

PLAYBOY

PHILIPPINES

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017

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DONALD TRUMP
FIDEL CASTRO
BATO DELA ROSA
JEFFREY DEAN MORGAN
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The Renegades Issue

Featuring
RANIA GAMAL
Dubai-based Supermodel

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PLAYBOY PHILIPPINES is now on





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International Woman Rania Gamal is a lot of things. She's an accomplished model, a fitness guru, a blogger, and painter. Did we mention that sexy is on top of that list?

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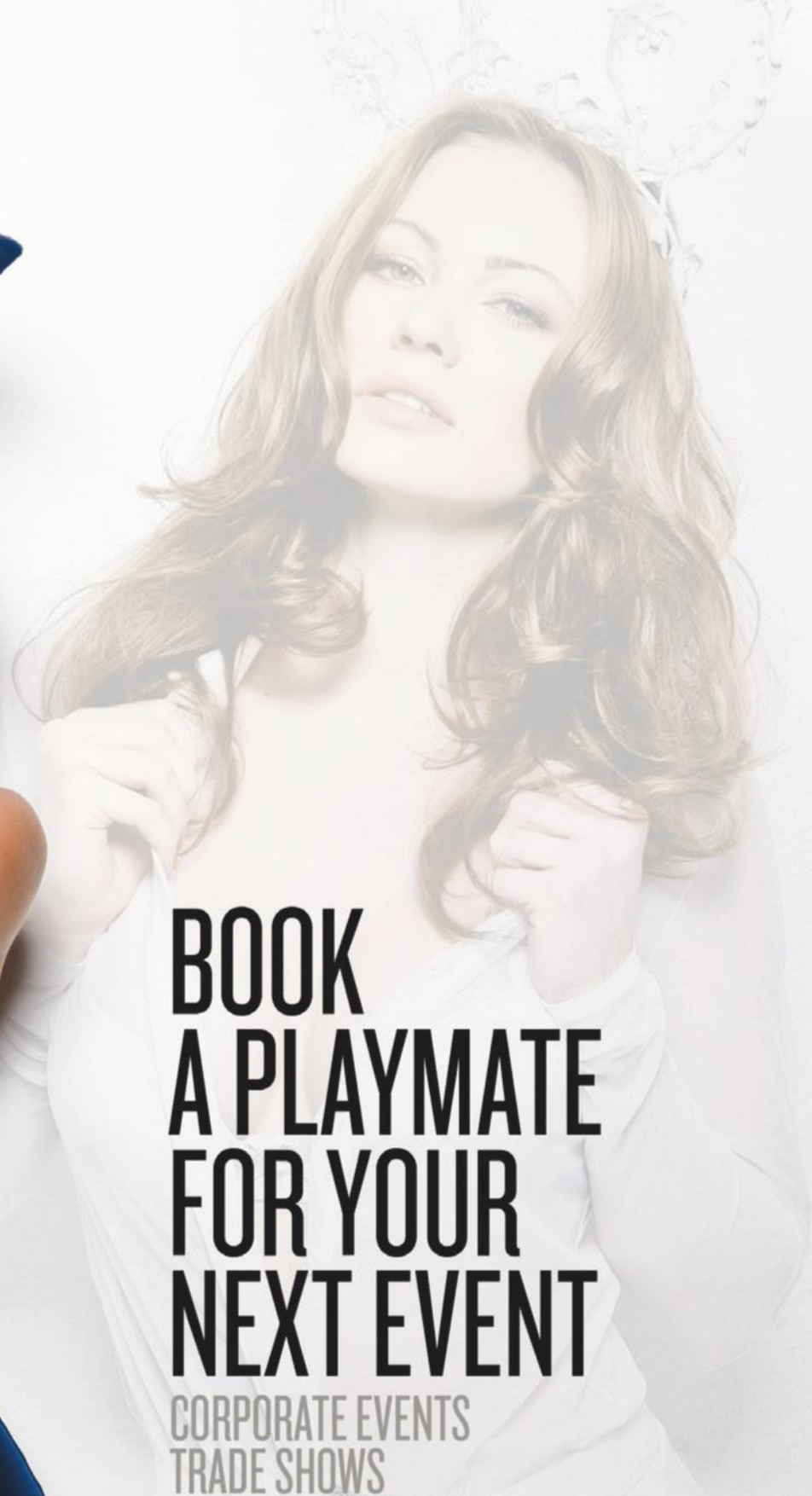
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THE RENEGADES ISSUE

ON THE COVER: RANIA GAMAL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY OWEN REYES

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ADVISOR

My Friend Keeps Hitting on My Crushes. I Wanna Crush Him.

Q: *I value my friendships, mainly because my friends are the coolest people in the world and I know I can count on them to be there for me. I couldn't have gotten through some really low points in my life without their support. Of course, I'm not completely blind to their faults either. Which brings us to my predicament right now.*

Ralph (not his real name) likes to flirt with women. I admit that this wasn't really a big issue at first, but then he started hitting on my crushes. Every single one of them. Granted, in some of those cases he didn't know I had a thing for the girl. But most of the time, I let him know which ladies I find attractive and they're the ones he makes a beeline for.

I try to give him a pass because I really don't want to lose him as a friend, but it's gotten to the point where I want to crush every single bone in his body whenever he glances so much at someone I'm interested in.

How do I handle a situation like this? Do I just give in to the urge to punch him in the face? Or, should I just let it go?

A: This whole situation is clearly bothering you, so it's obvious you shouldn't keep sweeping this under the rug. Saying that, I wouldn't recommend giving in to the urge to punch Ralph's teeth in. You just have to simply let it go and figure out a few things.

The major thing you have to ask yourself is why you're so bothered by all of this. Do you feel betrayed by your friend's constant flirting? If so, then you have to figure out why. Is it because you trusted him with these secrets and he's disrespecting that by macking on those girls? Then you need to have a serious conversation about this. You can't control his actions any more than he can control yours; you're both adults. But you can at least understand why he's doing this.

For all you know, he honestly thought you were encouraging him to hit on the girls by saying they're attractive—think about the way you talked about those girls (did you really say that you liked them, or did you just say that they're pretty? Because those are two different things). Or maybe he was pushing

you to make a move by making you jealous. Either way, get this cleared up for your peace of mind.

Is it because you think he's actively trying to steal girls that you like? That is, do you notice him talking to them before or after you've interacted with the girl? Because if you're slow to make your move, then you really can't blame Ralph (who you admit is a bit of a casanova) for giving in to his own nature.

I'll take this chance to discuss another personal issue you may need to resolve, which is that you may be psychologically calling "dibs" on your crushes. Frankly, this is more than a little unfair: you don't get exclusive rights to flirting with them just because you like them. In fact, they have every right to flirt with whomever they find attractive—even if it's your friend. You get no say on that.

This brings us to another question: Are you afraid your friend will end up with your crush, leaving you tormented by what-ifs? If that's the case, then it's obvious that you have

low self-esteem when it comes to relationships. The only way to get past this is to make more of an effort to engage with women you like. This way, win or lose, competing with your friend or not, you know you gave yourself a fighting chance. If they say yes, congratulations! If they say no, just move on (there's no use on putting yourself in a limbo). It'll go a long way towards building your confidence, and eventually your friend's flirting habit will stop bothering you.

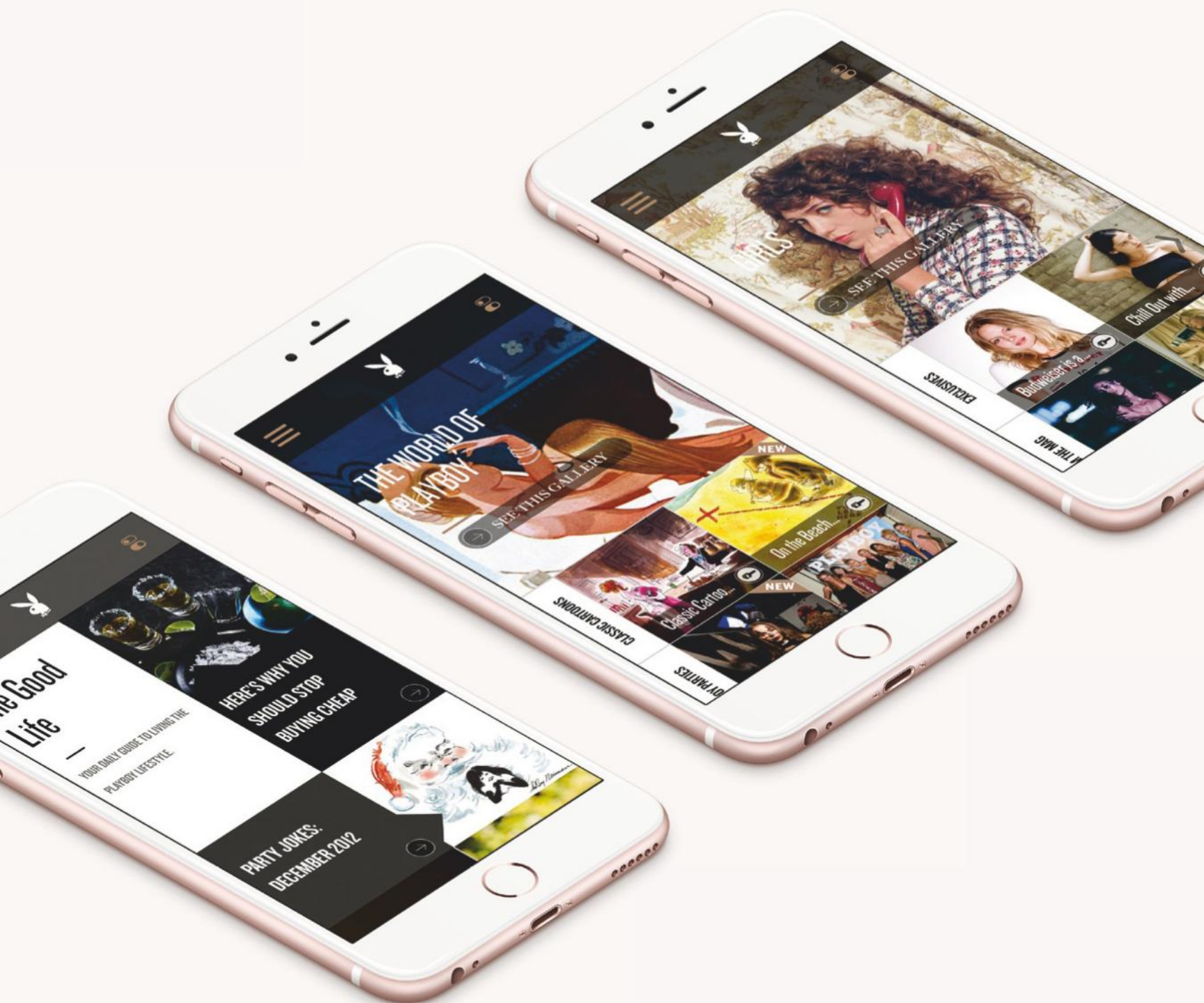
Ultimately, you have to get out of your own head and into the world—talk to your friend, chat up that girl, and don't resort to violence unless it's in sports or self-defense. The things that you are too passionate about should not push you on making decisions that you might regret. In the near future, make yourself aware of the things that you need to work on yourself for you to avoid bad encounters on situations like this.

Questions? Email advisor@playboy-philippines.com



BY **ELEA ALMAZORA**

PLAYBOY CLASSIC



Playboy's award-winning content updated daily



A woman with dark, curly hair is posing on a sandy beach. She is wearing a white, off-the-shoulder, lace-trimmed swimsuit. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background shows the ocean and a hazy horizon.

PLAYGROUND

ISSUE NO. 78

Tech.Lifestyle.Movies.DVD.Games.Books.Music.Food.Drinks.Gearbox.Style.Art



Apricot OTG for Apple

Let's face it, we all have a tendency to flood our phones with a plethora of images, songs and videos. This Apple-compatible flash drive lets iPhone users free up much needed space, offering 32GB or 16GB worth of extra storage. (P.W.)



Nintendo Family Computer

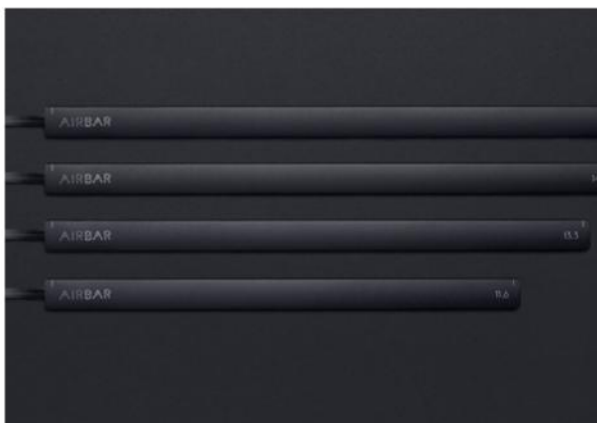
Yes, you read it right. Nintendo re-released the classic console to give the younger generation a chance to enjoy classic games like Super Mario, Battle City, and Ice Climber. The new Famicom comes with dozens of built-in games for endless button-mashing fun. (P.W.)



GoPro Hero 5 Black

Adrenaline junkies and frequent flyers who are always on the go have something to cheer about at the turn of the new year: the GoPro Hero 5 Black is finally on the market. Unlike its predecessors, the latest line carries a rear

touchscreen display, voice activated controls, and enhanced image quality. The GoPro Hero 5 Black is also rigged with a One-Button Control system for quick and easy recording. It brings out the adventurer in you.



AirBar

Ever tapped your laptop screen by mistake, thinking it would respond like a smartphone? In hooking up AirBar, you can tap your MacBook Air's screen with purpose. The gadget turns your laptop's monitor into a touchscreen display, letting you tap, swipe, and pinch instead of clicking. (P.W.)



Bose SoundSport Wireless

Drowning out the horn-filled orchestra of Manila traffic is as easy as putting on these sweat resistant Bluetooth earphones. It pairs well with both Apple and Android phones, so at any given moment, you can Spotify your way to a beautiful day. (P.W.)



John Wick 2

The reign of superhero movies at the box office is expected to continue with the upcoming release of the X-Men series' 10th installment in Logan. Hugh Jackman, who plays the title character, now faces the effects of aging and diminished regenerative capabilities, as he nurses an ailing Charles Xavier. Opting to stay hidden, Logan is forced to come out of hiding when a young mutant, whose abilities are similar to his, is stalked by evil forces. (Paul Wenceslao)

Logan

Immensely talented assassin John Wick comes out of retirement, in pursuit of some of the world's deadliest hitmen. Sworn to help his associate who plans to take over an international ring of assassins, John gets to unleash his stylish brand of violence anew. (P.W.)

Fifty Shades Darker

James Dornan and Dakota Johnson reprises their roles as Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele respectively in this intriguing follow up to Fifty Shades of Grey. In this chapter, the couple's relationship is faced with the demons of Christian's past. (P.W.)





Gravity Rush 2

Sony Interactive Entertainment Japan

Platform: PlayStation 4

Fans of the previous installment are in for another gravity-bending treat in Gravity Rush 2. An exclusive to the PS4, the title's lead character Kat makes a return with new abilities, more missions, and a more expansive world where she can float and fly around freely. The battle system has also been upgraded, with Kat learning two new techniques: Lunar and Jupiter, which improve her long range and melee attacks, respectively. (Paul Wenceslao)

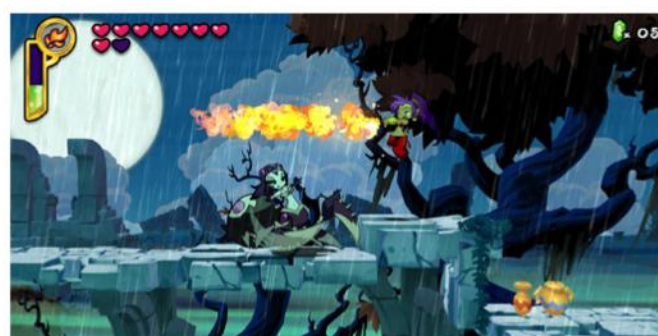


Shantae: Half-Genie Hero

WayForward Technologies

Platforms: PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC

With a protagonist who appears like an extra-quirky Playboy model with a slew of superpowers, guys will probably play this game as much as their girlfriends. Shantae uses her hair, dance moves, and animal transformation to pound baddies into submission. Don't mess with this chick. (P.W.)

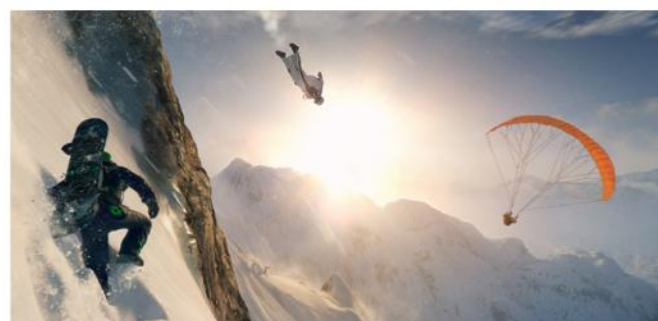


Steep

Ubisoft

Platforms: PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC

Conquering the mighty Alps with skis, a snowboard, a paraglider, a wingsuit, and an array of GoPro cameras is the theme of this wild winter adventure. Extreme sports enthusiasts will get a kick out of performing tricks and racing other players downhill. (P.W.)

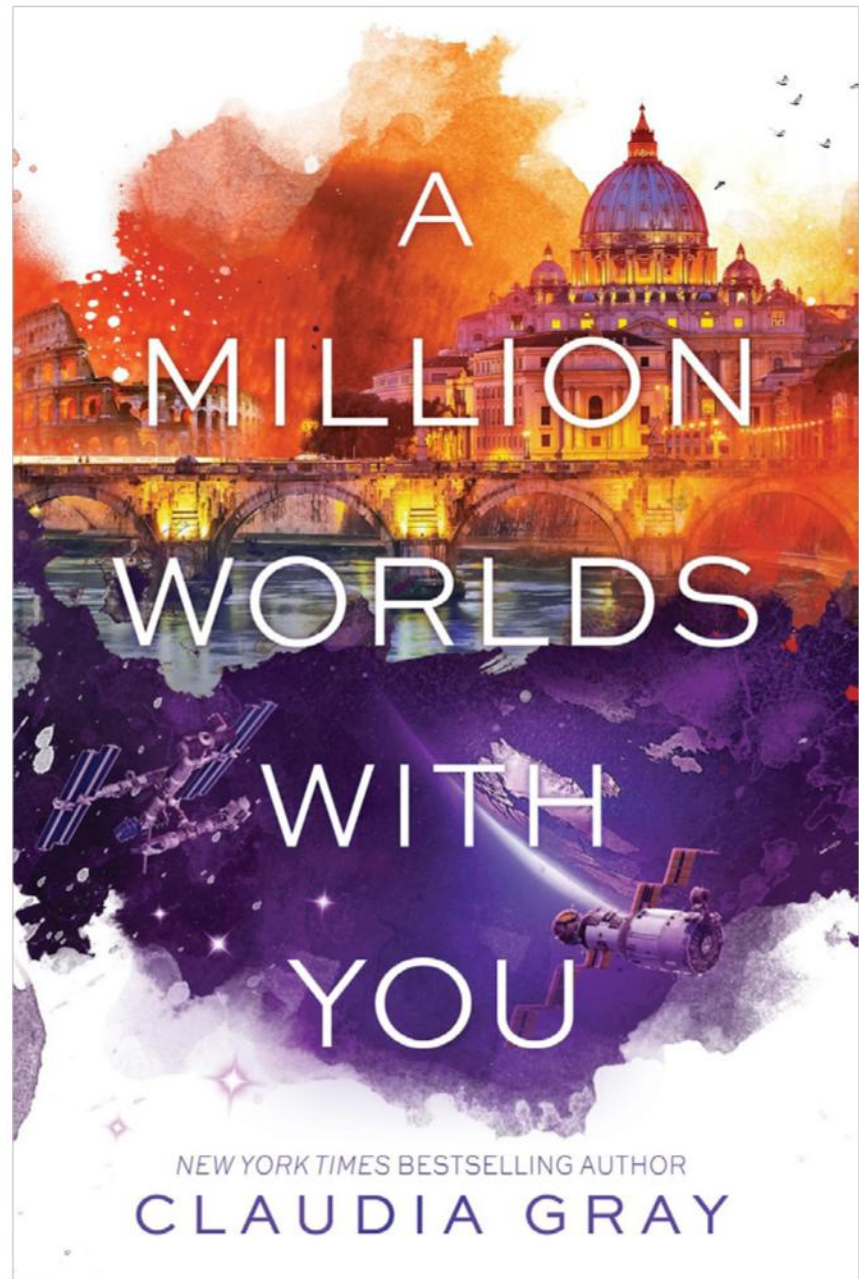


**A Million Worlds with You**

Claudia Gray

HarperTeen

A Million Worlds with You comes as the thrilling conclusion to the Firebird trilogy. Facing the possible destruction of the multiverse, Marguerite Caine is in a race against time to stop the Triad Corporation from annihilating a billion lives and hundreds of universes. Unknown to our heroine, the Triad has unleashed a new weapon to counter her every move – an alternate version of herself from a different dimension. *(Paul Wenceslao)*

**An Illustrated History of Notable Shadowhunters & Denizens of Downworld**Cassandra Clare
Simon & Schuster

The Shadowhunters series is packed with noble heroes, enchanting creatures, and vile beasts, and they are brought to life by the mesmerizing art of Cassandra Jean, maker of The Shadowhunter Tarot. This is a must-have for all Shadowhunters fans. *(P.W.)*

**Arrival (Stories of Your Life and Others)**Ted Chiang
Vintage

Multi-awarded science fiction author Ted Chiang weaves a compendium of unsettling yet wondrous tales centering on the arrival of aliens on Earth. Each story is well-thought out and put together in such a way that will captivate even non-fans of the sci-fi genre. *(P.W.)*



Musical O

Musical O

Fronted by vocalist and guitarist Marco Dinglasan, the now five-piece Manila indie rock outfit Musical O comes out of their eight-year creative hiatus with a second eponymous album. A follow-up to their 2009 debut album *Debutante*, the Foo Fighters and American Football-inspired band showcases a more elaborate multi-faceted sound as they welcome a new member: Rap Soliman on guitar. *(Celene Sakurako)*



Lupe Fiasco

Drogas Light

Chicago rapper Lupe Fiasco pulls through with 14 tracks of fervently charged hip-hop rhymes in his follow-up to 2015's *Tetsuo & Youth*. *DROGAS Light* is a mixture of feel good easy going tracks like "Wild Child" and heavier ones like "Made In the USA". *(C.S.)*



The Flaming Lips


Oczy Mlody

Four years after releasing emotionally profound album *The Terror*, Oklahoma psychedelic alternative rock band The Flaming Lips paints yet another somber fairytale in their melancholically dreamy 15th full-length studio recorded album. *(C.S.)*



Sriracha Hot Chicken!

The superspicy Nashville specialty has gone national. And our Asian-inflected version might be the best

A large, close-up photograph of a piece of fried chicken, possibly a drumstick, resting on a dark, textured surface that looks like a rock or a piece of bark. The chicken is golden-brown and crispy. In the background, there's a blurred view of a body of water and a green, rocky shore.

It took only 70 years or so for a hot chicken to become an overnight foodie cult hit. Legend has it a jealous girlfriend served an overly spiced dish of fried chicken to a Nashville playboy named Thornton Prince; her attempt at revenge turned into the signature offering of the restaurant Prince's Hot Chicken. In recent years other establishments, including Hattie B's in Nashville and Howlin' Ray's in Los Angeles, have tweaked the formula for the incendiary dish. L.A. chef Kuniko Yagi gives us a brilliant Asian-Southern, soy-and-sriracha-spiked interpretation that ups the umami. Gentlemen, start your fryers.

KUNIKO'S HOT CHICKEN

8 chicken drumsticks
2 qts. rice brain oil

Marinade:

2 tbsp. cayenne pepper
1 tbsp. soysauce
1 tbsp. sriracha
1 tbsps. mirin
1 tsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 tsp. ground white pepper
1/4 tsp. ground black pepper
1 large egg
3 tbsp. cornstarch

Dredging mixture:

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 tbsp. salt
1/4 tsp. ground white pepper
1/4 tsp ground black pepper
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper

Pour all marinade ingredients except egg and cornstarch into a large bowl. Stir. Add egg, again. Place chicken legs in marinade mixture and marinate for at least 30 minutes. In another large bowl, combine dredging ingredients. In a four-quart pot, heat rice bran oil to 325 degrees. Dip chicken legs in dredging mixture to coat. Fry in small batches for 10 minutes or until chicken reaches 160 degrees inside.

Photography By **GRANT CORNETT**



SHERRY SHAKES IT UP

Top bartenders and restaurateurs are reviving and reinventing the Spanish wine

If you want to know what everyone will be drinking next, ask your favorite bartender what he or she is into right now.

Perhaps because they deal with the standard spirits at work, professional mixers tend to pick less-common libations when they drink for fun. And lately, those libations lean toward sherry, a fortified wine from the Jerez region, at the southern tip of Spain.

What makes sherry stand out is an aging process that creates unique flavors. With the *solera* method, the wine ages by passing through a series of barrels that are never completely emptied. Lighter varieties—finos and manzanillas—age under *flor*, a layer of yeast that prevents oxidation and leads to a dry, citrusy and bright flavor, while oloroso sherries, which don't have *flor*, display nutty, cooked-fruit notes thanks to interacting with oxygen. (Amontillado sherry splits the difference, aging for some time with *flor* and some time without.) There's also Pedro Ximénez (usually called PX), a very sweet style named for the grape it's made from.

"The first sip, I fell in love," says Washington, D.C. bar professional Derek Brown of his introduction to sherry in a cocktail a decade ago. The depth of flavor, the layers—it was unique. It's like getting a song stuck in your head: I wanted to learn everything about it." One of the capital's most famous mixologists, Brown operates four bars, including Mockingbird Hill, which specializes in sherry and opened in 2013 with more than 60 bottles on the menu. As chief spirits advisor to the National Archives Foundation (I'm the highest-ranking bartender in the federal government," he jokes), Brown cites sherry's long history in America: The founding fathers and their contemporaries sucked

down gallons of sherry, port and madeira back in the 18th century. And a top cocktail of the 19th century was the sherry cobbler, a refreshing mix of sherry, sugar and fruit served over crushed ice that was beloved in part because its low alcohol content allowed imbibers to drink it all day long. Today, with low ABV cocktails back in vogue, David Rosoff Bar Moruno in downtown L.A. recommends a new version of the classic cobbler. His Grand Central Market spot has an extensive list of

sherries that go well with the Spanish-North African flavors on the menu. "Sherry is a natural for a low-ABV cocktail, whether you want salinity with a fino or sweetness with a PX," Rosoff says. Also, to put it less alcohol means you can drink more. —Jason Horn



González Byass Alfonso oloroso sherry Portland bartender and writer Jacob Grier uses this oloroso for a perversely primitive drink known as the bone luge, which involves drinking the sherry through a hollow roasted marrow bone. It offers intense flavors of oak, hazelnut, dried fig—and roasted marrow bone.

PX OLD FASHIONED by Derek Brown, Mockingbird Hill, Washington, D.C.

Brown uses PX sherry in place of sugar in an otherwise traditional old fashioned to create a more complex and fruity cocktail.

INGREDIENTS

2 oz. bourbon (such as Nelson's Green Brier Belle Meade Sherry Cask Finish)

¼ oz. Pedro Ximénez sherry (such as William & Humbert Collection Don Zoilo Pedro Ximénez 12 Years Old)
1 dash aromatic bitters
Glass: old fashioned
Garnish: orange twist

Add bourbon, sherry and bitters to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir, then strain into an old fashioned glass containing one large ice cube. Garnish with orange twist.

SHERRY COBBLER by David Rosoff, Los Angeles

Rosoff's twist on the classic sherry cobbler (pictured at right) combines nutty oloroso sherry with rich Irish whiskey, bitter Amaro Montenegro and a bright grapefruit liqueur.

INGREDIENTS

1 strawberry
1 tsp. sugarcane syrup
2 ½ oz. oloroso sherry

½ oz. Irish whiskey
½ oz. Amaro Montenegro
½ oz. Combier Crème de Pamplemousse Rose liqueur
Glass: wine
Garnish: strawberry, grapefruit wedge and powdered sugar

In wineglass, gently muddle strawberry and sugarcane syrup. Add remaining ingredients, fill glass with crushed ice and stir. Garnish with strawberry, grapefruit wedge and powdered sugar.





