



**KNOCK,  
KNOCK!**

We've Got  
Laughs  
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# Reader's Digest

CANADA'S  
MOST-READ  
MAGAZINE

MAY 2021

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*Mother's*  
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# Don't Pick Up the Phone

**I**t was the call I'd been dreading: my mom, sounding exasperated, telling me how her computer had stopped working ever since someone from Microsoft tech support phoned and offered to check that her system was up to date.

"Did you give him your credit card number, too?" I asked, not wanting to hear the answer.

"He did mention something about a fee, but we never got around to that."

"That's good," I said. "You know he wasn't from Microsoft, right, Mom?"

"Are you sure? How do you know?"

I didn't know—but who does? And that's how they get us.

As writer Emily Landau explains in this month's

cover story, "How to Outsmart a Scammer" (page 28), it's getting harder to avoid unsolicited callers, people claiming to be your friend on social media, online retailers offering too-good-to-be-true bargain products, and websites that surreptitiously collect your personal information.

In the last year, reports of scams in Canada jumped by 32 per cent. Fraudsters of all kinds took advantage of the fact that so many of us are at home and conducting even more of our daily lives online.

So whom can you trust? Read our story to find out how you can keep yourself—and your tech—safe.

As for my mom, the caller had promised someone would phone her back to complete the "update" to her computer. That's typically when scammers demand payment and take off with your credit-card information. Instead, she

paid a few hundred dollars to a legit PC repair shop to get it working again. She counted herself lucky she didn't lose a lot more.



**P.S. You can reach me at [mark@rd.ca](mailto:mark@rd.ca).**

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**“House Calls”**

Rinaldi's stories have appeared in *Maclean's*, *Toronto Life* and *The Walrus*. As a former editor of *Pivot Magazine*, he has won several awards for his business writing. A frequent music reviewer for publications like *Maisonneuve*, he recently recorded his own album, which will be released later this year under the artist name Longtime Listener. Read his story on page 18.



**DELPHINE MEIER**

Illustrator, Montreal

**“House Calls”**

Born and raised in Switzerland, Meier's illustrations are characterized by simple geometric shapes and a punchy colour palette. She has received several industry accolades, including a 2018 Grafika Award. Her work was also featured in *Couleurs Essentielles*, a pandemic project of vibrant illustrations on the streets of Montreal. Find her work on page 18.



**YASIN OSMAN**

Illustrator, Toronto

**“As Kids See It”**

Osman is an award-winning photographer and cartoonist whose work has appeared in *The New Yorker* and *Vice*. In 2018 and 2019, his solo photography exhibition, *Dear Ayeeyo*, was shown in Toronto and London, England. Osman is also the founder of Shoot for Peace, an arts mentorship program combatting gun violence. See his latest illustration on page 38.



**JASON McBRIDE**

Writer, Toronto

**“Good News: Five Reasons to Smile”**

McBride has written for *Report on Business Magazine*, *Toronto Life* and *Maclean's*. In 2015, he won a gold National Magazine Award for his profile of Canadian filmmaker John Greyson. His biography of the writer Kathy Acker will be published by Simon & Schuster next year. Check out his roundup of uplifting stories from around the world on page 11.



### ALL THAT JAZZ

I related to “Old School” by Rebecca Philips (December 2020). I’d always wanted to play the music I listened to when I was a teenager—Lighthouse, Chicago and Herb Alpert, among others—and started taking trumpet lessons at the age of 64. Plus, I’d read that playing a musical instrument is linked with a lower risk of developing dementia. I’ve been playing for three years now thanks to New Horizons, an international non-profit that provides programs for adults wanting to learn a new instrument.

—JEFFREY BRICKS, *Toronto*

### CONTRIBUTE

Send us your funny jokes and anecdotes, and if we publish one in a print edition of *Reader’s Digest*, we’ll send you \$50. To submit, visit [rd.ca/joke](http://rd.ca/joke).

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### SENTIMENTAL ITEMS

I’ve been reading *Reader’s Digest Canada* since I was about eight years old. I remember being at our family cottage as a child, selecting an issue from the shelf, tucking into my sleeping bag and digging in. The magazines had been bought by my grandparents—one had died and the other had a stroke before they could be a part of my young life. Reading those issues made me feel connected to them.

—BRENDA BOWLES, *Hamilton, Ont.*

### CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

“The Cousin Who Saved My Life” by Cristina Howorun (January/February 2021) really touched me. I’ve been dealing with my own chronic kidney disease—microscopic hematuria—since childhood. Though I’ve remained stable for the last 17 years, my disease has taught me never to take any moment for granted. Howorun’s story is a powerful reminder of the preciousness of life.

—CAROLINE MAH, *Toronto*

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*How an Ottawa kombucha maker helps  
people recovering from addiction*

# Good Brew

BY Karen Stiller

PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA DEEKS

**W**HEN HE WAS 16 years old, Jon Ruby tried alcohol for the first time. “All the voices in my head that said I wasn’t good enough went away,” says Ruby, who is now 47.

Soon he was drinking regularly and experimenting with drugs. At 22, he began to abuse cocaine and eventually spent time in jail. Within a decade he was homeless, and estranged from his family and friends. “I was emotionally and spiritually bankrupt,” he says.

While living in a shelter, things started to go right: he found Alcoholics Anonymous and, eventually, his faith. By 2006, Ruby was sober. He began work-

ing in a rehabilitation centre, feeling that it was his turn to help other people struggling with addiction. Through his eight years at the centre, he learned that, even after treatment, people need continued help integrating back into society. “There are a lot of pressures involved with getting back to normal life,” he says.

Ruby founded Union City Church in Ottawa in 2016, focusing the church’s programming on addiction recovery. Three years later, he and a team from the church launched a social enterprise that brews, bottles and sells the fermented tea drink kombucha—or

Carlington Booch's  
Josh Beattie (left)  
and Jon Ruby  
(right) employ  
people in recovery.




“booch.” Profits are used to pay staff and to fund workshops and other events that help people struggling with addiction tell their stories and receive support. Ruby named the new business Carlington Booch, after the neighbourhood where he first opened shop.

Large barrels line the back wall of the workshop, full of organic kombucha, in flavours like spicy ginger and sweet root beer. “We chose kombucha as our product because it’s all natural, it’s handcrafted, and it’s a product that goes through a transformation process,” says Ruby, “which is something like the process of recovery.”

He describes Carlington Booch as a shop of second chances. In addition to funding recovery programs, the brewery provides job and volunteer opportunities to people in drug and alcohol recovery. Since its launch, about 35 people have worked for or volunteered with the enterprise. They include operations manager Josh Beattie, a former electrician. “This is a workplace that understands the struggles we go through,” says Beattie, who has been

sober for two years. He points to the brewery’s flexible schedules and supportive environment. Team members can, for example, take time off when they need to see their sponsor or attend a court date. Beattie himself makes sure employees know he’s available to help when they need him. “I can take the calls that come in the middle of the day or night,” he says.

Pre-pandemic the “booch” mainly sold at farmers’ markets and cafés, at \$4 a bottle. Now it is largely purchased online. Beattie and Ruby dream of seeing their products in every grocery store in Canada. Their post-pandemic goal is to sell 20,000 bottles a month.

One of the important lessons Ruby shares with his staff and volunteers is that addiction is all about isolation, and recovery requires the opposite. “Building a supportive community is just as important as helping someone learn to work,” he says. “Building community and being there for other people is one of our main thrusts. Recovery is about connection. We’ve been there. We understand that.” 



### Take a Hike

**But the beauty is in the walking—we are  
betrayed by destinations.**

GWYN THOMAS

**I like long walks, especially when they are taken  
by people who annoy me.**

NOEL COWARD

## GOOD NEWS

FIVE REASONS TO SMILE

BY Jason McBride

Felix Böck,  
founder of  
Vancouver's  
ChopValue

# A SECOND LIFE FOR CHOPSTICKS

**CANADA** There are approximately 600 sushi restaurants in Vancouver, arguably making it the sushi capital of North America. Before the pandemic, over 100,000 chopsticks and other wooden utensils were used once and thrown out every day, according to a 2018 study by *Metro Vancouver*.

In 2016, Felix Böck, then a 27-year-old studying sustainable construction materials at the University of British Columbia, was sitting in a sushi restaurant when he realized he was holding an underused resource in his own hand. Thus ChopValue was born. Böck's start-up recycles used wooden chopsticks and transforms them into

premium household objects, from cheeseboards to bookshelves.

The company makes about 30 such items, as well as other custom projects, with each employing a varying number of chopsticks (a charcuterie board, for example, uses 900).

So far, the company has collected and repurposed almost 33 million chopsticks nationwide. Its products can be found in department stores in other major Canadian cities.

The company's innovations don't end there, however. ChopValue's products are manufactured in "micro-factories"—franchises with workers (five to seven on average) who collect

chopsticks from local restaurants and produce items that can be sold by local retailers. There are three so far in Canada—in Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal—and Böck would like to get to 10 by the end of the year. “We’re trying to scale our idea in the most sustainable way,” he says. “We never wanted to do things the way they were done before. We’re onto something great here, something inspiring.”

## Pygmy Possum Gives Conservationists Hope

**AUSTRALIA** Devastating wildfires decimated large swaths of Australia in late 2019 and early 2020, with Kangaroo Island, off the country’s south coast, the site of some terrible blazes. Two people died, while businesses, homes, farms and animal habitats were destroyed—the wildfires affected approximately 211,000 of the island’s 440,500 hectares. Tens of thousands of domestic and wild animals died,



Little pygmy possums are mainly found in Tasmania.

including kangaroos and koalas. Many of those species survived, but it was feared that a rare pygmy possum may have been wiped out—until almost a year later, when conservationists discovered one that had somehow persevered. Weighing less than 10 grams, the miniature marsupial represented a particularly bright glimmer in a dark moment. If something so small could endure such catastrophic environmental destruction, maybe there’s hope for the rest of the world, too?

## A Community Feeds Hundreds of Stranded Truck Drivers

**UNITED KINGDOM** Last December, France abruptly banned all travellers and freight from the U.K. after the discovery of a new COVID-19 variant. The fallout? Hundreds of Europe-bound transport-truck drivers became stranded on a U.K. motorway en route to cross the English Channel. Two local Sikh groups—a branch of NGO Khalsa Aid and the Guru Nanak Darbar temple—quickly leaped into action, and, in the pouring rain, delivered 500 free chickpea curries and 300 mushroom-and-pasta dishes to drivers who, in some cases, ended up being marooned for a week.

Tales of such charity have become a staple of the pandemic—feeding anyone in need is a centuries-old tradition of the Sikh faith, and it will continue long after the pandemic is a

distant, bitter memory. “If we see a need,” said Jagdev Singh Virdee, the temple’s general secretary, “we fill the gap and go beyond.”

## Leading the Way to an All-Electric Future

**NORWAY** As the world steadily parts ways with fossil fuels, global carmakers are pivoting toward electric vehicles (EVs). Ford, for instance, announced in February that all of its consumer vehicles in Europe will be fully electric by 2030, while Toyota announced

plans to generate half of its sales from EVs by 2025.

Nowhere is this revolution more evident than in Norway. While the country is still one of Europe’s largest producers of crude oil, it’s also leading the world in the adoption of EVs. Thanks to generous tax incentives and a robust EV infrastructure, 54 per cent of all cars sold in the country in 2020 were electric. Auto companies, meanwhile, are using Norway to test new electric models: the Volkswagen Group, creator of the luxury Audi e-tron EV, has outpaced Tesla in sales.

## ACTS OF KINDNESS

### Bangladesh’s Anti-Cyberbullying Activist

Cyberbullying is ubiquitous—one out of every three young people in 30 countries have reported experiencing it. And, given the anonymity the Internet affords its perpetrators, it is arguably even more pernicious than traditional forms of abuse and harassment.

In Narail District, Bangladesh, 17-year-old Sadat Rahman heard about a 15-year-old girl who died by suicide after being cyberbullied. In October 2019, moved by her story, Rahman and his then five-member team built Cyber

Teens, a mobile app that allows young people to disclose abuse safely and confidentially.

Within a year, over 1,000 teenagers in Narail District had used the app and, thanks to both police and family intervention, more than 250 complaints had been resolved and eight criminals apprehended.

Last November, Rahman won the International Children’s Peace Prize. “The fight against cyberbullying is like a war,” Rahman said in his acceptance speech.

“In this war, I’m a warrior.”



ASK AN EXPERT

# How Can Canada Be More Accessible?

*We quiz Jewelles Smith, disability activist*

BY Courtney Shea

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN TAMAKI

**Almost two years ago, Canada passed the Accessible Canada Act to identify and remove barriers for people with disabilities. What changes has that led to?**

Well, these things take time, but right away, the ACA gives our community leveraging power. We saw this in action last year when Prime Minister Trudeau gave his first few pandemic addresses without a sign language interpreter, and we were able to demand and effect change almost immediately. So many Canadians are deaf or hearing-impaired, and if they can't understand what's happening during a global health crisis, that's a safety emergency.



**If you could wave a wand and address one key barrier to accessibility, what would that be?**

That's a hard question because there is so much diversity—and that is in itself one of the key messages that could be a lot better understood when we talk about removing barriers. We have a joke in the disability community that "it's more than just ramps," meaning accessibility isn't just about mobility issues. There are communication

disabilities, cognitive disabilities, sensory disabilities—and each group faces different challenges. That said, there are attitudinal and systemic issues that affect us all. If you look at how the Black Lives Matter movement has led to an understanding that our entire society is based on structures that prioritize one group above another, the same is true of our ableist society.

## **WE'RE 20 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION—A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF VOTERS.**

---

### **How have those attitudes informed your own experience?**

Since I didn't really experience my disabilities until I became a parent—I have spina bifida, which for me got worse with pregnancy and childbirth—the first attitudes I had to confront were my own. For a long time I wasn't prepared to become “disabled” and, like most people, I had a lot of preconceptions about what that meant and why it was the worst thing. It took some time to overcome that.

### **Universal design is an idea that's getting a lot of traction in accessibility conversations. What is it and why is it important?**

It basically means that when we are

creating new things, they need to be created for everyone—or at least in a way that's adaptable. For example, building townhouses in such a way that an elevator can be easily installed. It's not about having an elevator in every home, but about recognizing that we shouldn't have to go back to the drawing board to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. We can't be an afterthought.

### **Are there examples of where Canada is getting it right?**

One area where we're seeing some positive change is with Elections Canada. They recently earmarked a large amount of money that can be spent on making meetings and forums accessible. I wish more politicians were taking advantage of that. I always say, we're 20 per cent of the population. That's a pretty substantial number of voters.

Also, you can look at the work that Parks Canada has been doing to make public green spaces more accessible in recent years—ensuring paths are suitable for wheelchairs and walkers, making washrooms accessible and posting maps on their website that highlight accessible features of particular parks. These are practical changes, but they reflect a shift in understanding. Ten years ago I don't think we thought of parks as places that disabled people would want to be, when for the most part, we want the same things as everyone else. **R**

## POINTS TO PONDER

Being selected is,  
in fact, a process  
of reconciliation.

—Cree writer **Louise Bernice Halfe** ON BEING NAMED  
CANADA'S NEW PARLIAMENTARY POET LAUREATE



*Somewhere my  
13-year-old self  
has fainted in, like,  
a really needy,  
melodramatic way.*

—**Dan Levy**, BEFORE LAUNCHING INTO HIS  
FIRST MONOLOGUE ON SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE



Going home to Sudbury was  
very useful in getting prepared  
for studies on Mars.

—NASA engineer and Mars rover  
team member **Raymond Francis**,  
COMPARING THE MINES IN HIS HOMETOWN  
TO THE PLANET'S GEOLOGY

**I SAY PHRASES THAT  
I KNOW PEOPLE WILL NEVER  
UNDERSTAND.**

—**Great Big Sea's Alan Doyle**, EXPLAINING  
NEWFOUNDLAND SLANG

Many people identify as salmon  
people. The salmon are treated much  
more like a relative than a product.

—**Indigenous fisheries scientist  
Andrea Reid**, TALKING ABOUT DWINDLING  
SALMON POPULATIONS ACROSS B.C.

India made sense to me  
in ways that my sheltered  
suburban existence in  
Canada did not.

—Actor and model Lisa Ray,  
IN HER NEW MEMOIR *CLOSE TO THE BONE*



**TO FINALLY BE  
ABLE TO PLAY  
A CHARACTER  
THAT'S FULLY A  
HUMAN BEING  
INSTEAD OF A  
CARICATURE IS  
A TREMENDOUS  
RESPONSIBILITY  
AND AN  
HONOUR.**

—*Kim's Convenience* star  
Paul Sun-Hyung Lee



My belief is that a good,  
just society provides every  
citizen with access to  
opportunity.

—Michael Katchen, CEO of financial-services  
company Wealthsimple

*I've realized that an underlying  
theme of loneliness permeates  
my songs—that feeling of being  
on the outside looking in.*

—Musician Daniel Greaves, REFLECTING ON  
GROWING UP BLACK AND JEWISH IN WINNIPEG

When you look at climate  
change from a human-  
mortality perspective, it will be  
the equivalent of a coronavirus  
crisis—every year.

