

OCTOBER 2021

DENMARK

# PLAYBOY

200  
NICK KROLL  
WHAT INSPIRES  
HIS CREATIONS

WE ADORE  
**OUR  
GIRLS**  
BEST  
PLAYMATE  
GIFTS EVER

**ORAL**  
AROUSAL  
DIRTY TALK  
LEADS TO  
STEAMY SEX!

PLAYMATE

KORINA

*Kanela*

Curves for Days

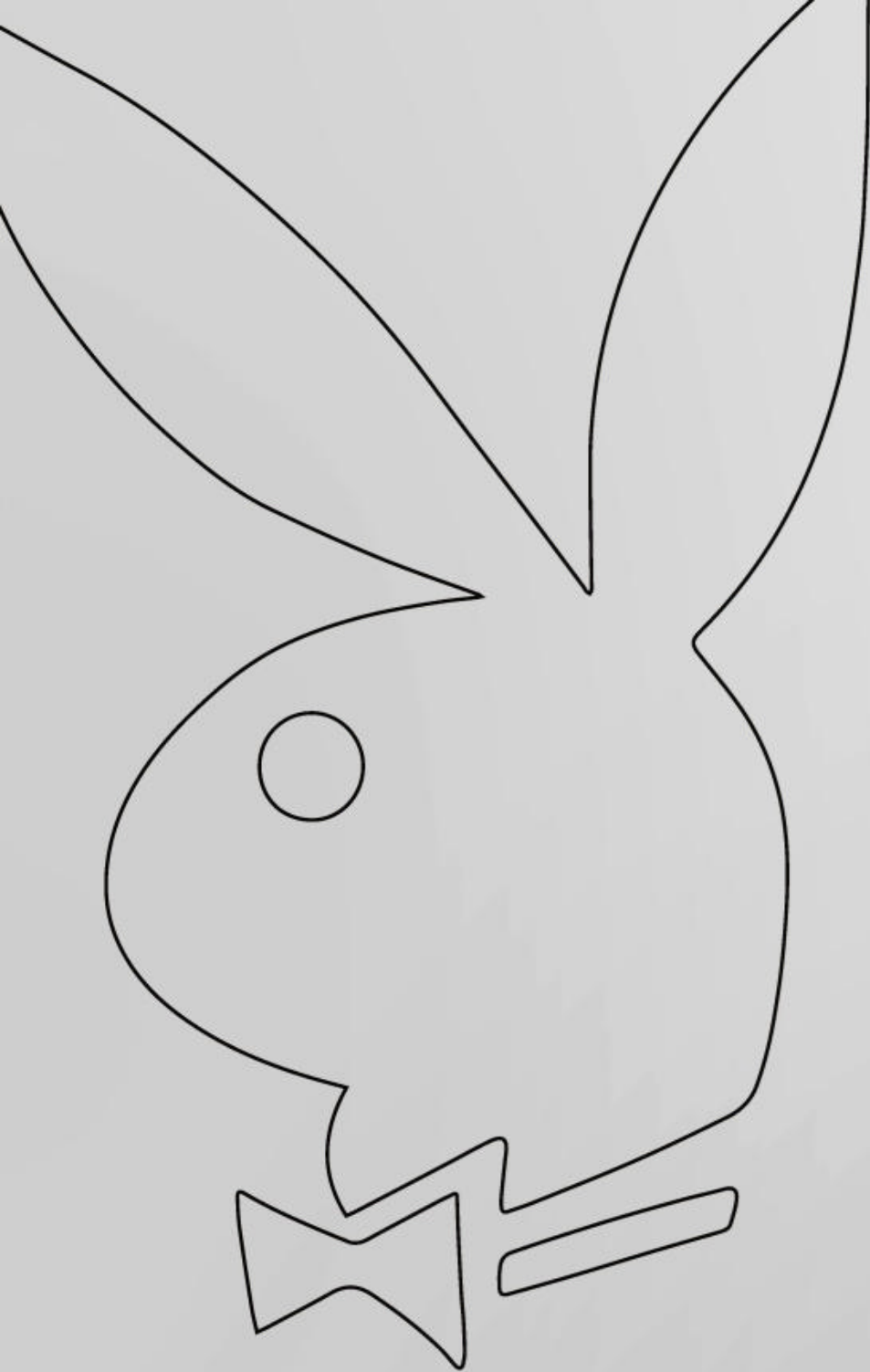
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Photography by Arthur St. John  
No 111 | **October 2021**



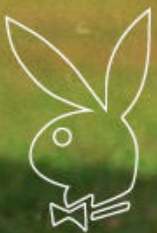


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# License *to* *Wed*

Queer couples rush  
to the altar amid  
the growing threat  
to marriage equality

BY **LAUREN ROWELLO**

PHOTO BY **HAPPY STOCK PHOTO**



Tonia Castaneda-Rose and Jenna Rose met while working at a private school just a month before the pandemic hit their hometown of Palestine, Texas. The two women started dating in March 2020 just as Covid-19 cases climbed across the United States, and they later lost their jobs when their school closed permanently.

As a polyamorous couple, the pair's first month together was shared with other partners. Weeks into their relationship, Rose's previous long-term relationship ended abruptly and Castaneda-Rose's father died suddenly. "She and I held each other together during some of the hardest moments of our lives," Rose says. "We quickly bonded and grew together." By July, the couple started planning a wedding with a date set in 2022.

When conservative Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court, queer people started to worry about their futures. Barrett is only 48 years old, and her lifetime appointment sets her up to influence the lives of Americans for decades. Her confirmation solidified a strong six-to-three conservative majority on the court, and some of those conservative justices have already dissented on rulings that protect the rights of LGBTQ people.

Advocates point to Barrett's conservative Christian beliefs as a possible threat, noting her defense of the justices' marriage-equality dissents and her misgendering of trans people as proof that she might not respect and protect queer people. As an "originalist," she interprets the Constitution through the lens of those who wrote the document, without considering modern experiences or cultural shifts. Activists explain that those historical leaders did not understand or affirm the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ and marginalized people, underlining the dangers of using this perspective to interpret today's laws.

Barrett has already started hearing cases that will decide the fates of queer people, with a case about discrimination in the foster care system pending adjudication after oral arguments were heard November 4.

"We're concerned about other rights we might lose and what other discrimination might be legalized," Rose, 30, says. As a transgender woman in Texas, she says, it's challenging to look for a new position following her recent job loss. She fears that protections afforded to her by the recent ruling protecting LGBTQ people from employment discrimination could be revoked.

Marriage offers legal protections for couples who could experience discrimination. Castaneda-Rose, 23, hopes their legal union will safeguard her child, who is not biologically related to her wife. "If something were to happen to me, what would they do with our daughter?" she wonders.

Rose, an avid motorcyclist, says she's concerned about possible accidents and wants to guarantee that her partner can make decisions about her care and visit her in the hospital if there is an emergency. It is critical for transgender women to have an advocate in healthcare, she says. "It's very scary living in a world where there are constant threats to your rights, especially your basic right to medical care," she adds.

Rose and Castaneda-Rose reached out to Raynie Castaneda, a leader in the pagan community who planned to officiate their wedding ceremony, explaining their fear

*"The message is: We exist. You can't legislate our existence away."*

that they might not be able to wed if marriage equality is overturned. Castaneda, a pagan witch, invited them to a public ceremony she planned for queer couples in a town square in Tyler, Texas.

On Sunday, November 15, five couples, including this pair, were married as an act of protest and solidarity. "The message is: We exist," Castaneda says. "You can't legislate our existence away."

Rose explains that living in a deeply religious part of east Texas comes with risks for openly queer people. "Hate crimes in Texas and political tension make queer people feel more unsafe than in other areas of the U.S.," she says. "Living here, you have to be prepared to defend yourself—philosophically, politically or physically."

A Christian group walked throughout the space during the wedding ceremony, praying aloud and reading from the Bible. "I've had threats and harassment," Rose says. "We've been told that we're evil for subjecting our children to our unholy union."

Rick Taylor, of Philadelphia, is no stranger to standing up for LGBTQ rights when opposed by religious institutions. In 2013, he married Bill Gatewood in a ceremony that protested the firing of a Pennsylvania pastor from the United Methodist Church for officiating his son's marriage to a man. The rite was performed at his church in Philadelphia by 65 religious leaders, including 50 Methodist pastors who risked losing their credentials for performing the ceremony. Marriage equality wasn't protected by the Supreme Court until 2015, so the couple had to wait more than a year for their marriage to be legally recognized.

Taylor, 62, lost Gatewood to heart disease, and then began dating Roberto Soler, 52, in 2018. As the Senate was about to begin Barrett's confirmation hearings, he asked Soler to marry him, seeking peace of mind in case marriage equality is reversed. "I decided I'm not going to give them a chance to tell me I can't do this again," Taylor says. "They didn't get to push me into a box the first time, and I'm not going to give them an opportunity to try it a second time. If they're going to change the rules, we need to get a jump on it."

Taylor says this relationship is different from his last. His late husband experienced rampant homophobia growing up, which led to internalized feelings of shame. "I spent our entire lives together trying to get him to understand that [being gay] is not a bad thing," Taylor says. He notes that American culture seemed to be becoming more affirming of queer people and more supportive of those with marginalized





experiences in recent years—until Trump gave a platform to those who oppose such progress. “I was beginning to see things get better, and then I started to watch it slip away,” he says. “I just want all people—gay and lesbian and transgender and immigrant—to have the same rights as every other American.” He says this year’s close presidential election demonstrates that so many people in the U.S. don’t hold those same beliefs.

Taylor and Soler are currently planning an intimate wedding to be officiated by his pastor, Robin Hynicka, who presided over his first marriage. The pair plans to wed in mid-December with a quiet ceremony at their home in Manayunk, a Philadelphia neighborhood just a few miles from Arch Street United Methodist Church, the site of Taylor’s first wedding. He says marriage will offer him peace of mind.

Castaneda echoes his sentiment. “Marriage protects families, full stop,” she says. “It protects spouses and loved ones—medically, monetarily and spiritually.”

*"I decided I'm not going to give them a chance to tell me I can't do this again."*







# The DOPE TUTOR ANSWERS

Why Does Weed  
Make Food Taste  
So Good?

BY ANDREW DEANGELO

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD A. CHANCE





THC-heightened senses can make the munchies a true pleasure to remember

My first food-and-weed epiphany was a quasi-religious experience—one that happened more than three decades ago. I was in high school and had smoked a joint on the walk over to my best friend's house, arriving quite stoned. In the grip of the munchies, I asked him if there was anything I could eat. He told me to help myself to the pots of Ethiopian food upstairs in the kitchen.

Aromas washed over me like a tidal wave as I entered the kitchen—berbere, garlic, ginger, chili. The array of fragrant spices flooding my senses made me want all of whatever was creating the wonderful smells. A bit of drool slid from the corner of my mouth, which I found hilarious. I began to laugh as I tried to figure out where the plates and utensils were kept in this unfamiliar kitchen. This was no easy task as each drawer yielded the wrong results. To me this was hysterical. Tears streamed down my face from laughing so hard. Somehow I managed to find the

proper gear and opened the first lid on the stove. As I peered into a pot of chicken legs and a whole egg drowning in a curry-like sauce, I smelled the food in a way I never had before. The scent lingered in my nostrils; I lingered above the pots. I must've stood there for 10 minutes smelling the food and laughing out loud.

Then it was time to eat.

I decided to take my time and really enjoy it. The memory of that first bite is seared into my mind. I could taste each flavor, each spice. I noticed the texture in my mouth, the heat, the chili burning my tongue, the chicken falling off the bone. It tasted so good, like the best thing I had ever eaten. I began to wonder if my mother had ever cooked anything so spectacular. It was a moment of pure pleasure.

My friend came upstairs as I was eating. Whoever made this food needed to open a restaurant right away, I told him. That's when he noticed my bloodshot eyes and busted me for being high as a kite. After a long laugh, he then schooled me on the proper way to eat this cuisine, showing me how to use the spongy injera bread and my fingers to scoop up everything. We sat in silence and ate, and I swear I thought I saw Jesus. I think I even stood up when I was done, applauding and saying "Bravo!" My friend made sure to usher my stoned ass out of his house before his parents came home. On my walk back, I noticed my senses were still heightened; I could still smell and taste the delicious flavors and spices.

That meal left a deep impression—37 years later, it's clear as a bell. And they say stoners can't remember anything. On the contrary, science says it's perfectly normal for me to remember that THC-enhanced meal with such clarity.

When cannabis hits your brain, a lot happens to your appetite. Two recent studies conducted with mice, one in the United States and the other in Europe, tell us a lot. The European study reveals that the olfactory area of the brain becomes more active when THC is in your system. This explains why the smell of the food captured my attention all those years ago. In

WHEN CANNABIS  
HITS YOUR BRAIN,  
A LOT HAPPENS TO  
YOUR APPETITE.

fact, when I tap into that memory, I can still "smell" those scents wafting off the stovetop. It's because the weed made that area of my brain more sensitive—and smell, in general, stimulates appetite. When smell is enhanced, so is appetite, and so is the memory of smell and taste. That's why you can remember great meals over the years, even without any assistance from cannabis.

The American study reveals two opposing things that happen in a different part of the brain called the hypothalamus, which tells you when you're full and need to stop eating, among other things. THC appears to turn this function down or off, and also causes the release of dopamine, which can make you feel hungry. That's why the munchies can strike even after you've indulged in a big dinner. Hours after the main meal, you may find yourself getting that third plate of turkey this Thanksgiving.

This year, as we forgo large gatherings and set more intimate tables, let's spark up some cannabis together and blow some smoke at the Zoom screen. You may find yourself slowing down, taking time to smell your meal, marveling at all the different tastes you can experience simultaneously—and maybe laughing out loud until tears of joy stream down your face. What better way to settle into the holidays?

Tune in next month for more about cannabis, pleasure and why weed can be the best gift of all.









# Danielle *Menchen*

Instagram @daniellenmx

Photography by **Jcsmooth Photography LLC**  
MUA **Lucrecia Suarez - Aura Makeup Art**

















*Hi! My name is Danielle Menchen, and I am a 22-year-old professional model from Tampa, Florida. I'm relatively new to the modeling world but have loved every second of it so far! I've always had a passion for fitness and working hard on my body, and modeling has helped me take that to the next level by turning it into a career. Some of my interests include fitness, I've competed in two bikini shows placing in the top 2 in both, and music, particularly going to music festivals and events where I get to meet new people. I'm extremely outgoing and love exploring and traveling as much as I can and meeting new friends along the way! My goal is to continue to excel in this career and get to model and travel the world while I do it. Follow me on my journey on Instagram -I'm just getting started!*









**Tell us something surprising about you?** I am a nationally qualified NPC bikini competitor and love doing fitness competitions!

**Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?** I was so excited I barely slept the entire week of the shoot.

**What inspires you?** Completing my goals. I love challenges and am always looking for opportunities to better myself.

**Why did you choose to pursue a career in modeling?** One of my absolute favorite movements: body positivity. The modeling industry has taught me how to love the way I look and be confident in myself and my body.

**Who do you look up to in the modeling industry?** Margot Robbie, Candice Swanepoel.

**What are some of your hobbies?** Chilling with my dog, hitting a workout at the gym, enjoying the beautiful beaches in Florida with friends.

**Name three things on your bucket list?** Traveling - I've always wanted to visit Australia, Italy, and Paris. Fly on a Private jet - never done it before! Scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef - my adventurous side has been dying to do this!

**Turn-ons?** Confidence without arrogance. Dominance and loyalty.

**Turn-offs?** No sense of humor, dishonesty, indecisiveness.

**Describe to us your perfect date?** I absolutely love spontaneity and creativeness - telling guys would Make it too easy. Pick me up, be a gentleman, and give it your best shot by surprising me or taking me somewhere exciting or unique.

**Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?** I've always wanted to visit Rome - I'm half Italian and have an appreciation for the culture and the food.

**What is your mantra?** Mind over Matter. It's a quote I live by. I truly believe that anything is possible if someone sets their mind to it, and works hard to achieve their goals. It's always been a dream of mine to be published in Playboy and here I am.





