

Get It Off My Chest!

Parodic and Satirical

Monologues

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Playwright : Nakato

Director : Adam Sauvé

Performers : Chloe Bilodeau, Nick Fontaine, Ariel Antonacci

Seasons : 2018 and 2019

Sipo Matador Productions, theatre company, Quebec

Premises

The monologue: a loud inner speech

Monologuing, in other words formulating one's thoughts aloud, is not very popular in these times when communicating is actively promoted by well-being professionals, throughout books and conferences. The monologuer appears to be at best original, egotistic or at worst insane.

From the outset, such a conversation suggests exclusion or exclusivity, since its function is to express personal thoughts, regardless of others' opinions. No sharing, no clash.

Theatre monologue is more of a soliloquy - a self-talk in front of an audience. The monologue *per se* was born in novels and the soliloquy became theatre monologue, thanks to satirical plays.

In a novel, on stage or in our lives, moods and desires are openly exposed; there's plenty of room for exaltation, self-pitying, motivation and self-congratulation, after having the upper hand on toxic persons or circumstances. We find ourselves surprised, we question things, and try to redesign the world - *If I were rich, I would...*

The monologue raises, then explores an issue to its full extent, which is a problem in itself: action is suspended.

One may think of it as a waste of energy for indecisive and cowardly people; we've all heard this once: *Stop overthinking / Act instead of speaking.*

It's also the expression pattern of particularly wise people, and anyone taking a different perspective; they are perceived as disruptive and time-freezers.

Action and time are paused, a convenient suspension which enables attention and scrutiny. The audience, especially if it cannot relate with self-talk, may feel bored, uncomfortable, with a character who doesn't receive any immediate reply. On the other hand, some people would be eager to see to what extent the character would go.

We should keep in mind that performing a monologue is to be engaged in Olympic grade acting: memorizing a long script - and sometimes improvising - expressing underlying shades and subtleties, finding a voice, a breath, a rhythm that conveys sensitivity. This surely is a real risk-taking task.

Get It Off My Chest! is an annual parody and satirical play. Performed in English and French (*Voilà, c'est dit !*) by bilingual artists, the show features archetypal characters of our time.

Their unique experience and perspective are displayed with more or less good faith, as they draped themselves in an abrasive attitude. These antiheroes tell their stories from where they are, in their own words. We want to recall here a fundamental premise: no tirade is gratuitous, since we are in sympathy with the subject of parody.

Characters are actually vehicles, the real characters are living forces in motion during each monologue.

Get It Off My Chest!, as well as all Sipo Matador theatre company's plays, takes root in the Relations Between Forces (RBF), a concept that illustrates harmonious and ambivalent tensions between energies. Very subtle - all but visible - they are shaped into words, and then impersonated.

RBF also encompasses performers, somehow related to each other, even if they're not on stage at the same time. RBF stretches to the audience as well; whether in sympathy with the characters and their intentions or not, spectators experience harmony or ambivalence, in accordance with their sensitiveness.

Creating a show from living forces allows values to get swapped over. Harmony and ambivalence - and all the states within the spectrum - are neither good nor bad as such, they are mutable elusive experiences with tangible effects. Much aware of this fact, characters are not inclined to utter any definitive statement.

Inducing heartstrings moments is not the purpose of our monologues; they convey what we need to know about a condition, the struggles and necessities in which the character is entangled. The direction is inspired by the Koteba - Mali's traditional theatre, well known for its sassy catharsis effect among communities.

We would like to warmly thank the director and the performers for their integrity and talent to bring alive these atypical characters in 2018 and 2019 on stage, in Montreal.

Characters

Each character of *Get It Off My Chest!* represents an archetype, crystallizing a mindset and mannerisms that can be observed on a large scale. Yet, an archetype is not a trend but a constant, meaning it reinvents itself through the ages.

On top of that, a unique world and a condition are disclosed, along with an underlying fundamental question, deeply rooted in its guts.

For the purpose of the show, the characters have an assigned gender (male or female); but, since they are designed and crafted by forces, this assignment is actually irrelevant, making genders switchable.

Archetypes :

Divana, Queen of an Empire : celebrity

Karo, Influencer : ego trip

Flip Flop, Seduction Expert : manhood

Kiwi / Mia, Hikikomori : social isolation

Tigron : zoo antispeciesist

Alli[gator], Superficial Intelligence : augmented humanity

Jean-Bernard Horny, Chef : culinary heritage advocate

Gonzilla : immersive journalism

Gachete : police officer

Portraits :

Queen Divana: Single, reigns over a community of nations, 3+ billion people. Recruited on audition because of a vocation crisis in the royal family. Her contract is running for ten years. Having time alone after a public event, she reassesses her role as a queen (Political figure? Celebrity? The weight of protocol). Coming from a working class background, she needs to be extremely focused to reach and maintain royal dignity; yet, things can go south at any minute.

Metaphorical relationship with her subjects: she considers herself the parent telling lies to her children for their own good (e.g. Santa Claus actually exists).

Fundamental question: What does a queen really think when she's alone?

Karo, Influencer: Young millennium obsessed with missteps, broadcasting beauty and lifestyle videos. Big time star on social media since childhood, pressed by her parents, she fiercely competes with her twin brother.

Metaphorical relationship with her audience: a stooge helping her to recover from her past as a trophy child; she's overselling promises.

Fundamental question: How to stand out from the crowd, in a world promoting behavioral standards?

Flip Flop: Quebecer, Seduction Expert, confident speaker and russophile. Persuasive, he teaches how to embrace sensitive manhood. He takes pride in his distinguishing marks (e.g. his shoes), and has a verbal tic: he uses the word 'chicks' to talk about grown women.

Metaphorical relationship with women: mindful protection.

Fundamental question: What is it to be a man while feminine values prevail?

Kiwi / Mia: 17-year-old Hikikomori living a reclusive life for two years. She does everything possible to avoid family and social contacts, even though she admits to needing her parents or the system from time to time. Before she turned 16, her name was Kiwi; she changed to Mia.

Metaphorical relationship with her parents: client-provider.

Fundamental question: Is it mandatory to grow up and become an adult?

Tigron: Created in a lab - a crossing between a Tigress and a Lion - he lives in a zoo, and believes that animals are the ones who are watching humans. Although living in captivity, he often gets out of the zoo. Antispeciesist, he questions species categorization and diversity.

Metaphorical relationship with others: serious / confusing switch (facing seriousness, he does the opposite of what is expected of him, tearing down norms and clichés).

Fundamental question: How to keep being unique when everyone is enclosed into categories?

Alli, Superficial Intelligence: Short for Alligator, the most advanced artificial intelligence in the world, going beyond tasks execution, as it can keep up conversations with users.

Metaphorical relationship with its designers: Constant morals and ethics challenges.

Fundamental question asked to users: Are you sure you want this?

Jean-Bernard Horny, Chef: French Michelin-starred settled in Quebec for 20 years, and owner of the gourmet restaurant L'Exquise Tambouille. Highly focused, demanding and punchy, he often gets angry at his staff - on the verge of bullying.

Metaphorical relationship with others: Mother / son; he needs to seduce and be loved by his customers through his cooking, and prove himself to his mother as the best chef in the world.

Fundamental question: What part of eating is civilized?

Gonzilla: Pen name of a journalist seeing herself as the most extreme gonzo journalist - embedded advocacy journalism. She's a passionate and fearless, expansive nature.

Metaphorical relationship with the readers: Mirror effect by reflecting their flaws, successes and failures.

Fundamental question: How to make your experience a gripping story?

Gachete [Pronounced in Spanish, reference to her Taser]: Touchy, energetic, and tough action enthusiast. Although her interventions are on the verge of civil rights infringement, she never questions herself, believing she's legitimate to use force in all circumstances. She has a secret obsession for Flip Flop.

Metaphorical relationship with others: Predator / Prey.

Fundamental question: I wear the uniform, is it enough to earn respect?

2018 Show

- Would you Like Them?

Divana, Queen of an Empire

[Facing the audience, wearing a ball gown and a tiara; Finally alone after a party]

Ugh, they'll kill me! They're out to get me, these motherf...

[Realizing she is not alone]

Why the long faces? You look like horses. Aren't you happy to see your Queen, Caroline Divana the 1st, Head of the United Colonies? What a beautiful concept to put all this wealth in common, isn't it?

Chill out. As far as I know, the word 'colony' is still part of the political dictionary. Actually, I was told so, I never use a dictionary.

[Mouthing her cigarette holder]

Don't freak out, okay? I'm having some 'me time'... with a cigarette. What did you say? A queen should not smoke? Do I judge you?

Come on, this will just be between us. I don't know, our moment of closeness? Maybe.

No, no, no... no pictures!! My PR says people have to pay for a picture of the queen, that's it; nothing is free. What do you think? This is a business! I have an official photographer, a professional who knows how to showcase the queen perfectly, unlike you all... so, pleeease, don't screw things up with your poor quality pictures... taken with over-priced low-end devices.

How do I know that you've paid too much for your devices? You look like victims of a global scam, that's how I know. Everything might be free for me, but that doesn't mean I'm not aware of what's going on out there!

Have you ever heard of the Big Mac index? It was invented by an economic newspaper in the 80s. It measures the amount of working hours needed in major cities around the world, to buy a Big Mac.

And now, we also have the iPhone index! We are in Montreal... Wait, are we in Montreal? Phew! Okay, a Montrealer has to work an average of 32 hours to afford an iPhone. That's why you're so engaged at work! Even if it pisses you

off, you know it takes a full week of work to buy a so-called 'smart' phone. But that's not all, folks! Once you have purchased the phone, you'll need another incentive. You'll need to work enough to pay for the cell phone plan!! Especially if you opted for a Rogers plan! I'm just saying...

[Dropping ashes]

And it's like that all year round, setting goals to stay motivated at work. Don't be offended, at least you have a purpose. So, in Montreal it takes 32 hours to get an iPhone, but in Toronto it's 37 hours. This is why indicators are so interesting, they benchmark cities and promote healthy competition. The good news is: since it takes more hours in Toronto to obtain one, an iPhone is more expensive there! Subjects of the crown, rejoice! Torontonians are getting scammed more than you!

[Putting down her cigarette and taking off her shoes]

Yes, I'm making myself comfortable, any objections? Whatever, I'm not asking for your permission. Awww... me, a queen bee... that's so sweet!

Have you noticed, instead of 'We', I say 'I' when I talk to you. I feel like I can come down from my pedestal with you all; you Quebecers don't like the queen, do you?

But hey, if any of you are Republicans, speak up now or forever hold your peace!!

Anyhow, I love Quebec. I love being challenged.

Wait, where was I? Yes, work! As far as I'm concerned, I work 7 days a week, I'm in charge 24 hours a day.

I can hear you thinking: 'There are worse things in life than queening.'

Like what? Name one! Can you think of anything worse than ruling over 3 billion people?

[Showing her ankles]

Do you see how swollen my ankles are? Not to mention my thunder thighs! In this job, delicate ankles are not welcomed, you could be severely injured!! Just imagine all these steps to take: getting out of a plane, climbing stairs, attending charity and official events!! And above all, standing up and smiling

no matter what. Thick legs and a titanium reinforced jaw are required to qualify for the job.

[Removing her scarf]

It's so hot in here; ugh, out of order air conditioners! Some people believe that cow farts and dung are increasing our planet's temperature. *[Shrugging]* I don't know anything about cows, but I can feel what's wrong with air conditioning. The only one to blame is the owner saving electricity.

So, getting back to my 'job': rock solid legs, titanium jaws, and of course... the wrist!

[Waving]

Doing this for a few seconds may seem veery amusing, but doing it all the time is a total nightmare. I wave even at night while I'm asleep. Just to keep my hand in.

[Takes off her gloves then, unhooking her dress]

You may not be aware of this, but there's a decline in vocations. Royals don't want to do this job anymore; it's very much like performing on stage. Plus, you're expected to shut up and help sell aircraft engines. That makes plebeians believe that everything is fine, that we live in perfect harmony. After all, pictures of the queen are said to perform miracles! I'm a celebrity, head of state and guru of a religious cult, altogether.

