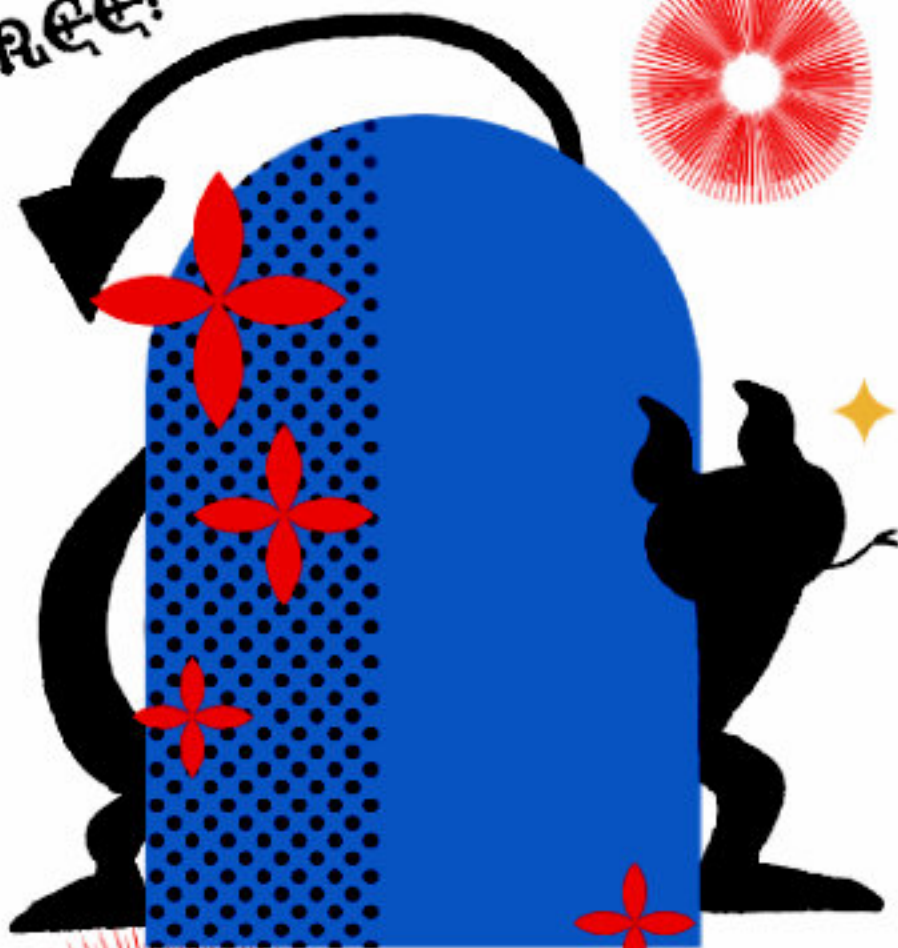


FREE!



the philadelphia  
*citywide*

MAY 2026  
ISSUE 5

the philadelphia  
citywide

Since we sent out our last call for submissions, our country has entered another war abroad. Meanwhile at home, our federal government is threatening the lives of more and more of our community members (although at the time of writing, City Council has *just* passed "ICE Out" legislation!). Entire populations are being wiped out around the world due to genocide and war perpetuated by the United States. People are being disappeared in our backyards. When they are gone, what happens to their stories, big and small? How will they be remembered?

One thing that gives us hope is the enduring human hunger for lore. "Lore" is traditional knowledge passed down—the word can be traced back to Old English, from the proto-Germanic *laisti-* meaning "to teach." Crucially, lore is shared. It is what we keep of one another. Passing down our lore—whether factual, fictional, or somewhere in between—is how we create and preserve our identities, for ourselves, for each other, and for future generations. Now more than ever, we think it's important to help other people share their stories.

Philly of course is a city with an extraordinarily rich history. Some of it is just in the process of unfolding for the future telling. In this issue you'll find some lore from here and elsewhere, knowledge that is deeply personal and knowledge that is collective... and also comics, art, playlists, stories, silliness, and super-high-quality journalism. We hope some of it moves you to cultivate and share your own lore, as well as to safeguard and amplify the stories of your neighbors.



<3 Citywide eds.



Philadelphia Museum of Art during the Super Hunter's Full Moon, November 2025  
Kodak 400iso film, Canon FTb



Long exposure of the Schuylkill River  
Dubble Solar 200iso film, Nikkormat FT3

PHOTOS BY KEVIN BRUSHA

# PLAYLISTS ON LORE

BY BO SPILLS



I keep landing at lore as a way for us to tie fiction with nonfiction. I read an interview with George Lucas where he said, "Rather than do some angry, socially relevant film...I realized there was another relevance that is even more important—dreams and fantasies, getting children to believe there is more to life than garbage and killing...Once I got into STAR WARS, it struck me that we had lost all that—a whole generation was growing up without fairy tales. You just don't get them anymore, and that's the best stuff in the world—adventures in far-off lands. It's fun." I like this idea, building a world for a place of imagination, of unknown pleasure.

Or even thinking about the lore of Buffy the Vampire Slayer—sure, it matters how Angel became a vampire with a soul, but really I cared about it because it informed his forbidden love with Buffy and the exhausting back and forth they had to wrestle with. Lore not only deepens the relationship between the audience and the creator, but is another way for us to add context or texture to whatever stories we are sharing or experiencing for that matter.

And then there's our personal lore. How do we define our own lore? How do we decide what we want people to know (or what to keep private) or what lore have we built within the privacy of our self-understanding? I keep thinking about my mom and her Alzheimer's and how I have no knowledge of the lore she knows of or any lore of her own before this wretched disease and now, what lore she is creating because of it? Interesting, isn't it, to just know that there's an entire world of unknown lore between us? ☹



☹ - SCAN THIS QR TO SEE THE PLAYLIST



- 1 **Star Wars (1977) original opening crawl**  
allbackpacker • 2.7M views • 10 years ago
- 2 **HAMNET - "Orpheus and Eurydice" Official Clip**  
Universal Pictures UK • 15K views • 2 months ago
- 3 **Cloudbusting (2018 Remaster)**  
KarabuzMusic • 324K views • 3 years ago
- 4 **Learning - While you were sleeping 1995**  
The New Theater • 101K views • 5 years ago
- 5 **Angel Tells Buffy About His Curse: Buffy the Vampire Slayer 1x07**  
Buffy Without Content • 4.3K views • 1 year ago
- 6 **Roman Holiday (2/10) Movie CLIP - The Mouth of Truth (1953) HD**  
Movieclips • 7.6K views • 14 years ago
- 7 **Tom Petty - Wildflowers (HQ Audio)**  
woodman08 • 5.3K views • 15 years ago
- 8 **Prometheus 4K HDR | Opening Scene**  
Apex Clips • 1.8K views • 4 years ago
- 9 **My So Called Life - Angela talks about Jordan Scene**  
H Mega • 347 views • 9 years ago
- 10 **Silver Springs (2004 Remaster)**  
Flowerwood Mac • 27K views • 10 years ago

A recipe for **Borani Banjan** inspired by my time interning at an embassy of a defunct country, for cooks who eyeball and are careless with measurements BY RACHEL WARNER

\*not intended to be authentic\*

I interned for the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Tokyo in 2018 back when the country existed (the government collapsed in 2021). The head chef there who cooked for the Ambassador made amazing food, and it was my first time trying Afghan food.

