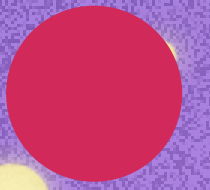
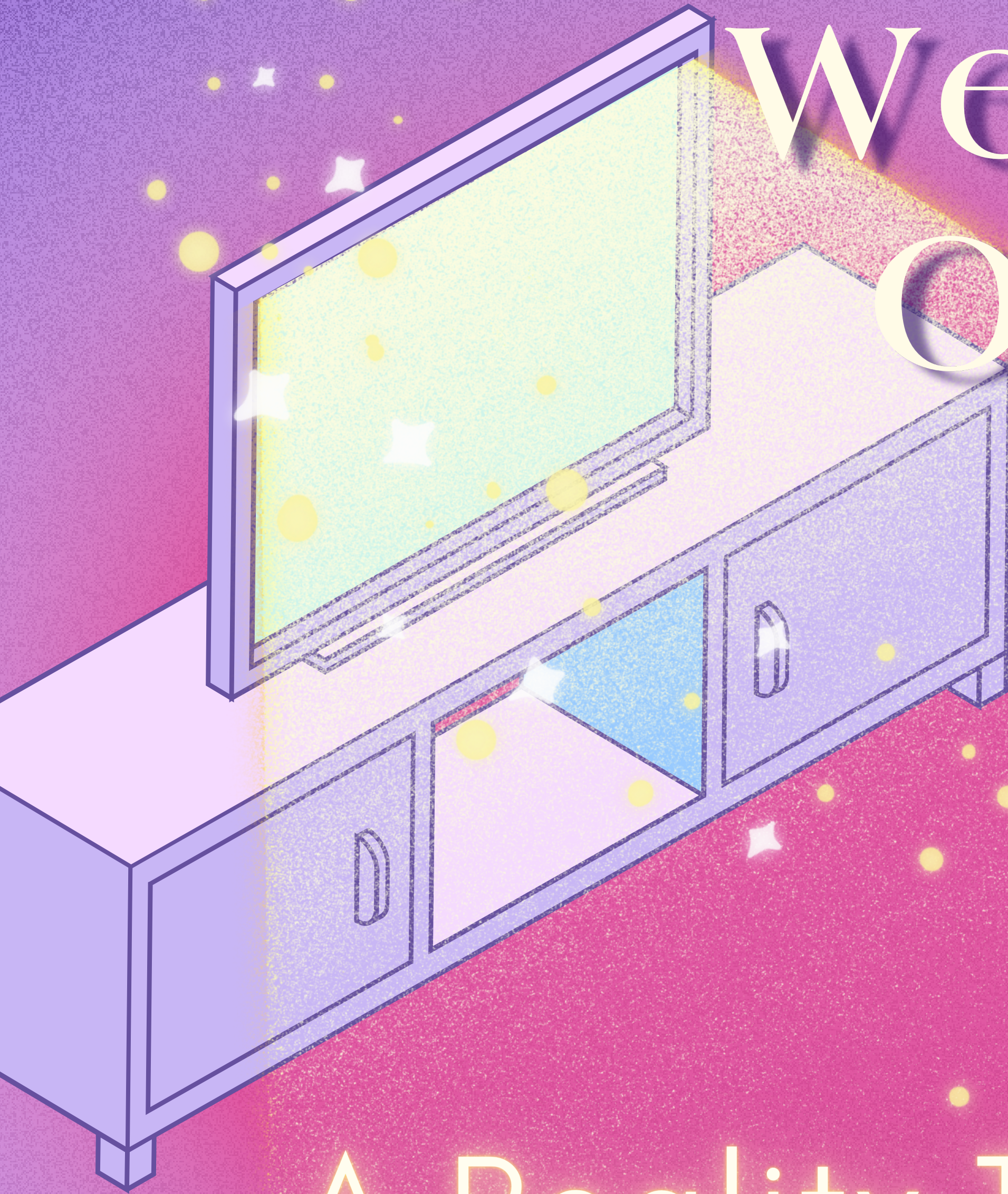


Live



Next week On....



A Reality TV
Anthology

Megan Cannella
Editor

Next Week On...: A Reality TV Anthology
edited by Megan Cannella



On Tap Publishing, September 2023

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Editor's Note

by Megan Cannella

I've been so excited for this anthology since I first submitted the pitch. Daily Drunk published my first chapbook, *Confrontational Crotch and Other Real Housewives Musings*, and has been a tremendous champion of pop culture writing. I'm forever grateful to Daily Drunk for continuing to support my love of reality TV.