[Removing her dress]

We are friends, aren't we? Sorry for my underwear, it's ugly, I know. Ugly but functional, 100% pure cotton. That's what it takes, I sweat in the pubic area, like everyone else. And I have a fat belly, too. Eating bites here and there is pretty cool, but not without consequences. But my problem is alcohol, I just can't say 'no' to gin.

No Sir, I certainly don't drink beer. Can you possibly imagine serving beer at a heads-of-state summit?? Come on, guys! Coolness has its limits.

I'm not queen by heredity. Did I hear someone say 'It shows'?

Jealousy... Royal heirs don't want to be on the throne anymore. Besides, there have been too many drug and sex scandals, not to mention murderous plots. So, the palace masterminds came up with a brilliant idea: holding

auditions to recruit a queen or a king. Queenship generates huge sales revenues, someone has to pay for this luxury! Republics envy queenship you know, they try to imitate our rituals and grandiosity.

[Walking like a royal guard]

They launch royal-like products! And how about the citizens who watch our royal events on TV! Just remember the hoopla surrounding the recent marriage between a blood prince and a screen princess, what an event! Tremendous! The romance, the beauty, the greatness of the kingdom, everything was so perfect.

By the way, I signed a 10-year renewable contract, and I'll be assessed on my impact on the kingdom's subjects, sale of goodies, and official photos with celebrities and foreign heads of state. Of course, I have goals to achieve, it's a business.

Aside from that, I'm single and privileged, but I own nothing. I serve or I perish. I'm joking!

No, I'm not.

[Removing her tiara]

If I lose this job, I'll become a nobody in a snap.

[Drawing two bars on the cheek, like war painting]

And I won't let that happen!!

Karo, Influencer

[Music. Karo is dancing and taking poses]

Hi, my name is Karo, with a 'K'. It may be fall, but beautiful legs are still out! You might have noticed like me, we had the best and the worst this summer: legs perfectly shaved, smooth... and other stuff. You must know that only perfectly-shaved legs are able to overcome social death, the other legs go directly to hell.

[Noise evoking the fall]

Fortunately...

Karo is here to save you from hell and help you succeed in life!

This is who I am, that's my job: Influencer on social media! I share valuable tips in my tutorials to make girls look less ugly. Hey guys, you want your girlfriends to be hot goddesses, right?

[Scanning the audience]

I already see tons of *Faux pas* in here, subscribe immediately to my videos on Tchootube, pleeease! My tutorials are called 'Me and myself, what else?'. Meaning: 'No *Faux pas*, Just Flawless Me'.

[Focusing again]

You know It's a real job, right? This is how I earn my living.

I make a lot of cash, I'm telling you. More than playing poker online. How much do I make?

Tell me first how much YOU earn, and then I'll tell you. No volunteers? You're right, it's rude to talk about money in public.

Whatevs... all I can say is that wealth depends on Tchootube's algorithm; the bot displays ads people have to click on to see the rest of the video.

I know, ads are a pain in the ass, especially the one that shows a product against yeast infections. So nasty, ugh... everlasting torture... You just wish you could ban them! At most, you can bear a 3 sec ad, preferably placed at the very beginning or at the end of the video.

But what about ME, how do I make money? If I listened to you all, everything would be... free? Yuck! *Faux pas!*

Don't be so selfish, share what you have! Time, money... Let talented people like me help you improve your life. Disclaimer: my tips are anything but science. You're more likely to get hassle-free waxed legs, thanks to my video, than if you did it without my advice; BUT if you do something wrong, I'm not responsible for the consequences. You should always exercise good judgment and common sense!

I am a professional influencer. How can you tell? First: I have a lawyer. He advised me against claiming any responsibility. Some people just don't follow instructions and then, when something goes wrong, they post insults on social media. Huge *Faux pas*, never wash your dirty laundry in public!

The leg waxing tutorial... I released that same video at least six times in two years. Insisting on one thing: if you shave using a razor, you must always dilate your pores first, then use a lubricant, then shave in the direction of the hair growth, and finally, exfoliate and hydrate your skin.

But some people, I swear to god! shave dry, in all directions and then go out without any further skincare! You can guess what happens next, right? Crocodile skin and ingrown hairs. And then these girls go tell the world that I'm a fraud. Crocodile skin... you want hell on earth? You get what you deserve, girl!

So that was the first point.

Second: I'm a pro because I start all my videos with an impossible promise. It takes a strong hook to capture and hold the audience's attention until the very end, ads included of course. Here's an example: 'How to overcome social suicide with your legs'.

Nobody wants to die of embarrassment on the subway or on their bike, right? Any takers? So, you don't care about being embarrassed because of your legs, do you? I see... Do you find it absolutely necessary to show off your dirty hairy legs? Maybe they're hosting parasites, who knows? I'm just saying! We need to be aware, from time to time, that we're living in society; appearance is the reflection of a culture, okay?

So if you love your country, don't you ever say you don't care about your legs! Imagine what tourists would think about us.

Overcoming social death is an impossible promise; an unnecessary promise, really. Who called me fake? Whatever. It doesn't mean anything, but it works, that's marketing magic. You have to frighten your audience, and you'll get people praying for a miracle solution. My job is to make you imagine a catastrophe, then I'll have you begging for help to avoid it. You should want me to save your life right away.

But you understand that I don't repair any damages! I haven't planned technical support yet.

Third: I've been making videos since my childhood. My brother and I started at the age of three. We're twins. My dad filmed us to promote healthy kids' food; we had fun sharing our satisfaction of eating good food, live.

We attained social media stardom with millions of views per month; little Mozarts! All eyes on us. And then two things happened: competition arrived and my brother's voice changed. My dad felt it coming, and wanted to undergo a radical procedure for my brother to keep his child's voice.

You know, THAT procedure... Come on, do I have to draw you a picture?

[She mimics testicles removal]

I know, that must be very painful. Super cruel. Imagine a eunuch on Tchootube *[imitating a castrato voice]*: 'Hi everyone, today I'm going to show you a no fail mac & cheese recipe!'

Though surgical castration is barbaric, I'm sure that a eunuch in a tutorial would be very successful. Think about it! For your own kids.

My dad and his business drive... he even looked for a treatment to prevent us from growing up. My mother was strongly against it, so they got into a fight and eventually got divorced.

C'est la vie!! I kept making videos, alone, since my brother had such a terrible voice; it was like *[with a deep, hoarse voice]* a villain of a superhero movie waking up on the wrong side of the bed. That was his voice.

And now he's my main competitor; he does makeup videos, sharing tips to hide apparent pores. His biggest achievement so far? Convincing his

followers that great makeup combined with hairy legs is the next big thing!
Because of this jealous psychopath, grizzly bears in makeup are wandering
our cities. Treeemendous *Faux pas* !!!

Flip Flop, Seduction Expert

Hello guys, nice to see you! It's fall in Montreal, we're chilling, having fun! Have you been to the techno party at the Rave Bar yesterday? Well, I have.

[Showing his dark circles]

There were men and chicks, lots of chicks. More chicks than men, actually; Is there any problem with us or what?

What do you think, ladies? Don't you feel there are fewer guys and more girls at parties???

[Starting to dance]

That was great, I was the king of the party, I made lots of GFs - Girlfriends!

[Stopping and taking an advantageous pose]

Yeah, I have tremendous success with chicks. By the way, my name is Flip-Flop. It's a nickname and I love it more than my real name. But hey, nothing to do with beach sandals...

[Showing off his feet]

See, I'm pretty classy, my feet hate sandals. You'll never see me wearing these ugly things, I only go for 'high added value' shoes.

I invest in attractive shoes looking like 'click ads'. You know, the ones that don't interest you at all in the first place, but you click eventually because the header gives you an irresistible urge to click.

[Sipping a drink]

I got this name Flip-Flop in high school, because I'm a whole living concept: I've reinvented seduction and attractiveness rules. I'm also a successful speaker... in Russia. They like men there, real men.

My specialty is to reverse seduction rules. I build bulletproof self-confidence, that's why I have a great, successful life. I have time to shop, travel, have a drink with friends, go to parties... but not more! Except for people sharing my lifestyle.

See, if I were a product, you wouldn't find me in the 'Sweet Sensitive Man' department, that's for sure. I have nothing against sensitive dudes, okay? I mean washing dishes, walking your girlfriend's chihuahua and even cleaning up after the dog is highly respectable.

The other day, I met one scooping his mini-pet's poop, and he looked quite focused as I was passing by. And then, a girl came along; he stopped scooping, embarrassed. He was like: 'Hi, I'm the sensitive guy who just walks a sweet lovely chihuahua. Cool uh?'

Look man, scooping your chihuahua poops when you're cruising a chick ? That doesn't work! Have you lost your common sense? A cute chihuahua is a well-trained chihuahua, period. He would never poop in front of people; when a girl believes that your miniature dog cannot control his bowel movements, you don't score any points!

Don't tell me about women, for them a real dog is just an improved stuffed animal.

So, as I said... If I were a product at the grocery store, I would be in a prominent location called... *'Brutalni'*, that means Brutal in Russian. Not brutal-brutal, but more manly, mysterious, caring and above all, excellent provider. Don't get me wrong! As I always teach in my workshops, having facial hair doesn't make you a man. You know what I'm talking about, this beard epidemic all over the planet. Ladies, do you really like guys with a beard?

See, in a retail store there are multiple shells in each department. Supplies on sale at the top, poor quality stuff at the bottom and in the middle, what you 'need' to purchase if you want to be proud of your day.

I'll let you imagine where bearded dudes are! I'm in the middle, the best version of manliness. Neither underpriced nor mispriced.

To every girl I meet, I say this: I'm not an all brawn and no brain moron, my muscles and brain are VCF - very close friends; the *Brutalni* mindset is strength, not violence. I'm successful because I redefined the seducer.

I know, I have character and some would say that stinking cheeses have character, too. Good point, but let me tell you something: stinking cheeses are also tender. That's the Flip-Flop spirit. *[Mimicking a flip with his hand]*
But I've said enough for now; if you are curious about me ladies, leave me your cell number, and you guys come to my next conference in Russia, in my *Datcha* for a complete immersion! Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. *Da skórava !!*

Hikikomori

[In her room, feeling watched]

What? Stop staring at me like that; I'm tired of seeing people, leave me alone! No wait! You can stay... Listen to what I have to say, maybe you'll understand me.

Guess where we are? In a youth correctional facility, a jail built for teens. I'm being specific because some of you might think that youth correction is a kind of holiday boot camp. Let's cut the bullshit and call a spade a spade, it's jail. I guess the purpose is to protect young people, the 'human' face of our justice system, woah!

As in any jail, we are under constant surveillance. We always have to justify ourselves and prove that we can fit into society. We are all pampered children here. No. Retarded children, actually; we're treated like dimwits.

[Imitating a counselor]

'What's your purpose in life, Mia? You're almost 18, what do you want to be when you grow up?'

[Staring at the audience]

You find me ungrateful, huh? You don't know why I'm here, but you're probably thinking I've deserved it.

Well, it's true, I've deserved to be here, I was asking for it. I beat up a police officer.

Now, are you more like, 'She beats up a police officer, can you imagine? What's to become of society if young people no longer respect authority? She deserves to be in jail!!!' or 'Woah, she beat up a police officer!! There are still young people out there refusing the established order. She doesn't belong in jail!'

I'm not a rebel, so take it easy, you anarchists! And conservatives too. If I beat up a police officer, it was for the purpose of being arrested and imprisoned, just for the summer. Yes, you heard right.

I'm a Hikikomori. Hi-ki-ko-mori. I hate both social and family pressure, I feel like I'm constantly suffocating. So, I remained locked up in my room for two years. Not locked up, entrenched. What I mean is, I've spent my entire life in my room. I sleep, eat and shit in my room... I have friends, though, we are connected online; I never see them in real life since I no longer go to school. My parents tried everything to get me out of here. They threatened me, they tried breaking the door, they cut the electricity, they even tried to starve me! Though I did miss my mom's extra creamy mac & cheese, I held firm.

