

# Mil Mania

The Official Newsletter of WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM

Volume 5, Issue 6 September/October/November 2009



Welcome To The Sept./Oct. /Nov. '09 Issue of Mil Mania!!!

Here it is -- the fall 2009 issue of *Mil Mania*. And, indeed, this edition is filled with "News"... including an announcement regarding the launch of a brand NEW pet rat magazine by me and Keela!!! You can read a bit more about this on page 6 -- and keep checking my website in the days ahead for a subscription page and additional info. Because this is an entirely new adventure, there may be a few glitches along the way -- and I therefore thank you in advance for your patience, and welcome any thoughts and/or suggestions.

Of course, *Mil Mania* remains its own mix of writing madness, and you'll find the usual suspects populating this installment. Once more, readers have provided excellent food for thought in the form of "Psycho Therapy" and "Molly Madvises" questions. And, a "Random Rant" spawned by the comments of a fellow writer have inspired a bit of passionate exposition about the "value" of arrogance and ignorance to beginning writers (or anyone else). There's also a review of a wonderfully insane TV show, a look at a few more *Magniloquence* photos (for which publication it seems I've become the resident photographer!), and a host of other tidbits intended to stimulate your mind -- and guaranteed to not further expand your waistline.

That said, I hope everyone had a very Happy Thanksgiving, and is enjoying a peace filled start to the holiday season. Thanks for allowing my work to be a part of it.

Mil

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Member of...

and...

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**ATTENTION** Mil Mania Readers:

Once more, I want to extend an extra special thanks to all current subscribers — and encourage you to share *Mil Mania* with your friends. Feel free to forward this issue and encourage signing up for future ones (plus, newcomers can check out all back issues on the subscription page: [www.artistinsane.com/news\\_sign\\_up.htm](http://www.artistinsane.com/news_sign_up.htm)).

Let's make this a record year of readership!

**Insanity's contagious — pass it on!!!**

### Newsletter Spotlight



Hope you've been enjoying a lovely autumn...

No tricks, all treats -- and some fun

Thanks-giving foot-ball!!!





## Music Mayhem



**Brian Fitzpatrick** will be playing The Ring-side Pub in Caldwell, NJ on Dec. 4th (full band show).

Also, Brian recently completed a massive graphic arts project for The Rolling Stones (hitting stores November 3rd) -- creating all the artwork for a special 40th anniversary release, including a 56 page book! You can catch a glimpse at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TE7t480sKR4>

**Michael McDermott** has finally scheduled a show on the East Coast -- in the Philadelphia area on Feb. 26th. Click here for more info and/or to buy tickets... [http://www.st94.com/music/2010\\_02.html](http://www.st94.com/music/2010_02.html)

As always, feel free to drop by my "space" at

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## Psycho

## Therapy

Disclaimer: I am not a "real" psychiatrist... nor do I play one on TV.

Dear Dr. Mil,

*Why is it that when unconditional love is always there for one, it seems so easy to act in unkind ways and mistreat the one giving the love?*

*Bound for the Unbound*

Dear Bound,

As is often the case when the total information provided about a question is the question itself, I have to start by noting there are many answers, depending on what circumstances -- and mental states of participants -- are involved. It's also greatly relevant *who* is asking the question. In other words, are you the party offering unappreciated unconditional love -- or the one suddenly realizing you haven't offered appropriate appreciation for love received?

Even in each of these scenarios, however, there are many points to consider. If you're in the giving position, for example, one could look to motivation...i.e. how unconditional is the love if you're focusing on what you're not getting from it being unsatisfactory. The New Testament says, "Love keeps no record of wrongs" and "Love never gives up." By the same token, one has to be in the throes of some pretty deep self-esteem issues to become a doormat, so to speak. There truly are some people out there who feel an unjust sense of entitlement, which leads them to take unconditional love for granted, or fail to recognize it represents far more than their just due. Perhaps they've been spoiled by overindulgent parents, or bought into their own publicity regarding some talent or achievement on which they've come to base their human value. Sadly, what these individuals often fail to recognize is how much unconditional love is often involved in even the most "personal" or "individual" success.

