with his police force after the hurricane.

Larry Zini
Huntsville, Utah

Kudos for your valiant attempt to get Smith to say something interesting.

Jake Neufeld
Brooklyn, New York

During Smith's one apparent lapse of concentration he states, "Remember, we have a conservative audience." How do you attract a conservative audience with "fair and balanced" reporting?

William Olson
Lake City, Michigan

If Smith can't talk about sex, politics or religion, why is he speaking to PLAYBOY? As his listeners would say, "It don't make sense!"

Richard Davis
Santa Barbara, California

I'm not sure how Smith "sleeps well at night" if he has any commitment to journalism. Does he not receive or read the FNC memos "guiding" its correspondents and anchors on how to report the news? Has he not seen the studies of the overwhelming bias of its guests toward Bush Republicanism? Is he not aware of the many stories Fox doesn't cover? I spent a year watching and studying Fox News for my documentary *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (outfoxed.org). As entertainment Fox News is very well-done. As news it is a disgrace.

Robert Greenwald
Los Angeles, California

VULVA POWER

Your report on vaginal "rejuvenation" (*Rosebuds*, June) makes this old sexual liberationist want to cry. The idea of the perfect pussy comes from porn, which creates a visual fashion for sex just as *Vogue* dictates the latest in women's apparel. A young woman today knows her lover boy has been whacking off to slitlike pussies since puberty, so she wants one that looks the same. We can't blame Dr. David Matlock for proceeding full-greed ahead. He's giving each of his clients what she thinks she wants—a clamshell pussy so her boyfriend won't have to mess with any drapery on his way to the hole. By contrast, the men who visit my site, bettydodson.com, often ask me why so many women shave their pubic hair and snip off their inner

lips; these men prefer them the way they were. Let's face it, vulva ignorance abounds, starting with the women who own them. *Viva la vulva* and *vive la différence!* Otherwise every fuckable woman in America is going to look as if she were made with a cookie cutter.

Betty Dodson
New York, New York

It saddens me that so many women grow up ashamed of the body parts designed to be the source of life's



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greatest pleasure. Believe it or not, gazillions of men think every pussy is beautiful. Guys, if you like the way she looks down there, tell her.

Joani Blank
Oakland, California

Blank is the editor of Femalia, a collection of intimate photographs of vulvas.

Vulval cosmetic surgery is an interesting cultural phenomenon, but 800 a year—or even 1,600, if the number doubles in 2006 as predicted—hardly seems like the "frenzy" Heather Caldwell describes. I can't be the only man who loves meaty, complicated vulvas; if commercial pornography is any indicator, guys are going for more labial presence these days, not less. I'm also betting there are racial and cultural differences with regard to what types of vulvas men and women prefer. I find something disturbingly antisexual about the idea of women trimming their labia. It reminds me of how, in the mid-19th century, upper-class white women had their clitorises removed

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David Steinberg
San Francisco, California

*Steinberg (davidsteinberg.us) is an erotic
photographer and writer.*

BEST DAMN SPORTS BOOKS

How can you omit George Plimpton's
Paper Lion from your list of top sports
books (*Books*, June)? If not the greatest
sports book of all time, it is certainly
the best one about football.

Jon Gerber
Whitehall, Pennsylvania

Where are the two best books about
basketball: *Foul! The Connie Hawkins
Story* by David Wolf and *A Season on the
Brink* by John Feinstein?

Milan Simonich
Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania

CHINESE INSULTS

It should be noted that unless you
get the tone of each word right when
using the Chinese insults in *Mantrack*
(June), nobody will understand you.
By the way, the phrases in the two
speech bubbles translate as "Kiss my
ass" and "Eat shit."

Louis Tong
Houston, Texas

BASEBALL TRUTHS

If we had more guys in baseball like
John Kruk (*The Wit and Wisdom of John
Kruk*, June), we would have cheaper
tickets, lower salaries and fewer player
strikes. Thanks, Krukker!

Casey Rett
Seattle, Washington

FIRST COURSES

Gary McCord says he was kicked off
the air for saying the greens at Augusta
had been "bikini waxed," but based on
his selections for the world's top courses
(*Fairway to Heaven*, June), it appears he
can no longer even visit Georgia, Florida
or the Carolinas. I love McCord and
his choices, but I wouldn't be surprised
if the folks in Myrtle Beach are planning
a wax-and-feathers party for him
if he comes to town.

Lou Bristol
Lake Worth, Florida

YOUR SPACE

Although *2006: A MySpace Odyssey*
(June) perfectly portrays the first
week or two of using the site, I take
issue with Dave Itzkoff's dismissive
attitude toward the music section. As
a member of a local unsigned band, I
find MySpace to be a great networking
tool. I regularly walk downtown now
and feel like a rock star when people

say, "It's the drummer from Katharsis!
I have you guys on MySpace!"

Cory Granger
Greenville, North Carolina

While the subjects featured in *The
Women of MySpace* (June) are lovely, I'm
disappointed that they don't reflect the
range of women on the site: some nerdy,
some curvy, some punky. Your pictorial
could have been called "Models Who
Happen to Have MySpace Pages."

Daniel Papp
Plainsboro, New Jersey

FAST RIDE

Kara Monaco is a great choice for
Playmate of the Year (June), but I
take exception to your description of



Kara Monaco has the need for speed.

her new Honda CBR1000RR. It's not
slow, but it won't go anywhere near
200 miles an hour, even with a strong
tailwind. Fast girl, though!

John Revilla
South Riding, Virginia

Kara may be the first Miss June to
become PMOY, but the second will
surely be Stephanie Larimore (*All the
Right Steph*, June).

Jody Martin
Greensboro, North Carolina

WORD UP

While reading the June issue, I
came across an unfamiliar word:
elegiac. Then I saw it again in a second
article, compelling me to grab a
dictionary. Thank you, PLAYBOY, for
stimulating my literary self as well as
my blood pressure.

Ron Radley
Seaside, California

Did we say elegiac? We meant epicedial.



The longer you wait



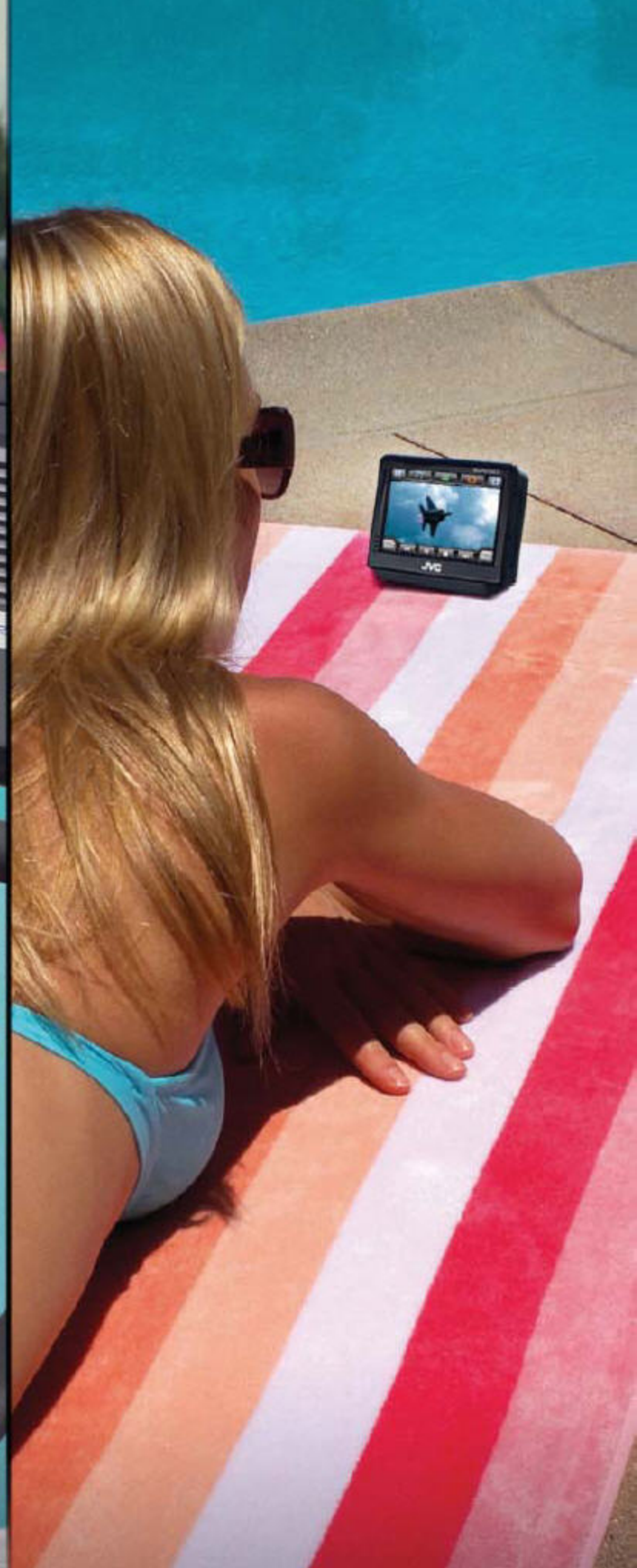
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PLAYBOY

after hours



“This guy’s like, ‘*Daaamn*, girl.’ That bugs me.”

babe of the month

Rachelle Leah

As an Ultimate Fighting Championship Octagon Girl, Rachelle Leah practices the time-honored ring girl’s art: strutting around in a skimpy getup, holding a card and looking hot. For our interview she wears a baseball cap, a tank top and jeans, and she looks—according to some dude at the supermarket—*daaamn* hot. “I was just there, and this guy’s like, ‘*Daaamn*, girl,’” she says. “That bugs me. If I were a guy and I found a girl attractive, I wouldn’t be like that. I’d say, ‘You’re absolutely beautiful. Can I take you out to lunch?’” Of course she’d do it that way. Rachelle is a go-getter who loves extreme sports

SHE’S A FIGHT-NIGHT SIREN WHO’S REALLY KIND OF SHY

and was training to be a paramedic when her modeling career took off. She’s not invulnerable, though; she confesses to suffering from anxiety about the aforementioned skimpy getups. And it’s not just at the matches: She also flashes the flesh as host of *UFC: All Access*, an *MTV Cribs*-style show, which tends to kick off with Rachelle in a state of undress. (For the first episode, cameras “surprised” her in her room while she was in only a bra and jeans.) “I’m getting to the point where I can joke about it,” she sighs. “When I look at all it’s done for me, wearing a small outfit is not a big deal.”

video of the year



Retro Sexual

DJ BENNY BENASSI'S LATEST VIDEO PAYS TRIBUTE TO CLASSIC SKIN-FLICK ONE-SHEETS

His frenetic beats are like aural spumoni to Euroclubbers; now Italian DJ Benny Benassi celebrates the art of adult cinema's golden age. With its parodies of 18 adult-movie posters of the 1960s and 1970s, "Who's Your Daddy?" is a stroll down memory lane for fans of such films as *Emmanuelle*, *Hot Lunch* and *Bang Bang*. "Benny's music is very sexual," says the video's director, Mauro Vecchi. "You can add sexual images to it without being banal. The secret of these posters was that they were never *too* vulgar. The cartoonish drawings of the actresses were innocent on one level, hiding the 'sins' the films contained, yet on another level they were also saying, 'This is nothing to be ashamed of.'" Benassi concedes that the conceit may elude his young fans. "Not everyone will get the references," he says, "but they can do the research. That's why Internet search engines were invented. Research is good for you!"

behind the scenes

The Cutting-Room Ceiling

WHAT'S IN AN R? A NEW DOCUMENTARY CLAIMS NO ONE REALLY KNOWS

According to the cineasts behind *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, the process of rating movies is arcane at best and highly political at worst. Here are a few nuggets from their exposé:

- A PG-13 movie can contain one nonsexual use of the word *fuck* (e.g., "What the fuck?"). Using the word to refer to intercourse garners an R.
- Bloodless killing and maiming are kosher in a PG-13 film. Bloodshed earns an R.
- Specific things that have apparently earned films at least an initial NC-17 include more than three thrusts in a sex scene (*Where the Truth Lies*), teenage lesbian masturbation (*But I'm a Cheerleader*), prolonged discussion of sex without explicit depiction (*Orgazmo*) and non-missionary style puppet sex (*Team America: World Police*).

a really large star

A League of His Own

QUESTIONS FOR HOWARD STERN SIDE-KICK ARTIE LANGE, CO-WRITER AND STAR OF BEER LEAGUE

How is *Beer League* similar to *Field of Dreams*? There's a scene where I make out with Amy Madigan. We had to cut it, but I hope it makes the DVD. How is your film different? Our movie isn't for pussies.

Why is Ralph Macchio in this movie? His audition was better than Scott Baio's. Was it difficult working with so many Italians? Yes. I hired one black guy so I would have someone to talk to. Is it true you've gained 100 pounds in the past year? No. Okay, but how much did you gain? Ninety-six pounds. Did you put it on for the movie, as Robert De Niro did for *Raging Bull*? Absolutely. Would you describe yourself as a fat comedian or a fat actor? Neither. Just fat. What's your junk food of choice? Drake's Devil Dogs. What's your record for Devil Dogs eaten in one sitting? One morning on



the Stern show I had 11. You used to do a lot of cocaine. What's your relationship with it today? The same as my relationship with my dead father: I miss it oh so much. You drink a lot these days. What's the difference for you between coke and alcohol? Coke was killing me quickly; booze is being nice enough to take its time. Who's the most successful *Mad TV* alumnus? Orlando Jones. Where do you rank? Behind Nicole Sullivan, in a 28-way tie for third place. What important question have we not asked? Why is my movie so fucking awesome? Sorry, we're out of space.

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behind the scenes



Both Sides Now

ARNY FREYTAG TAKES US THROUGH THE CREATION OF THIS ISSUE'S FRONT-AND-BACK COVER

Hef wanted two pictures shot simultaneously, exactly like Nancy Cameron's 1974

double-sided Centerfold. I set up two cameras and two sets of lights. With one remote control in each hand, I'd fire the front camera and set of lights, then immediately fire the rear camera. We also needed to see what was happening on both sides because what looks good from the front doesn't always look good from the back. So I put a video camera

underneath the second camera. That way I could say, "Move your hand over here," then look at the video screen and say, "But make sure your butt is still facing this way." And remember, this is times three; when Dwight Hooker shot Nancy, that was just one girl. It was a stressful shoot. Fortunately, these girls aren't self-conscious about anything—ever.

to sirloin, with love

Any Way You Slice It

It's registration time on America's campuses, and in case you hadn't heard, today's hottest topic of study is beef. But be advised that not all bovine studies are created equal. What you learn about cow depends on where you go to school.

Beef Production (ANSC 4403)

"The breeding, feeding and managing of beef herds for profitable production of slaughter cattle. Emphasis on commercial cow-calf herds."

—Department of Animal and Food Sciences, Texas Tech

Best of Beef

"Join former Gramercy Tavern chef Sabrina Sexton to celebrate the joy of beef. You'll examine different cuts and discuss the preparations appropriate for each, then cook up a meaty meal."

—The Institute of Culinary Education, New York City

Beef (HACU 0256)

"Where's the——? What's the——? Our livestock and athletes are pumped up with hormones and chemicals. We're on low-carb diets, watching reality TV. Porn stars are parliamentary reps, weight lifters are governors. Anything is possible. Shock and awe. *Hasta la vista*, baby. Break out the cattle prod. Did you say the anal probe?"

—Cultural Studies workshop, Hampshire College

Telling It Like It Wasn't

"George Washington Carver changed the world with his nuts/Sat on a few and invented peanut butter with his butt/BFD."

—from Sarah Silverman's revisionist ditty "Nobody's Perfect," part of the bonus material on the soundtrack to her film *Sarah Silverman: Jesus Is Magic*

unconventional wisdom

'Tis Better to Receive...

A STATS EXPERT BENCHES THE NFL'S BALL DROPPERS

ESPN.com scribe KC Joyner, author of *Scientific Football 2006*, doesn't buy the usual numbers. A case in point is *yards per reception*, a standard metric for judging wide receivers. "It doesn't factor in when a receiver doesn't reach a catchable ball, drops a pass or draws a penalty," Joyner says. "I think *yards per attempt* is a more accurate evaluation of a receiver." Here's how Joyner would refigure the top wideouts of 2005 (minimum 40 receptions):

Yards Per Reception

1. Ashley Lelie **18.3**
2. Terry Glenn **18.3**
3. Santana Moss **17.7**
4. Randy Moss **16.8**
5. Ernest Wilford **16.6**

Yards Per Attempt

1. Santana Moss **11.4**
2. Steve Smith **10.7**
3. Eddie Kennison **10.7**
4. Ernest Wilford **10.0**
5. Terry Glenn **9.7**



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employee of the month

What's Happening, Hot Stuff?

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S FIREHOUSE FLAMETHROWER KELLY JOHNSTON

PLAYBOY: Says here you're a firefighter medic. What's that?

KELLY: I fight fires, but I specialize in treating injured people on the scene.

PLAYBOY: In the firehouse it's you and a bunch of manly men. Any knocking of the rubber boots?

KELLY: No. We treat each other as a family, so I think of the guys as my brothers and they treat me like a sister—meaning they are very concerned with my social life. As in any family, we have fights, but they're normally over what to eat: Should we order takeout or fire up the grill?

PLAYBOY: How often do you tend the flames?

KELLY: Never. Grilling is a guy's job.

PLAYBOY: Do guys you rescue fall in love with you?

KELLY: All the time. Because our last names are on our clothes, I get love letters addressed to Johnston at the firehouse. One time this guy OD'd and was violent. I had to wrestle him to the ground. When he came around he asked me out. I was like, "Dude, you just kicked my ass, and now you want a date?"

PLAYBOY: What's a bigger rush for you: running into a burning building or having sex?

KELLY: Both really get your adrenaline pumping. Fires tend to last longer, but you can't beat sex for immediate satisfaction.

Employee of the Month candidates: Send pictures to Playboy Photography Department, Attn: Employee of the Month, 680 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60611. Must be at least 18 years old. Must send photocopies of a driver's license and another valid ID (not a credit card), one of which must include a current photo.

drinks of the month



Double Coverage

SUIT UP AND DRINK YOUR TEAM TO VICTORY

As football games go, the September 9 contest between Texas and Ohio State is a meeting of the haves and the have-nots—two giant top-five teams slugging it out, last year's champ against this year's favorite. But their mascot-themed beverages seem to tell a different tale. When a cool and classy martini out of Columbus lines up against a big ol' bucket of Austin sunshine, which side will you be on?



BUCKEYE
VS.
LONGHORN ICED TEA



Buckeye

(Origin: old as the hills)

3 oz. gin

½ oz. dry vermouth

Stir the gin and vermouth with cracked ice and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a black olive.

Longhorn Iced Tea

(Origin: 219 West, an Austin bar)

½ oz. Skyy vodka

½ oz. triple sec

½ oz. El Jimador Blanco tequila

½ oz. Bacardi light rum

1½ oz. sour mix

1 oz. fresh lime juice

1 oz. orange juice

Dash of grenadine

Splash of Coke

Fill a pint glass with ice, add all the ingredients and shake. Garnish with a lime wedge and a cherry.

racial-sensitivity consultant

An Animal House Undivided

HOW RICHARD PRYOR SAVED THE DEXTER LAKE CLUB ("OTIS, MY MAN!") SCENE

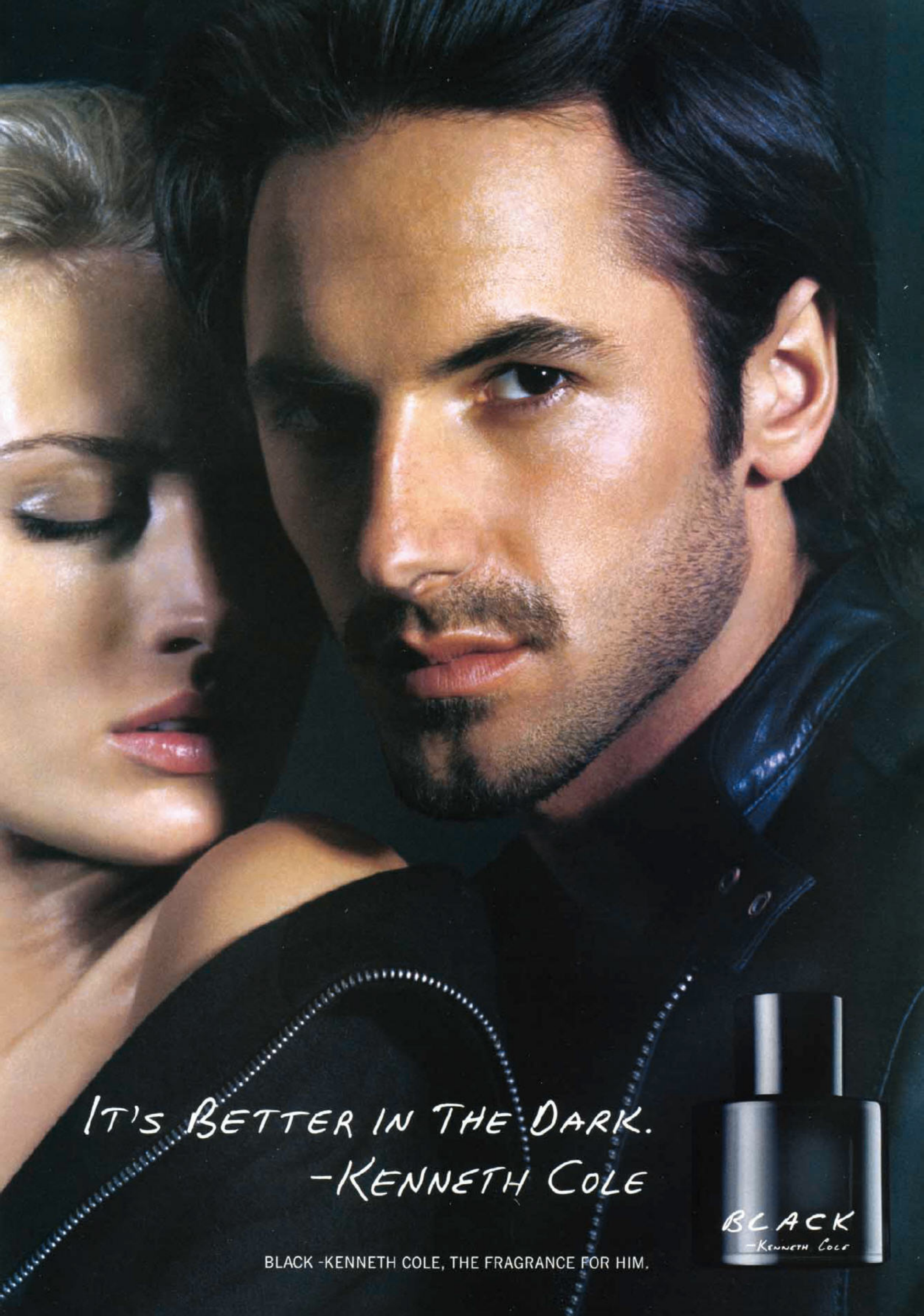
"Pryor and studio executive Thom Mount watched the film alone in a screening room on the Universal lot. As the lights came up, Mount asked Pryor whether he considered the scene offensive.

'No, man,' Pryor chuckled. 'It's just fucking funny. And you know what else is funny?'

'No,' Mount replied.

'White people,' Pryor said. 'White people are funny.'

—from Josh Karp's *A Futile and Stupid Gesture: How Doug Kenney and National Lampoon Changed Comedy Forever*



IT'S BETTER IN THE DARK.
-KENNETH COLE

BLACK -KENNETH COLE, THE FRAGRANCE FOR HIM.



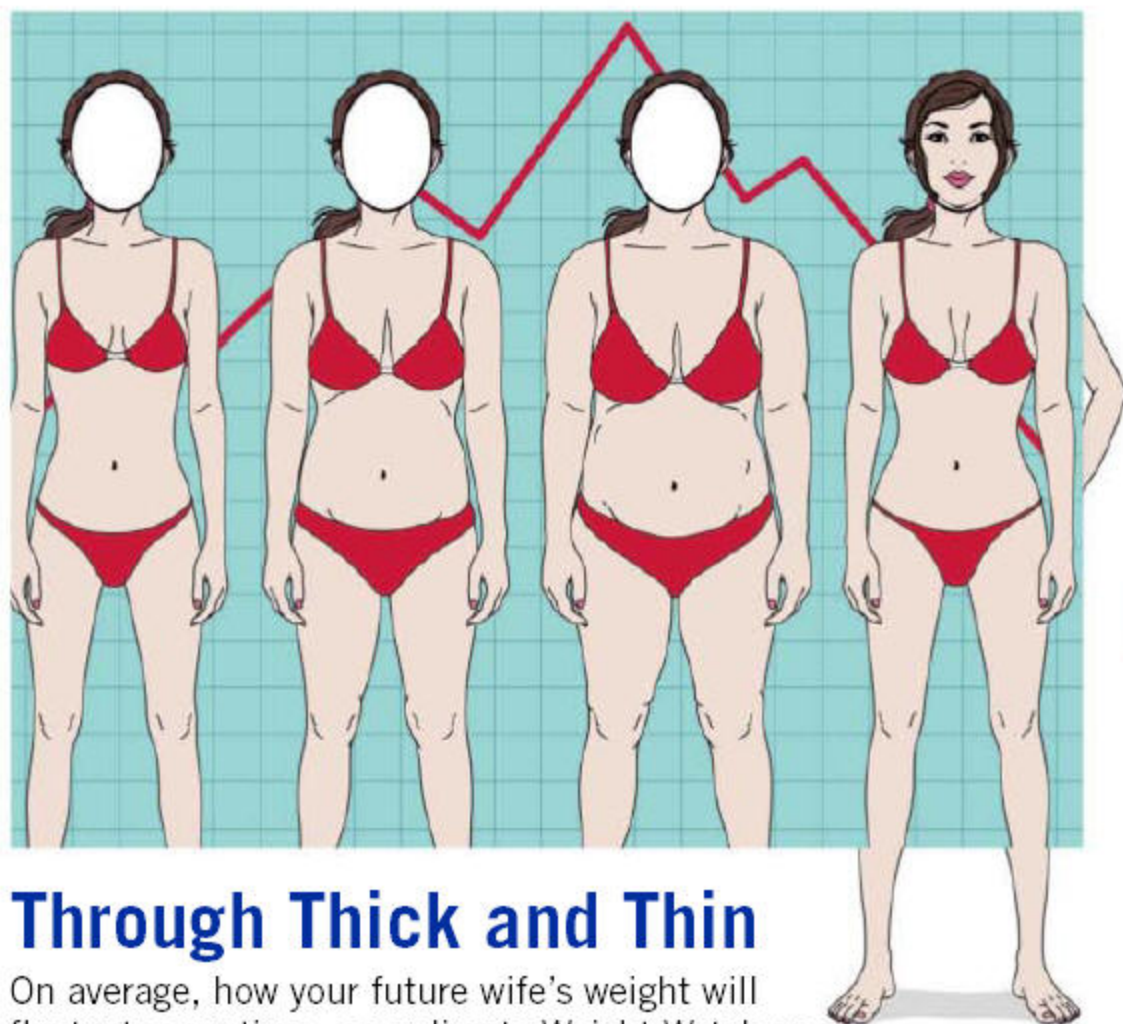
LIFT HERE TO EXPERIENCE
BLACK -KENNETH COLE

SCENT PACKING? -KENNETH COLE



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Through Thick and Thin

On average, how your future wife's weight will fluctuate over time, according to Weight Watchers:
 The two of you meet and start dating: She **loses 8.5** pounds.
 You develop a long-term relationship together: She **gains 11**.
 You propose, and she slims down for the wedding: She **loses 9**.
 She begins having kids: She **gains 16**.
 The kids get older; she experiences midlife panic and hits the gym: She **loses 16**.

Optimists

68 percent of Americans think their life story is worthy of a book, according to a poll by everythingyou shouldknow.com.

23 percent say they have sex pointers they believe they can share.

price check



\$7,864

Paid at Internet auction for the one-shoulder Vera Wang dress worn by Keira Knightley at this year's Academy Awards.



Head Games

Soccer fan Paul Hucker took out a **\$1.85 million** policy to insure himself in case he suffered mental trauma from England getting knocked out of the World Cup in the early stages.

All-American?

Portion of a Ford Mustang's components that come from the U.S. or Canada:



All in the Family

46% of all prison inmates have at least one relative who has also been in jail.

Interned

The death rate at a typical major teaching hospital sees a **4%** spike each summer, attributed to the arrival of new med school grads in July.

Ad TV

The number of product placements on U.S. prime-time network TV shows last year was **101,212**.

book of pointless records

Most Brassieres Linked

114,782, by women in Cyprus who created a 70-mile-long chain of boulder holders. The feat easily busted the old record of 79,001, held by women in Singapore.



Creative Coupling

A study done by British psychologists found that professional poets and artists have, on average, **7** sexual partners. That's more than twice as many as other people.

No Higher Education

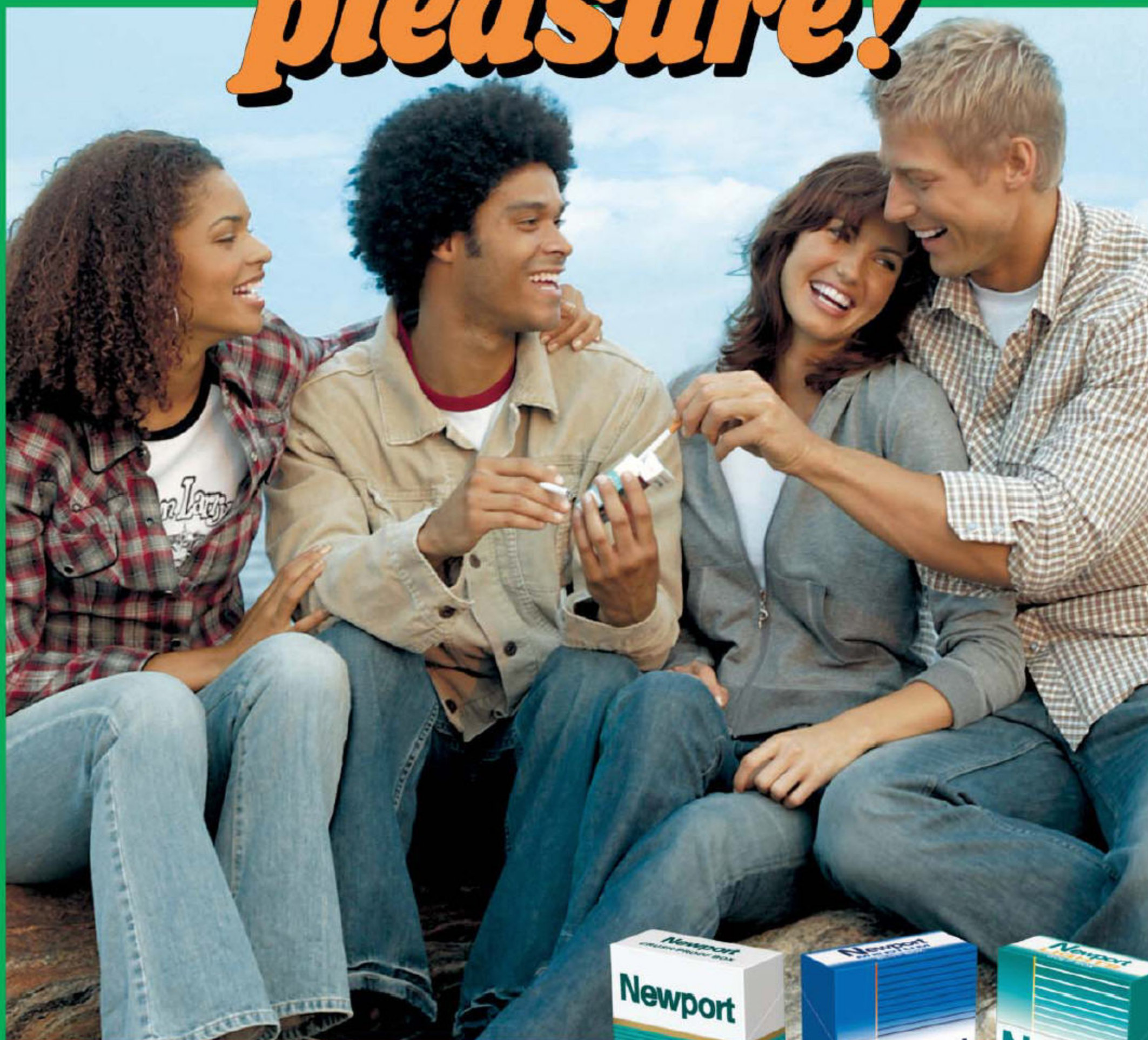
1 of every **400** students who apply for federal financial aid for college is turned down because of a drug conviction. **189,065** have been rejected since the restriction was instituted with the 2000-2001 school year.



Portion of a Toyota Sienna's components from the same region:



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R E V I E W S

m o v i e s



movie of the month

[THE BLACK DAHLIA]

Brian De Palma revisits an infamous murder mystery

In director Brian De Palma's new whodunit, two prizefighters turned L.A. cops—Aaron Eckhart and Josh Hartnett—get in way over their heads while sleuthing the gruesome 1947 murder of a would-be Hollywood starlet (Mia Kirshner) nicknamed the Black Dahlia. The flick, which takes off from one of America's most bizarre unsolved crimes, is thick with twisted motives, big-city corruption, depravity and cool vintage clothes and cars. The snarly atmosphere is aided and abetted by Scarlett Johansson as Eckhart's smart, sexy girlfriend and Hilary Swank as a mysterious rich dame. The film's sexy-grimy vibe recalls movies such as *Chinatown* and *L.A. Confidential*, which, like *The Black Dahlia*, is based on a James Ellroy novel. Says Eckhart, "The surreal thing is we pretty much filmed the entire movie in Bulgaria, including a spectacular boxing match between Josh and me where there were 2,000 to 3,000 Bulgarians cheering and booing in the stands. I watched a lot of James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson movies, so when I did an interrogation scene of our prime suspect and took off my hat and the jacket of my three-piece wool suit with the shoulder holster and went at him in this old-school, spitfire way cops had in those days, I thought, We're cooking now."

"The surreal thing is we pretty much filmed the entire movie in Bulgaria."

—Stephen Rebell

now showing

BUZZ

Snakes on a Plane

(Samuel L. Jackson, Nathan Phillips) Slithering into theaters with mighty Internet-fueled hype, this high-altitude thriller finds FBI agents Jackson and Phillips protecting a Mafia-related witness from an assassin. What's a killer to do? He unleashes 400 serpents to lessen the witness's chances of arriving alive.

Our call: You have to love the concept, even if it sounds like something you and your pal invented while drinking. Stupid? Maybe, but we're on board this panic plane.



Invincible

(Mark Wahlberg, Greg Kinnear, Elizabeth Banks) This against-all-odds gridiron saga casts Wahlberg as a real-life sports fan who, faced with the loss of his wife and job, tries out for the Philadelphia Eagles. Making the cut despite zero experience, he becomes (surprise!) a local hero as the oldest rookie player.

Our call: A feel-good *Rocky*-style tale like this needs a dose of the young Sylvester Stallone's underdog sincerity, and Wahlberg is one of the few actors who can pull it off.



Factotum

(Matt Dillon, Lili Taylor, Marisa Tomei, Fisher Stevens) This take on Charles Bukowski's rancidly funny novel offers Dillon as a brilliant, grungy hell-raiser who beds a succession of aimless women, plays the ponies and writes stories nobody is in any rush to publish.

Our call: Read the novel instead—it's terrific, and this cinematic interpretation may provoke some Bukowski cultists to howl and hurl things at the screen.



DOA: Dead or Alive

(Devon Aoki, Jaime Pressly, Natassia Malthe, Sarah Carter) This low-rent video-game adaptation features five scantily clad, genetically blessed babes who are highly trained in different styles of martial arts. The gals battle to the death on an exotic island in the ultimate chick fight.

Our call: Sexy things fighting in bikinis and over-the-top action sequences from director Corey Yuen are all well and good, but this flick stoops to *BloodRayne* caliber.



dvd of the month

[PLAYBOY AFTER DARK]

Hef's influential laid-back TV show makes its DVD debut

In 1959 Hugh Hefner began hosting TV's ultimate parties—rubbing shoulders with such legends as Ella Fitzgerald, Lenny Bruce, Nat King Cole and Sammy Davis Jr.—on *Playboy's Penthouse* and, 10 years later, on *Playboy After Dark*. The casual free-form setting was groundbreaking and made you feel as if you were hanging with Hef and his famous friends as they shared laughs, played games and discussed the topics that made the 1960s such a trip. *Variety* called the show uninhibited and “more like a night on the town than a tryst with the tube.” We agree. This sophisticated time capsule collects six of these swinging shindigs for their long-awaited DVD debut. **Best extra:** A historical booklet by journalist Bill Zehme. **★★★★** —Robert B. DeSalvo



PRISON BREAK: SEASON ONE (2005) Fox scored with this epic about a man who infiltrates a maximum-security prison in an attempt to free his inmate brother from death row before time runs out. **Best extra:** Director Brett Ratner's audio commentary for the pilot. **★★★** —Matt Steigbigel



V FOR VENDETTA (2006) This vivid social commentary vibrates with visionary, if violent, viewpoints. Hugo Weaving is V, who advocates victory via vandalism and vows vengeance on the government he vilifies with help from Natalie Portman. **Best extras:** Guy Fawkes's history and the comic-book origins of V. **★★★★½** —Stacie Houglund



UNITED 93 (2006) *United 93* depicts events aboard the doomed flight that crashed in a Pennsylvania field on September 11, 2001 after a passenger assault on its four hijackers. Balancing adroitly between the government's original let's-roll story and the 9/11



Commission's more ambiguous account, writer and director Paul Greengrass gets it painfully right. **Best extra:** *United 93: The Families and the Film* will drain your tear ducts. **★★★★** —Greg Fagan

JAMES STEWART: THE SIGNATURE COLLECTION This deluxe boxed set showcases six of the icon's films premiering on DVD. Standouts include *The Naked Spur* (1953, pictured), which has Stewart acting against his easygoing persona as a burned-out Civil War vet turned bounty hunter. In *The Spirit of St. Louis* (1957) he expertly plays intrepid aviator Charles Lindbergh. **Best extra:** Vintage Stewart shorts. **★★★★** —M.S.



JAYNE MANSFIELD COLLECTION Mansfield was tagged early on as a Marilyn Monroe knockoff and rarely rose above that stereotype before her death. Happily, she plays to her comic strengths in these DVD debuts. She's a starlet in *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956, pictured), a dizzy actress in *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (1957) and a saloon singer in *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* (1959). **Best extra:** A documentary that recaps her PLAYBOY pictorial. **★★★** —Buzz McClain



SCANNER

THE OFFICE: SEASON TWO (2005) Television's best sitcom features ineffective boss Steve Carell stumbling his way through management and romance. It's just like your office, only more dysfunctional. **★★★★**

ORIGINAL STAR WARS TRILOGY (1977–1983) With the DVD debuts of the original theatrical versions, purists can now return to Han Solo shooting Greedo in cold blood. Sadly, the Ewoks are still on Endor. **★★★★½**

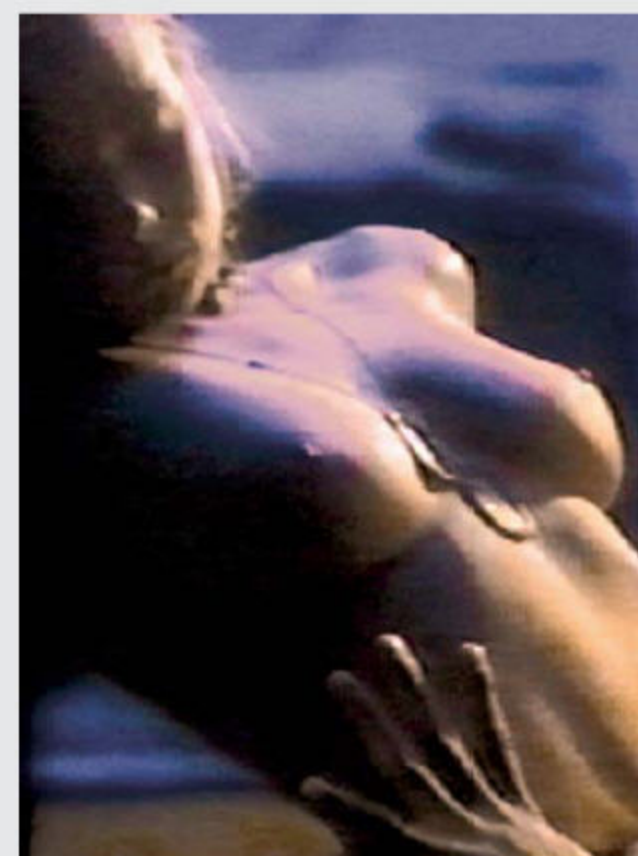
SCARY MOVIE 4 (2006) Twisted bits of a dozen recent movies add up to a sporadically humorous low-brow sequel. Anna Faris still delivers laughs, and Hef's girlfriends join Charlie Sheen in a crazy cameo. **★★½**

GOJIRA (1954) The original Japanese version of *Godzilla*—a misunderstood movie metaphor for the fear of nuclear annihilation—finally gets its due with a U.S. release. **★★★★½**

HOUSE: SEASON TWO (2005) This season Dr. House rekindles the romance with his old flame Stacy, drives his best bud to the brink, contains a devastating outbreak at the hospital and takes a bullet, literally. **★★★★½**

★★★★ Don't miss ★★ Worth a look
★★ Good show ★ Forget it

tease frame



Jaime Pressly may be the Joy of My Name Is Earl, but try to find 1997's *The Journey: Absolution* (pictured) to see absolute proof of what lies beneath.

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road trip

[TENNESSEE TWO-STEP]

As always, the Volunteer State leads the way in American music

MEMPHIS INDIE In Memphis, rock and roll's Fertile Crescent, the boogie disease is rampant. Jim Dickinson, the godfather of Memphis indie music, provides a redneck take on white rock and American blues with **Jungle Jim & the Voodoo Tiger** (*Memphis International*). Imagine the house band at the world boogie

truck stop: Banjo, fiddle, slide guitar and kitchen whisk sidle easily between shout-outs, shuffles and a samba. Dickinson's children, the North Mississippi Allstars, are the core and the roar of his back-

ing band. The Allstars also collaborate with Al Kapone for a syrupy psychedelic overhaul of "No Mo" on their **Electric Blue Watermelon: Screwed and Chopped EP** (ATO). Even though *Hustle & Flow*'s Oscar win put Three 6 Mafia on the map, Kapone, author of three songs from the movie's soundtrack, still felt obliged to title his forthcoming album **True Underdog** (*Alkatraz*). If you pine for some real "Ubangi Stomp" style, run to buy Cory Branan's **12 Songs** (*Mad-jack*), an exhilarating album of the good old stuff. Intense dynamics, deep humor, brave production and heavy songwriting: A new voice emerges to run with the greats.

—Robert Gordon

NASHVILLE UNDERGROUND The most interesting stuff coming out of the Music City today doesn't have much to do with big hats or pedal steel. As a bastion of the music industry, Nashville is home to an army of songwriters and session players, and most of these hired guns pursue their own work—daring, smart

and soulful—when their day jobs are over. More than a few of these moonlighters deserve wider recognition. Chris Knight, who arrived in Nashville a few years back with a great batch of bleak

songs, returns with **Enough Rope** (*Emergent/92e*), on which a newfound maturity accompanies his Kentucky drawl. Songwriter Mark Selby has enjoyed success with the pen, but now **And the Horse He Rode In On** (*Mark Selby*) shows his chops, as he plays and sings hits he wrote for the Dixie Chicks and Kenny Wayne Shepherd. Jeff Black's **Tin Lily** (*Dualtone*) is an impressively hard-nosed collection of tough, powerful songs. Kevin Gordon's **O Come Look At the Burning** (*Crowville Collective*) may be the least classifiable of the lot but perhaps the best, with a strange assortment of swamp rock, blues and literate lyrics.

—Leopold Froehlich



TAPES 'N TAPES * The Loon

This Minneapolis quartet combines to good effect the playfulness of the Shins, the manic energy of the Talking Heads and the improbable intensity of the Violent Femmes. After the band's homemade release of this LP did well, a proper label stepped in. Given the innovative sound, it's no wonder. (XL) ★★★ —Tim Mohr



DIRTY PRETTY THINGS

Waterloo to Anywhere

Because of all the tabloid ink Pete Doherty garners, people forget Carl Barât was the McCartney to his Lennon in the late, great Libertines. Here Barât's new band reminds us with a blistering, nearly flawless LP of sloppy melodic rock. (Interscope) ★★★ —T.M.



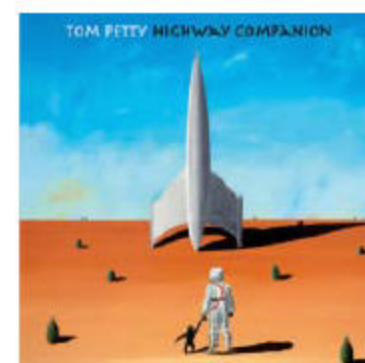
THOM YORKE * The Eraser

The rest of Radiohead seems to have become increasingly extraneous to the band's recent output, so it's not surprising that Yorke's solo LP has a sound similar to Radiohead's, with his mournful vocals over hiccuping electronics. Some songs even come off like variations on the group's older tunes. (XL) ★★★ —T.M.



