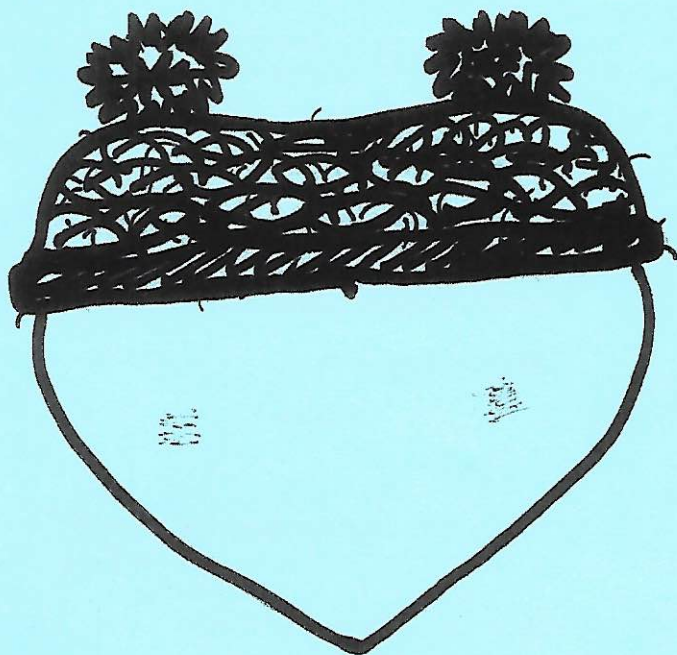


the BAD MAG



PRESENT

ISSUE #8 | WINTER 2022



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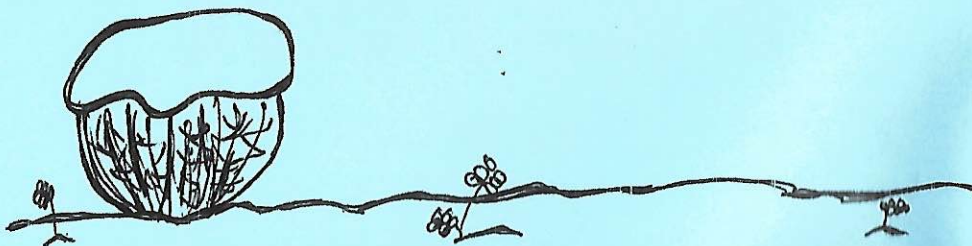
issue created by

Candi Bartlett * * * writer, editor, illustrator

@thesubtleknife ♦♦♦ contributor

Nog, chocolate, cardamom * * * support staff

 = featured in every issue



Letter from the Editor


This season, as the year slows and winter brings stillness, I am making some promises to myself. I promise to be present, fully in each moment, to enjoy every light I see and bell I hear. I will not focus only on tomorrow or dwell on the past, absorbing only a fraction of everything that happens. I will be present and I will give presents.

And it will be good.

Happy winter, friend. I wish you great cheer!


Candi





Frosty Morning

by
Candi Bartlett

Things used to be a little slower. There certainly was no such thing as coffee when she was a kid. And there definitely was no ridesharing. None of this bothered her. If an itty bitty cup of coffee is what it takes for her to give Mother Nature the most beautiful winters, she is all for it. Plus, with just a drop of peppermint, coffee is the most amazing thing she's ever had.

Every part of her shimmered in white and blue as she flew into the office. Of course, she was early because that was the way to get the best transport. The cold, blue sky above her buzzed with traffic - the new rideshare meant to increase efficiency and retain energy resources was a fleet of hover bikes built for four that ran on ice. Talk about a sustainable resource. Behind them, glittering trails of snow followed and fell. With the new system, each team member can spend more time in the field, their wings utilized for seasonal shift work only. The union was very proud of the most health-forward productivity agreement any fairy division had ever seen.

Her offices, located in the lower quadrant of section two, were in the base of a pine tree and extended through a long network of fungi and crawling wild thyme. Fall was right on task and days of light rain meant the entire place smelled so very good. Not as good as icicles but damn close. In her office, a carve out at the base of a brown mushroom, she sat and pulled a muffin out of her desk. She munched it, fast. The fringe hem of her short dress shook and sparkled. Today's assignment was already in her inbox - it was time to make the ground shine. Frost duty was her favorite. She frowned when her eyes hit the bottom of the form. A trainee. A tiny sigh and a little slump came with her final maple muffin bite. Trainees usually meant a lot of explaining.