Still, it can be very healthy to look past slights and less than point-for-point return attentions in some cases. As applies to so many life circumstances, the key to this paradox is balance; if you know who you are and to whom you're giving the unconditional love, not basing your own worth on acceptance or rejection by the loved one, you will probably be able to sort out quite easily whether to continue giving unconditionally indefinitely.

If you're in the second scenario, by contrast -- the one receiving unconditional love you've only just discovered you're not returning in fair measure, this proves the point regarding instances noted above where that kind of love should continue to be given. Because, clearly, the love you've received has made a difference in your life -- indeed caused a new awakening that is leading you toward growth...and very likely toward a state of greater giving yourself. It's been said "love conquers all," and truly such recognition of one's shortcomings is a huge step in the direction of overcoming them. Of course, the next step is to act on that awareness, not merely feel guilty or in any way become self-abusive over a sense of your unworthiness. Thankfully, love can be expressed in a million different ways, and beginning with even the tiniest exhibition of gratitude can start a great wave rolling. And, once one starts giving more and more unconditional love oneself, it tends to start a chain reaction of rewards one may never have imagined. If you don't believe me, just ask the Grinch! Hmm...seems like Dr. Seuss may have had his own degree in Psycho Therapy.

Thanks for writing -- and here's to your improved mental health.

Dr. Mil

Comments on this topic or questions of your own? Send them to [mil@artistsinsane.com](mailto:mil@artistsinsane.com). Thanks.



R.A.T.S. Newsletter  
Summer 2009  
Volume 14

### Rat Assistance and Teaching Society



## Rat-a-Tat Chat



Ollie Scott

**Letters**  
Dear Dr. Mil, I have been reading your newsletter for some time and I have to say I love it. It is so informative and I love to see the different stories and photos of the rats. I have a few questions that I would like to ask you. I have a rat named Ollie and he is very smart. He can do a lot of things and I love to see him do them. I would like to know if you have any tips for training rats. I would also like to know if you have any tips for socializing rats. I would appreciate your help and advice. Thank you for your time and for your newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, [Name]

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**Dear Dr. Mil,** I have been reading your newsletter for some time and I have to say I love it. It is so informative and I love to see the different stories and photos of the rats. I have a few questions that I would like to ask you. I have a rat named Ollie and he is very smart. He can do a lot of things and I love to see him do them. I would like to know if you have any tips for training rats. I would also like to know if you have any tips for socializing rats. I would appreciate your help and advice. Thank you for your time and for your newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, [Name]

**Yet again my rats and I were featured in an issue of the rat-Tat-Chat. Thanks, Deb!**

[www.petrats.org](http://www.petrats.org)

[www.ratfanclub.org](http://www.ratfanclub.org)



## Musings of a Mental Case



I frequently read the blog of an author whose work I've enjoyed for a number of years, and recently read an entry there which included a link to an essay she'd written for a well-known newspaper. Before I go any further I should probably add that I've long since gathered (both from her books and her blog) that she and I have a very limited amount in common, not to mention vastly different views on many topics. As I noted in last month's "Psycho Therapy" column, however, I see the fact humanity is widely diverse as a very good thing overall, and appreciate the opportunity to discover new angles on subjects and generally expand my experiential vocabulary, if you will, through reading the perspectives and adventures of other writers.

From time to time, however, I encounter a perspective that's not merely "different," but so diametrically opposed to my own beliefs that I can't help commenting on it in some form. And, of course, with the venue of *Mil Mania* available, I've decided to "rant" here about this author's assertions. What's more, because I once reviewed her work in the "Ravings of a Mad Woman" column, she receives this newsletter each month. Perhaps now I'll find out if she actually reads it!

In any case, I won't divulge her name here, but the following is the quote that opened her essay, and instantly raised my eyebrows — and ire.

*"Would-be novelists need to bring equal parts arrogance and ignorance to the task before them. The arrogance is almost self-explanatory. Walk into any bookstore or library, calculate how many lifetimes the average person would need to read all the fiction contained therein. To think that one has anything to contribute, to any genre or tradition, takes genuine hubris."*

Wow. What an unbelievable declaration — one which, in my opinion, makes obvious not the need for would-be writers to possess arrogance, but just how much of this she herself possesses. But then, perhaps one must take into consideration the second part of her statement — that a writer also needs ignorance... which she seems to possess as well. That aside, I should clarify that she was talking about ignorance of the business end of publishing, which may, indeed, offer some benefit. Still, I think one requires innocence (and optimism) instead. There are very few instances where it's helpful to one to enter into an endeavor hugely uninformed, and I firmly believe writing is no exception.