—Mark Carney, former governor of  
the Bank of Canada



# House Calls

*Virtual appointments are convenient and safe—but are they effective?*

BY Luc Rinaldi

ILLUSTRATION BY DELPHINE MEIER

**L**AST YEAR, COVID-19 forced much of our lives online: work meetings migrated to Zoom, quarantins replaced in-person happy hours. Medicine was no exception. In order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, governments worldwide instructed their citizens to stay home when possible and avoid non-essential outings, including trips to hospitals and doctors' offices. So, patients swapped in-person appointments for phone calls and video chats. Google searches for telehealth spiked. Before the pandemic, just one in 10 Canadians had used telehealth; by last May, half of them had.

To meet the increasing demand, North American and European governments, hospitals and private businesses have invested billions of dollars in new and existing virtual care services. The Canadian federal government, for one, earmarked \$13.4 million for a trio of telehealth companies and a digital health "innovation hub," while Loblaw Companies Ltd. invested \$75 million in Maple, an app that facilitates online doctor consultations. As a result, hundreds of Shoppers Drug Mart stores are now outfitted with iPads that provide customers a direct link to Maple physicians.

Virtual visits are best suited to simple tasks, like refilling prescriptions, as well as diagnosing and treating conditions that rely on a doctor's sense of sight—pink eye, rashes, varicose veins—or a patient's description

of symptoms, such as back pain, strep throat and UTIs. Telehealth also excels at monitoring chronic conditions, such as congestive heart failure, where doctors don't need to provide a new diagnosis but simply check up on patients, monitor evolving symptoms and discuss the side effects of medication. Diabetes is also a good fit: people can upload blood sugar levels, dosing and other information for a nurse to review electronically.

Mental health counselling is easy to access digitally, too, though it comes with pros and cons. On the one hand, therapists may not be able to see body language, which can sometimes be a clue to understanding a client's well-being, and a shoddy Internet connection can be particularly jarring during a difficult conversation. At the same time, there are patients who like it better. "Some providers even say having that extra bit of distance makes people more honest and less stressed to talk about difficult topics," says Annette Totten, an associate professor at Oregon Health and Science University who has studied telehealth extensively.

When done right, Totten's research shows, telehealth benefits both health-care providers and patients. It can significantly reduce hospital admissions, which frees beds for people in need of critical care—an especially crucial factor during the pandemic. And it's a lot more convenient for patients, adds Michelle Greiver, a family doctor in

Toronto whose entire practice shifted to telehealth when the pandemic hit. "They don't have to take time off work or travel to our office," she says.

Totten experienced that convenience firsthand last spring. When her husband accidentally spilled hot oil on his arm, she suggested they arrange a video call with his doctor instead of rushing to the hospital, where they risked getting infected with COVID-19. Over video chat, the doctor inspected Totten's husband's burn, instructed him how to bandage it and prescribed him painkillers.

BY MAY 2020,  
**50%**  
OF CANADIANS HAD  
USED TELEHEALTH.

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According to a May 2020 survey by the Canadian Medical Association, 91 per cent of telehealth users were "very satisfied" with their experience. To ensure visits go smoothly, Totten recommends preparing for appointments with a list of questions and to ask for written instructions about next steps. Patients can avoid wasting precious minutes of their appointments by ensuring beforehand that their Internet connection is strong and that they have all the necessary software and hardware.

Online or off, some doctors are better than others. If patients aren't satisfied with an experience, they can look for another telehealth provider—there are plenty. Many hospitals and public health systems have telehealth programs, and some startups offer instant access to doctors—for a fee. Maple, the Loblaw-backed app, charges between \$49 and \$99 for a one-off virtual visit.

Of course, there are times when telehealth just doesn't cut it. "Diagnosis is an art, and doctors take in information from lots of places," says Totten. "There are things that involve touch or smell that you're not going to get through telehealth." For example, doctors regularly use their hands to examine potential tumours, hernias and fractures, while a foul odour may hint at poor general health.

For maternal health, expectant mothers should still make the trip to the obstetrician. The same is true after birth, since babies can't communicate their health concerns and regularly need immunizations. And urgent health matters—a broken bone, prolonged shortness of breath, symptoms of a heart attack or stroke—should still push patients to the ER, not their iPads.

Greiver expects the uptick in telehealth use to last after the pandemic. At her clinic, she says, much can be taken care of by phone. "I don't think we will go back to as many in-person visits as before. It's just not needed to provide the best possible care."



## Telehealth Intel

### **Are there virtual "walk-ins" if you don't have a doctor?**

Yes, many brick-and-mortar walk-in clinics have begun offering virtual visits during the pandemic. These appointments, which are covered by provincial health plans, may require you to book hours or even a day in advance, whereas services like Maple and GOeVisit can provide near-instant access to licensed doctors around the clock for a fee.

### **Who is using telehealth the most?**

The demographic skews young and, at least prior to the pandemic, rural. According to a May 2020 survey by telehealth provider MDLive, 72 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 44 said they would "probably" or "definitely" use telehealth, whereas only 61 per cent of 45-to-65-year-olds said they would.

### **Do you need to worry about privacy?**

Yes, within reason. Patients would be wise to ask their chosen provider what data-protection measure they take, and also scan and search news sources to make sure there are no reports of data misuse on the part of the company.

## LAUGHTER THE BEST MEDICINE

### Strange Encounter

I went into a clothing store and a lady came up to me and said, "If you need anything, I'm Jill." I was like, "I've never met anyone with a conditional identity before." What if I don't need anything? Who are you?

— DEMETRI MARTIN,  
*comedian*

**Spider:** Why are you terrified by me?

**Me:** Well, the reasons I once had have all now been replaced by the fact that you can talk.

— [@THEALEXNEVIL](#)

### The pandemic has

turned us all into dogs. We roam the house all day looking for food. We're told "no" if we get too close to strangers. And we get really excited about car rides.

— [@DOGOWNERSUK](#)

### Feats of Strength

A shark could swim faster than me, but I could probably run faster than a shark. So, in a triathlon, it would all come down to who is the better cyclist.

— [@EMMAMANZINI](#)

A guy tells his psychiatrist, "I always have this weird dream where I'm locked in a room. There's a door, but no matter how hard I try to push it open, it won't budge."

"Interesting," says the psychiatrist. "And does it say anything on the door?"

"Yes!" the guy replies. "It says 'Pull.'"

— GCFL.NET

### Collateral Damage

Never run a fruit stand in an action movie!

— [@EMASINMONEY](#)

**Send us your original jokes! You could earn \$50 and be featured in the magazine. See page 7 or [rd.ca/joke](http://rd.ca/joke) for details.**

## THE BEST JOKE I EVER TOLD

**By Veronica Antipolo**

**I watch shows on Netflix like I have relationships. I start them, but I never finish them.**

*Veronica Antipolo, also known as Sassy La V, is a Toronto-based comedian, storyteller and producer.*





BY Samantha Rideout

## EXERCISE PROTECTS THE DECLINING BRAIN

It's not unusual, and nothing to worry about, for some cognitive decline to occur as you age. But if you have more difficulty with judgment, language or memory than is expected for your age, a doctor may diagnose you with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). This condition raises your risk of progressing to dementia. However, in a Korean study of nearly a quarter-million people with MCI, participants who exercised more than once a week were 18 per cent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. Physical activity may protect us by increasing blood flow to the brain or by aiding the production of the molecules that help neurons to grow.

## For Most People, the Benefits of Multivitamins Are an Illusion

Millions of us take a multivitamin every day—and feel like we're getting results. In a Harvard-led investigation, people who used these supplements rated their overall health, on average, 30 per cent higher than non-users' own self-assessments. It turns out, though, that both groups actually had comparable levels of well-being, both physically and mentally. It's possible that people with a more positive outlook are more attracted to multivitamins, or that taking them encourages you to see yourself as the picture of health. Either way, they're probably not worth your money unless you have a restrictive diet (e.g., vegan or gluten-free), a pregnancy or a medical issue that specifically calls for supplements.

## Taking Your Blood Pressure? Check Both Arms

The ideal way to take blood pressure is by measuring it in both arms, according to international guidelines. But in real life, this happens only half the time at best—even at the doctor's office. Checking both arms is important because when arteries stiffen and harden, one side is usually affected more than the other in a way that blood-pressure testing may detect. A slight disparity isn't cause for concern, but a difference of 10 mmHg in the systolic number could be a sign of cardiovascular problems. So the next time you're at a doctor's appointment, if they only check one arm, encourage them to take a few extra moments for the other one.



## Diabetes in Dogs: A Possible Red Flag for Owners

When Swedish researchers compared pets' veterinary records to their owners' medical records, they spotted a trend. In their study, which followed 332,546 human-pet pairs for up to six years, the owners of dogs with diabetes were 38 per cent more likely to develop this condition themselves. The same connection was not seen among cat owners. Since dogs typically rely on their humans for exercise, insufficient physical activity might be the main shared factor at play. In any case, if the vet diagnoses your pooch with diabetes, it's a good time to examine your own lifestyle and risk factors.

## Treating Epilepsy With Keto

Although ketogenic diets are a weight-loss fad, most dietitians wouldn't recommend them for taking off pounds. However, keto diets have been used successfully for over a century to reduce seizures in children. More recently, they've shown themselves to be effective for nearly 60 per cent of adults with drug-resistant epilepsy as well. Keto diets are heavy on fats but low on carbohydrates, which forces the body to use fat for energy instead of its default source, the glucose that it breaks down from carbs. While we're not certain why this metabolic change reduces seizures, we've seen that it can. If you're considering giving the keto diet a try for this reason, don't go it alone: you'll need monitoring and coaching from medical professionals to implement it safely and effectively.

## **Obstructive Sleep Apnea's Toll on the Heart**

As one of the most prevalent sleep disorders, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) affects around one billion people worldwide. For those with this condition, the muscles in the back of the throat relax too much during sleep, creating a narrowed passage for air and causing breathing to stop and restart repeatedly. Each time this happens, the sleep cycle gets interrupted, which often leaves sufferers feeling tired all day. But the potential consequences don't stop there. Untreated sleep apnea may also raise the risk of dying from heart disease by up to five times.

A recent Finnish study explored one of the reasons for this by recording OSA patients' nighttime heart rhythms. When the body runs low on oxygen and suddenly awakens, this causes a surge of activity in the sympathetic nervous system—and releases stress hormones in the body. The longer a participant's breathing was interrupted, the faster their heart raced and the more their short-term heart rate varied. Over time, too much of this strains the cardiovascular system.

Fortunately, there are treatments that work well for OSA. Mild cases may improve with lifestyle

changes such as quitting smoking or shedding excess weight. For people with more serious cases, the most effective solution is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), a machine that pumps a constant stream of air into your throat by way of a mask.



## **Grin (or Grimace) and Bear Your Vaccine**

If a needle jab makes you wince, that might actually be a good thing. American participants in a study were asked to make various facial expressions while getting injected. Those who wore either a grimace or a genuine smile involving both the mouth and eyes reported about 40 per cent less pain as those who maintained a stoic poker face.

## **Alcohol Impairment Begins Below Legal Driving Limits**

In many countries, it's illegal to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above 0.05%. However, new research suggests that the ability to process visual motion can be compromised with a BAC as low as 0.015%. So in other words, it couldn't hurt to call a ride even if you've had as little as half a beer. **R**

## MEDICAL MYSTERY

# Something in Her Eye

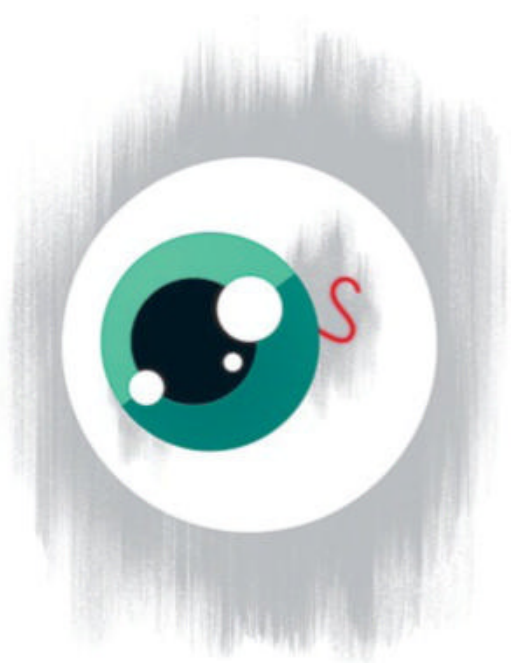
*Blank spots in Nida Shahzeb's vision indicated rapid deterioration—but what was causing it?*

BY Lisa Bendall

ILLUSTRATION BY VICTOR WONG

AFTER THE PANDEMIC hit last year, Nida Shahzeb, a 38-year-old social-media specialist in Mississauga, was busier than ever—working from home while looking after her three children, aged 11, eight and five. When spring arrived, they spent as much time as they could playing in their backyard, where Shahzeb was planting a garden.

One evening in June, Shahzeb briefly closed her right eye while using her



iPad. When she did, she noticed something odd about the vision in her left eye.

“The screen was hazy and shadowy,” she recalls. She assumed her eye was tired, but the next morning, the problem was still there: greyed-out spots in her central vision. The eye wasn’t sore or red, but after a couple of days she listened to her gut—and her GP—and headed to the emergency room.

The ER physician who examined her was mystified. He gave her an urgent referral to an ophthalmologist, who would have more expertise. Shahzeb went immediately.

After dilating her pupil, the doctor spotted inflammation in the retina and

suspected Shahzeb had white dot syndrome—a category of eye disease characterized by lesions deep in the retina—but couldn't determine any reason why. She told Shahzeb that she needed to see a specialist in diseases of the retina—and quickly.

By now, Shahzeb was frantically reading everything she could find online about eye diseases. "All day long I was worried about it," she says.

The next day, she visited Dr. Netan Choudhry, medical director at Vitreous Retina Macula Specialists of Toronto. Choudhry explains the urgency: "When you're experiencing a vision lapse and you don't know why, you need to make a move. There's a concern it's rapidly progressive."

## SOME CAUSES OF DEEP LESIONS IN THE RETINA CAN RESULT IN PERMANENT VISION LOSS.



White dot syndrome has a variety of suspected causes, including viruses, autoimmune disease, even lymphoma, and while some conditions improve on their own, others can result in permanent vision loss without treatment.

Using optical coherence tomography, which applies light like an ultrasound to take high-resolution images

of the retina, the medical team determined that Shahzeb's macula—the critically important central area of the retina—was inflamed. Since Shahzeb was young and healthy, a likely trigger was a virus, in which case she just needed a course of steroids to settle the inflammation. Choudhry prescribed the medication and told Shahzeb he'd recheck her in a few days.

In the meantime, Shahzeb struggled to focus on the computer screen. She stopped wearing her glasses, which exacerbated the problem. It seemed her vision was deteriorating further, but she recognized that might have been her feeling anxious. "It could have been my brain messing with me!" she says.

After a few days, she returned to Choudhry's office. This time, the testing was even more extensive. One potential cause was a tiny parasite, but if indeed that was the cause, it was well hidden. The team used multi-spectral imaging, which shines lights of different wavelengths, allowing doctors to see deep layers of the retina.

When Choudhry reviewed the images, he instantly realized they'd found what they were looking for. There, on the macula, was a pale squiggle less than 2.5 millimetres in length. It was a roundworm. And since it changed positions between images, it was obviously alive.

For weeks, the parasite had been tunnelling, undetected, through Shahzeb's macula. "It's like a bulldozer

moving through a forest. As it moves, it destroys,” says Choudhry.

Several species of tiny worms have been known to invade the human eye, although it’s rare, and in up to three-quarters of cases, the culprit isn’t visible on imaging tests. But one of the most common species, a roundworm called *Baylisascaris procyonis*, is also one of the largest and most devastating.

Choudhry had previously asked Shahzeb about contact with raccoons and cats—both can occasionally transmit *Baylisascaris* to humans—but Shahzeb had brushed it aside. Questioned again, though, Shahzeb recalled disposing of raccoon feces she’d found in her backyard garden, about a month before her symptoms had appeared. She used gloves for the job, but Choudhry says that wouldn’t have prevented a *Baylisascaris* egg from entering Shahzeb’s body through her respiratory system.

Shahzeb held her emotions in check until she got to the car, where she broke down and cried as her husband pressed her to tell him what was wrong.

As long as the worm stayed near the surface of the retina, it could probably be removed. Choudhry arranged for Shahzeb to see Dr. Efrem Mandelcorn at Toronto Western Hospital the next day. But new scans showed that the parasite had burrowed deeper in just 12 hours. Removal was no longer an option without damaging Shahzeb’s eye.

Mandelcorn had no choice but to kill the worm by overheating the area with

a thermal-laser instrument and leave it in the eye. Its body would eventually disintegrate, but its species would never be known for certain. Three days later, at a follow-up appointment with Choudhry, Shahzeb was relieved to learn the worm was no longer moving.

## AS LONG AS THE WORM STAYED NEAR THE SURFACE OF THE RETINA, IT COULD BE REMOVED.

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Shahzeb still has blotted-out areas in her central vision, but as her brain has adapted, it has learned to fill in some of the gaps, and she doesn’t notice the loss as much. There’s also a chance some cells will regenerate over time.

“I like to think my colleagues and I unravelled the mystery in time to rescue some vision,” says Choudhry. “If this had been left for months or longer, it could have gotten to the point where she saw no light at all.”