# Money Shot: Pleasure Planet

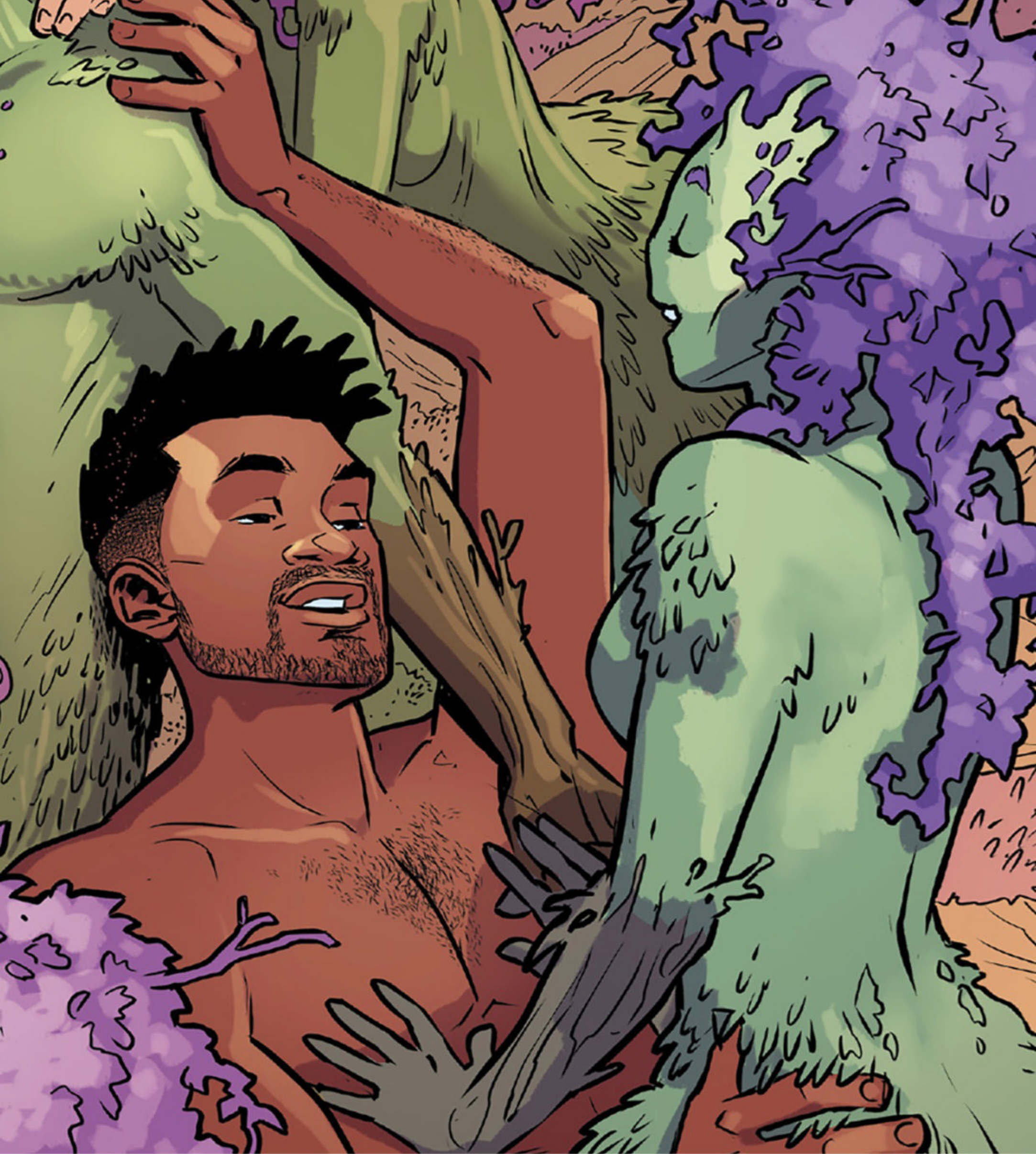
The triple-X  
space sex-pplorers  
are at it again in  
this exclusive tale  
for Playboy

BY  
**TIM SEELEYSARAH BEATTIE**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
**REBEKAH ISAACSKURT MICHAEL RUSSELL**

As they skip through space seeking exciting new alien partners to bang for bucks—turns out live-streaming intergalactic porn ain't a bad way to raise research funds—the intrepid crew encounters an entity that gives new meaning to phrase “big love.”







WRITTEN BY  
TIM SEELEY & SARAH BEATTIE

VAULT COMICS PRESENTS

Planet: Omalaud-3-Epsilon



NOPE.  
I'M SORRY.  
I CAN'T DO IT.  
I'M OUT.

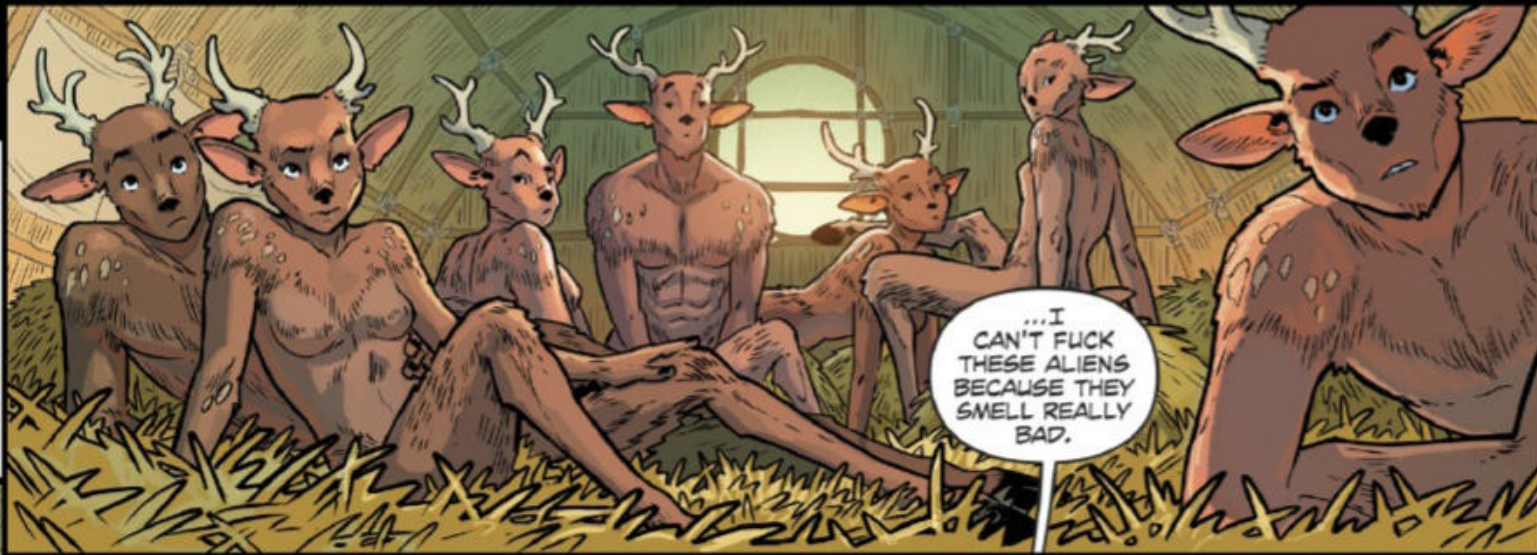
DRAWN BY  
REBEKAH ISAACS  
COLORED BY  
KURT MICHAEL RUSSELL  
LETTERED BY  
CRANK!

# Money Shot



I'M A *FLAVOR TECHNOLOGIST*, OKAY? I'M EXTREMELY GIFTED IN THE CHEMISTRY OF SENSATION, AND SCENT FIGURES HEAVILY INTO THAT.

SO, HERE'S MY SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENT...



...I CAN'T FUCK THESE ALIENS BECAUSE THEY SMELL REALLY BAD.

GOD DAMN IT, *DOUG*. SINCE WHEN DO YOU GET TO BE THE PICKY ONE?

HE'S RIGHT, THOUGH. THE WATER HERE HAS A HIGHER CONCENTRATION OF PURINE NUCLEOTIDES, WHICH ARE RELEASED IN THE NATIVES' SKIN, CREATING AN AROMA SIMILAR TO URINE AND--



"GAS FACE," CHRIS. WE CAN'T DO A *LIVE SHOW* HERE BECAUSE THERE ISN'T ANYTHING SEXY ABOUT US ALL DOING *GAS FACE*.

GAS FACE? IS THAT ONE OF THOSE HIP-HOP THINGS?



GOD, YOU ARE SO WHITE, *OMAR*.

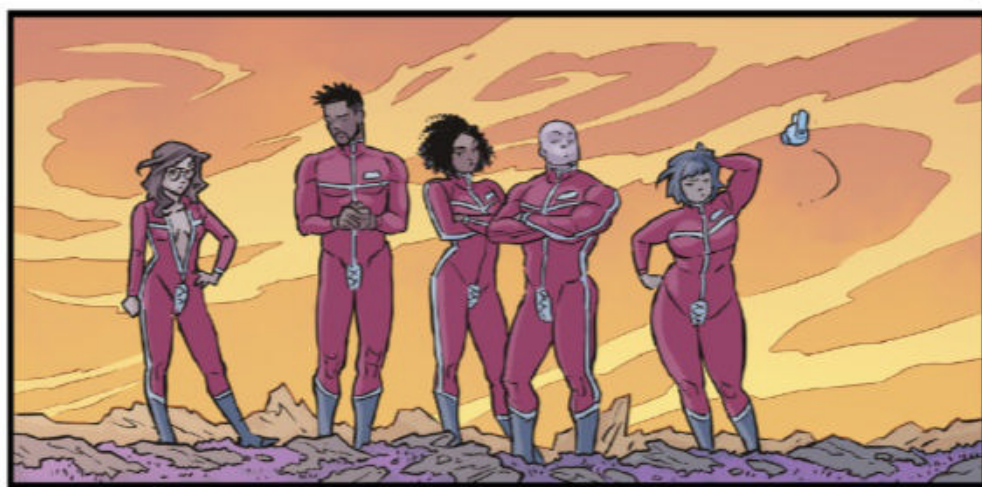
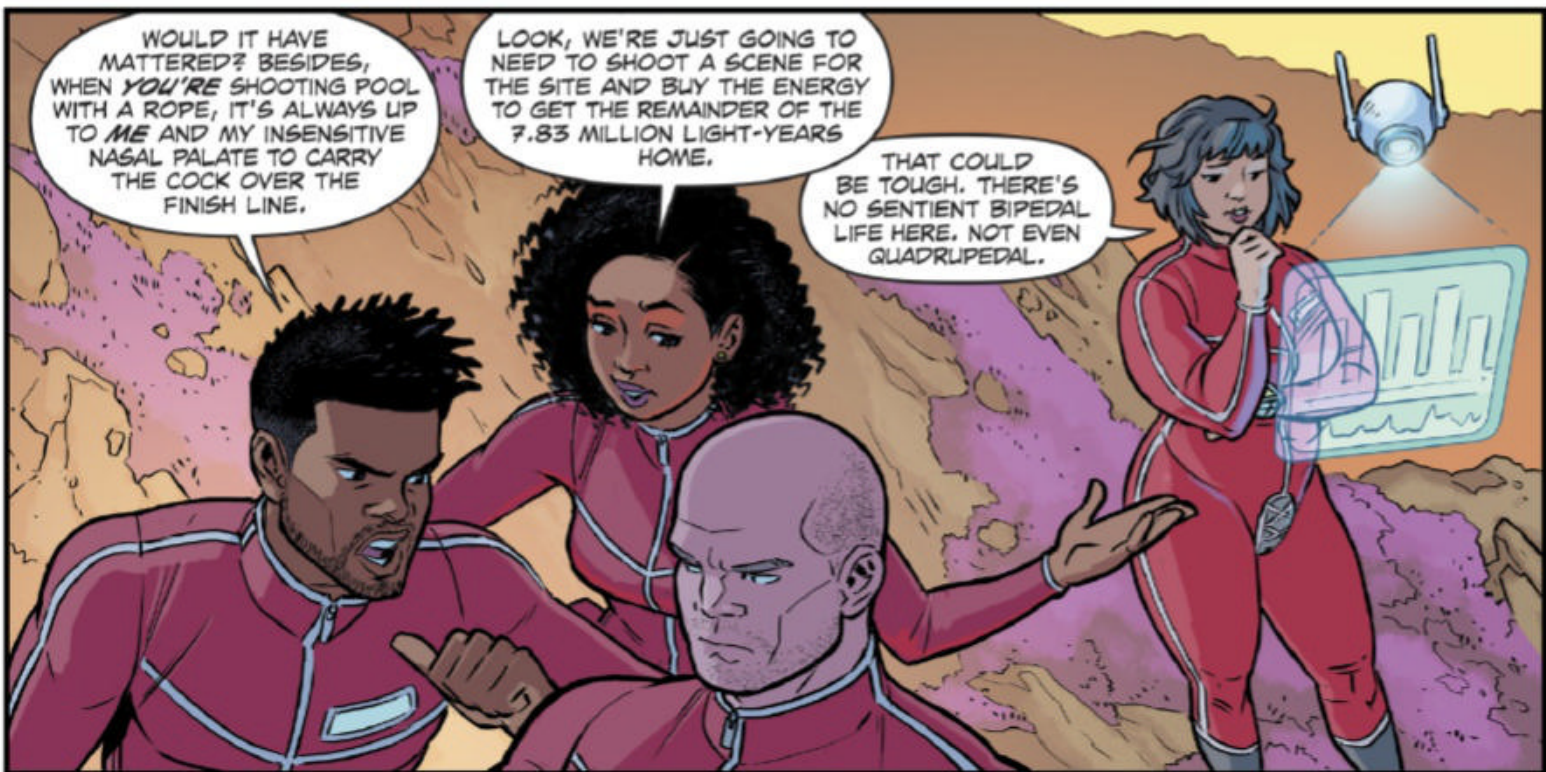
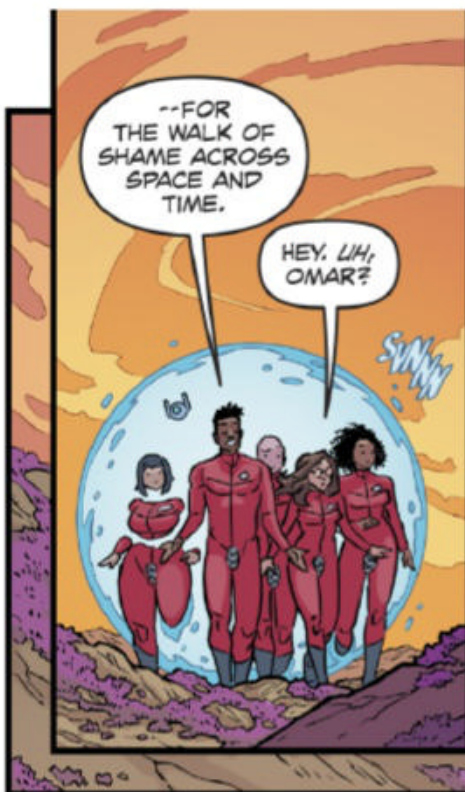
*MONEY SHOT* TRANS MAT FIELD READY.

THANKS, *LITTLE SHOT*.

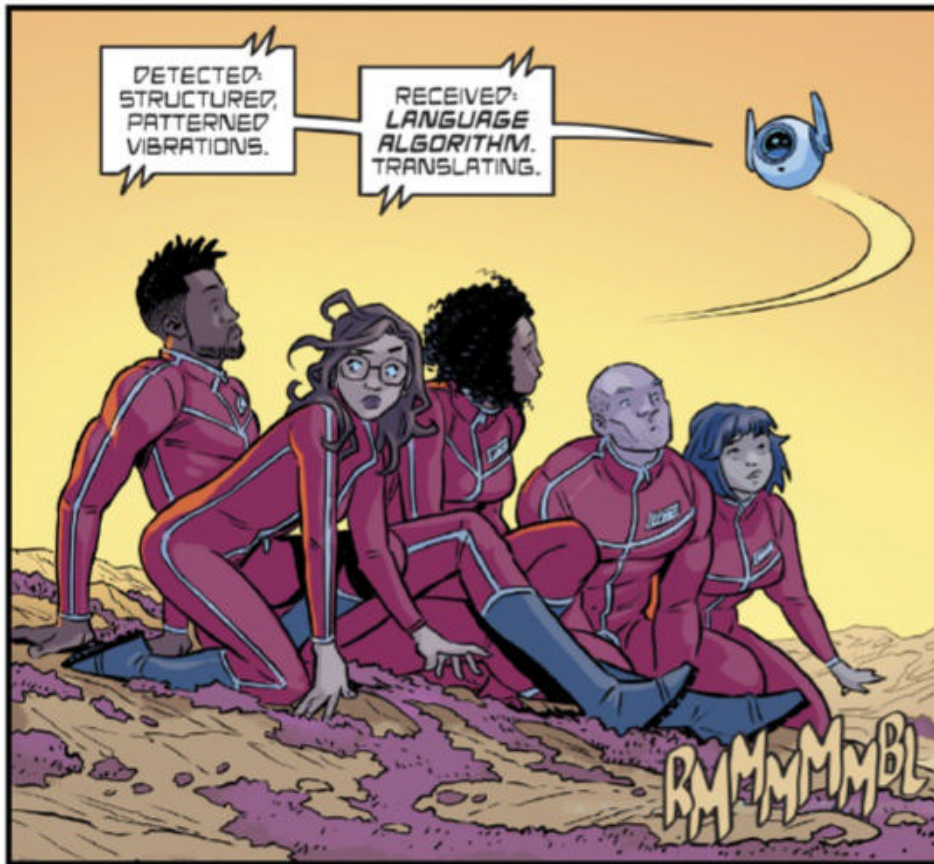


OKAY, CREW. TIME--



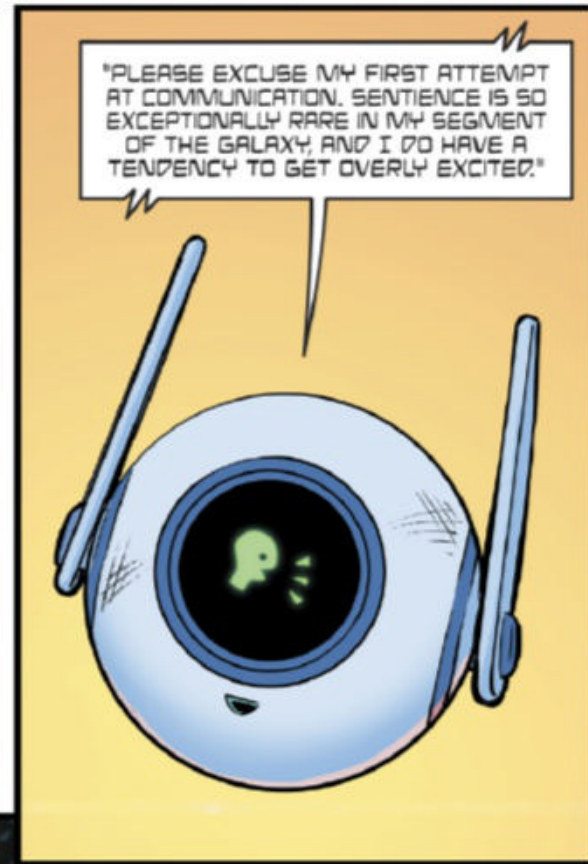






DETECTED:  
STRUCTURED,  
PATTERNED  
VIBRATIONS.