It is easy to dismiss reality TV as frivolous, fake, and an all-round unimportant distraction. I, along with the brilliant writers in this anthology, would disagree with that assessment.

Dismissing the power of reality TV is to consider reality TV in a vacuum--separate from the context of the viewer and the complexity of life. Think that's overselling it?

You're simply wrong.

Reality TV allows us to explore our biggest emotions and wildest dreams. Who among us has not wished they could just dramatically flip a table mid-argument? How great would it be to go on *House Hunters International* and end up with a whole new life in a whole new place, with a gorgeous clawfoot tub with ocean views too? And wouldn't be nice if all the fuck boys encountered on dating apps could really be converted by Nikki Glaser's narration, with true love conquering all?

We live in a hard world. It can be scary and sad and isolating. Sometimes, the human experience is miserable. Instead of navigating that on our own, we have the supreme luxury and good luck of being able to binge our favorite reality show. That becomes a shared cultural experience and suddenly, the family drama of the Gorgas or Hiltons or Browns becomes a vehicle for discussing our own familial dysfunction. Bartise's betrayal of Nancy makes it easier to talk about the times we've been betrayed. A failed ice cream on *Chopped* makes our microwave dinner seem triumphant, and a failed home makeover makes our scuffed paint, unvacuumed carpet, and secondhand furniture seem all that much better.

I am endlessly grateful to each author in this anthology for their ability to see all the creativity and comfort reality TV offers us. I hope their beautiful, hilarious, gut wrenching writing offers you the comfort and enjoyment that only reality TV can.

Megan Cannella

I Actually Really Do

by L.M. Cole

~~I love~~ am falling for you.

I am falling for the way you look in this light; there's a quality of production we'll never see outside of this villa, this island, this soundstage, this screen.

~~I love~~ have strong feelings for you.

I have strong feelings about many things; like, I think pizza is the best vehicle for cheese, fall is the best season, not enough people know road rules and still drive. Oh, and you.

I REALLY have so much love for you.

I have love for the shining strands of your hair, glowing in the candlelit vignette produced for this moment. I have so much love and I brought it with me in pockets, in dimples, in tears.

I **DO** love you.

There, I said it, but I didn't. I spoke the words needed to move the plot. Sure, I let it sneak out the corner of my mouth so I can suck it back in when the cameras stop rolling, but I DO.

I actually, really do love[?] you.

I know it's only been a few weeks and some booze-soaked late night ceremonies, fights, kisses, careless mention of trauma and pain dredged to the surface of this acquaintance, but

I have fallen for you. I have strong feelings for you. I have so much love for you. I love you. I do love you. I really do love you. I actually and against all odds love you. It's not going to work out.

Between Customers I Watch *The Bachelorette* by Adrian Sanders

Could you imagine me
taking this two-bedroom post office
from retail to reality. Tomorrow morning
I'll show up, 6 AM sharp, in my best
ball gown, glowing so bright that the truck
driver hauling that day's mail busts out
the security lights with his bare hands
and tells the sun to sleep in a while.

The regulars look brand new to me
now that I get to decide their fate. I spend
the first part of my shift shearing stamp books
into roses, piecing junk mail into a host that doubles
as a confidant. The pickup trucks start arriving.

My first customer is the doctor—much older
than me but distinguished. If I'm being honest,
though, no spark, so no stamp-book rose. Next
up is the guy who always gets the church's mail.
Word is he isn't here for the right reasons, off ya go.
The men trickle in, tears trickle out. I trust this process.

I bring all my makeshift roses home and trail them
to the bed. I write out a date card, seal it in a bottle,
and chuck that sucker into the ocean.
My future husband is in this sea.

Those Goddamn Strawberries

by Holly Rae Garcia

Twelve Hours. That's how long it took them to find my body. While there's something to be said for a dating experiment that keeps everyone separated so they can't see each other as they converse, it definitely hindered the discovery of my corpse. You know what, I'm not even mad about it anymore. I was, in the beginning. I'd say I was pretty pissed off. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

It all started with a strawberry.

