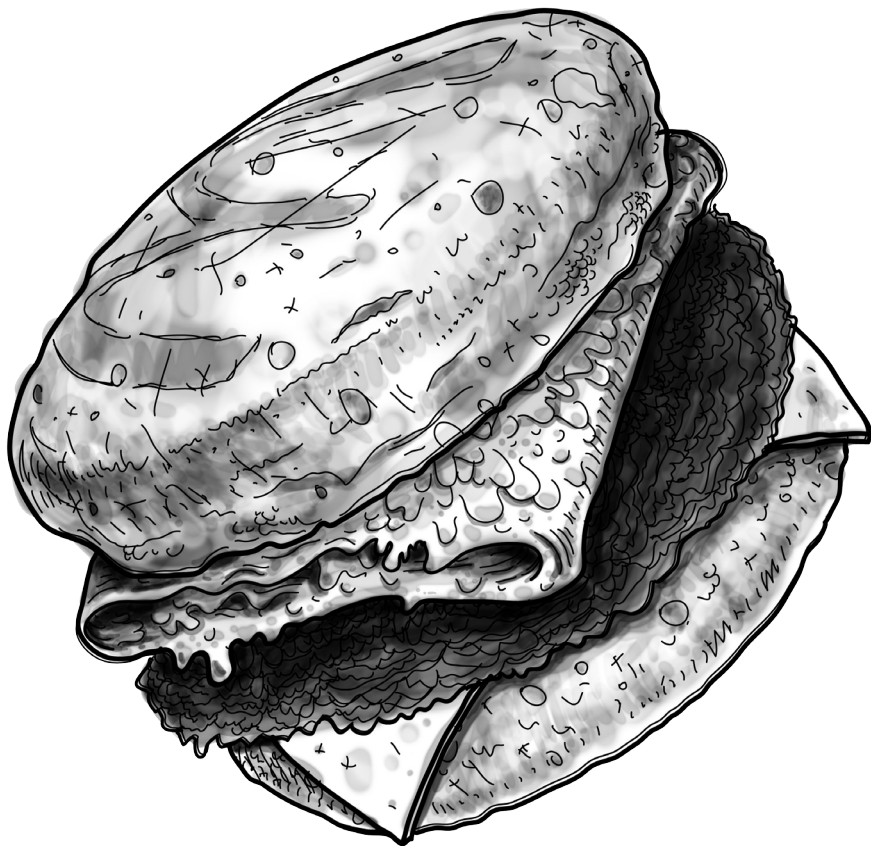


MCGRIDDLE



DEFENSE



MCGRIDDLE DEFENSE

Selected Short Works about the Breakfast Sandwich

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*EDITED BY RYAN GRATZER. COVER BY STACY PELTIER.
INSIDE COVER ILLU BY DREW MARSHALL.*

A Short Note

Do you remember a time when your breakfast plate used have distinct items placed on them? Like, there'd be some pancakes in one area, some sausage in another, eggs to the side, a block of cheese for protein, and then the whole thing would basically be covered in maple syrup? Back then, this system may have seemed like it worked perfectly. The food was cooked separately, so it made sense for the plate layout to reflect that. But really, it wasn't perfect, at least not if you thought about it like this:

You ate this food all on one plate because the food all goes together. Each item compliments the next. That's what makes it a "meal." So with that in mind - and with no small amount of brilliant skill to go along with it - the McGriddle improved on this unstructured and out-of-touch plate formula by making things more efficient, delicious, and vertical.

In this respect, I'd like to think that the McGriddle itself is the original McGriddle fan fiction (except it's nonfiction). Just like what happens in the creation of fiction, it started with some things that work/happen, and then modified them to be a "new story." A better story - and one that's worth retelling and celebrating.

Of course, these themes - of pleasure and ingenuity and enjoyable meals - are timeless, and thus merit further exploration. In the following pages, we took the McGriddle's example - and the McGriddle itself - and weaved stories that hopefully will delight and surprise.

On a personal note, I've learned a couple of things from my explorations into where my imagination can take me when McGriddles are at the bow of the ship, so to speak: one is that McGriddles make me think about peace lilies. Maybe it's just that I have a peace lily on my desk, but I don't know. They keep popping up in the stories I write. The other is when McGriddles are around doors and vacuums and stuff often make "foooooosh" sounds. And now I can't help but wish that reality, and not just McGriddle fiction, had a lot of things going "foooooosh." I think that would make life just a little bit more interesting.

The Tale of the Delicious Breakfast Sandwich: A Choose Your Own Adventure Story

by Zach

It is a morning like any other. You are sitting in your office. Your job: private detective. Your breakfast sandwich: the McGriddle.

Your feet are propped up on your desk. Sitting next to them is a big bag overflowing with McGriddle sandwiches. They are delicious and you just can't get enough of them! Just as you are about to finish another one off, the mad scientist (and your old friend) Dr. Astounding bursts through the door.

"Ack, you must come quick! Nigel the pirate has been murdered at the mysterious haunted mansion, and you're the only one who can crack the case!"

You ponder his words as you pop the final pieces of maple-infused pancake into your mouth. It was a good case alright, and every second that passed made it more likely that the killer would get off scot-free. But this bag of McGriddles wasn't going to eat itself. Maybe you should have one more before leaving....