I further believe (and yes, by the way, I realize how so confidently putting forth those words "I believe" may be interpreted as an arrogance all my own) that the bottom line of the above writer's quote is directly linked to the assumption that adding an entry to those many lifetimes' worth of library books represents a misguided notion that this new addition might actually be "original." And, if the new writer is proceeding on that misguided notion, I believe his ignorance speaks volumes (no pun intended). And, this ignorance is most certainly not an attribute. However, I will agree that such a beginning motivation speaks, also, to arrogance, in that any creative effort wherein the primary goal is to make something "new" as opposed to simply expressing some passion one can't contain without going stark raving mad, indicates the creator is already doomed (regardless whether his book actually finds an audience).

As C.S. Lewis said, "Even in literature and art, no man who bothers about originality will ever be original: whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring twopence how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it." In other words, as I see it, the matter of setting out to write a novel, create a painting, carve out a sculpture or otherwise give birth to any art piece is very much like making an acquaintance. I don't know that anyone approaches meeting someone for the first time with the expectation — or even hope — they'll be completely unlike any human they've met before. On one level that will be true, of course, but in general terms, it's the fact people are really all the same — given the same ability to hope, fear, feel, dream, etc. — that makes the experience of meeting someone fun, even exciting. And, the more we find in common with a particular person — the more we see our own tastes, values, perhaps even personality quirks mirrored in another, the more we're often drawn to that particular "individual." Or, in the case of attraction to those very different from us, this may spring from some ability we admire and aspire to — their confidence, their joy...that spills over into us and makes us somehow feel it possible to become "better" people ourselves.

The point is, I'm admittedly amazed that a writer of more than ten years' publishing experience should at this late date *still* possess so much of both arrogance and ignorance. And, I think it's worth raising questions about what constitutes arrogance, ignorance, and more importantly, general "worthiness" to allow writing aspirations to become reality -- in any (paid or unpaid) form. (By the way, I should point out here that this author *is* paid, and her attitude regarding this requirement represents another point of strong disagreement for me. She says, "... I'm afraid I'm one of those old-fashioned types who thinks a novel should be edited and published by a third party and that the writer should receive payment for the enterprise." Ironically, she's also expressed sympathy for struggling/unpublished writers by mentioning previously in her blog that, statistically, only one percent of writers make a living by their pen — a number she's gone on to say she believes is exaggeratedly high.

I think it goes without saying a certain number of the other 99 percent [or 99+ percent] isn't published because...well, they stink. But, say, even 5 percent are really, really good — and it's just one of those inexplicable injustices of earthly existence [like Van Gogh selling only one painting in his lifetime] that they haven't won the publishing lottery. I wonder what this author — from her lofty perch of making a living by her pen, and who frowns highly on self-publishing — proposes for that other 4 percent. Should they just swallow their "arrogance" and not bother trying to further clutter library shelves? But, I digress...)

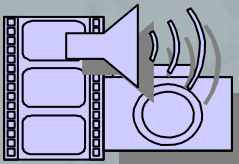


### Musings of a Mental Case (cont'd)

Even so, I must conclude with a note regarding a commonality with this author that might even supersede my disagreement with her philosophies. The reason I'm aware of her in the first place is the fact she created a character who caught my attention while browsing the shelves of my local library nearly a decade ago -- and who engaged me so completely that I'm still taking enough interest in her work to be reading her blog (and her books) all these years later. And, I must note that the point of the essay I'm commenting on was not to discuss writing in general, but to respond specifically to certain "experts" who believe she should at last kill off this character. Finally, I not only agree wholeheartedly with her rejection of this idea, but relate to her own conclusion: "*Ultimately, the relationship between a writer and series character is personal, not unlike a marriage, and perhaps it would be wise for others to refrain from comment... I will forever be linked to that [character]...and a million words don't begin to tell her story. Make that: Our story.*"

But, that story, whether the author likes it or not, extends likewise to her readers, as all good writing does. I've often said art pieces exist as their own living entities. And, just as we meet "real" people by a mix of plan and happenstance, so we should meet fictional ones -- and their creators. Still, I don't know too many who find arrogance and ignorance a very appealing first impression in the former. It only stands to reason neither would they serve as positive precursors to the latter.