1. Dr. Martens Lite

For years, Dr. Martens has made a name for itself with its unparalleled durability and industrial aesthetic. Recently, the company released a new line of footwear that's lightweight and fitted with superior cushioning - Dr. Martens Lite. Offering Lite versions of its boots and shoes, the collection promises the same level of durability with improved comfort. It also carries the brand's signature stitches and heel loops, much to the delight of true Dr. Martens fans. (Paul Wenceslao)

2. IWC Pilot's Watch Mark XVIII Edition "Le Petit Prince"

Whether you have a penchant for casual clothing or into the power corporate aesthetic, the IWC Pilot's Watch Mark XVIII "Le Petit Prince" fits right in like a snug garment. Ideal for everyday use, the timepiece carries a classy masculine face and a bold brown strap that blend with any style. (P.W.)

3. H&M Scuba-look Sweatshirt

Chilly temperatures are a constant at the start of every year. Welcome 2017 with style and without the shivers by snagging H&M's Scuba-look sweatshirt. It drapes on the torso with edgy appeal and comes with a nifty sleeve pocket to boot. (P.W.)





Honda BR-V

Honda beefs up the SUV competition by releasing a new line that can sit up to seven people as a standard - the all-new BR-V. Compared to the 2016 CR-V, the BR-V is slightly more compact and owns a sportier and

more aggressive exterior. Beneath the hood is a 5-liter IDTEC engine that cranks up 200 nm of torque at 1,750 rpm. With Honda pulling all the stops in promoting the vehicle nationwide, this model is expected to sell like hotcakes pretty soon. (Paul Wenceslao)



2017 Toyota Corolla Altis

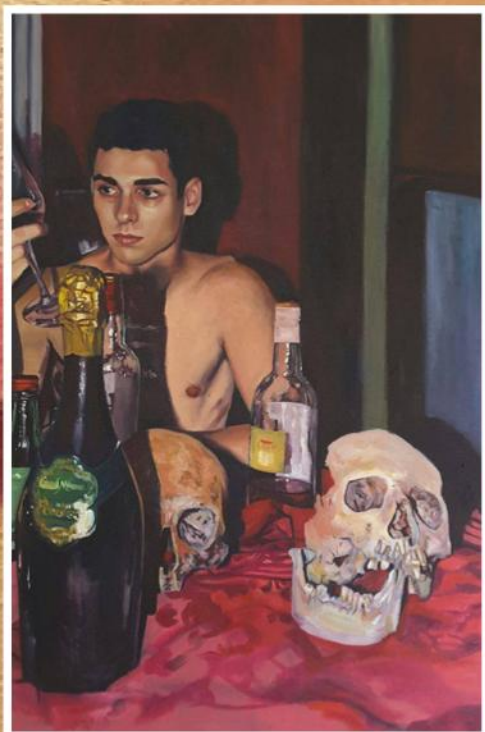
Toyota's 50th birthday is marked by an exciting new release in the 2017 Corolla Altis. As a perennial best-seller, the 2017 model brandishes a bolder and more refined exterior, powered by a 2.0-liter DOHC 16-valve engine. It also has a full suite of safety features, perfect for Metro Manila's hustle and bustle. (P.W.)



2017 Toyota Corolla Altis

Looking for a quirky take on the standard SUV? The Nissan Juke merges the muscular contouring of a sports car with the breezy feel of a Honda Jazz. Rigged with the cutting-edge I-Con system, the SUV allows you to select from different driving modes and types of air conditioning, among others. (P.W.)





Eleanor Giron: Of Shedding Clothes and Skin

By Paul Wenceslao

Stripping oneself bare encapsulates an individual in a sphere of vulnerability where one can opt to crumble with the weight of rash judgment, or utilize the rather compromising state as an avenue for a more expansive view of the self, therefore leading to a progression in expression. Manila-based visual artist Eleanor Giron knows this fully well; her body of work, comprised by a good number of nude self-portraits, perennially evokes strong reactions from its audience. “Nudity represents freedom, courage and the ability to acknowledge and appreciate oneself,” she explains, “we were all born naked, and we will all end up the same.”

Eleanor’s paintings illustrate some of the tumultuous moments in her life, embellished with realistic imagery lodged in precarious positions. Her most recent solo exhibition - *Metamorphosis* - represents a transition, the succeeding phase after a “cocooning process” upon experiencing the bleakness of recent events and imbibing the insights generated. The compendium reflects maturity in both her persona and her work. “It is about being dead while you breathe, and slowly coming back to life with new clarity of what it really is,” she admits.

Eleanor’s works have been exhibited in many of the prominent galleries in the country, including Pinto Art Museum and Pablo Gallery at The Fort. Her paintings have also gone beyond local shores, being exhibited in New Zealand, Malaysia, and in New York this coming May.

Find more of her art at www.eleanorgiron.com.



FORUM

WHO'S AFRAID OF PRESIDENT TRUMP?

BY FRANCIS CABAL

President Trump – it is a title that we have got to be used to from now on. His winning surprised everyone, especially Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton who won the popular vote by over 2.5 million votes. Despite Clinton essentially winning by popular vote, Donald Trump's presidency was clinched through the electoral college. A process wherein each state chooses a number of electors, with the electors totaling 538 (corresponding to the 435 members from the House of Representatives, 100 senators, and three allocated electors). To win the election, a candidate must bag 270 electoral votes. Trump finished with 307 electoral votes, and so here we are.

At the time of this writing, Barack Obama just finished giving his farewell speech and the world is gearing up for Trump Presidency. It is a time of uncertainty for sure, and the question on everyone's mind is: "Should we be worried?" A lot of signs point to yes, and here we will break down why Trump presidency is something that we should be prepared for.

TRUMP'S BACKGROUND

Donald J. Trump made a name for himself when he entered the world of real estate straight out of college. He mainly focused on developments in New York City, but eventually branched out to hotels, casinos and slowly building the Trump brand. It is undeniable that Trump's business acumen is right up there, but politically he is essentially an untested celebrity. Add to that the conflict of interest between being President of The United States and owning several properties across the globe.

One of the points raised during the Presidential Debates was the fact that Trump failed to pay federal income taxes

for years, to which Trump just smugly replied "That makes me smart." Coupled with his allegedly dubious tax reduction methods, the Federal Income Tax is sure to be one of the more hot-button issues during his upcoming presidency.

ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Bill Clinton and Anthony Weiner, two Democratic politicians, proved that the biggest threat to a political career are scandals involving sexual misconduct. After his affair with Monica Lewinsky became public, Clinton's political career was pretty much over and he was relegated to the sidelines as his wife Hillary rose through the ranks. Meanwhile, Weiner has yet to recover from a sexting scandal that not only ruined his marriage but any hopes for a future in politics.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, has been fielding allegations left and right during his campaign. Much has been written about these accusations, but it didn't stop Trump from winning the candidacy. A sound bite of a candidate bragging about "grabbing women by the pussy" should be enough to bring the politician down, but instead it became a sort of slogan for the normalization of sexual abuse and misogyny, and that is not a good sign.

In fact, immediately right after Trump's win, there were several reports of women being harassed, with some of the attackers justifying the acts by quoting the president-elect. It's troubling when such acts could be justified with the reasoning that "If the president can do it, then so can I".

TRUMP'S POLICIES

Donald Trump ran a campaign that

catered to America's protectionist roots. From his economic policies, to his stance on immigration, his promises were music to the ears of the far right. In Trump's website, he published what he calls a "Ten-Point Plan to Put America First:"

1. Begin working on an impenetrable physical wall on the southern border, on day one. Mexico will pay for the wall.

2. End catch-and-release. Under a Trump administration, anyone who illegally crosses the border will be detained until they are removed out of the country.

3. Move "criminal aliens" out day one, in joint operations with local, state, and federal law enforcement. The Obama administration's "deadly, non-enforcement policies" that allow thousands of "criminal aliens" to freely roam the streets will be terminated.

4. End sanctuary cities.

5. Immediately terminate President Obama's two illegal executive amnesties. All immigration laws will be enforced – the number of ICE agents will be tripled. Anyone who enters the U.S. illegally is subject to deportation.

6. Suspend the issuance of visas to any place where adequate screening cannot occur, until proven and effective vetting mechanisms can be put into place.

7. Ensure that other countries take their people back when they are deported.

8. Ensure that a biometric entry-exit visa tracking system is fully implemented at all land, air, and sea ports.

9. Turn off the jobs and benefits magnet. Many immigrants come to the U.S. illegally in search of jobs, even though federal law prohibits the employment of illegal immigrants.

10. Reform legal immigration to serve the best interests of America and its workers, keeping immigration levels within historic norms.

If we're going to take the list at face value, it basically means that an America under Trump's presidency will be unkind to immigrants and people of color so much more than it already is. And it's evident with the rise of the alt-right. This newfangled iteration of the neo-nazi is basically a representation of Trump's constituency and is a physical embodiment of America's protectionist history.

HIS CABINET

Nearly as controversial as Trump himself are some of the members of his cabinet. Top of the list is Vice President Mike Pence, known for his stance against abortion and LGBT rights. He is also a proponent of conversion therapy, proposing that resources allocated to support LGBT organizations should instead be directed towards institutions "which provide assistance to those seeking to change their sexual behavior".

US Attorney General Jeff Sessions is an advocate of building a wall on the US-Mexico and has voted against several bills that pushed the agenda of human rights to the forefront including the Matthew Shepard Act which aimed to include violence against homosexuals to the federal hate-crimes law.

It is worth noting that Trump's cabinet also includes notorious climate change denier, Ben Carson and wrestling magnate and politician, Linda McMahon.

Lumping all these politicians together can be a bit tricky, but looking at all the commonalities in their agenda and political



A street art in London. (Photo by Matt Brown via Flickr)

And with the revelation that Russia was responsible for a campaign that sought to influence the election in Trumps favor by hacking top Democrats and releasing the

business dealings with Russia and are in favor of stronger US-Russia relations.

All told, how does all of this affect us? Questionable leadership capabilities, questionable stances on foreign and economic policy and an outright xenophobic stance with regard to national security and immigration means bad news for Filipinos in the United States. When the leader of one of the world's superpowers is this divisive, it could have some far-reaching repercussion – some we may even feel firsthand. One thing is for sure: the world will definitely be watching with bated breath.

It's easy to give President Trump the benefit of the doubt, but considering his track record, there's a good chance that our worst fears are possible.

When you add everything up, it doesn't bode well for America and the rest of the world when Trump finally assumes the highest seat in the United States government. But on the bright side, we are not the only ones aware of the threat that a Trump presidency poses. Any injustices during his presidency will not be taken lying down. There will be opposition from different sides. That is the power of democracy, and in the end, democracy will prevail. ▼

DONALD TRUMP RAN A CAMPAIGN THAT CATERED TO AMERICA'S PROTECTIONIST ROOTS. FROM HIS ECONOMIC POLICIES, TO HIS STANCE ON IMMIGRATION, HIS PROMISES WERE MUSIC TO THE EARS OF THE FAR RIGHT. IN TRUMP'S WEBSITE, HE PUBLISHED WHAT HE CALLS A "TEN-POINT PLAN TO PUT AMERICA FIRST."

stance, and it's clear that the fight for basic human rights and specifically LGBT rights is far from over.

TRUMP'S ALLEGED TIES WITH RUSSIA

It is no secret that Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin are as thick as thieves.

information to the public, Trump can be considered compromised. But the Russian ties do not stop at the two leaders.

According to reports, several of Trump's inner circle including campaign manager Paul Manafort, former political advisor Carter Page, and future US National Security Advisor Ret. Gen. Michael Flynn all had



INTERNATIONAL WOMAN



Ravishing Rania

*International beauty **Rania Gamal** is the very definition of an empowered woman. No feat is too great and no heart cannot be captured by this endearing bloom.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY OWEN REYES

WORDS BY PAUL WENCESLAO

HAIR & MAKEUP BY LOU BUNYI PAREJA

“The girls of Playboy stand out from the rest and as a model it’s been my dream to be one of them.”

At first glance, International Woman Rania Gamal is nothing short of a spectacle. The Dubai-based vixen owns a glorious amalgamation of cuts and curves in all the right places. However, underpinning her to mere physical beauty does not do this charmer justice. She is a mélange of talents, which makes her all the more desirable – linguist, fitness guru, pole dancing enthusiast, blog writer, abstract painter are just of the hats that she casually wears.

Despite already being accomplished in the modeling realm, Rania has no plans of slowing down anytime soon. “I would like to continue to work in the fashion and modeling industries, perhaps with more focus on fitness,” she reveals, “I’d love to have my own TV show produced by my own company.” Clearly, no goal is too lofty for a woman this driven.

Her typical day begins with a cup of coffee before hitting the gym. Upon getting her dose of early morning fitness, she rushes off to work, which could mean doing photoshoots, working on her blog or having meetings with individuals from the various fields she dabbles in. Any normal human would’ve stopped there and called it a day, but this is not the case for our tireless princess. She elects to close her day with pole dancing and a hot shower.

As if her busy schedule is not enough, Rania plans to include even more activities to her daily routine. “If I had more time, I would love to learn tango, salsa, and RnB dance, as well as spending more time on my art,” she says.

Sexiness is skin deep, and not something topical like a glamorous wardrobe or arresting curves, for Rania, and this applies to both genders. She views a woman who has a strong personality, an abundance of self-confidence, and can carry herself well as someone sexy. Similarly, men who command respect, carry ample amounts of confidence, and possess natural elegance often gain her favorable attention.

Speaking of favorable attention, Rania is turned on by unbridled passion and the sheer magnetism of deep eye contact. “I want to be wanted, and I get turned on by pushing the boundaries a little each time, giving up and going with the flow,” she admits. We could only imagine what those boundaries are, but one thing’s for sure: breaching them would certainly blow one’s mind.

As for date night ideals, Rania loves it when men gives her surprises, especially if it involves a good amount of effort. “I love it when someone has gone the extra mile to prepare a surprise for me, where I get treated as a princess,” she says, “especially if it’s a weekend away that involves traveling abroad – it makes me feel like I am in a different world.”

The Playboy brand has been the object of Rania’s fascination growing up, as she sees the magazine as a platform for female empowerment – a movement that she fully supports and embodies. “The girls of Playboy stand out from the rest and as a model it’s been my dream to be one of them.” Now that she’s part of the fold, we could only imagine the next conquest that she is bound to surmount. It could be your heart.

















“I love it when someone has gone the extra mile to prepare a surprise for me, where I get treated as a princess.”












THE RENEGADES

The men and women on these pages will change how you think about politics, sports, entertainment etc. They've risked it all—even their lives—to do what they love, showing us what can be accomplished if we break the rules. Meet the Renegades.





**“ALL OF
US WANT
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NOT THE
PEACE
OF THE
DEAD, OF
COURSE,
BUT THE
PEACE
OF THE
LIVING.”**

RODRIGO DUTERTE

A Malacañang state banquet may have been held a day before, with the usual pomp and pressed-suit pageantry, befitting a visiting head of state. At his home in Doña Luisa Subdivision, Matina District, President Duterte shared with the Prime Minister a simple Filipino breakfast, while clad in a checkered polo, maong and loafers—sans socks.

The international media framed the unusual informality as “folksy diplomacy.” Long-time Duterte supporters might say that such is what primarily draws them to the former Davao City mayor—that he’s cut from the same cloth as theirs, with or without socks.

President Duterte appears to have ascended to national power because of his straight-talking, expletive-laden, man-of-the-streets appeal. Since his July inauguration, major media outlets have bleeped out more colloquial curses from their Presidential coverage than ever before. Many joke that under Duterte, the phrase “Republic of the P.I.” now means something entirely different.

Some are unsettled, having gotten used to a certain manner of speaking, dressing, decorum and even thinking from their national politicians. They have decried the President’s behavior as unstatesmanlike and disrespectful of the long history behind the position.

Yet, such break from convention may be precisely why Duterte fit the bill for 16 million or so Filipino voters who were tired of the uninspiring rhetoric and stale leadership of their politicians. After all, what is the use of “prim and proper” when millions are in dire straits?

Undeniably, some did cringe and cry foul when Duterte joked during the campaign about having a first dibs with a pretty Australian nun. Blood continues to boil over the outright threats of violence and martial law declarations—with even more expletives—if the drug scourge and other vestiges of criminality are not eradicated.

But on these very points, many have also cheered, laughed and applauded, possibly on the basis that what they hear from the President is what they themselves have been thinking all along. Assuming that elections are always clean and trustworthy, ballots became the mirror where people point their fingers at themselves.

2016 has been written off as the year of political upheaval—from the Brexit referendum in the UK, to the election of real estate mogul and reality TV star, to perhaps the most powerful political position in the world.

Add President Duterte’s rise to the mix, and 2016 could also be seen as the year the establishment realized just how disconnected they have been from the people they are supposedly serving. Preeminent French statesman, Charles De Gaulle did write once in his book, *The Edge of the Sword* that “a statesman may be determined and tenacious...but if he does not understand the character of his time, he will fail.”

Past his first 100 days, President Duterte’s approval ratings remain historically high. Political analysts speak of a honeymoon period this short a span of time after an election. Whether these ratings reflect the evanescently high campaign or actual harmony between the elected and the electorate, it remains to be seen. If it was the latter, then change has truly come. — *Buboi Arevalo*

EDUARD FOLAYANG

If you think the image of Eduard “Landslide” Folayang unexpectedly pinning down Shinya Aoki and forcing the Japanese grappler and jiu-jitsu specialist to cower in the face of the relentless barrage of brutal blows is the highlight of this Baguio City native’s MMA career, then you deserve to get punched in the face, too.

That’s just 2016 baby, and that became an old news now.

An impressive, three-match winning streak, capped by a merciless and methodical round 3 pummeling of the soon deposed lightweight king is all in a year’s work for the former Wushu standout. Indeed, a banner year in ONE Cham-

pionship consisting of back-to-back unanimous decision victories and a TKO deserves an impressive follow-up, and there’s nothing grander than a successful first title defense.

ONE Championship hasn’t been announced yet on who will challenge the newly-minted Fighter of the Year. It could be Hawaiian Lowen Tynanes, or Costa Rican Ariel Sexton, or even a surprise contender. Nothing is certain yet, but everyone is excited.

As for the 32-year old former high school teacher, there’s no time for rest. Every MMA fighter is only as good as his last victory, and “Landslide” is on a mission to remain the king of the hill. — *Nathaniel T. Dela Cruz*

**“NOTHING
CHANGES
UNTIL
YOUR MIND
CHANGES.”**



“IT IS EITHER YOU ARE WITH ME OR YOU ARE NOT WITH ME. IF YOU’RE WITH ME, THEN LET’S DO IT. BUT IF YOU ARE NOT WITH ME, THEN YOU ARE FINISHED.”

PNP Chief Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa to the police force in fight against drugs, criminality

GENERAL BATO

Senior officers first gave him the nickname for the strong, rock-solid physique that he built up after graduating from a scout ranging course at the Philippine Military Academy.

Not too long after, he demonstrated a hardened stance against crime, especially in the programs he implemented as Davao City Police Chief. He has also spoken—once in tears during a Senate hearing—about his unmovable loyalty to the Philippine National Police (PNP), for which he has served since 1986.

These have carved not just a moniker but the nom de guerre for Police Director General Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa. After all, a war is being fought in the Philippines—against what though depends on who you ask. Either way, General Bato is one of its main proponents and public faces. Never before has a PNP Chief been so outspoken about

using violence to win that war. Or been so visible in intimidating—even strong-arming—convicted drug lords and other hardened criminals.

But neither also has a PNP Chief been made into a mascot, stopped for selfies like an artista, or seen (and heard) singing on noon-time shows and rock festivals. News reports have cited internal surveys that peg General Bato’s approval rating at 84 percent, churning rumor mills about what’s next after his mandatory retirement in 2018. That he is waging a war against criminality on all fronts is perhaps where General Bato breaks trend the most from any of his predecessors’ pursuits of justice. And whether it is to crush the drug scourge, or lift the public’s perception of the police, his strength—being used in the name of justice—will be the most at play.

— *Buboi Arevalo*





“I COME FROM NO MONEY. I GREW UP IN A TRAILER PARK. IT WAS SO IMPORTANT TO ME TO SUCCEED. TRIAL BY FIRE. SURVIVE OR DIE.”

JASON DILL

In 2009, pro skateboarder Jason Dill had to call 911 on himself. He was throwing up blood all over his New York City apartment and suffering from a gastric hemorrhage. The Jameson, Vicodin and Percocet cocktails had finally taken their toll.

“I didn’t think I’d even survive,” says Dill, who now stars on the Netflix series *Love*. “When I’m on the set, I’m quiet as a mouse. I’m just so blown away and thankful I’m there. And the last thing I ever wanted was the responsibility of owning a company that people expect more from—because owning a company is a pain in the ass.”

In 2013, after kicking the pills and spending more time on his board, Dill ditched his longtime sponsor, Alien Workshop—one of the most popular skateboarding companies ever—and walked away

from a partial-ownership offer to co-found board brand *Fucking Awesome*, an extension of his self-funded apparel side project.

In doing so, Dill dumped a bucket of ice on the once-countercultural world of skateboarding, which in the previous 17 years had devolved into a G-rated parody of itself to appease moms and malls, and woke it the fuck up. The exodus of Alien’s riders to *Fucking Awesome* was swift. It’s now one of the top-selling and most knocked-off companies in boards and streetwear, despite its provocative graphics, null social media presence and label that prevents mass retail saturation.

“I suppose FA is like having a kid,” he says. “It’s got personality; it’s walking around and talking. I can’t let it go to a community college, you know? I gotta raise it right.”—*Rob Brink*

NOOR TAGOURI


For anyone with preconceived ideas about women who choose to wear a headscarf every day, Noor Tagouri is disorienting. She's simply not what you expect: a 22-year-old journalist (she likes to call herself a storyteller) on the verge of becoming this country's first hijab-wearing news anchor. As of June, she's an on-air reporter for Newsy, where she provokes the sort of confusion we could use right now, in part by making a surprisingly bold case for modesty. As a badass activist with a passion for demanding change and asking the right questions, accompanied by beauty-ad-campaign looks, Tagouri forces us to ask ourselves why we have such a hard time wrapping our minds around a young woman who consciously covers her head and won't take no for an answer.

A West Virginia native and first-generation Libyan American, Tagouri graduated from college at the age of 20. In 2012, her #LetNoorShine campaign went viral. Her 2015 TEDx talk advocated unapologetic individuality, and her YouTube channel draws tens of thousands of viewers. More recently, she collaborated with streetwear brand Lis'n Up Clothing on a fashion line that includes a Jean-Michel Basquiat-inspired sweatshirt. Half the purchase proceeds go to Project Futures, an anti-human-trafficking organization. Americans have a long way to go when it comes to how we regard Muslims, but with Tagouri burning down stereotypes and blazing new paths, we're a healthy stride closer.

—Anna del Gaizo

“BEING A HIJABI MUSLIM WOMAN HELPS ME GAIN TRUST. I SAY, ‘I KNOW WHAT IT’S LIKE TO BE MISREPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA. I WON’T DO THAT TO YOU.’”





**“BEAUTY IS
THE THING
THAT MAKES
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CONTINUE
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TO THE QUES-
TION, WHY
BOTHR?”**

STOYA

It’s hard to capture an old friend in one anecdote, but I’ll try. The time is two A.M., and Stoya and I are smoking outside an East Village bar. A mink hangs from her shoulders. The streetlights catch her feline cheekbones like a kiss. Stoya tells me about the mid-19th century prima ballerina Emma Livry. In an era when dancers routinely caught fire from stage lights, Livry refused to destroy the ethereality of her art by soaking her tutu in flame retardant. When she died of burns, she had no regrets. Stoya notes that panic about safety often focuses on the bodies, and the choices, of young women. She wonders why no one thought to move the lights.

This moment hints at Stoya’s ferocious mix of glamour, toughness and nerdery. A classically trained ballerina until an injury in her mid-teens ruined her prospects, Stoya became a porn star—and I use the word star in the sense that applies to Garbo. She has written for *The New York Times*, starred in a Serbian sci-fi film (the upcoming *Ederlezi Rising*) and trained as an aerialist in Moscow. She has also moved into entrepreneurship, co-founding the genre-defying porn site *TrenchcoatX*. When one of the biggest porn studios in the country treated her with disrespect, she chose to work as a waitress rather than kowtow. No matter what she does, Stoya exudes a fierce, hard-won sense of freedom.—*Molly Crabapple*

PAUL BEATTY

Paul Beatty may be America's most hilarious—and subversive—writer. In July, the Los Angeles native's daring fourth novel, *The Sellout*, was long-listed for the prestigious 2016 Man Booker Prize. The gleefully unhinged satire follows the misadventures of one Bonbon Me, an urban weed and watermelon farmer whose father, a prominent psychologist and “Nigger Whisperer,” is gunned down by the LAPD. With the settlement money, Bonbon reinstitutes segregation, acquires an elderly slave and lands himself, stoned, before a baffled Supreme Court.

“It all starts with the language,” says the 54-year-old (who was also the first-ever Grand Poetry Slam champion, in 1990). “That’s where all the latticework is for me.” Indeed, the thrill of *The Sellout* lies not only in Beatty’s delirious conceit but also in his virtuoso riffs that take bull’s-eye aim at race, class, pop culture and propriety in our supposedly postracial America.

“I get nervous when things don’t make people nervous,” Beatty says. “A lot of writers of color feel there are certain directions they have to take: what your point of view should be, who can do what, how positive it has to be. Somebody’s always going to tell you what it means to be a black writer, what responsibilities you have. Just trying to create some space is important to me.”

And that’s exactly what Beatty does, obliterating the boundaries of what is funny, what is profane and what is just so sad and unfixable that we can only laugh to keep from crying. There’s a bit of truth in every good joke, and perhaps in that truth we are able, after the laughs subside, to better see the world and ourselves in it.—*James Yeh*

“THERE’S STILL THIS NOTION THAT THERE’S ONLY ROOM FOR ONE FUCKER. CAN WE HAVE A RANGE? THAT’S ALL WE’RE ASKING FOR.”



PLAYMATE

Rob Guinto

RAVE WARRIOR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JJ MAGHIRANG

WORDS BY PAUL WENCESLAO

Miss January Rob Guinto is the life of any rave party. She'll make your heart dance while earnestly relishing an endless stream of Jack Cokes.

When asked how she would describe herself, Miss January Rob Guinto answered without hesitation, “a rave warrior.” True enough, she embodies the term “rave” in more ways than one. She’s a wildly enthusiastic firecracker who is quick to flash a radiant smile and an eye-catching pose, not to mention being a mainstay of some of the metro’s grandest rave parties. A true party girl, she aims to please and be pleased in return.

Rob is no stranger to photoshoots and being in the spotlight. At the young age of 21, she already has a plethora of modeling stints and beauty pageants tucked under her proverbial belt. “When I was in fourth year high school, I was entered in a beauty pageant. Luckily, projects for modeling and other pageants came not long after,” she narrates. It’s not hard to see why; she is blessed with a svelte figure, a confident attitude, and addictive facial features that exhibit a hint of innocence and a dash of naughtiness.

As a model, Rob reveals that her eyes are her biggest assets and gave us a quirky demonstration of her seductive stare. “I believe that when there are guys in a room or a bar, the very first things that they notice are my eyes. They are like the eyes of a tiger,” she laughed.

Interestingly, a sexy pair of eyes are also the first things

that she notices in guys; after which, she proceeds to survey if they have immaculate lips and if they dress well. “I like bad boys. But honestly, I prefer gentlemen who have a naughty side,” she says, “I get easily turned off, however, by guys who are too rude and those who have dirty feet and poor dental hygiene. It’s not easy kissing guys with horrible breath.”

Our Jack-Coke-loving raver, as it turns out, is also a beach babe. She is enthused by the idea of sitting on the beach like a fiery tigress, pinning an amorous gaze on the sunset, then on her date’s eyes. “The beach is a romantic place and the parties there are fun”, she admits, “I’d love it if my date takes me to a place like Palawan. But I would really be happy if he takes me to France.”

For Rob, sexiness in a woman is rooted in her character. She identifies with women who are confident in their own skin as well as those who can take challenges in stride. After all, beneath her pretty face and cheerful nature is a strong, self-assured individual who knows her limits and is dead-set on achieving her modeling goals.

“I want to be a top model someday. It’s part of my dream,” she reveals. Being a Playboy model, for her, comes with a lot of prestige and brings her a step closer to that dream, on top of gaining more friends and getting to know people who can help shape her career.



