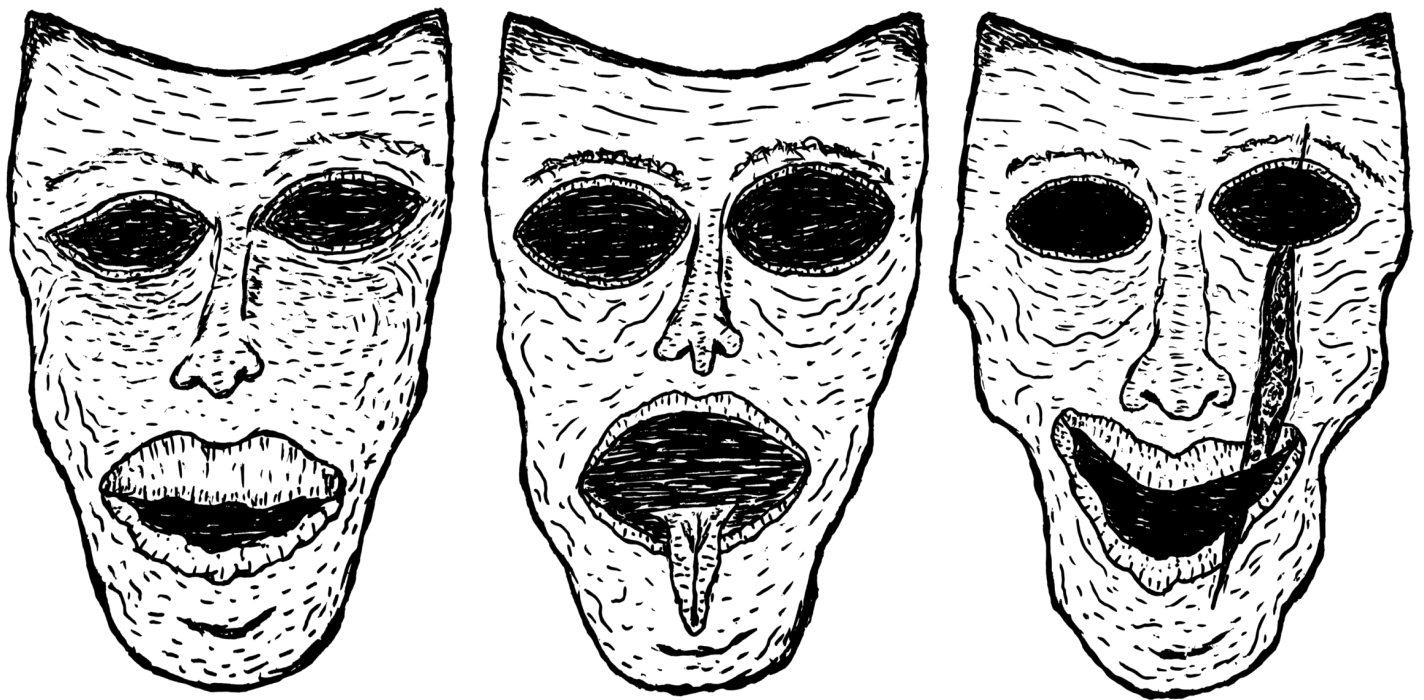
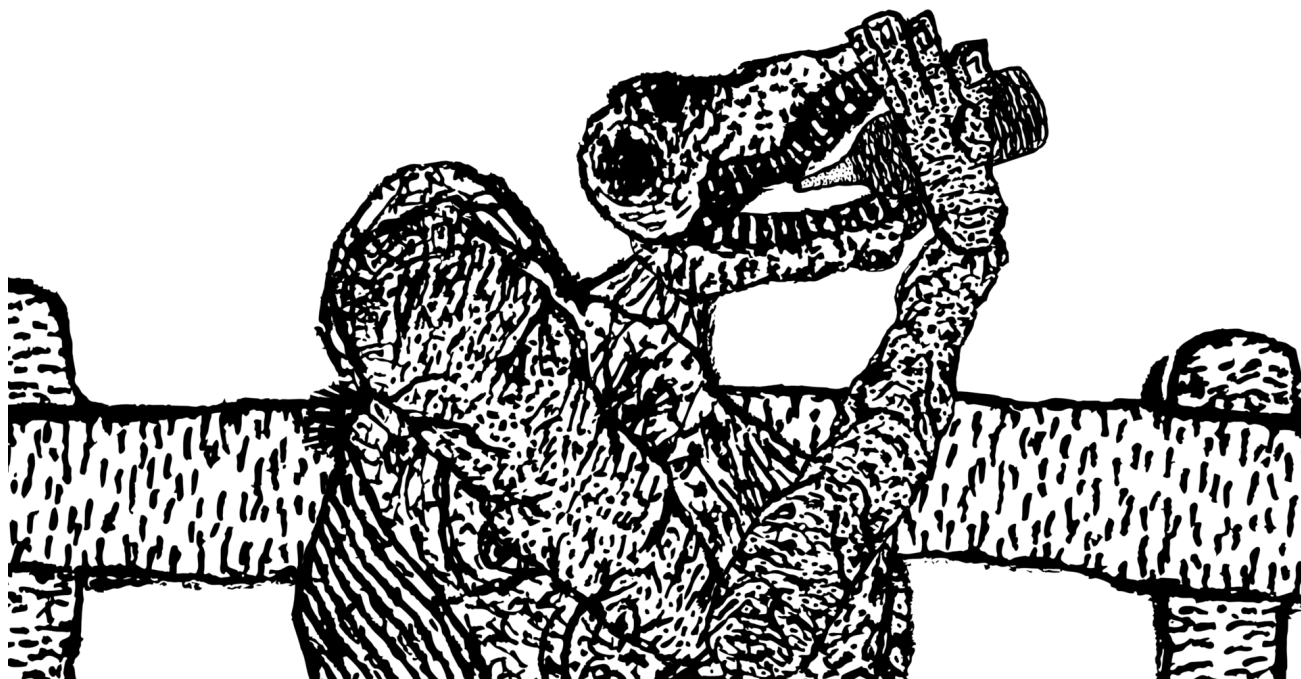