TOM PETTY * Highway Companion

Petty bitch-slapped the music industry with his previous album, the anticorporate *Last DJ*. With that off his chest he returns to mellower moments, drifting through this LP with a gentle strum and Byrds-brand melodies. There's no "Free Fallin'," but "Square One" is gorgeous. (American) ★★★ —Jason Buhrmester



MIDLAKE

The Trials of Van Occupanther

Despite Texas roots, the five Midlakers create a relaxed groove akin to Belle & Sebastian's and add the ache of Radiohead. Alternatively, call it a cool, dark update of Fleetwood Mac or CSNY. In other words, this is perfect end-of-summer music. (Bella Union) ★★★½ —T.M.



HEF'S FAVORITES

Along with his more celebrated passions, Hugh Hefner has enjoyed a lifetime love of jazz. As a result, this set offers an impressive group of selections. Strongly informed by the music Hef listened to in Chicago, this sultry collection is perfect for any late-night endeavor. (Concord) ★★★ —L.F.



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stories of the month

[RIDING WITH TOM MCGUANE]

An American original defends the short story and country life

Q: Why is the short-story form held in such low regard?

A: Short-story collections are a tough sell for publishers, but I don't think critics hold short stories in low regard, particularly if they're remotely aware of the work done in that form recently by people like Thom Jones, Susan Minot, Richard Ford, Julie Orringer and Nell Freudenberger. I think the best fiction of the past 20 years has been in the short-story form.

Q: In "Miracle Boy," a story from your latest collection, *Gallatin Canyon*, you revisit your childhood and family. Does fiction allow you to write about your past in a way that nonfiction doesn't?

A: Fiction or nonfiction, it's always somebody's version. Frank O'Connor said the best fiction—as in Chekhov—is 99 percent nonfiction.

Q: How has the West changed since you've been living west of the 100th meridian?

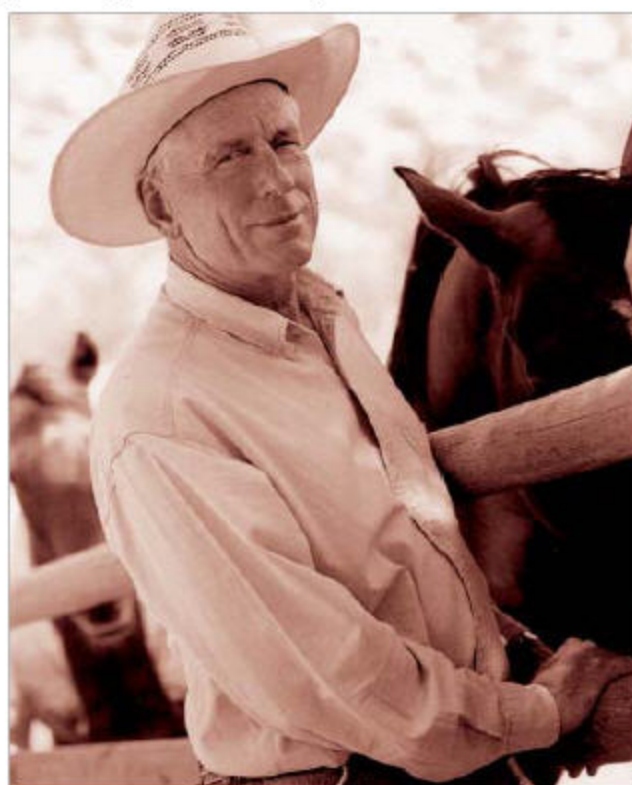
A: In the 38 years I have been here, ranching has nearly failed, extraction industries like timber have nearly disappeared, and the gap between the classes has grown wider. With that has come some new disquiet and resentment.

Q: America seems divided not so much between blue state and red state but between city and country. What do country people know that city people don't?

A: They know where food comes from. They also have what Wallace Stegner called "the dignity of rarity." Individual prominence is strikingly different in the country.

Q: You directed the film version of your novel *Ninety-Two in the Shade*. Was it your idea to cast the great Warren Oates as Nichol Dance?

A: Yes. I thought he was the real deal, and it showed.



[UNFORGETTABLE MEMOIRS]

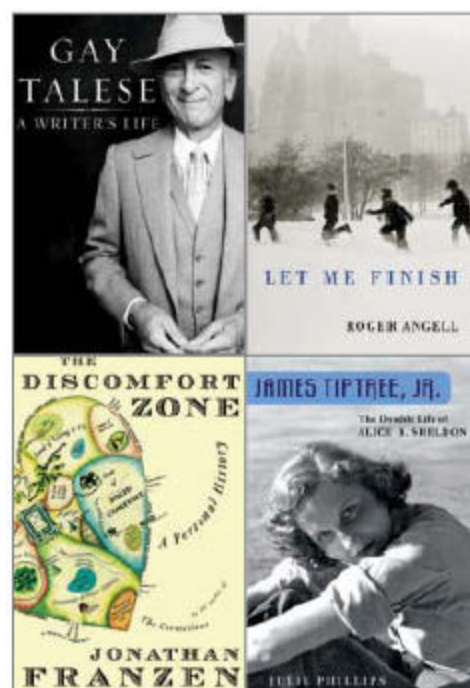
September is for remembering

The best writers tend to keep their egos in check. For them, it seems, the world is wonder enough. So it's no small pleasure to find that a few of our finest writers have gotten around to publishing their memoirs. In *A Writer's Life*, Gay Talese details his years as a Bama undergrad, his apprenticeship as a *New York Times* reporter and his long struggle with writer's block—many of the chapters here began as magazine articles Talese never got around to finishing. His meditation on John Wayne Bobbitt's missing member is especially good. In *Let Me Finish*, *New Yorker* editor Roger Angell filters his remarkable autobiography through the life of his legendary stepfather, E.B. White, and in *The Discomfort Zone: A Personal History*, novelist

Jonathan Franzen uses the occasion of his mother's death to look back on his own awkward adolescence.

It's too bad Alice Sheldon, who worked as a CIA analyst before assuming a secret identity as reclusive sci-fi writer James Tiptree Jr., never wrote her memoirs: The story Julie Phillips tells in the brilliant *James Tiptree Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon* starts with cannibals, ends in a murder-suicide and thrills all the way through. But for out-and-out dysfunctionality, nothing beats Rich Cohen's *Sweet and Low: A Family Story*, in which the author (whose grandfather invented Sweet'N Low) describes the bitterness and infighting that result when his family's American dream turns sour.

—Alex Abramovich



late summer reads

[EDITORS' PICKS]

The season's not over until you've read one of these

From time to time things happen in New York City that simply don't happen anywhere else. In *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE BRONX IS BURNING*, Jonathan Mahler captures one of the most spectacular of those moments, the summer of 1977, when, between a blackout, the Son of Sam, riots and a few Yankees psychodramas, Gotham used horror and folly to assert its primacy in the national imagination. • Die-hard Philip K. Dick fans and those looking for a thoroughgoing, mind-bending introduction should try *VINTAGE PKD*, which features extracts from his novels *VALIS*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, as well as several stories, including "A Little Something for Us Tempnauts" and "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon," plus essays and letters unavailable in book form. • In his day David Goodis ranked with pulp greats Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett.

BLACK FRIDAY, the meanest of his dark thrillers, will remind readers why. The Serpent's Tail edition of the novel includes several stories that have been out of print in the U.S. for more than 50

years. Criminal. • *Fight Club* author Chuck Palahniuk outdoes himself in *HAUNTED*, a collection of grisly, hilarious tales told by characters under lockdown at a writers' retreat. Cabin fever has never been more fun than with this motley crew caught in a desperate bid for survival and fame. • The twin horrors of young manhood are the past and the future. In *UTTERLY MONKEY*, the debut novel by Irish poet Nick Laird, a young London attorney is visited by a loutish chum from high school. Throw in girls, booze and a bomb, and you have a novel that's funny and vividly written. • In *THE PIRATE COAST*, by Richard Zacks, you get everything but a file in your cake: a founding father, Marines, mercenaries, foreign adventures and real-life pirates, all brought together by an entertaining nonfiction writer with an eye for the outlandish.



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Into the Blue

Quiksilver Travel's surf adventures get us stoked for the ultimate wave

EVERY BOARD RIDER yearns to discover the perfect unspoiled break, an elusive ideal that is easy to imagine, hard to describe and nearly impossible to find. Who better than a stalwart board company to help you realize that dream? Quiksilver Travel, an offshoot of the surf outfitter, specializes in dropping wave riders into some of the best and most secluded brine in the world—Samoa, Fiji, Mozambique—with a local expert to guide you to the most coveted swells. At Punta Roca in El Salvador (inset), where we put Quiksilver's service to the test, we met expert Robert Rotherham, an American expat and owner of the appropriately named Punta Roca Surf Resort. Stationed here since the 1970s, he knows the area as well as anyone. He set us up with local riders such as Quiksilver pro Jimmy Rotherham, who adjusted the outings to our particular style and skill level. Guides can also take you farther afield to area sweet spots like Conchalio, San Blas, La Bocana, Zunsal and Mizata. Accommodations are refreshingly simple and perfectly suited to that stripped-down beachnik escape fantasy you've been entertaining all your life, complete with fresh fish dinners, cold local beers and a rogue scorpion in the shower. Rates for the Punta Roca destination run from \$155 a person each night and include airport transfers, lodging, food and as many sessions as you can handle. Surf over to quiksilvertravel.com for more info.



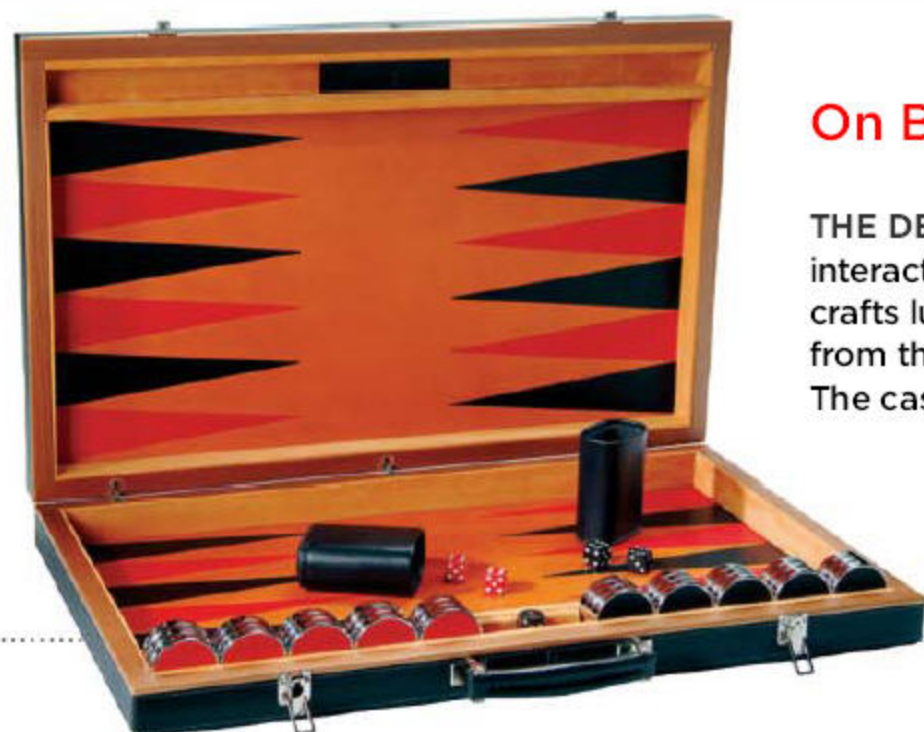
Best Surf Flicks

IF YOU CAN'T go to Malibu, go to the movies. Bruce Brown's masterpiece, *The Endless Summer* (1966), showcases the world's most pristine surf spots and the ultimate chilled lifestyle. In *Big Wednesday* (1978) John Milius presents a parable about surfing and adulthood. (Spoiler: They don't mix.) What do mix are surfing and robbery in *Point Break* (1991). Add Keanu Reeves as a dazed FBI agent-surfer and you have an instant (if idiotic) classic. Only one film has Kate Bosworth and Michelle Rodriguez in bikinis: *Blue Crush* (2002). It also has surfing.

About Time

DIGITAL DISPLAYS ARE fantastic for data, but for telling time we'll take analog, thanks. Hence our love for Linde Werdelin's Biformeter (\$3,580 to \$4,300, lindewerdelin.com), a classic Swiss watch with a mechanical movement, dive bezel and style to burn. When you're ready to get active, snap the Instrument (\$1,890) over the face and you're wearing one of the most advanced wrist gadgets on the market, with sensors to monitor temperature, altitude, pulse and compass heading, all of which is reported to you graphically.





On Board

THE DECEPTIVE SIMPLICITY and fast play of backgammon make it delightfully interactive and potentially seductive. Schedoni, the Italian fine-leather house that crafts luggage collections for Ferrari, fashions this board (\$3,500, schedoni.com) from the same tumbled leather as said luggage, and it travels just as beautifully. The case is Italian walnut, and the chips are palladium-clad brass.

Rabbit Transit

IT WAS THE CAR so many of us learned to drive in, the car we kissed our first girl in, the car that never seemed to let us down. This summer, after 22 years, Volkswagen released a new Rabbit for the North American market. (It's the fifth-generation Golf.) The 1.3 million Rabbits that sold back in the day pale in comparison with this little demon, with its 2.5-liter, five-cylinder engine (which generates a zippy 150 hp), ABS and traction-control system. Two-door and four-door versions are available, starting at just \$15,000. Info at vw.com.



Small Is Beautiful

WHAT'S BIGGER THAN A PDA but smaller than a laptop and has all kinds of built-in doodads? If you answered "Kate Moss," you're technically correct, but the answer we were looking for is an ultramobile PC. The first two out of the gate in this new computer category are Sony's Vaio UX (\$1,800) and Samsung's Q1 (\$1,100). Though fairly expensive, both pack serious hardware under the hood, with touch screens, a full version of Windows XP Pro and built-in wi-fi and Bluetooth. With its seven-inch screen, the Q1 weighs just less than two pounds, while Sony's UX goes the small and chunky route with a 4.5-inch screen and a weight that's a hair more than a pound. They're hard to beat for video watching and web surfing (though not for serious text entry). Our rule of thumb for determining if a product will become part of our lives is that we shouldn't be able to tell if it's in our bag or not. These both disappear quite well.

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The Playboy Advisor

What if men had a simple, reliable method of birth control the way women have the pill? It may be dangerous to stop the mojo, but it is our time. I saw some Brits on the Discovery Channel who soaked their balls in hot water for a few hours a day, with the idea that a man's testicles must be cooler than his body temperature to make sperm. (That's why the scrotum hangs away from the body.) It took a few weeks, but eventually the guys shot blanks. It struck me—why not create a discrete pouch that would keep a guy's testicles overheated? People laugh when I explain my idea, but I think it could change the world and make me rich.—W.S., Madison, Wisconsin

We're sorry to disappoint you, but you're 80 years behind the times. Scientists have been studying the effects of heat on sperm production since at least the 1920s, and several inventors have attempted without success to market testicle pouches and insulated underwear. Heating your balls does seem to work, but it takes discipline. A widely cited 1946 study found that nine volunteers who soaked their balls in 116-degree water for 45 minutes a day over three weeks became sterile for about six months. Other research has shown that holding the balls extremely close to the body raises the temperature enough to impede sperm production. But that too is a tough sell, and we wouldn't trust either method. We've been writing about male contraception research for years, and something revolutionary is always just over the horizon. The latest nonhormonal development, reversible inhibition of sperm under guidance, involves injecting into the vas deferens a gel that causes the heads of passing sperm to rupture. It's about to undergo a large clinical trial in India. Fertility is restored when the gel is flushed out with an injection or by a combination of vibration, electric current and perrectal massage. Elaine Lissner of the Male Contraception Information Project (newmalecontraception.org) notes that even after 25 years of research on RISUG, it's still a long way from being approved in the U.S. or Europe. "This is the most promising method because we know it works," she says. "Several dozen men in India have been using it for a decade without problems, and 140 others have used it for three or four years."

Id like to buy a high-definition television, but the numbers are confusing. Some sets are 720p, and others are 1080i. Is there more to it than simply different resolution? If not, why doesn't everyone buy 1080i?—J.N., Cincinnati, Ohio

There is a little more to it. The number represents how many horizontal lines of pixels are on the screen, and the letter indicates how fast the frame refreshes. Progressive scanning (p) redraws each line 60 times a second, whereas interlaced scanning (i) redraws only



every other line at that rate, meaning it takes twice as long to redraw the entire frame. Fox, ESPN and ABC broadcast in 720p, while CBS, NBC, PBS and HBO use 1080i. But any HDTV can handle both. It's hard to say which is superior: 1080i has more resolution but doesn't handle motion as well; 720p displays sports more smoothly. Also important is the quality of an HDTV's scaler, which determines how good one kind of signal will look on a different type of set—e.g., how 720p or standard television's 480i will appear on a 1080i set. You could get a 1080p set and be ahead of the curve, though no one is broadcasting in that standard yet.

Whoever answered the question in May from the guy who'd had a threesome with his wife and a well-endowed friend has his head up his ass. You tell the husband to establish ground rules and make sure his friend understands he will always go home alone. Give me a break! You can bet Mr. Huge Cock is banging that guy's wife behind his back every chance he gets. You should have told him his marriage is over. It's no more than the idiot deserves for regaling his wife with stories about his friend's big dick, then bringing the bozo home so she could blow him.—D.A., Commerce City, Colorado

For all we know, you may be right. But why would they go to the trouble of sneaking around when the husband has given his blessing? You should hang out with some swingers before you make such a harsh judgment about what does or doesn't work in a marriage.

Your anticircumcision diatribe in May is silly and wrong. Despite what David Gollaher claims in his book, there are no highly sensitive nerve endings in the foreskin;

they are in the glans, just as a woman has nerve endings in the clitoris rather than the labia minora. The foreskin is merely an extension of the skin covering the shaft and has virtually no feeling. The American Academy of Pediatrics, which in 1999 decided not to recommend circumcision, caved to political pressure from a rather bizarre group of people claiming the procedure is on a par with removing the clitoris and/or labia. The data are clear that women partnered with circumcised men have fewer vaginal infections and lower rates of cervical cancer. The foreskin probably had a protective function at some point, just as the hymen probably served as a barrier to fecal contamination. Indeed, in third world countries where hygiene is a luxury, they may still serve these functions. Otherwise the data suggest circumcision is best. Incidentally, I teach a college course in human sexuality, and when this issue comes up I have yet to hear a female student say she finds an uncircumcised penis more attractive.—D.M., Benton, Kansas

*Well, that's important. Many women don't find testicles that appealing either. A number of readers pulled out their knives after reading our response. Gollaher's book, *Circumcision*, is a thorough examination of the procedure and its history, including the results of a study of the prepuce by pathologists at the University of Manitoba. Based on our reading, "the data are clear" doesn't apply to most of the research on the subject, which is why we urge caution. As is our custom, we'll allow a few more readers to weigh in before veering back to the more familiar territory of blow jobs and scotch.*

Although I tend toward the holistic and hippieish, I'm a young mother who decided to have my sons circumcised. The truth is, most women prefer giving head to a man who has been snipped. After polling my friends and much soul-searching, I decided a split second of pain they won't remember is worth the potential ramifications for their later pleasure. That's not to say I didn't feel like an ogre when they cried while it was done. But wouldn't the pain of rejection at the hand or mouth of a girl unsure of what to do with or grossed out by an unfamiliar foreskin sting far worse? You also need to consider that little boys want to look like Daddy and don't want to stand out in the locker room.—N.M., Madison, Wisconsin

I grew up in the 1950s. Because I was uncut, no one in the junior high school showers looked like me. It seemed to me that the other boys had all had sex, while I was still a virgin. Because I was never taught to wash down there, I always had problems, so in 1998 I had a circumcision. I finally felt like a regular guy. The bonus was that my wife started going down on

me. You can stump for that useful flap all you want. I've had it both ways, and bald is better.—D.T., Greeley, Colorado

Thank you for opposing infant circumcision. I've been giving my husband the evil eye for years about reading PLAYBOY, but he now has my blessing for a lifetime subscription.—E.W., Jackson, Tennessee

That didn't happen after the last time we shared tips for better cunnilingus?

As a woman, I find that the foreskin rolling up and down makes each thrust more pleasurable than those from a circumcised penis.—A.R., Olympia, Washington

I can't speak for every guy, but I was circumcised as an infant and feel mutilated and violated by it.—M.C., Medina, Ohio

As someone with a father, two friends, a co-worker and a nephew who required circumcision as adults because of an infected or constricted foreskin, and who has slept with both cut and uncut men, I will present the other side of the argument: (1) Circumcision of an infant is generally painless, and the healing time is rapid. Adult circumcision is painful, takes longer to heal and involves a larger amount of skin. (2) Most uncut men do not bother to wash their glans after urination. Being presented with flakes of dried urine during spontaneous sex is distasteful. (3) A circumcised man will never tear his foreskin during vigorous masturbation or in a zipper. (4) I have never met a woman who doesn't prefer the cleanliness and granitelike hardness of a circumcised erection. The flaccid worm-in-a-turtleneck look is unappealing as well. (5) No woman I have asked has ever noticed uncircumcised men experiencing extra orgasmic pleasure. We have noticed, however, that they can have difficulty reaching orgasm. While our society favors passive measures, any woman bearing a son should do her own research and make an informed decision.—L.L., Ottawa, Ontario

There is no evidence that uncircumcised men have trouble reaching orgasm, but that's not our point. We're not arguing against adults being circumcised; we're saying there's no compelling reason to cut an infant. He won't be having sex for years, and a parent can't predict what he or his lovers will prefer.

I've been with my company for a few years and worked hard to get to a junior management position. I have a lot of great ideas that could benefit the company, but the trouble is my boss is hardheaded and a little unprofessional. If I went to him with my ideas, I know he'd just dismiss them. Should I take a chance and meet with him or go over his head?—P.A., Covina, California

You have more than those two options. Bob Rosner, the author of Gray Matters: The Workplace Survival Guide, suggests you try to find other department heads, managers or col-

leagues to sponsor your innovations. "Figure out where the best home is for each idea and take it there," he says. "At the same time, you can be shopping around for better bosses in the company; they won't all be insane. Volunteer for committees or task forces, get to know people who work in other departments, and find out who the cool supervisors are. Place a bunch of bets because you can never tell which will pay off. People are much too rigid about the workplace and don't see it as the ecosystem it is. You should simultaneously build a paper trail to document your ideas. Write your boss an otherwise dull e-mail—the more boring the intro, the less likely he'll pay attention—and append an aside such as 'By the way, I was brainstorming with Charlie about the XYZ account and suggested this or that, and he thought it might work.'" Good luck.

What is the proper length of a tie?—R.C., Dallas, Texas

It should hit the top of your belt buckle. No exceptions.

In May you suggest a reader dreamed about cheating on his fiancée because of "biology." Committing to one woman, you claim, causes "anxiety that seeps out in guilty fantasies." Of all the things dreams may be, unconscious yearning no longer makes the list. Dreams are about data mining, pattern recognition, image respooling and verbal reassembly of current feedback and broken snippets of conversation. Hell, he may have been repeating something from a radio commercial he heard on the way to work. Omens and lusts are the stuff of romance novels but not dream processes. Next you'll be suggesting that dreams predict the future.—A.K., Fort Myers Beach, Florida

His dream may have been all that and more, but this doesn't resolve the larger dilemma, which is that his fiancée heard him talking in his sleep as if he were cheating. We still believe, as we said in May, that there's no satisfactory way to explain it to her, regardless of whether he offers your scientific explanation or our Freudian one.

What steps can I take to wake up on time and feel refreshed? Normally, I hit the snooze button three times and have to shower and drink a gallon of coffee before I can get going. I have tried eight hours of sleep, eating before bed, Tylonol PM, etc. Are some people just night owls?—B.C., Houston, Texas

Morning or evening patterns do appear to have a biological basis. In one study of young men, Dr. Charles Czeisler, a professor of sleep medicine at Harvard, discovered that the circadian pacemaker—the part of the brain that regulates not only wakefulness but body temperature, hormones and digestion over a 24-hour cycle—differs in early birds and night owls. Exposure to light also controls these rhythms. Research has found that wakefulness peaks two to three hours before bedtime and begins to drop off only in the last hour before sleep. You should try to get up each morning at the same time

as often as possible, including weekends, and hit the sack when you feel drowsy. Adults who establish this routine generally need seven and a half to eight and a half hours of sleep a night. (Currently the average American gets only six and a half.) If you still feel run-down, your sleep may be affected by depression, anxiety or sleep apnea, a condition that can cause heavy snorers to repeatedly stop breathing, which shakes them awake. "If you're having a hard time waking up, put a lamp with a 200-watt lightbulb on a timer next to your bed," says Dr. Richard Snow, of the Snow Sleep Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. "Or leave your blinds open. Sunlight will wake you better than anything." To ensure a restful night, avoid alcohol, cigarettes and heavy, spicy and sugary foods in the hours before bed, as well as computer and TV screens, which mimic sunlight. Daytime exercise can help. And you won't find this among the standard medical advice, but an orgasm or two puts us right out.

My wife and I were fooling around, and she pulled down my pants to give me a blow job. Suddenly she recoiled and said, "What the hell is that?" Turns out I had a small piece of tissue stuck on the head of my penis from when I had masturbated earlier in the day. She went to the bedroom and cried, and now she refuses to have sex with me. How can I convince her that masturbation is natural and that I still enjoy being with her?—M.W., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Given her overreaction, this will be a difficult assignment. You can explain that you've been touching yourself since you were 12 and that it has nothing to do with your desire to fuck her anytime she wants. However, she will likely need to hear this from a third party. With any luck her friends will reassure her that all boyfriends and husbands masturbate once in a while and that it's a problem only if she's unsatisfied. It's also not a problem if she touches herself.

When my girlfriend and I have sex, she likes to be on top. I have no problem with that, but sometimes she flails her arms and hits me in the face. Any suggestions?—N.D., Omaha, Nebraska

A helmet comes to mind, which you could introduce with the fantasy that you're an amateur boxer, football star, motorcycle cop or school mascot. But the simpler solution is to hold her hands; this can be quite sensual and keep her balanced on your erection. It's a dance, after all.

All reasonable questions—from fashion, food and drink, stereos and sports cars to dating dilemmas, taste and etiquette—will be personally answered if the writer includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The most interesting, pertinent questions will be presented in these pages each month. Write the Playboy Advisor, 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, or send e-mail by visiting our website at playboyadvisor.com.



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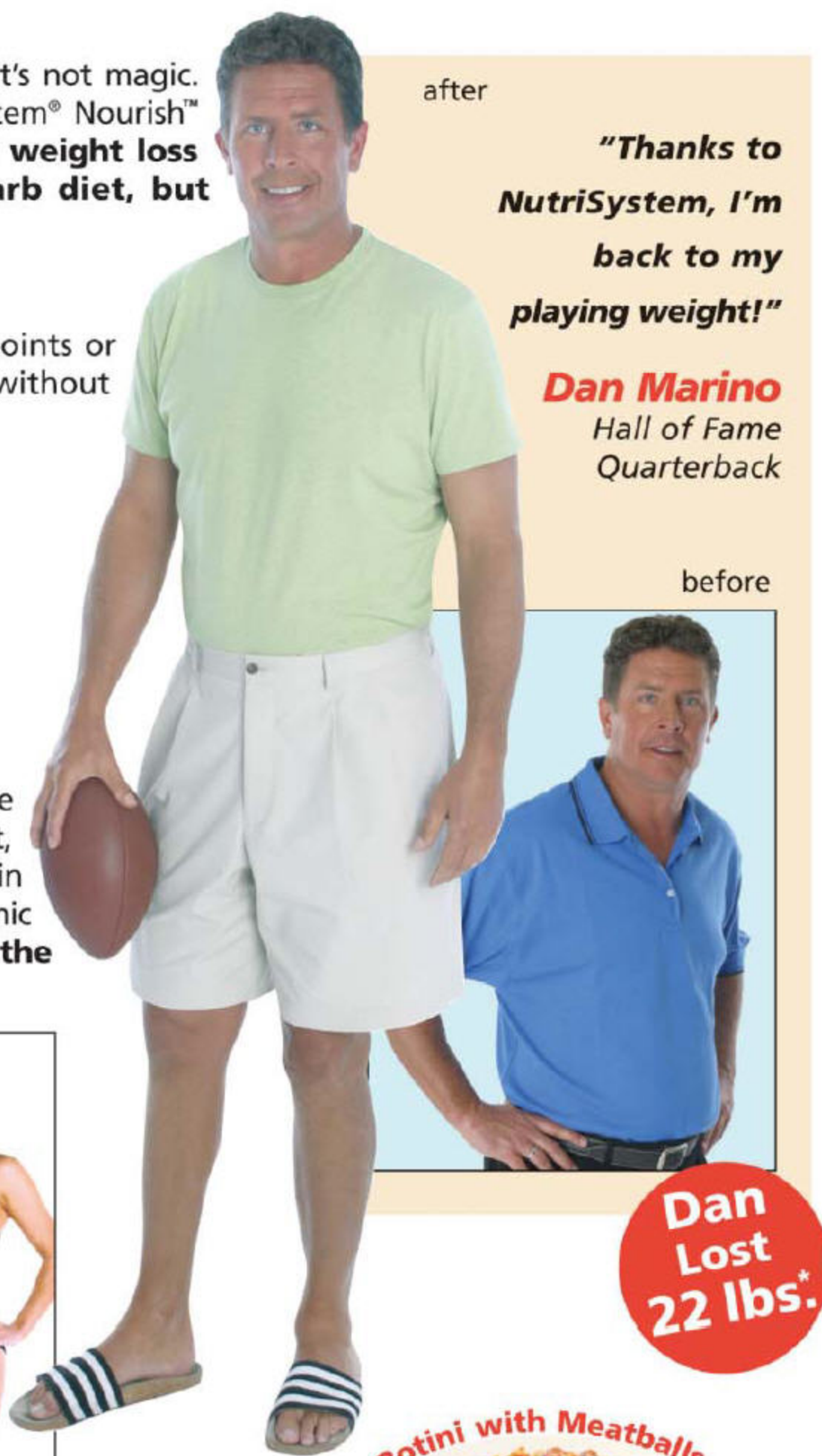
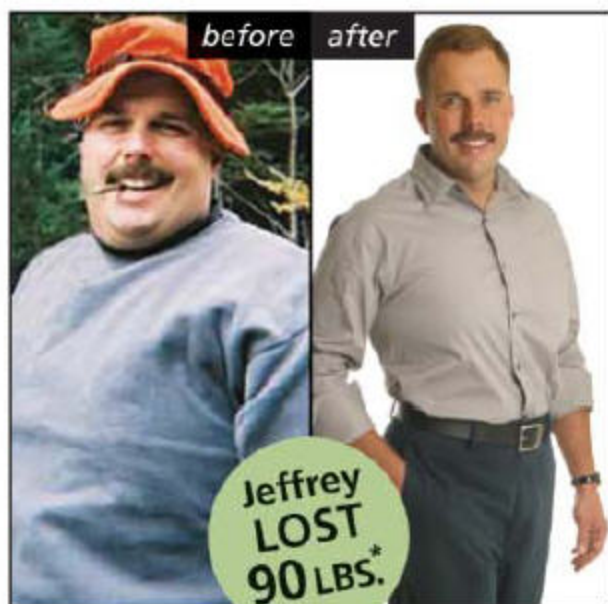
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THE PLAYBOY FORUM

POWER PLAY

THE PRESIDENT TRIES TO INCREASE HIS CLOUT. BIG DEAL. THE REAL CULPRIT IS CONGRESS, WHOSE JOB IT IS TO STOP HIM

BY MICKEY EDWARDS

When political scientists in the future compile their lists of America's weak and strong presidents, George W. Bush, whatever his other achievements or failings, will inevitably be judged among those who, for better or worse, thoroughly dominated the politics of the day. But despite what one may think of the president's various proposals, it is not Bush's policies but how he came to be so powerful that should most worry us.

The president has taken the nation into two significant wars, reshaped American tax policy, changed the fundamental premises of our security policies (and of our relationship to other nations, individually and collectively), vastly expanded the government's role in subsidizing health-care costs and dramatically changed the way many public school classes are taught.

It is also true that much of what this president has urged upon us has not come to pass, but in the end it is not merely the success or failure of individual initiatives that marks presidential strength but whether the White House is central to, or peripheral to, the national debate. One of Bush's predecessors, Jimmy Carter, blamed the nation's then current problems on a sort of national malaise (a "crisis of confidence," he called it), as though the president of the United States were a mere observer rather than a partial shaper of events. President Bush's immediate predecessor, Bill Clinton, felt forced to insist the presidency was still relevant. The question with Bush is not whether the presidency is relevant but whether any other part of the government is.

Presidential power ebbs and flows, of course, but it tends to flow in a fairly circumscribed way—for a short period after an election victory or in response to a special circumstance that affords a president greater than usual deference. But in time the honeymoon ends and traditional constraints on presidential power are

renewed. That has not been the case with the current occupant of the White House.

Instead, the 21st century has seen the rise of a presidency that blatantly and deliberately ignores the law and openly defies and insults Congress. Actions by Congress are simply dismissed out of hand. When Congress set a requirement for court-ordered warrants before the government could eavesdrop on the private telephone conversations of American citizens, the White House simply ignored the requirement. When Congress attempted to prohibit the torture of U.S.-held prisoners, the administration answered, in effect, that it would take Congress's opinions into consideration and then decide for itself what to do. High-ranking administration officials have threatened reprisals against subordinates if they give Congress accurate information. Other administration officials, asked to answer a Senate committee's questions, have simply walked out of the room rather than comply.

Our current president likes to think of himself as "the decider," as he made clear in responding recently to suggestions that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld resign or be fired. In the case of deciding whether to retain a particular cabinet member's service, he's right, of course. But in regard to obeying a congressional mandate—for example, to get a warrant before eavesdropping on American citizens—he's not. Bush was elected president, a constitutionally prescribed and circumscribed office, not the nation's decider in chief.

But sometimes it seems this president does indeed function as decider in chief, setting his own course and following it without much concern about possible objections from other government quarters. How has this happened?

Much of the current unease over presidential declarations of almost unlimited authority is focused on the clear overreaching of the president



STEVE BORDEN

himself. But presidents overreach; George W. Bush is not the first to do so. The list of previous presidential overreachers includes, among others, Thomas Jefferson, Harry Truman and Franklin Roosevelt. What makes this particular expansion of the imperial presidency more dangerous—and a far greater threat to our very system of government—is congressional acquiescence.

Our system of separated powers has devolved into an Americanized version of a European parliamentary system, in which the two major political parties have superseded the three branches of government and the constitutional separation of powers. Many members of Congress apparently no longer see themselves as constitutionally obligated to function as part of a completely separate and completely equal branch of government, charged with serving as the voice of the people, determining the laws, setting the priorities of the government and maintaining a check on the presidency. This is not a question of Congress's rights or its authority. It is a responsibility imposed by the Constitution. When a senator or representative takes an oath of office to support and defend the Constitution, he or she is also swearing to perform the duties assigned by the Constitution.

Those duties do not include serving as *de facto* members of the White House staff, but that is precisely how many members of Congress behaved until the president's poll numbers fell so precipitously. Despite occasional huffing and puffing, members of Congress

have refused to use any of their many powers (subpoena, oversight, control over public spending) to enforce their decisions. This is a Congress in which the Senate majority leader was actually handpicked by the president. (Can one imagine Senator Bill Frist investigating the Bush Department of Defense the way Harry Truman investigated the Roosevelt War Department or the way J. William Fulbright investigated Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam policies?) Leaders in both the House and Senate

THE BASIS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT— SEPARATION OF POWERS, CHECKS AND BALANCES—WILL BE LOST, PERHAPS FOREVER.

have largely seen it as their function to enact the president's agenda rather than bring independent judgment to the issues of the day.

It was ironic to see members of Congress—including members of the president's own party—express reservations about Bush's nomination of General Michael Hayden, the man who oversaw the National Security Agency's domestic spying operations, to head the CIA. The irony doubled days later when even more members of Congress—and more members of the president's party—became upset upon learning the NSA's spying operations had

included gaining access to the phone records of millions of Americans. This was the Congress that had allowed the White House to forbid sharing information about this intelligence gathering with the full membership of the House and Senate intelligence committees and their staffs. This was the Congress that, upon learning of the NSA's eavesdropping, had not stepped in to enforce—with budget cuts and subpoenas—its insistence that the administration get court-issued warrants before doing domestic surveillance. Congress had, by its inaction, allowed to continue the very abuses about which it now complained.

This is an extremely dangerous period of presidential expansion precisely because of Congress's acquiescence and the fact that authority once ceded is almost impossible to retrieve. The more power the current Congress surrenders to the White House, the weaker future Congresses will be—and the stronger future presidents will be. The basis of American constitutional government—separation of powers, a system of checks and balances—will be lost, perhaps forever.

If the president of the United States is guilty of malfeasance—wrongdoing—by virtue of having ignored the Constitution, then Congress is equally guilty of nonfeasance—also a crime—for failure to perform its constitutional duties. The United States has survived presidential malfeasance before; congressional nonfeasance is a much more dangerous thing.

AN IMBALANCE OF POWER

No single act speaks more to the decay of congressional power than President Bush's unprecedented use of signing statements. On more than 10 percent of the bills the president has signed—amounting to more than 750 times—he has claimed to have the right to ignore parts of laws he doesn't agree with. By making such claims he essentially declares himself the judge of his own constitutional powers and rules for himself without any checks and balances. With his signing statements Bush has challenged the congressional ban on torture, oversight provisions in the Patriot Act and whistle-blower protections for nuclear regulators. In each instance a compliant legislature has forgiven him his excesses. A president has the right to say whatever he wants, of course, but his only writing that matters legislatively is his signature. He holds the power of veto—a refusal to sign a bill—but Bush has yet to use it. He signed



the congressional ban on torture, for example, but later added provisions (filed quietly on December 30) that claimed to take away the lawmaking authority of Congress and the courts' power in interpreting the Constitution. During the first 200 years of the Republic, presidents used signing statements about a dozen times. Ed Meese, attorney general during the Reagan administration, popularized signing statements by urging courts to look to them for evidence of what a statute "really means." Reagan appended signing statements 71 times, and Clinton used the provision 105 times. But no one approaches Bush's numbers. What can Congress do? It could hold hearings or withhold funding. But it's unlikely that a partisan Congress would consider the more serious steps of censure or impeachment. Senator Arlen Specter, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, plans to hold hearings on signing statements.

ABORTION AND YOU

ROE V. WADE PROTECTS A LOT MORE THAN YOU THINK

By Tim Mohr

Droves of women dying after botched back-alley procedures. Doctors and patients sent to jail. Poor women forced to miss work and travel out of state to get care. These are some of the doomsday visions of a post-*Roe v. Wade* America. But a reversal of *Roe v. Wade* by the U.S. Supreme Court may not prove so dire. The repeal of the federally protected right to terminate a pregnancy would likely have relatively little impact on abortion in America. Such a reversal could, however, have a huge, largely unanticipated effect on other areas of our lives.

Roe has not made abortion universally accessible. Despite theoretical protections enshrined in the contentious 1973 ruling, 87 percent of U.S. counties have no abortion providers. Various state laws permitted under *Roe* have introduced waiting periods, gag orders on doctors and other barriers to abortion. For women who live in these areas the situation is already grim, and the need to travel for an abortion is already a reality. But the states where women now go—Maryland, for instance, from the southeast—would continue to support abortion rights even if *Roe* were overturned.

A reversal of *Roe* would open two other fronts to attack. The first is the legal definition of life. The second is the privacy doctrine the *Roe* decision helped solidify as implicit in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. Attempts to change the definition of life are already under way—both the recently passed South Dakota antiabortion bill and a potential ballot measure in Michigan define life as beginning at conception. Success on this front could have far-reaching implications. As Ramesh Ponnuru writes in his book *The Party of Death*, “If abortion had not become the law of the land, we might not now be debating euthanasia or the killing of human embryos for research purposes. The same might work in reverse. The more we reject abortion, the more we might

come to reject other choices for death too.” In other words, meddling in cases such as Terri Schiavo’s could be back on the menu, and stem-cell research could become a felony.

Attacks on privacy may immediately target contraceptives, as hinted at during debate prior to the passage in May of a draconian antiabortion bill by Louisiana’s House of Representatives. But the scope of attacks would be much broader than that: In 2003 when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Texas’s anti-sodomy laws in *John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner v. Texas*, Justice Antonin Scalia’s dissent-

ing opinion specifically compared the case to *Roe*. He also wrote that the 14th Amendment “expressly allows states to deprive their citizens of ‘liberty,’ so long as ‘due process of law’ is provided.” Unfortunately, in this interpretation the right to experiment in the bedroom, the right to use contraception and the right to read the magazine in your hands—among many other “liberties” we take for granted today—would no longer be protected once the landmark *Roe* had fallen. In summing up, Scalia stated, “The Court has taken sides in the culture war, departing from its role

of assuring, as neutral observer, that the democratic rules of engagement are observed.” Under those rules of engagement, criminalizing homosexuality was, he said, “well within the range of traditional democratic action.”

If *Roe* were reversed, the Supreme Court would open the door to banning almost anything conservatives dislike. And as conservatives themselves acknowledge, that list of dislikes extends into our most intimate spaces. It is not only a woman’s womb protected by *Roe*; it is the library, laboratory and hospital, and the body and bedroom of every member of our society. Those areas would be vulnerable to even bolder attacks than we already see in conservative legislatures should the Court reverse *Roe v. Wade*. But you would still be able to go to Baltimore for an abortion.



MARGINALIA

FROM A RESPONSE

on Reason.com to an article by Todd Gitlin in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: “Long before the current wave of conservative attacks on the legacy and values of the Enlightenment, many left-wing academics were deriding reason, freedom and tolerance as bourgeois prejudices, and scholarly objectivity as a smoke screen for the white male point of view. Instead of championing individual rights, the academic left began to promote the ‘identity politics’ of defining people by race, gender and sexual orientation. But there is a parallel problem on the right. Today assaults on evolution frequently find a platform in respectable conservative publications. So do attacks on secularism and the separation of church and state. As Gitlin notes, many conservatives assert that the American republic was founded not on the principles of the Enlightenment but as a ‘Christian nation.’ On the right or the left, reason- and reality-based politics are increasingly hard to find.”



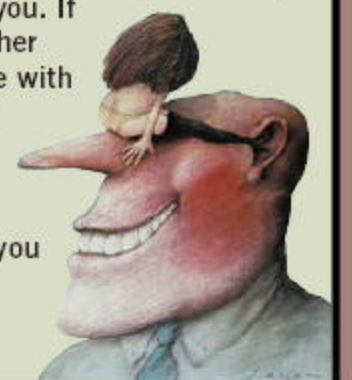
FROM A DISSENTING

opinion written by Justice John Paul Stevens in the Supreme Court’s *Garcetti v. Ceballos* ruling, a setback for whistleblowers, in which the Court decided public employees were not covered by free-speech protections in the course of their jobs: “Public employees are still citizens while they are in office. The notion that there is a categorical difference between speaking as a citizen and speaking in the course of one’s employment is quite wrong. It is senseless to let constitutional protection for exactly the same words hinge on whether they fall within a job description.”



FROM COMMENTS

by Richard Ebstein, a professor at Hebrew University and the lead researcher of a study seeking a genetic component to sex addiction: “Some people really do think more about sex and place a greater importance on it than others do, and what our study suggests is that genes may make a substantial contribution to these differences. If you have a lower sex drive, it does not necessarily mean you should go to a sex therapist to see if something is wrong with you. If it does not bother you or interfere with your life, then maybe you are best to just live with it. After all, if you (continued on page 47)”



READER RESPONSE

MOUNTAINS VS. MOLE HILLS

I'm not a Christian, but my back is getting up more and more when I see Christian fundamentalists compared to Muslims acting out ("The War at Home," June). The Muslim world's reaction to Danish cartoons of Muhammad was several orders of magnitude greater than Christian reactions to *The Last Temptation of Christ*. In fact, in recent decades we have seen many examples of deliberate affronts to Christianity, and the response of those offended is usually condemned as mere ignorance and hatred. The double standard on this issue is appalling. Christians are told to get over it in the name of free speech, while the media trips all over itself to apologize and avoid offense when Muslims are angry. Show me an example in living memory when Christians have run amok in every major city, looting, burning and murdering



These religious fundamentalists don't loot. in the name of Jesus. Then I'll agree that Christian fundamentalists are just as scary and dangerous as their Muslim counterparts. Ugly behavior of any sort should, of course, be held up for scorn. All I'm saying is we must use the same measuring stick for everybody.

Bill Brewer
Colorado Springs, Colorado

OPERATION DESERT THORN

With regard to the statistics given in "Sex and the Service" (June): As a member of the United States Army, I realize I am part of one of the most conservative organizations in America. I am the only person I know of in my



Force protection can mean different things. unit who voted for John Kerry, Al Gore and Bill Clinton (both times). I am an atheist, though I know chaplains play a vital role in the military. It doesn't bother me if someone is gay, wants an abortion or takes drugs—a person is born gay, abortions are legal (for now, anyway), and drugs harm only the user. It does bother me, however, when more than a million dollars is spent on "Every Soldier's Battle" kits to promote abstinence. How many sets of body armor, up-armored HMMWVs, IED robots or other combat gear could that same amount of money have supplied?