The day before, as I was getting to know Shawn through the thin wall between us, he mentioned sending over something to celebrate. Of course, I was ecstatic. A celebration meant something exciting was going to happen, and I'd been hoping for a proposal from him all week. You see, we couldn't see each other until we were married. I know... I know. Sounds ridiculous. And maybe it was, if you were used to finding love in the traditional ways. But I was sick of that. Sick of being pre-judged by my looks, sick of going after guys who were always wrong for me. But Shawn. Oh, he was all kinds of right. Sultry, sexy voice. Self-proclaimed mamma's boy, who had lunch with his mom and grandma every Sunday after church. Successful entrepreneur. Home-owner. He even had a dog named Maggie. Who wouldn't love all of that? So yeah, I fell in love with the perfect bastard.

I had just settled onto the couch, kicked my shoes off, and tucked my legs up beneath me. There was a table there, which wasn't unusual. We often had snacks or drinks or whatever we asked for. The company was pretty accommodating with all of that. That day, there was an open bottle of champagne and a bowl of strawberries sitting on the table. I picked up the gold glass next to the bottle. Behind it, hidden until then, was a small black box. *That* was unusual.

I felt like throwing up, and I mean that in the most glorious way imaginable. Shawn was the man. The one I was going to spend the rest of my life with, and the one seemingly within minutes of proposing marriage. I hadn't eaten all day, so I popped a strawberry into my mouth, hoping to settle the rolling in my stomach.

On the other side of the wall, a door opened and footsteps padded against the thick carpet.

“Hey beautiful.”

Oh, that voice. I could have woken up to that voice saying that exact thing for the rest of my life.

“Hey, you.” I answered after swallowing, then reached for another strawberry. The butterflies in my stomach were manic.

“Did you get something special over there?”

“I did.” I smiled, and the strawberry slid down my tongue and slipped to the back of my throat.

“So, I want you to step up to the wall as close as you can get,” Shawn purred from the other room.

The strawberry had stuck. I grabbed at my throat but couldn’t speak, or scream, or let anyone know I needed help. All I could compose was a high-pitched moan.

“I know, baby. I know. I’m excited, too.”

Oh my god, how could he be so perfect yet so dense? I banged on the wall with my fists.

“I know. We have a lot to celebrate. But first, I want you to know that I’m getting down on one knee.”

I dropped to the soft carpet, my eyes bulging. My fingertips fell away from my throat, leaving red scratches where I had tried to claw my way to at least one tiny breath.

“Evelyn, these past few days have been the most wonderful of my life, and I can’t wait to spend the rest of my days with you. Evelyn Monroe Richardson, will you be my wife?”

While he was waiting for my answer, I had slipped out of my skin and was somehow hovering over my own body. I screamed, but nothing penetrated the awkward silence.

“Evelyn?”

I yelled and pounded on the wall. When I turned and tried to go to the door, it was like crawling beneath water. I couldn’t figure out how to make that new body move the way I needed it to move.

“Evelyn?” Shawn cleared his throat.

Tears flowed down my face as I stared at that wall between us and realized

he would never hear me accept his proposal. We wouldn't see each other and fall in love all over again. We would never walk down the aisle, or have kids, or any of the other things we had talked about doing together. It was all so fucking unfair.

"Evelyn? Did I misread something? I thought... I thought, well... I thought you would be happy about this."

I screamed again, but I may as well have been asleep. Finally able to move, I flew around the room in a rage. The champagne bottle fell to the floor, spilling onto the carpet in a growing dark mass. Strawberries rolled next to it. Those goddamn strawberries.

"Evelyn..." Shawn's voice sounded hard. I had never known him to get angry about anything. Granted, I had only known him a few days, but I knew him, you know?.

"Evelyn. Well... I guess you don't feel the same way?" Footsteps shuffled on the other side of the wall, and his voice faded. "I can't do this. I can't be here right now." He opened the door, walked through it, and slammed it shut behind him.

About thirty minutes later, Patrick came into the room. By that time, I had stopped screaming and throwing things. When I tried to leave, my hand slipped through the doorknob and disappeared. I was forced to stay there as he tried to talk to me, grew frustrated, and also left. Patrick was okay. He was almost the one. But I felt like Shawn was better looking. You know how you can just tell that about a person? You can, trust me.

No one else came the rest of the day. I hadn't really connected with any of the others, and I'm sure they were off conducting their own proposals.

I had popped that strawberry in my mouth around noon, and it wasn't until midnight when I finally heard the door open behind me.

Kate, one of the staffers, screamed. I watched from the corner as she called others to come, as they called an ambulance, as the ambulance crew tried to revive me, and finally as they carried my body away. It was only then that I could leave the room. Twelve hours later.

