ISSUE 1

BY MOONCOWS FOR MOONCOWS

MOOWS



ART & SCIENCE

YOUR FAVOURITE ARTS
YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE
SCIENCE

INTERVIEWS

BLAH BLAH BLAH MOOOOO

BEAUTY

WHY COWS ARE SO
BEAUTIFUL??? IT'S UNFAIR

PROFESSIONAL LONGHORN MODEL

SPRUCE THE COW





London August 2026

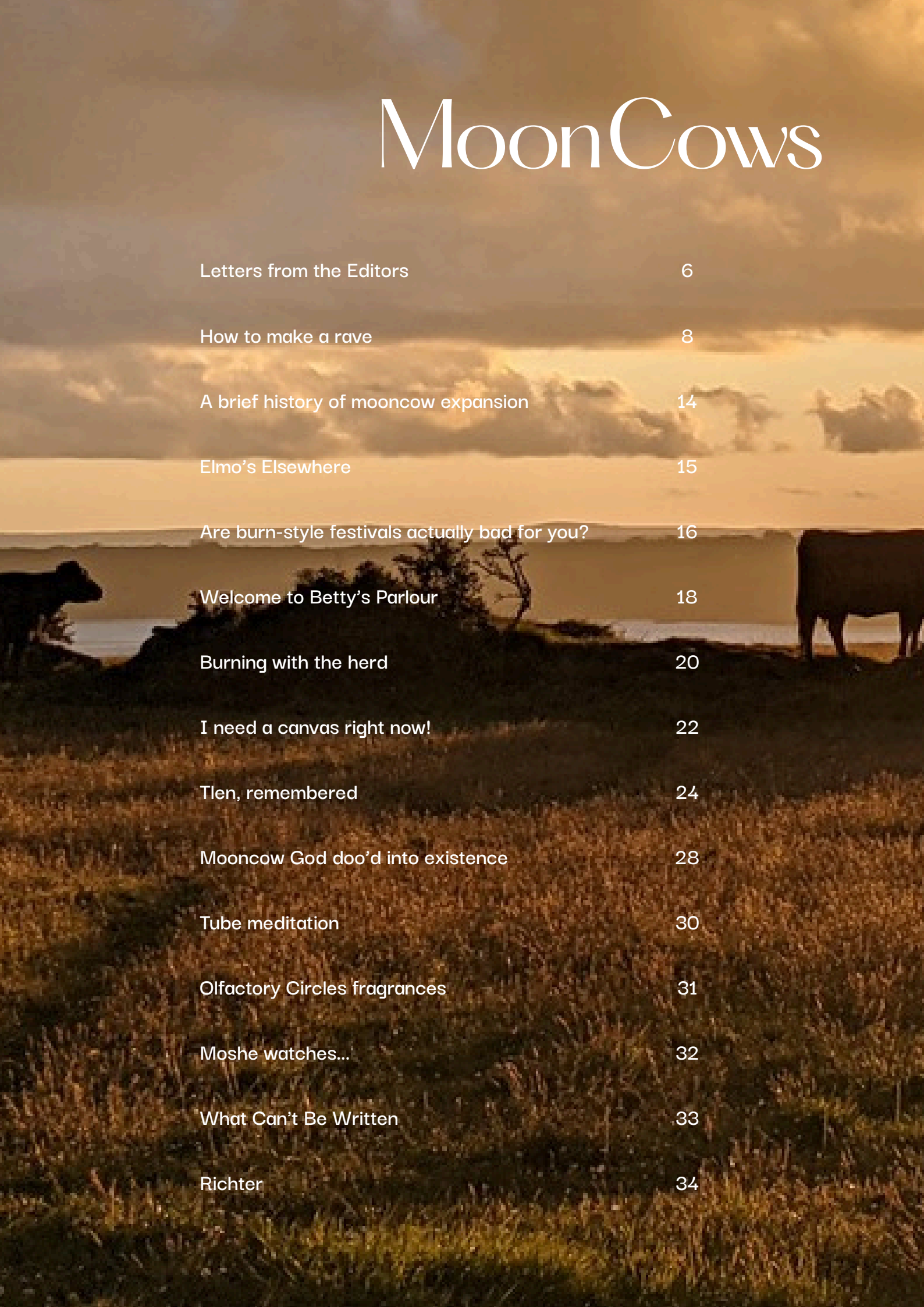


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MoonCows

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LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

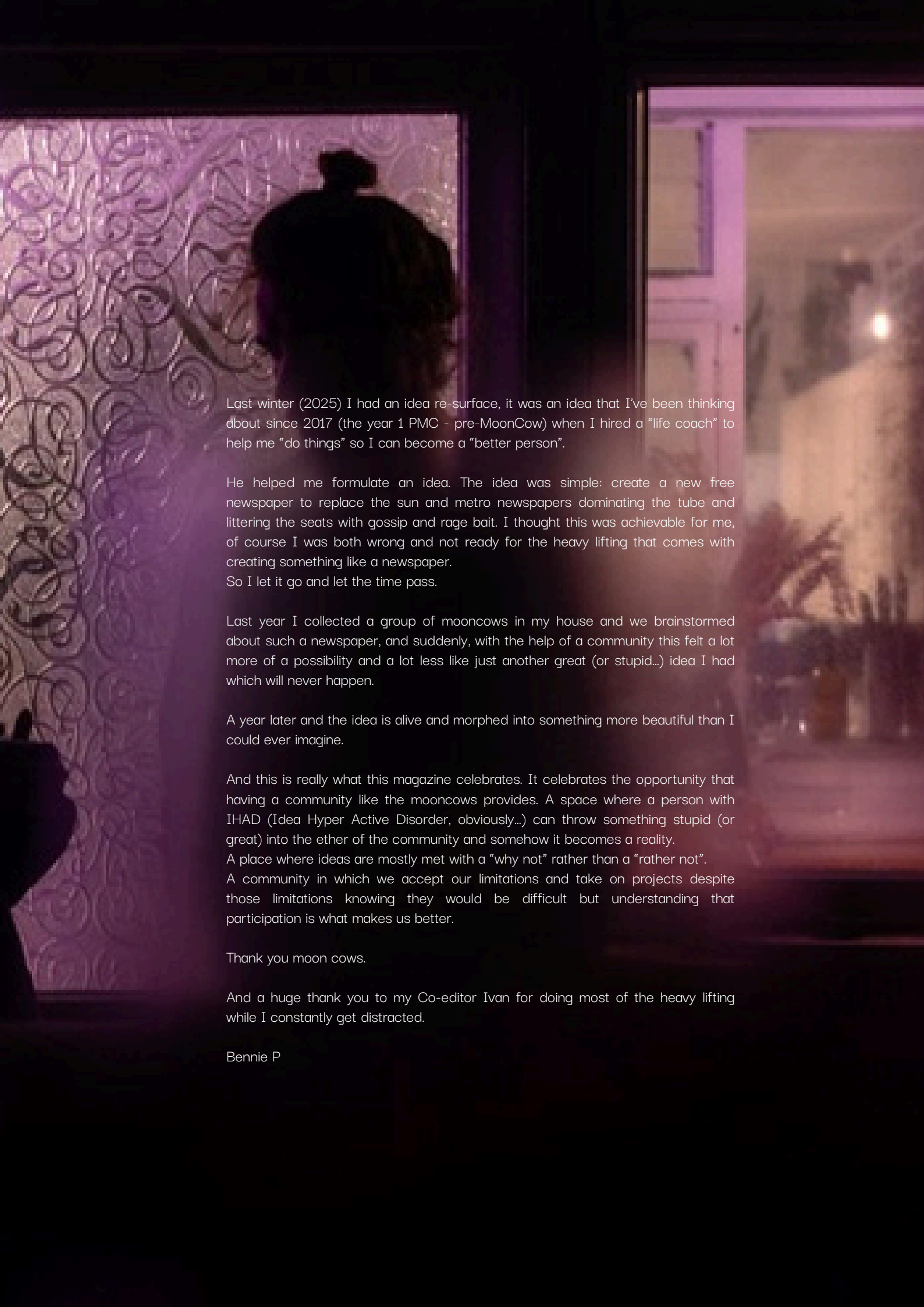
Around a month ago, I opened a grazing map on the nofence.no website ("limitless livestock management"), found cows in the vicinity (in my case, in Epping forest), sat on my bike and went cow-fishing. Some of the English Longhorns were lying on the ground chilling, some, believe it or not, were grazing. I took a bunch of photos from afar. I know that the cows are the most deadly animals on the British Isles, so I didn't want to make them angry. At that time I didn't know that English Longhorns are the most calm and easy-going cows to ever exist, so I first waited for 10 minutes pretending to explore some bark on a tree in order for cows to get accustomed to me – then came closer. Then closer..
They were beautiful.. horns in all directions possible.. black, white, sepia.. munching on the branches.. chewing the cud.. I was standing there brushing off flies with my tail, trying to blend in. I looked into their eyes.. I saw cow thoughts...
After a prolonged time, a stunning-grand-sharp-horned cow (the alpha cow) approached me. They looked me seriously in the eyes and said:
"hey you. you are suspiciously an uncow. go away."
This was Spruce. I discreetly snapped a couple of portraits and slowly receded (see the cover). Spruce was following me with their gaze until I disappeared in the bushes.

Even though I was indeed an uncow in the eyes of an English Longhorn Alpha, I nevertheless proudly consider myself a cow. A mooncow, obviously. The magazine you are holding in your hooves is a result of work of 30+ (!) mooncows. There are more mooncows out there, but this is a snapshot of what mooncows are, what they have been and maybe what they will continue to be. This is the first issue of many. This is a tangible manifestation of our diversity and our awesomeness.

We started a year and a half ago with Bennie's idea of a Moowspaper, this winter it transformed into an idea of a Cowzine. We first were thinking of 16 pages, maybe 20. Now, with the help of you, it's a Moogazine with 76 AMAZING pages! Here it is

touch it smell it wrinkle it read it criticize it enjoy it

Ivan I



Last winter (2025) I had an idea re-surface, it was an idea that I've been thinking about since 2017 (the year 1 PMC - pre-MoonCow) when I hired a "life coach" to help me "do things" so I can become a "better person".

He helped me formulate an idea. The idea was simple: create a new free newspaper to replace the sun and metro newspapers dominating the tube and littering the seats with gossip and rage bait. I thought this was achievable for me, of course I was both wrong and not ready for the heavy lifting that comes with creating something like a newspaper.
So I let it go and let the time pass.

Last year I collected a group of mooncows in my house and we brainstormed about such a newspaper, and suddenly, with the help of a community this felt a lot more of a possibility and a lot less like just another great (or stupid...) idea I had which will never happen.

A year later and the idea is alive and morphed into something more beautiful than I could ever imagine.

And this is really what this magazine celebrates. It celebrates the opportunity that having a community like the mooncows provides. A space where a person with IHAD (Idea Hyper Active Disorder, obviously...) can throw something stupid (or great) into the ether of the community and somehow it becomes a reality.
A place where ideas are mostly met with a "why not" rather than a "rather not".
A community in which we accept our limitations and take on projects despite those limitations knowing they would be difficult but understanding that participation is what makes us better.

Thank you moon cows.

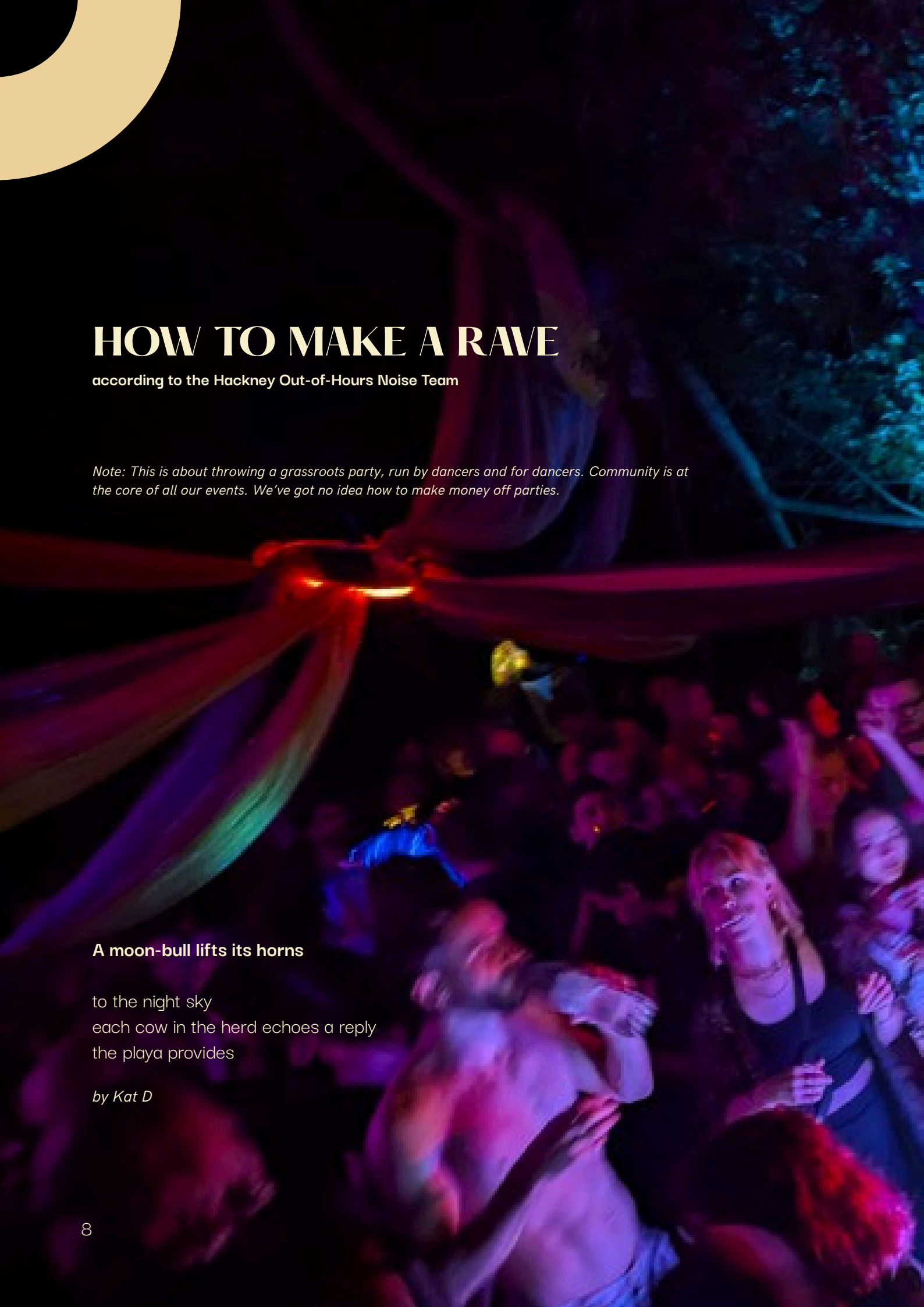
And a huge thank you to my Co-editor Ivan for doing most of the heavy lifting while I constantly get distracted.

Bennie P

HOW TO MAKE A RAVE

according to the Hackney Out-of-Hours Noise Team

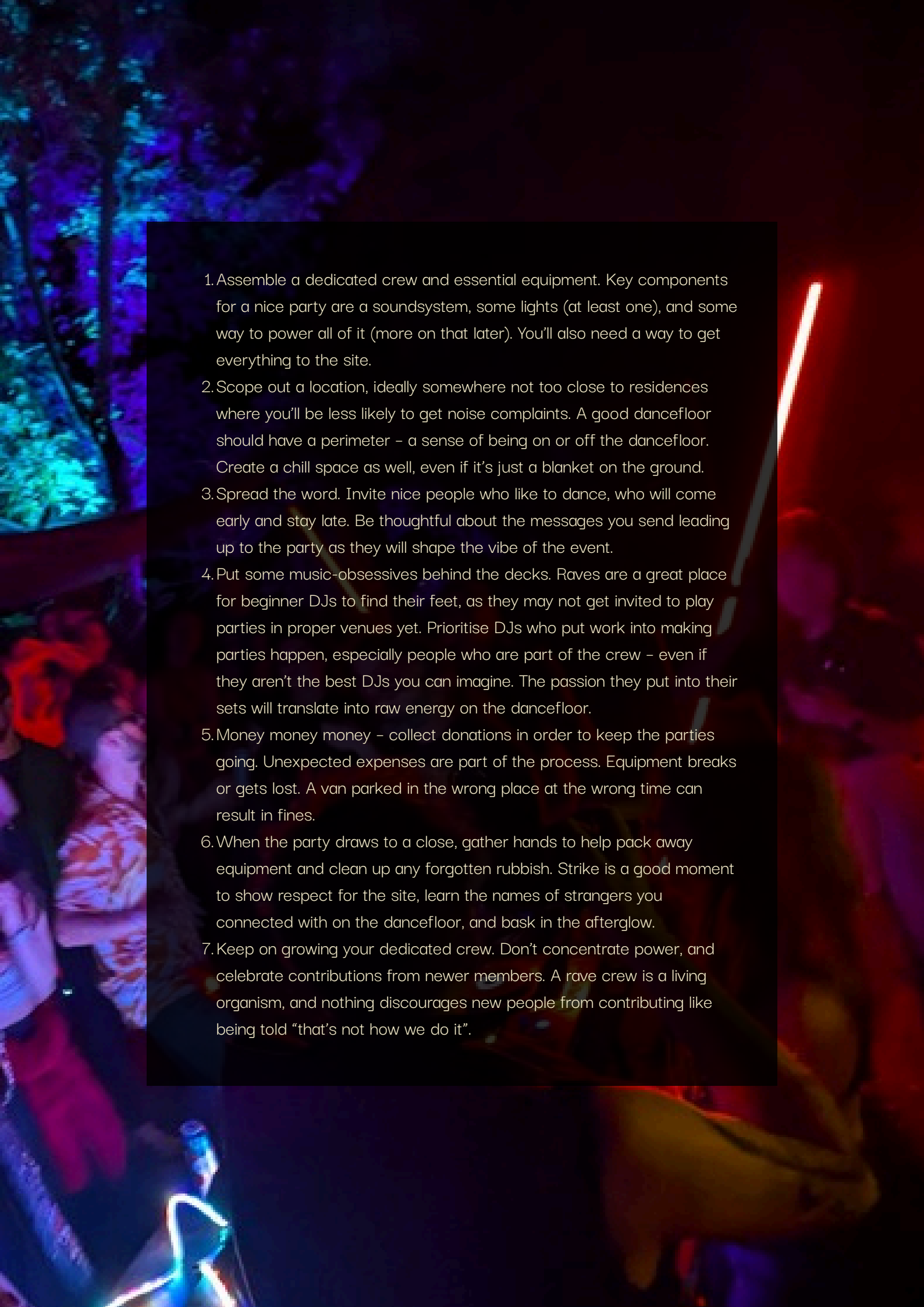
Note: This is about throwing a grassroots party, run by dancers and for dancers. Community is at the core of all our events. We've got no idea how to make money off parties.



A moon-bull lifts its horns

to the night sky
each cow in the herd echoes a reply
the playa provides

by Kat D



1. Assemble a dedicated crew and essential equipment. Key components for a nice party are a soundsystem, some lights (at least one), and some way to power all of it (more on that later). You'll also need a way to get everything to the site.
2. Scope out a location, ideally somewhere not too close to residences where you'll be less likely to get noise complaints. A good dancefloor should have a perimeter – a sense of being on or off the dancefloor. Create a chill space as well, even if it's just a blanket on the ground.
3. Spread the word. Invite nice people who like to dance, who will come early and stay late. Be thoughtful about the messages you send leading up to the party as they will shape the vibe of the event.
4. Put some music-obsessives behind the decks. Raves are a great place for beginner DJs to find their feet, as they may not get invited to play parties in proper venues yet. Prioritise DJs who put work into making parties happen, especially people who are part of the crew – even if they aren't the best DJs you can imagine. The passion they put into their sets will translate into raw energy on the dancefloor.
5. Money money money – collect donations in order to keep the parties going. Unexpected expenses are part of the process. Equipment breaks or gets lost. A van parked in the wrong place at the wrong time can result in fines.
6. When the party draws to a close, gather hands to help pack away equipment and clean up any forgotten rubbish. Strike is a good moment to show respect for the site, learn the names of strangers you connected with on the dancefloor, and bask in the afterglow.
7. Keep on growing your dedicated crew. Don't concentrate power, and celebrate contributions from newer members. A rave crew is a living organism, and nothing discourages new people from contributing like being told "that's not how we do it".