To leave right away, turn to **page 14**

To enjoy another delicious McGriddle breakfast sandwich before you go, turn to **page 25**

Mutual Satisfaction: A McGriddle Pantoum

— by Benjamin Pearson —

Sweet pancake to another sweet pancake,
embracing your protein heart
of bacon, egg and American cheese,
glistening with warm oils.

Embracing your protein heart,
my mouth attempts to ingest you.
Glistening with warm oils,
my lips are now lubricated.

My mouth attempts to ingest; you,
you want to be ingested.
My lips are now lubricated:
moans bursting forth easily.

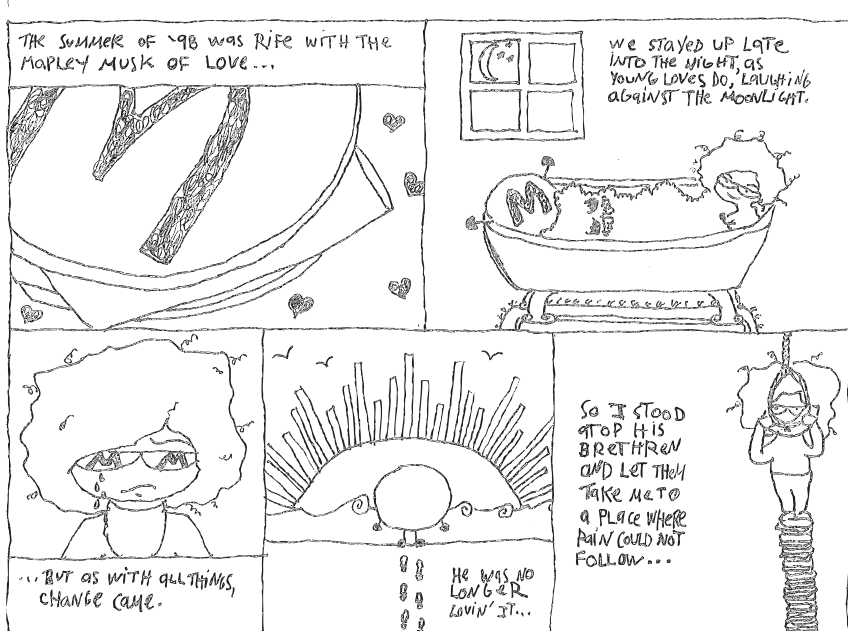
You want to be ingested
like my manhood by a woman;
moans, bursting forth easily,
into syrup injected griddle folds.

Like my manhood by a woman,
towards our mutual satisfaction—
into syrup injected griddle folds
and our love seeps out across it all.

Towards our mutual satisfaction
of bacon, egg and American cheese,
and our love seeps out across it all,
sweet pancake to another sweet pancake.

A McGriddle Comic

— drawn by Renee & written by Scott —



Full English Breakfast

by Zach

“Another year, another winter holiday alone,” thought McGriddle sandwich as he walked the empty hallways of Hamburger Academy. Sunlight shone in through the countless windows of the ancient castle, but it did nothing to warm him. He kept his heavy cloak wrapped tightly around him in a vain effort to keep out the cold. Alas, it was pointless. The sound of his footfalls echoing only heightened his feeling of loneliness. Even a thick cloak of enchanted Grimace pelt would not have kept an icy pall from gripping his heart. Two more weeks by himself, no one to hang out with, nothing to do but be bored.

“I can’t believe this! I can’t believe they went off and left me!” he muttered to himself. Almost immediately he felt guilty for saying it. It was not their fault they had families that loved them. McRib would be at his family’s sprawling house right now, probably getting up to all manner of mischief with the twins and playing pranks on their stuck-up older brother, Arch Deluxe. Happy Meal would be nose deep in a stack of books as tall as she was. Okay, maybe he did not envy Happy Meal too much. Still, he couldn’t help but feel a little bit...

“OOF!”

McGriddle was so lost in thought he hadn’t heard the other person coming as he rounded the corner and ran smack into them. They were evidently equally distracted, and in a mixture of surprise and panic both tried to extricate themselves from the collision but only succeeded in making it

worse. With a flailing of limbs and tangled robes they were both soon on the floor. McGriddle has assumed the castle had been virtually deserted for the holiday. He hadn't heard of any other students choosing to stay over the break. "I guess I will have some company after all!" thought McGriddle as he picked himself up off the floor.

McGriddle started, "Hello, my name is..."

"McGriddle!" shouted Croissan'wich with disgust.

"Croissan'wich!" McGriddle shouted back. Of all the luck! Alone for the holidays with only his sworn enemy for company!

"Why don't you watch where you're going!?" yelled McGriddle angrily.

"Why don't you make me?" retorted Croissan'wich. "Let's see how strong you are without your filthy soyblood friends to watch your back!"

At this both wands flew out. The two breakfast sandwiches lunged at each other, shouting "Exspiliarmus!" simultaneously. Both spells went just wide of their target as the two collided. They again fell to the floor, desperately grabbing at the others wand hand while wildly casting spells in hopes of getting in a lucky shot. "Confoodo!" "Densausageo!" "Impedimeata!" "Stupefry!" But nothing managed to connect, their spells glancing harmlessly off the stone walls in a shower of sparks.