RECEIVED:  
LANGUAGE  
ALGORITHM.  
TRANSLATING.

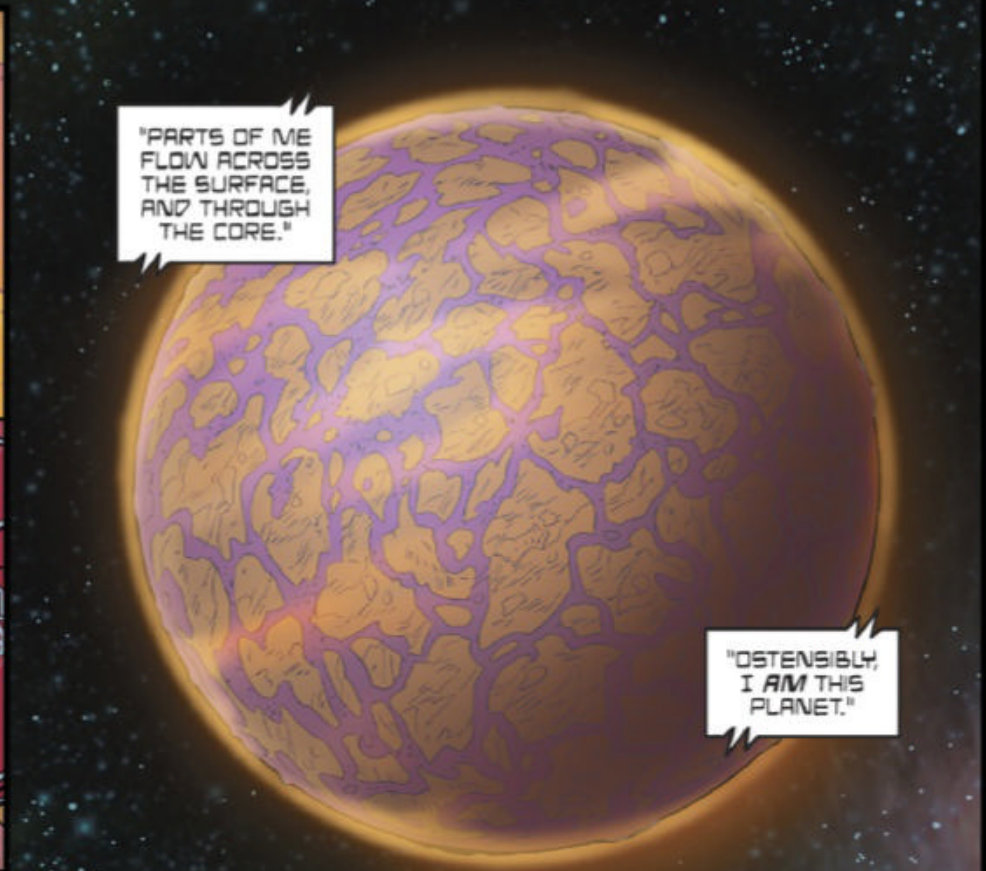


"PLEASE EXCUSE MY FIRST ATTEMPT  
AT COMMUNICATION. SENTENCE IS SO  
EXCEPTIONALLY RARE IN MY SEGMENT  
OF THE GALAXY, AND I DO HAVE A  
TENDENCY TO GET OVERLY EXCITED."



UH?  
LITTLE SHOT?  
WHO'S TALKING,  
BUDDY?

RMMMMMBL



"PARTS OF ME  
FLOW ACROSS  
THE SURFACE,  
AND THROUGH  
THE CORE."

"OSTENSIBLY,  
I *AM* THIS  
PLANET."

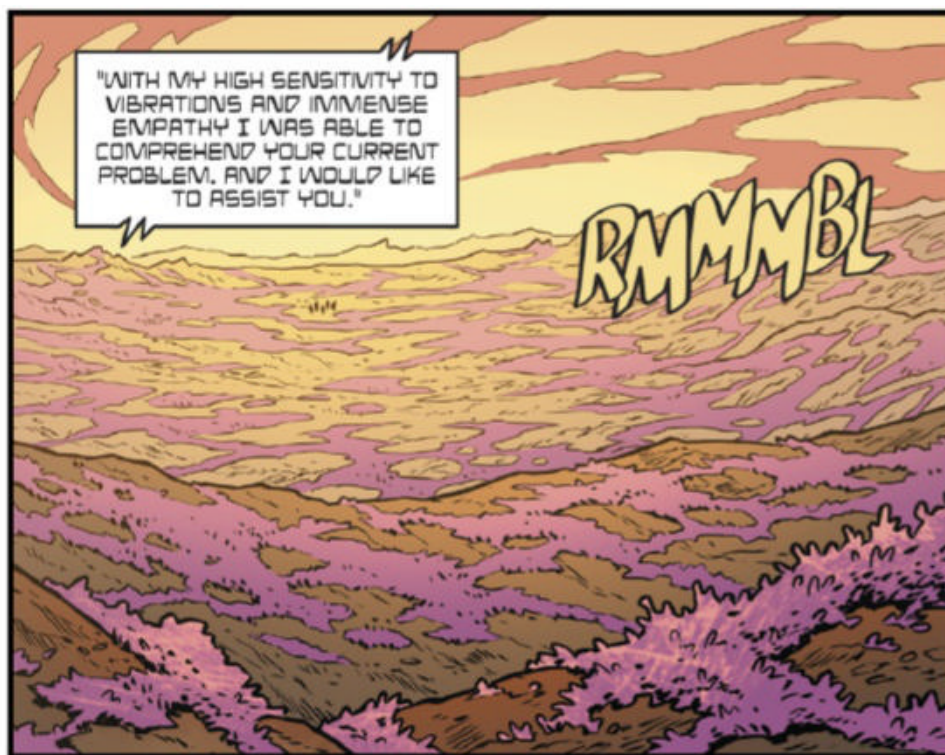


OH MY  
GOSH. IT'S LIKE  
THE *OREGON*  
*ARMILLARIA*...  
THE HUMONGOUS  
FUNGUS, WHICH  
IS THE LARGEST  
LIVING THING ON  
EARTH!

BUT ON A MUCH  
LARGER SCALE.  
AWESOME.

TASTES  
ALL RIGHT.  
SMELLS NICE  
TOO.







# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?



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Brand new content

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RMMMMBL

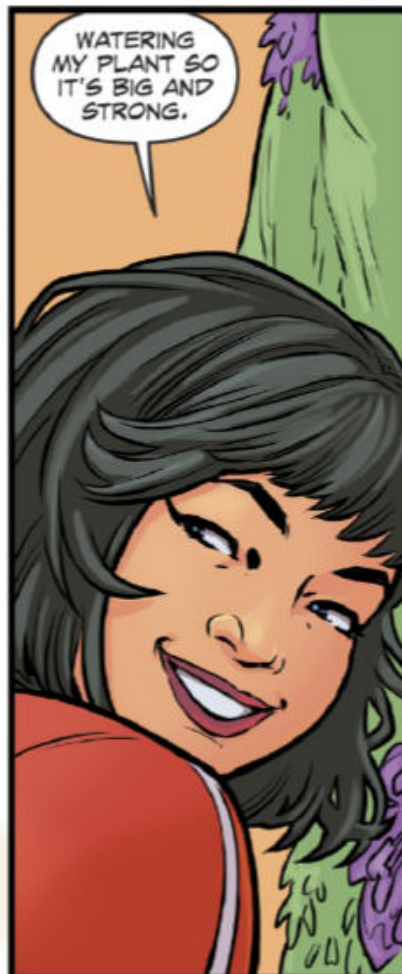
"I COULD JOIN YOU."

COMPLETELY AMBULATORY PLANT APPROXIMATIONS OF HUMANOID MAMMALS...

RIGHT DOWN TO THE PISTILS AND STAMENS. GEORGIA O'KEEFFE WOULD SHIT HER DEPENDS.



ANNIE?  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



WATERING MY PLANT SO IT'S BIG AND STRONG.

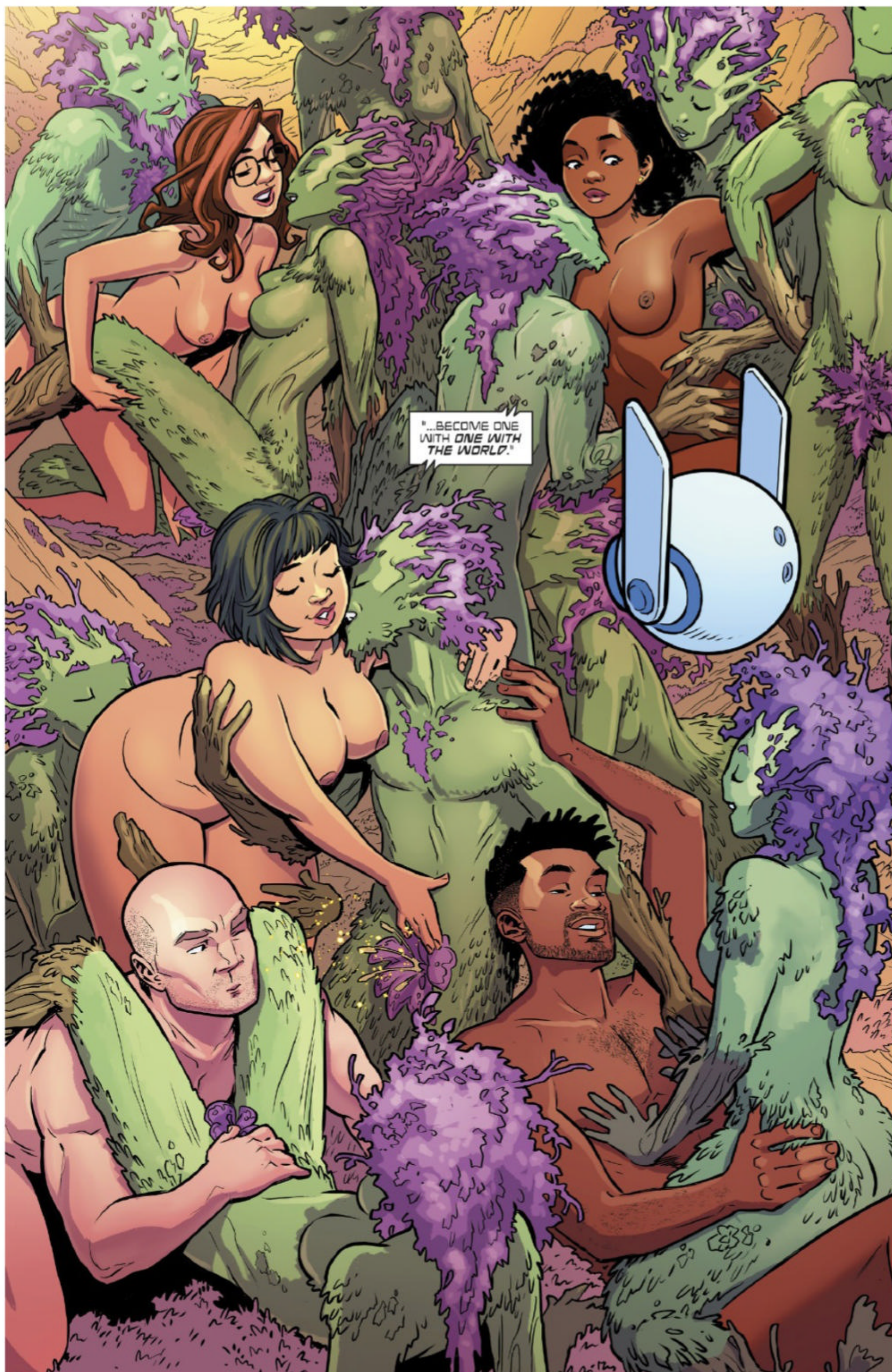


I DON'T THINK THIS IS WHAT MY PARENTS MEANT WHEN THEY TOLD ME TO EAT MY VEGETABLES.

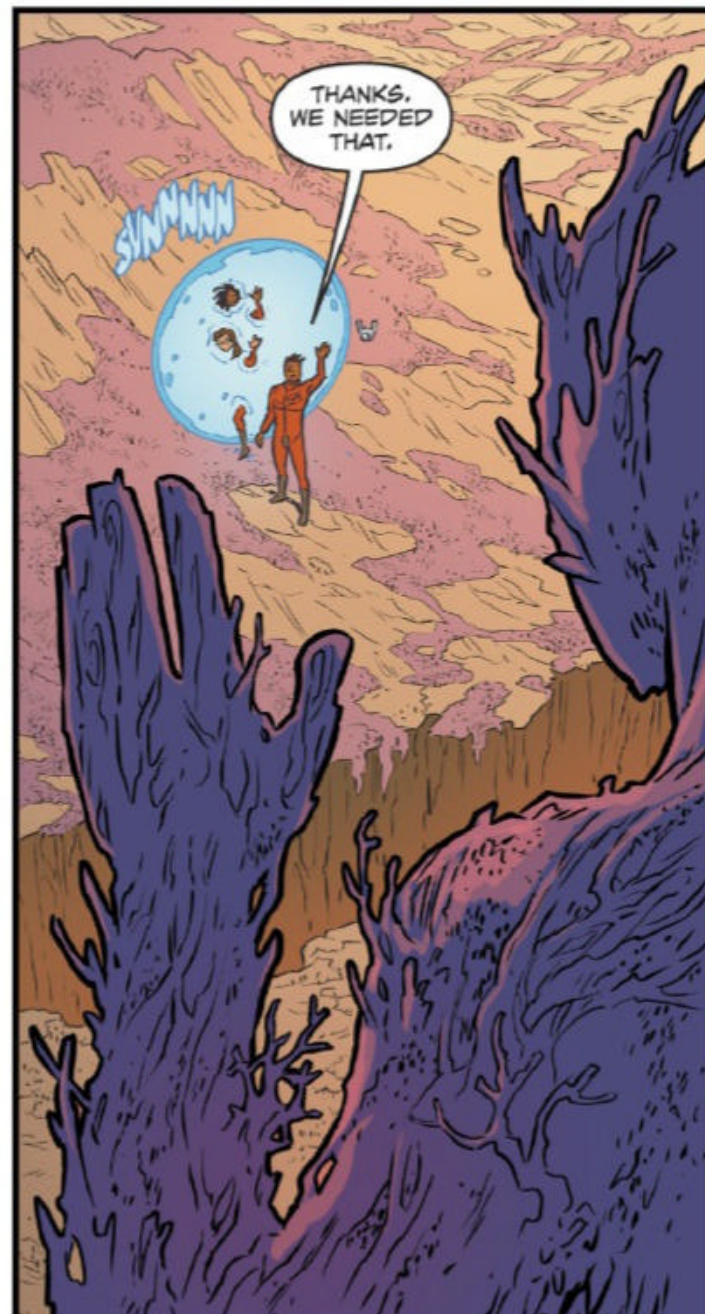
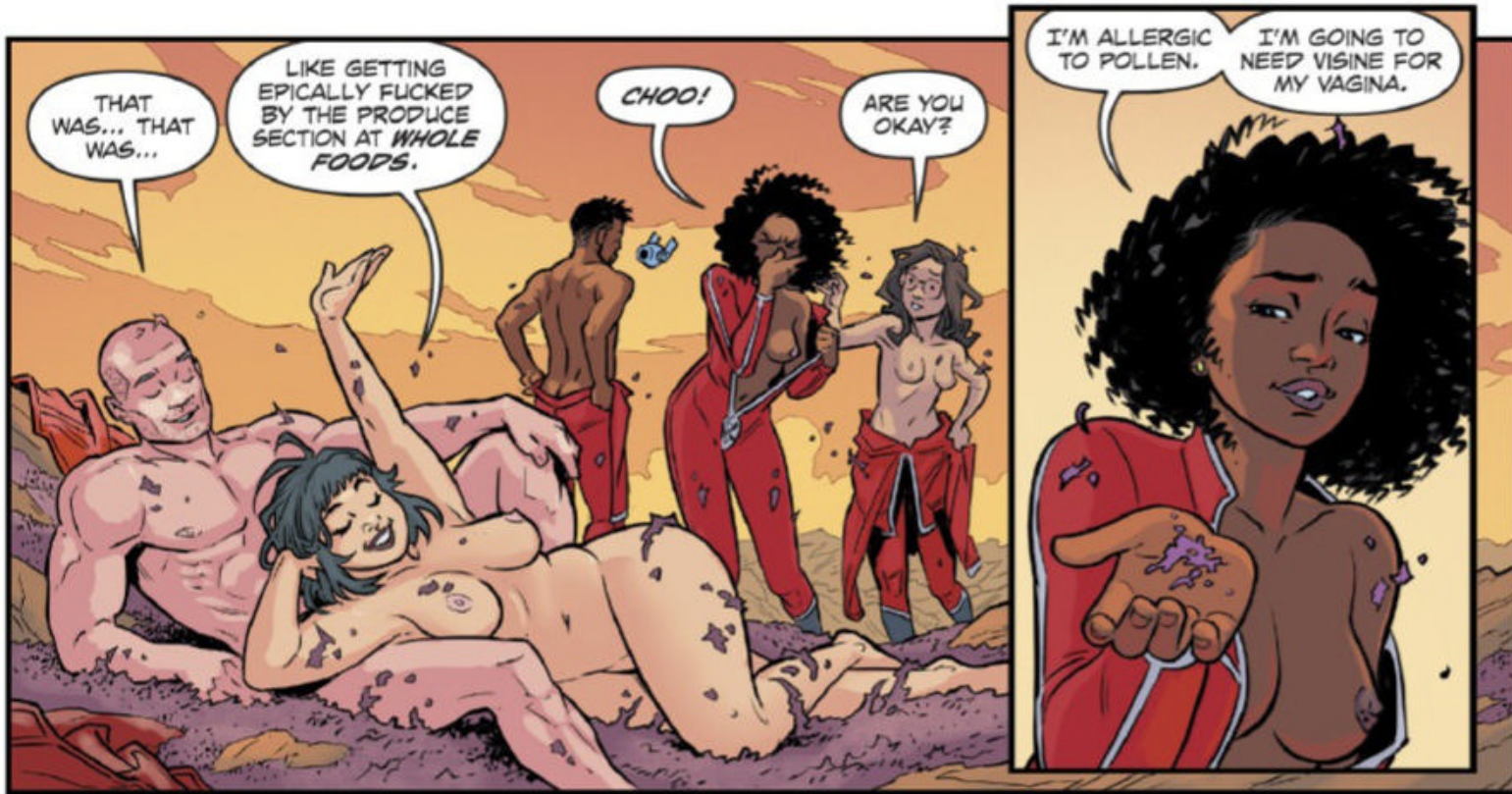
SIGHE IT'S THIS OR PRETEND I'VE NEVER SEEN YOUR BUTTHOLE UP CLOSE BEFORE. AGAIN.