Of course, perhaps I'm merely ignorant when it comes to the good in arrogance. If so, here's hoping that state persists for a very long time to come.



### Ravings of a Mad Woman

This column corresponds with the Mad Ravings On... section of my website ([www.artistinsane.com/movie\\_madness.htm](http://www.artistinsane.com/movie_madness.htm)) and is dedicated to selected reviews of movies, television and books... most of which are unlikely to represent "the latest" in any of these categories, but rather a random selection that represents a new and/or noteworthy discovery to me.

**Monk** — Longtime *Mil Mania* readers may recall that I touched on this television series in the December 2008 issue (wherein the Psycho Therapy column dealt with superstition). Now that it's concluding its eight season run, however, I think it's time I offer it a full "Mad Raving." After all, what could be more appropriate to cover in an insanity-themed newsletter than a show dealing with a phobic, OCD -plagued "mental case" as a lead character?

Though I'd heard about the show, and was already appreciative of its star, Tony Shalhoub, I never watched it myself until Traylor Howard joined the cast, in the role of Adrian Monk's new assistant, Natalie Teeger. As a fan of the sit-com *Two Guys and a Girl*, which I was still lamenting no longer being on the air, I welcomed this chance to see Howard act again. I must admit, however, that first *Monk* experience for me proved a mixed one. I can't say exactly if it was just a bit too simplistic, or a bit too silly or a bit too, well, "out there" for even me as crazy as myself. Still, I found something compelling enough to give it another try. Finally, I realized that the show is an acquired taste, built on layer after layer of character attributes and past events that build over time into a deeply valued shared experience.

For those unfamiliar with its premise, Tony Shalhoub plays Monk, a brilliant detective whose wife Trudy was murdered in 1997. Her death led Monk into a downward spiral of phobias, severe OCD and an overall mental state too fragile to allow him to continue effectively carrying out his duties on the San Francisco police force. Still possessed of an incomparable knack for solving crimes, however, the department continues to employ him as a consultant, meaning he is able to regularly work cases with his old boss and dear friend, Capt. Stottlemeyer, along with Stottlemeyer's junior investigator Randy Disher.

It's Disher's character, in fact, that proves a prime example why this show was initially a hard sell for me. At first glance, he proves more a dim light bulb who hinders progress than in any way an asset to the crime-solving team -- or the show. In time, however, one learns he possesses a winning level of loyalty and naivete that makes him a beloved member of *Monk's* main quartet. And, of course, one comes to appreciate this Fine Arts degree graduate for his precision acting skills; make no mistake, it takes someone pretty smart to convincingly act so (endearingly) dumb. The same level of acting prowess applies to the rest of the cast (Ted Levine as Stottlemeyer is a personal favorite), and I will miss every one greatly once the series concludes.

Regarding that conclusion, as this newsletter's being sent out the final episode is in progress -- with the conclusion of its two parts airing Dec. 4th. And, yes, that means there's still time to revise the excellent opinion of the show I expect to be left with. Judging by this season thus far, however, it seems the creators have truly saved the best for last. Not only did Monk continue to confront -- and conquer -- many of his fears, he learned about the love a pet, saw his friend Stottlemeyer at last find true love, and even earned his long-awaited reinstatement to the police force. Mainly, however, he's remained Monk -- the quirky, maddening, brilliant character we've come to know and love.

What's more, with Christmas right around the corner, it should be noted all prior seasons of *Monk* are available on DVD. And, for music lovers, it's worth mentioning the theme song from Randy Newman is reason enough to check out at least one episode...as are various guest appearances, including those by Andy Richter, Eric McCormack and John Turturro. It even offers something special for us rodent lovers as every opening credits sequence includes a rat dropping onto *Monk's* shoulder in one scene. But, for those who share my artistic insanity, it might be said *Monk* truly is the very best Psycho Therapy available. Tune in for yourself and see if you don't agree.