C. Benjamin Whalen
Balad, Iraq

GAG ORDERS WILL SET YOU FREE

The vitally important academic bill of rights does not operate "under the guise of protecting free speech" ("Newsfront," June). It really does aim to protect free speech, a basic right endangered by the leftist hegemony in America's colleges. Stifling professors is a good thing when they waste classroom time raving mindlessly about Bush or abortion. They get paid very well to teach math or science. Parents shelling out 30 or 40 grand a year for their kids' education may actually be reactionary enough to expect professors to do their job.

Ronald Wieck
Kew Gardens, New York

LOVE ON THE LINE

I'm an immigration lawyer in Houston. Most of my clients are U.S. citizens married to inadmissible aliens. I frequently attend forums for international couples having severe immigration problems. My clients, the forum attendees and I are all frustrated that most of the immigration debate is centered on employment-based concerns.

The media and Congress have not sufficiently discussed the impact of the law on couples. Speaking frankly, I believe the public still thinks it's unusual for white people and Latin people to want to have sex with each other.

Scott Laurel
Houston, Texas

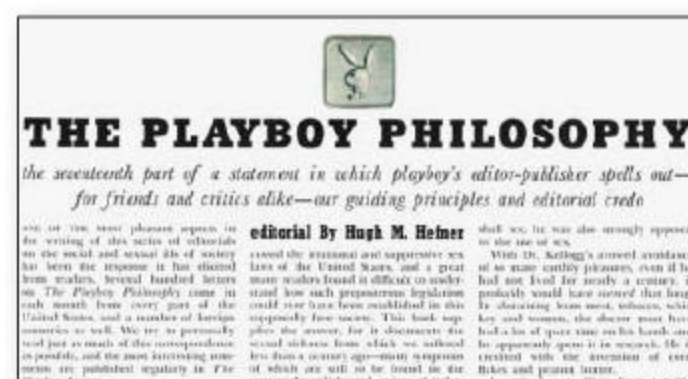
UNEASY LISTENING

White House officials are probably technically correct when they claim millions of domestic calls are not being listened to ("Don't Spy on Me," June). However, that technicality is hiding the most treacherous crime ever committed against the American people. What if your electronic communications have shown you to be on the wrong political, religious, moral or sexual side? Well, then your transgressions have been duly noted in your NSA profile—or have they? It's a secret, and only the administration knows for sure.

Bill Moreno
Calabasas, California

BACKSTORY

At a garage sale I picked up one of your issues from 1963, back when you were serializing Hef's *Playboy Philosophy*. The reader letters responding to previous installments were amazing—people from all walks of life, from Bible-thumping preachers to divin-



The origins of our Forum section.

ity students to Unitarians, engaging in civil debate about a complex topic. The recent years of Republican rule and creeping fundamentalism have been discouraging, but I have to say, that issue made me feel good again. I'm going to see if I can find all the issues from 1962 to 1966 just to read the letters!

Dan Kegel
Los Angeles, California

E-mail via the web at letters.playboy.com. Or write: 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10019.

NEWSFRONT



Terror Tactics

WALDO, FLORIDA—On May 28 hazmat teams were called in to handle what police classified as a weapon of mass destruction deployed against Café Risqué, an adult shop scheduled to open in this town, just outside Gainesville. Alachua County investigators said a two-gallon container filled with a “caustic, corrosive” fluid had been placed on an air conditioner. A hose ran from the jug into the building, and another connected it to an outside spigot; the chemical had been forced into the building with water, destroying one room inside. For months prayer vigils had been held at the location in an attempt to prevent the shop from opening. “You’re trying to hurt people,” Sergeant Keith Faulk said of the attack. “You’re trying to change their ideas and instill fear. That’s exactly what terrorists do. This person is a local terrorist.”

Morality Bites

BLACK JACK, MISSOURI—Olivia Shelltrack and Fon-dray Loving were denied an occupancy permit for the house they bought in this St. Louis suburb. The unmarried couple planned to move into the four-bedroom home with their two children and Shelltrack’s daughter from an earlier relationship, but a town ordinance bars occupancy by more than three people not related by “blood, marriage or adoption.” The city council recently voted down a proposal to change the law. Many municipalities have similar rules, hoping to prevent frat houses, brothels and, more recently, groups of unrelated immigrant workers sharing shelter. Mayor Norman McCourt claimed Black Jack’s ordinance was designed to prevent overcrowding. But in a letter concerning a similar case in 1999, McCourt mentioned the community’s “morals and standards.” He also wrote, “The easiest resolution to cure the situation would be for the occupants to get married. Our community believes this is the appropriate way to raise a family.” Shelltrack disagrees. “It just comes down to the fact that it shouldn’t really be any of their business,” she says. “They shouldn’t set their own moral values and agenda on anybody. That’s not how a city should be run.”

Good News, Bad News

NEW YORK CITY—In this year’s annual UN report on AIDS, worldwide growth rates of the disease appear to be slowing for the first time since it was identified 25 years ago. Dire prognostications about an explosion in the rate of new infections in China and India, for instance, seem not to have come true. In the U.S. the number

of new cases has stabilized since 2000 at about 40,000 a year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, though the number of people living with AIDS in the U.S. reached a new high of 1.2 million in 2005. The UN report provided more food for thought about the situation here at home: Evidence suggests that risky sexual behavior may be increasing among gay men as the perceived threat of HIV recedes, and AIDS has become the leading cause of death among African American women ages 25 to 34. Black women are also half as likely as other groups to receive the latest AIDS drugs.

Target Practice

LOS ANGELES—Video-game developer Pandemic Studios has angered Venezuelan politicians with its *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames*, set in Venezuela and planned for release next year. According to the game’s website, players attempt to overthrow “a power-hungry tyrant who messes with Venezuela’s oil supply, sparking an invasion that turns the country into a war zone.” Venezuelan congressman Ismael García called *Mercenaries 2* “psychological terror” and claimed it was a precursor to real American military action. Though Pandemic vice president Greg Richardson says his company has no ties to the U.S. government, Pandemic’s website describes its game



Full Spectrum Warrior/Army Training as a “squad-level, dismounted, light-infantry training simulator created for use by the U.S. Army.”

MARGINALIA

(continued from page 45)

are not good at music, you don’t keep on trying to play the saxophone.”

FROM THE LYRICS of the song “Not Ready to Make Nice,” the first single from the Dixie Chicks’ new album, *Taking the Long Way*: “How in the world can the words that I said/Send somebody so over the edge/That they’d write me a letter/Sayin’ that I better shut up and sing/Or my life will be over?”

FROM A COURT RULING protecting the confidentiality of online journalists’ sources after Apple sued reporters who had published materials on the Internet about an impending product launch: “We decline the implicit invitation to embroil ourselves in questions of what constitutes ‘legitimate journalism.’ We can think of no workable test or principle that would distinguish ‘legitimate’ from ‘illegitimate’ news.”



FROM THE WEBSITE of the Minuteman Project, explaining the group’s plan to build a 10-mile-long fence of metal barriers and razor wire along the border between Arizona and Mexico: “The Minuteman Project did not think up this fence plan but is willing to be part of its creation, planning and implementation on behalf of all American-loving patriots. The Minuteman Project welcomes all those who want to secure America by lending a helping hand. This fence project is so important that it cannot depend on just one lone group to finish such an ominous task. It will require the cooperation of many, possibly all of the American people. The opposition will misrepresent the Minutemen by calling them frauds, grandstanders and racists. Has America tired of hearing these empty words? I think so.”



FROM A COLUMN by Jennifer Van Bergen on Findlaw.com, a legal-news site: “Recently, students at the University of Miami (a private school but one with a stated policy of fostering free speech) demonstrated alongside striking maintenance workers to show solidarity. Now they face the threat of disciplinary charges. These students received ‘administrative subpoenas’ to appear before a school official and were told they faced possible major disciplinary action on grounds of ‘disorderly conduct’ and failure to comply with a school order. But instead of charging the students, the official asked them to look at pictures and identify others who participated in the strike activities.”

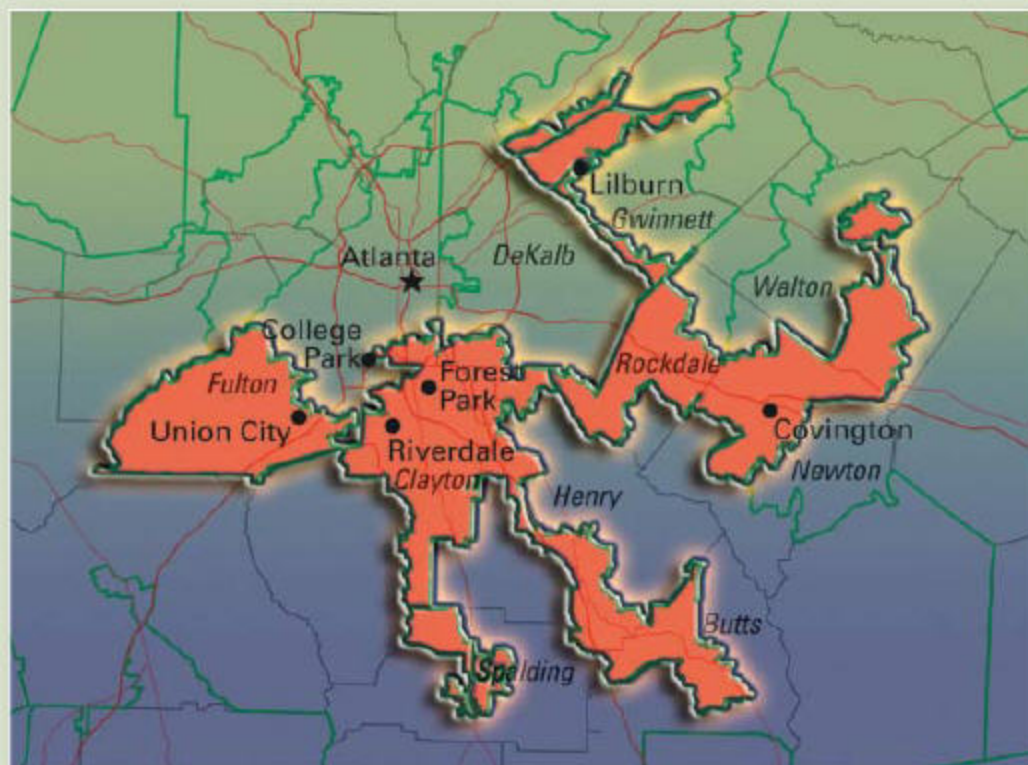
YOUR VOTE DOESN'T MATTER

WITH NEW DATABASES, POLITICIANS DETERMINE ELECTION OUTCOMES BEFORE YOU ENTER THE BOOTH

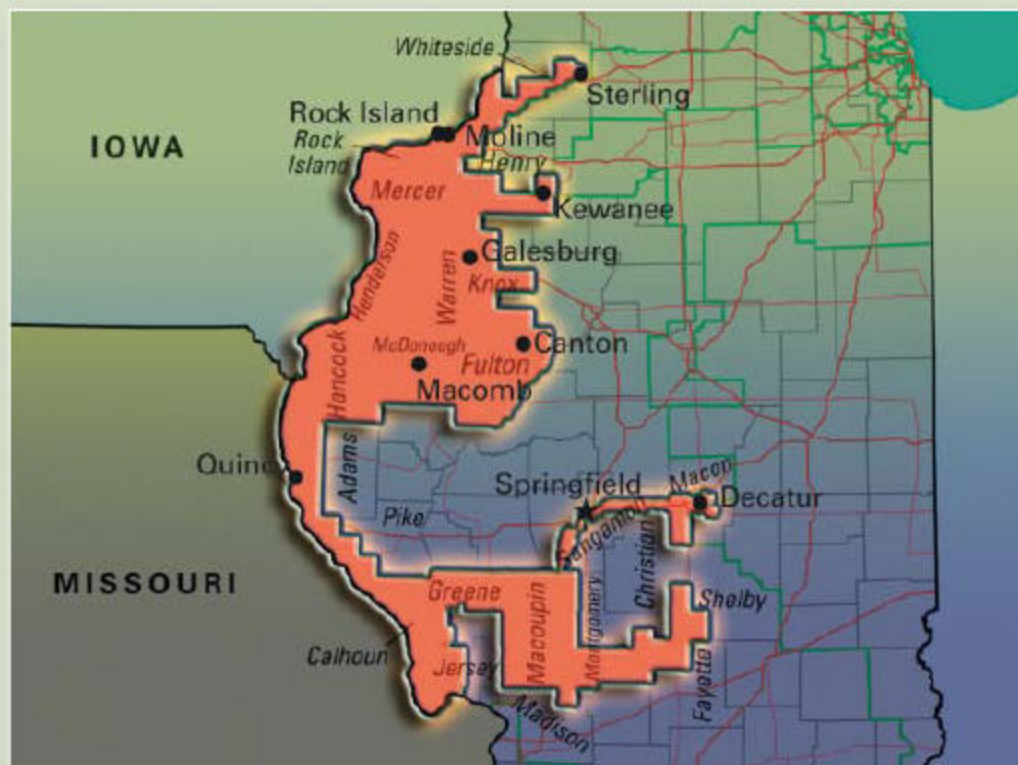
Redistricting—better known as gerrymandering—has in recent years been honed to such an art that one of the basic tenets of democracy no longer holds. Voters are supposed to be able to choose their representatives; instead, politicians these days choose their voters. Of course, gerrymandering—named after Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry, who redrew state districts for the 1812 election—is nothing new. Districts are

redrawn at least every 10 years, after each census. But until the 1990s such tinkering was undertaken with wax pencils and transparencies. With computers, new Census Bureau digital cartography and geographic information systems able to crunch quantities of data and draw maps based on them, the practice has attained a sinister level of efficiency. In 2000 just six House members lost reelection bids—a 98 percent success rate for incumbents. Mich-

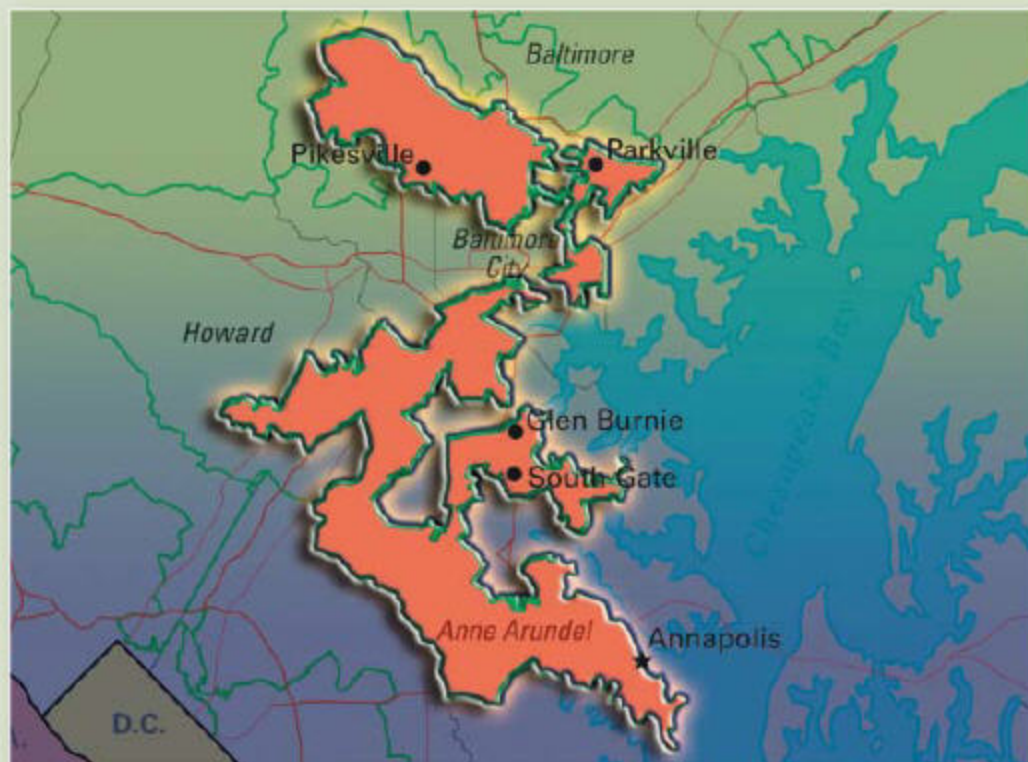
igan Republican Mike Rogers won his seat by 111 votes in 2000; after redistricting, he won in 2002 by a margin of 37 percent. Of 153 U.S. House and state congressional seats up for grabs in California's 2004 elections, none changed hands. Why? Gerrymandering, engineered by lawmakers with little oversight, creates ever larger majorities for incumbents: In 2004 only 22 of 435 House elections were decided by fewer than 10 percentage points.



GEORGIA District 13 is represented by second-term Democrat David Scott, a brother-in-law of former Atlanta Brave Hank Aaron. Scott's district includes parts of the city of Atlanta plus portions of 11 counties, helping to keep two surrounding districts whiter and thus more dependably Republican.



ILLINOIS The claws of crab-shaped district 17—the only Democratic district beyond Chicago and East St. Louis—were added to make sure five surrounding districts would remain reliably Republican. Incumbent Lane Evans is not running, making this one of the few open seats in the November midterm elections.



MARYLAND District three, highlighted here, is one of several odd demarcations in the state, which also has two black-majority districts awkwardly built around the city of Baltimore (district seven) and Prince George's County (district four). South-east of South Gate are sections of district one, a Republican stronghold.



TEXAS The 25th district is reliably Democratic. Of its 651,619 residents, 447,059 are Hispanic; on either side of it are similarly narrow districts also stacked with Hispanics. Creating these supermajority districts allows others—such as the 14th, between Houston and Corpus Christi—to remain Republican.

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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BROWN

A heckuva conversation with the maligned ex-FEMA chief about Katrina's fury, why we're still not safe and which congressman can, as he says, "bite me"

Over the course of several horrific days a year ago, Michael Brown, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, went from relative obscurity to fame and then, just as quickly, from fame to infamy. On August 29 Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast and devastated more than 90,000 square miles. New Orleans was flooded, and more than 1,800 people died. In addition to causing death, injury and displacement, the storm caused approximately \$75 billion in damage. At first President George W. Bush famously lauded Brown, saying, "Brownie, you're doing a heckuva job." Within days, however, Brown was forced to resign after what was generally viewed as his, and the government's, incompetence.

Brown was vilified. Editorial writers, politicians and citizens called him everything from "an embarrassment and a menace" to "an unqualified political appointee" who was "utterly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the disaster." "The more one learns about him, one is surprised he is in that job in the first place," said conservative commentator William Kristol on Fox News after Time magazine accused Brown of falsifying his résumé. Aaron Broussard, president of Louisiana's Jefferson Parish, told CBS's 48 Hours that FEMA under Brown "has committed murder here in New Orleans." The late-night comedians had a field day at Brown's expense. Jon Stewart said Brown's performance had been downgraded from "heckuva" to "Faulknerian idiot man-child."

The barrage didn't end when Brown stepped aside. A House committee investigating the response to Katrina released more than 1,000 damning e-mail messages sent between Brown and his staff. In one Brown is preoccupied with finding a sitter for his two dogs. In another, one of his assistants advises him to modify his appearance before talking to the press. "Even the president rolled his sleeves to just below the elbow," she wrote. "Roll up the sleeves." During the worst of the hurricane Brown wrote to a co-worker, "I am a fashion god. Are you proud of me?"

The Bush administration might have wished Brown would quietly go away, but he has not. Instead, after a series of congressional hearings and the release of videotapes showing him briefing the president during Katrina, he has been partially vindicated. Contradicting the view of Brown as inept, uninvolved, egotistical and unqualified, the videotapes show he was informed and engaged, though frustrated in his attempt to get the administration's attention and support. Brown has refused to be the administration's fall guy. Instead he has fought back, charging that the government's preoccupation with the war on terror distracted the nation and drained resources from FEMA, that his boss at the Department of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, restricted his ability to manage the disaster and that the New Orleans and Mississippi governments were dysfunctional.

Brown, 51, was born in Guymon, Okla-

homa, where his father worked as a printer. He attended Central State University and received a law degree from Oklahoma City University in 1981. After graduating he worked as an assistant to the city manager of Edmond, Oklahoma. His résumé stated he had emergency-services oversight in that position, but Time reported that the head of public relations for the city denied Brown had oversight over anybody, noting, "The assistant is more like an intern." (The spokesperson later claimed that comment was taken out of context.)

Brown also served as staff director of the Senate Finance Committee of the Oklahoma legislature, and he was elected to the Edmond City Council but resigned to practice law. He ran for Congress in 1988 and lost. Brown next became the judges and stewards commissioner for the International Arabian Horse Association. After Bush took office, in January 2001, Brown joined FEMA as general counsel, hired by his longtime friend Joe Allbaugh, then FEMA director, who had run Bush's 2000 election campaign. Allbaugh later named Brown to the post of FEMA deputy director; when Allbaugh resigned, Bush appointed Brown as director, in January 2003.

Brown is married and has two children, and he divides his time between an apartment in Washington, D.C. and homes in Taos, New Mexico and Boulder, Colorado. He has started a new business, a consulting firm for disaster



"Terrorism has to get the resources it needs but not at the expense of natural disasters, which we know are coming—earthquakes, hurricanes. Chertoff keeps trying to shift the blame back to me, which solves nothing."



"We are less prepared now than before Katrina. It's more of a mess than ever. People should be scared, and they should demand more of the government than this kind of half-assed way of doing things."



"In the middle of the disaster I thought about quitting—after the first few days. But then I thought, People are dying, people are suffering; I can't leave. It was a no-win situation. So I truly had to be the scapegoat."

PHOTOGRAPHY © SAM KITTNER

preparedness, but it will not be an easy ride. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote, "No sane person would trust Brown to plop an egg into a pot of boiling water without screwing it up." *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* added, "After you hire Brownie, you might want to hire Typhoid Mary to help you avoid infectious diseases."

Anticipating the emotional anniversary of Katrina—a time when the nation will remember the dead and look ahead to determine how well we are poised for the next disaster—we tracked Brown down for an interview. Contributing Editor **David Sheff** met with him in Boulder.

"After the public shellacking he had withstood, I was surprised to find that not only is Brown still standing, he is thriving," reports Sheff. "Brown is now a sought-after advisor on disaster preparedness to companies and communities, as well as a media commentator on everything from earthquakes to terrorism to avian flu."

"As he was described during Katrina—a characterization repeated in congressional hearings—Brown sometimes looks like a deer staring into headlights, but he also appears serious, thoughtful and concerned. After spending a day with him—during which, between interview sessions, he fielded endless phone calls and e-mails and appeared on Neil Cavuto's show on Fox News Channel—I was struck by how far up he has fallen. Only in America can a reputation for ineptitude lead to stardom plus a career that requires authority, trustworthiness and leadership."

PLAYBOY: Looking back on Katrina one year later, do you agree with the Senate subcommittee that concluded FEMA should be scrapped?

BROWN: One third to two thirds of the subcommittee's recommendations mirror almost word for word the points I had been trying to make to Tom Ridge, Michael Chertoff and the president for three years. Now, God forbid, they aren't going to admit Mike Brown was right. He has to continue to be the scapegoat. Now they say they want to abolish this dysfunctional agency and create a new one. The way they work, they'll probably change the name and do nothing else. I don't think anything will change. I think it will fall on its face. [groans] It's incredibly frustrating.

PLAYBOY: You have blamed everyone for FEMA's failures during Katrina—the Department of Homeland Security, the administration and the local governments in New Orleans and Mississippi. But most people still blame you.

BROWN: I know, and that's something I live with every day. The truth has come out, though. It all comes down to the clash between FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security.

PLAYBOY: What is the nature of this clash?

BROWN: The DHS and I had a personality clash, for lack of a better term. Of its 185,000 employees, well over 180,000 are focused on terrorism prevention. The other very small group concentrates on how to respond when the big one happens. This creates an inherent clash. The bulk of the money goes to prevention. In D.C. who do you think gets all the attention? He who has the biggest pot of gold. Preparation gets the attention; dealing with disasters gets little.

PLAYBOY: DHS secretary Michael Chertoff has charged you have tried to drive a wedge between the nation's interests in preparing for disaster and preparing for terrorist attacks. How do you respond?

BROWN: It's nonsense. Terrorism has to

Katrina and are not better prepared for another disaster, whether a terrorist attack, hurricane or earthquake?

BROWN: We are *less* prepared now than before Katrina. The mistake was the knee-jerk reaction after 9/11. Politicians always want to show they're doing something: "We're going to rearrange everything. We're going to redo the organizational chart." All the buzzwords. "We're going to create these synergies." As a result it's more of a mess than ever.

PLAYBOY: After 9/11 and Katrina, that's a scary thought.

BROWN: People should be scared, and they should demand more of the government than this kind of half-assed way of doing things.

PLAYBOY: If we're not better prepared for a natural disaster, are we at least ready for a terrorist attack?

BROWN: No.

PLAYBOY: Haven't we made new plans based on 9/11?

BROWN: Let's say the next 9/11 is a similar attack. Terrorists take planes and tear buildings down or they bomb buildings; it happens as it did in New York, but in Los Angeles. There are some really good people in L.A., but who's going to show up on behalf of FEMA? Who's going to show up on behalf of the DHS? Who's going to be in charge?

PLAYBOY: Wouldn't Chertoff take charge? And if so, is that a good thing?

BROWN: I don't think it would be a good thing. Chertoff is a bright man, but he's an appellate court judge. He tends to manage the way you do court decisions: "Put the brief in front of me, and I'll make a decision." You need more of a strategic point of view. You need dynamism, leadership and a plan.

PLAYBOY: Which he lacks?

BROWN: [Nods] In my opinion.

PLAYBOY: Should he have been fired or, like you, asked to resign?

BROWN: I always thought so.

PLAYBOY: Why wasn't he?

BROWN: I think it goes back to inertia. The president's not going to do anything.

PLAYBOY: Wouldn't it make him look decisive to fire Chertoff?

BROWN: I don't know. Go ask him.

PLAYBOY: Do you maintain it was a mistake for the Bush administration to put FEMA under the DHS?

BROWN: It was.

PLAYBOY: But you were part of the team that integrated the agency under the DHS.

BROWN: I thought I could make it work. I've now done a 180-degree turn. It's not going to work.

PLAYBOY: If everyone agrees FEMA failed during Katrina, why the resistance to dramatic change?



I'm a fighter. I made the determination to bide my time and, when the time was right, to come out fighting.

get the resources it needs but not at the expense of natural disasters, which we know are coming—earthquakes, hurricanes. Chertoff keeps trying to shift the blame back to me, which solves nothing.

PLAYBOY: And you point the finger back at him.

BROWN: My point is, if we don't acknowledge the problems with the system and fix them, we're in trouble. Nothing will ever change.

PLAYBOY: A year later have we begun to fix them?

BROWN: No.

PLAYBOY: That's a serious accusation.

BROWN: It is.

PLAYBOY: Let's make this perfectly clear: Are you suggesting we didn't learn from

BROWN: There are three things. I'm going to make everybody mad when I say them. First is inertia. The government doesn't move fast. Second are the turf battles in Congress. Everybody wants a piece of that pie. The DHS doesn't want to give up any of its turf. Third, pulling FEMA out of the DHS now is tantamount to admitting a mistake. This administration does not want to admit mistakes.

PLAYBOY: Even at the expense of America's ability to respond to future disasters?

BROWN: Yes.

PLAYBOY: Exactly why is FEMA ineffective under the DHS?

BROWN: Pre-DHS the FEMA operation center used to pull together all the emergency support functions during a disaster. If we needed the Department of Transportation or the U.S. Postal Service to do something, like an orchestra conductor, we just tapped and said, "Go do it." We could say to the Department of Defense, "I want you to take 50 Black Hawk helicopters to the scene of the disaster." It worked on April 19, 1995 with the Alfred P. Murrah building in the Oklahoma City bombing. It worked on 9/11 when former FEMA director Joe Allbaugh and I totally integrated with the FBI, the New York City police and fire departments and the city's emergency management. At the Pentagon we integrated not only with urban search-and-rescue teams but with the U.S. military. FEMA was seen as the disaster expert.

PLAYBOY: What changed?

BROWN: The FEMA operation center still exists, but now you have the DHS operation center, and it competes with the Customs and Border Protection operation center and the Transportation Security Administration operation center. It's chaos and everyone is fighting for power and control and no one responds and nothing gets done. After Katrina hit, I met with Governor Haley Barbour to find out what he needed in Mississippi. I got back on the G5 jet to head to Baton Rouge, and Chertoff caught me on the phone. He said, "I've been trying to reach you. I'm tired of you flying around everywhere. I want you to go to Baton Rouge and plop your butt down in Baton Rouge and not leave." I was in the middle of a disaster, attempting to respond, in this case working with the Mississippi governor, and Chertoff was screaming because I hadn't called him back.

PLAYBOY: How did you react?

BROWN: I was dumbfounded. It was the most ludicrous order. I was speechless.

PLAYBOY: Did you do as he said—plop your butt down in Baton Rouge?

BROWN: I finally gained my composure and said, "Do you really want me to tell Haley Barbour and Governor Riley of Alabama and Governor Blanco of Louisiana and Senator Thad Cochran, the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, 'I can't see you because I have been told to stay in Baton Rouge?'" And he said yes.

PLAYBOY: What were you thinking when this was happening?

BROWN: At that point I didn't think to myself, I'm being set up. I thought, There's no way I can win this.

PLAYBOY: But did Chertoff have a point? Could you have done your job better by staying put than by flying around?

BROWN: My job was to get out there and find out what was happening. The only way to cut bureaucratic red tape is to go find the red tape. I'll give you an example. In Florida during Hurricane Andrew, I was going to different counties with Jeb Bush. We split up, and I decided to go to a feeding station where there were Navy recruits. We had people lined up. I got there, and everybody was sitting around twiddling their thumbs. I was panic-stricken. I had a line of people, and it was hot. They needed ice. They needed water. They needed food. They were frustrated to begin with because of the disaster, and now they were more frustrated because the state and federal governments weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing. I was furious because my people in the field were sitting there. "We can't find anything," they said. They were complaining they weren't getting what they

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needed. Well, why the hell weren't they doing something about it? Seeing that, I was able to break the red tape. I got on my cell phone. I started yelling at my federal coordinating officer, "I'm at such and such a place. I don't know what's happening, but we have a breakdown here. Fix it, and fix it now." Within an hour I had helicopters coming in and stuff happening, bringing in supplies so they could get that line going again. That's what the FEMA director is supposed to do.

PLAYBOY: In retrospect, what prompted Chertoff to take you out of the field?

BROWN: I don't know. Ask him. I think he was just thinking, I can't reach you on the phone [snaps fingers] right when I want you. Well, sometimes I would look at my phone and see it was Chertoff. I would think, I don't have time for this. I've got a disaster to run. I wouldn't call him back instantaneously. Apparently this upset him.

PLAYBOY: Was Chertoff trying to put you in your place? Did he think you weren't being effective, or did he simply want to control you?

BROWN: I think it was all of those things. Suddenly this was the biggest thing to hit

the country. He was already being criticized because he was off at some avian-flu conference. He wasn't engaged. There was this feeling that he had to get control of me. It totally hamstrung me and sent me spiraling into disaster.

PLAYBOY: You're spreading blame around, but it sounds as if you reserve your most bitter censure for Chertoff.

BROWN: Yes.

PLAYBOY: Did you consider ignoring his order to stay in Baton Rouge?

BROWN: I did. I wish I had.

PLAYBOY: Why didn't you?

BROWN: I had a lot of good people around me. But with the exception of one or two, they were all too young and too D.C.-focused. These young turks work for the administration. They're not experienced. They're sometimes scared of their own shadow.

PLAYBOY: But you were supposed to be in charge.

BROWN: I know. I am so mad at myself for not saying, "Screw you." But everybody around me was like, you know, "It's the DHS." Yes, I wish I had said, "Screw it."

PLAYBOY: Chertoff obviously has another version of events.

BROWN: The e-mails bear me out.

PLAYBOY: We'll get to the e-mails. First, you have said the administration would not have fumbled this disaster as badly if it had been a terrorist attack. Do you still hold that position?

BROWN: Yes.

PLAYBOY: What would have made the difference?

BROWN: For one thing, the president would have shown up on the first day. He wouldn't have stayed in Crawford.

PLAYBOY: How would that have changed the circumstances?

BROWN: The president has the bully pulpit. I can do 1,000 interviews, but if the president had shown up, if he had been standing next to me, it would have been different. You would've had the entire federal government saying to the president, "What does Brown need?"

PLAYBOY: Bush has been accused of failing to recognize the seriousness of the Katrina problem. Did he?

BROWN: I believe the president thought, We have another hurricane coming. Brown did four of them last year back-to-back. Why is this one different? I don't think he grasped the catastrophic scope of Katrina. The president had confidence in me. "Brown'll take care of it."

PLAYBOY: Wasn't it your job to make sure he understood?

BROWN: The videotapes prove I informed the president and his staff.

PLAYBOY: Even if Bush had shown up, managing the disaster would still have fallen into your hands. What specifically would have been different if this had been a terrorist attack?

BROWN: Chertoff would have asserted himself, and we wouldn't have had multiple chains of command. I would

have gotten the Department of Defense faster. The DOD would've been [*snaps fingers*] right there. I was getting some DOD support, but I wasn't getting this *varrump* that I wanted. I wrote an e-mail saying, "Where is the blankety-blank Army? I want the Army now," in all caps. I was desperate and furious. If the president had been there, they would have responded instantly.

PLAYBOY: What would the DOD have been able to accomplish if its forces had arrived earlier?

BROWN: I'd have gotten people out of the Superdome faster. It would've been full steam ahead—a helicopter evacuation, Humvees and personnel carriers, boat rescue, whatever. I should have called Donald Rumsfeld and Gordon England, the deputy secretary, myself. I should have said, "Look, guys, this is one big f'ing deal. We've got to fix this now." They would have responded. I am also disappointed in myself for playing along with DHS public affairs, FEMA public affairs and White House public affairs. They were all crafting the message, a lie. I was torn between trying to make it work their way and basically saying, "Screw you." At one point my deputy chief of staff told me he'd received a call from the White House in which he was told, "Get Mike to talk up the secretary more." I was thinking, We have a catastrophic disaster on our hands here, and people are worried about who I am or am not talking up at a press conference? Screw it!

PLAYBOY: A White House e-mail quoted the president as being happy that you were getting the flack, not him. When did you get a sense that you would be the fall guy?

BROWN: I remember telling my wife I wasn't going to come out of this. Whatever I had accomplished in the previous three years had just gone down the tubes.

PLAYBOY: What had you accomplished? By your own admission FEMA was a disaster.

BROWN: We had made progress. I had tried to fix things. We had scenarios planned for four big catastrophes: a San Francisco earthquake, another terrorist attack on New York City, a category-5 hurricane in the Gulf and an earthquake on the New Madrid Fault, which goes through Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas and parts of Ohio and Kentucky. With all due respect to my predecessors at FEMA, James Lee Witt and Allbaugh, both of whom I greatly respect and admire, the agency had never done catastrophic disaster planning. I pushed and pushed to do it. I asked for \$100 million to get started. The DHS gave me \$20 million, so I had to cut back. My hands were tied.

PLAYBOY: Could you have gone around the DHS?

BROWN: By going to the White House, saying, "These knuckleheads won't give me the money"? You can't do that in Washington for very long.

PLAYBOY: How had you prepared for the 2005 hurricane season?

BROWN: We thought we were ready. We

started watching what would become Katrina when it was still out in the Atlantic. We thought it would hit Miami like Hurricane Andrew. But it skirted Miami and went back into the Gulf. Then we were panicked. The storm still had enough internal pressure that we thought it was going to grow. The question was, Where is it going? Galveston? Gulfport? New Orleans? We started moving all our stuff into the Gulf four or five days before landfall. The cone got narrower and narrower. It was going to be New Orleans. I sent an urban search-and-rescue team, a national-disaster medical team, a federal coordinating officer and a public-affairs person. Only one guy made it, my public-affairs guy, Marty Bahamonde. The medical teams finally got there, but they decided to evacuate because it was getting worse and worse. On Sunday afternoon, putting it off as late as I could, trying to make sure I had everything lined up, I went out to Andrews Air Force Base, jumped on military air and squeezed under the radar into Baton Rouge. I immediately went to the evacuation operation center, met

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with Governor Blanco and then went back to the hotel room to ride it out. By late Monday morning we were beginning to get reports of flooding.

PLAYBOY: Meanwhile Bush famously said, "No one anticipated the breach of the levees."

BROWN: My jaw dropped.

PLAYBOY: Was Bush ignorant of the situation, or was it intentional deception?

BROWN: He doesn't have an incredible command of the English language. Maybe he meant "None of us really wanted this to happen."

PLAYBOY: "None of us really wanted this to happen" is far different from "No one anticipated the breach of the levees."

BROWN: Yes. My friends in the Republican Party—the bullies—jumped all over Clinton about parsing words. Now the president was parsing words. "Are the levees going to breach?" "Are they going to top?" Who cares? We were going to have flooding in New Orleans, and we knew New Orleans was a fishbowl.

PLAYBOY: Is it conceivable the president didn't know the levees could breach?

BROWN: I had been having regular con-

versations with Andy Card, Bush's chief of staff, and Joe Hagin, Bush's deputy chief of staff.

PLAYBOY: Were you feeling more isolated from the administration?

BROWN: I was feeling totally out of control.

PLAYBOY: Did you call the president at that point?

BROWN: I spoke to Andy Card. I'll never forget what he said to me, because it was so unlike him. He said, "Well, Mike, I don't know what to tell you, other than try to follow the chain of command and see if we can make it work." Chain of command? We had thousands of people in the Superdome, maybe 12,000. We had planned for 2,500. We had enough food and water for 24 hours. Chain of command? We had people on rooftops. The airlines agreed to come in and start flying people out, but the TSA, which handles airport security, told me, "We can't do that yet because we don't have a way to screen these people." Screen them? I didn't give a shit about screening people. "Well, you know, we've got to run this back up the chain of command." Oh God!

PLAYBOY: The TSA is under Chertoff too. Did you call and ask him to intervene?

BROWN: Many times. If it had been answerable directly to me—but those people weren't answerable to me.

PLAYBOY: At the time, you said the governments of Louisiana and New Orleans were dysfunctional. Would other cities have responded more effectively?

BROWN: I got blasted in the media, but it's the truth. There was an incompetent political structure, corruption and ignorance.

PLAYBOY: Ignorance?

BROWN: Not ignorance but ignoring the problems down there. I'm not going to say it publicly anywhere, but in my mind I know some states are better prepared.

PLAYBOY: What's your opinion of R. David Paulison, who currently runs FEMA?

BROWN: Joe Allbaugh and I brought him in. We had a couple of choices. We were looking for some people to run the U.S. Fire Administration, and our first choice didn't work out. So we found Dave and brought him in.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying he isn't qualified for the position?

BROWN: I don't know. About seven or eight people turned down the job. Good people. I had tried to hire some of them before, and they turned me down because they didn't want to work for the federal government. I don't blame them. I wish Dave well, but I think he's been set up for failure.

PLAYBOY: Why is he set up for failure?

BROWN: He has the same problems I had, plus now it's a demoralized agency with the same structure I was fighting. He's in a position where he can't really make any decisions.

PLAYBOY: You've come out fighting, but couldn't this have destroyed you? Did you consider running away? Suicide?

BROWN: No, it never crossed my mind.

(continued on page 140)



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On a sunny March morning I drove north on Route 19 toward Deep Mine 26, Lick Fork, Lower Banner seam, in Dickenson County, at the extreme southwest corner of Virginia in the heart of Appalachia. There were coal-miner songs on the radio: "And when I die, dear Lord in heaven, / Please take my soul from the cold, dark mine." I passed through the tiny coal-camp town of Coeburn, where a sign read HOME OF FRIENDLY PEOPLE, and turned right onto a corkscrewing two-lane blacktop that led me past tired old farmhouses, dilapidated trailer homes and abandoned log cabins as I wended up into the mountains. Frequently I had to slow down to let 22-wheel trucks go hurtling past me, and every so often I had to stop to let children cross the road after the school bus dropped them off or to give a beaver a chance to scuttle by. While waiting I'd glance down the ravine at the rusted wrecks of cars.

Ten miles into the forest, by a set of railroad tracks, I turned left at a sign that read DEEP MINE 26 IN. Up ahead in a hollow between two

mountains I saw a line of Peterbilt dump trucks waiting their turn to park beside a towering pyramid of coal and have their cargo beds filled by shoveling bulldozers. I spotted a blue silo where coal was separated from rock and a conveyor belt that led down to a gaping black hole in the side of the mountain. To the left I saw a long, low prefabricated building with a sign on it: PARAMONT COAL CO., LLC, DEEP MINE 26, A SUBSIDIARY OF ALPHA NATURAL RESOURCES, ABINGDON, VA.

I had no interest in coal mines or coal miners until January 2, 2006, when 12 miners were trapped and 11 ultimately lost their lives in the Sago, West Virginia coal mine disaster. I began to think and read about coal miners, and now I was going to spend six days with them at Deep Mine 26. I would talk to miners 1,300 feet underground and at restaurants near their homes. I wanted to learn what I didn't know about coal mining. Most of all I wanted to know this: Who are these guys?

At seven A.M. 12 section foremen sat on folding chairs within the cheap

INSIDE DEEP MINE 26

AS THE WORLD CONFRONTS A LOOMING ENERGY CRISIS,
COAL PRODUCTION HAS AGAIN ASSUMED MAJOR
IMPORTANCE. A FIRSTHAND LOOK AT HOW HALF THE
NATION'S POWER SUPPLY IS WRESTED FROM THE EARTH

BY PAT JORDAN





MINERS IN PIKEVILLE, KENTUCKY, 1998. THIS YEAR 33 MINERS HAVE DIED, PROMPTING CONGRESS TO PASS THE MINER ACT OF 2006.

pine-paneled walls of the mine superintendent's office. They wore hard hats, blue coveralls with glow-in-the-dark orange-and-silver stripes and steel-toe boots. Most of the men had beards, and their faces and hands were so filthy with coal dust that their eyes seemed to shine. They dipped Skoal from tin cans and spat tobacco juice into little plastic bottles while the superintendent, Henry Keith, 47, stood behind his desk and talked to them about safety.

"All this Sago stuff is drawing us so much attention, y'all gotta study this like a bible," he said. Jerry Bledsoe, 52, the mine-safety foreman, passed out paperback copies of *Title 30 of the Code of Federal Regulations*. "It ain't just the fines; it's the impression," Keith continued. "If we got 62 S&S violations, it'll give us a black eye, even if we know they're nothing." S&S stands for "significant and substantial"—violations that contribute to an accident or illness.

"God forbid we have an accident," Bledsoe said, warning about the media response. "They'll bring up our violation history. It's a knee-jerk reaction. The best time to beat a violation is before an inspector writes it up. They're human beings. Don't argue with 'em. Just put doubt in their mind."

Keith said, "Don't piss an inspector off. He's got you dead to rights."

"Fess up," Bledsoe said.

"If inspectors are told we've got a good reputation, that's what they see," Keith said. "If they're told we've got a bad rep, they're looking to write us up."

After the meeting Keith's assistant, Tim Vicars, took me on a tour of the building. I asked him if the Sago miners differed from those at 26. He said, "Well, West Virginia miners marry their sisters. But, hey, if your own family ain't good enough to marry, who is?" He led me into the locker room where miners shower after their shifts. One of the miners told me, "It's the highlight of my day to shower and put on clean clothes. My neighbor's a doctor. He leaves for work dressed up. Miners dress up after work."

We walked back to Keith's office. Vicars told me the mine is divided into thousands of rooms the size of a large bathroom. Miners cut out some coal going into a room, then cut out the rest as they retreat.

Keith's office door was closed, so I sat outside with a miner named Shaky Baker. He (continued on page 132)

10 Things to Know About Coal

EVERY DAY 42,000 miners go underground to produce an average of six tons of coal an hour.

UNDERGROUND mines accounted for 96 percent of all U.S. coal 50 years ago. Today surface mines account for 60 percent.

TWO THIRDS of underground coal extraction is performed by machines called continuous miners (pictured at right).

ONE HALF of the nation's electricity is produced by burning coal in power-generating plants.

THIS YEAR 26 miners have lost their lives underground, seven on the surface. Last year 22 miners died.

THE DEADLIEST underground mine disaster occurred in Monongah, West Virginia on December 6, 1907, when 362 miners died.