Addicts Idiots And Losers



Volume XXIII (free)



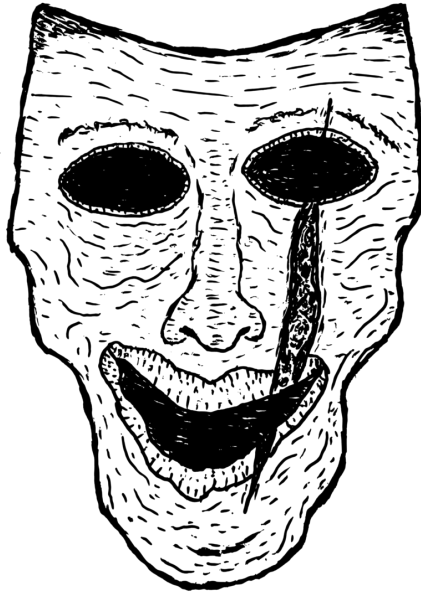
Trigger Warning: The content may not be suitable for children or those with a fragile psyche.

Rat People Must Kill Humans Publishing

Addicts Idiots And Losers Volume XXIII

Copywrite 2023

Written and designed by Samuel Zagula



The Professional Conversationalist

With my monthly government handout as a member of the unemployed, all my basic necessities were paid for, and I had an inexhaustible amount of free time. I wasted all of my free time doing nothing. If I accomplished something, I feared that this accomplishment would reveal how empty the thing I desired was, how pointless, and I would regret ever accomplishing it by the terrifying truth it revealed. If I failed at something, I would have wasted time I could have spent doing nothing. Either way, it was better to remain in a state of absolute stasis, never moving in any direction at all.

Most days I spent in my small cement room looking out my window at the metal courtyard across from me. The trees were all made of metal in that courtyard, and nothing ever moved. I stared out the window and tried to think about as little as possible.

The only times I did anything was to satisfy my body's functioning necessity by eating food. The food I ate was always middle of the road food, tasteless but not disgusting. If the food I consumed was delicious, I feared that its flavor would spark a desire for more delicious food. If the food I consumed tasted disgusting, I feared that it would spark a desire for a different kind of food. Either way would bring into motion that same awful cycle of desires which I was trying desperately to avoid.

So, I was glad when, in one of my weekly government mandated therapeutic sessions, my therapist informed me of an occupational opportunity which would eliminate my inexhaustible amount of free time.

“It is my opinion that a job might do you some good, and it happens that a position as a professional conversationalist has just opened up,” said my government mandated therapist.

My government mandated therapist had a large forehead and glasses which he often cleaned on his jacket in a mechanical way. He spoke as if reading from a script. I imagined that each word he spoke had been written down in advance, and whenever I responded to him, he would examine a detailed list of all possible sentences I could respond with and then read aloud the indicated reply.

“What is a professional conversationalist?” I asked.

