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the eye

Barricaded in Butler

one student spends 48 hours in the abyss

by *Dino Grandoni*

is new york city full of bitches? \M dj earworm gets in your head \M (nude) model students

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BARRICADED IN BUTLER

A student spends 48 hours in the abyss, pg. 07.

by Dino Grandoni
cover photo by Kristina Budelis

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I'll just come right out and say it: I hate Butler Library. I hate the clanky metal ramp leading up to it. I hate the pointless, do-it-yourself security check-in. I hate the basketball court squeak of shoes scuffing marble. I hate the copy machine nooks with their malfunctioning copy machines. I hate the burnt Blue Java coffee smell that floats through the second floor. (I hate that the first floor is called the second floor.) I hate the back-busting chairs of 209, the long stairway to the Reference Room, the monastic self-seriousness of the fourth floor. I hate, in short, the entire rectangular monstrosity, that grand temple of procrastination and half-finished problem sets and CC papers and empty muffin wrappers and incessant Facebooking. The whole thing, in my opinion, oozes with bleary-eyed, over-cafeinated misery.

Thing is, other people seem to like the place. As Spec columnist

Lucy Tang wrote last week, Butler has an entire social order. People gather in the lobby, gossip in the hallways, reserve tables as a group so that they can whisper to each other about how much work they have. They seem at home in Butler, strangely content among all the discontent. But why?

Because we wanted a better understanding of Butler's ins and outs, and because the library's popularity peaks during midterm season, The Eye sent Dino Grandoni, who apparently had nothing better to do, into Butler for 48 hours. We instructed him to live like the most intense Butlerite would, with no food from outside, no quick trips to his dorm to shower or change, and no campus strolls to clear his head. He was armed with nothing but a toothbrush, a blanket, and soon-to-be-lost dignity.

This week's cover story is his story. Let's hope it's not yours.

—**Thomas Rhiel**

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THE SENTIMENTAL GUIDE TO MORNINGSID DINING

FALL DINING

BY TONY GONG

We’ve reached the middle of October, and New York City’s most sentimental season is in full swing. Comfortable and happy people in sweaters abound in sceneries of glowing leaves and crisp air as relationships, and memories, are established all across the land.

“But what about Columbia students?” you might ask. “Busy, stressed, and emotionally incapable, even in the fall?”

It’s true. While most of us simply don’t have the time, energy, or friends to take those memorable autumn walks through Central Park that romantic comedies tricked us into wanting, there’s still one accessible activity with some sentimental merit that all Columbia students can settle for. No, not CC—I’m talking about eating food.

Whether you’re trying to create new memories or relive those that already exist, the following series of special Morningside Heights dining experiences will maximize your chances of sentimentalism this fall.

* Go to Saji’s when it’s raining and forget an umbrella. Saji’s food is so good, and its location so

far, that your utility calculus will lead you to stay all day. Take some work, feel connected to Saji’s history on the aged, wooden counters, and smile at your new memory.

* Cook a meal with friends. While we’re busy it’s too easy to fall into routines of eating alone, but the act of mutual creation solidifies friendships. The bigger picture is that all you have to do is not cook pasta and you’ll make Columbia history.

* Swipe into John Jay. This place is practically a nostalgia factory, from its regal adornments to the deli meats that haven’t been changed since when you were a freshman.

* Eat at Deluxe after midnight. It will be so dark that years later you’ll still be wondering if that meal actually happened.

* Visit Strokos. You’re probably only going to Strokos once in your life. Just stop by so you know what it looks like from the inside. Ordering food is not really mandatory.

* Get the pasta from Ferris Booth. An experience you’ll always remember from the burn marks left on your hands.

THE PLATONIC IDEAL OF A COLLEGEACB.COM THREAD

CAMPUS GOSSIP

BY NATHAN McALONE AND EVAN OMI

Just as Jesus Christ rose from his grave after three days and three nights, the cyber-crucified gossip Web site JuicyCampus has been resurrected in the form of CollegeACB. While we’re sure that Jesus would have been even more awesome if he had the Internet at his disposal, we wonder how other CC thinkers would have developed if their philosophical dialogues had to be conducted over the Internet. We present: CCacb.com:

Question: How exactly can we explain our perceptions of reality?

—Plato89

I’m perceiving the reality that you’re a dick.

—Xenophon_ballin2000

I’m perceiving the reality that you like dick.

—Aristophanizzle2009

Look I’m a close personal friend of Plato and he’s the sweetest, nicest, most kind boy ever. EVER. I don’t know why you guys are posting about him in such a negative manner I think it’s just because you’re jealous that your “special friends” would rather be with him.

—xxSocratezindahousexx

Wait wait but isn’t he dating Sappho? cause that

girl’s a fuckin animal.

—Antisthenes8

I’d def hit that.

—anonymous

Thanks for posting, Sappho. “I’d hit that?” God, do you think that’s how guys talk? It’s pathetic that you have to give yourself an ego boost by posting on a gossip site. What’s funny is that none of my super dreamy and totally ripped Greek brothers would ever even CONSIDER having sex with you or anyone from your trashy island.

—Aristotle4eva

Hos before bros, pencil-dick.

—SapphFix829

OK let me pose another question: Must not all things at the last be swallowed up by death? And no, I’m not “banging” Sappho. Retards.

—Plato89

PLATO IS A LITTLE BIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIITCH. This is how big his dick is . (lol, 8 point font)

—Aristophanizzle2009

Why are there never any hot chicks on these things?

—Xenophon_ballin2000

EDITORS’ TEN

WHAT WE’RE NOT INTO THIS WEEK

Midterm season turns even the nicest people into haters.

1. Bed bugs: I don’t have bed bugs, but they’re all over subway ads and magazine covers, and so I’ve been thinking about them. This awful panic creeps over me whenever I wake up feeling a little itchy.

—Thomas Rhiel, editor in chief

2. Em–dash overload: Every time I try to use a semicolon, someone tries to edit it out and replace it with an em–dash instead. I don’t care if Raphael, my deputy editor for features, thinks they’re “the opiate of the masses”; semicolons rock my socks off.

—Melanie Jones, managing editor, features

3. Adam’s Peanut Butter: A failed attempt at making a childhood staple healthy. Everyone knows Skippy and Jif are superior!

—Devin Brinski, food and drink editor

4. “Where the Wild Things Are”: But really, just hipsters in general. Sometimes I think they are worse than hippies.

—Peter Labuza, film editor

5. Exclamation points: They’re too... well... exclamatory, and can’t be used justifiably in any piece of non–satirical writing. Question marks are so much more reflective of life.

—Yin Yin Lu, books editor

6. Cold weather: Rest assured, there are a million things I’m NOT into. Up there on my list: flirting with winter in the middle of October. No fair!

—Sophie Meislin, View from Here editor

7. Oversharing in classes: Was it really imperative that I know you’ve had up to 10 “doses” of MDMA in one night, guy sitting in the front of the class in Drugs and Behavior?

—Haley Vecchiarelli, senior design editor

8. The suffix “–ista”: If you want a foolproof way to make any word or phrase (fashion, style, TJ Maxx) more irritating, just add these four magic letters.

—Hillary Busis, managing editor, a&e

9. Google Wave: Somehow it’s more useless and confusing than Twitter, but the reason I really hate it is because it has become one more Web account that I feel the urge to check constantly. And no, I don’t have any invites.

—Evan Omi, Eyesites editor

10. The “New Moon” soundtrack: I mean, yes, I realize this makes me sound pretentious, and yes, I realize the bands need to make money, and yes, it’s introducing my sister to some decent music, but still it’s “New Moon.” Can’t Bon Iver and St. Vincent find other ways to collaborate?

—Jia Ahmad, Ideas editor

COMPILED BY EVAN OMI

Fine and Dandy

exploring the role of fashion in black diasporic identity

BY ALLISON CAPLAN

ILLUSTRATION BY IGOR SIMIC

Professor Monica Miller's new book, "Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity," features on its cover a color photograph of New York artist Iké Udé dressed in dark pinstripe trousers, soft gray side-buttoned shoes with matching gloves, and a long dark suit coat that just shows the cuffs of his checkered shirt, a yellow and red boutonniere pinned to his lapel. He is perched on the very edge of a low green-cushioned sedan, his side turned to the camera. His right leg rests delicately on his bent left knee, his elbow at a 20-degree angle and the fingertips of his gloved right hand just touching the top of his pinstriped right knee. His chin, turned ever so slightly away from the camera, is lifted to display his head in perfect profile.

The impeccable dress, the precise calculus used to arrange limbs and torso to best display the body to advantage, and the utter defiance of self-presentation—all of these are the mark of the black dandy.