MAKEUP BY KYLE CONCEPCION
& LINKEE COUSNARD
HAIR BY ADDIE SANTOS





Rob, in a nutshell, is a spunky lass whose love for modeling is rivaled only by her unyielding attachment to rave parties and Jack Cokes. Upon seeing her steamy photos, we assure you, you'd be racing towards the nearest dance party in search of our lovely rave warrior.





***“I want to be
a top model
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dream,”***











CLASSIC INTERVIEW

FIDEL CASTRO

A candid conversation about Reagan, revolution, dictators, drugs, debt and personal life with Cuba's Communist leader--and Washington's nemesis.

"Twenty years ago, the worst things were said in the U.S. about China. Now even Reagan has visited the Great Wall. Why? Now there are two types of Communists--the good and the bad. We are the bad Communists."

"When Cortes and Pizarro and the conquistadors reached this continent, they treated the Indians in the same manner that the U.S. treats Latin America--including bartering trinkets for gold. I notice it, I feel it."

"The Reagan Administration wants to exterminate every last revolutionary. It's as if they want to teach an unforgettable lesson so that no one else in Central or Latin America will ever again think of rebelling."

Few world leaders, living or dead, have occupied history's center stage as long as Fidel Castro, the Cuban *caudillo*, whose words and deeds have irritated or enraged seven American Presidents and whose Revolution, in 1959, electrified the world. The political history of the years since is well known, so we thought we'd use this space to tell you just how this extraordinary interview came about.

For the past two decades, with rare exceptions, the 58-year-old Castro has kept the press at arm's length. (One exception was Playboy's own first interview with him, in 1967, in which he discussed the early days of the Revolution and the 1962 missile crisis.) But times change, and Castro clearly believes that the time has come to launch a new dialog with the American public. And herein lies the rub: Although Castro's talkativeness is legendary, after sifting through the transcripts of the most extensive interview Castro has granted, it is difficult to imagine anyone engaging in a true back-and-forth dialog with him. It isn't that he doesn't listen to other viewpoints--he does and, though dogmatic about his political beliefs, he seems genuinely curious about everything--but that his answers are long and repetitive, complicating the usual process of editing the spoken word for the printed page. Those film clips of his five-hour speeches to stadiums full of people are not exaggerated: Even in a less formal interview setting, answers are ten, 15, 20 minutes long, and follow-ups become academic. He waves away interruptions as his answers pile on one another. So we want to let our readers know that even though this interview with Castro may well be the most faithfully rendered ever, it has undergone extensive cutting as well as interruptions to break up the text.

The questioners themselves are an unusual team, since the interviews were conducted by free-lance writer and political-science professor Dr. Jeffrey M.

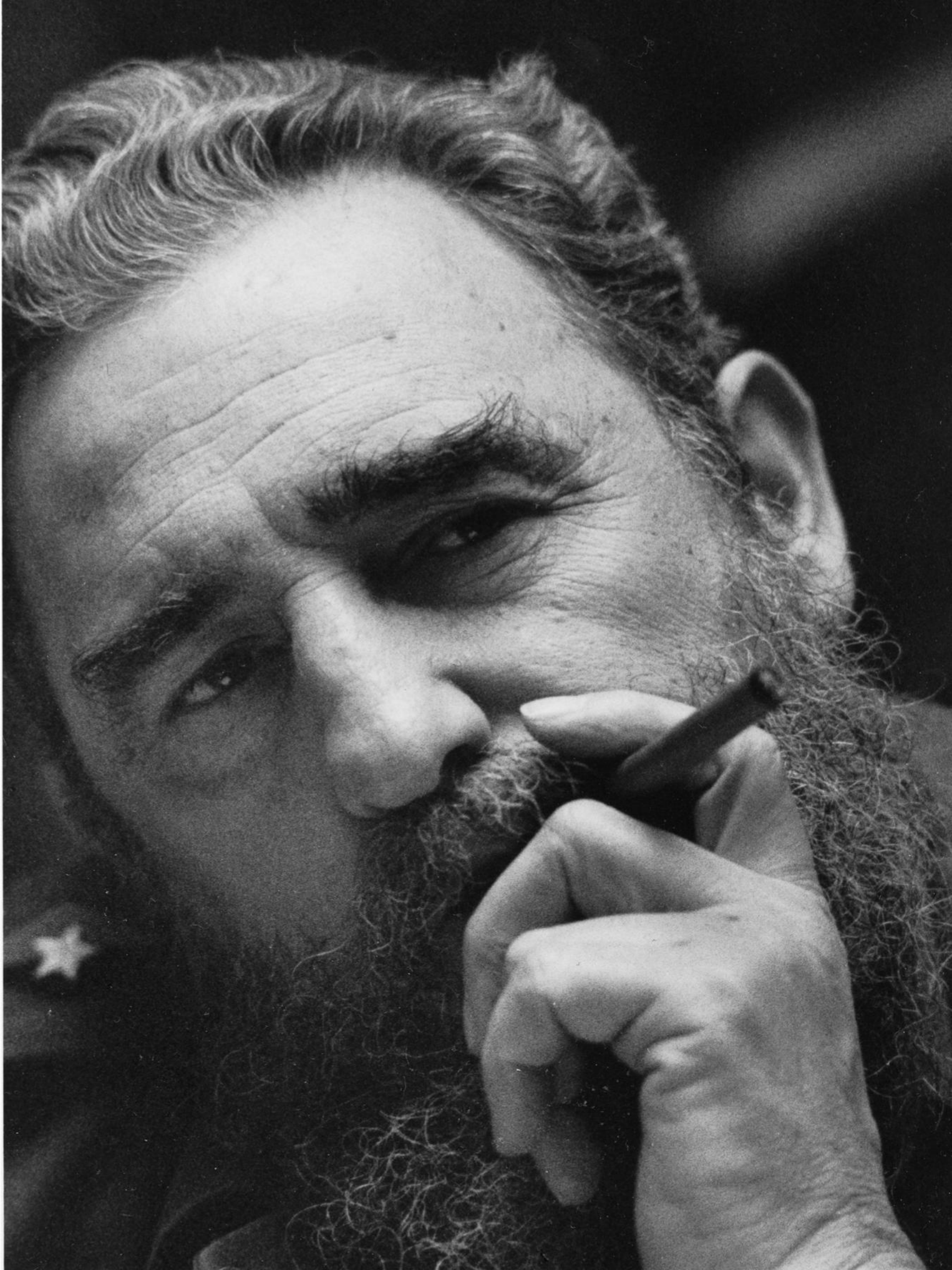
Elliot and U.S. Representative Mervyn M. Dymally (who also holds a Ph.D.), a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the president of the Caribbean-American Research Institute. Because of these credentials, and because of the tradition of Playboy's Interviews, Castro sat for what he called the longest and most far-reaching interview ever with a North American journalist. Ten days after Elliot and Dymally returned, Kirby Jones, an expert on Cuba and a co-author of a 1975 book on Castro published by Playboy Press, raised several additional topics with the Cuban leader that were incorporated into the interview. Jones was in Havana to assist with the filming of a documentary for Public Broadcasting Corporation/WNET, produced by Carol Polakoff and Suzanne Bauman and directed by Jim Burroughs, to be aired on PBS this fall.

The intense interest that Castro took in the Playboy project may be unusual in scope, but reporters agree that he is no less committed when he engages in other enterprises, bringing his considerable charm and energy to bear on anything he gets caught up in. This is part of the enigma of the man, of course: The leader who can passionately talk about his Marxist beliefs, scathingly criticize U.S. society and rationalize away Soviet aggression can also admit, as he does in this interview, that he missed the funeral of Soviet leader Chernenko because--in so many words--he had pulled two all-nighters in a row.

All-night sessions were also on the minds of Dr. Elliot and Representative Dymally upon their return to the U.S., when they filed this report:

"Few interviews could have been as bumpy in the making as our eight-day marathon with Fidel Castro. It's no wonder that a Sixties documentary about a film crew's frustration over a promised-but-not-delivered interview with him was titled *Waiting for Fidel*. Castro's acquiescence to *our* request for an interview was preceded by two earlier meetings with Dymally. In June 1984, Dymally accompanied the Reverend Jesse Jackson--then a presidential candidate--to Cuba. As a result of his meeting with them, Castro offered to release 27 Cuban political prisoners and 22 Americans who had been arrested for illegally crossing into Cuban waters or for engaging in drug trafficking. In December 1984, Dymally again traveled to Cuba, that time on a humanitarian mission on behalf of two constituents in order to help reunite their families. It was on that trip that Dymally proposed an in-depth interview, to which Castro agreed. Dymally then proposed a March 21 date, to which

Photography **CATHERINE SERVEL**





CLASSIC INTERVIEW

Castro also agreed.

"That was the last simple thing that happened. On the appointed day, Elliot, Dymally, technician Kenneth Orduna (the Congressman's chief of staff) and photographer Gianfranco Gorgoni met in Miami and flew to Havana in a twin-engine Cessna.

"Upon landing, we were met by two guards, protocol officer Armando Amieba and Alfredo Ramírez, the minister of exterior relations. We were offered lime daiquiris while our papers were processed. We had been instructed by Cuban officials not to arrive prior to 10:30 A.M. After that, we assumed that we would go directly to the Presidential Palace for the interview. Our plan was to spend three days in Cuba.

"Upon arriving at the hotel, we were told to wait in our suite and that we would receive a call when the president was ready. We assumed, with wondrous optimism, that we would receive an early call and then begin the interview. Ten hours later, sitting in our hotel rooms, we had yet to receive the call. We finally were told that the interview would begin the next day. Here is a kind of journal of what happened next:

"Saturday. We awaken at seven A.M., expecting an early call. After all, we're scheduled to leave Havana on Sunday evening. We hover again by the telephone, waiting anxiously for the call. Afraid to leave the hotel, for fear we'll miss the call. At 11 A.M., Amieba informs us that the session will not begin until after one P.M. and that they have scheduled a tour of old Havana. After sight-seeing in the company of Havana mayor Oscar Fernandez Mell--a comrade and close friend of Ché Guevara's--we eagerly return to the hotel in anticipation of the call. Again, we wait. At seven P.M., Ramírez appears. He informs us that the president will see us later that evening but not for the interview: It will be a get-acquainted session. Ramírez says a driver will come for us at eight P.M. We're skeptical and start a betting pool as to what hour the driver will actually arrive. The telephone rings at 11 P.M. Castro is ready!

"We are sped to the Presidential Palace. As we enter, we are met by an armed guard. He stops us and clears us for entry. The door opens and there is Fidel Castro.

"He is a tall man, lean and fit, dressed in his usual military garb, boots highly polished. His eyes are piercing. He greets us warmly and asks us to be seated. Through an interpreter (this session and the entire Interview are conducted in Spanish), he raises a series of questions about the project. We respond. He listens attentively. Following our presentation, Castro rises, then sits and proceeds to lecture us for nearly an hour on the shortcomings of the media, chiding U.S. journalists by name for their lack of knowledge and integrity. Calming down, he asks us to explain the project again. We do. Half an hour later, Castro rises, waves his hands and tells us that he *will* do the interview--but on Sunday, the next day. We leave the Presidential Palace at four A.M., buoyant and confident.

"Sunday. After a few hours' sleep, we arise, eat breakfast and are met by Amieba. We are informed that the interview will not begin until late afternoon; would we like to explore Havana a bit more? Yes. An hour later, we are driven back to the hotel. We are told that Ramírez would like us to meet him by the pool. We arrive shortly before he does. Ramírez then tells us that the president has been up most of the night, that he is extremely tired but that he hopes to see us late in the afternoon or the early evening. We politely stress the time pressures weighing on us: For one thing, Dymally must be in Washington on Tuesday to vote on the MX missile. We return to our suite and begin yet another wait. The betting pool grows larger. Hours pass--and no call. We begin to worry. Dymally *has* to fly out on Tuesday morning.

"Monday. We eat breakfast early. The food is becoming monotonous--we dine every day in one of two hotel restaurants, so we won't be far from our phones. We are anxious and nervous. We stay that way all day. This is the low point of the trip. At seven P.M., Dr. José Miyar (referred to as Chomy), Castro's closest advisor, arrives. He is accompanied by Ramírez and interpreter Juanita Ortega. They offer their apologies on behalf of the president, informing us that

he has been extremely busy--that he worked through the morning. However, they assure us that he will see us later that evening--but only for a photo session. He is too tired to do the interview. Finally, the call comes at 11 P.M. and we are sped to the Presidential Palace.

"We are escorted into Castro's office. He is talkative and begins yet another long discourse, which meanders to the origin of his beard. He tells us that while they were in the Sierra Maestra Mountains, he and his comrades took to growing beards because there was little need or time to shave, then kept them as practical symbols: If Batista's forces had tried to infiltrate, they would not have had time to grow beards and would have been spotted. Castro then calculates, to the minute--with pen and paper--how much time was saved by their not shaving.

"The formal Interview begins and our spirits are high. But after that first session, Dymally makes his plane trip to Washington and gets to cast his vote just in time--against the MX--and returns the next day to more delays. By now, the pool of one-dollar bets has grown to a size that would probably get us expelled from Cuba.

"Thursday. The Interview resumes, and this time we keep our momentum. One night, we tape from ten P.M. until four A.M., with a tired Castro reviving as the hours pass. Armed with his favorite Cuban cigar, a Cohiba, and a glass of Chivas Regal, he speaks in a precise, didactic manner, treating each question as if it were the only one. He struggles not to be misunderstood and builds his responses brick by brick by brick. When the session ends, Castro is exhausted--and so are we.

"Friday. We sleep until ten A.M. Although we have made Herculean progress, we're not finished. Castro wants to get to all our questions, regardless of the time it takes. It has been eight days. We wait for the call. Just 11 hours later, the phone rings. Castro is attentive, effervescent. We tape until four A.M.--another seven hours. At last, we are finished. Twenty-five hours on tape. We express our appreciation; he expresses his. As we depart, he extends his hand, withdraws it and tells us that he has thought of one additional point he wishes to make--so it's back to the table, where Castro adds an afterthought to an earlier answer. Despite the hour, he appears energized and poised. We are wrecks. Our charter flight is scheduled to leave within the hour. This time, we say farewell--for real--and return to our separate worlds."

Playboy: People know Fidel Castro the public figure, but few know the man. We'll be taking up many issues, but let's begin, Mr. President, with some personal questions. After 26 years at the center of controversy and history, what still motivates Fidel Castro?

Castro: That's a very difficult question. Let me start by stating the things that do *not* motivate me: Money does not motivate me; material goods do not motivate me. Likewise, the lust for glory, fame and prestige does not motivate me. I really think that ideas motivate me. Ideas, convictions are what spur a man struggle in the first place. When you are truly devoted to an idea, you feel more convinced and more committed with each passing year. I think that personal selflessness grows; the spirit of sacrifice grows; you gradually relinquish personal pride, vanity . . . all those elements that in one way or another exist in all men.

If you do not guard against those vanities, if you let yourself become conceited or think that you are irreplaceable or indispensable, you can become infatuated with all of that--the riches, the glory. I've been on guard against those things; maybe I have developed a philosophy on man's relative importance, on the relative value of individuals, the conviction that it is not the individual but the people who make history, the idea that I can't lay claim to the merits of an entire people. A phrase by José Martí left in me a deep and unforgettable impression: "All the glory of the world fits into a kernel of corn."

Playboy: Then you don't think certain men are destined for personal greatness? It's a matter of time and circumstance?



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Castro: Yes. Very much so. Let me give you some examples. If Lincoln had lived today, he might be a simple farmer in the United States, and nobody would have heard of him. It was the times in which he lived, the society in which he lived, that made a Lincoln possible. If George Washington had been born 50 years after independence, he might have been unknown, and the same holds true if he had lived 50 years earlier. Lenin, with all his extraordinary abilities, might have been an unknown, too, if he had been born at another time.

Take my case, for example. If hadn't been able to learn how to read and write, what role would I have played in the history of my country, in the Revolution? Where I was born, out of hundreds of kids, my brothers and sisters and I were the only ones who had a chance to study beyond the first few grades. How many more people were there, among those hundreds of kids, with the same or better qualities for doing what I did if they'd been given the opportunity to study?

One of the 100 best poems in the Spanish language tells of how often genius lies dormant in ones' innermost soul, awaiting a voice that will call out, "Arise and walk!" This is true; I believe this deeply. This is why I believe that the qualities required for being a leader aren't exceptional; they are to be found among the people.

Why am I saying this? Because I've noticed, especially in the West, a great tendency to associate historical events with individuals; it's the old theory that men make history. There is also a tendency in the West to see the leader of any Third World country as a chieftain; there's a certain stereotype: Leader equals chieftain. From that, there is a tendency to magnify the role of the individual. I can see it myself in what you say about us: Castro's Cuba, Castro did this, Castro undid that. Almost everything in this country is attributed to Castro, Castro's goings, Castro's perversities. That type of mentality abounds in the West; unfortunately, it's quite widespread. It seems to me to be an erroneous approach to historical and political events.

Playboy: You may feel that the West magnifies the role of the individual, but aren't you under intense scrutiny here in Cuba? Don't you live in something of a fish bowl?

Castro: Actually, I'm never even aware of it. There may be something that explains this: My activities are almost never reported in the press. I may be doing a lot of things for 15 days, yet none of it

comes out in the papers. You may have noted that by and large, all countries have what's called a press office. Everything a leader does throughout the day is published in the papers and reported on television and radio. In a sense, ivory towers and fish bowls are built around these people. I *haven't* created a fish bowl for myself. I go out and visit factories, schools and the various provinces and towns. It's true that I visited them more often in the past, because I had more time then. But there's never been any protocol or welcoming ceremonies for me, as is customary for leaders in many other countries.

Yet crowds gather where I go. How long is it since I last went to a restaurant? Why? A new Chinese restaurant has just been opened in old Havana, which is being restored. It's small and cozy, in an old building. For some time now, I've wanted to go there; but if I do, it will mean eating while people wait to see me in the street. Well, these are the minor inconveniences of my job. I have ways

"Think that the people's feeling is one of familiarity, confidence and respect; it's a very close relationship. I think it's a family relationship. The people look on me as a neighbor, as one more person. They aren't overpowered by positions."

of getting around them. If I want a rest, if I want to relax, I go to the sea. I go to small cay out there to scuba dive. There are some marvelous bottoms, fish and coral reefs, and I've grown accustomed to those places. When I was a student, nobody ever thought of scuba diving in the ocean as a sport. There were all those stories about sharks. . . .

Playboy: Considering all the traveling you have done around Cuba, how would you describe the relationship between the people and Fidel Castro?

Castro: I think that the people's feeling is one of familiarity, confidence and respect; it's a very close relationship. I think it's a family relationship. The people look on me as a neighbor, as one more person. They aren't overpowered by positions, by public figures. No one ever calls me Castro, only Fidel. I believe that that familiarity is based, among other things, on the fact that we've never lied to the people. Ours has been an honest Revolution. The people know we keep our word--and not only Cubans *in* Cuba but also those in

Miami; that is, people who don't have any feelings of affection but trust our word. They have known ever since the Revolution that there will be no tricks, no betrayals or entrapments: When we told them they could leave from Mariel, they could--even if they are our worst enemies, even if they're terrorists. We are like the Arab of the desert who welcomes his enemy in his tent and doesn't even look to see which direction he takes when he leaves. Of course, this is based on the fact that the Revolution never lied. Never! This is a tradition that dates back to the war. Throughout the entire war, all the information we released on the fighting, the number of casualties, the munitions captured, was strictly accurate. We didn't add one single bullet or rifle. Not even war justifies a lie or the exaggeration of a victory. This has been an important element in our Revolution.

Playboy: Do you have many close friends? *Can* a man in your position have friends?

Castro: Well, I have many friends who are not Cubans, whom I've met through different activities--some of them outstanding personalities: for example, doctors, writers, films makers, scientists, friends from abroad. But my friends in the Revolution are all my revolutionary comrades, all those who work with me, all those who hold important responsibilities in the state. We have a friendly relationship.

I don't really have what you might call a circle of friends, because for me a circle of friends is a very broad concept. I don't have the habit of meeting always with the same group of eight or ten friends. I visit one friend one day, another another day; with some I talk more because of work relations--that's logical. However, I've tried to avoid--because it's not good practice, from the viewpoint of my responsibility--cultivating just one group of friends I see every Sunday.

Playboy: What we were getting at is whether or not people feel intimidated, whether or not they can argue with you.

Castro: As a rule, any of the comrades who work with me in the state or party can come to me in total familiarity and state any concern or problem he may have. In general, my relations with comrades are excellent. But since you've asked me, there are two or three people with whom I work closely who would tell you I'm a big headache to them. Comrade Chomy, who is sitting here with us, is the prime example. He has the un-rewarding task of showing me the list of people I must see, who ask for meetings. . . . He is the one I can grumble and complain to.



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[Castro and Chomy laugh. Moments later, Chomy leaves the room and as Castro is making a point, the tape recorder Castro's aides are using for their own verification clicks to a stop. In exasperation, Castro shouts for Chomy, who rushes back in.]

As a rule, I do not let myself get agitated or obsessed by problems. If I didn't have a sense of humor, if I couldn't joke with others and even with myself, if I weren't able to let go, I wouldn't be able to handle the job. Because I also ask myself the same questions others do: How's my blood pressure? How's my heart doing? How have I been able to stand it for so many years?

I meet people who I immediately know are going to die young. I see them all worked up, bitter, tense, but that's not my case. Exercise and moderate eating habits have helped. And why not? Nature and luck have also helped.

Playboy: Unlike most political leaders, you do much of your important work late at night--often into the early hours of the morning. Why the odd hours?

Castro: On a day like today, with conversations that go on this long, the schedule goes out the window, gets out of control, and this is frequently the case. A lot of visitors come to Cuba: ministers of foreign affairs, party representatives, a great many people. If I were to set an exact date and hour for each one of the visitors asking for an interview through Comrade Chomy, through the party, through the ministry of foreign affairs, through the executive committee, through all channels, I'd be tied up all the time. I dislike purely protocol meetings; they're a waste of time. I prefer to talk about interesting things with visitors, and I dislike keeping an eye on the clock. As a rule, I tell the people who have arranged someone's visit here, "Make up the schedule; I only want to know where he is and when he's free." This has, of course, its inconveniences. Many times they tell me, "Minister so-and-so is leaving tomorrow," and then I'm forced to meet him at night very late.

On the other hand, *nobody* upsets my life as much as interviewers and journalists.

Playboy: Have you ever given any thought to marriage, a family, settling down and retirement?

Castro: I've always been allergic to gossip-column publicity about the private life of public men. I believe that's part of the few intimacies that one has. That's why I maintain discretion--until one day. Someday, the things you're asking about will be known, but not with my cooperation. I can tell you that everything's perfectly well with my private life--no problems. [Grins]

Playboy: One more question in the personal vein: You are one of the last of the great orators, with your booming speeches to stadiums full of people; you are known as an effective communicator. Is there any difference between that public figure

and the private man?

Castro: [Laughs] I have a great rival as a communicator--and that is Reagan. But let me tell you something that people may not believe: I have stage fright. Whenever I'm about to speak in public, I go through a moment of tension. I don't actually like making speeches. I take it more as a responsibility, a delicate task, a goal to be met. The huge rallies are difficult. I may have the basic ideas--you might call it a mental script of the essential ideas--and more or less the order in which I'm going to present them. But I work out and develop the ideas--the words, phrases and forms of expression--during the speech itself. People prefer that to written speech. It seems to me that they like to see a man's struggle, his efforts to elaborate ideas.

Playboy: This year, you have granted several interviews besides this long conversation. Why? And why now?

Castro: It's true that I've granted several interviews in the past few months. I thought it would be useful to do this now. I'm not trying to launch a publicity campaign, much less improve my image. I'm not running for office in the United States. Rather, I'm doing this because this is a special time in the international field.

For instance, there has been tension in Central America, and I believe that there's a really critical situation in Latin America, both economically and socially. There is great international concern over the problems related to the arms race, the danger of a war; at the same time, there are conflicts in southern Africa. If these problems are better understood, some contribution may be made to solving them.

Playboy: You've had a chance to see the results of your earlier interviews; what do you think of your press so far?

Castro: I believe that the PBS interview was a serious one, on interesting, complex topics. After PBS, there was an interview with Dan Rather of CBS. I don't think very important problems were discussed in that interview. It was more anecdotal, containing personal views about Reagan and other topics. But television's possibilities for spreading information are, by definition, very limited. Rather wanted to know why I hadn't attended Chernenko's funeral. Sometimes you make a great effort and put a lot of time into something, and then reporters take up anecdotal rather than essential matters. That's why, as I said to you before we began, if you want to express your point of view in depth, you have to have the space to develop it.

Playboy: You may consider it anecdotal, but we saw the Rather interview and, like him, wondered about the Chernenko funeral. Why *did* you skip it? You didn't really answer Rather.

Castro: Look, I was present at Brezhnev's funeral; I was present at Andropov's funeral; I've attended

the two most recent Soviet Party Congresses, that is, almost all the most important occasions of that type that have taken place in the U.S.S.R. One must bear in mind that the distance between Cuba and the Soviet Union is great; the other socialist countries are two hours away from Moscow, sometimes less.

Now, the death of Chernenko--a man whom I held in great esteem, whom I'd known for some time and who was very friendly toward Cuba--occurred at a time when I had an enormous amount of work. On the day of his death, we had just concluded a women's congress to which I had devoted several day's intense work.

I'm going to tell you something else, since you force me to. Between the end of the Federation Congress, where I delivered the closing address--that was Friday evening--and eight o'clock Sunday morning, I worked for 42 consecutive hours. No rest or sleep. Since I had other visitors in town in the following days and I was worried about keeping them waiting--and you are exceptional witness to the fact that I don't begrudge time or energy in attending to visitors, regardless of their political rank--I decided to ask my brother Raul to represent me at the funeral.

Fulfilling a formal obligation isn't the only way to show affection, appreciation and respect for a friend. I can tell you in all frankness, our relations with the Soviet Union are excellent, better than ever; and precisely because of the confidence they have in us and the confidence we have in them, I knew they'd understand.

Playboy: What the Soviet feel for you is one thing, but it's no secret that attitudes in Washington have hardened in recent years. President Reagan has characterized you as a ruthless military dictator, one who rules Cuba with an iron hand. There are many Americans who agree with him. How do you respond?

Castro: Let's think about your question. A dictator is someone who makes arbitrary decisions on his own, one who is above all institutions, above the law, and is subject to no other control than his own will or whims. If being a dictator means governing by decree, then you might use that argument to accuse the Pope of being a dictator. His broad prerogatives for governing the Vatican and the Catholic Church are well known. I don't have those prerogatives. Yet no one would think of saying that the Pope is a dictator.

President Reagan can make terrible decisions without consulting anyone! Sometimes he may have to go through the purely formal motions of securing the Senate's approval when he appoints an Ambassador, but Reagan *can* order an invasion, such as the one against Grenada, or a dirty war, such as the one against Nicaragua. He can even use the codes in that briefcase he always carries around with him to unleash a thermonuclear



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war that could mean the end of the human race. If not, why does he have the briefcase? Why does he have the codes? And why does he have an aide with the briefcase? It's to be supposed that Reagan would make the decision to unleash a thermonuclear war without consulting the Senate or the House of Representatives, without consulting the Cabinet. And that's something that could spell the end of the human race. Not even the Roman emperors had that kind of power.

Playboy: But, Mr. President, don't you, in fact, rule by personal decree?

Don't you make all important decisions of state?

Castro: No. I don't make decisions totally on my own. I play my role as a leader within a team. In our country, we don't have any institution similar to the Presidency of the United States. Here, all basic decisions—all the important decisions—are analyzed, discussed and adopted collectively. I don't appoint ministers or ambassadors; I don't appoint even the lowest public servant in the country, because there exists a system for selecting, analyzing, nominating and appointing those officials. I do, in fact, have some authority; I have influence. But my only real prerogative is to speak before the Central Committee, before the National Assembly, before public opinion. That's the main power I have, and I don't aspire to any other. I don't want or need any other.

Those are the conditions in which a political leader in our country must work. I don't think any of these mesh with the idea of a dictator, which comes from the verb *to dictate*—one who is always dictating orders of all kinds. I don't act that way, nor am I empowered to. I don't give orders; I reason. I don't govern by decree, nor can I.