That gives Shahzeb goosebumps. “I’m just so grateful this was discovered and that I didn’t end up losing my eyesight to the point where I couldn’t function,” she says. There’s one activity, however, she won’t resume. “My mom said, ‘Don’t even think about going back in the garden!’” **R**

They're **stealing** passwords,  
**impersonating** the CRA, **charging** thousands  
to credit cards and **ruining** our lives.  
It's time to beat them at their own game.

# HOW TO OUT SMART A SCAMMER

The word 'HOW' has a small character peeking over the top right. The word 'OUT' has a small character peeking over the top left. The word 'SMART' has a character's head integrated into the letter 'A'. The word 'SCAMMER' has a character integrated into the letter 'M'. A large character's head is at the bottom left. Curved lines connect the characters to the text.

BY Emily Landau

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSH HOLINATY





As if the COVID-19 pandemic hadn't stolen enough from our lives, it also created a fertile ground for scams. The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre saw a 32 per cent increase in reports of scams between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020. The most common are phishing emails or texts, phone calls from scammers impersonating banks or governments, phony job advertisements and retail scams hawking fake goods. It's not that there are more fraudsters, explains Jeff Thomson, an RCMP senior analyst at the CAFC, but more innovative forms of fraud—and more people online to target. "Right now, we are forced to do our everyday shopping or groceries online, so we're increasing that online user base," he explains. And Thomson expects those scams to keep proliferating throughout 2021. "More people are vulnerable to scams, and more people are more likely to run into scams."

This is the year to scam-proof your life. Here's how.

## DON'T FALL FOR FACEBOOK FRAUD

With its 2.79 billion users, Facebook is an all-you-can-eat buffet for cyber fraudsters. These are the five most common ways scammers will try to steal your money or your identity—or both.

**1. THE PHISHING ATTACK** One of the most common scams on Facebook is phishing, in which individuals or organizations send you a message seeking money. An urgent DM from a trusted friend, exhorting you to click on a sketchy-looking link or install software, is likely coming from a scammer who has either hacked into or cloned that friend's account. Clicking on that link might trigger an unauthorized malware download or send you to a fake



(LAPTOP) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/YMGERMAN;  
(SMARTPHONE, PREVIOUS PAGE) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/HOCUS-FOCUS

**I GOT SCAMMED!**

## THE PUPPY SWINDLE

Last December, Greg Stachula of Mississauga, Ont., posted an ad on Kijiji looking for a puppy. Someone in Thunder Bay, Ont. responded, claiming to have a cocker spaniel puppy for sale. The seller asked Stachula to send him \$3,000 in Amazon gift cards—\$750 for the puppy, \$1,450 for travel insurance and \$850 for a COVID-19 vaccine for the dog. After Stachula sent the gift cards, he never heard from the seller again. Canadians lost more than \$2 million to such scams in 2020.



login page, compromising your information. Some **scammers personalize the attacks**—a technique known as “spear phishing,” says Kathy Macdonald, a former Calgary police officer and independent cybersecurity consultant. “This means the attacker has done some research on their target so that they can personalize the contact—they’ll find out, maybe from social media, where you live, where you like to go on vacation, your relationship status,” she explains. The conclusion? Don’t click on those links. If you’re interested in the content, search for information in a separate browser.

**2. THE FAKE CONTEST** Many scammers will bait users with the promise of a tempting contest prize: a legitimate-looking post offering entrants the chance to, say, meet Vin Diesel or win a free SUV. These links can lead to malware infections and damage to devices. “At the

very least, they’ll get your account added to spam lists,” explains Claudiu Popa, president of the cybersecurity company Datarisk. **Even real contests are susceptible to fraud:** in January, for example, the P.E.I. restaurant Nimrods’ held a contest to win a gift certificate. Within days, entrants were receiving false emails from fake accounts claiming to be Nimrods’, telling them they’d won and asking for credit card info. “It hurts to see that people are misusing our company name, and tricking people to make money,” said Nimrods’ owner Mikey Wasnidge.

**3. THE SHARE SCHEME** The classic chain letter has received a digital makeover. **Scammers will pose as Facebook administrators** updating users on privacy policies or data ownership, and urgently implore those users to share the link and pass it onto their friends. “Fraudsters will track those shares,

identifying the Facebook profiles of those who fall for it as the marks in future fraudulent or disinformation campaigns,” says Popa.

**4. THE NON-EXISTENT GRANT** In COVID-19 times, the government is offering all kinds of financial assistance: CERB, small-business loans, rent relief. And scammers are taking advantage. Users might see an official-looking ad for free government funding, which will take them to **fraudulent links with plenty of strings attached**. “Ultimately it leads to a request for personal information and money up front to get the grant,” says the CAFC’s Thomson. “And, of course, there’s no grant. They don’t receive anything at all.”

**5. THE CATFISHING SCAM** A sophisticated class of romance scammers are taking advantage of lonely hearts. Facebook helps them learn crucial information about their victim before establishing contact. A romance scammer will often claim to be in the military, working on an oil rig or volunteering overseas, waiting to save enough money to move back home. They might spend months grooming their target, and will seem to always be available to chat because, in reality, the suitor is several people working in cahoots. The first rule of online romance: **never send them a penny**. If they ask you to cover travel expenses or medical bills, or even buy them Amazon gift cards, it’s time to move on.

## AVOID TOO-GOOD-TO-BE-TRUE DEALS

Early in the pandemic, online shopping doubled, with Canadians spending some \$4 billion between February and May 2020, according to Statistics Canada. New and sophisticated retail scams also increased: over the 2020 Black Friday–Cyber Monday weekend, for example, suspected e-commerce fraud in Canada spiked by 435 per cent compared to the same time in 2019. Thomson says much of the fraud involves brand name or designer items. “We saw fake blenders, hot tubs, Lego,” he says. “PlayStation 5s were a particularly hot commodity, since those are hard to come by to begin with.”



(BOXES) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MICHAEL BURRELL



**I GOT SCAMMED!**

## THE SPOOFER

Sheila O'Reilly, a nurse from Oakville, Ont., recently fell victim to SIM-card spoofing. Someone called her mobile carrier and impersonated her, likely reporting the phone stolen, and then transferred the SIM to their own device. They took over her phone number and were able to access her stored information. The scammer charged \$10,000 to her credit card, splurging on concert tickets from Ticketmaster and delivery from Uber Eats, which Visa refunded.

Fraudsters have become alarmingly good at the work they do—they often create slick, faux third-party resale sites to hawk the most coveted video game consoles and designer sneakers, or post ads on eBay, Amazon and Kijiji with glossy, high-quality product photos that look just like the real thing. **Some of the most scammable items are pricey tech devices**, like laptops, hard drives or tablets, says Popa. “In the best-case scenario, you might buy it and discover it’s either not functioning or it’s not the right amount of data storage,” he explains. Sometimes you pay for the product—and it never arrives. “I find this happens with eBay a lot. Two months pass, you’ve bought a bunch of other products [and] you’ve forgotten about the one you were expecting,” Popa says. “Then you go back a couple of months later, and the seller has disappeared.”

The most glaring warning sign to watch for is probably the thing that attracted you to the product in the first place: the price. **If it seems too good to be true, chances are it is.** “If you want a Canada Goose jacket that costs a thousand bucks, and you hop online and suddenly you’re finding ads offering them for \$400 or \$600, that’s likely a fake,” Thomson says. Popa, meanwhile, flags a practice known as astroturfing, where sellers publish false reviews on sites like eBay and Amazon to make their account look more legitimate. “You’ll find those to be very superficial. Sentences are very short or incoherent, and sometimes they’re just star reviews with no text,” he says. He advises buyers to read reviews closely and critically, and also to stick with sellers who have proven longevity and a significant number of transactions. “If the vendor has been on the platform for 15 years, you can see their track record,” he says.

To further steel yourself against scammers, **use platforms with fraud protection**. “You need to transfer the risk of fraud to sites providing you a service,” Popa says. PayPal offers some fraud insurance, he says, while eBay has a money-back guarantee, though only for certain types of purchases.

## HANG UP ON THESE FAKE CALLERS

Scammers aren't just thieves—they're master manipulators. “This pandemic has been perfect for tricking people into divulging personal information using technology,” says Macdonald. “That's because people are already highly emotional. They're fearful, they're anxious, and scammers can leverage those things.” Increasingly, fraudsters are doing this through phone scams, which doubled in 2020, according to the CAFC. One of the most common schemes is when they impersonate officials from the Canada Revenue Agency or RCMP. “**They'll play on your fear** by shocking you and telling you something's happened to your account, that you owe taxes or fines,” Macdonald says. In reality, when the CRA calls, they may ask you to verify your name, birth-date or address, but they will never ask you for your driver's licence or social insurance number, or demand immediate payment. If you suspect you've been targeted by any of these scams, you



should report the sketchy behaviour to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre's website or hotline (1-888-495-8501).

A similar phone scam, Thomson says, involves a fake bank investigator claiming that there have been unauthorized charges on your account and that you'll need to pay a fee to protect your funds. **These calls usually occur early in the morning and target people with landlines**; this is because landlines often have something called a delayed disconnect, which means the caller is still connected even after you hang up. He might ask you to hang up and dial the number on the back of your credit card, but you've never really hung up. So, when you provide your personal information to the person who answers at the supposed credit card company, it's still the same fraudster on the line.

## STOP OVERSHARING YOUR CREDIT CARD

Credit card information should always be dispensed sparingly—given those details, some swindler might rack up

**I GOT SCAMMED!**

## THE IDENTITY THEFT

In December 2018, Calgarian Alana Higgins received a stern letter from a big bank informing her she owed money on a loan. Higgins, who'd never had an account with that bank, figured it was a mistake. It wasn't: someone in Kelowna, B.C., had opened an account in her name using a fake credit check and taken out a loan for \$156,000 to buy a Range Rover. At last report, Higgins was still attempting to get the bank and credit bureau to let her off the hook.



unauthorized charges, damage your credit score or even sell that information to other fraudsters. But in our online-everything climate, it's often necessary to provide those digits to buy goods or services. If you do, take steps to ensure the site where you enter that information is secure. "Look for the HTTPS in the URL," Thomson says. "That shows the site is locked and encrypted, and it's standard across most reliable sites." Other times, sites for things like newspaper subscriptions or streaming services will offer users free 30-day trials, promising not to charge the card until the trial period is

up. You're best off avoiding those trials altogether, says Claudiu Popa. "You have no idea whether this company can protect your information, and the fewer companies that have your credit card on file, the better," he explains. When it comes to credit cards, hyper-vigilance is the best policy: instead of paying bills automatically, read statements closely, check your credit score once a year and familiarize yourself with your card's fraud insurance.

## SECURE YOUR WI-FI AGAINST INTRUDERS

No matter how secure your Wi-Fi password is, a hitchhiker can sneak onto your network. If someone is stealing your Wi-Fi, you might notice slower speeds than usual, pop-up ads that seem out of sync with your family's interests and browsing, and higher-than-usual usage bills. To get to the bottom of the issue, you'll want to



**I GOT SCAMMED!**

## THE RENTAL FRAUD

Anne Quinn, a truck driver from Nova Scotia, responded to an ad for a “cozy bungalow” in Charlottetown, P.E.I. She did her due diligence, speaking to the prospective landlord via phone, text and email, and examined a legit-looking rental agreement. Eventually, she transferred the landlord \$1,200 for the first month’s rent, \$1,000 for a security deposit and \$500 for a homeowner association fee. Then the landlord went silent and Quinn realized she’d been duped. It turns out the house was for sale, not to rent, and the scammers had created the rental ad using photos and information from the MLS listing.



**check your router** to see which devices are logged into your network—which is probably a smart practice even when you don’t suspect a Wi-Fi weasel. And this kind of vigilance is a good idea outside of the home, too; coffee shops and co-working spaces may seem like a distant memory, but one day we’ll be using public Wi-Fi again. When you do, be sure to **avoid sensitive transactions** until you’re safely back on your own network. “I always suggest that people never use public Wi-Fi to enter credentials into a bank, for example, or buy any products,” says Macdonald.

## PROTECT YOUR PASSWORDS

Immediately kibosh all kids’ birthdays, pets’ names or beloved sports teams from your rotation. What you need instead are long, random passwords—

blends of capital and lowercase letters, numbers and obscure symbols galore—and you’ll need a different one for each of your accounts. If a scammer figures out that you reuse a password, they can hack into your other accounts, and even into your email. Once inside your email, they will have all kinds of information to impersonate you. **Download an authenticator app on your phone** and use it for two-factor identification for email and banking passwords, since those are the treasure chests of information for would-be identity thieves. Collect all your passwords in an offline database, either a password manager you download for your computer—Popa recommends Password Safe and KeePass as trustworthy options—or the one that comes with your smart phone. Then do it all again: protect the password database with a two-factor authentication method along with a long, unique password.

(SIGN) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SCHULTEPRODUCTIONS

# BLOCK SITES FROM TRACKING YOUR EVERY MOVE

Every time you sign up for a newsletter, register on a website, accept cookies (chunks of tracking data) onto your browser, order an item online or comment on a forum, you're expanding your digital presence and potentially exposing yourself to people who might pilfer all that information and use it against you. One way to mitigate that risk is to **use pseudonyms and nicknames** when signing up for accounts, communities and forums. Another tactic Popa recommends is using disposable emails: when a website asks for your email address to read an article or create an account, you can use a service called Mailinator to **generate a one-time email address** without compromising your real one. "No one tells you this, but email addresses are the primary attack method for any type of cyber fraud—ransomware, phishing,

spam," he says. "The scammers can keep trying new angles and scenarios until you bite." Periodically, it's smart to clean your digital footprint: for a fee, services like DeleteMe will help close all the accounts and services you've signed up for, and keep checking periodically to ensure your information hasn't been re-added to any spam lists.

Despite their sweet name, cookies aren't always harmless. When a site asks for session cookies, that's usually okay, because all it's doing is saving your preferences for that particular site. Some sites, however, ask you for permission to use third-party cookies, which means they can share the information they collect with other parties. Review the settings on your web browser to block these persistent cookies. Popa also recommends a browser extension called Privacy Badger, a free tool that tracks the cookies being written into your computer and blocks them before they're finished. You can even set your browser to **automatically clear your history and cookies every time you close it**.

Also important: never agree to store your passwords to an auto-fill. You'll have to log in fresh each time you re-open the browser, but your online information will be much more secure. "Make these steps part of your regular practice," Thomson says. "Then it's not a matter of whether you'll be the victim of identity theft, but whether you're able to stop it before it happens." **R**

(COMPUTER) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/TURNERVISUAL



# AS KIDS SEE IT



"Well, at least they're not on their phones."

**It was difficult** to see my two-year-old granddaughter when the pandemic began. But when lockdown restrictions in our area were lifted last May, I visited her with my hand puppets, and we had so much fun. The next time, I forgot my puppets. I said I missed her

and asked if she missed me. "No," she replied, "I miss the puppets."

—RENA HADLINGTON,  
*Brampton*

**Whenever I get** discouraged and want to quit something, I remember the words of my three-year-old after she puked carrots all over

the living-room floor: "I'm going to need more carrots."

—JESSICA VALENTI, *writer*

**My five-year-old** son loves YouTube and seems to think that "Please subscribe to my channel" is a way to say goodbye.

—[@EMISHEEP](#)

I told my daughter that if a woman can be vice-president, then she, too, can do anything. But my daughter is only two, so she responded that she would like some chocolate.

—ANDREW NG, *entrepreneur*

When my grandson and I arrived at our vacation cabin, we kept the lights off until we were inside to keep from attracting pesky insects. Still, a few fireflies followed us in. Noticing them before I did, he whispered, “It’s no use. Now the mosquitoes are coming after us with flashlights.”

—BARTHELEMY PETRO, *Portland, Ont.*

**Me:** What the heck?

**My child:** The news said it’s more sanitary to sneeze into an elbow.

**Me:** They mean your own elbow.

—RODNEY LACROIX, *writer*

Kids get all shocked when you figure out they did something wrong. “Mom, how did

One of my kids just told me to “ease up on the parenting a little bit.”

—MOLLY JONG-FAST, *author*

you know I coloured on the table?” Because you wrote your name on it.

—@FIVEOCLOCKMOMMY

When I was five, my family went to visit my grandparents. My mom said “dad” to my grandpa, and I was mad because I thought the word “dad” was only for my dad.

—REDDIT.COM

My wife is a teacher, and apparently one student has been changing his name to “Reconnect-ing” during the Zoom lessons so he doesn’t get asked any questions. He’s been doing it for weeks. The lad doesn’t need to worry about his education—he’s already a genius.

—@CHRISARNOLDINC

I took my four-year-old son to the local park. A boy approached him and said, “I’m three.”

Without hesitation, my son replied, “Hi, Three. I’m Ezra.”

—VICTORIA STEIN, *Pickering, Ont.*

**Me:** What do you want to do when you grow up?

**Four-year-old:** I want to drink beer.

**Me:** No, like, what do you want to be?

**Four-year-old:** A beer drinker.

—@DADDYDOUBTS

When my son was six, he had a Superman rain cape. One wet morning before his walk to school, I told him to wear it. Scowling, he looked up at me and said, “You want me to fly away, don’t you?”