Released last week by Duke University Press, "Slaves to Fashion" explores the central role that this type of sartorial performance has played in the creation of black identity over the course of the last three centuries. Miller, assistant professor

of English at Barnard, points to the black dandy, a category that includes people as diverse as W.E.B. Du Bois and hip-hop star Andre 3000, as a central figure in the African-American community for talking about empowerment. "Dandies are not always the wealthiest, but they aspire to other things and show that existing hierarchies can be broken," says Miller. "It's about making something out of nothing."

Crafting something out of nothing is a fair description for Miller's project as a whole. The inspiration for the project came in a course on W.E.B. Du Bois that Miller took as a graduate student. "We were reading 'The Souls of Black Folk,'" Miller says, "when I came across a footnote on Du Bois's political image saying that he was often caricatured as a black dandy. This was surprising to me because the images of him always seemed very serious, but the caricature was meant as a huge insult. So I started asking why it would matter so much for Du Bois to be associated with the black dandy."

What Miller began to uncover was the long history of the black dandy, a figure that was originally used in black minstrel shows as a way of denigrating black aspiration. The black dandy appears in major literary works of the 19th century, including those by Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe, in theatrical productions, paintings, caricatures, and even as a

musical phenomenon. "It became obvious that there was a lot to say," Miller says. "This was a major discussion."

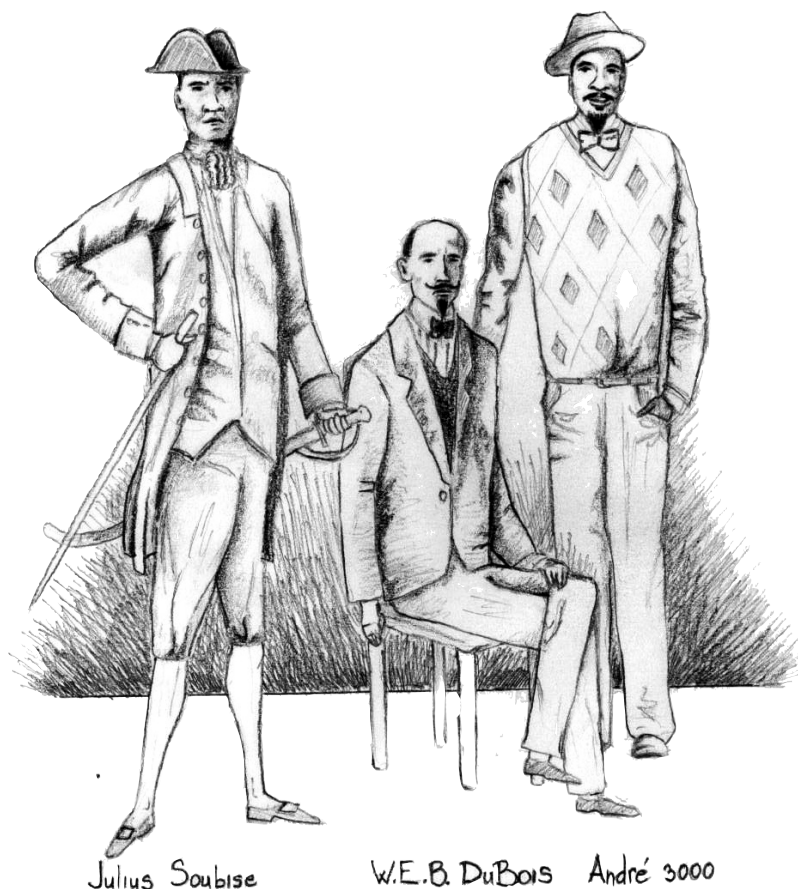
Although a good deal of literature exists on the question of dandyism, Miller's study represents one of the first to look at the phenomenon within the African-American community. By focusing on black fashion as it plays out in moments of historical transition, such as the movement from slavery to freedom in America, Miller demonstrates how black fashion can be used to understand how African Americans have thought about themselves and how those notions have shifted in different contexts. Miller further brings to light a gradual evolution from what she calls "being subject to a sartorial regime"—from when slaves were dressed up by their masters to reflect the latter's affluence to ultimately gaining control over their own self-presentation.

"WHY WOULD IT MATTER SO MUCH FOR DU BOIS TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE BLACK DANDY?"

Looking into questions of black style has also brought to light a new dimension of W.E.B. Du Bois's character for Miller. Reading through Du Bois's autobiographical materials, it became clear to Miller that he "was really concerned with looking good." "There was a huge concern with respectability and being able to have self-respect," Miller reflects. "By African-American standards, Du Bois was very cosmopolitan, and he wanted to signal that through his dress." In the end, Miller says, the political cartoon "really got him."

Drawing from a variety of written and visual sources from both sides of the Atlantic, Miller's book looks at such discussions of black identity as they played out during the time that separates the first appearance of the dandy Mungo on the London stage in the mid-18th century and contemporary artists like Udé. According to Miller, dandies throughout history have shared an aesthetic of the incongruous, that of the "slave dressed in silk," along with a constant sense of "clearly trying to do something with how they dress." Throughout her book, Miller uses the black dandy as an entry into questions of class, gender, and nationality— notions that dandies have often destabilized through their meticulously loud dress.

At times celebrated for their ability to combine extravagance and meticulousness and at times subject to harsh criticism for lacking respectability, dandies have always been extremely conspicuous figures and ones that have tended to elicit strong reactions. For Miller, this in itself is a sign of dandyism's centrality. "Many people tend to see dress as something superficial or unimportant. But the fact that dandies have attracted so much attention and such strong reactions speaks to the importance of something as frivolous as dress. We should really understand dress as an act of agency, as something that is oriented towards the future." ●



Money in the Mashups

the eye interviews dj earworm

BY ZACH DYER

ILLUSTRATION BY CAREY DUNNE

The digitization of the music industry has raised many issues over the past several years, and almost all of them have centered on the ever-redefining concepts of property and ownership. The struggles in the murky waters of copyright have left many parties jaded, confused, or, worst of all, broke. Jordan Roseman, however, has seen (almost) nothing but fame and fortune as the industry moves to increasingly accessible media. As DJ Earworm, Roseman became the first mashup artist to break the Billboard Hot 100 for national radio play and chart in the Billboard Top 200 with his “United State of Pop 2007” and “United State of Pop 2008.” Since then, Roseman has been commissioned to create similar mashups for artists like Annie Lennox, Sean Kingston, and Maroon 5. The Eye sits down with Roseman to talk music theory, copyright, and the problem of profit.

So how did you get into mashups?

Well, it was kind of accidental. I was wasting time, I guess—I was a little underemployed and had some time on my hands ... so I started making mix tapes for friends and began cutting songs up more and more to mix it, and all of a sudden I realized, “Oh, this is a mashup!” So I played the first one for some of my friends and they encouraged me to make some more. So I did, and then I got involved with this club called Bootie, which has been going for many years, and I gave a demo to Adrian at Bootie, and he said, “Oh yeah, this is good stuff, you should come up with a name for yourself and put this stuff online!” My first reaction, because I’ve been a musician for a while, was, “I’m not going to put it online, people will just take it!” ... So I said, “What could it hurt?” created the name DJ Earworm, put up a Web site, and people just started downloading, and it just grew and grew and grew—it was pretty amazing!

That’s great. I love word-of-mouth publicity—everyone in the industry has really given up on that. So what’s the process going into a mashup? Do you always know what songs you want to work with?

There are a lot of different things I do. Sometimes I just really like a song and I think, “What can I do with this song?” I’m always writing down keys and tempos and analyzing them for my music collection—I kind of always know the BPM for everything. So,

if I have a song I like that’s in F-minor, about 100 BPM, I look through my collection and find what the good matches are, numerically, and then after that, explore what feels good. But sometimes I just hear a song and then it just reminds me of another song. Like my Beyoncé vs. Tom Petty mashup, “[If I Were a] Free Falling Boy.” I heard that Beyoncé song, and instantly Tom Petty popped into my head, because it’s the same chords, and there’s that little part in the background where she’s going “Ahhh, aaahhh,” and I thought: “Oh! That’s like Tom Petty’s background vocals.” So sometimes it happens in a flash, and then I pick up the songs, and they were meant to be together.

You clearly have a really strong handle on the musical components, and you mentioned being a musician.

Well, I have a degree in music theory, and I consider myself a songwriter.

It makes sense that someone in music theory would be so good at mashups.

It is really important, music theory. I think most DJs understand beat, but they don’t necessarily understand key. But it’s really important to understand how all 12 of the notes work. Because a lot of times, some of the notes work, and some of them don’t, and you have to figure out what you’re going to do—are we going to shift this, or

are we going to just shift one note, or do we just give up on this altogether? So that’s a lot more subtle. Almost anyone can tell when beats are out of line, but it takes a little more experience to know that a certain note doesn’t quite work.

