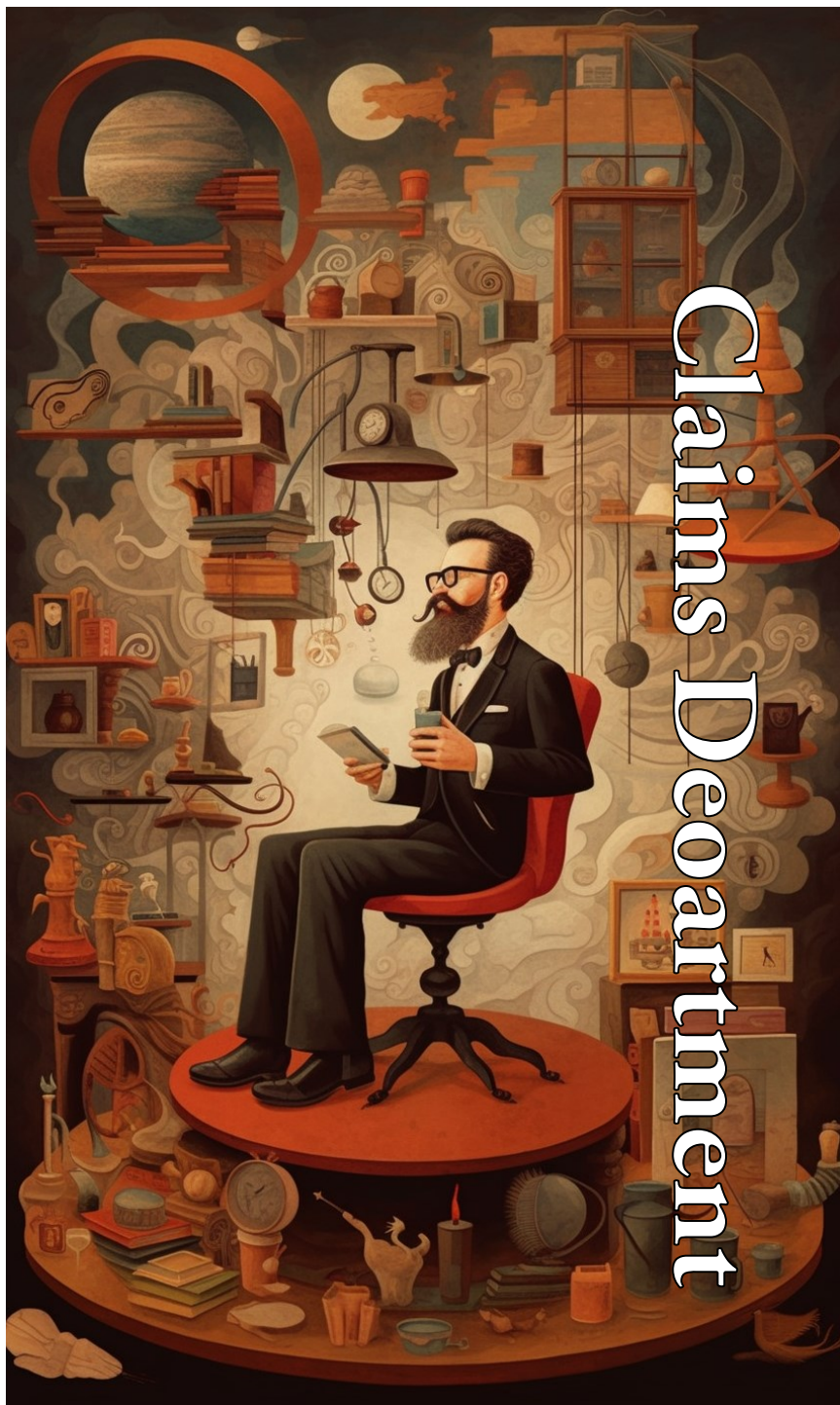


Claims Department



ANOTHER WEEK, ANOTHER ISSUE!

This week has been crazy (things keep falling into my lap, for some reason) and I've been watching the kids after work while Vanessa gets ready for an art show by carving and painting. I love that she's getting into that realm!

Been working on all the zines. There's a Journey Planet about Fantastical Musical Instruments and I've been making some fun collages! The Drink Tank about Manhattan Project has me going and going on writing. So much fun!

OK, on to what you'll recognise as another issue of *Claims Department*.







THE LAS VEGAS ALIEN

SOMEHOW, VEGAS JUST GOT WEIRDER.