—SHARON BURKE, *Barrie*

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DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

EVERY SECOND  
MATTERED AS A  
TEAM OF SURGEONS  
RACED TO REPLACE  
SIX VITAL ORGANS  
IN TWO PATIENTS

# "ARE YOU

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BY Bryan Smith  
FROM *CHICAGO*

PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY RYAN SEGEDI



**READY?"**

Daru  
Smith (left)  
and Sarah  
McPharlin  
each received  
three new  
organs.

**D**aru Smith was talking to his doctor and sister one day in December 2018 when he began to die. He saw their forms grow dim, a dark curtain coming down on them and himself in his fluorescent-lit hospital room at University of Chicago Medicine. Then the 29-year-old was above it all, looking into a hole in the ground where a torrent of water was swirling like a giant draining sink.

And then he was in a hallway. At the end of it glowed a white light. He felt at peace. No more heart palpitations, no flutters, no aches. He saw pictures on a wall. Scenes from his life. His son being born. It felt good, the light. Until Daru realized: This is what happens when you die. He turned around and began to run. The light pulled him. I gotta fight, he said to himself.

Daru had been sick. A few weeks earlier, he'd gone to the emergency room with a cold he couldn't shake. But tests showed it was much more than that. Daru was in cardiogenic shock, a condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. He also had something called sarcoidosis, a rare autoimmune disease that can cause the body to overproduce certain cells that all but shut down organs—in Daru's case, the heart, liver and kidneys.

That meant Daru needed all three vital organs replaced, a procedure so complex and risky that only 15 had

been performed in the United States by that point. He would need the rarest of donors, one with three healthy organs compatible with Daru's blood type and strong enough to support his nearly two-metre-tall body.

Daru fought the light long enough that his eyes fluttered and opened. "Hey, where'd you go?" said Daru's cardiologist, Bryan Smith. "Thought we lost you for a second."


**SARAH McPHARLIN** sat in a spare room at UChicago Medicine, waiting to plead for her life. She was there to meet with the centre's transplant evaluation team.

As different as Sarah was from Daru—she'd grown up in a tree-lined suburb of Detroit, gone to graduate school, travelled the world; he was raised by a mother who managed a Harold's Chicken Shack in Chicago, where he worked until he found a better-paying job as a truck driver—they were, in more important ways, alike.

Like Daru, Sarah was 29. A rare autoimmune disease—an inflammatory condition called giant cell myocarditis—had attacked her heart. At 12, Sarah had had a heart transplant, but over the years the replacement organ also began to fail. Surgeons had to open her chest five more times to repair ongoing problems. Complications from years of procedures and medications had all but destroyed her liver and kidneys. Her only hope, too, lay in a triple transplant.

But there were some ugly realities that needed to be addressed: The degree of difficulty of a heart transplant doubles with each previous cardiac operation. Sarah's numerous procedures had left her heart buried in scar tissue. This "hostile" chest, as surgeons call it, makes it harder for them to locate the arteries and veins they will need to disconnect and reattach. What's more, she was so physically weak that doctors weren't sure she could survive such a gruelling surgery.

## IT WAS A WAITING GAME FOR ORGANS—WAITING, TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, FOR THE RIGHT PERSON TO DIE.



And then there's the macabre math that goes into such decisions. A triple transplant means using three organs that could potentially save three other patients. Does it make sense to use them on a single long shot?

Dr. Nir Uriel, a heart specialist, was at first skeptical about Sarah's case. She was as pale as the hospital sheets. She had almost no muscle mass. Her chest seemed to have collapsed in on itself, while fluid swelled her arms and abdomen. She could barely speak a sentence without gasping for breath. But when Uriel asked what she planned

to do post-transplant, the words she *could* get out moved him.

She'd travel, she said, maybe to Europe, where she had visited as a student in high school. She'd restart her career as an occupational therapist. Beyond that? She loved spending time with her family. They were inseparable.

Before the day was out, Sarah had spoken with nearly 30 members of the transplant evaluation team. Afterward, they unanimously voted to move forward, each one seeing what Uriel had seen: someone who, though facing death, radiated life.

For both Sarah McPharlin and Daru Smith, it was now a waiting game. Waiting for organs to become available. Waiting, to put it in blunt terms, for the right person to die.

But at their darkest point, a bright spot flickered: The two patients, just two doors apart in the ICU, met. Over the following weeks, a bond developed. Sarah and Daru compared notes as they walked laps around the floor together, challenging each other on how many trips they could make, laughing at what they must look like in their gowns, with tubes and machines trailing behind. Their go-to phrase became "You got this."

**AT 3:15 P.M.** on Tuesday, December 18, 2018, Jamie Bucio, lead coordinator of UChicago Medicine's organ procurement team, felt her pager buzz with an alert. A potential match for Daru had

been declared brain-dead. The young man's heart, liver and kidneys were intact and strong, and his family had agreed to donate the organs. Bucio and her five-person team had one hour to respond with a preliminary acceptance of the organs—otherwise they would go to the next patient on the waiting list.

Every moment of that hour was crucial. First, Bucio collected information on the organs: What kind of shape were they in? Were they good matches? Then she and her team alerted the surgeons and the attending physician, sending them medical records of the intended recipient.

Bucio called the attending physician: "Tell Daru it's time."

"You ready?" Dr. Smith asked Daru as he walked into his room.

"For what?"

"Are you ready?" he repeated, smiling.

Now Daru smiled, too, the realization dawning on him.

**ON MOST DAYS**, the white-tiled hallway just outside of operating room five west is deserted, save for the occasional flock of surgeons, nurses and orderlies. But on this day, December 19, just before 3 p.m.—24 hours after Jamie Bucio got the call—an unusually large contingent of 20 medical staff members milled about. The star of the show was the hospital's head cardiac surgeon, Dr. Valluvan Jeevanandam. He'd be performing Daru's heart transplant, the initial procedure upon which the

other surgeries rested. As Jeevanandam and his team began prepping for the first leg of the marathon surgery, two floors below, Daru was being wheeled away from his ICU room and his family. Meanwhile, three SUVs carrying the two surgical teams—one for the heart and one for the liver and kidney—raced across the city to retrieve the donor organs. Speed is of the essence. A heart needs to be implanted within six hours—ideally four—of being removed from a donor.

## **DARU'S NEW HEART DIDN'T BEAT. NOT PANICKING, THE SURGEON "TICKLED" IT BACK TO LIFE.**

Jeevanandam made his first cut at 3:07 p.m., timing it to when the doctor at the other hospital began removing the donor's heart. Inserting the rib spreader, a stainless steel retractor used to lay bare the chest cavity, he began to crank slowly. Daru was then hooked up to a heart-lung bypass machine, the major arteries to his heart clamped shut, leaving him without a functioning heart for what would be 102 minutes. Then the removal process began. The donor organ, packed in a Tupperware pickle jar, bathed in a preservation solution, and chilled in a medical box

similar to an Igloo cooler, arrived at 5:04 p.m.

Daru's sarcoidosis presented a complication for Jeevanandam. A healthy person's tissue is like supple leather, which helps it fuse when sewn together. Much of Daru's tissue was more like cardboard, so the doctor had to be extra careful not to rip it while sewing the new heart in place.

That accomplished, Daru was ready to be taken off the bypass machine. In transplant surgery, it's always a tense moment when the aortic clamp is removed. To preserve a heart for transport, doctors fill it with a solution high in potassium. If all goes well, when the clamp is released, the whoosh of blood into the heart restores normal levels of potassium and other electrolytes, and the heart begins to beat.

But Daru's heart didn't beat. Not panicking, Jeevanandam picked up forceps and gently massaged the heart, trying to "tickle" it back to life. Finally, a dot began to hop up from the long, flat green line on the screen across the room. With that, Jeevanandam stepped back. Four hours after beginning the surgery, his part was done. It was 7:00 p.m.

While Jeevanandam's assistants affixed drainage tubes and packed the



**Daru and Sarah's surgeons (from left): Yolanda Becker (kidney), Talia Baker (liver), and Valluvan Jeevanandam (heart)**

area around the heart with gauze to absorb blood, Dr. Talia Baker, the surgeon performing the liver transplant, and her team were setting up.

There are some 180 steps in performing a liver transplant. But Baker's main challenge with Daru was the state of his liver. A healthy liver has the spongy consistency of a jellyfish, which makes it pliable. A cirrhotic, or scarred, liver like Daru's is firm, so manipulating it is more difficult, raising the risk of damaging the tissue around the organ while removing it.

With liver transplants, there's also a fear that the absence of oxygen and nutrient-rich blood can damage the newly transplanted organ once blood flow is restored. That damage can cause the heart and lungs to collapse, resulting in death. In Daru's case, though, the new liver handled the blood flow as it was supposed to.

At 11:46 p.m.—eight hours and 39 minutes after surgery began—the second portion of his transplant was complete. All that remained: the kidney.

Around that time, Bucio got a page that stunned her: A young woman in another state had been declared brain-dead. She was a potential match for Sarah, and she had three healthy organs. Bucio called Dr. Smith, Sarah's attending physician: "Well, I guess nobody's getting any sleep for the next 48 hours."

No hospital had ever performed two triple transplants within a year, and yet UChicago Medicine was preparing to begin its second in just over a day. Was it even possible? It had to be. The offer of three matching organs simply could not be turned down. Bucio had already started assessing the logistics. Because Sarah's organs were coming from some distance, UChicago Medicine would need two jets, plus ground transportation to and from both airports.

At 8:18 a.m. on December 20, Daru's triple transplant was completed. After more than 17 hours in surgery, he was moved back to the ICU. Ten hours later, Sarah's triple transplant began.



As Jeevanandam had anticipated, the heart portion of Sarah's surgery required extra care, taking longer than Daru's. The scar tissue that had built up in her chest from past surgeries made hunting for the arteries and veins seem like an archaeological dig. Just as an archaeologist uses little brushes to carefully clear away dust and debris, Jeevanandam had to use special instruments to tease apart the tissue to find the arteries underneath. A miscalculation of a single millimetre with the scalpel could nick the heart itself.

Sarah's liver posed special challenges as well. Because she had been on immunosuppressive drugs for most of her life, her tissue was fragile. Baker had to work slowly and precisely, taking



painstaking care with each incision and suture.

Dr. Yolanda Becker was last up. And as the final surgeon, she had to not only perform the kidney transplant but make sure the heart and liver were still functioning, which meant keeping a close eye on all of Sarah's vital signs. She also had to navigate the minefield of drains and chest tubes and pacemaker wires left in place by the previous two surgeons. Dislodge any of the tubes or drains, and she might not notice internal bleeding. Detach a pacemaker wire, and the heart could develop a dangerous arrhythmia without her knowing.

By the time her surgery was finished, at 2:27 p.m. on Friday, December 21,

**Left: Sarah and her parents. Middle: Daru having his post-op vitals checked. Right: Dr. Jeevanandam (left) checks in on Sarah (right).**

Sarah had been on the table for more than 20 hours. UChicago had accomplished the unthinkable: two triple transplants in less than two days.

Not long after the surgery, Sarah was amazed by how good she felt. Before the transplant, she had gained 45 pounds of water weight. It was nice to have her normal legs again. She'd also felt out of breath and cold all the time, a result of the poor circulation caused by her failing heart. Now she didn't have to constantly be swaddled in a blanket or coat.

But the two patients' recoveries were not without complications. Two weeks after the transplant, Sarah registered low magnesium levels, requiring weekly infusions of the mineral, which keeps the heartbeat steady and maintains nerve and muscle functions. She has also struggled with a low white blood cell count, necessitating booster shots. Despite these setbacks, she's more active than ever. She exercises regularly, works as a dog walker, and last February she participated in Hustle Chicago, a charity stair climb event to the very top of the former John Hancock Building, 94 floors up.


As for Daru, a month after the operation, surgeons placed a stent in one of his bile ducts to open up a blocked passageway. Other than that, he's been working out and "actually seeing results."

Sarah and Daru had intended to meet up after leaving the hospital, but life and eventually the COVID-19 pandemic conspired against them. Instead, Sarah sends Daru banana bread, and they text each other three to four times

a week. They also have a regular group chat with three other triple organ recipients, each of whom had their operations after Sarah and Daru.

Daru often thinks back to that day he finally left the hospital he'd called home for eight weeks. As he was wheeled through the ICU toward the elevator, nurses, doctors and administrative staff clapped and shouted goodbyes.

"You are loved here," the orderly pushing his wheelchair said.

They turned one corner. And then another. And then they stood looking down a final hallway. At the end of it shone what looked like a bright white light. The orderly pushed him forward. And as he did, the source became clear: a set of white double doors illuminated by bright disks of light in the ceiling. The white grew brighter until Daru was on the other side, where he saw a familiar car and his sister standing beside it, smiling, waiting to take him home to his son. 

FROM CHICAGO (SEPTEMBER 2019), COPYRIGHT © 2019 BY TRONC (TRIBUNE).



## Counting the Days

**Sometimes when it's grey outside and cold within,  
we need to conjure up the sun, some light, a lazy feeling of  
having all the wide-skied time in the world to sit back and  
eat warmly with friends.**

NIGELLA LAWSON

**Because a little bit of summer is what the whole year's about.**

JOHN MAYER

## LIFE'S LIKE THAT

### Ruff Morning



#### Follow-Up Question

I received a call from a telemarketer asking to speak with my husband.

“Unfortunately, that’s impossible,” I told him. “He’s in heaven.”

“In that case,” he said, “what’s the best time to reach him?”

—CAROL WHITE

Nobody’s thinking about that weird thing you said. They’re

thinking about a different weird thing you said that you didn’t even notice.

—[@DEADEYEBRAKEMAN](#)

#### Out of Order

I get very nervous when I order coffee because it’s a whole world and I don’t know that world. Sometimes they’ll ask you, “Do you want heavy cream or half-and-half?” And

I’ll go, “I’m sorry, I’m not taking questions right now.”

—NATE BARGATZE, *comedian*

At a certain point in every man’s life, he begins collecting random screws in an old coffee can.

—[@MOMMAJESSIEC](#)

#### Let’s Get Physical

“I’m not working out with a mask on” is my new favourite excuse for skipping exercise.

—[@THECATWHISPRER](#)

My husband and I switched sides of the bed this weekend. That’s what we call “vacation” now.

—ILANA GLAZER, *comedian*

If you try to correct my grammar, I will think fewer of you.

—[@THESAMMYHANNAH](#)

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# A WORLD OF WORRY

Compounding crises have made everyone anxious, but how do you know if you've slipped into a more serious disorder—and what do you do about it?



BY Rebecca Philps

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETE RYAN



**FIVE YEARS AGO**, Meredith Arthur, a 45-year-old San Francisco employee of the social media company Pinterest, arrived at a neurologist appointment in a distraught state. She spoke a mile a minute, rattling through her extensive research on the vagus cranial nerve and explaining why she thought it might hold clues to her crippling shoulder and neck pain, frequent dizziness and nausea and chronic migraines. “I was presenting my inexpert case to an expert, and she stopped me and said, ‘I know what’s wrong. You have generalized anxiety disorder.’”

For Arthur, the diagnosis was a shock. She had been so focused on her

debilitating physical symptoms that she hadn’t considered that they could be linked to her mental health. But almost immediately, it clicked.

“My brain was always in overdrive, from early childhood,” Arthur recalls. “I always wanted to work really hard all the time and solve everything.”

She would have never described herself as a worrier, however, and certainly didn’t connect her perfectionism to anxiety or its impact on her body. But in fact, physical discomfort (like stomach and chest pain, feeling restless or irritable, sleep problems, fatigue and muscle aches) is most often what drives people with anxiety to seek treatment, not distressing thoughts.

“The diagnosis changed everything,” says Arthur. “It’s like somebody picked me up off the earth, turned me around 180 degrees and put me back down. It was the same world, but everything looked a little different.”

Arthur is one of the 44 million North American adults who experience an anxiety disorder—the most common form of mental illness—every year. But beyond serious cases, anxiety is something that touches everyone to varying degrees. Typically, it’s intermittent and brought on by a stressful or traumatic event. The core features of anxiety are excessive fear and worry—followed by extreme problem solving, in Arthur’s case—and one of the major underlying factors is a feeling of uncertainty about situations that occur in daily life.

Enter big, bad 2021. These are exceedingly anxious times due to the unholy combination of economic precariousness, social unrest, political volatility, environmental catastrophes (pause: deep breath) and the COVID-19 pandemic. But an individualized, holistic approach to managing anxiety—including lifestyle tweaks, medication, mindfulness exercises and, to begin with, acceptance—will ensure it doesn't rule your life.

## What Anxiety Does to Your Body

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Anxiety is part of your body's stress-response system—and it's uncomfortable, overwhelming and sometimes plain confusing.

"I describe anxiety as a future-oriented emotional response to a perceived threat," says Dr. Joel Minden, a clinical psychologist and the author of *Show Your Anxiety Who's Boss*. "We anticipate that something bad will happen. Maybe we have evidence for thinking that. Maybe we don't. But we have a belief that something catastrophic might occur."

Almost immediately after that, Minden says, your sympathetic nervous system, which controls involuntary processes like breathing and heart rate, kicks into high gear. This leads your adrenal glands to release adrenalin and cortisol, two of the crucial hormones driving your body's fight-freeze-or-

flight response, which prompt anxiety's physical symptoms. Your heart races, your blood pressure rises, your pupils dilate, you get short of breath and you break out into clammy sweats.

