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A FABRICATED CONVERSATION FOR THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE IDEAS BY VERNON HOWL

**It's shocking to me there hasn't been a professional athlete who wore hot pink or deep red lipstick on the playing surface yet.**

What if they smudged or stained someone on the other team's uniform? Surely there'd be a fight?

**Sports should be more like baseball where the only contact is gentle hand holding. Then this wouldn't be an issue. All of the physicality should be handled by machines or fabricated by a computer via AVR for the TV crowd. If bloodlust is what we're after.**

I imagined there would be drones by now, big steel drones, with porcelain baby faces wearing bowler hats and the bodies of

eagles, sparing the sky no room for blue. We've completely lost our sense of creativity and wonder as a people.

**A sky full of drones would be better for sports, no doubt. The weather would be less complicated at least in the outdoor matches. Not sure what other needs they would service, especially larger ones.**

Everything always comes back to sports with you.

**The best sports is technology. It's the greatest contest because all of its participants don't realize they're playing a sport. Some people say the same thing about life but that's not quite right. Normal life is too boring and**

**sad but when you devote it to technology and futurism, well, it's a whole new ballgame.**

I tried to invent a deviation for the sport once. I called it “Depression Ball” but it involved camels and we could never figure out what to do with all the poop.

**I've developed so many sports tweaks, I lost count ages ago. I never heard back about any of them.**

Sometimes I feel like it stinks there's just the one sport now, but I guess that's all you need. I can vividly recall a baseball game where the only objective was to murder a black cat hiding in the dugout with a foul ball.

It was really the only sport they left out of the new and only sport, that's true. I miss it too. Even though it was so gentle, something about holding those bats made it feel like you were watching cavemen doing an interpretive dance.

There should be an interpretive dance element in the NSA, that's for sure. Like a points-multiplier if you scored while also dancing.

It would cut against the no music policy but I suppose you don't need sound to dance.

The players could wear tap shoes.

Now you're talking. Things *have* gotten too stagnant. For example, they should

**have never outlawed drones after those exhibition experiments just because one person in the stands lost an eye.**

Those drones games were probably the last time I watched live, to be honest. Some weeks I just bet the minimum amount required and hope for the best.

**You really ought to pay more attention. When was the last time you played?**

Oh, I put in my five years right after high school and called it quits. Mount Victory Gravel Miners, center forward. I actually wasn't half-bad. Finished third on the team in scoring during my tenure.

**Hmm, you don't say. You're an interesting guy, Chom.**

It's not that I don't like sports. Finished in the top 10% betting in hit percentage more times than I can remember. I just feel like there has to be something more to life. I've even exhausted my supply of movies and books. The algorithm seems to be getting worse.

**Man, don't say that out loud!**

I'm not worried. If they're listening to everyone, they're listening to no one.

**Mumbo jumbo, my friend. You better be careful.**

**You know, speaking of movies, I think you're wrong. I asked for a four-hour one about a piglet who had to skydive into a volcano to save the world and it was the best thing I've seen.**

It still looks like a cartoon to me. And the books are even worse. Even the recent history prompts seem to be riddled with inconsistencies and straight-up lies.

**Ha. What recent history?**

Laugh all you want, but we're losing something in that department. Just because it feels like nothing of consequence is ever happening doesn't mean that it isn't.

I had a grilled cheese for lunch, Chom. It tasted just like a grilled cheese.

Very funny, Gary. I don't think you're going to be the one who's laughin last, though.

Who's laughing? Are you trying to say that living forever is a *bad* thing? You're not seriously saying that.

I'm not sure this is living exactly. It's more like maintaining. My great-great-great grandfather died when his *gas* automobile plunged into a river. Now that's drama!

If you want to see eagle drones with baby heads or whatever, just ask for it.

**But this negativity is a bummer. I don't know why we even hang out anymore.**

I never really considered this "hanging out." We're just neighbors. And I definitely don't see the point in moving and the hassle that entails now.

**That's pretty hurtful, Chom. I always enjoyed our conversations even when you start sounding like a terrorist.**

Oh, please. Don't get me started.

**There was a while back when I got caught up on the idea of having children. And I thought that it would be nice to experience that. I'm not immune to your line of thinking. But there comes a point when you just apply for**

**expiration or accept things. You should at least try. Seriously. Think of a prompt and make it really long. I found the longer they are, the better. I once watched a movie that took me over six months to complete. It was impossible to fully comprehend but the experience changed me.**

The kids question is something else entirely. I mean, it's not at all. It's all the same thing. But I'm not even talking about something so deep. I did once try to watch a movie where I had a kid. But it didn't look like me and the kid was just horrible. I stopped thinking about children after that.