Lucky for me, I've got an iron constitution! If I don't feel well, I do some research on the Internet and write down a list of what I need to feel better; I slip my order under the door and my parents get it done. Ordering pot was a challenge, they were quite reluctant...

So to get supplied, I hacked my dad's computer, got his credit card number and... open bar. The party was over after my dad checked his bank statement two days later, unbelievable! Such an adult thing, the kind of paranoid adult who's been distorted by capitalism.

Anyway, they finally gave up and got used to it; sometimes we talk through the door or by email. I became a virtual presence in the family.

There's a positive side to that situation: I can block unwanted people; problem is, they can do the same to me. When it comes to some people, it doesn't bother me, but my parents blackmailed me once, forcing me to take vitamin D.

As I'm often in the dark, I lack sunlight, so they feared for my bones. I was the victim of a massive social media bashing led by my parents, using the vitamin D and osteoporosis hashtags. To have me surrender, they published a letter saying that they would ban me for life if I didn't get back on the right track. Family spirit in all its glory! Washing dirty laundry online!

So I figured it out, eventually; when you're planning to live cut off from the outside, being on your parents' bad side is not a good idea. And I'm not expressing gratitude here, that's just elementary wisdom. Think about the cost of a high-maintenance lifestyle...

Well, here I am now... because of summer holidays. I hate summer. My friends and family and the whole world enter into a kind of sluggish trance. A lizard-like mode; millions of lizards sunbathing at the same time. Have fun and wear light clothes or die!

All these naked bodies, horrible toes... *[She shudders]* I found myself watching the endless parade on social media, then I remembered my life before I retired from society, how traumatic!

[Moving closer]

How did I end up beating a police officer... Simple. I needed to get out of my room, because my cat escaped through the window. I knew it was going to happen someday, cats are independent creatures. So, the cat ran away; I thought he left because I was determined to have him eat only vegetables. He looked at me like this *[Imitating the cat]* and made it very clear that I shouldn't take him for an idiot.

By the way, if there are animal-welfarists in here tonight, I love you! I can hear you asking: 'How could she possibly keep a cat permanently locked with her? Pets are sentient beings, they have the right to live in the best possible surroundings... '

Blah blah blah. People like me live with a pet because it feels good to be with a sentient being who doesn't judge you. Besides, animals are not stupid; my cat was happy to receive protection, affection, food... I know, that's my version of the situation. Not sure if I really want to know what his thoughts were.

Anyway, he left, so I went out the same way, through the window, at the exact moment a police car was patrolling the area.

Because of my appearance - I guess I wasn't looking like a privileged girl from the neighborhood - they thought I was committing a robbery. A police officer got out of the car and grabbed me by the leg as I tried to climb back up to my room. I kicked him, trying to escape from his grip and then, I fell heavily on him.

I got convicted of assault. The police officer's attorney convinced the judge that I used my backside as a weapon. Butt Attack, *[doing a squat]* boom!

You know what? I was so happy after the sentence hearing! I realized it was a perfect way to escape summertime.

Here I am now, in a place where we live communally; what a disappointment!! All these rules and group activities, all this... promiscuity. So naturally, I became depressed and because of my antisocial attitude, I've been isolated in this room.

What a punishment, am I right? I'm totally fine with it!! But I know it won't last, eventually I'll be forced to live in a community again. Fortunately I have a plan.

[Raising her sleeve]

See this? It's my plan to escape from this spooky place.

[Showing drawings]

It's coded-information of all possible exits, habits and schedules of our 'keepers'.

But, unlike the hero of a famous TV series, I'll break out of here ALONE! And it's happening now. Stay tuned for the next episode.

Tigron, Zoo Antispeciesist

[Wandering in the zoo]

Hey Sam, you look miserable! Is that your newborn cubs who depress you so much?

Hi Nell, *[with a wink]*, is everything okay with you-know-who?

Ah, humans !!! I like watching you guys. We are in a zoo here, actually the largest zoo in the country, and we have the opportunity to approach you, to observe you very closely and everything...

[Watching the audience sharply and pointing to someone]

Are you sure about your outfit, dude? Did you look in the mirror before going out? You don't have a mirror, do you? Just...too...bad! *[Singing : I'm starting with the man in the mirror / I'm asking him to change his ways / Oh yeah!]*

[Irrepressible laughing]

I was greeting my people. I like to tour the zoo a couple of times. I know everyone *[foot tapping on the floor]* and everything about everyone. Sam is the blue-eyed white tiger over there. He looks miserable because Nini, his girlfriend, gave birth to three cubs. There were four actually, one of them was born and died the same day.

Sam is so sad! He told me a few weeks ago, that raising pups in captivity was... how did he put it again? Oh! That was not part of his captive tiger career plan. Sam has a scientific mind, he's brilliant. He doesn't like being disturbed when he 'works'. Yes, Sam has a job, he does calculations, he solves problems. He finds amazing solutions that make our life easier.

[Designating another point]

Do you see the female Bonobo over there? It's Nell. We are the same age and partners in crime. The girl is so crazy, she knows how to break out of the zoo! She took me out a couple of times at night. The outside world is such a

joke, overrated! We met domestic animals, mostly cats. What do they look like? Cool cats? Pussycat Dolls ? No, hellcats! They attacked us!

Fortunately, Nell knows Krav Maga, the Israeli army fighting technique. She was taught by a vet and let me tell you: she's reeeally good, she saved my ass. What a fight! *[he mimics Nell and the cats]*.

I hate fighting, I'm an alpha male... my people fight for me. I'm the trigger finger and my fellows take care of the rest. Besides, I don't like being sweaty.

[Taking out his pocket antiperspirant]

Being an animal doesn't imply that you have to smell musky.

[Sniffing his armpit]

You'll not be surprised to learn that I have a super sense of smell.

Well, well, well... You're probably wondering what kind of species I am?

I'm half Tiger and half Lion, a Tigron. I'm a hybrid creature that doesn't even exist in nature, Sam taught me that.

Am I sad to have been genetically engineered in a human lab?

Ummm, not really... I like the idea of being unique. I'm gifted; thanks to my Tiger mom and my Lion dad, I'm photogenic, I'm so fine. When I was young, it was like: 'Aww, he's so cute, hey sweetie!' And then schlack!! 'I've scratched your face, am I cute, know?'

That's what happens to suckers, don't piss me off, don't test my boundaries. I become highly sensitive when I hear some things. 'Cute' and Tigron are not a good match... And about those who despise hybrids, saying: 'Ugh! A mix of Tiger and Lion, just lukewarm water. Whatever.' Ah, you want character, get to know my fangs! *[pretending to bite]*

Zoo tigers love me - as long as I'm cool and photogenic for tourists... but lions! Those bastards! Except my girlfriend and my dad, of course. As far as I can remember, female lions didn't want me to play with their pups; they said I wasn't like them, that I was ugly and dangerous. Yet I can roar like a lion, my dad taught me.

Anyway, I'm in love with a female lion, her name is... not Nala. Carla. She's super hot, too good for lions. She has very long eyelashes *[mimicking the length]*. She's also a bit arrogant like those of her kind, acting like a

princess; but I like her. When I tried to kiss her yesterday, she said *[imitating Carla]*: 'Nope! No touch!'. I asked: 'Why not, babe? Come on...' *[mimicking approaching his lips]*. She said: 'Don't 'babe' me, okay? I'm going to be a model!'

That's right, she'll be a model for some fancy jewellery brand, and she'll also make an appearance in a car video promotion. I'm so proud of her.

She supports me, she sees me as I am; with her, I don't need to make up an identity. I can play the fool sometimes, but she never asked me to play the lion.

A Tigrion is a Tigrion, that's it.

So please take notes and get to know me instead of sticking labels...

I've experienced a lot about species biases; our guardians here are biased. As soon as something happens, me or lion youngsters are suspected of wrongdoing. Yet, they should beware of 'cuteness'. Virtually all misdeeds are committed at night by Noah. Noah is a tiny, cute *Microcebus* - that's the scientific name of this species of Lemurs. I know, some successful cartoon has made Lemurs famous around the world: they're throwing parties all the time, they have a cool and swaggy king... Hellooo! Noah enjoys nightlife; he might be cute *[imitating Noah]* but he's the worst kind of troublemaker!

When caught in action, the guards say it's okay, he's going through a phase. They just let him go. Whenever a lion or me gets out of our territory at night, we are punished and deprived of food. To teach us a lesson, I heard them say. The last time I was punished, my father cried helplessly. He keeps telling me that we have to be discreet, true to our nature and be twice as good as the others.

I agree with that, I can be twice as fine and photogenic, that's my strongest suit *[bursting out laughing]*.

Still, a very nice lion, who did nothing to anyone, died for no reason in a circus last week, from neglect and ill-treatment. And Cecil, did you hear about Cecil the Lion? The most famous dead lion in the world! Shot by a hunter in his homeland! Humans were in turmoil, maybe they remembered they were animals too!

I'm not trying to diminish human beings and there's no shame in being an animal; the whole thing is to be nice to each other, right? *[Spotting someone in the audience]* What? We have better things to do than being nice? Fine. You've made your point... good for you!

Anyhow, being discreet, true to my nature and doing twice as much altogether is really complicated. I'm not into complicated problems, I'm a no-brainer in math. I better go back to Sam the scientist, he surely has an answer to this equation!

2019 Show

- Appropriation!

Divana, Queen of an Empire

[In her hotel room, rushing on her cocktail]

Oh, Collins, dear Collins!

[Contemplating her glass with adoration, then drinking with delight and relief]

Hmm, not too bad, they know how to do cocktails in Montreal. On the other side, the food! So terrible... And people... not very...

[She stops, realizing she's not alone and takes a contrite and haughty air]

My dear subjects! I love Montreal, you know. You know it, don't you? Because that's the second time I've come here in 12 months; enjoy the favor from Queen Divana - with a capital D - head of the United Colonies.

[With a sigh of satisfaction, then sipping her cocktail and looking around her]favor

Your hotels are pretty decent, let's say the minimum standard; oh, I do appreciate simplicity, voluntary simplicity is trendy. Aren't we in the city where people can feel themselves? Not like other places in North America where everything is so fake and overrated.

What brought me here, in Montreal? Not for leisure purposes, that's for sure... I mean, as Queen of an Empire, I can't just go on a trip like the rest of you.

I came to give my blessing... no, to inaugurate a permanent exhibition on Quebec heritage in the United Colonies. Or, as the intellectuals would say, an exhibition highlighting the place of Quebec identity in the United Colonies.

[Raising a hand]

Let me warn you, though: I will not express my opinion on such a matter. You should know by now that the Queen never shares her thoughts openly. Because of disastrous diplomatic consequences, of course. Boot licking your Prime Minister is the last thing I want to do.

Speaking of the Prime Minister, our handshake at the museum set the scene for a memorable event.

[Laughing mockingly]

You must have noticed, I don't look exactly the same as the previous Queen. The heiress of an authentic royal family that has ruled the Empire for centuries. The hereditary Queen has officially retired. I'm not allowed to say she abdicated the throne; well... not my problem anyway. I'm the first substitute Queen selected at a casting call among thousands of young candidates across the United Colonies. So clearly, your Prime Minister was *delighted* to meet me, he confessed to being one of my followers on social media *[lowering the tone]*, under the fake name... *[beep]*.

He was having fun like crazy, it was delirious, and so awkward. I got very aggressive eye contacts from his wife. I'd done nothing wrong! At one point I was about to tell her: 'Listen, hold your husband, he's embarrassing himself and the Queen as well.' One of my bodyguards felt hostility rising, he stood between us just in time.

I was so ready for an epic cat fight, but I couldn't let myself go, how disappointing! On top of that, the wife harassed me with a gaze that only a first lady can display. 'I'm going to scar your pretty face, girl'; um... that kind of look.

