

March 22, 2021

News Section

What to Expect When You're Expecting (a Vaccine)



With the new administration, and the new year, there has been a significant increase in those getting vaccinated. Roll-out plans, more purchasing and availability, and several new sites being opened for New Yorkers, it is safe to say that the projections of a “normal summer” might just be right.

However, from complicated internet searches to severe wait times, there are obvious hang-ups that are leaving many young, and old, New Yorkers in a rut when it comes to what happens before,

during, and after they have received their vaccinations. So, what should you, as a community member, know?

As of the writing of this article, Allegany County is only vaccinating those who are 65 years and older, those with underlying conditions, as well as those who fall in the Phase 1B category. This list includes first responders, school faculty, grocery store clerks, campus RAs/RDs, and other essential in-person workers.

There are several steps for individuals to get their vaccine, which can become confusing or even near impossible to do if they don't have access to the internet. If you know someone who is eligible for the vaccine but cannot be put onto the waiting list or schedule their appointment because of this, help them navigate this. All of these steps about to be listed are available in greater detail in the website link given at the end of this article.

The first step is to register for a vaccine using the link given on the website. The second, once you have a confirmed appointment, is to complete the New York State Covid-19 Vaccine Form—it's recommended to complete this ahead of time to avoid additional complications. When you are fully scheduled, bring appropriate forms of ID (such as employee identification or pay stubs, if you're eligible via work, and/or your driver's license if you're eligible via age.) Be aware that different eligibility and sites may require additional identification. There will be a

clinical questionnaire to fill out upon arrival. Finally, at the site, you will have to schedule your second dose.

While Allegany County, itself, does not have many available choices, there are several state-run mass vaccination sites nearby. Some of these include the Rochester Dome Area in Henrietta, Jamestown Community College in Olean, and SUNY Binghamton in Johnson City. There is a consistently updated list of these sites, and more, on this website: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>.

Over the course of Americans waiting their turn for the vaccine, the CDC has authorized three versions: Pfizer-BioTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson/Janssen. Pfizer and Moderna both require two doses, ranging from twenty-one days (Pfizer) to a month (Moderna) apart. They are both mRNA vaccines, which means they teach your cells how to make a protein to trigger an immune response. It does not contain a weakened version of Covid-19. J&J is a single shot, viral vector vaccine. This means that a “vector” (a harmless, modified virus) enters your cells to produce a harmless piece of the virus that causes Covid-19, causing the body to learn how to defend against the real Covid-19. This does not infect you with Covid-19.

The CDC has several recommendations for individuals during and after vaccination. While in the middle of your first and second dose, remain masked and vigilant, as there is still a chance for transmission and infection. Once fully vaccinated, you can gather with other vaccinated individuals maskless and without social distancing. However, if you’re interacting with unvaccinated individuals, stay masked and distanced.

Allegany County’s numbers have reached a safe level, and with the mass roll-out of vaccinations, they will likely stay that way. But it is important to know where to get your information, and how to help others during this time. As previously stated, if you know someone who is having difficulty in scheduling their vaccine, help them. For continually updated information regarding Allegany County’s roll-out plan, visit <https://www.alleganyco.com/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-information/>.

By Sam Sage

Opinion Section

The Catholic Church is Wrong for Refusing to Bless Same-Sex Relationships



On Monday, March 15th, the Vatican announced that the Catholic Church cannot bless same-sex unions. This statement was issued in response to recent questions from pastors and other Catholic leaders, as social and legal acceptance of same-sex marriage continues to grow.

The Vatican described same-sex relationships as a “sinful choice” that is not a part of God’s

plans. The Catholic Church only recognizes marriage as a union between a man and a woman and places an emphasis on the couple raising children together. The Church also refuses to bless any relationship that involves sexual activity outside of marriage, which is considered the case with same-sex unions. The Vatican insisted that God “cannot bless sin.”

The Vatican recognized that same-sex relationships can be healthy and stable but remained firm on their disapproval.

“The presence in such relationships of positive elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing,” the statement read.