Before long the spells were forgotten and their fight had degenerated into

a rough melee on the ground. Both did their best to throw punches, but the close quarters and awkward robes made it all but impossible to do any significant damage. McGriddle thought he had finally gained the upper hand when he managed to wind Croissan'wich with a knee to the stomach. He tried to pin him to the ground, but acted too hastily and Croissan'wich used the momentum to throw him to the side and reverse their positions. It looked like the fight was over. Croissan'wich laid on top of McGriddle using the weight of his body to keep him from moving. He had McGriddle by the wrists, pinning his arms to the floor above theirs heads. Their faces were inches apart, twisted with contempt.

McGriddle hated this. He hated losing. He hated feeling Croissan'wiches body pressing against his, holding him down. Rage engulfed him, like flames on the side of his face. His breath, heaving from the fight. It clouded his mind, pushing everything else out. Or almost everything. As McGriddle looked up at Croissan'wich's light grey eyes, there was something else there. A feeling that was strange to him. Something... new. It scared him, and his mind flashed to his wand. He had never wanted it so badly as he did now to protect him against this new thing. But he had dropped it during the fight and he could feel it trapped between their bodies.

No. Wait. It couldn't be. A quick glance to the left confirmed it: in his peripheral vision he could just make out both of their wands lying on the floor. But if not his wand....

McGriddle looked back up into the face of Croissan'wich. He searched his eyes, and like the lightning bolt carved into his bun it hit him: those

strange feelings, he could see them behind Croissan'wich's eyes as well. The gloating smirk of victory fell from Croissan'wich's face and was replaced with a new smile. Not hateful this time but instead a sinister, knowing smile. Croissan'wich released his hold on McGriddle, sat up and retrieved his wand. He dragged the tip of it down McGriddle's chest, letting it slowly trace a path along the mixture of bacon, egg and cheese. Finally he stopped, his wand resting on McGriddle's lap. Their eyes met again. Croissan'wich's eyes flashed mischeviously as he mouthed the words to a single spell: "Super Size".

"Well," thought McGriddle, "maybe this vacation won't be so boring after all...."



TO
BE
CONTINUED?!?!?!?!?!?

User Submitted ReGriddles!

by users (like you?)

So - background - we were just sitting around talking about McGriddles the other day. Suddenly out of nowhere one mega-McGriddle fan whose name, for the sake of this piece, shall remain unknown blurted out, “Woah, somehow I didn’t even notice that the McDonald’s “M” is branded onto each McGriddle.... what the hell?!” “Hey,” probably the funniest guy in the room retorted, “you must have ate them too fast to notice!”

We cracked up and all over that, but the whole thing also got us at McGriddle Defense HQ thinking. Our thoughts: Foods that have been griddled with shapes and stuff are cool. I wonder what other griddled foods there are? Oh man! I wonder what other things could be griddled onto McGriddles!?”

So McGriddle Defense decided to have a little contest. We challenged fans to send us “ReGriddled” McGriddles. But, wait, this was no ordinary contest! In this particular contest, there were no winners and no losers. We don’t like that competition-type stuff. So we designated all the contestants as “users.” Also, this way we didn’t have to give anyone prizes. So, pretty unorthodox for a contest, eh? That’s just how we do it!

Anyway, the rules were simple. We won’t even type them here, they were so simple. What follows are some of the great user submitted brands!

DHARMA INITIATIVE McGRIDDLE

SUBMITTED BY BRIAN REYNOLDS, POMONA, CA

Brian says: “Lost is my favorite TV show. Ever. I thought wouldn’t it be cool to brand the Dharma Initiative logo on a McGriddle? So I did it. I know at least Hurley would appreciate some Dharma McGriddle! Of course, the Dharma Initiative supplied some pretty righteous food to the island, anyway. But still, sometimes you just want to junk out on a McGriddle, right? Good luck in Season 6, guys!”



JESUS IS CRUCIFIED McGRIDDLE

SUBMITTED BY LOIS SATTERFIELD, ORLANDO, FL

Lois writes: “My friends are always going on about how mind-blowing it would be to accidentally grill up a Jesus grilled cheese sandwich, or to look outside one morning only to find Mary in your window frosting, and so on. And I always say whatever, I’m sick of looking for things that aren’t there! I’m too old these days to spend my time staring at the grills in my sandwich. So I whipped up this Jesus crucifixion McGriddle and then snuck it in my friend Marg’s lunch bag. She freaked out, let me tell you! But I couldn’t not laugh my head off at her, and so I gave myself away. RIP Jesus. p.s. I hope I win this contest.”



OBAMA McGRIDDLE

SUBMITTED BY SEMJASE BRINKMAN, NYC

Sem says: “Obama’s not only our awesome president, he’s a freaking icon, no doubt. This is my shout-out to him. 4 more years, y’all!”



McGRIDDLED McGRIDDLE

SUBMITTED BY DAVID CORNO, OBERLIN, OH

David writes: “I don’t know how else to describe this. Basically it’s a McGriddle mcgriddled onto a McGriddle. I’m sure you’ll hate it.”



Okay, thanks guys! Additionally, if you'd like to be a user like these great folks, submit your re-griddled McGriddles to McGriddle Defense HQ, and we'll post them on the site. ganatronic@gmail.com

the adventure continues...