“It is a very easy job,” replied my government mandated therapist. “All you have to do is listen to people as they talk. You don’t have to say anything at all. It is the kind of job perfectly suited to your skills.”

“Alright,” I said.

“How have you been feeling?” asked my government mandated therapist.

“I don’t know,” I said.

“Great, I’ll see you next week.”

I met with Hammond in a large decrepit building which may have once been a library but wasn’t any longer.

If it had been a library, all the books had been taken from it, and the shelves left bare, and only the musty smell of old paper remained. There were a few leaks in the ceiling and small streams of water trickled from above and wet and swelled the wood, and the small table we sat at to have our conversation was soft and sagging.

Hammond had three children who had all grown up and died in different years, and each year corresponded with a year in which he lost a finger.

He had a single dog to keep him company whom he had raised as a puppy. His dog was old, blind, and suffered from terrible dizzy spells. During these terrible dizzy spells his dog would spin around on its back and paw desperately at the air. His dog was eating less and less each day and the inevitable time would soon arrive when it would stop eating altogether, and be represented by a tombstone, to be added to the growing number of tombstone representations that were what remained of most of Hammonds past human and animal relationships.

Hammond was beginning to worry that he was immortal, that he would live for eternity. That all that he loved would crumble, decay, and succumb to the dirt, while he remained forever unchanging.

Hammond was unemployed, he had worked as a factory worker at one of the many mechanism factories, but that had dried up, as with most employment in this rotting town.

The next client I met with was in the medicine bar located in the center of town. Listening to people talk was incredibly dull and I needed something to help with it. The medicine bar had all kinds of medicine, and much of my meager earnings as a professional conversationalist went to the purchasing of medicine which made it easier to sit and listen to people talk. It was a drab place with entirely identical furniture. There were mirrors above all the medicine cabinets, but the mirrors were so caked with dirt and grime that only a vague shadow reflecting each of my movements ever looked back at me.

Foals had a strange habit of making the opposite expression of whatever expression his words warranted making. He had a debilitating fear of heights. He always slept on the same side of the bed. He counted the steps it took to walk from his front door to his couch, his couch to his bedroom, his bedroom to his bathroom. He made sure these steps were always the same number.

He used the bathroom at the same three times: six a.m., two p.m., and eleven p.m. If he ever deviated from his routine, he would collapse on the ground and remain catatonic until he could muster the courage to re-enter and repair his broken schedule.

Listening to Foals, I wondered why people came to talk to me instead of to friends.

I had never made a single friend either naturally or artificially. Maybe everyone in this town was like me, without a single friend, and the only conversations they ever had were with professional conversationalists.

At my next government mandated therapeutic session, my therapist recommended I begin seeing a professional conversationalist myself. I had no desire to do so and preferred to spend the little free time I had left staring out my window at the metal courtyard with its frozen metal trees, but I feared that my position as a professional conversationalist might be revoked if I refused, so I relented.

For some reason I had never noticed the wallpaper of my government mandated therapist's office before, nor the nature of the books that lined the shelves of his cramped workplace.

The wallpaper was covered in disorganized black scribbles that cascaded around the confines of the walls without any pattern or cohesion.

The books on my government mandated therapist's shelves all had the same dull gray cover and had no titles written across the fronts of their bindings. I suspected that if I were to open one of those many books, their pages would all be blank.

I met my professional conversationalist in a building that may have once been a prison. The building was made of concrete, and there were many tiny rooms all with doors made of iron bars. We sat in one of those tiny rooms, which may have once been a prison cell, to have our conversation.

I did not have anything of my own inside of me to discuss, so I spoke about all the different conversations I had listened to in my occupation as a professional conversationalist, as my professional conversationalist listened quietly with feigned interest.

The client who met me in the medicine bar was wearing a mask which had very large eyes and teeth that jutted out at awkward angles. He introduced himself as Gregory, but I could tell that he was not Gregory, but someone with another name who I had already met and listened to previously in this medicine bar.

I did not challenge him on this claim.

I was certain that if I challenged him, I would be stripped of my position as a professional conversationalist, and once again I would have an inexhaustible amount of free time and I did not want that at all.

He began to tell me his problems and his story which were a completely different set of problems, and a completely different story than this man had told me when he claimed his name was something other than Gregory, and he was not wearing a mask.

Gregory had a troubled childhood. He hadn't learned to talk until he was six. He avoided conflict at all costs. He had never had a girlfriend.

The idea of a hypothetical argument with his hypothetical girlfriend paralyzed him with terror.