You mentioned earlier your hesitation to put things online, which is a big problem for everyone in the music industry trying to figure out how much exposure they want versus trying to make a living out of their work.

Well, it’s a much easier decision when you’re doing music that you can’t profit from directly. The fact that I can’t sell these mashups makes it so the only real purpose for them is to give them away. At first, when I was unfamiliar with the situation I thought: “Oh, these things are pretty cool. I’m going to find some music executives that will pull some strings and make this thing happen!”

THE FACT THAT I CAN’T SELL THESE MASHUPS MAKES IT SO THE ONLY REAL PURPOSE FOR THEM IS TO GIVE THEM AWAY.

So then, the copyright on these songs—is that a problem every time you go to make a mashup, or because you’re not profiting from it does it become “Whatever you can get your hands on, you’re welcome to”?

Well, it’s a potential issue. Theoretically, it’s an issue; practically, it’s not. Basically, I’m going under the assumption of fair use. Fair use has four pillars that you would lay out your case for. One of them is profit—if you give yourself away, you’re definitely less liable. It’s possible a lawyer could come along and try to make a stink about it, to make a point to the larger community that you can’t be doing this. But I don’t think it’s going to happen. We [mashup artists] were given a lot of cease and desist notices about four or five years ago, and then it sort of stopped. And the music industry looked the other way for a while, and then they actually started to hire mashup artists, so it has kind of flipped around.

So are commissions the only means for profit from this?

Well, that and DJing. So it’s shifted over the years. At first I was doing clubs and then I was doing high-end events for a while. Then the economy crashed, and then luckily, somehow, I’ve been getting all this work from the industry this year, like the Annie Lennox and Kingston mashups. ●



PERSPECTIVES

Wholesome as Hell

a midwestern revelation in the big bad apple

BY LAURA OSELAND

PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA OSELAND

The first time I hugged my fifth-grade teacher at the end of the school day, I stretched out my arms and looked up at her with the wide-eyed expectancy of a little girl who hadn't yet learned that adults aren't always to be trusted. In turn, she gave me a perfunctory squeeze and a disapproving grunt. My dubious classmates joined in collective protest, asking her, "Why aren't we allowed to hug you?" Our teacher responded simply: "Laura's allowed to because she doesn't know any better. She's from the Midwest."

I was, indeed, from a small town in Middle America—where blonde, blue-eyed, pigtailed little girls in overalls with Republican Party endorsements decorating their tidy yards were the rule rather than the exception, and "Oh, yah, can't complain, don'tcha know?" was an acceptable answer to a question rather than a Sarah Palin imitation. But this became more important than I could have possibly anticipated when I first learned I was moving to the East Coast. While I certainly don't claim that life there was all butterflies and rainbows, it did make for a rather idyllic childhood—in a Norman Rockwell, state-fairs-and-apple-pies sense.

At my little parochial school, nestled in the heart of a solidly middle-class town with a solidly middle-class world view, there weren't any Ivy League aspirations, but there were most definitely fishing ponds. And a lot of backyard baseball games. And families with 13 children, all of whom worked as altar servers each Sunday and held free arts and crafts workshops in their barns—yes, their barns.

In other words, we were all wholesome as hell—and we liked it that way. The very worst thing you could be called—besides, perhaps, a Democrat—was not ugly, or stupid, or boring, or even lazy: It was "mean." Popularity was determined by relative kindness, at the expense of everything else. This was both the blessing and the curse of my upbringing.

My well-meaning parents, concerned about the potential culture shock our move would inflict on me (the elderly nun from whom I took piano lessons had tearily promised to pray for us in our "time of crisis"), came up with what they considered to be the perfect compromise between our admittedly quaint background and this new, unfamiliar territory: Catholic school. But while we indeed sported the requisite uniforms and said the rosary each morning, this Catholic school was not my Catholic school. This was an old-money, Harvard-legacy, Catholic prep school. It was there that I learned about the allure of rebellion.

Being "nice" was all right, but it also got you nowhere fast. I was fascinated by the other girls who, even with their gangly seventh-grade limbs and bracketed teeth, knew how to attract attention—a fact made all the more evident by the number of my peers' pregnancies that were surreptitiously swept under the rug before I'd figured out that I could, in fact, be an object of desire to the opposite sex—and how to get exactly what they wanted. In between summers at Martha's Vineyard, they had learned how to name-drop, how to sit, how to smudge their eyeliner to post-coital-just-rolled-out-of-his-bed perfection, and why you should never, ever hug the teacher. They effortlessly toed the line between the barely-perceptible rolling of their pleated skirts just above the knees and demerit-worthy dress code infractions. The fact that mandatory morning prayer services and weekly confessions left them with much more to rebel against than the average well-to-do teenager rendered their carefully constructed "edginess" even sexier. This was something they seemed to have known since birth.

For most of my adolescence, I was fairly impermeable to the allure of alcohol-soaked weekends down the Shore and reckless romps with the cocky sons of Wall Street gurus from local all-male prep schools. I observed their world from a distance, like a scientist studying a poisonous plant species: I was fascinated, but I never got too close. But I couldn't help noticing that I was evidently lacking in an area that I had apparently overlooked my entire life. "You're just too... nice," one classmate admitted to me. "You have no edge."

And what on earth, I wondered, was an "edge," why was it so significant, and most important, where could I get one? In Minnesota and in my family, we were not "rebellious." We were not "edgy." We were ladies. We were respectable. We were... well, "nice."

"SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANY BETTER. SHE'S FROM THE MIDWEST."

And then, as I began to contemplate what my upcoming college years would be like, it hit me: I was boring. This was the problem, and it was a problem that needed immediate and drastic attention. After all, this was Columbia University, and more important, New York City: a place where (as popular consensus would have us believe) warmth was a sort of bizarre afterthought in the midst of a whole lot of self-serving, where you could walk



smack in the middle of thousands of people for hours and never make eye contact with a living human being, and where liking someone as a person was not necessarily a prerequisite for having copious amounts of sex with them. I was not going to spend my college years as the annoyingly peppy "nice" girl from the Midwest.

And so I learned to navigate the waters of that particular brand of indifference and rebellion that seems to be reserved for big-city college students, as my zeal for conformity—ironic in a world of skinny-jeaned, self-proclaimed "nonconformists"—grew. I developed the art of aloofness, retired my usual array of colorful dresses, and eliminated most emotions and exclamations from my vocabulary. I didn't tiptoe around others' feelings, and I didn't burden anybody else with my own. Burgeoning attachments were discarded quickly; everything was anonymous and excruciatingly, carefully, deliberately casual, so as to never give the impression of vulnerability. I joined the masses who slunk carelessly in and out of parties and leggings and ill-fated flings. I took care to build a protective wall around my heart, and I was, so to speak, rewarded. No one called me "innocent" anymore, or a pushover, or "too nice." It made me feel powerful. It made me feel like I couldn't get hurt, like I'd finally gotten it.

It made me feel like a bitch. And I was, to be honest, pretty bad at it. When the makeshift wall shattered and the remnants swept away as swiftly as it had been constructed, I realized that I liked forming attachments; I liked it when things were a bit boring sometimes. Moreover, as in my Catholic schoolgirl days, the boys I generally lusted after were sweet and shy rather than obnoxiously perfect (or, as is unfortunately often the case, perfectly obnoxious), which made for admittedly lackluster romances but much less angst-ridden ones as well. I grappled with whether or not this superficial, cutthroat world that had made so many glittering promises of invulnerability and success was really the source of my struggle, or whether I'd simply lost my innocence altogether. But my own personal Achilles heel, the main problem, what it all came down to, was that—I cared. I cared a lot. I was still, at heart, wholesome as hell. Love live the pastel-colored rebellion. ●

BARRICADED IN BUTLER

one student spends 48 hours in the abyss

by Dino Grandoni
photos by Kristina Budelis

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF BORED IN BUTLER LIBRARY'S REFERENCE ROOM, look up on the north wall. You'll see inscribed, "MAN IS BUT ALL HE KNOWTH." Mottos should pithily describe the ethos of a group, institution, or in this case, a library, but this one falls flat. The saying suggests men become better through imbibing copious amounts of knowledge, presumably the type you come across in an Ivy League library. But how can those creatures that crawl out of Butler at all hours of the day reasonably qualify as "men" (or women)? Those protohumans that hole themselves up in that block of a building at the south end of campus, that great repository of books of literature, philosophy, equations, and other asinine things people dedicate their lives to—friends, those things aren't human.