I'm not a by-the-book home cook and can't follow a recipe without changing it for my life. So when I looked up recipes online to recreate this dish, I used a bit of what I had and haphazardly did my own thing (hence why I feel comfortable sharing it out like this with no credit)! There could be many people who haven't had this dish before and as a food city, I want to spread the love for Borani Banjan and trying new cuisines in these trying times. ☺



**Ingredients for a medium dish size, enough to share as a side for four to five hungry creatures**

- four Japanese eggplants and one globe eggplant (I mix them for fun)
- one spicy pepper (I used jalapeno 'cause it was available)
- two medium tomatoes
- tomato paste
- olive oil
- fresh lemon or lemon juice

- one medium red onion
- lots of garlic
- labneh or plain greek yogurt (medium container)
- salt
- fresh cracked black pepper
- garlic salt
- coriander
- turmeric
- red pepper flakes
- gochugaru (I said it wouldn't be authentic)
- optional: pomegranate seeds, mint



## Directions

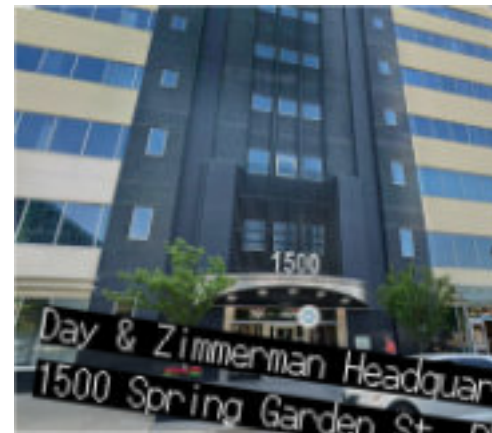
- 1: Start by finely grating garlic into your yogurt/labneh. Mix with olive oil, lemon juice (and grated lemon if you have), garlic salt, pepper. Mix in sliced mint leaves and pomegranate seeds. Mix and set aside in the fridge.
- 2: Cut tomatoes into small slices and set them aside for later. Cut eggplants into disks. Salt eggplant to get out the excess water (pat them dry with a paper towel).
- 3: Heat up a pan of oil. Individually fry each eggplant slice.
- 4: While you are frying the eggplant, start cooking the tomatoes in a pot with maybe 1/2 cup water, some tomato paste, coriander, turmeric, red pepper flakes, gochugaru, garlic salt, and pepper. As the tomatoes cook down, add sliced red onion and chopped garlic. It should be enough to cover the eggplant comfortably.
- 5: When everything is ready, layer the warmed eggplant, tomato mixture, and then top it off with the yogurt/labneh. ☺

# Villainous Spots Around Town

Funders and profiteers connected with war and right-wing authoritarianism can be found around Philadelphia, often in office buildings and locations that may seem innocuous at first glance. Here's a quick overview of a few. . .



Casually located just across the city limits on the other side of City Ave. (for tax avoidance purposes) there's a bulky but fairly non-descript office building. This is the headquarters of Susquehanna International Group (SIG), a financial trading firm founded by Jeff Yass, the wealthiest billionaire in PA and the 6th biggest donor to Republicans in the country. Yass is pretty single-handedly responsible for propping up a constellation of right-wing lobbying and political organizations in PA connected to the Commonwealth Foundation. He is far and away the biggest donor to Republican candidates in PA state government and a school privatization zealot pushing hard for school voucher programs that would redirect taxpayer money to fund religious and private schools. A ProPublica analysis found that Yass managed to game the tax system to pay an average federal income tax rate of just 19% during 2013-2018, much lower than others performing similar high volume short-term trading. A SIG affiliate has a seat on the board of the U.S. spin-off company that now owns TikTok's U.S. assets. There have been accusations against TikTok of censoring posts critical of Trump or ICE since the ownership transition, although TikTok has blamed infrastructure issues.



This one has been getting more attention lately, thanks to weeks of early morning noise demos outside their Center City office. This is the corporate office of Day & Zimmerman, a company which operates the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, which has been a source of many artillery munitions used by the Israeli military in the genocide in Gaza.

## Rhoads Industries and Noblis Headquarters

Rhoads: 1900 Kitty Hawk Ave, Building 57, Philadelphia, PA



Less well-known, two other major military contractor companies, Rhoads Industries and Noblis, have offices located down in the Navy Yard. These companies both have contracts with the Department of Defense worth tens of millions of dollars each year for engineering services.



Tucked away down a little alley on Penn's campus is the Penn General Robotics, Automation, Sensing & Perception (GRASP) Lab in Levine Hall, which has been on the cutting edge of research into small, autonomous drones – the kind

of stuff out of Black Mirror nightmares. A start-up with roots in the lab, Ghost Robotics, has been the target of protests for developing dog-shaped robots used by Israeli military forces in Gaza, driving Ghost Robotics to leave the Pennovation Center and no longer publicly disclose its address. While Penn faculty from the GRASP lab have disavowed the work of Ghost Robotics, it seems entirely unsurprising that academic research into the types of autonomous robotic systems that the GRASP lab has been developing would be used to develop dangerous weapons, and the GRASP lab has accepted funding from the Department of Defense.

### University City Housing Apartments

Their blue and orange signs can be seen out front of apartments and rowhouses all over University City. University City Housing is one of the largest landlords for student tenants in West Philly and also landlord for properties like Summit Park Communities in Roxborough which have dozens of annual eviction records. The company and its owner Michael Karp are major political donors to PA state Republicans, including



being the largest donor so far to 2026 GOP governor candidate Stacy Garrity. Garrity has been endorsed by Trump and has said that she would cooperate with the Trump administration in running Pennsylvania's elections at a time when Trump has made calls to "nationalize" elections. Karp is also founder and board chair of a Philly charter school, Belmont Charter, and in 2019 he was able to get the PA state legislature to carve out a special designation that applies exclusively to his school. It feels particularly sickening that rent money coming from one of the most left-leaning neighborhoods in the city is directly being used to fund right-wing politicians.