Back in April, there was a 9-1-1 call to the Las Vegas Police Department. There had been a sighting of a green ball of fire UFO captured on bodycam footage, so they were actually taking these things seriously. The caller said there'd been a crash, and then they'd seen something.

we see there's a, there's like an eight-foot person beside it and another one's inside, and it has big eyes and it's looking at us. They're very large. They're like eight foot, nine-foot, 10 foot."

Now, that's pretty creepy, right? I mean, even if it's just a case of mistaken animal identity, an eight foot tall creature is going to be concerning!

The only reason it was taken seriously, because a lot of police departments get this kind of call, is that there'd been that sighting by a cop earlier. That's a major thing, and if the departments that got these calls started reporting them, we'd likely have a much more thorough picture of UFOs in America.

The thing is, if you're a UFO nerd, you're probably trying to suss out exactly what type of alien they were seeing?

Well, clearly the size would indicate they weren't Greys, though they did have the big eyes. Nordics are right out. That leaves Reptiloids as the likely variety.

They're from Alpha Draconis, they're tall and they look like big ol' lizards.

Now, is there possibly another explanation? Probably, but the thing is that it might be a hoax, though the people who called it in haven't tried to monetize it and I've not seen them do any interviews.

This one's interesting, and I'm hoping we learn more, but ultimately, it's the kind of report that has some legs with me. It seems legit, even if what they were seeing wasn't exactly what we think it could be.





I READ THE INDICTMENT.

It's a speaking indictment, of course. It had to be. Smith had to lay out the entire case for a few reasons, one of which was to mitigate the reaction of Trump's hardest-set supporters.

There was no chance of that working.

Reading it, you can see that they've got him dead to rights as far as the facts of the case, but getting a conviction still ain't 100%. There's a lot of legal slip-n-slide that can happen that can nullify some of the evidence presented, but it looks like a slamdunk, at least from the indictment point of view.

The big issues here are external to the case, but serious. There's the matter of the judge assigned: Ailene Cannon. She's the whackadoo who was reprimanded for favoring Trump on the Special Master case last year. That's a



wrench in the works, and though the DoJ can ask for a transfer, it's not entirely likely. That makes a gentle upward-sloping battle. Maybe. The other thing is that Donnie ain't got no lawyer. Now, I don't think that'll stay that way, but it's a rough aspect of the case. He'll claim that he can't get council (which makes sense as it does tend to put a lawyer under a microscope and so many have found themselves lied-to, and quite a few facing charges themselves. Added to that, he does apparently have a tendency to stiff his contractors, and there's no way that's not how he sees his lawyers.

The thing is this is a huge case, though not as bad as I had feared. My thought was that there were hundreds of missing nuclear documents that couldn't be accounted for. That would have been disastrous. There is a shot of one of the storage rooms with the boxes across an aisle from a photocopier. That should be terrifying to everyone because it could mean that there was a whole lot of copying going on.

Also, it reminded me exactly how much I wish I owned one myself.

I think he's going to be convicted, and then it'll go through appeals, probably all the way to the Supreme Court, who I imagine will decline to hear it based on Roberts' never wanting to put SCOTUS in danger. Some will point to recent decisions as doing just that, but if you look at Roberts' track record, it shows his reluctance.

None of that is as dangerous, though, as what his followers might do following a conviction. It's going to be a dangerous time and I can see limited skirmishes, maybe better described as riots, in places like... Boulder Creek.

We live in a very 'blue' area, but there are a LOT of Trump-ites, and you'll see folks wearing "Blue Lives Matter" sweatshirts at Johnnie's grocery, and on our Locals Facebook pages you'll see some very dark stuff about guns and the LGBT community from folks. Are they a tiny minority? Yes. Will they turn up to make trouble? They could. I imagine any

sort of protest clash, such as counter-protests on anything, will lead to clashes.

It's a strange time, a dark time. Yes, this is a political prosecution, we need to recognize that and realise that this breaks hearts, as it were. It's not undeserved, though, and we need to make sure that we keep that in mind. It IS political, but that is the nature of these times. It will get messier in the future, but I hope that future Presidents will be less corrupt than Trump and make it a moot point.

The fact is, the entire end of the Trump presidency and the years since has been a big part of what the Founding Fathers feared. They thought every time the President was going to change this could happen. They feared former Presidents trying to retain power, and that's a big part of what Trump was trying to do by holding those docs. They got it, even if the ideas of the Eighteenth century shouldn't be governing our lives today.







THERE WAS A SHOOTING.

What else is new?