The Vatican also insisted that their negative judgement of same-sex unions does not equate to a negative judgement on individual persons. According to them, the Vatican’s statement was not intended to be “unjust discrimination” and they called on Catholics “to welcome with respect and sensitivity persons with homosexual inclinations.”

While this teaching really is not news, as the Catholic Church has upheld this belief for centuries, it is disappointing. In the past, Pope Francis has been welcoming towards members of the LGBTQ+ community. In 2020, during an interview for a documentary, Pope Francis spoke in favor of legal civil unions for same-sex couples, stating that homosexual people “have a right to a family” and “are children of God.” Though this statement did not indicate a change in Catholic teachings.

As many countries across the globe have legalized same-sex marriage, the Catholic Church has continually rejected the idea and in doing so, has turned away many younger followers. And in my opinion—so be it. There is a reason membership is dwindling.

Being with someone you love should not be considered a sin. Who you love is not a choice. Love is love, and love should always be celebrated and accepted when it is between two consenting adults. I think that the Catholic Church needs to reconsider what the word “welcome” means if they are going to claim that everyone has a place in the church.

Your love life does not require the Vatican’s approval. It is important to remember that an individual’s faith is between themselves and their creator. It is not one person’s place to deny another person’s humanity. In other words, you do not get to tell other people how to live their

lives according to your beliefs. And quite frankly, I am sick of old white men telling the rest of the world how to live their lives.

Opinions are opinions, but when they invalidate the existence of a whole group of people and deny them basic rights, they are no longer just opinions. They are a hateful act of discrimination. I grew up in the church and no longer consider myself a member, or even a Christian anymore. I believe in love and acceptance for all humans, which the teachings and actions of the Church do not reflect, in my opinion.

To any members of the LGBTQ+ community reading this—you are valid. It is okay to be confused about your beliefs. It is okay if the God you know and believe in is different from the God the Church told you about. It is okay if you do not believe in any god or any religion at all. What matters is that you are here, and you are wonderful just the way you are.

By Katie Alley

Graduating from the Electoral College Act II

Time of day: The Senators are settling in for their lunch

How do we prevent the Tyranny of the Majority? So far, we've been able to avoid the worse end of this fault in Democratic institutions by ultimately giving the power wielded by the majority to their elected officials, and entrusting the will of many to their representatives. In this way the majority couldn't become tyrannical since they didn't have direct access to ruling others by law, only the Senators, Mayors, Presidents, Governors Local Officials and



all their ilk risk exposure to the tyrannical temptations in a Republic (not to say the Majority in America hasn't oppressed in other ways). But the closer the people come to the Power they once externalized (say with the removal of the Electoral College), the more power the undistinguished majority have (kept within state lines, the voter said that "I as far as I have a representative, want my representative to vote in this way", without this buffer, the state can't be swooned before the voter, only the voter is to be courted {by ads, by ideology}, meaning the majority is directly negotiated [and swallows the existence of Politicians, as they have become Puppets of Public Content]), the more the power corrupts in its own image [disintegrating into its form of expression (and politicians are elected because they are 'good' politicians, electable, presentable,

regardless of their ability to realize ideology, regardless of their cultural accountability to whom they represent; and ideology is consumed and regurgitated at the party because that is where the ideologies *live*, all others starving at the gate without their benefactors, Political Parties offer different locales with the same spread, and the supposed difference in their practices are vehemently defended so the partisans can maintain their personal relevance, rather than reveal the true relevance of their acts [or lack thereof when regarding politicians and their parties], to the state, to the people), the greater the need for new powers to regain control of the system [Reform].