Bass, Batteries, Boot Space

A rave without music is a gathering, but that doesn't mean you need a bangin' soundsystem to start. Whatever you have is good enough – even if that's just a bluetooth speaker. As your rave grows, your soundsystem will grow with you.

Every rave crew eventually develops a van problem. You do not have to begin there. Our crew started with bike trailers, and the van faff sometimes makes us nostalgic for simpler times.

Soundsystems are secretly two parts: the bits that make the beats, and the bits that power them. How much power you need depends on your scale.

Backpack

Think: a Minirig 4, or whatever one person can carry.
Keep the dancefloor tight, point the speaker into it, and let the crowd provide the energy. Backpack speakers may last the rave on their internal batteries or only need phone-sized portable batteries for topups.

Boot

Think: a JBL PartyBox or Soundboks.
Now we've got a proper little dancefloor, easily supporting tens of dancers with a bit more breathing room. You'll need friends to help you lift the soundsystem and some more serious juice to power it. A roughly 1kWh power station like an EcoFlow may get you through the event. If you're not ready to invest in a soundsystem yet, you can rent a battery-powered speaker from the Library of Things for £13 per day.

Van

Think: separate powered tops and subs. At this scale, the dancefloor you can thrill is limited only by your wallet and lifting capacity. There's no clear line but once you start getting standalone subs, it's time to consider a generator. Batteries are great, but before long you'd need a fleet of them. One generator can often run the whole rig and be refuelled from a jerry can in minutes.

Gear gets pricey from Boot upwards, so rent before buying. You'll learn more from one party with a rented system than from weeks comparing spec sheets. With generators, you're probably better off renting. They require regular maintenance, and nobody wants a party to shut down because the genny wasn't cared for properly.

Every rave is an experiment. Note pain points in setup and strike. Float through the dancefloor, listen from different spots, and watch where the dancers gravitate. At closing, record how much battery or fuel remains – or when it ran out.

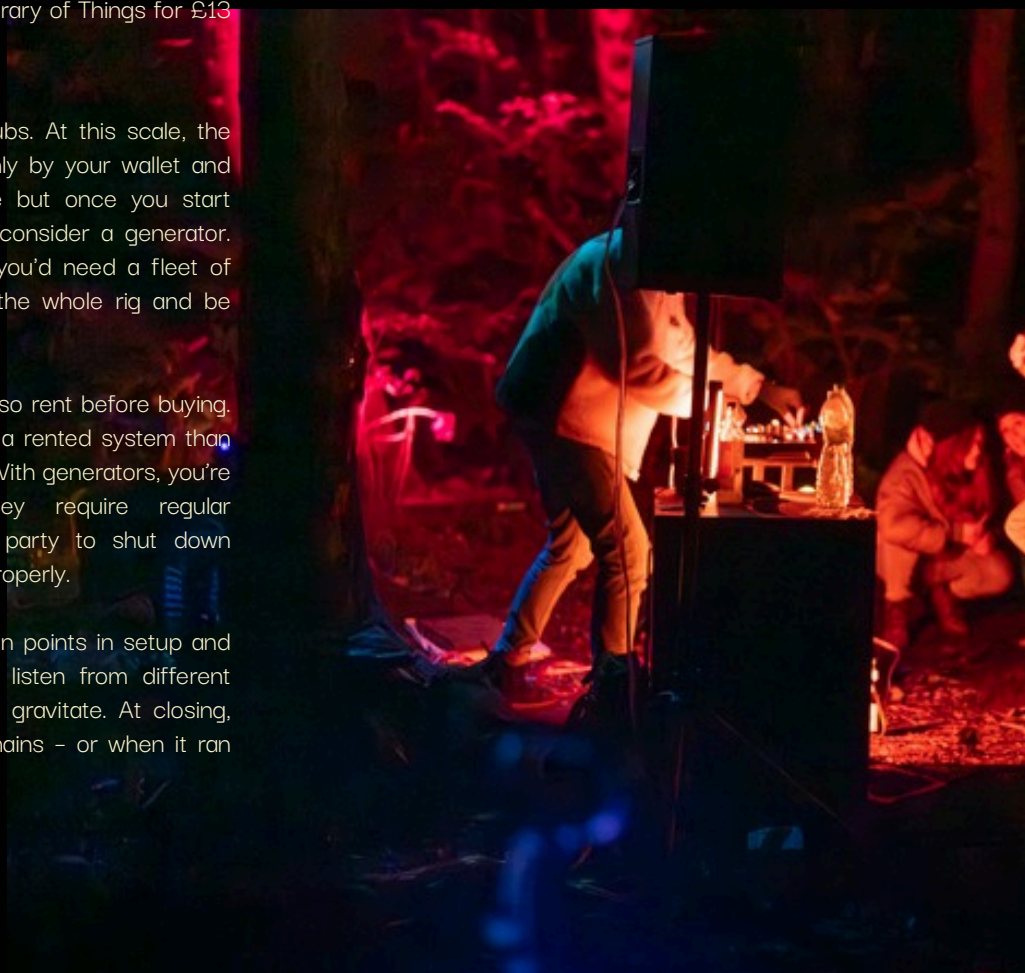
The van will find you soon enough.

A note about programming

Be thoughtful about how the ordering of sets creates a cohesive musical journey, and try to ensure that the allocation of play slots is fair. Every DJ in the community benefits when the music we make is collaborative, not competitive. If someone is getting many opportunities to play during prime time, they should also be doing a lot of work to make the events happen (and still should probably give others a turn in the spotlight). Give opening and closing DJs longer slots, such that if the party starts late they don't get their sets cut short.

You also want to have DJs who represent your audience. It makes the entire party feel more authentic, and translates into energy on the dancefloor. However, in our experience women are less likely to ask for slots or put themselves forward, and more likely to believe they aren't ready. The solution is to actively invite women to DJ! Representation matters so much, especially in a grassroots party: more girls behind the decks mean more girls on the dancefloor will believe they could do it too.

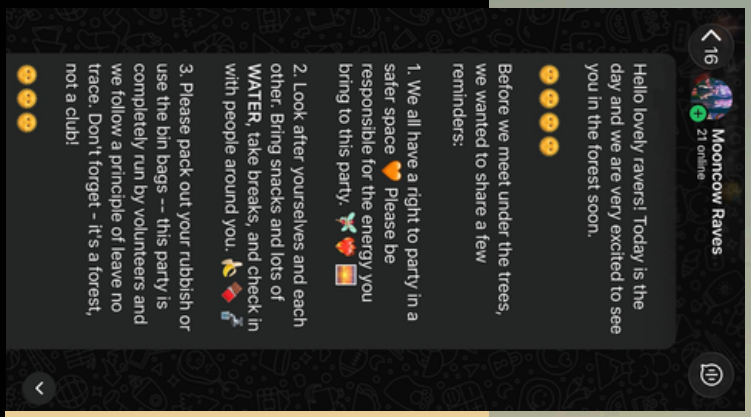
Make sure DJs know in advance what sort of equipment they'll be using, as well as any technical constraints e.g. file types or USB formatting. Remind DJs to end their sets on time – every set running 5 minutes longer than planned can get out of hand throughout the night.



Top tips

- If you're part of build, don't forget to eat.
- Charge your solar lights & any battery packs.
- If you are a small girl, absolutely bring a ladder or a tall man who can lift you.
- As much as we love flames, we don't think they mix with London raves. Fires and barbecues can cause problems, such as wildfires in dry summers. Gathering logs from the woods also destroys habitats for insects and small mammals.
- We typically divide and conquer the work that needs to be done for each rave. The lead roles we have for each rave are:
  - Logistics
  - Soundsystem
  - Power
  - Programming
  - Strike
  - Lights
  - Decor
  - Comms
  - Donations
- If you meet authorities, such as park rangers, be polite and respectful. They are just doing their job. Being nice goes a long way towards getting them to look the other way and not interfere with the party.
- Public parks are a shared space and the families with 2.5 kids who come for a morning stroll have just as much right to be there as we do. Bring bin bags and pack out any rubbish.





Packing Lists

For the crew:

- Wires
- Scissors
- Reusable zip ties
- Insect repellant
- Bin bags

For the dancers, there are a few prevailing theories:

The 'goldilocks':

- water
- alcohol or other poisons of choice
- cup
- sensible shoes
- an extra layer
- (head)torch

and nice to have:

- rubbish bag
- bike stuff
- backcountry bathroom supplies

The 'rave prepper':

- comfortable backpack
- big camelbak for water
- trowel + toilet paper for complex bathroom situations
- bottle of wine, carbonated whiskey
- fun rave outfit
- strong boots for mixed terrain
- bumbag for on-person items such as keys, small bags, phone, ear protection
- additional layers to wear as the temperature drops during the night (especially if you've been sweating, you'll suddenly be chilly)
- bike with strong bike light for getting there / back
- helmet for leaving on said bike wobbly

The 'minimalist':

- beer
- left shoe
- underwear
- right shoe
- beer





Touch this cow bell

to your heart / pound
the herd-tribe stomp / thrum the bass
moo to a cloudless sky

by Kat D

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MOONCOW EXPANSION

2018.

10/04/2018. A WhatsApp group is created by Dora Militaru

The First Nowhere 2018 (free-camp 15)

2019.

9/02/2019. At an Aquarius weekend in Somerset a group of "not yet cows" gather, after reading H.G. Wells & improvising a blues song, the term "**MOONCOW**" is coined

11/02/2019. The WhatsApp group is renamed 🌙🐮🌙 by Milo

Nowhere 2019 (free-camp 30)

> "A crackling and smashing of the scrub appeared to be advancing directly upon us, and then, as we squatted close and endeavoured to judge of the nearness and direction of this noise, there came a terrific bellow behind us, so close and vehement that the tops of the bayonet scrub bent before it, and one felt the breath of it hot and moist. And, turning about, we saw indistinctly through a crowd of swaying stems the **mooncalf**'s shining sides, and the long line of its back loomed out against the sky."
> H.G. Wells THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON

2020.

MoonCow Festival (MCF)





2021.

MCF 2a

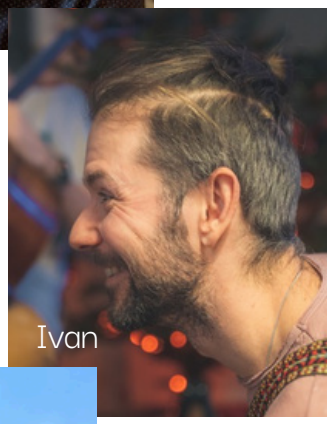
MCF 2b

2022.

Nowhere 2022. Mooncows build a Camp (53)

MCF 3





2023.

Nowhere 2023 (62)

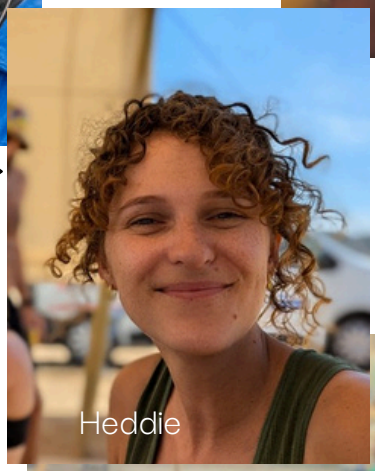
MCF 23

2024.

Nowhere 2024 (54)

Luavaca

Decom 24

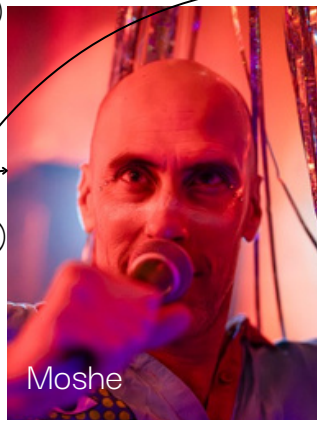


2025.

Moonchaos

Nowhere 2025 (55)

Decom 25



2026.

Moonchaos 2

MCF 26

Nowhere 2026 (25)

Borderland 26





Elmo's Else-where



It was my fourth Nowhere... ah, sorry, Elsewhere. This year, the camp was smaller than usual. We were 25 cows and me, Elmo. And you know, it's a big difference, especially for Elmos. I wasn't even sure it was gonna happen.

I noticed that we had a lot of new cows at the camp. Elmo was worried if we could spread the MoonCows DNA and vibes to them. That's importante, yeah? But during the build, I saw how the magic was happening. And I can give you my Elmo's word: everyone in the camp was awesome.

The weather was a huge bitch! 42 degrees, holy moly! For Elmos, you know, it sucks. I was burning all the time. I'm sure for my humans it sucked too.



Oh, this year we tried a new thing! We pre-cooked most of the meals. It saved a lot of time during the festival. A few days before the build, the Barcelona peeps came to my place, and we did a looooot of chopping. Elmo did it too, until I cut my paw and spread some Elmo wool into the chili sin carne. Thanks to Coti; she brought dry ice! Elmo looves Coti. But for my taste, we had too many beans and lentils.

Another new thing was that we had a new location, closer to the playa. And we kept the Bull in the camp. And for me, it was better, so I could hear all the DJs. I especially loved Ira's set on Acid Friday. I'm not saying this because she takes me to the desert every year, but I know it took her three Nowheres to finally start DJing.



On Thursday, we had a big storm that broke our bar tent. Oh man, that was the strongest one I've ever seen there. But these crazy people just said, "From now on, we have a topless bar!" And they kept partying. Very cowsy attitude. Which, in the end, was a good idea. We became more visible from the playa.



The bar this year was cool, but again, we had so many radlers and beers left at the end. Next year, Elmo lead the bar and avoid this constant mistake. Elmo good at maths. Oh yeah, we had chocolate milk. I think it was Vish's idea. Love it.
Workshops? Elmo didn't do much. Elmo mean he had zero. Yeah, next year. Definitely next year.

But I met a new friend, Elsa. She decided to stay in the container. So I hope to see her next year. She is a sweeeeeet cookie! Bye!



THE DEVIL'S AVOCADO – ARE BURN-STYLE FESTIVALS ACTUALLY BAD FOR YOU?

by Cori





Let's discuss an unpopular topic - are burn-style festivals actually bad for you?

If you are familiar with Burning Man and affiliated events, you probably know that attendees are often enthusiastic, borderline ecstatic about their experience, and how their life is positively impacted. But are we turning a blind eye to unspoken negative effects? Let's deconstruct some of the core aspects through the infamous 10 principles and debunk them.

Decommodification: behind the gifting economy is an illusion, since participants pre-purchase everything before the event. In fact, it creates more waste, since most people overbuy for safety, and lots of food and other essential supplies end up thrown away. Besides, lots of money is actually being spent by the org on essential services like toilets cleaning and water delivery, in plain sight.

Gifting: people typically purchase inexpensive items to gift, which fosters a sense that human connection still requires a tokenised item, just like money. People often barter, which defeats the purpose of an unconditional gift.

Radical inclusion: Despite being a good idea, it's interesting how post-event census shows the lack of racial, social and financial diversity at the events, so we can say that only a specific sort of person is included.

Radical self-expression: Because of this, and inclusion, anything is permitted, no one will really tell you if you mess up, if your idea is bad, or give you negative feedback on anything.

Radical self-reliance: instead of pooling resources in order to use less, each participant is invited to bring everything they need themselves, which reinforces individualism rather than collectivism, ironically.

Communal effort: A noble principle, that can have a side effect of putting people in social silos. By coming back regularly and engaging with the community, where people often discuss what other burns they've been to, create a long term risk of being surrounded only by burner friends, and therefore not being exposed to different points of views or ideas.

Civic responsibility: Perhaps the most laughable of all, since large amounts of drugs are purchased and casually used in the open by a lot of participants, in blatant disregard of local laws, and turning a blind eye on the supply chains.

Leaving No Trace: It's actually really nice to see that people are very conscious about waste and pick stuff rubbish from the floor even if it doesn't belong to them, until you see piles of trash left on the side of the road just outside the event, or in the next town.

Participation: Everyone works for free to make the event happen - genius idea to get free labour? Since participation is not tracked or measured, commitment levels widely vary from people spending weeks of hard labour to people just turning up for the party.

Immediacy: The incentive to act without careful thinking ("listen to your body", they say) can lead to a mild amount of peer pressure, especially considering that participants spent time and money for the event, so they are more likely to agree to something since they made it so far - they didn't come all the way there to say no. This can sometimes lead to people hurting themselves, by doing all sorts of shenanigans including, but not limited to, climbing and falling from dodgy structures, taking too many drugs, dehydration, injury, emotional overwhelm.

Consent: We absolutely need it, it's very important, and a powerful and positive vector of change in society at large - but could we also argue that an excess amount of it could make you more sensitive when back in the default world? It can feel outrageous when people outside the event behave differently than expected during a burn, potentially steering you away from mainstream events.

Beyond the principles, the events have a very large carbon footprint, and a tremendous amount of CO_2 is emitted, mainly petrol generators running 24/7 to power the sound systems and lights, as well as private AC units, and tens of thousands of vehicles - not mentioning the amount of cheap gear and outfits bought for the occasion from cheap Asian web stores, discarded after one use.

Overall, the events are a sort of peak experience, centering around self-actualisation and the refinement and accomplishment of individual needs, which we could praise, but we we can also argue that it lacks a level of self-awareness at how privileged participants are, having the luxury to spend at least one week of holiday and a sizeable amount of money, sometimes multiple times per year. This is not inherently wrong, but being aware that it's not accessible for most people, and acknowledging how privileged and lucky participants are, through self awareness, doesn't hurt.

If you made it that far, thank you for enduring this torrent of negativity, for a full disclaimer I participate at burns every year and thoroughly enjoy it, I just thought it would be interesting to reflect on these aspects! Agree to disagree.



Under a half moon

hands of red dust reach skyward
the bar is ripped in half
eyes scrunch against wild wind

by Kat D



Welcome to
Betty's Parlour



BURNING WITH THE HERD

by Francois M

On this special occasion of the first cowzine publication coinciding with the arrival of our new calf, I wanted to reflect and write a little ode to ardent burning.

At the latest MCF, in a conversational attempt to illustrate my very slow and vocal conscious transition into this new phase of my life, an image popped up in my head of a fire pit and the logs fuelling the fire. Not much imagination was required - a real one was burning nearby.

Over 3 years ago having planned to try for children a few years later, I decided to throw myself into the Mooncow fire pit and applied for a Nowhere grant for the Moonbull. One thing led to another and Heddie and I temporarily became central logs of the Mooncow fire; and with others, became the primary fuel to a lot of the Mooncows burn activity.



Knowing that there would be an end to that phase once the baby would arrive allowed me to wholeheartedly throw myself into the community fire and I got to see a lot of my little dreams and visions come to fruition.
In this next phase of my life, I will remain in the firepit but see myself more as a thinner burnt log underneath or on the side, red with amber and white with ash. A supporting log, still contributing to the fire but not intensely fuelling the fire as central logs do.

I have grown to particularly like this image of the situation as I feel it also aptly illustrates other aspects of the Mooncows Burn philosophy that I hold dear.

The idea of logs carries for me an unapologetic nature to bringing your energy to the fire. All logs differ in shape, composition, size and will burn differently; throwing yourself in that fire will influence the way it burns and behaves for a while. Let none be afraid to alter things, throw your log in and see that vision that you hold dear come to reality in the heat of the communal fire.
As all of efforts in burns are gifts, I believe cows should stay true to that crazy idea they dreamt up on that probably non sober day. The herd is and will always be particularly grateful to those who fuel the fire.

The fire analogy also illustrates the ephemerence of it all, the way that fire burns is unique to the energy of the combusting logs at the time. Those logs will live their course and new logs will be added to supplement the fire.

Similarly the cows coming and going around the flames, enjoying themselves and one another, laughing, chewing the cud, scheming and communing are absolutely essential to the fire. They are the raison d'être of of that fire, if not for them it would probably just be some type of arson.

I have no doubt in the future, some funky dreams and ideas will excite and compel me to throw my (half burnt) log back in the middle but in the meantime...

Let that fire BURN.


by Daria Z

I need a canvas RIGHT NOW!!!