You've pretty certainly seen their red, white, and blue logos on parking lot signs around Center City. Parkway Corporation is led by Joseph and Robert Zuritsky, two of the biggest donors to Philly local elected officials and political action committees (PACs). Joseph Zuritsky was for years on the board of anti-Muslim think tank the Middle East Forum, which is also based in Philly. Middle East Forum pioneered an Islamophobic "Campus Watch" way back in 2002, and their research has been cited by organizations like Canary Mission that have been doxxing anti-Zionist activists. Middle East Forum's Director Daniel Pipes has been described as "the grandfather of Islamophobia in America" by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). More recently in 2023, Israel Bonds, which seeks investors in bonds to help fund the Israeli government, held an event honoring the "Zuritsky family's enduring commitment to Israel." ☹️

—ANONYMOUS

To view this article as a pdf with links to sources, scan the QR code here →



# Ma Barker's Discotheque

BY COLLEEN ITANI

The discotheque beneath Lake Weir is one of the best parts about growing up in Florida. Many will try to trick you, tell you it is Disney, it is Key West, it is Miami Beach, it is Cassadaga. And let me tell you, they're wrong. Even those humanoid mermaids from Weeki Wachee pale in comparison to the Lake Weir venue. You will soon know why. And then, I suggest you fly into the Tampa Airport. Far superior to the other airports in Florida, and that is a gift from me to you. You can pay me back later.

To begin, I should tell you, my name is Kate Barker. Maybe, maybe you knew me as "Ma Barker," but I digress... I hail from Missouri and relocated to central Florida, just south of Ocala, in the fall of 1934. The media says I relocated with my favorite son, Fred, but the other three, Herman, Lloyd, and Arthur, all had the better names. People like to talk about our Belle Air home, sure, but the real treat is just down the dock. So, I had my gills installed back in 1930, before I knew I'd even end up here at the lake. Kismet! I just knew I had to be near the water. I learned to swim from my uncle, a banker and a Barker. He also taught me the ins and outs of bank robberies. As an homage to him, I committed to living near the water.

After a few years of sloshing around in the lake and exploring easily on my gilled morning swims, I paid to install a light-up floor underwater so it really glowed in the night. Next, added in the bar and high tops. Installed a disco ball. The place really cleaned up.

Now, I rent out water shoes for \$14.99 an hour. It used to be less, but inflation, you see.

Old Joe the alligator is my current business partner. He's the bouncer and oversees the front of house. Only operating once we've caught the last of that nightly lakeside sunset, we spin the records of Teddy Prendergast, The O'Jays, and Lou Rawls... The Sound of Philadelphia moves alongside the gators, bass, and crappies. I love a soulful sound, and so do the critters. I've even paid for commercial air time on the local R&B station to draw in a crowd. Saturday nights are our busiest and the underwater dance floor is bustling. On Wednesdays, I host a karaoke night. If anyone ever requests to sing "Bonnie and Clyde," that Serge Gainsbourg and Brigitte Bardot song, I do have to silence them. For good.\*

Sure, people like to talk about how we graciously hosted the FBI in the longest shootout they had the blessing of encountering, but darlings, you can meet me under the lake and see what all the fuss is really about. ♪



\*This has only happened a handful of times.



COMIC BY ERIC @BESTERICBREHM



I have been visiting Main Street Manayunk and the Manayunk Canal since I was a child. Manayunk was a factory district at the height of the industrial revolution. After a long period of rust and decay, it reimagined itself as a vibrant center of human activity. It is a place of old bones that breathes anew. Everywhere you can see the old infrastructure and little whispers of ancient machines. But through the tenacity of its residents, all has been made gentle and green, redesigned for new purposes without ever forgetting its origins.



These pictures are from a walk I took up the Canal towpath with my camera one August afternoon. I ended up taking two hours to cover a distance that normally takes fifteen minutes, and only stopped because I was in danger of being late for a family dinner. When the weather warms I have every intention of going back to get even more pictures of that singular place, but until then, here are some of the highlights of my erstwhile venture. ☺

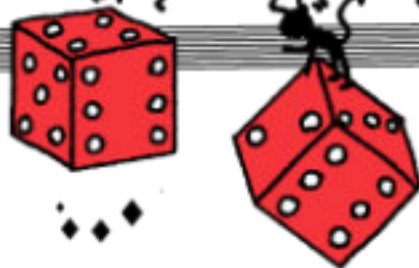
WORDS AND PHOTOS BY CCSYNAN

IG: @CCSYNAN BLUESKY: @CCSYNAN.BSKY.SOCIAL



# KEEPERS OF THE LORE

A TTRPG PRIMER  
BY MITCHELL BROESDER



**M**y desk is piled with notebooks. Their pages are littered with half-sketched maps of forgotten catacombs and desert planets; long lists of potential names for merchants, mercenaries, sorcerers, and salesmen; and details for the motivations of kings and councils, the planned betrayals of close allies, and chance encounters on long winding roads.

I still remember the jaw-dropping shock of the moment that Thecla plunged the Nightblade into the Apotheosis Engine and created the nightmare world of Noctis, still reminisce with friends about the extravagant misadventures of the Arrow of Cardiss, and still laugh about the time that Centin Varr mistakenly assumed that the stone-like Chylexians ate rocks for sustenance.

In the age of AI slop and the hyperindividual, there is one hobby that I find more joy in than almost any other, one which relies exclusively on conversation and interaction between people and their ability to collaborate. That hobby is the source of these memories and the thing that has cluttered all the pages of these half-filled notebooks. It is the wonderful medium of tabletop roleplaying games.

## WHAT IS A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME?

Storytelling is one of humanity's oldest collective habits—we've been sharing stories with each other since the first campfires were lit and we gathered around them with the rudiments of early language. As children we fall easily into the habit of sharing stories together, playing games of make-believe where we all take turns adopting and discarding roles at the drop of a hat as the story evolves and changes. C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien famously worked through the logistical knots of their fictional worlds during meetings of the writing group known as the Inkblots. Mary Shelley is said to have produced Frankenstein after an evening of spooky storytelling with Percy Shelley and Lord Byron.

Tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs) are games that structure storytelling as a collaborative activity. You might describe them as a mix between improv theater and a board game, something like the make-believe games of childhood invested with the framework and guidance of a set of rules. TTRPGs usually have their players take on

the roles of characters in a fictional setting, using game mechanics to structure a shared conversation about those characters and how the world reacts to them.