But this question of how to establish this benevolent, democratic majority, tongue tied to a less-Republican, more-Democratic Voting system, presents the dissolution of Electoral Boundaries as the cause of the problematic question (that America's inability to ease the modern Democratic-Republican Political Divide, implies that the Democratic erasure of the Electoral College would press upon the already declining Republican Party [currently fracturing, held very loosely by anti-liberal sentiment], tipping the scales drastically in a Democrat's favor [in favor of the cities], thereby silencing the Republican's Voice and Role into obscurity, via a potential tyranny of majority [if some sort of compromise isn't reached before the power is seized]), and as the questionable answer (that there is right now, a bipolar tyrannical majority, which, pragmatically speaking, both politicians and voters are beholden, but neither can affect any meaningful change to as individuals, unless they give up their hopes and dreams to one of the majorities [with a realization of the ulterior 'political'-self, or Identity Politics], circumstantial majorities which are most succinctly expressed as largely generated in blind opposition, when this occurrence of bipartisan tyranny is in such a state of disrepair that no one person can fix it by showing us the right way to use the system {that no partisan would acknowledge the truly bipartisan need [to stretch across aisles] without lamenting its unfairness to their partisan perspective [that they can't bring the lingering compassion of such a compromising hug back to their seats and then home to display], and no politically stable group truly wishes to oppose the hand that grooms them, it seems the best solution would be a system change that allows for a fresh good to flourish atop the rotten crop).

Because our reform (a Democratically structured vote, uncovered when eliminating the electoral college) aims to both exacerbate the problem (accelerate the speed at which America's Republican Element runs its natural course), and solve the problem through this stress (discover a healthier division to vote on, when the Republican Element is overcome due to their sudden irrelevance in national politics, and the dense {Socialist, Environmental, Anti-Racist, Anti-Sexist, Transgendered, Sexually Liberal, Minoritively Religious, Non-Religious, Alternative Lifestylist...}) Democratic coalition breaks apart, picking up old enemies in the remnants of Republican Ideology, creating a new majority), we should take efforts to distinguish between the painful procedure of setting the bone (the Anti-Republican drive which unites the Democratic Coalition to try and destroy the Republican party, to better get at the Republican Elements [sore spots] the party preserves), and the goal of fixing the arm (that a constant beratement of our historical position, where we were a fundamentally flawed government with aims for self-betterment {a Republic pretending to be a Democracy, while limiting the vote for representation to a clear minority}, can only bring our cultural relation to our past history so low {that we [as far as we may be a part of the establishment] are inheritors of slavers, pirates, and genocidal simpletons}, and when that Republic is washed away, and hopefully some of its sins with it,

something must still be built on its foundations), if we don't want to keep breaking the arm over and over again in a political stupor, with all sorts of poems and pinings to not have the arm be broken.

Scene 1: Cities of Power



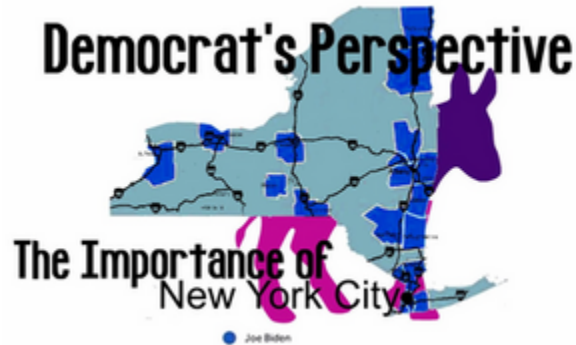
But how will the voters organize themselves after state lines are transcended in the election. Luckily, due to the imperfection of such man-made rules like borders, the voter should already have a dimension to their voting that accesses this space beyond the state (while it is true that our Governmental State ultimately decides the elections connotations for the voter in reality, the calling of a vote implies the existence of a State which the voter is aware of, that is not the Governmental State, but may be partially