During the war, I led an army; in a war, it has to be that way. There has to be that kind of responsibility—during World War Two, Eisenhower had the responsibility and the power to make decisions—but, as soon as our movement was organized, long before the attack on the Moncada

Garrison on July 26, 1953, we had collective leadership; throughout the war, our movement had collective leadership, and when the war was over, we immediately organized collective leadership for the country. These principles have remained unaltered throughout the years.

I honestly believe that the President of the United States has much greater power and more capability of giving direct, unilateral orders. If this power includes something as monstrously undemocratic as the ability to order a thermonuclear war, I ask you

have beggars. We have neither abandoned children nor beggars without homes.

You always speak of freedoms. Since your Declaration of Independence, you have spoken of freedoms. We, too, consider it self-evident that all men are born equal. But when George Washington and the others created U.S. independence, they did not free the slaves; not long ago, a U.S. black athlete could not play baseball in the major leagues. And yet you called yours the freest country in the world.

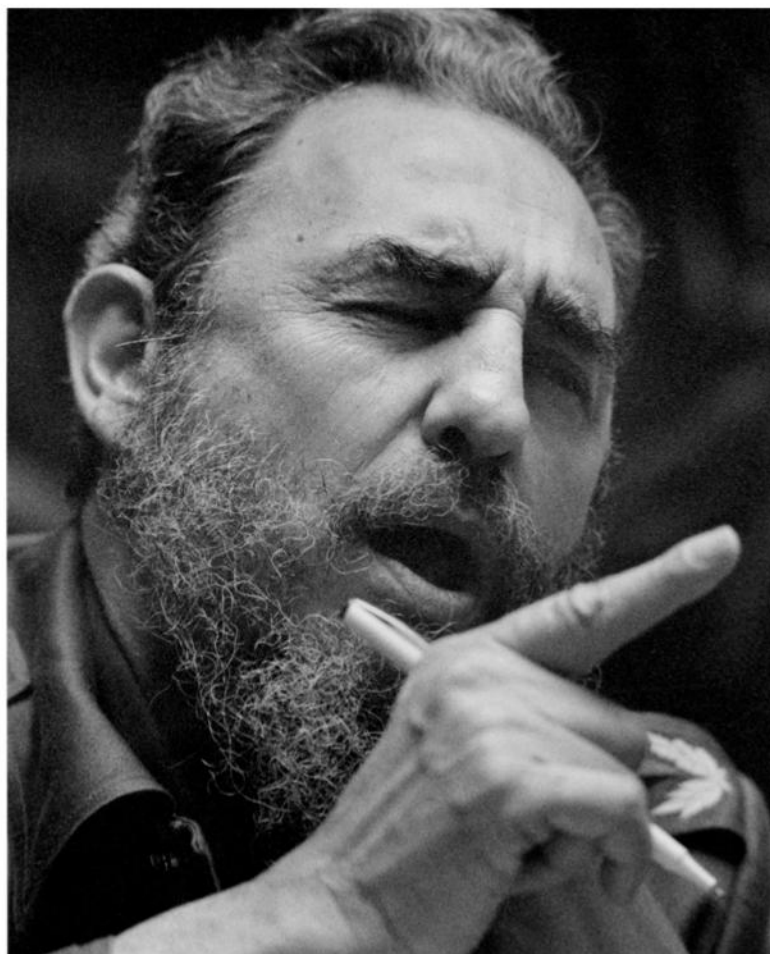
The freest country in the world also exterminated the Indians. You killed more Indians than Buffalo Bill killed buffaloes. Since then, you have made allies of the worst tyrants in Argentina and Chile, you have protected South Africa, you have used the worst murderers in the world to organize the *contra* revolution—and yours is the country of freedom? What is the banner of liberty the U.S. is really defending?

OK, if you are a Communist in the U.S., where are your freedoms? Can you work in the State Department, in any form of Government employment? Can you speak openly on TV? In what papers can you write? We may be criticized in Cuba, but at least we are cleaner than you. Our system is cleaner, because we're not pretending to be the best of liberty.

Playboy: In fact, a Communist can speak openly in the U.S. In the U.S., people have the freedom to say whatever they like.

Castro: You can say what you want, but you have no place to say it—unless you can afford it. If you do not

own a paper or a media empire, you are ignored. I have read how a right-wing Senator has tried to buy CBS to kick out Dan Rather—and Rather is not a Communist. But they want to shut his mouth. I admit that there are some brilliant writers and journalist who write both for and against capitalism and can speak on TV, but a Communist who wants to preach communism, who wants to change your system, does not appear in any big papers or on large TV stations.



who, then, is more of a dictator: the President of the United States or I?

Playboy: Nonetheless, what Americans see is that there is a marked difference between the personal freedoms in a Western country and those allowed in Cuba.

Castro: I think U.S. and Cuban conceptions of liberty are very different. For example, there are more than 1,000,000 children who have disappeared in the U.S. Next to your millionaires, you



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Playboy: What about in Cuba? Could someone write against your system in your newspapers?

Castro: No, a counterrevolutionary cannot write in our newspapers. Against our system, he cannot write. But that is exactly the same thing that happens in the U.S.—only we are honest; we say so. You say you are the best model of freedom that ever existed. When I see a Communist writing in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, or speaking on CBS, I promise you I will open the doors so all the counterrevolutionaries will be able to write in our newspapers! But you set the example first.

Playboy: Surely, you know there are Communist political candidates in the U.S. who speak freely.

Castro: Yes, they are allowed to hand out their pamphlets and make speeches. But they are not covered by the press, they are not allowed to participate in the debates, the text of their speeches is not published.

Playboy: Could we go out right now to the main park in Havana and speak critically about Cuba?

Castro: Cuba is one of the places where people are *most* critical. Anyone who visits here knows that Cubans speak openly. From morning until night, they criticize everything. No one is arrested here for speaking out. If they were, everyone would be arrested! Things are not the way you imagine. Besides, people do not want another party. This country has had a political education, a revolutionary education. People can speak their mind, but not if they start conspiring or organizing terrorist plans---

Playboy: So if we went outside and began speaking against the party---

Castro: Go ahead, try it, test it. You could get in trouble! [Laughs]

Playboy: The history of relations between Cuba and the U.S. is quite bad; how much worse have they become since Reagan took office?

Castro: Considerably. He has, of course, tightened the blockade against us. Then he put an end to private citizens' traveling to Cuba--something that had been reestablished for some years. He also applied an incessant, tenacious practice of placing obstacles in the way of *all* of our country's economic and trade operations. I don't know how many people in the United States are engaged in compiling information on all of our economic and trade operations with the Western world to try to keep us from selling our products, to block Cuba's nickel sales to any Western country and to try to block credits to Cuba and even the rescheduling of the debt. Every time we reschedule the debt with various bankers, the United States draws up documents and sends them to all the governments and banks.

The United States does not limit its blockade to trade between the United States and Cuba--it even bans trade in medicine, a shameful thing. Not

even an aspirin can come from the United States--it is legally forbidden; pharmaceuticals that may save a life are forbidden; no medical equipment can be exported from the United States to Cuba; and trade is prohibited in both directions. The U.S. also expands the blockade throughout the world as part of its policy of unceasing, shameful and infamous harassment of all of Cuba's economic operations. The only reason it doesn't interfere in our trade with the other socialist countries is that it can't. That's the truth.

Playboy: To ease these tensions, would you be willing to meet with President Reagan, without a prearranged agenda?

Castro: [Very carefully, after several false starts] In the first place, you should ask the President of the United States. I don't want it to be said that I'm proposing a meeting with Reagan. However, if you want to know my opinion, I don't think it's very probable; but if the United States Government were to propose a meeting of that nature, a contact of that type, we wouldn't raise any obstacles.

Playboy: What if an invitation were extended by the United States Congress or, specifically, by the Congressional Black Caucus? Would you accept such an invitation?

Castro: Well, I have very good relations with the Black Caucus. I know many of its members, and any invitation from them or any opportunity to meet with them, in Cuba or in the United States, would be an honor for me. In any case, I'd first have to know the position of the United States Government, because a visit to the United States requires a visa from the U.S. Government. If that were possible, indeed, if that could lead to a broader meeting with U.S. legislators, I think I have the arguments with which to talk, discuss things and debate with a group or with all U.S. Congressmen at once. That is, I think so; I think I could go. There are many things to talk about that it would be useful for the members of the U.S. Congress to hear, and I could answer all of their questions. But all this is on a speculative, hypothetical plane; I don't think it can be done unless the President of the United States agrees.

Playboy: And that seems hardly likely, with what current Administration officials are saying about you. One particularly negative charge was by Secretary of State George Shultz, who claims there is evidence of a Cuban-Colombian drug connection. How did you react to that?

Castro: One of the Ten Commandments says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The Reagan Administration should be constantly reminded of that. Besides, I believe that the United States Congress and the American people deserve more respect.

It's absolutely *impossible* for the United States and the State Department to have a single shred of

evidence of this kind! [Stands up, paces angrily] I believe that these are, in fact, dirty, *infamous* accusations, a dishonest way of conducting foreign policy! During the past 26 years, Cuba's record in this regard has been *spotless*, because the first thing the Revolution did in our country, where drugs were once freely used, sold and produced, was to eradicate that problem. Strict measures were taken to destroy marijuana plantations and to strongly punish all forms of drug production and trafficking. Since the victory of the Revolution, for 26 years, no drugs have been brought into our country, nor has any money been made from the drugs coming from anywhere else.

During the 26 years of the Revolution, I haven't heard of a single case of any official's ever having been involved in the drug business--not one. I ask if the same could be said in the United States or if that could be said in any other Latin-American or Caribbean country or in the rest of the Western world.

Playboy: Secretary Shultz has said that Cuba tacitly goes along with the drug trade by allowing overflights of smugglers in light planes.

Castro: Look, our country is the place drug smugglers fear the *most*. They all try to avoid landing in Cuba or making any sort of stop on our coasts, because they have a lot of experience with the consequences and the strict measures taken in our country. Our island has an east-west axis in the Caribbean and is more than 1000 kilometers long but only 50 kilometers wide in some places. It's easy to cross it in a matter of minutes and be under international jurisdiction again. Radar very often detects airborne targets approaching or leaving our territory. United States spy planes do this almost every day, even without entering our national airspace; every so often, they do it with sophisticated aircraft that fly at an altitude of 30 kilometers at 3000 kilometers per hour. I imagine that *those* planes aren't carrying drugs.

Small civilian aircraft penetrate our air-space rather frequently, and they don't pay or interceptors the slightest attention. Having to decide whether or not to fire on an unarmed civilian aircraft is a serious, tragic question. There's no way you can be sure who's in it. An aircraft in the air isn't like an automobile on a road that can be stopped, identified and searched. The occupants may be drug smugglers, but they may also be off course or trying to save fuel by taking a shorter route. They may be families, journalists, businessmen or adventurers--of whom there are many in the United States--who are afraid to land and be arrested in Cuba.

Playboy: Why do you think there have been such harsh charges over the years? Why do you think American leaders--and, to some extent, the American public--have had such a relentlessly negative view of Cuba and of you?



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Castro: In the first place, basically, it is not a negative attitude against Cuba and against Castro; it is fundamentally an antisocialist, antirevolutionary and anti-Communist attitude. The fact is that for the past 100 years in the United States, Europe and elsewhere in the world, this anti-Communist feeling has been drilled into the masses by all possible means; the anti-Communist indoctrination begins practically when a child is born. The same thing used to happen in our country: A permanent campaign in all the newspapers, magazines, books, films, television, radio, even children's cartoons, was aimed in the same direction--toward creating the most hostile ideas and prejudices against socialism. I'm referring, of course, to a socialist revolution, not to the much used and abused word socialism, which so many bourgeois parties have taken up as something elegant in an attempt to dress old-fashioned capitalism in new clothes.

Playboy: Critics in the Reagan Administration would argue that you need to employ cruel, punitive measures in imposing *your* kind of socialist system in Cuba.

Castro: As regards the charge of cruelty, I think the cruelest people on earth are the ones who are indifferent to social injustice, discrimination, inequality, the exploitation of others--people who don't react when they see a child with no shoes, a beggar in the streets or millions of hungry people. I really think that people who have spent all their lives struggling against injustice and oppression, serving others, fighting for others and practicing and preaching solidarity cannot possibly be cruel. I'd say that what is really cruel is a society--a capitalist one, for instance--that not only is cruel in itself but forces man to be cruel.

Socialism is just the opposite. By definition, it expresses confidence and faith in man, in solidarity among men and in the brotherhood of man--not selfishness, ambition, competition or struggle. I believe that cruelty is born of selfishness, ambition inequality, injustice, competition and struggle among men.

Playboy: Getting back to the way the U.S. has portrayed Cuba specifically----

Castro: Really, a study could be made of how much space, how much paper, how many media have been used against Cuba. But despite their huge technological resources and mass media--and I say this with sorrow--Americans are one of the least politically educated and worst-informed peoples on the realities of the Third World, Asia, Africa and Latin America. All this is actually at

the root of those anti-Cuba, anti-Castro feelings--the anti-Castro part.

Now, I'd also like to say that, in turn, there is a broad minority of people in the United States who think, who have a high cultural and political level, who do know what's happening in the world, but they aren't representative of the average citizen. Furthermore, I know for a fact that there are many U.S. citizens who are not taken in by this phobia, by those prejudices and by those anti-Cuba feelings. On the other hand, I want to remind you of the following: Twenty years ago, the worst things, terrible things, were said about China, about Mao Tse-tung, about Chinese communism, about the Red threat and all the most inconceivable threats that China posed. The press used to say the worst things about China every day. However, that is no longer the case. The press is no longer full of insults against the Chinese government and the People's Republic of China. Quite the opposite, there are excellent diplomatic relations, invest-

“During the 26 years of the Revolution, I haven't heard of a single case of any official's ever having been involved in the drug business--not one.”

ments and increasing trade. And yet that process did not start with today's China but with the China of Mao Tse-tung, at the time of the Cultural Revolution, at a time when an extreme form of communism was preached and applied in China. Now even Reagan has visited the Great Wall, and just look how everything has changed.

And why? Could you tell me why? Now there are even two types of Communists: a bad Communist and a good Communist. Unquestionably, we've been classified among the bad Communists, and I am the prototype. Well, Mao Tse-tung had also been included in that category for a long time.

Playboy: What would it take to change your image from that of a bad Communist to a good Communist?

Castro: Unfortunately, if changing that concept of a bad Communist to that of a good Communist implies that we stop denouncing the things we deem incorrect, that we stop assisting the causes we deem just, that we break our ties of friendship

with the Soviets, that we become anti-Soviet in order to be good Communists, acceptable to and applauded by the United States, then that will never happen. If one day the United States changes its image of Cuba and public opinion has the chance to learn the truth, it will have to be on the basis of its ability to realize that neither Castro nor the Cuban people are opportunistic, turncoats, people who can be bought.

Playboy: And you feel that the U.S. treats the rest of Latin America as if it can be bought?

Castro: I'm convinced that this U.S. policy toward Latin America, the idea of acting as the proprietor of the peoples of this hemisphere, in contempt of the peoples of this hemisphere, is evident everywhere--in the simple things, in speeches, anecdotes and stories, in the toasts that are made, in contacts with Latin-American leaders. I have the impression that when Columbus, Cortes, Pizarro and the European conquistadors reached this continent, they treated the Indians in almost the same manner and with the same philosophy--which included bartering mirrors and other trinkets for gold. I think that is the American attitude.

I notice it, I feel it. Not when they talk with me, because with me, none of those visitors can talk like that--besides, the visitors I receive are usually a different type of person, right? But when I look at the Presidents of the United States in their relations with Latin America, it is impossible not to sense their contempt, their underestimation of these Latin-American peoples--this strange mixture

of proud Spaniards, black Africans and backward Indians; an uncommon and strange mixture of people who deserve no consideration or respect whatsoever.

I think that someday, that policy--the policy of intervening in all countries of Latin America, setting guidelines, saying what type of government should be elected, the social changes that can or cannot be performed--will give out and result in a crisis, and I really believe that that moment is drawing nearer.

The United States has been lucky in that up to now, these problems have come up in small, isolated countries like Cuba or Grenada or Nicaragua, in Central America; it can still afford to speak of invasions, acts of intervention and solutions based on force, as had already been the practice in 1965 against another small Caribbean country, the Dominican Republic. But when it is faced with these problems everywhere in the Southern Hemisphere, in any one of the large or medium-



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sized countries in South America, it won't be able to solve them through intervention, dirty wars or invasions; that would be catastrophic.

Since I can picture very clearly what will happen, I have been raising these problems, insisting on discussing them with all American people I meet, and maybe my effort will be useful to some extent and make at least some American people reason things out.

Maybe if, when the United States was about to embark upon the Vietnam war--as it enthusiastically did--someone had persuaded the people of what was to happen there, he might have done a great service to the American people. For instance, it is said that if *The New York Times* had published the story it had concerning the Playa Girón [Bay of Pigs] invasion, it would have done Kennedy a great service and would have prevented that mistake. We are now doing exactly that with respect to Central America: As we watch the United States--or the U.S. Government; I can't say the U.S. people because 72 percent of them are against intervention in Central America--move with similar enthusiasm toward intervention in Central America, we are not doing the people of the United States a disservice when we insist on warning them of the consequences to them, to all of us.

Playboy: There is obviously support for that position, as evidenced by the votes in Congress blocking Reagan's proposals to support the *Sandinista's* adversaries. But that is hardly a ringing endorsement of either the *Sandinista* or the Cuban regime. In fact, there is a general feeling that when a Marxist government takes over, the inevitable result is repression, curtailment of human rights, imprisonment of political dissidents.

Castro: The idea that anyone is in prison in Cuba, no matter what you have heard, for holding ideas that differ from those of the Revolution is simply nonsensical! [*Stands again, begins pacing*] No one in our country has ever been punished because he was a dissident or held views that differed from those of the Revolution. The acts for which a citizen may be punished are defined with precision in our penal code. Many of those laws were adopted prior to the triumph of the Revolution, in the liberated territory of the Sierra Maestra Mountains, and were applied to punish torturers and other criminals.

We have defended ourselves and will continue to do so. I don't expect that the counterrevolutionaries will put up a statue for me or that our enemies will honor me. But I've followed a line of conduct in the Revolution--and throughout my life, in fact--of absolute respect for an individual's physical integrity. If we had to mete out punishment--even drastic punishment--we meted it out. But no matter what our enemies may say, no matter how much they may lie and slander us, the history of the Revolution contains *no* cases of

physical abuse or torture! All the citizens in this country, without exception, know this.

Playboy: That's a sweeping denial, Mr. President. Does that mean that any story told about unfair imprisonment or torture in Cuba through the years has been a lie?

Castro: Yes. We've never had to resort to anything illegal--to force, torture or crime. Throughout the entire history of the Revolution, no one can point to a *single* case of torture, murder or disappearance--things that are common, everyday happenings in the rest of Latin America. Another thing: Never has a demonstration been broken up by the police in Cuba. Never in 26 years has a policeman used tear gas, beaten a citizen during a demonstration or used trained dogs against the people. Never has a demonstration here been broken up by the army or the police--something that happens every day everywhere else, in Latin America and the United States itself.

Playboy: As well as in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Bloc. But why is it you claim that Cuba is the exception?

Castro: Because the people support their government, the people defend it. The true repression I speak of occurs in countries whose governments are against the people, whose governments have to defend themselves against the people: in Argentina, with the military dictatorship; in Chile, El Salvador and elsewhere, with repressive forces and death squads trained by the United States. When the people themselves are the Revolution, you may rest assured that there is no need for violence or injustice to defend it. Ours is the only government in this hemisphere--and I can state this proudly--that has never inflicted any bodily harm on an individual or committed any political assassinations or abductions.

Playboy: Are you claiming that the way you deal with political dissidents actually results in greater freedoms than Americans have?

Castro: I'm sure that every day, United States citizens see things in their country that are never seen here, things that simply can't happen here, acts of violence against people. Here, nobody has ever seen--nor will they--the murder of a champion of civil rights, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Actions such as this have never occurred here, yet we don't go around bragging about the Revolution's humanitarian spirit and respect for human rights.

Playboy: You yourself were in prison before the Revolution. How do you remember it?

Castro: I was in isolation for a very long time. Batista's men didn't want me to go to trial, because I had been so vocal; I had denounced all the crimes that were being committed, so it was clearly political. And even in prison, I was able to organize such political activities as a school, with courses in history, philosophy, politics.

I was sent to the Isle of Pines--we now call it the Isle of Youth--and we organized while we were there. Once, I remember hearing that Batista himself was visiting the island to inaugurate a small power plant. The moment he was set to leave, we in the prison began to sing our anthem based on our uprising of the 26th of July. Batista thought he was hearing a song in his honor--he may have thought it was the *Angels' Chorale* or something. But once he heard some of our lyrics--"insatiable tyrants," and so forth--the policemen came into the prison and took harsh, repressive measures. One comrade was beaten--he was a black man and the author of our anthem. Others were put into isolation. I was in solitary detention for more than a year; they even shut off our electricity during the day.

Playboy: Was it always so harsh?

Castro: I could say a few good things about prison. We took advantage of the time; we read a lot--14, 15 hours a day. I studied a lot of Marxist works. They even let us receive *Das Kapital*.

Playboy: There has been speculation over the years as to when you became a Marxist. Some have said it was only after you took power and were pushed to embrace communism because of Washington's hospitality. But it sounds as if you left prison a committed Communist.

Castro: No, I was a Marxist *before* I entered prison. Before our defeat at Moncada, which sent me to prison, I already had the deepest convictions. I had acquired them earlier, upon reading books about socialism. I was already a Utopian Communist. I became convinced of the irrationality, the madness of capitalism just by studying its economics. I was in my second year in law school when I felt inclined toward Marx's theories. I did not have the knowledge I have today, but if I hadn't had a Marxist orientation, I would not have conceived of the struggle against Batista.

Playboy: It has recently been reported that Cuba has dramatically expanded its own defenses. After all these years, do you still fear an attack or an invasion by the United States? Do you think of it as a real possibility?

Castro: [*Very intensely*] It's no secret that we have increased our defense capability considerably in the past four years. Not just that, we've actually revolutionized the way we think about defense. Over these past four years, we have incorporated more than 1,500,000 men and women into the country's defenses, besides the army and its reserves; we have trained tens of thousands of cadres; we have prepared for all possible scenarios of aggression against Cuba, even in the most adverse circumstances; the population is organized, even in the remotest corners of Cuba, to fight under all circumstances, even under occupation.

Why have we done this? Obviously, not as a sport; not for fun or for the love of arms. I'd rather have



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said, like Hemingway, "Farewell to arms." It has been in response to an open, declared policy of force and threats against Cuba implemented by the U.S. Government.

Playboy: You say this has happened in the past four years, so it's obviously the Reagan Administration's policies you feel threatened by.

Castro: We launched this effort even prior to the present Administration, when we realized that the wave of conservatism and great economic difficulties might turn the U.S. constituency in favor of a chauvinist policy, when we saw there was a possibility that the Republican Party could win the elections. We were familiar with its program, ideas and philosophy concerning all Caribbean and Latin-American issues; the Republican Party didn't hide them. Indeed, it openly proclaimed them in its platform. We perceived a strong ideological component in this Administration: With the ideas and mentality of crusaders, they virtually proclaimed their objective of sweeping socialism off the face of the earth. In other times, there were people who had the same goal, and we know what happened then. Our effort was intensified after the U.S. invasion of Grenada. What we've done is perfectly logical. We couldn't wait until the U.S. Administration decided to invade Cuba to start making ready. That's a mistake we could not afford to make; those who made it didn't survive.

Playboy: Do you think the United States will intervene militarily in Nicaragua?

Castro: I do not rule out military intervention. It is obvious that the Reagan Administration is obsessive about Nicaragua. To be more precise, the President of the United States has an obsessive attitude and a very high degree of personal commitment on this issue, which could lead—at a certain moment—to direct intervention. It is quite evident that the Administration has been preparing to that end; it has built new airstrips in Honduras and has rebuilt and expanded three old ones; it has set up land and sea military installations, training centers and numerous

troops; the military exercises and maneuvers are all obviously aimed at creating the conditions for an invasion of Nicaragua, if that decision is ever made. Now it is possible: Tanks, armored vehicles and other military equipment—all the military conditions are in place.

Playboy: Do you believe that the Reagan Administration does not really want a peaceful solution in Nicaragua?

Castro: The objective of the Reagan Administration regarding Nicaragua is to crush the *Sandini-*

justice.

Playboy: Washington would argue that it is not how Cubans or Nicaraguans run their own countries that is a threat but your policy of spreading revolution to other countries.

Castro: I once said that Cuba does not have nuclear rockets but it does have moral rockets. If the U.S. feels threatened by the altruism and sacrifice of Cuban teachers and doctors in other countries, perhaps they are right to feel threatened—because those workers are expressing a morality that is

superior. If they want to fear our ideas, then I will say yes, they are right to fear the ideas—that is why so many lies have to be invented. But to say that we represent a physical danger to the U.S.—that's absurd!

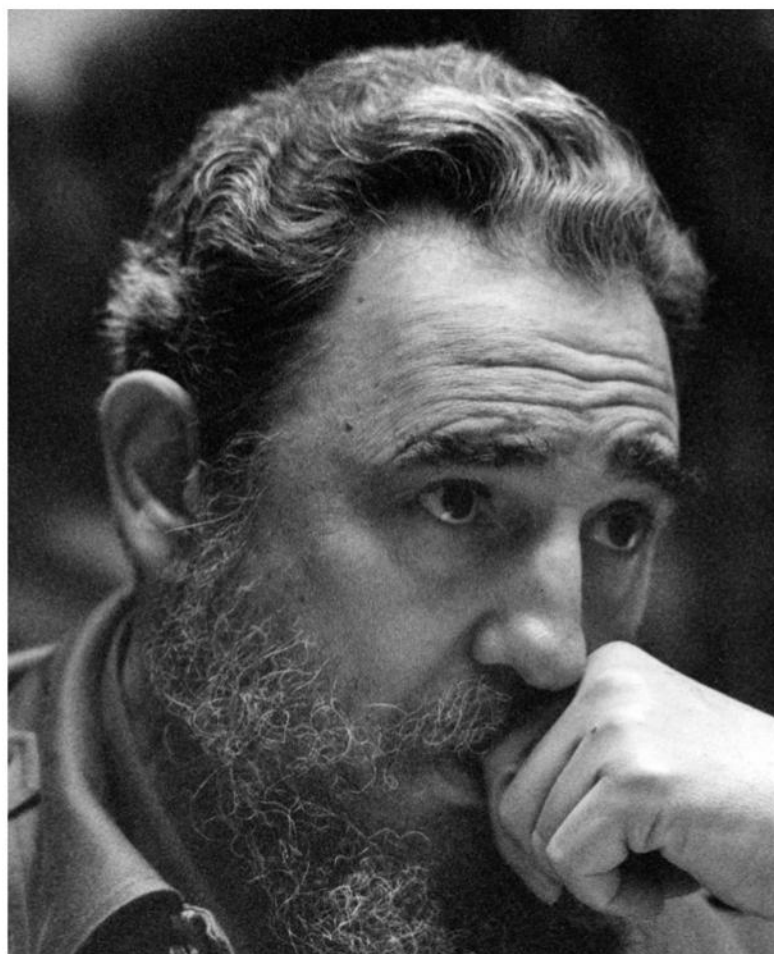
How can Cubans or Nicaraguans be a threat to a country that has 16 or 17 aircraft carriers, 300 bases throughout the world, thousands of nuclear weapons? How can a Third World nation that does not produce any airplanes be a threat to a country thinking about *Star Wars* defenses? It's ridiculous; it's brainwash.

Playboy: Let's discuss El Salvador. Your critics claim that Cuba is working to overthrow the newly elected government of President José Napoleón Duarte in El Salvador by supplying military arms to the rebels. Is that true?

Castro: I don't know where this notion of the legality of that government comes from. Everyone knows that there was a civil war there; everyone knows that over the past six years, more than 50,000 people have been murdered there by the death squads and by the

Salvadoran army itself; everyone knows that true genocide has been going on there and that Duarte has contributed to that genocide. He has actually been a coconspirator and an accessory to those crimes, and he cannot shirk his responsibility for what has been taking place in El Salvador for the past five years.