Meanwhile, cortisol curbs functions that your brain considers nonessential: it alters immune-system responses and suppresses the digestive system, the reproductive system and growth processes. This was helpful for our ancestors trying to outrun a sabre-toothed tiger, but not so much when you walk past someone in a grocery store and, even though you're both wearing masks, can't stop ruminating for days afterward about whether you might have caught COVID-19 when they coughed.

"The physiological sensations you get make sense when you're in danger," says Dr. Melisa Robichaud, a psychologist and clinical instructor in the University of British Columbia's psychiatry department. "But they feel odd and sometimes quite scary when there's no physical threat."

## Everyday Anxiety or an Anxiety Disorder?

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For Arthur, chronic physical pain and discomfort were the most powerful manifestations of her disorder, but anxiety can show itself in many ways. You might perceive something as threatening, even when it isn't, or go to great lengths to avoid uncomfortable situations. You might constantly

overthink plans or spend all of your time creating solutions to worst-case scenarios that are unlikely to happen. Maybe you're indecisive and fear making the wrong decision. Or you might find yourself unable to relax and feel restless and keyed up.

Often, those symptoms last only as long as a certain situation or problem is present. (You may feel nervous about flying, but you do it and the feeling fades when the wheels touch down.) But sometimes anxiety can tip into a chronic anxiety disorder. These include generalized anxiety disorder, but also panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic-stress disorder and phobias. People with an anxiety disorder can also suffer from depression—and in fact, some estimates show that 60 per cent of those with anxiety will also have symptoms of depression.

The distinction between circumstantial or temporary anxiety and a more severe case isn't always easy to make, says clinical psychologist Dr. David Carbonell, founder of the Anxiety Treatment Center in Chicago.

"There isn't a blood test for anxiety. At some point, everybody experiences it," he says. "It becomes a disorder when it interferes with your behavioural choices and your ability to do as you wish in life."

For instance, that point could be when your job requires you to fly, but you're too anxious to even make it as far as the airport, which ultimately

puts your livelihood in jeopardy. Or, more generally, when you find that anxious feelings last for a long time, beyond when a problem has passed or been resolved, and they seem to jump from one situation to the next without relief.

Despite the fact that chronic anxiety is very manageable with professional help—and some combination of medication, therapy and lifestyle adjustments—only about 37 per cent of affected people receive treatment of any kind. "I always say that I have a really good job because I specialize in treating people who have anxiety disorders," says Robichaud, "and by and large, most everyone I see gets better."

## How to Treat an Anxiety Disorder

**1. ACCEPT IT** Just like happiness and sadness, anxiety is part of everyone's lived experience—but it's not always tolerated as such.

"People spend too much time and effort on trying to control anxiety," says Minden. "I encourage them to remember that anxiety is a normal emotional response." If you try to banish it, he adds, all you're doing is putting it more at the forefront of your mind. But if you accept anxiety as part of life, you can learn to relate to it with self-compassion or even with humour. This is a cornerstone of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), which has been gaining clinical

## THERE'S NO SHAME IN TAKING MEDICATION

Many people avoid taking, or even looking into, medication for anxiety because of the stigmas associated with psychiatric drugs. They may worry about dangerous side effects, that they'll become dependent on them or that loved ones will see them as weak or flawed.

But the fact is, modern pharmacological treatments for anxiety disorders are safer and produce fewer side effects than they did 30 years ago. At the same time, attitudes toward mental illnesses are improving: a 2019 survey by the American Psychological Association found that 87 per cent of adults agreed that having a mental-health disorder is nothing to be ashamed of.

If you're ready to explore medication, Dr. Debra Kissen, CEO of Light on Anxiety CBT Treatment Center, suggests talking to a primary care doctor, who can prescribe the medications most commonly taken for anxiety.

**Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors** (SSRIs) are considered a good starting medication for many forms of anxiety. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that plays a role in feelings of well-being and happiness, as well as thinking, memory, sleep, digestion and circulation. SSRIs

increase levels of serotonin in the brain and are considered non-addictive and safe for long-term use.

Another choice is **benzodiazepines**, or "benzos," which strengthen the effect of the neurotransmitter GABA—the primary inhibitory ("turn off") signaller in the brain. Benzos are fast-acting and don't stay in your system for long, but they are considered unsafe for continuous use and are potentially addictive.

Kissen believes therapy is still crucial because the gains are hardwired into your brain. For moderate to severe anxiety, combining therapy with medication is generally the most impactful. "It's a one-two punch where the medication is setting up the environment of your brain to make the most rapid gains as you're doing the work of learning new ways of looking at situations," says Kissen.



validation, including by the American Psychological Association.

ACT guides people to see their unpleasant emotions as just feelings and to accept that parts of life are hard. Practitioners encourage patients to begin a dialogue with anxious thoughts, examining their causes while also keeping in mind their personal goals and values. Although anxious thoughts shouldn't be completely suppressed, sufferers can deliberately not allow anxiety to decide what gets their attention or turn them away from what they want to do and who they want to be.

## NOTING PHYSICAL SENSATIONS OF ANXIETY ALLOWS YOU TO BE LESS CAUGHT UP IN THEM.

This way of relating to anxiety has been a powerful strategy for John Bateman, the 52-year-old host of the podcast *Our Anxiety Stories*. When negative or irrational thoughts arise, he acknowledges them but doesn't let them drive his decisions.

Over the years, Bateman has noticed that if he acquiesces to his thoughts, they don't go away but dramatically increase. But if he recognizes them for what they are, just a passing thought and not a fact that needs to be acted on,

they diminish. Since beginning to train his brain to think in this new way eight years ago, he's noticed that the negative thought patterns have lessened. "I discovered that my brain is this amazing, elastic thing," he says.

**2. BE CURIOUS ABOUT IT** After acceptance, a mindfulness approach to anxiety can be useful, especially when you're cycling through anxious thoughts and are unable to think clearly or rationally.

In his book *Unwinding Anxiety*, psychiatrist and neuroscientist Dr. Judson Brewer recommends paying attention to the body sensations, thoughts and emotions that come as a result of feeling anxious or worried. When we notice and name the physical sensations that are arising in our bodies (my face feels hot and flushed; my breathing is shallow; my heart is beating quickly; I feel sweat prickling my underarms), we are already less caught up in it, simply through that act of observation, writes Brewer.

Many mindfulness training apps can provide you with help, including one that Brewer developed in his lab at Brown University and shares a name with his book. After three months of using the app, a test group reported a 57 per cent reduction in their anxiety.

Understanding exactly what was happening inside her body and bringing her awareness to it was an empowering tool for Arthur. When she'd notice the shaky feeling in her chest or belly that radiated out to her hands and

down her legs, she knew that meant adrenalin had been released. And by noting these changes as an observer, her “thinking brain” could take over from her immediate fight-freeze-flight reaction to an anxious moment—and as she began processing what just happened, her symptoms became less acute and threatening. She pictured the hormones hitting her body the same way an ocean wave hits the beach. The beach can’t fight the wave, but it remains steady and allows the wave to wash over and fall back.


### 3. MAKE LIFESTYLE ADJUSTMENTS

Learning to live with anxiety is an individual process, and one that requires trial and error to get just right. While acceptance is the first and most important step to take, some lifestyle changes have been proven to take the edge off, as well.

Since fatigue and increased tension and stress leave us more vulnerable to anxiety, a well-balanced diet, adequate

rest and, especially, regular exercise can help us manage it better. In one study, researchers showed that regular vigorous workouts lead people to be 25 per cent less likely to develop an anxiety disorder or depression over the next five years.

Meredith Arthur’s toolkit consists of medication—a prescription SSRI antidepressant—and regular meditation. She also shares her experiences on and edits stories about mental illness for the web platform Medium and recently wrote *Get Out of My Head*, an illustrated guide on how to understand anxiety and learn to navigate problems without overthinking.

Openly discussing the condition with an online community and readers has transformed her relationship with anxiety. “I’m learning to live in harmony, as much as possible, with this thing that is a part of me,” she says. “It’s not always pleasant, but I’m learning to accept and, as much as I can, take care of my anxiety.” 



## Thoughts of Mom

**Mother is a verb. It’s something you do, not just who you are.**

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

**To describe my mother would be to write about  
a hurricane in its perfect power. Or the climbing, falling  
colours of a rainbow.**

MAYA ANGELOU

**Sooner or later we all quote our mothers.**

BERNARD WILLIAMS, PHILOSOPHER



In lockdown, Mom and  
I were able to move  
past our clashing  
personalities and connect

# Character

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BY John Danakas FROM *THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

ILLUSTRATION BY MEREDITH SADLER

# Studies





**LAST SPRING**, when the first lockdown began in Winnipeg, the task to check in daily on our elderly mother fell to me. I was no longer working in an office, and since I lived alone, I could more easily limit social contacts and ensure her safety.

My brother and sister-in-law handled the weekly grocery shopping (dropped off at the side door) as well as Mom's monthly haircut (with her seated smack in the centre of the backyard on a white-gone-grey plastic lawn chair).

Mom is 88 and lives on her own in the home she and my father moved into after their retirement. Dad passed away about 12 years ago—he fell ill just as my parents were about to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

She's blessed, of course, to have her two sons and three grandchildren nearby, and my brother and I are lucky even to have been able to visit her. Still, I wasn't sure how the visits would go. Mom and I agreed long ago that we have clashing personalities and, even as I've crossed into my late 50s, our differences still present challenges. She appreciates

discipline and order; I favour improvisation. We do share a facility with language—but, unfortunately, when directed at each other, it can be biting.

Initially, I timed my visits to coincide with the Greek game shows she watches every afternoon on satellite TV. The ice-breaker worked: soon we found ourselves rooting for the same contestants or comparing the relative appeal of the various hosts.

Mom became fascinated with my ability to find out trivial information almost instantly on my smart phone: the age of a Greek pop singer, the selling price of the house down the street, the year an acquaintance married.

"How can that little thing know so much?"

What I discovered when we turned away from the TV, however, was that my mother knew things Google didn't. Soon I set aside my phone and made Mom my preferred search engine. I learned, for instance, that the German soldiers occupying her hometown south of Sparta during the Second World War sunbathed in the nude every afternoon, and that the trick to cooking wild dandelion greens so they are only slightly tart and still deliciously tender is not to over-boil them.

My mother also revealed family histories I wasn't aware of: that as a child she enjoyed climbing trees and throwing stones; that in 1934 my paternal grandparents lost their twins—two boys not yet six months old—on consecutive

days to a mysterious “grippe” virus; that my mother had only ever seen snow once before coming to Canada; and that my father, in their first years of marriage, had earned her lifelong loyalty by agreeing without argument to pay for her own mother’s new dentures.

I was hooked. Soon I was visiting twice a day.

**ON ABOUT DAY 12** of that initial lockdown, Mom’s landline went dead. I called the phone company and learned the problem could last as long as a week. The customer service rep was surprised Mom didn’t own a cellphone and recommended we buy one for her to tide her over.

“We’ll call the television news,” I joked to mom, “and invite them to interview the octogenarian learning to use a cellphone for the first time.”

Mom wasn’t amused. We nixed the cellphone idea. But now the issue remained of how she would contact anyone in the event she needed help. We decided it was best if I slept over until the landline was repaired. I packed my overnight bag.

“I get up a few times a night, I’m just warning you,” she told me.

“It’s okay,” I replied. “So do I.”

She laughed: “I guess so. I’m only 30 years older than you.”

The week living together went surprisingly well. Never a handyman, I nevertheless tried my best to make myself useful. I changed a light bulb,

found a discarded piece of baseboard with which she could easily switch the television on and off, and took her reading glasses in for repair when the toothpick I tried as a temporary fix to replace a screw didn’t quite do the trick.

When we weren’t addressing the long list of deferred household maintenance chores, we planned the day’s menu, went for walks down the street and continued our open-ended chats.

## THERE’S PHYLLO PASTRY WAITING IN THE FREEZER FOR THE DAY SHE CAN BAKE FOR US ALL AGAIN.

One night at bedtime, which was signaled on weekdays by the 9:00 p.m. closing credits of the Seattle broadcast of *Wheel of Fortune*, she turned to me and said: “Now I’ve learned your character.”

I didn’t ask her to elaborate. But, choosing to interpret the gleam in her eye as an indication that her conclusion was a favourable one, I found myself struggling to keep from choking up.

**ONE AFTERNOON WELL** into the second month, after the phone was working again, I called Mom to let her know I was coming by. No answer. I dismissed any negative thoughts. I drove over and knocked at the door. Again, no answer.

Now I was getting worried. I called my brother and the friend down the back lane my mother often visited pre-pandemic. Neither had heard from her that morning. I retrieved the extra set of house keys from my car and let myself in. My heart thumped. I checked the upstairs rooms, the basement. No Mom. I realized I hadn't checked the bathtub. I steeled myself for the worst, pulling the shower curtain aside.

Nothing.

I got into my car and headed down the street. Maybe she'd taken a walk. I spotted a police cruiser parked outside a fast food outlet. The officers might have spotted her somewhere, or at least I could report her as a missing person, I decided.

As I swung into the strip mall parking lot, there was Mom walking down the adjacent sidewalk, sunglasses shading her eyes, a grocery bag hanging at her side.

I was too relieved to chastise.

"I'll drive you home," I offered.

"I'm fine, thanks," she said. "I just needed to do something myself."

I smiled. "I was ready to have the police track you down."

"Don't worry," she said. "It won't happen again. I don't like all the new rules. The cashier scolded me for resting my purse on the checkout counter."

**NOW, OVER A YEAR AFTER** our lockdown journey began, the pandemic hasn't given up. But neither has Mom. The

winter months were the hardest, forcing her to remain indoors more than she'd have liked. Her spirit, though, remained as indomitable as ever.


The year has not been without loss, however. At least a dozen of Mom's friends have died, and so has one of my own.

"The shovels, the spades and straight to Hades," my mother intoned recently in rhyming Greek, calling up one of the countless Old World aphorisms in her repertoire. I guess when you've lived almost 90 years, you come to realize that the end of life is always near.

In the meantime, Mom is eagerly anticipating her COVID-19 vaccine. And like so many other grandparents, she's looking forward to safely hosting her grandchildren again. There's even phyllo pastry waiting in the freezer for the day she can bake a *spanakopita* for us all.

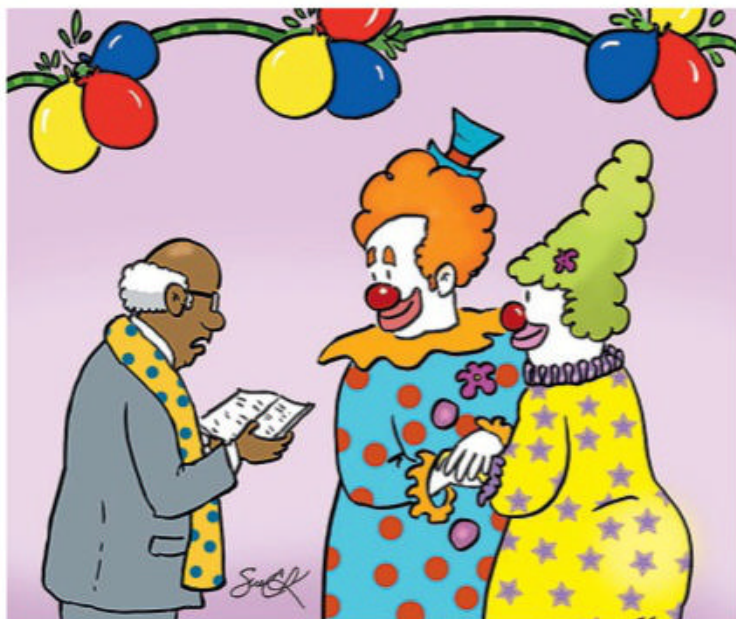
Physical distancing measures notwithstanding, my generation fully expects to visit our parents as they are dying, usually in hospital; I've learned that the real reward comes in visiting them as they are living.

With at least some level of pandemic restrictions still in place, my sessions with Mom have become the highlight of my day. Some days I drop by as many as three times.

I like to believe the time spent with her is good for my character. 

© 2020, JOHN DANAKAS. FROM "IN LOCKDOWN. MOM AND I ARE LEARNING TO RECONNECT," *THE GLOBE AND MAIL* (NOVEMBER 22, 2020), [THEGLOBEANDMAIL.COM](http://THEGLOBEANDMAIL.COM)

## KNOCK, KNOCK



"Now repeat after me: 'Knock, knock...'"

**Knock, knock.**  
Who's there?  
A broken pencil.  
A broken pencil who?  
Never mind. It's  
pointless.

—[@BIARIANACXH](#)

**An Oldie but Goodie**  
Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
A little old lady.  
A little old lady who?  
I had no idea you  
could yodel!

—[@KNOCKKNOCKJOKES](#)

**Grammar Check**  
Knock, knock.  
Who's there?

To.  
To who?  
To *whom*.

