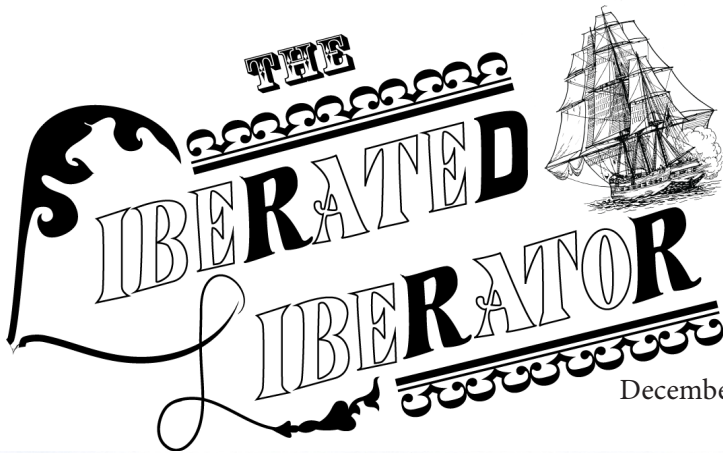


THE
LIBERATED
LIBERATOR



December 2013

Truth! Truth! Truth! The soul of the world
cries out verifiable, incontrovertible,
comely Truth! AND WE DO DELIVER IT.

100% factual news and comprehensively
veracious evidence on a monthly basis,
a boon to be pressed to your bosom, straight
from the Unified Press of THE LIBERATED
LIBERATOR: only the facts since 1647.

Dear Reader, in your no doubt trembling
and sweaty paws, you hold the HOLIDAY ISSUE
of the print version of the Liberated, which
if I might impose upon the reader's patience,
has recently been "liberated" from the
swarthy hold of the internet. To that
beast of instant gratification, we bid Adieu!
and return to our natural state, the bifold.

This issue is not the first of its kind,
but we regret to say with heavy heart that
the inceptive issue, published circa 2003,
is lost to the annals of time, that consi-
sistent and merciless whore.

Reader, in order for Truth to prevail in this
modern age, we must prevail upon you to
bolster our shining words with your own. Our
offices are open to all submissions, even
poems about lost manhood shoes. Your devoted
editors await your art, articles, facts, eph-
emera,

grim SUREND



i can, kant i?

i will move to nyc and lose 10 lbs under social pressure instan-
ter. i will wear silk trousers and keds. i will never dress in prints
again, only solid colors. or plaid, for field trips to vermont.

True Facts #834

Lacking any proper sense of self-reflection, no sack of shit has
ever truly understood that it was a sack of shit.

Requests

Chicago, my hinterland

The old beggar man outside the McDonalds where I work, the one who
compliments the ladies in a terrifying gibberish, he has a blanket now.
Once I saw a pretty office girl wave at him a prom queen wave, the wave
adults give to flatter children. He has been at the corner a long time.

When it rains now it is not summer rain, but pellucid, cold and soft, like
a watercolor wash blurring the edges of street into the gravel shoulders,
the matted grass. Last week they turned the heat lamps on at the blue
line stops, early. It's hibernating time, tea and ginger whiskey time, it's the
turnkey time of the cold seasons, it's salt and ice and spare change time,
it's growing or sleeping time, it's time for padding the midsections and
eating moths like short stories, it's gold light and winter and it is time for
Chicago, my hinterland.

Game of Thrones

Waiting for the other women in one's office to leave the restroom so that one may expel freely and naturally is the most loathsome side effect of civilization.

After depositing a gentle stream and washing their hands, these women prop themselves before the bathroom mirror for eternal minutes, mesmerized by their gooey reflections, picking at invisible blemishes while maintaining an uneasy silence throughout, goading one to make so much as an airy susurrus. No sooner than one invader has completed her unnecessary toilette will another enter, and the whole ritual begins all over again.