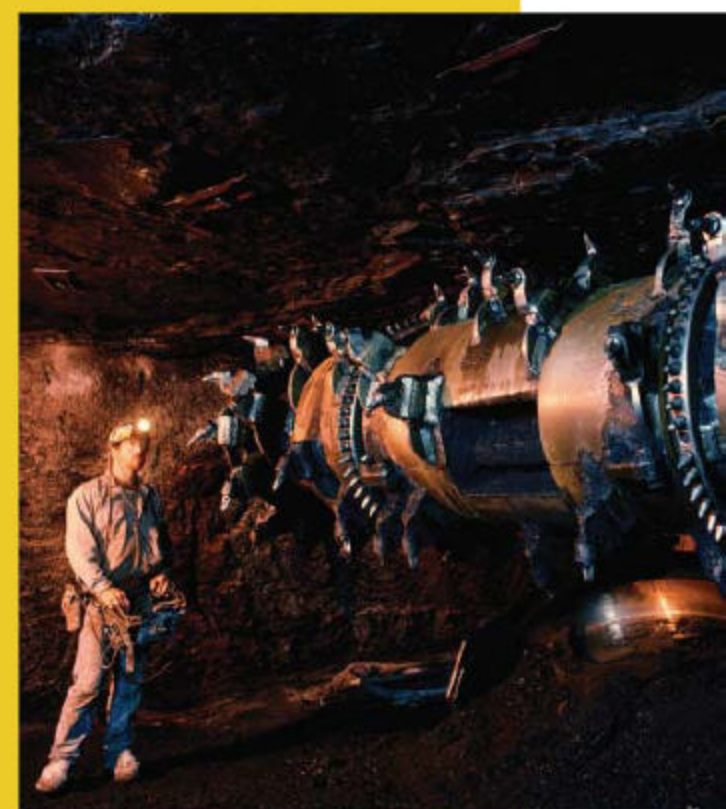
THE MOST plentiful energy resource in the U.S. is coal. Experts say reserves are 44 times larger than those of oil, and coal is cheaper to extract.

BURNING coal, though cleaner than ever, still pollutes. Each year coal-fired generating plants release

1.9 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide (the chief culprit in global warming), about six times more than natural-gas plants emit.

THE TOTAL number of coal-fired power plants in the U.S. is about 600.

TRADE-OFFS and hard choices are at hand. Next-generation coal-burning plants can trap more CO₂, but only a dozen or so of the 140 new plants will use the new technology. Will the government mandate CO₂ emissions limits—or not?





"It may appear bigger in the reflection, but it feels about the same to me."

ONE NIGHT AS

PARIS

MS. HILTON IN THE NUDE. SORT OF



Consider the fate of young Natalie Reid. Some people are born with natural athletic ability, some with an acute mind, some with three nipples. Natalie was born with very particular DNA, causing her to bear a striking resemblance to the world's sexiest, most famous celebutante.

You may have heard of Natalie already. The 21-year-old Winnipeg-born beauty is the world's foremost Paris Hilton look-alike. She has passed for Paris at fashion shows, clubs, restaurants and parties, as well as in photo shoots and on-camera interviews. All she has to do is dress to the nines and walk out her door and the paparazzi come running. Naturally, our curiosity got the better of us. We had to see if this Paris was as delicious with her clothes off as the real one. Well? You make the call.

A few answers to FAQs: Yes, Natalie has seen the tape. Yes, she is single. And yes, she has met Paris. "Her reps got in contact with me," Natalie says. "She invited me to her house in West Hollywood, and we hung out. She was totally in shock, like staring at me and taking a lot of pictures." Still, being a ringer for a world-class sex symbol isn't always a gas. Natalie has to wear a brown wig if she wants to walk around without drawing crowds in New York and Los Angeles, her two current hometowns. She plans on reinventing herself in the future so she can do more modeling and TV jobs as Natalie Reid, not as Paris Hilton. When not working, Natalie keeps up on baseball and Formula One, and she loves to travel. What's the one place she most looks forward to visiting? "Paris." Naturally.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNY FREYTAG



*Paris
Suite*

Vol
b





Paris Hilton look-alike Natalie Reid, 21, toys with two cameras at once. "I think everybody's seen it," Natalie says of the celebute sex tape *One Night in Paris*. "It's really popular." As for her PLAYBOY shoot, she says, "Of all the things I've done in the look-alike industry, this is definitely the most exciting."





SMASHING WINDOWS

AN EPISTOLARY
LESSON IN RAISING SONS
AND MAKING ART

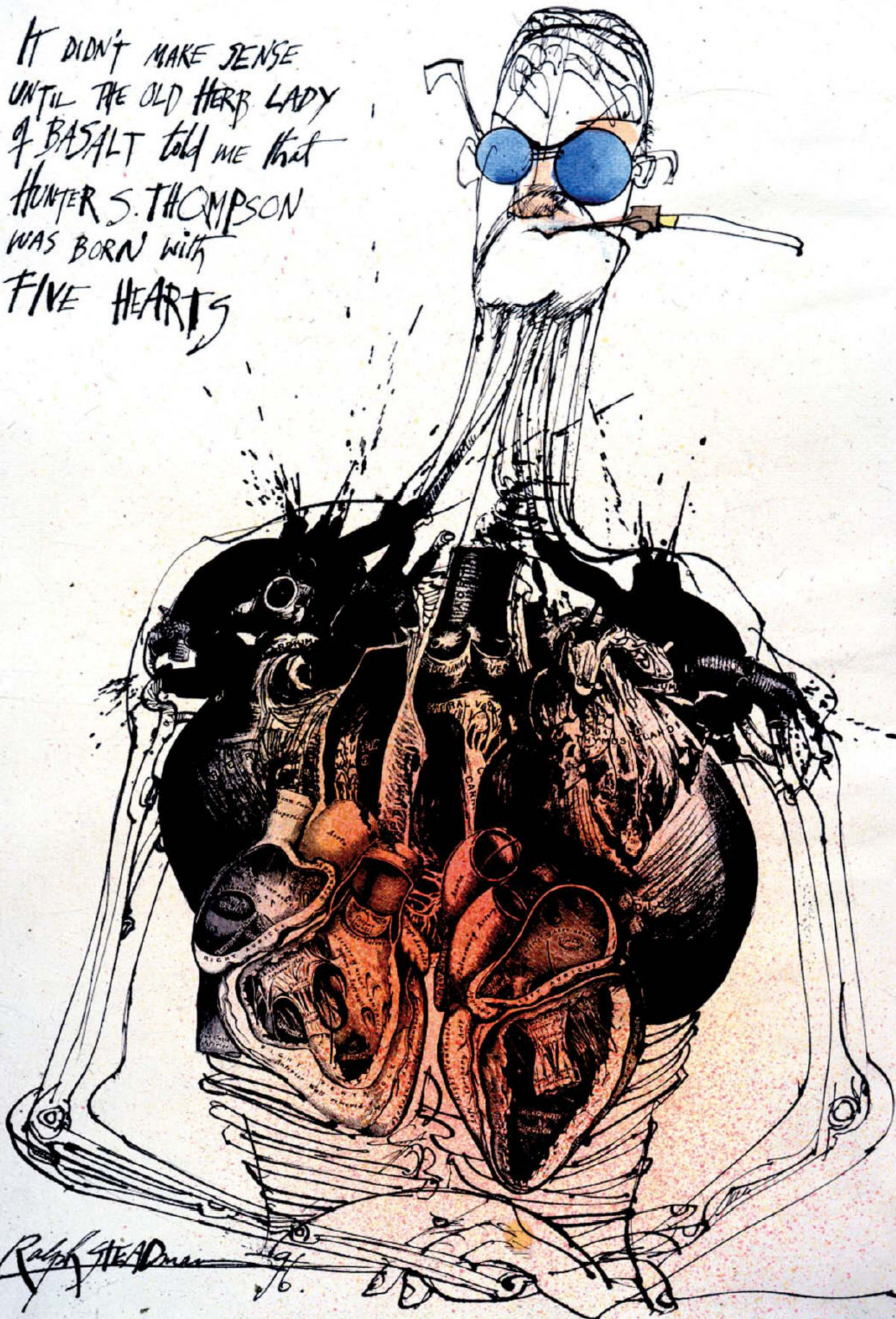
BY RALPH STEADMAN WITH HUNTER S. THOMPSON

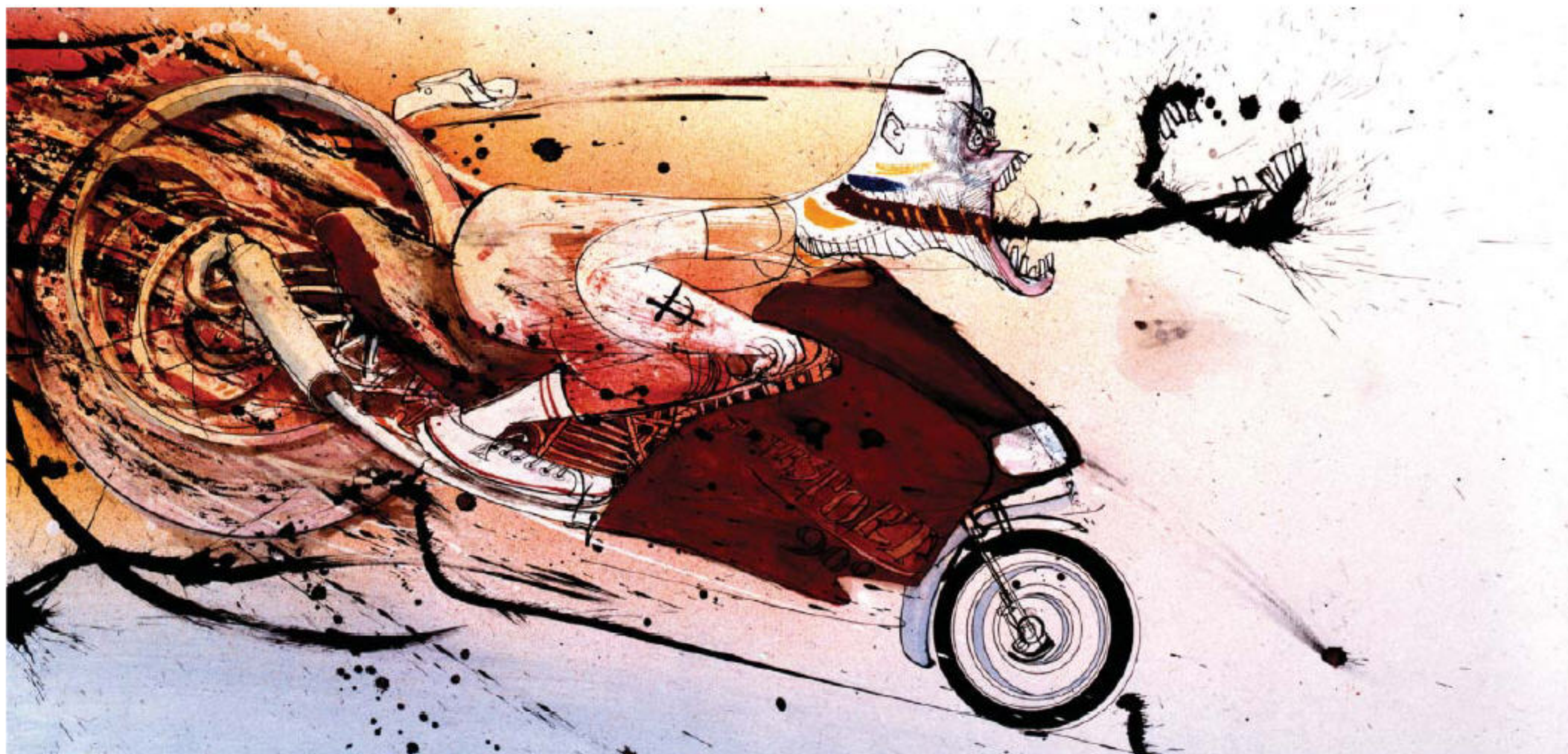
I met Hunter S. Thompson when we covered the 1970 Kentucky Derby for *Scanlan's Monthly*. He was not what I had expected after reading his book on the Hell's Angels. No timeworn leather shining with old sump oil, no manic tattoo across a bare upper arm and certainly no hint of menace. He did have an impressive head cut from one piece of bone, the top part covered down to the eyes by a flimsy tight-brimmed sun hat. His eyes revealed nothing of what he thought of me. I found out later that his first impression was of "a matted-hair geek with string warts." Despite all that (or because of it) we worked together for the next 35 years, on *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and the other *F&Ls* and on more than a dozen books (the last was *Fire in the Nuts*, which I did as a limited chapbook of 150 copies in 2004), many assignments, movies and dozens of magazine articles. We covered the fall of Richard Nixon, the Ali-Foreman fight in Zaire, the Super Bowl, the America's Cup, the rise of greed and the slow erosion of personal freedoms in America that Hunter always railed against.

People were fucking with Hunter's beloved Constitution, and he was born to banish the freaks who were doing it. In that way he was a real live American of the noble kind: a pioneer, a frontiersman, the last of the cowboys, even a conservative redneck with a huge and raging mind, taking the easy way out and mythologizing himself at the same time. I had the good fortune to work with one of the great originals of American literature. Maybe he is the Mark Twain of the late 20th century. Maybe not. Time will sort the bastard out, and I leave it to others more qualified than I to assess and appraise his legacy.

Hunter said more than once, "Don't write, Ralph. You'll bring shame on your family." Needless to say I ignored his warning in writing a book about our four

IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE
UNTIL THE OLD HERB LADY
OF BASALT TOLD ME THAT
HUNTER S. THOMPSON
WAS BORN WITH
FIVE HEARTS





decades of gonzo collaboration. In the process, I set about collecting everything we had ever written to each other. Hunter's letters were sometimes solicitous and caring, sometimes cruel, but above all funny. When one of my sons got into trouble in late 1981, I wrote to him, asking for advice.

"Dear Hunter:

My son has been picked up by the police with another brick in his hand. The other one was already through a \$500 plate-glass window. He also finds your book *Hell's Angels* fascinating but doesn't care much for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* because you don't dwell at length on petroleum-based substances. He's nearly 16 and locks the bathroom door. When he comes out he leaves the wall heater on and opens the bathroom window. He denies this flatly even though I hang about outside the bathroom door until he comes out.

I beat him to within an inch of unconsciousness, and still he denies it.

As a concerned Protestant father, what should I do next? How can I stand by and watch him destroy himself—and more important, the family name?

I confiscated his gun because he shoots at children. He demands the gun with menace but would settle for the money.

Juan was never like this, was he?

Are we the first generation of parents to spawn a mutant tribe? Have we taught them tricks even we would rather forget?

Is it because they don't believe in anything anymore, and is the white man fucked?

Are the sins of the fathers visited immediately on the sons, or aren't they supposed to wait a generation or two?

And finally—why me?

Don't try to answer any of these questions, because you can't. You, like me, have nothing to say, no right to explain and certainly no ability to understand.

I rue the day I gave my son the justification to call me Judas.

So there it is—and we await the outcome. At least it's not theft or rape.

bring a bit more concentration to bear on the matter.

And I have come to this conclusion: Send the crazy little bugger to Australia. We can get him a job herding sheep somewhere deep in the outback, and that will straighten him out for sure. Or at least it will keep him busy.

England is the wrong place for a boy who wants to smash windows. Because he's right, of course. He should smash windows. Anybody growing up in England today without a serious urge to smash windows is probably too dumb to help.

You are reaping the whirlwind, Ralph. Where in the name of art or anything else did you ever see anything that said you could draw queer pictures of the prime minister and call her no worse than a denatured pig but yr. own son shouldn't want to smash windows?

We are not privy to that level of logic, Ralph. They don't even teach it at Oxford.

My own son, thank God, is a calm & rational boy who is even now filling out his applications to Yale & various other Eastern elitist schools, and all he's cost me so far is a hellish

drain of something like \$10,000 a year just to keep him off the streets & away from the goddamn windows.

What do windows cost, Ralph? They were about \$55 apiece when I used to smash them—even the big plate-glass kind—but now they probably cost about \$300 apiece. Which is cheap, when you think on it. A wild boy with a good arm could smash about 30 big plate-glass windows a year & still cost you less than \$10,000 per annum. (concluded on page 130)



Steadman (right) and Thompson at Owl Farm in Woody Creek, Colorado in May 1996, celebrating the 25th anniversary of gonzo.

Yeh! God bless, send word or wire. Ralph"

"Dear Ralph,

I received yr. tragic letter about yr. savage glue-sniffing son & read it while eating breakfast at 4:30 A.M. in a Waffle House on the edge of Mobile Bay, and I made some notes on yr. problem at the time, but they are not the notes that any decent man would want to send a friend. So I put them away until I could



"Ever notice the funny way dogs look at you when you're getting undressed?"

ARTISTIC

Production cars so rare and exotic, you may never

By KEN GROSS



Racing from zero to 60 mph in three seconds happens faster than it took you to read this sentence. Not many cars can run like that, but we have a couple pictured here. PLAYBOY has rounded up a garageful of cars so exotic, there's not a Ferrari or Lamborghini in the bunch. Street racers like this don't simply roll off assembly lines; they're crafted meticulously, one component at a time, in small shops by skilled artisans. The lowest priced among this stable costs \$95,000; the highest is \$1.3 million. The slowest will hit 160 mph, the fastest over 250. But enough talk. Let's ride.

LICENSE

actually lay eyes on one—unless you've got the cash, that is



• **Koenigsegg CCR** Before you scoff at the idea of a Swedish supercar, consider that in 2005 a production Koenigsegg CCR hit 241 mph and broke the McLaren F1's 231 mph speed record. Christian von Koenigsegg began building cars in 1994. Faster than a Ferrari Enzo, his CCR features a twin-supercharged 4.7-liter V8 located amidships and a sequentially operated gearbox. This car is not yet available in America but makes moving to Europe worthwhile. Stats: zero to 60 in 3.2 seconds; 242 mph top speed; 806 bhp at 6,900 rpm; about \$575,000 in Europe; koenigsegg.com.



• **Saleen S7** (big image) Who needs Italians? Slip open the scissor doors on this chunk of exotica from California and you're ready to intimidate anything on the road. In ex-racer Steve Saleen's Le Mans-inspired S7 twin turbo, you get brilliant aerodynamics, immense disc brakes, hyperquick steering and acceleration that borders on the absurd. There's no traction control or antilock braking system, so you'd better know what you're doing. Stats: zero to 60 in 2.8 seconds; 248 mph top speed; 750 bhp at 6,300 rpm; \$580,000; saleen.com.

• **Bugatti Veyron 16.4** Legendary Bugatti has returned with the most expensive, powerful road car of all time. Put the whip to the Veyron's 1,001 horses (an eight-liter W16 engine with four superchargers, mounted amidships) as we did on a Florida airport runway and you slingshot to 100 mph in six seconds. With all-wheel drive you stay firmly planted as the horizon forces its way through the windshield. Despite its power, the Veyron is surprisingly tractable, if a bit bulky at low speeds, and the huge carbon-ceramic brakes could stop a semi on a dime. Stats: zero to 60 in 2.5 seconds; 253 mph top speed; 1,001 bhp at 6,000 rpm; \$1.3 million; bugatti.com.

• **Pagani Zonda C12S** Argentine expatriate Horacio Pagani cut his car teeth at Lamborghini. His C12S coupe (there's also a roadster), built in Modena, Italy (where Ferrari started), relies on tightly wrought alloy tubing



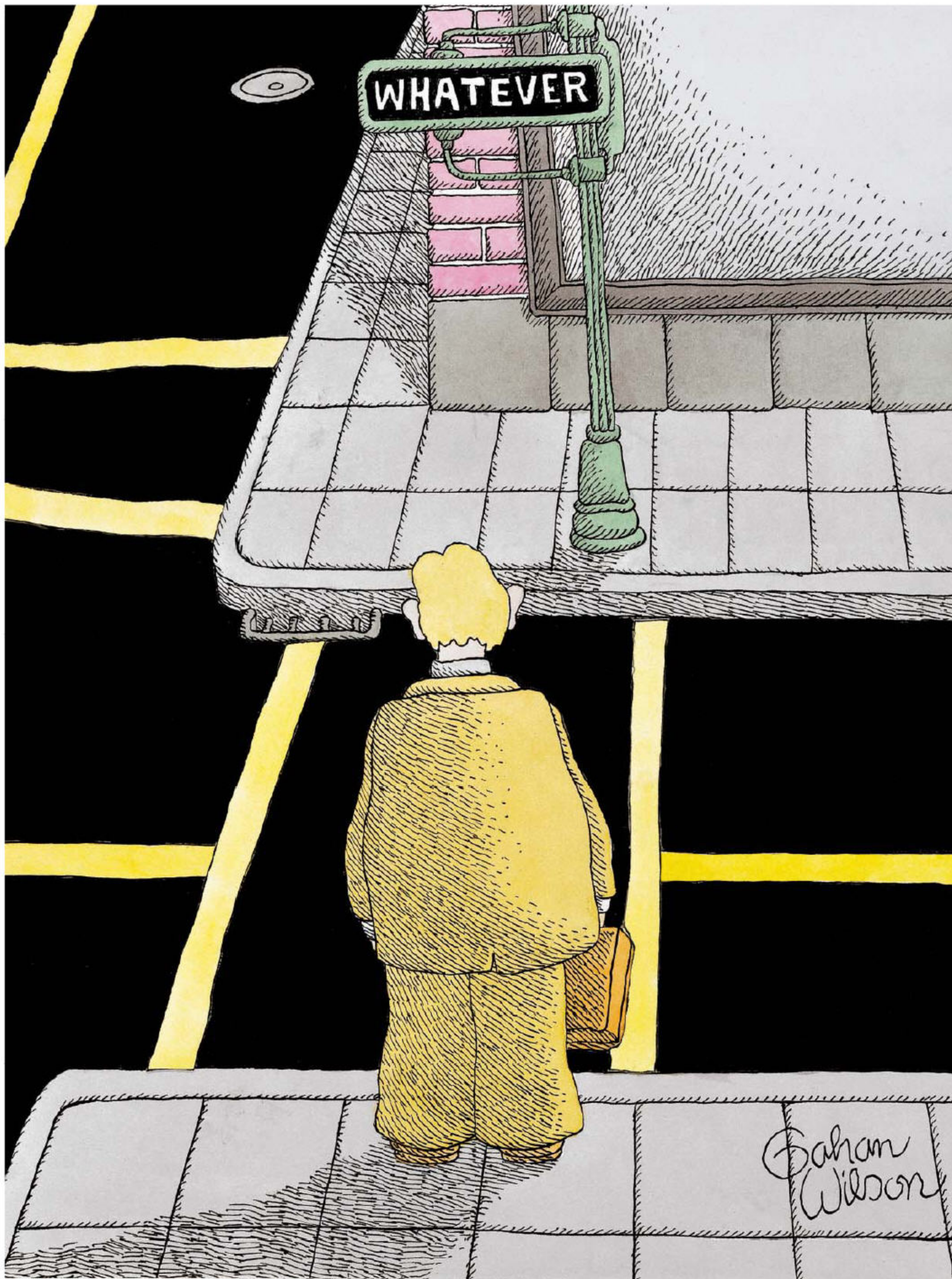
and carbon fiber for an incredibly stiff structure. A souped-up AMG Mercedes-Benz 7.3-liter V12 lurks just behind the cockpit. The Pagani is not yet available stateside, but it's rumored to be arriving soon. Stats: zero to 60 in 3.7 seconds; 208 mph top speed; 555 bhp at 5,550 rpm; about \$520,000; paganiautomobili.it.

•**Noble M15** Noble M12s are designed in the U.K., assembled in South Africa without engines and then imported to Hamilton, Ohio by 1g Racing. You ship the "roller" to your choice of shop, have a Jack Roush-built twin-turbo three-liter V6 and a six-speed manual bolted in, and for just over \$100K you're ready to hunt for Porsche 911s in your own ultralight GT. In 2008 a new Noble M15 (pictured) will be available, fully assembled stateside. Stats for the M15: zero to 60 in 3.5 seconds; 185 mph top speed; 455 bhp at 6,500 rpm; about \$159,000; 1gracing.com.

•**Morgan Aero 8** A radical departure for the U.K.'s 95-year-old Morgan Motor Company, the Aero 8 is a streamlined, virtually all-aluminum, dare we say modern design, with bonded and riveted alloy panels. Morgan has been making top-of-the-line vintage throwbacks for years, and the Aero 8 is a thinly veiled racing machine. Still hand-built (only 120 units a year), with BMW 4.4-liter V8 power and six-speed automatic, the car zips to 60 as fast as a new Corvette. Stats: zero to 60 in 4.5 seconds; 160 mph top speed; 325 bhp at 6,100 rpm; \$95,000; morgancars-usa.com.



•**Spyker C8 Laviolette** The original Spijker company built World War I fighters and aircraft engines in the Netherlands. (The name was changed to Spyker for easier pronunciation.) That heritage survives in the C8's lavish use of polished aluminum, scissor doors, propeller imagery in the steering wheel and 19-inch alloy wheels—even the angry growl of the modified Audi-based four-cam 4.2-liter V8 engine with six-speed manual. If you're thinking bling, you're on the money, but this Dutch beauty is no slouch performance-wise. Stats: zero to 60 in 4.5 seconds; 187 mph top speed; 400 bhp at 6,000 rpm; \$292,500; spykercars.com.



THE UNLUCKY MOTHER OF AQUILES MALDONADO

HER ALL-STAR SON MAY BE UNHIT-
TABLE, BUT HE'S NOT UNTOUCHABLE

FICTION BY
T.C. BOYLE

When they took Aquiles Maldonado's mother, on a morning so hot it all but seared the hide off the 120,000 stray dogs in Caracas, give or take a few, no one would have guessed they would keep her as long as they did. Her husband was dead, murdered in a robbery attempt six years earlier, and he would remain unconcerned and uncommunicative. But there were the household servants and the employees of the machine shop ready to run through the compound beating their breasts, and while her own mother was as feeble as a dandelion gone to seed, she was supremely capable of worry. As were Marita's four grown sons and Aquiles's six children by five different aficionadas, whom she looked after, fed, scolded and sent off to school each morning. There was concern, plenty of concern, and it rose up and raced through the community the minute the news hit the streets. "They took Marita Villalba," people shouted from window to window while others shouted back, "Who?"

"Who?" voices cried out in outrage and astonishment. "Who? Aquiles Maldonado's mother, that's who!"

At that time, Aquiles was playing for Baltimore, in the American League, away from home from the start of spring training in late February to the conclusion of the regular season in the first week of October. He was 30 years old and had worked his way through four teams with a fierce determination to reach the zenith of his profession; he was now the Birds' closer, pitching with grit and fluidity at the end of the first year of his two-year, \$11.5 million contract, despite the sharp burn he felt up under the rotator cuff of his pitching arm every time he changed his release point, about which he had told no one. There were three weeks left in the season, and the team, which had already been eliminated from playoff contention by the aggressive play of the Red Sox and Yankees, was just going through



PAINTING BY PHIL HALE



the motions. But not Aquiles. Every time he was handed the ball with a lead to protect, however infrequently, he bore down with a fury so uncompromising, you would have thought every cent of his 11.5 million U.S. guaranteed dollars rode on each and every pitch.

He was doing his pregame stretching and joking with the team's other Venezuelan player, Chucho Rangel, about the two tattooed *güeras* they'd taken back to the hotel the night before when the call came through. It was from his brother Néstor, and the moment he heard his brother's voice, he knew the news was bad.

"They got Mamí," Néstor sobbed into the receiver.

"Who did?"

There was a pause, as if his brother were calling from beneath the sea and needed to surface to catch his breath. "I don't know," he said. "The gangsters, the FARC, whoever."

The field was the green of dreams, the stands spotted with fans come early for batting practice and autographs. He turned away from Chucho and

THEY WERE BOYS WITH AUTOMATIC PISTOLS WORTH MORE THAN THEIR OWN LIVES.

the rest of them, hunched over his cell. "For what?" And then because the word slipped into his mouth, "For ransom?"

Another pause, and when his brother came back to him, his voice was as pinched and hollow as if he were talking through his snorkel. "What do you think, *pendejo*?"

"It just shouldn't be so hot this time of year," she'd been saying to Rómulo Cordero, foreman of the machine shop her son had bought her when he signed his first big-league contract. "I've never seen it like this—have you? Maybe in my mother's time...."

The children were at school, under supervision of the nuns and the watchful eye of Christ in heaven, the lathes were turning with their insectoid drone, and she was in the back office, both fans going full speed and directed at her face and the three buttons of cleavage she allowed herself on the hottest days. Marita Villalba was 47 years old, 30 pounds heavier than she'd like to be but pretty still and so full of life (and, let's face it, money and respectability) that half the bachelors of the neighborhood—and all the widowers—were mad for the sight of her. Rómulo Cordero, a married man and father of nine, wasn't immune to her charms, but he was an employee first and never allowed himself to forget it. "In the 1960s when I was a boy," he said, pausing to sweeten his voice, "but you would have been too young to remember, it was 119 degrees by 11 in the morning every day for a week, and people were placing bets on when it would break 120—"

He never got to finish the story. At that moment four men in the uniform of the federal police strode sweating into the office to crowd the little dirt-floored room, with its walls of unpainted plywood and the rusting filing cabinets and the oversized Steelcase desk on which Marita Villalba did her accounts. "I've already paid," she said, barely glancing up at them.

Their leader, a tall stoop-shouldered man with a congenitally deformed eye and a reek of the barrio who didn't look anything like a policeman, casually unholstered his gun. "We don't know anything about that. My instructions are to bring you to the station for questioning."

And so it began.

When they got outside to the courtyard, where the shop stood adjacent to the two-story frame house with its hardwood floors and tile roof, the tall one, who was referred to variously as Capitán and El Ojo by the others, held open the door of a blistered pale-purple Honda with yellow racing stripes that was like no police vehicle Marita Villalba or Rómulo Cordero had ever seen. Marita balked. "Are you sure we have to go through with this?" she said, gesturing to the dusty backseat of the car, to the open gate of the compound and the city festering beyond it. "Can't we settle this right here?" She was digging in her purse for her checkbook when the tall one said abruptly, "I'll call headquarters." Then he turned to Rómulo Cordero. "Hand me your cell phone."

Alarm signals began to go off in Marita Villalba's head. She sized up the three other men—boys, they were boys, street urchins dressed up in stolen uniforms with automatic pistols worth more than their own lives and the lives of all their ancestors combined clutched in nervous hands—even as Rómulo Cordero unhooked the cell phone from his belt and handed it to the tall man with the drooping eye.

"Hello?" the man said into the phone. "District headquarters? Yes, this is"—and he gave a name he invented out of the scorched air of the swollen morning—"and we have the Villalba woman." He paused. "Yes," he said, "yes, I see. She must come in person."

Marita glanced at her foreman, and they shared a look. The phone was dead, had been dead for two weeks and more, the batteries corroded in the shell of the housing and new ones on order, endlessly on order, and they both broke for the open door of the shop at the same instant. It was hopeless. The weapons spoke their rapid language, dust clawed at her face and Rómulo Cordero went down with two red flowers blooming against the scuffed leather of the tooled boot on his right foot, and the teenagers—the boys who should have been in school, should have been working at some honest trade under an honest master—seized Aquiles Maldonado's mother by the loose flesh of her upper arms, about which she was very sensitive, and forced her into the car. It took a minute, no more. And then they were gone.

Accompanied by a bodyguard and his brother Néstor, Aquiles mounted the five flights of listing stairs at the Central Police Headquarters and found his way by trial and error through a dim dripping congeries of hallways to the offices of the antiextortion and kidnap division. The door was open. Commissioner Diosado Salas, Chief of the Division, was (continued on page 120)





Achtung, BABY

Miss September is the best German import since beer and the Benz



Strolling the beach in Santa Monica with Berlin native Janine Habeck, we immediately think that this fine *fräulein* represents a well-articulated argument for the value of immigration. Although she was named Germany's Playmate of the Year 2005 in our sister publication and appeared in our July issue's *World Soccer Team* lineup, the 23-year-old has long dreamed of becoming an American Playmate. "This is only the second time a German Playmate has immigrated to American PLAYBOY," she says proudly, delighted to follow in the footsteps of Ursula Buchfellner, Miss October 1979.

Born in West Berlin to a German father and an Italian mother, Janine vividly remembers seeing the fall of the Berlin Wall. "I felt like I was a part of history," she says. And even then she was thinking about America. Suffice it to say that when she finally got here, she arrived in style. "I'm living at the Mansion and love Hef and his girlfriends," Miss September says. "We're all really close."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN WAYDA, CENTERFOLD PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNY FREYTAG



As for her love life, "At the moment, I don't have a boyfriend, but I am looking," she says. "A guy has to come to me, though, because I'm a princess." She likes to travel to exotic places for romantic vacations. "I used to date a football player—you'd call him a soccer player—and we went to Ibiza. It rained the whole time. We stayed in bed and ate lots of ice cream. Now that's what I call a romantic weekend."

What lies ahead for Janine? As she gazes at the Pacific she confesses her love for California and the possibility of her relocating here. "I am my own management," she laughs, suggesting she could offer young models guidance she never had. "In the immediate future I want to learn more English. I like the people here, so maybe I can stay and become a citizen. Why not?" We're all for it.











MISS SEPTEMBER

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH



Laraine Labreck

PLAYMATE DATA SHEET

NAME: Janine Habeck

BUST: 36 WAIST: 26 HIPS: 36

HEIGHT: 5' 6" WEIGHT: 110

BIRTH DATE: 06.03.83 BIRTHPLACE: Berlin, Germany

AMBITIONS: I want to be married in 3 or 4 years and want children ∞, and I want to pose for more photos.

TURN-ONS: Chocolate, champagne and Coke! ∞ I like animals and people; they make me laugh.

TURNOFFS: People who smoke in restaurants, people who do bad things to kids.

WHY AMERICANS SHOULD VISIT GERMANY: Americans should visit Berlin because I am from there ∞ and you can eat well and learn about the city's history.

BEST BEER IN THE WORLD: It's a German one, Beck's.

NUMBER OF SOCCER GAMES I'VE BEEN TO: I think 10 or 15 ∞.

ALL ABOUT MY DOG: His name is Bambi. He is 10 months old. He is my baby, and I love him so much.

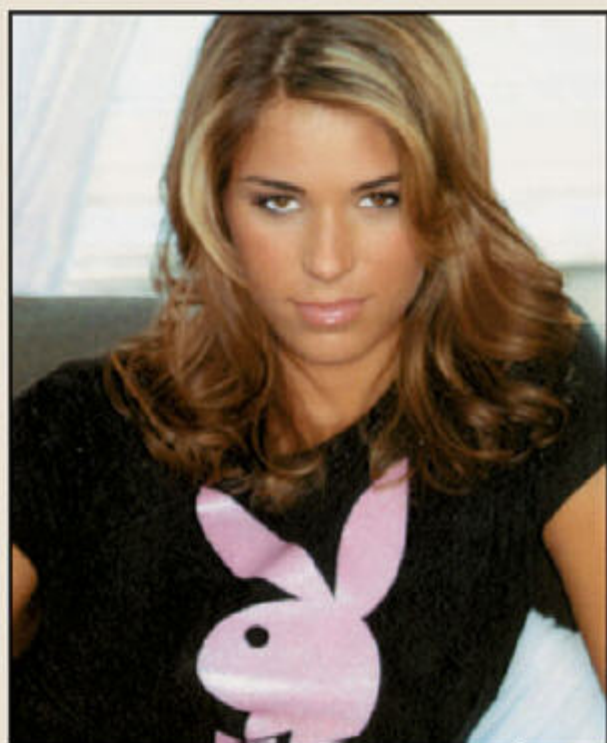
PERSONAL IDOLS: Jennifer Lopez, and I like Paris Hilton.



Me when I was 8 years old!



Me with my baby, Bambi.



Me at the 2nd Playboy Shoot.

PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Two terrorists were chatting. One pulled out his wallet and flipped through the photographs. "This is my oldest," he said proudly. "He is a martyr. And this is my second oldest. He too is a martyr."

"Ah," the second terrorist said, "they blow up so fast."

One day the devil challenged God to a baseball game. Smiling, God proclaimed, "You don't have a chance. I've got Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle and all the greatest players up here."

"Yes," laughed the devil, "but I have all the umpires."



A man at a play couldn't hear the actors' dialogue over the constant chatter of two women sitting in front of him. He tapped one on the shoulder.

"Excuse me," he said, "I can't hear very well."

"I should hope not," she replied curtly. "This is a private conversation."

A teacher had asked her class to write a composition about an interesting recent event in their lives. A boy got up and began to read his essay: "Daddy fell into the well last week."

"My goodness!" the teacher interjected. "Is he okay?"

"He must be," said the boy. "He stopped yelling for help yesterday."

What did the receptionist at the sperm clinic say to clients when they were leaving?

"Thanks for coming."

Two married buddies were at a bar one night when one turned to the other and said, "Whenever I go out drinking I park around the corner from my house and try to sneak in the backdoor, but I always seem to wake up my wife. Then she yells at me for being out so late."

"You're taking the wrong approach," the other guy said. "I screech into the driveway, slam the front door and yell to my wife that I want a blow job. By the time I get upstairs she's sound asleep."

I just found out my boyfriend is cheating on me," the comely coed confessed to her friend.

"That's terrible," the friend replied. "Which one?"

A guy asked his friend Steve, a notorious ladies' man, how he satisfies women.

"I just slam my penis on the dresser until it's numb; then I can go for hours," bragged Steve.

That night the guy slammed his dick on the dresser while his wife was in the bathroom.

"Steve," she called out, "is that you?"

Two bulls were standing on top of a hill. The old bull turned to the young bull and said, "It's really cold out today. I think I'll go slip into a nice warm Jersey."

A man noticed his co-worker wearing an earring. "I didn't know you were into that kind of stuff," he said.

"It's just an earring," the co-worker replied.

"How long have you been wearing it?" the man asked.

"Well," his co-worker replied, "ever since my wife found it in our bed."

A penis said to the balls, "Get ready. We're going to a party."

"You fucking liar," the balls said. "You always get in and leave us outside."



Did you hear about the lady who would never date a Marine?

She was rotten to the Corps.

I think my wife is unfaithful," a man said to his friend. "I asked where she was last night, and she said she spent the night with her sister."

"Why do you think she's unfaithful?" asked the friend.

The first man replied, "I spent the night with her sister."

Send your jokes to Party Jokes Editor, PLAYBOY, 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, or by e-mail through our website at jokes.playboy.com. PLAYBOY will pay \$100 to the contributors whose submissions are selected.



"Tennis, anyone?"



Quarterback Troy Smith eludes Irish tacklers during Ohio State's 34-20 win over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl.

PLAYBOY'S 2006 PIGSKIN PREVIEW

For 50 years PLAYBOY has brought you the best NCAA football primer in the country, and there's no reason to stop now. Here are our picks for this season's standout players, teams and coaches

By GARY COLE

In 1957 Ike was a year into his second term as president. You could buy a pack of cigarettes or a gallon of gas for a quarter. *Collier's* magazine had just folded, and its tradition of selecting a college football All-America team, derived directly from the original All-America selections Walter Camp had conceived in 1889, was about to end with it.

An enterprising Hugh Hefner, only three years into publishing PLAYBOY, spotted an opportunity. He hired *Collier's* football writer Francis Wallace, and in September 1957 we published our first preseason college football All America team roster. Hef turned the job over to PLAYBOY staffer Anson Mount, who for the next 29 years filled the All America teams with players and coaches whose names have become synonymous with the greatness of the game: Bear Bryant, Forest Evashevski, Dick Butkus, Dan Marino, John Elway, Archie Griffin.

The tradition didn't die with Mount in 1986. The roll call of great players continued with the likes of Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith, Barry Sanders, LaDainian Tomlinson, Peyton and Eli Manning and so many more.

This issue, we celebrate 50 years of selecting PLAYBOY college football All America teams and 50 years as the most successful publication in forecasting which teams and players will be the nation's best. And it seems only fitting that this time around PLAYBOY would honor Joe Paterno with its Coach of the Year award. Paterno, whose reign at Penn State has spanned an incredible 40 years, is one of those rare icons who seem to get better with age—much like the magazine itself.

Now it's time to look forward to the upcoming college football season and predict who will be the best on the gridiron this year.



OUR TOP 25 FOR 2006

1. OHIO STATE
2. WEST VIRGINIA
3. NOTRE DAME
4. TEXAS
5. USC
6. OKLAHOMA
7. MIAMI
8. GEORGIA
9. WISCONSIN
10. FLORIDA
11. CALIFORNIA
12. FLORIDA STATE
13. IOWA
14. LSU
15. AUBURN
16. LOUISVILLE
17. TEXAS TECH
18. NEBRASKA
19. MICHIGAN
20. PENN STATE
21. ARIZONA STATE
22. TENNESSEE
23. BOSTON COLLEGE
24. CLEMSON
25. ALABAMA

PLAYBOY'S 2006 A



OFFENSE

Top row, from left: **Arron Sears** (76), lineman, Tennessee, 6'4", 320, senior, played all offensive line positions for Vols except center; **Joe Thomas** (72), lineman, Wisconsin, 6'8", 303, senior, has 26 consecutive starts for Badgers; **Justin Blalock** (63), lineman, Texas, 6'4", 329, senior, started all 38 games of his career at right tackle for Longhorns; **Adrian Peterson** (28), running back, Oklahoma, 6'2", 215, junior, already has 16 100-yard rushing games in career; **Mason Crosby** (16), placekicker, Colorado, 6'2", 210, senior, kicked 58-yard field goal last season; **Sam Baker** (79), lineman, USC, 6'5", 305, junior, first team All-Pac 10 on one of best offensive lines in nation. Bottom row, from left: **Dwayne Jarrett** (8), wide receiver, USC, 6'5", 210, junior, 91 receptions for 1,274 yards and 16 TDs; **Troy Smith** (10), quarterback, Ohio State, 6'1", 215, senior, 2,893 yards of total offense last season, Fiesta Bowl MVP; **Zach Miller** (86), tight end, Arizona State, 6'5", 260, junior, 94 receptions and 10 TDs over two seasons; **Ted Ginn Jr.** (7), kick returner/receiver, Ohio State, 6'0", 175, junior, two-time Playboy All America, caught 51 passes last season; **Dan Mozes** (76), center, West Virginia, 6'4", 290, senior, two-time first team All-Big East; **Garrett Wolfe** (1), running back, Northern Illinois, 5'7", 177, senior, nation's number one returning rusher; **Joel Filani** (not pictured), wide receiver, Texas Tech, 6'3", 222, senior, led Big 12 with 87.3 yards a game receiving.

LL AMERICA TEAM



DEFENSE

Top row, from left: **Daymeion Hughes** (13), cornerback, California, 6'2", 185, senior, 62 tackles last season, plus five interceptions; **Nic Schmitt** (23), punter, Virginia Tech, 6'2", 273, senior, averaged 43.2 yards a punt last year; **Gaines Adams** (93), lineman, Clemson, 6'5", 260, senior, had 9.5 quarterback sacks and 15 tackles for losses; **Adam Carriker** (90), lineman, Nebraska, 6'6", 280, senior, 17 tackles for losses, including 9.5 quarterback sacks; **Frank Okam Jr.** (97), lineman, Texas, 6'5", 315, junior, recorded 48 tackles, including five for losses. Bottom row, from left: **Brandon Meriweather** (19), safety, Miami, 6'0", 188, senior, 115 tackles and three interceptions last season; **Leon Hall** (29), cornerback, Michigan, 5'11", 194, senior, Wolverines' active career leader in interceptions, with nine; **Jay Henry** (42), linebacker and Anson Mount Scholar/Athlete, West Virginia, 6'2", 225, senior, two-year starter with perfect 4.0 GPA; **H.B. Blades** (51), linebacker, Pittsburgh, 6'0", 240, senior, led Big East with 121 tackles. His father, Bennie, was a Playboy All America in 1987; **Patrick Willis** (49), linebacker, Mississippi, 6'2", 230, senior, SEC Defensive Player of Year, led nation in tackles; **Quentin Moses** (94), lineman, Georgia, 6'5", 255, senior, led team with 11.5 quarterback sacks; **Paul Posluszny** (not pictured), linebacker, Penn State, 6'2", 229, senior, won the 2005 Butkus Award as nation's premier linebacker; **LaRon Landry** (not pictured), safety, LSU, 6'2", 204, senior, 241 career tackles and nine interceptions.



1. OHIO STATE

Last Year: The Buckeyes punctuated their 10-2 season with a 34-20 win over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl.

Outlook: Ohio State's offense will be formidable. Quarterback Troy Smith is back for his senior season; he's 12-2 as a starter, including two wins over Michigan and an MVP performance against Notre Dame in the Buckeyes' bowl win. He will look often and deep for Ted Ginn Jr., a threat to score every time he touches the ball. Antonio Pittman, who rushed for more than 1,300 yards last year, is solid at running back.

Weakness: The defense lost impact linebackers A.J. Hawk and Bobby Carpenter. Are coach Jim Tressell's replacements ready to step up?

Key Game: Ohio State faces off against Texas in Austin on September 9. If the Buckeyes win that game, they could run the table to the BCS championship.

Prediction: 11-1



2. WEST VIRGINIA

Last Year: The Mountaineers crowned one of their best seasons ever (11-1) with a 38-35 Sugar Bowl victory over Georgia.

Outlook: We're not claiming West Virginia is the second-best team in the nation, only that its easy schedule makes a number two finish entirely possible. That said, coach Rich Rodriguez has done a masterful job in his five-year tenure in Morgantown. Success in football always starts at quarterback, and WVU has two good ones: sophomore Patrick White, a playmaker and running threat, and Adam Bednarik, who has recovered from injuries and was 6-1 as a starter last season. Returning running back Steve Slaton, the Big East rookie of the year, capped off his season with an MVP performance in the Sugar Bowl.