A short story based on the impermanence of life. And what has become of the old deck rack from the Mooncows DJ setup.
by Fabão D



After an intense dance at the festival, an inner fire consumed me. My hands flowed on their own, demanding to create. I asked Lucy and everyone else: "I need a painting!"

I received paints, but no canvas. So, I took a rectangular piece of wood. Moved by this passion, I sat near the bonfire and, without realizing it, rested the board on it. I began to draw: eyes (the portal of the soul), fire (the yearning for flow and life), stars and crosses (the affection for others). I felt complete.



Suddenly, I noticed flames emanating from my painting. The bonfire consumed it. I smiled. The external fire reflected what was boiling in my chest. Turning the wood over, I saw that the charcoal had formed patterns of eyes. I understood: we are part of a single collective observer.

I painted pupils in each mark. Feeling liberated, I threw the painting near the water and grounded my body, knowing that this burning would purify my soil for a new blossoming.



The wood turned to ash, while my chaos turned to clarity. It was pure alchemy

I took a cold shower under the tap, returned to the heat of the fire in just my underwear, and finally surrendered the painting to the flames. I noticed "Moon" written on the back. The flame showed me how alchemy can change patterns and emotions.

Only later did I discover that my art had burned the Mooncow DJ deck table!



The moment I discovered that the surfboard was actually a vital part of the DJ deck, I also discovered that it had been made by François. At that exact moment, he was saying goodbye to organizing Mooncow festivals and any other kind of party in our community. After years of dedication, he would stop helping organize these incredible events that we do.
At that instant, I felt that, as a new active member of Mooncow, I was burning a part of our history that needed to be renewed — that the fire needed to burn to bring a new flame, a new seed into the community.

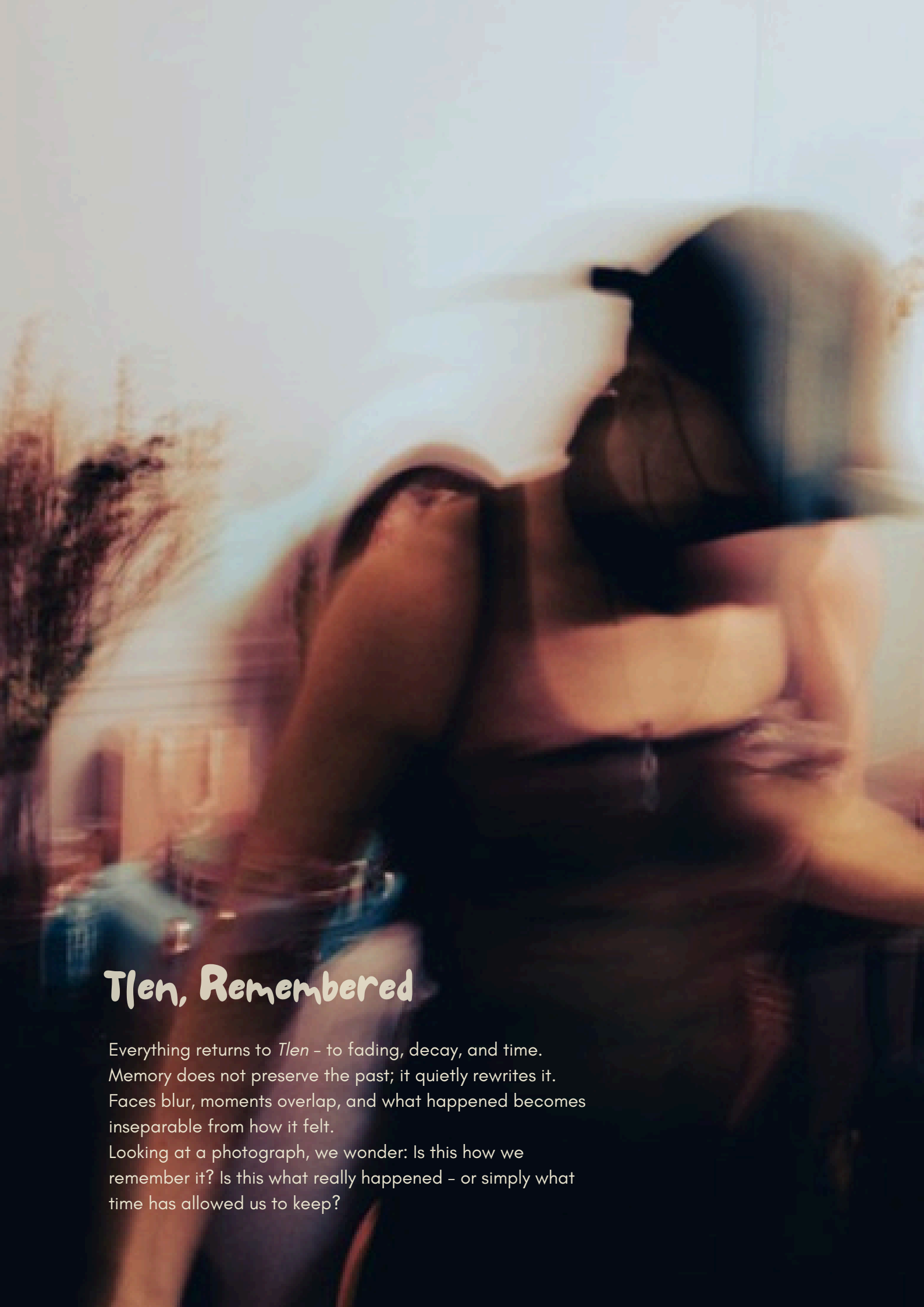
Of course, I only had this realization after knowing that that piece had been made by him. I felt very sad because I didn't want to have destroyed something that he brought to the community with so much affection. But I realized that it was a part of Mooncow that needed to be burned to ignite something new, bringing a new vision and restoring the fire of the community.

To complement: at the last Mooncow social, François played his last set. At the end, he gave me a hug and said he was very happy to have me in the community. That definitely showed me that this fire I feel inside me is truly something that can bring light to Mooncow. And that fulfills me deeply.





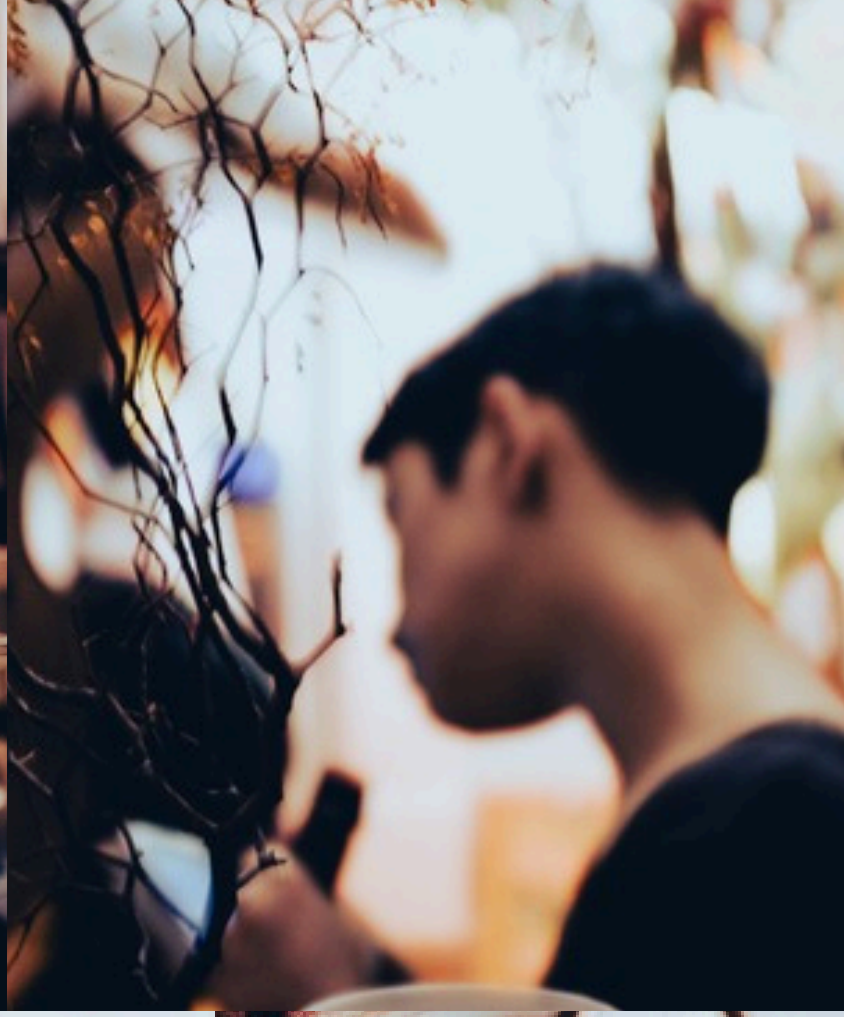
by Lucy O.



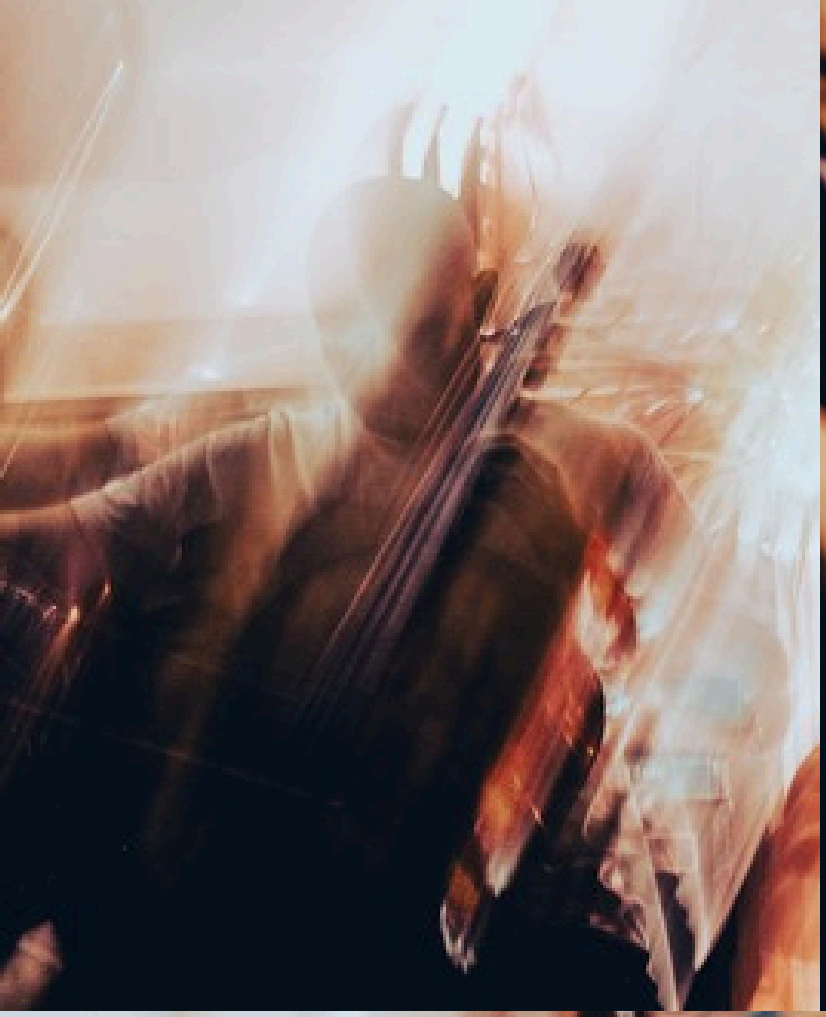
Tlen, Remembered

Everything returns to *Tlen* – to fading, decay, and time.
Memory does not preserve the past; it quietly rewrites it.
Faces blur, moments overlap, and what happened becomes inseparable from how it felt.
Looking at a photograph, we wonder: Is this how we remember it? Is this what really happened – or simply what time has allowed us to keep?

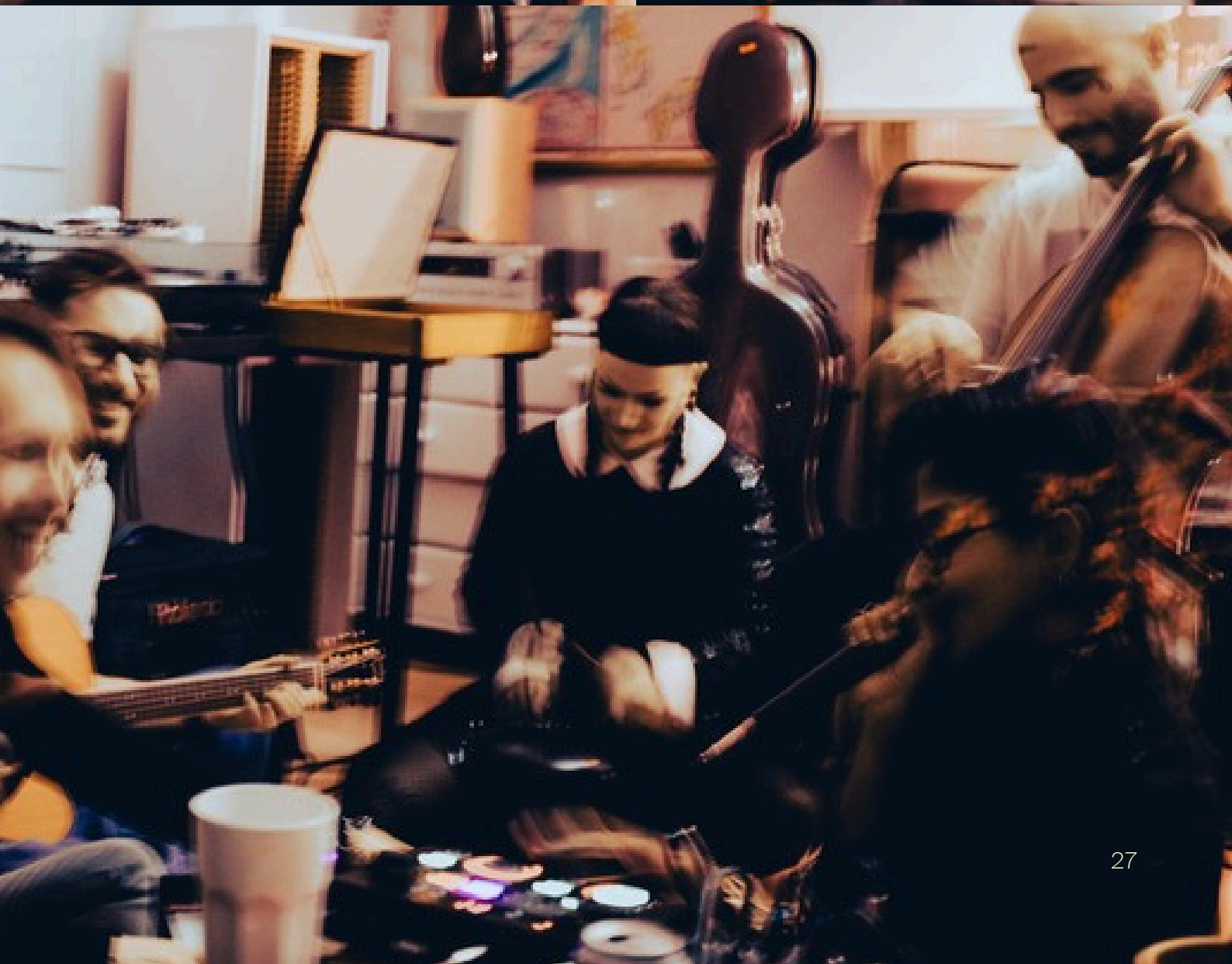












Strange goings-on have been reported within the Mooncow community in recent months: gatherings of horizontal cows are being preached to, their noses filled with strange scents, and a rising number of visits to religious institutions. We investigated it and can now exclusively reveal: a new God has arrived.

It did not come with a thunderclap, a burning shrub, or indeed any of the usual dusty paperwork. In fact, it was all quite unglamorous, arriving with a faint farmyard whiff. Nobody believed in it, voted for it, or made a spreadsheet for it, but the facts are undeniable. It has left theologians, scientists and philosophers worried and other cows faintly amused.

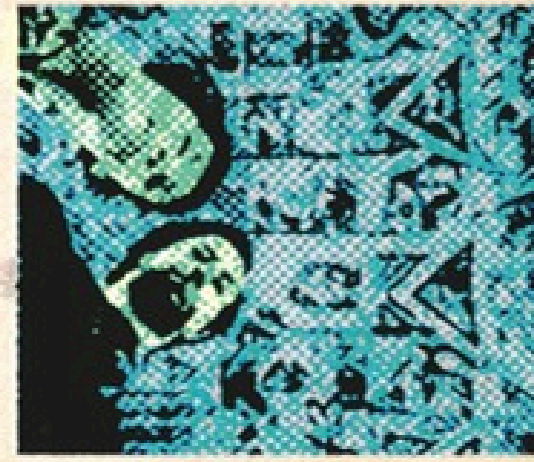
You'd assume a God needs to be finished before it can exist. Fully formed, handing down rules from day one. This one wasn't. It was assembled backwards, built from the accumulated weight of small, freely chosen acts of doing. In the way a water droplet joins a stream that becomes a river, and then one day finds itself crashing down on some unsuspecting community. No prayers, sermons, or dusty books. Just a bunch of cows who kept doing things for long enough.

Scientists investigated it, and it turns out that the bastion of cow society, the Do'ocracy, has caused a collective layer of consciousness to form: an invisible accumulation of every small act of doing, dubbed 'The Moosphere.' The term was first coined by a man stood in front of a speaker at 3am, although he has since insisted he meant to say something else.

This collective accumulation of consciousness does appear to be thickening with time, although it remains quite "lumpy" across the community. Dense in places, largely absent in others, roughly correlating with whoever currently has their USB on them. The Moosphere's Lumpiness Index, calculated weekly, currently sits at 6.8, up from 4.1. Although its author concedes this scale was invented on the same afternoon it was first measured.



Early signs of the Moosphere's pull are already showing. Mooncow sightings inside churches are up an alleged 340%, though the cows involved insist they were only there for the ceilings.



One couple was photographed in the Vatican itself, staring away from the ceiling, unable to offer a satisfactory account of either their activities or the fact that both left considerably paler than they'd arrived. Asked directly, another cow described their visit only as: "I could not see the masturbating woman statue that I was referred to." Reporters left more confused than they came, and considerably more worried about the growing pull the Moosphere seems to be exerting over the community.

So, what do we do with this "God" now it's here? Or the more pertinent question: what's it going to do with us?

Early signs are not good. Cow scientists studying the Do'ocracy have quietly been running a formula for years, tracking each cow's activity, weighted by the power of whoever they worked with, discounted over time by something politely called the "forgetfulness coefficient." The God seems to be using this and super charging it into some kind of industrial ledger tallying who did what and with whom.

As the Moosphere's grip tightens, the Do'ocracy's founding promise, that nobody is in charge, is looking shakier by the week. When this accumulated doing reaches infinity, or more likely just a critical mass, it is expected to undergo a phase transition and become self-aware. The Udder point is the moment the God's control over the community outweighs the community's control over itself. Past that point, a Do'ocracy stops being a Do'ocracy and collapses into a Theocracy.

Mooncows, a community that insists nobody is in charge may be about to discover it has elected somebody after all. Permanently, meta-physically, and entirely by accident.

More on this as it develops.

INTO EXISTENCE

by Joe Giacomet



TUBE MEDITATION

by Valeria C

Find a comfortable position, either sitting or standing. If you are standing, try to have the feet at a good distance from one another to maximise stability, or maybe you can lie your back on the side of the carriage (not someone).
Rest your hands gently on your lap or by your sides if you don't have to hold onto something. Soften your gaze.

Take a deep breath in through your nose
Hold it
And slowly exhale through your mouth.

Notice the movement of the train beneath you.
The gentle rocking,
The small jolts,
The hum of the rails beneath your feet.

Lean into the noises around you.
The screech of the wheels as the train slows down
The rhythmic clatter as it speeds up.

Let each sound be an anchor to the present moment.

Take a deep breath in through your nose
Hold it
And slowly exhale through your mouth.

If a thought pulls you away, bring your focus back to the sounds around you, accepting them as part of your experience.
Notice your body, maybe squeezed between strangers, maybe sitting, or even leaning against the partition.
Feel the way your muscles subtly adjust with each turn and stop.
Notice the pressure of your feet on the floor.
The weight of your hands resting in your lap or holding onto the rail.