Tabletop roleplaying games are very special to me because of the unique way they embody the spirit of collaboration—when we play a roleplaying game, we sit down to tell a story together. Even at its goofiest moments it can be a deeply vulnerable experience to open up and express one's ideas, to contribute to the tapestry of shared narrative. In a world of algorithmically designed entertainment, the narratives of TTRPG sessions are almost always pleasantly shaggy, with diversions and shifts in tone and mood that are reflective of the very nature of conversations themselves. When they are functioning at their very best, they allow a group of people to step into a shared imaginative space together and create a story that could never exist in the same way under any one author's pen.

This act of shared play extends beyond just the moment of improvisation—it exists in the days between sessions pondering the next turn of the story and in those lingering moments of remembrance after the game is over. Even when the story of a TTRPG session only exists for a few hours and a handful of dice rolls, it still lives on in the memories of those that participated, a shared relic of a secret history that belongs only to those who played.

## THE PLAYER'S CHOICE

For many people if you've heard of TTRPGs at all, it's likely because of Dungeons & Dragons. It's one of the oldest TTRPGs and easily the most famous of the bunch. It's been written about extensively and I don't have much new to say about it here but, in the same way that not all movies are Marvel films and not all music is 60s surf rock, the world of TTRPGs is host to a vibrant and diverse landscape of independent creators and games that explore very different genres and approaches to shared storytelling. The ease of distribution allowed by the internet has produced a golden age of experimentation in design and structure for TTRPGs and we are living in a moment when creators are pushing the boundaries of the medium in new and exciting directions.

With that all said, I have attempted to compile here a few suggestions of tabletop roleplaying games for folks who have never experimented with collaborative storytelling and who are perhaps less interested in the high fantasy trappings and relatively dense mechanics of D&D. If you've played D&D before but have never tried a different game, these might also serve as a great doorway to step into a different part of the hobby and try on a totally different mode of play.

Each game listed on the next pages is intended to be played in a single 2-4 hour session and they all have relatively simple game mechanics that are easy to teach and learn for a group of first time players. Every game featured also lacks something common to D&D and other games—there are no game masters, no single hand crafting the world; every game on this list is meant to be played collaboratively, with players working in tandem to generate the fiction of their shared narrative.



## I'M SORRY DID YOU SAY STREET MAGIC

BY CARO ASCERION

"...a game about building a city: filling it with life and vivid detail, exploring its hidden corners, and meeting its

strange and wondrous inhabitants."

i'm sorry did you say street magic is a game about people and the places they share together. It is a city-building game for two to six players wherein, taking turns, players collaboratively imagine the neighborhoods of the city, its defining landmarks, and the people who inhabit it. It asks us to consider all of the elements that create a shared environment and to explore them through play, to imagine a neighborhood not just as a collection of buildings but through its 'true name'—a phrase or a sentence that captures the poetic image of a location, that digs into what is at the heart of place and how the people who live there feel about it. It's a perfect game for generating vibrant and delightful cities full of characters, excellent to play all by itself or as a way to create an interesting location to explore in other games.

## THE GROUND ITSELF

BY EVERIST PIPKIN

"This is a game about places over time."

If street magic is about bringing the lens of scrutiny on a city and its inhabitants, exploring in fine detail the bustle and rhythm of a metropolis, The Ground Itself asks us to think a little more broadly about time and place, about how one location can be many different things across the vast expanse of history. In this game, two to five players choose an interesting location of any type: a building, a town, a forest, a continent, a planet, any singular place. Players then draw prompts from a deck of cards and answer to define and explore the history and culture of the location they've created together—but at regular intervals a dice roll sends the game's focus backwards or forwards through time.

It's up to the players to consider how a single location changes throughout the long arc of history. A session focused on a modern city might hurtle backwards millennia to the floodplain that city was built on before human life existed, or it might discover how a gleaming new space station transforms over decades into a decrepit hub for interstellar smuggling. The prompts are just evocative enough to provoke interesting discussion but broad enough to leave room for interpretation, with each chronological shift accompanied by questions that help spark the discussion about how that place has changed with the passage of time.



## FIASCO

BY JASON MORNINGSTAR

"A game about powerful ambition and poor impulse control."

Inspired by the crime caper films of the Coen Brothers and others, Fiasco is a wild and dramatic game about people in bad situations getting in over their head, with chaotic and disastrous results. Each game is framed around a 'playset,' a collection of predefined details for the setting (a small suburb with secrets to hide, the local mall that's about to close down, an isolated research facility in the Arctic) that players use to create characters connected to each other in fraught and complicated webs of deceit and obligation. The game is played out in two acts, with players taking turns acting out scenes as they advance the rapidly spiraling disaster of their story. A midgame intermission introduces dramatic new twists that must occur in the second act.

There's a frenetic joy in taking on the role of a character and then driving them like a stolen car towards an explosive conclusion. While many TTRPGs ask players to take on the role of brave heroes and wise adventurers, Fiasco offers players the joyous opportunity to become the entertaining scumbags and hapless bystanders that populate off-kilter crime films like *Fargo* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*.



In a world of deeply commodified cultural production and amidst an endless barrage of psychic damage emitting from a litany of screens, TTRPGs can serve as a lovely island of respite or as a testing ground for new ideas and identities. They are an excellent occasion to get a group of friends together and spend a few hours talking and telling stories. The games I've listed above are (I hope) easy and interesting entrances into the world of this delightful hobby but they also represent only a fraction of the games out there. There are games for sketching out the timeline of alternate histories (*Microscope*), games for goofy one-offs about himbos trying to save the local gym or bears in disguise trying to pull off a heist (the delightful one-page games of Grant Howitt), games for Jane Austen-inspired regency dramas (*Good Society*), games for little old ladies in a book club solving strings of suspicious murders (*Brindlewood Bay*), and so much more. If you're at all interested in the idea of shared storytelling then give one a try, engage in one of the oldest human pastimes, tell some stories, and create some lore with your friends. ♪

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mitchell Broesder** is a local weirdo in Philadelphia pursuing the dark disciplines of Library Science. He and some friends create the actual podcast *Risky Standard* where they use the medium of TTRPGs to explore stories about the struggles of building a better world.

# "Let's Prove Bigfoot"

BY PETER SCHRANZ



The jury is still out on whether there is Bigfoot or not (verdicts must be unanimous), and while we have a well-known and overwhelming library of physical evidence in favor of Bigfoot, I've found that the most riveting evidence is linguistic.