—[REDDIT.COM](#)

**Knock, knock.**  
Who's there?  
Saul.  
Saul who?  
Saul there is. There ain't  
no more.

—FLETCHER HENDERSON,  
*1930s big-band leader*

**Knock, knock.**  
Who's there?  
Ida.  
Ida who?  
Surely it's pronounced  
Idaho?

—[@HAILEYHARGREEVE](#)

**Knock, knock.**  
Who's there?  
Nobel.  
Nobel who?  
No bell. That's why  
I knocked.

—[LAUGHFACTORY.COM](#)

**Knock, knock.**  
Who's there?  
Boo.  
Boo who?  
Hey, don't cry!

—[@KATA\\_KITOKA](#)

**Science Fiction**  
Moo.  
Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Time-travelling cow.

—[@LEAHBLOOM](#)

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in the magazine. See  
page 7 or [rd.ca/joke](#)  
for details.**

# The Wolf Who Trusted Too Much

Takaya roamed B.C.'s  
coastline with little fear  
that a human would  
harm him—until one did

BY Larry Pynn FROM *HAKAI MAGAZINE*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TJ WATT



Takaya, who first appeared off the coast of Vancouver Island in 2012, lived an unusually solitary existence.

# Who killed Takaya the wolf?

The simple answer is the hunter who legally shot the animal—a celebrity to wildlife lovers around the world—during a chance encounter on a Vancouver Island logging road.

The fuller explanation is nuanced and says more about society's conflicted views of predators than a fatal single bullet fired from a hunter's rifle.

Takaya is thought to have lived a celibate existence for almost eight years on Discovery and Chatham islands, the traditional territory of the Songhees Nation. The islands rest in the Salish Sea; only a thin barrier of water separated Takaya from the tourist shops and manicured flower beds of Victoria.

Takaya began to assume celebrity status in 2012 when he was fully grown and two or three years old. He is estimated to have weighed 36 to 40 kilograms—about the size of a large German Shepherd.

Boaters, kayakers and photographers occasionally spotted this wild predator in his archipelago home.

"It was magic, such a beautiful animal," recalls Mark Malleson, a boat skipper with Prince of Whales, a Victoria marine ecotourism company.

Wolves are pack animals, and it was highly unusual for Takaya to be living a solo existence for so long. No one knew where he came from, whether he

had been exiled by his pack or whether he had left on his own in hopes of starting a family.

Sometimes Takaya would reveal himself on a stretch of shoreline by lounging in the open. He came to accept the gawking of visitors aboard their boats. “Everyone would sit there, take a few minutes and watch,” Malleson says.

Just two months after Takaya’s arrival, in a local news segment about the wolf, a park ranger warned viewers that repetitive human contact could lead to the

to call him Takaya, which means “respectful one” in Japanese. But also, she chose the name because it closely mirrors *stqéyax̣*, the Songhees word for wolf.

Alexander and her husband, David Green, a solar LED entrepreneur, own 3.4 hectares on Discovery Island. They’re working to reduce invasive plants and allow research, including on migratory birds and Steller’s sea lions, from the property. The rest of the island includes a 61-hectare provincial

## “HE’S A LOT LIKE A DOG,” SAID LAND-ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IAN CESAREC, AFTER TAKAYA CAME WITHIN SIX METRES OF HIM.



wolf becoming habituated to their presence. And at the end of the segment, the reporter passed along a conservation officers’ message that people should keep their distance from the wolf.

**ONE PERSON WHO DEDICATED** a lot of time to tracking Takaya’s movements was Victoria conservation photographer Cheryl Alexander. She was a regular visitor to Discovery Island for decades before first spotting the wolf in May 2014. “He’d just swum across from Chatham to Discovery and was coming out of the water onto a little beach,” she says. “Then he started to howl, and it was unbelievable.” Alexander decided

park, Songhees reserve lands and a decommissioned federal lighthouse.

In 2019, David Suzuki’s show, *The Nature of Things*, featured Alexander’s documentary, *Takaya: Lone Wolf*. She narrated the film and served as cinematographer, creative consultant and co-executive producer. “I’ve gained this wolf’s trust and documented his life, shooting over 1,000 hours of footage,” she commented on camera.

To some, Takaya seemed to have learned to view humans as harmless. In September 2019, Songhees land-enforcement officer Ian Cesarec, who patrols the Chatham Islands, told a local reporter that Takaya came

within six metres of him, sat down and scratched his ear. "He's a lot like a dog," he said.

Had Takaya maintained his exiled lifestyle, it might not have mattered. But for reasons unknown, he braved cold water and swirling tidal currents to return to Vancouver Island in the winter of 2020.

**HIS HOWLS UNANSWERED**, did Takaya finally go in search of a mate? After all, wolves reach sexual maturity at about two years of age.

"It was breeding season, and, unlike dogs, wolves breed only once per year," says Chris Darimont, a professor at the University of Victoria and a science director for the Raincoast Conservation Foundation.

People first reported seeing a wolf, suspected of being Takaya, on January 25 in James Bay, Victoria's oldest neighborhood, just south of the province's government buildings. The bewildered animal showed up in residential backyards and dashed across streets. Police cautioned residents to keep pets and small children indoors—a warning that could bring to mind an image straight from "Little Red Riding Hood."

Conservation officers tranquilized and tagged Takaya on January 26, and the next day drove him about two hours northwest of Victoria for relocation to an unspecified spot near the community of Port Renfrew, which sits on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The provincial agency didn't have to go to all that effort. A predator that winds up in human company is typically killed—either because it's become habituated or is considered a danger. In 2019, for instance, conservation officers destroyed 60 cougars across B.C. and relocated just two. Wolf encounters tend to involve livestock and are handled by the cattle industry's Livestock Protection Program through an agreement with the provincial government that allows for trapping in response to predation. In the span of a year ending March 2020, 129 wolves were destroyed in British Columbia under that program.

But Takaya was healthy, hadn't threatened people and, after all, was a known figure. "It was his reputation and fame that protected him," Alexander says.

Members of the Pacheedaht First Nation in Port Renfrew believe that the relocation was doomed from the start. Wildlife manager Helen Jones would have preferred a more remote site affording greater protection, such as the 16,365-hectare Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park, just to the north. "It wasn't the right place to put him," she says, "so the process failed him."





Takaya in San Juan Valley, a couple days before he was killed.

**TAKAYA THRIVED** on the archipelago despite public scrutiny. He largely lived off marine mammals like harbour seals, and did so without competition or threats to his safety. All of that changed after his relocation. There's a price to be paid for having more room to roam and potentially finding a mate. Takaya had to find food in his new home and contend with the potential

lethal threat of other wild wolves.

"The location for the wolf's release was not influenced by the potential presence, or lack thereof, of other wolves," says Ben York, the conservation officer in charge of the west-coast region. "The assumption is that the entire west coast of Vancouver Island, as well as most of the island's middle and north, support and contain wolves."



After he was captured by conservation officers, Takaya was relocated near Port Renfrew.



That meant that anywhere on the island that represented good wolf habitat for Takaya probably already contained wolves.

For two months, Takaya survived and hunted successfully, and had occasional encounters with humans

and their pets. “Takaya was interested in dogs, but in a nonaggressive way,” Alexander says. “He essentially wanted to play with them.”

After his relocation, Takaya regularly visited Island Road, on the outskirts of Port Renfrew, a popular spot for people to exercise their dogs off-leash. Conservation officers and the Pacheedaht reported no incidents of him showing aggression.

By late March, the wolf eventually entered logging company Mosaic Forest Management’s private timberlands just beyond Shawnigan Lake, a recreational and residential community of tightly packed waterfront homes less

than an hour's drive north of Victoria.

This is where Takaya's tracks end.

**NEWS OF TAKAYA'S KILLING** shocked his many fans.

Conservation officers confirmed in a written statement that a hunter had fatally shot the wolf on March 24. York assured me that a thorough investigation discovered no wrongdoing: it was wolf-hunting season. The licensed hunter reported the kill as required by the Wildlife Act and legally took possession of the pelt.

off, as he has seen them do on many occasions, but instead it stopped on the side of the road and stood there looking at the truck."

The hunter knew wolf season was open, so he grabbed his Remington rifle and pressed the trigger. Takaya dropped where he stood, 15 metres away. The hunter said he didn't know at the time of the shooting that it was Takaya, but it didn't take long to make the connection once he examined the carcass and spotted the wolf's ear tag.

After the hunter took the hide, the

## THE HUNTER KNEW WOLF SEASON WAS OPEN, SO HE GRABBED HIS REMINGTON RIFLE AND PRESSED THE TRIGGER.



According to the documents obtained through a freedom-of-information request, the hunter was driving Mosaic's logging roads with his dog, looking for a friend's missing cougar-hunting hounds. On a spur road he pulled over to let his dog pee, about four kilometres beyond the company's main gate.

That's when Takaya popped out from a ditch, where he may have been resting in a plastic culvert. He approached the hunter's dog.

The hunter "called the dog and was able to get it into the truck," according to the Conservation Officer Service report. "He expected the wolf to run

carcass went to provincial veterinarian Helen Schwantje for a necropsy. Her report described Takaya as 11 years of age—at the upper limit for a wild wolf—in excellent condition, with a belly full of beaver, no less.

**THE QUESTION OF** who killed Takaya, however, extends beyond a single act of aggression.

Provincial hunting regulations permit the rather liberal killing of wolves because the species is quick to reproduce and competes with human hunters for deer. Each licensed hunter on Vancouver Island can shoot up to three

per year, out of an estimated population of 250—a figure the government concedes is based more on anecdote than hard science.

Hunters kill, on average, 20 wolves per year on Vancouver Island, while trappers take another seven. Those kills are not enough to jeopardize the population, but it underscores a troubling attitude to predators, says the University of Victoria's Chris Darimont. "This is not an issue of the population's numerical sustainability, it's an ethical issue," he says. "I think it's wrong to kill something with no intention of eating it."

In Takaya's case, his familiarity with

She also doesn't buy the argument that wolves should naturally be wary of people. "The fear has come from how we treat them," she said. "That's the sad part of this."

**SONGHEES NATION** Chief Ron Sam was shocked when he heard about the animal's death. "I didn't even know you were allowed to hunt wolves on Vancouver Island," he says. "I don't think it's needed. To be told it's a trophy, a pelt, I don't agree with it."

Sam wanted to bring the wolf's body home, and made offers to the hunter through the province.

## SOME SONGHEES NATION BAND MEMBERS BELIEVE THE WOLF IS THE EMBODIMENT OF THEIR LATE CHIEF ROBERT SAM.

people made him a vulnerable target. David Mech, a wolf expert and senior research scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey, argues that when wildlife no longer associates humans with danger, it can be at risk. "It's not surprising for a human-habituated wolf to be shot or killed," he says.

According to Alexander, Takaya kept his distance from people, but he would see them frequently and they weren't harming him. "He would not expect that a hunter would pick up a gun and shoot him."

Some band members see the wolf as the embodiment of their late chief Robert Sam (Ron Sam's uncle), who died in 2012. "He is still out on the land looking after us; that's what some people took it as. That's where we're coming from," says Sam. He wants the wolf buried on their Chatham Island reserve lands—and it appears that may have happened.

On April 30 of last year, the Ministry of Environment provided me with a brief statement: "We understand that the hunter and Songhees First Nation

have reached a resolution that will see the body returned to the Nation. We are grateful that a resolution has been reached, so that the Songhees can carry out the appropriate ceremony for healing and closure. They have requested privacy going forward.”

All that’s left to ponder, then, is Takaya’s legacy: just another dead wolf or something more enduring and meaningful? Could the wolf become British Columbia’s version of Cecil the lion, shot by an American trophy hunter in Zimbabwe in 2015?

International outrage over the Cecil killing generated almost 95,000 news stories, yet “did not lead to widespread policy changes,” according to an Indiana University study.

In British Columbia, campaigns against trophy hunting have achieved some success. In 2017, the provincial

government buckled under years of public pressure and banned the widely unpopular hunting of grizzly bears—for both trophies and human consumption.

Representatives of the Songhees and Pacheedaht First Nations are opposed to trophy hunting of wolves, and their voices may yet carry weight.

For now, this remains a story of irreconcilable social values. In the clash of those who love wolves and seek to live peacefully among them versus those with a desire to kill for trophies—with full support from government policy—the latter is destined to win and the animals to lose.

The double tragedy for Takaya is that society stole his wildness and then ultimately took his life. **R**

© 2020, LARRY PYNN. FROM “THE LONE WOLF THAT WAS LOVED TO DEATH,” *HAKAI MAGAZINE* (OCTOBER 27, 2020), [HAKAIMAGAZINE.COM](http://HAKAIMAGAZINE.COM).

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## City Views

**A city always contains more than any inhabitant  
can know, and a great city always makes the unknown  
and the possible spurs to the imagination.**

REBECCA SOLNIT, *WANDERLUST: A HISTORY OF WALKING*

**Cities have the capability of providing something  
for everybody, only because, and only when,  
they are created by everybody.**

JANE JACOBS

**The outcome of the city will depend on the race between  
the automobile and the elevator, and anyone who  
bets on the elevator is crazy.**

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT



# Why Do You Ask if I Was a Neurotic Kid?

BY Cassie Barradas

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX GORA

**DESPITE REASSURING FRIENDS** and strangers that I had loving parents and a stable upbringing, I'm often asked if I was a neurotic kid. My immediate response is always "No! Why would you even think that?"

After some reflection, though, there might have been some clues.

**THEN: I CHEWED ALMOST EVERYTHING.** I didn't just chomp on my fingernails or pen lids—reliable choices, if a touch pedestrian. I bit whole hands off

my baby dolls. I left bite marks at the foot of my wooden bunk bed. If it was pliable, my teeth chewed it. This lasted until puberty. Textbook self-soothing.  
**NOW:** I throw out pen lids and have gum nearby at all times. My fingernails are still, um, “manually maintained.”

## I MADE A FAKE BODY OUT OF STUFFED ANIMALS TO PREVENT BEING ABDUCTED BY ROBBERS.

**THEN: I BELIEVED IN SANTA UNTIL I WAS IN GRADE 7.** My mom finally broke the news to me in a not-so-subtle way: responding back to my letter, as “Santa,” in an envelope with her company’s logo on it. All along, I had been worried about what would happen if I *didn’t* believe in Santa. Would I hurt his feelings? Would I be banished from wonderment?

**NOW:** My fear of disappointing others is combined with more positive self-talk. For example, “Oh no! What if I forget my sister’s birthday and she’s really upset about it, but then my apology brings us closer together?”

**THEN: I TOOK THE LEGS OFF MY BARBIES AND PRETENDED I WAS KNITTING WITH THEM.** The clacking of needles (read: doll limbs) across yarn (read: bath

towels) is considered to be quite relaxing—which then raises the question: Why was I so stressed out I had to give myself sound therapy?

**NOW:** I knit actual scarves and fall asleep to a 500-minute playlist of whale songs.

**THEN: MY BEDTIME PRAYER WAS, “PLEASE DON’T LET ME HAVE ANY MORE NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE LITTLE MERMAID.”** One time I dreamt that Ursula, the sea witch, was using my family’s downstairs telephone. The experience was so upsetting I prayed for a full year that it would never happen again.

**NOW:** My nightmares are significantly more mundane (think: my hair is overgrown, but my stylist is in pandemic lockdown for the year).

**THEN: I MADE A FAKE BODY OUT OF STUFFED ANIMALS TO LIE WITH ME AT NIGHT.** To prevent my abduction at the hands of robbers, I would fashion my stuffies into a sort of decoy, going as far as to put a Cabbage Patch Kids doll at the top. I would then attempt to sleep as still as I could, my face between the wall and the bed.

**NOW:** My whole house, from my bed linens to my kitchen towels, is decorated in cat patterns to deter any interest by thieves. At this point, the only intruders visiting me are unwelcome thoughts.

**THEN: I HAD A SPECIAL BLANKIE NAMED POOKIE.**

**NOW:** Oh wait, I still do.





Sandra, Lloyd and  
17 of the Simpson  
kids in the 1970s



EDITORS' CHOICE



# S. Meet the Simpsons

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How one couple adopted dozens  
of children from around the world  
and created Canada's most  
remarkable family

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BY Nicholas Hune-Brown FROM *TORONTO LIFE*

The house at 45 Russell Hill Road in Toronto is tucked behind a short stone wall and a copse of birches. In the 1970s and '80s, it was filled with dozens of children, from preschoolers to teenagers. The woman in charge was Sandra Simpson, a tall blond from Montreal's West Island. Along with her husband, Lloyd, Sandra spent decades adopting children from around the world. Her bottomless energy and sheer tenacity allowed her to carve out avenues for international adoption that had never existed before.

With their sprawling numbers and the haphazard way they came together, the Simpsons pressed up against the boundaries of what it meant to be a family. They arrived in Forest Hill in 1978 like an asteroid, crashing into a wealthy neighbourhood that had never seen so many non-white faces before, let alone enough non-white faces to field both sides of a baseball game, and all under one roof. They embodied a strain of mid-century Canadian liberalism—a belief that the complications and inconveniences of race could sim-

ply be discarded and replaced with a new collective identity.

Talk to the Simpson kids today and they'll say they were just like any other family. Over the course of 20 years in the big house on Russell Hill Road, they played on soccer teams and got into fist fights, snuck around with boyfriends and delivered newspapers. They experienced joy as well as tragedy—troubles with the law, illness and disability.

Now, 40 years later, the Simpson kids have grown into chefs, business owners, athletes, hospitality workers and

(PREVIOUS SPREAD) COURTESY OF THE SIMPSON FAMILY

parents with kids of their own. And they've had time to reflect on the singularity of their childhood and of their mother's vision, and on the peculiar moment in time that allowed their family to flourish. What happened on Russell Hill Road is not just the story of an extraordinary woman but of a radical experiment in child rearing. Sandra Simpson didn't keep the suffering of the world at a distance. She invited it into her home and made it family.