realized in Government). To find this place for ourselves, we need look no further than the means that a voter uses to become informed about an election, and where they get these intellectual products ([The Cities], which while sufficiently multifarious, I will be simplifying their total importance into two Intellectual Capitals [Los Angeles & New York], assuming a continued usage of bipolar power distributions in American Politics). What gives us the tools to crack open the seemingly intentional frivolity of politics [Ideology & its Consequence], but the centers of these extravagant political stagings themselves [Hollywood & the News], and the means by which they relay these dramatizations [Movies & Papers]. In order to conjure a nationwide vote, a Reality Political must be established for the good of the people, so the vote can be intelligible to all the voters {the agreement can be as simple as, 'who would be in charge', or 'who represents such and such a swath of land', or slightly more complex like, 'how will our representations of past-and-future human endeavors be allocated for the communal good, in the school budget' or 'what sort of enforceable code of conduct would we all like to adhere to via external means, when ratifying a law'}. Which means the way the voter is able to think about the election directly affects what the election actually *is* about (Most common example is the event of televised debate in the JFK v Nixon election, but news reports, or topical themes in films are obviously integral to the way our political process operates). So much so that when providing an election that goes beyond supposedly antiquated state lines, then the actual means of proving such an election to have occurred {that the people did vote, meaning that everyone understood what was being voted upon, and had their decision accounted for in some way} must transcend the means of state relating that produced our Republican Democracy in the first place {and wouldn't necessarily fall back upon being an election about a person as they are representative, or even a ballot based election, where the voter places in words, what some others might do in action}.

The very fact that the Electoral College is on the cusp of delivering its graduation speech, means the methods of delivering political information have evolved to the point that the next stage of

American Democracy seems simultaneously: frustratingly out of reach {when it's obscured by its actual occurrence as a Republic} and almost upon us (that we can't help but cry out for this Freedom, to unburden it, and be unburdened). But to lay the blame for the haste we make in this work solely on the backwards-facing Republicans is to not entirely know what we mean when we wish for this truer democracy [where all can participate], since surely if one were to understand the need to restructure our very use of borders to decide the vote, than they couldn't help but see the Democracy we're implying (the election we intend to hold). Therefore, if there are still Republicans, it is because we do not adequately know how to relate the rich potential this future holds, so that everyone could understand it (which should be required to have a vote on whether or not to go down this road [which of course is the vote itself]). The challenge of a Democracy is not to argue a point that most people can agree with; it's to find the argument that everyone can engage in.

Scene 2: The Import(s) of New York City



They sing songs to you
Oh fragile one
Shattered on the pavement
Into a thousand pieces
A thousand lives
On the lord's day driving stagecoaches
Their hopes crept up on parchment paper
Softer than a feather
Lighter than their airs
Ink blots on their mind
With a coming darkness
Words can't describe
Blind, only faith will see you through
Signing off on fates no one yet knew
Not almighty
Oh fragile one
Pieces scattered on paved pavement roads
The fire raged
Across factory floors

The smoking chained
To holstered guns

What you wouldn't give
to crack a window
What you wouldn't buy
to crash through the pane

Not cut out, to be cut in
Was sighed
during

Breaking time on rainy days
Smoke choked out in your heart
And beat your lungs

Pick the pieces
Don't cut your hands
Such tender fingers
fragile one
Tell the debris
From harsh pavement
Gentle stories
From hard souls

“And uh eyes that burn like cigarettes”

(cake)

-Politikos

By Jakob Perez

Nostalgia

In Greek, *nostos* means to return home, and *algos* means pain. These two words have morphed together into what we now call *nostalgia*, a feeling we so often chase. Nostalgia is the pain of an old wound, but one that is dangerously addicting. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again—a homesickness for a home that no longer exists and will never exist again.

Newer generations have always felt a fascination for times that preceded them, but since the Covid-19 pandemic first struck, people have been using nostalgia to cope with an unforeseeable and messy future. Covid-19 has made people of all generations all over the world nostalgic for a past that held a promising future.

As a young person entering adulthood in the time of Covid-19, I can certainly admit to having fallen in the dangerous cycle of living in the past once or twice—using that ache to satisfy my longing for any new feeling. I also think that I am a nostalgic person at heart. I’m even nostalgic towards things that I haven’t even experienced—having Jell-O in the basement of a mid-century modern suburban house while playing D&D with my friends, for example. I’m certain that a lot of that nostalgia comes from the media that I have consumed, both media from before I was born and contemporary media that simply evokes feelings of nostalgia, like *That 70s Show*. I’m especially nostalgic of media—films, television, music, and print—that I had once consumed alongside my father before his death, many of which he felt nostalgic towards.