A language called Mono is spoken now by only maybe fifty people in the mountainous woods of central California. It belongs to the Uto-Aztecan language family, and some of its more famous relatives are the Comanche, Ute, and Nahuatl languages. In 1993, a dictionary of the Western dialect of Mono was published (or typed and scanned at least) by Bethel et al. These are two entries from pages 137 and 138, for the words *qasiqasinga* and *qauqau*:

qasiqasing'                    #  
"white-coated Bigfoot"  
Ex. Qasiqasing' nábábi-dugu kima-nee "qasiqas"  
na-naqa-gíaa-t.  
"The white-coated Bigfoot made a noise as it was  
coming through the snow."  
(Morph.: qasiqasi-na' OMM-it.says)  
(Sem.: compare with qauqau' "brown-coated Bigfoot")  
(Cult.: Bigfoot has a white coat during the winter, and the  
sound "qasiqas" is made by its feet as it walks in the  
snow)

qauqau'                         #  
"brown-coated Bigfoot"  
(Morph.: qauqau-na' OMM-it.says)  
(Sem.: compare with qasiqasing' "white-coated Bigfoot")  
(Cult.: Bigfoot has a brown coat during the summer, and the  
sound "qauqau" is made by its feet walking over dried  
leaves)

Now I knew that the coats of stoats (*cardigans of ptarmigans??*) turn white in the winter and brown in the summer, probably because owls ate all the ones who rejected this fashion accessory, but that Bigfoot should possess the very same trait is just far too reasonable to be false. The same goes for the almost self-evident detail that Bigfoot's footsteps make different noises depending on what he's walking on. If someone were to invent a mythical characteristic of Bigfoot because he's not real, it would be that he shoots radioactive rays out of his eyeballs, or one of those other false things that people make up about stuff, not actual phenomena like changing color, or footsteps sounding different on snow versus leaves.

The coat-change also perfectly explains Bigfoot's elusiveness, for just as the nimble stoat disappears amidst both snow and leaves, so the backpacker's camera only ever captures a white smudge or a brown smudge in a wood of the very same hue.

My one criticism of this linguistic evidence of Bigfoot's existence is that "qauqau" sounds far more to me like the crunching of snow underfoot, and "qasiqasi" like the shishing of leaves. On the other hand, Bigfoot bears nothing if not an extraordinary gait, so is it really that impossible for his mysterious feet to make surprising noises? Anyway, keep your ears peeled if you're in the woods of the West, because your eyes will be useless!

For further information about unrelated subjects, please try [peterschranz.substack.com](http://peterschranz.substack.com) or even [dailydoofus.com](http://dailydoofus.com) for that matter. ☺

Yon Daily Doofus

Fucus Polymorphus

December 17, 2025

Lamouroux's Dissertations on Several Species of Fucus

November 22, 2025

And That's Why It's Called Cubes

October 25, 2025

Where

January 17, 2025

My Post About Mouth Cereal

December 19, 2022

The Question Of What Is Memory

November 6, 2022

Skill As A Musician

October 1, 2022



# CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE/HATE



Wheeler Yuta taunts the crowd. PHOTO BY MITCHELL BROESDER

On a recent Friday night, the basement of the **First Unitarian Church** rang out not with song or worship, but with the loud slaps that announce a body landing hard on the mat of a wrestling ring. **Labor of Love**, a Philly-based independent professional wrestling promotion, brought the region's most battle-hardened grapplers (plus a few from farther afield) to the city's preeminent temple of DIY, and the Citywide was there to bear witness. The event was called "Love/Hate," and there was plenty of both on display throughout the night. The audience was treated to seven matches that exhibited the best, worst, and weirdest of human nature in gladiatorial combat.

The show kicked off with a six-man tag match\* between Counter Strike and Mach10 and Darien Hardway and The Lost Boys. Hardway and the Boys pulled off a decisive victory despite spending most of their in-ring minutes flexing at the audience.

\*A match style where wrestlers fight in teams. They take turns wrestling one-on-one and "tag" each other to swap out. A six-man tag has two teams of three.

Next was a match that Wrestling Observer will surely refer to as "The Zero Percent Body Fat Classic," as hometown hero Cheeseburger took on Detroit's Leon Ruffin. The crowd was on Cheeseburger's side at the start, but Ruff really put all 152 pounds of himself into that match. He did Motor City proud, but it wasn't enough to defeat Cheeseburger. The last time the Citywide saw Cheeseburger wrestle, he was getting shut in a coffin by the demonic luchador\* Mil Muertes, so it was great to see him get the win.

This reporter covered her husband's eyes for the bodacious return of Allie Katch, from "the whole damn state of Texas," as she took on Total Nonstop Action Wrestling's Harley Hudson. The wiry Hudson made frequent use of her obnoxious British shriek and ended up defeating Katch, which was a damn shame as it was her first match back at Labor of Love since breaking her leg last year. But we have a feeling we haven't seen the last of Katch—she's got "Champ" written all over her.



PHOTO BY MARQUIS COMBS

Now, it's an unfortunate truth that not even the professional wrestling industry is unsullied by political corruption. The next match, a six-man tag between the Citywide Street Gang (great name) and Thiccc Daddy (better name?) and The Rep, was preceded by the appearance of Pennsylvania Sports Commission Rep Wink Vavasseur, who seems to have a personal vendetta against the Street Gang boys. Somebody tell that guy to cut his

\*Usually a professional wrestler from Mexico, although not always. Luchadors wear masks to conceal their identities.

ponytail! Anyway, this match fucked. The Citywide Street Gang came out on top, but an enraged Vavasseur abused his authority to ban them from competing in Labor of Love going forward.

Asked about Vavasseur's ruling later, a representative of Labor of Love said, "(Vavasseur) has a vengeful attitude against wrestling. He became a Commissioner to make it hard on wrestling promotions like ours...he's basically trying to shut us down in every direction." You hate to see it.

If you have experienced any incongruity in the space-time continuum since that Friday night, it's probably because of the events of the next match, which pitted Dr. Ethan Wilde, "The Large Language Model," against Mr. Ooh La La. Wilde trapped the gray-haired Mr. Ooh La La inside a homemade time machine (although not before whipping a croissant into the crowd at an unbelievable velocity).

Inside the time machine, Mr. Ooh La La later told the Citywide, "I was literally able to see my life before my very eyes! It was okay, kid." Imagine Wilde and the audience's shock when a YOUNGER version of Mr Ooh La La emerged from the machine and beat Wilde's ass! Then he returned to the time machine and got present-day Mr Ooh La La out of it. The repercussions of TWO Mr. Ooh La Las at large have yet to be determined.