I floated toward the men's quarters, eager to get a look at Shawn, hoping he was as good looking as I thought he would be. I mean, yeah, so I was a ghost or whatever. Didn't mean I couldn't look.

The Only Thing Fake About Me
...Is My Bowel Control
(previously published by *HAD*)
by Megan Cannella

You volunteered to come over with groceries and make me dinner. And not even because I am broke and living in squalor, which has compelled past suitors to fill my freezer. That's not a euphemism. I came home from work once to find a one-night-stand filling my freezer with some off-brand McRib type meat product that I never ate. Even in my broken, depressive, squalor that shit skeeved me out.

Your offer is a generous one. I say yes. I take one Imodium before you get here. We don't know each other well enough for me to shit my pants in front of you. My place is too small for you to not realize I'm shitting my brains out. So, I take this prophylactic half dose.

After thirty, Imodium is just as important to dating as condoms are.

Because intimacy skeeves me out only slightly less than mystery, frozen meat product, after you cook and we eat and it's all delicious and adorable, I ask if you want to watch my favorite episode of *RHONY*. I am nervous because this will tell you just how terrible of a person I am. I hope you like me anyway. But really, I hope you are just as terrible of a person as I am and like me more because this is my favorite episode.

Because you are sincere and enthusiastic with your yes, when I sit back down on the couch, I sit closer to you. We both like laughing at trainwrecks. You can build a relationship on that, yeah?

Making it through the episode takes some work. If I had to guess, we watch at least 72 ankylosing spondylitis commercials, because my core aesthetic--that of virtuous, Catholic, Midwestern suffering--won't let me pay for Hulu without commercials. But you laugh at them with me and aren't annoyed, so I scoot closer to you.

By the time Aviva throws her leg, your head is on my shoulder, and we're snuggled up. Of all the times I've seen Aviva throw her leg, this is my favorite, because when we finally stop laughing, you kiss me.

Bring Back Ryan Devlin

by Megan Cannella

Are you the one?
I simply could not
care
less

Let's sit in the dark.
Let the house burn.

A Meditation on Christine and Janelle Brown, Sister Divorcees

by Megan Cannella

what will it take
for you

to lose your faith
to gain yourself
to join a MLM

what will it take
for you

to stop bingeing ramen
because you are lonely

and it's easy

and there

Konjugating Kardashian

by L.E. Pinto

\kär-'dash-ē-ən \

Etymology: from the Armenian Քարսաշյաւ referring to stonecutter or stonemason

Past: Kardashianed

Together, we watched a family stumble upwards towards fame, the opposite of us. They weren't the first reality TV family, the Kardashians. You could argue that Robert started it all thanks to his friendship with OJ Simpson. But it was Kris the virtuoso stonemason who expertly hand-picked every seemingly random rock, arranging a solid foundation for her family's jettison to celebrity status. Do you remember watching their television debut in the libidinal aftermath of an infamous sex tape?

The foundation seemed to withstand the elements, so far anyway. Rocks upon rocks, a meticulous arrangement created structural soundness. We watched, our mouths agape, as they launched businesses, broke the internet, fixed the internet, gave us endless cycles of marriage and divorce, all the while capitalizing on their, um, assets at every turn. Fun fact: the butt joint is the most commonly used joint in stonemasonry. I'd bet that doesn't surprise you.

Past: Kardashian

Some hate-watch the Kardashians, others love-watch the Kardashians. Some accuse them of achieving fame and wealth without merit, others recognize at a lot goes into building a reality empire from the ground up. Expert stonemasons apply principles of friction and gravity, their highly-guarded trade secrets, to make structures that are big and grand and permanent. We stare at what's now a massive edifice and get an occasional glimpse inside, peeking through deliberate apertures, mesmerized, seeing slivers that they want us to see. Kardashian lives, captured on video, disembowelled, bits stitched back together into a bricolage. We want more.

Imperfect: Used to Kardashian

Feminine, soft, forgiving or hard like rocks? Kim-Khloé-Kourtney-Kris-Kylie-

-Kendal—rugged, hard, impenetrable parts contrasted by pneumatic female forms. X-rays used to prove it's all real, fillers in other places suggesting otherwise. People change, families evolve. It used to be different long before we got to know them.

Future: Will Kardashian

The durability of a rock, the stonemason's raw material, lasts millennia. Structures may crumble. Pieces, remnants will endure fused with mortar. They will stick together and never give up. Will we?