**You should never watch a movie starring yourself. Amateur hour.**

That's true. I guess people aren't doing that anymore. The loss of vanity of narcissism is probably the only good development of the last few hundred years.

**It's not even that complicated. Most people have changed the way they look a dozen or more times. I don't think anyone's any less narcissistic.**

I've never changed the way I look.

**Is that so? Well, you're what? At least a hundred years younger than me. I guess there wasn't much to improve upon that crop of DNA.**

A gross oversimplification, Gary.

Maybe. But folks from the last couple *legal* batches are different. You can't deny that.

Who's to say *I* was legal?

Don't go there. You think they're still some out there? Roaming free?

I know it for a fact.

I think I better go.

Listen, I'm sorry. I'm just in a weird mood today.

And for the record, I think how they treated those people was wrong. It wasn't their fault at all. Round up the parents, but not the offspring.

There was a player on the Gravel Miners. Gree Folley. Played a dozen or so years after I retired. Real good player and one of the best fixers I ever saw. I was still living in Ohio then and I would go watch the games live from time to time as I was dating a girl on the squad. Anyway, they zapped in right in the middle of the game as he was on a breakaway. Made a big announcement and hauled the body away. Everyone loved him. And nobody knew. Never seen a team lose so badly when they resumed play. Probably one of the biggest drubbings of all-time.

That's honestly a stat I should know.

**I think I recall that! Why on earth was even on the team!**

Because that's what I'm saying. Sometimes the best place to hide is in plain sight. I never knew him personally. But my girlfriend said he was a real nice guy. Totally normal.

**But the alternative? The alternative to that?**

Why did everyone assume that if we didn't round them all up, people would continue to do it? It's just a bad assumption. He just wanted to live forever like everybody else.

Look, I see your point there, I really do. It was a decision and an incredibly fatalistic one. Points had to be made. Statements had to be hammered through. But the risk of mucking this up for everyone else...

There you go! The *risk*. Isn't there something about risk? Don't you miss it?

I never knew it and neither did you. You're pining for an experience that went extinct. You want to watch yourself do something risky? You can do that. You want to read about being rebellious and taking the whole system down? Go ahead.

I struggle with the fact that you can't see the difference between

these things. If all fabrication has become reality then where does that leave reality?

**Who cares! We're going around in circles here, neighbor.**

Yeah, I guess. But it feels good to say these things out loud.

**Does it, though? You really don't worry about saying them?**

No, not really. I don't think it's too dangerous to say these things. If we can think them then why shouldn't we be allowed to say them. I could have created this entire conversation in a prompt. What exactly would the difference be?

**I think you know what the difference would be. There are crimes and there—**

*Crimes?* These are just ideas. What was Gree Folley's crime besides being born? We've been tricked into thinking that all human interaction needs to be boiled down to sex and sports talk. And what movie prompt you just *have* to try. You ever seen a movie or read a book made before 2100?

**Of course I have. There's some great stuff. And I'd be more than happy to chat about it!**

I don't think you see my point.

Oh, but I do. You want to take the greatest gift mankind has ever been given. A gift that literally defies god. You want to talk about something? Let's talk about that. I bet you have loads to say.

God is real, Gary. The only question we answered about religion is whether it's a benevolent force and it most clearly is not. It's up there. It's in here. It's everywhere. Every movie you make. Every single sentence you read. Every breath you take. Hell, every shit you take. A little piece of god comes out of you. We can't escape it and it's—

AT THAT MOMENT, A LARGE  
DRONE FLEW DOWN AND  
SNATCHED CHOM AWAY. GARY  
WATCHED AS HE WAS CARRIED  
THROUGH THE AIR  
SCREAMING. HE WAS STILL  
HOLDING THE TRASH HE HAD  
WALKED OUTSIDE OF THE  
APARTMENT WITH BEFORE  
INITIATING THAT FATEFUL  
CONVERSATION WITH CHOM.  
HE THREW IT IN THE BIN. FOR  
MANY YEARS, HE WONDERED  
WHAT BECAME OF CHOM  
DESPITE ALWAYS KNOWING THE  
TRUTH. AT SOME POINT, HE  
STOPPED THINKING ABOUT HIM  
ALL TOGETHER. IT SEEMED LIKE  
THE MEMORY FADED  
COMPLETELY EVEN IF THAT  
ISN'T TECHNICALLY TRUE.