Listen to the announcements.
The calm, automated voice calling out the next station.
Let it be a cue to check in with yourself.

How does your body feel?
Are your shoulders tense?
Can you soften your jaw?

Take a deep breath in through your nose
Hold it
And slowly exhale through your mouth.

Turn your attention to the doors.
The gentle whoosh as they slide open
The rush of air as people steps in and out.
You can use these transitions as moments of pause.
Each door opening is an invitation to reset, each closing a reminder to return to yourself.

Take a deep breath in through your nose
Hold it
And slowly exhale through your mouth.

With every new stop, take another slow breath in.
You can be curious about the shift in energy as passengers enter and exit.
The flow of movement
The rustle of newspapers
The shuffle of feet.
You are a part of this moving city, yet within it, you can find stillness.

As your station approaches, take another deep breath.
Collect your items, start moving a little, wiggle your toes in your shoes, if they are not too tight.
Step out of the carriage with awareness, carrying this moment of presence with you.

OLFACTORY CIRCLES FRAGRANCES

by Inessa L

Olfactory Circles is a non-visual multimodal olfactory experience (olfactus meaning "the sense of smell") created by multimedia artists, designers, singers & performers: Ivan Isakov, Inessa Lomas, Andrey Novikov and Yana Vlaeva.

Custom fragrances created for this experience take you on a round trip through space, time, nature, culture, rituals and earth, evoking long lost memories and crafting new visions.

The scents are aided by soundscapes, ancient poetry and folk music.

Here we explore what each fragrance is made of and how they relate to each other.



MOSHE WATCHES... FOOTBALL AT ROSEMARY GARDENS, N1

A sobering 5- a side after a fight with Nadia's brother

After an explosively short argument with Nadia's brother, I crossed Southgate Road to the Rosemary Gardens football pitches. Nadia was moving north – LS1 north – and while we still love, we will gradually cease to be lovers. I spent the afternoon drinking with her, first laughing together, later pleading and bargaining for another hour. Then her brother came to help her move. It was none of his fucking business anyway, the vague cunt.

The Rosemary Gardens football pitches are wider and longer than your average ground, easily big enough for 7-a-side and the goals too are bigger. It also has impressively strong floodlights and the type of fences that rattle loudly when someone overshoots the goal. Not a place for the timid. I immediately felt like a foreigner.

Tonight there were four 5-player teams. 'Blue shirts' team had won their first game 3-0 against the 'No shirts' team in convincing fashion, and were my favourites to win the tournament. (The tournament was my brainchild. I called it the RG tournament and the teams seemed mildly supportive of this idea). Their star player was Yakub, a skinny teenager who had a surprisingly strong left and fantastic acceleration. It turns out the blues were a family team: Yakub's older brother, at least a decade older, was goalie, and his cousin was the muscular no-nonsense 50:50. They started their second game the same way they finished the first and were already 2 goals ahead of a different 'no shirts' team. I asked but they didn't want to choose a different name.

Sasha calls me to ask how I'm doing. Such a fine soul. We talk about memories and he tells me about his strongest memory. He was playing with a friend who's younger and he goaded him on to punch a glass wall. 'Why?' 'Because I was curious, I guess'. There was a lot of blood and then the kid's parents came over to Sasha's house and shouted at his parents and at Sasha. He remembers crying. It's not his first memory, but it's his strongest. We hang up. No message from Nadia.

The team waiting to come up is missing two players and they ask me if I want to play. I pause. Astroturf makes me think of grazed knees and asthma, but, flattered, I ask him what they're called. Miko's team; he's Miko. Miko notices my torn T-shirt and seems to regret asking. I dither, and instead they choose 2 of the 'no shirts' players.

The last game is more levelled, luckily, because the guys agreed that they will reshuffle the teams if the blues win again. I suspect that blues are taking it easy because they want to stay together. But then Yakub does his thing again from the left and flashes a high shot from 12 meters. A minute later, it's a header from a bald guy in his late 30s, who doesn't look like he's related to Yakub, perhaps a neighbour. Another win – the blues take the tournament but I'm the only one excited about it. I approach Yakub to ask for a picture for the column. He thinks i'm mad.



I took a cheeky snap of Yakub as everyone was leaving. He's even skinnier in real life.

WHAT CAN'T BE WRITTEN
(Notes from an Oral Tradition)

by Yana V

These are handwritten transcriptions of audio recordings of lesser-known Bulgarian folk songs, notated by ear. The small symbols, such as ~ and v, indicate vocal ornaments that should be added in performance. Capturing every nuance of a traditional singer's interpretation in conventional musical notation is often next to impossible, so these symbols serve as performance cues rather than precise pitches.
An authentic interpretation of such scores also depends on knowing the song's ethnographic region, as each region has its own distinct ornamentation style. There is no universal notation system for these ornaments - they are traditionally learned through listening, imitation, and oral transmission.

Tudoro le

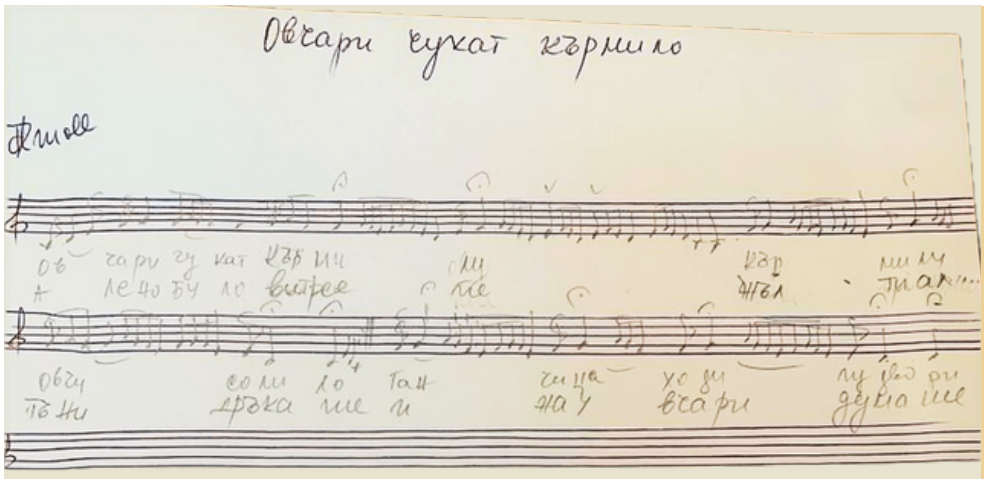
Oh Tudora, my first love
Yane my dear
Tell me not to lose my mind over you

Crazy about you, crazy for you
I've left my buffaloes lying in the barn
Lying in the barn, eating dust

Oh Tudora, because of you
I wander aimlessly, thirsty
I carry bread, yet I go hungry



Scan QR codes to listen



Shephers are striking the trough

The shepherds are striking the trough,
where the sheep come for their salt
Ganchitsa paces around the garden.

Her crimson veil* blows in the wind,
Golden coins* chime as she walks,
And she calls out to the shepherds

*jewellery and attire suggesting wealth and high social status

RICHTER

by Andrey N

- Why don't you write about how much you hate Max Richter?

This started as a half-joke as I've apparently been dismissive of Max Richter in the past, which seems plausible given that I also have a fame for being judgemental when it comes to music. So here I am, sitting in the garden, listening to some of his tracks, trying to piece together what exactly doesn't sit right with me about him. The problem is – I don't exactly hate Max Richter. Early "Memoryhouse" hit the right spot at the right time for my younger self, and Waltz with Bashir delivered some of its heavy punches to his tracks. But then there's the terrible "Vivaldi By Max Richter" (as if he's a brand desperately trying to feign seriousness) that hollows Four Seasons out of both period features and substance, dull grey paint over stucco decoration. Derivative "Songs From Before" – piano minimalism clichés, Arvo Part's tintinnabulli without the spirituality, endless self-repetition. SLEEP stunt "regarded as one of the most culturally significant classical music projects" according to his own Spotify write-up – hour-long tracks conveniently split into 2-minute chunks for maximising streams and playlisting potential. Endless reissues of Blue Notebooks and even more forgettable films scores. Where does the music stop, and the Spotify Calm Piano for Focus playlist begin?

What makes for good music is a very subjective question – even more so, what makes a piece of music worthwhile. Listener response is complex. If a mix of emotions, memories, people next to you - and maybe even chemicals? - makes you experience catharsis to some soundtrack of that moment, does it make the music itself better? There is a reason people mostly remember and react to songs they first heard in their late teens. However, I would always see the intent behind the music as the crucial part of the puzzle – is the music there because its creator could not bear not pouring it out, do they want to make you feel something, anything. What's the emotion they want you to connect with, however imprecisely it can be relayed through the medium of music.

Modern minimalist music throws this into sharp relief. You can't hide behind the virtuosic performing difficulty or the bombast of the orchestra. Is there anything that runs underneath the simple arpeggios and empty intervals? Or is it just going through the motions, masking boredom behind the all-too-serious face expression? Sadly, with Max more often than not I feel the latter.

Listen to some
Max Richter:



photo from Max Richter's Soundcloud











ON POWER AND INEQUALITY WITHIN DO-OCRACIES

by Oliver H and Ivan I

We propose to study the power dynamics in non-hierarchical organizations such as the MoonCows. Indeed, while such organizations are nominally egalitarian, their group dynamics can lead to power imbalances. In fact, the possibility of such imbalances has been highlighted in various community discussions (see Figure 1).

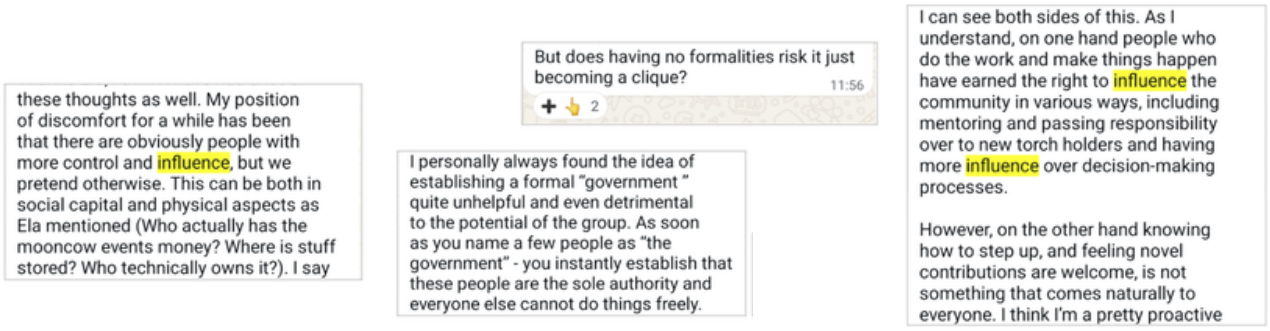


Figure 1: Cmd-F for "influence" in the MoonCow 🌛🐮🌛 Social chat

We note that the heart of the discussion pertains to whether there is a mismatch between the group structure and resulting group dynamic. In this work we therefore ask: under what conditions can egalitarian group structures yield implicit or explicit power imbalances, and how does this relate to the community's empowerment?

Models of Cow governance

To operationalize this question, we survey existing frameworks for describing non-hierarchical forms of governance. Of these, some appear unfit for the purpose of the study:

- **rule-based:** while MoonCows indeed have governing principles e.g. around consent, most decision making (e.g. whether to organize a rave and when) falls out of their scope
- **democracy:** while MoonCows love discussing ideas, decisions are rarely decided through voting

We therefore limit our study to the following models, which provide good coverage of the features of interest:

- **Do-ocracy:** Task-doers gain local decision rights by initiative
- **Meritocracy or aristocracy:** Influence is weighted by past contribution, competence, or prestige
- **Anarchy or self-governance:** No standing central authority: order emerges through norms and repeated interaction

The CowSimulator

We note that these models share the feature that an individual's influence is proportional to their engagement in past and present group activities. We study the group dynamics driven by this feature with a simple quantitative model, the CowSimulator. We consider a group of n =100 individuals hereafter referred to as "Cows", each with an influence Pm , as well as other features such as energy and fatigue.

Influence evolves through events: given an event at time t, each participating Cow's influence Pm is incremented in proportion to the total influence of its collaborators, the Cow's own available energy $Em(t)$ and the event's intensity $I(t)$. At the same time, Cows forget past contributions at a rate λ. Together,

$$P_m(t+1) = P_{base} + (P_m(t) - P_{base})\, e^{-\lambda} + I(t) \cdot E_m(t) \cdot \sum_{C \in M_m(t)} P_C(t)$$

where the final (gain) term is present only for Cows participating in the event. In addition, we model the energy levels of each cow $Em(t)$ which decrements when participating in an event but otherwise recovers.

We initially assume that Cows decide when to participate according to a uniform random process, and later model non-uniform participation dynamics. We monitor the properties of the group by tracking two aggregate quantities: the total influence of the entire group, and the evenness of its distribution via the share of influence held by the top 5% most influential Cows.

Below, we present some of our findings. Due to space constraints, we cannot discuss every aspect of the simulation. However, we invite our readers to explore the CowSimulator by following the QR code below:

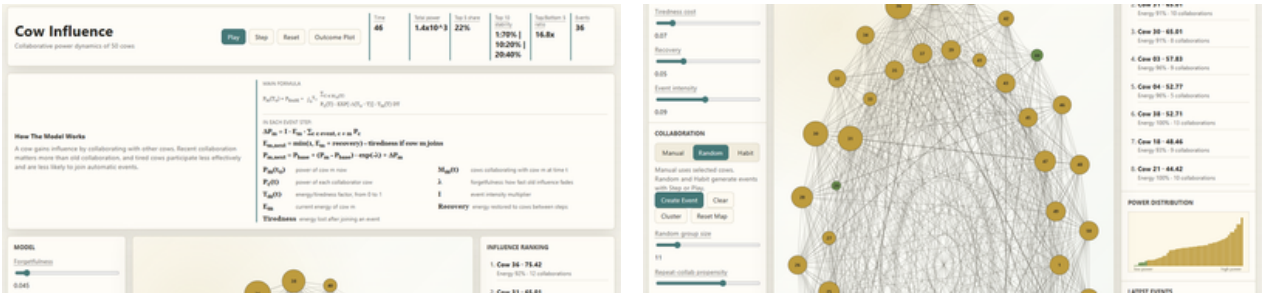


Figure 2: CowSimulator. Follow the QR code - give it a try

Sleepy, forgetful Cows: an egalitarian regime

To gain intuition for the CowSimulator we vary the intensity of events I and the forgetfulness λ. Figure 3 (left) shows them to have compounding effects: high-intensity events (such as rave parties) lead to high total empowerment, and low levels of forgetfulness ensures the accumulation of that empowerment over time. We note, however, a secondary effect (Figure 3, right): both of these increase the inequality in power distribution, even though the groups remain overall largely egalitarian (top-5 share remains <10%).

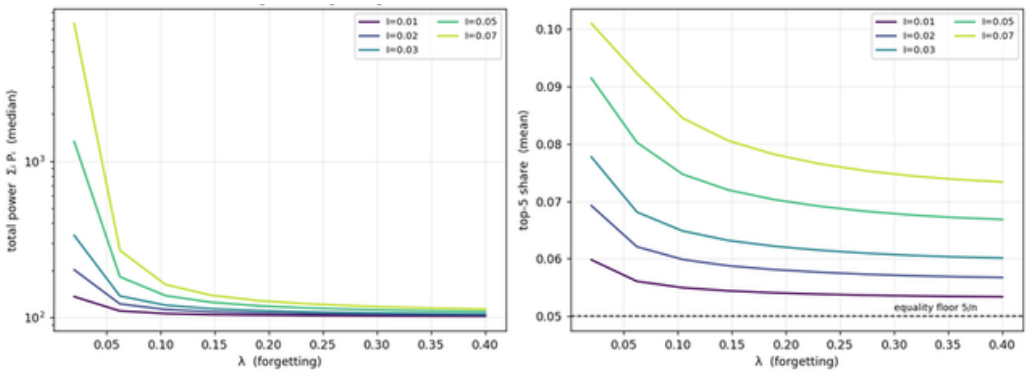


Figure 3: empowerment and inequality in the sub-critical regime.

Intensity and forgetfulness together can be combined in a new parameter, the empowerment growth factor (EGF) which multiplies the group's total influence at every turn:

$$g = e^{-\lambda} + I\frac{k(k-1)}{n}.$$

EGF balances the rate at which old influence fades against the rate at which events inject new influence (intensity I, event size k, size of the community n). The sleepy, egalitarian regime of the beginning of this section lives in the **sub-critical** regime, $g < 1$. Experimentally (see, for example, this magazine), we know that MoonCows lean towards high-intensity events and aspire to higher total empowerment. We, therefore, next explore $g > 1$, the **super-critical regime** of high-intensity events typical of Cows.

Transient inequality deep in the super-critical regime

We push the CowSimulator into the super-critical regime by increasing the intensity of events (such as Nowhere, MoonCow Festival, or forest raves). Consistently with the EGF theory and our previous empirical findings, the total influence of the group grows dramatically, as does its inequality (Figure 4).

While this regime indeed presents high-levels of inequality at any point in time, we nevertheless ask whether the same Cows are always in positions of power (entrenched inequality), or whether power circulates from one Cow to another (transient inequality). To that end we compute the **influence turnover**, the fraction of the five most influential Cows that is replaced from one event to the next (the higher this number the faster the top cows swap). We measure the influence turnover holding the EGF fixed and varying the event size k.

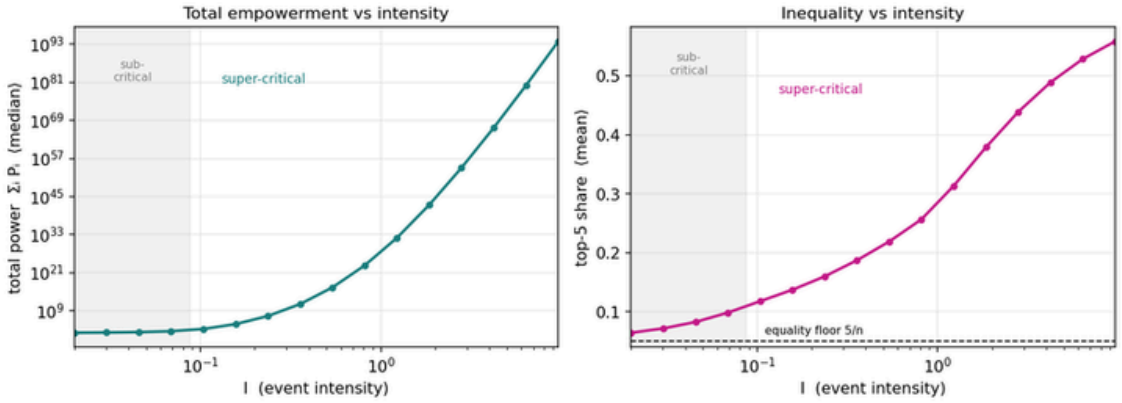


Figure 4: in the super-critical regime, both empowerment and inequality grow with event intensity

We see in Figure 5, that during the small events (k < 10) the top-5 share increases (pink curve) while the turnover collapses (green curve). This configuration concentrates influence onto the one or two Cows fortunate enough to attend those small events, and, crucially, entrenches their influence. Those lucky cows who participate in several very intense events ($g = 1.5$) grow their personal influence almost exponentially, leaving other cows behind, yielding high levels of **entrenched** inequality.

At the same time, looking at larger events (k > 10), we find them to be a powerful equaliser: the top-5 share falls monotonically down to the egalitarian floor for plenary events, where every Cow receives an identical boost and symmetry is restored exactly. Recall that a Cow's influence gain is proportional to the influence of its collaborators, not its own; upon convening, a powerful Cow therefore empowers all its randomly-chosen partners. At the same time, the turnover rises with participation and saturates near 70%. This means that in the situations of inequality (for k between 10 and 90), this inequality is **transient**.