"COME. JOIN ME. COMMUNE WITH NATURE ITSELF.."













THE  
XXX-PLORERS  
IN  
"PLEASURE  
PLANET"



# IS IT TIME TO SAY NO TO NO NUT NOVEM- BER?

The popular challenge  
has roots in sex nega-  
tivity and bad science

BY DANA HAMILTON

PHOTO BY YAROSLAV DANYLCHENKO

I heard about No Nut November for the first time in college. It was always spoken about by freshmen guys trying to make (now long-distance) relationships with their high school girlfriends work by showing how devoted they were. They weren't going to hook up with any girls or even jack off until they saw their high school sweethearts during winter break.


You know what else happened in college? I once stole a rotting jack-o'-lantern off someone's porch on my walk home from a bar and brought it home because I "wanted to save its life." All I'm saying is, it's been years since I was in college, and somehow this dumbass idea carried out by kids whose prefrontal cortex won't develop until three years past graduation is still around. I don't get it.

As a sex columnist, I always forget No Nut November exists until the last week of October rolls around and I start seeing the memes. This year, I saw the TikToks—and then I rolled my eyes and found my vibrator like I do nearly every day.

The precise origins of No Nut November are murky, but it is closely linked to the NoFap community on Reddit, which boasts 725,000 followers, only a small fraction of which are female. The community started in 2011 as an accountability group for people who wanted to abstain from masturbation for a variety of reasons, most notably believing this practice is linked to curing erectile dysfunction, improved sperm quality, muscle growth and increased testosterone. (None of these claims have been proven by the scientific community, by the way.) The latter is why the community was created in the first place: A very small one-time study of 28 people in China showed testosterone increases in people with penises after seven days of no ejaculation.

The chasing of that testosterone high is where things turn from a dumb thing college dudes may do to prove their loyalty into something more sinister. Idealizing testosterone (or any "masculine" trait) and linking it to superiority in any form is inherently misogynistic. It's





# Shame and a healthy sex life can't coexist.

no surprise that there's a darker side to NoFap, where some members believe porn of any kind is harmful and unethical and women in porn aren't real women, which is some real purity culture shit. I know women in porn are real women because I've spoken to them. Trust me, they are very real. They're some of the realest people I've ever met.

Plus, there are plenty of ways to consume ethical porn. There are countless places to go, including Belleza, the Crash Pad Series, Four Chambers, Make Love Not Porn, Pink Label TV and many others. If you're more concerned about ethical consumption from a monetary perspective and you want to make sure you're compensating someone fairly for their work, go straight to your favorite performer's website or OnlyFans. It's the best way to ensure they get paid for their job.

The shaming of porn is a problem because, like kissing or erotica, porn is merely one facet of someone's overall sexuality. When we shame porn, we shame sexual pleasure. This is harmful for folks of marginalized genders or sexualities because it results in things like the orgasm gap and slut-shaming—but it's harmful for straight men, too, because shame and a healthy sex life can't coexist. There is no room for shame in sex positivity.

What happens when we demonize porn? Someone creates software like Covenant Eyes, a computer program that, whenever you look at porn, emails a group of people you know with a comprehensive report of your screen activity. Yes, you heard that correctly: When you look at porn, an email is sent out alerting others what you've been up to. Don't worry—it won't get emailed to a bunch of randoms. You can pick the email recipients (your "allies," according to the company's website) yourself. Because, you know, receiving your dad's porn history in an email report isn't weird or creepy at all.

This shit creates shame, and that shame permeates other parts of a person's life—not just inside the bedroom. When we actively deny ourselves self-pleasure (an act that doesn't inherently hurt ourselves or others) for the sake of willpower, we're less likely to deny ourselves other forms of pleasure that can boost our mental and physical health, such as nutrition and creating emotionally intimate connections. In short, it's self-harm. (And if someone's relationship with porn or masturbation is compulsory or "addictive," real help can be found in the company of a licensed sex therapist, not an anonymous online community.)

The reason it's so hard not to masturbate—and why these "accountability" groups exist in the first place—is because masturbation is natural. After all, at its core, masturbation is self-massage. In the same way you'd massage your neck if you slept funny the night before or massage your feet after going on a long run (or wouldn't chastise an infant for sucking its thumb to self-soothe), it's okay to massage your own genitals for the sake of feeling good.

Humans are pack mammals who need human interaction, social acceptance and touch. This has been made even more clear during the pandemic.

Plus, there are so many reasons masturbation should be a part of any person's health regimen. It's been shown to reduce stress, help with sleep, relieve menstrual cramps and muscle tension and even strengthen the pelvic floor (which does help with erectile dysfunction). If you want to do something truly good for your body, fap to your heart's content.





# ASPIRE

WITH ZURINE ASPIUNZA | @ZURI.AS









**“I love ad-  
ventures,  
with a bit  
of healthy  
madness.”**





**Instagram:** @zuri.as

**Birth:** 03/10/1993

**Height:** 1,80m

**Weight:** 56kg

**Eyes:** Honey green

**Nationality:** Spanish

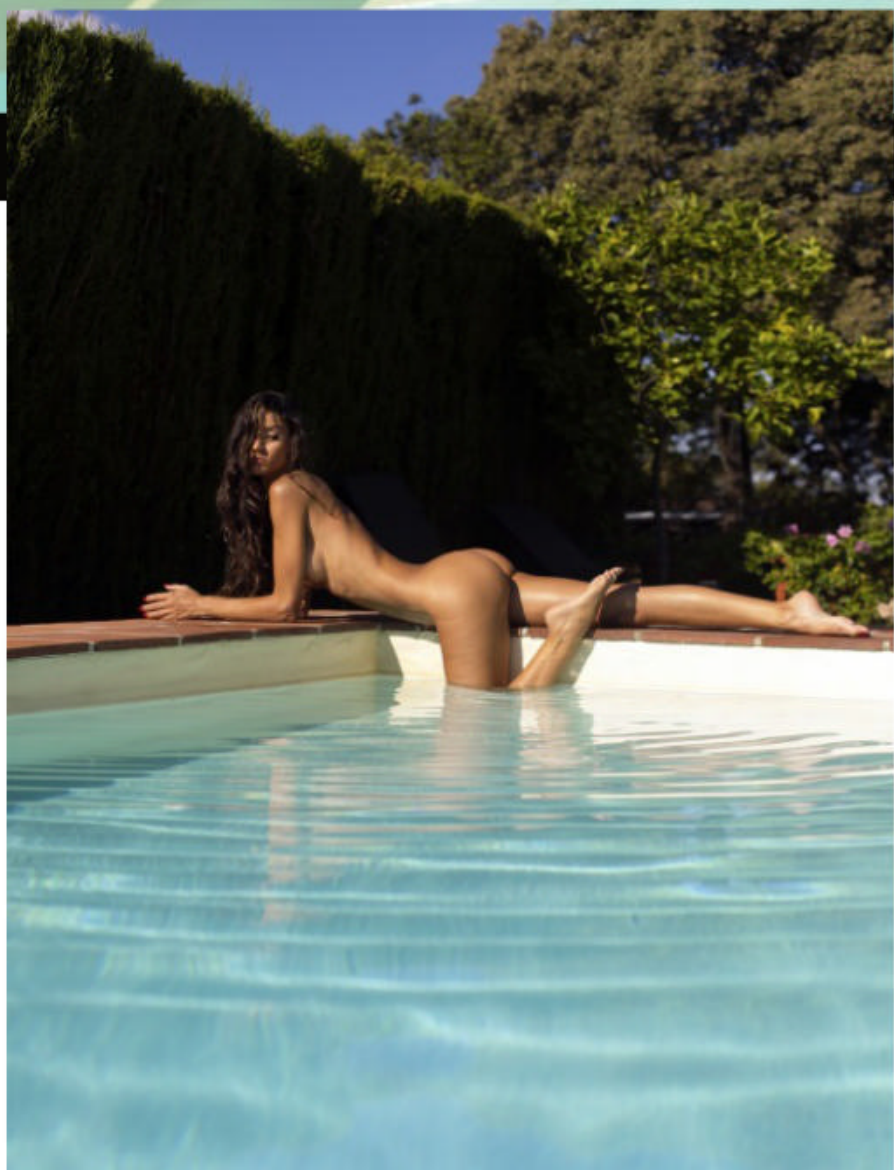
**Country you live:** Spain

**Occupation:** Professional model  
and Esthetician

**Favorite movie:** Coyote Ugly

**Favorite music:** Country

**Favorite book:** "The monk  
who sold his Ferrari" (Robin S.  
Sharma)















**Describe yourself. Tell us a little about yourself and your personality...**

I am a bold, strong and independent person. I love adventures, with a bit of healthy madness. I am extremely passionate about defending my values and in my personal life. Sensual and very simple.

**How was the shoot with Ana Dias?** The session with Ana was incredible, both professionally and personally, she is a very attentive and fun person, who takes special care of her models; I would repeat it a thousand times more.

**What are your career ambitions?** I would like to continue traveling and working as a model, but my dream is to be able to create my own brand of lingerie.

**Describe your hobbies, interests or special skills...**

I adore surfing and all outdoor sports, especially those related to the sea.

**What makes you happy?** The little things that I can enjoy every day make me happy, being with my family, friends or alone.

**Who is your celebrity crush?** Channing Tatum is my "ideal man". He seems to me a very funny, sexy and morbid boy, apart from his dances that I could spend hours watching.

**What do you love most about your body?** I love my long legs and my ass.

**How do you feel about posing nude?** I love showing myself as I am, I feel comfortable

posing naked, I love my body with all my flaws, I feel free and fulfilled when I do it.

**What is at the top of your bucket list?** To go around the world.

**What is the craziest thing you have done?** Traveling alone to the Mauritius Islands, a 12h trip to visit a friend, I made friends with the crew and landed from the cockpit (you have to have friends even in hell).

**What's your guiltiest pleasure?** My greatest pleasure is chocolate, sex, traveling and living life.

**When do you feel sexiest?** When I feel confident when I put on high heels, I let my hair down and I am myself.











PLAYMATE  
**KORINA**  
*Kanela*  
**Curves for Days**

Instagram @KorinaKanela

Photography by Arthur St. John | @ArthurStJohn  
HMUA Taylor Jazz | @Taylor\_Jazz  
Location Serob Papazyan





PLAYMATE









*“The most  
attractive  
feature in a  
man is  
intelligence.”*











PLAYMATE

**Congrats on your Playboy Denmark cover! What does this mean to you?** It's my second Playboy cover, it's another amazing accomplishment for which I am very grateful.

**What do you think of when it comes to Playboy and the iconic bunny?** I think Playboy and the iconic bunny represent women's sensuality and beauty.

**Where were you born and where do you live now?** I was born in Colombia. I live in the United States.

**Besides English, do you speak any other languages?** I also speak Portuguese and Spanish

**Favorite color?** My favorite color is white.

**Favorite movie of all time?** My favorite movie of all time is "The princess and the frog."

**Beach or pool?** I prefer the beach.

**Read the book or watch the movie?** I prefer to read the book.

**If you could be an animal, what would you be and why?** If I could, I would be a panther because it's powerful, smart, fast, and beautiful.

**What attracts you the most in a man?** The most attractive feature in a man is intelligence.

**Biggest turn on. Biggest turn-off?** The biggest turn-ons are kindness, sense of humor, confidence. The biggest turn-offs are rudeness.

**Describe your perfect date.** Taking a helicopter ride, filled with rose petals, sipping on a delicious aromatic French wine and landing on a deserted island with crystal-clear water for a delicious dinner.

**Describe yourself using 3 adjectives.** Sweet, strong and intelligent.

**Tell us a secret nobody else knows...** I learned how to fly an airplane.

**Where is your favorite vacation destination and why?** My favorite vacation destination is in Africa because I love African culture, they have the most beautiful sunsets.

**Have you ever been to Denmark?** If not, would you like to visit someday? I have never been to Denmark, but I would welcome the opportunity to visit.

**If you could change any one thing in the world, what would it be and why?** I would eliminate poverty, so that children and the elderly would have the necessary resources to live good-quality lives.

**Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?** I see myself establishing my luxury beautiful boutique hotel in other parts of the world.







PLAYMATE

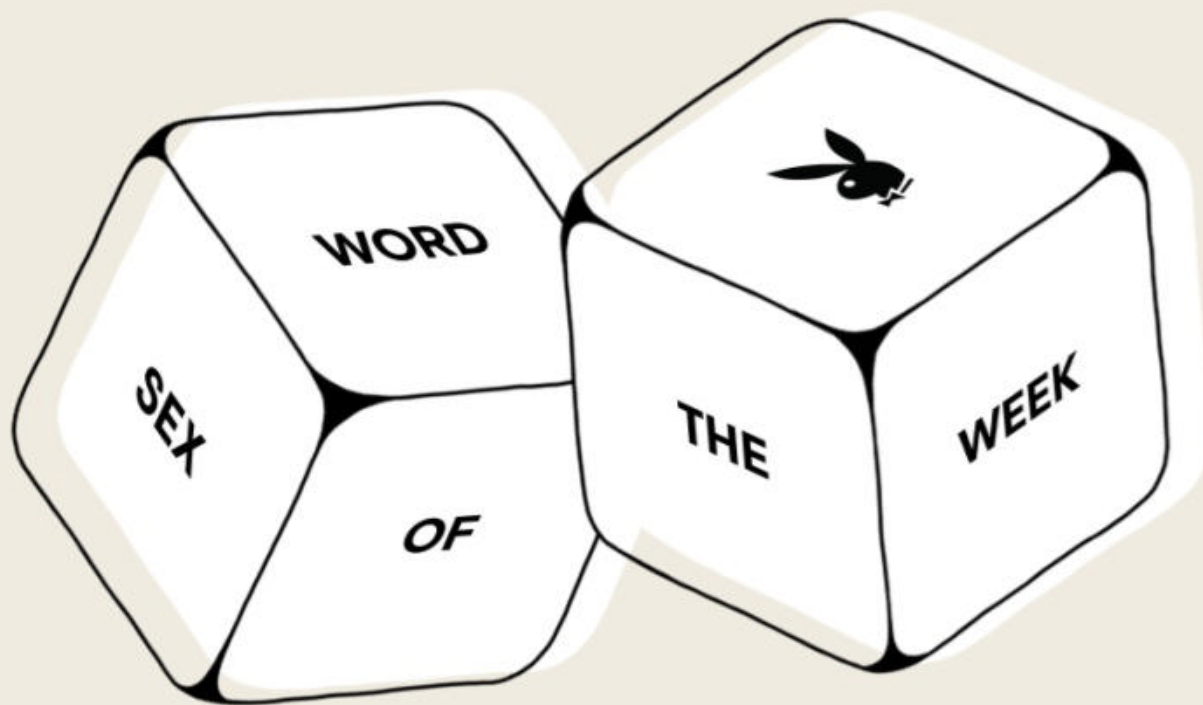




PLAYMATE







# Vanilla

WRITTEN BY  
**ANITA LITTLE**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
**KATIE BAILIE**

**If your libidinous mind can imagine it,  
there's probably already a term for it**

vanilla (*adj*) a term used to describe any form of sexual intercourse that meets the conventional standards set by society

*Rachel and Taylor put away the tools and toys and decided to go for some cozy vanilla sex since they hadn't done missionary in a long time.*

There is no incorrect way to enjoy sex. Any consensual encounter that brings pleasure and connection is worthwhile. That said, vanilla sex, or sex that can be regular ol' missionary with the lights turned off, has been unfairly maligned in our sexual landscape. The definition of vanilla is subjective, but it's generally characterized as traditional, simple, non-acrobatic sex—no handcuffs, swings, rubber suits or extra people.