Playboy: But isn't it true that Duarte was elected president by the people of El Salvador in an open and free election?



sta Revolution; regarding El Salvador, to exterminate every last revolutionary; more generally, to destroy once and for all the spirit of rebellion in this Central American people. It's as if the Reagan Administration wants to teach an unforgettable lesson so that no one else in Central America or in Latin America will ever again think of rebelling against the tyrannies serving U.S. interests, against hunger and exploitation—so that no one will ever again fight for independence and social



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Castro: No! [*Pounds table*] Everyone knows under what conditions the elections took place: amid the most ferocious repression, terror and war; everyone knows that the electoral campaign was planned by the United States, that the political parties were manipulated by the United States and that the electoral campaigns were funded by the CIA. The present government and all other allegedly legal bodies are the result of all that manipulation and all those maneuvers by the United States. Augusto Pinochet of Chile could also say that his government was legal after the fascist constitution was imposed upon the people in an alleged plebiscite in which no one but he and his constitution took part. Actually, one can't help wondering why the United States considers the El Salvador elections to be legal and, in turn, considers the Nicaragua elections illegal. In spite of the fact that the elections in Nicaragua were sabotaged by the United States, the people turned out to vote with enthusiasm, granting the *Sandinistas* and the left more than 70 percent of the vote. This was witnessed by more than 1000 people from all over the world: representatives of governments, political organizations and parties and journalists from everywhere.

Playboy: As you say, it can be argued both ways. The question remains, Isn't it true that Cuba has worked, and is actively working, to overthrow the government of President Duarte? If so, what right does Cuba have to intervene in the internal affairs of another country?

Castro: I'm not concerned in the least about charges against Cuba in relation to our solidarity with El Salvador. We have stated that the United States knows perfectly well that sending weapons to the Salvadoran revolutionaries is very difficult, in practice almost impossible; but I have no interest whatever in clarifying anything on this subject, because I consider that morally, it is absolutely fair to help the Salvadoran revolutionaries. They are fighting for their country; it's not a war from abroad, like the dirty war the CIA carries out in Nicaragua; it's a war born inside the country that has been going on for many years.

What I can assure you is that, in fact, the main supplier of the Salvadoran revolutionaries is the Pentagon, through the weapons given to the Salvadoran army. That also happened in Vietnam; the revolutionaries there seized huge amounts of weapons delivered by the United States to the puppet army. I really don't know who could feel morally entitled to criticize Cuba for allegedly supplying weapons to the Salvadorans when the United States admits to supplying weapons to the Somoza mercenaries to overthrow the government of Nicaragua.

Playboy: What evidence do you have that the CIA manipulated the presidential elections in El Salvador? Didn't they have the same kind of scrutiny

as Nicaragua's elections, which you claim were fair?

Castro: The information was published in the United States--and the CIA admitted it publicly. It gave money not only to the Christian Democrats but also to all the other parties and covered the expenses of the election campaign. Proof is not necessary in the face of a confession.

Playboy: You've mentioned Grenada. How do you explain the failure of the socialist revolution in that country?

Castro: The invasion of Grenada by the United States was, in my view, one of the most inglorious and infamous deeds that a powerful country like the United States could ever commit against a small country. What was occurring there had nothing to do with the failure of socialism. What had been taking place in Grenada was a process of social change, not a socialist revolution. I believe that what opened the doors for invading that country, what gave the United States a pretext on a silver platter, were the activities of an ambitious and extremist sectarian group. I believe that the main responsibility for the domestic situation created there lies with Bernard Coard, an alleged theoretician of the revolution, who was really advancing his own ambitions to conspire against the popular leader, Maurice Bishop.

Playboy: Do you believe that the United States would have intervened in Grenada had Bishop still been in power?

Castro: No. If Bishop had been alive and leading the people, it would have been very difficult for the United States to orchestrate the political aspects of its intervention and to bring together that group of Caribbean stooges in a so-called policing coalition that didn't include a single policeman from the Caribbean--it was exclusively U.S. soldiers.

Playboy: You say the U.S. invaded on a pretext. But President Reagan argued that the United States had no choice but to intervene in Grenada, because Cuba was building an airport and stockpiling weapons with which to export revolution--and, of course, because the American medical students studying in Grenada were in mortal danger. Why didn't the U.S. have a right to protect its citizens and prevent the spread of revolution?

Castro: The U.S. invasion was accompanied by unscrupulous lies, because for one thing, U.S. students on the island never ran any risk. The first thing the coup group did was to give assurances of safety to everyone, particularly the medical students. The safest people in Grenada were the U.S. students. As to the airport, Washington claimed a thousand times that was a military airport, but not a single brick that went into that airport was military. It was built with the participation of the European Economic Council and England, Canada and other United States allies.

Playboy: What explains the fact that the Grenadian people cheered the United States intervention and rallied behind its goals and objectives?

Castro: I doubt very much that that support is as deep and widespread as you suggest. Bishop was a man greatly loved by the people. He was the leader of the Grenadian people. He had the real, sincere and enthusiastic support of the people. The group involved in the coup plotted against Bishop, arrested him, fired on the people when they revolted and, furthermore, assassinated Bishop and other leaders. Naturally, this caused great outrage and confusion among the masses. The United States intervened, stating its sole purpose as the noble aim of liberating the country from those people and that it would punish Bishop's murderers and those who had fired on the people. It was logical for a large number of people in that country, even most of the population, to be susceptible to accepting invasion as desirable.

Playboy: What about public support in the U.S.? The overwhelming majority of the American people rallied behind President Reagan's decision.

Castro: Public opinion in the United States was manipulated by a pack of lies told over and over again. Melodramatic elements were brought into play: the student kissing U.S. soil on their arrival; the bitterness and frustration resulting from the Vietnam adventure and its humiliating defeat; the problem of the Marines killed in Lebanon and the memory of the Iran hostages; all these elements, latent in the spirit of the U.S. people, were manipulated in a cold, calculated manner. People can be manipulated; they can even applaud crimes. When the Nazis annexed Austria, the German people applauded; when they occupied Warsaw, the vast majority of Germans applauded. Some Americans applauded at the start of the invasion of Vietnam; later we saw the consequences. I believe future generations of U.S. citizens will be ashamed of the way their people were manipulated.

Playboy: You compare the "shameful" Grenada invasion to actions by Nazi Germany; some would say that the actions of Soviet troops in Afghanistan are a more appropriate comparison. How can the bloodshed caused by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan be anything but a shame and an embarrassment to socialist countries?

Castro: Afghanistan is one of the most backward countries in the world, where a feudal regime had existed until April 1978. It had an illiteracy rate of 90 percent and an infant mortality rate of 235 for every 1000 live births--one of the highest in the world. Two thousand families owned 70 percent of the land, and the population consisted of around 1500 tribes. I believe that Afghanistan was one of the places in the world where a revolution was becoming more and more indispensable. As soon as that revolution took place--as it inevitably



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had to--the CIA began its subversive activities, exactly like the ones being carried out in Nicaragua. The United States has invested one billion dollars in helping the counterrevolutionary gangs since the beginning of that Revolution.

The Afghan Revolution led to a series of tensions in the region. Cuba was involved in trying to find solutions, including hosting the sixth summit meeting of the non-aligned countries in Havana, in 1979. There I met President Taraki of Afghanistan. I had also met the man who was to overthrow him and cause him to be murdered--Amin. He was a man who came to resemble Pol Pot, the genocidal leader of Cambodia. You can't imagine what a pleasant man he was! You know, I've had the rare privilege of meeting some figures whom you would find courteous, well educated, who have studied in Europe or the United States, and later on you find out that they've done horrible things. It's as if at some moment, people go mad. It seems that there are people whose brain neurons aren't adapted to the complexities of revolutionary political problems, so they do crazy things that are really amazing.

In any case, everyone had a hand in that situation until the events that took place in Afghanistan in later 1979. The Soviets were helping the Afghans--that is true--because Taraki originally requested their help. Amin also asked the Soviets for help later, and a lot of Soviets were there, assisting in a wide range of fields--military, economic, technical, all kinds--up until Soviet troops were sent into the country on a massive scale.

Playboy: That is, when they invaded. You say that was based on what provocation?

Castro: Essentially, counterrevolutionary actions fostered from abroad. Revolutions always entail more than a few complications and headaches. No revolution has ever avoided that; not the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Chinese Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution or the Nicaraguan Revolution. There are no exceptions, and all the problems arise from the invariable attempts made from abroad to overthrow the revolution. This is also what happened with the revolution in Afghanistan.

Playboy: You blame the invasion on the CIA, then?

Castro: The CIA was doing, and continues to do, everything in its power to create problems for the government of Afghanistan and for the Soviets. It's pouring enormous numbers of weapons and

amounts of money into Afghanistan, using the *émigrés*, playing on the political backwardness of a part of the Afghan people, using religion--it's making use of every tool it can to create difficulties for the Afghan revolutionaries and for the Soviets. I don't think the CIA is particularly interested in promoting peace in the country.

Playboy: Yet there was a bloody invasion. How can you defend the Soviet action, and at the same time preach the philosophy of revolution and liberation?

Castro: I sincerely believe that the Afghan Revolution was just and necessary, and we could support nothing that would jeopardize it. We sympathize with and support the Afghan Revolution; I say this frankly. But I think Afghanistan could be a nonaligned country--but one in which the revolutionary regime was maintained. If a solution is sought that is based on the idea that Afghanistan should go back to the old regime and sacrifice the

historical foundation whatsoever. Let's go back for a moment. Any scholar who knows the history of the Soviet Revolution can't ignore the fact that while Lenin's first decree was a proclamation of peace--immediately, 24 hours after the victory of the 1917 Revolution--the first step the Western countries took was to invade Russia. It was Lenin who first stated the principle that the nations that had made up the czarist empire had a right to independence.

Playboy: Pardon us, but---

Castro: [*Waving away the interruption*] I would cite the example of Finland, which was part of that empire and became an independent nation. Yes, everyone who has studied history knows that Lenin waged a great battle for the enforcement of that principle. It can't be ignored that as this was happening, there were armed actions against the Soviet people from all over the West: from the Germans, who attacked and penetrated

the Ukraine to Kiev; from the French in the south; from the English in the Murmansk region in the north; from Japan and from the United States in the eastern territory. *Everyone* joined in. World War One had already ended, but intervention in the Soviet Union went on for several more years.

What happened in later years is well known: Even Finland itself was used by Fascist Germany to attack the Soviet Union. The country was invaded, and I believe that contemporary history doesn't know of any other example of such massive destruction and death as was caused by

'The people have to protest, because they are being forced to pay a debt that they didn't contract and that brought them practically no benefits.'

Revolution, then, unfortunately, I don't think there will be peace there for a long time. I think it's in the interest of all the neighboring countries, including the Soviet Union, to find a solution. And I believe that the observance of the principle of respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty and for its right to make social changes, build the political system it deems best and correct and have a nonaligned government--as a Third World country--should serve as the basis of a solution for the problems there.

Playboy: You repeatedly describe the United States as the source of many of the world's problems while either praising or avoiding criticism of the Soviet Union. Yet many see Soviet foreign policy as warmongering and expansionist. The invasion of Afghanistan and the crushing of Solidarity would seem to fit that category.

Castro: You can't ask the Soviet Union to remain impassive if it actually feels threatened. I believe that these accusations of warmongering have no

fascism there.

After World War Two, the Soviet Union was surrounded by dozens and dozens of nuclear bases--in Europe, the Middle East, Turkey, which lies on the Soviet border, the Indian Ocean, Japan and other Oriental countries--and by military fleets near its coasts in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean. No one can deny these facts. It was surrounded by nuclear bombers, nuclear submarines, military bases, spy bases, electronic installations--a country totally surrounded. How can the Soviet Union be accused of warmongering and aggressive attitudes in the face of these historical realities? How can we not explain the Soviet Union's highly sensitive reactions regarding anything that occurs near its territory? Who is historically responsible for this lack of trust on the part of the Soviets? How can international politics be explained so simplistically?

Playboy: Many people believe that the next full-scale war will break out in South Africa. As an



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opponent of apartheid, what do you think can be done there?

Castro: *[In the most impassioned tone of the entire interview]* Apartheid is the most shameful, traumatizing and inconceivable crime that exists in the contemporary world. I don't know of anything else as serious--from the moral and human standpoint--as apartheid. Particularly after the struggle against Nazi fascism, after the independence of all the former colonies, the survival of apartheid is a disgrace for humanity. The major industrialized countries, however--the United States included--have made heavy investments in and have collaborated economically, technologically and through the supply of weapons with the apartheid regime. In fact, South Africa is an ally of the West's, and it is the West that has actually made it possible for that system to endure. The United States has systematically opposed all sanctions against the South African regime.

Playboy: What international measures would you propose to force South Africa to abandon its policy of apartheid?

Castro: As long as South Africa continues to receive technological assistance, economic assistance and assistance in the form of weapons, it will remain unaltered and will continue in its blackmailing position. South Africa, like Pinochet, the West's other fascist ally, parades itself before the West as the great standard-bearer of anticommunism and other social changes.

I wonder: Is there any fascist regime in the past 40 years that has not been an ally of the United States? In Spain, the Franco regime; in Portugal, the Salazar regime; in South Korea, the fascist military; in Central America, Somoza, the military dictatorships in Guatemala and El Salvador; and Stroessner, the military dictatorships in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, as well as the Duvalier regime. I don't know of any reactionary, fascist state that has not been a close ally of the United States'. Yes, the West is responsible for the survival of apartheid. How can you justify the aggressive, subversive measures against Nicaragua, the economic blockade of Cuba--which has already lasted 26 years--and then talk about constructive relations with the apartheid regime? If South Africa were effectively isolated, economic measures were implemented against it and everyone were to support them, the apartheid system would come to an end. The measures the United States take against socialist countries are not taken against apartheid! Nothing about apartheid has produced sufficient revulsion in leaders of Western countries, just a few embarrassing situations that they try to explain with hypocritical statements.

Playboy: Would you favor, then, an international war against South Africa?

Castro: No. I'm not saying that violent measures should be taken. They're not needed. What is

called for is simply international political, moral, technological and economic pressures. This will not in the least harm the vast majority of South Africa's population, who live in the ghettos and who are being massacred and assassinated every day. Not a month goes by without a slaughter of greater or lesser magnitude.

Playboy: You are passionate about South Africa, yet Cuba has been widely condemned for its extensive military involvement in Africa. How do you justify sending Cuban troops to such countries as Ethiopia and Angola?

Castro: We sent troops for the first time outside our country in 1975, precisely when South Africa invaded Angola, at the moment of its independence. We are the only country that has actually fought the South African racists and fascists, the only country in the world--in addition to Angola, of course, which was under attack. You can be sure that all the African countries have always admired and been thankful for this action by Cuba. The troops are still there, to defend Angola against another operation by the South Africans. It was simply that, an unexpected situation in which somebody had to fight against the racists, and not part of some larger plan by the Soviet Union, as the United States has claimed.

Playboy: What about Ethiopia? There was no South African invasion there.

Castro: Until very recently, Ethiopia had lived under a feudal regime. Before the Revolution, there was even slavery in Ethiopia. We appreciate the importance of the Revolution in Ethiopia, one of the largest African countries, with the longest tradition of independence, but a very poor country, one of the poorest in Africa. Right after the Revolution, contacts were established between the new Ethiopian leaders and ourselves. We supported their socialist experiment and also sent them doctors, instructors and weapons.

Then came an invasion to seize some oil-rich land, this one from Somalia, in the south, while the separatist movement in the north was being fanned with the aid of such American allies as the Sudan and Saudi Arabia. It was a difficult moment for Ethiopia. The Revolution could have collapsed; the Ethiopian people needed our help and we sent it. No one could help them when they were invaded by Mussolini's troops, but this time they received support from tiny Cuba.

Playboy: In one case you intervened in what would be called a civil war, and in both cases you have troops in African countries well after the crisis has passed. Do you really claim that Cuban troops are still there in a just cause?

Castro: Only a few well-equipped units with combat capabilities remain in Ethiopia, as a symbol of solidarity. They will remain there as long as the Ethiopian government deems it convenient. That is not the situation in Angola, a nation with

a smaller population and less experience and one faced with South Africa's military might. There, too, the dirty war was organized by the South Africans, who did just what the United States is doing in Nicaragua. I consider what the Cuban troops are doing a truly honorable cause, among the most honorable in the history of Africa. I think that nothing can stop the course of history. Nothing shall prevent the tens of millions of Africans living in ghettos and *bantustans* in their own homeland from someday becoming the masters of their own destiny. The concentration camps of Dachau and Auschwitz also came to an end.

Playboy: You've talked bitterly in the past about the 26-year trade blockade by the U.S. Because of its effect--and your own domestic problems--haven't you had to reduce many needed programs and services that your revolution promised in its early days?

Castro: No, not at all. We already know what we are going to do during the next 15 years in all fields of economic and social development--in the industrial, agricultural, housing, educational, cultural, sports and medical programs. And despite the blockade, there are some areas, such as public health and education, in which we expect to be ahead of the United States in the not-too-distant future. That is, we use our resources rationally to achieve sustained economic development in the interests of the people. We certainly won't adopt any such measures as cutting aid to the elderly, reducing old-age pensions, cutting medicines for the sick, reducing hospital and school appropriations. We don't sacrifice social programs, as they do in the United States, for the sake of building aircraft carriers, MX missiles and other engines of war that the world abhors.

Playboy: Do you mean to suggest that Cuba can boast a stronger record of accomplishment in the social realm than the United States?

Castro: What I'm suggesting is this: While the United States has recently adopted a policy of cutting or freezing its social-assistance programs, in our country these are top-priority items. Rather than being cut, as has been suggested in the United States, they are increasing every year, as our economic performance improves.

Playboy: You're also saying that, despite the problems you mentioned earlier, Cuba is not really facing an economic crisis, as other Third World countries are.

Castro: Precisely. Due to the factors mentioned, we are the only Latin-American or Caribbean country that hasn't suffered from the present economic crisis. We haven't been exposed to the crisis, except as it affects the 15 percent of our trade that is carried out with Western countries--which, of course, charge high prices for their products, pay low prices for ours and force us to pay high interest rates on our foreign debt.



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Playboy: And, of course, your economy is tied to that of the Soviet bloc.

Castro: Eighty-five percent of our trade is within the socialist community, and this is what gives us a solid foundation for the sustained growth of our economy. That is why we are morally entitled to speak about the economic crisis and Latin America's debt; we don't have to keep silent. That is precisely why we are energetically denouncing it. But we can feel secure, because, fortunately, we depend very little on the Western world, and we don't depend at all on economic relations with the United States. I wonder how many other countries can say the same.

Playboy: Some would say you have merely traded a former dependency on the United States for another dependency--on the Soviet Union.

Castro: That question is older than the rain. Actually, we consider ourselves the most privileged nation of all, because in a world where everyone depends on the United States, there is one country--Cuba--that does not. It is a unique privilege.

Playboy: But you have paid a price for that support--some of your independence.

Castro: The Soviets have given us their support with no conditions; they do not say what Cuba can or cannot do. In 26 years, I cannot remember a single time when the Soviets have attempted to tell us what to do in our foreign or domestic policy. And criticizing us for our dependency on the Soviets is like telling us, "Look, we sank the ship--and you used a lifesaver!"

No country in the world can be an economic island. You in the United States depend on Saudi Arabia, on Kuwait, on the Persian Gulf states for your oil. We depend on others, too, to a greater or lesser degree.

Playboy: Let's speculate: What would happen if the United States were to resume trade relations with Cuba?

Castro: Frankly, the United States has fewer and fewer things to offer Cuba. If we were able to export our products to the United States, we would have to start making plans for new lines of production to be exported to the United States, because everything we are producing now and everything we are going to produce in the next five years has already been sold to other markets. We would have to take them away from the other socialist countries in order to sell them to the United States, and the socialist countries pay us much better prices and have much better relations with us than does the United States. There's a folk saying that goes, "Don't swap a cow for a goat!"

Playboy: Talking about economics for a wide audience can be cumbersome, but one thing everyone has heard about is the staggering debt Latin American countries owe to Western countries, particularly the U.S. You have recently spoken out against attempts to pressure these countries

to repay that debt. Don't you think they have a moral responsibility to pay their creditors?

Castro: Some 20 or 25 years ago, Latin America had practically no debt; now it amounts to 360 billion dollars. What did that money go for? Part of it was spent on weapons. In Argentina, for example, tens of billions of dollars went for military expenditures, and the same was true of Chile and other countries. Another part of that money was embezzled, was stolen and wound up in banks in Switzerland and in the United States. Another part was returned to the United States and Europe as a flight of capital. Whenever there was talk of devaluation, the more affluent people, out of mistrust, would change their money for dollars and deposit it in U.S. banks. Another part of that money was squandered. Another part was used by some countries to pay the high prices of fuel. And, finally, another part was spent on various economic programs.

Playboy: But, with respect, you're avoiding the question. Don't these nations have a moral responsibility to repay the debt?

Castro: You say that they have a moral responsibility. When you talk about nations, you're talking about the people, the workers, the farmers, the students, the middle class--the doctors, the engineers, the teachers, the other professionals--and the other social sectors. What did the people get out of the billions that were spent on weapons, deposited in U.S. banks, misspent or embezzled? What did the people get out of the overvaluation of the dollar or out of the interest spread? They got absolutely nothing. And who has to pay for that debt? The people: the workers, the professionals and the farmers; everybody has to make do with reduced wages and reduced income and make huge sacrifices. What is the morality of imposing measures that result in a blood bath in an effort to make the people pay the debt, as was the case in the Dominican Republic, where the International Monetary Fund's measures resulted in dozens of people's being killed and hundreds more shot? The people have to protest, because they are being forced to pay a debt that they didn't contract and that brought them practically no benefits.

Playboy: Mr. President, are you saying that Third World countries should simply cancel their debts?

Castro: Even if they wanted to repay them, it would be an economic impossibility, a political impossibility, a moral impossibility. You would practically have to kill the people to force them to make the sacrifices required to pay that debt. Any democratic process that tries to impose those restrictions and sacrifices by force will be ruined. The debt simply cannot be paid. "Give me liberty or give me death." The choice for those governing Latin America now is between the cancellation of the debt and political death.

Playboy: Do you honestly feel that any of this is

realistic--that creditors should simply swallow the losses from the canceled debt?

Castro: I'm not suggesting that the banks lose their money or that the taxpayers pay more taxes. I am suggesting something very simple: using a small percent of military expenditures--which wouldn't be more than 12 percent--so the governments of the creditor nations can assume the debts from their own banks. That way, neither the banks nor the depositors would lose; to the contrary, the banks would have that money guaranteed. Who could guarantee this better than the rich and powerful industrial states of which the Western nations are so proud? They consider themselves capable of dreaming up and waging "star wars" while giving barely a thought to the risks involved in a thermonuclear conflict that would in the first minute destroy a hundred times more than what is due their banks. In short, if the idea of universal suicide doesn't scare them, why should they be afraid of something as simple as the cancellation of the Third World's debt? It's a simple accounting operation. It's not going to close a single factory; it's not going to stop a single ship along its route; it's not going to interfere with a single sales contract on the market. To the contrary, employment, trade, industrial and agricultural output and profits would be increased everywhere. It isn't going to hurt anybody. The only adverse effects would be on arms and military spending.

Playboy: What effect do you think a change in U.S. military spending would have?

Castro: The avoidance of financial catastrophe for all of us. What will be the consequences for the future U.S. economy of spending two trillion dollars in only eight years for military purposes, instead of investing it in industry, technology and economic development? The only significant development has been registered by the arms industry, but weapons aren't goods that the population can consume. Rifles, bullets, bombs, bombers, battleships and aircraft carriers increase neither the wealth nor the productive capacity of a country; they can't meet any of man's material or spiritual needs. You can't even fish with those boats; you can't do anything with them that's useful for human life, health or the struggle against cancer and other diseases that kill so many U.S. citizens every year.

Playboy: Again, you focus on the dire economic consequences of military spending by the U.S., even though the Soviet Union--a socialist state--is engaged in the very same arms race.

Castro: A socialist can better understand--is better prepared to understand, from a theoretical point of view--the folly of spending on weapons the resources needed to meet the pressing needs and problems of any human society. The socialist states know what can be done with those resources both at home and abroad. A glance shows



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the poverty and disasters that plague our planet. The arms race is a crime against mankind. Why not opt for a sincere effort to seek peace and cooperation among all countries, based on full respect for the sovereignty and the social system that each people has chosen for itself? As for the Soviets, they are not to blame for the arms race. Their response reflects decisions made in Washington--the desire to protect themselves against possible U.S. aggression. But they are not the culprits. They are not to blame for the arms race.

Playboy: What will happen, in your opinion, if industrialized world refuses to cancel the debt?

Castro: If a negotiated solution cannot be found, the Third World will impose a solution--unilateral cancellation. Industrialized nations will not have any actions open: economic blockades, invasion of Third World countries, repartitioning of the world's territories and resources, as in past centuries, are simply impossible today. Any rational person can understand this. They couldn't invade ten countries, blockade 100 countries.

Playboy: Since it's not likely that the industrialized world will follow the course you're recommending, what do you see as the final outcome?

Castro: If we want to be madmen, if we want to continue the arms race and keep this unfair economic order, we will continue along the path leading to large-scale famines, great social conflicts and--what is even worse and probable--a large nuclear conflict, until all people, both sane and insane, are wiped off the face of the earth. By the way, it may also be said that not all madmen are in government, and not all who govern are mad.

Playboy: You have made several literary references during this Interview. To shift again, as we near the end, to a personal topic, are you still an avid reader? Do you still find time to read?

Castro: Yes, though my tastes have varied with time. Of course, when I was younger, literary works and novels, for example interested me more than they do now. Obviously, a good novel is pleasant reading, really recreational reading, so I read many novels. I remember perfectly that during the 22 months I spent in prison, there weren't enough books there for the 15 or 16 hours a day that I read. I read literary, economic, historical and political works, but throughout my life I have usually preferred history books, biographies, books about nature, narratives.

I've read many memoirs, from Churchill's--which is quite unwieldy but interesting, with a lot of historical data--to DeGaulle's. I've also read numerous books on the World Wars and the main events that took place then. I've read most of the books dealing with the actions carried out by both the Western powers and the Soviets. I've read practically all those books--memoirs, narratives, particularly about the military actions. I've always been interested in that kind of literature.

Once in a while, I delve into the roots of the language and reread Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, one of the most splendid works ever written. If it weren't for the long narrative passages it contains, which make it somewhat boring at times, I would read some excerpt from it every day.

I've also read all of Hemingway's works, some more than once. I'm really sorry he didn't write more. I've also read most of García Márquez' novels, stories, historical works and newspaper articles. Since we are friends, I'll dispense with the praise.

It is amazing, isn't it, to think of the enormous number of quality publications that are printed every year and the tension between the desire to read all of them and the real possibility of reading very few?

Playboy: You mentioned *Don Quixote*. Is there anything about Don Quixote, the character, with which you specifically identify?

Castro: Well, I think that a revolutionary is what Don Quixote resembles the most, particularly in his desire for justice, in that spirit of the knight-errant, of righting wrongs everywhere, of fighting against giants. It has been said that *Don Quixote* was written to ridicule the romances of chivalry. I believe it was written very ingeniously. In fact, I think that it is one of the most marvelous exaltations of man's dreams and idealism and, above all, it's very interesting. We have the two characters: Sancho, with his feet on the ground, looking at all the problems and giving advice, a model of caution who remembers all the details; and the other, who's always dreaming about a cause to defend. Don Quixote's madness and the madness of the revolutionaries are similar; the spirit is similar. I like that character very much. I'm sure Don Quixote wouldn't have hesitated to face the giant of the North.

Playboy: Have you ever had any self-doubt?

Castro: Let me state, in all frankness, that I have never harbored personal doubts or a lack of confidence. That may be good or it may be bad. But if you see your actions as objectively correct, then not having doubts is good. I must admit that pride may have influenced my attitudes from time to time. But once I came to a conclusion as to what was right, I had great personal confidence in those ideas. This doesn't mean that I am not self-critical. Quite the contrary: I constantly question the rightness of my beliefs and actions. In that sense, I'm quite hard on myself. I've never fallen victim to the trap of complacency. But I have always persevered.

Playboy: Clearly, you cannot live forever. What plans, if any, do you have for the succession of power? Is there an heir apparent?

Castro: Well, of course I don't have any plans for dying. I'll tell you this: Since the beginning of the Revolution, since the very first year, and particu-

larly when we started realizing that the CIA had plans to shorten my life, we suggested the prior nomination of another comrade, Raul Castro--today second secretary of the party--who would immediately assume leadership. In my opinion, the comrade chosen is the most capable, not exactly because he's my brother but due to his experience and revolutionary merits.