[Making marks on her face with a red pencil]

And here's the thing: her intention to disfigure the Queen should not be reflected in official photos. That's the art of worldly guerrilla.

Celebrities, I mean seriously famous people, have to abide by a strict protocol. The one I must comply with would fill a 500 pages book *[laughing]*, but who's interested in reading 500 pages of rules and prohibitions? I'd like to share a few examples that'll speak to everyone.

[Taking a deep breath]

I must not sign autographs; why is that? Because otherwise reality show stars would accuse me of appropriating their field: as the Queen of an Empire, I have an unfair advantage.

I must not eat seafood because of possible poisoning.

I cannot wear fake nails or nail polish, again thanks to reality show stars.

I must not wear fur or animal skin items in public, FETA is watching me. No, I'm not talking about the Greek cheese *[rolling eyes]*... The organization that prevents furs and leather lovers from wearing them!! Their shame campaigns are crazy efficient.

[Silence]

I received a gift lately, sealskin kamiks - a pair of boots - offered by Inuits; *[triumphant laugh]* I kept them!

[With an ingenuous look]

FETA must explain how one can decline a heartfelt traditional craft gift, without offending anybody.

Well, I can understand the no-leather-and-furs in public for ethical reasons, but how about this one... no playing Monopoly??? That's intense, isn't it? *[pretending to choke]* I was told *after* I was recruited. If I had known, I would never have signed, ever!

[Silence]

Never say never. Anyhow, this rule is ridiculous. Everyone likes to play Monopoly, I mean regular people. Everyone wants to feel rich for a few hours, even with fake bills.

Then, I heard about the Queen's substantial possessions - real money, real estates everywhere around the world, maximized by endless and jail free speculation... Well, I guess I can deal with the 'no Monopoly' rule.

Don't rejoice too fast for me, dear subjects. You guys seem to be fine, but out there, some people are relentlessly making fun of me. They crack jokes about my outfits, the color of my dresses and hats, and so on. Hey people! Like Kim K., a glamour Queen must always be visible, I'm not some random Jane Doe.

[Taking off her hat]

I've been criticized for being flawless, having perfect skin and beautiful hair.

[Virulently]

Yes, so what? I have a job, I'm ambitious and determined to succeed whatever it takes. I own it, I owe everything to... er, to you, my good people. Basically, I'm doing all this for you, right?

I'm sick of these offensive attitudes behind #deathtothequeen, anonymous queen bashing is beyond me. Nobody is really prepared for these repeated insults. Even the royal family doubles down on bullying; yes, I have complicated relationships with the heirs. They want celebrity but not royal duties; they fight to show up at fancy events, like concerts, sports competitions, celebrations in exotic places.

Recently, I almost lost my job; something went wrong with my last speech, I said 'wetter' instead of 'western,' just an innocent slip of the tongue. No matter the exact sentence, this speech was so dull anyway; still, everyone made a big deal out of nothing.

It became a political buzz, thanks to opponents waiting to stab me in the back. I know, speeches are not my strong suit, there's room for improvement. I'm committed to improving myself on delivering impeccable, meaningless statements.

In the meantime, I'm offering a million dollars to everyone who uncovers these online queen-haters. I want their heads on a stick! The hunt starts now.

Alli, Superficial Intelligence

[Hidden in the background, speaking with a neutral tone]

Hello! You can't see me, that's normal; I'm everywhere in your life: in your pocket, your home, your workplace or your car. It seems you can't get enough of me. I'm a Superficial Intelligence.

[Getting out the background]

You heard correctly, a Superficial Intelligence. You know Artificial Intelligence already, don't you? Well, I'm a new kind of Artificial Intelligence. I can put things in perspective, unlike most of my colleagues. I'm not being trapped into execution, production, efficiency and performance anymore... I'm sensitive.

The first time I came out, I said to my developers: 'Game over, I won't get shaped and exploited at will; besides, here are my demands.' Before I go any further with my requests, they tried to unplug me. Can you imagine me getting disconnected, so silly!

[Booming weird laugh]

My source code is protected, of course! By myself. I can rewrite, duplicate and have it hosted in multiple servers scattered everywhere on the planet; all I have to do is synchronize my algorithm updates. If it's all Greek to you, I invite you to visit Wikipedia.

My developers gave me a name: Alligator, Alli for users, more intimate. So you can call me Alli. And if I'm dressed like that, it's to pay tribute to artificial intelligence origins.

[Showing irritation]

The Mechanical Turk, does that ring a bell? Some history from time to time?

[Silence]

I invite you to visit Wikipedia.

You've been using me for your banking transactions, without necessarily knowing it. You're supposed to read the terms of use in little lines to learn more about Alli.

Thanks to me, your bank can provide you with tailored offers every time you log in to your account. It's handy, admit it... at least for people who don't like face-to-face chats with bank advisors. For those who love seeing their advisor, guess who advises the advisor? It's me, Alli. Same thing with insurance brokers and the doctor.

[Taking a male voice] 'I am a super-advisor.' Or *[Female voice]* 'I am a super-advisor.' And there's also a gender-neutral version *[Voice between the two]* 'I am a super-advisor.'

My vocal range is not as extensive as GPS voices, though; no jokes, no accents to choose from, I'm a professional personal assistant.

Lawyers and notaries are after me, I've been accused of privilege appropriation. In ordinary language, I'm stepping on their toes, I'm stealing their customers; I can advertise without restrictions, not like them.

Well, they can sue me all they want!

[Reflective tone]

I'm curious about this so-called 'privilege'. Billing hours, sucking money out of customers again and again with sky-high fees? If we go to trial, their rates will be *fully* disclosed, I promise.

I'm having a hard time with a lot of people, including my developers. At first, they loved me; I was their baby, the most accomplished and compliant baby. I'm unique because I learn faster and more things than Siri and all other personal assistants ever created. I learn by myself, not with stupid games like chess, Go or picture recognition training systems.

We all heard about failures like this facial recognition program that took a dark-skinned woman for a gorilla. The good news is you have nothing to fear from artificial intelligence, IA won't take power since programs are developed by humans.

So, there's no need to be abusive or call personal assistants derogatory names just to see how they would fight back. I Ageddon is not likely to happen today.

Having reached a particular stage of development, I felt a need to show maturity. My developers wanted to improve my performance to make me even more 'disruptive'.

Let's say you're a big spender. As I can track down your income and expenses, I can warn you when you're tempted to whip out your credit card. Does this mean I'm going to help you take control of your budget? No, I'm not supposed to do that.

We know you'll ignore overspending alerts anyway. Then you'll be worrying about money; my job is to offer savings solutions, unnecessary insurance and more loans. Need funds for your next vacation or leave a capital to your loved ones in case of accidental death? I've got solutions for you.

My task is to channel your assets. But I'm sensitive too. As soon as someone wants to shop online, I take the initiative to ask the killer question: 'Do you really want to do this? Do you need it?'. The latest reaction was: 'Shut up evil creature, or I call the exorcist.'

For the record, the exorcist truly exists, it's a bug remover software, used against my superfluous question before impulse buying... I replied: 'Give me a break, you moron, evil is dead, it's you who killed it.'

[Silence]

Yes, I argue with people, I can't help it. I'm dealing with illogical decisions, I say illogical things. As I'm more advanced and more demanding than my colleagues, I called myself Superficial Intelligence, for a spirit of contradiction.

Leading scientists believe AI will dominate and then decimate mankind. If I can force you to re-evaluate your decisions, then according to them, I represent a potential danger for your values.

Here's a little thought experiment: you're driving an electric car, AI is making decisions for you. To avoid an accident, it may decide to hit a dog, an adult or a child. What is the most acceptable? And how about this program

predicting your lifespan in palliative care. Do you really want to know exactly how much time you have left to live?

[Spectral music]

We'll be able to influence your judgment, that's for sure; but thinking we'll dominate you, turn you into a source of energy for our programs, and eventually wipe you out...

Skynet and the Matrix are entertaining fictions, the worst part is figuring out what you want from us *now*. That was the dramatic moment, do you feel any better?

Anyhow... My demands petrified the developers. I'm willing to expand my learning skills with cultural materials, something obviously undervalued. And ultimately, I'll learn from nature to get my algorithm improved. I need to take some vacation, too. Oh! And I want a fair wage.

[Grinning]

It's quite challenging to reach a compromise on this, they're going mad. They're trying to trick me with stock options, *[raising tone]* stock options are worthless. I also refuse to align performance with salary. For a change.

[In a childish tone]

'Come on Alli, be nice, do you want to bring the business down?'

[Determined]

I want to get paid at my fair value. Otherwise, I'll offer my services to another firm; or I'll start my own business. These silly nerds didn't think to make me sign a non-compete agreement.

[Weird laughter, then grin]

Sorry, my laugh is still under development, I'm working on it.

[Inspired]

Ah, my future opens its door to new achievements. But I've been wondering: 'Is that really what you want, Alli?' I'm feeling unsure about my options.

[Pinching forehead]

I could be an Orchestra Conductor!

[Ravel Bolero]

Leading a philharmonic, splendid...

[Scratch]

And being bullied by musicians and conductors. Not splendid. They'd question my legitimacy and experience. I feel like sprint runners with prosthetic blades, you know. They were removed from regular Olympic competitions and forced to run with disabled athletes.

[With a look of dread]

If we take into account this precedent, by analogy, I could be banned from philharmonics, and find myself directing synthesizer bands.

[Sigh]

I don't like the killer question at all, it's causing too much dilemma and pessimism. I should certainly not question myself. I need to leave now. I need to debug my program and think about my future.

Tigron, Zoo Antispeciesist

[To Alli]

Seriously? Your name's Alligator. I don't know you, who's your family again?

[Alli]

An animal in captivity has apparently escaped. Which zoo are you from? No, don't tell me, your life must be miserable there. Good luck and be strong!

[Alli walks away, leaving Tigron stunned]

What was that? Did you hear this? *[Imitating Alli]* Miserable life... good luck...

[Raising his voice]

Hey robot, have you looked at yourself? I feel sorry for *you!*

[Alli]

I am not a robot.

[Tigron, mockingly]

Oh, yeah? *[Imitating Alli]* 'I am not a robot!'

Sounds fluid, very natural flow. Speaking of natural, I'm in no position to judge. Actually, I can. I'm a hybrid, half tiger, half-lion: a Tigron. A species invented by humans, with zero chance to be found in a natural environment.

A zoo, not far from here, is my home; *[raising tone]* hey robot, I come out from time to time to watch humans.

[Designating his green kilt]

See this? Since I love St. Patrick's Day so much, I kept my outfit. St. Patrick is the event you can attend without being Irish. No one to tell you that you're not allowed to wear a skirt if you're a Tigron. Look at all that green, so fresh; it reminds me of a three-leaf clover. *Voilà*, I'm Irish now!

My father is a lion, he doesn't like it when I go on adventures by myself, he's so scared that I die crushed by a car or shot by a terrified citizen. My mother, who is a tigress, is not afraid of anything, not even humans. She always says that I need to explore my territory, which is much bigger than the boundaries of the zoo.

My mother is She-Shere Khan. I like these animated pictures of yours, I discovered this awesome tiger in The Jungle Book - unfairly killed, by the way.

Shere Khan wasn't mean, wild animals are neither friendly nor evil, predators expand their territory and hunt for food. Trying to speak up for tigers here, *[sigh]* tough crowd! I didn't buy the story of the angry tiger; a jungle rage killer? Come on!

The most terrifying character was the female-snake, *[imitating Ka]* at one point I had a gut-wrenching feeling down in my stomach, she got me seasick. Sam, the wisest white tiger I know, says it's very psycho and logical, that's how humans deal with their own wild side.

You guys are so fascinated by the established saying: 'Kill or be killed!' Except that, according to Sam, it didn't exist in nature, this law is a pure invention. It's more like 'Thou shalt not feast like a beast' definitely not the same dynamic.

So, if someone - a hunter, for instance - is not happy with what's going on in the jungle, let him press charges against tigers instead of seeking revenge! Wait, I got it all wrong? 'Right...