Because of my inclination to dwell on moments where I was too foolish to even contemplate my own happiness, I tend to always go back to the media that I grew up with. When I long for my childhood, I revisit *Bananas in Pyjamas* and relive Sunday mornings with my parents in my beautiful childhood home. When I long for my dad’s company, I listen to *The Doors* and revisit our long car rides and camping trips. When I want to relive my angsty years as a preteen, I re-watch the first season of *American Horror Story*, or revisit *Freaks and Geeks*, both of which somewhat introduced me to the awareness of counter-culture.

It’s easy to see why shows like *Stranger Things* and *Freaks and Geeks* work (the latter because of the cult following it developed after its initial failure). Nostalgia sells. It’s perhaps the easiest feeling to evoke in people, now more than ever. Yes, like all good things, too much of it can be a bad thing. But I don’t think that we should write off nostalgia as a coping mechanism. We’re living through a time of mass depression, it’s okay for people to go back to their childhood favorites when they have a longing to feel... anything.

By Talulla Torthe

A 10 Second Clip Sold for \$6.6 Million. How?



I’m sure within the last 2 weeks or so, you’ve come across “NFTs” on the internet. You’ve also probably heard of a ten second clip by Beeple that sold for \$6.6 Million... Beeple has also just sold a collage of 5,000 images for \$69.3 Million. It’s safe to say the NFT hype train is in full

But what exactly are NFTs?

An NFT or non-fungible token is a digital asset that is tied to a blockchain. What makes something non-fungible is that it’s one of a kind. There is limited quantity and thus it cannot be multiplied like a regular picture for instance. A blockchain is a ledger

that publicly documents transactions and establishes your proof of ownership. In short, NFTs are

unique one-of-a-kind digital assets. What's crazy about NFTs is that anything that's digital can be made into an NFT. So, it could be a picture, video, gif, tweet, webpage, digital basketball card, song, literally anything digital.

Ok, but what's the point? How is an NFT valuable when I can download the same digital asset online for free?

The value primarily comes from that proof of ownership. Think of it like a certificate of authenticity that says you own a very limited addition of something.

Wait, digital basketball cards?

Indeed. It's called NBA Top Shot and it allows you to buy and sell NBA highlights in the form of short clips called moments. A clip of a Lebron James dunk sold for \$208,000. Yeah, the first time I heard that my mind was absolutely blown away too. Dapper Labs, the company that created Top Shot, say they've made [\\$230 Million](#) in sales so far.

What do NFTs Promise?

A lot, because this new technology has the potential to change many things. NFTs allow artists more creative freedom by selling art directly to their fans. Some music artists right now are already planning on making NFTs part of an exclusive offer for fans when they buy concert tickets or merch bundles. It also breaks the barrier of entry for artists who are left out of the often-elitist art scene. For digital artists, it's a way to finally make a steady income. Royalties can be built into NFTs so that anytime one is sold, the original artist will get a cut.

This new technology can also serve as a way to undercut the very unequal industries that many artists are forced to work under. Record labels, streaming platforms like Spotify and so many others make money off of artists but rarely let them share in the profits. NFTs will make it easier for music artists to be more independent and be less reliant on record labels.

On a much bigger level, NFTs could change the way consumers engage with art. There is already work being done on VR galleries, frames to display your digital NFT on a wall and substituting physical memorabilia with digital ones. It's an exciting new frontier.

Any downsides?

I would say several. First, if you haven't guessed already, all the hype around NFTs is fueled almost completely by people wanting to make money. Collectibles have always been a thing and in recent years the market for collectibles like baseball cards has exploded. The difference however is that the collectibles market for any kind of product was initially driven by a desire to collect, not speculation. Later on, investors caught on to the potential value that these collectors would have, but collecting played a much bigger role early on.