Playboy: If you were to step down tomorrow, what would happen in Cuba?

Castro: In this question, I am not yet dead, correct? [Laughs] Let me tell you one thing. If tomorrow I were to resign all my functions, first, there'd have to be a truly convincing reason for the population to understand it--it would have to be logical, natural and justifiable. I couldn't just say, "I'm going to drop these activities because I'm bored or because I want to lead a private life." It would be difficult to explain and difficult for the people to understand. The people have also been instilled with the idea that one must do everything possible, that one must give top priority to all revolutionary obligations.

I haven't the slightest doubt that although I can still be useful and make further contributions to the Revolution--there are still some things that need a little time to mature--I believe that the opinion and the recognition of the people with respect to the role I've played and my efforts in the Revolution would be truly high if I were to quit tomorrow. This in no way means that everything has been perfect, free of errors or anything of the sort. But I'm quite sure that there'd be a high opinion of my services. I haven't the slightest doubt.

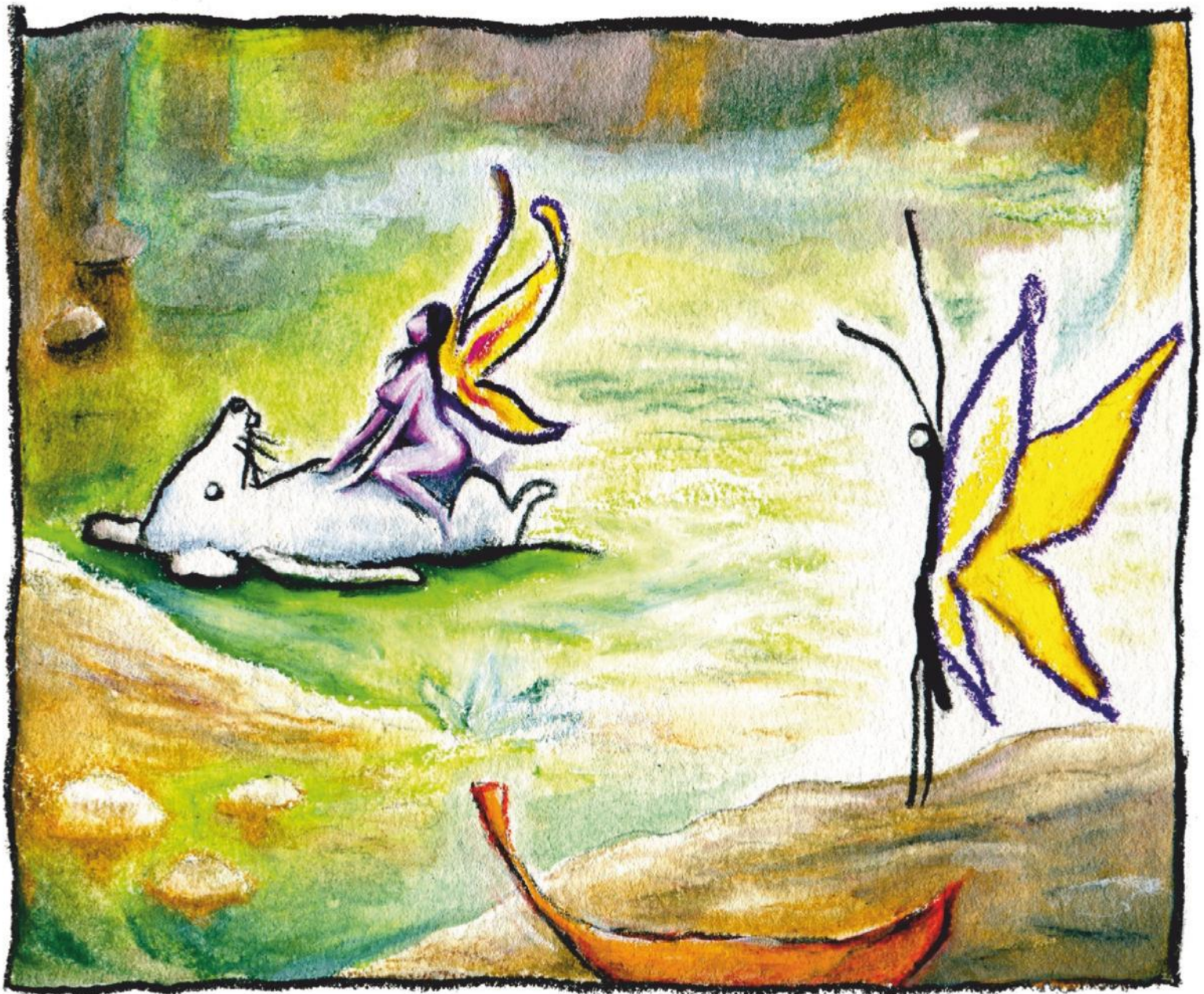
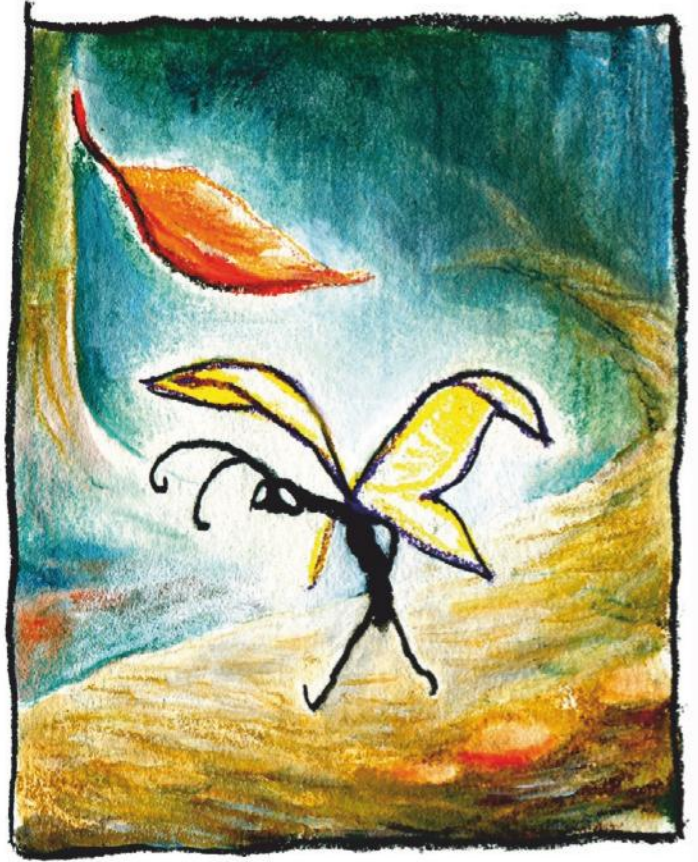
Playboy: Let's end on a note of imagination. Here is something truly wonderful from your point of view: Suppose the U.S. canceled Latin America's foreign debt, as you propose, and offered substantial aid to boot--in other words, offered to treat the hemisphere with the fairness you think it deserves. What would you do then? Reassess your views?

Castro: If the United States were to spontaneously do what you say--if such an inherently selfish, neocolonialist system were capable of that generosity--a real miracle would have taken place, and I would have to start meditating on that phenomenon. I might even have to consult some theologians and revise some of my opinions in *that* field. If that were to happen, I might even enter a monastery.

Playboy: We asked you toward the beginning of this Interview whether or not you considered yourself a dictator. Do you again deny the charge?

Castro: I would say that I am a *sui generis* type of dictator, one who has been subjected here to the oppression, torture, demands and impositions of a journalist and a legislator from the United States and who has shown his willingness to discuss any topic openly, frankly and seriously. 📌

We're too different, Coolidge.
It'll never work.







ASIAN BEAUTY

Unica Roces

BRAINS AND BOOTY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEFF INFANTE

WORDS CELENE SAKURAKO

MAKE-UP KYLE CONCEPCION

HAIR ADDIE SANTOS

Asian Beauty Unica Roces proves that sexiness is all about being confident and having a shapely derriere.

It's not hard to see why Asian Beauty Unica Roces is a sight for sore eyes. Owning a lithe frame that gradually and elaborately curves down to form a pleasantly conspicuous rear certainly has its rewards. Now add the fact that you'll get "only friction" if you translate her Spanish-sounding name to English, then you'd realize that sparks are bound to fly.

"I'm attracted to a man who knows how to take care of himself because I take care of myself," discloses the 22-year-old Surigao del Norte native. Now based in Makati, the aspiring fashion designer and part-time model manages her own online store called Fashion Passion Unica, which holds an array of swimsuits and tropical wear imported from Thailand. The slender bombshell recently hit a milestone by opening her first physical store in A.Venue Mall, with dreams of expanding her business one day at a time.

Fun and flirty in nature, Unica can be found sweating it out on the gym or partying at clubs like Valkyrie. She considers her figure as a primary asset, and she would do anything to keep it in partying shape. Speaking of shapes, she considers her plump tight butt to be the body part that instantly draws favorable attention. We certainly agree; it certainly snagged ours.

Truly a woman who knows what she wants and gets what she wants, she shows a laid back side as she coyly admits, "If I could wear only one thing forever, I'd wear pajamas." After all, comfort is a suitable reward after a crazy night of clubbing.

Drawn to the masculine scent of Ralph Lauren's cologne, her per-

fect man is kind, honest and chivalrous. It's only fitting that her number one turn-on in a man's body are firm abs given that her ideal date consists of her sporting a bikini to the backdrop of a beautiful beach. A big fan of techno music, she admits "Love Me Like You Do" by Ellie Goulding from the movie *Fifty Shades of Grey* puts her in the mood to play around in bed.

Unica believes that confidence is a woman's best weapon. She affirms, "I wanted to pose for Playboy because I wanted to boost my confidence. Many may think that posing sexy can be too daring, but I think it's all about how it makes you feel, and I feel great." Rocking a style that is anything but predictable, she opts for a printed dress rather than the typical black dress on a night out.

Looking to further her career in modelling and perhaps try out acting, she speaks of her hobbies: dancing and singing. A potential triple threat, Unica smiles and says her go-to karaoke song is Whitney Houston's ballad "I Will Always Love You." Never one to shy down, she's always up to try anything adventurous. She discloses, "My friend actually suggested me to do this shoot, and I didn't even have a doubt. It's one of the boldest things I've done in my life but I take it with a stride of confidence. As I've said, confidence is all a woman needs to feel sexy."

When asked brains or beauty she quickly retorts, "Can it be both? Even if you're beautiful, it's completely useless if you don't have the brains to back it up." A businesswoman, model and soon-to-be fashion designer, she surely knows what she's talking about.















20Q

JEFFREY DEAN MORGAN

As Negan, he strode into TV history with The Walking Dead's fanatically debated season-six finale. Meet the man behind the bat

BY **SCOTT PORCH** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RYAN LOWRY**

Q1: Last season, The Walking Dead's concluding episode saw the introduction of your character, Negan, and a major cliff-hanger: Negan presumably killing one of the main characters with a baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire. How much did you know at the end of the season?

MORGAN: We ended on that bat coming down. I didn't know who the victim was at that time. I don't think anybody in the cast did. Maybe somebody knew, but everyone on the show swears they didn't. When we came back this year, we picked up directly from there.

Q2: How does a show this big keep a major secret like that?

MORGAN: We've had to take so many security measures. People will hang out where we shoot and try to fly drones

over the sets. It's a level of crazy I've never experienced. We hide people in vans to get to the sets so you don't know who's coming and who isn't. We shoot Alexandria—the place where a lot of the show is set—in a town called Senoia, Georgia. The town has become this big tourist attraction. It has a Walking Dead coffee shop. People come from all over the world to this 15-foot wall and try to get a glimpse of us shooting.

Q3: Have you watched the show from the beginning?

MORGAN: I was a fan of the show from when Frank Darabont started it. I was like, Really? A zombie show? How will that fly? And it's not a zombie show. You get into what the characters are going through and how they interact with each

other. The zombies are kind of an added bonus. I've been in the comic-book world for a while, from being on Supernatural and in Watchmen. I've been going to Comic-Con for one show or another for the past 10 years, and I went this year for The Walking Dead. It was insanity. Hall H holds almost 7,000 people, and it was standing room only. We brought everyone who was in the lineup with Negan at the end of last season.

Q4: Has your appearance in that one Walking Dead episode made a difference in your ability to go to Starbucks?

MORGAN: Not yet, but I live in the middle of nowhere here in Atlanta and on a farm in upstate New York. Everyone on the show has said it's a life-changing experience. I hang out with Norman





20 Q

Reedus, who's the brother I never had. We go on motorcycle rides in the middle of Alabama or wherever, and we can stop for five minutes and people will converge on him. He can't go anywhere, and it's like that for most of the cast.

Q5: You've seen it up close, and you're okay with it?

MORGAN: It's more than I want to deal with. Star magazine has never given a shit about me, and TMZ doesn't know who I am. The show is going to change all of that, and I don't know how I feel about it. It hasn't really hit me yet. I'm already in the process of putting in a ton of security on the farm. After that episode aired, I started seeing weird things in my mailbox and people coming up my driveway to take pictures. The cast members don't go to the grocery store. They don't go out to eat. AMC has told them in no uncertain terms that they have to lie low until the premiere. We've been given very strict directions on what we can and can't say between now and then.

Q6: You've been at this for a long time. When did you start acting?

MORGAN: I was 22 and I'm 50 now, so I've been acting for almost 30 years. I wanted to be a graphic artist. I grew up in Seattle. I had been selling paintings in bars to pay my rent. All my friends were musicians in Seattle when grunge was blowing up. I had an actor friend who was moving to L.A., and I went with him. I went to a few auditions and got a part playing a pimp in a Roger Corman movie called *Uncaged*. I remember driving down Hollywood Boulevard in a Cadillac convertible with a camera mounted to it and thinking, I've got this wired, man. I had been there only a month, and I was already the lead in a movie. And then I struggled forever. I didn't break out until *Grey's Anatomy* and *Supernatural* hit, when I was 39 years old.

Q7: That must have been a hectic year. What do you remember?

MORGAN: I was doing *Grey's Anatomy* and *Supernatural* at the same time, and then they aired at the same time. Zack Snyder was a fan of *Grey's Anatomy* and cast me as the Comedian in *Watchmen*, which was the exact opposite of Denny Duquette. For a while, I would get tackled by women at the grocery store. I was at the Harley dealership yesterday, and a lady knew I was an actor and couldn't figure out who I was. And all of a sudden, I saw the lightbulb go off: It's Denny.

Q8: Speaking of Harleys, didn't you and Norman bike up north recently?

MORGAN: We went to Nashville from Atlanta. It's like four and a half hours if you take the freeways, but we took back roads through the mountains. I have a new bike that has GPS and we just put in "no freeways." We didn't care how long it took us, and it was about nine and a half hours each way. Just the two of us. It was great.

Q9: I hear you have pet alpacas on your farm. What is an alpaca?

MORGAN: An alpaca is a camelid. They spit at you. They honk at you a little bit. We don't have enough for a serious wool operation, but we get enough to process it and give to some of our friends. We have Highland cattle that look like woolly mammoths—they're as big as a Volkswagen—and a calf named Hamilton. We saved two baby ducks that think they're dogs. And we have chickens. I'm usually outside working on something. We built a workshop and a barn last winter, and we're doing an addition now. There's a lot of grass to mow, a lot of snow to plow.

Q10: You joined Twitter in August with the handle @JDMorgan, but you haven't been very active. Do you have an incognito account, or are you just not into social media?

MORGAN: I've never had a stealth

account, or any account. When we were at Comic-Con this summer, our showrunner, Scott Gimple, said I should get an account so other people wouldn't pretend to be me on Twitter. I have never really understood social media. I don't understand how actors complain about privacy and then tweet what they're having for dinner.

Q11: Back to Negan. He says a lot of funny things, like "Pissin' our pants yet?" Is that all in the script?

MORGAN: This may evolve as we go, but all of my dialogue so far has come almost straight from the comic—way more so than any other character. I want to be careful not to make Negan too cartoony. The world of *The Walking Dead* is so gritty and dark that I wondered if playing him bigger than life would fit. The dialogue lends itself to going super big, so I've had to fit that a lot. Every director who comes in wants to have his Negan moment, and I want to reel it in.

We do the F-bomb take, where every other word is fuck or fucking. It's so much. I swear like a fucking sailor in real life, and it's a lot for me. I've been trying to make him as realistic as possible in this *Walking Dead* world and yet keep the larger-than-life comic-book character alive.

Q12: TV has a recent history of celebrating antiheroes and other morally ambiguous characters, from Tony Soprano to Wilson Fisk in *Daredevil*. Do you see Negan as a pure villain?

MORGAN: The introduction of Negan is probably even more straight-up evil, but it's complicated. Rick Grimes, Andrew Lincoln's character, has done some horrible things in the past seven years. Negan does horrendous things, but there's a certain charisma and sense of humor that the audience would feel if they had been following him for the past seven years instead of Grimes. Negan is coming in and blowing apart the show,

**AN ANONYMOUS PERSON CAN SAY
MY FACE LOOK LIKE A FOOT OR I'M
TED CRUZ'S DOPPELGANGER. THAT
DOESN'T AFFECT ME.**



20 Q



and he's a guy people are going to hate.

Q13: Was he ever motivated by making the world a better place?

MORGAN: Robert Kirkman, who's a producer and writes the comic series, sent me the first 48 pages of Negan's backstory from the comics. I don't know if it will ever end up in the show, but it's interesting to see that Negan

was a husband and a coach before the apocalypse. He was a physical education teacher. He coached Ping-Pong. [laughs] He ended an affair when his wife, Lucille, got cancer, and he was in the hospital with her when the apocalypse hit. He takes people in and tries to protect them from these zombies. No one listens to him, and they continually die. He becomes this abrasive asshole, this dictator who leads by the threat of violence.

Q14: He named the bat he uses to kill people after his wife?

MORGAN: Yeah, Lucille was his wife's name. There's a human in there somewhere. That's the only way I can play a guy like that. I have to approach every scene with him like there's the possibility of a person in there—the sense of humor, the charisma that shows a sense of who he was.

Q15: Who's your Mount Rushmore of TV villains?

MORGAN: I love, love, loved Ian McShane on *Deadwood*. David Milch would write these five-page monologues, and McShane had this dark, poetic delivery. Walton Goggins from *Justified*—so sleazy with that snake-charmer charisma. John Lithgow for *Dexter*, which was an extraordinary season. And Mads Mikkelsen for *Hannibal*.

Q16: What makes a villain tick?

MORGAN: To be a good villain, there has to be some unpredictability. With Negan, it's the unpredictability that you'll survive the conversation. He can be having a normal conversation with you, and all of a sudden you're dead. McShane was the same—he could smile and put a bullet in your head. A good villain has to be smart, and Negan is always a move or two ahead of everyone else.

Q17: The *Walking Dead* and *Game of Thrones* have a lot in common: big scale, big stakes, a lot of character work, bravura violent scenes. How do you explain their insane popularity?

MORGAN: It's such a crapshoot what people will embrace. I love *Game of Thrones*, and I can't explain why I love it so much. I got hooked watching Peter Dinklage, who is so, so good. I think they're character-driven shows. It's not the zombies and the dragons; people are relating to these characters and how they

struggle. A lot of people embrace the violence, but I meet a lot of people who say they don't watch *The Walking Dead* because it's too violent. With our show, and I think with *Game of Thrones* too, people like the characters and they want to see what happens with them. They're flipping out now because they have so much time invested in these characters who are part of their lives, and they're going to lose one of them. I just hope I'll be able to walk down the street without people hurling shit at my head.

Q18: Is *The Walking Dead* all you have time for, or are you talking about joining any of the major film franchises?

MORGAN: I'm not, but that's obviously the wave of the future. I'm purely locked into *The Walking Dead* at this point. I played Thomas Wayne, a small bit, in *Batman v Superman*, and Zack Snyder and I talked a little about the Flashpoint comic where Thomas Wayne is Batman and is a really dark dude. DC has a lot on its plate right now with all the spin-offs, but that's a character I would relish playing.

Q19: Are you signed to play Negan beyond this season?

MORGAN: Yeah, I'll be around for a little while. Negan is introduced in issue 100 in the comics, and he's still in it some 50 issues later. If we keep going at this rate, and if they follow the comic book, that could be three or four seasons. We haven't had a lot of conversations about what's ahead, but the show is in a rare position. Unless the audience just totally says "Fuck off," I think we'll be around for a while longer. I can honestly tell you—this is no bullshit at all—it's the most fun I've ever had. It's also the biggest challenge I've ever had. There's no sleepwalking through this character.

Q20: Do you want to be 70 years old and still going to Comic-Con for *The Walking Dead*?

MORGAN: Oh hell yes. What I do for a living is to put myself out there and hope people enjoy my work. The ones who enjoy the work are the ones who go to the conventions, and it's important to interact with fans. I've heard so many stories of people being sick and binge-watching a show or relating to a character, and you meet people and realize it can be a life-changing moment to meet you. It's a profound thing. It can be very emotional. 🙌





'Road-trip-pin'

Photography By **GREG MANIS** Model **HANNAH GLASTBY**











WHO PUTS GUNS IN THE MOVIES?

BY **ADAM SKOLNIOK**

"So, are you ready to fire a machine gun?"

In reply, I smile.

My anticipation has been building for more than an hour—ever since the tour began in the revolver room, a place that would feel familiar to any policeman from the 1970s (like, say, Dirty Harry Callahan). Larry Zanoff, a former soldier in the Israeli military and one of Hollywood's most sought-after armors, guides me from the revolver room to the Western room, where I gawk at Gatling guns, lever-action rifles and double-barreled shotguns, brand-new and gleaming, racked floor to ceiling in perfect order by year and manufacturer.

"There's a misconception that the guns people see in movies are fake," Zanoff says. "Most of these are reproductions, but they're real."

Soon I'm fingering a German Luger from World War I, cradling a Japanese matchlock rifle from the

1500s and, later, shamelessly posing with a vintage 18th century dueling pistol. But the highlight of my tour through Hollywood's biggest armory, where some 16,000 weapons are stored in six rooms, is the NFA room—named for the 1934 National Firearms Act, which placed strict regulations on machine guns in the Al Capone heyday of bootleggers, bank robbers and public gangland hits. On display here are grenade launchers, mortar tubes, .50-caliber machine guns, sniper rifles and racks of assault weapons, including—ironically—dozens of semiautomatic AR-15s.

Although the commercial sale of automatic weapons remains prohibited in the United States, the semiauto market is booming and legal, and its biggest star, thanks to its versatility and reliability, is the AR-15. You've heard of it. It's often stockpiled by those preparing for the apocalypse and publicly

flaunted by open-carry zealots. It has had a leading role in more than one of our country's mass shootings, and judging by recent history, it's likely to play a vital part in the next big production starring a psychopath near you.

As I drove that morning through picturesque suburban horse country to the converted government compound northwest of downtown Los Angeles that houses Independent Studio Services—Hollywood's preeminent prop house—I kept thinking of the AR-15 and wondering if there's a credible link between Hollywood and gun violence in America. And I hated myself for it. I grew up in the 1980s, when those Tipper Gore-inspired Parental Advisory labels on CDs smacked as much of Bible-thumping censorship as they did of concern for kids. This is why I typically don't blame creatives for what ails us as a culture, but then June and July happened.



It began with the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando on June 12. Next came Alton Sterling (July 5), Philando Castile (July 6), Dallas (July 7) and Baton Rouge (July 17). Innocent civilians and innocent cops, all killed for no good reason within days of one another. It was tragic and horrifying, and the resulting anger, grief, conflict and political opportunism saturated America. Then in the midst of it came the marketing rollout for *Jason Bourne*. The poster was stylish, minimalist, with a background as black as a midnight shadow, showing only a sliver of Matt Damon stepping into the light to aim his Sig Sauer P229R pistol.

Given the timing, it wasn't a good look. Tami Sagher, co-executive producer of *Girls*, posted on her Instagram and Twitter feeds an image of the ad, taken at a subway stop, with the gun torn off. She suggested New Yorkers start tearing the Sig off all the *Bourne* posters. "So tired of guns," she wrote. Lena Dunham shared the post, and suddenly a backlash was brewing so loudly that Damon addressed it and Universal switched to a poster featuring the actor sans weapon.

Granted, politics pairs with Hollywood only slightly better than it does with Facebook and Twitter, but Sagher and Dunham were hinting at important, systemic questions we should all consider. Does Hollywood embolden a Chicago drive-by shooting or an ambush of officers on the job? Does it inspire the itchy trigger finger of jumpy cops on patrol or the work of spun-out mass shooters who choose to salve their pain with innocent blood? Does it condition us to gawk, grieve, then shrug our collective shoulders and move on until the next episode? In other words, does Hollywood have a gun problem?

If film sets are dictatorships, then directors are emperors, which means making the final call on which guns their characters use. It's up to armorers like Zanoft to break down a script and narrow the director's choices. If the script specifies a particular gun, Zanoft will oblige, but more often he factors in the script's historical time period and the character's background and skill to determine which guns to bring to the director for a "show-and-tell." There's a reason Hollywood productions rely on folks like Zanoft and ISS to stockpile and handle weapons for them: government regulations.

"We provide a legality," Zanoft says. "Again, these are all real guns; we can't just give them to people. So we're responsible for safety, and we often do actor training and gunfight choreography too." ISS has eight armorers on staff, including three gunsmiths who modify weapons—say, for wars waged in some future or fantasy world—and, more important, convert them to shoot only blanks. Live ammo is never fired on set.

ISS and other armories have to be prepared for such a wide range of stories that they usually source their stock well in advance. And though guns were flashed on-screen before "talkies" became a thing, it wasn't until 1971 that gun manufacturers recognized the value of having their weapons featured in a hit movie.

"It started with *Dirty Harry*," says David Fencel, another A-list armorer, with films such as *Zero Dark Thirty*, *13 Hours* and the *Transformers* franchise to his credit. Sales of the titular character's weapon of choice, the Smith & Wesson Model 29, "skyrocketed after that movie," says Fencel, founder of the Nevada-based shop Point Blank Props.

"Nobody knew when they put that revolver in Clint's hand that it would boost sales, because no law enforcement officer ever carried that gun," Zanoft adds. "It was an oddball thing."

"It was designed for fishermen in Alaska to protect themselves against bears," Fencel says. But that didn't stop fans of the movie—and fans of guns—from buying the model, and it wasn't the last time gun guys bought weapons or ammo ill-suited for their needs.

Zanoft experienced the power of motion pictures before he was in show business. In the mid-1980s he worked at a small manufacturer called Calico Light Weapon Systems. Its signature gun, the Calico, was featured in *Total Recall*, the classic Arnold Schwarzenegger film. When Zanoft went to work on the Monday after the movie opened, the company's voice mail was filled with messages from people who wanted those exploding rounds they'd just seen in the movie. "And we were like, 'It was a movie. There are no exploding rounds in nine millimeter for this gun,'" he says. But munitions manufacturers soon caught wind of the demand and built an exploding round for the Calico.

Zanoft calls it "life imitating art," and weapons companies noticed. "After *Dirty Harry*, manufacturers realized that getting their product into a film is worth millions in advertising," he says. Today many weapons companies regularly ship their best goods to film armorers, hoping to make the cut.

"We do see value in being placed in a movie, and on TV shows too," says Kevin Wilkerson, marketing manager for Arkansas-based Walther Arms, maker of the sleek and stylish PPK handgun preferred by James Bond. "Armorers contact me sometimes, and we'll donate product, but I haven't dealt with any who pay for it."

Sometimes preferential treatment extends beyond the usual swag weaponry. In 2012, Fencel was in Amman, Jordan working on *Zero Dark Thirty*. According to Fencel, in the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, two SEAL Team Six members carried HK417 fully automatic rifles, but at the time the cameras were rolling, that model was available only to armed forces. Then, just as director Kathryn Bigelow was preparing to shoot the raid scene, news broke that

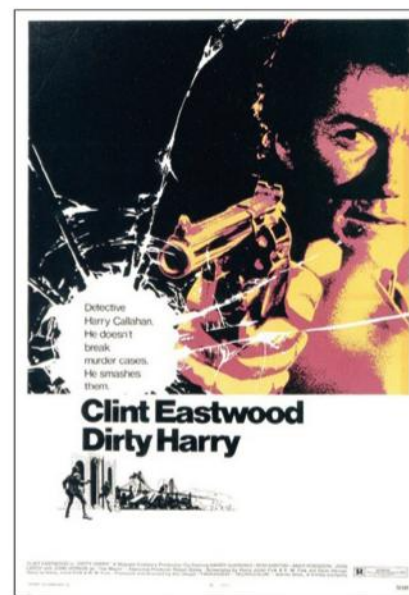
a civilian version of the weapon, the MR308, was about to come out. Fencel placed a call to the manufacturer, Heckler & Koch.