Pet Peeves and Paranoia



Introducing...

## The Rodent Reader Quarterly



*A brand new pet rat magazine launching in December!!!*

*Details coming to [artistinsane.com](http://artistinsane.com) --*

*I'll begin setting up a web page*

*as soon as this newsletter is sent out.*

*All info and links to subscribe should be ready by the end of the first week in December -- the magazine itself is now at the printer's!!!*

*And just what is *The Rodent Reader Quarterly*???*

*It's a 28 page full color, professionally printed magazine --  
containing no paid advertising.*

*What it does contain is a mix of articles, poems, full-page photographs,  
a chapter of a rat fiction book in progress, reviews  
and much more! (all written by me and Keela)*

*Visit [www.artistinsane.com](http://www.artistinsane.com) or [www.rodentreader.com](http://www.rodentreader.com)*

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*Gift subscriptions available!*



## Molly Madvises



MOLLY



As per the precedent set by *Dear Abby* which syndicated column retained that title when passing to its originator's daughter, so this column continues to retain the name of its originator though now written by another. The "madvice" currently offered herein is that of Keela, one of the "noisy neighbors" Molly (introduced in the Dec. 2005 newsletter linked here... [http://www.artistinsane.com/Mil\\_Mania--12-05.htm](http://www.artistinsane.com/Mil_Mania--12-05.htm)) spoke of frequently — and who, like Molly, knows a bit about life as learned by her adventures as a rodent single mom. Also like Molly, she has a strong mind of her own with much rat wisdom to share. I hope you'll enjoy her commentary.

E-mail your "Molly Madvises" questions to [mil@artistinsane.com](mailto:mil@artistinsane.com) and I'll pass them on to Keela. Thanks!

That said, on to this month's question...

Dear Keela,

*If you could have only seen me fuming there in the kitchen/copy/fax/mail room with all my fur standing up every which way! I must have been a sight. No. I wasn't livid because someone had swiped my maple apple oatmeal crisp out of the fridge--while that is reason enough for a fur frenzy. My cage was so rattled because someone came in there to fax, copy or mail something...don't recall exactly which it was because I started thinking about how I could smooth down my fur nonchalantly. But they didn't seem to notice that my fur was all crazy because they were too busy telling me what they thought I was going to say! We all experience this now and then. You start a chat and the other person seems so excited about your reply that they cut you off and tell you it. For me, it is always NOT what I'd say. In this particular "fur"-ocious instance it made me "fur"-ious because it was the third time I'd experienced this sort of exchange in a few days time. I had had it with this unengaged chatter. I wanted to fling around and whack them with my tail...if I had a tail...well, you know what I mean. Keela, why do people do this? I know that God gives us a repeat of a situation in order to help us learn something that we are not getting. All that I am getting out of this recurrence is that these folks seem to be able to have conversations with themselves...??? Do you see a wiser lesson that I am not?*

*Fur-y No More*

Dear No Fur,

Before I can get to answering your question, I have to obtain just a bit more information from you -- where did you get the maple apple oatmeal crisp? I've never had it and I *want some!!!* It sounds *yummy!*

Okay, down to business. You may have heard that my species is a very social one -- everything you read about adopting a pet rat recommends you adopt two so we each have a little company. Of course, my two sisters were already living with Mom and Dad when they adopted me, and then a few weeks later I had my 15 babies, so company has never been a problem in my household! In any case, it seems to me your species isn't all that different when it comes to wanting to be part of a crowd. Whereas mine just wants somebody to play with and snuggle up to in the igloo, however, yours is often characterized by a deeper motivation that involves needing others to share ideas and ways of seeing different situations, not merely enjoying a little increased warmth -- and maybe some warm maple apple oatmeal crisp! Well, to tell you the truth, that's one area we aren't crazy about sharing -- even though we're pretty generous in many ways, when it comes to food, we *all* want it *all* to ourselves!