There is a term in professional wrestling circles, "marking out," that basically means "to lose one's shit." When the ominous strains of the Death Riders\* theme music were heard in the FU Church basement, the whole crowd (including this reporter) totally marked out. To put Marina Shafir and Wheeler Yuta's appearance on Saturday into perspective for the non-wrestling fan: It was kind of like if you went to a show at Cousin Danny's and The Cure were on the bill.

They were fighting The Outfielders, the city's most charismatic and least tall tag team, composed of Shea McCoy and Weber Hatfield. The Outfielders put up a fantastic fight. Yuta dropkicked McCoy in the face and busted her nose open so badly that a friend of this reporter had to go sit down for a minute and collect himself.

McCoy valiantly fought on, her face crusted in dried blood, and eventually got the biggest win of the night by snatching Yuta's beanie to reveal his freshly shaved head (long story\*\*).

Unfortunately Shafir locked Hatfield in the Mother's Milk choke, which won the match for the Death Riders. But McCoy was undeterred, telling the Citywide, "It's hard taking the loss, but I think we put up a good fight, so I'm not mad about it. We'll get them

next time." When asked about stealing Yuta's hat, McCoy told us, "It felt so good. Honestly, I'm okay taking the loss as long as everybody got to look at (Yuta's) big shiny beautiful head."



PHOTO BY MARQUIS COMBS

The main event was a three-way match for the Citywide Championship, the highest honor that Labor of Love can bestow. The reigning champ was Matt Mako, a stone cold killer if we've ever seen one. His challengers were the mercurial Mecca and this reporter's personal favorite, Big Callux, who is one enormous dude. This match pushed the competitors to their limits. Also, the ceiling was very low and they kept doing dives off the top rope which was extremely scary. Mecca took a gnarly bump out of the ring and onto the floor, but he just kept on fighting—a true contender. Both Mako and Mecca had trouble slowing down Big Callux, but eventually Mako was able to get Callux in an arm bar\* and the big guy tapped out. Mako's victory celebration was cut short by the reappearance of Shafir, who stalked into the ring and got up in his face.

Mako later told the Citywide, "It would seem that Marina wants a shot at the Citywide Championship, so the powers that be at Labor of Love are going to have to look into that."

He added, "One of my goals when I started wrestling was to be the king of Philadelphia independent wrestling and I think the Citywide Championship proves it; it's the most prestigious title in the city right now, if not the region. Labor of Love's only on the up-and-up and I'm leading the way."

\*An evil gang of wrestlers who primarily operate in All Elite Wrestling (AEW).

\*\*Yuta and Shafir recently competed in a televised "hair versus hair" tag match against AEW's Orange Cassidy and "Timeless" Toni Storm, where the person who got pinned had to shave their head. Yuta got pinned. Look, you should just watch AEW.



A triumphant Shea McCoy brandishes Wheeler Yuta's hat. PHOTO BY MITCHELL BROESDER

We also had a brief exchange with the bald-headed and evil Wheeler Yuta, who told the Citywide that he would “probably not, but maybe” start attending services at the First Unitarian Church, although it is more likely that he will be back for a concert instead.

While we can't agree with Mako's assertion that he is the “king” of Philadelphia indy wrestling (#nokings), it's undeniable that Labor of Love is putting on some quality shows. As their rep told us, “The talent we have always shows out. We try to showcase the best card possible, we try to give every member of the audience something different because we believe wrestling is for everyone.” We think “Wrestling is for everyone” is a pretty damn good slogan. ☺



COLLAGE BY SURXGIR



A laundromat on South Street, 4/24/26

PHOTO BY AMELIA



“Dead End Saints” (digital photo, 2011) BY AMANDA K. RETOTAR



## ON FAYETTE COUNTY: LORE OF A PENNSYLTUCKY COUNTY FROM A PHILLY AREA TRANSPLANT

**F**ayette County is a formerly flourishing coal county that is slowly dying due to lack of industry. Over 200 miles west of Philly, this county has large swaths of forest, abandoned industry, a dwindling population, and plenty of small towns. As a person native to this bittersweet area, I want to introduce you to lore that won't get me sued.

### BIG MAC



The Big Mac was invented in Uniontown, PA, my hometown. The invention's original location was demolished and then moved to the center of a shopping plaza parking lot. Most people do not realize my town is the home of that disappointing sandwich because the Big Mac Museum is located in Irwin, PA, roughly one hour away by car in the neighboring Westmoreland County. The only thing in my town commemorating this capitalistic achievement is a sign added post-COVID, located behind the guardrail next to the current McDonald's location in this shopping center. Fun fact: In a town of fewer than 10k people, there are 3 McDonald's just off every exit along the 119 bypass that goes through Uniontown.

## JOHN WOODRUFF TREE

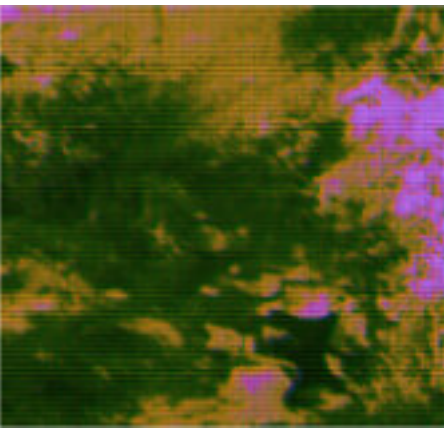


John Woodruff was an African-American gold medal Olympian who competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics in Nazi Germany, and a former student of Connellsville Area High School. Woodruff won his gold in the 800 meter-dash (winning a medal before Jesse Owens) and along with it a tree sapling from the then-fascist host country. Many gold winners discarded their saplings in protest of Nazi Germany, but Woodruff brought his back to the US and planted it at Connellsville Free Library. The tree still stands to this day, but it has since been moved to Connellsville Area High School where they host a 5k every year in memory of Woodruff.

## FORT UNNECESSARY NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD



Fort Necessity is a piece of history from The Seven Years' War located in the mountains of Fayette County. You probably ask yourself, "Fort Necessity? I don't remember any mention of that in history class," and you would be correct, because Fort Necessity is a part of history that demonstrates British military failure. This was a common field trip destination growing up and every time it was the same old disappointment. Here's the TLDR: The British forces (led by George Washington) used this fort during the The Seven Years' War, lost the fort to the French, and it was abandoned for many years. Eventually someone found it, and they rebuilt the fort for educational and historical preservation reasons. Then after a few years they realized they built it incorrectly so they rebuilt it the correct way. The end. That's it. That's the glorious Fort Necessity.