[Top Shot](#), for instance, allows you to buy and sell basketball highlights but how many people are buying these highlights with the idea that it would be cool to just own it? Maybe a few, but speculation is foundational to the way Top Shot functions.

Second, there's been a debate over the environmental impact of NFTs. NFTs are tied to the blockchain Ethereum. In short, all the transactions that happen on Ethereum are done on machines that consume huge amounts of energy. There are questions about how to clean up this process and what role NFTs have in [damaging the environment](#). Even though it makes up a small portion of transactions on Ethereum currently, the increasing popularity of NFTs and crypto in general could push those machines into overdrive as demand increases.

Third, most NFT's will probably be worthless in a few years. This is true for collectibles in general. How many things have you kept and thought later on it would be valuable and then found out it was completely worthless? James Surowiecki, a columnist for The Slate and The New Yorker, adds that investing in collectibles is far more lucrative when you get on it early. All the outrageously priced NFTs make this point clear. There's the very real possibility that the whole thing will crash.

Should I Invest?

Don't take financial advice from strangers. I'm just a random guy with a computer and apparently a lot of time on my hands to read about the very confusing world of NFTs.

By Alpha Bah

Literature Section

Surviving College Pt.2

I'm running,
wheezing,
out of breath-
This marathon of life.

A rest,
a break

is all I want,

But there's no end in sight.

"Don't go too fast
through life!" they say.

I wish, I want,

I try.

At night I rush
through mounds of work,

hurrying to bed
Only 'cause I know

in morning
the race will start again.

Speed to the store,
slurp up my food...

I just don't have the time.
I'm learning in class

the pleasures of life;

Thoreau says,

don't work 'till you die.

I sit in class

and ponder this,

my planner by my side.

Its pages are filled-

tasks and to-dos-

with classwork

and what Thoreau writes.

By Dale Mott Slater

Bird Shot (Part 3)

“What kind of dog is that!?” yells Mark, fogging up the back seat window. I bite my tongue hard. Hard enough to imagine drinking a hot cup of coffee with this jerk later on and trying not to show the aggravation in my eyebrows.

“Mark, no. Leave the windows up,” I tell him. I look back at the dog and only one ear goes up this time. I can't take it anymore.

“Well anyway, her name's Kelly and she just absolutely loves everyone,” he says. Typical. “I don't wanna freak anybody out or nothin' but I lost both my legs a long time ago—back in The Long War. Kelly's been helpin' me out,” he says. *The dog's already cute enough, Bud.* I keep the gun trained at his head and raise my voice.

“Look, Jack. We need to get to Pittsburgh and we need this vehicle. Take this T.P. or leave it but—we need this van,” I tell him. It was worse than telling off Ron for the last time at our front door, Mark in the car-seat and Linda crying about starting a new school. This time, there's no grandparent's house to bring them to. There's no hotel. When it went down, we came back to an empty house and no sign of my ex-husband. Jack leans on his steering wheel, rubbing his forehead and looking off into the upper corners of his thoughts.

“Alright, hold on,” he says. “Not Pittsburgh, lady. Excuse me, what's your name?” he asks.

“It's fucking Ellen Degeneres,” I tell him and hold the gun tighter like I'll shoot him harder or something. “So—why *not* Pittsburgh?” I ask. I look at Linda, who folds her arms at me, and then at Mark, focused on the dog, not a care in the world.

“Pittsburgh's bad news. They got all kinds of government remnants trying to claim highway taxes in and out. You get in, that's one thing. All the T.P.'s gone around there and people're collecting scrap. Don't go down there unless you got a half-ton of steel you can trade. Ellen, if I can just call you that, you gotta get away from those cities,” he says. He's so confident with his hands draped over the steering wheel.

“So then—where do we go? Ride with you?” I ask him, still trying to pretend he's Ron and that a stupid answer waits for me somewhere.

“Well—” he answers, cut off by Linda smacking the side of the truck a few times.