She grabbed her duty slip and walked over to the service depot. A new, gleaming ice podium stood next to a valet lane. She handed the attendant her slip and waited for a bike.

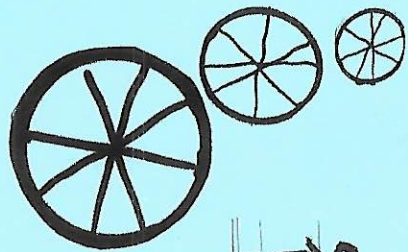
"Crystal!"

She turned, blonde bob bouncing. The boss was there, plus one.

"Crystal, this is Blink. Show him the ropes. Bring him back in one piece." The boss gave Blink a too-big pat on the shoulder then turned and walked away, large wings confidently swaying.

The valet came with their bike and helmets. Crystal got on and looked at Blink. He was definitely nervous, barely making eye contact. He wore a modest shirt and pants. Nothing was sparkly at all. When he shifted, his small wings surprised her with an opalescent flash. He noticed her noticing and smiled. "They look really cool when the sun is fully up."

"Hop on" she said, big smile beaming. "We've got frosting to do."



IT'S

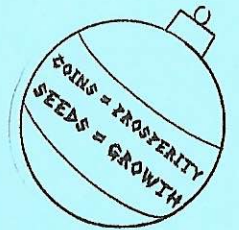
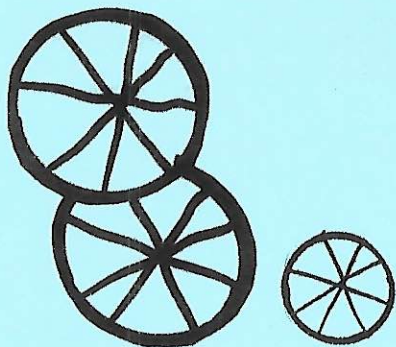
ALREADY

WITCHCRAFT



Decorating Your Tree with Intent

words and illustration
by @thesubtleknife



TO ENCOURAGE THE
SUNS RETURN/
LIGHT & RENEWAL

ORANGE GARLAND:
THINLY SLICED
ORANGES IN 200
DEGREE OVEN FOR
TWO HOURS. FLIP
EVERY 30 MINUTES.
STRING THROUGH
CENTER

THE EVERGREEN
REPRESENTS
STRENGTH IN THE
FACE OF DARKNESS
AS IT IS ALWAYS
GREEN





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"Things I Miss"