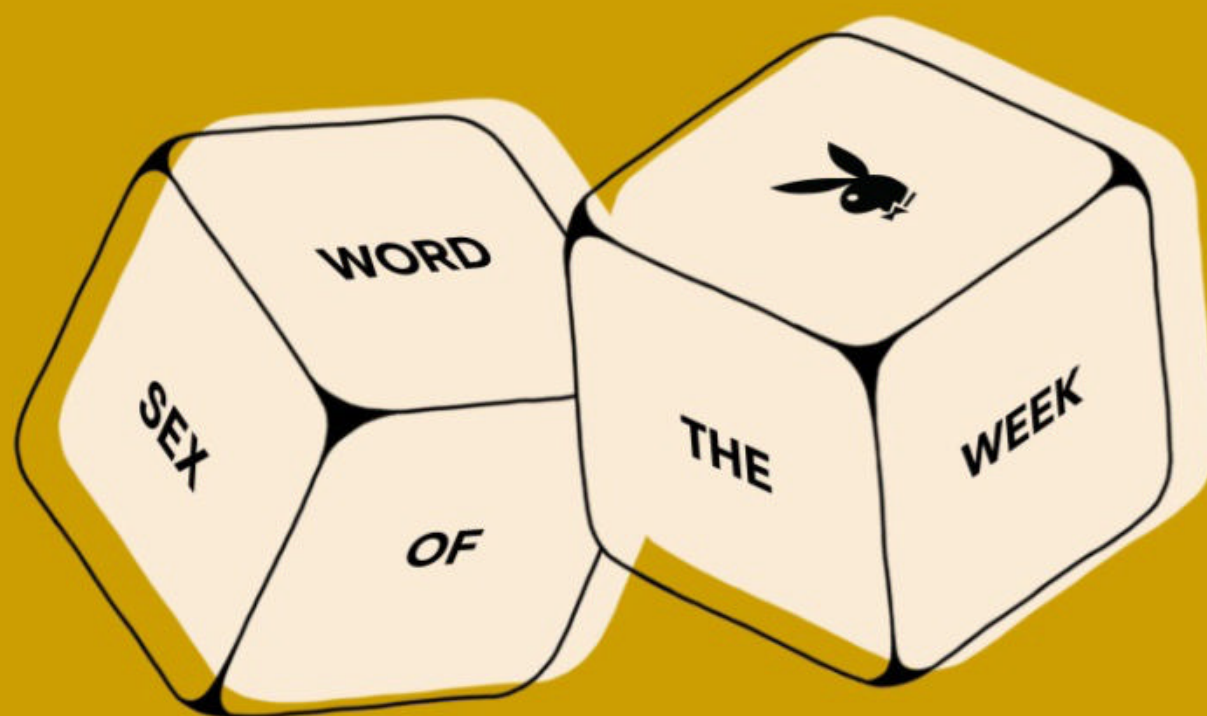
Vanilla is typically hurled as an insult to indicate someone is basic in bed. In actuality, there is nothing wrong with the vanilla label. The term grew out of the BDSM community to differentiate sex that happened outside of the kink world. It was meant to be a harmless descriptor with no shade behind it. As the label went mainstream, however, it picked up a negative connotation. Combine that with the ubiquity of hardcore porn and franchises like *Fifty Shades*, and vanilla folks begin to feel like their sex lives are missing something.

It can be assumed a significant chunk of the population likes vanilla sex—thus the name—so if you're a vanilla sex-haver, you're in good company!

Although sexual experimentation can teach you new things about yourself and your partner, there are advantages to conventional exploits as well. For some, vanilla sex can feel more romantic and emotionally comforting.

The big takeaway is not to compare your sex life to the sex lives of others. Sex is a wide-open, choose-your-own-adventure book, and there are no rules for how to get off.





# Mukbang

WRITTEN BY  
**ANITA LITTLE**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
**KATIE BAILIE**

**If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it**

mukbang (*n*) a live broadcast during which the host eats copious amounts of food while interacting with an online audience

*Lee made roughly \$6,000 a month doing her spicy ramen mukbang on Twitch.*

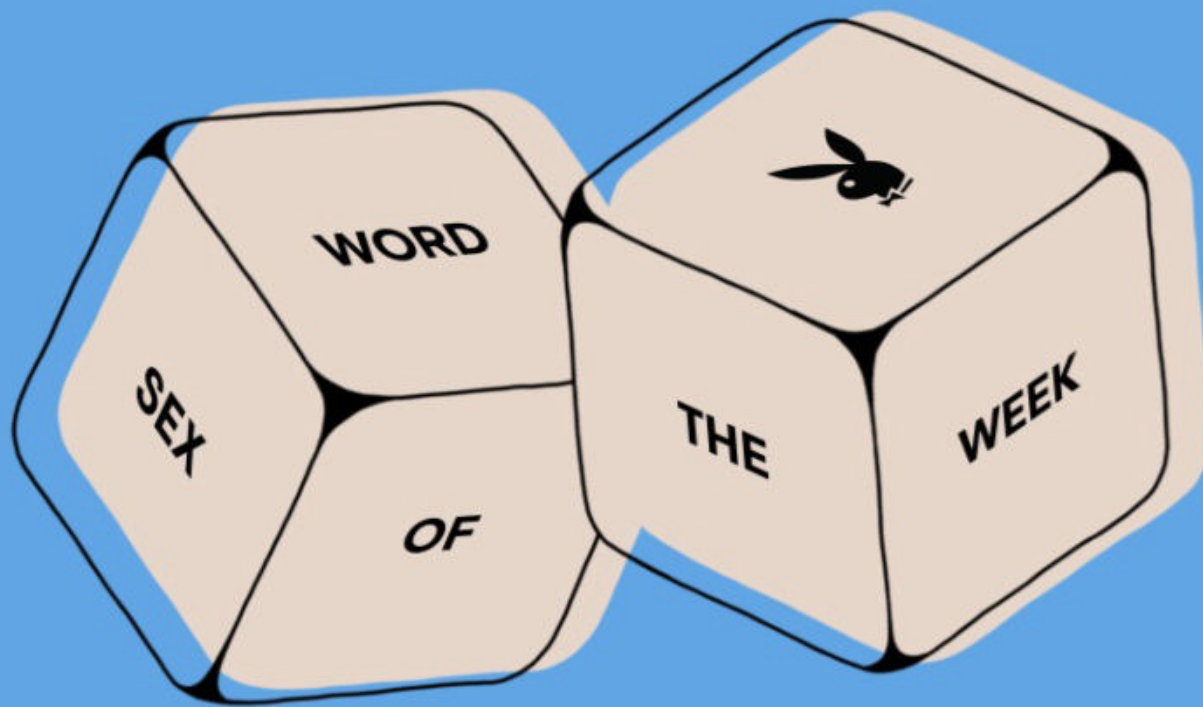
In honor of Thanksgiving tomorrow, we wanted to do a food-focused fetish for this week's sex word. Since we already did feederism, we decided to discuss the pleasure of mukbanging instead. For those of you not familiar with the internet fad, mukbang is inhaling huge amounts of food on a live broadcast platform such as Twitch or YouTube. Mukbang, a portmanteau of the Korean words muk-ja ("let's eat") and bang-song ("broadcast"), started growing in popularity as early as 2010.

If you tune in to a video, you'll likely see someone sitting at a table with a ridiculous smorgasbord and then ravenously consuming everything before them. A mukbang dish can literally be anything: Giant-sized bowls of noodles are a popular choice, as are dumplings, fried chicken, barbecue, shellfish and fast food.

Why do people enjoy watching this? The reasons vary. For some who might be lonely and lacking social interaction, mukbang imitates the feeling of communal dining. For others, yes, duh, of course it's a sex thing. ASMR, which is basically arousal at specific auditory or visual stimuli, can be triggered by mukbang videos. Although mukbang is not inherently sexual, the loud slurping, exaggerated exhaling and reddened faces can all be turn-ons if your brain is wired a certain way. People will pay good money just for the privilege of watching an attractive person binge-eat their way through a plate of atomic wings.

So when you're chowing down on Turkey Day, remember that the bird could potentially be paying for itself if you just hit record.





# Humiliatrix

WRITTEN BY  
**ANITA LITTLE**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
**KATIE BAILIE**

**If your libidinous mind can imagine it,  
there's probably already a term for it**

humiliatrix (*n*) a type of dominatrix who is skilled in erotic humiliation or real-life humiliation

*Erica opened her messages to find a video of her sub scrubbing the floor of his bathroom completely naked save for a chastity belt and platform heels—another day in the life of a humiliatrix.*

If you've been keeping up with Playboy, you likely know the ins and outs of being a dominatrix. Now it's time to delve even deeper into the world of erotic humiliation. If a man gets off to the idea of being laughed at and insulted, especially in a sexual manner—penis shaming comes to mind—then they may be the perfect candidate for a humiliatrix.

Being a humiliatrix is simple enough. The tasks may range from demanding embarrassing nude videos to calling someone a “useless, baby-dicked piece of garbage” to completely ignoring your sub for weeks as they beg for acknowledgement. Like any dominatrix, humiliatrixes accept nothing but utter obedience and unrelenting servility from their bottoms. Unlike professional dommes, however, a humiliatrix doesn't always require a physical space with their clients. All they need is an internet connection to rain down verbal abuse and psychological stress on the sub. Humiliation play is the perfect BDSM kink for our social-distance era.





# SHOP THE RABBIT

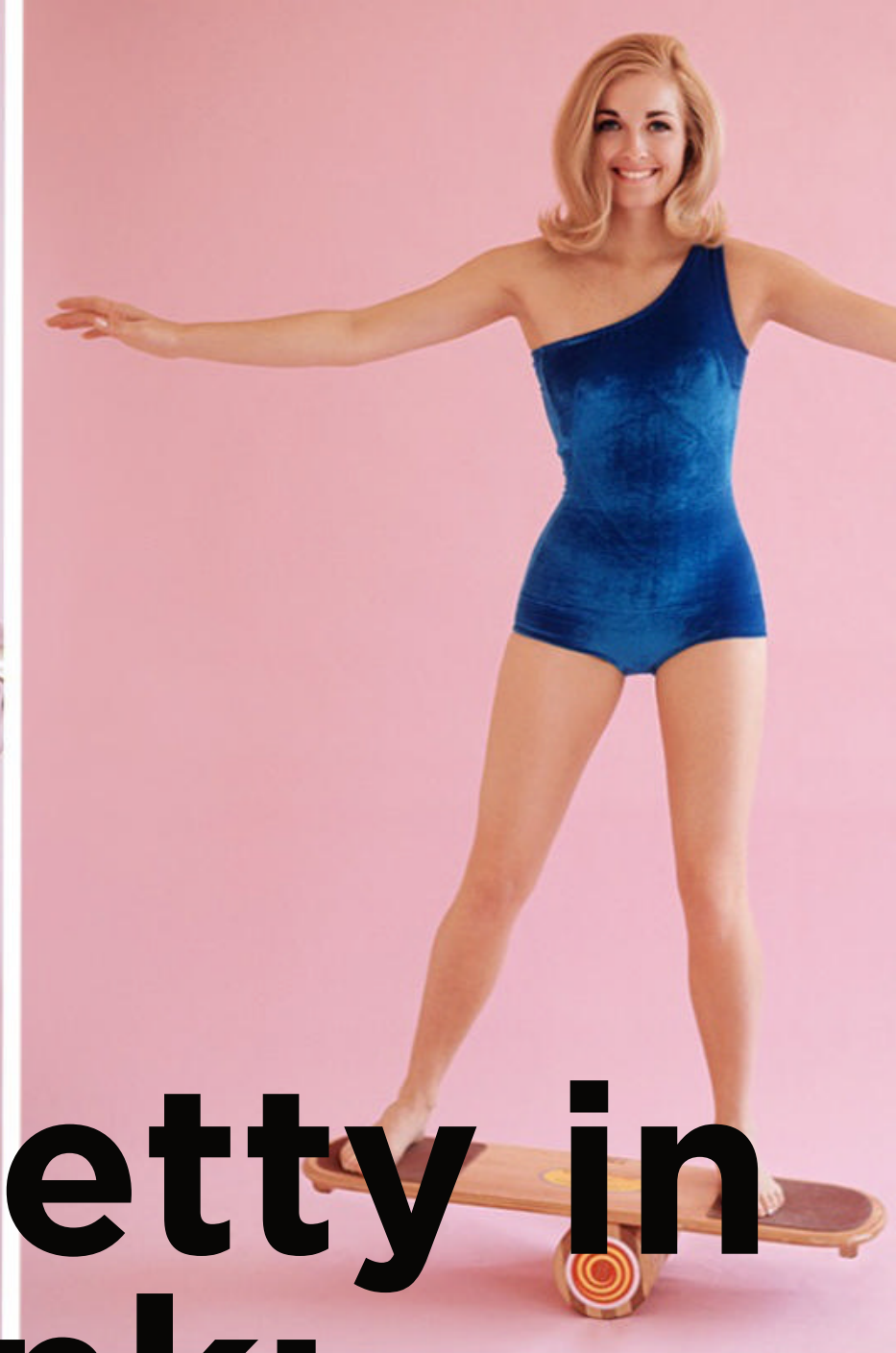


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The official site for Playboy clothing,  
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VISIT [PLAYBOYSHOP.COM](https://www.playboyshop.com)





# Pretty in Pink:

**The Greatest Gifts  
Given to Prize-  
Winning Playmates**







WRITTEN BY  
**TORI LYNN ADAMS**

PHOTOS BY  
**THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**



BY IMAN SULTAN

PHOTOS BY RMV/SHUTTERSTOCK



Longtime PLAYBOY fans and devoted readers likely recognize the soft-blush tones pictured above. The petal-perfect hue, dubbed “Playmate Pink,” was announced in the magazine in February 1965—“a striking new color shade conceived by Playboy”—in a pictorial featuring 1964 Playmate of the Year Donna Michelle. The cotton-candy color became a tradition in PMOY pictorials that lasted into the 1970s. But how did the practice of crowning a PMOY begin in the first place?

For years after its founding in 1953, the magazine editors received letters from eager readers expressing their favorite Playmates. In 1956, Michigan State undergrads wrote to declare they

had named June Playmate Gloria Walker their Playmate of the Year, in addition to the standard title of Playmate of the Month. PLAYBOY recognized a good idea when it heard one, and soon decided to bestow the Playmate of the Year title upon one lucky winner each year. Choosing from 12 exceptional Playmates

proved challenging, and reader feedback was key. December 1959 Playmate Ellen Stratton was named the first official Playmate of the Year in 1960. (Unofficially, Playboy gave the title to Lisa Winters in 1957 and Joyce Nizzari in 1959.)

To further honor the PMOYs, Playboy put together gift packages with items such as luggage sets, stereos, cars, clothing and novelty items—many of which came in Playmate Pink, naturally.

From a scuba suit to a blonde wig, a look back at some of the most fascinating Playmate of the Year presents—plus a quick history of Playmate Pink

Are you wondering what to give the queen in your life? Explore these photos of early PMOYs and their prizes for inspiration. (And, when in doubt, head to the Playboy Shop for your own Playboy gear!)

“If anyone had told me I’d be wearing mink by my 20th birthday, I’d have sworn they were ribbing me,” said Jo Collins of her white mink cape by Alper Furs. Collins was favored by PLAYBOY readers, who chose her as their favorite 1964 Playmate, and Vietnam soldiers, who requested that Playboy send her to pay them a visit during the war. Collins’s prizes, worth more than \$10,000 at the time, included a gallon bottle of Kahlua, which she puts into perspective here.

The Dodge Charger fastback Allison Parks received as part of her Playmate of the Year gift package was the perfect means of transportation to speed to the local airway, where she was training for her private pilot’s license. In addition to her affinity for aviation, Parks also loved spending time in the pool and garden. Her new toolkit was perfect for her active lifestyle, while the Lilly Daché wig from Donna Elaine may have proved useful in her acting endeavors. Parks was also a regular on Playboy After Dark, Hugh Hefner’s variety show.

## Jo Collins, 1965 Playmate of the Year





**Allison Parks, 1966 Playmate of the Year**



Lisa Baker shows off two water looks here: a stylish swimwear set complete with Renauld of France sunglasses and a scuba diving getup featuring a Swimaster tank from W.J. Voit and other gear from U.S. Divers. Baker's most tantalizing Playmate gift, though, was a record contract audition from Monument. The music lover, who counted Count Basie among her favorites, was discovered by photographer Bill Figge at a wedding. She went on to become the November 1966 Playmate—and Figge's personal secretary.

**Lisa Baker, 1967 Playmate of the Year**





Baker's scuba gear would certainly come in handy for Connie Kreski, an outdoors lover. When Kreski traveled to London after becoming a Playmate, she not only landed herself a role in a major movie (she met actor and director Anthony Newley in an elevator at the London Playboy Club), but also spent time shopping the latest styles. "The Mod shops in Knightsbridge sell the wildest outfits I've ever seen," she told PLAYBOY at the time. Here, the free thinker and passionate Playmate rocks some equally far-out fashions, featuring the Walter Holmes Vibration collection and gloves from Aris.

**Connie Kreski, 1969 Playmate of the Year**



Between working as a model and actress and traveling the world for Playboy promotion opportunities, Claudia Jennings had quite a full plate. That's why she prioritized rest and relaxation. "You've got to sit down and relax sometimes, since the future will be unpredictable even if you work 24 hours a day," she told PLAYBOY. We think these cassettes probably did the trick. Or, if she felt so moved, the master communicator may have enjoyed typing on this Smith Corona Electra 210 typewriter—a skill she put to good use while working as a receptionist at Playboy before becoming a Playmate.