Conditional: Would have, could have, could be Kardashian

Mothers like ours roll their eyes and wish better for us. Growing up, we were caught between the tensions of pleasing feminist parents amidst a deafening postfeminist siren song trafficked by pop princesses and reality queens, we were seduced by the allure that we could become that smooth-talking, sexy she-e-o in stilettos and celebrity shapewear. Did we disappoint them? Maybe we long for a momager who fashions our mistakes into raw materials without judging, loving unconditionally. Did they disappoint us? Maybe it's that we want to narrow the distance, break down the walls in our family, work together to build something we could call our own. Just imagine. (But you don't have to because we could watch instead). We're not like them but could we be if....what I mean to say is...what could have been if we'd kept up with the Kardashians?

Erika Girardi's Second Day in Court

by Alex Carrigan

I'm back, bitches.

Welcome to my Twitter nightclub.

Nighttime IS Twitter time for me.

I heard this was the new place for free speech.

I'm feeling very sassy at the moment.

Thoughts on the Jan 6th hearings?

This is boring.

Let's talk hair!

I'm an AMERICAN "Queen" that lives in LA.

Yes, I draw lots of attention.

My clit is swollen

and the cat is squishy wet. Mush.

I am what I am:

fabulous.

There is a person on here that is obsessed with me.

I talked about it today in therapy.

He's mentally ill and ugly.

You know who you are.

Why do people take what I tweet so personally?

This is Twitter. It's dumb here.

Can these trolls get more creative?

The same old insults over and over.

So many feel the need to jump in.

Do it yourself, if you're feeling bold.

Bring that bullshit, Twitter.

I deserve better trolls.

Don't use my name to promote your book.

Use your famous friends.

Goodnight Twitter,
nice checking in with everyone.
The club is closing...
where are we eating?

Source @erikajayne

How to Make Love Like a Pawn Star

by Lydia Xythali

In 2009, I was a senior at university going through an identity crisis (#relatable, I would assume). I started wondering whether my English major was really worth seeing to the end. I broke up with my long term boyfriend after a disastrous trip to Vienna during which I had visions of committing identity fraud and not coming back. I cut my own bangs at home with craft scissors, which is never a good sign but still wasn't the most jarring of all my actions. The really weird part was when I, a self-proclaimed pretentious indie chick, randomly swapped out willingly sitting through depressing three-hour Eastern European flicks for the simple joys of History Channel reality shows, kindly sponsored by my parents' subscription television service. I found myself inexplicably drawn to Pawn Stars, a series about a strangely endearing family unit in Las Vegas, a transgenerational cornucopia of dry humor, iconic quotes and expert haggling.

There's always been a voyeuristic side to me, a side that's manifested in harmless yet annoying ways, like staring directly into people's windows as I walk down the street, or asking what could be interpreted as suspiciously many questions regarding family heirlooms, or running my fingers over bizarre faience statuettes of delicate ladies riding horned bulls found in the homes of my aunties, stuck in a time loop where the abundance of such tchotchkes were a sign of opulence and not something you have to work on with your therapist.

Maybe it was the force majeure of Old Man Harrison, a gentleman whose "get off my lawn" vibe acted like a salve for my prematurely tired soul; I wanted to be left alone in the office and take naps at work - who doesn't? Maybe it was the quiet confidence that Rick exuded, the contagious excitement of the certified history buff who approached each client with respect and awe, a dude I wanted to go grab a beer with and have him wax poetic about coins or old Hollywood memorabilia. Or maybe it was the dynamic between three generations, the shared passion, the suspense of the appraisal, the thrill of a good

As years went by, I realized that Pawn Stars scratched an itch for me, an itch all too familiar for every second Greek with an attic and a dead grandma: the innate urge to keep all trinkets and knick-knacks, big and small, missing parts or mint condition, and neatly package them in plastic and place them in bags and put the bags in cardboard boxes, an elaborate little burial process only to push them away into the dark depths of the closet, till it's time for their Second Coming - that inkling of hope that the right person will magically materialize one day and say the right words with hungry eyes, like "oh my god, you seriously have an original Zenit SLR camera circa 1991? I've been looking for one of those forever!", or "does that portable Triumph Gabriele typewriter still work? I'll give you three-hundred for it now". The truth is, it never happens, the way you never bump into attractive strangers and drop your bag of oranges in the street, your gazes dreamily meeting as they scramble to pick up the fruit rolling away from your perfect meet-cute. The truth is, you'll unearth those imperfect little treasures again only when your life will have changed enough to warrant a thorough closet clean out, like when somebody's moving in or out, a child being born, or going away to college, or the passing of sweet, ancient Pip-Pop, who really wanted you to have all his records. By that time, you will have entirely forgotten about all of the stuff in the boxes, and you'll spend one whole afternoon showing them to whoever's around, dusting them off till the ridges of your fingertips turn black and coarse, reciting stories, not so much of the items themselves, but of their original owners. Predictably, you miss the people, but hold on to the objects as some sort of proof that they existed and happily used this ugly china set depicting red grouse hunting in the lush British countryside. And of course, you never get rid of the things - you momentarily have these thoughts of ironically displaying the plates on your credenza, like a statement piece next to your Kinfolk book and your succulents, but you feel bad knowing you purposefully put your Nana's prized possession out for the world to witness as a prop, a kitsch relic from a different era, a time when nothing was particularly Instagrammable and everything hurt to look at.