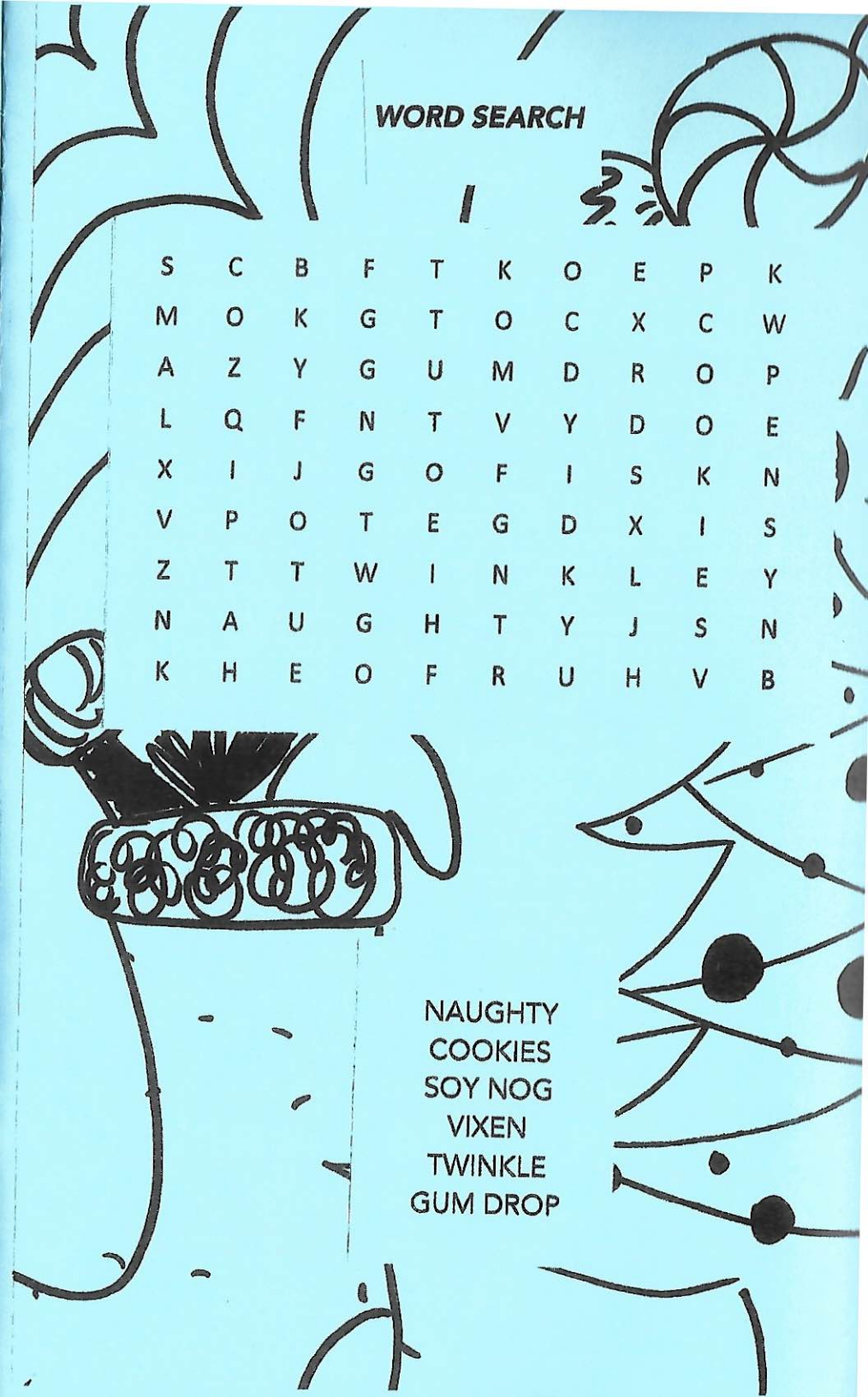
Chacharone with Candi & Noodle, Season 5



EARTHLING STORYTELLING
JUST FOR YOU.

WORD SEARCH

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



NAUGHTY
COOKIES
SOY NOG
VIXEN
TWINKLE
GUM DROP

The Cleanup Man

by Candi Bartlett

Jennifer was never in the field. Her being at the scene under a big, dark tent only made the case weirder. Tom didn't call Donnie in. Instead, Donnie received an encrypted text at 2:00 a.m., was on a plane by 3:00, and drove to the scene from the tarmac alone. It was cold in Canada. If things weren't so off, Donnie would have found Jennifer's red parka with black fluffy hood and cuffs totally hilarious.

Climate change had been a nightmare for units like theirs all over the world. When stuff melts, there's usually stuff underneath. Same when the ground is washed away or picked up and dropped somewhere else. There's always stuff underneath. Way north, where long standing snow and frozen earth was melting, a handful of bodies usually would not land on a cleanup crew desk. It definitely wouldn't call for multiple international units, all with different unheard of names but the same purpose. This was, apparently, a very big mess.

Donnie zipped his puffer coat and popped on green ear muffs. He found the coffee, couldn't find Tom, and waited with the crowd. It was a small sea of variously dressed agents, every one of them holding a steaming cup. Half were reusable travel containers. Indiscriminate, of course. No blazing logos here. Donnie had a variety of cleaning brand socks he wore as often as possible to compensate.

"Can I get your attention?" Jennifer didn't have to shout. Her voice commanded everyone stop milling and turn. In front of a long table filled with monitors, flanked by large men long black coats, she gave a quick rundown.

"This is not yet a manhunt, but we are prepared for a large scale search of this area. No one has heard from him yet, but we are focusing on the scene in the woods as the primary case for now. See team leaders for search grid and duties. There is a lot to do here and as always, very little time."