“There is no time to lose!” you shout as you jump to your feet. You grab your trusty hat and trenchcoat and are out the door within seconds. As you close the door behind you, you catch one last look at the bag of McGriddles.

The death of Nigel the pirate is quite the mystery. A case filled with explosions, danger, fist-fights, ghosts, and a hidden treasure. However none of these prevent you from discovering the true killer: Linus the Astronaut! Another case closed. You should be happy, but....

Your mind keeps flashing back to that bag of McGriddles. You are glad that you found the culprit, but you can't help but feel a deep emptiness in your soul. An emptiness that all the cases in the world can't fill. An emptiness that calls out for McGriddle breakfast sandwiches. You put on a brave face for the cops and Dr. Astounding, but when you get to your car you sit behind the wheel, stare at your hands, and weep silently. Your hands... when did they get so worn, so lined? How did you get so old? How many hours have you wasted not eating McGriddle breakfast sandwiches? You feel like your life is just a collection of missed opportunities, interspersed with fleeting moments of McGriddle-based happiness. Oh god, what you would give to have all those years back. If only you could try again.

The End

McGriddles in Space. Or: Will a Vacuum-Sealed McGriddle That's Injected With Space Matter in Order to Expand Back to Normal Taste Just as Good as a Fresh One on Earth?

by Ryan Gratz

Excerpt from a short story-in-progress that's being reformatted as a script.

Intro: While astronauts/scientists are up in the International Space Station twittering back and forth with their “fans” about who knows what, one ex-astronaut-in-training and superstar popstar, Lance Bass, is, once again, up to... good? Scene One takes place in his semi-secret lab contained deep within a totally secret passageway nestled below the Boston subway. A few years earlier the Russians had at the last minute denied him entrance to space.



“What.” Bass, blond hair shining under the fluorescent lights of his lab, muttered to himself. “I spent so much of my life touring the world and dancing and writing songs. What... Did I earn all this money for WHAT!” He shouted/sung the “WHAT” part, his voice sending all the rats and subway pigeons out from their nooks, to then alight on his shoulders and place some pellets of food in his signature button dimples. “Cast away, ye, foul vermin! I want none of your treats today!” He looks forlornly at the ceiling. “I only want what was once almost mine...” dramatic but also sad music plays.

Cut to Joey Fatone, beard still cut as sharp as always, twittering from his laptop while on his couch in his living room. His mouth mimicking the words he types. “Astronauts – do you ever get sick of your regular old space food? How have things progressed since the days of ‘powdered etc.’?”

“Follow-up: And what kind of improvements/experiments would you make, food-wise, were it up to you? #joeyfatone”

“Thanks for your question Joey. Unfortunately, twitter doesn’t allow the space (ha! Astronaut humor for ya) to go into detail. But, thanks again”

“Oh, you have a follow-up! Okay, well, I think we all feel that we’ve reached the limits with powdered foods – milk, ice cream, fries...

“But what about vacuum-sealed foods? I’d like to see where we can go with that.”

Close-up of some dirt, with two brown-gloved hands digging a hole. The hands disappear for a few seconds, and then they come back and drop a little seed into the hole. The hole then gets covered up. End scene.

Close-up of Joey’s sideburn. The edge of a phone can be seen.

“Lance.”

Close-up of Lance’s dimple.

“What?”

Sideburn: “The seed’s been planted, my friend.”

Dimple: “The peace lily?”

Sideburn: “What?”

Dimple: “You finally planted those peace lily seeds I got you for christmas?”

Sideburn: “Well, yeah, as a matter of fact I did... but, Lance!”

Dimple: “What!”

Sideburn: “That’s not why I called you. I planted a different seed – a seed of information...”

Frowny dimple: “I’ve got lab reports to write, Joey. Get to it!”

Joey’s goatee: “I think the astronauts at the ISS are finally ready for the payload.”

Dimple: “And what makes you think this, my fine friend?”

Joey’s teeth: “They told me so.”

Lance’s eyes lighting up: “Nice!”

“Gents! Gents, gather around me! Another McGriddle for your little bellies.” Rats scurry simultaneously up all four legs of the vast metal table. On the table: with a fooodooosh sound, all the air is expunged from the plastic that’s encasing a fresh McGriddle. Skreeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeakpippippippip – the McGriddle slowly shrinks and shrinks, a huge and complex metal apparatus huffs and puffs next to it. Lance stares hard through his goggles, his face moving closer and closer as the McGriddle shrinks and shrinks.

The rats chill out on the table, sorting food pellets and stuff. “Gents!” The rats come to attention, then scurry up next to Lance’s face, moving their whiskers about like they are inquisitive (note: think of more ways to have the rats seem “smarter” than normal rats).

When the vacuum-packed McGriddle is shrunk down to the size of a thumbnail, a smile emerges on Lance’s face. He then cranes his neck back, and stares up like he’s staring through the ceiling and then up all the way into space at the ISS that’s orbiting the planet. “If I can’t be up there,” he says toward the heavens. “I sure as damn well will make sure only a McGriddle takes my place.” He picks up the McGriddle pellet and then heaves it against the far wall. It hits the wall with a sproing and then bounces straight back into his hand. “Home run, Lance,” he says to himself, with a sly smile. “But we won’t know how well they can expand back to normal until my McGriddles make it up to the ISS. But thanks to Joey, the suggestible men and women hogging all the oxygen on that space station will soon do their duty to find out for us. Oh yes, they will.”