I'm not the Butler type, if you can tell, which makes me strangely suited for this special project: to spend 48 hours—two consecutive days—in Butler Library. Reactions from friends and acquaintances run the gamut, but the most common question is simply, "Why?" That is the question I intend to answer: Why, exactly, do so many of my fellow Columbians subject themselves to living in the library—literally living there for days straight—when they have a bed, a desk, a padded chair, and some privacy no more than four blocks away? How can you justify living in a place so miserable, so lifeless, so devoid of any of the things that bring meaning to life, just to read a book or do a problem set? You can check out the books, and problem sets can be done anywhere.

This library has become a sort of masochistic theater in which participants perform the modern equivalent of ritual self-flagellation: studying for days straight, staying up until absurd hours of the night, and then complaining about it to their friends. Did any of us apply to Columbia for this?

So I go there to learn its ways, its people, and its language; to eat only Blue Java; to sleep on its benches and floors; and to see how my person holds up under these various stresses. I will quaff the spirits that are Butler, and try not to puke it up afterward.

Thursday, 12:00 p.m.: I enter the library knowing I won't leave until two days later. I spend an hour scouting out a study spot, a home base. Where you camp in Butler is a mark of social status—it corresponds with how much time you put into searching for a spot and how grave you consider where you sit to be. Consider the Reference Room. It's gaudy and gilded, with faux marble floors, high ceilings, tall windows, and large chandeliers—none too shabby a place to be seen. With all its reference materials, it also houses perhaps the greatest percentage of leather-bound books of all the rooms in the library.

But Reference is too obvious. The more ambitious Butlerites tend toward the obscure study spots. I aim for 310, the Card Catalog Room. Perched high above the rows and rows of catalog card cases is a balcony with 25 or so of the classiest desks in Butler, normally reserved for the most elite studiers. Like nearly all other high-end pieces of real estate in Butler during midterms, every alcove

is occupied by a person or a person's stuff. Winning one is a crapshoot, and I have no choice but to move someone's things from a desk, a mortal sin for some. Person studying at Catalog Room desk No. 20, I apologize. You seem to be studying chemistry, and it will be very awkward when you come back and we have to share the 4-by-4-foot desk. You can't claim this workspace merely because you left your notebook, Snickers wrapper, and trash from JJ's there. Sorry. Good luck on your midterm.

THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A SINGLE GRAM OF PROTEIN IN THE ENTIRE CAFE.

(Note: The key to holding down a workspace in Butler is the volume of stuff you put there. Leave only a notebook and a few pieces of paper, and it's easy to move. Leave your jacket and backpack and blanket and four water bottles, and all of a sudden you've made it that much more difficult for someone to steal it. Don't be the easy target. Remember: It's not about finishing first, it's about not finishing last.)

5:00 p.m.: Part of plunging yourself into Butler is Blue Java, which for many reasons isn't a popular campus eatery. Its food offerings consist of only baked goods, yogurt, and soggy, factory-

produced sandwiches probably shipped from out-of-state. I've already had the "tomato and mozzarella on ficelle" sandwich twice, for lunch and dinner, at \$8.17 apiece. \$8.17! You can get a delicious Milano sub with freshly cut meat and cheese for less. And there doesn't seem to be a single gram of protein in the entire cafe. Man does not live on stale muffins alone. They're lucky it's only two days for me, otherwise the only alternative would be cannibalism.

11:00 p.m.: The "sandwiches" have hit me hard, and three hours of reading ESPN's Web site and stalking people on Facebook can numb the mind, so I almost pass on the adventure I had scheduled for that night. I know, though, that this is the freshest I'll be, so I go tunneling under the library.

The beating heart of Butler, which heats and cools and waters the entire building, is Level B, the basement—a concrete catacomb only accessible through X Stair, the northwesternmost stairwell, and then only after picking the lock on a grated door. Underground, you'll find yourself in a series of corridors that form a loop, part of the fabled tunnel system under the Morningside campus.

The tunnels are hardly "tunnels" in the sense of muddy, dug-out crawl spaces—not that you would expect those under a modern building. Really, they're for custodial work, clearly used during the day, filled with ladders, long fluorescent tubes, lockers, pieces of wood and strap steel, pipes running every which way along the walls, heating vents, giant boxed-in machines pulsating with the heat of whatever they're doing, the stench of fiberglass, and the knobs and levers controlling God-knows-what part of the University. The walls are graffitied repeatedly with the same marker-drawn rats and giant stencil-painted flies, and at the end of one hallway, one artist cleverly labeled the doors Doors 1, 2, and 3. No. 3 leads to perhaps the coldest room in the entire school, on your way to what some signs suggest is Low. There are signs pointing the way to John Jay and Lerner, but in the two hours underground, I can't find a path to any other building.

The tags of three tunnelers—"Artie," "Golden Cats," and "Benoit"—are ubiquitous. Benoit is the most recognizable one—he has a page on WikiCU. Some of his tags include his e-mail address, with promises of tours he leads himself. It apparently is inactive—at least for me. (It is, after all, a Yahoo account.) But the other bards of the basement still laud him:

BENOIT's tunnel tours
Are widely sought ...
In my 4 years here
I've never been caught :)

(I concur—today's poetry needs more emoticons.)

The basement, it turns out, might be the easiest way to get into the stacks after they are locked





up for the night. After dark, obviously, they're deserted—and probably provide an ideal place to have sex in the library, if you are so inclined to do it there and not, say, in your own dorm, with your own bed and a locking door. Be careful, though, about which way you exit the stacks—the doors that indicate “ALARM WILL SOUND” are not, in fact, lying.

When the alarms start buzzing, I decide to call it quits. It's been hours, and I'm hungry again—even for Blue Java. Sleep is a good option, but where? This is something I should have thought of hours ago. I narrow it down to two choices: the black, padded benches of the cafe on the second floor, or the plastic-y armchairs in 209. Indecision mixed with Hulu and dread of sleeping in Butler keep me up later than I want to be. (While wandering around in the early morning, I hear the alarm from Stack 9 still ringing. Apparently nobody has responded.) At 4 a.m., I go down to the cafe ready to sprawl myself out on one of the soft benches, but I'm afraid of being woken up at 7 by early risers buying coffee. I opt for 209, putting two chairs together and giving my 6-foot frame about four feet in which to sleep.

Friday, 10:30 a.m.: I wake up with a strained back and the kind of greasy face and bed-head that normally call for a shower. It feels like I've spent a night camping, except I can't romanticize the experience like you can when you rough it in the woods. My breath is bad, and it's only going to get worse.

During the first few minutes after waking up, while I'm trying to orient myself, two girls from

Barnard sit down conspicuously close to me, ignoring open chairs more reasonably spaced from where I slept. But they aren't interested in me—they're interested in James Franco. Days earlier, one of them had received a text from a friend in Butler telling her that Franco was here. She sprinted from her dormitory to the library, and followed someone who turned out to be a James Franco look-alike all the way to the subway. Dejected, she started walking back home when she got another text: “He's still HERE.” She raced back, found the real one here in 209, and waited until there was an free seat to grab a spot across from him and do Spanish homework. “I was shaking the whole time.” She had brought her friend here to recall the tale. Butler can engender some heretofore undocumented psychoses, none stranger than that obsession some students have with finding Franco in the library. From the rest of Columbia: Mr. Franco, we're sorry. I imagine you hate us all.

2:30 p.m.: Back to Blue Java for lunch. They've restocked on sushi, chicken wraps, and some other foodstuffs made of meat, so today at least I can cover every food group. While standing in line, I overhear, “2.99? 2.99?! Do I at least get free coffee with that?” I think the guy was buying a Clif Bar. Apparently I'm not the only one peeved at Java's prices.

3:39 p.m.: For a break from the bustle of the library proper, I take an excursion to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, a museum-like corner of Butler's sixth floor that no undergraduate should miss. Currently on display in its Octagon

Room is “The Dream Machine.” (This sounds like something out of “Legends of the Hidden Temple.”) The device—part of a display on “Naked Lunch” and William S. Burroughs, a glorified prototype to the strobe light—was invented by two of Burroughs' friends for their LSD trips, and purportedly creates “a flickering light that oscillates at a rhythm corresponding to the alpha waves of the brain, thus creating a psychedelic effect on the observer,” according to the caption next to it. It can also create headaches.

6:33 p.m.: After the sojourn to the Rare Book Library, I head back to my desk in the Catalog Room, intent on studying for the midterm I have Wednesday. I can see through the window that Carman Hall is buzzing with freshmen spending their Friday night right. It's depressing, and at this point, the library has really started to

THE DOORS THAT INDICATE THAT “AN ALARM WILL SOUND” ARE NOT, IN FACT, LYING.

hit me physically. I have yet to brush my teeth, and now's about the time when my five o'clock shadow really takes hold. My eyes are glazed and bloodshot from hours of wearing contacts. Before, I could sit somewhere in the library and passers-by would think nothing of me.