The crowd broke and Jennifer saw Donnie standing in the back. He was not happy. Which was expected. The ear muffs as big as his face were not. She walked toward him.

"Tom is missing?"

The large men broke off. "Donald, with me."

"Where is he, Jennifer?"

"I know." She spoke as she walked, leading him to a place he wasn't sure he wanted to go.

"Well, I don't." Donnie stopped. "So fill me in or I don't go anywhere."

She stopped and took a deep breath. When she turned, Donnie felt bad. Her nose was red and runny and he was pretty sure she hated the coat. "No one has heard from him in 48 hours. Phone signal died a day ago. Car signal is

active and led us to his sedan about a mile down the road. Then we found this." She gestured down a melted path, big pine trees looming behind her.

He walked toward the direction she pointed, but stopped just next to her. "He's *my partner*, Jennifer. You call me first."

They locked eyes. "I know that. Not my call."

It was his turn to sigh as he moved passed her. "I would have let you know."

Jennifer dropped her arm and trotted to meet him. She really hated the cold.

Beyond the hill, three bodies laid face down in the soft mud. "Why do they look like this," Donnie asked. Each body was no more than 4 ft tall and wearing a pointy hat. Little golden bells glistened in the rising sun.

A tech popped out from behind a pile of tree branches and leaves. "It's an amazing archeological find." He disappeared as quickly as he had popped in.

Donnie looked at Jennifer. "What is going on, where is Tom, and what smells so good?" Donnie finished his coffee and immediately wanted more. "And, *archeological*? I thought we were here for fresh problems."

"It is a fresh find. Tom got a call two days ago, we traced the number."

"Burner."

"Of course." She pulled a small tablet out of a pocket he never saw. "These bodies have been here for a very long time. About 100 years."

Donnie furrowed. "Okay. Why are so many agencies interested?"

Jennifer raised her brows. "Because jurisdiction is all over the place." She flipped through files fast. "A persecuted people across two continents, horrible immigration records, no formal investigations *ever*. Three missing elves wasn't exactly documentable information in 1900."

It was Donnie's turn to raise brows. "Stop it."

"How did you not get the file, Donald?"

If people didn't start sending him files... "You know damn well I don't have a file."

She looked back to her pad. "Oh." *Swipe*. Donnie's pocket dinged.

"Lovely."

"Donnie, I can't find him. Anywhere. There is nothing locatable on him." She was as cucumber tempered as usual but her eyes asked for help.

"Okay." He took a deep breath. Sure, part of him was mad about the lack of communication. But he was more worried than angry. Are you going to tell me what smells so good?"

She made a face that said sorry. "It's the bodies."

"Awesome. And do you think if I knew about his yesterday I maybe could have helped?"

"Anything is possible," she said with a smile.

"Okay. Let's go see what Indiana Tech has in the trees. Next to the bodies that smell like oatmeal raisin cookies."

"For me it's ginger snaps."

Donnie was grossed out and cookie shopping in his head. Which other people might find upsetting. Donnie was just about used to it. Behind the trees, three techs had blocked off a large square, Elf #1 in the center.

Indy spoke. "We can't tell you what happened to E1 yet. With the melting and the mud shifting, we're not sure if there is a crime scene to find or where it could be. Total fresh topography of a 20 mile radius is being assembled now. When that's done, we can start turning the bodies over."

"No one has seen the front of them yet?" Donnie was shocked. That seemed like a bad thing. Maybe, a bad thing for Tom.

"Sorry, no."

Donnie wanted more. "What about the trees? Any large scale damage here that seems not of recent mudslide?"

Indy shook his head and got back to work. It was a short report. Jennifer looked at him and tilted her head.

"I do *detect* in the field," he said.

"Right." She gave a little head shake. "Sorry. There's a lot happening."

He had to agree with her.

When evening came, Donnie was under a tent that was filled with warm, running equipment. The topography was in. Their site was not intact, but the bodies were most likely in or very near their current position before the

recent melt. That was good for forensics. At least, as good as they were going to get.

Someone shouted over the bustle. "We found his phone!"

