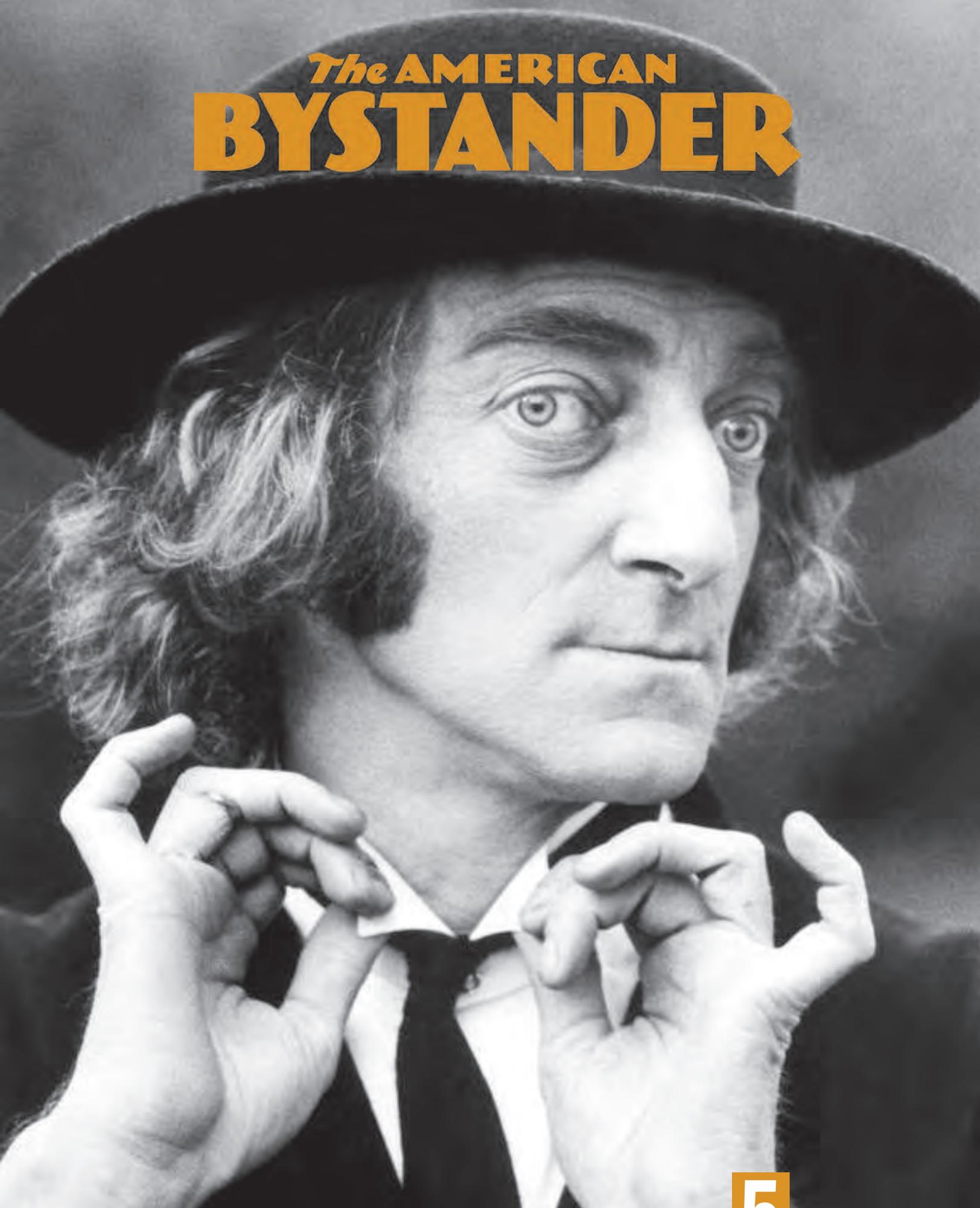


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BYSTANDER



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PAGES OF FUN

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The **AMERICAN**
BYSTANDER
The Comedy Magazine



BY DAVE HANSON

CALL ME MR. LUCKY

Reflections on a truly charmed life

Life... so fragile... a million ways this crazy ride could end in a heartbeat. You don't get to be my age without some pretty serious luck. Good fortune. Real horseshoe-up-the-hiney stuff.