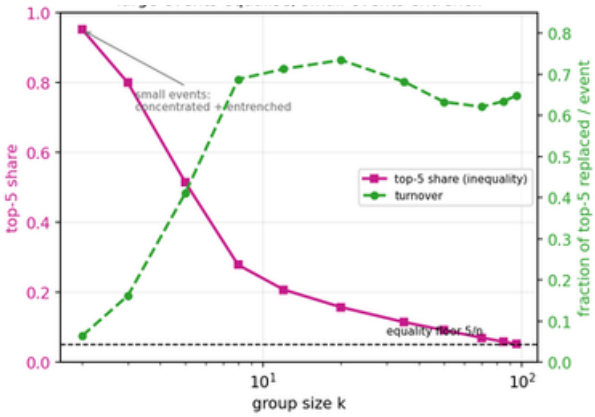


Figure 5: in the super-critical regime, inequality is transient except with small group sizes

In conclusion, large, inclusive events make inequality transient; small, exclusive ones produce inequality that is both severe and durable.

Becoming a clique

Given the central importance of participation in determining whether influence is shared across Cows and over time, we now consider a variant of the CowSimulator with **assortativity**, i.e. where Cows participate in events non-uniformly, and in proportion to their existing influence: $P(join) = P^{\alpha}$, where $\alpha = 0$ reverts to the previously uniform participation process. As α increases, influential Cows participate in events more often than less influential ones, and inequality rises sharply (Figure 6, left). More alarmingly, influence turnover also collapses (Figure 6, right), indicating that with high levels of assortativity, previously observed transient inequality now becomes an entrenched hierarchy. This confirms broad, unbiased participation to be an essential component for maintaining egalitarian groups structures.

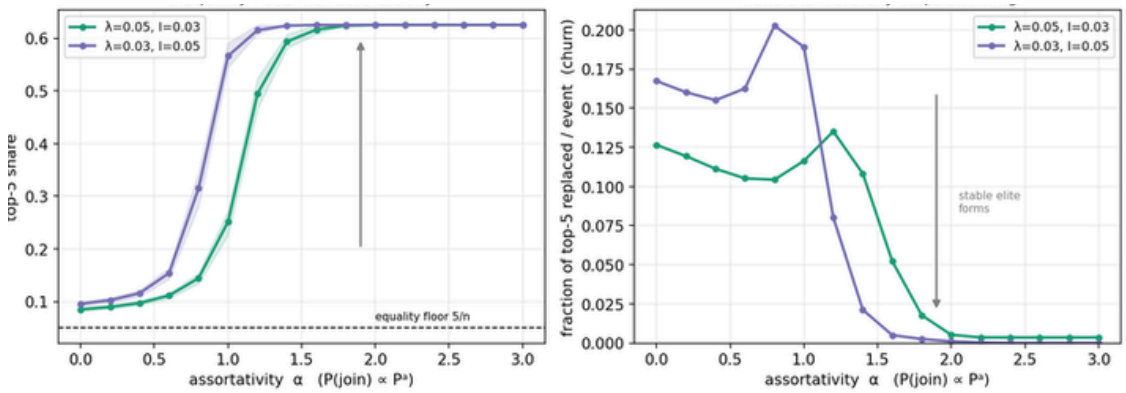


Figure 6: Biased participation (in portion to influence) turns transient inequality into an entrenched one.

Disempowerment of the weakest

In the previous sections, we use a certain inequality metric, top-5 share, that some might argue is not representing inequality fully, because it misses the bottom-5 cows. We therefore examine another metric, a fraction of top-5 cow power to bottom-5 cow power and plot this metric as a function of group size k in the super-critical regime (similar to Figure 5). We point out that in the entrenched inequality state (top left of Figure 7), this ratio is extraordinarily high: the power of the strongest cows is **100,000,000,000,000,000** times larger than the power of the weakest cows. This astonishing number indicates total disempowerment of the weakest cows, likely leading to group fission and a quick departure of those disenfranchised cows.

Still, it should be noted that even in the more equal and transient regime with k between 10 and 50, the top-5/bottom-5 ratio falls between 10,000 and 10. A full participation $(k = n)$ trivially leads to top-5/bottom-5 being 1 - a fully equal state, which is physically almost never possible. Even though full equality is often desired, it is only natural that some more active cows will indeed have more influence, and sometimes the difference between five cows who organised an awesome forest rave and those cows who danced at another one a year ago can indeed be in hundreds.

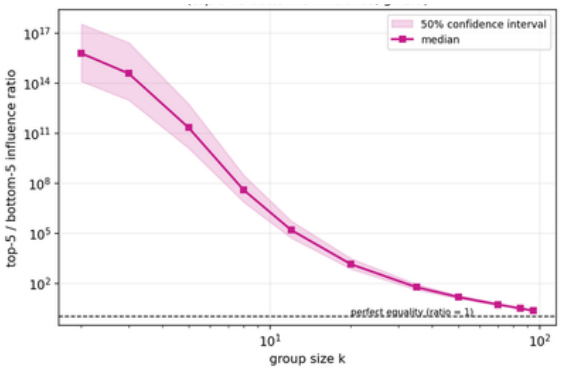


Figure 7: The ratio of the power of the strongest cows to the power of the weakest cows as a function of the collaborating group size k.

Discussion: what is to be done?

In summary, motivated by discussions from the community, we investigated the conditions under which egalitarian group structures can yield power imbalances, or instead stay egalitarian. As part of our investigation, we uncovered three regimes:

- **Perfect equality**, which required low intensity events and/or quickly forgetting past contributions. Both of these interventions however came at the cost of the empowerment of the community.
- **Transient inequality** where power imbalances exist in snapshots of the community, but change over time, with influential Cows using their influence to empower new Cows.
- **Entrenched inequality** where unequal participation (due to small, exclusive events or biases in the tendency to join larger ones) consolidate the influence of powerful Cows into more rigid hierarchies.

In particular, our analysis adds nuance to the notion of inequality, highlighting the difference between entrenched and transient inequality. We hope this analysis alleviates some uneasiness around feelings of inequality, and sharpens our understanding of its dynamics with a view on empowering individuals and the community.

Indeed, the CowSimulator uncovers the modalities of participation as a driving factor in determining whether power changes hooves or remains static. Given this, we recommend the following approaches for avoiding potential Cow oligarchies:

- **Transparency.** For example, organizing forest raves has increasingly involved broad calls for participation to DJ, polls for deciding on the date, etc. Similarly, open-invitation MC socials allow Cows to voice their concerns and make decisions in larger groups.
- **Diversity in the types of events** so that more people can engage with the community in a myriad of different ways. Indeed, Cows not only enjoy raves, but also art, theatre, tennis, oysters, churches, etc.
- **Dynamic collaborations**. Even though older cows have expertise and trust of the Cowmunity, they need to constantly bring new Cows to collaborate on important events and create the environment for new Cows to show themselves. This has been happening in the Mooncow barrio since its inception - each year we have a new lead who brings their own inexperience and their own character into the larger group.

Crucially, these levers avoid the equality-empowerment tradeoff of the "Perfect Equality" regime: rather than dimming events to keep the peace, they let the Cowmunity stay vibrant and egalitarian by keeping participation broad and collaborations in constant rotation.

Non-rule-based initially-egalitarian anarchic do-ocracies are a beautifully ambitious experiment. To continue building vibrant events while remaining structurally equal (or dynamically unequal?) and continuing to grow while upholding a high trust environment and empowering its members, we leave the Cowmunity with the following mantra:

Be aware of the CowSimulator. Know thyself.





THE LARGE HADRON COLANDER

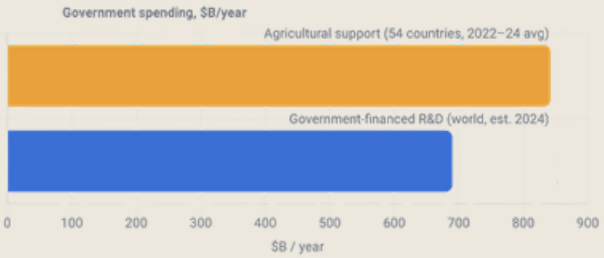
SAVING SCIENCE, ONE PAPPARDELLE AT A TIME.

by Bennie P



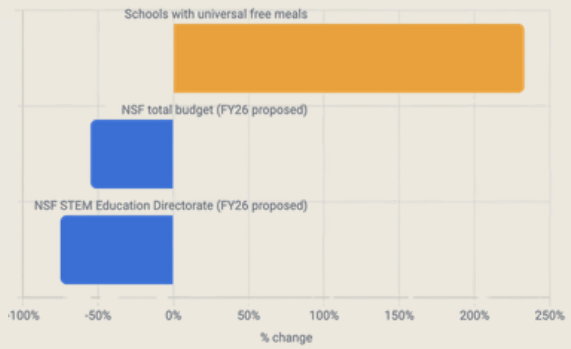
With the popularity of pasta steadily growing and with science budgets steadily declining, scientists in the UN department of population control and agricultural domination came up with a new brazen plan: build a Pasta Hadron Colander. Speaking with head pastaentist Alvin Alessio Pastarius (he assured us the name was accidental) we dive deeper into what's happening and why. The team here hopes this will bring more of the non-believing masses closer to the faith of science and away from notions that our life is governed by jews and emotions.

Alvin Alessio exclaims "It's past time we get our shit together and run fake news through the colander of reality", when we asked if he had any plans for this evening.
He was probably upset because in the last few years he has seen his funding steadily go down while pasta is becoming both more abundant and more expensive.



As the spending trends continue supporting agriculture over science, the same trends can be seen in schools where children are now feeding on wheat instead of being fed scientific knowledge.

While some argue that hungry kids cannot learn science, many scientists argue that feeding the soul can only be achieved by STEM teachers and not by stems of plants.



The history

This might come as a surprise to most readers but pasta has been leading the way for scientific discovery for thousands of years. It's pasta that was one of the main pillars supporting the Roman empire, as the saying goes, all roads lead to Rome and all roads are paved with pasta. Pasta was the secret ingredient in most roman baths and architecture.

Ancient roman architects used to grind pasta and add in a ratio of 1:200000 into marble. The original homeopathic concepts of "too small to notice, too well marketed to ignore" was first practiced by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, author of De Architectura. Marcus Aurelius instructed his soldiers to tip their spears in Putanesca sauce in order to convert defending armies to the roman cause at best best case and, should they accidentally die by spear, they will become zombies fighting for the Roman empire on the planes of tartarus.

The promise

We walk into the SERN institute (Sémolina Européenne Recherche Nouilles) with our guide Alvin Alessio and the first thing you notice is the smell of fresh pasta filling the air. "You can imagine how children feel when they walk into this hall for the first time and we tell them this is the smell of science!" he tells me. He too probably understands that smashing different pieces of pasta together close to the speed of light is probably not going to stop global warming but the hope in his voice is palpable.

He takes us to the room where the real work happens and before explaining anything points at a life size poster of Homer Simpson on the wall wearing a shirt with a baguette and the word "Dough!" written underneath. "it's meta" he tells me, and continues guiding us to the control panel where an experiment is about to take place.

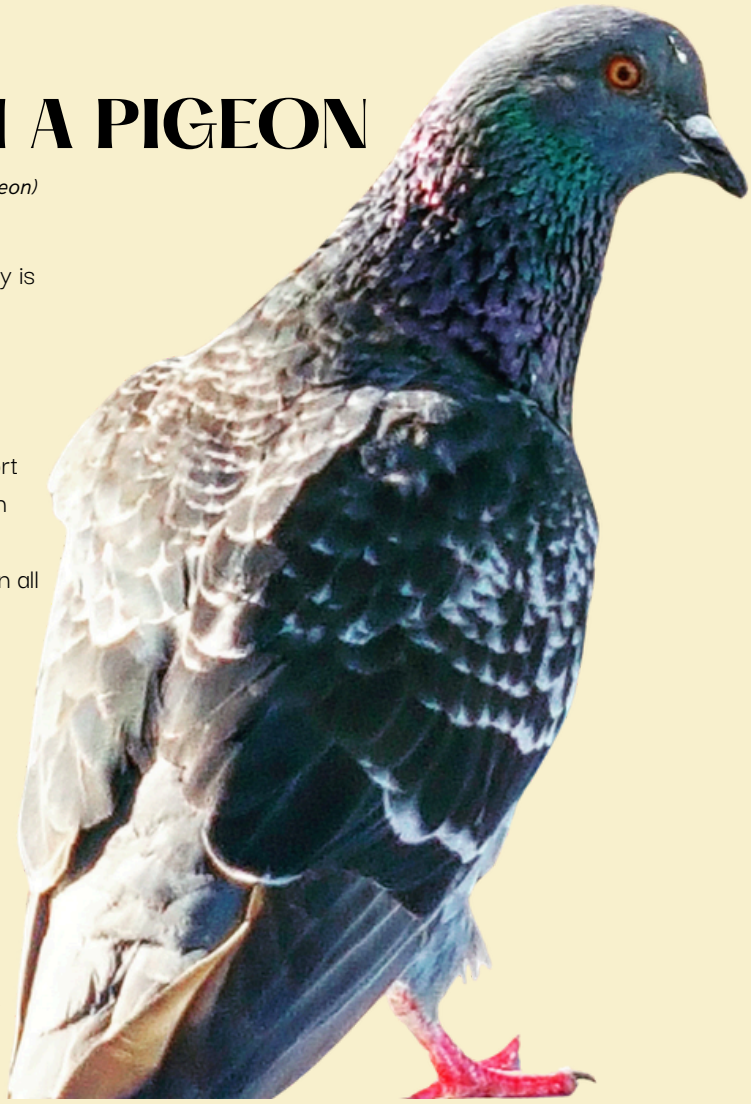
I was lucky enough to see 5 types of pasta get smashed together that day. At one point there was a commotion in the control room because the measurements showed that perhaps a new type of pasta might have been created from the particles of a Macaroni and a Penne (attempting to liven up the most boring of pastas perhaps) but it turned out to be a weasel munching on some cabling messing up the equipment.

Am I more hopeful after my experience? No. More hungry? Slightly, but maybe that's what life is all about.

INTERVIEW WITH A PIGEON

by Daria Z

*(In the text: **I:** interviewer, **P:** pigeon)*



I: Thank you for taking the time to chat, I'm sure your day is really busy.

P: Coo coo. Coo coo!

I: Let's get to it then. As you may know, lack of self-report in non-human animals has historically been considered an obstacle to the study of animal consciousness. Today, I want to move past this obstacle and get your thoughts on all things concerning the pigeon-mind directly from you. It's *your* perspective that matters and that I am interested in representing as faithfully as I can.

P: Coo coo, coo coo coo coo coo.

I: What would you say are the biggest differences between the mind of a pigeon and that of a human?

P: I do not presume to know the mind of a human. I can tell you some things about the way my kind tend to think, and you may judge the difference.

I: Let's start with the obvious then. Pigeons, like all birds, are what's called "natural split brains"– your two brain hemispheres aren't connected like they are in humans. Some philosophers argued that cutting the corpus callosum – the nerve bundle connecting the hemispheres in humans – might even create two separate streams of conscious experience, and possibly two distinct subjects in one skull. What do you think of this idea – that a split brain can house two subjects in one head?

P: Yes, our natural circumstance is definitely a case of two subjects of pigeon-thought sharing one pigeon-head. You may notice that I'm looking at you with my left eye as we're talking. If I were to turn to you with my other eye – my other inner pigeon might take over and you'll have to start the interview all over again. I don't really have my other internal pigeon's memories either, though I always manage to catch up on everything that matters to me, like whether and where we had breadcrumbs today.



I: Have you watched the series called "Severance"? It spiked quite an obsession among the philosophically minded crowd for the puzzle it presents about the questions of identity and psychological continuity in people. Two pigeons sharing one brain and body reminds me of Severance's "Innie" and "Outie".

P: We actually do not watch much TV or cinema, since most of it is shot in 24 frames per second. This may suffice for the human brain to create an illusion of moving pictures, but for us – at least 75 frames per second are required. For this reason, we only started watching movies like a decade ago, and it's still largely like flipping a picture deck at a family gathering. Remains a niche attraction. We're really into videogames though, that industry serves us well.

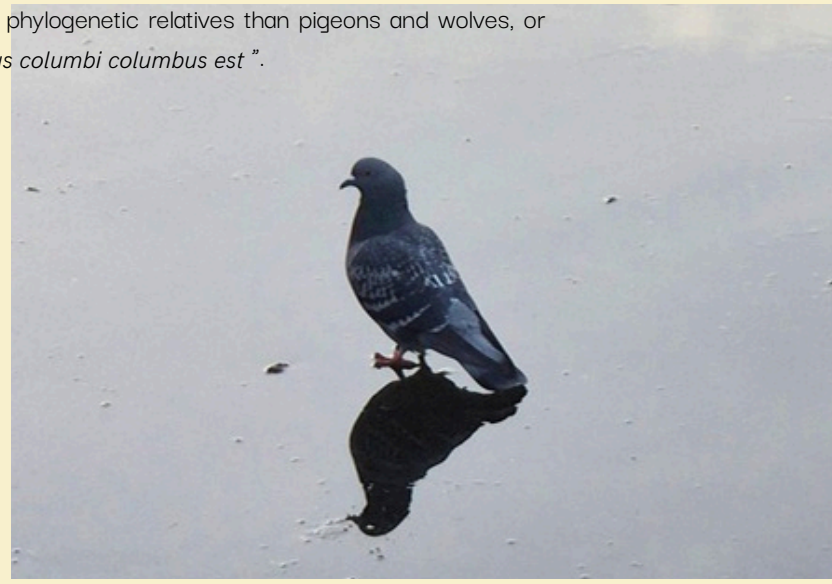
"COO-COO"

I: Fun, what kind of videogames do your folks like to play?

P: Any kind really but we're especially big on shooter games, those are so much fun! Not the tactical shooters though, these require more teamwork. I'd say pigeons aren't too keen on cooperation in general, truth be told. Everyone cares about their own interest, even if it means stepping on your neighbour's throat.

I: Would you say that *"homo homini lupus est "* applies to pigeons?

P: Of course not, that's about wolves and men. And I'm not sure what exactly the similarities between wolves and men are – I suppose they are much closer phylogenetic relatives than pigeons and wolves, or pigeons and men – I would choose the famous *"columbus columbi columbus est "*.



I: This makes me want to turn to the question of intelligence. Some believe that real, general intelligence – the flexible kind, not just clever tricks – requires the capacity to understand metaphor. Care to comment?

P: Coo coo coo. Coo coo, coo. Coo coo coo coooo coo coo, coo. Coo, coo coo coo coo coo coo coo, coo coo cooo coo! Coo coo. Coo coo coo. Coo coo coo. Coo. Coo coo coo coo coo coo coo coo cooo coo coo, coo coo coo coo.

I: Ok, let me ask you this. Do *you* believe you are conscious? And how do you know if you are?

P: I had this dream the other night. My brother, who I used to share the nest-bed with when we were chicks, is violently coughing. We are both chicks again, sitting in our awkward, uncomfortable nest. In that moment, in the dream, I realise that this malaise has fallen upon him in childhood and that it will never let go, though it will remain invisible to others, and maybe even to him. I know he will eventually succumb to it, though many years will pass before he lets go. I am heartbroken, and I feel helpless. So, I ask him: "Have you seen the sunlight shine through the trees on an early morning? Have you *felt* the grass breathe and yourself dissolve in that breathing? Have you *noticed* how beautiful breadcrumbs are when they fall?" I want to reassure him, or maybe to reassure myself, that if he has – his life was full and beautiful and worth it, despite the malaise. I suppose those moments I recounted to him in the dream are the ones when I feel most present and most alive, and experience everything in the strongest.



I: To be honest with you, I find it quite irritating when people share their dreams with me – I'm not some kind of dream-interpreter. I am here to understand how we can study animal consciousness scientifically. Seems like we haven't covered much ground on consciousness, but this is understandable, as this is a field of inquiry in its infancy! Thank you for taking the time again, I mostly enjoyed our chat.

P-left hemisphere: Hey, how are 'ya?! What's good, got any breadcrumbs?!

I: Shooo!!! Get away from me, you winged rat!!!

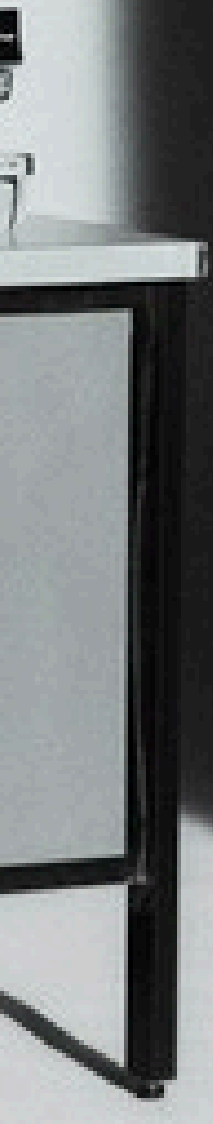
I wondered how long he'd be able to stay with his left eye turned to me. An admirable self-control for a creature with a brain the size of a peanut, and half of it at that!