Donnie rushed to the evidence table. The phone was crushed. More than just stepped on. "Dammit."

Another tech, this one wearing an ugly sweater under their puffy blue coat, came to the table. "Maybe not, though. Let me see if I can wake it up." They grabbed it and practically leapt to the next tent over. That tent was doing a lot of beeping.

There was nothing Donnie could do and that made him anxious. The agent who usually has the great coffee showed up out of nowhere and handed him a big brownie with white icing. She smiled and moved on to the next person who needed a delicious break from the waiting.

The beeping tent started getting louder. A human voice made an excited sound. Donnie rushed over with his last brownie bite. Tom's phone powered up, blue tooth searched. Then, it connected.

Ugly sweater tech let out a soft, "Huh?"

Behind them, footsteps faintly crunched in the little bit of snow. In the dusk, a figure walked toward them. As it got closer, a torn coat and small limp came into focus. Then, his face. Tom's bruised and cut face, treated with butterfly stitches.

"Thomas!" Jennifer shouted. She was so happy to see him, and so happy he wasn't dead, it also meant she could be a little bit furious. "Where have you been? How is it you disappear for this long-?"

Behind Tom, seemingly out of the cold air, a large man walked up. He wore a long, red coat making his chic white-grey beard glisten in the twilight. A large brown dog, larger than any dog Donnie had ever seen, walked beside him wearing a collar adorned with one giant bell.

Jennifer gasped. "Mr. Cee!"

"Hello, Jennifer." Mr. Cee smiled the largest and most handsome smile. When he stopped in front of them, Donnie had to look up. The man was at least 7 feet tall.

"Donnie?" Tom spoke. His voice was gravely, but strong. "You okay?"

Every cup of coffee spilled out of him. "What is going on, Tom? Are you okay? You look like hell. Do we hug?"

Tom laughed and put a hand up. "I have a few broken ribs, so no."

"Donald, this is Mr. Cee," Jennifer said.

There was a lot of authority around Mr. Cee. Everyone was standing up as straight as they could. His perfectly styled silver hair never moved as he did a small bend to shake Donnie's hand. "North Division," he said.

"Uh-huh." It was the only response Donnie could think of.

"This is all my fault, I was the one who brought Tom out here. I had a tip on some possible trouble with this protected land."

Tom shook his head and winced a little. Coffee agent brought him water, in and out like she knew everything they needed. "I shouldn't have come out here alone. I didn't realize the terrain was so bad up here. After my car died, I tried to make it to the outpost, slid down a ravine and landed on my face."

"My team found him about five hours ago."

Jennifer made a face. She wanted to tell Mr. Cee that is not protocol. She looked at Tom. Knowing he was okay was worth the five hours she could have been not outside. "Thank you, Mr. Cee. What do you need from us? This is your case."

"Get some rest. Meet us at the compound in the morning. We'll do a forensic report, get all teams their local assignments, have some bagels. It'll be nice."

Jennifer was thrilled. She gave Tom a soft shoulder squeeze. "Glad you're home."

Tom smiled, raising his mustache on one side. "Me too. It's way too cold up here."

Jennifer wanted to run to her car, but made sure to grab a latte from the coffee station before she left. A steaming, sweet coffee almost made her ridiculous coat feel at place.

"I have so many questions," Donnie said to no one and anyone who could hear. "Why would you come up here alone?"

"That's only one question," Tom said.

"There will be more. Probably for days."

Mr. Cee put his hands in his pockets and smiled. "You were right. I do like him."

Tom didn't really have an answer for Donnie. Well, he did, but it was simply that he was passing through anyway, meeting a friend for the weekend.

Yes, the signal was usually patchy up there, but unless the world was falling apart (sometimes, it was), he could get away for a few days at the end of the year and no one seemed to notice. He thought he could stop at the coordinates, give a quick visual report, and continue on to his holiday. His friend was probably very worried, all alone in a very warm, secluded cabin. The elf situation was taking place of a really nice tradition.

Something dinged and Mr. Cee looked at his super spy watch. "My team is almost here." He pulled a small candy cane out of his pocket and handed it to Donnie. "You've been very good."

"I have?"

He nodded. "Take it. I hear you have a little bit of a sweet tooth." Mr. Cee winked and walked away. His big, brown dog followed, jingling all the way.