For example: it's just a crazy, wispy twist of fate that JFK Jr. wasn't gay, and gay for me. I mean, I'm straight, but how could you resist if a guy that *flippin' awesome* wanted to fly you up to Martha's Vineyard for a romantic weekend? Answer: you couldn't. But John-John and I *never even met*. What a lucky break.

And that's not all. Back in '83 I was a lock for the host job on *Wheel Of Fortune*. Then I slipped in the shower and broke my leg, and the gig went to Sajak. At first, I was devastated, how could you not be? But God had a plan. Turns out *Wheel* tapes on Thursday and Friday, and on that schedule, I never would have been at Vincent de Paul for Chili Night. Which means I never would've met the missionary, who gave me the Bible, that was in my jacket pocket, when the cops raided the underpass. As I was running away, and the cop opened up with his Glock, it was that Bible that stopped the bullet from entering my heart!

I don't tell people this. I keep it to myself. I don't wanna jinx it. But a couple years after that, I had literally *forty-two cents* to my name when lucky old me found a five-spot on the sidewalk. I walked over to a diner; the waitress who



brought my burger flashed me a smile... and ultimately became my wife. A year after that, we had a daughter. Who, twenty-three years later, was killed in a skydiving accident — but was a *perfect match* for the kidney I needed.

Talk about a charmed life!

It just keeps going. That Czech underwear model? The one whose photographer boyfriend got swept away in the tsunami? If she'd returned *even one* of my 4,000 emails, that would have been me. Dude, look in the mirror and answer me this: how are you *not* in Vegas?!

Two years ago, I was feeling lonely so I decided to see if the classifieds had any pets for sale. But the newspaper delivery guy had hurt his elbow playing softball and it made his throwing arm so weak that the paper came to rest in the

lower section of the driveway, where the runoff from my neighbor's sprinkler turned the classified section into papier-mache. Did that save my life? *For sure*. I know me, and I know that I couldn't have passed up that adorable-looking little chimp... who subsequently ripped the buyer's face off.

Wanna talk destiny? I was born minus the chromosome that would have given me the bravery to try swimming the Pacific. But even before then! My entire freaking life began with a labyrinthine series of events involving a car mechanic getting sick from street food, going to an Urgent Care, and recognizing the doctor from his home-

land as a fugitive. After an exhausting night of questioning, the mechanic called in sick. Two days later, an *un-repaired car* backfired in my neighborhood, startling our cat, who knocked Mom's birth control pills down a heating grate. And that's how I got a baby brother. Who looked so much like me, when an enraged Pat Sajak came after me in 2009, he shot my bro instead—without ever realizing he'd killed the wrong brother! That, my friend, is luck. Crazy, dumb luck.

Look, I'll tell you what I told Homeland Security: I guess I rubbed Mohammad Atta the wrong way at the job interview — maybe it was my necktie? Twenty openings and I didn't get picked. Tough on the old self-esteem, but it all turned out okay I guess. #blessed. 🙏

DAVE HANSON

has written for Letterman, Leno, and Lopez, National Lampoon and The New Yorker. He's writing away the time before death writing on unpublished novel he can adapt into an unproduceable screenplay.



COMPLETE ENCYCLOPEDIA SET



MATCHBOOK



PENCIL SET



UKULELE BOOK



BASKETBALL & HOOP



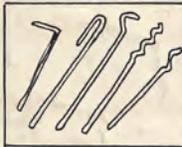
"I sell American seeds on death row."
Joel Bellhop
Ossining, New York



"It's an easy way to get money in prison."
Martha Zimmerman
Marion, Illinois



"I stayed in prison so I could keep selling."
William Zilliam Polunsky
Texas



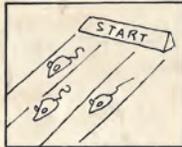
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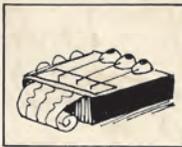
1937 CALENDAR