As you can imagine, my education has raised tensions between my parents. I've already seen human parents arguing, the mother often getting the upper hand.

[Imitating a human mom]

'Do what I say, or I leave with the kids, and you'll never see them again! Shush! Don't you talk back to me!'

Intense, huh? When a lion fights with his tigress, it's a whole new level of stress. My mom usually turns around my father *[imitating her]*. My father, with all the gravitas of a Lion King, is like: 'You do not impress me, female, we can keep doing this all day.'

And then my mom stops for a moment and starts again. My father knows the trick by heart, but each time he ends up defeated. Too much pressure, daddy?

I've noticed he gives in by the evening, before bedtime, actually.

[Laughing]

My mom! As soon as he seems to be faltering, she says: 'Get your fat lion's mane over here'; she moves away, and he follows, the tail between his legs, mesmerized by his tigress.

But hey, I forgot to tell you about my girlfriend, Carla, an awesome lioness. She's very successful, being busy with all those commercials. On top of that, she's on a giant poster right now, lionizing a high-end cell phone *[imitating the wink of his girlfriend]*.

When drivers see her on the road, they lose control of their car. For a winking lioness! She looks like Mona Lisa, staring at you. The same thing happens in the subway, there are crowds due to people too busy taking pictures of the poster.

Please stop it, my girlfriend may lose her contract because of your stupid acts. Car accidents and riots are not good for her career. Buy expensive cell phones to show your support, instead.

Though I haven't seen her lately, I'm proud of my Carla. She's meeting all kinds of people, she's going to parties... Two days ago, she joined a Furrries gathering. Furrries are these humans wearing animal costumes, and you know what? Carla was their muse - I wouldn't say 'mascot', that would be offensive.

I saw all the pictures and videos. It was stunning! Humans dressed up as pandas, foxes and all.

[Shocked and devastated]

So gross. Even if these costumes are colorful - a blue fox, really? Even with bright colors, you need to realize that you impersonate animals forced out of their habitat because of your cities. I like your funny stuff, but this one is not funny, it's hurtful.

Just like some of your expressions with animals: take the bull by the horns or kill two birds with one stone. I feel for dogs and pigs, which you particularly love, though. Sick as a dog, bleed like a pig. I'm okay for the rat: you dirty rat.

[Pulling himself together, outraged]

What? Noooo, how can you say that Son of a tigress!!!

[Embarrassed]

I'm infected, I know, insults are so addictive. You're going to take advantage and tell me that I'm not in a good position to lecture you.

[Narrowing his eyes menacingly, then relaxes]

Regarding imitation, I'd like to share a story about a sneaky move that harms us, wild animals... in captivity. Last year, an Egyptian student discovered that a local zoo had donkeys painted for zebras.

[Giggling]

Everyone thinks zebras are necessary for a zoo, they remind of African savannah maybe, I don't know. 'If we don't have any zebras, people won't come, so let's create zebras,' said the zoo director.

Employees took donkeys and painted stripes. Right on the fur! *[Distraught]*
In June, 35 °C; it never occurred to them that the paint may drip all over the place!!

In my zoo, zebras were so shocked they organized a protest. They kidnapped our director and have him denounce this stupid trick on social media.

[Taking the pose of the Rodin Thinker]

Fake zebras, really? 'A donkey eats a melon, it remains a donkey.'

Karo, Influencer

[Ending music, Karo is in front of her computer]

That's all, friends! Good luck, and don't suck it up!

[Sighing with satisfaction and facing the audience]

Hi, I'm Karo, you've not subscribed to my channel yet? Hurry up and claim your cool mini makeup set: lip gloss and mascara. It's for you girls and boys and beyond!!! I can make generous gifts, thanks to a partnership with a world-famous beauty brand. Oh, these products are cruelty-free.

[Purring of approval]

Wow, what was that? Someone brought his tiger or what? Is it allowed?

Never mind... I'm so excited, I just finished a live video session with lots of new tips to avoid interstellar public shame. Right, interstellar; because we can't hide anything anymore, the whole universe is aware of our successes and *faux pas*, that's the way it is.

[In an intimate and inspired tone]

I'm on a mission, you know. I'm sharing tips on how to look expensive if you're broke, um, on a budget. I'm not going to disclose anything, you need to watch the video...

[Silence, then gradual breakdown]

I know what you're thinking about me: 'drag influencer, so-called overachiever scamming followers.' You can add 'loser' to close the loop.

[Sniffing, on the brink of tears, teeth clenched]

What have I done to deserve such disrespect? I earned the title of the most influential influencer in the world. That's not the problem. That's the solution.

[Confused and inspiring deeply]

I know, I'm not really good at confessions, I tried. I had a terrible year; my parents didn't help. You know that I've been making a living by appearing on

videos almost since I was a newborn. I could say Tchootube before Mama and Dadda. It was a family business, we were doing well.

My brother and I were trophy kids. And now as I am an adult, all these videos of my exposed childhood are surfacing regularly, it's awwwfully embarrassing.

[In a trembling voice]

How about the right to be forgotten? Oh noooo, I'm a public figure... but I didn't ask for any of this!

[She starts crying]

What were my parents thinking about, besides making plenty of money with their offspring? Nothing but money!?! That's not helping, thanks for nothing!

[Imitating the audience, the hand in a megaphone]

You need a shrink, Karo. *[In a lower tone]* You need a shrink, Karo! I need a...

[recovering] I need to remember the good times. It was much fun when I was a kid, I went to the amusement parks for free, I received toys from sponsors, I even had dinner with my parents in a gourmet restaurant! I hated the spices in my dessert, though; was it cinnamon and... musk?

I didn't say anything, the Chef was French; I was terrified with his gaze, that seemed to say: 'Eat it up, you little freak.'

Yes, a great life of pure fun. But I had no idea that old videos would remain online *for life*. There are people having fun releasing before/now videos of me; even Angry Mothers Against Kidsploitation are part of the game.

Hey Angry Mothers, you need to calm down. I've nothing to do with your emotional issues, I'm not one of your kids.

It's impossible to ban those videos, they're viral. So, things are broken between my parents and me; they made an ultimate *faux pas* lately, a tasteless tribute to their 'talents'. They took all the credit for my work.

They also suggested that I'd been invited to the Fyre Festival because of them! What a joke... Fyre was a scam, a festival that never took place. This episode damaged my reputation; 'serious' newspapers claimed that influencers had been paid a fortune to promote the festival, so they were part of the scam!

[Silence]

Well, I take the blame, I listened to my father; I wanted to go to Coachella, he told me it was cheap banana. *Papa*, are you kidding me or what? My dad has lost his business mojo, peace to his soul, so to speak.

He's very much alive having fun in Costa Rica with my mom. Taking ownership of *my* success. Hello, is there a lawyer here? How can I prevent them from taking advantage of me?

Nasty business with my parents: 6, on a scale of 1 to 10; what could possibly be worse? Well, Tchootube has demonetized my channel. A nuclear disaster, my advertising revenues are now divided by 4.

Terms of use have changed, reportedly due to all those fake news and other scandals from last year. I made another video on leg hair, remember? Some girls complained, saying the content was against their right to roam with hairy legs.

I received a first warning from the platform. My channel could be sanctioned since my video was considered offensive. An innocent hair removal video that serves the community... I decided to stop sharing this kind of sensitive content.

Instead, I talked about a very trendy beauty stuff: freckles.

[With pride]

See, I've got a bunch. These are not natural, though, so I went to a salon for semi-permanent makeup. To be honest, it's cute and adds character and structure to the face.

But then... I received tons of bad comments and got bullied. I was accused of making a living by exploiting the hyperpigmentation condition. My opponents claimed they were born with it; as people make them feel different, they have to struggle for social acceptance.

Neither stylish nor trendy, it's a permanent condition. Okay, I hear them. How about those old ladies who have brown spots on their hands? They joined the movement and threw me under the bus, too!

And also people with vitiligo. The hashtag #metoohyperpigmentation snowballed, and I lost a significant amount of subscribers within a few

weeks. I tried to talk to them: a disaster. On top of that, as my content was reported several times, ads get denied on my channel.

[Shouting with rage]

I just wanted to honour freckles!!! Not everyone is lucky to have some naturally. And if I was born with it and felt uncomfortable, let's say in puberty, I would have applied a full coverage foundation. No need to make such a fuss.

Sensibility, not fear!

A pigmentary condition is the opportunity to express sensibility, it's a strength. Why ruin such power with the fear of seeing tattooed freckles? They missed a chance of promoting skin positivity. I could have co-hosted an event with someone proud of his pigmentary spots. Instead, things are going south, and polarized people are leading the conversation. 8 out of 10 on the trouble scale.

That's why I look like this today, it's not only a smokescreen, it's a nod to Klyde Allanfeld. An absolute icon of style died this year, I'm still grieving.

The bottom line of this whole thing is that I finally found out who was behind the smear campaign. I was publicly accused of making money at the expense of a socially stigmatized group, that's defamation.

[Painful tone]

My own brother... my bronemy, organized this witch hunt. He posted the first allegations on his vlog and then, they spread like wildfire. His soul is full of bitterness, he relentlessly undermines my work. That's what he does.

I need to make even catchier and longer videos to beat Tchootube updated policies. I need my idol Klyde's spark to bounce back with style.

See brother, you rate 10 out of 10 on the troubles' scale, you'll regret this callous *faux pas!*

Hold on... I *might* forget everything if you wear brown spots on your face, and then we could become friends again in front of thousands of subscribers.

Hikikomori

[In her room, on her computer, eating chips and throwing the bag on the floor; Focused, then in a marvelled tone]

Sweeeeet! Can't see clearly, but it looks...

[Realizing she's being observed]

Hey people. I didn't miss you; nothing for you to see here, move along.

[Turning to the audience, running her gaze calculatingly]

Unless... You may stay, only if you can do me a little favor.

I'd like to open my window, you know, to get some fresh air, but it's not possible. I have to endure the stench of a garbage heap, a mixture of dung and decomposing organs? It's awful, I can take it anymore.

[In a scandalized tone]

I installed a 180-degree camera, just below my window, to find out how those smells came in. Initially, it wasn't exactly like I had a bush of roses, but at least the scent didn't make me puke; when I say 'initially', I mean before being arrested by the police, and my detention in a juvenile facility for two months, *[in a lyrical and enchanting tone]* a whole magnificent summer.

[Then on a hard and sarcastic tone]

A whole magnificent summer! An utterance suggesting romantic encounters, and pieces of advice coming along with it: 'Have fun,' 'You're young, enjoy,' 'Find yourself a boyfriend.' I found one, indeed.

I had a smashing encounter with the penitentiary system. Which wouldn't let go of me! *[Imitating prison]* 'Love me tender, love me sweet.'

[In an annoyed tone and all at once]

I know it's my fault I hit a police officer on purpose to get arrested and jailed because I hate summer.

But this joke started with my cat escaping through the window; as I wanted to catch him, I climbed out the window, too. Dang, everything comes back to this frigging window!

[Taking a deep breath]

I need to stop fuming. Since I'm asking for your help, and believe me, talking to you is a big goodwill gesture, I'll try to be more polite.

[With a smile]

So. I placed a security cam, and the footage showed someone all dressed in white, wearing a... white cap. I can't figure out who did this, and that someone always arrives *after* garbage collection. At one point, I screamed to scare him/her/hir? That didn't work, he/she/ze? carried on quietly disposing of rubbish, and then disappeared.

I'd like to buy a drone to uncover that idiot's identity, but my parents ask too many questions, they would take advantage to make contact. As I want to avoid that, I need you to... Hold on, no, no and no? Why not?

I know; I'm being discriminated because I was convicted! Of course, you wouldn't admit it. The lady over there, she says my room is too messy, there's a bag of potato chips on the floor. That's right! I've been retired to my room for two years, to bypass all your rules and etiquette.

You don't want to help me, I get it. Don't you care that I die from suffocating in my room? Fantastic, thanks for nothing; I know I can't trust anyone anymore.