Donnie looked at Tom. He smiled. "Stop it."

Tom gave a little shrug. "Let's go, kid. I'll fill you in in the car. I have to make a call."

Donnie stood, melty snow and long cold crime scene behind him. Ahead, his partner, safe, walking toward the light blue night. Incoming, Mr. Cee's team all in black, the ones who pull out the stuff that shouldn't be there and tidy up the world. Donnie realized they were all about as tall as the almost-frozen bodies. *Hm.*

An icy gust blew Donnie's pants around his cold legs. His brown hair danced. He opened that little candy cane and popped it in his mouth.

Damn right he was good.



WHAT CASE WILL THE CLEANUP MAN WIPE OUT NEXT?

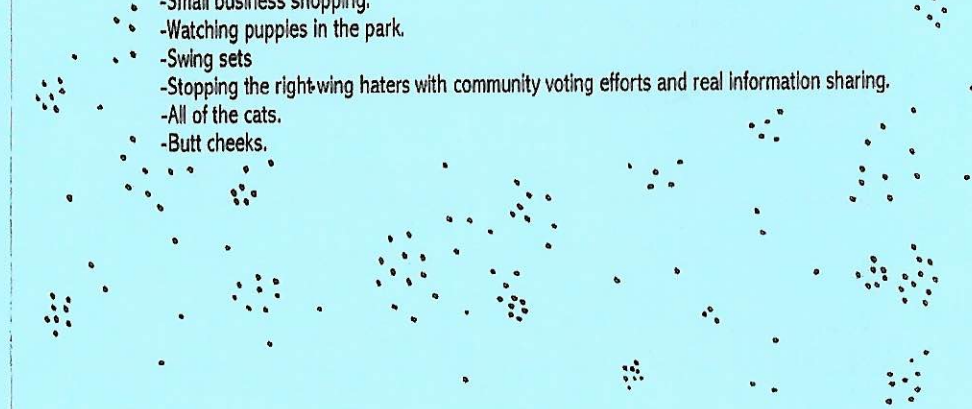
FIND OUT IN ISSUE #9!



A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

A handy list of wonderful stuff to beat the winter blues.

When you're feeling blue this season,
when the cold and dry and gloom are too much,
take a peek, or a sip, or a taste
of some of my favorite stuff.

- Brightly lit trees, indoor and out.
 - Stories where the people come together.
 - Cheeseburgers. The kind that don't make nature cry.
 - Happy birds.
 - Anytime cake.
 - Anytime champagne.
 - Small business shopping.
 - Watching puppies in the park.
 - Swing sets
 - Stopping the right-wing haters with community voting efforts and real information sharing.
 - All of the cats.
 - Butt cheeks.
- 



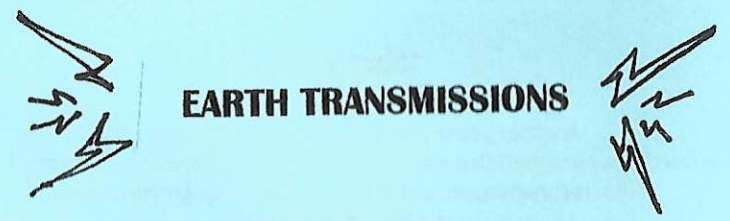
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and
SWEET NEW READS!

Catch ya on the flip side.



EARTH TRANSMISSIONS

OMG I got my BONUS!
I won't burn this mother down
after all.

Fa la la la la
La la la laaaaaaa



THE STRANGE AND UNUSUAL!

THE PROVOCATIVE AND PERVERSE!

Comic Call

Your illustrations to these words could be featured in *the Rad Mag!*
Visit www.CandiPresents.com/the-Rad-Mag for details
and watch the art spread.

What now?

Another paper product has come into the world.
Before this super sweet zine ends up in the trash, or recycling, or compost heap
(not recommended: soil that will be used for growing foods)

the Rad Mag suggests:

- Sharing it with a friend
- Using the pages as fun crumpled packing material
- Creating wintery tutus for your knickknacks
- Cutting out stars to place in your windows
- Using the pages as envelope liners

Issue #8 printed on 30% recycled paper



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