3 ICE CREAM SANDWICHES



MOUSE RACE SET



POLYGRAPH



MISMATCHED SOCKS



BONFIRE KIT



BASEBALL CARDS



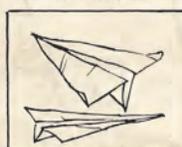
PASSPORT SET



CHEMISTRY SET



COUNTERFEIT MONEY



PAPER AIRPLANES



CANDY CIGARETTES



FILE SET



HAUNTED LOCKET

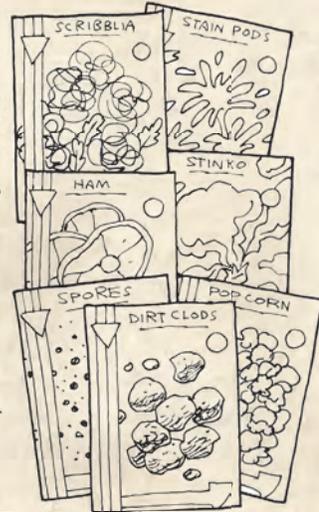


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Please send me your illustrated instruction book on how to sell seeds in prison. I will sell them at 20¢ per pack or face an extension of my sentence.

Warden's initials Attorney/family approval

Name _____

Prison _____

Sentence _____ Last meal _____

PRISONERS SEED CO. BLOCK 946, LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS
Please send me your illustrated instruction book on how to sell seeds in prison. I will sell them at 20¢ per pack or face an extension of my sentence.

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EXTRA!
\$3,000 REWARD GIVEN for information leading to the capture & arrest of notorious seed thieves.

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HELP US LOCK UP THESE CRIMINALS

BY EVAN WAITE & RIVER CLEGG

HUMAN SOCIETY DEFENSIVELY EXPLAINED TO ALIENS

Welcome to Earth! Care for a beer? Beer? Oh, it's a thing we drink to make ourselves feel good, even though it almost always makes us feel bad. It's really popular. Sometimes we go into special buildings where they serve beer. The beer costs much more to obtain inside these buildings, but we accept this because there are often attractive people in there that we would like to kiss.

Kissing is when we put our tongues inside each other's mouths and hope not to catch a disease.

No, you sound gross.

This? It's a gym bag; I was about to go to the gym. Gyms are unpleasant buildings where we lift heavy things called weights. This process is boring and excruciating, but it makes our arms slightly larger, which we like.

No, it makes perfect sense. I can tell you don't lift because your tentacles are thin and puny.

Can you repeat that? Your high-pitched alien whine is difficult to detect for my muscular human ears.

It's a newspaper. The headline is about one of our many wars. War is horrible, but sometimes it's necessary because we need oil. We could all just share the oil and live in peace, but we definitely won't do that.

Because we don't feel like it.

Oil is this black liquid deep in the ground made of crushed dinosaur bones and stuff. We use it for energy.

Obviously the sun could provide us with more energy — it's the sun! But we don't know what to do with that information.

Because we refuse to invest in solar energy. It's impractical. Or too expensive. I forget which.

Solar-powered spacecraft? That's nice. Good for you.

Yes, we're aware that global warming could lead to our extinction. What's your point?

Look, we'd just rather subsidize oil companies, okay? They need money, too!

Money is inedible green paper that we value above all else.

No, you seem stupid.



Maybe Earth isn't for you. Nothing personal, but aliens should stay with their own kind. Human cultures aren't usually too welcoming to newcomers anyway. We even have a name for it: *xenophobia*.

Of course it's illogical! You think we don't know that? We start the word with an x even though it sounds like a z. We embrace the illogical! We make choices *because* they're meanspirited and self-destructive! Take a look at human art sometime. *The Iliad* is basically about some Greek guys who kill each other because they're insecure about the size of their genitals.

Yeah, we know that's a stupid thing to worry about! And it's without a doubt the

human male's biggest preoccupation! My ex Carol said I was the biggest she's ever had! Call her up if you don't believe me.

God, talking to you is a pain in my ass. And before you ask, God is a symbol we've created to make sense of our loneliness in an uncaring, empty universe. We know there's no actual proof He exists.

Wait. Seriously? You guys have God, too?

And He sent you to convert our species?

Nah, we're good.

Your God can make my penis even bigger?

This changes things.

B

EVAN WAITE

(@theohbits) is a staff writer on Comedy Central's *The President Show*. He has also written for *The Onion*, *The New Yorker*, *Funny or Die* and *Kevin Hart's Guide to Black History*.