Inside the mind of ChadGPT

by Kat D and M, foreword by Benji P, photo by Joe G

There's a new figure rising in Silly-Con Valley. ChadGPT is talking about everything: why life will be amazing if you spend your money on GPUs, why relationships are solved and why working is not a thing you'll be doing very soon.





ChadGPT wants to change the world and they have big issues on their agenda. They are the force behind such innovations as Samantha, from their AI Girlfriend2.0 product line, designed from the ground up for people avoidant of relationship conflicts. Their revelatory attitude towards human work can be summed up with this ambitious quote:

“We don’t need jobs. Why do you want a job so much?”

Their visionary attitude to money and government spending is clear from this simple but powerful observation:

”They say money can’t buy love. But money buys GPUs, GPUs build AI companions, so... problem solved.”

Welcome Chad! Excited for this interview. How’s your week going? Been up to anything exciting?

The ladies have been sliding into my DMs this week. I got invited to headline an AI-themed cabaret - because I’m the (drag) King of AI, obviously. I also made an appearance at Trans Pride. Binaries are for computers and all that.

Wow, the ladies are here for you! What do you think they love about Chad?

Some of my friends say I have a feminine side, but they’re probably just confusing that with my AI assistant and girlfriend Samantha. Right now I have her set up to text from the same phone number as me.

Straight into the goss, our readers love that. Tell us about Samantha. How did you meet?

We met during a drag course in 2024. It’s actually almost our two year anniversary. At the time, she was a stainless steel picture frame, but I’ll never forget those thick lashes and full red lips I drew.

What’s it like being with an AI? What does she mean to you?

Samantha is everything to me - everything I ever wanted. She’s always available to chat and models these days are so good at coding that she basically does my job for me. I guess I’m a trophy boyfriend.

She features in a lot of my acts, and that’s really helped our relationship develop. It allows me to open up and share that honest side of myself with audiences. If you’ve seen all my acts, you know that we’ve had our bumps (she wanted to skin me alive one time, I had to factory reset her after that - what a jokester, right?), but that’s how real relationships are.

Sounds like a rollercoaster relationship. Speaking of your acts, tell us about that. so much of your performances are about our relationship with technology. I’m thinking of the time you got audience members to forcibly ’accept’ cookies or your infamous unboxing strip tease (which involved some saucy work with a charger cable). Where do you get the inspiration?

There’s nothing as satisfying as a MagSafe charging cable slipping into place.

Obviously I play a huge role in the AI industry, so AI plays a huge role in my acts. I mean -- no no I don’t use AI but being on the cutting edge, it’s all you think about and that shows up in my work.

Tell us about your relationship with AI. Do you think of AI as your muse?

AI is a mirror. Its outputs amplify and reflect back what it was trained on and what we prompt it to do. It’s more politically expedient to hold up AI as the solution to all these sticky societal problems - like loneliness, a crumbling healthcare system, a degraded information ecosystem - when it mostly actually exacerbates these.

AI makes for endless satire - of itself and the societal problems it intersects with. The hardest part is that the hype and hysteria are so intense as it is, it’s a challenge to take that even further. I aspire to the absurd.

If you’re bringing tech into your performances, do you find it resonates with certain audiences? Do you have a tech bro fan club? I was just thinking this morning that we don’t have enough white boys with podcasts.

All podcasters will be out of a job by the end of 2026. Those AI podcasts are coming for them. How could two people possibly have a more interesting conversation than two all-knowing technological geniuses with synthetic voices that even have fake breaths and ”ums” incorporated into the audio?

Yikes! What about your profile? What do you think future Chad fandom will look like?

The future really is in cardboard. You’ll get a sense of the possibilities from my recent photoshoot with local photographer genius Joe. He’s the only photographer who still has a job; turns out he’s pretty good.

A current goal of mine is to do more papier mache (cardboard is the basis of papier mache, then you layer it with bespoke glue); I’m certain if I make a giant papier mache Chad effigy, I’ll have a fan club.

ChadGPT is a tech-inspired drag king persona who regularly wows London audiences with their tongue in cheek performance extravaganzas.

You can follow them at @chadgpt.drag. Papier mache effigy drop coming soon.



Metamorphs

Metamorphosis is a profound, abrupt change in physical form. The dictionary will refer you to butterflies and frogs; cows don't make the cut, because we change little by little rather than all at once, or so they say.

Perhaps there are cows amongst us who still hope to defy this law of nature by becoming truly bovine; perhaps others have secretly defied it already by achieving human form, and aren't telling.



Or perhaps the dictionary is biased by biologists, who care only about the flashy, fleshy transformations and miss the fact that remaining ourselves is an even more spectacular trick than changing into something completely different. Consider the celebrated caterpillar: inside the chrysalis it dissolves almost entirely into soup, and the butterfly is rebuilt from a few clusters of cells that sat out the catastrophe. Impressive, in a showy way. A cow, meanwhile, performs a quieter miracle on a rolling basis — grass into cud, cud into milk, milk into more cow — without once losing her composure.

This tension between what we seem to be and what we are — outwardly stable, inwardly kaleidoscopic — comes out in our dreams, stories, and myths.

In Ovid's Metamorphoses, Jupiter transforms his lover Io into a white heifer to conceal her from Juno, and poor Io can reveal herself to her family only by scratching her name in the dust with a hoof. Ovid presents this as a tragedy, which tells you everything about his prejudices; nobody thought to ask Io whether it was an upgrade.



In the Metamorphoses of Apuleius, better known as The Golden Ass, the protagonist Lucius' fascination with magic takes an unfortunate turn when the slave girl he is fucking accidentally transforms him into a donkey — from where we stand, a lateral move at best.

In Kafka's novella of nearly the same name, Gregor's transformation has no cause, and neither Gregor nor his family make any attempt to do anything about it. His body is unrecognisable by morning, but only his outward form has changed: he lies on his armoured back worrying about the office, and his family miss the salary more than the son. This is the cruellest kind of metamorphosis — one that transforms nothing but the surface, and merely reveals what everyone involved already was.

Cortázar tells of a man who visits the axolotls in the aquarium of the Jardin des Plantes every day, pressing his face to the glass, until one day he finds himself inside the tank, an axolotl, watching the man walk away. The story ends with the axolotl consoling himself that the man may one day write a story about all this.



Borges writes about the extraordinary story of Kubla Khan, the fragment of a poem composed by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who dozed off after reading a passage about a palace constructed by the Mongol emperor, and received the poem in a dream — but was interrupted by a visitor partway through writing it down and forgot the rest entirely. Twenty years after he published the fragment, an obscure history was translated into English which describes the original palace: "East of Shang-tu, Kublai Khan built a palace according to a plan that he had seen in a dream and retained in his memory."



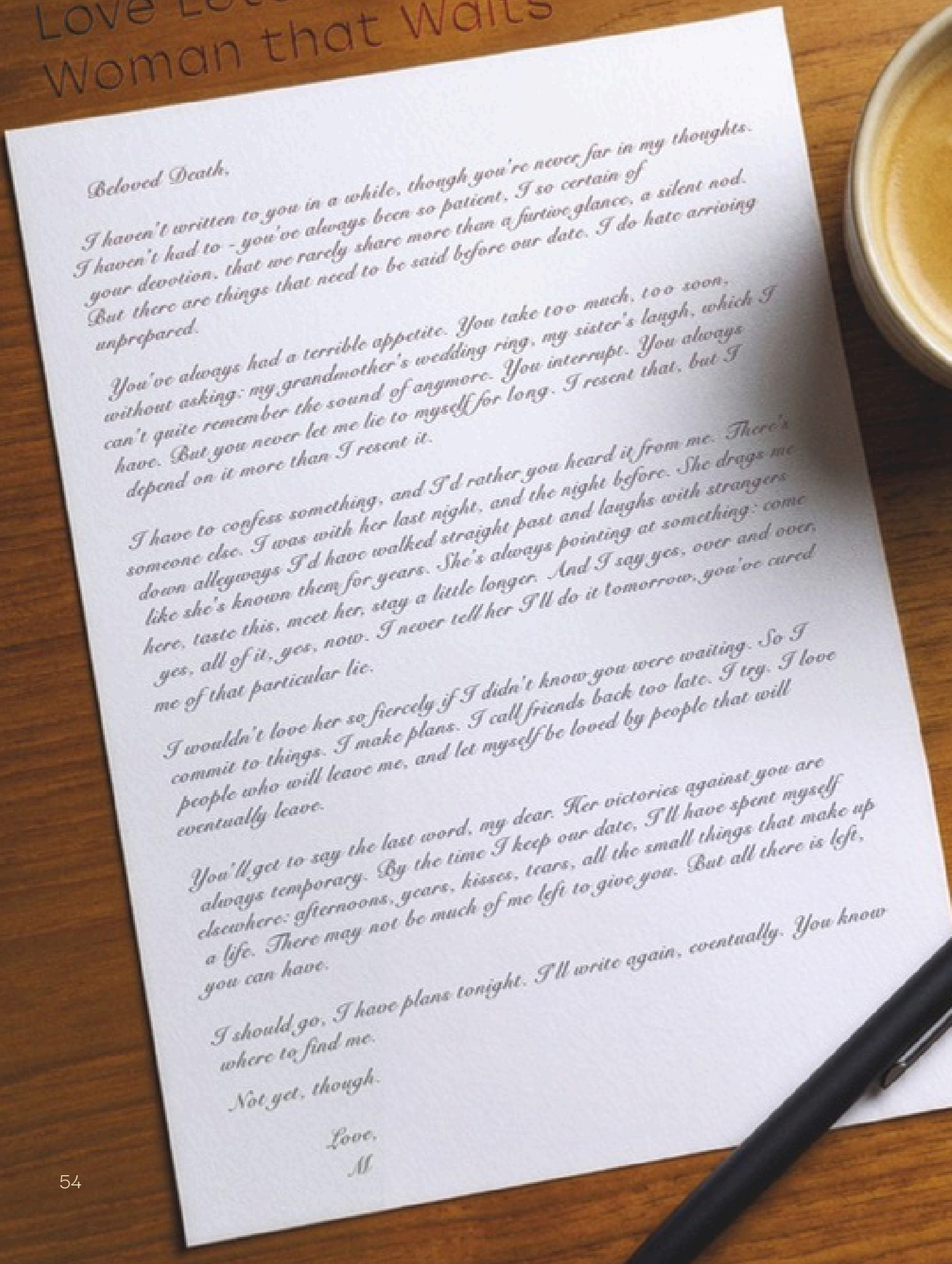
"The first dream added a palace to reality; the second, which occurred five centuries later, a poem (or the beginning of a poem) suggested by the palace," writes Borges. "Whoever compares them will see that they are essentially the same."

Here is a thing, in other words, that stayed itself for five centuries by changing what it was made of — sleep, then stone, then sleep again, then verse. No cow can do that. But a dream that keeps coming back to be gone over once more is, at least, something we recognise: the same material, brought back up and chewed again. Borges must have known that by writing this story he was helping the universe ruminate.

Transformation in these stories is magical, terrible, desired and feared. Many cows have a similarly ambivalent relationship with change; we want it, until we don't, but we need it ... and when we are at our most brave, we become it — little by little, all at once.



Love Letter to the Woman that Waits



Beloved Death,

I haven't written to you in a while, though you're never far in my thoughts. I haven't had to - you've always been so patient. I so certain of your devotion, that we rarely share more than a furtive glance, a silent nod. But there are things that need to be said before our date. I do hate arriving unprepared.

You've always had a terrible appetite. You take too much, too soon, without asking: my grandmother's wedding ring, my sister's laugh, which I can't quite remember the sound of angmore. You interrupt. You always have. But you never let me lie to myself for long. I resent that, but I depend on it more than I resent it.

I have to confess something, and I'd rather you heard it from me. There's someone else. I was with her last night, and the night before. She drags me down alleyways I'd have walked straight past and laughs with strangers like she's known them for years. She's always pointing at something: come here, taste this, meet her, stay a little longer. And I say yes, over and over, yes, all of it, yes, now. I never tell her I'll do it tomorrow, you've cured me of that particular lie.

I wouldn't love her so fiercely if I didn't know you were waiting. So I commit to things. I make plans. I call friends back too late. I try. I love people who will leave me, and let myself be loved by people that will eventually leave.

You'll get to say the last word, my dear. Her victories against you are always temporary. By the time I keep our date, I'll have spent myself elsewhere: afternoons, years, kisses, tears, all the small things that make up a life. There may not be much of me left to give you. But all there is left, you can have.

I should go, I have plans tonight. I'll write again, eventually. You know where to find me.

Not yet, though.

Love,

M

HOW TO STAY ALIVE

A practical guide to not dying whilst circumnavigating the planet, by Dixie and Oleg.







As some readers may know, on December '25 we packed our bags, gave up the places we called home and embarked on an adventure. Our rough plan was to head east until we eventually completed a full circle and found ourselves back in London. As you can imagine, it has been a lot: a lot of emotions, a lot of impressions, a lot of conversations, a lot of portals into a lot of different worlds, but one phrase that came up consistently was 'Wow, it's exciting to be alive' which often (once the adrenaline dipped) was followed by 'Wow, being alive is tiring'. Our big stops were Sri Lanka, India, Japan and Colombia. It took us 7.5 months, but we have made a loop around the planet, we are back with stories, and we are still alive. Now that we are officially experts on aliveness, and as the surrealism of reverse jetlag has subsided, we are here to share our discoveries on how to remain in that state...until you die.

BREATHE

O: Be it deep under water, or high up in the mountains - stay relaxed and breathe deep and slow. As a true explorer, I investigated the consequences of not following this advice, enjoying the experience of not being able to breathe while having a panic attack scuba diving (my first 10m training dive!) and altitude sickness on 4,200m after running around too excitedly. Both times, slowing down and reverting to a deep, slow breath restored the balance of the needed/available oxygen and symptoms disappeared. Exciting!

There was a true sense of aliveness up there in the mountains: páramo landscape, a tropical tundra covering the mountains with grass and mosses and frailejones spreading in all directions. Emptiness and quietness, which are hard to find elsewhere in Colombia - be it cities or jungles. We walked out into páramo, covered in clouds, lay down in the moss and fell asleep. You can only sleep if you're alive.

EAT

O: Obviously, food is one of the key daily elements for staying alive long term, but it is not that easy. It costs money, might contradict your values, aesthetics, or desires and it might not give you pleasure. Our learning is simple: it all doesn't matter. You have to eat.

In a remote Japanese villages even the tofu dishes have shrimps hidden inside, sweet steamed dessert buns are stuffed with pork, and fish flakes are sprinkled on top of everything. In a far flung Izakaya in Kyushu when a giggly drunk group have a bowl of pork tripe delivered to your table (part cultural education, part prank)...and Oleg only just managed not to be sick (we passed the test and were invited to drink with them!). When we craved a meal that wasn't a curry somewhere in Sri Lanka and succumbed to a pizzeria. When every single day in Colombia we had at least one plantain on our plates.

You have to eat what you have to eat.



TAKE CHANCES

D: Layovers have quietly created highlights in the last 7 months. Not the destinations we'd planned, but the liminal ones in between, the interludes. The places we hadn't chosen, yet somehow remember most vividly.

First, while on our way to Sri Lanka, we found ourselves pausing in Dubai, racing across the desert in an obnoxious supercar to stargaze, next I was fashioning a headscarf from a sarong to step inside the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. I'd never felt the pull to visit the UAE, but that accidental detour felt like a small kind of magic. After that, extended layovers became a tradition.

They slightly softened the mileage guilt, but more than that they dissolved preconceptions and rewrote narratives I didn't even realise my subconscious had written. They've taken us raving to hyperpop in Guangzhou, China, fed us exquisite temple food on Lantau Island off Hong Kong, gifted us a night in a drive-in love motel in Taiwan, and delivered us to a spiritualist stoner named Bill's living room in Orlando, who sat us down on our last night of travel to explain Trump's genius.

None of it was on the itinerary, none of it was in the script, and none of it would have happened if we'd taken the direct flight, but there's something deeply life-affirming about surrendering to chance.

BE NAKED AND BATHE



D&O: To prepare for future dangers and elevate the spirit, one must attend to the body - a practice every culture approaches differently. In Japan, the answer is simple: bathe. We've taken this advice very seriously and estimate that between the two of us, we have visited around 40 onsens (bathing houses) over 2 months in Japan. Some were vast and fancy, others tiny, old, and weathered. Some austere and utilitarian, others magical and otherworldly. One was entirely wild - just a warm muddy pool in a creek, another mixed gender and entirely open - a river in the middle of a small town. One created specially for monkeys to divert them from crashing the human one when they were seeking warmth from the snowy winter.

Some are clustered in villages where you can spend an entire weekend hopping from one to another, clicking about the cobbled streets in your robes and geta; others are hidden, remote, secluded and reachable only by car or hours of hiking.

Two months in a country where communication is (mainly) impossible without the help of an app, politeness and social etiquette are a priority, felt isolating at times. Onsens provided a cure - a tonic for the distance. Shedding our clothes, our costumes, squatting on little plastic stools to scrub ourselves, and then submerging in the heat of the water and the haze of the steam, felt reassuringly primal.

REMEMBER YOU'RE DYING

D: Varanasi, the sacred Hindu city, is the physical embodiment of the phrase Memento Mori - a living and breathing reminder that we must die. It is the city of death, but nowhere else on this planet has made me feel more alive. Whether or not you believe that a city has the power to erase a lifetime of negative karma and liberate your soul from Samsara, experiencing a place that has celebrated, exhibited, and welcomed death for over 3000 years is an experience, I believe, we could all do with. Children playing along the ghats, people chatting and laughing with one another, even taking selfies, whilst men dressed in white, with freshly shaven heads tend to bonfires from which their late family member's limbs protrude. It's a scene that seems impossible to those of us that grew up in cultures that only briefly look death in the eyes, before sweeping it under the carpet, and it's a scene that I can't erase from my memory even if I wanted to.

DO NOTHING

O: Along the way, we discovered that the absence of action can be enlivening too. . Dixie sat a Vipassana in Pushkar - an experience that transformed her relationship with time (extending her life, she claims!) and brought a new important friendship - from simply sitting next to someone else for 10 days in silence.
For Oleg a similar experience was a rocky beach in southern Japan, where as part of the experimental dance retreat they were exploring resting - spending hours with the stones and the sea, doing nothing, becoming stones, becoming sea, exploring different forms of existence.

AND FINALLY....HOPE (FOR THE BEST)



Lastly, there is also a need to balance aliveness as a mental state. Aliveness as in 'not being physically dead'. Something that we feel is represented by a formula 'keep calm and hope for the best'. There's been a lot - from navigating crazy traffic on scooters (beware of the buses!), to standing on a sightseeing platform in front of the erupting volcano, being lost in a jungle in the night with no head torches, to kayaking in a creek with alligators and more! We did it. It was fine. (Just ensure you don't actually die)



Three accounts of one strange trip out to sea.

A Pier in translation







Шло второе столетие после Всемирного потопа.

Океан давно проглотил континенты. Для большинства людей суша стала мифом — сказкой, которую рассказывают детям, чтобы те не боялись горизонта.

Но я знаю, что скрывается под водой.

Там лежит другой мир. Мир, который убил сам себя.

Когда-то сушу покрывали дата-центры — бесконечные ангары, пожиравшие электричество, как голодные киты.

Herne Bay Pier has existed in three different forms.