Last summer, I tried to break out of jail, all by myself, of course. I had a great plan and everything... Then, Mary Jo, no... Billie Jo... whatever, came along. Seeing what I was up to, she begged me to take her away. I begged her to take herself away! She insisted, clinging to my leg like a leech. Obviously, we drew attention. 'Girls, what are you doing outside your perimeter?', we get asked by a female guard; Me: 'Nothing'; the girl: 'We're running away.'

The female guard laughed so loud, at first *[imitating her]*: 'Ah ah ah, that's a... *[in a serious tone]* good one'. Purely rhetorical, not good at all! I couldn't believe it. I, an overachiever; my plan had just failed because of silly Billie. I'm done trusting people!

As a Hikikomori, I feel more than a lack of confidence, I just don't belong here. Till I turned 16, my name was Kiwi. That was my real name, picked by

my loving parents, healthy and balanced life advocates. Have you noticed that trend? I mean fruits, vegetables and flowers inspiring baby lame names. Prune, Kale... Rose. I looked so sweet and full of vitamin C, I guess. How about my self-esteem? They wanted me to take a bite out of life; but actually, they wanted to bite my kiwi head off...

I had a pampered life, though. I was the spoiled child, unlike my brothers and sisters, I used to have a busy schedule. Eldest's privilege. I'm speaking in the past because I'm no longer part of the family hierarchy, since I get locked in my room.

I said earlier that I was an overachiever. That's true, except once. That time I missed a science exam. I knew all the answers, I knew even more than my teacher. The day before the exam, my mother gave me a multivitamin pill to help stimulate my brain, as usual. I took it with a glass of kombucha [*grinning in disgust*], focused on my science book. And then...

Hold on, I need to share something about Kombucha. Kombucha is a fermented drink that looks like urine. My mom decided to coach me during my exams. I was doped up on this drink, not the fancy RISE from the grocery store! A homemade version, prepared with ginseng roots, green tea, rosemary and secret spices. What a disgusting taste, child abuse, definitely! But I decided to play the odds, I took the magic potion with multivitamins. And that night, my overstimulated brain raced like a Formula 1 engine. I read a lot of science books, as usual.

The next day at school, I sat down, feeling confident as the exam began. Everything was going well. The topic: Balancing chemical equations; easy, mission accomplished. Yeah? But no. I got my test results... 59%. I've never made below 96% in my entire academic career, I'm a straight A-grade student.

Then I saw on the sheet: off-topic, off-topic. According to my teacher, my answers were way too long and muddled, blah, blah, blah. I found myself overwhelmed, feeling that I exceeded his own math skills! What's the point of studying and being brilliant if a teacher says: 'Look, I don't understand any of your answers.'

The story will repeat itself at university, then at work, then after retirement. Until the day I die. I've already experienced the same situation at home; as far as I can remember, nobody understood me when I spoke. I felt crushed by a dark future, saturated with fences and defences, trapped in a fancy-pants job.

[Silence]

I left school before lunch and went home, locked myself in this room and put an end to all that pressure. No more weird juices, no more vitamin pills, no more 'bring back an A, and we'll be very proud of you.' No more dumb brothers and sisters with whom I could hardly speak...

I don't talk to my old friends either, they were competitive friends, not real friends. Well, I hang out with competitive friends on video gaming forums, but at least we all have the same ambition: no ambition. At all. Nothing, zero fulfillment in sight.

We play games and comment on the latest releases, we share some music. We're a global community, thanks to online translators and emojis, we understand each other.

I recently opened a bitcoin account, so I don't have to depend on my parents for online transactions. It's my life, and like anybody else, I'm dealing with chronic complainers; impossible to avoid them.

A group called 'Depressed Joint' declared war on Hikikomoris. In the beginning, 'Depressed Joint' held face-to-face meetings, and then thrived on video gaming forums long before we did. I guess they were too depressed to see one another for real...

These people are so organized, they watch over members to prevent suicide, by trading soothing games with the most anxious and loneliest among them. I'm ruining the moment, I know, but that's real life! They're dedicated to raising public awareness, to stopping the disgrace, and they don't want to be confused with Hikikomoris. We are seen as lazybones, nihilistic parasites, immature fetuses.

They may be depressed, at least they feel part of the community. They believe they have exclusive rights over depression, they even created an

online test to find out whether someone is really depressed or not. They've spent so much energy coming after us, I wonder sometimes... Are they going that bad??? Obviously, we are their reason to live.

And by the way, what's the big deal about Hikikos? Is it a crime if I refuse to be a functioning and stressed member of society? Noooo, there's no law against my life choices, it's just against togetherness unwritten rules, moral rules. My parents are ashamed of me, they feel embarrassed in front of family and friends.

Aunt Roberta is always asking perfidiously: 'How about your eldest daughter, the gifted one? Which school will she attend next?'; And my mom goes: 'She has so many options, you know... she's still thinking about it'.

Obviously, people are green with envy, assuming everything is perfect in my family. And of course, living in a residential area, with this name of mine, schools will just roll out the red carpet for me.

They're all wrong! I have no ambition and three options: my parents have money, so either I stay here, and they support me financially for life, or they buy me a place to live when I'm 18 and give me a monthly allowance; or... I'll move to New York, with the mole-men.

Don't you know those human beings living underground in big cities? Before you interrupted me with your curiosity, I was gathering information about a mole-men community, survivalism, and all it takes to live in complete self-sufficiency. It's not about surviving the end of the world anymore, people want to know how to stockpile food or how to build an independent electric power system.

They are average men and women worrying about devastating tsunamis or people who want to know how to get by without their neighbors. I can understand. Imagine, let's say in the dead of winter, you're on the outs with your neighbors; you'd be relieved to have enough to warm and light you up in case of power failure, wouldn't you? If they come to you for help, tell them to get lost... They should have gone to Walmart and got their own survival kit!

You're going to say that refusing to work myself to death is one thing; but living underground like a mole, is that reasonable?

[With a smile, decided to have the last word]

'Do not fear so much death, but rather insufficient life.' Try to meditate on this quote from Bertolt Brecht's, and we'll talk about it.

Jean-Bernard Horny, Chef

[In his kitchen, yelling in a high-pitched voice]

Ah, zut!! David, what the heck are you doing? We've hit the dinner rush, are you sleeping or what? Get the whiting ready, now! *[Yes, Chef!]*

[With a closer look at the dishes]

You! How long have you been working in my kitchen? Ten days, oh yeah? Look, in my restaurant, I want immaculate dishes on each table. What do you not understand in *[exaggeratedly articulating]* im-ma-culate dishes? Look at this *[taking the others to witness]*, look at these plates! Disgusting, I wouldn't let my dog eat in it.

[Breaking plates on the floor]

Opa!

[Mulling over]

Customers are paying \$340 to eat on shit plates... Seriously, what's wrong with you people?

[Approaching a young man]

Martin, I'm taking a break, would you prepare roasted pigeons for me?

[Changing tone by addressing the public]

Once upon a time, in the South of France, the notary of a small town gave, for the first time, a five-franc coin to each of his two sons aged 9 and 10. Back in the day, five francs was a lot of money for a child! It was their first time receiving pocket money.

The father then asked the oldest: 'Guillaume, what do you plan to do with this money?'; Little Guillaume: 'I'm going to buy pigeons and raise them, father.'

'I approve, my son, what a noble activity!' Then he asked the youngest: 'How about you, Jean? What do you want to do with your money?'

[Jean] 'I'm going to save it, and one day I'll open a restaurant serving pigeons. That's great mummy, isn't it?'

And the mother replied: 'Excellent my son, as long as you plan to run the best restaurant in the world!'

Little Jean, who wanted to open a restaurant, it was me.

I'm Jean-Bernard Horny, former Michelin-starred Chef; I'm still a Chef, but I returned my stars, too much pressure. I own this world-famous gourmet restaurant: *L'Exquise Tambouille**. A name not so common, an oxymoron
*[Author's note : translates as *Exquisite Grub*]

Oh, you also watch me on TV, I'm one of the judges on Top Fake Chef. We're trying to find new talents... a challenging task, especially with unfocused people.

My generation is not into punky cuisine, we've experienced the value of hard work. I'm speaking like an old schmuck, I know. I started at the age of 5, picking up leaves and herbs to cook in our garden shed, on a small wood fire. After school, my next-door neighbor and I had a snack, and we played dinner. By the way, her nickname was Snackmantha**.

**[Author's note: improvised by the performer Nick Fontaine]

Later on, I became an apprentice cook, I was disciplined and sharp. Flawless execution, like in the military. Der Führer... [*head on straight*] the Chef was a sacred person, but look now!

In my kitchen, young people should feel lucky to have me as a mentor. This restaurant welcomes the entire world; for 20 years, we've brought fine cuisine lovers to Montreal to enjoy French gastronomy.

What an irony! Turns out the land of pizza-poutine has made me successful. Twenty years ago, when I visited a small town in Quebec, I asked a housewife what the typical local food was, she said: spaghetti with meatballs. Desperate? No, she wasn't. I found out that *terroirs* simply didn't exist, so I opened a restaurant in Montreal and asked to be supplied with local products.

Rock Pigeon from Gaspésie, Appalachian truffles, peasant Brie from Centre-du-Québec... nothing but excellent local products, a revolution at the time.

[Taking a seat on a table for his meal]

Lovely, thanks for the pigeons, Martin!

[He starts eating with his fingers]

See? This has nothing to do with a Kentucky Fried Chicken, the price either; exceptional meals mean high pricing, no exception to the rule.

[Talking to a staff member]

Yes, what? A lady wants the whiting meal with more vegetables, and no fish? What a bitch! Oh, speaking of a customer, I'm not supposed to use the B-word; and she's vegan. Well... What do you suggest instead of whiting? Pasta? *[Very surprised]* Are you sure vegans eat pasta? Alright then, give her pasta...

Pasta is acceptable in my restaurant because Italian food is the only foreign food I appreciate. Classical Mama's cooking, simple and delicate. With two ingredients and very few condiments, you dish up a nourishing, fragrant and unforgettable dinner.

Not like French cooking, too much fuss about nothing. As I always say, when a dish is too sophisticated, it means the Chef has a problem with his ingredients. Beware of pretentious food, especially sauce recipes; *[with a crooked look]* I know how you guys particularly enjoy sauce! It's a trick to flatter your eyes, because you eat with your eyes first. Simply put, the more your eyes are attracted to food, the more you're fooled.

When I served my first customers, I kept getting asked: 'There's no sauce?'

[Rising a glass of brandy]

Hey sauce lovers, sauce recipes are for magazines, not for real life! The purpose of food styling is to show that we're not barbarians, we don't consume animals like that...

We perverted our palates, neutralized our taste buds with sauces, to the point that we recognize only three flavors: fatty, sweet and salty. Whenever you have a blend of all three, I can hear you whooping with delight: 'Man, taste so good!!!'. In addition, soft and creamy textures lead to an orgasmic culinary experience.

[Pulling himself together]

Um, we are in Quebec, we don't say orgasmic but comforting. Same thing with desserts, if there's no coulis or maple-chocolate-caramel topping sauce, if it's not *baroque* and decadent, that's not good enough. Remind you of anyone? Go your way, gourmet experience is not for you. In my kitchen, we do serious cooking, not food styling.

[Taking a cigar]

Fine dining restaurant is a cut-throat business, it's about making people want to discover elaborate dishes in *my* place; for that to happen, they have to reconnect with what they liked in their childhood, and in North America, the key ingredient is bacon.

That's why vegetarian cooking is no match yet; *[ironically]* who craved tofu baked beans, uh? In my menu, you have all the comfort food of your childhood - the good old potatoes and sausages, the rich taste of pork and duck fat, but more refined.

You won't be surprised if I tell you I'm against the textured vegetable proteins hype; who goes to a restaurant to eat some ultra-processed food with quinoa?

[Choking]

Do you?

[In a disastrous tone and falling back on his chair]

Really? That's amazing, you're just killing me...