Weakness: The Mountaineers don't play anybody. If they slip up, they have no way to climb back in the standings.

Key Game: The team's big test doesn't come until early November when it travels to Louisville. Last year the Cardinals took West Virginia to three overtimes before WVU prevailed.

Prediction: 11-1



3. NOTRE DAME

Last Year: 9-3, but the Irish couldn't get past Ohio State in the Fiesta Bowl.

Outlook: What magic hath coach Charlie Weis wrought? In just a year he turned a team that only



PLAYBOY'S 2006 COACH OF THE YEAR

Joe Paterno Penn State University
"Living legend" is the only way to describe Paterno, the most successful college football coach in the history of the game. Even legends have their critics, however, and when the Nittany Lions struggled through a few tough seasons, some said Joe Pa's day was past. He was out of date, out of touch. A lesser man—or a man who loved coaching football less—would have thrown in the towel. Instead Paterno persevered, and his team responded last season by finishing 11-1, winning the Big 10 championship and beating Florida State in a triple-overtime FedEx Orange Bowl thriller. Coach, thanks for making old age look so good.

picked to finish in the top 25 into a squad with nearly enough swagger to topple USC from its perch as the top team in the nation. How? He gave quarterback Brady Quinn the confidence to excel, something Quinn, an early favorite to win this year's Heisman, will likely do again. Weis also fired up the offensive line so that running back Darius Walker could churn out 1,196 yards. He opened up opposing defenses with wide receiver Jeff Samardzija. And he got just enough big plays out of Notre Dame's undermanned defense to give the Irish a chance to win every Saturday.

Weakness: Lack of speed on defense, which allowed Ohio State to gain 617 yards in the Fiesta Bowl.

Key Game: Penn State and Michigan are substantial opponents, but Notre Dame's season could boil down to its game at USC on November 25.

Prediction: 10-2



4. TEXAS

Last Year: A tidy 13-0. Rose Bowl and BCS national champions.

Outlook: Now that Mack Brown has

that can't-win-the-big-one monkey off his back, he can relax and enjoy coaching. That is, as long as his teams continue to contend for Big 12 and national titles each season. Though superstar quarterback Vince Young left a year early for the NFL, the Longhorns are again loaded with talent. QB duties will fall to either redshirt freshman Colt McCoy or true freshman Jevan Snead. While neither can be expected to measure up to Young (who could?), they are both strong-armed and athletic. The defense has a liberal sprinkling of first- and second-team all-conference players returning as well.

Weakness: Not having Young, a man among boys, who almost single-handedly willed the Longhorns to last year's national championship.

Key Games: The aforementioned early battle against Ohio State, plus the usual showdown against Oklahoma on October 7.

Prediction: 10-2



5. USC

Last Year: 12-1. The Trojans came within one play of winning their third consecutive national championship.

Outlook: Coach Pete Carroll has built college football's most dominant program, a fact that will be convincingly proven when the Trojans finish in the top five yet again despite losing Heisman Trophy winners Matt Leinart and Reggie Bush. Always the perfectionist, Carroll has installed Nick Holt as defensive coordinator, saying, "We definitely are looking to improve on last year's showing." That improvement should come from star defensive end Lawrence Jackson and linebackers Keith Rivers and Oscar Lua, USC's leading tackler in 2005.

Weakness: Replacing the production and experience of Leinart and Bush is impossible. The only experienced quarterback on the roster is John David Booty, who should have recovered from back surgery.

Key Games: The Trojans' final three matchups, against California, Notre Dame and crosstown rival UCLA, will tell the tale.

Prediction: 10-2

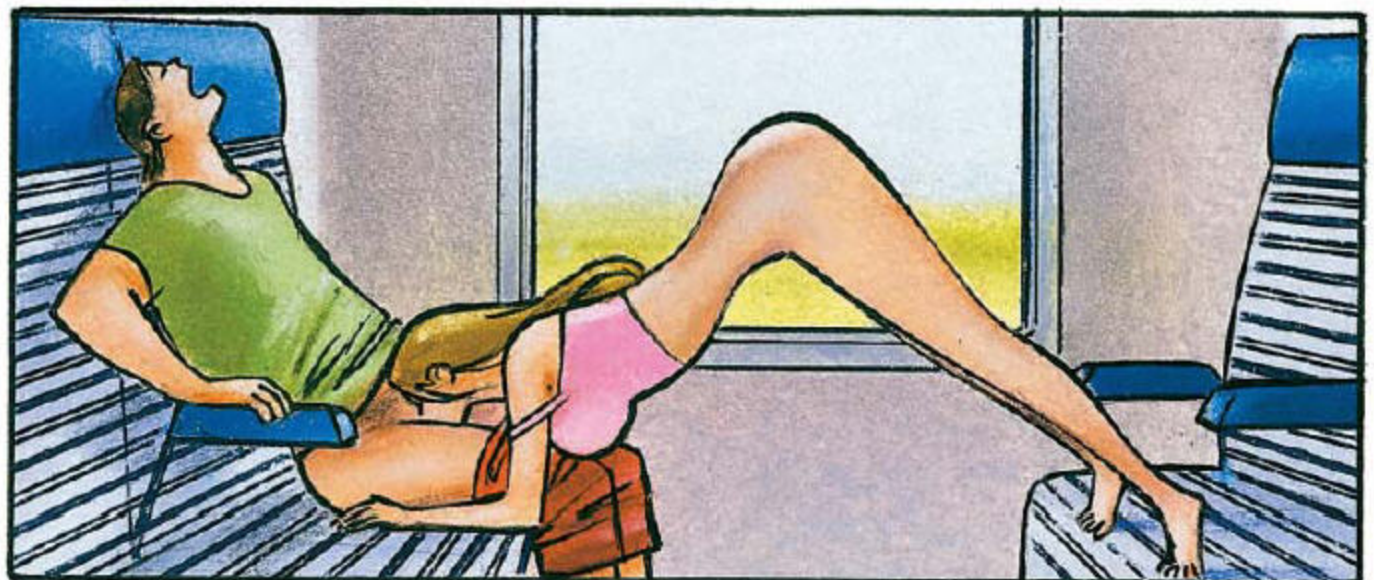
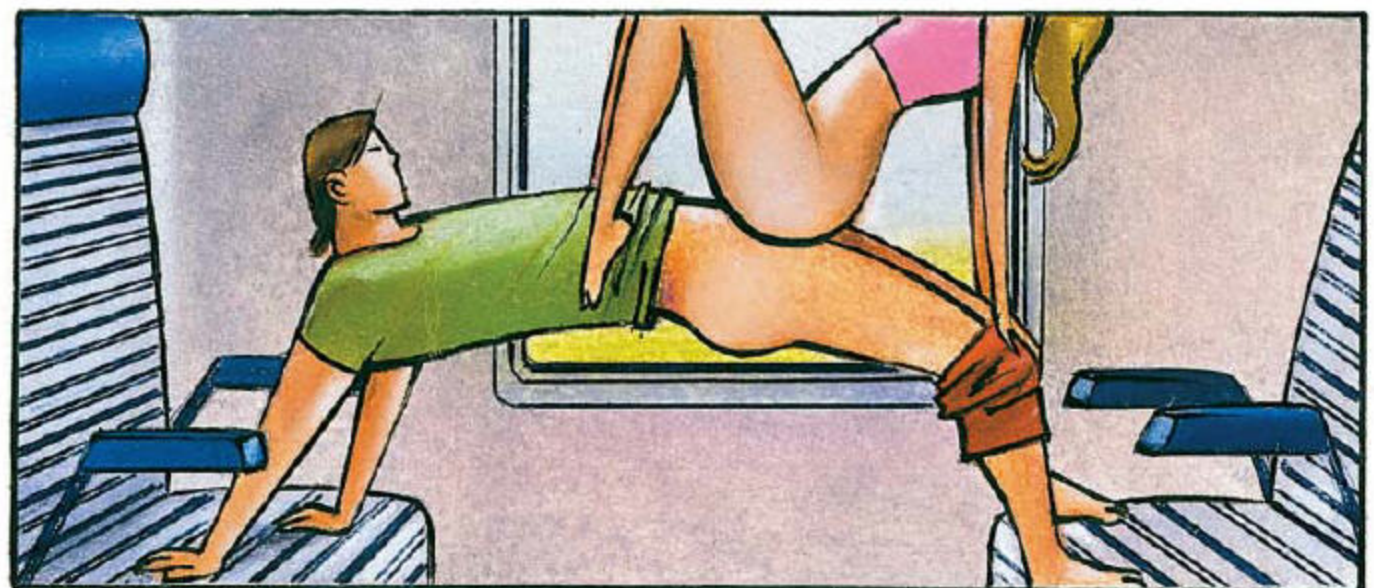
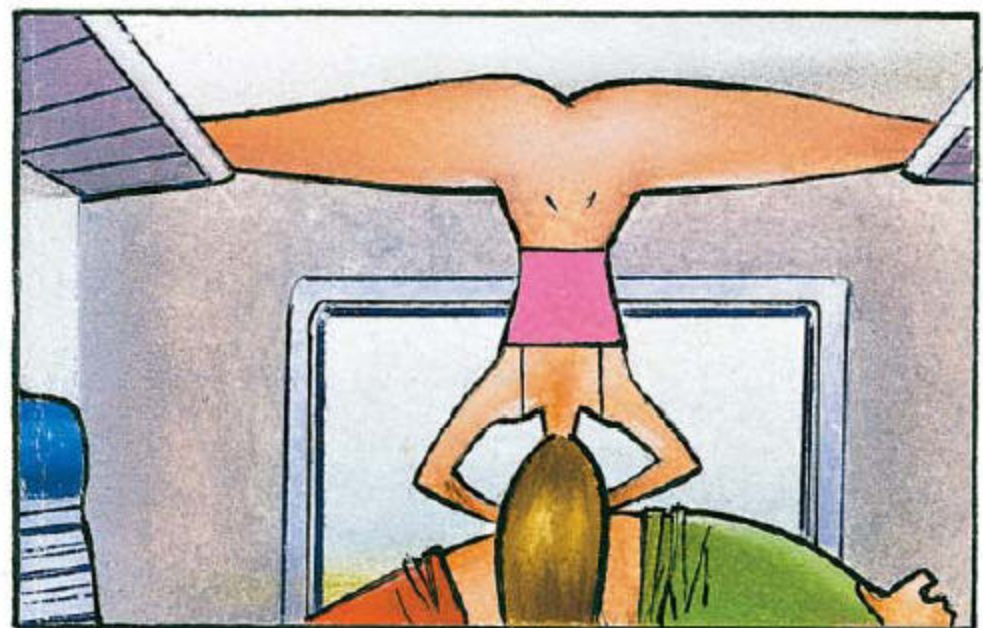


6. OKLAHOMA

Last Year: 8-4, with a 17-14 victory over Oregon in the Pacific Life Holiday Bowl.

Outlook: Coach Bob Stoops has lifted expectations for Oklahoma so high that last year's eight-win season felt almost like a losing one. Don't expect Stoops and the Sooners to miss *(continued on page 144)*

The Train



JUAN ALVAREZ & JORGE G

dress S M A R T

wear your mind on your sleeve with natural threads

2,000 Operating a single wind turbine can displace 2,000 tons of carbon dioxide in one year—the equivalent of planting one square mile of forest.

HIM: The moleskin peacoat [\$696] and burgundy moleskin trousers [\$195] are by **L.B.M. 1911**. His houndstooth cashmere shirt [\$2,500] is from **Estate by Robert Talbott**. The silk ascot [\$175] is from **Best of Class by Robert Talbott**. His copper leather lace-up shoes [\$1,230] are by **Berluti**. **HER:** The olive coat [\$750], brownish pants [\$298] and black vest [\$275] are all by **J. Lindeberg**. Her sandals [\$350] are by **Rodo**.

**PLAYBOY
FASHION**

FASHION BY JOSEPH DE ACETIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FABRIZIO FERRI
PRODUCED BY JENNIFER RYAN JONES



LEFT: The jacket [\$900], shirt [\$280] and pants [\$350] are by **Richmond X Uomo**. The tie [\$135] is by **Massimo Bizzocchi**, the pocket square [\$65] is from **Best of Class** by **Robert Talbott**, and the shoes [\$980] are by **Berluti**. **CENTER LEFT:** The suit [\$1,895] and black tie [\$135] are by **Valentino**, the shirt [\$281] is by **Ennio Capasa** for **Costume National Homme**, the pocket square [\$65] is from **Best of Class** by **Robert Talbott**, and the shoes [\$1,340] are by **Berluti**. **CENTER RIGHT:** The jacket [\$1,295] is by **Dunhill**, the shirt [\$695] is by **DSquared**, the trousers [\$700] are by **Brioni**, the tie [\$125] is from **Chelsea** by **Robert Talbott**, and the pocket square [\$60] is by **Massimo Bizzocchi**. **HER:** The top [\$700] and skirt [\$875] are by **John Richmond**. The sandals [\$215] are by **Stuart Weitzman**, and the necklace [\$225] is by **Fortunoff**.

TWO MILES A two-mile walk expends about half the calories contained in a small bar of chocolate. Traveling the same distance by car uses 10 times as much energy.

1 MILLION Five gallons
of motor oil can contaminate as much as
1 million gallons of water.

LEFT: His suit [\$2,190], shirt [\$185] and tie [\$125] are by **Ozward Boateng**. The pocket square [\$65] is by **Robert Talbott**, and the boots [\$778] are by **Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme**. **RIGHT:** His suit [\$1,903], vest [\$340], shirt [\$198] and tie are by **Ozward Boateng**. His pocket square [\$65] is from **Best of Class** by **Robert Talbott**, and his boots [\$656] are by **Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme**.

443 HOURS

The average American driver spends 443 hours a year behind the wheel.

HIM: His jacket [\$270] and pants [\$168] are by **Joseph Abboud**. **Gran Sasso** makes the sweater vest [\$160]. The shirt [\$325] is by **Lorenzini**, and the tie [\$135] is by **Massimo Bizzocchi**. His pocket square [\$65] is from **Best of Class** by **Robert Talbott**. His watch is by **Bulgari**. The belt [\$395] is by **JM Weston**.



1,000 Scientists say that because of reforestation the United States has more trees today than it did 70 years ago. We have about 230 billion trees—that's almost 1,000 for every citizen.

HIM: The earthy plaid three-quarter-length single-breasted wool coat (\$1,595), purple-and-pink-checked dress shirt (\$225), mustard moleskin trousers (\$295) and pink silk tie with blue medallions (\$100) are all by **Canali**. His brown leather belt (\$168) is by **Trafalgar**. The brown leather boots (\$185) are by **Kenneth Cole**.

LEFT: His suit [\$1,895] is by **Massimo Bizzocchi**. His shirt [\$325] is by **Lorenzini**. The silk ascot [\$175] and pocket square [\$65] are from **Best of Class by Robert Talbott**. His shoes [\$760] are by **JM Weston**. **CENTER:** His suit [\$2,795] is by **Belvest**. The cardigan [\$275] is by **Gran Sasso**, and his shirt [\$345] is by **Lorenzini**. The tie [\$135] is by **Massimo Bizzocchi**, and the pocket square [\$65] is from **Best of Class by Robert Talbott**. His shoes [\$985] are by **John Lobb**. **HER:** The coat [\$3,995], sweater with attached scarf [\$595] and miniskirt [\$1,195] are all by **DSquared**. The shoes [\$575] are by **Rodo**.

1.5 GALLONS It takes 1.5 gallons of ethanol to produce the same amount of energy as one gallon of gas.

LEFT: His trench coat with brown leather trim [\$1,570], sweater [\$630], shirt [\$310] and pants [\$480] are all by **Y's**.
RIGHT: His single-breasted gray herringbone wool coat with peaked lapels [\$4,500], white button-front shirt with black stripes [\$679] and gray Donegal-tweed flat-front wool trousers [\$1,112] are all by **Versace**. The black moleskin vest [\$276] is by **Rogues Gallery**. His black leather belt with longhorn buckle [\$180] is by **John Richmond**.

2.5 MILLION LBS. In 1900
horses deposited 2.5 million pounds of manure
on the streets of New York City each day.

1/3 Vehicles are responsible for about one third of all global oil use but nearly two thirds of U.S. oil use.

HIM: His black oiled-leather double-breasted motorcycle jacket with notched lapels [\$2,379], black coated-cotton button-front shirt [\$485] and black moleskin trousers [\$439] are all from **Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme**. The leather belt with round Texas buckle [\$180] is by **John Richmond**. **HER:** The black party dress is by **Lagerfeld Collection**. Her black leather gloves [\$250] are by **La Crasia**.



"Very impressive, Mr. Walker, but I said, 'Let me see your testimonials.'"

CENTERFOLDS ON SEX



LOVE...OR MONEY?

I've never been the kind of girl who thinks about her wedding or her dress. I'm putting that off for as long as possible, until my 30s. It's stupid to hook up with a guy and stay with him when you're young. As for dating, I hate pickup lines. They're all horrible. The best is just "Hello, I'm so-and-so." I'd rather have a guy say, "It's nice to meet you," than try to bribe or trick me into dating him. I want a man who is confident enough in himself to think I want to date him for who he is, not for what he can buy me. I've heard guys say, "I'll buy you a Tiffany necklace if you go out with me," and I say, "Would you really want to go out with me if I said yes?"



Christine Smith

A TIGHT SQUEEZE

I'm not big on doing it in places where I might get caught, but a few months ago my boyfriend and I went to a huge restaurant. He followed me to the bathroom, and we did it right there in a stall. I've wondered about doing it in an airplane bathroom: How do people join the mile high club? Is it real? Because I can barely turn around in there.



0dB

-10

-20

-30

-40

-50



Eva LONGORIA

TV'S SEXIEST STAR WEARS A G-STRING, LIKES A MAN WITH BACKBONE, SAVES HER MONEY AND KNOWS EXACTLY WHICH DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES SHOULD HAVE A LESBIAN FLING

Q1

PLAYBOY: You've become famous playing a red-hot two-timing vixen who can scam her way out of anything on *Desperate Housewives*. Offscreen, how intense is your inner bitch?

LONGORIA: Well, I am Latina, so automatically I have a feistiness most other people don't. When we made *The Sentinel*, Kiefer Sutherland called me a firefly crossed with a mosquito—bright but, look out, I could bite. When I have lines on *Desperate Housewives* like "I don't care if she shot triplets out of her ass—we're not having her as a surrogate," I become my character, Gabrielle, even though we're so unlike. I think I'm a tamed tiger.

Q2

PLAYBOY: Your co-star Teri Hatcher is now reportedly TV's highest-paid actress. What are you doing with your newfound fortune?

LONGORIA: Never in the history of television has a show done so well this fast. Our show is where most shows would be in their fifth or sixth year, which was when the stars of *Friends* started making \$1 million an episode. I'm still really frugal, which is funny. The other day I got upset

because every zipper was broken in a box of Ziploc bags I was using. My assistant said, "Let's just go buy another box," but I insisted, "No, they're supposed to zip, okay?" I called the number on the package and they sent me five free boxes. I felt better. It's the principle of the matter.

Q3

PLAYBOY: You played another scheming bombshell on *The Young and the Restless*. Why are you the actress everyone loves to hate?

LONGORIA: I hope it's because I can play someone with no moral boundaries who does what she wants when she wants. It's always much more fun for an actor to play the villain. People genuinely love Gabrielle on *Desperate Housewives* for being a good person with good intentions who does bad things. But I was bad to the bone on *The Young and the Restless*.

Q4

PLAYBOY: Which two characters on *Desperate Housewives* ought to have a lesbian fling?

LONGORIA: Definitely Nicollette Sheridan, who is a ball of fun, and Marcia Cross, who I think is stunning. My char-

acter would go for Nicollette too because Gabrielle is another ball of fun. They'd be a pair to reckon with. They would cause quite a ruckus.

Q5

PLAYBOY: Your new movie, *Harsh Times*, set in south L.A., is all about guns, drugs and crime. You play a lawyer-to-be who hooks up with a druggie screwup played by Freddy Rodríguez. Are there any real-life parallels?

LONGORIA: I used to have an asshole for a boyfriend, although he wasn't like Freddy's character, who I believe loves my character but doesn't have his shit together. I had a pretty evil person in my life. All my friends were going, "Run!" and I was like, "But I love him." Everybody has to experience one toxic relationship, and thank God I got mine out of the way. I'm attracted to driven, hardworking, humorous people, but the guys in the movie are either pretty serious or stoned.

Q6

PLAYBOY: What's it like to be a favorite target of the paparazzi?

LONGORIA: It's like being in a fishbowl. The (continued on page 138)



Love THY Neighbor



The Girls Next Door, back for more

G

By Steve Pond

ala premieres and celebratory cast-and-crew screenings are commonplace in Hollywood, but few advance screenings are as intriguing or enticing as the one that takes place every time a new episode of *The Girls Next Door* arrives at the Playboy Mansion. PLAYBOY editor-in-chief Hugh M. Hefner takes the disc upstairs to his bedroom, plops down on the bed with three young women who also happen to be the stars of the show and settles in for a private viewing party.

For the next half hour Hef and his girlfriends—Kendra Wilkinson, Holly Madison and Bridget Marquardt—watch their adventures in Hef's wonderland, showcased each week on the reality series that became this past year's biggest hit on E! Entertainment Television. No show quite like it has ever aired in the long history of the medium. It provides a look inside the life Hef has created from his dreams and fantasies, as seen through the eyes of the three young women who share that unique life. *The Girls Next Door*, which kicks off its second season this month, has acquired

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNY FREYTAG





Kendra Wilkinson, 21, Hef's youngest and most recent girlfriend, is sports crazy, so she decided to stage her own Super Bowl party in the colors of her hometown team, San Diego. "This is my dream photo shoot," she says. "I'm doing a Heisman pose, naked except for a Chargers jersey." Score!

a rabid following and made stars of its three leading ladies, and when it's shown upstairs at the Mansion, those stars are apt to view their on-screen exploits with occasional cringing—but mostly with love and laughter.

Then again, if you've been watching, you have a good idea of what those private viewing parties are like. You've been inside the Mansion, up the stairs, in Hef's bedroom. You've gotten to know Holly, the number one girlfriend, who has been with Hef for five years. And Bridget, the northern California broadcast journalism graduate student who has wanted to be in *PLAYBOY* since



Holly Madison, 26, met Hef at the Mansion five years ago at his annual Midsummer Night's Dream party. Two days after their first date she moved in, and now she is Hef's number one girl. The gorgeous Oregon native is pictured as Marilyn Monroe from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

she was four years old. And Kendra, the free-spirited sports fanatic from San Diego who, at 21, is the youngest of the girlfriends. You've seen their parties, their moods both good and bad, and their place in the often misunderstood world behind the Playboy Mansion gates.

"I think the show has rather decidedly changed people's views of my life in the Mansion," says Hef. "It has had a remarkably humanizing effect on the way people look at me, the girls and our lives." According to all concerned, the show has also helped bring (text concluded on page 149)







B

ridget Marquardt, 32, finds herself in a bit of a hairy situation. The California girl, currently working on her second master's degree (in broadcast journalism), is a horror-film fan. Here she's cast as exotic blonde Fay Wray in the best remake of *King Kong* we've seen yet.





See more of Hef's girls at cyber.playboy.com.

UNLUCKY MOTHER (continued from page 76)

The room became very quiet. There was no sound but for the fans and the faint mastication of the Chief.

sitting behind his desk. "It's an honor," he said, rising to greet them and waving a hand to indicate the two chairs set before the desk. "Please, please," he said, and Aquiles and Néstor, with a glance for the bodyguard, who had positioned himself just outside the door, eased tentatively into the chairs.

The office looked like any other, bookshelves collapsing under the weight of papers curling at the edges, sagging venetian blinds, a poor pale-yellowish light descending from the fixtures in the ceiling, but the desk, nearly as massive as the one Aquiles's mother kept in her office at the machine shop, had been purged of the usual accoutrements—there were no papers, no files, no staplers or pens, not even a telephone or computer. Instead a white cloth had been spread neatly over the surface, and aside from the two pale-blue cuffs of the Chief's shirtsleeves and the *pelota* of his clenched brown hands, there were but four objects on the table: three newspaper clippings and a single sheet of white paper with something inscribed across it in what looked to be 20-point type.

All the way up the stairs, his brother and the bodyguard wheezing behind him, Aquiles had been preparing a speech—"I'll pay anything, do anything they say, just so long as they release her unharmed and as soon as possible, or expeditiously, I mean, expeditiously, isn't that the legal term?"—but now, before he could open his mouth, the Chief leaned back in the chair and snapped his fingers in the direction of the door at the rear of the room. Instantly the door flew open, and a waiter from the Fundador Cafe whirled across the floor with his tray held high, bowing briefly to each of them before setting down three white ceramic plates and three Coca-Colas in their sculpted greenish bottles designed to fit the hand like the waist of a woman. In the center of each plate was a steaming *reina pepeada*—a maize cake stuffed with avocado, chicken, potatoes, carrots and mayonnaise—Aquiles's favorite, the very thing he hungered for during all those months of exile in the north. "Please, please," the Chief said. "We eat. Then we talk."

Aquiles was fresh off the plane. There was no question of finishing the season, of worrying about bills,

paychecks, the bachelor apartment he shared with Chucho Rangel in a high-rise within sight of Camden Yards or the milk-white Porsche in the parking garage beneath it, and the Orioles' manager, Frank Bowden, had given Aquiles his consent immediately. Not that it was anything more than a formality. Aquiles would have been on the next plane no matter what anyone said, even if they were in the playoffs, even the World Series. His mother was in danger. And he had come to save her. But he hadn't eaten since breakfast the previous day, and before he knew what he was doing, the sandwich was gone.

The room became very quiet. There was no sound but for the whirring of the fans and the faint mastication of the Chief, a small-boned man with an overlarge head and a crown of dark snaking hair that pulled away from his scalp as if an invisible hand were eternally tugging at it. Into the silence came the first reminder of the gravity of the situation: Néstor, his face clasped in both hands, had begun to sob in a quiet, sougning way. "Our mother," he choked, "she used to cook *reinas* for us, all her life she used to cook. And now, now—"

"Hush," the Chief said, his voice soft and expressive. "We'll get her back, don't you worry." And then, to Aquiles, in a different voice altogether, an official voice, hard with overuse, he said, "So you've heard from them."

"Yes. A man called my cell—and I don't know how he got the number—"

The Chief gave him a bitter smile, as if to say *Don't be naïve*.

Aquiles flushed. "He didn't say hello or anything, just 'We have the package.' That was all, and then he hung up."

Néstor lifted his head. They both looked to the Chief.

"Typical," he said. "You won't hear from them for another week, maybe two. Maybe more."

Aquiles was stunned. "A week? But don't they want the money?"

The Chief leaned into the desk, the black pits of his eyes locked on Aquiles. "What money? Did anybody say anything about money?"

"No, but that's what this is all about, isn't it? They wouldn't"—and here an inadmissible thought invaded his head—"They're not sadists, are they? They're not...." But he couldn't go on. Finally, gathering himself, he said,

"They don't kidnap mothers just for the amusement of it, do they?"

Smiling his bitter smile, the Chief boxed the slip of white paper so that it was facing Aquiles and pushed it across the table with the tips of two fingers. On it in those outsize letters was written a single figure: \$11.5 million. In the next moment he was brandishing the newspaper clippings, shaking them so that the paper crackled with the violence of it, and Aquiles could see what they were: articles in the local press proclaiming the *béisbol* star Aquiles Maldonado a national hero second only to Simón Bolívar and Hugo Chávez. In each of them the figure of \$11.5 million had been underlined in red ink. "This is what they want," the Chief said finally, "money, yes. And now that they have your attention they will come back to you with a figure, maybe \$5 million or so—they'd demand it all and more, except that they know you will not pay them a cent, not now or ever."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean we do not negotiate with criminals."

"But what about my mother?"

He sighed. "We will get her back, don't you worry. It may take time and perhaps even a certain degree of pain"—here he reached down beneath the desk and with some effort set a two-quart pickle jar on the table before him—"but have no fear."

Aquiles stole a look at his brother. Néstor had jammed his forefinger into his mouth and was biting down as if to snap it in two, a habit he'd developed in childhood and had been unable to break. These were not pickles floating in the clear astringent liquid.

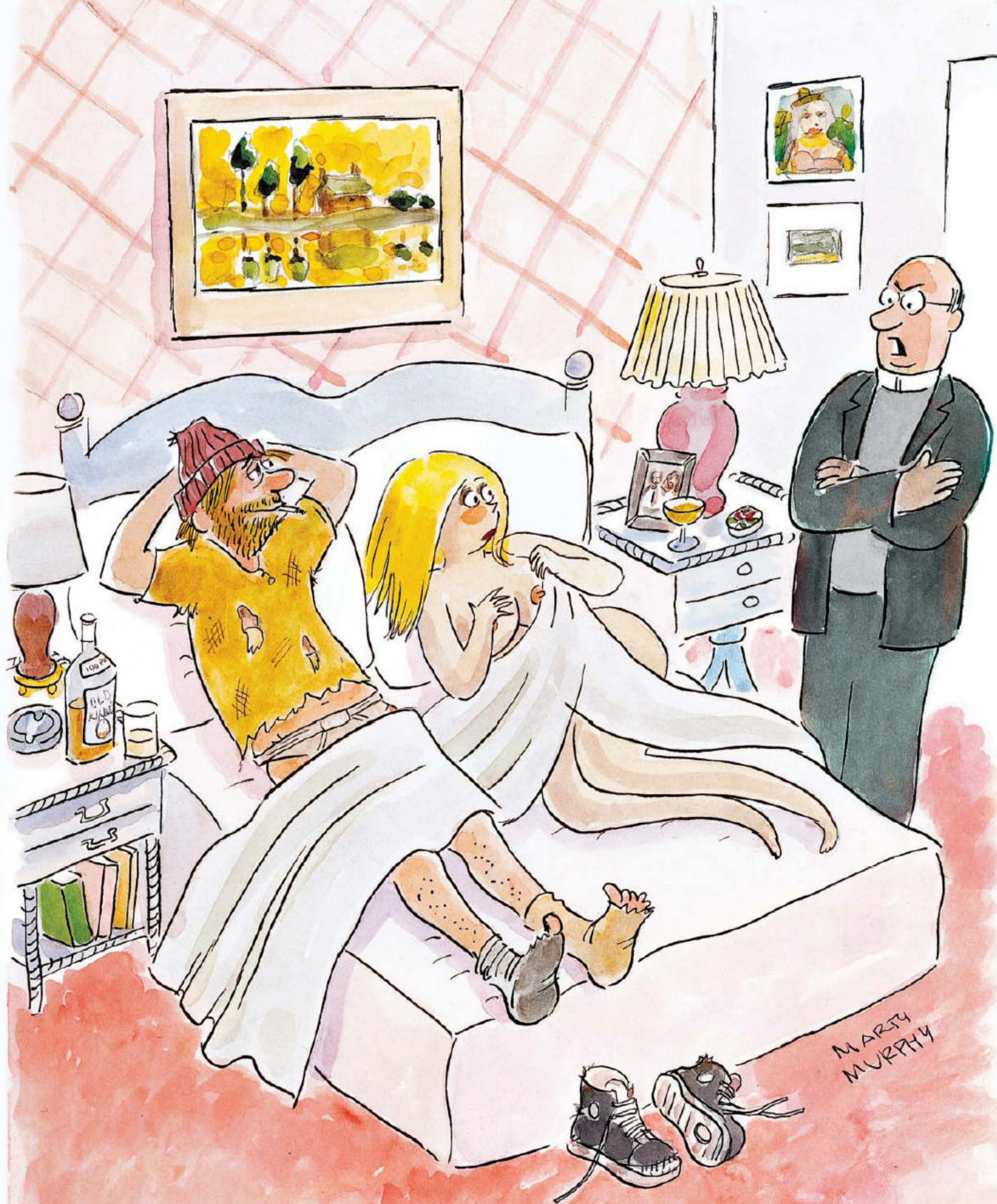
"Yes," the Chief said, "this is the next step. It is called proof of life."

It took a moment for the horror to settle in.

"But these fingers—there are four of them here, plus two small toes, one great toe and a left ear—represent cases we have resolved. Happily resolved. What I'm telling you is be prepared. First you will receive the proof of life, then the demand for money." He paused. And then his fist came down, hard, on the desktop. "But you will not pay them, no matter what."

"I will," Aquiles insisted. "I'll pay them anything."

"You won't. You can't. Because if you do, then every ballplayer's family will be at risk, don't you understand that? And, I hate to say this, but you've brought it on yourself. I mean, please—driving a vermilion Hummer through the streets of this town? Parading around with your gold necklaces and these disgraceful women, these *putas* with their great inflated tits and swollen behinds? Did you really



"Julia, there are some things we don't give to the needy."

have to go and paint your compound the color of a ripe tangerine?"

Aquiles felt the anger coming up in him, but as soon as he detected it, it was gone: The man was right. He should have left his mother where she was, left her to the respectability of poverty, should have changed his name and come home in rags, wearing a beard and a false nose. He should never in his life have picked up a baseball.

"All right," the Chief was saying, and he stood to conclude the meeting. "They call you, you call me."

Both brothers rose awkwardly, the empty plate staring up at Aquiles like the blanched unblinking eye of accusation, the jar of horrors grinning beside it. The bodyguard poked his head in the door.

"Oh, but wait, wait, I almost forgot." The Chief snapped his fingers once again, and an assistant strode through the rear door with a cellophane package of crisp white baseballs in one hand and a Magic Marker in the other. "If you wouldn't mind," the Chief said. "For my son Aldo, with best wishes."

She was wedged between two of the boys in the cramped backseat of the car, the heat oppressive, the stink of confinement unbearable. El Ojo sat up front beside the other boy, who drove with an

utter disregard for life. At first she tried to shout out the window at pedestrians, shrieking till she thought the glass of the windshield would shatter, but the boy to her right—pinch-faced, with two rotted teeth like fangs and a pair of lifeless black eyes—slapped her, and she slapped him right back, the guttersnipe, the little hoodlum, and who did he think he was? How dare he? Beyond that she remembered nothing, because the boy punched her then, punched her with all the coiled fury of his pipe-stem arm and balled fist, and the car jolted on its springs and the tires screamed and she passed into unconsciousness.

When she came back to the world, she was in a skiff on a river she'd never seen before, its waters thick as paste, all the birds and insects in the universe screaming in unison. Her wrists had been tied behind her and her ankles bound with a loop of frayed plastic cord. The ache in her jaw stole up on her, her tongue probing the teeth there and tasting her own blood, and that made her angry, furious, and she focused all her rage on the boy who'd hit her—there he was, sitting athwart the seat in the bow, crushed beneath the weight of his sloped shoulders and the insolent wedge of the back of his head. She wanted to cry out and accuse him, but she caught herself, because what if the boat tipped, what

then? She was helpless. No one, not even the Olympic butterfly champion, could swim with all four limbs bound. So she lay there on the rocking floor of the boat, soaked through with the bilge, the sun lashing her as she breathed the fumes of the engine and stared up into a seared fragment of the sky, waiting her chance.

Finally, and it seemed as if they'd been on that river for days, though that was an impossibility, the engine choked on its own fumes, and they cut across the current to the far bank. El Ojo—she saw now that he had been the one at the tiller—sprang out and seized a rope trailing from the branch of a jutting tree, and then the boy, the one who'd assaulted her, reached back to cut the cord at her ankles with a flick of his knife, and he too was in the murky water, hauling the skiff ashore. She endured the thumps and bumps and the helpless feeling they gave her, and then, when he thrust a hand under her arm to lead her up onto the bank, the best she could do was mutter, "You stink. All of you. Don't you have any pride? Can't you even wash yourselves? Do you wear your clothes till they rot, is that it?" And then, when that got no response: "What about your mothers—what would they think?"

They were on the bank now, El Ojo and the others taking pains to secrete the boat in the undergrowth, where they piled sticks and river-run debris atop it. The boy who had hold of her just gave her his cold vampire's smile, the two stubs of his teeth stabbing at his lower lip. "We don't got no mothers," he said softly. "We're guerrillas."

"Hoodlums, you mean," she snapped back at him. "Criminals, *narcotraficantes*, kidnappers, cowards."

It came so quickly she had no time to react, the arm snaking out, the wrist uncoiling to bring the flat of his hand across her face, right where it had begun to bruise. And then, for good measure, he slapped her again.

"Hey, Eduardo, shithead," El Ojo rasped. "Get your ass over here and give us a hand. What do you think this is, a nightclub?"

The others laughed. Her face stung, and already the flies and mosquitoes were probing at the place where it had swelled along the line of her jaw. She dropped her chin to her shoulder for protection, but she didn't say anything. To this point she'd been too indignant to be scared, but now with the light fading into the trees and the mud sucking at her shoes and the ugly nameless things of the jungle creeping from their holes and dens to lay siege to the night, she began to feel the dread spread its wings inside her. This was about Aquiles. About her son, the major leaguer, the pride of her life. They wanted him, wanted his money he'd worked so hard to acquire since he was a barefoot boy molding a glove out



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of old milk cartons and firing rocks at a target nailed to a tree, the money he'd earned by his sweat and talent—and the fame, the glory, the pride that came with it. They had no pride themselves, no human decency, but they would do anything to corrupt it. She'd heard the stories of the abductions, the mutilations, the families who'd paid ransom for their daughters, sons, parents, grandparents, even the family dog, only to pay again and again until hope gave way to despair.

But then, even as they took hold of her and began to march her through the jungle, she saw her son's face rise before her, his portrait just as it appeared on his Topps card, one leg lifted in the windup and that little half smile he gave when he was embarrassed because the photographer was there and the photographer had posed him. *He'll come for me*, she said to herself. *I know he will.*

For Aquiles, the next three weeks were purgatorial. Each day he awoke sweating in the silence of dawn and performed his stretching exercises on the Turkish carpet until the maid brought him his orange juice and the protein drink into which he mixed the contents of three raw eggs, two ounces of wheatgrass and a tablespoon of brewer's yeast. Then he sat dazed in front of the high-definition plasma TV he'd bought his mother for her 45th birthday, surrounded by his children (withdrawn

from school for their own protection) and the unforgivably homely but capable girl from the provinces, Suspira Salvatoros, who'd been brought in to see after their welfare in the absence of his mother. In the corner muttering darkly sat his *abuela*, the electric ghost of his mother's features flitting across her face as she rattled her rosary and picked at the wart under her right eye till a thin line of serum ran down her cheek. The TV gave him nothing, not joy or even release, each show more stupefyingly banal than the last—how could people go about the business of winning prizes, putting on costumes and spouting dialogue, singing, dancing, stirring soft-shell crabs and cilantro in a fry pan for Christ's sake, when his mother, Marita Villalba, was in the hands of criminals who refused even to communicate, let alone negotiate? Even baseball, even the playoffs, came to mean nothing to him.

And then, one bleak changeless morning, the sun like a firebrick tossed in the window and all Caracas up in arms over the abduction—FREE MARITA was scrawled in white soap on the windows of half the cars in town—he was cracking the eggs over his protein drink when Suspira Salvatoros knocked at the door. "Don Aquiles," she murmured, sidling into the room in her shy fumbling way, her eyes downcast, "something has come for you. A missive." In her hand—bitten fingernails, a swell of fat—there was a single dirty white envelope, too thick

for a letter and stained with a smear of something he couldn't name. He felt as if his chest had been torn open, as if his still-beating heart had been snatched out of him and flung down on the carpet with the letter that dropped from his ineffectual fingers. Suspira Salvatoros began to cry. And gradually, painfully, as if he were bending for the rosin bag in a nightmare defeat in which he could get no one out and the fans were jeering and the manager frozen in the dugout, he bent for the envelope and clutched it to him, hating the feel of it, the weight of it, the guilt and horror and accusation it carried.

Inside was a human finger, the little finger of the left hand, two inches of bone, cartilage and flesh gone the color of old meat, and at the tip of it, a manicured nail, painted red. For a long while he stood there, weak-kneed, the finger cold in the palm of his hand, and then he reverently folded it back into the envelope, secreted it in the inside pocket of his shirt closest to his heart and flung himself out the door. In the next moment he sprang into the car—the Hummer, and so what if it was the color of poppies and arterial blood? So much the worse for them, the desecrators, the criminals, the punks, and he was going to track them down if it was the last thing he did. Within minutes he'd reached the police headquarters and pounded up the five flights of stairs, the ashen-faced bodyguard plodding along behind him. Without a word for anyone he burst into the Chief's office and laid the envelope on the desk before him.

The Chief had been arrested in the act of biting into a sweet cake while simultaneously blowing the steam off a cup of coffee, the morning newspaper propped up in front of him. He gave Aquiles a knowing look, set down the cake and extracted the finger from the envelope.

"I'll pay," Aquiles said. "Just let me pay. Please, God. She's all I care about."

The Chief held the finger out before him, studying it as if it were the most pedestrian thing in the world, a new sort of pen he'd been presented by the Boys' Auxiliary, a stick of that dried-out bread the Italians serve with their antipasto. "You will not pay them," he said without glancing up.

"I will." Aquiles couldn't help raising his voice. "The minute they call, I swear I'll give them anything, I don't care—"

Now the Chief raised his eyes. "Your presumption is that this is your mother's finger?"

Aquiles just stared at him.

"She uses this shade of nail polish?"

"Yes, I—I assume—"

"Amateurs," the Chief spat. "We're on to them. We'll have them, believe me. And you—assume nothing."

The office seemed to quaver then as



"Now turn over and let's get you straightened out."

if the walls were closing in. Aquiles had begun to take deep breaths as he did on the mound when the situation was perilous, runner on first, no outs, a one-run ball game. "My mother's in pain," he said.

"Your mother is not in pain. Not physical pain, at any rate." The Chief had set the severed finger down on the napkin that cradled the sweet bun and brought the mug to his lips. He took a sip of the coffee and then set the mug down, too. "This is not your mother's finger," he said finally. "This is not, in fact, even the finger of a female. Look at it. Look closely. This," he pronounced, again lifting the mug to his lips, "is the finger of a man, a young man, maybe even a boy, playing revolutionary. They like that, the boys. Dressing up, hiding out in the jungle. Calling themselves"—and here he let out his bitter laugh—"guerrillas."

She was a week in the jungle, huddled over a filthy stew pot thick with chunks of *carpincho*, some with the hide still on it, her digestion in turmoil, the insects burrowing into her, her dress—the shift she'd been wearing when they came for her—so foul it was like a layer of grease applied to her body. Then they took her farther into the jungle to a crude airstrip—the kind the *narcotraficantes* employ in their evil trade—and she was forced into a Cessna airplane with El Ojo, the boy with the pitiless eyes and an older man, the pilot, and they sailed high over the broken spine of the countryside and up into the mountains. At first she was afraid they were taking her across the border to Colombia to trade her to the FARC rebels there, but she could see by the sun that they were heading southeast, and that was small comfort because every minute they were in the air, she was that many more miles from her home and rescue. Their destination—it appeared as a cluster of frame cottages with thatched roofs and the splotted yawning mouth of a dried-up swimming pool—gave up nothing, not a road or even a path, to connect it with the outside world.

The landing was rough, very rough, the little plane lurching and pitching like one of those infernal rides at the fair, and when she climbed down out of the cockpit she had to bend at the waist and release the contents of her stomach in the grass no one had thought to cut. The boy, her tormentor, the one they called Eduardo, gave her a shove from behind so that she fell to her knees in her own mess, so hurt and confused and angry she had to fight to keep from crying in front of him. And then there were other boys there, a host of them, teenagers in dirty camouflage fatigues with the machine rifles slung over their shoulders, their faces blooming as they greeted Eduardo and El Ojo and then narrowing in suspicion as they regarded

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her. No one said a word to her. They unloaded the plane—beer, rum, cigarettes, pornographic magazines, sacks of rice and three cartons of noodles in a cup—and then ambled over to a crude table set up in the shade of the trees at the edge of the clearing, talking and joking all the while. She heard the hiss of the first beer and then a chorus of hisses as one after another they popped the aluminum tabs and pressed the cans to their lips, and she stood and gazed up at the barren sky and then let her eyes drop to the palisade of the jungle that went on unbroken as far as she could see.

Within a week they'd accepted her. There was always one assigned to guard her, though for the life of her she couldn't imagine why—unless she could sprout wings like a *turpial* and soar out over the trees, she was a prisoner here just as surely as if she'd been locked away in a cell—but aside from that, they gave her free rein. Once she'd recovered from the shock of that inhuman flight, she began to poke through the dilapidated buildings, just to do something, just to keep occupied, and the first thing she found was a tin washtub. It was nothing to collect fragments of wood at the edge of the clearing and build a fire ring of loose stone. She heated water in the tub, shaved a bar of soap she found in the latrine, wrapped herself in the blanket they gave her and washed first her hair, then her dress. The boys were drunk on the yeasty warm beer, sporadically shooting at something in the woods until El Ojo rose in a rage from his nap and cursed

them, but soon they gathered round and solemnly stripped down to their underwear and handed her their filth-stiffened garments, murmuring, "Please, señora" and "Would you mind?" and "Me too, me too." All except Eduardo, that is. He just sneered and lived in his dirt.