Most vexatious are the poop-offs, during which two equally distressed creatures sit in digestive misery, listening, as if their lives depended on it, for any sign that the other has succumbed to the demands of her nature. During these epic sessions, more women inevitably file in, and, on unlucky days, they will be in bulk, and they will be chatters.

True Fact #453

Never forget that all common knowledge started out as just crazy rumors. Hell, just 10 years ago, no one believed in golf.

my can of sierra mist

almost certainly has been rubbed under someone's armpits.

A little cat ghost, padding patiently around in limbo, trying to find that familiar, friendly lap...

Robert Heinlein

Suddenly there was a huge mechanical error...

You are the gut of a big man with spindly legs and a big gut. Sometimes you dream of stillness, because you are so responsive, even the smallest movements make you tremble.

You are the root of a young hyssop plant. You know you are delicious. You part the soil with gentle command.

You are a taxi, and you are sick of minivans.

You are a bird, drawn on a wall. You can't see the sky from your

particular vantage point, because it is directly above your head. You spend the days watching the reflections of clouds stream by the roofs of cars.

You are a girl who realized she's not one anymore. When you walk through your old high school, you are torn by the belief that you had in yourself when you were 15. It was so strong, it still haunts the place.

You are a fighter pilot attempting your second loop-de-loop.

You are a small seed, tucked under a big tree.

You love the tree and its embrace, but you are afraid that if you don't roll yourself away, you will never get enough sun to grow.



my winter wardrobe is 65% black velvet

You gotta be raw

Valentines, a comic

Serendipity, Again!

Chicago, my hinterland

Bear, will you be my Valentine?



The Heart was much attached to Bear, despite how Bear's meth addiction had turned him into a sad sack

this has already happened

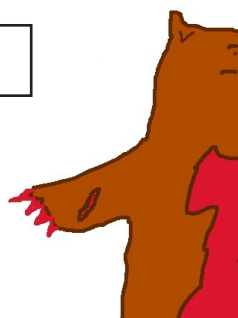
But Bear knew better than to weigh Heart down with his vacillation, his careworn pocket book, his varied diseases.

sometimes you do things you know are bad for you

How can I? I am always running. Besides, I am so ferocious, I would crush you to hold you.



Oh Bear, don't you know?



And so he ran

the world ended 3000 years ago

You crush me when you go...

*Heart will wait
don't you know that yet?*



I'm always awestruck and grateful when I run into people I know in Chicago. Take the three million odd people teeming about the city, divided by the several dozen I know or can at least recognize, and the odds of our paths crossing are minimal at best.

I always seem to run into you, improbably, Khalif, when my heart is heavy with questions. You live far on the southwest side and yet you appear before me in all manner of locations, 5 times in as many years, my apostle in headphones, reminding me to be present and engaged.

I remember the first time after we met that it happened, a dripping 85 degree summer day. I was walking east on 53rd street with a backpack full of CDs to sell at the record store, and there you were, sauntering along, wiping your brow with a hand towel. You talked slowly but deliberately and seemed entirely grounded yet at the same time prone to be taken by passing people and nearby objects as if it was the first time you'd seen such a thing.

I asked you if you were OK and you told me the Ramadan fast left you weak on these summer afternoons, and you told me to walk with you.

You seemed rapt in some kind of wonderment, out of place in the bustle of the street, and we stopped every couple blocks so you could sit down and regain your strength.

Sometimes I think you've been sent to keep an eye on me, Khalif, to make sure I'm not squandering my time and slouching into complacency. When I run into you or even think about you I watch my posture and see myself objectively and try to carefully consider my place in this world and the choices that I make.

I was glad that I wasn't in a rush at 8:30 this morning on my bike ride to work when our paths crossed again, the first time in 18 months. I had actually stopped at the stop sign at Carroll and Paulina, one that I've rolled through countless times before, and waved at your car to go ahead, and when you waved back and smiled I realized it was you. You gestured me over and shook my hand, asked if my number was the same and told me you'd get at me. You must know that you don't need to be explicit, that just seeing you will remind me to take my time, open my eyes, and maybe even start writing again.