“It's not like Grandpa's truck will arise from the dead anytime soon, Mom. If you shoot this guy then I'll forever blame you for ruining the only chance you had with a *NORMAL GUY* in years,” she says. I look at her again and her face has that Ronnish look again. She got me. Bitch. Who am I kidding? Amputated but relaxed does seem pretty normal these days.

“What is that? Twenty-gauge? Probably just bird shot in there, right?” Jack interrupts. He nods the tip of the barrel, next to his dog's face, pointed at his soft smile. It's the last straw.

I point the muzzle down and scream in the middle of Interstate Seventy-Nine. Linda comes over to me, reaching for my shoulder. The dog turns her own muzzle, confused by my rage and looks back at her owner, sliding carefully out of the driver's seat.

Jack waddles over to Linda and I, each foot looking tied down to a brick as he lifts it to its next spot on the asphalt. His boots are just like Mark's and he shoots him a thumbs up and a wink as

he comes around the front of the van. Behind the window, Mark looks like he just met his favorite baseball player, wiping the fog away to get a better look. I take a step back, my elbow corralling Linda behind me and point the gun at the dotted lines between us. He puts his hands up again and then points at the back of the van.

“I just wanted to give y'all something. Something for your travels in case y'all don't want to hang around with a creep like me,” he says. He opens the back hatch and then another long plastic container lying across the trunk.

“Got a twelve-gauge for you. Instead of that little twenty. Good thing about the heavier metal is you can use these whammy shells,” he says, reaching in his jacket pocket. “It's like shooting a fat, steel slug at someone. Could even hurt their car—real bad.” The weight of the shell sinks in his hand like a roll of nickels.

“Did you just say, *whammy shells*?” I ask him. “Like that stupid game show? *Press Your Luck*? No Whammies, no Whammies?”

“Yeah, that's right, I remember,” he laughs. “No more *whammies* for you.”

“Why're you being so nice to us—*Jack*?” I ask, trying to make the name sound dumb. I love his name.

“Well, Ellen. Ever since I got this new set of stilts, I'm just trying to help everyone else hold on to theirs. Having no legs ain't too good of a time,” he says, laughing at Mark, who finally releases a muted giggle after his silent admiration, fading away behind the fog again. My daughter finally unfolds her arms.

“My name's Linda, and that's Mark. I know my mother already introduced us in a very rude way, but hey, what are mothers for, right?” says Linda.

“Oh, I don't know about all of that. You kids ought to be nicer to your mom, out here on the highway, holding up some stranger with a shotgun. She's got a lot goin' on. Y'all could of ran into some character who decided to take her away from you. Why don't *you* hold on to this one,” he says, handing the twelve-gauge to Linda. “Now, you have two—no trades needed.”

“You mean THREE!” yells Mark, disobeying my order to keep the door closed, holding up the pellet gun. “My Dad got this for me and I shoot *pigeons*.” he continues.

“That's pretty neat there, Mister Mark,” says Jack. “You know, when my daddy gave me my first gun, do you know what he said?” he asks Mark, looking over to me for a moment and pausing, mentally telling me how nice my hair looks today even though I haven't shampooed it in months. He smiles again. “He said, 'Son, you don't ever have to shoot a living thing on this Earth if you don't want to, but if you do—you need to know that it's a trade. Gotta give something up for it. And don't you ever load this weapon with the intention of *wanting* something. You understand that?” he tells Mark. The more he talks, the more I watch his hips sway back and forth, keeping his balance on top of what might as well be a pair of stilts.

“Do you want to maybe sit back down, Jack?” I ask him. Linda doesn't speak—or look either. Mark grabs the pellet rifle from the seat next to him and looks at it like the thing can shoot laser beams now. Jack looks up and down the highway, sliding his hands into his pockets. Any other person could've blown him away by now and he probably wouldn't even bat an eye.

“I think it's getting dark soon. You guys wanna check out an old parking lot where you can get whatever kind car you want? Alls you need is a good battery to throw in it and some gas. Sound good? I got some rusty sheets of steel that still have some meat on 'em. Maybe find a nice minivan, bullet-proof it a little bit,” he says, stopping in order to reserve his plethora of tips and tricks, waiting for us to sound interested and not annoyed. I know that face. Again, this man wants nothing but to give to the woman pointing a gun at him, and I just want a generator so my kids have lights to pretend to do their homework with.

