



Claims Department

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All art created using MidJourney





Vanessa and I are going to a prom.

You see, Vanessa and I didn't know each other in high school. In fact, when she was in High School, I was already working at the Computer History Museum, and while there were quite a few twenty-somethings at my Prom, by the early 2000s, this had become frowned upon.

Now, our friend Devon is turning 40. She's wonderful, kind, beautiful people, and she decided she wanted to have a Goth Prom. This is a lovely idea, but then I found out where they were doing it—

- The Winchester House.

Devotees will know of my not-quite-but-certainly-bordering-on obsession with the House, and thus when I heard, I had to click the ‘going’ button on Facebook. I was so happy! I am so happy!

Even if I’ll only have one date, unlike last time.

That’s right; I had two dates to my senior Prom.

No, there were no SitCom hijinx, instead, the date of the girl my girlfriend and I were sharing a limo with backed out (loser, AS Kristy was sensational in every possible way!) and so we just made it me with two dates.

Dinner was great. A place overlooking the Bay out towards the San Francisco Airport. Then the dance, which was also great because while having two dates is lovely down-the-road stories, it wasn’t practical, so my buddy Josh who decided to crash the dance spent the night dancing with Kristy and all was right in the world!







#Octorporpe is a damn fine podcast!

It's easily the one I am most excited for these days, after *Some Place Underneath* which is a True Crime podcast about missing and murdered women, but it also goes into different areas and is engaging in a totally different way than John Coxon, Alison Scott, and Liz Batty do on #Octorporpe.

The thing about my podcast listening lately has been it needs to fit in. It's not about time, so much as brainspace. I need something that works for the moment. This zine proba-

bly documents my mindscape better than anything, really, at least in the last month or so. True Crime, coffee, fandom, friends, travel, film history (and I'm so happy *Slums of Film History* is back!) and LA history.

The following is my current listening by day of the week...usually.

Monday

Crime Junky (True Crime, Ashley Flowers)

Tuesday

You Must Remember This (Film history, Karina Longworth)

Slums of Film History (Genre and Exploitation Film History, Slate & Tom)

Wednesday

Ghost Town (LA history, Rebecca Lieb, Jason Horton)

Muriel's Murders (True Crime, Nick & Muriel)

Side Stories (True Crime/Paranormal, Henry Zebrowski & Ben Kissell)

Thursday

No Dogs in Space (Rock History, Marcus Parks & Carolina Hidalgo)

Redhanded (True Crime, Hannah McGuire, Suruti Balor)

#Octothorpe (Fandom, John, Liz, Alison)

Friday

Last Podcast on the Left (True Crime/Paranormal, Henry Zebrowski, Ben Kissell, Marcus Parks)

Some Place Under Neith (True Crime, Natalie
Jean, Amber Nelson)

Time to Time

Welcome to Nightvale (Creepy Fiction)

Gastropod (Food Science/History)

99% Invisible (Design, Roman Mars)

Articles of Interest (Fashion, Avery Trufelman)

That's fairly different listening, but it all fits into what I've been doing here, no? True Crime News is there. No Dogs is basically my band profiles. When do I not write about Fandom? How much film and LA has there been in these?







January 6th was exactly what the Founding Father's expected.

Lucky for us, it took a couple of centuries+ for it to actually happen. The reasons are many and varied (I tend to think it's because the Founders had a terribly skewed vision of what people really were and no Sociology studies to fall back on and we've devolved so much) but mostly, we kinda got lucky.

Trump is also to blame, but we'll be hearing a LOT more about that later.

The idiots who stormed the capitol that January morn were doing what they saw as their patriotic duty. They, of course, had been lied to for years, belittled for decades (rightly, from where I sit, but I get the anger it installed) and basically exploded when the match of a maniac touched them. There's no world in which the elements fermenting here wouldn't lead to riots, the same way you can say that about the LA Riots, but there's a clear difference: they were simply conned into believing they were the center of the universe and the curtain which had been slowly pulled back by progress has finally revealed enough. Liberal elitism hasn't helped either, nor has the segmentation of a largely unregulated media and on and on and on.

This isn't a political screed, though. This is about *Bob's Burgers*, a comedian I have always admired, and a chicken coming home to roost.

Now, on January 6th, there were a lot of ordinary Americans of various ordinary stripes. There were a lot of those who were widely-known in areas such as podcasting and conservative blogging, but there weren't a lot of Hollywood actors.

There was at least one, though.