Now I'm a harried freak—a friend I had lunch with at 1 p.m. today tells me I've changed.

8:52 p.m.: Doing this on Family Weekend is a happy coincidence. Two sets of parents who are touring the library comment on my odyssey. One is glad to see “colorful” things like this happening on campus. But any “color” my trip held is by this hour completely washed away, replaced by the dull gray of listlessness. By the 30th hour, the sounds of Butler have become more pronounced: The squeak of sneakers across the polished floors scream, and tapping pens become jet engines. Trying not to focus on such small sounds only

BOTH NIGHTS I SEE THE SAME MAN ASLEEP IN THE SAME TWO CHAIRS, WEARING THE SAME BLUE BUTTON-DOWN.

makes them louder. The lighting in, say, Butler's foyer and other prominent parts of the library is done subtly; in the less public parts, though, it is obnoxious and stinging. My head is swimming, and I want fresh air. Because I've made my desk so messy that it's unfit as a workspace, I try to move around to different spots in the library, but to no avail. My mind isn't in a state to get anything done, and I resign myself to the fact that I will leave this library not having done a single piece of schoolwork or having read any books.

9:20 p.m.: Text from a friend: “And you probably smell bad. Ew. I'm great—clean, warm, not in the library, Haha :) ...”

11:30 p.m.: Fresh air, I decide, can only be gotten by going up onto the roof. Earlier in the day, I'd hunted for a way to get up there—and it's not hard at all. At the northwest corner of the sixth floor, there is a staircase up to the seventh with a window from which you can climb out and onto the roof. Short of breaking a lock (and potentially setting off an alarm), this is the easiest way up. The view is fantastic, but for me, brief—I can see security guards snooping around through

the windows of the sixth floor, so I book it.

On my way back down, I run into a grad student who has been at Columbia for what he describes as “a long time.” I tell him I'm sleeping in the library tonight. According to him, the best places to sleep in Butler are the alcoves on the third floor or the private study rooms on the fourth (if they're free). Those who hit the hay in the chairs near the Circulation Desk on the third floor are “the most intense.” I agree: For both nights I'm here, I see the same man asleep in the same two chairs, wearing the same blue button-down. Unfortunately, I never get the chance to interview him when he wakes up. (My first question would have been, “Why, for the love of God, why?!”)

I am exhausted and sleep-deprived, but anxious about going to bed again in the library, so I decide to stay up. Past midnight, Butler is a different place, filled with catatonics at their desks for no apparent reason. Each has some demon clawing at their back: a midterm or an essay they've procrastinated on. I'm not one of them, but I am among them, desperate for my own bed. I go to sleep, once again, at 4 in the morning.

Saturday, 9:00 a.m.: This isn't funny anymore. I tried the double-chair method to sleep again, which mean my back now cracks with every step I take. My whole body hurts: My left elbow is chafed from leaning on it for hours, and my eyes are raw from the glow of computer screens and fluorescent lights. My white undershirt is pilly with the red fluff from the blanket I brought with me. And miraculously, I really have accomplished zero homework in the past 47 hours. I did this because I thought it wouldn't interfere with my schoolwork too much. “I'll be in the library for days, literally—I'll have plenty of time to study.” I was so, so wrong.

There is a silver lining, though. In three short hours, I am going to have the long-awaited sweet release—I'm going to go to Homecoming, get drunk, and then sleep—sweet, glorious sleep, with a mattress and sheets and pillows. I can already hear groups of students from Frat Row walking between Butler and Carman, chanting fight songs and beaming with almost-never-seen school pride.

Then, at noon, with slight trepidation, I leave the library, emerging from Butler a different man. Different how? Well, I smell worse and look like a homeless person. My body feels like it's been dragged by a horse and then beaten by that horse. My brain feels like it's floating above my head, disconnected, with no real control over my actions. I'm convinced that no one—absolutely no one—feels good after exiting Butler. There is no sense of accomplishment, no self-satisfaction. You would've rather been doing something different. Like some sort of drug, people seek out Butler in times of desperation, when they need to write a term paper in six hours or cram for a test in a class they haven't done any work in for weeks.

Butler, in turn, welcomes you with a cold embrace and vindictive smile. It knows you don't want to be there—that you have no choice—but it's indifferent. And like a battered wife, you return all the same. Despite not picking up a single book the entire time, I did learn one thing: Although nobody is happy in Butler, everybody is unhappy together. ●

FASHION FORWARD BENDERS

how an ancient spiritual practice became a hip trend

BY DEVIN BRISKI
PHOTO BY EMBRY OWENS

While most teenagers turned to Nirvana or Metallica, Prema Maja Rode's "Om Namah Shivaya" chant CD, which I used to play on repeat while working at my local yoga studio, was the soundtrack to my questioning adolescent years. In high school, my yoga instructors were my mentors and my fellow practitioners my friends. It was Jill, my Vinyasa instructor, who sat with me, holding my hand, as I opened my admission e-mail to Columbia. It was Rebecca, my Anusara instructor, who taught me heart-opening or "opening to grace" poses every Thursday night during the summer of my first heartbreak. Even outside the studio, I began to take yogic teachings—"ahimsa" (nonviolence) and "satya" (truthfulness)—to heart. But it wasn't just the spiritual concepts that seeped into my lifestyle—it was the identity that accompanied them. It was the tie-dye fold-over pants and the collect-all-seven chakra beater tops. It was the Krishna candles and the Ganesha T-shirts. It was Hard Tail and lululemon. It was fashion.

On campus and in the city as a whole, yoga's asana branch—one of the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga outlined in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—has become the new "it" workout and yoga clothing has become more trendy. The grand opening of lululemon athletica this fall in Park Slope followed right on the heels of Bryant Urstadt's exposé on "luluheads," young women who have a cultish devotion to lululemon, in "New York Magazine." All this hype has some critics wondering if the new lulu-culture has isolated the ancient practice of yoga from its spiritual roots.

"Yoga originally was an ascetic tradition, meant to yoke in the mind and induce spiritual states," says Rachel McDermott, Barnard professor of Hinduism. And as Emma Goidel, a Barnard sophomore who practices yoga regularly, points out, "It's a little bizarre that such a spiritual thing has become so commercial."

On the other hand, spandex pants' miraculous butt-shaping ability is undeniably appealing. "The fit, the function, and the fun [of lululemon] appeal to young women. The colors are always changing," says Rena Furuya, educator (the lulu-term for salesperson) at the Lincoln Center lululemon branch. "Working out is not about baggy T-shirts anymore."

The lululemon Manifesto, written on the brand's shopping bags and posters, includes "truths" like "The pursuit of happiness is the source of all unhappiness." Could these be new corporate "yamas"—rules, as outlined in the Yoga Sutras—for the modern Western world?



Yoga is about more than lululemon's ta ta tamers.

In addition to workout fanatics, yoga also attracts spiritual seekers who are looking for alternatives to Western religions. Many of them can be found at Columbia's Bhakti Club, which derives its name from "Bhakti" (or devotion) yoga and is sponsored by Hare Krishna monks. The club offers free yoga classes taught by Beth Krafchik, a student in GS, every Wednesday night at 7 p.m.

Gadadhara Pandit Dasa, the Hare Krishna monk leading Bhakti's efforts, explains what draws college students to the club: "Bhakti is not dogma, and I think people find that kind of refreshing. It's free of fear and guilt. The idea of God is there, but it's not being shoved down your throat."

McDermott says she notices a lot of students take her class because of a continuing yoga practice. "I think there's a perception that they're [Eastern religions are] not doctrinal. People like to make the distinction between spiritual and religious."

"IT'S BIZARRE THAT A SPIRITUAL THING HAS BECOME SO COMMERCIAL."

When students are drawn to both the fashion and the spirituality of Eastern traditions, the debate comes hinges on whether or not it is a fundamental contradiction to be a lulu-donning yoga devotee. Marie Desyedu, another educator at the Lincoln Center lululemon, does not think so. "The philosophy of lululemon is that if you feel good about the way you look, you'll be happier," she explains. "And clothing does that for some people."

But Pandit Dasa would disagree. "Traditionally, yoga leads to detachment. ... By making it material, you will do the physical act, but you will miss the point," he cautions.

Instructor Krafchik takes a different approach. She thinks it's impossible to separate this new commercial form from the ancient practice of yoga. "People can think they're practicing just for a good workout, but subconsciously they're still drawn to the spiritual benefits," Krafchik theorizes. "Separating yoga from its spirituality is like separating sugar from sweetness."

Amidst the irony of students wearing yoga pants to parties and pop Hindu imagery adorning T-shirts and tote bags in lecture, one wonders if it's possible for any spiritual or philosophical concept based in anti-capitalist ideals to exist in a capitalist society without hypocrisy. Hot Topic commercialized "punk" in the '90s, catering to middle school Misfits fanatics. Communist icon Che Guevara continues to grace T-shirts sold for profit on St. Mark's Place.