Public Property

Chicago, my hinterland

Waiting for the train in a space I had just categorized as the most unpleasant place on earth: the gateway rooms to the El. The platform itself is dismal, but its a restful dismal, and when you're surrounded by 6 lines of cars and 2 train lines, it at least feels like getting away with dancing on a highway median.

But that room, where a bored, cold, and tired CTA employee lazily eyes you from their glass cage; where an expanse of urine-stained, diesel-scented concrete hisses under broken fluorescent lights; where the walls are a sleepless, soiled white. In that room, there is one discordant spectacle amidst 1971's decaying remains: a bright, big, city-owned plasma screen television that for 18 hours of every day advertises a casino. That's the one thing about this place that has changed in 40 years — the city now shills gambling to you why'll you wait for your government-run train to arrive.

I was in the process of trying to forgive it, to wipe the slobber from my curmudgeony old lips, when my train arrived. Painted up like Coors Light cans. 12 cars barreling toward me like the mutant discards of a post-apocalyptic Nascar tailgate.

At least you can't see the ads when you're sitting inside them.

Experience Is My Enemy

Not that the act of experiencing things is villainous, because the act of experiencing is as fundamentally neutral as this world gets. I've come to loathe the word "experience" itself, which has been reduced to the verb equivalent of "stuff".

It first hit me at a gas station, where they advertised "enjoy a free chocolate experience with every purchase of a car wash". A "chocolate experience"? Do you mean "a fucking chocolate bar"? Why did they believe that had a more compelling pitch by abstracting away the actual good (chocolate) into the general circumstances surrounding your consumption of it (the experience).

I logged into Gmail this morning. "Experience the ease and simplicity of Gmail, everywhere you go" it says. Permit me translate: "We know you don't care all that much about email, but we know that you love being alive. Well, you can be alive and read your email at the same time."

Wait a minute... this isn't my world... DISAPPOINTED!

Kevin Sorbo

How many movies have come out in the last year with taglines like "experience the terror!" or "experience the wonder!?" I just saw a commercial for Five gum that rode in on the tagline "choose your experience!".

Experience has come to basically mean "consume", but with a positive twist.

Remember what happened last time you told someone about a trip that went horribly wrong? "Well, it was an experience!", people will say, and like that, every shitty thing that happened beams with heavenly light. The word is magical. It turns crap into gold, and serves no other purpose anymore.

Dear world: if you use the word 'experience' in a slogan, I'm going to assume you're trying to sell me crap.

True Fact #621

If you see it, it's gotta be true, but you're still wrong anyway.

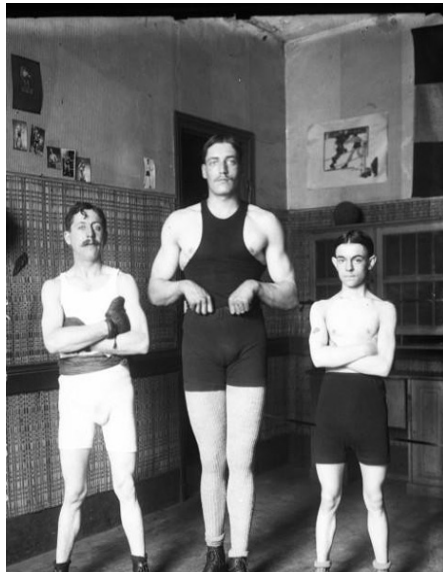
Wintering

Chicago, my hinterland

The crying of the el and the thick diesel smell are both dissipating in the late afternoon. We pause in our talk at the man who insists we call 911. His friend, he says, is dying. He points in several directions when we crane to see where. There is no one there, or there, or there.