"Everyone wanted them," he says, "but I told them about the movie, and they sent me the first two ever made."

Sometimes weapons manufacturers place stipulations on the use of their products. When Fencel was hired last year to work on *Patriots Day*, the Peter Berg film about the Boston Marathon bombing due out this winter, he discovered that the Boston cops on the subsequent manhunt had been carrying Glock. "Glock typically wants you to sign something saying it won't be given to a bad guy," Fencel says. "Luckily the Tsarnaev brothers didn't use a Glock, so I signed."

Zanoft and ISS refuse to make such guarantees. "We don't promise anything as far as who will hold it or how," Zanoft says. "Too many decisions get made on the fly."

Some companies are willing to buy assurances. Another Peter Berg film, *Lone Survivor*, a surprise hit starring Mark Wahlberg, became a poster child for firearms product integration after its 2013 release. The film tells the tale of a Navy SEAL team that was overrun in the mountains of Afghanistan in 2005. Although the real-life SEALs carried Sigs that day, firearms manufacturer Beretta reportedly paid \$250,000 to ensure that when Matthew "Axe" Axelson (played by Ben Foster) runs out of ammo for his



SALES OF DIRTY HARRY'S WEAPON OF CHOICE, THE SMITH & WESSON MODEL 29, SKYROCKETED AFTER THE MOVIE CAME OUT.



rifle, he fires his Beretta M9 pistol instead.

Rolf Auerbach, CEO of Brand In Entertainment, brokered that deal. Auerbach has been in product integration since 1996, and he insists *Lone Survivor* isn't an anomaly. "We've worked with a number of gun companies," he says. He scoffs at the reported amount Beretta paid to place its product in the movie and suggests it was higher, though he won't say for sure. He claims Beretta got its money's worth. "They did very well, and that's all I will tell you," he says.

ISS has also inked product-integration deals for firearms, though Zanoff insists it's rare. More often, he encounters directors who demand bigger, better and newer. "Every movie that comes out, especially nowadays, has to top the last one," he says.

Is that because we've seen too much? Have we, the audience, become addicts who need a more potent fix to feel something? If so, there is a cure. No matter how thrilling the action in a movie, it can't compete with the real thing.

After the tour of ISS, Zanoff escorts me to the house gun range and hands me a Heckler & Koch MP5A2 submachine gun. It feels light when I lift it to shoulder level, squint through the sight and point it at a metallic wall. There's no target because we're shooting blanks, which means no kickback either. But when I squeeze the trigger, the barrel flames and spent shells spout from the chamber, clattering at my feet—just like in the movies. "Can I do it again?" I ask. This time Zanoff cracks a smile.

...

So yeah, I liked it, but I couldn't determine if that was because of the experience itself or because I associate guns with the heroes and stories I love. In other words, was my thrill theoretical or physical?

Perhaps it was both.

The next time I fire a weapon is only a few weeks later. My gun of choice: a Heckler & Koch G36. This time, instead of standing I'm sitting in a tent set up in the parking lot of the Forum in Inglewood, California, and the trigger I'm tickling is that of a game

console. In a few seconds a row of unshaven millennial men and I—plus a woman or two—will drop into a game of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare Remastered*.

First-person shooters such as *Call of Duty* dominate the video game market because they combine the experience of being a hero on the battlefield with the fantasy that only a good story can provide. The sounds, graphics and characters pull you in, and the thrill of scoring a direct hit and beating your friends heightens the rush.

While I sit in a tent with the regular folk, Michael Phelps, Derrick Rose and Karl-Anthony Towns are in a VIP room somewhere, doing battle. The carnival-like event, *Call of Duty XP*, is a fan celebration—Activision's first in five years—and people have flown in from all over the world to attend. It's also a buzz builder for the release of *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare*. The event features three tents for playing the game, a paintball battlefield, a virtual-reality space made from converted storage containers, a championship e-sports tournament in the Forum itself, military vehicles on display and a zip line.

Call of Duty is a gaming Goliath. Each new release is the biggest entertainment launch of the year. Last year's *Call of Duty: Black Ops III* earned Activision \$550 million in just three days, and the video game business as a whole dwarfs Hollywood, making it an easy target following a mass shooting.

After the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012, National Rifle Association executive vice president and CEO Wayne LaPierre took a shot at the industry. "There exists in this country...a callous, corrupt and corrupting shadow industry that sells and sows violence against its own people," he said. "Vicious, violent video games."

Don't blame the guns, LaPierre argued; blame video games. That's a leap, but if millions of kids spend endless hours playing first-person shooter games, it does seem fair to wonder if they may become desensitized or even conditioned to violence. Of course,

LaPierre, reductionist that he is, left a few things out. Like the fact that weapons companies collaborate with video game developers and designers to make the games look, sound and feel like the real thing.

No video game company contacted for this story agreed to go on the record about its relationship with gun companies, but Mark DeLoura, former senior advisor for digital media in the White House and a 20-year veteran of the gaming industry, has personally witnessed game designers firing weapons at a shooting range and recording the various sounds for their games. "Realism has become so important," he says. "Anything game designers can do to make it more realistic, they'll do, because they want realism, and their players want realism."

"Weapons manufacturers have CAD diagrams, the original 3-D models," says Simon Parkin, author of *Death by Video Game*, "so they can just send all that information to the video game developer. Because they're also working within 3-D software engines, they're able to exactly replicate the weapon. I know that happens in the *Call of Duty* franchise."

An anonymous source at Activision says that the company licenses the weapons featured in *Call of Duty*. Translation: Activision pays the manufacturers of the weapons featured in its video games. The scope of each licensing agreement is unknown. It could be a one-time payment or a small percentage of each game sold. Either way, it sure looks as though gun companies—and therefore the NRA—are partially funded by your *Call of Duty* dollar.

The larger impact of weaponized media is less clear. "It's marketing," DeLoura says. "People see a weapon in a game and maybe they want that gun because it's cool."

Still, no hard statistics can prove a link between gun purchases and video games, and the overwhelming majority of academics agree there's no credible cause-and-effect relationship between the consumption of violent media—games, films or TV—and an increase in gun violence.



"If it's a factor, it's 25th out of 25 factors on a list," says University of Wisconsin associate professor Constance Steinkuehler, who studies video games, education and game-based learning. "Poverty, mental health issues and gun control are all much more significant."

"I haven't found much evidence that watching violent movies or playing violent video games makes people angry, more aggressive or is even correlated to violent crime," says Stetson University psychology professor Christopher Ferguson, who has published widely on the subject. In fact, the opposite may be true.

A 2014 study out of Villanova University entitled "Violent Video Games and Real-World Violence: Rhetoric Versus Data" notes that when new versions of popular video games are released—including especially violent ones such as *Call of Duty*—violent crime among young people drops considerably because so many kids are attached to their game consoles, at least for a while.

Still, I can't shake the thought that the media help boost familiarity with weapons, which breeds increased popularity. And it isn't the fault of Hollywood and the video game industry alone; toss the news and social media into the mix as well. Consider that in the days after the Orlando massacre, when it was erroneously reported that the shooter, Omar Mateen, had used an AR-15, Google searches for that weapon spiked. When it became clear he had used a Sig Sauer MCX, searches for that weapon spiked. People wanted to see the gun he'd used, and some almost certainly bought one for themselves, which brings us back to the gun-loving liberals of Hollywood and their most powerful weapon of all: stories.

For millennia, stories—especially hero tales—have been used to influence and reflect human life. Joseph Campbell, anthropologist and author of the seminal *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, became famous for documenting the hero's journey in myths and legends from cultures around the world. George Lucas

consciously integrated Campbell's work into *Star Wars*. Legions of filmmakers followed suit, and today's heroes are almost always armed for their journey with a gun.

"I think *Call of Duty* enables gamers to act out fantasies of empowerment—to be a hero and live an epic life—in a fictionalized world," Steinkuehler says, "and to be honest, that doesn't frighten me."

But what if the unhinged among us are telling themselves their own hero story? Didn't a crazed Gavin Long—who, don't forget, was a marine—see himself as a hero on the day he killed three cops in Baton Rouge? What about Mateen in Orlando or Micah Johnson, another veteran, in Dallas? They all fantasized and plotted, but most important, they all had access to assault weapons despite their mental

health issues. We as voters, and the politicians who claim to serve us, can't seem to overcome the NRA's congressional choke hold, even though nine out of 10 Americans—gun lovers and haters alike—support universal background checks.

The whole world watches Hollywood movies and plays the same violent video games, yet firearms-related murders are 25 times higher in the United States than in other developed nations—because we have more guns on the street.

Maybe the real problem isn't Hollywood the influencer but Hollywood the reflection. We're all so comfortable watching the same damn movies, playing the same games and feigning the same outrage and heartache, we've become too blind to see the laser sight settling right between our eyes.



Games like *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* allows us to play both hero and shooter.



PLAYMATE

Janine Rivera

INNER SENSES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY OWEN REYES

WORDS BY PAUL WENCESLAO

More than just a pretty face, Miss February Janine Rivera intends to conquer new ground with indomitable character and by keepin' it real.

Miss February Janine Rivera has everything going for her. Tantalizing eyes - check. A bountiful bosom - well covered. Lovely face - certainly. Endearing personality - absolutely. A quick glance is all it takes for a man to believe in the Law of Attraction, with her being the focal point of those fleeting seconds. We're lucky enough to be in the constellation of her presence, and boy, were we drawn to her!

At 19 years of age, Janine has already built up an impressive modeling career. Chances are, you'll find her face - among other things - familiar if you frequent car shows and fancy company affairs. "I model for local and international car shows, bar tours, corporate events, and expos. I'm also a brand ambassador for a large fuel company and a popular car manufacturer," she reveals.

Outside of her busy schedule, Janine finds time to go ice skating and perform household chores. She carefully picks what she eats, since she's allergic to most fish, chicken, canned food, and products laced with preservatives. Feasting mostly on vegetables, fruits, and pork meat, her diet helps

her maintain her curvaceous figure.

Delving further, Janine has a practicality to her that makes her endearing to both friends and suitors, regardless of her appearance. "I'm happy being me. I don't see the need to pretend to be someone else just to be liked by others," she admits. Interestingly, this extends to her definition of a dream date.

"My dream date is a simple one - just an intimate dinner in an elegant restaurant where we can converse. There is no need for fancy cars and clothes. What's important is that we're truly enjoying each other's company."

Janine may be only exiting her teenage years, but her sense of justice gives you the impression that you're communicating with someone a lot older. Her view on dating and relationships isn't something you would readily hear from people her age.

"I want guys to show women the respect that they deserve. Personally, I want my date to respect me in the same way that I respect him at the very least. He does not have to be good-looking. What I'm after is a good sense of humor, because it's the bond that counts," she opines.

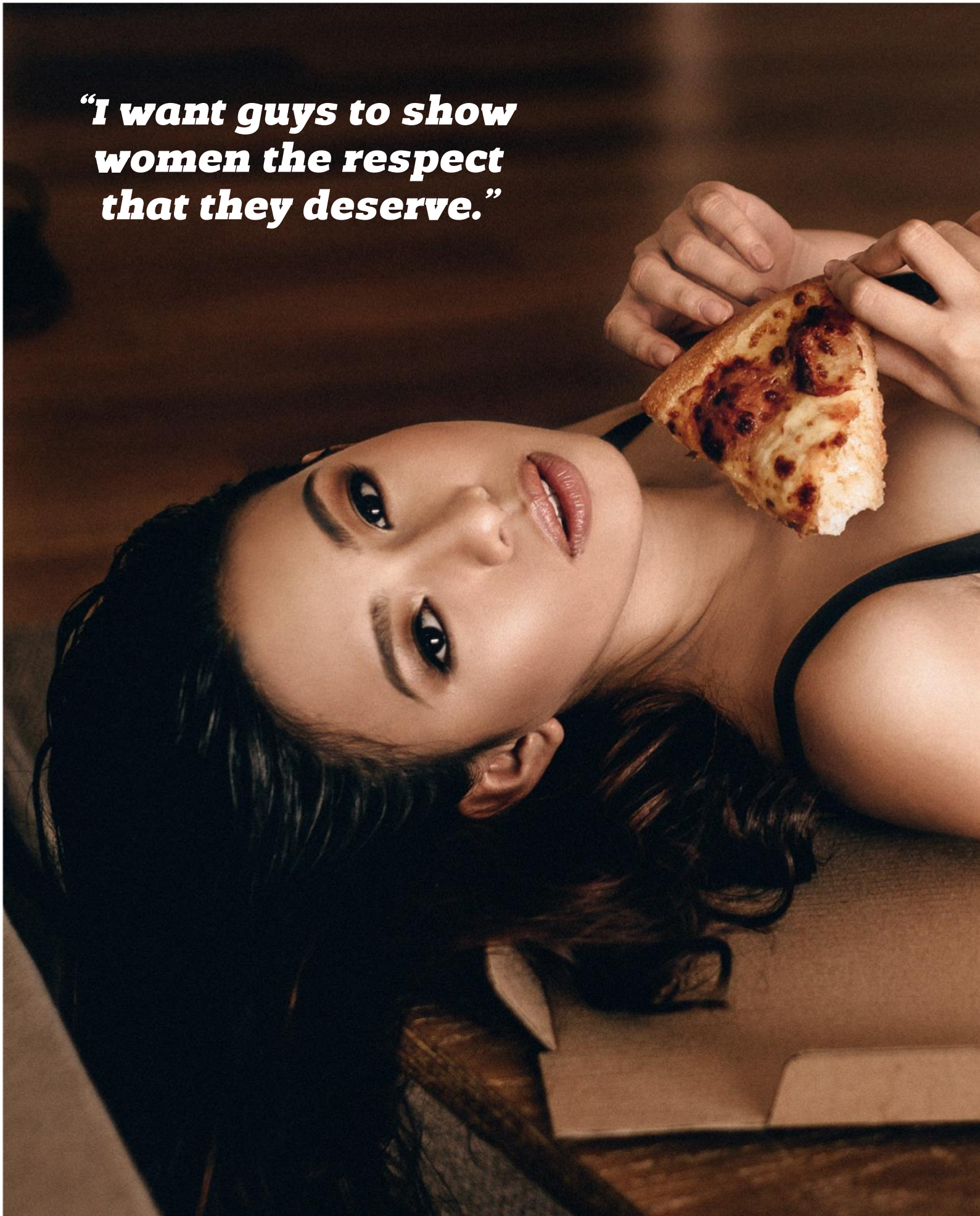


MAKEUP BY KYLE CONCEPCION
HAIR BY ADDIE SANTOS





***“I want guys to show
women the respect
that they deserve.”***









Contrary to what one would think, Janine is actually quite shy. Sure, she has no trouble baring skin in front of the camera, but the thought of doing interviews or even make-up tutorials on YouTube frightens her. “I know what to say, but my mind just freezes. It’s a bad case of stage fright, I guess,” she laughs.


As for her future plans, Janine maintains a pragmatic mindset. She recognizes that one can’t have the proverbial spotlight forever, which is why she’s determined to make the most out of her experience while she’s still young. And posing for Playboy is indeed a step in the right direction.

“For us models, we love the exposure and the other benefits that Playboy can give us. We can get more projects and the added publicity helps us gain more successful careers,” she explains.

Janine intends to rise above the ranks in the modeling world and be recognized for the things that she has and will accomplish. We can’t wait until she reaches the top and conquers more ground. And based on her photos, she’ll be happy to take your undivided attention on the way there.







The Beauties of Sinaloa

Mexico's beauty-pageant circuit is a place for

women to be discovered by talent scouts—and

drug cartels. Playboy travels to the land of

El Chapo to witness the hope and the danger

Photography By
OLIVIA JAFFE



“¡Silencio, por favor!”

The chattering audience in the bleachers at Televisoras Grupo Pacifico's Culiacán soundstage is causing programming director Francisco Arce Camarena a great deal of stress. It's 9:30 A.M. on a Tuesday in late May, and filming of a casting for the northwestern Mexican state of Sinaloa's

By **JESSICA P. OGILVIE**

most prominent annual beauty pageant needs to get under way. Behind Arce Camarena, 16 young women pose in an arc, delicately positioned on an ivory set with the letters *NB*, for *Nuestra Belleza* (“Our Beauty”), written in pink cursive. So stunning that they look like onyx-haired Barbies come to life, the women have their hands on their outer hips, their front-facing knees gently bent and smiles twitching on their angel-like faces. In accordance with pageant requirements, they're all between 18 and 24, five-foot-five or taller and at least conversant in English. They've arrived from all across the state. Those who make the cut today will go on to compete in *Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa*, whose winner will be in the running for *Nuestra Belleza Mexico*, which funnels its titleholder to Miss Universe—one of the largest beauty pageants in the world. This morning, the women stand beneath glaring television lights, in front of a now-silent audience full of their hopeful families and friends, waiting to be evaluated. But once today's casting airs, the judges won't be the only ones watching. The women will be seen by all of Mexico, including the region's richest and most dangerous men—members of the Sinaloa cartel. Widely believed to be one of the most powerful drug-trafficking organizations in the Western hemisphere, the cartel is among the largest suppliers of heroin, meth, marijuana and cocaine to the U.S. Its leader, Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera, is reportedly worth \$1 billion. He made international headlines the past few years for being captured, escaping from prison through a tunnel, scurrying off on a motorcycle, giving an interview to Sean Penn and then being captured again just a few months later.

For decades, men like El Chapo have courted pageant queens with money and gifts, pursuing them as aggressively as real estate moguls chasing a hot piece of property in L.A. or New York. Some women fend them off, wary of the violence of narco life. Others compete in pageants with the explicit goal of meeting rich but potentially dangerous men, weighing the risk against the chance to lift themselves and



their families out of the poverty from which many of them come.

"Most of the girls know this guy might kill them any minute, anytime, anywhere," says Javier Valdez Cárdenas, a Culiacán-based reporter and author of the 2010 book *Miss Narco*. "But that's the only way to mobilize in this society. There's no employment here. That's the only option they see."

It's impossible to say how cognizant pageant contestants are of narcos' covetous eyes when they sign up. While Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa can be a legitimate career step, it's also a guaranteed way to draw attention—wanted or not—from the cartel's most powerful operatives.

The pageant's reputation as an avenue for drug lords to discover new women isn't a secret, says Valdez Cárdenas. And when it comes to the money and power they hope will serve as bait, "nothing can compete against narcotraffickers," he says. "There's no religion, no political body, no government that can compete; they have more money and power than anyone."

...

Culiacán is Sinaloa's capital and largest city. Much of the rest of the state is rural; most inhabitants are farmers who produce tomatoes, wheat and sugarcane, among other things. The fertile soil is what has made the cartel's marijuana- and opium-growing operations so successful.

It sees fewer tourists than other Sinaloan cities, including the beachside destination of Mazatlán. A known hub of cartel activity, Culiacán has been painted by international newspapers as the type of place where foreigners may be shot or kidnapped as soon as they step off a plane. In reality, parts of the city look more like a quaint European village, a colorful medley of one-story buildings, street murals and outdoor cafés, with sidewalk stands selling *horchata* and other *aguas frescas*. A local museum exhibits works of Sinaloa's most influential artists.

When I arrive the week before the casting, the temperature in Culiacán is approaching 100 degrees. The air is tawny brown, and refracted light bounces off the asphalt. I'm here, admittedly, without much of a plan; my months-long attempts to reach pageant organizers have gone exactly nowhere. But there is some promise: My fixer, Miguel Ángel Vega who also works as a reporter for *Ríodoce*, a Culiacán weekly papermade contact this week with a representative who assured him we would be granted access to Tuesday's event.

In Mexico, pageants factor far more prominently in the public consciousness than they do in the U.S. Titleholders become national celebrities; little girls look up to them, wanting to do what they do.

And part of what they do, it seems, is get mixed up with drug lords. One of the first known 20th century weddings of a narcotrafficker and a Mexican beauty queen was between the nephew of Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana and Miss Sinaloa 1958 Kenya Kemmermand Bastidas. The following decade, Ana Victoria Santanares—Miss Sinaloa 1967—wed Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo, a reputed founder of Mexico's Guadalajara cartel.

The tradition was updated in 2007 when El Chapo himself descended on the small town of Canelas, Durango in a legendary display of courtship. According to news reports, Guzmán Loera arrived by plane during a local celebration, flanked by hundreds of armed men, to woo 17-year-old Miss Coffee and Guava contestant Emma Coronel Aispuro. The two were soon married, and Coronel Aispuro bore Guzmán Loera two daughters. She was by his side when he was arrested in a Mazatlán condo in 2014.

Coronel Aispuro has remained untouched, but the same can't be said for other women associated with the cartel. In 2008, El Chapo's mistress Zulema Hernández was killed, some suspect by members of rival cartel Los Zetas. Her body, with the letter Z reportedly carved into it, was left in a car trunk. In 2012, beauty queen María Susana Flores Gámez was caught in a shoot-out between Mexican soldiers and high-ranking Sinaloa cartel member Orso Iván Gastélum Cruz, whom she was dating. Gastélum Cruz escaped. Flores Gámez was killed.

The violence hasn't hampered the relationship between narcos and pageant queens, particularly in Sinaloa. The state has a nationwide reputation for producing some of the country's most beautiful women. To narcos, these women are prizes.

Manuel (not his real name) is a mid-level

trafficker who claims to work for the cartel. At a ranch in Pericos, a town 30 miles north of Culiacán, Manuel who has a wife and two girlfriends explains the connection between cartel members and beauty queens. "Women and power, they are the same," he says. "If you have power, you can have women. It's a luxury. Women love power. That's why we have so many women because we can afford them."

...

Nelly Peña, 23, steps out of her boyfriend's beat-up white sedan into the blazing Culiacán sun. She's wearing John Lennon sunglasses, high-waisted jeans and a white crop top. Her thick curly hair is piled on top of her head. She seems a bit short for a beauty queen, but her looks allowed her to work as a model when she was younger. She says her agency encouraged her to raise her profile by competing in pageants.

Resting against the car and occasionally reprimanding her Labrador, Simba, that's running free in the streets—"*¡Simba, fuera! ¡Rápido!*" Peña explains she took up her agents suggestion as a way to advance her career.

"I want to be a TV host, and I want to be good," she says. "But my dream is to become an actress. That's what really triggers me."

In that sense, many women audition for Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa for the same reasons they might vie for the title of, say, Miss America or America's Next Top Model. They want to be actresses or models, TV hosts or spokespeople. The pageant can serve as a launching pad.

But Peña was immediately instructed in the not-so-secret underpinnings of the beauty world. "*Culiacán es muy pequeña*," she says. Culiacán is very small. "The narcotraffickers know the heads of modeling agencies, so they know who is competing."

According to Peña, those agency heads will sometimes set up a date between a narcotrafficker and a woman at the narco's request.

"They say, 'There is this person who wants to meet you. He can support you in many ways. He can open doors for you,'" says Peña. Sometimes they're more blunt: "*¿Quieres más dinero?*"

**SINALOA HAS A REPUTATION
FOR PRODUCING SOME OF THE
COUNTRY'S MOST BEAUTIFUL
WOMEN. TO NARCOS, THESE
WOMEN ARE PRIZES.**



1. A Sinaloa street 2. Model and aspiring actress Nelly Peña has entered pageants hoping to elevate her career. 3. Peña at home in Mexico

she says. Do you want to make more money?

The women are indirectly encouraged to be nice to the men, to flirt, and soon may find themselves on the receiving end of expensive gifts—cars, phones, trips around the world.

“*Que sí*” if you say yes to them you have a car outside your house the next day,” says Peña. Seeing the surprise on my face, she says, “If you’re impressed, imagine how they feel when they have nothing and all of a sudden they have a car.”

With their activities largely unchecked by cops—many of whom are threatened or paid off—narcos are often free to do whatever they want, to whomever they want. When it comes to courting the state’s *bellezas*, their pickup techniques have all the subtlety of clubbing a woman over the head and dragging her back to a cave. “When a narco sees a girl he likes, he sends a worker to follow her,” says Josue (not his real name), who once ran cash for the cartel. The worker gets the woman’s address, then the narco starts sending presents.

Manuel confirms this. “If they’re hot, I will select them,” he says. “You ask for their phone

number, and you send them gifts—expensive ones, like diamond rings or gold necklaces. Then you just take them to bed.

“I told you,” he adds, “women love power. And they know who holds the power.”

...

“We’re in El Chapo’s territory now,” Ángel Vega says on the Friday morning before the casting. We’re driving south toward Televisoras Grupo Pacifico’s Mazatlán office. We haven’t heard back from pageant reps after leaving several messages, and Arce Camarena, our primary contact, has been slippery. After promising us VIP access to the casting earlier in the week, he has since avoided our calls. Ángel Vega suggests we make the more than two-hour trip to drop in and say hi.

Outside the borders of Culiacán, the landscape becomes immediately and jarringly rural. Unlike the piled-up buildings of the city, homes in the countryside are scattered amid browned fields. The roadside trails off into dirt with almost no separation from the asphalt.

Thirty minutes into our drive, I explain my original plan for reporting this story: to fly in

and out of Culiacán without the cartel knowing I was here. Ángel Vega who has been reporting on the Sinaloa cartel for almost a decade turns to me from the driver’s seat.

“Without the cartel knowing?” he says, then throws his head back and laughs. “They already know you’re here.”

The cartel has fly lists, he explains. Upon recognizing the name of an American journalist, operatives would have looked into me, possibly even found out what story I was trying to do, then decided whether I would have access or not.

“If they didn’t want you to tell this story, no one would talk to you,” he says. “You would get no interviews. You pose no danger to them, so you’re okay.”

This is a blow to my ego—as a journalist, my job is to pose a danger to certain people. But it also makes me realize how much I’ve bought into the myth of the cartel as an underground operation—and of myself as a sort of secret infiltrator.

Valdez Cárdenas explains later that, to Sinaloans, such an assumption is almost



1. An award at a custom-gown studio in Culiacán. 2. Pérez López having makeup applied at Conchita Torre's beauty salon.

laughable. "You have to understand," he says, "narcotrafficking is a way of life in this society. Every single road connects to the narco world. That's our reality."

...

When we finally arrive in Mazatlán, Ángel Vega finagles our way into the station by saying we have a meeting with Arce Camarena. We're shown through a series of corridors, then deposited on a couch outside a production office. Minutes later, a young dude dressed in what is apparently the international uniform for TV bros distressed jeans, a hoodie over a T-shirt, Warby Parker like glasses comes out. He speaks to Ángel Vega for a minute in Spanish, then Ángel Vega translates. Arce Camarena isn't here, he says. He's out in the field. But he's so sorry he missed us, and we're all set with VIP press access to next week's casting.

We are both skeptical.

...

In the Las Quintas area of Culiacán, Conchita Torres's eponymous beauty salon is on the second floor of a white and beige stucco building. One of the most renowned hair and makeup stylists in the city, Torres says she has been working with Televisoras Grupo Pacífico for nine years.

With iridescent brown eyes and a shy smile she can't help flashing every time something amuses her, which is often, Torres talks about the contestants as gently as if they were her own children. It's now Monday night, and her job at tomorrow's casting is to tweak whatever

looks the women show up with, making them both pageant- and camera-ready. "I tell them, 'This is too much' or 'This is not enough,'" she says. "So let's just balance what you did."

Their hair will be styled in soft waves. Their skin should be even—"not very dark on the arms and light on the shoulders, or vice versa," says Torres—and their makeup will be natural. (Natural for pageants and television is, of course, a bit different from natural for every day.)

As it happens, when we arrive, Torres is also being visited by Alejandra Rubi Pérez López, 2015's Miss Teenager Mexico and Miss Teenager Earth. Quietly thumbing through magazines in a salon chair, Pérez López is so pretty it's hard not to stare. She's tall and slim with delicate features, and her thick, espresso brown hair pours perfectly over her shoulders. As of today, Pérez López says, she's been competing in pageants for two years. She started as a way to help her family, but she has determined that the experience also helps her professional polish; she wants to work in marketing one day.

"You see a lot of people from different places, and you learn a lot about different countries," she says, never dropping her Vaseline smile. "It's great for my career."

Pérez López doesn't have a boyfriend—she says her manager has advised her to stay single until she's 25. "I have to devote my focus to my career," she says. "I'm only 18."