This one happened in San Francisco, and it's an interesting one, and one that basically worries me because it's so indicative of where we are today. It took place in the Mission District, which isn't a bad part of town, but it's also got some of the best tacos in all of SF.

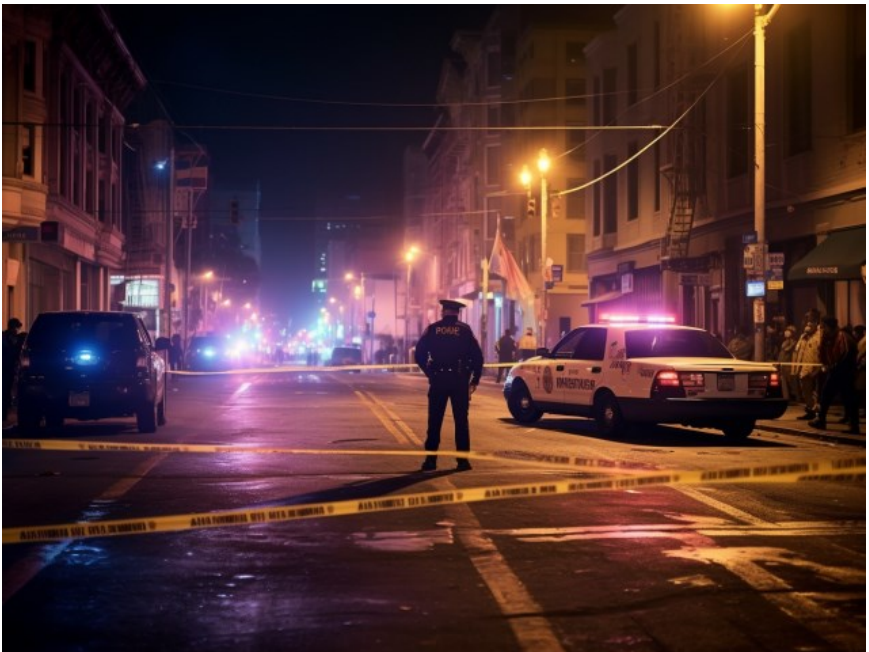
Nine people were injured; no one was killed.

The cops Tweeted that this was a targeted assault, and that's also somewhat different from many, if not most, of the mass shootings these days.

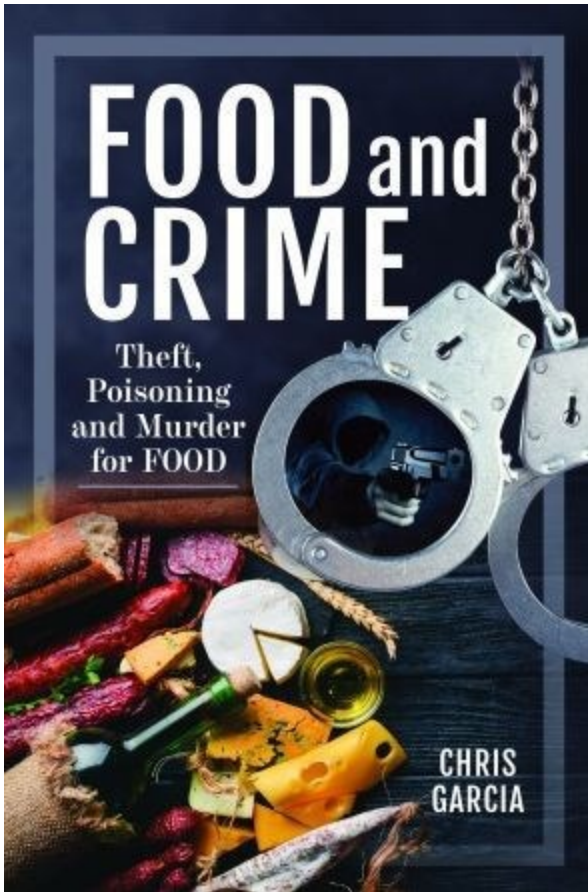
There was a big ol' block party at the intersection of Treat & 24th. There were more than twenty shots. When the cops got there, the injured were down, and the gunman was gone. They still haven't caught them as I write this.

Supposedly, this could be tied to a fight that happened on Carnivale weekend. That's a long time to hold a grudge.

We're a country full of cowards who believe that the only way to protect themselves is guns and so many of us have convinced ourselves that the only defense against a gun is another gun. It's such garbage. I've had the classic "those that trade freedom for comfort deserve neither" thrown at me endless number of times, failing to realise that what society is, at its heart, is a transaction between those two concepts, and every now and again, we have to re-set the weight put on each. Sadly, I know there'll never be a change without completely upsetting the entire order, which would likely be worse.