Jay Johnston is a comedian I have loved since first seeing him on *Mr. Show*. He is hilarious, has an exceptional form of deadpan average guy doing average stuff presence, which makes his bits, like Choo-choo the Herky-Jerky Dancer work, not to mention every cop he has played. He's almost a prototypical cop actor. He would show up on *Arrested Development*, and *New Girl*, and *The Sarah Silverman Show*. He's super-

talented, and a damn fine writer.

What I didn't know, is the skit about Sovereign Citizens that showed up on Mr. Show might have been cutting really close to truth. He had sorta slid further and further towards the right over the years, including showing up on the podcast of the founder of the Proud Boys.

Right Wing politics and Hollywood are weird these days. There's not as many Reps outside of the big boardrooms these days, but there are some, and a stripe of Liberalism that hoes closer to Libertarianism. The best-known folks have been largely isolated to a particular area of production. Kevin Sorbo, Gina Carano, even James Woods, they're not appearing in a lot of top-billed productions these days. Johnston wouldn't have been put into that camp largely because he was still working on big projects.

Well, one big project—*Bob's Burgers*.

You see, one of the most-popular animated shows of the last couple of decades is *Bob's Burgers*. It's not hard to understand why. It takes the concepts that made *The Simpsons* such a major cultural touchstone and turning it slightly with characters that are far better lovable losers.

Johnston isn't one of the big stars, he provides the voice of Jimmy Pesto, Sr. Bob's foil in many episodes, but it's a big part of the joy of the show.

Well, he was a part of the show.

The FBI posted an image looking for someone who was CLEARLY Jay Johnston. I mean there was no mistaking him. He was at the riot, and it came out that he was wanted

for his involvement. While it didn't take long to figure out who he was, it was a while before he was arrested for civil disorder, entering or remaining in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly or disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, and impeding passage through the Capitol grounds or buildings.

That happened June 6th, 2023.

He'd already been let go from *Bob's Burgers*, and while he filmed a starring role in a film between the riot and being identified, he's basically become untouchable. He's been approached by his former co-workers and friends, and mostly they've been stymied. He certainly bought into the Election Fraud fallacy, but no one can really tell why.

Still, he's a very funny guy who's gonna face some very unfunny consequences.







Now, they're saying we got a crashed saucer.

This is not the first time this has been said, you may remember a fellow named Bob Lazar (who is genuinely a nice fellow) who, in the 1980s, was hired by the government to reverse-engineer technology recovered from a crashed spaceship. In the 1990s, he started talking and talking about it, and a lot of folks think he made the whole thing up. Bob's not exactly the most trustworthy soul.

This time, there's more credible stuff.

Now, let's start with soft-disclosure.

Back in 2021, the Government officials in charge of such things, I think the Navy or Air Force, announced that there were three confirmed videos of what they called UAPs– Unidentified Aerial Phenomena. I guess they didn't want to just come out and say UFOs. These UAPs were recorded by US Pilots, and they showed very different kinds of crafts, most notably the 'tic-tac' which resembled the famed candy mint my friend Kate used to do the commercials for.

The thing is it led to serious discussion, and I believe congressional hearings as well.



Now, fast-forward the last couple of weeks. David Grusch led an analysis of reports for an investigation into UAPs, passed on some documents and got in trouble. He claims he's a whistleblower, and he may well be. He's started calling for further disclosure, especially to announce that they've had a complete and a partial craft of alien origin.

Now, this would seem to be along the lines of Bob Lazar's claims way back when. It's also been 'confirmed' as much as they can be, that the government has possession of 'exotic materials' that clearly didn't come from Earth. That's a big thing, no?

Now, this is coming from people who are inside the government, and who are recognized as such. Lazar didn't have this sort of boosting.

The question for the moment is why, and why not, just let the world know?

First off, and this is pretty clear, it's probably nothing. The sources are good, almost great, and the thought that the



US has a ship after so many reported sightings of crashes does make sense. Clearly the greatest fear is fear itself. If we don't fully understand the potential dangers presented by any sort of non-Earther, presenting the information of their existence could certainly open us up to significant problems (see: V, 1983) If we know they're dangerous, then saying they're here and dangerous is likely to set off a panic (see: pretty much every SF film about aliens OTHER than V) and if they're not dangers, and maybe they're here to just observe us, then really does it matter?

OR...

The big thing I think is they need to keep them under wraps so that other groups, non-governmental and foreign governments. This would make UFOs the equal to something like The Manhattan Project, and then there'd be a very good reason to not disclose anything more than glimpses.

Either way, UFOs are something real, if they're alien, and I'm still kinda torn on that, then what kind of aliens? Are the ships themselves the aliens? There's a thought that the aliens aren't here, but we get projections of them, or perhaps they manipulate space-time in such a way that they both are and aren't here. These are, admittedly, heady thoughts, but I think there's too much we've already seen/heard to say that they're not a thing that we don't know. The idea of them being foreign or private entity devices of super-science isn't out of the question, but whose? That's a harder question.