Ultimately, she knew these boys better than they knew themselves, boys playing soldier in the mornings, *béisbol* and *fútbol* in the afternoons, gathering to drink and boast and lie as the sun fell into the trees. They were the spawn of prostitutes and addicts, uneducated, unwanted, unloved, raised by grandmothers, raised by no one. They knew nothing but cruelty. Their teeth were bad. They'd be dead by 30. As the days accumulated she began to gather herbs at the edge of the jungle and sort through the store of cans and rice and dried meat and beans, sweetening the clearing on the hilltop with the ambrosial smell of her cooking. She found a garden hose and ran it from the creek that gave them their water to the lip of the empty swimming pool and soon the boys were cannonballing into the water, their shrieks of joy echoing through the trees even as the cool clear water cleansed and firmed their flesh and took the rankness out of their hair. Even El Ojo began to come round to hold out his tin plate or have his shirt washed, and before long he took to sitting in the shade beside her just to pass the time of day. "These kids," he would say and shake his head in a slow portentous way, and she could only cluck her tongue in agreement. "You're a good mother," he

told her one night in his cat's tongue of a voice, "and I'm sorry we had to take you." He paused to lick the ends of the cigarette he'd rolled, and then he passed it to her. "But this is life."

And then one morning as she was pressing out the corn cakes to bake on a tin sheet over the fire for the arepas she planned to serve for breakfast and dinner, too, there was a stir among the boys—a knot of them gathered round the table and El Ojo there, brandishing a pair of metal shears. "You," he was saying, pointing the shears at Eduardo, "you're the tough guy. Make the sacrifice."

She was 30 feet from them, crouched over a stump, both hands thick with corn meal. Eduardo fastened his eyes on her. "She's the hostage," he spat. "Not me."

"She's a good person," El Ojo said, "a saint, better than you'll ever be. I won't touch her—no one will. Now hold out your hand."

The boy never flinched. Even when the shears bit, even when metal contacted metal and the blood drained from his face. And all the while he never took his eyes from her.

•

By the time the call came, the one Aquiles had been awaiting breathlessly through five and a half months of sleepless nights and paralyzed days, spring training was well under way. Twice the kidnappers had called to name their price—the first time it was \$5 million, just as the Chief had predicted, and the next, inexplicably, it had dropped to two—but the voice on the other end of the phone, as hoarse and buzzing as the rattle of an inflamed serpent, never gave directions as to where to deliver it. Aquiles fell into despair, his children turned on each other like demons so that their disputations rang through the courtyard in a continual clangor, his *abuela's* face was an open sore, and Suspira Salvatoros cleaned and cooked with a vengeance even as she waded in amongst the children like the referee of an eternal wrestling match. And then the call came. From the Chief. Aquiles pressed the cell to his ear and murmured, "*Bueno?*" and the Chief's voice roared back at him: "We've found her!"

"Where?"

"My informants tell me they have her at an abandoned tourist camp in Estado Bolívar."

"But that's hundreds of miles from here."

"Yes," the Chief said. "The amateurs."

"I'm coming with you," Aquiles said.

"No. Absolutely no. Too dangerous. You'll just be in the way."

"I'm coming."

"No," the Chief said.

"I give you my solemn pledge that I will sign one truckload of baseballs for the sons and daughters of every man in the federal police district of



"My word—that looks like quite a handful you've got there, young lady!"

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Caracas, and I will give to your son, Aldo, my complete 2003, 2004 and 2005 sets of Topps baseball cards direct from the USA."

There was a pause, then the Chief's voice came back at him: "We leave in one hour. Bring a pair of boots."

•

They flew south in a commercial airliner, the Chief and 10 of his men in camouflage fatigues with the patch of the Federal Police on the right shoulder and Aquiles in gum boots, blue jeans and an old baseball jersey from his days with the Caracas Lions, and then they took a commandeered produce truck to the end of the last stretch of the last road on the map and got down to hike through the jungle. The terrain was difficult. Insects thickened the air. No sooner did they cross one foaming yellow cataract than they had to cross another, the ground underfoot as slippery as if it had been oiled, the trees alive with the continuous screech of birds and monkeys. And they were going uphill, always uphill, gaining altitude with each uncertain step.

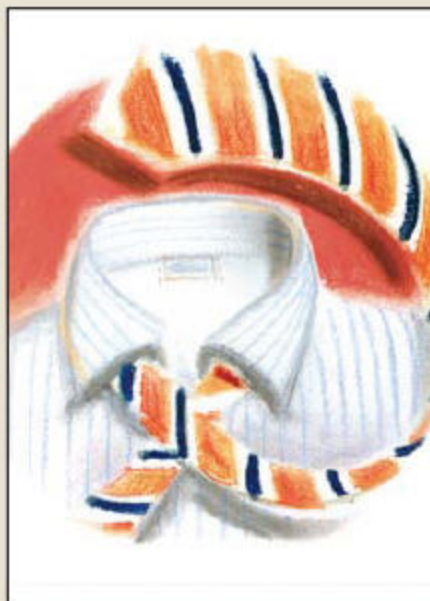
Though the Chief had insisted that Aquiles stay to the rear—"That's all we need," he said, "you getting shot, and I can see the headlines already: 'Venezuelan Baseball Star Killed in Attempt to Save His Sainted Mother'"—Aquiles's training regimen had made him a man of iron, and time and again he found himself well out in front of the squad. Repeatedly the Chief had to call him back in a terse whisper, and he slowed to let the others catch up. It was vital that they stay together, the Chief maintained, because there were no trails here and they didn't know what they were looking for except that it was up ahead somewhere, high up through the mass of vegetation that barely gave up the light, and that it would reveal itself when they came close enough.

Then, some four hours later, when the men had gone gray in the face and they were all of them as soaked through as if they'd been standing fully clothed under the barracks shower, the strangest thing happened. The Chief had called a halt to check his compass reading and allow the men to collapse in the vegetation and squeeze the blood, pus and excess water from their boots, and Aquiles, though he could barely brook the delay, paused to slap mosquitoes on the back of his neck and raise the canteen of Gatorade to his mouth. That was when the scent came to him, a faint odor of cooking that insinuated itself along the narrow olfactory avenue between the reeking perfume of jungle blooms and the fecal stench of the mud. But this was no ordinary smell, no generic scent you might encounter in the alley out back of a restaurant or drifting from a barrio window—this was his mother's cooking! His mother's! He could even name the dish: tripe stew! "Jefe," he said, taking

WHERE &

HOW TO BUY

Below is a list of retailers and manufacturers you can contact for information on where to find this month's merchandise. To buy the apparel and equipment shown on pages 35–36, 98–105 and 154–155, check the listings below to find the stores nearest you.



MANTRACK

Pages 35–36: *Linde Werdelin*, lindewerdelin.com. *Quiksilver Travel*, quiksilvertravel.com. *Samsung*, samsung.com. *Schedoni*, schedoni.com. *Sony*, sony.com. *Volkswagen*, vw.com.

DRESS SMART

Pages 98–105: *Belvest*, belvest.com. *Berluti*, berluti.com. *Brioni*, available at Brioni boutiques. *Bulgari*, bulgari.com. *Canali*, available at Bloomingdale's. *DSquared*, available at Gregory's in Houston. *Dunhill*, 866-929-0637. *Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme*, costumenational.com. *Fortunoff*, fortunoff.com. *Gran Sasso*, gransasso.com. *J. Lindeberg*, jlindeberg.com. *JM Weston*, 212-535-2100. *John Lobb*, johnlobb.com. *John Richmond*, johnrichmond.com. *Joseph*

Abboud, 212-586-9140. *Kenneth Cole*, 800-KEN-COLE. *La Crasia*, wegloveyou.com. *Lagerfeld Collection*, info@lagerfeld.com. *L.B.M. 1911*, available at Mark Shale in Chicago. *Lorenzini*, www.lorenzini.it. *Massimo Bizzocchi*, massimobizzocchi.com. *Ozward Boateng*, ozwardboateng.co.uk. *Richmond X*

Uomo, available at David Lawrence in Seattle. *Robert Talbott*, roberttalbott.com. *Rodo*, satineboutique.com. *Rogues Gallery*, dandyrogue.com. *Stuart Weitzman*, stuartweitzman.com. *Trafalgar*, 203-853-4747. *Valentino*, available at Valentino boutiques. *Versace*, versace.com. *Y's*, yohjiyamamoto.co.jp.

POTPOURRI

Pages 154–155: *Skullcandy*, skullcandy.com. *BallPark Pens*, ballparkpens.com. *Bugatti safe*, stockinger.com. *Cableyoyo*, cableyoyo.com. *Grooming Lounge*, groominglounge.com. *Jada Toys*, jadatoys.com. *Roundabout Signs*, roundaboutsigs.com. *Segway*, segway.com. *Travel Bar*, kegworks.com.

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hold of the Chief's arm and pulling him to his feet, "do you smell that?"

They approached the camp warily, the Chief's men fanning out with their weapons held rigidly before them. Surprise was of the essence, the Chief had insisted, adding chillingly that the guerrillas were known to slit the throats of their captives rather than give them up and so they must be eliminated before they knew what hit them. Aquiles felt the moment acutely. He'd never been so tense, so unnerved, in all his life. But he was a closer, and a closer lived on the naked edge of catastrophe every time he touched the ball, and as he moved forward with the rest of them, he felt the strength infuse him and knew he would be ready when the moment came.

There were sounds now—shouts and curses and cries of rapture amid a great splash and heave of water in motion—and then Aquiles parted the fronds of a palm and the whole scene was made visible. He saw rough huts under a diamond sky, a swimming pool exploding with splashing limbs and ecstatic faces, and there, not 30 feet away, the cook

fire and the stooping form of a woman, white-haired, thin as bone. It took him a moment to understand that this was his mother, work-hardened and deprived of her makeup and the Clairol Nice 'n Easy he sent her by the cardboard case from the north. His first emotion, and he hated himself for it, was shame, shame for her and for himself, too. And then as the voices caromed round the pool—"Oaf! Fool! Get off me, Humberto, you ass!"—he felt nothing but anger.

He would never know who started the shooting, whether it was one of the guerrillas or the Chief and his men, but the noise of it, the lethal stutter that saw the naked figures jolted out of the pool and the water bloom with color, started him forward. He stepped from the bushes, oblivious to danger, stopping only to snatch a rock from the ground and mold it to his hand in the way he'd done 10,000 times when he was a boy. That was when the skinny kid with the dead eyes sprang up out of nowhere to put a knife to his mother's throat, and what was the point of that? Aquiles couldn't understand. One night there was victory,

another night defeat. But you played the game just the same—you didn't blow up the ballpark or shoot the opposing batter. You didn't extort money from the people who'd earned it through God-given talent and hard work. You didn't threaten mothers. That wasn't right. That was impermissible. And so he cocked his arm and let fly with his fastball that had been clocked at 98 miles an hour on the radar gun at Camden Yards while 45,000 people stamped and shouted and chanted his name—*High and inside*, he was thinking, *high and inside*—and without complicating matters, let's just say that his aim was true.

Unfortunately Marita Villalba never fully recovered from her ordeal. She would awaken in the night, smelling game roasting over a campfire—smelling *carpincho* with its rodent's hide intact—and she seemed lost in her own kitchen. She gave up dyeing her hair, rarely wore makeup or jewelry. The machine shop was nothing to her, and when Rómulo Cordero, hobbled by his wounds, had to step down, she didn't even come downstairs to attend his retirement party, though the smell of the arepas, empanadas and *chivo en coco* radiated through the windows and up out of the yard and into the streets for blocks around. More and more she was content to let Suspira Salvatoros look after the kitchen and the children while she sat in the sun with her own mother, their collective fingers, all 20 of them, busy with the intricate needlepoint designs for which they became modestly famous in the immediate neighborhood.

Aquiles went back to the major leagues midway through the season, but after that moment of truth on the hilltop in the jungle of Estado Bolívar, he just couldn't summon the fire anymore. That, combined with the injury to his rotator cuff, spelled disaster. He was shelled each time he went to the mound, the boos rising in chorus till the manager took the ball from him for the last time, and he cleared waivers and came home to stay, his glory gone but the contract guaranteed. The first thing he did was take Suspira Salvatoros to the altar, defeating the ambitions of any number of young and not-so-young women whose curses and lamentations could be heard echoing through the streets for weeks to come. Then he hired a team of painters to whitewash every corner of the compound, even to the tiles of the roof. And finally—and this was perhaps the hardest thing of all—he sold the vermilion Hummer to a TV actor known for his sensitive eyes and hyperactive jaw, replacing it with a used van of uncertain provenance and a color indistinguishable from the dirt of the streets.



"At least he died in his sleep."



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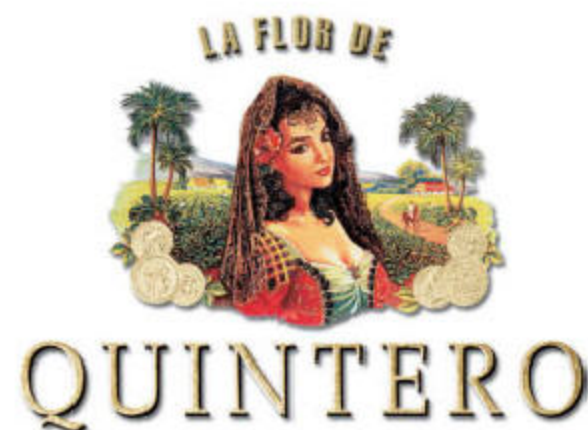
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SMASHING WINDOWS

(continued from page 66)

Is that right? Are my figures correct?

Yeah, they are. If Juan smashed 30 big windows a year, I would still save \$1,000.

So send me the boy, Ralph—along with a certified check for \$10,000—and I'll turn him into a walking profit machine. Indeed. Send me all of those angry little limey bastards you can round up. We can do business on this score. Just ship them over, with a \$10K cheque for each one, and after that you can go about yr. filthy, destructive business with a clear conscience.

The prime minister is a denatured pig, Ralph, and you should beat on her like a gong. Draw horrible cartoons of the bitch and sell them for many dollars to *The Times* & *Private Eye*! But don't come weeping to me when your son takes it into his head to smash a few windows. You might as well try to teach a young dog not to piss on a tree.

Have you ever put a brick through a big plate-glass window, Ralph? It makes a wonderful goddamn noise, and the people inside run around like rats in a firestorm. It's fun, Ralph, and a bargain at any price.

What the fuck do you think we've been doing all these years? Do you think you were getting paid for yr. goddamn silly art?

No, Ralph. You were getting paid to smash windows. And that is an art in itself. The trick is getting paid for it.

What? Hello? Are you still there, Ralph?

You sniveling, hypocritical bastard. If yr. son had your instincts, he'd be shooting at the prime minister instead of just smashing windows.

Are you ready for that? How are you going to feel when you wake up one of

these mornings & flip on the telly at the Old Manor just in time to catch a news bulletin about the prime minister being shot through the gizzard in Piccadilly Square, and then some BBC hot rod comes up with exclusive pictures of the dirty freak who did it, and he turns out to be your son?

Think about it, Ralph, and don't bother me anymore with yr. minor problems. Just send the boy over to me. I'll soften him up with trench work until his green card runs out, then we'll move him to Australia. And five years from now you'll get an invitation to a wedding at a sheep ranch in Perth.

And so much for that, Ralph. We have our own problems to deal with. Children are like TV sets. When they start acting weird, whack them across the eyes with a big rubber basketball shoe.

How's that for wisdom?

Something wrong with it?

No, I don't think so. Today's plate-glass window is tomorrow's BBC story. Keep that in mind & you won't go wrong. Just send me the boys and the cheques.

(I can't spell that word, Ralph, but I think you know what I mean. It's what happens when the son of a famous English artist shows up on the telly with a burp gun in his hand & the still-twitching body of the prime minister at his feet.)

You can't even run from that one, Ralph—much less hide—so if you think it's a real possibility, all I can advise you to do is stock up on whiskey and codeine. That will keep you dumb enough to handle the shock when that ratchet head, glue-crazy little freak finally does the deed.

The subsequent publicity will be a nightmare. But don't worry—your friends will stand behind you. I'll catch one of those polar flights out of Denver

and be there eight hours after it happens. We'll have a monster press conference in the lobby of Brown's Hotel.

Say nothing until I get there. Don't even claim bloodlines with the boy. Say nothing.

I'll talk to the press. And we will bury your shame forever, in a blizzard of angry bullshit.

Right. And how's that for art?

Never mind. Let's get back to this terrible problem you're having with your son. He's a murderous little bastard for sure, and Jesus, Ralph, I think I might have misspoke myself when I said 10,000 would cover it.

No, let's talk about 30, Ralph. You've got a real monster on your hands. I wouldn't touch him for less than 30.

[Handwritten] (Whoops—I just got a call with regard to the opening of *F&L* in Las Vegas in London on Jan 25—where I will be the guest of honor.)

You're in luck, Ralph. I can counsel the boy personally in my suite at Brown's Hotel.

I can film my personal counseling sessions, as well as the stage production.

See you soon,

Yr. buddy, HST"

●

As it happens, Hunter was right. It was hell at the time, but I think it worked, and today Theo is a great guitarist, singer, songwriter and all-around fine human being, who serves his community as a printer—not quite his own choice of penal servitude but an honest job. He stands like the Statue of Liberty operating state-of-the-art printing equipment, transforming drivel into elegant documents about mail-order bargains for personalized diapers, brochures for money-laundering opportunities and funeral-parlor circulars on how to die with dignity and be buried with long-term afterlife opportunities.

As I have said, it is a way to earn an honest living. He is a musician, for God's sake! And that is exactly what he should be doing—all the time. But the world is warped, so he plays at being a printer. He would just as willingly print a political leaflet to impeach George W. Bush, if given the chance, and also Tony Blair. Just as easily he would print one advocating a third term for both those sons of bitches. He is my beloved son and I love him dearly. Like me, he looks through a glass darkly.

Since those far-off optimistic times, I have met some of the children of our generation, and they seem pretty good to me, but the parents on the whole are a miserable mess, fucked-up and lost—a wandering tribe of disillusioned mutants whose brains died inside an ideology that seemed like a good idea at the time.



"The best thing about being 40 is I can date women half my age and not go to jail."



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MINE 26

(continued from page 56)

would have looked like a young Wilfred Brimley if his face and hands hadn't been covered in coal dust.

"My grandpappy was a miner, my pappy was a miner, and now my boy's a miner," he said. "The more things change, more they stay the same." A miner for 26 years, Baker described himself as "an old former hippie trying to survive." Once, he told me, a rock fell on his back and crushed his feet while he was underground. "A man's gotta be stupid not to be scared," he said. "But, hey, my wife got six years of college, and I can make more in the mines than she can teaching in a prison." Miners make between \$17 and \$22 an hour. A person working in a retail store makes \$5.15 an hour.

The door opened. "Come in, buddy." Keith went to a dirty window with a watering can. On the windowsill were Styrofoam coffee cups filled with dirt and frail green shoots straining toward sunlight. "Tomatoes," he said as he watered them. "When they're grown, I'll plant 'em outside. By July I'll have tomatoes for the guys' lunches." At home he grows apples, cherries, grapes, pears and bananas, as well as basil, peppers, garlic and tomatoes for a chicken parmigiana sauce. His maternal grandfather, Guerno Galosi, emigrated from Italy with his wife, Nazzaranna, in 1928. During processing at Ellis Island, Galosi's name was changed to William Glass, his wife's to Miss Glass. A mine representative offered him a job cutting coal in Dante (pronounced *dant*), where Keith, one of six children, would eventually grow up. Keith's father died when Keith was seven. Keith went into the mines at 18.

"I watched those old guys go into the mines," he said, sitting behind his desk, "and that's all I wanted to be. I couldn't wait to take my lunch bucket down there and listen to their old war stories." Keith looks boyish for a man his age, his pink face clean-shaven, his blue eyes as mischievous as a child's. He started in the mines as a red hat, an inexperienced laborer, and progressed to become a black hat, an equipment operator. At 22 he became a white hat, a foreman. Mostly he's worked in union mines. "In those days," he said, "the union watched out for you. Today there's not much difference between union and nonunion mines except nonunion miners take care of themselves." Deep Mine 26, a nonunion mine, is well run and operated, says Phil Smith, the local communications director of the United Mine Workers of America, adding that nonunion guys sacrifice benefits for \$1 or \$2 more an hour in wages. The "tremendous difference" between union and nonunion, he says, is that when a nonunion miner goes to his foreman with a problem and the foreman doesn't agree with him, the miner

has to call a federal hotline, which can take hours or days to deal with the complaint. At a union mine, a rep is on-site to deal with problems immediately.

Thirty years ago, everything in a mining camp revolved around the mines. "You socialized with miners," Keith said. "They were your family. Older guys taught younger guys." Unlike other jobs, coal mining instigated few rivalries because the close quarters demanded teamwork. Miners often lived in row houses owned by the mine company. They shopped in the company store, which had three sections: guns and tools on one side, clothes and dry goods on the other and groceries in the middle. "Everything was top quality," Keith said. "The best cuts of meat. You charged it, and the company took it out of your check. The stores vanished in the late 1970s because they'd become a headache for the mines to keep up." Also, Wal-Marts began appearing near small coal camps to take advantage of miners' disposable income.

Mining camps in the past had a strict social hierarchy, with nonmine workers at the bottom, miners in the middle and mine executives at the top. "When I was a boy I watched those big executives in their fancy cars, smoking big cigars," Keith said. "I realized that's what I wanted to be. A prestigious person who made decisions." Keith smiled. "Now I'm the guy I used to watch in Dante." Keith doesn't go down into the mines much anymore. He spends his days hosting the press, holding meetings, telling jokes.

"After Sago, you get some fear," he said. "Anything out of our control could happen. But if it's in our control, I can take care of you." Keith said miners know what to do when accidents happen, as they inevitably do. "There's a misconception that miners are dumb. We're MacGyver types. We can adjust to anything underground. Things change—the roof, the composition of the rock, moisture."

Bledsoe came in with miner's gear for me: a hard hat with a safety light, safety glasses, coveralls with red-and-silver stripes and steel-toe rubber boots. Over my shoulders he hooked a harness that held a 14-hour battery for my hat light; a self-rescuer, a canteenlike container that held enough air to last an hour; and a methanometer, which measures methane and emits a sirenlike noise if it detects too much. I didn't tell Bledsoe I was claustrophobic and feared being buried alive. I just signed the mine's safety form.

While Keith made calls, Bledsoe and I stepped outside onto the deck that looks out over the mine's surface. Miners covered in coal dust moved in and out of a Quonset hut that serves as a warehouse. They hovered over machines, repairing them. Part of Bledsoe's job is to ride in the helicopter to the hospital with injured miners to see that they get the best care, and then to go into the mine and investigate accidents.

Keith, in his clean miner's gear, came out onto the deck. He pointed to the sky. "Wild turkeys," he said. They soared over a patch of pussy willows and disappeared into the woods. Keith pointed down to an old miner covered with coal dust, bending over to pick up a log. "That's the old man, Carson Vanover," he said. "He'll be 65 tomorrow. We're gonna have a birthday party for him. He made \$140,000 last year, working 100 hours a week. We cut him back to 80 hours so he won't get hurt. Yeah, you can talk to him, but the old man don't go to nobody." Keith called out to another miner, a heavysset man with a beard. "Hey, Shug, this here fella from PLAYBOY wants to talk to you." Shug flung the back of his hand at me and walked away. Keith laughed. "He's a preacher."

Keith and I went down to the mantrip that would take us into the mine. It looked like the bottom half of a Bradley fighting vehicle. Sammy Adkins, the miner working on it, is a compact man who looks younger than his 52 years, even with coal dust covering his bearded face like war paint. We shook hands but only after he took a little sideways glance at the dirt on his. Then Keith and I got into the vehicle and rumbled toward the gaping hole in the mountain. We were to rumble slowly down into the mine at a six-degree angle for 2,700 feet until we reached the bottom, 1,300 feet below. On the conveyor belt were two signs: DAY SHIFT 337 DAYS NO LOST TIME ACCIDENTS and EVENING SHIFT 28 DAYS NO LOST TIME ACCIDENTS. We passed another sign, FINISH EACH DAY INJURY AND ACCIDENT FREE, then another overhead, 2,500 FEET.

The sunlight vanished behind us. We turned on our hat lights, which revealed the mine shaft ahead of us like a gray crypt. A cool blast rushed at our faces from the huge surface fans that blow in fresh air and suck out dirty air. The shaft narrowed, and it was as if we were moving down a funnel. We had to lean our heads toward each other to avoid hitting our hats on the mine roof. The floor became muddy. The odor of burning diesel fuel became stronger as we moved into narrower and narrower shafts.

At 1,000 feet below, the mantrip began bumping and rattling over the muddy mine floor. Big electrical wires snaked against one wall. The mine seam, where the coal was exposed, was less than five feet high now, and the roof overhead was covered with corrugated tin to keep it from falling in. We had to contort ourselves to avoid the big bolts that hold the roof up. Then we were on the mine floor. Keith and I turned off our hat lights. We were in darkness, blackness. I put my hand to my face but couldn't see it. I waited for my eyes to adjust to the darkness. Nothing.

We turned our hat lights back on, and they bathed the shale walls, which were ribboned with coal, in a hazy, eerie gray light. Up ahead the shaft led into darkness. Other shafts shot off to the left and

right, like ancient catacombs. We rumbled forward past a medical station—a stretcher and some rolls of tape—and then we were even deeper into the narrowing shaft, heading slowly toward the farthest end of the 100-acre mine. Here, miles from the mine's entrance, men were cutting coal. Keith told me each of the four working mines has a 10-man crew: four roof bolters, two miners, one shuttle-car operator, one foreman, one electrician and one miner to clean up. Miners haven't used picks and shovels since the late 1940s, when a diesel-powered machine called the continuous miner was invented to cut coal out of seams.

Until the early 1900s miners carried canaries in cages down into a mine to help them detect methane, which is odorless. If a canary dropped dead off its perch, the miners hustled out of the mine. Today sensors have pretty much eliminated the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning; only when miners are trapped for hours, as in Sago, does it become a concern. If a detector senses too much methane in the mine, miners call up to the surface to have more fresh air pumped down. If the amount of methane becomes extremely dangerous, the detector automatically shuts off all machines, and miners walk or run toward the surface, which can take as long as an hour. "In a disaster," said Mike Quillen, CEO of Alpha Natural Resources, which owns this mine, "the rule is, Get out of the mine. Only as a last resort do you barricade yourself in a room."

Keith stopped the mantrip, and we got off. Almost immediately my hat hit the mine's roof, 48 inches from the floor. High coal, as the miners call it. Low coal is any seam less than 30 inches high. Keith tried to show me how to walk hunched over so that my upper body would be parallel to the floor. He folded his hands behind his back for balance, like an old college professor pacing in his classroom. I lifted my head up again and clunked it against the roof. "Like this," he said. He twisted his head side-

ways and glanced up as if sneaking a peek. I grabbed at a seam of coal and it flaked off in my hand like a piecrust.

Up ahead, flashing red-and-silver stripes moved against the black velvet darkness: The roof bolters were at work. "That's the most dangerous job because they go into a room first," Keith explained. They worked hunched over, using a big machine that operates like an upside-down jackhammer to drill five-foot-long holes into the roof rock. Into those holes they inserted tubes of resin to hold five-foot-long screws, which bolted roof plates the size of cafeteria trays above them. The noise was deafening; the men worked by gesturing to one another with movements of their hat lights or hands. They put up a plate every 50 seconds, working quickly, seriously. Keith introduced me; the men nodded but said nothing and continued working.

Farther down the shaft in another crowded room were the big machines: a continuous miner, shuttle car and scooper. The continuous miner worked closest to the seams, the other two machines behind it. They moved forward, backward and sideways, missing each other by inches. Keith motioned to me to flatten myself against a wall to avoid them.

The public has a grisly fascination with miners' deaths when they occur underground. Such deaths speak to our most primal fears of being buried alive hundreds of feet under the earth. But in truth most miners' deaths are caused by the heavy machinery they use in the mine's confined spaces.

The continuous miner, a loud, infernal-looking machine, can gouge coal from the wall at rates as fast as 38 tons a minute. The business end of it has a large rotating drum equipped with curvy teeth made of carbide steel and tungsten, which give it a weird, menacing medieval look. As the teeth cut coal out of the earth, the machine's two metal arms swept it back to the shuttle, which scooped the coal, pivoted 180 degrees and rumbled down the shaft

toward the conveyor belt. Later the scooper would clean up what was left over. The continuous miner's operator stood a few yards behind it to the side. He flicked switches and pushed buttons on a metal box that hung at his waist from a harness around his shoulders.

The room was cold, damp and windy. It smelled of diesel fuel. Coal dust hovered in the air, but the air was still light, breathable. My back began to ache. I turned my head sideways and glanced up at the roof. It seemed to be pressing down on me like those moving walls and ceilings in horror movies.

I asked Keith how many hours a day men work like this. "Ten-hour shifts," he said. When I had asked Mike Quillen if miners ever came to the surface during their shift to eat lunch or go to the bathroom, he said, "Only wimps come out."

I signaled to Keith that I wanted to go back up to the surface. The man operating the continuous miner smiled at me, his white teeth flashing in his dirty face. "Why don't you stay a couple hours more, buddy?" he asked.

"That's hazard pay," I said.

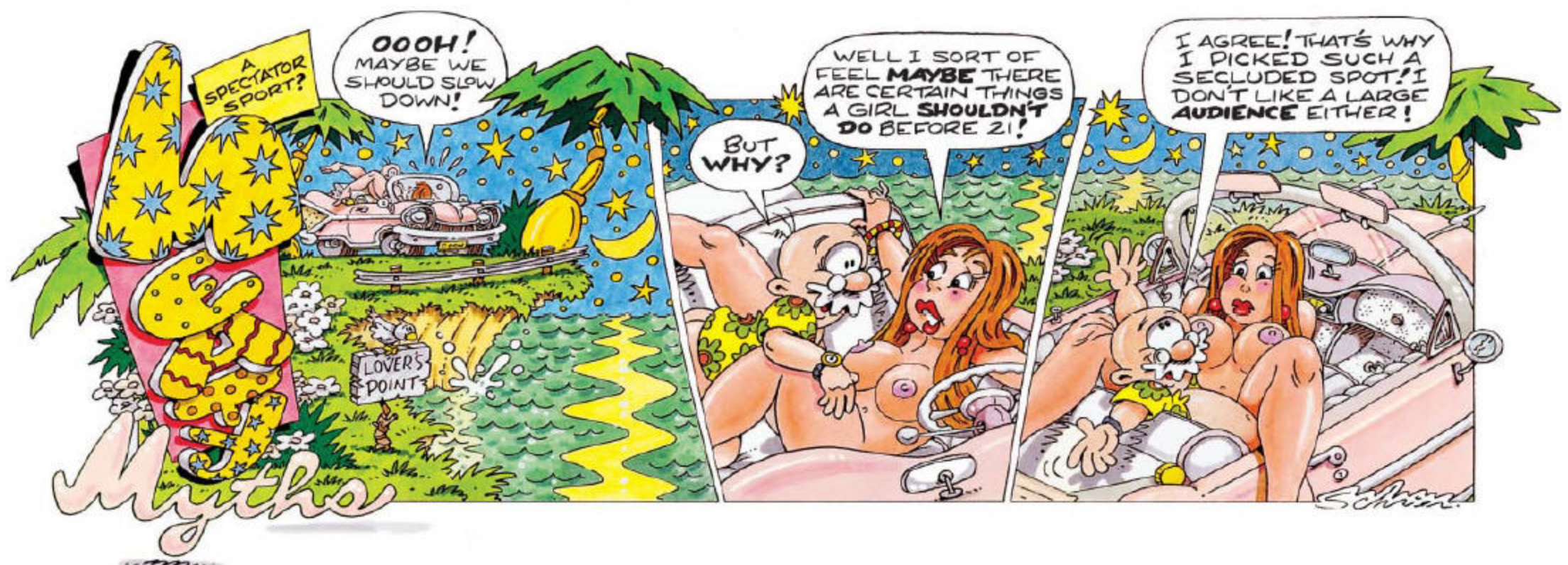
He said, "I know."

There was a crash behind us like falling rock. Keith and the miners whirled around. Keith moved cautiously down the shaft until he almost disappeared. He called back, "Aw, it ain't nothing. Just part of the roof." We started walking back to our mantrip. One of the miners called out after us, "Be careful."

The mantrip rumbled through the shaft. Keith pointed to pieces of wire hanging like string from the roof of the shaft every few feet. "There are numbers on them," he said. "That's how we guide ourselves out. If a miner's trapped, we can locate him by the number. Nobody ever touches those strings."

I saw sunlight up ahead.

I took off my filthy coveralls in Keith's office and went to the bathroom. My entire face was covered with coal dust except for my eyes, which had been shielded by the protective glasses. I looked like a raccoon. My hands and wrists were filthy too. I



scrubbed myself clean. When I got back to my hotel room I took a shower.

At eight that night I sat at the crowded bar in an Applebee's with Sammy Adkins; his friend A.B., the designated driver for the evening; and Eric, a coal-truck driver. Adkins was playing hearts and flowers with the barmaid, Christine, who was from California. Eric and A.B. swapped war stories. Twenty-eight members of Eric's family have been killed in mines. A.B. mentioned the South Mountain mine explosion of 1992. "Killed eight," he said. "I helped people get out from under rock in my day. Most of the time you can't blame no one. It's a hostile environment. But I'm as comfortable in a mine as I am here."

Eric grabbed a waitress walking by and kissed her. She told me her father had been crippled in a mine accident. Everyone in the area seemed to have stories. They told them after work and over drinks but never at the mines—that might bring down the wrath of God.

A.B. ordered another Coke. Virginia has stringent drunk-driving laws, he explained. "If you blow a 0.4, you go to jail and lose your license." For A.B. and Adkins, who live in Jenkins, Kentucky, at least 30 miles from their jobs, this would be a kind of death.

A.B., 47, has been a coal miner since he was 20. "If you live in eastern Kentucky and you don't work in the mines," he said, "you starve to death." A.B. wore glasses, had a clean-shaven face and neatly parted hair and dressed like Bob Newhart. Adkins looked like a miner on the town: blow-dried mullet, diamond-stud earring, Harley-Davidson jacket that seemed brand-new. Adkins and A.B. are members of a motorcycle club. "Miners are the only ones with enough money to buy a Harley," A.B. said. "Makes us a prize catch for women." A.B. is happily married with children. He works in a Kentucky mine, although he used to work in Alpha mines, which he described as the safest mines around.

"I wouldn't be happy doing nothing else," Adkins said as Eric left.

Our food came, and we ate in silence for a moment. Then Adkins asked how I liked it underground. Too cramped, I said. He laughed. "Hey, buddy, you was in high coal. To understand mining you gotta be in low coal."

"That Bill Jim seam in Bell County, Kentucky," said A.B. "That's low coal. Them's tough old boys in Bell County. They work in 22-inch-high seams. They wear knee pads and elbow pads and crawl on their bellies, using their elbows like legs for 10 hours a shift. The boys shoot out coal with dynamite and then scoop it up with a 19-inch-high shuttle they call a low-coal Charley."

Why would anyone work under such conditions? I asked. A.B. looked at me. "The money," he said. "The lower the

seam, the more companies pay." Even the lowest-paid red hat makes twice as much as most nonminers in mining camps can make. Miners in this area can earn between \$40,000 and \$80,000 a year, depending on how much overtime they work.

Out in the parking lot A.B. said, "You know, when you turn on a light, it goes on because of me. I feel I do some good." He looked around at the many cars and noted, "Must be the first of the month." We got in Adkins's 2003 Toyota. It was as spotless as it must have been the day he drove it off the lot. He held up his hands to show me a ridge of black inside his fingernails. "The only place we can never get clean," he said. Miners are so obsessed with cleanliness, Adkins told me, they even dress in their best clothes to go shopping at Wal-Mart.

The next morning I went to the warehouse to talk to Carson Vanover, the old man, before his birthday party. He sat on a dirty chair in a dirty office, his face and hands covered with coal dust, his blue coveralls gray with it. He hunched toward me, his hands folded in front of him like a schoolboy, a big robust-looking

"We drilled holes in the seams, stuck in the dynamite, lit the fuses and shot the coal out. You had to get out of there real quick. You didn't wanna be hit by debris."

old man with a young man's blue eyes. The miners called him "a look-up-to kind of guy." His father took him down into a mine when he was five years old, then left him alone in the blackness.

"No, sir, I didn't cry," Vanover said. "By 14 I was no longer afraid. It was like being home. I was proud to follow in my daddy's footsteps, and his daddy's."

In those days miners cut coal with picks and shoveled it into carts drawn by mules. There were no roof bolters, just rotting timbers; no methane detectors, just a little flame in a peaked glass on a miner's hat, called a possum light. When it flickered or changed color, there was too much methane in the mine.

Some of the early mines Vanover worked in used dynamite. "We drilled 11 holes in the seams," he said, "then we stuck in the dynamite, lit the fuses and shot the coal out. You had to get out of there real quick. You didn't wanna be hit by debris."

I asked why he started in the mines. "I was 18," he said. "I wanted to buy me a new car, a 1960 Chevy, turquoise and white, with a 348-cubic-inch engine. I paid \$108.56 a month for two years."

Vanover proudly showed me his work sheet. At 65 he worked 13 to 20 hours a day, week after week. It annoyed him when Keith cut back his hours from 100 to 80.

His last vacation came in 1984. After he married, his wife once asked him when he'd be coming home from work. He said, "When you see me comin'." She never asked again. She once accused him of having a mistress, Minnie the Miner. He seemed to have no real interest in the money he earned except to buy toys—a boat, a camper, tools—he has no time to enjoy. "Anything I want," he said, "I get."

He has no plans to retire. "Some people say it's a dirty job," he said, "but I figure when your number's up, you're done. How many people took boat rides after the *Titanic*? You just gotta pay attention is all, or you're history."

Vanover's birthday party began at noon in the warehouse, where methane detectors and self-rescuers were stacked on shelves, each labeled with a miner's name. Every miner is responsible for his safety devices. About 20 miners had come up out of the mine for the party, a rare occasion for them on both counts. Keith had laid out a birthday cake, chili dogs and chips on a counter, and an ice chest filled with soda sat on the floor. The filthy miners hovered around the food in the kind of awkward silence workingmen exhibit in certain social situations. Adkins took a bite out of a cold chili dog and said, "They take care of us, don't they?"

Keith led the miners in a rendition of "Happy Birthday." Vanover looked embarrassed.

The men stood around, eating, talking, razzing each other. Keith introduced me to a man with a big belly. "Now, don't say nothing about his belly," Keith grinned. Somebody called out to Shug the preacher and told him he had no ass. Shug turned and wiggled what he had in his baggy coveralls. The miner was right. Everyone laughed. It was like being in a baseball locker room in more innocent times.

Later that day I drove to Clinchco, to the home of a miner and preacher named Jimmy Ellis. Clinchco is an impoverished Appalachian mining camp of about 400 people. Railroad tracks ran behind a line of rotting company row houses, a red-brick old-folks' home and a Triple T convenience store. A sign read, READY OR NOT, JESUS IS COMING. At the entrance to Mill Street a gleaming plaque was planted in the earth, a memorial to the coal miners of Dickenson County, dedicated to those who lost their lives in the industry. More than 300 names were on the plaque.

Jimmy Ellis's house on Mill Street was a spotless yellow bungalow with four *veehicles*, as the miners called them, parked out front: a Ford F-150 truck, a Lincoln Navigator, a white Jaguar XJ6 and a Kia sedan so immaculate it was impossible to determine its age. Ellis, a chunky brown-skinned man with a miner's easy



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Q: Dear Steffanie,

For the past few weeks, I've been having some difficulty performing. I am 32 and for the first time in my life, I have a “drop dead gorgeous” 24 year old girlfriend, so every time we have sex, it's really important to me that I “perform like a champ”. Basically, I'm not sure if it's nerves, but my erection just isn't as firm as I would like it to be. I don't think I need a prescription, and “Herbal pills” never live up, I know, I've tried them! Is there anything out there that can get me “over the hump” faster or more effectively? I need something fast before she starts looking at younger men!

Kevin R.
Cincinnati, OH

A: Kevin,

When it comes to the “hump”, I'm a bit of an expert, and this question is a pretty common one, so Kevin you're not alone!

My fiancé is about your age, and when he had a some trouble with the “hump”, I noticed how much it really affected his performance in and out of the bedroom and believe me, I wanted him back on top of his game as much as he did! So, we did a little research, we spoke to his doctor and got on the Internet. We learned that male sexual performance is all about

blood flow and for lack of a better term, “exercise”. That's right, fellas. Just like anything else, you've got to use it or lose it!

I found a product that was right on target with what the experts were saying - “Maxoderm” (www.Maxoderm.com). It has a 97% customer satisfaction rate and 100% guaranteed, so we decided to order it. The results were immediate and very impressive! When it arrived, my fiancé tried it right away (he never thought “exercise” would be so much fun).

Needless to say, later that night, we had the most phenomenal, mind blowing sex, EVER.

He took control right from the start and I had never seen him more confident (or rock hard!). He was truly “confident and in charge”! And believe me, it just keeps getting better and better. It's an understatement to say that we're both huge fans of Maxoderm!

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smile, met me at the door, wearing a shimmering brown dress shirt and matching brown pants. He introduced me to his wife, Cynthia, who was perfectly made-up and dressed in a silk blouse and slacks. In their living room were dozens of angel figurines with the faces painted black, a scale model of an old whaling schooner and photographs in gilt frames of the Ellises' four children—all were now grown and had gone on to college—and their grandchildren. One prominent photo was of Jimmy as a reverend, in black robes with gold embroidery and two gold crosses hanging around his neck. His church had recently burned down, the result of a kitchen fire. Alpha Natural Resources gave Jimmy \$5,000 to help rebuild it. Paramount gave him \$7,500. Mike Quillen gave him \$1,000. He was with Jimmy on the helicopter that flew him to a hospital after he broke his back in a mine accident eight months ago.

"Mike Quillen called the whole time I was laid up," said Jimmy. "He's a good person."

"I worry about Jimmy after the accident," said Cynthia. "Him being slower." She glanced at him. "Older, too." They both laughed.

At 58 Jimmy wasn't supposed to return to work as quickly as he had. "I'm healed up enough," he said. "If I'm able to work, I gotta work. I'm not old enough to retire."

"We kiss and say we love each other every day he goes off to the mines," Cynthia said. Her brothers worked in mines, as did Jimmy's father. But as a teenager in Clinchco, Jimmy had no interest in them. He worked on and off in steel mills in Ohio, served in Vietnam, then went back to the steel mills until he finally accepted the inevitable in 1970.

"The first time I went down in a mine, I said to myself, Lordy, what have I done?" he said. "The coal seam was 27 inches. But I've been there ever since. I bonded with the miners. They're like family. We share personal life, not like the steelworkers. If my daughter's sick, the miners ask about her. Miners don't see no prejudice."

When Jimmy first started in the mines, he estimates, 50 percent of the miners were black. Now it's about three percent. "I worked in union mines until 1974," he said. "In those days the Man got away with murder. But today I like nonunion better. If you want something done, you don't have to ask. You just have to sacrifice some benefits for higher salary. Miners spend; we don't save. Alpha's the best mine I've ever worked for. They take care of you like family."

Jimmy has worked many different jobs in the mines. He has served as a laborer and roof bolter and has mined coal with dynamite and a pick and shovel. Now he's a section foreman. "I'm proud of my job," he said. "I've achieved my goals."

After more than 36 years of mining, Jimmy said, he could never work above-

ground again—not even his broken back could deter him. His accident happened on June 14, 2005. A two-ton rock fell on him. He crawled out from under it without help; then his crew got him up to the surface in 15 minutes. Within 45 minutes he was at a hospital. "My men did a great job," he said. He still walks hunched over from his back injury and his years underground.

"You can always tell a miner," said Cynthia. "Even at the beach they walk bent over." Jimmy jumped up and gave me his miner's walk across the living room. Hunched over, his hands folded behind his back, he twisted his head and glanced up at an imaginary sun. Cynthia laughed. "Yes! That's it. He even walks like that in Lowe's."

Jimmy said he had lived a full life before he found Jesus and was saved in 1990. "Like Saint Augustine," I said. "You got your fair share." Jimmy and Cynthia roared with laughter, Cynthia making little waving motions at her cheeks as if to cool a hot flash. "Some people are Christians all their life," she said, "so they don't know how to live."

*A two-ton rock fell on him.
He crawled out from under
it without help; then his
crew got him up to the surface.
Within 45 minutes he was
at a hospital.*

"Amen!" Jimmy said with a sheepish grin. Then he added more seriously, "One day God told me, 'Anything you touch, I'll tear it down if you don't serve me.' So I became a preacher in 1993. I have 27 parishioners, some of them white."

●

The next morning I was in a coal truck loaded with more than 50 tons of coal dust as it left the mine, headed toward the Toms Creek Preparation Plant in Coeburn. The driver was a man in his late 40s named Everett Hutchinson. He steered the big truck past the sign that read DEEP MINE 26 OUT, across the railroad tracks and onto the corkscrewing two-lane blacktop. He flicked on his CB radio and reported his position to the office. "Passing the yellow trailer." Then he explained, "Let 'em know where I am." The twisting road is dangerous for the big 22-wheel, 18-gear trucks, which weigh 21,000 pounds empty and up to 160,000 pounds loaded. Hutchinson pointed to a culvert at the bottom of a switchback. "Three trucks turned over here."