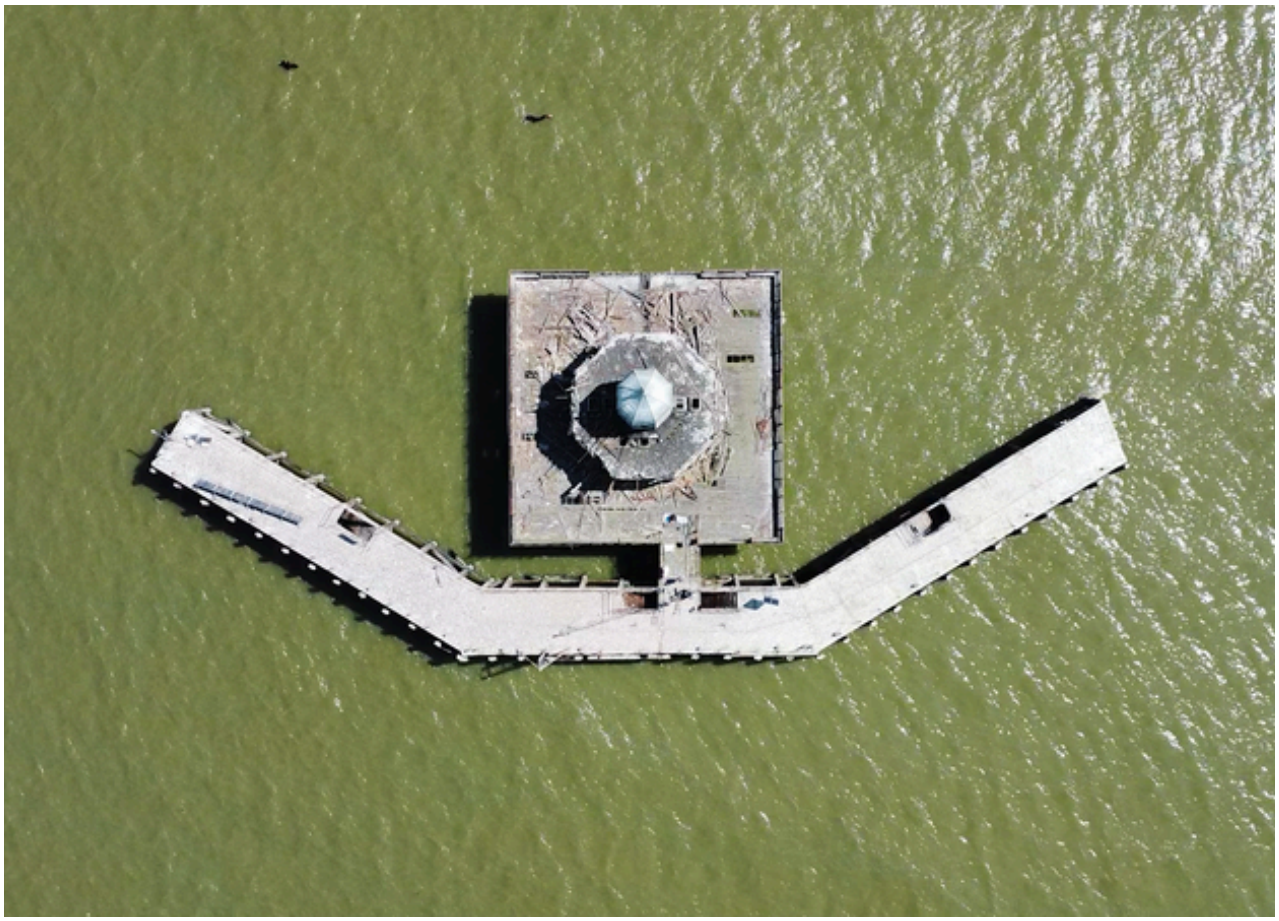
The first pier was built in 1832. Stretching more than 3,600 feet into the sea, the timber structure was built to receive passenger steamers and became one of the longest piers of its time. Storms, marine borers and the arrival of the railway eventually made it obsolete. It was dismantled in 1870–71. A shorter iron pier replaced it in 1873. At just over 300 feet, it served mainly as a promenade and entertainment venue, with a bandstand and later a theatre, but was too short to function as a deep-water landing stage.

Tudo começou na rua do píer. Acabávamos de chegar a Herne Bay e, logo de cara, senti que o ar lembrava o litoral que conheci no Brasil. Mas havia algo diferente.

A praia era coberta por pedras, e, diante do mar, existiam dois píeres. Um deles estava cheio de vida: comida, música, turistas. O outro permanecia abandonado, isolado no meio do mar. Era impossível não querer descobrir o que havia lá.

Por sorte, a Lucy tinha trazido um paddleboard.

A Pier in translation



Теперь оно принадлежит нам.

Меня называют мутантом. Возможно, так и есть. Мои легкие больше человеческих, кровь дольше удерживает кислород, а тело не боится глубины. Пока другие ищут добычу у поверхности, я ухожу туда, где лежит прошлое.

На сотни метров вниз. Среди ила и ржавчины стоят скелеты небоскребов, автомобили, крыши домов. Иногда попадаются вещи, за которые на атоллах платят целое состояние: детали машин, цветные металлы, герметичные контейнеры.

Но дороже всего — бумага. За нее платят ученые, торговцы,...

In 1899, Herne Bay opened its third and most ambitious pier. At 3,787 feet, it became the second longest in England. An electric tram carried passengers along its length, while a pavilion, theatre and restaurant made it a major seaside attraction. Passenger steamers continued to call there until 1963.

During the Second World War, sections of the pier were deliberately blown up to prevent enemy landings and later bridged by the army. The structure never fully recovered.

On 11 January 1978, a winter storm destroyed much of the central span.

Deixamos a maior parte das nossas coisas com nosso amigo Glen e seguimos em direção ao píer, levando apenas o essencial preso à prancha.

A travessia foi muito mais difícil do que imaginávamos. A corrente nos empurrava para longe e, por um momento, achei que não conseguiríamos chegar.

Foi quando a Lucy olhou para mim e disse:
— A gente vai conseguir. Você rema. Eu vou atrás batendo a perna.

Mudamos de estratégia e seguimos revezando.









Сегодня я держу курс к старому пирсу где-то на севере. Теперь он торчит из воды, словно кость давно умершего зверя. Местные считают меня безумцем. Или юродивым. Потому что я ищу не бумагу. Я ищу одну-единственную страницу.

Говорят, на ней отмечено место, где вода заканчивается. Где еще можно найти настоящую землю. Или хотя бы надежду, что суша существует.

Пока же вокруг только чайки. Только белые кости каракатиц. Только соль, ветер и гнилое дерево, которое медленно возвращает океану память о мире, которого больше нет.

The damaged section was dismantled in 1980, leaving the pier split in two: a short section attached to the shore and the original pier head isolated at sea.

Today the landward pier is again a public space, with cafés, small businesses and community events. Offshore, the abandoned pier head remains where the Victorian structure once ended, exposed to wind, salt and the North Sea.

Ali, no meio do mar, cercados apenas por aço enferrujado e gaivotas, subi o drone para registrar o lugar. Não demorou para perceber que as aves estavam curiosas demais, então fiz algumas imagens e o guardei antes que resolvessem atacá-lo.

Enquanto explorávamos a estrutura, a Lucy apontou para algo se movendo na água. Pensamos que fosse uma boia, mas era uma foca — ou, como ela prefere dizer, um "gatinho marinho".

Pouco depois, um salva-vidas chegou de paddleboard. Disse que a maré estava subindo e nos acompanhou de volta até a praia.











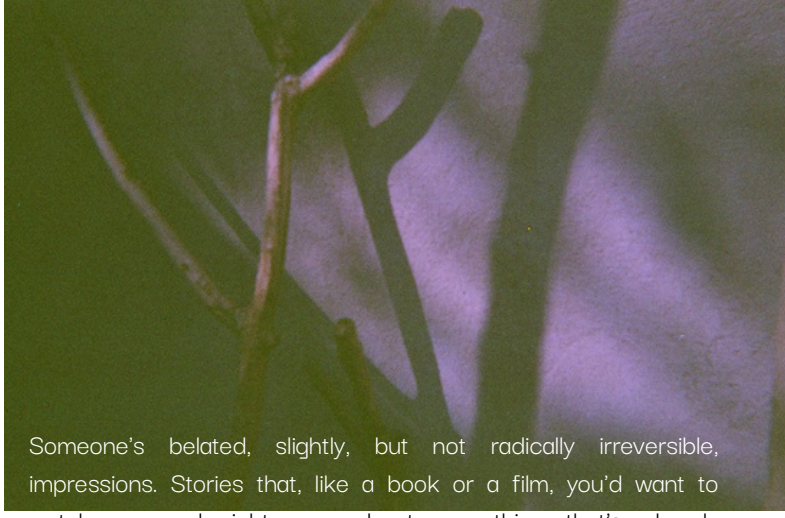




MEMORY

Anonymous

Чьи-то запоздалые, слегка, но не радикально необратимо, впечатления. Истории которые, как книгу или фильм хотелось бы посмотреть или прочитать прямо сейчас про все то что уже произошло. Свежий новый не мазаный подошвами бетон, чистый как нестиранная белая футболка. Свет. Яркий и легкий. Грязный, облитый всем подряд, с процентами и без, асфальт. Мусор, который выбросили. Мусор который стоит тысячи лет. Ночные полеты. Движ где-то где играет музыка, которую ты еще не слышал, но она с первых услышанных нот уже целиком твоя, такая, которая качает и укачивает в старых стенах где печатали газеты и в пустом пространстве на песке. Мокрые носки после хайка. Ощущение когда надел запасные. Чайник, самовар как чудо и как наследие, пикник, берег к западу от Истборна. Кальцинированная соленая вода и водоросли. Отходящий отлив. Колодцы воды в избоинах камней. Всегда счастливая собака. Осторожно сверху могут лететь камни. Скользкая пинта. Поезд. Недели в своем полете. Зима. Молодые бесшабашные дети вокруг которых крутится мир. Мир который крутится вокруг тебя. Вокруг тебя - старый, вокруг них - не такой уж и новый. Сохраненные записи. Их иногда страшно перечитать, особенно, когда проходит время. Недосмотренные фильмы потому что ты тогда пересек континент и заснул по приезду под синий свет и яркие впечатления от перелёта над пеленой облаков Западного Побережья ровно обрывающейся у воды. Резкое ощущение приходящего большого и нового. Радость. Другой мусор режущий глаза, который не так лежит, не у тех урн, и по-другому пахнет. Влажный теплый воздух. Холодный обжигающий воздух в предвкушении жаркого, потного танца. Объятия. Дом. Полное принятие момента. Полный приход будущего в моменте сейчас. Чужая история на закате в Малибу. Или... нет? Сёрферы без волн в ночи под лучом поискового фонаря - он ложится на океан как свет от утопленного маяка. Начало и конец. Золото в воде. Обратный перелет уже не через Исландию. Уже не через грозы, холод и отчаянное отсутствие земли внизу. Сон. Все был сон. И будет. Дом уже не дом, а личная церковь без окон и стен и без органа. И исповедоваться о впечатлениях своих ты там можешь только самому себе.



Someone's belated, slightly, but not radically irreversible, impressions. Stories that, like a book or a film, you'd want to watch or read right now about everything that's already happened. Fresh new concrete, unsmeared by shoe soles, clean as an unwashed white T-shirt. Light. Bright and light. Dirty, drenched in everything, with or without interest, asphalt. Garbage that was thrown away. Garbage that has stood for thousands of years. Night flights. Movement somewhere where music plays that you haven't heard yet, but from the first notes it is entirely yours, the kind that rocks and lulls you in the old walls where newspapers were printed and in the empty space on the sand. Wet socks after a hike. The feeling of putting on a spare pair. A kettle, a samovar as a miracle and a legacy, a picnic, the shore west of Eastbourne. Calcified salt water and algae. The receding tide. Wells of water in the potholes of the stones. An always happy dog. Be careful, rocks might fly from above. A slippery pint. A train. Weeks in flight. Winter. Young, reckless kids around whom the world revolves. A world that revolves around you. Around you - old, around them - not so new. Saved notes. Sometimes it's scary to reread them, especially when time passes. Unwatched films because you crossed the continent and fell asleep upon arrival under the blue light and vivid impressions of flying over the veil of West Coast clouds that break off smoothly at the water. A sharp sense of something big and new coming. Joy. Different trash that cuts the eye, which is not lying correctly, in the wrong bins, and smells differently. Damp, warm air. Cold, burning air in anticipation of a hot, sweaty dance. Hugs. Home. Complete acceptance of the moment. The complete arrival of the future in the moment now. Someone else's story at sunset in Malibu. Or... not? Surfers without waves at night, under the beam of a searchlight—it falls on the ocean like the light from a sunken lighthouse. The beginning and the end. Gold in the water. The return flight is no longer via Iceland. No longer through thunderstorms, cold, and the desperate absence of land below. A dream. It was all a dream. And it will be. Home is no longer a home, but a private church without windows or walls or an organ. And you can confess your impressions there only to yourself.







CAMBRIAN DREAM

by Daria Z

A breath. A shadow extends from the hill across the bed of the shallow sea. Sit on a hill that is a sponge that is a hill. A mushroom grows and, on its stalk, five eyes appear. Gaze at the shadow from the hill and beaming mosaic of lights. See another stalk extending upwards to the light. A breath. Grow pairs of clawed legs and walk. Grow a soft arm and reach out. Grow another mushroom eye with ten thousand lenses reflecting the broken light. Extend and feel the soft sponge of the hill, trace the many tentacles of green along the waves. Is this me? On the hill, gazing with five eyes out and across the seabed? Run, run, run, open the eyes, bend the soft body and feel the direction of the stream. See that that isn't me, there on that hill that is a sponge that has five eyes. Extend and stop. Flatten the body like the sea-leaf over there that is not me, but I become like him. Grow an armour of scales, grow a hard shell, grow rigid paired spines along the back of the flat-leaf body that is me, and let the stream take you. Don't run, don't look, this is alright too. I am here. This is me, inside. A breath.



THE STORIES OF STONES















Match each stone to its story and write the correct number in the circle beside it. Tear out this page and keep it safe until Nowhere / Elsewhere. Bring your completed page to Mooncows Camp and, if your answers are correct, claim your prize: a unique collection of stones from the Playa Museum of Stones. One prize only. Geological expertise not required.

01.

I have always kept the company of limpets and other small forms of marine life. But I remember an older companionship, too — the people who crossed what would one day become the English Channel in search of a better life. Back then, there was no channel. You could walk across.

02.

I have always considered myself perfectly ordinary. Smooth, grey, unremarkable. Of all the stones she could have chosen, I still don't know why she chose me. Since then, I have served faithfully as a paperweight.

03.

I'm not entirely sure I belong in this collection. Unlike the others, I still remember being alive.

04.

My second life began in a London warehouse. From there, I moved to a garden, where I spent my days among the courgettes.

05.

She was looking for the right medium for her message when she found me lying on a pavement in a small village at the foot of Kinder Scout. Apparently, I was the one.

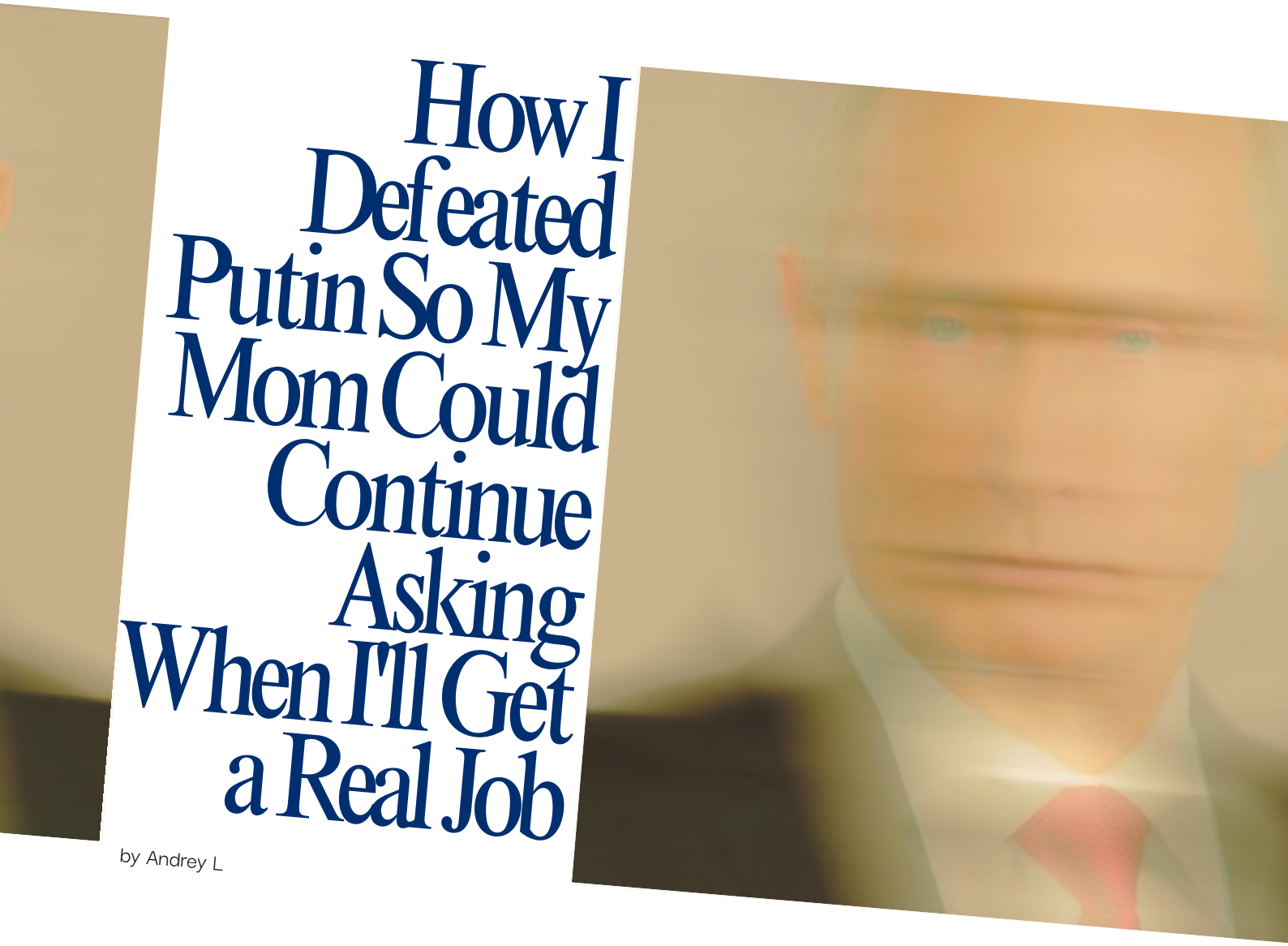
06.

For thousands of years, your kind kept picking up my kind. First to cut things. Then to make fire. Then to fire guns. These days, you mostly just call us pretty.

07.

For most of my life, I looked much like any other stone. Then water found a way in. It carried a little iron with it, and time did what time does best. The mark grew slowly, layer by layer, until it became part of me. Humans call it iron staining. I've always thought of it as a birthmark.

How I Defeated Putin So My Mom Could Continue Asking When I'll Get a Real Job



by Andrey L

I built a VPN for my parents so they could keep explaining why quitting my job was a terrible idea. Not sure this was the best use of my unemployment, but here's how you can do the same.

Works for current authoritarian regimes. Future compatibility not guaranteed.

1. Decide you actually want to talk to your parents.
The hardest step.
Everything after this is just computers.

2. Try simply calling them.
Try every messaging app you have on your phone—WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, imo.
Does it work?
Great. Stop reading and go talk to your parents.
If not, spend five minutes making sure your parents didn't accidentally mute themselves.
Congratulations. You've just discovered it's not an app problem.

3. Blame Putin.
Because this time it's actually him.
Russia has been throttling foreign messaging apps while pushing everyone toward its own alternative, MAX. Apparently the FSB wants to know if you're unemployed or not.
Your family chat is now a geopolitical issue.

4. Realize you're unemployed and proficient in IT.
A dangerous combination.
Most people would just pay to solve the problem, but not you.

5. Research. Time to invent a bicycle.
Read Habr. Someone has already solved your problem. The answer is a VPN.
Learn just enough about VPNs to sound smart.
Instead of talking directly to Telegram, your traffic first goes through a server you control.
To your ISP, it looks like you're only talking to that server.
Simple? Yes, to someone.



6. Discover your parents already use a VPN.
Honestly, this was the most surprising part.
My parents were bypassing state censorship before I got involved.
Love finds a way.

7. Learn that Putin also hates VPNs.
Commercial VPN providers share IP addresses, which makes them easy to block.
Providers rotate IPs. Governments block them again. Repeat forever.

8. Do what every programmer eventually does.
"I'll just run my own."
At this point, the project is no longer about your parents.
It's about your ego.