Ultimately, every Vinyasa class is a grab bag of both people who come for the fashion and stay for the spiritualism and devout practitioners that rarely deny themselves stylish bamboo pants. Maybe yoga, which means "union" in Sanskrit, is the perfect place to marry these two powerful forces. In the end, Goidel reconciles with the fad, saying, "If there is going to be this pop culture air surrounding yoga, at least it's a positive one—one that encourages to practice a healthy lifestyle, eat well, drink a lot of water, work out daily."

And even Professor McDermott can support a new type of yoga that melds spiritualism with style. "The fact that yoga meets the needs of people in an entirely different culture shows its resiliency," she says. "To say 'Well, it's not the way it used to be'—well, what does that matter? Nothing stays the same, and that's a very yogic claim." ●

ART THOU NUDE?

the bare essentials of modeling in the buff

BY LIZA ELIANO

ILLUSTRATION BY MATTEO MALINVERNO

It's slightly chilly. You're standing absolutely still as a group of students carefully studies every inch of you. Oh, and you're naked.

For most of us, this might bring up residual anxiety from that all-too-familiar nightmare of showing up to school in only your birthday suit. But for a nude model working for a studio art class or a professional artist, this is a regular day on the job.

The nude has always been a subject of both classicism and controversy. Artists began working with nude models during the Renaissance, as the human body became a symbol of divine creation and beauty. While the nude is often associated with feminine ideals, Anne Higonnet, professor of art history at Barnard, notes, "The extent to which they [artists] favored men vs. women has varied over time. In the last years of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th, for instance, the gorgeous male model was supremely admired, especially by male artists." She points to the mythical neo-classical work "The Sleep of Endymion" by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson as the quintessential use of the male body in painting. In the piece, Endymion lounges wistfully across the canvas, displaying his idealized body for the viewer.

While men are still used as models, more recently women have dominated the field. "By the middle of the 19th century the female model had taken the lead," says Higonnet. This allowed women to find a niche within the patriarchal world of art, but also caused unease over the use of the female body as an object at the artist's disposal. Victorine Meurent was a famous model for painters during this era and an artist herself. Her face is immortalized in several of Edouard Manet's works, including the infamous "Olympia", which turned the concept of the female nude on its head.

"Olympia" is studied in almost every art history class as the moment when the purity and mysticism of the female nude was transformed into a grotesque image, an exemplification of the type of male perversion and voyeurism prevalent in the modern city of Paris. In portraying a naked prostitute who looks out at the viewer as if he is a customer, Manet destroyed the romanticized notion of the feminine body and revealed the base sexuality that lies at the core of every man.

Today, the notion of nudity as inseparable from sex seems to have spilled over into the world of nude modeling. A Google search of the term "nude models" gives links that aren't at all related to art—at least, not in the traditional

sense of the word. Making the search more specific by adding in "art" yields the same results.

Craigslist, a popular vehicle for models to find jobs, also offers some sketchy prospects. While a few postings are simply looking for models to sit for a drawing class or a photo shoot, others seem to expect a bit more. One seemingly innocent post reads "Nude Male Models Needed," but clicking reveals a photo of a nude couple getting a little too personal. Some models who also use Craigslist to promote themselves aren't shy about explaining why they should be taking their clothes off for you. "Muscular Male Model Totally Open. For Real" ends his short resume by imploring readers to "Find out for yourself how fine I am," along with a picture that shows just enough skin to back up his claim.

Our sex-obsessed culture threatens to cheapen the traditional use of the nude model. Now nudity is usually seen as pornographic rather than as a form for artistic inspiration. Additionally, as more contemporary artists move away from classical figuration and focus on abstract or mechanized art, the nude model as a muse no longer seems viable. While artists of the 19th and 20th centuries often developed intense relationships with their models and made them a part of the creative process, nude modeling today has become an impersonal profession used mostly in academic settings.

THE NOTION OF NUDITY AS INSEPARABLE FROM SEX SEEMS TO HAVE SPILLED OVER INTO THE WORLD OF NUDE MODELING.

In the wake of the financial crisis many people have even turned to nude modeling to make a couple extra bucks. An article on how to make easy money in Time Out New York's Student Guide issue, handed out to Columbia students on move-in day, lists nude modeling alongside other less provocative pursuits like dog walking or passing out flyers. Institutions like the School of Visual Arts and the National Academy hold auditions to pose for classes. Models can make anywhere from \$18 an hour in a class to \$100 an hour for professional work. Time Out states that the only prerequisites needed to land a gig are "stillness and boldness"—two skills anyone can acquire, especially when other jobs are hard to come by.

Even Columbia offers opportunities for students to do a little nude modeling on the side. The Artist Society, an on-campus visual

arts group, holds Friday Night Sketches where anyone can set up an easel and practice their drawing skills. The group's website prominently advertises for student models, stating, "If you hold a CUID and can maintain poses for 20 minutes ... consider modeling for us!"

Hiring students to display themselves in the buff on a college campus has certainly sparked some controversy. As Nora Rodriguez, a Columbia junior who is in charge of coordinating models for the sketch sessions, says, "When the Artist Society was asked to put on a drawing session for Days on Campus, we were not allowed to use nude models. It's pretty ridiculous if you ask me. Anyone who has taken a figure drawing class knows what a benefit it is to see the body in its entirety. Besides, you can go to the Met and see all the nudity you want."

Negative campus reactions to nude modeling have not deterred students from signing up to pose for the Society. "We are already mostly booked for the rest of the semester," says Rodriguez. When asked what draws in students, Rodriguez responds, "I think money is a large incentive, more so than a desire to further their art practice, anyway." At \$15 an hour, students are ready and willing to put aside their inhibition and shed their clothes—all in the name of art, of course.

Monetary enticement and the defiling of the nude may be eroding the purely artistic conventions of nude modeling. Even so, the practice has retained its credibility as a method for young art students to learn the fundamental basics of drawing and painting. Tara W. Geer, who teaches Basic Drawing at Columbia's School of the Arts, explains that artists still use nude models today simply because "we still draw and paint people."

As long as students are interested in becoming artists, sketching a nude model will continue to be the most useful way for beginners to refine their skills and understand how art captures what we see in the real world. Even though many students later stray from academic figurative representation in order to cultivate their own individual style, drawing from a nude provides them with the necessary foundation to explore more obscure approaches.

In Nick Guagnini's Introduction to Drawing class at Barnard, students draw from a nude model for six to nine sessions before moving into abstraction and fragmentation. As Guagnini explains, several famous artists have worked with these modern conceits, especially when depicting the nude. Willem De Kooning's series of paintings titled "Woman" portrays the female body with erratic brushstrokes and harsh colors. De Kooning consciously subverts the nude, demonstrating that he is aware of how the nude was traditionally represented in the past with an

emphasis on mimesis and naturalism. Rendering the complex contours, shadows and details of the human body is a way of learning this “dominant code of representation, which needs to be understood,” argues Guagnini.

EVEN COLUMBIA OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO DO A LITTLE NUDE MODELING ON THE SIDE.

Professor Geer also emphasizes the importance of art students confronting the difficult and sensitive subject of nudity. “Nudity is particularly fraught—and you can feel an extra nervousness in the room” when students are presented with nudes, she says. “Part of the experience is learning to get over that, to be able to do your job of translating visual information into two dimensions though there is a naked woman or man right there in front of you. This can be a useful skill later on in drawing portraits, or even drawing through your own crowding emotions.” Drawing the nude not only teaches students invaluable technical skills but also gives them the emotional strength to question and stretch the limitations of art and use it as a vehicle for personal expression and social commentary.

The relationship between student and model is not one-sided—modeling can be an extraordinary learning experience for the naked party as well. Mariana Newhard, a model for Professor Guagnini’s class, says she enjoys listening to Guagnini’s lectures and feels like she is contributing to the class. Newhard, an actress originally from the Philippines, got her start as a nude model at School of Visual Arts when she heard about the job through a friend. She has done a range of work from animation classes to group poses that mimic biblical scenes. “If you have a good teacher running the class it makes a difference,” she says. “I feel like I am also learning and absorbing the information. The experience can be very comfortable when you feel like true art is being done.”