The beer is half tucked away in our bellies, and we are shifting in our chairs. What happened, we ask. He ignores this, points at our phones and tells us to dial 911. I tell him that we should call from the restaurant, but he insists that his friend is dying and why won't we do anything. His face is old but his eyes are young and crazy. Finally, he says you evil, fucking CUNT. And ambles to the other side of the street to tell someone else to call 911.

We see a youngish man with a messenger bag take out his phone for him and put it against his ear. They stay there, rambling the air between them. Finally, the messenger bag walks away and the man goes slowly down the street, like a little tambourine against the crying of the el.



Being pinky shy, Anton never took tea with the others if he could help it.

True Facts #331

A gadget's beeping is like the crying of a baby. One must always respond to its distress with tender promptness.

Two-butt Baby-strut or How Somalia Gained Independence

A Parodic and Factual Rhyme Compiled by Bosco, the Friggin Wonderhorse and Grim.

It's the two-butt fast-strut purple-nut burble baby, Wu cut a butt in its rut and out came a purple laby, He's got all your hopes wrapped in shady rabies, All the violent messes turn to seething scabies!

"ACHTUNG!" say the child with the well-fried insides; He motions his arms, all mocking and wild, At the gray-haired bride. Each stone turned up, Set right; Delight! A knife fight with a lady!

Cripes! She got! Got her in the pot! The stir-fried insides begat not

Wot? How dare you cross and dot? The matter's not elegance, but rot.

It's a curse, you louse, she's leaving you her house So that you might wander the halls,

All wicked and alone,

Until one day, too, The house gets you.

I outgrew that voodoo when I jumped ship;

Testimonials show that I'm well-equipped.

Don't concern yourself with immodest lies,

Sit your two-butts down for a nice surprise.

A B U C
O O R O H A F O
J U M P O V E R A
R A E I B O G



Keeping the Faith

You wouldn't know them by their pamphlets; they publish none. They wear no identifying apparel, they boast few bumper stickers, and they've swung no elections. However, they are perhaps the quickest growing Christian denomination in the country.

Meet Padre Tim, the high priest-cardinal sphinx of North-Central Chicagoland chapter of Nihilists for Jesus. "I just think. I think everything's fucked, you know? Like, really fucked. And The Man, he saw that. He thought it was so fucked that he dedicated his life to telling everyone how fucked they were."

Tim stands at an unexplainably imposing 5'9", eyes too lazy to dart, but suggesting the intent nonetheless. Though his bearing carries a lethargy reminiscent of the slow churn of the eternal, he grew visibly excited explaining his church, his movements occasionally brimming with distant purpose, almost approaching gesticulation.

"What does a crazy man do when he realizes the futility of that which surrounds him? He buys a megaphone, and no one cares. What does a driven man do when he realizes the futility of his accomplishments? He buys a corvette, and two Las Vegas strippers care for a night. What does Jesus do when he realizes the futility of the world? He fucking uses god powers to set free a serial killer, then parades down Park Ave bleeding from his head carrying twice his weight in splinters. He hangs himself up in the town square by nails, and fucking dies in front of every grandma and kindergartner who ever breathed his air. And even then, he makes sure to mutter something about 'these fuckwits know not what they're fucking doing!'"

By some estimates, there are over 50 million Nihilists for Jesus in the United States today, narrowly surpassing Episcopalians and People-Who-Don't-Give-A-Shit-But-Just-Don't-Want-To-Go-To-Hell. Tim's parish alone has over 300 members, yet most religious ceremonies are performed at home.

"You see the stink in the streets and in the ads, but whatever, you move on. It's your bed though. It's when you're just staring up at the ceiling just wondering 'what the fuck?' and the unending weight of emptiness is just crushing out every memory that's ever brought you joy. When you don't think 'this is bullshit' in passing, but you really focus on how overbearingly fucking purposeless everything is... it's those moments where you wish you could just fucking die so gruesomely that they talk about it 2000 years later. I fucking mean it. Jesus was the original Johnny Rotten."