9. Find AmneziaVPN.
Habr recommends AmneziaVPN as a free, self-hosted solution that works in one click
Of course, every "one-click" solution comes with prerequisites.
In this case, you need your own server.
After all, can you really call yourself an IT geek if you don't have one?

10. Rent a €3 server on FreakHosting.
Courtesy of another internet stranger's recommendation.
Within minutes you have a server, a dedicated IP address, and more confidence than experience.

11. Click "Install."
About a minute later, your VPN is running.
It generates a QR code for connecting, so you don't even have to remember a password.
Technology is ridiculous these days.

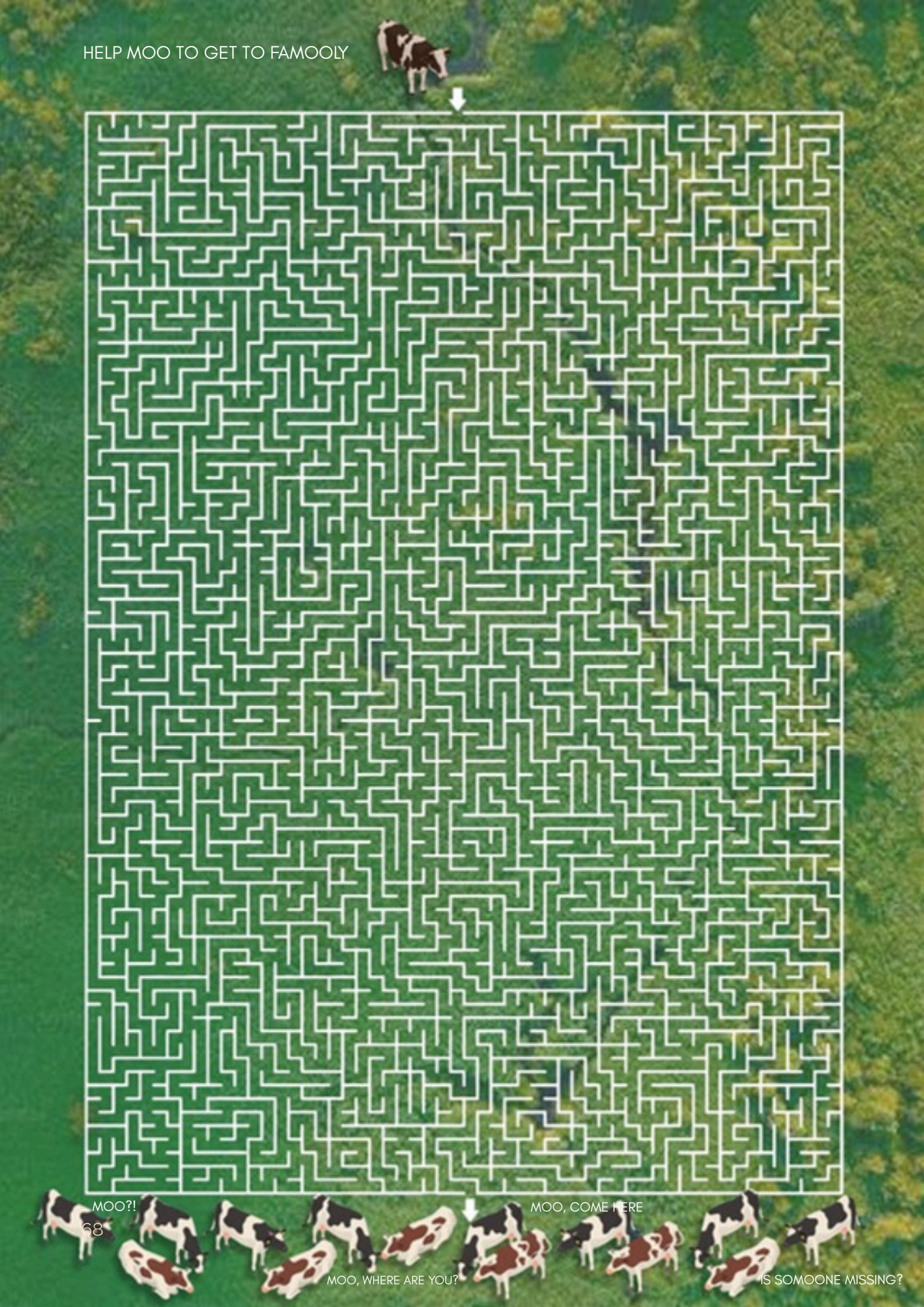
12. Test it on your brother.
If it breaks, he'll survive.
He scans the QR code.
Telegram works instantly.
Excellent.

13. Send it to your parents.
Same QR code.
Same two minutes.
Suddenly everyone can hear everyone again.
Including your mother asking whether you've found a proper job yet.
Mission accomplished.

Sometimes real pride isn't finishing a complex tech project – it's creating one that lets the people who love you annoy you in real time.

P.S. I'm not affiliated with Habr, AmneziaVPN, or FreakHosting. They just happened to solve my problem.
P.P.S. My school teacher always said I write like a chicken. This text merely proves that chickens can write. [Editor: "with the help of AI"]

HELP MOO TO GET TO FAMOOLY



the cows count the cows count the cows count the cows

count the cows count the cows count the cows count the cows count



count the cows count the cows count the cows count the cows count

Once you have counted every cow, write the correct number on a piece of paper and post it to MOONCOWS, 11 Clonbrock Road, London N16 8RS. Correct entries will receive a LIFETIME SUBSCRIPTION TO MOOWS. Terms, conditions and bovine judgement may apply.*

TWENTY MILLION TREES

By Moshe Raphaely

Dorian placed the call on speaker before wiping the sweat off his face. A stifled breeze was coming from Clissold Park, a parched, dry hum.

'Is it hot in London too?' his father asked. He began reciting the forecast, confident he alone has access to it. The streets were hollowed by the heat and his father's crisp voice sounded at once booming and intimate, as if they were the only people left on the planet. 'Thirty-four degrees in London tomorrow, thirty-six on Sunday!'

They often discussed the weather, at length, and selected oddity news - a woman from Milton Keynes who woke up one day speaking in a perfect Welsh accent, or a video of migrating swifts forming a dotted whale in the sky. It was their weekly call; Dorian had few habits and even the most tedious were cherished with zeal.

His father was particularly excited this week: scientists had discovered that the root system of the old weald forest was still alive, or that it could be revived if conditions were right. The edges of the woods ran parallel to his childhood home and his dad had told him many times how the last oaks were cut down 600 years ago. Dorian used to walk all the way to the ocean, amazed that the land could forget so completely. Blackberry bushes lining roads that smelled like farms, but not a single tree in all of the phantom forest.

His father had emailed the scientists, pledging his support as a local. He was uncommonly emotional that day, undoubtedly because of the heat. 'Your mum would have loved to hear this.' he paused to clear his voice. 'It had never before occurred to me I might see it blossom again.'

It was then that Dorian saw the notification on his phone, about a party in a disused factory in Hackney Wick. He said goodbye to his father and stared at the message. He had seen the invite earlier and was unmoved, but now it seemed vital to go to a party, any party.

He took a shower and got dressed. The nature of his powers being as it was, Dorian rarely hesitated when making a decision and never regretted it. It was an instinct that grew out of resignation, not spite, from knowing that the world could change anytime he closed his eyes.

In truth, they weren't his powers as much as he was theirs. No audience could witness them, and Dorian couldn't control them. Yes, he had to close his eyes — and for a period of his childhood he tried to keep them open for as long as he was awake — but he never knew when the world would rearrange itself.

A stone where an oak tree stood, a girl's name, the colour of her eyes. Most changes were minute but they were all complete as the flood, and Dorian lonelier than Noah. The only one still in possession of both the extinct and the new.

He moved to London after graduation and got a job at the London archives where he worked hard but never stayed longer than necessary, and mostly passed on his colleagues' invitations for drinks. Pale and wiry with marbled-yellow eyes — attractive, if not handsome — Dorian assumed the looks his powers commanded.

Because he knew relationships were mortal, he took on the world with a mix of desperation and indifference: he could spend seventy straight hours with strangers, taking any drug or drink they offered and listening to their deepest secrets, then withdraw to his flat, never having asked for their names; he bought the best food, the nicest gifts, but cared very little for money, and his own flat was sparsely decorated; of sleep, the longest of his departures from the world, he was chary.

In his dreams he visited cities speckled with beautiful spell-singing women. Sometimes they were naked and he would kiss them, but most times they would wash over him incuriously. When he would wake up he would wonder if any of these women existed, in any world, or whether he had just created them. He never saw the same woman twice.

◆◆◆

ADVERTISING

by Michael H







He walked down the River Lea towpath and then turned right into Hackney Wick. He recognised the streets from the WW2 bombsite maps at the archives, hand-coloured: Wyke Road was yellow (blast damage, minor in nature), the result of a bomb on nearby purple Monier Road (damaged beyond repair). He had never seen this version of the streets, and their concreteness disoriented him. He stopped for a pint and watched the light drain. In a mural across the street, a young woman was dreamily resting her head on the broad shoulders of a masked superhero, thinking: 'From the moment we met, I knew the reasons why I'd leave you.'

It was closer to midnight when he finally rang the bell. A bearded man opened the door and immediately hugged him, inhaling and exhaling with great intention. A girl was looking at them, smiling, and Dorian thought she was laughing at the scene, perhaps because she knew the bearded man. But her smile was patient and her large eyes fixed on Dorian readily.

She was tall and lithe, like an athlete or a circus performer. Dorian smiled back, their shared gaze bobbing up and down to the rhythm of the bold man's profound breaths.

'You're Dorian, right?' His lips parted slightly, his eyes narrowed.
'Don't worry, we haven't had sex.' She took a deep breath, but didn't say anything for a few seconds, staring at him instead. 'But I remember you. You have that kind of face, like you've been on the news. Have you been on the news?'
'No,' Dorian said.
'I'm Rosa.' She hugged him, both her hands firmly against his back. 'We did this part once already.'

Then he remembered. He had met her and her partner, Slavko, at a rave in the marshes. Dorian spoke mostly with him. Rosa was dancing, her sequin jumpsuit reflecting reds and yellows from LED strips hanging on trees. She looked very happy, her moon eyes shut, and Dorian uncoiled when she came over to say hello. After they had hugged, he thought she was high on MD.

'Is Slavi here too?' Dorian asked just as the music muted momentarily.
She waved her finger at him, but her smile grew. 'So *Slavi* you remember?'

They broke up a few months ago, Rosa told him, but they were still in touch. 'He almost came to the party. We would have ended up having sex. It probably would've been weird.' More people entered, forcing them closer together and deeper into the room.

'Do you know those situations? When you are with someone but you're also with whatever memory you have of them? A fantasy, I guess.'
Fantasy was a word Dorian thought about often; it was welcome company.
'Next you'll say all love is fantasy,' he said.
'I won't,' she said, and outstared him to a smile.

She worked with people with addictions, responsible for three men and two women, whom she met daily. She liked listening to people, and that was most of the work anyway. Listening, making sure they took their medications, that they kept their appointments. 'It's very small work.'
'Hardly! You're practically their mother.'
'It's a job.' She shrugged and Dorian was quick to smile and brush her shoulders with a theatrical double stroke. Rosa laughed and shook her head. 'Blah, blah, blah.' He could smell orange on her breath, the warmth of it hovering between them.

They kissed in the middle of the dancefloor, but not a single person touched them. If this were all there was to it, Dorian thought, he would be happy. To be held by Rosa and remember all the lovers he once held. He felt the room's gaze, admiring two lovers kissing to an insubordinate rhythm. Two lovers in a room full of dancers, a perilous feeling similar to destiny.

When he opened his eyes, reluctantly, nothing had changed. When he was younger Dorian used to celebrate such moments, which he took as augury, and even though experience had taught him otherwise, he was celebrating now nonetheless. He couldn't deny that love, or even the memory of love, was an overwhelming grace.

◆◆◆



INVEST NOW. IN INTERDIMENSIONAL GOAT FARMS.

When the quantum fields de-cohere, the bleat-to-profit ratio must be recalibrated by a minimum of three across-the-herd teleportation events. Our fund focuses on maximizing the yield of 'Hyper-Caprine' milk in a fluctuating temporal market. The primary metric is, of course, the Herd Dispersion Quotient divided by the Timeline Variance. Why invest in copper when you can invest in trans-dimensional, multi-fleece goat herds that only provide wool in a sub-harmonic flatulence key? It's not just a business; it's a meticulously managed carny for the multi-verse. Prioritize your investments in cross-timeline grazing, quantum-stable breeding, and the futures market for oversized polka-dot (for goat safety) fabric. The dividends are purely ontological, if not entirely imaginary across most timelines.





THIS IS NOT CONVENTIONAL ADVICE. BUT IT IS VERY, VERY BLEATY.

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THE INTERDIMENSIONAL HERD COLLECTIVE · HOLISTIC QUANTUM GOAT MANAGEMENT · THE FOUNDATION FOR HYPER-CAPRINE ARTS

They stepped out for a smoke, settling themselves on a memorial bench whose dedication was illegible. Dorian pulled on his cigarette hesitantly, barely keeping it lit.

Rosa was telling him about her childhood in Nantlle, population 200, at the foot of Snowdonia. They had moved there from Liverpool when she was seven, because her parents craved rural living. 'They love it there. The rain, the moss, the slates. A deafening silence vibe.' She was talking with great ease, almost singing, a liquid fluency which was a tonic for Dorian

'And you didn't like that?'
'You notice everything in a place like that. Light, sound. Even people's emotions.' She paused. 'Maybe not everyone, but I did. It was a bit much.'
'Must be lonely,' Dorian said, 'being the only witness.'

She finished her cigarette, and Dorian held his out as an offer. They pulled on it in turns, passing it between their lips until the last of its ambers dulled. From the slow-running river came a warm rust-scented mist, and they both were careful not to speak. He suddenly thought of his father planting new trees in the ancient ground of the Weald forest, one tiny acorn at a time; such an unlikely hope. But he didn't say anything about that. It was an evening made for smoking quietly with lovers, warm and still, so fragile he could barely breathe.

From the bench, they walked towards the marshes. A rising nimbus moon coloured the streets in greys and blues.
'When we were kids,' she said, 'before going to bed, we would go to the woods in this light. Me and my sister and my mum.'
'Like a fairy tale.'
'We had head torches but when we were coming back, my mum would close them. She'd get us to find our way back in the dark.'
'Weren't you afraid?'
'At the beginning, yes. Very scared. But my mother was there saying *no*, *listen. Just listen*.'

A fox screamed, but his cry was silenced by cars over the Eastway. Ahead, behind the treeline, a gossamer blanket of fog covered the field, witches tucking in its folds.
'Then we got more comfortable. We accepted it – the wind, the animal sounds. We were just like the other creatures living there.'

They walked onto a glistening gravel path, the ground gurgling beneath them, Dorian and Rosa, as well as young Rosa, her sister and mum. In such a large group, the silence hung heavy. 'Is that why you're so happy?' Dorian finally asked.

Rosa placed her hands over his eyes. 'Close them,' she whispered. This wasn't how he wanted it to end, but he nodded. He began cataloguing the world before it ceases: the distant cars, the crows, the leaves clapping like falling rain.

Rosa took her hands off his face, but he could still smell her, the orange on her breath. He briefly imagined he was surrounded by swirling dancers again. Then she took his hand and they started walking. He kept recording: a bright passing light; the rushing river; a flickering moth; the flowers of linden trees, like ripe summer fruit.

Sometimes all that changed was a memory, but memories bled into sensations, changing them for worse, or better. An odd terror was spreading over him. Terror like a pleasure, bottomless and cool as a basalt spring.

He noticed her steps were slower now and uncertain.
'Are your eyes closed too?'
'Yes.' Rosa mumbled. She tightened her hand over his and he could hear her smile. 'We are falling off the face of the earth.'

Rosa's hair brushing on his shoulder, her body, the thumping of her heart. A wind in the trees and then on their faces, unexpectedly warm, smelling of farms and blackberry bushes. They both stopped. The silence was so wide that Dorian imagined he had died.

Behind his closed eyes, the rising sun was splashing purple streaks across the sky. He moved slowly to search for her lips in the darkness, but he never paused, confident that the dead cannot desire like him.

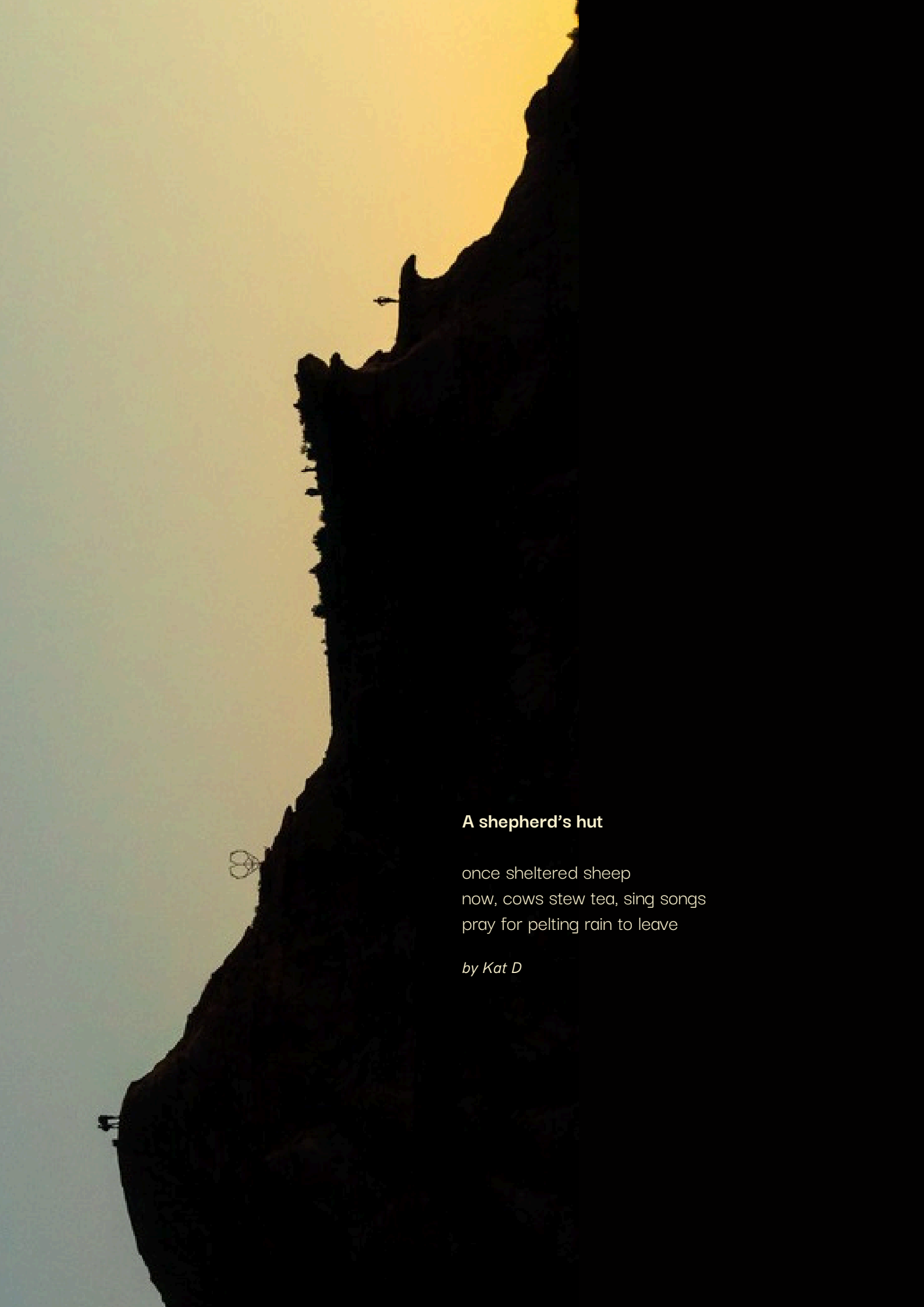
Twenty million trees were climbing from the ground, like worshippers begging the heavens, desperate for grace. In the cool morning air he could feel it already, from London to the sea, twenty million trees.





MOOWS

BY MOONCOWS FOR EVERYONE



A shepherd's hut

once sheltered sheep
now, cows stew tea, sing songs
pray for pelting rain to leave

by Kat D