When watching Professor Guagnini’s students diligently sketch Mariana, it’s clear that “true art” is in fact being produced. In the softly lit studio, Mariana sits poised like a Greek statue. The silence is overwhelming. It seems as though this is a sacred space, one where the artist and model have come together to share a fleeting moment of creation. Here, the nude model seems untouched by the distortion of the outside world. She remains the holy muse she was always meant to be. ●



JOLLY GOOD FELLOWS

columbians score at the public library

BY MALLIKA NARAIN

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES LIVINGSTON

An initial foray into the main branch of the New York Public Library at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street inspires a sense of awe not unlike that which Columbia inspires in prospective freshman. Within the library's imposing depths, however, lies an office that contrasts aesthetically with its surroundings—a cozy room of limited access with unassuming wooden floors and yellow lighting.

This is the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, which opened in 1999. Since then, it's been the source of a notable fellowship awarded annually for excellence in a specific field of work, ranging from academic disciplines to the visual arts. 15 fellows are given a sum of money, an office, and unhindered access to the NYPL's much-sought-after reserves. The Fellowship's objective is to support research and writing—fellows are encouraged to develop a literary work over the course of the year, in an environment that fosters a high degree of creativity and internal communication. This year, three of these fellows are Columbia professors: Michael Golston, Karen Russell and Rivka Galchen.

When I visit the NYPL to speak with Golston and Russell, Jean Strouse, who has directed the Center for the past seven years, sits me down in her office. As she tells me about its history and mission, her enthusiasm for the Center is infectious. The Cullman Center was the brainchild of cultural historian Robert Darnton, who felt that New York needed a place to encourage scholars in a multidisciplinary milieu—a foundation that would parallel the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study. Dorothy and Lewis Cullman, patrons of the NYPL, agreed to help establish the center, but maintained that the fellowship should be extended beyond the realm of academia. They particularly insisted upon providing spots for creative writers.

In the past few years, thanks to its incredibly open-ended qualifications, recipients of the Cullman fellowship have included poets, playwrights, novelists, and even cartoonists. Strouse attributes the lack of academic crossfire at the Center to this diverse set-up: "This collaborative environment ... is really a place where people live together for a year. They [the fellows] are having fun!" she says. In her opinion, interaction with novelists is a huge boon to academics, whose viewpoints are altered by this unique channel of communication. Consequently, the Center has cultivated a tradition of interdisciplinary writing that manifests itself in both Golston's and Russell's works.

Michael Golston—a professor of English and subject of a Facebook group called "Prof. Golston is the Man Club"—ushers me into his office,

which is decorated with large sketches of human organs. These, juxtaposed against the postmodern texts on his shelves, create an initial sense of dissonance, but the organs are very much representative of the interdisciplinary nature of Golston's past and future works.

Golston explains that there are structural similarities between elements of physiology like "brainscapes" and the paintings of surrealist artists like Yves Tanguy. He finds that, in turn, postmodern poetry is heavily influenced by surrealist art. Golston is interested in exploring the relationship between surrealism and literary allegory and translating this into a manuscript.

"THIS COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT ... IS REALLY A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE LIVE TOGETHER FOR A YEAR. THEY [THE FELLOWS] ARE HAVING FUN!"

How, then, will organs fit into his completed work? "That's what I'm trying to figure out right now," he replies, laughing. Aside from recognized figures like John Ashbery, Golston's research will address a number of obscure poets, "some that literally no one has worked on"—Craig Dworkin, Mary Rising Higgins, and Lyn Hejinian in particular. Access to the art criticism archives in the Library will be crucial to his work. Golston's

book, still in its embryonic stages, will not be his first venture into an interdisciplinary approach to poetry—he published "Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science" in 2008, and is now moving away from musicology and technology to re-contextualize poetry and art.

Karen Russell has a very different goal in mind. An undergraduate creative writing professor and graduate of Columbia's MFA program, Russell has already been named one of Granta's Best Young American Novelists and is the von der Heyden Fellow at the Cullman Center. While cheerfully offering me coffee and snacks, she explains that the novel she is working on will grow out of a short story about Florida she wrote previously.

Russell was raised in Miami, and it shows—she is infatuated with the mythic elements of Florida, which she sees as a place where the natural is slowly being sidelined in favor of the artificial and materialist. She wants to write a novel that draws upon the sort of supernatural reality created by the paradoxes evident in the Floridian landscape: "the true weirdness of the alien beauty of the Everglades and these 'ticky-tacky' outposts."

While rummaging around for a book of Dustbowl-era images, Russell tells me about the research she hopes to conduct into the lives of the 1930s homesteaders and their relationship to their surroundings. She wants to explore different perspectives in a limited setting, like a town, to try to understand: "What would keep a person in a place like this?" Her work will greatly benefit from the NYPL's non-circulating diaries, firsthand accounts that almost seem specially tailored to her project.

The Cullman Center seems to be a kind of anomaly: a setting where academia is personalized, thanks to the inter-scholar exchanges it facilitates through events like lectures and lunchtime discussions. It really is, as Russell jests, "like living the life of a 7th grade bookworm." But although the Fellows acknowledge the rarity of the vast resources offered by the NYPL, they seem far more enthused about the repositories of human knowledge in the offices immediately around them. ●



Columbia's three Cullman Center Fellows just love books.

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

csa: yea or nay?

BY JASON BELL

ILLUSTRATION BY REBEKAH KIM

The modern day American supermarket conjures images of fluorescent lights illuminating wilted iceberg lettuce and identical rows of plasticized cheeses and gelatinized lunchmeats. But in recent years, food activists and concerned eaters have been working to change this picture.

An alternative method of purchasing food called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) attempts to reconnect consumers to local produce. On Columbia's campus and in New York City, CSA programs have sprouted at a remarkable pace, providing students and residents with a source of fresh local produce every week. Still, the question of whether CSAs have helped to change the way Americans look at food remains unanswered.

WHETHER CSAS HAVE HELPED CHANGE THE WAY AMERICANS LOOK AT FOOD REMAINS UNANSWERED.

Participants in CSA programs pledge support to a farm operation in the hope that, according to the US Department of Agriculture, "the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm." These individuals agree to pay an upfront fee, buying a share in the farm's produce for a set period. In return, shareholders receive fresh fruits and vegetables from their particular farm over the course of the growing season. Participants must assume the risk that farmers will face a poor harvest, which would mean receiving less than their money's worth or an excess of one product. Although an unlikely possibility, when faced with a glut of eggplants or rutabagas a participant might quickly regret joining the program.

Multiple CSAs operate within New York City. Paula Lukats, program manager of one CSA in NYC, claims that this season alone there were 80 CSA distributions. "That's 80 drop off points [in the city] that farmers are bringing shares of their harvests," she says.

Lukats describes the recent "increase in understanding and knowledge and interest in CSAs," noting that they have started 20 new sites in the past season. Paying the \$400–600 fee guarantees food that city dwellers can feel good about eating, even if their pocketbooks suffer.

As she explains, CSA has a number of benefits. The system gives consumers a way to know "where their food's coming from, to have a connection to the person who's growing the food so that they

can ask questions," Lukats says. "It certainly gives them access to incredibly fresh high quality local produce that's grown organically. [CSA] gives people a sense of community within their neighborhood." CSA also gives financial security to farmers upstate. "They receive money up front before the beginning of their season. In the past farmers would have to borrow money and hope to repay that from their income," says Lukats.

On Columbia's campus, the Columbia University Food Sustainability Project (FSP) connects students to the Morningside Heights CSA. Columbia also has its own CSA, which allows students to work with Roxbury Farm in Kinderhook, New York. Barnard senior Megan McNally, former president of the Morningside Heights CSA, clarifies that the Columbia CSA "has full season shares available to the residents of the community," unlike Morningside's program.

The very presence of CSA options in the "Columbia bubble" begs an exploration of the strong student response to "responsible eating." Why do so many students opt for local food, especially considering the relative expense of participating in a CSA versus more conventional shopping outlets?

Jake Lasser, a Columbia sophomore, says that he participates in FSP because he enjoys cooking with the produce delivered every week. "Last week we got kale, bok choy, carrots, and celery. It presents interesting cooking challenges because I never know quite what I'm going to get until I pick it up," he says. In addition, Lasser likes "to know exactly where [his] vegetables are coming from."

CSAs may also attract participants because they promote a sense of community among members and, more broadly, between campus and upstate New York. Columbia students rarely take Metro North upstate, and living on an urban campus for four years deprives many of any link to a more natural world. Vicariously escaping from the Columbia gates via the taste of an unnaturally luscious beet or a mellow, sweet pumpkin allows students to feel closer to the world outside of Manhattan. Such a sensuous experience displaces some of the guilt associated with living among concrete behemoths rather than trees.