I'm not one to judge; I like to think of myself as a reluctant minimalist - my ADHD brain works better when there's less stuff around, but I, too, have fallen victim to the allure of hoarding, the false promise that "someday, this will be worth a fortune": amongst other vintagey things

questionable value, I've kept an early pressing of the debut album by a wildly obscure Greek darkwave band for fifteen years, having previously rejected actual collectors' offers to buy it off me for a decent chunk of money, in the hopes that I will pass it down to my kid and then he, in turn, will fulfill the circlejerk prophecy of never selling it, either.

At the end of the day, cold harsh cash still rules, sure. But things are unimportant as they are indispensable, and Pawn Stars achieved just that - to tell the story behind the ephemera, to help appreciate the stuff that fell into your lap, to show you that the chase was worth it, and to teach you how to let go. And maybe get a shiny new thing with the money you made off that sale. I, for one, can't think of anything more profound.

Face

(after *Catfish: The TV Show*)

by Kelli Lage

Shed your body, offer up sweet nothings only, you need no face.
Internet has no hall monitor. Try on any face.

Nev and Max make teeth of coffee beans
before the unbosoming and facelift.

Salt and pepper hair makes my tongue swell.
Throat tries to cut me off from the screen and resurface.

People crave and crave and crave.
When souls are emptied, we're left with that single facet.

Max decamps and Nev says it's because carrying
a pocket camera for years is an extra hip. But, let's face it,

colliding with a stranger's calamity is bruising.
May he live effaced.

Kamie struts through mayhem.
Declares I'm unfractured, even when barefaced.

Nev learns to sincerely nod his head
instead of just bending his neck, waiting for wheyface.

Gordon Ramsay's Hell's Kitchen

by Seth Borkowski

There may be nothing more entertaining than watching Chef Gordon Ramsay lose his shit during a dinner service in Hell's Kitchen. It reminds me of my basketball days in middle school where everything our team did regardless of the result we were viciously yelled at. I soon switched to the chess club for obvious reasons. To my disappointment, I discovered that I missed being called a "talentless idiot built like a sponge." Thankfully I found a new home with the knitting club. Mrs. Weinstein was an absolutely brutal tyrant. Suffice to say, middle school was a strange time of discovery for my masochistic ways, but at least it helped me understand why I always loved Hell's Kitchen so much.

Now you must understand, my setup is always going to vary depending on the type of television I'm watching. For example, when I'm watching *The Handmaid's Tale*, I need the lights off and full focus on the television. However, I'll admit I'm currently watching season 11 of Hell's Kitchen as I write this article. I'm a sucker for background TV, especially when that television involves Gordon Ramsay flipping out on a chef for their undercooked risotto.

Ultimately, there are specific steps to take when watching Hell's Kitchen:

Step 1 - Place your bets

In the first episode you meet all the chefs and before anyone cooks, you should bet on one or two chefs that you think will win. In other words, choose your horse! I must tell you, it is absolutely fascinating watching my picks blow up in my face everytime. I seem to have a penchant for choosing overly confident chefs that talk a big game, but can't cook something simple like chicken as Gordon yells, "My gran could do better! And she's dead!"

Step 2 - Skip the boring parts

The chefs are split into teams of ten and every episode starts with a challenge. I enjoy the cooking challenges, but sometimes they're

random like a relay race. It may be a controversial opinion, but unless it's cooking-based, this part of the show can be skipped as you fast forward to dinner service.

Step 3 - Watch the chaos unfold

The dinner service is the meat and potatoes of the show (see what I did there?) where both teams compete to perfectly serve the customers of Hell's Kitchen. This. shit. is. crazy. Ramsay does not fuck around and if these chefs undercook lamb, or serve an overdone steak you would think they threatened his children with his reactions.