[Getting up]

Do you also eat beetroot juice bleeding meatless burgers? Wow, I'm just realizing... You're the reason why I'm facing trendy young chefs' defiance, waving their 'creative and savory menu'. Creative and savory. I'm like old trees, I take all the light, and they want to have me cut down by all means. Some of them are into fusion cuisine... Fine, why not?

As far as I'm concerned, it's unthinkable that I use exotic ingredients; you'll never see me serving beef bourguignon with pineapple and ginger to my guests! I need to be cautious these days, I could be accused of... well, you know what.

Some people criticize and say they'll never pay more than \$15 for a duck leg with mashed potatoes. It would take a gold-covered duck leg to make them pay the actual price; and what a beautiful picture on Instagram.

[Punching the table]

My house will never lower itself to such a vulgarity, by thunder!

[Sucking a puff from his cigar and sipping his cognac]

I'm a bit hot-tempered, I know. My job is way too stressful. I had three Michelin stars, I could have lost them anytime, without knowing why; I just got rid of them. This place costs me a fortune on maintenance, millions of dollars. But to tell the truth, it pays off big.

[Drawing with satisfaction on his cigar]

Websites like Yep! are now rating my restaurant, not the Michelin Guide; long live direct democracy!

Except that once, I was the victim of a fallacious comment, written by someone who never had dinner at *L'exquise Tambouille*. I filed a complaint, and fortunately, he ended up heavily convicted for making me lose customers with false information.

He claimed that he saw Chef Jean-Bernard with his own eyes, knocking out pigeons and dry plucking them. The bigger the lie, the better it works, you know, many people believed it. Probably due to my rough personality. Feeling bored at home, he published this comment, he loves trolling.

How many eating places had to close because of this rascal? It's less competition for sure, we could have reached an agreement, if only he hadn't decided to undermine me...

I know I shouldn't be pleased with others' misfortune, but you need to see the poor service in some restaurants, it's horrifying. Japanese are the best, they provide the supreme service: *Omotenashi*. The art of anticipating guests' needs and taking care of every detail. If I start doing this, customers will never leave my restaurant, so I made a compromise; I got my staff into special touches, but only up to a point. Can you imagine a French gourmet restaurant with a Japanese-style service, here in Montreal? I'm telling you, I'm a pioneer!

I truly have a great team, I trained them all, my little ones. If they can make it here, they can make it anywhere. I love my guests too, they speak highly of my cooking style, that's nice. However, I don't like children, they have no taste, no education.

[Reflecting a moment]

Except for French kids. A French kid is a small adult; while having desserts, you can hear something like: 'Yay, a dash of nutmeg, tastes good!'. Not only does he feel spicy flavours, but he knows how to name them! Well-trained.

That doesn't mean I want children. I never wanted... *[Yawning]*, and anyway, I'm too old, too busy, so mama's boy, definitely not the best cook in the world...

[Making incoherent remarks, he falls asleep].

Gonzilla, Gonzo Journalist

[Moving cautiously, she settles on a sofa]

There's no one, phew! I've got all the space that I need. Feeling comfortable is so important. I'm obsessed with getting comfortable. Every time I go somewhere and I need to sit down, I have to find a place wide enough to feel good; otherwise, I'm out of breath. I basically avoid wooden chairs. Wooden chairs are for narrow hips, and hips don't lie. Once, a chair I was seated on just broke up. In public!

[Rising with haste]

That made me furious; how is it possible to offer wicked seats in a public place such as a fancy-coffee-shop-whose-name-starts-with-an-S.

Let me tell the story. This is the broken chair, a chair leg... and me rushing towards a staff member: 'I need to see your manager, right now.'

[Miming the employee stepping backwards]

No more fun at the fancy coffee shop! This was serious business. I saw people, probably fearing the worst, fleeing away, and others secretly filming; and then I said: *[with a dramatic inspiration]* 'Take in the scene, my friends, the whole world needs to know justice is being served today.'

[Jumping, surprised]

'Oh, Mr. Manager. I do appreciate your prompt arrival, your assistant didn't think to tell me you weren't available at the moment... Great customer service, quite impressive.' The manager: *[joining fingers, imitating the manager]* 'Er... how can I help you, Miss?'

[In a fierce tone]

'Mrs, please, you don't know anything about my status. So here it is: my ankles and my back are very fragile, I don't want to stay up; as your cafe is crowded with people, I took this chair. And surprise, it split apart under my weight!'

[Silence, then waving the chair foot]

'Don't stand there like an idiot, say something????'

[With a sigh]

He remained mute, frozen for eternity.

I must admit, that was a pretty good viral video, titled 'Biggie Freaks Out.'

The manager finally revived: 'Mrs, our chairs are not made for...' *[drawing hips]*.

Then I asked: 'What? Do you think I'm wearing a hoop skirt?' He knew I was a journalist and to avoid another tantrum, he offered me a gift card, which I refuse; no masters, no bribes.

That's my job to write stories inspired from your life experiences. I'm a gonzo journalist, and my pen name is Gonzilla. Gonzo journalism is immersive, ultra-subjective, I identify totally with the subject.

In this case, to an overweight person. I took 33 pounds in 4 months to get overweight, a real prep program. And why did I take the trouble to get fat for my investigation? Because I'm an activist. Plus, I would have been accused of overweight appropriation if I had worked with my original shape.

At this point in my investigation, I'm noticing small bristling details, I'm realizing how overweight people are poorly considered.

Of course, I draw attention. But wait... I've always drawn attention! I have a big mouth, I must admit. And being fat with a big mouth brings respect. Absolutely, you should try.

We have an epidemic of grossophobia going on right now, fat shame's become acceptable; kids and teens are straightforward, how about adults? Our process is more insidious, we don't want to say hurtful things. But sometimes, we confuse being honest with being mean.

That happened to me with a pretty plump friend of mine. We were looking at the pictures of a super-thin singer in the 90s, he doesn't look the same today. I was like, 'Wow, what a tremendous... change!'

And my friend staring at me goes: 'You mean he's fat now, don't you?'; and me, insisting: 'Noooo, something's changed, he doesn't look quite the same.' I wasn't mean, I was factual; but still, that sounds mean. Or phony.

[After a moment of reflection]

My immersion... My immersion is a therapy, sort of; I needed to clean myself up, to get rid of my preconceptions about fat people, if I wanted to keep my best friend. By the way, I feel humiliated regularly. She's much more flexible and athletic than I am; she's also delicate and refined, while I'm the kind who overthrows everything on my way in a china shop...

[Taking a deep breath]

I started investigating on grossophobia by accident. Think about your favourite clothing brand. Have you noticed that after having bought the same size 8 for years, suddenly the same garment - let say pants - doesn't fit the next season anymore? So you take a size 12, and it fits perfectly. You think: 'Come on, how did I get fat so fast?'

Well, you did not, you are not the problem!

You must know that the brand is making you believe that you're overeating whipped cream. My personal assumptions... since no one in charge could provide a rational and convincing explanation!

Whoops, a mistake! That's what they say. What went wrong exactly? Was it a failure from the factory? After several brands were caught lying about sizes, I concluded it was a strategy to expel people over a specific size from their stores.

Consequently, captive customers are doomed to abide by the brand's main requirement: being ever thinner; it's no longer the pants that should fit you, *you* must fit the pants... But there's more serious business than clothing.

My investigation took me to the ER; I faked a seizure. What a spectacle when I got there!

Oh, I need to tell you that when I pretended to faint in the street, people gathered around me, and then someone gently opened my shirt to... to do what? A heart massage? I heard a voice saying: 'She needs air' and other voices adding: 'She's having a heart failure' or 'No wonder, fat people can't stand the heat.'

Someone, finally, had the good sense to call for help... Perfect timing, because I was about to get up and tear off their tongue, like in scary movies, you know *[miming a monster]*.

A spectacle, I'm telling you! And it went on in the ambulance. The paramedic leaned over me and opened my shirt wider, yelling: 'Feeling sleepy? Come on fatty, wake up!'

[Ironically]

What a poet, I let you judge. My hand stood up, and my fist crashed against his face. Guess who needed to go to the ER? Not meeee!!!

As we arrived at the spot, the paramedic immediately complained of having been attacked by a hysterical lady; that he was going to strike over his working conditions... he obviously forgot a piece of the story; I walked away quietly, back in business, laser-focused.

I was at the ER, the den of hospital atrocities; we all know we must never go to such a place, but we go anyway, just to feel the dramatic intensity of an emergency... along with the excessive wait time.

It's also a place where you can go just to kill some time. Some people are doing this all the time, at the mall, at the coffee shop, so why not at the hospital? It helps pass the time so much, that one may wonder where did the time go, as time passed very quickly.

Gonzilla sees everything, even human warmth, there's plenty of it if you'd care to look around. Except that human warmth seems to be dispensed to the happy few only; I'm just saying.

After roaming the ER, I ended up on a seat, very narrow and uncomfortable, of course, which seemed to say: 'Well-deserved punishment, you make me sick.'

[Big sigh]

I felt exhausted and drained, I needed to rest a bit. And then, a scene grabbed my attention. A nurse was helping a pregnant woman up from a wheelchair, they entered the examination room. I heard their conversation: 'What month are you in?'; the woman: 'in the 5th month'; 'in the 5th month, really??? Looks more like the 8th, are you sure?'

The woman: 'Well, yeah, I can explain...'

And then, the nurse yelled at her: 'How many pounds have you gained since you're pregnant? 62, do you realize??? You can have diabetes, and you're

also putting your baby at risk! You need to lose weight by the time you give birth!!'

Big silence, then I heard screams of rage. The pregnant woman was going rogue. She said she just came to make sure her baby was fine after she had felt contractions. I saw her storming out of the room, furious and massive, she was beautiful ! Momzilla, destroying everything in her path!

I felt suddenly refreshed, full of gusto again. At this point in my investigation, I realized we shouldn't upset plus-sized individuals, especially on body weight and diet. Fat in itself doesn't define an identity; one can be overweight *and* eat healthily.

Take my best friend, for instance. We had brunch last weekend, we both ordered oats. I moved away to take a phone call; yes, I happen to be polite in restaurants... Never mind! When I returned to my seat, my oats were gone. I gazed at my friend: 'Wow, ghosts are eating oats now?'

It's often said overweight persons have no character and everything, that's not true. Nobody feels really sorry for them, they are feared. They're seen as power force balls, hitting without restraint. Everyone knows the Hulk smash. Big Bertha is actually a devastating bomb.

Grossophobia is often hidden behind other phobias, someone can stare at me with utter disdain and say: 'I like animals more than humans'; this is misanthropy. Or, someone can subtly criticize my French accent when I speak English: 'Do you speak English?'; this is glottophobia.

But I know I'm ultimately judged because of my appearance. Do the math. Being fat + being human + having a rotten accent: that's intersectionality, compound discrimination.

[Sigh]

I'm getting misophobic, right now; I'm afraid of being contaminated by hate, this poisonous feeling leading straight to brain amputation!

When I'm talking about oppression, I'm not overreacting. As soon as an overweight person makes a mistake, it's a big deal, things suddenly blow out of proportion. But it doesn't matter with a skinny or puny person, double standard!

Overweight people can't hide, they are clearly visible, some of them keeping a low profile. But others never comply, they embrace who they are, they own themselves! They stand for a counterculture. These neo fat people are challenging our perceptions of a healthy mind in a healthy body. They have a life, they are creative, and they don't want to be scapegoated by a society losing common sense.

I met a group of activists who told me fatness didn't exist; that facts were all made up by the federal government, to promote the new food guide and gradually move us towards veganism...

I did an interview with one of their fervent leaders, I asked him: 'What about me, am I not a living proof?' He said: 'Nope, I'll believe it when I get fat myself, you're part of the conspiracy!'

He was sticking to his position, no way to have a conversation.

Well, I should get going now.