Things to happen: shoot a payload of the pellets up to rendezvous with the ISS. Include in the load a holographic note (pretending to be) from ComStat, instructing them to collect and then mix a potent combination of Space Matter and Space Anti-Matter. Inject the combo into the pellets – carefully! - then: taste test. Once the whole thing has turned out to be a success, and rejuvenates a flailing and despondent space program, it is revealed that Lance Bass is the man behind the McGriddle pellets. NASA awards Lance with an opportunity to record his solo album on the Space Station.

McGriddlelvr

by Michael Russell



McGriddlelvr

My man left for a McGriddle sandwich. Right on.

9:54 AM Jul 16th from web

If this mofo is the greatest McGriddle eater of all time <http://tinyurl.com/mcgmcmg> then I'm Stewie from Family Guy.

6:24 AM Jul 15th from web

I need documentary evidence that you love me.

12:23 AM Jul 14th from web

Mickey D's man look like the bug from Men In Black (via @slippery Taco). Make me forget it Fresh Prince!

12:12 AM Jul 13th from web

@MCGRAD4 Here's your personal tweet, brotha. Now don't get all McGriddle-y on my ass, aite? YOU STILL GOT MUCH TO LIVE FOR. LIKE TATER TOTS.

2:17 AM Jul 12th from web

This chick got a "McGriddle Double-Double": 22 McGriddles and a .17 BAC. <http://tinyurl.com/nwzmcg>.

4:28 AM Jul 11th from web

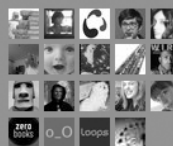
Name McGriddlelvr

22 261
following followers

Updates

Favorites

Following



RSS feed of McGriddle updates

@gridmaster Looks like the Predator with an eating disorder.
My new governor is about to stomp his McGriddle out.

11:21 PM Jul 8th from web

If Obama ever ate a McGriddle, he'll be able to field his own
polo team with them kids.

2:44 AM Jul 8th from web

@gridmaster – word :)

7:09 AM Jul 7th from web

Hey, notify Twitter. There's a half-giraffe man eating McGriddles
on a Twitter account @Gridgrad. That sh%t is illegal!

1:08 AM Jul 6th from web

6:25 AM Jul 5th from web

No wonder I has so many McGriddles, I got that Canadian
conversion rate. Take that ish to Africa and I'd have 47 million.

2:27 AM Jul 4th from web

Your twitter profile looks like a character from Coming to
America eating McGriddles -- but not Eddie, his mug
played by Arsenio.

11:17 PM Jul 2nd from web

Can't Help Thinking About Me

1:03 AM Jul 2nd from web

#MctotheG – Lance Armstrong didn't sell his soul but he
might have sold a testicle to eat McGriddles fast. Bad deal, Lance.

5:46 AM Jul 1st from web

If Jessica Simpson eat one more McGriddle she
gonna officially be a duo.

4:30 AM Jun 30th from web

McGriddle Spells Exercise

(tips)

“Fatty. Filled with Junk, and Covered in Junk. Luxury Item.” These are some of the words you may hear in your head when thinking about McGriddles. But did you also know that MCGRIDDLE can be an acronym that ends up spelling out a total routine for fitness? What follows is the secret to using McGriddles to break it out of that staid stereotype as an unhealthy luxury item that will clog your arteries while making your taste buds tingle, and turn it into a recipe for success. Just follow these steps!

Masticate – *You can’t exercise if you don’t eat. So you have to start out by eating. This way you’ll have stuff to burn. I recommend eating a McGriddle or two.*

Crouch – *Exercise position!*

Get

Ready – *Get ready! (Hands forward)*

Initiate

Double

Dash – *It helps if you have two people for this part. That’s what makes it double. If you’re by yourself, do it twice.*

Lay Down – *Take it easy on yourself. You only have one body for the rest of your life. You have to take care of it.*

Exercise – *Okay, now complete the routine by doing the exercise regimen of your choice.*



How to order what you want

(more tips)

Tips from an Expert: First off, when entering a McDonalds, use the wheelchair accessible button that opens the automatic door. Door handles are gross, and touched all day by who knows what kind of greasy germs. Door buttons, on the other hand, are stamped quickly, barely giving time for the Five Second Germ Rule to come into play. Plus, it simply makes for a smoother entrance when you don't have to deal with a door.

Once inside, the first thing you should see is a giant glowing menu set up like a banner above the cash registers. While walking from the doorway to the registers, maintain eye contact on the menu. But don't even bother with the text. The text can be really difficult to read while walking, unless you can walk without bobbing up and down much, which I can't really. So just look at the big pictures that accompany the text. The pictures tell you everything you need to know. Think about it – you're not going to eat a likeness of the letters of the text, you're going to eat a likeness of the picture of the McGriddle. By the time you get in line, you should by now have a decent idea of what feels tasty and what's not welcoming at all. I suggest that you scan the pictures of each different type of McGriddle, but in the end stick to your gut. Don't ignore what first stood out to you. Changing your mind a lot is, obviously, the first and last step toward NOT ordering what you want.