**Claudia Jennings, 1970 Playmate of the Year**





Sharon Clark keeps an eye on the time with her new Lady Hamilton 14-karat gold-and-diamond watch. Traveling—Clark went all the way to Micronesia for her Playmate pictorial—and being active were among her favorite ways to spend time, but the sunny Playmate also hoped to get into acting. Included in her many gifts were a Yamaha Mini-Enduro and a ruby-eyed gold Rabbit pin by Maria Vogt.

### **Sharon Clark, 1971 Playmate of the Year**

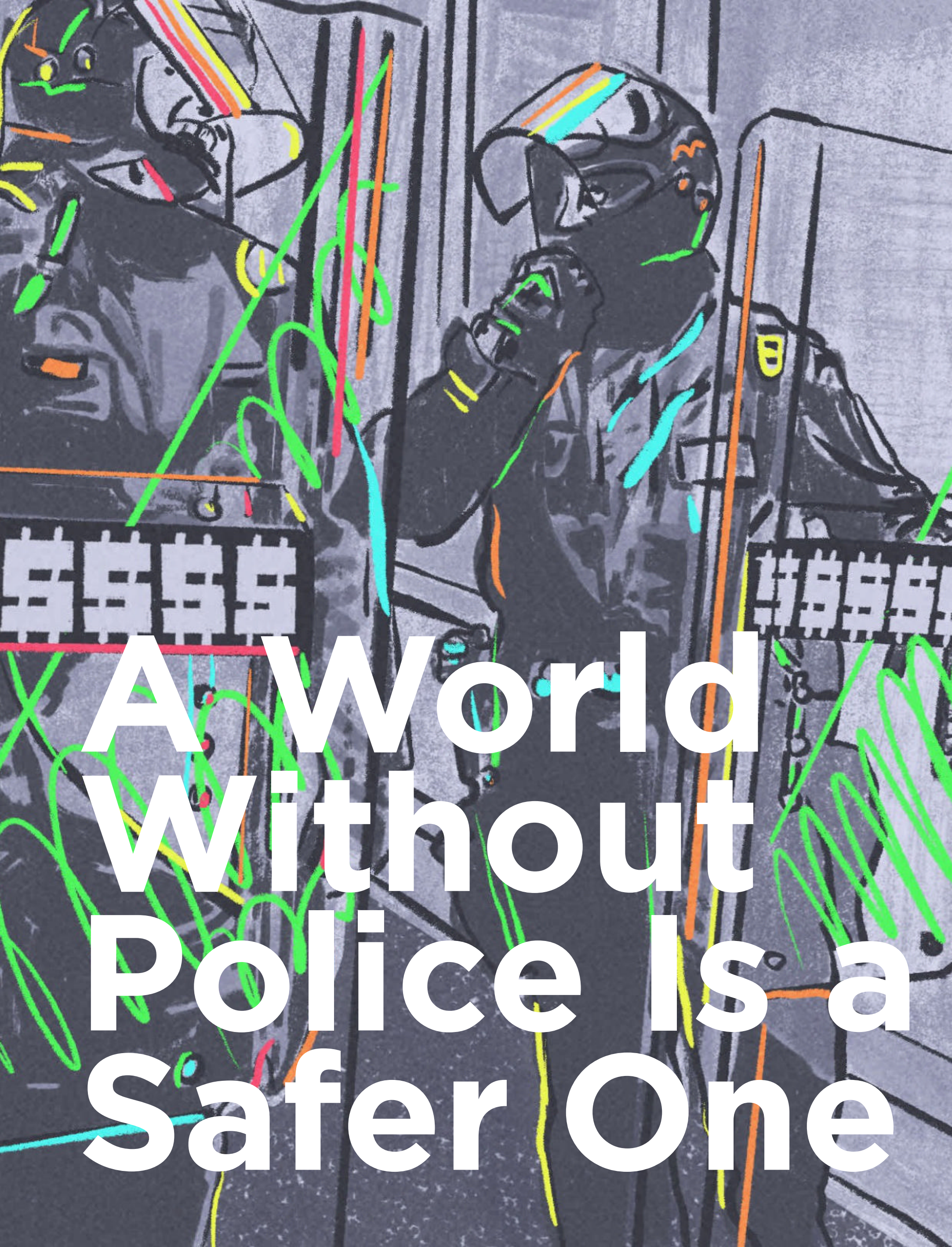


"I've always liked being in the spotlight," said Playmate Cyndi Wood. Raised by an actress and recording-company executive, Wood gravitated to the arts. Not only did it land her a spot as Playboy's February 1973 Playmate, but it also got her quite a few dancing, modeling, singing and acting gigs, including a memorable role in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. The above Schwinn Super Sport 10-speed bike and four-piece set of Samsonite luggage (in Playmate Pink) are just a glimpse of the grand gifts Wood received in her Playmate of the Year package.

### **Cyndi Wood, 1974 Playmate of the Year**

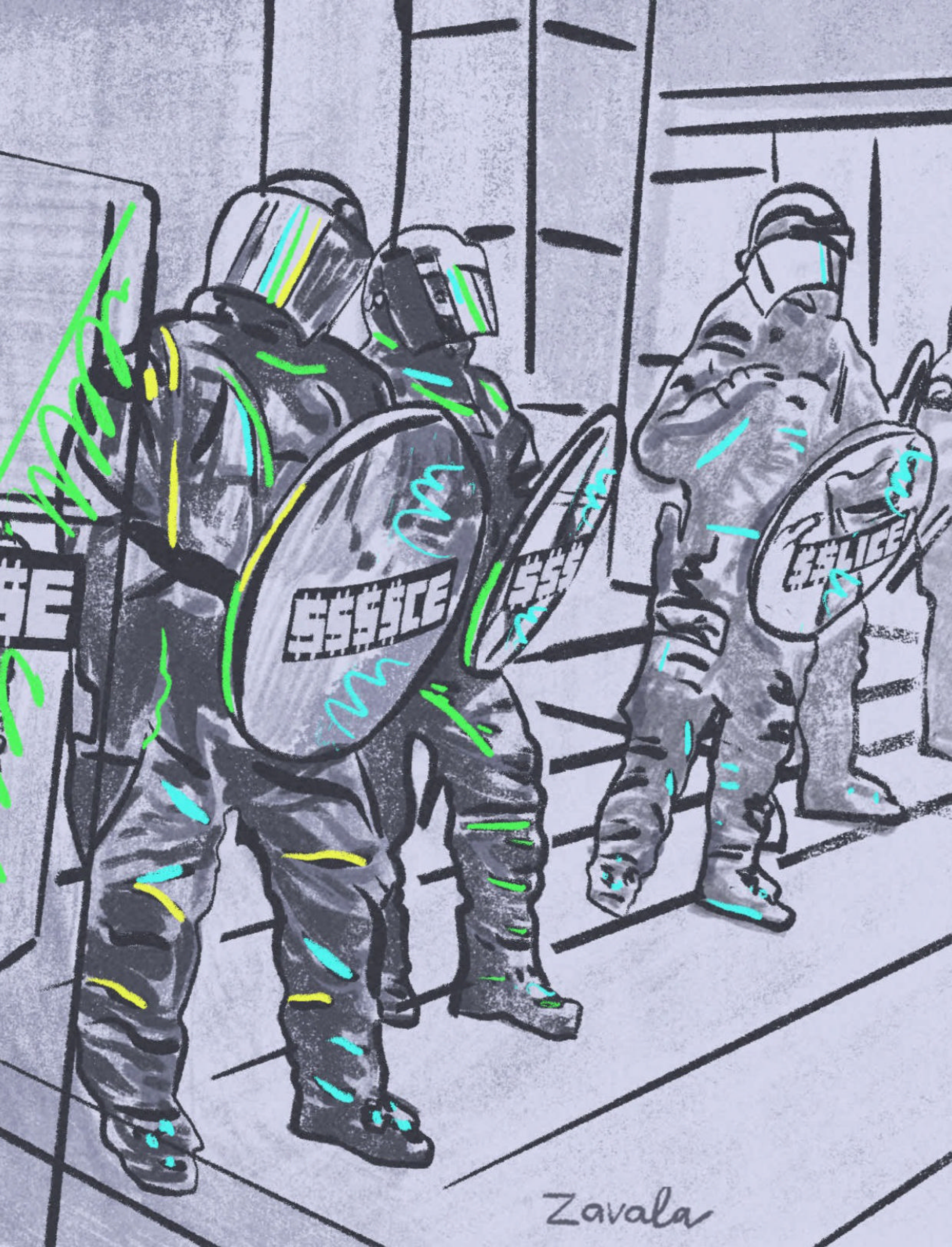






A World  
Without  
Police Is a  
Safer One





Zavala



# The Democratic backlash against “defund the police” rhetoric shows the power of white anxiety

WRITTEN BY **IMAN SULTAN**

ILLUSTRATIONS **FLORENCIO ZAVALA**

Mahamed Sharif Salad, a 21-year-old Somali activist in Minneapolis, remembers the first time he chanted “defund the police” as a 15-year-old high school student. Jamar Clark, a 24-year-old Black man, had been killed by local police, and Salad participated in a walkout after lunch at school.

“The slogan has existed for a while, and that’s the first time I personally said it,” Salad says. “For us to fix the system, we have to dismantle it, take it apart and start over with something more community-oriented, which caters to the people and actually defends and protects citizens.”

“Defund the police” is a call for abolition that has been used by racial justice activists for years, and which surfaced in the mainstream after George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police in May, triggering a worldwide uprising of millions of people. Prison abolitionists argue that money funneled into policing, prisons and weapons should be allocated instead to health care, education, social services and community welfare. Defunding the police aims to build a new world in which impoverished, over-policed communities can live with the resources they need to thrive and racial capitalism, the color of one’s skin and the ZIP code in which they were born does not undermine their civil liberties or their quality of life in general.

Yet recently, “defund the police” faced attacks from establishment politicians in the Democratic Party, who blamed the radical demand for the loss of seats in the House of Representatives or attributed wins by dangerously narrow margins to the controversial slogan. Republican opponents exploited fears of socialism and cutting off funds to the police, and pro-Trump political action committees spent millions of dollars on ad campaigns vilifying progressives who support climate activism, social equity or police reform. According to media tracking firm Advertising Analytics, approximately 70 conservative ads negatively mentioning “defund the police” aired on television during the 2020 election.

“What the establishment Democrats have tried to do to reas-

sert power—and fundamentally not change themselves—is to use the Republicans’ bad-faith arguments against progressives as evidence [for why it’s not an actionable demand],” says Brandon Soderberg, a Baltimore-based investigative journalist and co-author of *I Got a Monster: The Rise and Fall of America’s Most Corrupt Police Squad*. “This, of course, doesn’t parse out because the Republicans, especially under Trump, simply call anyone who is left of fascism ‘radical’ or ‘antifa.’”

A particularly melodramatic ad depicts a chaotic breakdown of law and order, and a person dialing 911 only to find out the police have been “defunded” and can no longer help. The same ad obliquely accuses Biden of wanting to defund the police, despite his proposal to pour \$300 million into law enforcement, his role in crafting the 1994 crime bill and his choice of Kamala Harris, a former district attorney widely criticized for cracking down on the parents of truant children, as vice president. Although the statements in the ad are false or misleading, this rhetoric likely succeeded in capturing conservative constituencies in states such as South Carolina and West Virginia, voter bases of police and firefighters and expatriate Latino communities that fled socialist governments.

Instead of reflecting on their failure to build a counter-narrative that delegitimizes Republicans, strengthen digital campaigning or shift away from an overreliance on polls, many centrist Democrats

**Abolitionists are already laying the groundwork for what a world without police can look like through shared assistance and survival.**



opted to blame Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the rest of the Squad for the party's losses.

Representative Kurt Schrader of Oregon told Politico that the party needed a "different message," and Representative Abigail Spanberger of Virginia said, "No one should say 'defund the police' ever again."

Yet what these same Democrats appear to forget is that it was the party's progressive base that canvassed and mobilized voters in Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania—crucial swing states that helped Biden win the election.

Similarly, former president Barack Obama recently dismissed the slogan as "snappy" and unrealistic in attaining police reforms. "You lost a big audience the minute you say it," he said. "Do you want to actually get something done, or do you want to feel good among the people you already agree with?" Obama's condescending and misinformed opinion erases the labor of prison abolitionists, community leaders and activists across the country who back "defund the police" as a concrete political demand. The same people chanting "defund the police" are also posting cash bail, organizing mutual aid after staggering job loss caused by the pandemic, campaigning for the freedom of political prisoners and providing legal aid for protesters attacked or arrested by police. Abolitionists are already laying the groundwork for what a world without police can look like through shared assistance and survival.

Nor is Obama, who in 2013 told the public to accept a jury's decision to acquit George Zimmerman

for killing 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, distinctly qualified to opine on a movement of which he is not a part.

"Defund the police" strikes fear in the hearts of both Republicans and Democrats, because the abolitionist demand challenges the pervasive anti-Black racism that has shaped criminal justice policy for the past four decades and the bipartisan exaltation of law enforcement at the expense of Black communities confronting the ongoing militarization of their neighborhoods. When Biden was questioned by a reporter about Walter Wallace Jr., a 27-year-old mentally ill Black man shot dead by Philadelphia police in October, the presidential nominee reflexively denounced "looting and violence," a disclaimer that frequently takes precedence over Black lives for most politicians. The excessive focus on crime and riots to justify policing isn't a coincidence, and deliberately protects white supremacist institutions harming Black and brown communities and represses popular movements for social change.

"If you look at history, the American police emerged with slave patrols, which returned escaped slaves back to plantations and policed slave rebellions," says Johanna Fernández, a history professor at Baruch College and an activist with the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home. "In the aftermath of World War II, police expanded in cities across the country when working-class struggles were growing exponentially and people of color were moving to cities in large numbers. They started policing the racial boundaries of neighborhoods. The police play a very specific role, and it's not to protect the citizens."

In 2014, photographs of heavily armored vehicles rolling into Ferguson, Missouri launched headlines and spread across the internet. More recently, the National Guard was called into several cities and towns amid uprisings against police. The militarization of local police in America finds its roots in the Cold War, when the military created training programs deploying American police to Asia and Latin America, and the counterinsurgency tactics used against populations in postcolonial countries under dictatorship were subsequently imposed on marginalized Americans at home. Since 1997, the Department of Defense has conveyed military equipment to local law enforcement amounting to \$7.4 billion, and police departments across the country continue to demand public funds to buy gear that doesn't belong in any American neighborhood.

Defunding the police thus also means demilitarizing the police. Although the "defund" part of the demand has been misconstrued to denote only an allocation of funds, defunding the police means totally dismantling the institution and conceptualizing a better world that does not rely on carceral justice to redress harm. Abolitionist activists say defunding the police is a stepping stone to its eventual abolition, a tactic that will pave the way for transformative justice and an end to policing, prisons and white supremacy.

"In Minneapolis, we didn't want to advocate for a system that is constantly killing and destroying Black lives," Salad said. "For us to get tangible change, we'd have to defund and get rid of the police, and start over within the community—without the government. Creating a slogan like 'defund the police' encompassed all the things we wanted, because we understood we had to take the police apart for us to actually have rights in society."

**Police departments  
across the country  
continue to demand  
public funds to buy  
gear that doesn't be-  
long in any American  
neighborhood.**





# TRISTA MIKAIL

Instagram @Trista Mikail

Photography by **Emmanuel D. Fouquet**  
Styled by **@legavenue**  
PR **FC Media Group LLC** | [influentsmedias.com](http://influentsmedias.com)  
& **LSA Management** | [@leo.alderman](https://www.instagram.com/leo.alderman)













“I always try to  
stay on top of  
my game by chal-  
lenging myself  
and becoming the  
best version of  
myself.”







Trista Mikail, the stunning model and influencer spent her early years in Star, Idaho where she had a wonderful childhood. She loved doing outdoor activities such as fishing, rock hunting, snowboarding, and water sports with her family. Despite her love for her hometown, she knew there was more she wanted to do.

"I moved to LA when I was 19 to start my modelling career. I always felt like there was much more for me when I lived in Idaho. Don't get me wrong I still love it there, but there definitely isn't any modelling opportunity out there! I love to create with people, so I knew I had to leave. I have been able to travel all over the world because of modelling. The best part is I have met a lot of incredible people along the way."

Since the age of 19, Trista has made incredible strides in the modelling and influencer world. Her Instagram continues to skyrocket reaching almost 400K followers. Those who do follow her get to enjoy her incredible content full of exciting travels and beautiful aesthetics. Her success can be seen through her outlook, "I always try to stay on top of my game by challenging myself and becoming the best version of myself. I also do not compare myself to others. I only try to be better than I was the day before."

Trista has graced multiple covers and has been featured in magazines such as MAXIM, Influent Magazine, Influent Traveler, and FHM due to her striking looks and inspiring attitude towards her work.

"The best moments in my career are when I flew out to Tahiti and Bora Bora to shoot covers for different magazines. I had an amazing time on the island and so much fun with everyone. Also, when I was published in Maxim, FHM, Influent magazine, and Influent traveller, I got to pick up my magazines from the newsstands and airports. It was an amazing feeling!"

Trista believes in the quality content of Influent Traveller and Influent Magazine. "I also travelled to Turkey, Mexico, France, and Croatia for Influent magazine and Influent Traveller. The founder, Florent Carmin has always been supportive of my goals, and I respect the picturesque, beautiful content he produces. I was able to become part of the creative team of publications that truly capture the beauty of travel in its most natural sense with some of the world's most beautiful people. I'm grateful to take part in Influent Traveller and Influent Magazine because they are really taking art, beauty, fashion, and travel and creating something innovative. I'm excited to see the publications continue to grow in the future."