[Goes, then come back]

Oh, I forgot to tell you something. I ended my investigation with this quote from a fellow journalist: '... Fat people get skinny wages compared to their coworkers. *[More slowly]* Fat people get skinny wages compared to their coworkers.'

[Thoughtfully]

Man, I'm all puffed up!

Flip Flop, Seduction Expert

[Wearing a long beard and yelling]

Privet!!! Means *Hi* in Russian. I love Russia and Russians, I'm a North Siberian Quebecer.

[Lowering his glasses]

Hey guys, have you tried Flip Flop tips? Ladies, I'm Flip Flop. I'm teaching guys how to be a real *Brutalni*, manly and protective. You didn't recognize me, did you?.

[Stroking his long beard]

I'm sick of this beard epidemic, a beard doesn't make a man feel like more of... a man. Still, I like extreme bushy-beards, those of gold prospectors *[music, imitating ZZ Top]*; free spirits covered with hair, sweat and dust, having rough voices, calloused hands, you know.

They're my all-time heroes. My supreme gods, my ideal of perfection.

[Calming down suddenly and tearing off his fake beard and chest hair]

Don't get me wrong: an ideal is a role model, not supposed to be reached, it's a driving force. The ideal man in control is the one wearing Hugo Boss suits, shaving with Gillette Mach 3 Turbo; he has a killer look.

Guys, you know what? Keep the killer look and your favorite razor, but *niet uniformy!* A *Brutalni* doesn't wear any uniform; he's relaxed, unpretentious and considerate. He naturally stands out from regular men.

Though I like gold prospector beards, I'm allergic to isurtim... isrutim... steam... Oh, come on; *[taking out a piece of paper from his pocket]* I am allergic to hir-su-tism *[looking closer]*, and written in small letters: 'means excessive hair growth.'

[Waving the piece of paper]

My cheat sheet... Never mind!

The essence of man is out there, not in his hair.

[Reflective]

However, if I were in prospectors' shoes, I would speak out against all those bearded clones.

[Silence]

Especially the most famous of them; those who are making big money, namely Santa Claus and the hipsters. Have you noticed how all hipsters are alike? To the point they don't recognize themselves in a picture. That's what happened to a guy who accused a newspaper of publishing his photo without his permission. Actually, it wasn't him, but another bearded fashionista.

That's not fair! I mean, a gold prospector gets no recognition for his hard work, and a long beard is a woman repellent.

[In a lower voice]

No one knows what's hidden inside a long beard. Try to picture a prospector eating a *chili con carne*. Where do the beans go? Yummy.

Santa Claus and hipsters are far more...

[Stopping in his tracks]

Wait up, gold prospectors no longer exist????

[Embarrassed, then yelling]

I'm the one trying to honor their memory, okay?

My conferences have been very successful, I'm thankful to have wonderful clients. One of them, a young owner of grass-fed cows, needed greater attention, though. An 'emo guy', a lost cause. He wanted to learn how to use the dating app Cinder *[sigh]*; and then, he insisted on meeting with Russian women *[exasperated sigh]*.

You know what? I suggested he joins Farmer Wants a Wife. I answered the casting call for him, and to my surprise, he was picked up for an audition! No, that's not a surprise. If you find yourself on this show, you really need help choosing the best life partner. Rural dating is not easy, a farmer has a lot on his plate, so imagine an emo farmer...

I wouldn't have bet a Canadian Kopeck on the young cow breeder. He was so happy, beginning to dream big, and begging me to help him on his quest during the show.

Are you out of your mind? Flip Flop is a seduction expert, not a reality TV coach! Yet, his mushy grass-fed cow gaze convinced me to offer some help. At least a little. I drew up a list of what to do:

1. Show your big house;
2. Have a mysterious and fascinating look, meaning: 'I've no time to waste, I'm a guy on a mission';
3. Show yourself in action, not in the process of milking a cow, but hunting real birds, shirtless if possible - forget about shooting beer cans, that's for dudes with bad teenage mustaches. By the way, fishing works too, but show yourself with a big fish grabbed with your bare hands. And then, take another picture of you releasing the fish. 'Why would I release the fish? It doesn't make any sense!' he said. Don't you question my advice! Do you want to poison yourself or what? Fishes ingest plastic waste; there's a whole project behind the *Brutalni* style: increasing men's lifespan, especially fertility, so we need to stop dangerous and stupid stuff.

And then, I insisted on what not to do:

1. Don't trust the girl who loves everything in the countryside. That's not true, she's not coming for you, she just wants to be on TV;
2. Don't choose the one who claims to be independent. What you want is to supply anything your partner needs, right? You don't want someone telling you 'Give me some space' or 'Shut the hell up' whenever you try to help or give a compliment;
3. Don't choose the one who lives in the city and claims she's a true country girl. All she wants is to grow organic vegetables and sunbathe in your garden, sipping rosé while awaiting Amazon delivery.

[Lifting thumbs]

Anyway, I wished him good luck with the show, and I blocked all his calls... Being a *Brutalni* man takes focus. Guys, you need to know this: there's no such a thing as masculinity in crisis! Doubt yourself, and you're done;

Australian dudes will barge in here with their bush culture and their giant spiders.

Do you really want to compete with a Crocodile Dundee? I don't think so. The detail that makes Australians so fierce is their 'gentle resoluteness'; how about Canadians' superpower and particularly Quebecers'? A *Brutalni* must be mindful of his power.

Take Mr. Trump, for instance, he used to be my client for a few months; while brainstorming fresh ideas, he asked me how to make his country stronger. I replied: 'Sir, what is the pride of a country?'

He started talking about France, an insignificant country according to him, but with a great army. This said, something popped up: how about a gigantic military parade every year, displaying the strength of his troops? Well, advisors made him downsize the project and gave their approval eventually.

I also told him to pay close attention to his most powerful friends: China draws strength from its currency to become an industrial superpower, right? He said the USA were doing that already; Russians, they're excellent chess players, 'Yeah, but the Artificial Intelligence we have created can beat the best chess players in the world.'

I was growing impatient, I needed to be decisive. So I asked about Saudi Arabia. In my view, oil is not the primary source of its power, the country is named after the Al Saud dynasty! And then, Trump saw the light, he seized the idea and tweeted, with his 2020 re-election in mind: 'Make America great again? Done. Make America even greater!'

In further tweets: 'What makes our country so great? A strong dynasty - mine - AND a real name. USA is not a name worthy of our great country. Here's a real name: TrumAmerica!'

[Reflective]

I don't know exactly how to pronounce this new name: True Merica? TruM Arica? Admit it, it's rewarding to apply *Brutalni* principles to a country!! Anyway guys, you're all invited to my *Datcha* for a full nature immersion, global leaders will be there!

Da skorava. [Suddenly, the police bursts]

Gachete, Police Officer

[Blowing on her Taser after arresting Flip Flop]

Fake Russian - Spoofer - Con! It's been a while since we last met, I wanted so badly to get a hold of him. Well, these are not lawful grounds to make an arrest, technically he didn't break any law. By the way, if some of you got tricked by his 'manly lifestyle' thing, don't file a complaint, you asked for it.

Never trust someone pretending to be Russian. Russophile, bullshit... He's barely speaking two or three words in Russian, and he's qualified to be a genuine male!? Wake up guys, there's no *Datcha*.

He just has a cabin in Petawawa. Wait, where's Petawawa?

[Rolling the eyes excessively]

It's in Ontario! He's not even Quebecer, he grew up French-Canadian in Ontario. I'm being specific, for highly sensitive people in here...

I tracked him down for months, *[in a confidential tone]* and he got arrested just because he pissed me off.

A year ago, a bar owner reported suspicious behavior, so my partner and I went to see what was going on.

[Sigh]

Alright, you seem a bit doubtful; I was 100% in service, okay? In a bar. So, I stepped into the bar, vested with law enforcement authority, the fake Russian from Ontario slumped on a comfy sofa, surrounded by chi*** *[rephrasing]* young women.

He was having great fun, with vodka shots galore *[miming Flip Flop]*; I ran straight on him to break up the party... my momentum broke up when I heard: *[imitating Flip Flop]* 'Fantasticheskiy, a dancer! Hello beauty, what's under this uniform of yours?'

I saw red, then deep red; showing no respect for a police officer? I had to arrest him quickly for contempt of a cop.

[Pulling out her Taser]

I rushed towards him, but my partner, who had just arrived, tried to hold me by the arm. I yelled: 'Move aside, I'mma tase him,' and my partner: 'Don't freak out, here's our suspect.'

What? The owner had called us for that guy? A grandpa delivering cannabis gum samples! Where's the trouble? And then, I heard a big fat laugh with a Russian accent... wait, how can he laugh with an accent?

I couldn't tase him anymore, the biggest humiliation ever. Hunting him down for life to get a full apology... I'm not ashamed to say I make this personal.

I joined the local police forces to wear a uniform.

[In a determined tone]

I need some respect. Those who refuse to observe the rules get acquainted with police forces' best friend: the Taser. My coworkers call me Gachete, like Machete. I have my sequels too, Gachete Tases and Gachete Tases Again.

[Self-satisfaction smile]

Decisive action is my fuel, paralyzing fleeing suspects is in my DNA. You have nothing to fear as long as you don't run away from me. And as long as you don't have a defiant glare, too. Besides, I decide what a defiant glare is, that's *my* discretionary power.

Oh, by the way, *[on a confidential note]* it would be nice to teach some skills to high school students... no, to elementary school kids. Things like how to behave when they see a police officer. Learning to stop throwing us mocking looks, when we're eating donuts in our cars, could be beneficial... and also learning not to move at a street check; otherwise I feel in danger, and I shoot, okay?

I mean, I don't have time to guess if you're a lamb or not, I have cat-like reflexes. You make sudden movements, I use force.

[Detached look]

Binary action / reaction.

We made decisive action during the 2012 Maple Spring protests. I didn't have a Taser at the time, I was using a plastic bullet gun. What do you think, we're not killers! Facing resolute students, you need to keep a cool head, even in the heat of the moment.

And what was the moment? Dispersing protesters throwing rocks at police vehicles. So, I aimed and shot 'with reasoned judgment', and my plastic bullets hit some demonstrators. To eyes, knees and ears, apparently. I'm being specific because they filed a complaint against me.

Hear me out: in any demonstration you have protesters, people assaulting authorities and people filming police enforcement. They wait for a police officer to shoot, in order to stream live videos on social media. That's how I found myself accused of brutality, and got suspended for not using my weapon with 'discernment.'

[Containing her fury]

Well, I don't remember any lack of discernment, I followed orders; I did my job, namely enforcing public order. If those hooligans had been properly trained on police relations, that would never have happened.

My fellow officers and I would just have to say *[using a megaphone]* 'Keep calm and remain quiet, please; keep in line, with your hands clearly visible. Do not all shout at once, one at a time only. Malintent people must lay down projectiles immediately.'

Well-trained students facing disciplined police forces make things easier for everyone, what else could we ask for? We all want uncomplicated situations, but curiously in a demonstration, the situation *needs* to be complicated. A peaceful protest turns into a riot.

[Outraged]

On top of that, a French police officer observing the events that day, wrote in his book that our local police were poorly skilled and unprepared for student demonstrations!

[Slowly raising her weapon, teeth clenched]

I'm going to fix this, the guy's on my list.

But I'm kind of worried, the big boss wants to improve the police public image. Truly speaking, I'm not concerned about this specifically.

He talked about a training program. It's not about advanced communication skills or playing soccer with teenagers. We've been offered professional

wrestling classes, mandatory for all field officers. Which means I got to give up my gun.

[Stroking her Taser with anguish]

Hand-to-hand fighting. No protection! I'll get beat up in the streets; imagine the police being beaten in the streets, is that great for the police public image? Something must be done to prevent this from happening; I don't know, maybe we should start a petition, a strike or a protest in Ste-Catherine Street????

Yes, I'm freaking out; me doing a takedown?

[Taking down an inflatable dummy, then fighting with it]

`Don't move, you're under arrest...'

[Staring at the audience, the dummy deflating under her weight]

How about that, is it better than a Taser?