IT'S COMING!

My book, *Food & Crime*, comes out in July in the UK, and October over on this side of the swimming' hole! I'm so excited, it's my first published book (though the second I ever managed to sell as the first publisher who ever bought anything of mine went under before they could even finish the editing process!) and I'm pretty amazed at the response so far.

I did what no writer is supposed to do; I read the comments. There are 5

reviews on *Goodreads*, and more shockingly, they're all really positive, 4s and 5s. That's not bad for a book that's only available via Netgalley, hasn't received a push as far as I can tell, and is just another book out there in the world.

Which is fine by me. I've not heard from my publisher in a couple of months, and while I don't really expect to, I haven't gotten my author's copies yet, which I'd really like as I have people I need to get them to!

The fun thing isn't that this is going to lead me to being a full-time writer of fame and fortune, though even a little extra cash every now and again will be super helpful in avoiding times like the wife and I are going through at the moment, but it's also something I can put out there for other opportunities. I'd love to be on more documentaries, I've been contacted a

bunch the last few months and would love for that to increase, and if it leads to articles or anything else like that, that'd be great!

I know I've not got what it takes to be a full-time writer, and that's fine; it's never been my goal. In fact, I've never had any goal, I just wanna do stuff. That's probably part of why I've never had a lick of money my entire adult life, but it's true that I've been lucky enough to get to do some amazing things that money couldn't buy.

Still, being poor sucks.

I don't have a second book lined up, and since I didn't actually try and get this one published, it just sorta fell into my lap, I may never have an opportunity like this again.

I'm glad I did it, that's for sure.





Health-wise, I'm OK

I did have a scare the other night. I was sitting in bed, on my phone, and I had a sudden shooting pain in my elbow. Well, I've been told to be concerned about these things, and a minute later, I had a sharp pain in the side of my chest.

Well, that scared me.

I instantly looked for the Blood Pressure cuff, and took my number.

158/102

Well, that's scary, or so I would find out, but not go to the emergency room immediately sort of scary. I took some aspirin and went to sleep.

Obviously, I woke up.

I'd lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 18 pounds, but I'm back up to about 6 or so pounds down. It's not easy always being starving, so I've kinda loosened up, but not quite as loose as I was.

I did call my doctor the next morning. She told me something I will remember—"if you think you might be having a heart attack, don't bother taking your blood pressure. It'll read super-high because you're freaked out! Just call 9-1-1."

I've cut down on coffee...mostly. I used to drink 4 or 5 a day. I'm down to 2 or 3. That might mean less writing, right?

We will have to see.







SOMETIMES, PODCASTS MAKE ME THINK.

You Must Remember This, arguably the best film podcast ever created, has been doing a series called *Erotic 90s*. Now, it's a lot of films I've seen, and a few I haven't. I was never much into the erotic thriller genre, save for an unending fascination with the film *Single White Female* starring the incredible Bridget Fonda. The series is incredibly fascinating, looking at the time through a lens of a film critic and historian who has both a populist and feminist bent. She really straddles the line between those worlds, to the point where she can find great things to say about a film like Madonna's *Body of Evidence* at the same time as dissecting

the themes and its place in the culture at the moment. It's a hard way to go, but she manages.

What it made me realise, listening to all of the as I have so far, is that I'm a massive prude. This will not surprise anyone who I've dated, but it's just something that is certainly true. I do feel uncomfortable about sexy movies, to the point where I'll rarely watch them. It's something about the public nature of film and the private nature of how I view sexual stuff that might account for it.

The podcast has examined the years between 1990 and 1992 very thoroughly, and it's a period I know well because it's the time when I was working for L'Strange & Associates doing market research data collection. I can remember seeing *Single White Female* and *Poison Ivy* screenings and recording the demographics. She's dug into TV too, with *Red Shoe Diaries* and *Murphy Brown*, which I never would have considered being in the conversation, but Karina Longworth does an incredible job of tying it all in with film and the erotic 1990s work.







I LOVE LORDE.

I'm also decidedly not in her demographic. While Billie Eilish rose up to fill the spot she had occupied as the young thinking woman who is rising to put everyone on their ass, Lorde is still the one whose music has moved me the most.

I first heard *Royals* not as her original, but as a cover by Puddles Pity Party. He's the 6'10 guy dressed like a clown who covers modern pop songs. He's really good, too! His cover of *Royals* is great, and it wasn't until slightly later when I heard Lorde's version.