He barely went outside. Gregory let dirty dishes pile up in his sink. He barely washed them.

He was terrified that when he washed his dishes, all the tiny, microscopic, creatures which had used his dirty dishes to build their own personal world of rotting food scraps, would be washed down the sink and drown.

He had nightmares of the screams and pleadings of these microscopic creatures as they begged for Gregory to reverse the course of time, to go back to before he had washed his dishes, so he could leave them alone, so they could continue to exist as living microscopic creatures and not as dead haunting microscopic creatures existing only in Gregory's nightmares.

I looked up and saw the murky shadow of a figure in the mirror, I watched as it held the indistinct cup of medicine in its ephemeral arms and brought the hazy outline of a cup to where its lips should have been.

On the cement wall next to my bed hung three masks. They all had twisted distorted features. One had bright green lips. One had a gaping mouth and a dark purple tongue. One had a giant scar across its cheek that oozed yellow pus.

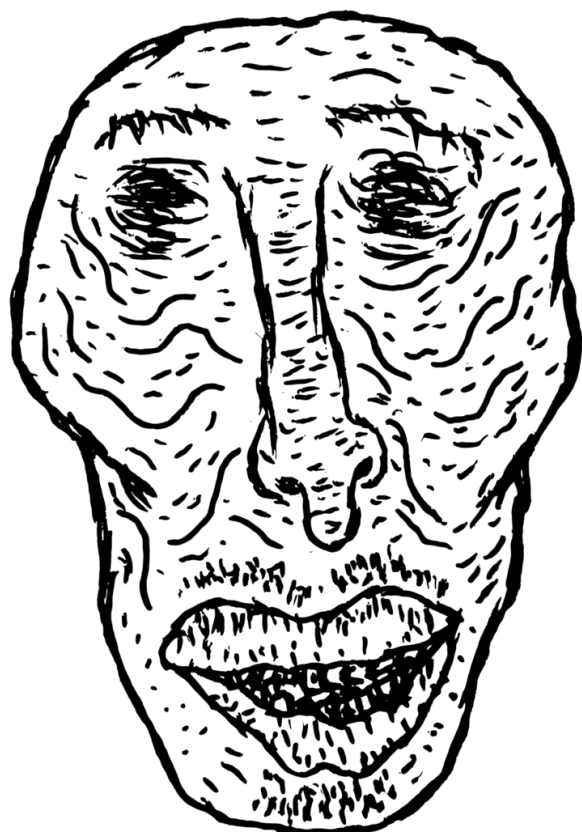
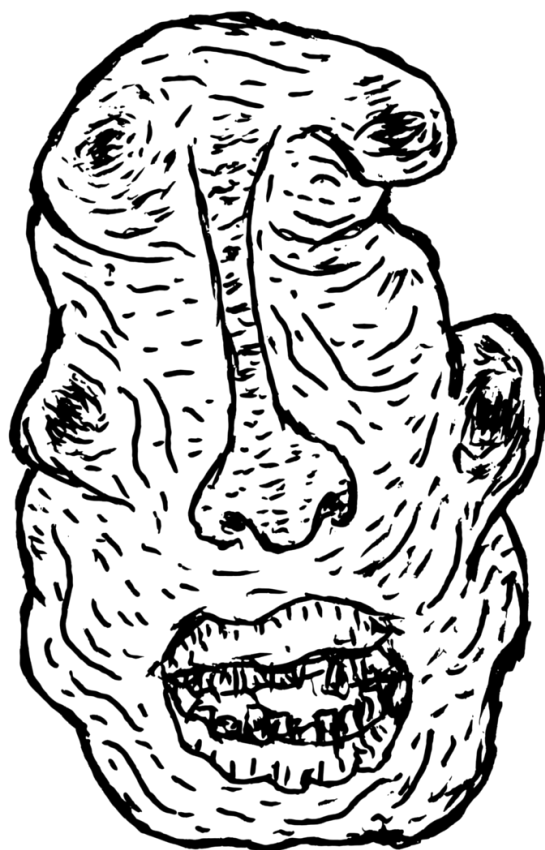
I liked the way they looked there

My cement room had been so drab before

They brought a little color to the place

END

Thank
you



You are
Loved

addictsidiotsandlosers.com



[Instagram.com/addictsidiotsandlosers](https://www.instagram.com/addictsidiotsandlosers)



[Patreon.com/addictsidiotsandlosers](https://www.patreon.com/addictsidiotsandlosers)



For general inquiries or to request additional volumes contact:

Zag@addictsidiotsandlosers.com