“Look, Jack. We're sorry. I'm sorry. My name's Patty, by the way. Could you maybe just drive us back up north a little. The border would be great. We've had a long day and we'd really appreciate your help,” I tell him. He finally lets out the smile and nod he's been saving, waiting for me to cave in. He helps us carry the Charmin over to his van, reciting every cute little anecdote about every cute little Patty he ever knew.

“That being said--ain't never met a Patty with a shotgun before,” he says. “Nice to meet you. That's for sure.”

Jack's van sits rumbling and idle, waiting for Linda and I to salvage what we can from Grandpa's truck. Mark's inside, reaching his arms out, amazed by the amount of room and seating options. Linda always gets shotgun, but now, Mark can have any seat he wants. It's even more amusing to the dog, her tail waving frantically for someone new to play with.

“You mind sitting *gunner* for me, Linda? Usually Kelly does it, but it seems we now have some more firepower available. Maybe your mom can catch a nap on the way home. Just in case?” asks Jack. Linda looks up at the driver's seat and then to me, grabbing the new shotgun and walking to the front of the van.

I sit on a bench seat with Mark, his head resting on my lap after only ten minutes north-bound. It feels good to sit in the back, to not be driving, or holding the gun, or keeping watch. I watch the green signs with names in German and Dutch and Seneca, no bullet holes on them. This is how Mark sees the world, trying to remember the French translations. We're going home; not to the house that used to be Ron's, but to the house that my children and I built; the house we defend.

I *did* need a nap and as I join Mark, snoring in the back seat of Jack's ugly church van, my last thought is that no one will mess with us when they see the bullet hole from one of those fancy whammy shells. Rita will start rumors about where we went and who this man is and how we got this other gun, or a new car. No one will understand her chirping through the muffled gas mask. I'll tell her we just needed to get out of the house for a while.

By Andrew Wiechert

Sports Section

Tennis Takes on Sage

Last weekend, the Women's Tennis team took a loss against Russell Sage College, however, it was a strong start to their Spring season. Head Coach Jordan Crouch and Assistant Coach Tori Pelligrino claim that, "[they] were incredibly proud of how [the] team played. Every player took everything they worked on the past couple of weeks and applied it to their match—everyone came together and showed great success."



Freshmen Anna Gwordz won her singles match with a final score of 2-6, 4-1, ending with a forfeit from her opponent. "I played well and was excited to be back competing. I learned a lot and will take this to my next match and continue working hard," Gwordz said.

During Gwordz's and Senior Cassandra Mark's doubles match, they won with a final score of 8-4. They helped each other stay motivated by encouraging one another

after every point and staying focused throughout the match. "There were some shots that could have been better and overall, I did not play as well as I wanted, however, I'm proud of the outcome – we really pushed ourselves and came out with a positive result," said Mark.

Another win for the Saxon's was Freshmen Kimberly Rauber, with a winning score of 6-4, 6-3. She started the first set strong and continued staying focused, ensuring the win by not backing down with each point. "I really enjoyed competing, it was nice to play collegiately again. The team's energy was something that, also, helped me remain motivated and focused throughout every point," Rauber said.

Despite the overall losing score of 3-6, every player worked hard and applied their weeks of training to each of their matches. With their next match being March 20th against Utica Pioneers, everyone is continuously striving for success during their practices and taking what they learned and applying it to their work ethic on and off the court. For upcoming matches, check out the GoSaxons website and watch future livestream games to cheer them on remotely.

"I was so excited to watch everyone play well. It has been a long time coming and I know our team was itching to play some great competition against some other schools. I was really pleased with our effort and communication as a team during these matches, particularly in doubles play.

Congratulations to each of our first-years for getting their first of many collegiate wins,” said Coach Crouch.

By Kailey Reyes

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