It takes Hutchinson an hour to make the 20-mile trip back and forth from the

mine to Toms. He gets paid \$18 for each run. He shifted gears, slowing the heavy truck around a sharp curve. After struggling up a hill, we came to a flat stretch of blacktop and hurtled forward at almost 45 miles an hour; it felt as if the big truck had become a runaway train. "It takes a football field to stop these things," he said. He slowed for a speeding car in the opposite lane. "My biggest fear is cars," he said. Often a driver will try to pass the truck on a blind curve or a hill, and just as often another truck will be coming in the opposite lane.

Hutchinson spoke into his CB, "RBJ," the call letters of an abandoned mine. A few minutes later we turned left at the sign for Toms, moved slowly up a hill and came to a weighing station. Then the truck moved up the grade to the hopper, which is like an open-sided self-storage room. Hutchinson backed the truck up, then dumped the coal onto the waffle-grid floor. From there the coal is put on a conveyer belt to a silo, where it is washed clean of dirt and rock. Then bulldozers load it onto waiting railroad cars that ship it all over the country.

Driving back empty to Deep Mine 26, the big truck hit 55 miles an hour on the twisting blacktop. Hutchinson told me he used to be a long-haul trucker in Baltimore. "But my daughter got tired of going through metal detectors to get into her high school." So he moved to Coeburn in 1990 and began hauling coal. The laid-back country life was better for his family. He has been married almost 30 years to his high school sweetheart. "I knew her when she was seven and I was nine." He laughed. "Yeah, I pulled her pigtails." He turned to look at me. "It's scary. You know, we buy each other anniversary cards, and we get the same cards."

The following morning I was sitting in Keith's office talking to Jason Stanley, a 25-year-old red hat from a family with four generations of miners. He is tall, lean and boyishly handsome, and he had already acquired the miner's habit of dipping Skoal and spitting tobacco juice into a plastic bottle.

"I never thought I'd go underground," he said. "I thought I'd break the tradition. So I went to college for two years. I thought I'd be something great. But I couldn't figure out what I wanted to be." He smiled.

Stanley quit college and took a series of call-center jobs, most recently with Travelocity, for \$8 an hour. "Travelocity broke my Appalachian accent," he said. "The miners make fun of my generic accent. They call me a Yankee." Stanley wasn't disappointed when his job was outsourced to India. In the summer of 2005 he married Katrina Elkins, from Whitesburg, Kentucky. He told her the only way they could have a good life was if he worked in the mines. "She was scared to death at first," he told me. "I explained how my dad never lost time in 25 years." So in October 2005 he went

underground. "I was fascinated by the rock formations," he said. "It wasn't scary. The guys took me under their wing. I realized if I screwed up, I screwed up for everyone. It wasn't hard adjusting to older people, because they looked at everything in a funny way." When he got his first paycheck, Keith told him not to spend his money on a new car but to buy a beat-up truck instead. The next week Stanley showed him his used truck and then, grinning sheepishly, told him he'd bought a new Pontiac Trans Am, too.

Stanley spat tobacco juice into his bottle and said, "My father tried to discourage me, but now he's proud. I could be a miner for 40 years." He smiled in wonder. "The other day I went to McDonald's in my dirty uniform. People let me get ahead in line." Then he asked if I wanted to meet his wife. A few minutes later I was following his truck to Clintwood, a much neater, more prosperous-looking coal camp than Clinchco. Jason and Katrina Stanley's trailer is at the top of a hill dotted with other modest homes and one sprawling ranch house with a manicured lawn, new tan siding and four cars in the driveway. That house belongs to Jason's father.

Katrina met us at the door. She was, as the miners would say, "a bitty little thing," barely 100 pounds. I told her she looked like Uma Thurman. She gave me a hard look and said, "Are you saying I have a big nose?"

Jason jumped in. "He means you got a distinctive look."

"Jason says I look like Reese Witherspoon," said Katrina.

I sat on a sofa facing a small TV. Before I could ask a question Katrina began talking. She told me she was a "surprise baby" her mother had at 37, after having had two sons. Katrina's father died when she was two, and she spent a lot of time with her brothers, fishing and watching football games on television.

The couple met at a Super Wal-Mart when Jason was a freshman in college. "Wal-Mart is like our Hollywood," Katrina said. "We drove around the parking lot and yelled at whoever we thought was cute." When Jason asked

her out, she refused at first because he was 18 and she was only 15. Finally she succumbed to his entreaties. "He was so intellectual," she said. "I fell in love with his mind. Now he's my best friend."

"She watches football, I watch the Discovery Channel," Jason said. "I spend a lot of time thinking." He smiled sheepishly. "I'm trying to figure out the world."

"He can play the piano," said Katrina. "We both love classical music. He might be a miner on the outside, but he doesn't limit himself. I'm just enlightened listening to him. He's got a great heart. What I lack, he has; what he lacks, I have." Jason already has an old man's contemplative nature. He thinks before he speaks, whereas Katrina admits she may never

"I'm gonna take her to Virginia Beach," said Jason.

Katrina looked down as if embarrassed. "I've never seen the ocean."

When he first told her he was thinking of going down into the mines Katrina had cried, "Oh my God! Lord, you're going underground!" Then after Sago she was terrified to see him head to work.

"It's hard not being with him," Katrina said. While Jason works a shorter, red-hat shift from 11 P.M. to seven A.M., Katrina prowls her trailer, forcing herself to stay awake so that after he returns she can get in bed with him at two P.M. when he goes to sleep. When I commented that he must be tired a lot, she looked at me knowingly. "Oh, don't you worry," she said. "That's gotta happen."

Jason smiled at his wife. I remembered Carson Vanover, who never saw his own wife. I asked Jason about him. He said, "I asked Carson why he worked so much. He said work was his hobby. But that ain't it." He leaned over toward me, his elbows on his knees. "When he's in the Wal-Mart, he's just an old man. When he's in the mines he's the Old Man."

"Since Jason's been in the mines, he's become a man," said Katrina. "Some men are not even grown at 30." She smiled at her husband. "He even walks bent over like a miner in public. See the way he dips Skoal right from the tin? That's because his hands are dirty with coal dust." She sat there a moment, her hands folded on her lap. Then she

said, "Jason values life more now. Death is gonna come, so you have to appreciate life more than be scared of it."

•

Later I stopped by the Paramount offices to say good-bye to Henry Keith. "I got something for you, buddy," he said. He handed me my dirty miner's coveralls.

When I got back to Florida I showed the coveralls to my wife, and she offered to wash them for me. I told her not to bother. I hung them on the back of my office door. The next morning, when I went back to the office and sat at my desk, I saw them.

have had a thought she didn't express. Jason said he hopes to be able to put Katrina through college so she can get a job she would like, maybe something with animals. "She had poodles," he said, "but I wouldn't let her bring them into our house because we had new furniture."

"He's like his father," said Katrina.

"If you drop a crumb in my father's house, you'll hear about it," he said.

I asked Katrina if she planned on having children. Her eyes grew steely. She said she had seen too many of her girlfriends get pregnant at 15. "I don't want to be an average person. I want to be something special. God created this beautiful world, and I want to see it all."



EVA LONGORIA

(continued from page 109)

fish aren't doing anything but swimming along in their own merry way, yet people can't help but watch. If Brad and Angelina are in town, that's lucky for all of us because then there's a diversion, like the day Britney Spears had her baby. That was also a good day for me. Earlier this year something fell on the *Desperate Housewives* set and I got a concussion, but I never lost consciousness and was home from the hospital within an hour. By the time I got home there must have been 40 paparazzi outside my house. My girlfriends came over to take care of me, and while we were watching *Oprah*, the show was interrupted by "Breaking news: Eva Longoria almost fatally injured."

Q7

PLAYBOY: Have you gotten used to all the attention?

LONGORIA: I'll be at a basketball game, scarfing down nachos and hot dogs, and of course there will be all these photos of me with my mouth wide open and

a nacho halfway in. It's all very weird. I think if I ever get used to that stuff, something's not right with me.

Q8

PLAYBOY: At what point do guys' stares turn into leers?

LONGORIA: I don't think a guy seriously noticed me until late in high school, so I never noticed men staring at me in the past, much less now. When my closest friends go, "That guy just won't stop looking at you," I'm always like, "What guy? Does he know me?" And they'll say, "Duh, yeah, he knows you." I always forget I'm on a TV show. I was shooting something at a studio, and when we pulled up, all these photographers were waiting outside. I said to my friends, "Oh my God, you guys, who's here?" And they said, "You are." And I said, "Oh, I thought a big star was here."

Q9

PLAYBOY: Your boyfriend is San Antonio Spurs guard Tony Parker. How does an NBA star woo a successful actress?

LONGORIA: Tony did it correctly. I took

my dad to a Spurs game, and the team asked if we wanted to meet the players afterward, because they would love to meet me. I said no, but my dad said yes. So we took my dad back to the locker room, met all the players and took pictures with them. Tony was the last one I met. He invited my dad out to dinner, so of course I had to come. Then he asked me out for lunch. We talked on the phone for two months before we went on another date. It was very natural and slow, unexpected—very un-Hollywood. And here we are two years later.

Q10

PLAYBOY: If you're really Parker's sex teacher, as another interview suggested, what have you taught him lately?

LONGORIA: That's something I definitely want to clear up. That magazine story was quoted a lot, especially on the Internet: "Eva is the experienced one in the bedroom," and "Tony's had sex only once." I'm 31, Tony's 24. Tony's been in one long-term relationship. I've been married, divorced and in several long-term relationships, so I'm definitely the experienced one. When I met him, he was already way more mature and responsible than I was by tenfold and had been in the spotlight longer than I had. What can make me wobbly in a relationship is immaturity, which spawns all the other ugly things, but luckily Tony's more mature than I am. I'd also like to say Tony and I are not engaged. I'm not pregnant. Tony's definitely the teacher. He teaches me a lot of sweet, sexy things to say in French, but I can say them only to Tony.

Q11

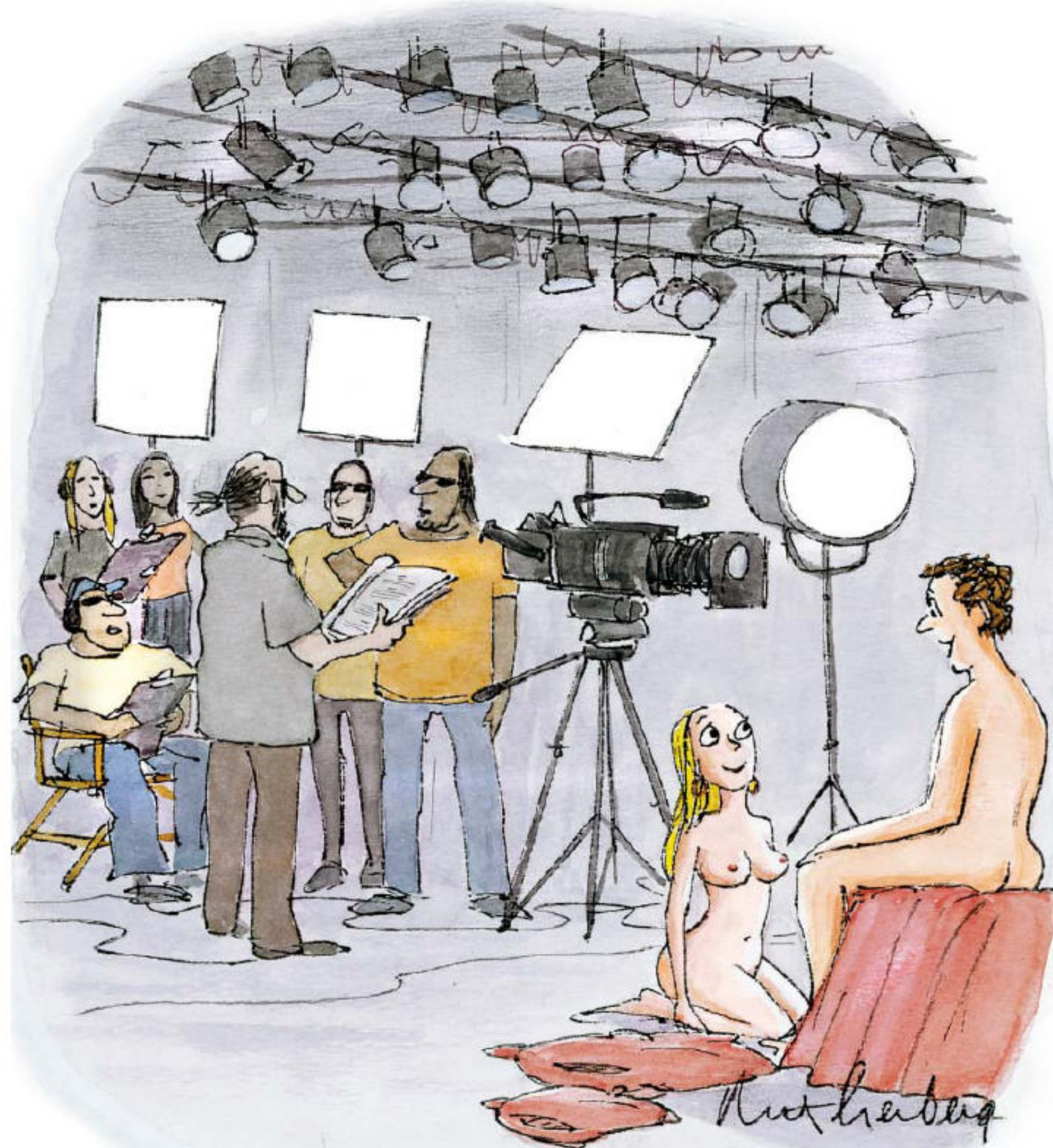
PLAYBOY: Monogamy can be challenging, especially for two famous, busy people. Is monogamy overrated?

LONGORIA: I think you're born monogamous, like a penguin—you have one mate, and that's all you can handle. I don't have time to be with more than one person. I think that's the key. I fly home to Texas every weekend to be with Tony, and we know we have limited time together, so we don't waste it on anything like fighting. In between we e-mail, phone and use our Sidekicks to send photos, which of course we keep clean. We're both so afraid of anything obscene turning up on the Internet.

Q12

PLAYBOY: You've been candid in interviews about things you like, such as vibrators and G-strings. Are you currently packing a vibrator? Are you wearing a G-string?

LONGORIA: The function of a G-string is to give you no panty lines. The by-product of a G-string is that it's sexy. So the answer is yes, and it's white. The interviews in which I mentioned



"So, can I see you later—after the money shot?"

a vibrator were five years ago. With my relationship, obviously some things have changed.

Q13

PLAYBOY: What's sexier to you: kissing or making love?

LONGORIA: Kissing is way more personal than sex, which is why I hate, hate, hate doing kissing scenes on-screen. Sex can definitely be just physical. For me there's a connection—a sense of friendship, respect and sexuality—that comes more from a kiss than from sex. I didn't like it in the past when someone kissed my neck, but I love it when Tony does. Some people have a fascination with feet, but I hate that. Tony could touch my feet, though, and I don't think I would mind.

Q14

PLAYBOY: You earned a degree in kinesiology from Texas A&M. When was the last time you applied your knowledge of human anatomy to movement?

LONGORIA: It's been a while, but the knowledge is always applicable in my life because I want to be healthy. What I originally wanted to do was study sports medicine and be a trainer for a professional athletic team, like the Dallas Cowboys or the Spurs. I was a gym rat—kickboxing, yoga, Pilates, cycling, weight training, conditioning, circuit training. I just wanted to be in the gym all the time. Now I get bored with working out, so my trainer mixes it up for me.

Q15

PLAYBOY: You grew up as a gun enthusiast on a ranch in Corpus Christi, Texas. What's the last thing you hunted down, killed, skinned and ate?

LONGORIA: It's been a long time. Now I love to go target shooting and shoot a bull's-eye with my dad. There's definitely some truth to that old line "You can't get a man with a gun." Ever since I've become this sex symbol or whatever you call it, guys hit on me less. There's always that intimidation factor of a powerful woman who may shoot a man down—with or without a gun.

Q16

PLAYBOY: How did your parents deal with guys hanging around the ranch? Were guns involved?

LONGORIA: My dad wouldn't let boys even call the house, let alone come over. The first time a boy called me for homework or something, I was in sixth grade, and my dad flipped out. I'm the extreme opposite of everybody else in my family. I don't look like the rest of them, and it was hard having my sisters tease me all the time, saying I was adopted, I was switched at the hospital or they found me in a Dumpster. Now it's just kind of flattering to be on any list of the most beautiful, hottest

or sexiest. I just send the articles to my sisters, say "Ha!" and gloat a lot.

Q17

PLAYBOY: What early gigs would you have killed for?

LONGORIA: After I auditioned to be one of the girls who walked out with the wrestlers on *Battle Dome*, I thought, I can't believe I didn't get that. All you had to do was be pretty. I auditioned for *Dark Angel*, which Jessica Alba got. Eva Mendes and I met each other at the *Spanglish* auditions, and when I ran into her a few years later she said, "Can you imagine? If I had gotten *Spanglish*, I wouldn't have done *Hitch*, and if you had gotten *Spanglish*, you wouldn't have done *Desperate Housewives*." Growing up, my sisters and I were soap opera addicts because we didn't have money to go to the movies. So when I moved to L.A., I thought, If I could just get on a soap, my life would be great. I landed *The Young and the Restless*, but my character did so many bad things she was painted into a corner. So they fired me.

Q18

PLAYBOY: Not only were you fired from that show but your gig on the revived *Dragnet* lasted only a year. Do you have a message for people who put you down as you were heading up the ladder?

LONGORIA: My career and current status speak for themselves, so sometimes that's the victory right there—or knowing that people like the ones who fired me from *The Young and the Restless* are forced to see me on billboards everywhere. But I've always had cheerleaders along the way.

The casting director for *The Young and the Restless* helped me find *Dragnet*, and when that was canceled ABC kept me and that's how I got *Desperate Housewives*. I'm not bitter at all, although there is that one fashion designer who said, "We're not dressing her," because he thought I was such a nobody. When he sends clothes for free now, I send them right back.

Q19

PLAYBOY: Whose career intrigues you?

LONGORIA: Actually, I want to live with Michael Douglas, Catherine Zeta-Jones and the babies. They're such a fun, close-knit family. I could just say, "Hey, guys, where are we going today?" I absolutely want to become a *va-va-voom* movie star like Catherine and still go home at night to put my kids to bed. I won't do a movie if it means canceling a vacation with Tony or my family. I would much rather get married and have babies than have the best career in the world.

Q20

PLAYBOY: What do guys need to learn about making women like you—or Gabrielle—happy?

LONGORIA: I believe in the *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* idea that we don't have the same thinking pattern. A man should at least listen to what a woman has to say and then try to please her in a way that doesn't compromise who he is. A lot of guys overdo it and say, "I did everything for her," but I say, "Yeah, but you had the backbone of a jellyfish." Never be a jellyfish.



"Right at this point we decided to use the actual figures."

MICHAEL BROWN

(continued from page 52)

Suicide isn't my style. It's not in my nature.

PLAYBOY: When did it dawn on you that your career was in shambles?

BROWN: Right after I was sent home. *Sent home*—what a stupid phrase. Like a child. I'd been going 24 hours a day; the cell phone and the BlackBerry were literally attached to me 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I had the top-secret phones, and I was talking to the president of the United States. To go from that to zero miles an hour...

PLAYBOY: What was the effect of the blame and humiliation?

BROWN: Of being scapegoated? When everyone tried to shift all the blame for everything that went wrong onto my shoulders? What do you think? It's a heavy burden to carry.

PLAYBOY: It was a high fall from the president's nationally televised accolades, when he said, "Brownie, you're doing a heckuva job."

BROWN: That didn't mean anything to me. It's typical of the president. He's a cheerleader. You know what the comment did? How many people in the world do you think have ever called me Brownie? His name's George W. Bush. When he used that nickname, a lot of people in the media went, Is he an insider? Do they know each other? What's the deal here? That's when *Time* started researching my résumé and came up with the totally false story about my having inflated it.

PLAYBOY: The story was that you lied on your résumé, not just inflated it.

BROWN: Yeah, and it was because the media thought I was the president's buddy.

PLAYBOY: The buddy who was completely unqualified for the FEMA post—that the job was patronage.

BROWN: Yeah, and I had to live with that in the middle of everything else.

PLAYBOY: On your résumé you claimed to have been the assistant to the city manager in charge of emergency preparedness in Edmond, Oklahoma. Your boss told *Time* it was untrue. He said you were basically an intern.

BROWN: Right, which has been proven totally false. I was in charge of emergency police and fire departments and was a liaison to the Emergency Services Division. I was on the committee to develop the new emergency operations center, which is still running. The spokesperson has since submitted an affidavit saying the magazine totally took what she was saying out of context.

PLAYBOY: You were also accused of inventing a professorship.

BROWN: *Time* totally skewed those things.

PLAYBOY: If the story proved untrue, did *Time* print a retraction?

BROWN: It never printed a retraction. People said, "Why don't you sue them?" Why waste my time on that?

PLAYBOY: But it would have been far from

irrelevant if the person appointed to handle the disaster in New Orleans had lied on his résumé and was unqualified.

BROWN: If it were true, it would be absolutely relevant.

PLAYBOY: What about the charge of patronage? Exactly how did you get the job?

BROWN: Joe Allbaugh was Bush's chief of staff as Texas governor and his national campaign manager in 2000. We've known each other since college days. He called me, said the president was going to nominate him as director of FEMA and wanted me to be his general counsel. After 9/11 the president turned to me and said, "Hey, you're doing such a good job, why don't you be the deputy director?" When Joe left, I became director.

PLAYBOY: Do you maintain you were qualified to head FEMA?

BROWN: Yes.

PLAYBOY: Yet you admit you were unable to lead the organization in the way it needed to be led—to remake FEMA in ways that would have prepared it for this catastrophe.

BROWN: In the middle of the disaster I thought about quitting—after the first few days. I thought about saying, "If this is the way we're going to do it, fine. Send somebody else in. They've got eight hours to show up and I'm out." But then I thought, People are dying, people are suffering; I can't leave. It was a no-win situation. So I truly had to be the scapegoat. Throw all the sins on this goat and send him over the cliff. Okay, but I refuse to let them chop my head off. I keep coming back. I'm their worst nightmare.

PLAYBOY: It's true that you haven't gone quietly. What made you decide to fight back so publicly?

BROWN: I'm a fighter, and I believe I'm right. When I lost my job and everyone was piling on, my wife and a couple of good friends said to me, "We know you're down in the dumps now, but you're going to be judged by history for two things: whether you respond to this in a dignified way and whether you do it at the right time." I made the determination to bide my time and, when the time was right, to come out fighting. The time has come.

PLAYBOY: As far as you know, at some point did the administration decide you would be the fall guy?

BROWN: Yes, I've been told that.

PLAYBOY: Who said what to whom?

BROWN: I can't say anything other than I've been told the conversation took place.

PLAYBOY: Was it as specific as "Let's hang him out to dry"?

BROWN: Yeah. They had a plan in place before I was pulled out.

PLAYBOY: As you look back, did the worst attacks on you come from the administration, the media, other politicians, editorial writers, angry citizens calling talk-radio shows or whom?

BROWN: All of the above.

PLAYBOY: When was your final conversation with the president?

BROWN: On *Air Force One*, during his last trip when I was still at FEMA. I think it was the Wednesday before the Friday I was pushed out.

PLAYBOY: Nothing since?

BROWN: Nothing since.

PLAYBOY: On the flight did he betray a sense that you were to be fired?

BROWN: No, it was a hardworking session.

PLAYBOY: Did he indicate he was dissatisfied with you?

BROWN: No.

PLAYBOY: There were other stunning low points, such as your telling Ted Koppel you had just learned about the crisis at the convention center. Koppel was incredulous and said, "You just learned it? Haven't you been watching television?"

BROWN: People can either believe this or not, but this is how it happened. We learned about the convention center on the afternoon people started going in there. I was up that entire night, with the exception of maybe a couple of hours of sleep. I started doing the shows the next evening. Koppel said, "What are you doing about the convention center?" I instantly said, "We just learned about the convention center." I couldn't figure out what he was talking about. I meant "Yeah, I just learned about it when it started happening." After that, one after the other, reporters kept asking the same damn question. I thought, Why do they keep asking this? What's the problem here? When I finished the interviews and walked out, my aide said, "You kept saying you just learned about it, and they were interpreting that to mean you had just learned about it in the past 30 minutes or hour, while they've been reporting it for the past 24 hours." I went ballistic. I was out behind the satellite trucks, screaming, cussing, kicking—I was actually kicking one of the trucks, I was so mad, pounding on the thing. "Well, why didn't one of you guys step in and explain that to me between the breaks?" It was horrible phrasing, but I repeated it three or four times in a row.

PLAYBOY: Which led to descriptions of you as a deer in headlights and—

BROWN: "He's out of touch." "He doesn't have a clue what he's doing." "He's incompetent." "He's not qualified for the job." "He's got to go."

PLAYBOY: Was that the worst for you, or was it even worse when the House released your embarrassing e-mails?

BROWN: It was all equally bad.

PLAYBOY: Were you horrified when you learned your e-mails had been released?

BROWN: I was pissed off because every one of those e-mails was taken out of context. I must have had 100,000 e-mails, and they selectively released ones that made me look bad. Do you remember the famous one about being a fashion god?

PLAYBOY: We do.

BROWN: How could you forget that, right?

PLAYBOY: Do you understand how damning it was that you were worrying about your wardrobe in the middle of the crisis?

BROWN: I had just eaten lunch with the person I sent that to, and we were laughing about it—we can laugh about it now. She had always bugged me to get rid of the white shirt and put on a FEMA T-shirt or FEMA cap or something. I would get mad and say, “No, we need to look professional.” I wore a FEMA shirt that day because that’s all I had left. Anyway, she e-mailed me and said something about how fabulous I looked. I e-mailed back, “Yeah, I got it at Nordstrom. Aren’t I a fashion god?” Just trying to bring a little levity to the situation. I was making a joke.

PLAYBOY: According to many Americans it was not a time for joking. You were also criticized for your e-mail asking for help finding a dog sitter.

BROWN: This ticks me off because it was a serious e-mail. When I left to go to Katrina, my wife left for Scottsdale to see our daughter. We have a Saint Bernard and a dachshund. They were locked up in the house, so I e-mailed my scheduler and asked her to find somebody to watch the dogs for me. People were appalled that I was concerned about the dogs in the middle of a disaster. Well, what was I supposed to do? Leave the dogs there to starve for the next week?

PLAYBOY: Another e-mail was from one of your staffers, who said you needed time for a nice dinner now that Baton Rouge restaurants were open. At a time when people were starving, that didn’t go over well either.

BROWN: But I didn’t even know they were doing it. I mean, that was just stupid. Of course I sent her back home.

PLAYBOY: In another e-mail, a staffer advised you to roll up your sleeves to look as if you were working hard. “Even the president rolled his sleeves to just below the elbow,” she wrote. You and your staff seemed preoccupied with your image and personal needs.

BROWN: That was the same woman who sent me the e-mail saying, “He needs time to eat.”

PLAYBOY: Can you legitimately blame your staff for all these mistakes? You hired these people. You set the tone. One can assume your assistant had reason to believe it was her job to make sure you were well fed and dressed.

BROWN: When asked about that in a hearing, I said, “Not one of you sitting up here doesn’t have some staff person who walks over before that red light goes on, who adjusts your tie or makes sure the powder is just right.” Everybody does it—everybody. Look at who released those e-mails. Who selectively released ones that would make me look bad? Homeland Security.

PLAYBOY: As part of a campaign to discredit you?

BROWN: Draw your own conclusions. All I know is the department released certain e-mails. They were selectively released by the department to a Democratic congressman.

PLAYBOY: There were other appalling

e-mails. In one you talked about how bad you wanted to go home, walk your dogs and have a margarita.

BROWN: The problem is they ignored the work I was doing—the hundreds of other e-mails and the videotapes that prove what was really going on, that I was working against a system set up to fail.

PLAYBOY: In one congressional hearing, Representative Gene Taylor from Mississippi said you couldn’t relate to the losses of people hurt by the hurricane. You angrily fired back that you in fact did. Have you personally experienced disasters?

BROWN: My earliest childhood memory is of being on my grandparents’ farm in Osage County, Oklahoma and running to the shelter, the cellar—which seemed like it took forever, but it was probably 20 yards from the house—to escape a tornado. The next one I remember vividly was in Edmond when I was an assistant to the city manager, the position *Time* said didn’t exist. I went with the fire department on a run one day to a house engulfed in flames, everything totally destroyed; then I watched the family come home. I was devastated by this. I can still smell that fire. I lost a Sunday-school teacher, blown up in the Murrah Building. I lost a friend who was on the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. That congressman, that little twerp, said I didn’t understand suffering. He said I didn’t recognize the death and suffering that was going on. As I told him, I’ve seen death and suffering. I’ve smelled death. I smelled death in the tsunami. I know what it’s like to lose close friends in disasters. You don’t know how many people I’ve hugged as FEMA director—rich people, poor people, all ethnicities, people who lost everything. People who didn’t think it was going to happen to them. For that little twerp to claim I didn’t understand death and suffering—he can just bite me, for all I care.

PLAYBOY: Representative Kay Granger from Texas asked how you can sleep at night.

BROWN: You know what I want to say to Mrs. Granger? “How does Congress sleep at night when you people knew I’d been pointing out these potential failures, yet you did nothing?”

PLAYBOY: In a hearing you also had it out with Minnesota senator Norm Coleman.

BROWN: I thought that was so chickenshit. He came in there and started saying I didn’t show any leadership. He kept chastising me. I said, “Okay, now, ask me a question. Give me the specifics so I can respond to it.” And he turned and said, “Well, I’m sorry. I’m out of time, and I’ve got to go.” He got up and left. What kind of man is that? If you don’t have the guts to sit there and listen to my response and ask me questions about my leadership, then screw you!

PLAYBOY: You became a national joke on TV. Every comic and talk show host made fun of you.

BROWN: I truly didn’t hear most of them.

PLAYBOY: Jon Stewart said your prior job with the International Arabian Horse Association was proof the Bush



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T.J.

administration is beholden to the Arabian people.

BROWN: My line was better—that dealing with horses' asses taught me how to deal with the federal government.

PLAYBOY: Did you appreciate Stewart's description of you as a "Faulknerian idiot man-child"?

BROWN: Oh Lord. Thank you for reminding me.

PLAYBOY: How did your family take the attacks on you?

BROWN: After all this we were having dinner somewhere, and I said to our son and daughter, "You know, if I've embarrassed you guys, I'm sorry." My son put his silverware down and looked at me eyeball-to-eyeball and said, "Dad, we're proud of you. You haven't embarrassed us at all." It meant a lot.

PLAYBOY: How did your wife handle it?

BROWN: She was incredibly supportive. It has brought the family closer together. It made us focus on what's important.

PLAYBOY: Which is?

BROWN: The people you love and doing good, meaningful work. You also find out who your real friends are. They step forward to help and offer encouragement. I'm very picky now about who I work with.

PLAYBOY: How were your parents affected?

BROWN: My father-in-law was an old country surgeon. Thank God he wasn't

alive during all this stuff, because it would have killed him. Oh Lord, it would've killed him. He would've been so mad at the president and others. Oh God. I heard from my mom and dad throughout. There really is nothing greater than a parent's love. No matter how hard someone's stepping on you or rubbing your face in it, "We're still proud of you. We're thinking of you and praying for you. Hang in there." I'm sure it hurt them, but boy, they would never let on.

PLAYBOY: We've covered some of the horrifying moments, but was there one point when you began to feel somewhat vindicated?

BROWN: The most vindicating moment was when the videotapes came out. They showed what I was actually doing. Suddenly the mainstream media was saying, "Maybe we had this all wrong." The floodgates opened. I never looked to be vindicated. I was mainly concerned about how to get on with my life. But now, to have been vindicated in this way has been beyond my expectations.

PLAYBOY: Can these turnarounds make up for the attacks? Can your reputation truly be repaired?

BROWN: Never 100 percent. It may come as a shock to people in the mainstream media, but a lot of the country doesn't pay any attention to them. Most people

don't watch the news; they don't know or care that Katie Couric is about to become anchor of the *CBS Evening News*. Some of the vindication will never occur.

PLAYBOY: In one tape that turned many people's opinion, Bush seems distracted and uninterested in what you're saying. Much has been made of his not asking you any questions.

BROWN: I think that's missing the point. If people want to claim the president wasn't engaged or wasn't grasping the magnitude of the disaster, that's a fair issue to debate. But to use that videotape as proof is the wrong way to do it. He was on the videotape only to give a rah-rah speech. If they want to ask questions about engagement and responsibility, they should look at the fact that after the tsunami I told the president we weren't prepared for that kind of catastrophe. And nothing happened.

PLAYBOY: Nothing?

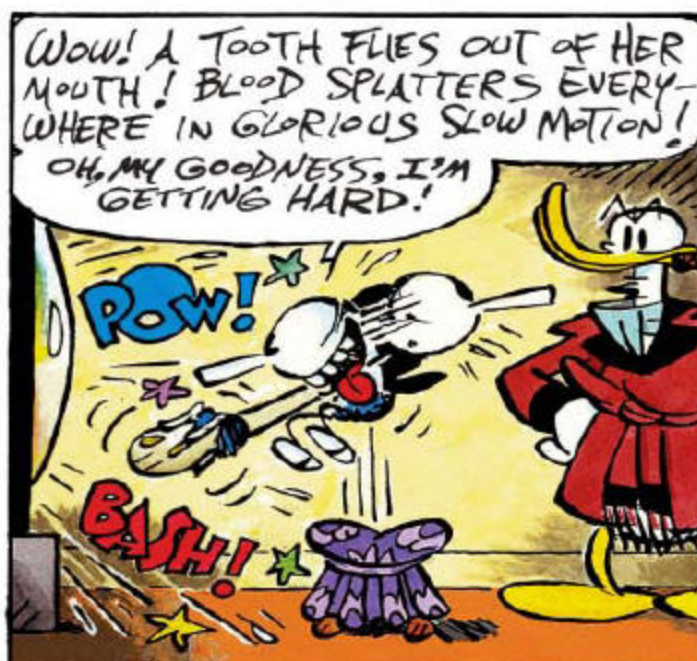
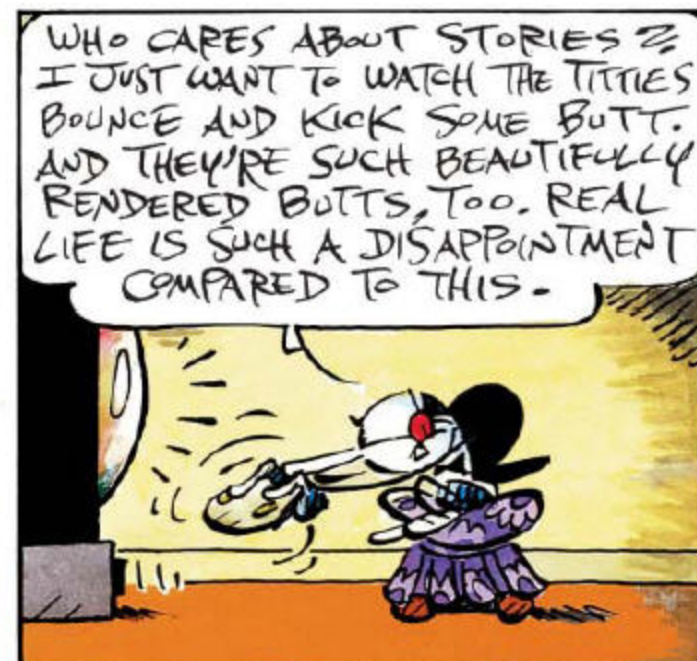
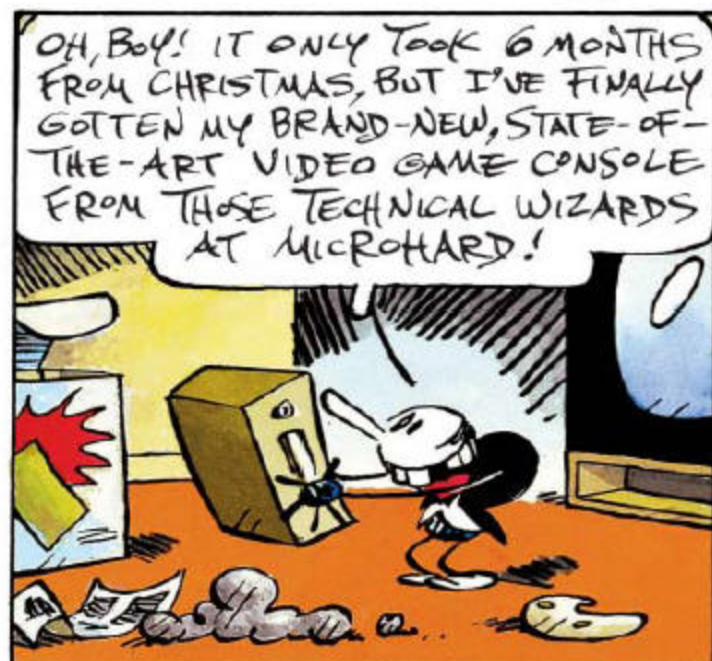
BROWN: It is scary. As I have said, things are worse than ever.

PLAYBOY: At exactly what point did you warn the president the U.S. was unprepared for a major disaster?

BROWN: Back when I returned from South Asia with Secretary Powell and Jeb Bush after the tsunami. I told the president, "We're not ready for something like that in this country." As horrific as the World Trade Center attack was, it was confined

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to 16 acres. What would happen if there were an enormous catastrophe like the tsunami? Or what would happen if we were hit simultaneously in two American cities? We are unprepared. We ought to be honest with the American people.

PLAYBOY: What needs to be done?

BROWN: Fix the borders. All the focus is on the southern border, but think about how big the Canadian border is. Where's the leadership? We have lost our way. These are perilous times. The radical Islamists are out to destroy our way of life.

PLAYBOY: What changes would help with future disasters?

BROWN: First, get every governor and emergency manager, the DHS secretary, every mayor and everyone else and determine their capabilities and map out a strategy. You need to know what they can and can't do. Then drive all your resources to fix what needs to be fixed. Natural disaster or terrorism, you have to plan for as many scenarios as possible. Say Al Qaeda decides it wants to do a bio event. It can't aerosolize smallpox to the point where it can cover a wide area, but it could do a local mall. What capabilities do communities have to deal with that? What capabilities do the feds have to help? Let's see where we are. Assess and make contingency plans for every possible scenario—at least as many as you can imagine. You've got to imagine big, too—100,000 people displaced. We haven't trained people in this country.

The alarm bell goes off. What do you do? We need to teach preparedness in grade schools.

PLAYBOY: In your line of work, are you paranoid, always looking for potential danger?

BROWN: I am always looking for vulnerabilities. I was sitting in Dulles airport last night after midnight, and the concourse was empty yet all these maintenance people were walking through with big carts full of screwdrivers, tools and piping. I'm thinking, There's a vulnerability. I watch the way the TSA screens. It's archaic. Do we honestly believe that now, with hardened cockpit doors, if somebody charged the cockpit with a knife or gun, the other passengers would sit there? We're still checking old

ladies for knitting needles; meanwhile I can get my Montblanc pen on a flight. I could use it to take somebody out—stab you in the jugular. We aren't using our resources very well. We aren't thinking.

PLAYBOY: In preparing for disaster, where is the line between rational and paranoid?

BROWN: In the case of a big disaster, whether a blizzard or Katrina or whatever, it may take a firefighter or rescue worker up to 72 hours to get to you. So you should be ready to survive on your own for 72 hours. That's not paranoid. Most of us don't think it's going to happen to us. Disasters are called disasters because they inherently are disasters. There's nothing clean about them. There's nothing easy about them.

PLAYBOY: We often assume we are in control, but we're learning the hard way that the best we may be able to do in many situations is just mitigate the damage.

BROWN: That's exactly right. The other point is we are learning we cannot expect our government to do everything for us. If we think we can rely on any level of government to take care of everything for us, we're doomed.

PLAYBOY: Since resigning, you've started a consulting firm for disaster preparedness. Is it true a Louisiana parish considered hiring you to help prepare for the upcoming hurricane season?

BROWN: St. Bernard Parish asked me to come down to meet with them. They wanted to hire me. When word got out that I was coming down, a lot of people started complaining about it.

PLAYBOY: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote, "No sane person would trust Brown to plop an egg into a pot of boiling water without screwing it up."

BROWN: That's just gratuitous.

PLAYBOY: Another newspaper said, "After you hire Brownie, you might want to hire Typhoid Mary to help you avoid infectious diseases."

BROWN: Another gratuitous one. I just told them, "Look, guys, I'm not coming down. If you ever want to call and ask me questions or want advice, feel free."

PLAYBOY: Obviously, it's not the reaction you want. But isn't it expected?

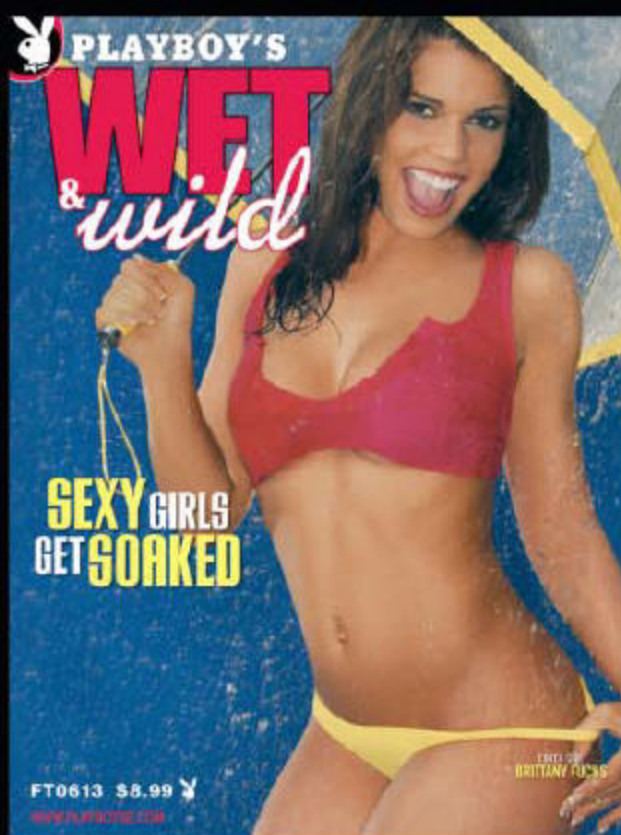
BROWN: Actually, I was a little surprised.

I didn't think it would be a cakewalk, but I didn't think there would be a backlash.

PLAYBOY: Do you really expect people to come to Michael Brown, the poster boy for the government's failures around Katrina, to help prepare for disaster?

BROWN: But they *are* coming. Since the videotapes and hearings, people have called and said, "We like how you handled yourself. We're looking for some advice." The hearings made the difference. People saw a stand-up guy. They think, He's been through hell. The big one is coming, and we want him on our side.

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PLAYBOY: How worried are you about avian flu?

BROWN: I'm not sure we've had an honest, objective discussion about avian flu. Be honest with the public and tell them what it means. We don't know how worried to be.

PLAYBOY: What forms of terrorist attack concern you most?

BROWN: Prior to 9/11 we had a lot of discussions at the White House about smallpox. I think they're still debating. Is smallpox a threat? Don't know. There were worries about dirty bombs. We need to think more about how to protect critical infrastructure. No matter how sophisticated we think we are as human beings, in a catastrophic event our humanity is exposed.



PIGSKIN PREVIEW

(continued from page 96)

double digits in wins this year, however. Hampered by injuries in 2005, running back Adrian Peterson is a front-runner for the Heisman. Quarterback Rhett Bomar, the Holiday Bowl MVP, is back and only a sophomore. If the offensive line's potential turns into on-field performance, Oklahoma will roll for lots of points.

Weakness: The Sooners defense will miss the meanness of tackle Dusty Dvoracek and linebacker Clint Ingram.

Key Game: No game is bigger for Oklahoma than its annual showdown in Dallas against Texas, this year on October 7.

Prediction: 10-2



7. MIAMI

Last Year: 9-3. LSU buried the Hurricanes 40-3 in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl.

Outlook: Going into their bowl game last season, the Hurricanes were 9-2, a record that at some schools may merit the coaching staff a pay raise. But when LSU torched Miami in the Peach Bowl, head coach Larry Coker wasted no time in dumping four assistants. The instruction to new offensive coordinator Rich Olson: Pick up the pace. Olson has a solid quarterback to build an offense around in Kyle Wright, a six-foot-four junior who threw for 18 touchdowns last year in his first season as a starter. Tight end Greg Olsen has drawn comparisons to Kellen Winslow—senior, not junior.

Weakness: The Hurricanes have unproven players on the offensive line and at some skill positions. The coaching staff turnover has brought in new systems that could cause early confusion.

Key Games: Florida State in Miami on September 4 and at Louisville on September 16.

Prediction: 10-2



8. GEORGIA

Last Year: 10-3. The Bulldogs were SEC champions but lost the Nokia Sugar Bowl to West Virginia, 38-35.