Since I've been broke, lunch is harder.

I've developed a methodology that allows for maximum lunch to hold me over for dinner without breaking the bank. It's not as easy as you'd think. For a while I was doing A Costco chicken (4.99) on Monday, second half on Tuesday, Wednesday would be the El Pollo Loco chicken tacos or Original Pollo Bowl (5.89) and then Costco Chicken again. If we'd have a bigger dinner the night before, sometimes I'd do that. Lately, even that's been a bit too much of a splurge so I've had to develop a cheaper method.

Enter the 1+1+1.

The first 1 is soup. If you buy a full carton of the Trader Joe's Tomato or Roasted Red Pepper & Tomato Soup, that's 7.89 and it'll last three or four lunches. Not particularly satisfying lunches, but lunches nonetheless.

Then the second 1—nuts. Nuts are super-foods. They got fat and protein, aren't too high in carbs, and most importantly, they kinda eat like meat. They also have crunch, which I really like. Lately, I've been into Cashews, which are a bit pricey, a bag at Trader Joe's is 7.99, but they last three lunches and a couple of snacks in-between, so that's value!

The final 1 is leftovers. If we buy tacos the night before, there's usually at least one leftover. I'll take it to work, scoop the meat into the bowl, add nuts and soup, and microwave city! If I make a meat mixture, the meat and mushroom sautes I've been doing for dinner, bring some of that in and toss it in and it's great...at least when I don't do the Garlic-Ginger ones I've been making lately. Not being too hard on the old arteries, it's a good call.

I guess the real call will be how long it takes to get boring. So far, it hasn't.







Just what I need: another Museum idea.

I was thinking the other day about how finding a good source for interpretation of the evolution of the magazine isn't easy or accessible to the non-academic. I started digging into sites that should cover that sort of thing, and didn't find too much.

So I thought *there should be a Museum of the American Magazine*.

Now, what does that mean?

Well, Magazines have been around for a long time, and there have been waves of them that crash hard against the rocks of the culture. 1880 or so, with cheaper and faster printing methods you got things like *Overland*, then improved distribution methods regionally made regional magazines like *The New Yorker* and *The Coast* to go national. That was followed by paper-prices dropping and improved techniques in the 1950s for color (not to mention several significant court

decisions allowing for various kinds of material to be distributed) and you've got that major boom. The 1970s saw the rise of the Glossy, and the 1990s the invention of the eZine.

That there's no major collecting institution that interprets that passage is odd, but understandable. It's hard collecting magazines as a part of more diverse collections, so how would it be if that was all you collected?

How I would approach it; start by drawing up a list of 20 or so titles for each decade since 1850. Then I'd go about collecting them. Some I'd want in-house, physical copies, and some I'd just want good scans. That would require a whole bunch of physical storage (*Playboy*, clearly one of the most important magazines of the last century, would require roughly 40 linear feet) and a large amount of redundant digital storage. To handle this, you'd also need a helluva scanner, probably several, and software to deal with the images.

Now, the hard thing is how you make this accessible. The web, of course, is the clearest method, which means you've got to navigate the copyright and permissions processes. While that's pretty easy for stuff pre-1928, it gets harder for after that period. Of course, scans for research use is possible, and if you do exhibits, and I've seen some very good magazine-based exhibits (notably one about *Aspen Magazine*) and clearly that's a way to go.