Shockingly, she experienced a harrowing illness this year; an infection called necrotizing fasciitis. "It's a very rare infection, during that time I had 9 surgeries to get the infection out of my body.

I was first in the ICU for a week and then in the hospital for the other 3 weeks. This has been the hardest/painful thing I have ever been through. I got released from the hospital in January. So, this year has been rough."

While this experience must have been incredibly difficult, Trista has used her experience to help motivate girls that are struggling and in difficult situations. "It also has been the year I have found myself the most and really has pushed for my dreams. I do have scars now, but I want to show myself and every girl that you can still do whatever you want in life if you work hard enough and follow your dreams. Modelling has always made me happiest, so I am going to follow that no matter what marks are on my body. This has given me a whole new look at life, to hold your loved ones because life can be so fragile. Live life to the fullest and always do what makes your heart happy."

Trista is a gorgeous model with an even more beautiful heart. She has overcome many obstacles with grace and made a name for herself around the world. She will no doubt continue to thrive and create even more amazing work in the future.



















# Out of Character With Nick Kroll







Nick Kroll has come a long way from his bombastic sketch days. And with a new season of Big Mouth, he's hoping to share what he's learned

BY JULIE SEABAUGH

PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Nick Kroll doesn't like being online.

Although much of his early career was defined by his outsize sketch characters, many of whom have become viral figures, Kroll preferred to let the internet's gaze stop there.

"I don't love giving personal access, so the whole thing used to make my skin crawl," Kroll says over a Zoom call from his home in Los Angeles. "I stayed away from it for the most part because I'd rather have my work speak for what my personal beliefs are. I really struggle on social media because it's not what I intended to do. I intended to do comedy and write and be an actor and produce things. I didn't intend to be a personality who has a take on everything."

That ended in 2020. This interview happened just a few days after November's presidential election was officially called for Joe Biden. The victory provided a cautiously optimistic bookend to a turbulent year that included a global health dilemma, a racial justice reckoning and a leadership crisis. From quarantine, public and private figures alike were forced to rethink how they showed up on social media.

"At a time when so many people felt powerless and someone like me has a platform, it became impossible to stay quiet," Kroll says.

That took different forms. Sometimes it was signal-boosting GoFundMe accounts for the families of victims of police brutality such as Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake or encouraging donations to organizations such as Black Visions Collective and Equal Justice Initiative. But it was also confronting past failures on his own projects, namely the decision to cast Jenny Slate as a young girl of color on his critically adored Netflix show *Big Mouth*, the fourth season of which premieres December 4.

"We sincerely regret and apologize for our original decision to cast a white actor to voice a biracial character," Kroll posted on his Instagram and Twitter in June, as Black Lives Matter discussions rose to the foreground of national media. "We made a mistake, took our privilege for granted, and we are working hard to do better moving forward."

When I asked if the issue of Slate voicing a nonwhite character had ever come up prior to this summer, he acknowledges that it had.

"Jenny had vocalized it in the past. It kept coming up in various ways. Then around the George Floyd murder and everything that followed, Jenny said she really didn't feel comfortable, so we went to our black writers and cast members to talk about it," Kroll says of the decision to recast the character. "I can't say they were easy conversations, but none of it was contentious. It all made sense."

"We had to admit our blind spots, and I think we have ultimately landed in a really good place with Ayo [Edebiri], who is such a talented and funny and smart performer and writer."

The casting of Edebiri feels even more timely when you realize season four goes into the characters' explorations of identity. Following Slate's decision to step down from voicing the half-black Missy Foreman-Greenwald, comedian and writer Edebiri assumed the role beginning with season four's penultimate episode. "It makes sense and it's the right thing to do, especially as we're diving more into Missy's story," says Edebiri, who'd come aboard the show as a writer eight months prior.

"What helps make Kroll's voice so relevant is he has the ability to change. He still has his point of view and the things that make him him," Edebiri says. "But he's able to learn and grow. There are people who only want their comedic clones around them because they think that's how they keep their legacy, but he doesn't seem interested in that."

The 42-year-old Kroll is serious about becoming a better ally, and a better version of himself. And some of that is reflected in his work on the hit *Big Mouth*, which he co-created, writes for and voices multiple characters on.

As the public face of a no-holds-barred animated sitcom centered on junior-high classmates grappling with puberty, Kroll doesn't fit

an obvious mold of social-justice warriorism. But with Netflix blessing the show with a rare multiseason renewal, *Big Mouth* has proven itself a standout among a current crop of sexually diverse and sex-positive series that aim to educate as much as entertain. His show's success has encouraged Kroll to continue achieving more with his comedy than simply getting laughs. He's determined to use it as a platform to help others understand lessons he's long struggled to teach himself.

Kroll grew up the youngest of four in affluent Westchester County, New York. He attended Jewish day school, private prep school and Washington D.C.'s Georgetown University. Although Kroll majored in history, he simultaneously gravitated toward media studies and performance.

As a freshman, Kroll bombed a Funniest Act on Campus contest but was encouraged to audition for future one-man-show maestro Mike Birbiglia's burgeoning Georgetown Players improv troupe. By senior year, Kroll was the director, and responsible for casting then-freshman John Mulaney, who would become a frequent collaborator and eventual *Big Mouth* co-star.

In early 2002, Kroll headed to New York City, where he soon began writing for Chappelle's Show. Within seven years, he was playing uber-asshole Rodney Ruxin on FX ensemble comedy *The League*.

As Kroll's star rose with *The League*, Comedy Central offered an outlet for him to showcase his long-running characters. Kroll Show's Bobby Bottleservice, Fabrice Fabrice, El Chupacabra, Rich Dicks and Oh,

"We had to admit our blind spots, and I think we have ultimately landed in a really good place with Ayo Edebiri, who is such a talented and funny and smart performer and writer."



Hello cranks Gil Faizon (Kroll) and George St. Geegland (Mulaney) proved themselves noxious, needy, perfectly self-absorbed satires of reality-TV wannabes.

In 2015, as both *The League* and his namesake show were ending after decent runs, Kroll looked for ways to challenge himself even further. While voicing a literal feminine douche in Seth Rogen's *Sausage Party*, Kroll recognized animation as an outlet to "draw anything and go anywhere."

"I was on two TV shows and felt incredibly lucky to be on both of them, but also walking through the airport was a little intense at times," Kroll says of that time. "I was not and am not as recognizable as a lot of my friends, but I think I was like, 'Okay, this is what it feels like to be on TV a lot. Maybe if I do animation, where you don't see my face at all, that will be a nice change of pace as well as just creatively different.'"

The resulting *Big Mouth* is a smart, fast-paced raunchfest that celebrates both physical changes and emotional growth. Randy "hormone monsters," frequent musical numbers and plenty of cartoon nudity share space with frank discussions of mental illness, family dysfunction and feminism. The character diversity—ethnicity, sexual orientation, ableness—is off the charts. Three seasons in, the series has been nominated for two Emmys and cited by *Time* magazine as a highlight of modern adult animation's "new Golden Age." Along with the teen-focused *Sex Education* and *Pen15*, *Big Mouth* is proactively

"We carry so much of our puberty stuff with us into adulthood. That anxiety is something all of us deal with, and it doesn't just go away like pimples do."



*Big Mouth* character Missy Foreman-Greenwald, now voiced by Ayo Edebiri



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helping shift public discourse around sex from taboo to on-trend.

"We carry so much of our puberty stuff with us into adulthood," Kroll acknowledges. "That anxiety is something all of us deal with, and it doesn't just go away like pimples do." Citing inescapable anxiety fodder like social media, 24-hour news cycles and election worries, he continues, "Trying to figure out tools to help lessen it is really useful right now. Hopefully the silliness of our show takes away some of its power."

Big Mouth's fourth season, which has anxiety as a central theme, became Kroll's most personal work to date. Autobiographical plot points abound: experiencing insecurities and inadequacies in public camp showers, sabotaging his deepest friendships, even meeting a future version of his character Nick Birch as an adult paralyzed by the threat of romantic intimacy.

"At the time we were writing this, which was a year and a half ago, I was in a relationship but I hadn't fully committed," he says. "I was really dealing with questions of intimacy and the fear of, Will I be this person who is unable to fully connect to someone?"

The entire season, Kroll says, was emotionally draining to write. "I'm in therapy and I talk about the stuff I'm working through in therapy in the writers' room, and I'm taking the stuff we're talking about in the writers' room into therapy, you know?"

In 2019, in addition to the announcement it had picked up Big Mouth through season six, Netflix revealed a spinoff, Human Resources. Kroll describes the latter as "a workplace comedy about the world of the monsters and creatures on Big Mouth," one strategically designed to cover stories of "birth and death and divorce; all the other huge elements of life that a show about a bunch of kids going through

puberty doesn't really allow real estate for."

The hefty workload of dual shows doesn't faze him—The League and Kroll Show ran concurrently—particularly now that Big Mouth can intentionally pace itself toward specific character goals. Like, perchance, Nick Birch going all the way with a girl?

"If that were the case," Kroll groans, "it would be around episode 190—a.k.a., I was 19 when I lost my virginity."

On the acting front, Kroll is adamant about expanding his range of roles, following dramas such as 2016's *Loving* and 2018's *Operation Finale* with the upcoming Olivia Wilde thriller *Don't Worry Darling*. The blogosphere even spread rumors he was up for the Marvel role of Moon Knight, a Batman-esque hero who struggles with his family's Jewish roots.

"I think I experienced that alongside the internet," Kroll laughs. "But something like that would be super cool. Who isn't intrigued by that world? And that particular character for me, as a Jewish guy: Lot of Jewish guys writing comic books; not a ton of Jewish superheroes at the center of them. But I would love to do all that stuff. I'm a big fan of the combo platter."

Whether it's animation or drama or activism, Kroll isn't done trying new things and growing. In light of the world—and comedy—changing, I ask if he would do anything differently today if he could rework some of the Kroll Show characters that made him famous, such as the gay, multiethnic Fabrice Fabrice; the Latino El Chupacabra; or even the differently abled portrayals in *Wheels Ontario*.

"There are definitely things I would not do now that I did years ago," Kroll says. "But we all have to own everything we've done because we were the ones who did them. You take an extra look at what you're doing, what the joke is and who the target of the joke is. It doesn't stop you from continuing to do crazy, fun things. It just makes you have to work a little harder and think a little more before you do or say something. That's okay."

With Big Mouth, Kroll has found a platform to keep his focus trained on the future, professionally as well as personally. He may have left other dated characters behind, but there will always be more work to put in.

"The beauty of doing a show about kids going through puberty—and really a show about kids going through changes—is that they can evolve and change both physically and emotionally," he says. "For us creatively, we can make our show do the same."







A full-page photograph of actor Nick Kroll. He is wearing a dark red suit over a mustard yellow turtleneck sweater and glasses. He is leaning against the front of a dark classic car with a chrome bumper. He is giving a thumbs up with his right hand. A large white graphic of the number '20' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

20

**Nick Kroll**





PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PETER YANG**



## No one creates more bizarre characters. Now the real Nick Kroll explains how he does it

BY ERIC SPITZNAGEL

**Q1:** *On Comedy Central's Kroll Show you've created a vast universe of characters, including Fabrice Fabrice, Bobby Bottleservice and Aspen Bruckheimer. Do they just pop magically into your brain, or is it an arduous process involving math equations and dry-erase boards?*  
It's a combination of things. Usually a voice will pop into my head. Sometimes I'll start playing around with it in the writers' room, doing the voice and seeing if it lands. When I lived in New York I got a lot of inspiration on the subway. It was great for research. It's tough in L.A. because it's a solitary existence. You end up having to do a lot of research on YouTube.

**Q2:** *Which of your characters are you most likely to slip into during sex?* I developed Bobby Bottleservice by talking to girls—my friends mostly—and pretending to hit on them. Their responses were a combination of “Ugh” and “Oh, that’s funny, because that’s the kind of douchebag who hits on me all the time.” But there was also a weird part of them that liked it—that liked a guy who’s passionate

and loves women, even though he’s, you know, kind of a juice monster. [laughs] Bobby, in the right context, isn’t a bad one to channel. He’s young and wild and full of life and passion. You could do worse.

**Q3:** *Making people laugh is part of your job. Do you lose your sense of humor when you're not at work?* Sometimes I have trouble watching comedy on TV or whatever, because I’m so accustomed to looking at the mathematics of how comedy works. I think if you talk to a lot of comedians, if you ask them what shows they watch, most of them will tell you they can watch only dramas. It’s just not relaxing to watch a comedy. It’s relaxing to watch a football game or House of Cards. You need that release.

**Q4:** *What's your release? Is there a certain genre of entertainment that lets you unwind?* Honestly, my release is flipping through channels. At the moment I’m binge-watching The Wire. [laughs] That’s right, I’m on the cultural forefront—from 10 years ago. I also like watching football. I like playoff sports, generally. I like it when there are real stakes. I’m not interested in watching a midseason baseball game, but I’ll watch just about any playoff game in just about any sport.

**Q5:** *You're on an FX show called The League, about a bunch of friends in a fantasy football league. Prior to joining the show, had you ever been involved in a fantasy sport?* Not at all. But the entire cast of The League is in a fantasy league together, which is kind of awesome.

I’m not having the best season thus far, but historically I’m one of the top guys in our league. I’m a tinkerer, a drunk tinkerer. I’ll come home late at night and fuss with the lineup. On the show we call it “tinker stinker time,” which is the morning bathroom time on Sunday before a game—you know, your morning dump—your last opportunity to tinker with your lineup and really make it happen. I’m a master of the tinker stinker.

**Q6:** *A few years ago Ken Marino, who was guest starring on The League, allegedly got arrested after punching you on the set. "I had my reasons," he tweeted. Let's assume for a moment it actually happened and wasn't a big joke. What's your side of the story?* Ken Marino is a bully. [laughs] No, actually, I’m fascinated that people took any of that seriously. What happened was, Ken came into the trailer and was like, “Hey, I just tweeted that I punched you.” And I responded by tweeting a Martin Luther King Jr. quote—something like, “I have decided to stick with love.” And people thought the whole thing was real. I couldn’t believe it. It was so bizarre to me. Then people were mad when they found out it was just a joke, because I guess they felt lied to or something. It was the weirdest thing I’ve ever been involved in.

**Q7:** *We should also discuss the Bono incident. After the U2 frontman kissed your girlfriend, Amy Poehler, at the 2014 Golden Globe Awards, you tweeted later, "Hey, Bono, watch your back." Is there still bad blood between you guys?* I am conflict averse, but I have my limits. My thing with Bono isn’t just about what happened at the Globes. We have a long-standing conflict. It goes way, way into the past. It’s just.... [sighs deeply] This is still really painful to talk about. I was supposed to be the Edge, but Bono fired me because I don’t know how to play guitar. Just like that—boom!—I’m out of U2. I have not forgiven Bono since.

**Q8:** *Does it upset you when you and Amy go to Mexico and the tabloids publish your vacation photos, but all they talk about is her bikini and don't once mention your beach body?* It’s a total bummer. It’s a bummer that anyone would want to see a picture of me on vacation. Like, where are we as a society that it’s considered news that I went on vacation? Doesn’t the world have bigger issues to deal with than looking at photos of me in short-shorts and a weird camo hat?

**Q9:** *You once bragged that your career has*



been “about as easy a ride as you could have.” What’s your secret? I think it helps that I grew up financially comfortable. A lot of artists throughout history came from the leisure class. They had the time to ponder things, to think about things. They didn’t have to spend every waking moment worrying about where rent was coming from or finding a shitty job they didn’t want because they needed the money to survive. Many, many artists grew up with nothing and had something deep inside that they wanted to express. But it makes a big difference if you don’t have those financial burdens and can decide, without worrying about bills, if you want to tell dick jokes professionally.

**Q10:** *Were you a funny kid?* I thought I was, but I don’t think my family would agree. When I was a kid, if you’d asked them, “Do you think Nick could be a professional comedian or actor?” I’m pretty sure they would have said, “He’s a sweet kid, but let’s be honest....” When I decided I was going into comedy, I would describe their reaction as skeptically supportive.

**Q11:** *Were you telling original jokes or just imitating what you saw on TV?* Me and my friend Andrew Goldberg—who now writes for Family Guy—were best buddies in elementary school, and we’d re-create “Wayne’s World” sketches. I think a lot of comedians start out that way, just reenacting their favorite Saturday Night Live bits or their favorite scenes from Trading Places or whatever. But to me as a kid, it never felt like it was leading somewhere. I never thought, I’m going to be a comedian when I grow up. I never thought too far into the future. I guess that goes back to growing up comfortably—I had that leisure to relax and not think about what I was going to do with my life or how I was going to do it.

**Q12:** *Your first time on a big stage was as a freshman in college, during a stand-up competition. You lost. What happened?* I had never done comedy before, but I had this idea that I would get on stage and say, “God, I thought I was going to be so nervous, but I’m actually totally relaxed,” and then pee my pants. I’d have a water balloon in my pants and pop it with a pin during my set, and it would look like I’d peed myself. But I forgot to bring the water balloon, so I grabbed a sandwich bag or something and filled it with water. But it didn’t work out like I’d hoped. When I tried to jab it, it didn’t burst, and I kept trying, which ended up looking like I was furiously masturbating on stage. And then I spent the next five or 10 minutes explaining what I’d

tried to do unsuccessfully. It did not go well.

**Q13:** *Your father was a private investigator. Was that as cool as it sounds?* From a very early age I would say, “My dad is a private investigator, but he doesn’t carry a gun and he doesn’t wear a trench coat.” He was working on a corporate level. I guess some of it was a little dangerous. The Kuwaiti government hired him to find Saddam Hussein’s money, and the Filipino government hired him to find Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos’s money. During the Hussein thing we had a cop outside our house for a while, and I guess that was cool. It felt more cool than scary.