Next comes crunch time. Here comes a detailed example of what to do, brought to you by me. Here we go:

Her: "Welcome to McDonald's, how many I help you?"

Me: “Okay yeah I’d like two fresh McGriddles – NO ONIONS! - and a Coke and a shake.”

Her: “What size Coke, sir?”

Me: “eeeeeehm, large.”

Her: “And what kind of McShake?”

Me: “What kind of who? oh... eeeeeehm, chocolate.”

When you specify no onions it means that they’ll have to make the McGriddle fresh. They can’t just pull it off the rack of ones that have been sitting there for hours, because those ones aren’t custom.

Next, I don’t know, pay them and then wait! Finally, last step: eat it up YUM!

Hope this helps,
McGriddle Defense HQ

These are just two of the hidden tips that dwell within the exciting world of McGriddles. Discover your own recipes by thinking about things and being a little creative. Good luck!

Canticum Fratris Trichinella Spiralis

by Joe Mar

Dave Miraz of Wilkes-Barr, PA eats his 215th McGriddle sandwich for breakfast while sitting in his 1994 green Ford Escort. He's listening to "The Lives of the Saints," an audiobook his pope-obsessed Catholic mother gave him for Christmas last year. He savors his last greasy bite, while staring at a mockingbird eating french fries and other unrecognizable grizzle in an oily puddle two parking spots over. He puts the car in reverse and pulls out of his spot and begins his commute to the garage where he works as a lube technician. On the expressway the morning sun glints sharply off the chrome bumper of a shiny yellow Dodge Ram extended cab dually with purple truck balls hanging off the trailer hitch. The bright reflection shoots straight into the back of his eyes and feels like it burrows back into his skull, pulsating as if an electric jellyfish has sent its tendrils deep into the meaty goo of his mind. He loses his grip on the wheel and his vision begins to turn bright red with flashing white streaks arching through his periphery. All those fatty acids in that cute little warm sandwich have flooded poor Dave's neuron membranes.

When he opens his eyes he sees red smoke and red crumpled hood and red tree branch in shattered red windshield. In that tree branch he sees a red shining. A red movement. A twisting and turning. A creation of such beauty he is overcome. He sees only red but in this pattern he sees all colors and wondrous sounds like violins and cellos. In the center of the pattern is a red creature spinning by a thread, hanging on with two of eight legs waiting for the world to stop turning. Dave starts to cry. He flashes back to the last time he let himself cry in public. Second Grade in Ms. O'Rourke's class. Sitting "Indian-style" on the alphabet-themed

carpet listening to her soft slow voice read the ending of “Charlotte’s Web.” He’s bawling just like he did when he had to hide his face in his Osh-Kosh-B’Goshs way back when. Through his sobs Dave feels a wetness coming from his head and reaches up with one of his hand to feel a bowl of scrambled eggs on the top of his head. As his fingers poke and scoop around, probing his brain, all he can think about is what an awesome name Frances is for a man and how great it would be to visit Central Italy. He thinks about how cool it would be to make his own clothes, and wonders if he has a potato sack long enough to cut armholes in and sew a hood on.

the adventure continues...

“Hold on a second, Dr. Astounding. A man’s gotta have priorities!” you say as you tear into another delicious McGriddle breakfast sandwich. As the mixture of bacon, egg, cheese and maple hits your tongue a sense of peace and well being engulfs your body. It is a sense of joy that nothing else in your life can match. The only word to describe it is sublime.

Turn to **page 39**

A Sullen Corg Unit's Never Clean

by Ryan Gratzner

Bleach. For the past four blocks, along a teeming street pinched between the stems of ghostly skyscrapers, all I've smelled is bleach. With my maxi-shades tinted to a custom calciar-blend (a maxi-shade plugin procured from a vendor on this very street), I can see the bleach steaming up like a soft mist from the asphalt. The air is choking on the sharp smell. I forgot it was Tuesday that this neighborhood was gonna be targeted.

The vendors grin and shout out to me from under their tarps, peddling, at times, some pretty rare spices. I shoot them a puzzled look – don't they know we're being cleaned off? Before my senses burn out I cover my nose with an old cloth napkin from my pouch. A few minutes ago I'd noticed that my umbrella, once a cosmic violet hue, had lost all its radiance. Turning just plain white. So I'd ditched it on some toothless little boy, his grin like a gutted mackerel. If there were still mackerel left in this crapass world.

The coagulated trash heaps bulging from the base of the buildings, recently oozing with rat guts left over from the Super Rat's purge of their lesser kin, are all blanketed an infirmic white. Sort of gray, though, when you really look at it. Hard to wipe it all clean.

I duck from underneath one shoddy vendor cart's awning to the next. And the bleach, I can see it starting to coat the tips of my once-jet black cargo boots.

It's part of EcSon's latest corporate directive – to brighten the walls, the streets, the moods. The clouds – the relentless clouds that threaten to stamp down and remove all color and heat from the world –

the clouds have been injected with mesahylotanical bleach compounds. Mesahylotanical bleach – when it evaporates it snags and then flings microbial dirtballs into the stratosphere. As a sort of cruddy tent top for our rotted ozone. At least, that's what Mecras told me the last week when I stopped in to replace my holo-stim set.