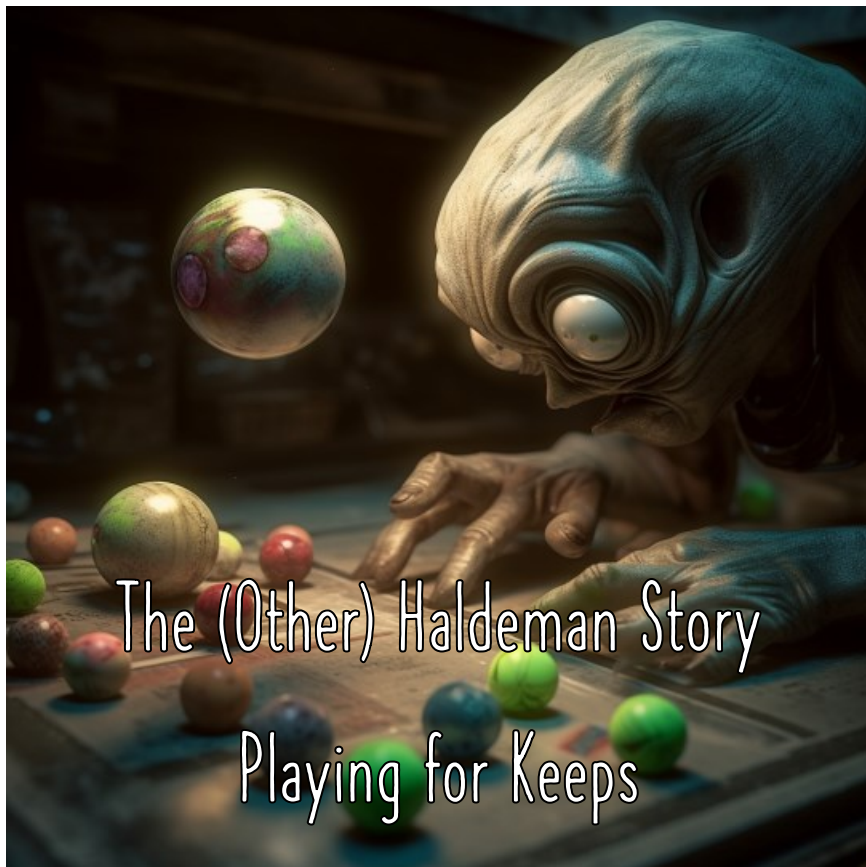
The thing is, at least as far as I see it, is that there's no one out there really looking at magazines as objects instead of as content holders. Things like *Aspen* had clear exhibit potential, but so do things like *Playboy*, or *The New Yorker*. If I were an exhibit designer, I'd love to work with so many of the mag-

azines I've got my mind on.

The web would be the key to making it exist and have impact. That's the key to so many of the Big Picture on a Thin Subject collections these days, but what are you gonna do?







The (Other) Haldeman Story Playing for Keeps

I'm not sentimental.

Some of you may question that, but it's true. I'm an emotional guy, true, but sentimentality isn't wired in me for some reason. It may have something to do with being an historian. There are few sentimental stories that do it for me, but *Playing for Keeps* is one of them.

Though the argument of sentimentality may have something to do with me not being a boomer.

The story is lovely, and smart and of a kind that I can make a whole lot of different points about. The story boils

down to this—the aliens arrive, a kid meets them, they play marbles, the kid wins, saving us all.

This is a story of an unknowing hero. These stories often have a lot of detractors who see it as too simple, that the hero must make a purposeful attempt to enact the change in the story, that they must know the odds they are against the stakes they are playing. I don't buy it; a good story is a good story and any specific way of looking at things is full of pitfalls when in the hands of a suitably decent storyteller.

A fair amount of the story deals with young Johnny's imagination. He's a cowboy, a soldier, a racecar driver, and more. He's a kid and one who plays with his own reality, which is so fun.

I'm pretty sure I was that kind of kid.

When the alien provides a demonstration of what the aliens are planning on doing to Earth, the kid can only put it in the context of his experiences, in this case, it's as if he's playing marbles, and when he proves his prowess at it, the alien is defeated because he interprets the act as one showing that Johnny is willing and able to bring forth great force to meet and defeat the aliens.

It's a bit of a cheat, but it's a really effective little vignette.



That's all for this time!

I'll be working on *Drink Tanks* (The Manhattan Project/Oppenheimer deadline the 25th, then it's Douglas Adams, July 25th, then it's Spider-Man on August 25th!) and *Journey Planet* with an issue dedicated to Vietnam, SMOL (miniatures and other tiny things!) Mythical Music and Instruments, and Jack the Ripper in Fiction.

And I'll keep doin' these, because I'm really enjoying the way this reminds me of the Olde Days of 2006-07 when *The Drink Tank* would pop=up ever few days and I'd just sit at the office, working on a project until something hit me that I had to write down. Only now, it's at home with the kids and when they do something funny, I'm all about writing it!

Because of the zine, I've also cleaned my coffeemaker.

This doesn't sound like much, but it was the first time I decided to run the home coffeemachine after my heart/sodium issues back in October. I ran three passes—1 of vinegar and water, one of salted water, and one of just plain water, and when I made the first cup, Vanessa declared it very good! I didn't notice, I just noticed that it was nice to make a regular pot myself for once.





I've been broke the last few days. I've got 10 dollars a day, and have budgeted for one tank re-fill. That's always a tough thing, I get three trips back and forth to work from a full tank, and since I get paid on Thursday, that means my current tank has to last until Tuesday, which seems a reasonable assumption at this point.

The things you gotta consider when there's no money to be had!

This issue is dedicated to the memory of The Iron Sheik, Twitter champion, 2015 to 2023.