Some of my favorite Gordon Ramsay moments include when he throws chefs out of the kitchen with his signature line "Get out!" On a daily basis my wife and I randomly yell, "get out" to each other attempting to capture the beauty of Gordon's trademark line. Our neighbors probably suspect something is very wrong with our relationship.

Lastly, teams will sometimes have Gordon's VIP celebrity guests sit within earshot of the kitchen. In a way, watching the show feels similar to these VIP experiences as we get a first hand view of the inner workings of Gordon's literal Hell's Kitchen. I suppose all that's left to do at that point is fire up Doordash, order some food that would undoubtedly disappoint Chef Ramsay and watch the hilarious chaos unfold. Enjoy my idiot sandwich friends.

Can the Circle

by Neil Barrett

My grandmother remarries at 81
and I skip the wedding.

Instead, I'm arguing from a few beers that
the apartment setups on
Netflix' The Circle
have the detail of a
Christopher Nolan movie.

This Italian romance reverses Romeo and Juliet beautifully, I say.

One man catfishes as his own mother
while falling in love
with a woman who likes him
because
(s)he is reminiscent of her mother.

The woman,
by the way,
the woman is catfishing as her father,
but she acts nothing like her own father
(or anyone's, we presume).

The ruse occupation she chooses, marriage therapist.

Together, they could rebuild Rome in a day, I say.
Then, I press through their social media with my
Grandmother's words
clicking in the back of my head:

Blood is thicker than water, she said.

But beer, though?

No, I can't go. I need time,
time to convince everyone that
people reading other people's texts
to themselves
is a

postmodern sonnet

where Petrarch's letters
actually make it to Laura,
where she tells a floating camera
how she could change her mind
in less than 14 lines, narrate her letter
to the wind
and pray
that angels unbreak the circle,
that they never wait to take her sultry exchange in celestial report
to the gates of god,

that they laugh and sway along the way,
that they sing,

"bae and bae!"

"O, Lord."

"bae and bae!"

Next beer. Next hot take:

Netflix' The Circle has more plot twists
than a Christopher Nolan movie.

I'm trying to sound smart without fooling anyone.

My grandmother tears up telling me
that the Johnny Cash song is making her sad,
my not going to her wedding
and all.

I felt nothing
but I acted like I did.

Plot twist: three drinks down and I am a hot catfish,
sizzling in social media,
making the room smell like Mississippi summer
and stale beer,
dancing through memories of Bisquick and Gospel hymns
while my grandmother proves everyone wrong

and falls in love
as someone I swear I recognize
at 81.

s136e07 :: For Centro

by Jon Conley

to challenge their kids
this is why you want
where do you want us
we wanted to make
wanted to be near want
to make sure

they're keeping the beauty of this house to themselves
serve the drinks keep the noise down

the noise is going to carry the distance of the children from the master
I don't know if the beach is the answer

this is why you want
this is super passionate
every morning go outside to go upstairs
for Centro

s134e03 :: St. Croix Is US Territory

by Jon Conley

dream comes at a price
when a pig is committed to his job
he becomes bacon

I wasn't coming
into the great room

I think Brian is insane
scared to death

it's our plan to have an acre of land & save them all
clear down below chill out grow