# LAUREL CAVERNS

Once again located in the mountains is Pennsylvania's largest cave, Laurel Caverns, containing over four miles of passages. In 1798, before the cave was regulated, two local men named Crain and Simmons got lost in the cavern for three days and were luckily rescued. After

this, the cave entrance was sealed for safety reasons up until 1861 when the first geological survey took place. During this survey, a Philly journalist, John Paxton, gave the cave its first official name, "Laurel Hill Cave." Unfortunately Paxton's name was phased out after many years. Today it is a highly visited tourist destination in my county, closing to visitors in the winter months so as not to disrupt the hibernation of the resident bats.

# GIANT CROSS

If you're spending the day in Uniontown and gaze towards the mountains you may notice the giant 60 ft tall steel cross overlooking the town. This landmark has sat at over 2,000 ft above sea level since the 1950s in Jumonville, PA. During the day its stark white complexion stands out from the blue sky behind it, while at night it's illuminated by lights.



The money for this project was raised by multiple Mennonite churches, but its initial construction was put on hold due to WWII and steel shortages. After the war, the project resumed but there were issues with the logistics. It was hard to erect due to the size, as the shaft was over 47k lbs and the arms needed to be constructed separately and welded on the site. The cross still stands tall and many hike up the mountain to see it up close, and there's even a christian summer camp at the base of the hill. When I first brought my partner home for a visit, he likened the behemoth to the cross utilized on many album covers by the French EDM group Justice. 🙄

-A. MARIE

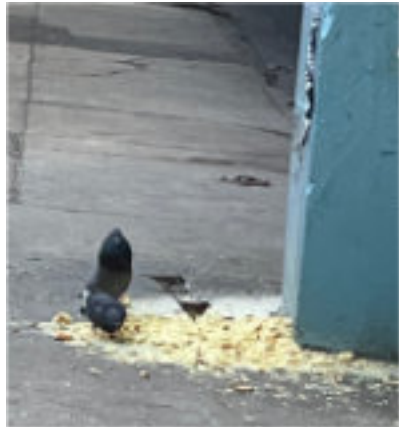


COMIC BY MOONPRISM // MOONPRISM.COM

When I think of the word *lore*, I picture stories—stories told by pen put to paper, or told at night after a few too many drinks. However, these aren't stories that are spoken around a fireplace by someone's grandfather with a glass of bourbon in his hand. These stories aren't passed down from father to son, they are shared by the people who for far too long have been in the background. Ranging from "good for her" to "yikes that's depressing," here are a few of my favorite songs with lore by female artists.

- "Silver Springs" 🟦 Fleetwood Mac
- "Goodbye Earl" 🟧 The Chicks
- "The Bridge" 🟦 Dolly Parton
- "Maggie Creek Road" 🟩 Reba McEntire
- "Independence Day" 🟧 Martina McBride
- "Blown Away" 🟦 Carrie Underwood
- "The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia" 🟩 Reba McEntire

-ELEANOR NABHOLZ



"I live with bread, like you, feel want,  
Taste grief, need friends"  
-King Richard  
William Shakespeare's *Richard II*



courtship & bounty



under the girard el stop



PHOTOS BY AMELIA



# A comprehensive ranking of the use of shuttered Center City Wawa buildings

January's closure of the garishly redesigned 33rd and Market robo-Wawa and late 2024's end of the smaller "urban concept" Wawa experiment on 16th and Ranstead have sent a message loud and clear—Wawa is no longer interested in trying to figure out how to make a small footprint Wawa work. Philly's pedestrians are scrambling to the six remaining Center City Wawas to get their fill of pre-sliced deli meat and lukewarm flavored coffee before they close too. We'll all be left with our Old Nelsons, 7-11's and the remains of Wawa's losing battle with thieves, COVID-19 and ruthless corporate strategy. While we wait for Wawa to complete the transition to national gas station power-player and run out the string on the remaining locations, let's rank how the city has made use of former Wawa buildings from worst to best:

- 9 Chase Bank (Broad and Walnut): Yes, a bank is worse than nothing.
- 8 Chase Bank (20th and Hamilton)
- 7 Nothing (13th and Chestnut, closed 2022)
- 6 Nothing. (2nd and Lombard, closed 2023)
- 5 Nothing (12th and Market, closed 2022)
- 4 Nothing (20th and Market, closed 2022)
- 3 Nothing (16th and Ranstead, closed 2024)
- 2 Nothing (33rd and Market, closed 2026)
- 1 Popcorn for the People production facility, an Eagles Autism Foundation charity operation (9th and South): Sure, I guess this is better than nothing. 🐦



# VINNY VIDI VICI

NEW MUSIC REVIEWS & LIVE PHOTOS  
BY VINCE BARRERAS of ABANDON EVERYTHING RECORDS



## **The Damage** ◯ **Demo** (2025, self-released)

The Damage is the supergroup to end all supergroups. There's about 10+ bands amongst these four. This demo dropped last summer—'82 inspired punk, 4 songs, 6 minutes long. It doesn't waste your time—it comes in, beats that ass, and bounces.



## **Subtle Body** ◯ **Demo**

(2026, Strange Mono)

New hotness is here, and it's Subtle Body. I've been anxiously awaiting more post-punk bands of the gothy persuasion to appear in Philly, and this band does all of that. Just listen to the song "Infinite Casualties" and try not to dance—impossible. Thank you endlessly to Strange Mono (baller philly label) for putting this tape out because it's so deserving of life. There's so many directions this band could go into, and any of them I'm here for. Haunting vocals, nasty guitar, bass and drums that smack you in the face, and synths that draw you into their universe. It's universe building, carving out a land of their own. Really immersive—kinda crazy this is a demo—it's basically a fully fleshed out project that serves as the door to whatever dark world Subtle Body takes us to next.

## **Chancers** ◯ **Under the Red Lights Vol. 1 & 2**

(2025, Stupid Bag Records)

Some of the best songwriting I've heard in such a long time. It's got these amazingly washed out guitars that just bring me to why I love The Jesus and Mary Chain as much as I do. I love the parallels between the singing and the chaos of the reverb and lo-fi approach to the guitars. "Daylight Savings" is easily one of my favorite songs right now. Vol. 1 introduces us to Will's universe, and Vol. 2 welcomes us into it - it's both beautiful and chaotic. Will never stops creating, and I hope he does until the world ends.