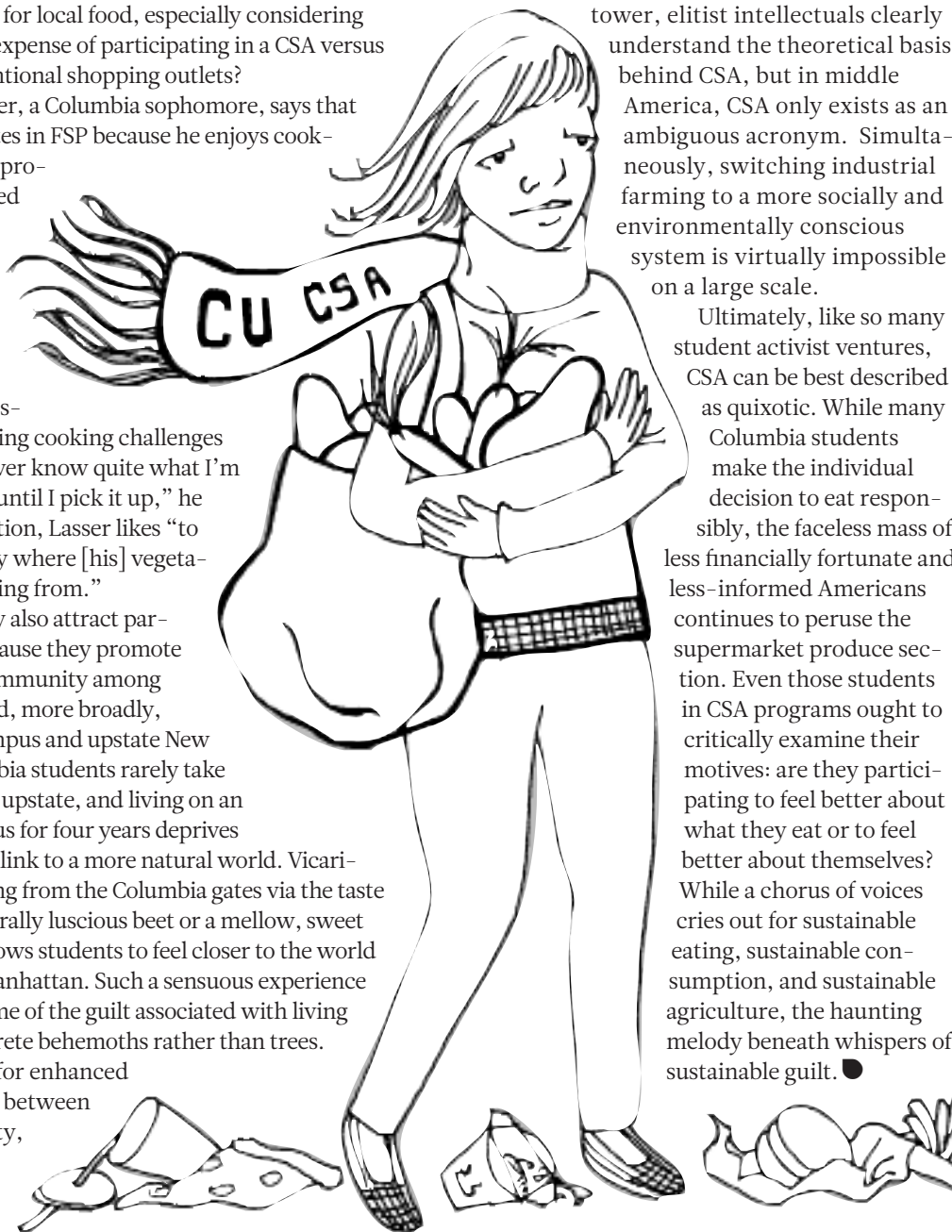
A desire for enhanced connections between the university, local economies, and a national

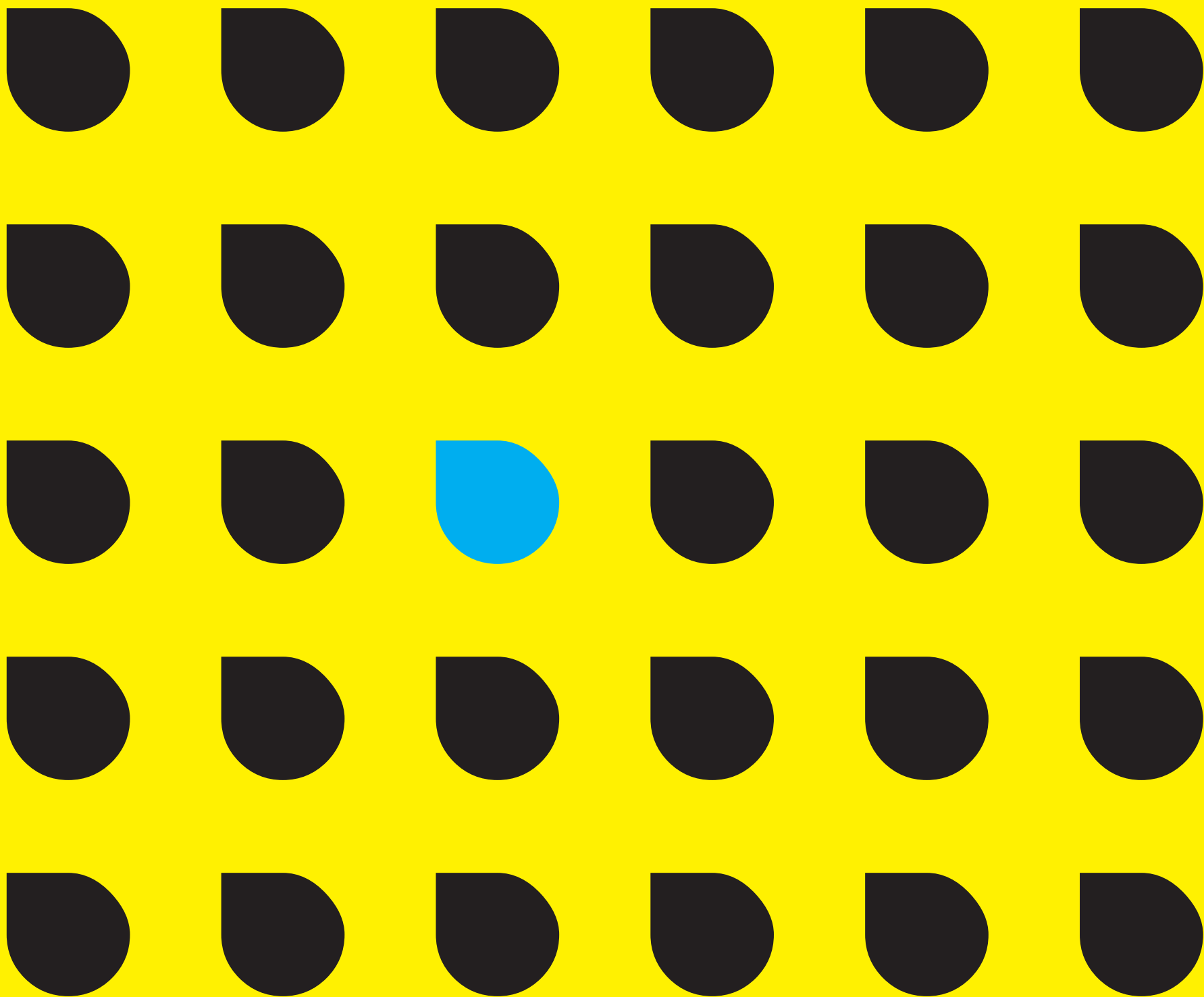
movement spurs already activism-minded students to leap onto the CSA bandwagon. Subtle undertones of self-righteous hippy-ism permeate CSA, from the indiscriminate usage of terms like "sustainable" and "community" to the movement's vaguely utopian vision. At a university infamous for fostering zealous protests and dedicated (read: crazed) activists, a lack of CSA programs would seem shocking.

But despite student enthusiasm for the program, it is clear that CSA programs will not replace the agri-industrial farm complex any time soon. Zealots of the responsible eating community understandably misrepresent the public's latent interest in their movement; even though heightened media attention to local agriculture and celebrity authors like Michael Pollan have increased awareness among certain typically wealthy demographics, much of mainstream America remains either unconvinced or

ignorant. Within Columbia's ivory tower, elitist intellectuals clearly understand the theoretical basis behind CSA, but in middle America, CSA only exists as an ambiguous acronym. Simultaneously, switching industrial farming to a more socially and environmentally conscious system is virtually impossible on a large scale.

Ultimately, like so many student activist ventures, CSA can be best described as quixotic. While many Columbia students make the individual decision to eat responsibly, the faceless mass of less financially fortunate and less-informed Americans continues to peruse the supermarket produce section. Even those students in CSA programs ought to critically examine their motives: are they participating to feel better about what they eat or to feel better about themselves? While a chorus of voices cries out for sustainable eating, sustainable consumption, and sustainable agriculture, the haunting melody beneath whispers of sustainable guilt. ●





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