**THE FIRST TIME** I wrote to Sandra Simpson, she told me, quite firmly, to go away.

anything unusual.

"Did you always want a big family?" I asked.

"It wasn't a question of want," she wrote back. "There were so many kids."

Sandra was born in 1937 in Barranquilla, Colombia, where her father worked installing telephone lines. A few years later, her parents moved back to their hometown of Pointe-Claire, raising five children in unremarkable comfort.

After high school, Sandra married a military man, and the couple had a daughter, Kimberley. That marriage ended, and in 1967, Sandra remarried,

## SANDRA HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO ADOPT. IN 1967, SHE FOUND A WILLING PARTNER IN HER NEW HUSBAND, LLOYD SIMPSON.

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"I had my voice box removed years ago and my last interview about the same time, thank God," she emailed.

Now 84, Sandra lives in a rambling home in Pointe-Claire, an anglophone suburb of Montreal. The word everyone uses to describe her is "sharp." She's a sharp thinker with a sharp sense of humour who doesn't hesitate to let you know how she feels. In the next months, over reluctant texts and emails, Sandra shared snippets of her life. She seemed unwilling to entertain the idea that adopting nearly 30 children was

this time to Lloyd Simpson, who came from the same tight-knit West Island community. He was kind and easy-going, with a solid middle-class job as a construction estimator. Sandra had always wanted to adopt, and with Lloyd she found a willing partner. Shortly after they were married, the couple adopted four kids who had been through Canadian foster homes. In the midst of this flurry of adoptions, Sandra also gave birth to a daughter, Melanie.

As the Vietnam War entered its second decade, Canadian newspapers

were filled with heart-wrenching descriptions of the orphans left behind. But Canada's immigration laws made adopting a child from overseas nearly impossible. To Sandra, that was unconscionable. She wrote to a series of officials, asking them how she could adopt a Vietnamese child. When that didn't work, she connected with an Australian nurse in Vietnam who had spent years battering the Vietnamese bureaucracy with pleas to allow orphans to be sent abroad. Through her, Sandra finally arranged to adopt an infant girl. On Christmas Eve in 1969, eight-month-old Mai arrived in Montreal,

When war began in Bangladesh, Sandra travelled to Dhaka to help arrange adoptions for orphaned children.

International adoption was and remains controversial. When the *Toronto Star* published an item about Sandra's work, readers were appalled. "I can't understand the thinking of those couples who adopt children of foreign races," read one letter to the editor in 1979.

The women running FFC were also criticized as white saviours. Such critics of FFC argued that adopting children from overseas was yet another form of colonialism, delivering adorable foreign babies into the hands of eager

## CANADA'S IMMIGRATION LAWS MADE ADOPTING A CHILD FROM OVERSEAS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE. TO SANDRA, THAT WAS UNCONSCIONABLE.

one of the first Vietnamese orphans allowed into Canada.

The methods Sandra used to adopt Mai—refusing to take no for an answer, badgering functionaries in high places, invoking her authority as a mother—became her *modus operandi*. She was fearless, meddlesome and scornful of authorities who dragged their feet when children's lives were on the line. Along with two other Montreal mothers, she formed an organization, Families For Children, or FFC, to help prospective parents navigate foreign bureaucracies.

Western parents. Sandra, too, believed that the best option for most orphaned children was to be raised in their home countries, but sometimes that simply wasn't possible, especially for kids who were older, of mixed race or who had disabilities.

More adopted children arrived quickly after Mai. Kesooni arrived from South Korea in the winter of 1971, during Montreal's worst snowstorm in a century. Roberto was four when Sandra visited his orphanage in Quito, Ecuador, in the early 1970s.

According to family lore, Sandra wanted to adopt a child from the orphanage, but the idea of choosing seemed impossible. She wrote “Simpson” on a piece of paper, turned around and threw it over her head into a crowd of waiting kids. Roberto was the one who picked it up.

Between adoptions, Lloyd and Sandra had two more biological children, Nicholas and Kathryn. Even as their home grew crowded, the same moral conundrum kept presenting itself: kids needed homes. Another mouth to feed would hardly bankrupt them; Sandra could always make a larger pot

willing to take on children with disabilities. She was adamant that FFC adoptions would be colour-blind, but potential families often refused to take Vietnamese orphans who were the half-Black children of American soldiers. Most devastatingly, adoptions often broke down.

Through FFC, an Ontario family had adopted Kate, a five-year-old girl from Bangladesh thought to have an intellectual disability. Three months into the adoption, the mother decided to move to the U.K. and didn’t know what kinds of services would be available. She asked Sandra if she could give Kate

## SANDRA COULDN’T CHOOSE A CHILD AT THE ORPHANAGE. SHE WROTE “SIMPSON” ON A PIECE OF PAPER AND THREW IT INTO THE CROWD.



of pasta, cram another kid into the house, get more wear out of the hand-me-down clothes. For the child, it could mean life or death. And so the family kept growing.

**SANDRA BUILT HER LIFE** and work around the belief that a loving Canadian home, with loving parents, could be transformative. And yet over and over again she witnessed the limits of that philosophy. She wanted to arrange adoptions for the neediest but found that many Canadian couples weren’t

back, and so the Simpsons adopted her. Such incidents were devastating for the children involved, and Sandra, who had often arranged the adoptions, felt compelled to step in. She fell in love with every kid who turned up on her doorstep, and she couldn’t bear the thought of putting them back on a plane to an orphanage.

At home, kids were constantly crawling through the house or being carried upstairs by one of their siblings. When a new kid arrived, they’d often gone through horrible experiences—illness,



The Simpson family kept on growing through the decades, and in the 1990s they lived together in a Toronto mansion.

broken adoptions, years on the street—and were suddenly thrust into a strange Canadian home and told a house full of strangers were their new siblings. One refused to sleep in a crib, so Melanie gave up her bed and slept in a little fort she made in the closet. Kate shrieked whenever she was in an enclosed space, so the family brought her crib out into the hall.

The family's sheer size seemed to them a bulwark against the worst of tragedies; they believed they were big enough and strong enough to handle anything. A childless couple, seeking the one baby who would complete them, could get overwhelmed by a kid with disabilities or who had suffered trauma. But the Simpson clan could absorb anyone.



COURTESY OF THE SIMPSON FAMILY

**BY THE MID-'70S**, more than 20 Simpson kids were cramped in the Pointe-Claire house, and it was clear to Sandra that something needed to change.

That's when the Gundy family stepped in. Charles Gundy and his wife, Antoinette, were wealthy Torontonians. The Gundy family had also adopted five children from Vietnam and Bangladesh through FFC. In the process, they'd met Sandra and become inspired by her story. In 1978, one of the Gundy's homes—a 22-room brick mansion at 45 Russell Hill Road—was sitting empty. When Charles learned of the Simpsons' predicament, he made an extraordinary offer: come to Toronto, move into the empty house, stay as long as you want. Sandra didn't care for Toronto, but she

was nothing if not pragmatic. And so, that autumn, they moved in.

The locals were alarmed by the Simpsons' arrival. "The neighbourhood hated us," says Kesooni. Their public school had only ever had a handful of students who weren't white, and now suddenly there were whole classrooms filled with Simpson kids from every continent on earth. At one point,

neighbours called a city councillor to complain that the Simpsons were running some kind of illegal group home. Melanie remembers a flaming bag of dog poop left on their stoop. "They were horrible racists," says Sandra.

Over time, FFC had shifted from adoption work to trying to support kids overseas, opening orphanages in India, Bangladesh, Somalia and El Salvador (the organization still runs children's homes in India and Bangladesh today).

Because much of her work with FFC took place in Asia, Sandra usually woke at 3:30 a.m. By then, her fax machine would have been buzzing for hours with business from the orphanages, and she spent the hours before sunrise hammering out responses on her electric typewriter. A few hours later, the kids would get up. Each child was assigned to either the breakfast crew or the dinner crew. In the mornings, the breakfast kids would arrive in the kitchen and begin cooking—pancakes on the enormous griddle served with "maple syrup" (made by boiling down water and brown sugar), or scrambled eggs on toast.

After-school playdates outside the neighbourhood weren't permitted—the logistics were just impossible—but friends were welcome to come back to the Simpson house, and they often did. Eventually, the dinner crew would make their way to the kitchen and whip up industrial-sized pots of spaghetti or mounds of hot dogs. The family would pile into an enormous picnic

table in the back room, excess kids spilling up the stairs.

In the pandemonium that was the Simpson house, Lloyd was an anchor of calm. While Sandra was off adventuring—setting up an orphanage in Somalia or yelling at politicians in Ottawa—he'd remain at home with the kids. Every afternoon, like clockwork, he'd walk home from his transit stop, a kid or two often meeting him along the way to enjoy a few quiet minutes with their dad. In the evenings, he'd drink a Labatt 50 and watch a Leafs game or Lloyd Robertson on the news.

week, she typed out highly specific grocery lists—powdered milk instead of the real stuff, huge bags of puffed rice instead of name-brand cereal.

They saved their big extravagances for holidays. Each summer, Sandra and Lloyd brought the kids back to their beloved Montreal. For Sandra, the house in Pointe-Claire, with a swimming pool and a lake nearby, was still home. She took all the children out of school in May, despite their teachers' objections, and only reluctantly brought them back on Labour Day.

As the years passed and older teens

## IT WAS A STRUGGLE TO STRETCH LLOYD'S SALARY ACROSS TWO DOZEN KIDS. SANDRA OFTEN BAKED NINE LOAVES OF BREAD A NIGHT.

Between the adopted and the biological kids, there was no hint of preferential treatment—every child was equal in the Simpson house. A few of the older kids got rooms of their own, but everyone else slept in big bedrooms that could accommodate up to seven. All clothes were shared. “The rule was: if you fit it, you got to wear it,” says Melanie.

Still, it was a constant struggle to stretch Lloyd's salary across two dozen children. Sandra made the family's bread, often baking nine loaves a night, and sewed many of their clothes. Each

moved out, still more new kids kept arriving. Take Sash, who was brought to the FFC orphanage in Podanur, India, at age four. By the time he was seven or eight, in 1978, Sash's chances for adoption were waning. The Simpson house was overflowing, but Sandra decided she couldn't leave him there.

He arrived at Pearson Airport in December 1978, in the middle of a blizzard, just before Christmas—always a momentous occasion in the Simpson house, with at least three presents for every kid. “I don't know how my mother did it,” says Melanie.

Sash Simpson  
with Sandra, at  
an orphanage in  
Podanur in 1977.



“She must have saved up all year.”

That first year, just a few days out of the orphanage, Sash experienced his first Christmas. “I was just over the moon that the lady who owned the orphanage wanted me,” he says. He remembers unwrapping a toy plane with wonder, marvelling at its blinking lights. Then he carefully put it back in the box, still not quite believing his luck.

AS THE KIDS GREW into teenagers, they did all the things teenagers aren’t supposed to do: they drank, they did drugs, they occasionally got in trouble with the law. They chafed against Sandra’s strict rules. If she caught a whiff of smoke on someone, she demanded

they strip and wash their clothes. If someone tried to sneak home after dark, they’d find the doors locked—the only way in would be to wake Sandra. They also grew up, graduated high school, got jobs and got married. Some drifted away from the family. Others brought their own families back to Russell Hill Road at Christmas, and the house became even more chaotic and raucous than usual.

Throughout it all, Sandra remained at the centre of everything. But in the mid-’90s, her voice began to waver. After a few months, she finally went to the doctor, who took one look and told her right there in the room that it was throat cancer. In 1998, they removed

her larynx, and Sandra never spoke above the faintest whisper again.

That summer, the family drove to Pointe-Claire like they did every year. But when the kids returned to their lives in Toronto, Sandra and Lloyd stayed behind. They were in their 70s at that point and, without ever making a firm decision about it, had stopped adopting years earlier. Toronto had never felt like home. The noise, the endless hustle—they had endured that for the children, but they'd never been comfortable. Many of the remaining kids, most in their early 20s, moved back to Toronto. There were only eight or so left, and the

clothes from every era, a lifetime of report cards and school projects, hair-brushes and fridge magnets.

By 3 a.m., everyone was delirious and exhausted. The last item to be moved was Kathryn's mattress, destined for a downtown apartment. As they got ready to hoist it onto the roof of the van, it began to rain, and Kathryn started crying. Her siblings pulled it down and put it back inside. She spent one last night sleeping on the floor of the house at Russell Hill Road.

LAST MAY, as the pandemic entered its third month, I texted Sandra to see how

## AT 84, SANDRA NOW LIVES ALONE. THE SIMPSON KIDS ARE ALL MIDDLE-AGED WITH LIVES AS VARIED AS THEIR BIRTHPLACES.

house seemed too large. A few years later, when Antoinette Gundy died, her family decided to sell it.

The day before the house went on the market, a handful of the remaining Simpsons descended on it one last time. Over the phone from Montreal, Sandra was as strict as always: she wanted every room left spotless. All day and night, the Simpson kids went room by room, from top to bottom. Furniture lined the curb, stretching two houses down. The siblings filled countless garbage bags, hauling out


she was doing. "Fine!" she answered, characteristically curt.

Since the lockdown began, she'd been on her own in the Pointe-Claire house she's always considered home. Lloyd died of lung cancer in 2017, and her trips back to Toronto had become even less frequent. At 84, Sandra is still the head of FFC and still wakes up well before sunrise to correspond with the orphanages in India and Bangladesh. She drinks her hot cocoa. She defrosts the meals her kids bring her when they visit. She doesn't venture out. After

decades of being at the centre of a maelstrom of kids, she is now living completely alone.

The Simpson kids are middle-aged, many of them cresting 50, with lives as varied as their birthplaces. Sash worked his way through Toronto kitchens, eventually becoming the executive chef at a midtown restaurant for 24 years. When I visited him last winter, it was in the plush dining room of his eponymous new downtown restaurant, where you could order Labatt 50—a tribute to his dad. Melanie and Kesooni opened a diner. Between 1994 and 2009, Mel's Montreal Delicatessen stood on a corner of the city's Annex neighbourhood, and many of their siblings helped out at the restaurant.

I met a handful of the siblings in Melanie's backyard one day in May 2020.

It was a warm afternoon, and we spaced out across the yard, careful to maintain our distance. They laughed, talked over each other, loudly contradicted one another. The very idea that having some 30 adopted siblings was an unusual family situation worthy of reflection was, to many of them, nonsensical. "It's a stupid question," said Kate, bluntly. Their family may have been a grand experiment in altruism, but it was also the only one they'd ever known. Some of them had flourished, others had struggled, but it was impossible to imagine life any other way. A family so large creates its own gravity. They weren't looking for their identity. They knew exactly who they were. They were Simpsons. 

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## Spring Cleaning

**Perfectionism means that you try not to leave so much mess to clean up.  
But clutter and mess show us that life is being lived.**

ANNE LAMOTT

**My theory on housework is: if the item doesn't multiply, smell, catch fire or  
block the refrigerator door, let it be. No one else cares. Why should you?**

ERMA BOMBECK

**Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like  
shovelling the walk before it stops snowing.**

PHYLLIS DILLER

**The question of what you want to own is actually the question of  
how you want to live your life.**

MARIE KONDO

READER'S DIGEST  
**BOOK CLUB**



*For your reading pleasure,  
this spring's buzziest new  
novels and memoirs.*

BY Emily Landau

**HANA KHAN CARRIES ON**

by Uzma Jalaluddin

In this retelling of the 1998 Meg Ryan–Tom Hanks vehicle *You've Got Mail*, the Ryan role belongs to Hana Khan, who runs a halal biryani poutine restaurant in Scarborough that is soon threatened by the arrival of a fancy new halal burger joint in the same neighbourhood, owned by the obnoxious Aydin. Jalaluddin's book is charming, inclusive and delightfully appetizing (we hope biryani poutine becomes a real thing soon). **\$25.**

**WHILE JUSTICE SLEEPS**

by Stacey Abrams

When she isn't saving American democracy, Abrams moonlights as a thriller writer. Her ninth novel—and her first published under her own name, rather than her *nom de plume*, Selena Montgomery—is a serpentine mystery about a U.S. Supreme Court judge who slips into a suspicious coma while researching a shady conspiracy, leaving his gifted young clerk to untangle the clues he left behind. **\$37.**

**WHEREABOUTS**

by Jhumpa Lahiri

For the past decade, Lahiri has been living in Rome, drinking espresso and perfecting her Italian. This lovely, lyrical little novel, which she wrote in Italian and translated back into English, is the culmination of her efforts. In a sequence of short, pensive chapters,

an unnamed narrator reflects on her relationships with others and with solitude itself. In many ways, it's the perfect novel for our time, offering both a voyeuristic European vacation and a treatise on loneliness. **\$30.**

### **KLARA AND THE SUN**

by Kazuo Ishiguro

The titular Klara is a lifelike robot designed with the mind and appearance of a little girl and sold as an "artificial friend" to a chronically ill teenager named Josie. Like all of Ishiguro's genre-spanning works, it's melancholy and achingly compassionate, as Klara tries to figure out what it means to be human. **\$34.**

### **PLUNDER: A MEMOIR OF FAMILY PROPERTY AND NAZI TREASURE**

by Menachem Kaiser

In his ambitious debut, Kaiser recounts his circuitous, occasionally surreal quest to reclaim his family's former apartment building in Sosnowiec, Poland, where he encounters eccentric residents, a troop of Nazi treasure hunters and legal complications aplenty. **\$39.**

### **THE RELATIVES**

by Camilla Gibb

In Gibb's thorny new novel, a pair of exes named Tess and Emily feud over ownership of embryos. But they didn't make those embryos alone: threaded with their story is that of their anonymous sperm donor, who's being held

prisoner in Somalia. The result is both intimate and epic, exploring the complex Venn diagrams of family, genetics and globalization. **\$30.**


### **HOW BEAUTIFUL WE WERE**

by Imbolo Mbue

Mbue's Oprah-stamped debut, *Behold the Dreamers*, was all about the blinding, illusory promise of Western ambition; her new one examines the cost of that grasping new-world greed. It takes place in Kosawa, an agrarian village in a fictional African nation, where an American energy company has been drilling for oil, poisoning the water and destroying the land on which the villagers make their livelihood. Everything changes when Thula, a young revolutionary, rallies her neighbours into action, kicking off a years-long legal quest for justice and self-determination. **\$37.**

### **GOOD COMPANY**

by Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney

For gossipy family satire, it's hard to go wrong with Sweeney: her 2016 water-cooler novel *The Nest* was like a literary *Succession*, about a clan of adult siblings squabbling over the family trust. She brings that same sardonic twinkle to her new novel about fame and family secrets, tackling the tangled relationship between a modestly successful actor couple (they live off of voice-over work) and their much, much more famous friend (who stars in a Shonda Rimes-esque TV drama). **\$35.** 

BRAINTEASERS

Pic-a-Pix: Penny

Moderately Difficult

Reveal a hidden picture by shading in groups of horizontally or vertically adjacent cells. The numbers represent how many cells are in each of the corresponding row or column's groups. (For example, a "3" next to a row represents three horizontally adjacent shaded cells in that row.) There must be at least one empty cell between each group. The numbers read in the same horizontal or vertical order as the groups they represent. There's only one possible picture; can you shade it in?