## **Sweepers** ◯ **Sweepers** (2025, Abandon Everything Records)

Sweepers are probably the most unhinged band in Philly. Their new record is such a sick offering—if you didn't like to clean before, you'll be scrubbing your bathroom floor with a toothbrush after this one. The recordings are blown out and ear-blisteringly loud. Where they shine is in the live performance. Renée deadass runs around the room with her push broom microphone and makes sure that any nasty room they're in is SPOTLESS by the end of the set. I've seen them maybe four times this year and each show gets better. They always feel so fresh, and no two shows are ever alike.





**Chained Bliss** ○ **Out of Touch** (2025, Stupid Bag Records)

These songs live are insanely loud and chaotic—riffs are crazy, super catchy, just a fun time. I think that's what I really love about these songs, it's that they take on different lives depending on their context. The live setting is like a whole new experience from the tape, they both have a life of their own. Favorite song is "Redemption"; the tempo is so good. Another quality release from Stupid Bag Records.

**Forever Chasing Honeybees**  
(Abandon Everything Records)

I often just refer to FCHB as Ortliebs in band form. At any given night there, you will find three or four members at O behind the bar, running around, working the door. Really unique group and sound - think noise rock, blisteringly loud bass (and that's not just because there are literally two bass players) - aggressive vocals, and drums that are minimal but leave an impact—Tony literally plays a snare and cymbals and a keg. It's just so bizarre but it's so cool. They just played a record release show at Legion VFW out in Delco—you gotta keep your eyes out for this band, they don't play often so if you miss them once, you may miss them forever... 🐝



THINGS FOR ME TO KNOW  
BY MADELYN PEPE

a splinter in a foot	a 7/11 grav bong
a dog thrown steaks	a nap on a lawn
a room with daisy walls	a noisy bridge
a crawl space of your own	a pile of plastic shoes
a lobster dying in a pot	a note to protect us
a lake of geese	a forever chocolate house
a head butt from a mutt	a change for the who knows what
a blanket fort for two	a cold spoon for my eyes
a dented brownie tin	a torn book cover
a family in the woods	a bill spilt three ways
a hoagie tray at a wake	a six o'clock lunch
a goddess under a textbook	a dead fly in the fridge
a roll of tape on the walls	a snow storm
a window to the roof	a

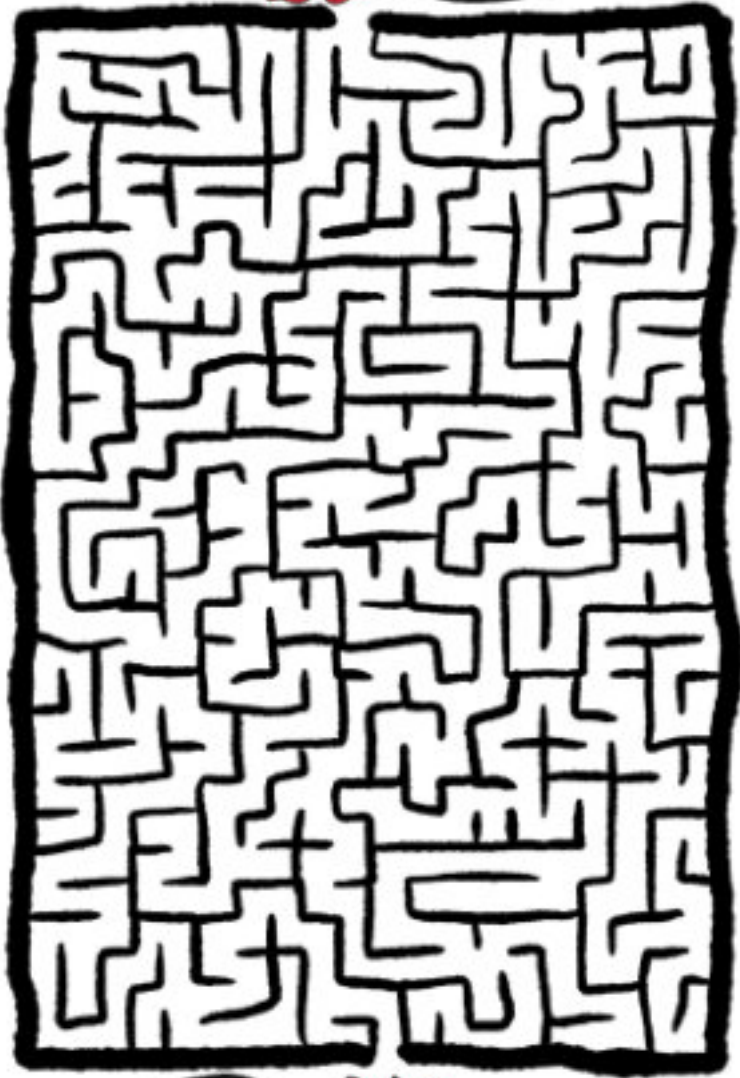


COLLAGE BY SURXGIR

Let's  
W-I-G-G-I-W  
U-R-I-N  
U



WOULD U  
STILL LOVE ME  
IF I WASN'T A  
WORM?



BRING ON  
THE METAMORPHOSIS



w/ HERALD!



ADULT HUMAN ISO COLLABORATIVE MAKER,  
CREATOR, FIXER, ENGINEER-TYPE TO HELP ME  
MAKE MY APARTMENT A HOME...POINT, HANG  
SHELVES, DREM BIG, THEN DIGL IT BOCK QND  
SUCH. EXCHANGE FOR MY EXCELLENT HELPER  
SKILLS, HOMECOOKED MEOLS, QND/OR  
REASONABLE COMPENSATION.

CONTACT VIA INSTA  
@GYPSYROGUESCHOLAR

LOOKING 2 HONE MY DREAM  
INTERPRETOTION SKILLS - SEND ME  
YOUR DREAMS QND I'LL TELL U WHOT  
I THINK THEY MEON

CONTACT VIA EMAIL  
DREAM.BORTERER828@POSSMAIL.NET

philly locals. send us your personal ads for  
inclusion in a future issue:  
thephiladelphiacitywide@gmail.com

# THANK YOU FOR PICKING US UP!

The Philadelphia Citywide is a **submission-based, free** publication with the mission of connecting readers across the best city in the world by reviving good old print culture. We want to be an antidote to the doomscroll, machine-powered, isolationist zeitgeist, a catalyst for community activism and artistic connection.



We are a left-of-center magazine; however, we want to encourage discourse and shy from black-and-white thinking. We welcome brave perspectives and ideas, playful and serious, in curating a zine that captures a sliver of this city's bizarro indomitable spirit.

**[www.philadelphiacitywide.com](http://www.philadelphiacitywide.com)**

INSTAGRAM @PHILACITYWIDE

If you like the zine and would like to support our independent print operation, you may donate by scanning this qr code --->