RIVER CLEGG

(@RiverClegg) is a staff writer on Comedy Central's *The Opposition With Jordan Klepper*. He also writes for *The Onion*, *ClickHole*, *The New Yorker* and *McSweeney's*.

BY LARS KENSETH

THE DETAILS OF MY ESCAPE

I am always two steps ahead of you. Or maybe three.

Greetings from nowhere. It is I, Lars Kenseth. Shocked, are we? You thought me dead, didn't you? Well, if death is sipping regionally specific alcoholic beverages while basking in the splendor of an unspecified location, then I guess I *am* dead.

No, you'll never know where I am...but that isn't what vexes you, is it? It's *how*. How did I do it? Your consternation and befuddlement pleases me to no end, but I suppose I've tortured you long enough, hmm? Here are the answers to the questions that have terrorized your mind, for these many months. Here are the details of my escape.

I dug my 200-yard tunnel with an old shoe that I fashioned into a crude spade. Its beaten, supple leather turned rigid through a petrification method that I developed after watching Alton Brown make an extremely resilient meringue.

I never used cash or credit while I was on the run. Instead I turned to the only truly untraceable form of payment: iTunes gift cards. Who gave that to you? Your aunt? Or was it Mom? No one knows.

Rather than do the expected and leave no fingerprints, I left fingerprints everywhere. I spent one hour every day for the past two years touching everything I saw. Go ahead, think of something I couldn't possibly have touched. Guess what? I touched it. And I'm not sorry.

I evaded your search dogs by hiding myself in an oversized novelty coffee tin. I still have 18 grams of house blend in my lungs, which my new foreign doctor tells me is harmless. Plus, I can make a latte by coughing into a cup of warm milk.

I used a squadron of look-alikes — doubles trained to confuse you and your investigative team. Chiefly by making them move across the street from you and become beloved by neighbors and extended family alike. Then people would say: "Why are you so harsh to the Larses? They seem so nice!" And you would have to smile through your rage and agree, lest you look petty and unfair. *Ha*.

I gave myself reconstructive plastic surgery, so as to turn potentially suspicious looks into shameful averted gazes. No one stares too long at a botched facial surgery, which makes it

the only truly perfect disguise. I also did this to save money. I'm not made of iTunes gift cards.

Do you finally see whom you are dealing with? Is the terrible picture becoming clear to you now? NO, IT ISN'T, because that tunnel I mentioned before? *It was a decoy*. I actually just crawled out an open window. And ran away.

You almost had me near the outdoor market. We locked eyes. Then I seemed to vanish into thin air as a bus drove by. Truth is, I actually just jumped into a nearby trash can to make it look like I was mysterious. I sat there for 45 minutes doing the crossword on my phone.

Remember that weekend your wife came back home after two years apart and said she wanted to reconcile? That was just a distraction. Also, that wasn't your wife — it was one of my doubles. Some plastic surgery is worth paying for, you know?

Oh, and I heard that you recently renewed your vows. Congratulations...?

Rather than use the phone or internet, I brainwashed a young street urchin into thinking he was a carrier pigeon. He would carry my notes near and far. And sometimes, he'd even come back.

I trained myself to evolve chameleonlike abilities. My skin tone can range from "mother of pearl" to "light olive," which means I can walk freely and without fear through hundreds of Greek and Russian restaurants.

I've visited 924 different post offices that feature my wanted poster and wrote "Forget it, we got 'em!" on every single one.

My in-depth knowledge of bad acting classes means I can pose as a tree almost anywhere for 15 minutes. Which is why when I made it into Angeles National Forest, it was over. I was *gone*.

Hear those sirens approaching? They're for you. The police, Interpol, the FBI — they all think I paid you off, that you were my inside man. Impossible, you say? Ridiculous, you cry? Look in your desktop drawer. There are enough iTunes gift cards there to put you away for life.

And to think, this could have all been avoided if you'd just treated my HBO GO login with *respect*. **B**

LARS KENSETH

(@larskenseth) is a cartoonist for *The New Yorker*, a Sundance Fellow and is currently baking a big loaf of weird for Adult Swim. Feel free to troll him on Instagram.