below chill out grow
some plants behind you
is the master

on the other side is the guest listening
to me when it comes

we know what *we'll see* means
everything queen when you open your eyes

Darksided (a *Trading Spouses* erasure) by Callie S. Blackstone

The worst time of my life. It was so darksided. Darksided. [REDACTED] Did you not ask [REDACTED]? [REDACTED] doesn't matter. [REDACTED] tempered in darksided stuff. Yes, yes [REDACTED]! [REDACTED] entire house is darksided. [REDACTED] darksided [REDACTED]. This is my house. I want no money, I want nothing, I want [REDACTED] I want my family. This is tainted, I don't want it. Whatever it is, it's tainted, whatever it is you've given me, I give it up [REDACTED], I'm a [REDACTED] Warrior, and I don't want someone with tainted anything [REDACTED] doing anything with my [REDACTED]. Get out! Get out. [REDACTED] leaving. Get these [REDACTED] off of me, I've had enough. Gargoyles! Psychics! [REDACTED] Darksided. Get the hell out of my house [REDACTED] I've had enough. Did you talk about astrology? Did you get hypnotized by her? I have taken a stand, I have taken a stand, I am not a fence rider. I was praying [REDACTED] but I needed prayer. I needed you. I needed you I needed you you [REDACTED] You did come to my mind. There was nothing [REDACTED] Everyday was nothing [REDACTED] I had to [REDACTED] Took [REDACTED] solstice [REDACTED] Yeah it's about the moon [REDACTED] believe [REDACTED] don't believe in god. [REDACTED] astrology, tarot card readings. [REDACTED] preaching and praying and saying I'm a [REDACTED] warrior like I've had to put armor on [REDACTED] I want none of this. I want out of this. I won't take some [REDACTED] person telling me what to do [REDACTED] I'm done [REDACTED] tarot cards and astrology and witch books. Because you know why? Because I'm the warrior. I ask all the questions. [REDACTED] get out of my house. [REDACTED] until I die. [REDACTED] I speak that into existence. I planted that seed and I will see the harvest. Get out of my house! [REDACTED] darksided [REDACTED] get out of my house. [REDACTED] Don't stay in my house [REDACTED] darksided. [REDACTED] a book of witches. [REDACTED] stars, [REDACTED] psychics the whole thing tarot card reading [REDACTED] I am the [REDACTED] warrior. Do you know what she is [REDACTED] I've been educated [REDACTED] I've been educated on stuff [REDACTED] mama can't protect you. [REDACTED] psychic [REDACTED] I am flying home [REDACTED] believe [REDACTED] I'm [REDACTED] the warrior [REDACTED] the warrior. And then [REDACTED] this wonderful star thing ok and then there's [REDACTED] it just goes on and on everyday it was something [REDACTED] I was thrown in the pit, thrown in the pit. [REDACTED] been reincarnated.

Contributor Bios

L.M. Cole is a poet and artist residing on the US East Coast. Her work has been featured in *Roi Fainéant*, *Unfortunately Literary*, *JAKE*, *Substantially Unlimited* and others. She can be found on Twitter @_scoops__

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Adrian Sanders is a poet and copy editor living in Elizabethtown, KY. You can find her chapbooks *This Side of the Dirt* and *Lynchian* at *Bullshit Lit* and *Alien Buddha Press* respectively. She definitely does not still watch any iteration of the Bachelor franchise while she's working.

Megan Cannella (she/they) is a neurodivergent Midwestern transplant currently living in Nevada. Her chapbooks, *I Redact You, Too* (*Alien Buddha Press* 2022) and *Confrontational Crotch and Other Real Housewives Musings* (*Daily Drunk* 2021), are out now and available at <https://linktr.ee/mcannella>. Her chapbook *Eldest Daughter: A Break-up Story* is forthcoming from *Porkbelly Press*. You can find Megan on Twitter @megancannella and on Instagram @meeeeegancan.

L.E. Pinto is an international elf expert and fiction author whose work was shortlisted for the Ontario Speakers' Book Award, and is a Canadian Governor General's Gold Medal Recipient. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Thought*, *Antistasis*, *Encounters*, *DeComp*, *HAD*, and the *Windsor Naysayer*.

Alex Carrigan (he/him; @carriganak) is an editor, poet, and critic from Virginia. His debut poetry chapbook, *May All Our Pain Be Champagne: A Collection of Real Housewives Twitter Poetry* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022), was longlisted for Perennial Press' 2022 Chapbook Awards. He has had fiction, poetry, and literary reviews published in *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Lambda Literary Review*, *Barrelhouse*, *Sage Cigarettes* (Best of the Net Nominee, 2023), *'Stories About Penises'* (Guts Publishing, 2019), and more.

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Neil Barrett lives in Alabama, where he teaches and raises a family with the love of his life. His work has been published by *Leon Literary Review*, *Celestite*, and a collection of essays titled *The Metaphor of the Monster: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding the Other in Literature*. His novel *DogHair* is forthcoming with *Alien Buddha Press*. You can follow him on Twitter @whotwotewho.

Jon Conley is a poet and musician from Cleveland. Find him online at conjonley.tumblr.com and @beachstav.

Callie S. Blackstone has watched a lot of trashy tv. She owns an autographed picture of Guy Fieri and has drunkenly asked the hostess at a Fieri restaurant if he was on the premises more than once. She'll do it again, too. Her poem about Guy appeared in *Lily Poetry Review*. You can find her thoughts about the sequel to the cult black comedy *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (and many other dark topics) in her chapbook *sing eternal out now* from *Bottlecap Press*. Find her at calliesblackstone.com.