Actually, maybe that's not so different from your species, come to think of it. Because, what's really happening in the situations you're describing -- you know, where people are telling you what you're (not) going to say -- is that these people have their own views of a situation that they're not at all wanting to surrender to anyone else (any more than I want to surrender my food!). And, even though they seem to just want snuggly company, what they're really looking for is comfort of a whole other kind -- or rather, possibly, many different other kinds. You see, on the one hand, the person may genuinely believe he or she is right...in which case it's genuinely taken for granted that you're going to realize this and immediately start agreeing with whatever he or she is saying. Then there's the type who knows his or her viewpoint is wrong -- maybe for him or her, maybe for the good of the group, or otherwise just not madvisable for some reason. But, this person *wants* what he or she wants to prevail nonetheless. So, it's hoped that by scurrying up to others and shrieking an opinion so fast and fur-iously, you'll be confused or caught off guard -- or just too busy at the moment minding your own business and doing what brought you to the busy-ness room for mailing or copying to begin with that you'll automatically start copying a viewpoint as well. And, oh boy, can I see how either of these situations could make one's fur start sticking out all over. Kind of makes you want to go find a nice quiet drawer to hide in for a while and take a nap.

BUT, there is one other possibility that might apply in a small number of these situations. Sometimes, people just aren't sure what they really think about something, and maybe they start putting what they think they might be thinking out there to see what you think. In fact, they may suspect that what they're thinking isn't what you're thinking at all, but they hope maybe it is (because changing one's viewpoint can often involve as much sticking up fur to deal with as being made fur-ious by someone thinking they know what you think before you've had a chance to even give a matter any thought). Or maybe they are, in fact, willing to deal with their own fur sticking up from having to change their viewpoint, but they feel funny asking for help or don't have a clear enough idea about what anyone else might think to approach the topic in a better way. What I'm trying to say is maybe they genuinely *want* your thoughts and are kind of testing you to see if you're a strong and independent enough rat -- I mean, person -- to given them an honest opinion, even if it's not what they think they might want to hear. Because, lots of people seem willing to just



# Mil Mania

Molly Madvises (cont'd)

go along with the crowd, even if it means letting themselves drown like a lemming -- and letting the lemming their following drown, too. Because, while being misunderstood can make one want to pull out one's fur, there's no doubt swimming against the current will twist it into a terrible mess...especially if you're trying to swim with one paw and pull somebody else along with the other. Of course, the good news is, if you stay strong and help them realize you're taking a different direction for their good, too, when you get to shore at last, you'll have someone to help straighten out your fur. But, if you pull it out before you get there, your companion won't have anything to hold on to and might be lost along the way.

In other words, don't let anyone make you *that* fur-ious -- no matter how in-fur-iating the situation. And, of course, make sure you keep your strength up -- which means eating lots of good food...like that delicious- sounding maple apple oatmeal crisp!

Keep those letters coming (and feel free to include recipes)!

KEELA



P.S. I'm on facebook! Here's the link...

<http://www.facebook.com/findfriends/?code=1325151454#/profile.php?id=100000109802208&ref=profile>

If that doesn't work for some reason, just look me up! I'm under Keela Scott and the photo at right is my current profile pic. Add me!

Don't forget...



Just added -- a BRAND NEW 2010 Calendar featuring my pet rats !!!



Plus, holiday gifts, Christmas cards, postage and more. Check it out!



[www.zazzle.com/artistinsane](http://www.zazzle.com/artistinsane)

## In A Nutshell

You may recall last year's October issue included an essay on the inexplicable phenomenon of people actually volunteering (and paying good money) to attend ghoulish attractions throughout the weekends leading up to Halloween.

And, in the November issue I wrote about the equally inexplicable phenomenon of "Black Friday," wherein otherwise sane humans turn into madding crowds intent on swooping like vultures upon the lowest priced products available to help them celebrate a holiday traditionally associated with peace, love and all manner of meaning that transcends money.

In contemplating all of this anew while searching for topics to cover in this current newsletter, it finally hit me. Perhaps these seemingly unrelated October and November happenings don't occur in that order by coincidence. Maybe it's the fact of so many people having had the wits scared out of them that accounts for so many half wits mindlessly running around in search of bargains a month later.

Just a thought.

Mil

Sept./Oct./Nov. 2009 Vol. 5, Issue 6

The Official Newsletter of  
[WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM](http://WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM)

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