**Q14:** *You never wanted to follow in your dad’s footsteps?* Not really. Obviously I went into a different field, but I learned a lot from him, especially the way he treats people. Anyone from heads of state to kids I played with in Little League baseball, he was kind to all of them. He treated everybody the same. You can go a long way in this world by just being a decent person.

**Q15:** *You went to school on a farm in Vermont. That sounds almost ridiculously idyllic. Were you milking cows more than reading books?* Well, if you want to get specific, there were no dairy cows. They were beef cows, so I didn’t have a lot of contact with them. You don’t befriend animals that are heading to slaughter. Otherwise it was an amazing experience. It’s this place called the Mountain School in Vermont, and that’s really where I got my first bug for performing. It was a bunch of smart, individualistic kids who were okay being weird. In high school it can be scary to be weird. But going up there and meeting all these eccentric kids, I was like, Oh, it’s okay to dress up in an orange jumpsuit and lip-synch James Brown songs while wearing kitchen clogs. It was a watershed for me. I was given permission to be a weirdo.

**“ I have trouble watching comedy on TV. It’s just not relaxing.”**



**Q16:** *One of your first big TV roles was on the 2007 ABC sitcom Cavemen, based on a Geico commercial. At the time, you were probably just happy to be working. In hindsight, do you wish you could expunge it from your permanent record?* I still think back on it fondly. I'd never had a TV show before. Just being able to act for a living was such an amazing opportunity, even though I was hidden under about a foot of silicone makeup. It took four hours every morning to get the makeup on and an hour to get it off. If I got that job today, I'd be like, "Holy shit. Are you kidding me with this?" But because I didn't have anything to reference it against, I was like, Oh, great. I guess this is what being on a TV show is like. You're covered in silicone with hair glued to your body.

**Q17:** *Have you ever met a comedy idol who turned out to be a jackass?* That almost never happens. Usually it's just about me being star struck. I had a small thing with Chevy Chase when I was on Community. He wasn't a huge fan of anyone besides him getting a laugh. But even then I was like, Oh shit, I'm threatening to Fletch? That's not too bad. Sometimes it doesn't matter if the people you love and respect aren't as cool as you want them to be. Whether Chevy Chase and I are best friends is irrelevant, and it pales in comparison to how he inspired me in Fletch or those Vacation movies or on SNL. I don't need him to like me.

**Q18:** *What's your 10-year plan? Are you fine with being a comic until the bitter end, or do you want to make the leap to drama?* I'd love to be able to do more dramatic stuff. There's so much good drama happening on TV right now, like True Detective, which I think is just amazing. I've got such a dark, dark side that I haven't been able to show yet. But I don't know; maybe it wouldn't be worth it. Doing a show like True Detective might be too much of a bummer. Dealing with dead people every day? That's a tough one.

**Q19:** *Do comedians have groupies?* Sure. I'm pretty sure that's the whole reason anybody becomes an artist. Whether it's music or comedy or filmmaking, it's all done in the hope that random strangers will want to sleep with you. When I got to the point in my career that women might actually have wanted to sleep with me because of whatever fame they thought I had, I wasn't interested anymore. I was like, Do I actually want to be with somebody who's just into me because I'm on television? But the biggest reason to say no to a groupie is that you've done two shows and are exhausted and want to go back to the hotel and sleep because you're leaving early in the morning.

**Q20:** *When you do stand-up, are you annoyed if people in the audience yell out requests?* I just let them get it out of their system. I'm like, "Everybody, let's all scream things that we want and think we like. Let it all out. Let the poison out." I let them have that moment, and then they tend to settle down. If that doesn't work, there's a thing I learned from Aziz Ansari, who I think learned it from Louis C.K. Once you finish your set, you come out for an encore and it's all about answering questions or taking requests. Some people really want to hear certain jokes. They want to hear it live like they heard it on an album or a special or a TV show.















# MICHELLE *yee*

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MUA **Evelyn McCullough** | @evilyn\_mua  
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**Such an honour to have a gorgeous and talented beauty feature! We're curious to know how your journey has been as one of the most respected models in your industry.** It's such an honour to be part of Playboy for a second time! I've been making a transition to assist other models in the industry moving forward, but will continue to make amazing content for many more years to come.

**Given your obvious stunning good looks and striking features, tell us a bit about where you're from?** I'm from Southern California, and my nationality is Filipino – 100%

**Tell us something surprising about you?** I'm a med student, with a goal to work with cancer research.

**2021 was an incredibly challenging for all us, what would say has been the most challenging thing for you thus far?** The transitions of what new regulations are, what is acceptable and what is not, changes in the way we react to things as a society and with each other. However so many positives came out from this year as well – so I'm thankful for everyday I've had thus far.

**What are some of the things you like to do, behind the cameras and all the glitz and glamour?** I would have to say getting ready for the photoshoots are my ultimate favorite. I love to get all ready to be in front of the camera, whether doing my own hair & make up or getting it done – I'm all for doing it all to get the shot.

**If we were to try and sweep you right off your feet, what are some of the things you look for in an ideal partner?** A beautiful smile, a wonder (and sometimes dry) sense of humor, must love going to long walks at theme parks and enjoy food.

**..And what would make you go running in the opposite direction as fast as possible?** Smells. If you have smelly breath, musty odor, stink feet I can smell thru your socks – smell is super important for me in regards to hygiene.

**You're a seemingly talented lady, what are some, if any, of your hidden talents not many people know about?** I don't think it's a talent but it is a more rare thing given the new wave of society for take out – but I can cook pretty much anything. All self taught or a bit of assistance, but if you ask me to make you something even if I don't have the recipe in my head I'll look up the best ones and put one together that I think would work great for your taste buds.

**What makes you feel sexy?** For photoshoots I love getting in some lace, thigh highs and high heels. On a normal basis a pair of underwear and a large t-shirt no bra, btw I hate wearing bras the opportunity presents itself to not wear a bra IM IN.

**If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be and why?** Speed. If there was a way to go faster and be efficient I would be able to do so many things.

**What can we expect from you this year?** Any major plans and exciting things we can look forward to from you? Planning on finishing the fall semester, and getting even more content before the end of the year. There are so many opportunities arising.

**It has been a true pleasure getting to know you! Any final words for our readers out there?** It was amazing to be interviewed by you guys and be a part of the publication. I'd like to say to everyone don't forget to smile everyday you never know whos falling in love with it.





















# Woman on *Top*

Celebrating Lainie  
Kazan and Her Playboy  
Club Showrooms

The extraordinary entertainer's career has included everything from a legendary pictorial to movie stardom—with eponymous Playboy nightclub nooks (and some nookie) along the way

BY PATTY FARMER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES







Lainie Kazan might be described as not one but two of the most singular figures in American pop culture. Since the 1980s she has made a specialty of playing zaftig, eccentric, older female relatives; you know her face, whether you've seen her in *Desperate Housewives*, *Fuller House*, *The Nanny* or *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. But the Kazan of the 1960s and 1970s was a buxom singing sexpot with erotic energy and musical chops in equal proportion. In addition to inspiring comic-book creator Jack Kirby's Big Barda of the DC Comics *New Gods* franchise, Kazan played a key role in the evolution of the Playboy empire. She was one of the most important celebrities of her time to pose for the magazine, and she played a pivotal role in the last great years of the first-generation Playboy Clubs.

Lainie Levine was born in Brooklyn in 1940 and later took her mother's maiden name, Kazan. Her father was a book-maker on the fringes of respectability.

"I grew up around that whole thing," she says, meaning illegal gambling and organized crime, "so I didn't really think about it." Both her parents were Jewish but of different strains, endowing their daughter with a combination of Eastern European and Mediterranean DNA. This empowered her to play a wide range of characters and undoubtedly proved to be a factor in the first roles she landed on Broadway: *The Happiest Girl in the World* (1961) and *Bravo Giovanni* (1962)—based on Greek and Italian culture, respectively.

Kazan was singing at a small New York club called the Living Room when the producers of *Funny Girl*, the Broadway smash starring Barbra Streisand, came in one night. Floored by her passionate delivery—a PLAYBOY writer later said that "Lainie tackles every song as if it might be her last"—they hired her as the lead understudy, as well as one of the show's "Ziegfeld girls." To Kazan's dismay, Streisand almost never missed a performance, although when the star

**Lainie's Room was so successful that the home office asked her to open a second location.**

happened to fall ill one matinee day in 1965, Kazan ably took on the leading role twice within several hours. It was precisely because it happened so rarely that when Kazan did go on, she attracted attention. When, that November, she appeared on a special Broadway-themed episode of the massively popular television show *Bell Telephone Hour*, she became the most famous understudy in the country.

Kazan flourished in the late 1960s, making four albums for MGM Records and appearing in top clubs all over the country. She broke into movies and became a frequent guest on the major variety shows, including *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Dean Martin Show*. This period hit its peak when Kazan posed nude in the October 1970 PLAYBOY. Months earlier she had been filming her third movie, *Romance of a Horsethief*, in Yugoslavia, where she met photographer Lawrence Schiller. He suggested she pose for the magazine. "He cajoled me and told me I wouldn't be totally nude—and I wasn't," Kazan says. "They were very Rubenesque pictures, very beautiful."

After that high point, Kazan's career stumbled. She broke her foot while filming a TV special, a stroke of bad luck that put her out of work for several seasons. The entertainment business was changing: Gradually, the old-school supper clubs went out of business, the TV variety shows went off the air and the big record companies shifted to new types of music. For a few years Kazan sustained herself and her daughter by working in low-rent clubs she calls "the toilets of America." When a few of the seedier club owners refused to pay her, she had to rely on tough-talking friends to make sure they honored their contractual obligations.

The Playboy clubs, having had a strong start in the early 1960s, were going through a similar period of change as business fell off. Magazine sales reached an all-time high in the early 1970s, but the clubs were losing their edge; there was less incentive to be served by waitresses in Bunny costumes when women were wearing considerably less on discotheque dance floors. Hugh Hefner tried to expand the clubs by opening family-oriented resorts, but this proved a costly misfire.

A moment of serendipity arrived in the mid-1970s. "I was working at one place in Milwaukee that was just ghastly, and all the checks they gave me were bouncing," Kazan recalls. "I was staying



An outtake from PLAYBOY's October 1970 feature on Kazan, entitled simply Lainie. "There have been many Jewish sex symbols," she told the magazine. (Photo by Larry Schiller)



at this beaten-down hotel, in a room with a cockeyed floor.” She remembered a friend, Sam Distefano, who was running the Playboy resort in nearby Lake Geneva, where she had sung a few years earlier. “I called Sam and said, ‘I would really appreciate it if I could just come up for a weekend and lie down in a real bed.’ And he said, ‘Of course! C’mon up.’”

The resort itself was as beautiful as she remembered—“I thought I’d died and gone to heaven”—but she was shocked by the music she heard in the big showroom: a low-rent rock band called Three Shaggy Gorillas Minus One Buffalo Fish. Barely 10 people made up the audience. Mustering her courage, Kazan took her concerns to Distefano: Playboy had once been synonymous with the best in jazz. What had gone wrong? Distefano passed her remarks up the corporate chain of command to Playboy HQ in Chicago until they reached the desk of Hefner himself.

Hef proposed a meeting. Kazan thought it over: “What can I lose? I’ll go and talk to them. I didn’t have a car. I didn’t have any clothes. I had only jeans and a T-shirt with me, and so that’s how I went down. And they rented me a van.”

In the spring of 1976, she drove to Chicago with

her daughter and met with Hefner and Victor Lownes, his partner in the clubs. As Kazan recalls, Hef said to her, “I hear you have a really good idea.”

“Actually, I didn’t have an idea,” she says about her bluff. “I just repeated my observations I had mentioned to Sam. But he quickly said, ‘Great, I’m leaving you with Vic. You two work it out.’”

What emerged from those talks was an innovation for the Playboy Club chain: Lainie’s Room, an entertainment showroom programmed by the songstress herself, would open inside the Los Angeles Playboy Club. Taking its name from a phone call Lownes made to Kazan at her hotel—she answered by saying, “Hello, Lainie’s room”—it officially opened to terrific fanfare in September 1976.

Kazan had overseen virtually every detail. “I changed the menu. I redecorated the whole place. I laid out linen napkins and tablecloths. Put roses on the table,” she says. “I made it classy.” Naturally she was also the first headliner, but she also



“My biggest self-criticism,” Kazan told PLAYBOY, “has been that I try to be everything.” Kazan certainly did almost everything during her time with the L.A. Playboy Club, from performing to opening and running her own showcase club room. (Photo by Larry Schiller)



Lainie Kazan performing in 1977 at the inaugural Lainie’s Room inside the Los Angeles Playboy Club. (Photo by Vernon Smith)

booked the other talent—singers, bands and comedians. The room was new and fresh and attracted lots of media attention; its success was a shot in the arm for both Kazan and the clubs.

The new gig came with challenges—unpredictability goes hand in hand with booking live acts. Kazan recalls that one night Morgana King, who played Marlon Brando’s wife in *The Godfather*, simply decided she didn’t feel like singing. And when songstress Barbara McNair’s husband was murdered in December 1976, she understandably canceled her sets. In both cases, Kazan dropped her own plans in order to take the stage in their stead. Her devotion paid off. Lainie’s Room was so successful that about a year after it opened, the home office asked her to open a second location. Situated on the fifth floor of the New York Playboy Club, it launched in February 1978. Both sites operated as clubs-within-clubs; visitors could access Lainie’s Rooms without having to buy a Playboy Club membership—a point Kazan insisted on, and Hef finally acquiesced to.

Perhaps the biggest star to rise from Lainie’s Rooms was



## " Bob Dylan was a standard in the room. He was like a piece of furniture."

one of Kazan's own musicians: pianist David Benoit. Kazan and her backing band were due to play a gig with the Duke Ellington Orchestra when her regular pianist simply disappeared—lost, she speculates, into his drug addiction. She desperately needed a replacement on keys. Someone recommended Benoit, a name that was new to her. He had played only in instrumental jazz and rock bands and had absolutely no experience accompanying singers, but Kazan took a risk and hired him.

"She really taught me," Benoit tells *Playboy*. "It was a lesson in how to accompany a singer." He did so well that in 1977 Kazan recorded a new album, her first in a decade, *The Chanteuse Is Loose*, live at the L.A. club with Benoit on piano. Benoit eventually became Kazan's full-fledged musical director; years later, he would become a Grammy-nominated contemporary jazz superstar.

Stars often entered Kazan's orbit. One night Benoit was in her dressing room, picking up his notes, which Kazan issued after each show, and heard a knock on the door. "I said, 'Who is it?'" Benoit remembers. "'It's Bob Dylan.' I'm like, 'No, no, c'mon. Who is it really?'" He says, 'Bob Dylan!' I opened the door, and there was Bob Dylan, right in front of me."

Indeed, Dylan and Kazan dated for much of the time she was running the two *Lainie's Rooms*. "Bob Dylan was a standard in the room. He was like a piece of furniture. He would come in at least once a week," says Jessie Rich Williams, Kazan's stalwart background singer. "He would come in incognito with a hat pulled down over his head and sit back in Lainie's booth." Dylan, who occasionally brought in his friend Joni Mitchell, was the only one with the chutzpah to give Hefner the cold shoulder in his own club.

Kazan was no stranger to high-profile romantic partners. She is perhaps the only woman in the world to have enjoyed intimate relationships with both Frank Sinatra and Dylan; in a 1979 *PLAYBOY*

story she characterizes herself as something of a short-term serial monogamist: "I'm a one-man woman, even if it's only for a week."

The *Lainie's Rooms* gave Kazan a career boost that restored much of her stature in the entertainment industry. Offers started coming in from Hollywood. In 1981, Kazan said yes to Francis Ford Coppola, a friend from her Hofstra University days. But the movie they made, *One From the Heart*, was an epic flop. "A fiasco," she says. "A big, big, nasty failure—but the greatest experience." Despite the poor box office, Kazan's film career was officially resuscitated.

In 1982 she appeared in *My Favorite Year*, delivering a performance that turned her into everybody's favorite older female relative (and led to plenty of future roles in that vein). The film was so widely loved that 10 years later it was adapted into a Broadway musical, in which Kazan revived her original role and earned a Tony nomination.



Nia Vardalos (left) and Lainie Kazan in the 2002 indie romance hit *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. (Photo by Sophie Giraud/lfc/Kobal/Shutterstock)

As Kazan's acting work picked up, she stepped away from the clubs. She had sold the use of her name to *Playboy Enterprises*, but the *Lainie's Rooms* just didn't work without Lainie. By the mid-1980s the rooms—along with most of the *Playboy Clubs*—were history.

Kazan, now 80 years old, looks fondly upon her *Playboy* years. She was treated as a full-fledged executive by the corporation, masterminding her venues, participating in corporate meetings and much in between. "I would make my points and they would take them in with some seriousness," she says. "It was always a battle, but they would eventually do what I suggested."

It all goes back to her beginnings—to her childhood in Brooklyn and the nascent grit that would bring her such durable and varied success. "I have negotiated with the most intelligent people and the high intellectuals, and I also negotiated with mobsters and with the lowest of the low," she says. "I learned how to be, and I learned how not to be. It was the great lesson of my life."



Lainie Kazan (left) with famed performer Eartha Kitt and congo-drum player Marcelino Valdez at the 1978 opening of the New York *Lainie's Room*. (Photo by Vernon Smith)



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