I slip between two tarps, then tuck into a low, brick doorway. I check my watch. 5pm. Time to take the last vitapower chewtab, so as to initiate the final cycle in my inner corg's mutagenic transholonation.

Two motorcycle brats whiz by, knocking down a tent pole and, with it, the tent. A buzzing follows them, like an aftershock of the ruffling of the streets. "Zzzztetsuoooooooooo." It sounds like.

My Emotimeter is reading "Stoic, Resolved." Just the way the Belmont Cyrcl Apt Complex's keymaster likes it. I pop the chewtab in my mouth, pull the tab, and start chewing. Surprisingly, this one's flavored mulberry. Suddenly I hear fireworks. But it's only in my ear, I know it. Crackling and pops, indicating my brain is feeding the corg unit neuro-dialogical nutrients. The tips of my fingers tingle. They're gloved in dual-maldyhide, so the tingling's not an effect from the bleach. I remove my right glove, and see a blue/gray wisp coming out of the tips of my fingers. The wisps, floating like smoke yet pixelated in detail, appear like they're fusing together at the top. My inner corg is coming out.

I have to enter the Complex before the corg gains enough potency to adjust my Emotimeter. They default on "Sullen," which would be enough to tip my Resolve.

I put my glove back on, and face the doorway. "Cybon McYork, chef. I'm here to see Commodore Mick. I'm here on business," I state in a stoic, resolved manner to the keymaster's keyhole. The keyhole, situated

just above the deep red door's handle, pulses fluorescent blue.

"Belmont welcomes you, Cybon," the keymasters voice rings forth. "Enter and proceed with your business."

The blue pulse turns a kind of aquamarine, and stops pulsing. With a small "fooosh" the door starts slowly opening inward. I push it the rest of the way - sometimes these keymasters forget to lube their hinges, but I don't have time to find out.

Inside I remove my handkerchief from my mouth and take a deep breath. The bleach has been replaced by mildew. I stride forward, toward the elevator in the middle of the hallway. It's a lonely hallway. The soft padding sound from my boots on the thick carpet is the only thing I can hear. A few halogens sticking out of the wood paneling above the faded valupak-themed wallpaper light the way. I shift my maxi-shades accordingly. The soft light is a relief.

I begin to catch a hint of maple in the air. But again, I know it's just the corg processing the chewtab's final phase.

I stop next to a robust peace lily set in a red pot against the wall. The leaves are huge, so I rip one off and use it to try and wipe the bleach off my cargo boots. As I'm working the leaf along my boot pocket, I remember the mini exacto-bomb I'd packed in there. Might as well move it to somewhere more accessible, in case shit gets hairy.

When I stand back up I notice a silvery shimmer on the wall, behind where I'd ripped off the leaf. It's sparkling, methodically, like it's in a loop. I part the other leaves and, holy hell, it's a framed poster of the seminal issue from our era's greatest and most influential work, McGriddle Defense #10 - The Wrapper Remix Issue. I can't help but smile. Commodo Mick knows how to welcome his guests.

But this isn't the time to let my sympathies, and my memories of our once-solid partnership, get the best of me. Mick was a total dick to me, after I alone basically synthesized the module for his entire operation. But whatever, we both know he's in some deep shit with Rommel, and as much as he hates it, only I can bust his ass out.

The tingling I felt at the doorway has now leveled out to a sustained buzz. I'm getting used to it. It's like a small layer of white noise surrounds my hands. They're not quite numb or anything; just... active, or something. I'll keep my gloves on until I get in there.

The elevator's hooked into one of those chintzy screwdriver mechs that were such the rage seven years ago. Back in 2012, amid the whole "2012 Global Freak-Out," (2012: Spend It Before the Stars Rend It... oh, they spent it) the international distraction campaign aimed to keep us from worrying too much about the crunch that was slated to take us all out by making our daily lives just a little more exciting. The whole box rotates as it goes up. One full rotation for each floor. I should hope. Big whoop – it's not pumping me up, I gotta say. It's just making me a little dizzy.

I exit on the 28th. There are six peace lilies lined up along the opposite wall. Peace lilies are nice and all, but, I don't know. I don't get it. This is the Commodore's MO, though: stick with what works.

Not having visited HQ since the Commodore relocated, I'm not exactly sure where to go from here. But - right or left. I take a right.

I check my emotimeter: "Quiet Resolve." Crap, the corg has offset my feelings. Oh well. That's what they do.

Um, I think I see a placard above a door at the end of the hallway. The wallpaper on this floor is slogan-themed. Text in yellows and browns, with a crinkly-looking background. "Let's eat out!" "You'll enjoy the dif-

ference.” “Make up your own mind.” “What you want is what you get.”
“It’s a good time for great taste.” I remember some of these.

A beam of light from outside shines directly onto the bronze placard. “Commodore McGriddle, Mgmt.” Why’d he put the placard above the door, and not next to it?

“I see you, Cybon,” a voice, Mick’s, suddenly comes out of a small speaker on the wall.

“Yeah, so?” I answer.

“You have to push the button on the speaker when you speak,” he says.

I push it. “Just open the damn door, Mick.”

“No.”

“What? Why?”

“Cybon, first you must promise me something.”