Outlook: Mark Richt is one of only 10 Division I-A coaches to have recorded 50 or more victories in his first five seasons. Though Georgia lost a ton of big dogs to graduation, enough talent is left in Athens to turn the 10-win trick again. Three talented running backs—Thomas Brown, Kregg Lumpkin and Danny Ware—await their chance to carry the ball this year, and the Bulldogs have a top kicking tandem in punter Gordon Ely-Kelso and placekicker Brandon Coutu.

Weakness: Richt must replace do-everything quarterback D.J. Shockley, now playing on Sundays. Joe Tereshinski is the most experienced of Georgia's four candidates, but the question will most likely remain unsettled until the season begins.

Key Games: Road matchups against two SEC rivals—Florida on October 28 and Auburn on November 11.

Prediction: 10-2



9. WISCONSIN

Last Year: 10-3, culminating with a Capital One Bowl win over Auburn.

Outlook: At first glance one may think Wisconsin doesn't belong in the top 25, much less the top 10. The Badgers have only three starters returning from last year's offense, its defense was injured and pushed around at times, and coach Barry Alvarez has given up the sideline for the front office. But Alvarez has anointed assistant Bret Bielema as his successor, and the defense, now healthy and more experienced, could be the best in the Big 10. Two of those three returning offensive starters are underrated quarterback John Stocco and talented tackle Joe Thomas. Alvarez has also stockpiled so many promising running backs and receivers that only game time will sort out the better from the best.

Weakness: The talent is there, but the receivers and running backs have virtually no experience.

Key Games: The Badgers' efforts at Michigan (September 23) and Iowa (November 11) will determine how far the team will go. Ohio State and Michigan State being absent from the schedule should help the cause.

Prediction: 9-3



10. FLORIDA

Last Year: 9-3, including a victory over Iowa in the Outback Bowl.

Outlook: With Urban Meyer, the hottest young coach in the nation, at the helm, Florida appears ready to once again assume a spot as one of college football's most dominant programs. After a perfect 12-0 season at Utah in 2004 garnered him the job in Gainesville, Meyer seemed to push all the right buttons as the Gators steadily improved over the course of last season. This year the team will be explosive on offense: Senior quarterback Chris Leak appears ready for a breakout year, and receiver Andre Caldwell is back as well.

Weakness: The defense is strong and experienced up front but unproven in the secondary.

Key Games: The Gators are tough when they play at home in the Swamp, but difficult games at Tennessee, Auburn and Florida State will test Florida's mettle.

Prediction: 9-3



11. CALIFORNIA

Last Year: 8-4, with three losses by a touchdown or less.

Outlook: Under coach Jeff Tedford, the Bears have won 26 games in the past three seasons and have the horses this year to make a run at the top 10. They return virtually every skill player on offense, including Marshawn Lynch, one of the nation's best running backs. Nate Longshore, lost in the second quarter of last season's opener, is ready to resume his spot behind center, while Joe Ayoob, who started nine games in his absence, waits in the wings. Look for new offen-

sive coordinator Mike Dunbar to throw in more than a few interesting wrinkles.

Weakness: The offensive line lost three starters, and the schedule got tougher.

Key Game: The Bears open early on September 2 against Tennessee in Knoxville, always a tough place to play. Cal's biggest game, however, is against USC on November 18.

Prediction: 9-3



12. FLORIDA STATE

Last Year: An uncharacteristic 8-5. The Seminoles beat Virginia Tech for the ACC championship but lost the FedEx Orange Bowl to Penn State after three overtimes, 26-23.

Outlook: With sophomore Drew Weatherford back to run the offense and explosive running backs Lorenzo Booker and Antone Smith in the backfield, FSU will put lots of points on the board. Weatherford broke Phil Rivers's ACC freshman passing record last season and has a shot at being the next great Seminoles quarterback. Another plus: Thirty-year head coach Bobby Bowden and longtime defensive coordinator Mickey Andrews experienced no staff turnover in the off-season, a rarity in Tallahassee.

Weakness: The Seminole defense took significant hits from graduation and early defections to the NFL.

Key Games: When isn't Florida State vs. Miami (September 4) a big game? And then there's the regular-season closer against Florida on November 25.

Prediction: 9-3



13. IOWA

Last Year: A disappointing 7-5, ending with a 31-24 loss to Florida in the Outback Bowl.

Outlook: Senior quarterback Drew Tate, who has passed for more than 5,600 career yards and 43 touchdowns, heads up what should be a potent Hawkeye offense. Tate will have a deep, talented line protecting him, and Albert Young, who rushed for more than 1,300 yards last season, coming out of the backfield.

Weakness: Coach Kirk Ferentz has seven starters back on defense but will miss impact linebackers Chad Greenway and Abdul Hodge.

Key Games: The game against Ohio State on September 30 will be challenging, as will the road game on October 21 at Michigan. But the Hawkeyes play only four other opponents on the road this season.

Prediction: 9-3



14. LSU

Last Year: The Tigers capped an 11-2 season with a 40-3 win over Miami in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl.

Outlook: LSU has potentially dominating talent at the offensive skill positions. Coach Les Miles has the luxury of three sharp quarterbacks: junior JaMarcus Russell, Peach Bowl MVP Matt Flynn and redshirt freshman Ryan Perrilloux, whom

many considered the top prep quarterback in the nation in 2004. Running backs Alley Broussard and Justin Vincent give the Tigers more than one option in the backfield, and the receiving corps is deep.

Weakness: Question marks exist on both sides of the line after the departure of defensive tackles Kyle Williams and Claude Wroten and two-time Playboy All America offensive tackle Andrew Whitworth.

Key Games: Road games at Auburn (September 16), Florida (October 7) and Tennessee (November 4).

Prediction: 9-3



15. AUBURN

Last Year: 9-3. The Tigers lost to Wisconsin in the Capital One Bowl, 24-10. **Outlook:** Obviously, reports of coach Tommy Tuberville's demise a couple of years ago were greatly exaggerated. Tuberville has posted nine wins in each of the past two seasons and has Auburn shooting for double digits this year. Look for quarterback Brandon Cox and running back Kenny Irons to head the offense. New defensive coordinator Will Muschamp expects ends Quentin Groves and Marquies Gunn to provide a speed rush from the outside and has moved Will Herring, a starting safety for three years, to linebacker.

Weakness: The Tigers have to replace four wideouts who had more than 1,000 yards receiving in their careers.

Key Games: LSU at home on September 16 and on the road at Alabama on November 18.

Prediction: 9-3



16. LOUISVILLE

Last Year: 9-3, finishing with a loss to Virginia Tech in the Toyota Gator Bowl, 35-24.

Outlook: When was the last time Louisville's football team was ranked higher than its basketball squad? Credit fourth-year coach Bobby Petrino for ratcheting up the Cardinals' overall talent level. Trivia quiz: Which running back named Bush led the nation in scoring last season? No, not Heisman winner Reggie of USC but first-team Big East pick Michael, a 250-pound bundle of speed and muscle returning to Louisville for his senior season. Quarterback Brian Brohm, who threw for 2,883 yards and 19 touchdowns last year, is only a junior.

Weakness: Louisville doesn't play well on the road and allows too many points.

Key Games: Miami (September 16) and West Virginia (November 2). The good news: Both games are at home.

Prediction: 9-3



17. TEXAS TECH

Last Year: 9-3. The Red Raiders lost the AT&T Cotton Bowl to Alabama on a last-second field goal.

Outlook: Sophomore Graham Harrell is the favorite to win the QB spot over redshirt freshman Chris Todd. Whoever emerges as coach Mike Leach's choice will throw to three of the best receivers

in college football: Jarrett Hicks, Joel Filani and Robert Johnson, a converted quarterback who was Big 12 offensive newcomer of the year in 2005.

Weakness: Tech's defense has consistently improved during Leach's tenure, but it still has a way to go to keep conference bullies Texas and Oklahoma in check.

Key Games: The aforementioned Longhorns (October 28) and Sooners (November 11).

Prediction: 9-3



18. NEBRASKA

Last Year: 8-4, including a 32-28 win over Michigan in the MasterCard Alamo Bowl.

Outlook: The transition was painful, but Nebraska football and its fans seem to have successfully made the switch to third-year coach Bill Callahan's West Coast offense. Quarterback Zac Taylor, who passed for a school-record 2,653 yards and 19 touchdowns last season, is back for his senior year. Taylor has talented receivers returning in Nate Swift and Terrence Nunn, plus tight end Matt Herian is healthy again after missing all of the past season with an injury.

Weakness: The Cornhuskers' running game rests on the shoulders of two largely untested sophomores.

Key Games: Killer games at USC on September 16 and home against Texas on October 21.

Prediction: 9-3



19. MICHIGAN

Last Year: 7-5. For the first time since 1984 the Wolverines didn't win at least eight games.

Outlook: Coach Lloyd Carr doesn't seem able to recruit enough blue-chip talent these days to keep the Wolverines among the nation's elite. Solid and steady Chad Henne will be back at quarterback, Mike Hart is at running back, and Steve Breaston, a fifth-year senior, will again be one of the premier kick returners in college football. But can these three make the difference when it comes to showdowns against Notre Dame or Ohio State?

Weakness: Three starters are gone from the offensive line. Michigan ranked ninth in the Big 10 last year in rushing. That puts too much pressure on Henne to make things happen.

Key Game: It is and always will be Ohio State (November 18).

Prediction: 8-4



20. PENN STATE

Last Year: 11-1, a superlative season for the granddaddy of college coaches.

Outlook: The Nittany Lions will struggle to match last year's performance. Quarterback and offensive leader Michael Robinson is gone, but his replacement, Anthony Morelli, has a strong arm and quick release, at least according to his coach. The return of Penn State's receiving corps is a plus, and any defense with



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Weakness: Morelli's lack of experience could be a problem early in the season. Also, three offensive linemen from last year had to be replaced.

Key Games: Away games at Notre Dame and Ohio State in September will make or break Penn State's season.

Prediction: 8-4

 **Last Year:** 7-5. They beat Rutgers in the Insight Bowl, 45-40.

Outlook: Any team that can field two quarterbacks as good as Sam Keller and Rudy Carpenter has to get at least some consideration for our top 25. Keller, who threw for more than 2,000 yards and 20 touchdowns, injured his thumb in the last game of the regular season, which gave Carpenter a chance to become MVP of the Insight Bowl.

Weakness: A lack of proven players on defense may have the offense watching too much from the sidelines.

Key Games: Two tough roadies: Septem-

ber 23 at Cal and October 14 at USC.
Prediction: 8-4

Last Year: The Vols finished a disappointing 5-6.

Outlook: Phil Fulmer is on the spot, and he knows it. Tennessee football fans are too demanding to tolerate another losing season. So Fulmer rehired David Cutcliffe, most recently head coach at Mississippi, to serve as his offensive coordinator. Erik Ainge, returning for his junior season, will go from part-time to full-time quarterback. Running back Arian Foster could have a breakout season. The defense will build around tackle Justin Harrell. Tennessee is a better team than it showed last season, and the schedule brings most of its strongest opponents to Knoxville, where the Vols always play tough.

Weakness: Both the offense and defense have more than a few.

Key Games: Every conference game is key in the SEC East.

Prediction: 8-4

 **Last Year:** 9-3, including a 27-21 win over Boise State in the MPC Computers Bowl.

Outlook: Junior quarterback Matt Ryan is BC's most experienced player to fill that position since Mark Hartsell in 1994. Ryan has completed 156 of 266 passes for 1,864 yards and 10 touchdowns. Coach Tom O'Brien thinks he can only get better. In the meantime BC's running game, featuring L.V. Whitworth and Andre Callender, will continue to demand opposing defenses' attention.

Weakness: An overall lack of depth on defense is a concern; Mathias Kiwanuka, who moved on to the NFL, will be impossible to replace at defensive end.

Key Games: The Eagles' season is highlighted by road games at Florida State (October 21) and Miami (November 23).

Prediction: 8-4

Last Year: 8-4. The Tigers beat Colorado 19-10 in the Champs Sports Bowl.

Outlook: Coach Tommy Bowden has yet to see if quarterback Will Proctor can adequately replace Charlie Whitehurst, who graduated. Clemson has other places to turn for offense, most notably running back James Davis, last season's ACC rookie of the year. An experienced offensive line will be a plus. Even if the offense falters, Clemson's defense, led by sackmaster Gaines Adams, will keep the team in most games.

Weakness: An unproven quarterback is Clemson's biggest concern.

Key Games: They both come early—Boston College on September 9 and Florida State a week later.

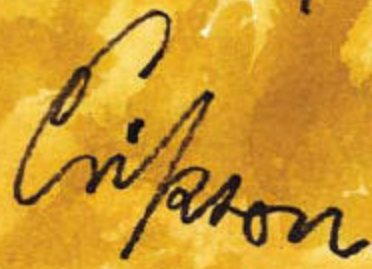
Prediction: 8-4

 **Last Year:** 10–2, including a 13–10 win over Texas Tech in the Cotton Bowl.

Outlook: Not as bright as last year. Too many veteran defensive players are gone, as is quarterback Brodie Croyle, who did almost everything right last season. Still, Alabama has Ken Darby, who has a legit shot at being the first Bama running back to gain more than 1,000 yards in three consecutive seasons. Linebacker Juwan Simpson will have to step up on a defense filled with newcomers.

Weakness: Who will be quarterback? John Parker Wilson will likely start the season, although coach Mike Shula is still open to alternatives.

Key Game: The Tide's ridiculously easy home schedule, which doesn't toughen until Auburn comes to town at the end of the season, should guarantee the team seven wins. One or two more victories on the road will make for a successful season in what is essentially a rebuilding year.

Prediction: 8-4

"Will it distract you if I access my e-mail?"

Go to playboy.com for a behind-the-scenes look at this year's All America Weekend and to find out which football greats were named to PLAYBOY's All-Time 50-Year Team.

PLAYMATE NEWS



PICTURE PERFECT

Cristy Thom has evolved. First she was the model in front of the camera, most memorably as Miss February 1991; now

she's the artist behind the paintbrush, with her work showcased in *New American Paintings* magazine. Cristy began her creative transition from Playmate to painter at Otis College of Art and Design in her native Los Angeles, funding her tuition in part with money awarded by Playboy. "I had always been creative, but I never actually painted or made fine art," she says. "After appearing in PLAYBOY, though, I started painting, and I just loved it." She met with success early, earning her first two gallery shows in 2000, a year before graduating with a bachelor of fine arts degree. Since then she has built an extraordinary oeuvre of more than 100 canvases and prints. Her work has attracted attention from galleries all over the country and can be found in private collections.



Cristy Thom puts paint to canvas with stunning results.

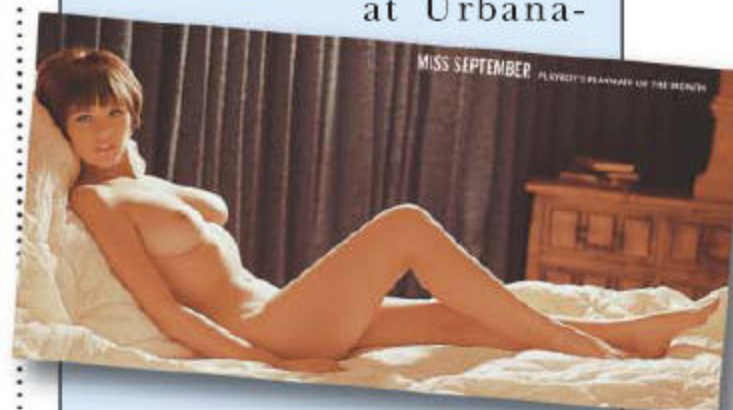
Like the artist herself, Cristy's pieces are both sexy and playful; they frequently feature glamorous women or kitschy objects. Citing John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage and Gerhard Richter as influences, Cristy usually employs a highly technical photo-realistic style. "I've always loved photography, so painting from photos is second nature." She works on huge canvases, some taller than six feet. "I love being immersed in a big canvas and watching it come to life," she says. "The bigger it is, the more it comes to life for me."

Perhaps because of her extensive background in modeling, Cristy also has a knack for photography, and she shoots to help make ends meet. "I can guide people well and tell them what to do and what I'm looking for," she says. "I got a lot from PLAYBOY in that way." For more info on Cristy Thom visit cristythomart.com.



40 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

Miss September 1966 **Dianne Chandler** was discovered at the Playboy Club in Chicago, where she was working while in between semesters at the University of Illinois at Urbana-



Champaign (also the alma mater of one Hugh M. Hefner). Luckily, Dianne left school and moved to Chicago to become our own girl next door.

LOOSE LIPS

"Well, you know, some guys buy Ferraris. Some guys jump on Oprah's couch. It just depends. Every man pretty much goes through it. It's how well they deal with it." —Jenny McCarthy on midlife crises



QUICK STUDY

Hot spot or not spot, how can you tell? Follow the bunny trail. From left: **Carol Bernaola** lifts Spirit in New York City; **Shauna Sand** on deck at Reebok's Rbk flagship store in West Hollywood; **Laurie Fetter** gets buzz for Barfly in West Hollywood; **Kelly Monaco** is locked away in the Abbey in West Hollywood; **Christi Shake** at her favorite haunt, the Mansion, for the *Robot Chicken* party.



HOT SHOT



LISA DERGAN

MY FAVORITE PLAYMATE

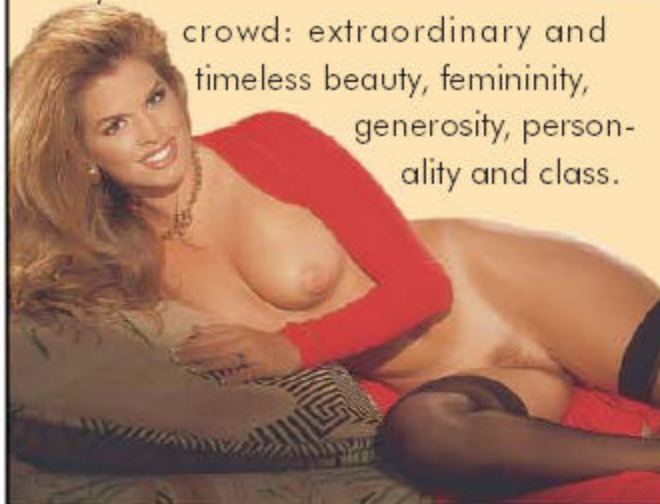
By Billy Lane

of Biker Build-Off

My favorite Playmate is Miss February 1994 and PMOY 1995 **Julie Lynn Cialini** because she embodies all the qualities that elevate Playmates above the



crowd: extraordinary and timeless beauty, femininity, generosity, personality and class.



POP QUESTIONS: KAREN MCDOUGAL

Q: You seem to have been doing a lot of fitness modeling lately. Are you working out like a fiend?

A: I didn't intend to become a fitness model. I just kind of fell into it. I've had a lot of time to work out, and I'm in better shape now than I've ever been.

Q: What kind of fitness projects are you currently working on?

A: I had a 10-page spread in *Iron Man*, and I just did a fitness video with Valerie Waters. She's a personal trainer to Hollywood celebrities.

Q: What kind of workout video is it?

A: She promotes an exercise routine

that uses your own body weight and complements that with dumbbells. It's as if a personal trainer is working out with you in your own home. I demonstrate all the exercises.

Q: So are you ever able to get away from training?

A: I just went island-hopping on a private yacht in Greece. I saw some of the ruins, including the Acropolis of Athens. That was beautiful. My friends and I stopped at maybe five or six islands total. Some islands were laid-back, and I was really able to take in the culture. Others were party islands. I enjoy getting into

culture and seeing things I haven't seen before and may never see again.



HOUSEBOUND



You could do a hell of a lot worse than landing PMOY Kara Monaco to play your lovely wife. In Willie Wisely's video for "Stayin' Home Again," Kara hunts for dinner, fights a ninja and uses telekinesis, all for the benefit of Wisely's stay-at-home slacker.



PLAYMATE GOSSIP

The Jenny McCarthy juggernaut continues to chug along as the 1994 Playmate of the Year stars in the comedy movie *John Tucker Must Die*, with Jesse Metcalfe, Brittany Snow and Ashanti.... Really, don't change that channel: PLAYBOY called on Playmates (below, from left) **Qiana Chase**, **Ava Fabian**, **Lindsey Vuolo**, **Tiffany Taylor**, **Shallan Meiers**, **Sandra Hubby** and **Julie McCullough** to entertain conventioners at the National Cable & Telecommunications Association trade show in Atlanta.... PMOY



LEROY NEWMAN



Unconventional at the NCTA.

1997 **Victoria Silvstedt** will appear in the film *Carry On London*.... Newspapers report that Miss September 1995 **Donna D'Errico** is divorcing Nikki Sixx.... Miss August 2001 **Jennifer Walcott** is on her way to becoming a pilot. The Playmate took her first lesson last spring and hopes to have her license soon. Jennifer, who dates NFL safety Adam Archuleta, was also spotted at the Kentucky Derby, where fans lauded her victory in CBS Sports Line.com's Hottest Significant Other Tournament.... Jennifer's on cloud nine.



PMOY 1993 **Anna Nicole Smith** is pregnant! She announced the news from the comfort of her pool in a video clip posted on her website.... PMOY 2001 **Brande Roderick** was a celebrity contestant on *Gameshow Marathon*, an amalgam of classic game shows, hosted by Ricki Lake on CBS.

MORE PLAYMATES

See your favorite Playmate's pictorial in the Cyber Club at cyber.playboy.com, or download her to your phone at playboymobile.com.

GIRLS NEXT DOOR

(continued from page 114)

the girls together. "We have very different interests," says Holly, "but the show gives us common goals and things to do together." Adds Bridget, "It's made us focus on what we need to do as a team."

Hef, who turned down dozens of offers for a Playboy-themed reality series before agreeing to do this one with executive producer, award-winning documentary filmmaker and longtime friend Kevin Burns, wasn't initially convinced the show would have such a salutary effect on his girlfriends. "One of my concerns going in was that we were importing something new into the relationship," Hef says. "Anytime you do that, you wonder how it'll turn out. I had reservations, and so did Holly. But I think everyone was surprised that it's as much fun as it is."

Another surprise: More than half the show's audience is female. "We knew it would be appealing to men," says Hef, "but it has also established a cultlike following among women." One female fan from Florida went so far as to fly to Los Angeles to have her hair done at the José Eber salon in Beverly Hills simply because that's where the girls go; she lucked out and got to meet Holly, who was there at the time. "I get a lot of comments about the show," Holly says. "One thing people say a lot is 'You and Hef are so cute together,' which is

something they would never believe if they didn't see it for themselves."

The second season of *The Girls Next Door* arrives on the heels of the DVD release of the first 15 episodes and begins with a show documenting preparations for Hef's 80th birthday festivities. But one wild weekend does not a proper Playboy celebration make, so Hef and the girls turned the party into a moveable feast, touring Europe for a whirlwind two-week, five-country jaunt with cameras in tow. Holly liked Paris the best (particularly the catacombs), Bridget fell in love with Italy, and Kendra now wants to live in Cannes or St.-Tropez. "All the hot people and the big-ass parties were there," she says. "I felt like, This is where I belong." In fact, she admits, she wound up in "a really bad mood" when the group had to leave Cannes after less than a day. "I was so mad, and I'm sure that'll wind up in the show," she laughs.

Fans of the show will notice something different about the second season: the girls' newfound fame, which has led to roles in *Scary Movie 4*, an upcoming 2007 calendar and talk of a book and a line of clothing and fragrances. "The girls have become almost overnight celebrities," says Hef, "and we talked about whether that should be shown. In the end we decided it's part of their lives and we should show it."

For Holly, though, the highlight of the new season may be its documenta-

tion of the photo shoots that appear in this issue of PLAYBOY. "Our shoots just keep getting better," she says. "The first pictorial was a lot of fun, the calendar was more fun, and this new one was just amazing." Each of Hef's girls was given the chance to come up with her own glamour theme. The front-and-back cover, meanwhile, is a PLAYBOY first—as is the technique used for the two shots, which were taken at exactly the same instant. "It was one of the most complicated things I've ever done," says photographer Arny Freytag. "Because both shots had to be taken at the same time, I couldn't move from the front to the back to shoot both of them. So we put up a video screen underneath me so I could monitor the back view as I was shooting from the front."

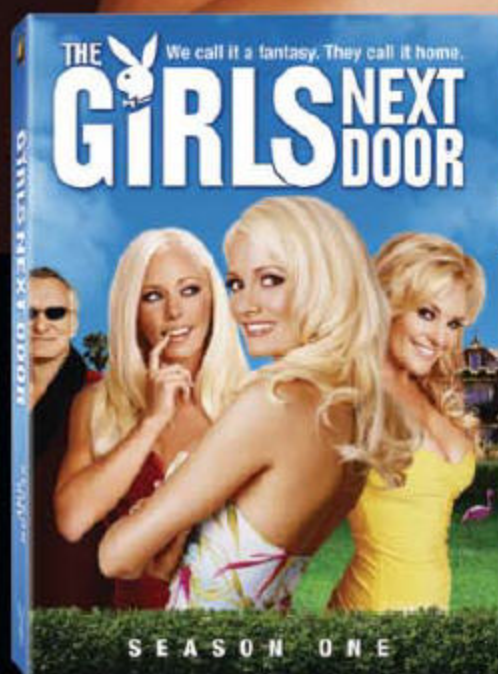
Now the Girls Next Door are back in these pages, back on TV, back living a lifestyle in which every party, outing or private moment just may be next week's nationwide entertainment. And from the look of things, they don't mind one bit. "Sometimes the filming gets old," admits Bridget, "but by the time the first season was over, I found I enjoyed having the cameras around. After we finished, I thought, Where are all my friends who follow me everywhere? Where's my entourage?" She laughs. "Be careful what you wish for, because now I have them back."



"Sorry, but I have to run. My driver will see to your orgasm."

THE GIRLS NEXT DOOR

There's more to see, more to love.



Holly, Kendra and Bridget are your average all-American knockout blondes who happen to be dating Hef! This **3-disc DVD** set gives an intimate view of their lives as they laugh, love, play and party in all 15 episodes from the first season of their hit reality show. Total run time 5 hrs., 35 mins.

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Playboy On The Scene

WHAT'S HAPPENING, WHERE IT'S HAPPENING AND WHO'S MAKING IT HAPPEN



Clean Air Act

A pair of socially responsible entrepreneurs shows the big boys how it's done

Attached to such buzzwords as *Chapter 11* and *global warming*, the reputation of the airline industry has recently taken a beating. So it comes as a surprise when a carrier not only is expanding and turning a profit but is also environmentally sound. In 1991 eco-entrepreneurs Alexi Huntley and Alex Khajavi bought a struggling Costa Rican airline that consisted of one turboprop and \$1 million of debt. They recast it as NatureAir, grew the fleet to eight low-emission aircraft that jump between exotic points in Central America

and have managed to increase profits by 35 percent each year. The company is also considered the world's first zero-emissions airline: By funding conservation projects in Costa Rica, NatureAir compensates for whatever carbon dioxide it emits in a given year. "The forests we're saving sequester the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere," Huntley explains. "We get calls from carriers in the U.S. and Europe asking how we do this." If the winged behemoths establish similar programs of their own, we may all breathe a little easier.



Redemption Songs

Michael Franti smart-bombs Iraq and Palestine

I didn't want to make a film that is a critique of the U.S. government or uncover some conspiracy," says Michael Franti, founder of hip-hop-funk-rock-reggae band Spearhead. "I just wanted to show what war does to everyday life for people." Franti's talking about his documentary, *I Know I'm Not Alone*, which chronicles his travels in 2004 and 2005 through Iraq, Israel and Palestine. Released on the art-house circuit in July, the film, along with Spearhead's excellent new album, *Yell Fire!*, provides a moving demonstration of music's power to connect people and bridge barriers. During his emotionally affecting journey Franti plays for children in hospitals and off-duty soldiers in Baghdad bars. Walking through the streets, he meets musicians and is invited into people's homes, where his hosts open up with remarkable honesty over tea. "I'm holding a guitar, and I'm the first American they've ever met who isn't holding an M16," he says. "I feel the best case against war is not a political argument or an economic one. It's to show what the human cost of war really is." For more information go to spearheadvibrations.com.

Price of Fame

Hardly a month goes by that Katie Price, a.k.a. JORDAN, doesn't grace the cover of a British lad magazine. With all the publicity it's amazing she doesn't have a swelled head.



MARK STEWART/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA



SEAN HARTGROVE

Leanin' Mean

Denver-based DJ MS. VICIOUS is a co-founder of Angelic, a group of five female spinners. For locals, the sight of her manning the decks in a leather bikini and fishnet body stocking is the sign of a good party.



AARON SETHIPANE/WENN

Doll You Need to Know

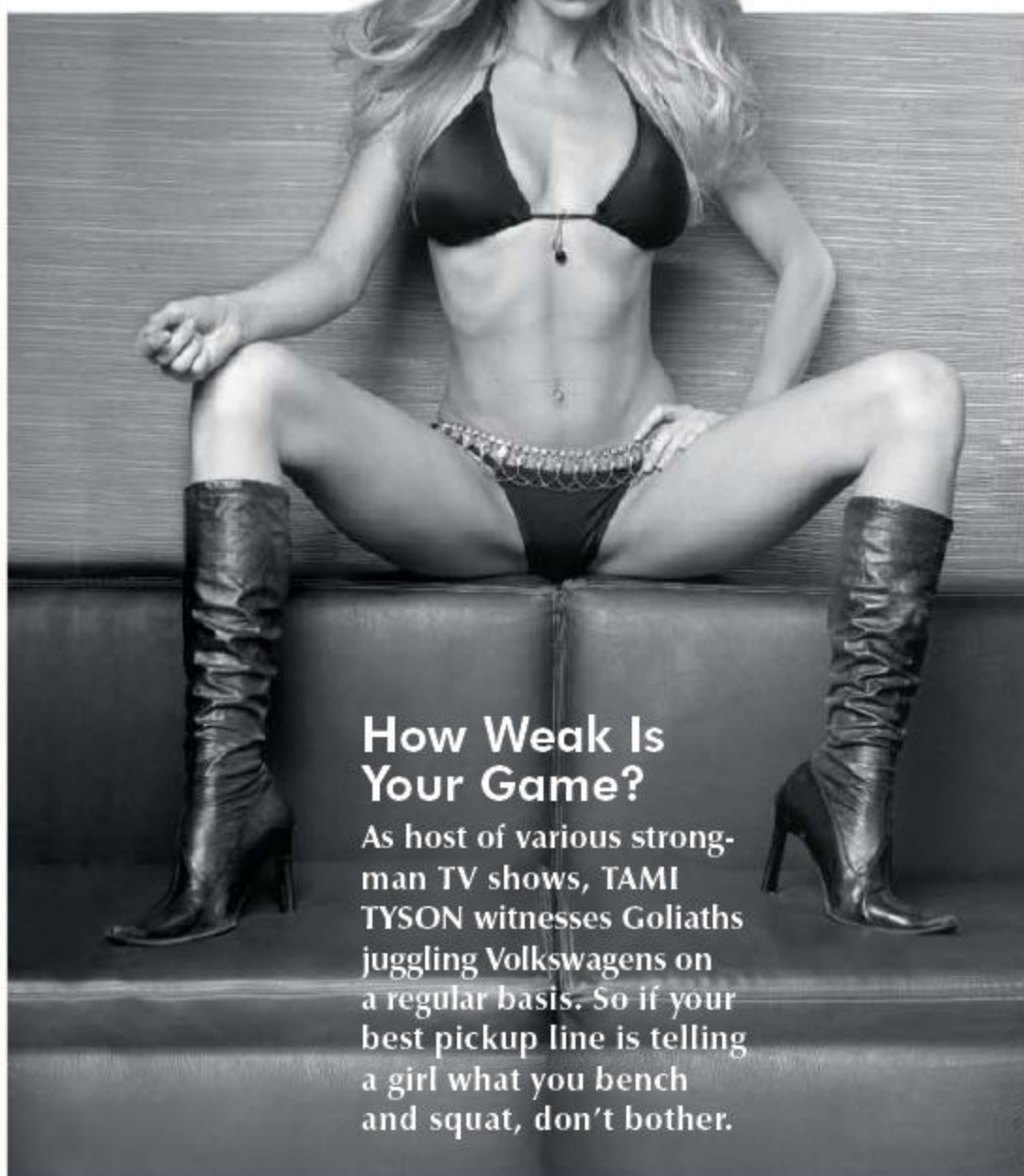
Bullet points on the Pussycat Dolls: 1. The hottest one is NICOLE SCHERZINGER. 2. Nicole did all the lead vocals on their debut album. 3. She also did all the backing vocals. 4. She was in Eden's Crush, from the TV show *Popstars*. 5. The five other Dolls are Whatshername, Whatshername, Whatshername, Whatshername and Whatshername.

A Cause Near and Dear to Her Heart

Pink-clad ELIZABETH HURLEY has become one of the world's leading campaigners for breast-cancer awareness. It's a logical step for a model and actress of whose breasts we are so often aware.



DAVID FISHER/REX FEATURES



How Weak Is Your Game?

As host of various strong-man TV shows, TAMI TYSON witnesses Goliaths juggling Volkswagens on a regular basis. So if your best pickup line is telling a girl what you bench and squat, don't bother.

JOHN RUS SO



PIPLAND/ARND BRONKHORST/MEDIA

I Married Paul

Her split with Macca has earned **HEATHER MILLS** the wrath of British tabloids. Perhaps they'd be more sympathetic if she hadn't bailed on her brief career as a topless model.

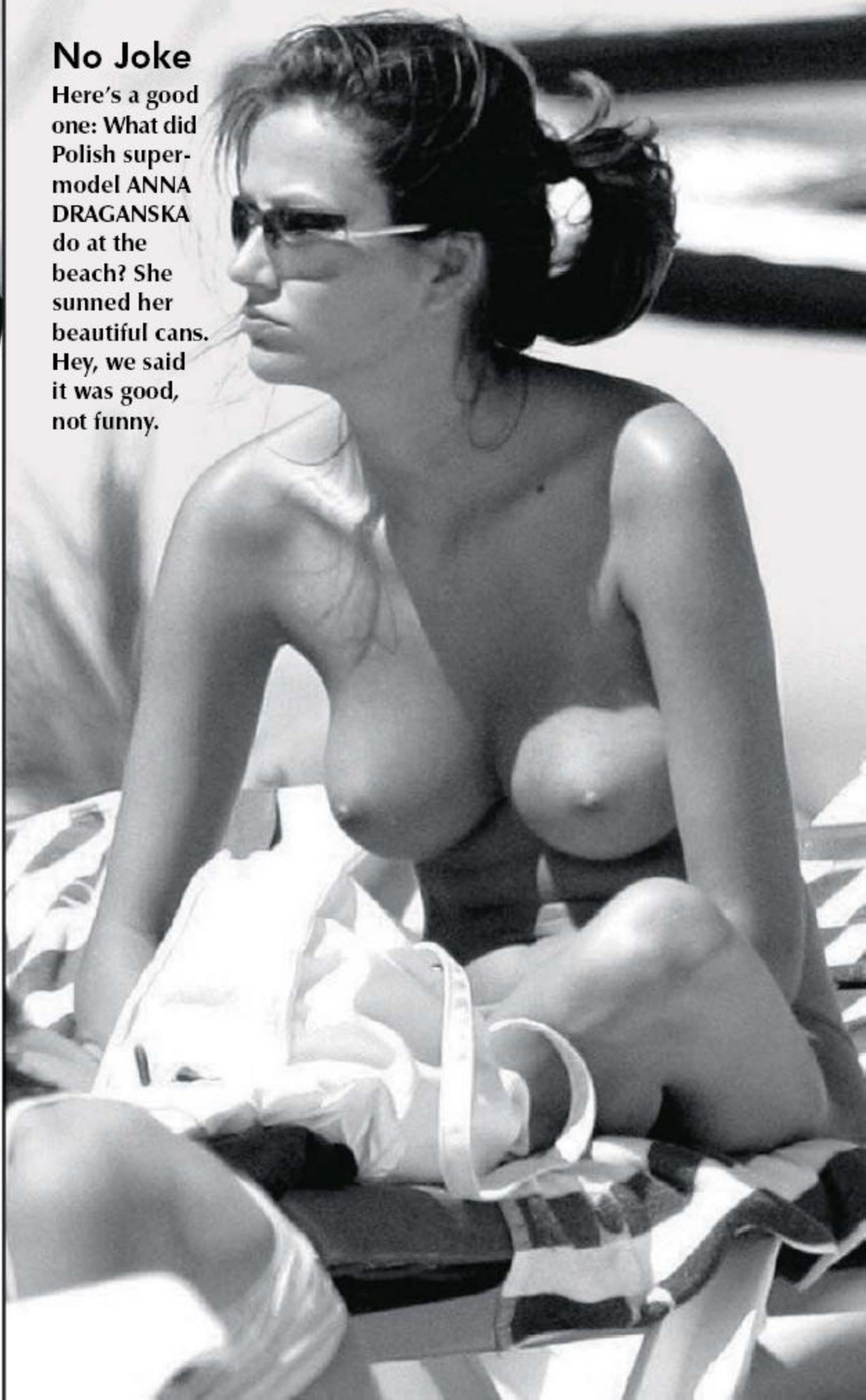


STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE.COM

SPLASH NEWS

No Joke

Here's a good one: What did Polish super-model **ANNA DRAGANSKA** do at the beach? She sunned her beautiful cans. Hey, we said it was good, not funny.



DRINKS TO GO

A bar is not a place; it's a state of mind. Prove us right with this Deluxe Portable Travel Bar Set (\$100, kegworks.com). Everything you need to make a perfect pair of cocktails—shaker, stirrer, strainer, jigger, tongs, napkins, even a couple of classic martini glasses and enough room for two full-size bottles of hooch—presents itself in one convenient case. The way we see it, if you're packing the right raw materials, happy hour is whenever you damn well say it is. Like, say, right now.



STREET SMART

Emancipating a grimy street sign from some suburban subdivision was once a drunken rite of passage. You hung it in your dorm, had some laughs, established a personal aesthetic and impressed the frosh with your flagrant disregard for Johnny Law. Roundabout Signs lends some international flair and adult sophistication to this idea with its collection of foreign road signs (from \$125, roundaboutsigs.com). Clockwise from top left: kangaroo crossing, tank crossing, autobahn, bumps ahead and...true love.



STRINGS ATTACHED

You're already lugging your guitar around. The last thing you want to have to carry is an amp. But without the amp, what's the point of hauling the ax? The clever folks at Skullcandy have designed a backpack-style case that solves this vexing dilemma. The Amp Gig Bag (\$170, skullcandy.com) has speakers built into its shoulder straps so you can broadcast your masterful noodling to the grateful folks nearby. Cooler still, there's a way to connect an MP3 player to the bag at the same time, so Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding can back you up as you rock.



TUNE UP

Okay, maybe this Dodge Magnum doesn't have a real Hemi engine. Maybe it goes only a few miles an hour. But in its own way it's got oodles of street cred. Jada Toys' Dub City Dodge Magnum remote-control car (\$100, jadatoys.com) is more than two and a half feet long (one-sixth scale) and has lights, a horn, a rechargeable battery that gets you plenty of zip on each charge and an impressive turning radius that lets you corner like a pro. Bonus: To our knowledge, it's the first remote-control car with an MP3 dock. Plug your iPod into the portal underneath the wagon and it'll blast tunes while you drive. No license required.

WOUND TIGHTLY

Earbud headphones become tangled every time you pull them out. If it takes one minute to fix them and you use your player five times a day, you lose more than 30 hours a year to this fiddly frustration. The Cableyoyo Pop (\$10, cableyoyo.com) is a cord winder that attaches to the back of your player with a suction cup, saving you a nuisance in the moment and buying you an extra day each year.



OUT OF THE PARK

Baseball memorabilia is great, but you're not going to play with a signed World Series ball. BallPark Pens (\$85 to \$500, ballparkpens.com), made from the seats of famous stadiums, aren't just historic; they're useful. You can take one to the game to keep a scorecard, then write down the number of the blonde behind you who was impressed by your attention to detail. Other handy items include bottle openers and corkscrews.



LOCK STAR

Got a million in cash you need to store? A pair of someone's panties you couldn't bear to part with? What you see here is the Bugatti of safes—and we mean that literally. The company responsible for the Veyron 16.4, the single fastest production car on earth (see page 70), has lent its name to the ultimate impenetrable box (price on request, stockinger.com). It has 83 liters' worth of space inside, a five-button combination keypad with alarm system, three-way bolt and two motor locks, an iron four-way ground anchorage and a torch-, tool- and fireproof body and door. It sounds an alarm if someone even comes near it.



CUTTING EDGE

The guys at Grooming Lounge know the art of the shave as well as anyone. They offer top razor goop from such brands as Jack Black and Molton Brown, yet they are confident enough to brew their own concoctions in their D.C. barbershop, stuff them in a box and call it "The Greatest Shave Ever" Kit (\$60, groominglounge.com). It packs a preshave face wash, Beard Master shave oil, Beard Destroyer shave cream and Happy Ending soothing aftershave. Smooth, baby.

CYBERCADDY

When others doubted, our faith never wavered. We knew in our hearts that someday someone would figure out a good use for the Segway transporter. The Segway GT Links package (\$5,700, segway.com) comes with an attachment for carrying a golf bag, special tires that won't tear up the turf and an extended battery pack that will keep you rolling through 36 holes. Gliding across the countryside while standing up beats cramming into a golf cart any day. But remember, just because it has a beverage cooler doesn't mean you can drink and scoot.



Next Month



BABES OF THE BIG 12.



LAKER GIRL.



INTERVIEW: WHAT YOU GOT IN THAT BAG?



THE FRUITS OF OUR FORBIDDEN PICTORIAL.

BIG 12 BEAUTIES—FROM COQUETTISH COLORADO COEDS TO RACY RED RAIDERS, WE PRESENT OUR BIG COLLECTION FROM THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN.

THE BASEMENT—THE CELLAR OF THE CHI TAU FRAT HOUSE AT CHICO STATE UNIVERSITY TURNED INTO A TORTURE CHAMBER THAT CLAIMED THE LIFE OF A PLEDGE. **JONATHAN LITTMAN** TRACES THE STUDENT'S LAST HOURS AND WONDER WHY GUYS DO SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS TO ONE ANOTHER.

JONESY—HIS DRUG ADDICTIONS AND HIS BANDS BEHIND HIM, STEVE JONES IS THE HOTTEST RADIO HOST IN LOS ANGELES. PROLIFIC PROFILER **DANIEL HALPERN** FOLLOWS THE FORTUNATE FORMER SEX PISTOL, WHO HAS BEEN GRANTED A SECOND SHOT AT LIFE AND STILL HAS AS MANY GROUPIES AS EVER.

CHRISTINE DOLCE—WE RECEIVED AN AMAZING RESPONSE TO OUR *WOMEN OF MYSPACE* FEATURE. THE ONLY COMPLAINT: "WHERE IS **FORBIDDEN?**" SORRY FOR HOLDING OUT, GUYS. NEXT MONTH WE GIVE THE QUEEN OF MYSPACE THE ROYAL TREATMENT WITH HER OWN PICTORIAL.

LUDACRIS—A YEAR AGO THE DIRTY SOUTHERNER CLAIMED OPRAH HAD CENSORED HIM. IN THE *PLAYBOY* INTERVIEW, WE GIVE HIM AN OPEN FORUM—EVERY WORD STRAIGHT FROM LUDA'S MOUTH. THE RAPPER WHO HAS PUT OUT FIVE SOLO ALBUMS IN

SIX YEARS WHILE ALSO ACTING IN FIVE MOVIES TALKS TO **ROB TANNENBAUM** ABOUT HUSTLING AND FLOWING.

SEXUAL PENSÉES—MASTER OF DARK COMEDY **BRUCE JAY FRIEDMAN** TAKES A LIGHTEARTED LOOK AT THE SEXUAL DANCE. HIS CEREBRAL OBSERVATIONS OF CARNALITY COME TO LIFE IN **ANDRÉ BARBE**'S EROTIC ILLUSTRATIONS.

DORM HAZE—"WE'LL BE YOUR FRIENDS ONLY IF YOU DO THE ELEPHANT WALK." ARCHAIC INITIATION RITUALS ARE PART OF THE COLLEGE PROCESS. WE TAKE A LOOK AT RECENT PRACTICES FROM THE PLAYFUL TO THE PERNICIOUS.

OZARK LAKE—AN INEXPERIENCED GIRL GOES FOR A SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS RIDE ON THE WATER WITH A CHARMING OLDER MAN. THE LAKE IS PLACID UNTIL THE MAN STARTS ROCKING THE BOAT. OR IS IT ALL IN THE GIRL'S HEAD? FICTION BY **NICK CONNELL**

JOHNNY KNOXVILLE—SOME THINK PHILIP JOHN CLAPP IS A SPELLBINDING SADOMASOCHIST. TO OTHERS HE'S JUST A JACK-ASS. WILL THE MAN WHO SWAM THROUGH SHIT HAVE LASTING POWER IN LA-LA LAND? 20Q BY **JASON BUHRMESTER**

PLUS: *PLAYBOY*'S BEST-DRESSED MEN ON CAMPUS; NEW YORK CITY'S TAXI OF THE FUTURE; AND HOW TO SATISFY YOUR DATE DURING DINNER, BY **TYLER FLORENCE**.

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