And man, did it open my eyes.

For a 16 year old, she had a voice that couldn't be defined to a single concept. While so many of the young singers of the last couple of decades have come out of the Blue-Eyed Soul tradition, notably Joss Stone and Amy Winehouse, Lorde was something different. Hard to place, save for she fell deeply into the world that wasn't typical pop. She sang with power, but her lyrics were deeper, while still speaking of youth, they hit themes of disillusionment and somehow detachment

Then, there's the production.

It's not quite minimalist, but it's spare, everything is given space to land. There's little of Katy Perry or Lady Gaga, where the sound hits in a way that places the vocals as a partner of the backing track. Lorde's voice is 100% the driver, and the backing track is merely a cent.

And that is so very new, at least to the world of Radio Pop.

While *Royals* and *Tennis Court* are the ones that are best-known, I have a deep place in my heart for *Team*. She has this whole modern day royalty concept for her act, and here she announces that concept with the line "Wait 'til you're announced, we've not yet lost all our graces."

The song goes on to compare her youth crew with the Court of olden times. It's a great song, and it shows her ironic sense of humor.

Which is weird, because she was often shown as humourless.

When I think of her as more than a voice, I think of the

video for *Tennis Court*. It's just her against a solid background. The song plays and she's just looking at the camera. There's a light behind her head, and as the song goes on, she does not lipsynch. The lighting changes, at times she looks away, crosses her arms. The one time her mouth matches the words is when there's a 'yeah' in the song. It's unnerving at one level, it's raw as it is far less about her as the singer than it is about her as the image, an icon against a solid black background. The lighting varies, and provides extra visual interest and punctuation, but really, it's just her. It's something of a callback to Sinéad O'Connor's *Nothing Compares 2 U* but with ever less content other than her face, shoulders. It's a remarkable piece, and I think it's why she works as a performer—she's knows how to hold back without giving less.







WRESTLING HAS BEEN CRAZY GOOD.

You can actually say that about the last five or so years. The WWE and AEW have been putting on great matches, largely because we went through a period where young wrestlers found their way on the Indy scene and ended up becoming really good at the art of wrestling. AEW has built their company around that idea, while WWE has taken a lot of the talent and molded them in their developmental group, NXT >

NXT also happens to be most of what I watch these days.

About a year ago, I would watch the big shows from Raw

and Smackdown, WrestleMania, SummerSlam, The Royal Rumble, and they were great, but the only thing I watched every week was NXT UK, the British developmental group that was the home of several European stars who never made it to the US. The WWE folded that late last year, and I was bummed, but many of the folks I most loved came across and are working NXT now, which means I get to see them still.

The biggest names are Ilya Dragonov, a Russian who is an amazing worker and can both brawl and fly. He reminds me of Chris Benoit at his peak. There's the incredible Blair Davenport, who is a bad girl heel who is just straight ahead. The goofy-gimmicked Isla Dawn just moved up to RAW, but her Celtic Witch bit was fun. Also, she might be the most beautiful wrestler I've ever seen. The most talented of them, though, is the Big Strong Boy Tyler Bate. The man's been around for more than a decade, having incredible matches all over the world.

He's also 26 now.

He's an amazing flyer, and has a good ground game. He's so good and so young, he could easily keep things going the next twenty years, though he's a bit small. His long-time rival Jordan Devlin (now called JD McDonough) was in and is now on RAW too.

It's a good time for the Europeans, but they're not the only stars.

The US players are great, too. Bron Brekker, who is the real-life son of 1990s star Rick Steiner, was champion for most of the last year and a half, but lost it to one of the most talented stars to come up over the last half-decade—Carmelo Hayes.

And he's going to be an absolute legend!

There's the fantastic worker named Wes Lee. He started as a tag team wrestler and his partner got fired for abusing his ex, a former NXT star named Kimber Lee. He's become champion and is an amazing high-flyer and I love his stuff!

I'm loving it, and JP is slowly coming into it too. I got him into steak, now wrestling seems to be the next step towards becoming his Papa...only smaller.





WRAPPING IT UP FOR THIS WEEK.

I'll get back to Haldeman and other fun next time. I've got a crazy weekend (my wife's doing an art show in Felton and then we're going to a LegoFest!) so I won't be spending all day in front of my computer!

I'm very much looking forward to next month. It's July, my book comes out, we're going to the Goth Prom at the Mystery House, and I'll be setting up an exhibit at the Boulder Creek Library. Gotta love when all my things happen at once.

All the coffee this time was Dunkin' Donut's Original Blend. It was all we had...