But should she catch the eye of the wrong

man—even if she turns him down—she may find someone coming after her.

Raquel Vega works at a different beauty salon, one that's popular with narco women. For narcos' mistresses, she says, the biggest risk isn't the narco himself—it's his wife.

"The wives send hit men to kill the girlfriends," she says. "The wife is the worst enemy they have."

Her clients often spend entire days at the salon—"manicures, pedicures, hair extensions, facial treatments," Vega says—which can cost up to \$600. Many go further, getting breast and butt implants until they begin to look like caricatures. "They don't care about being educated, funny, smart—it's only how they look on the outside," she says.

But accepting money from a drug lord comes at a price, and Manuel isn't shy about the fact that he expects sex on demand. "Fuck yes," he says. "That's why you pay for their shit. I can go to any of my mistresses, and they better put out."

In fact, he takes it one step further. "I own them," he says. "If you have a pet, whose is that pet? It's yours! Your brother, your cousin, your neighbor—they're not paying for your women; you are. So you own them."

Still, the allure of narcotraffickers is well understood. A young woman I'll call Guadalupe (she won't tell me her real name) says she competed in Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa several years ago. She works as a model now, but some of her friends wound up with narcos.



She doesn't begrudge them their choices.

"If, in their hearts, they believe their decisions are the best, I wish them well," she says.

It's too soon to say whether Pérez López will be able to fend off suitors. In the meantime, she focuses on her pageant talent. Leaning forward in the salon chair, she pulls out her phone to show us a sample. It's a traditional Sinaloan deer dance, in which Pérez López plays the part of the deer.

"Supposedly you are being hunted. You are hiding from the hunter because you know he is after you, so you are trying to hide away every time," she says. "You are prey."

...

At 8:30 the next morning, the hallway at Televisoras Grupo Pacífico's Culiacán soundstage is full of women. They are otherworldly, tight dresses hugging their curves, their hair magnificently cresting down their backs.

We quickly find Arce Camarena, or rather he finds us. It's then, as we're about to clinch the story we're actually here to report, that we find out what has been going on all these months.

First Arce Camarena apologizes—he can't let us in. The network told him we're with *PLAYBOY*, and they don't want to be associated with the magazine. Then, as we press him, he says he can't let us in because we lied about not contacting the network. (No such lie was told.)

Finally, five minutes before the cameras flick on, Arce Camarena begins a rapid-fire conversation with Ángel Vega in Spanish. I don't catch all of it, but I do make out "*narcotráfico*." The real reason they don't want us here, it turns out, is because they believe we have nefarious intentions when it comes to the angle of the story.

It's a point I can't argue with. Journalists come to Sinaloa from all over the world to taste the danger associated with the cartel. Many have more straightforward assignments than I do—they want to go to opium fields or interview hit men. But we're all after the same thing: exposing cartel culture.

Which is why I do not give full disclosure; I do not tell the truth when Arce Camarena finishes his conversation with Ángel Vega and approaches me.

"What is your angle?" he asks.

"I want to write about how different beauty pageants are in Mexico than they are in the U.S."

"What is your angle?" he repeats.

"Well, I also want to talk about how Sinaloa has the most beautiful girls in the country."

He sighs. "*Amiga*," he says. "I know you are going to do whatever you're going to do with your notes and interviews. But I just ask that you not take a negative angle."

I am embarrassed, I am humbled, and I briefly debate calling the story off. After all, I believe Nelly, and I believe Alejandra, and I believe Guadalupe when they say they entered pageants to advance their careers. What woman can be faulted for using a God-given advantage to secure her future? If that advantage happens to be beauty, so be it. Why should I tarnish the image of an organization that offers them that opportunity?

Arce Camarena decides to let us stay, but we have to wait outside. He then disappears behind the two doors separating us from the soundstage.

It's now one minute to showtime. I stand in the hallway with Ángel Vega and our photographer, all of us unsure if we should leave. Right then, a blonde woman dressed like a CEO pushes open the doors and heads inside.

are briefly released to change clothes before filming officially begins. They scatter to find their parents and friends. One yells up to the bleachers: "*¡Mama!*" Her mother tosses down a multi-colored bikini top. "*¡Y los otros!*" Down come the matching bottoms.

Suddenly I feel two large hands on my shoulders. Arce Camarena, somehow, has materialized behind me. "*Amiga*," he says again, "you know you're not supposed to be in here."

I fumble through a shoddy explanation: I thought only my *photographer* couldn't come in. Couldn't I just stand back here and watch? I don't even have my notebook with me, see? He looks at me as if he pities my dilemma and my general state of existence.

"Fine," he says, turning to walk away. "But if I see you recording, I'm kicking you out."

Ten minutes later, the contestants reappear wearing only bathing suits and high heels. The cameras roll, and the contest begins.

...

In online photos, the women in Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa's annual lineup look like

"NARCOTRAFFICKING IS A WAY OF LIFE IN THIS SOCIETY. EVERY SINGLE ROAD CONNECTS TO THE NARCO WORLD. THAT'S OUR REALITY."

Ángel Vega, looking straight ahead, says, "You might make it in."

I have seconds to make the call. I jump up and follow her into the room.

...

Arce Camarena is pacing in front of the bleachers, yelling commands to a crew of at least a dozen. The 16 contestants are now onstage, so brightly lit that their primary-color dresses make them look like a box of beautiful crayons: bright yellow, deep blue, siren red.

Perla Beltrán Acosta, Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa 2008, who now serves as the pageant's coordinator, is demonstrating the proper way to walk. She glides across the stage, turns down the runway, stops at the microphone, turns again and glides back. The women laugh at how easy she makes it look. When she steps away for an on-camera interview, the competitors

lean, classy Kardashians, all cartoon curves, implausibly big eyes and hair that seems like it should smell perpetually of strawberries. In person, they're even more unreal. Gathering at the stage's edge in groups of three, they step up one by one, cross to the middle, bear left down the runway and approach the microphone to answer questions from the four judges.

The first contestant seems nervous but not inexperienced. At the end of the runway, she places her hand expertly on her hip. The questions take about three minutes, and she is then escorted into a room behind the bleachers.

The second has a bit more spunk. She stops to pose at the microphone, shaking her extravagant hair out behind her.

Contestant number three speaks in a mature, soothing alto. Placing her fingertips delicately on the microphone, she addresses the judges.





"*Buenos días*," she says. Why do you think you should be Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa? "*Por mi carisma*."

The women continue their parade for more than an hour. Each presents a slight variation on the aesthetic theme: One has a waist so small her hands touch when she places them on her hips. Another looks so young and wobbly her presence here is almost uncomfortable. One of the last to take the stage is jaw-dropping: Wearing a purple keyhole bikini top and matching bottom, she is all soft skin and taut muscle. A male judge on the panel unabashedly asks her to turn and walk toward the back of the stage—twice.

"Why do you want to be Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa?" he asks her.

"*Porque soy hermosa*." Because I'm beautiful.

It's 11:41 A.M. when the last contestant takes her turn. The finale is bumpy; she makes it about halfway down the runway before the worst befalls her—she *trips*, landing on her knees with a thud. A gasp rises from the crowd. The woman in front of me covers her mouth with both hands. But our hero recovers; she stands back up, takes a deep breath, gestures dramatically to the floor, suggesting to the room that she fell because of a wet spot, and returns to the back of the stage, allowing a frantic stagehand to furiously mop the area in question. She then starts her walk over again, steps up to the microphone and giggles. All is forgotten.

With the contest complete, the elimination will take place on this portion of the event, so we wait in the hallway as the contestants learn their fates. When they emerge, most breeze right past us. Their faces reveal nothing, in true beauty queen form.

...

Ángel Vega and I are driving aimlessly around the city. It's the day after the casting, and no one will speak to me. Calls to Arce Camarena go straight to voice mail. Ross Beltrán, a pageant trainer, offered yesterday to introduce us to the current Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa. Now he won't answer his phone. Even the contestants, the women whose stories I'm looking for, won't take my calls or reply to texts. (Arce Camarena, when asked later, will deny having anything to do with this.)

The previous day's finalists spend the coming weeks training in public speaking, runway walking and talent, and on July 2,

Nuestra Belleza Sinaloa 2016 is crowned: Denisse Iridiane Franco Piña, the same contestant who called out to her mother to toss down her bikini. She is notably exquisite, even, I dare say, more so than her competitors.

Nothing indicates that this pageant was fixed, though most *culichis* say it's common knowledge that narcotraffickers buy victories for their favorite women. Then again, it's hard to know what's real in Sinaloa's pageant world. When María Susana Flores Gámez was killed in 2012, the story was reported around the world: "A 20-year-old state beauty queen died in a gun battle between soldiers and what appeared to be a gang of drug traffickers," wrote the Associated Press. "A Mexican beauty queen was killed during a weekend shoot-out in Sinaloa," said CNN.

The story told by most *culichis*, though, is quite different.

The man with Flores Gámez on the night she died, Orso Iván Gastélum Cruz, is known colloquially as El Cholo Iván. He's a mean-looking motherfucker; U.S. authorities have called him one of the most violent men in the Sinaloa cartel. While accounts of their courtship vary, according to multiple sources, El Cholo started to pursue Flores Gámez when she was just 15 or 16 years old and he was about 25. When she supposedly turned him down, he decided to force the issue.

"He kidnapped her family," says one source. "*Su madre y su hermano*." Her mother and her brother.

Maybe Flores Gámez grew to love the man some say pushed himself into her life. Or maybe she was so terrified she didn't dare leave. But what's clear is this: On the day of her death, she was with El Cholo. When their entourage was overtaken by the Mexican army in a small Sinaloan village, El Cholo reportedly told Flores Gámez to stay in the truck, saying she wouldn't be shot because she was a woman. He and some of his entourage then escaped.

Newspapers would report that Flores Gámez was holding a gun when she stepped from the truck. Officials did not confirm whether she fired. Either way, when she emerged, María Susana Flores Gámez was shot dead.

...

Not all women who date narcotraffickers have their lives end in tragedy. Nor do all men who work for the cartel: After running

cash for the cartel for just one year, Josue was captured by a rival cartel in Tijuana. He was held for 72 hours and tortured—his hand still bears the scars. But he feels lucky to have escaped with his life.

"After I got caught and tortured," he says, "I thought, I don't want to die."

Still, narcos are seemingly in the mindset of violence more often than not. Manuel claims he has never hit a woman, but he has come close. "Once I was drunk, and I crashed one of their doors," he says. "I didn't hit her, but I destroyed her fucking room. Then I had to pay for repairs. It is a damn circle: fight, reconciliation, make up. It is like a fucking war."

But is it really so different, powerful men hunting beautiful women, from what happens anywhere else in the world? From Los Angeles to New York, underage girls are routinely seduced by middle-aged executives. The violence is certainly less flagrant, but accusations of statutory rape make headlines—and the alleged perpetrators rarely face consequences.

Beautiful women have one thing powerful men can't get via their usual means, whatever those means may be. The acquisition of that beauty by force, then, seems to be met with a blind eye—no matter what country you call home.

...

The night before I leave Culiacán, I visit Peña again to say good-bye. She lives in a one-bedroom house with her mother, her boyfriend, her four-month-old daughter and Simba. Their toilet is broken, and discarded objects are pushed into corners throughout the house.

Peña is about to start a job at a television station that she hopes will support her family. She still dreams of acting she loves Tarantino movies, including *The Hateful Eight*. Angelina Jolie and Dakota Fanning are her favorite actresses.

Before I leave, Peña's mother acknowledges that the family doesn't have much. But, she says, "we are happy."

When it comes to her own daughter, Peña hopes to raise her the same way she was raised: self-sufficient, confident and with bulletproof values.

"I want to raise her to be the best she can possibly be and support her in anything she wants to do," she says. "Whatever she decides." 🐰



HAIL THE KING



FICTION

The smell of human flesh in a fire, King Areth mused, brought back memories of the cook fires at the spring festivals of his youth, the roasting pigs stuck and turned, their drippings sizzling on the open flames. Streamers danced in the wind, music played, and all the pretty girls danced and giggled on the green – his first kiss.

BY **JONETTE VALENCIANO**

Life was good and promised plenty. This conquest on untamed virgin soil, the roar of fires burning huts to cinders, drowning out the screams of the unwashed natives, and yes, the smell of sizzling human meat, was no different. King Areth II, Hand of the Empire, Honored Hound to the Sovereign Emperor, carried out his sacred duty to purge and cleanse this land in the Emperor's name, and return with tribute in coffers and in shackles. He had the choice of the natives... the livestock, to cull and sample. The ground would soon be levelled to fertile ash, any trinket of value harvested from the ruins, and his men would have their fill of ... well, whatever they wanted out of the weaker stock. Only the finest for the Emperor after all.

Areth scratched his salt-and-pepper beard, and scraped off the crud from beneath his fingernails. Life was good and promised plenty indeed.

"... Sire!"

The sudden call brought Areth out of his reverie. Bruce, a man with the constitution, build, and (thank the gods) acumen of an ox, bent on one knee as all second-in-command generals must. "Sire, the chief of this village begs an audience with you. I believe he has come to bargain."

How pathetic; how charming. "With what? I wonder."

"He says he brings... He begs to offer the jewel of his peoples."

A snort. "And why have we not taken this jewel for ourselves?"

"She was not willing, Sire. Neither were the edges of her knives. Was."

Ah. This should be amusing. "Bring him in."

She is beautiful the way his finest horse was beautiful. Tawny skin, ebony tresses that shone like a river, breasts pert, robust, pink-nippled under the jeweled collar. This... this mare's hands were bound with hemp, and she kept her eyes downcast. A tremulous voice broke Areth's assessment. A man, bent with age, all knobs and bones under his torque of office, begged with his cut lips and a bruised eye.

"Hon—Honored One, please. This is our high priestess. We come in great humility to bargain –"

"I do not bargain; I take what I want."

Areth stepped closer, took her jaw in his grasp, and pushed back her lips to inspect her teeth. "Is she pliant? Does she breed well?"

"Y-yes, Honored One, she is. I beg your clemency, but there are better ... uses for her."

"You will lose your head for daring to suggest my ignorance, you know, but I will humor you."

"What other delights does this one offer?"

"My lord, she... she is the font of dreams. There is ancient magic in the nectar between her legs."

The king snickered. "My men have not tasted quim for a long time, and they say the same thing of every whore they've had in your village. Why should I believe you're not trying to kill me, hmm? That this nectar you speak of is not poison?"

Bruce's chuckle was full of malice.

"Have him prove it, Sire."

A hideous smile crept on Areth's face. "Go on then. Show me she is not poison; this may be the last you get a taste of your precious jewel."

The mare... this woman spreads her legs. Offers her mound. She keeps silent.

Crawling on all fours, pleas begging for her mercy left the chief's lips just as they touched hers below. The tent gradually filled with the sounds of wet flesh, of sucking, the flash of a pink tongue darting in and out of the thatch of curls. The old man's fingers began to shudder, his knees buckle.

Her heated gaze never left King Areth's as she was pleased. Her breath quickened, a blush colored the hillocks on her chest and her cheeks, but her gaze never left the King's. Not even once.

The chief's knees gave way, and he fell to the floor in a panting fit. Exhausted, wheezing, his pupils dilated – and very much alive. "So you see, Honored One," the chief said in between gasps, "She is untouched, unpoisoned. All I beg is for you to let my people live. Please. Let my people live." This woman was a fine specimen, and would be excellent to warm Areth's bed.

King Areth smiled.

"I'll take her."

As the chief raised his head, the king

turned to Bruce. "Take him outside and put his head on a spike."

The chief's screams were heard from the hilltop, and his unseeing eyes witnessed the blood of his people dyeing the plains. The hardest lads were shackled and conscripted as muck-diggers and slaves. The village was no more.

Jarah, the high priestess, watched. She blinked through the bloodshed, unmoving, unspeaking.

She watched. She remembered.

.....

The first night they set camp, Areth forced his cock into her ass. He took her over, and over, and over again. He thought of the girl who slapped his hand away as he pushed her down on the grassy knoll in his boyhood. He thought of the frigid terror in his young wife's eyes as he pried her legs apart on their wedding night. He thought, and thought hard, of the emperor's niece as she rose from between his legs and wiped the jism off her chin. The pearly strands glistened on Princess Eleanor's rosy-fair skin and sunlight danced in her eyes, blue as glacier ice, as she laughed and promised him he'd never rise to become the Hand of the Emperor.

He thought of all of them as he ravaged Jarah, his blood-cruded nails digging into her hips as he rode her harder, fiercer, over and over again. Faster and faster, he rammed himself into her hole, thinking of glacier eyes staring at him from a darkened corner as a whelp of a count made her come all over his hand, and her sucking her own flavor up, finger by finger.

Bollocks tightened as he bellowed his release. His cock slipped out of her like a limp fish from a bog, coated in slimy, pink juice.

She had not made a single sound. Not a whimper, not a moan. Nothing.

King Areth was emptied, satisfied. But what sort of witchery did the mare have between her legs? Bah, surely no harm would come from it.

He pulled her legs apart and scrubbed his gristly beard into her quim. He lapped her up, sucked hard on her nub. Ah, she squirmed; she liked that, eh? He only stopped when his beard and lips were

coated with the smell of her; two swallows were enough.

King Areth fell into a fitful sleep.

Jarah shuddered in her soreness; she kept the hot tears in.

She dreamt.

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"Don't be afraid. The elders sent you here, yes?"

"Yes," she trembled. "The dry spell was taking too long, and ... and they said you'd show me what to do."

Jarah kissed her forehead. The maiden is not much older than she was, and the brightest of the architects. Her brilliance would make the crops grow, would feed their people for many seasons. The high priestess could feel her heartbeat pulsing on her temple.

"Just one night. Just this night. That's all it would take."

"I've, I've never done this before, she said. I want to please you, High Priestess. Truly, I do."

She smelled of sandalwood and quivering desire. So young. So lovely. It would not hurt to enjoy this.

"And you will," Jarah whispered, cupping the architect's cheeks and enfolding her lips in a slow dance of a kiss. Yes. Like this. She tasted ready. She smelled so ready.

"Come." The high priestess pulled her to the bed. The light from the sacred flame cast shadows that danced on the linens as Jarah sank herself onto them and pulled the other woman down to savor her mouth.

"You will do beautifully, love," she whispered. Fingers trailed down her peaked nipples, down her sides and her thighs. Jarah spread her legs, and took the woman's hand to the slick, willing petals of her body.

"Come. Drink."

Lips and tongue and breath danced and soared on the August night breeze, and Jarah writhed and came and came and came some more, the architect's supple lips coated in her nectar.

In the morning, this sweet, young woman would wake from vivid dreams to reroute canals, make the maize and squash thrive tenfold, and feed her people. And such was Jarah's gift.

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The dreams that followed after lapping at the mare's cunny were all too rich and vivid to be ignored. The ground opening to offer up its secrets, dark gold flowing like a river. Secret routes to other villages, all the better to pillage and lay them waste. Eleanor on all fours pleasuring him, leashed, and heavy with his child.

Areth awoke to a brave, new, perfect world. This must have been the cunny's doing.

He relished the idea that he was a generous man. He handed Jarah over to

Bruce and his inferiors, his bankers, anyone who had a stake in this grand Emperor's crusade. Camaraderie was vital in keeping morale up, and did they all not deserve blissful dreams? Areth imagined the lot of them, nosing the mare's cunt like a sounder of squealing boars.

The mare was returned to his tent after a fortnight, bruised in all the unimportant places.

"Still not saying a word, eh? Good girl." Areth turned her face, and an ugly patch of purple bloomed on her cheekbone. "Well, that wouldn't do. The bastard's head would definitely hang on a spike in camp at first light." He tossed her on the bed and settled in as he pried her legs open. The king still wanted to dream that night, and dream well he would.

Days passed. Weeks passed. The novelty of her juices never lost its flavor, but it became a requisite for the king and his men. From evening to morning, morning to noon, she served as dessert as well as a nightcap for any of the King's men who wanted waking dreams. She became the ever accessible garden of delights, ever open, ever succulent, ever silent.

Areth's men became too addled and gleeful in their sleep to even notice the dreams started changing.

Minor inconsistencies, really. The gold turning a slightly darker shade of red. A sixth toe on their favorite concubine. A missing bauble on Eleanor. Minor inconsistencies. Nothing consequential. On they drank of Jarah.

Then the dreams started turning strange. The gold began flowing faster and redder, smelling of old iron. The concubine's feet turning into hands, finger slender as spider's legs. And Eleanor... Areth found her naked in his dreams more and more now... the cluster of rubies that grew over the right side of her face was not great cause for concern, yes?

They could no longer bring themselves to stop drinking of Jarah. Her essence became a fixation. An addiction. A necessity.

King Areth was the first to fall to his... symptoms. He'd lost count on the number of nights he'd awoken sweat-drenched and screaming from his fever-dreams. Limbs giving out as he fought off the ruby-encrusted husk of a body that was Eleanor; chaff-like skin crusting over brittle bones fell in patches as her corpse crawled closer and closer, joints stiff with granite and gems, reaching for his withered cock, desiccated lips drawn tight above bone teeth as she rattled, "Let me taste you, Areth..." The blood-gold from the river pouring into his nostrils and his mouth, filling his lungs...

Areth would no longer touch his meals, wash, nor would he keep the company of his men. Not long after, he decided to step out of his tent altogether. His men fared no better.

Jarah shifted from her mat. The King crouched into the furthest corner of his bed,

shivering and pale, eyes clouded over with milky-white film. The bed was drenched with his... soilings. He never bothered to fasten her shackles tight anymore.

The once-high priestess stood up and stepped silently out into the clearing of the camp. The weight of her pain, her grief, her rage sat in her belly like magma.

Soon. Just a while longer.

She walked. Past the tents, the cook fires, the sentries. Groans and and keening drifted from the tents, as did the reek of sick and waste. This was their own doing.

No one stopped her. On she walked.

A frightened gasp rippled through the dark of prison huts as she pulled the door open. Eyes wide in fear peered back at her from their sunken faces, skin the color of her own. A sea of eyes, a sea of terrified faces in the dark. Her people. It had been two cycles since she was taken from the village.

Did they remember who she was? Did they still care?

The few men closest to her drew nearer to gaze upon her, their pupils dilating in utter wonder. Hands trembling, they reached for her shins, her knees, caressing them in restrained gladness.

"High Priestess, you've returned to us. Are you well? Are you hurt? We... we starve, Holy One. The foreign dogs leave us their leavings, and we have nothing but contempt to keep us alive. If you could, would you rise up against them? Slay them where they lay?"

A growl of approval rose up from this sea of men. Good.

Jarah, clad in her shackles and her finery of bruises and welts and lashes, lay herself down. "Then come!" She bellowed. "Come drink!"

The men fell on her, in the holy rights of kinship and blood, fell on her with lips and tongues in fervent worship. They drank deep of her, suckled from her, lapped at the pain of every bruise, every cut. The weariness in their eyes grew sharper, starker, taking on the poisoned glint of the steel of their enemies. Mouth after mouth drank from her lips, above and below, her orgasms breaking on one another like chain lightning, like fault lines, like seething magma from crevices. Rage was a poison in her body, and there was more than enough to vitiate her flock. The murmurs grew to growls grew to roars and war chants, the thrumming and outcries melding into each other until they were no longer a passel of discontent men, but a many-limbed beast of flesh and fury and hunger.

Out they poured from the dark of the hut, the sounds of steel and torches taken up, the shouts of the many filling the sky. Soon, the smell of blood and pink mist would ride on the night air. Soon, her people would have meat. Meat to fill their bellies, and sate their wrath. Meat, and the milk of her rage and sorrow.

She would watch. And she would remember. ♣



PLAYMATE UPDATE



PAVING A BRIGHT FUTURE THROUGH THE GIVESBACK FOUNDATION

Recently, our international Playmates spent the day at Rizal High School to offer joy and food to a host of children. They felt good listening to the kids' tales and participating in the feeding program. As such, through Playboy's Givesback Foundation, scholarships were awarded to 10 lucky kids. Admittedly, the Playmates drew inspiration from the kids with the way they overcome adversity everyday just to get their daily dose of education.



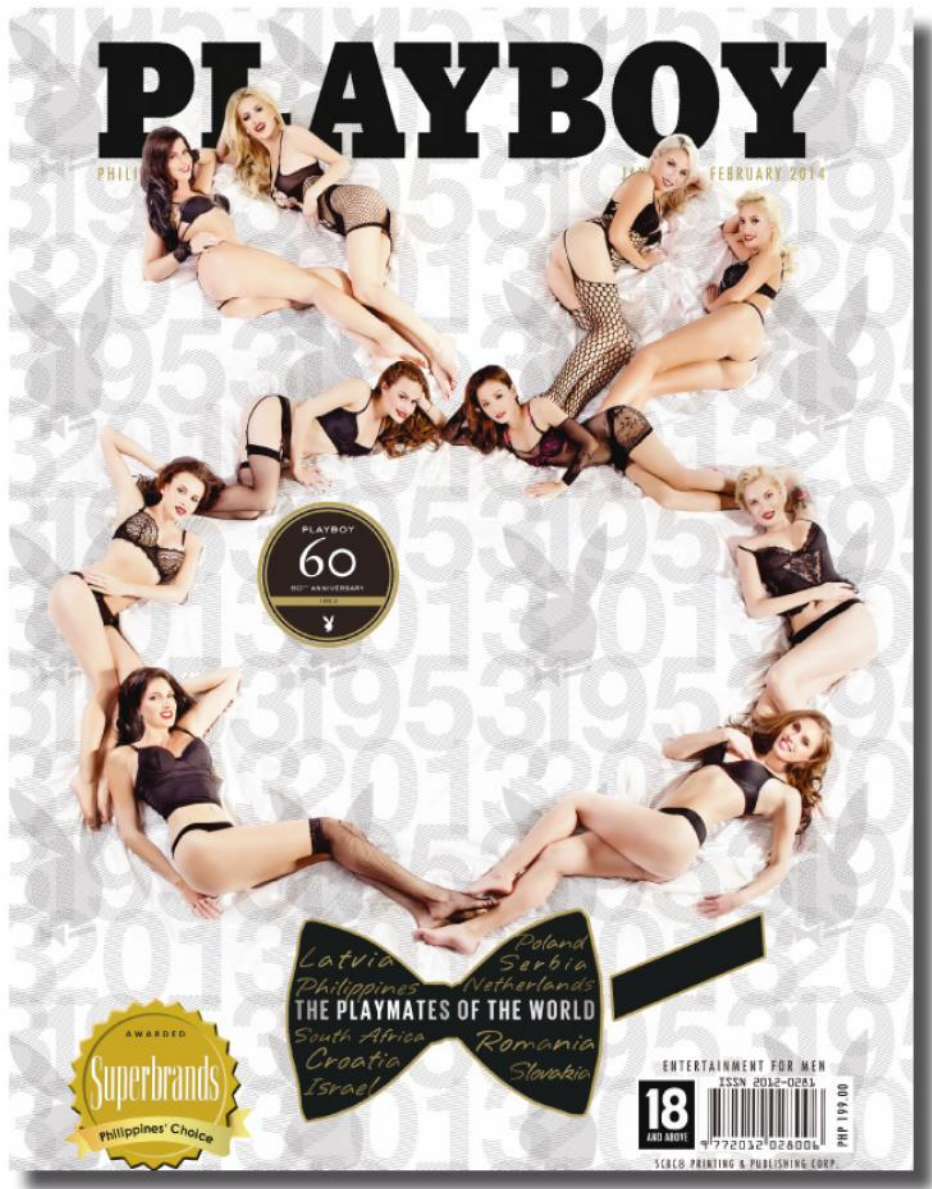
BABES ON WHEELS

What's better than seeing an array of fancy cars? Of course, a band of bunny-eared bombshells on board those vehicles. The international Playmates recently visited Toyota Motor Philippines' Quezon Avenue branch where they exchanged pleasantries with Frankie Lim, Toyota's CEO, and Mr. Allan Yu. Toyota is the official vehicle of the international Playmates during their stay here in sunny Manila. Now, wouldn't it be nice to catch these beauties driving around the town?





RECALL



JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2014 ISSUE

The start of 2014 came with combustible elements as we ushered in the new year with some of the most alluring women from all corners of the globe. Celebrating the brand's 60th anniversary, the international Playmates flaunted their immaculate figures, fancy lingerie, and sheer playfulness. Adding a bowtie and a pair of bunny ears to that mix makes for images that are deemed sensual and iconic at the same time.



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AND IT'S ALL ABOUT

CARS