			3	2			2	3	2	
		4	6	3	2	10	10	2	3	2
		2								
		6								
		8								
3	2	2								
	2	2								
	2	2								
3	2	2								
		8								
		6								
		2								



No More Scissors

**Moderately difficult** Simone decides to create a variant of the game rock, paper, scissors. It will feature five elements. So far, she has decided that:

- Water puts out fire
- Fire melts metal
- Water rusts metal
- Air blows away earth

Simone will ensure that the new game is balanced, meaning that each element wins against as many other elements as it loses to. Under this system, between earth and fire, who wins?

(PIC-A-PIX: PENNY) DIANE BAHER. MORE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS AVAILABLE AT LEARNPICAPIX.COM; (NO MORE SCISSORS) DARREN RIGBY



## Eighty-Six the Toast

**Difficult** A diner offers three options for breakfast:

- bacon and eggs
- pancakes
- sausage and hash browns

If four college students come in, the waiter could get any of 81 different orders, since each person could ask for any one of the three things, and  $3^4 = 81$ .

Unlike the waiter, the cook doesn't need to know which customer gets what: he only needs to know how many of each breakfast plate to make (for example, three plates of bacon and eggs and one plate of pancakes). Considering this, and assuming that each student asks for only one breakfast plate, how many different possible orders are there that the cook could receive?

## Treasures

**Easy** Can you locate 12 hidden treasures in the empty cells of this grid? The numbers outside indicate how many treasures are in each row or column. Each arrow points directly toward one or more of the treasures and does not share a cell with one. An arrow may be immediately next to a treasure it points to, or it may be further away. Not every treasure will necessarily have an arrow pointing to it.

	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1
2								
3								
2					↓	↖		
2	↘							
0	↗				↙			
2	↗							
0								
1			↗		↗			

For answers, turn to PAGE 95



BY Beth Shillibeer

- 1. Actor Morgan Freeman turned his 50-hectare property into a sanctuary for what species recently labelled “the most important living beings on earth”?
- 2. After she successfully climbed the Matterhorn in 1895, the press debated whether Annie Smith Peck should be arrested for what reason?
- 3. Where in our solar system might it rain diamonds?
- 4. What writing implement can be made out of eggshells?
- 5. The Central Public Library in Vancouver is modelled after what type of building, famously found in Rome?

- 6. Which northeastern European capital city offers its residents free public transit?
- 7. Adherents of what religion have practiced langar—feeding those in need—throughout the pandemic?
- 8. Heron of Alexandria invented the first vending machine in the first century AD. What did it dispense?
- 9. The Bios Urn, created by Spaniard Gerard Moline, transforms the remains of loved ones into what?
- 10. Which disease, affecting roughly 422 million people globally, did University of Alberta researchers recently cure in mice?

11. What kind of dancers traditionally perform at an English May Day celebration, accompanied by bells, sticks and sometimes a white handkerchief?

12. What German vehicle once favoured by hippies will be available in an electric form in 2023?

13. Which Irish writer said, “We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars”?

14. What milestone did Chris Nikic achieve when he crossed the Ironman finish line in November 2020?



15. Which European general was attacked by rabbits, forcing him to retreat from a hunt?

Answers: 1. Bees. 2. She wore pants while climbing. 3. In the outer planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus). 4. Chalk. 5. A coliseum. 6. Tallinn, Estonia. 7. Sikhism. 8. Holy water. 9. A tree. 10. Diabetes (types 1 and 2). 11. Morris dancers. 12. VW Bus. 13. Oscar Wilde. 14. First person with Down's syndrome to complete the Ironman triathlon. 15. Napoleon Bonaparte.

SHUTTERSTOCK/HAPPY MONKEY

## WORD POWER

English dictionaries have many contronyms, or words with contradictory definitions. See how many of these two-faced terms you're able to wrap your head around.

BY Samantha Rideout

**1. cleave—A:** loosen or tighten. **B:** sharpen or make dull. **C:** adhere or split.

**2. table—A:** climb a mountain or traverse a plain. **B:** consume or abstain. **C:** present something for consideration or postpone consideration.

**3. overlook—A:** regard with suspicion or with optimism. **B:** oversee or fail to see. **C:** see well or poorly.

**4. ravel—A:** grow louder or softer. **B:** disentangle or entangle. **C:** appear or disappear.

**5. anabasis—A:** foundation that is solid or shaky.

**B:** military advance or retreat. **C:** swampland or desert.

**6. quiddity—A:** planned purchase or impulse buy. **B:** trivial distinction or essence. **C:** flexibility or stiffness.

**7. flank—A:** stretch or compress. **B:** show off or remain humbly quiet. **C:** attack the side or guard the side.

**8. literally—A:** figuratively or actually. **B:** messy or tidy. **C:** precisely or vaguely.

**9. moot—A:** together or apart. **B:** subject to debate or irrelevant. **C:** well maintained or neglected.

**10. peruse—**

**A:** examine casually or carefully. **B:** use once or as many times as possible. **C:** choose or be indecisive.

**11. discursive—**

**A:** rambling or proceeding logically. **B:** friendly or hard to get along with. **C:** unwritten or written by hand.

**12. nonplussed—**

**A:** fluffy or flat. **B:** sufficient or needing more. **C:** perplexed or unbothered.

**13. screen—A:** conceal or show. **B:** curse or blessing. **C:** foresee or deny as a possibility.

**14. nervy—A:** audacious or nervous. **B:** charming or annoying. **C:** shaky or steady.

**15. sanction—A:** make sacred or profane. **B:** officially approve or impose a penalty upon. **C:** increase or decrease.

## WORD POWER ANSWERS

**1. cleave—C:** adhere or split; as, The stump *cleaved* to the ground, so Violetta *cleaved* it with an axe.

**2. table—C:** present something for consideration or postpone consideration; as, Kim *tabled* a growth strategy, but the board *tabled* it until later.

**3. overlook—B:** oversee or fail to see; as, Efraín was so busy *overlooking* the renovations that he *overlooked* his son's academic struggles.

**4. ravel—B:** disentangle or entangle; as, Julia's experience *ravelling* out fishing nets didn't help with her *ravelled* necklace.

**5. anabasis—B:** military advance or retreat; as, The mercenaries' *anabasis* was repelled, forcing them into a perilous *anabasis* toward home.

**6. quiddity—B:** trivial distinction or essence; as,

*Quiddities* such as spelling errors aside, Jackson's essay captured the *quiddity* of grief.

**7. flank—C:** attack the side or guard the side; as, Suddenly, highway robbers *flanked* the soldiers *flanking* the carriage.

**8. literally—A:** figuratively or actually; as, "I'm *literally* blown away," said Fang about a cookie that was *literally* head-sized.

**9. moot—B:** subject to debate or irrelevant; as, The health effects of vaping were a *moot* topic, but for non-smokers, the debate was *moot*.

**10. peruse—A:** examine casually or carefully; as, After quickly *perusing* the menu, Jigar *perused* Mireille's texts for clues about her feelings for him.

**11. discursive—A:** rambling or proceeding logically; as, when Malcolm's boss called his report *discursive*, he wasn't sure if it was clear or confusing.

**12. nonplussed—C:** perplexed or unbothered; as,

Mike was *nonplussed* by the rude customer but gave his employees a *nonplussed* smile to assuage them.

**13. screen—A:** conceal or show; as, Curtains *screened* the stage where the film had *screened*.

**14. nervy—A:** audacious or nervous; as, Liz's *nervy* habit of contradicting the boss made her colleagues feel *nervy* around her.

**15. sanction—B:** officially approve or impose a penalty upon; as, The city *sanctioned* new bike lanes and agreed to *sanction* drivers who didn't respect them.

## CROSSWORD ANSWERS

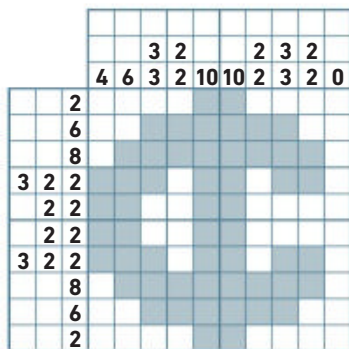
FROM PAGE 96

R	I	M		R	A	M		G	O	P
O	N	E		O	M	G		A	L	A
T	A	X	S	C	A	M		M	A	D
F	L	I	C	K	S		R	E	F	S
L	A	C	R	O	S	S	E			
	B	O	U	L		T	R	O	I	
			F	A	C	E	O	F	F	S
T	U	R	F		H	E	L	M	E	T
E	C	U		I	L	L	L	I	V	E
A	L	L		M	O	E		C	E	E
M	A	E		P	E	R		E	R	R

## BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

FROM PAGE 90

### Pic-a-Pix: Penny



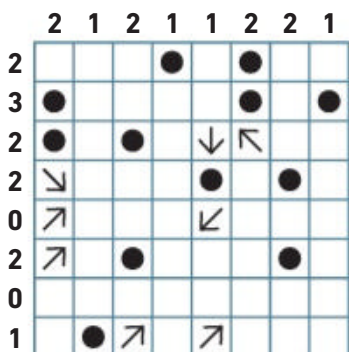
### No More Scissors

Earth does.

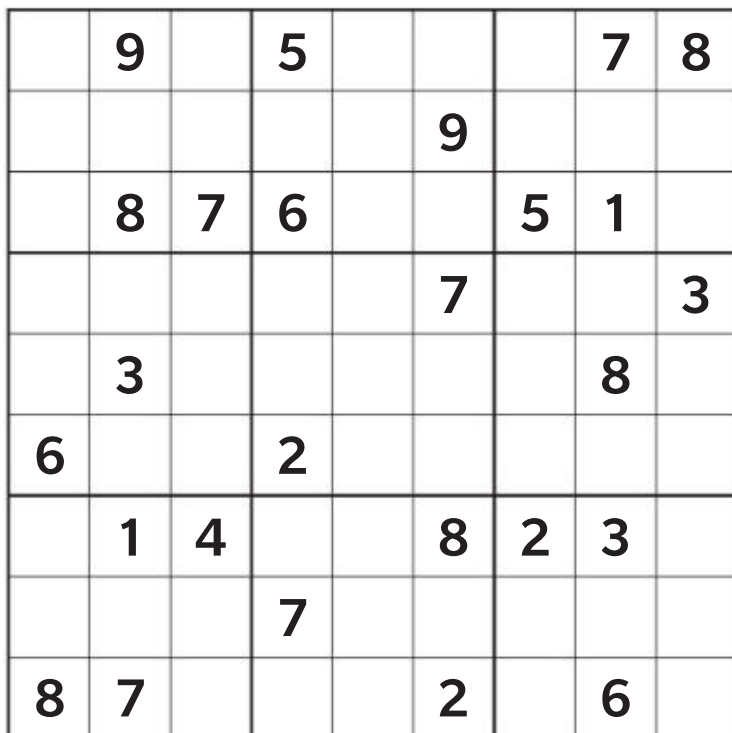
### Eighty-Six the Toast

15.

### Treasures



BY Jeff Widderich



### To Solve This Puzzle

Put a number from 1 to 9 in each empty square so that:

- ◆ every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numbers (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- ◆ each of the outlined 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numbers, none repeated.

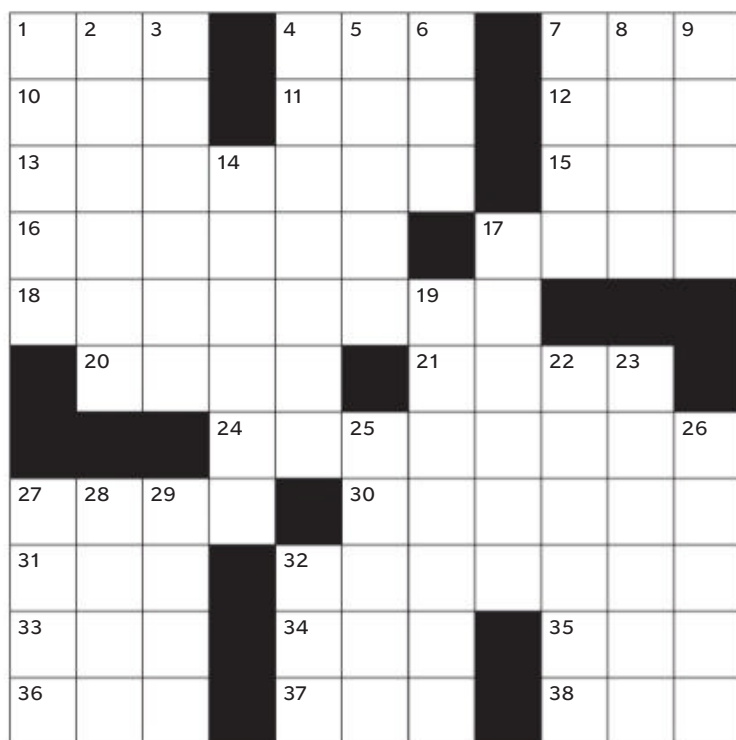
### SOLUTION

5	9	1	2	4	3	6	7	8
4	6	8	5	1	7	2	9	3
7	3	2	8	9	6	4	5	1
1	5	7	3	6	2	8	4	9
2	8	6	9	5	4	1	3	7
3	4	9	7	8	1	5	2	6
6	1	5	4	3	9	7	8	2
9	2	4	6	7	8	3	5	1
8	7	3	1	2	5	9	6	4



# Field Day

BY Derek Bowman



## ACROSS

- 1 Canyon-viewing spot
- 4 Butting bighorn
- 7 Republicans, for short
- 10 Showing unity
- 11 Online gasp
- 12 Pie \_\_\_\_ mode
- 13 Fraud attempt involving impersonating the CRA
- 15 "What, me worry?" magazine

- 16 Passes in 18A
- 17 Officials in 18A
- 18 Stick-and-ball sport with Indigenous roots
- 20 Rue crosser: Abbr.
- 21 One of Worf's love interests on *Star Trek: TNG*
- 24 Post-goal clashes in 18A
- 27 Possible playing surface in 18A
- 30 Piece of 18A equipment

- 31 Neighbour of Colombia: Abbr.
- 32 "No harm done"
- 33 Fully, completely
- 34 Stooge with a bowl cut
- 35 Capital of Canada?
- 36 Film star West
- 37 The "p" in kph
- 38 Make mistakes

## DOWN

- 1 Texting chuckle
- 2 Where DNA samples may be examined
- 3 Chihuahua's place
- 4 Classic jukebox
- 5 Gather together
- 6 \_\_\_\_ Grand (Vegas hotel)
- 7 Four quarters in the field version of 18A
- 8 Frozen snowman
- 9 Protective gear for 18A
- 14 Back of the neck
- 17 Keep going in Yahtzee
- 19 Super Bowl XL champ
- 22 Start of a Steinbeck title
- 23 "Should that time come"
- 25 Snowboarder \_\_\_\_ Kim
- 26 Take the helm
- 27 Ten, six or 12 in 18A
- 28 Home of the NCAA's Bruins
- 29 Something enforced in 18A
- 32 Mischief maker

For answers, turn to PAGE 94

**"Made you look.  
And yes, I'm wearing Always Discreet."**



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# Got Joint Pain?



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