“Oh yeah? Promise you what?”

“Say you’ll promise first, and then I’ll tell you.”

“Uh, nuts to that, big guy.” I hear a small rustling over the com.
“You’ve been holed up in there too long. You forgot what it’s like outside of HQ. You wouldn’t believe what EcSon has...”

“Oh, I know perfectly well what EcSon’s up to out there.” His voice booms clearly. “And I’m not stupid enough to wash myself in that horrid bleach. They’re poisoning you just to save the ozone. I can’t even go into how backward that is. I mean, first off—”

The smell of maple is stronger now, overpowering the stagnant smell of the hallway. “Alright, screw it,” I interrupt. “I promise.”

“Great!” His voice cracks through the speaker. “Okay, you just promised that you’d personally taste test my latest creations.”

“Uh, yeah...”

“And! Not mention my current, uh, appearance to anyone.”

“What? Alright fine, just let me in!”

The door opens with another “fooosh.”

A glow fills the room, sort of yellow in hue. Two ropes, about waist high and attached to both sides of the doorway, guide me forward. Outside the ropes are brick-wallpapered planters containing – I won’t even bother to say. The leaves carry up above my head. I can’t see past them on either side to whatever the hell he’s got going on in this room. It’s warm, humid, and smells like pancakes. Mick’s been stewing in this yellowhouse for who knows how long.

“Mick, where the hell are you?” I call over the leaves, while the ropes turn me 90 degrees left, then after ten feet 180 degrees around.

“Do you like what I’ve done with the place?” His voice booms out over a PA system.

After a few more turns, and then a short straight-away in the direction I came in, the planters finally end. The lilies are so large at this point that their leaves droop into the pathway, obscuring my view. I part them with my gloved hands.

“Christ,” I say. He’s standing behind a counter, wearing a headset, and his [REDACTED] splotted with various shaded [REDACTED]. A back-lit menu sign is above him. I see that his goofy grin hasn’t gone anywhere.

“Welcome to McGriddle Defense HQ, how may I take your order?”

“Cut the shit, Mick.” I step up to the counter. “Starbucks’ new Sausage Breakfast Pancake Patty Melt threatens to wipe out the McGrid-

dle for good, and here you are in your hole making me - WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?"

From under the counter he's pulled out a tray containing simply a brown napkin, and next to it a McGriddle unlike anything I've seen before.

"Ha, I thought you'd like this, Cybon," he says with a smirk that crowns the [REDACTED] on his face.

I'm dumbfounded. "Is that... is that a layer of French toast in between the sausage and egg layers? Dear God, man."

He straightens up and stares hard at me. "I couldn't let Starbucks take us off the map, Cybon. We've invested too much into this enterprise to let it die out now. Society has invested too much into this thing we call the McGriddle. When I bought out McGriddle Defense I thought I'd be able to use its force to keep the McGriddle on top forever. But now it's clear we can't be only on the defense, so to speak. A strong offense is necessary. And so, as you can see, I cranked things up."

"Heh..." I rest my hands on the counter, leaning my face into this new creation, inspecting its folds. I adjust my maxi-shades to full spectrum. "Do you really think the people will accept this? Do you think they'll know how?"

"Hard to say at this point," he sighs. "Frankly, it's a work in progress. It's just a prototype. In fact, right now it's the last copy of the prototype I have left." He turns his head and looks down.

I peer over the counter and notice tray after broken tray strewn across the floor behind him, the remnants of McGriddles splattered all over.

"This has been more difficult than expected, Cybon. And, as you

probably know, that's why I called you here."

"I'm shocked, Mick. Here I thought I was going to have to come and pull you out of your lethargy. But damn... I'm not sure, it, it even smells like you've upped the syrup levels accordingly, eh?"

"Uh, no. Not at all," says the Commodore. "The syrup injection was destabilizing the folds. Why do you think I have all these failures?"

"Hmm."

"I'm not sure what you're smelling..."

"Wait a minute, my corg!"

"WHAT!" He smashes his fist down on the counter. "How the hell did you get a corg unit into the building? The data here is far too sensitive..."

"Listen, Mick—"

"That stupid keymaster..." he mutters, looking back and forth. Then he focuses straight on me. "Okay, where is it?"

I look down at my hands planted firmly on the counter. His eyes follow mine. "Mick," I say, "I think this may work out even better than expected. This corg's been programmed with my entire McGriddle memory base. The intention was to feed it enough of my personal dialogical nutrients so that it could develop the next logical extension of our current McGriddle. It was still forming as I entered the building – that's how I got past the keymaster."

"And you thought this would be a wise decision? You thought it would safely infuse a—"

"I didn't think I had a choice!"

"Cybon," he sighs. "You're the same crazy ass as ever. The only one crazy enough to be able to come up with the master idea for McGrid-

dle, yes. But also the same guy who freaked out when criticism became, well...”

“I have all the spices on me that would be necessary to subdue it, if shit got out of hand. I assure you.”

I slip off both gloves and drop them onto the ground by my feet. Mick tenses and pulls the tray toward him.

“Ah, don’t worry so much, Mick. I can control this thing.”

“That’s sort of what I’m afraid of.”

Bluish orbs, quivering with minuscule activity, surround my hands. The pixelation in them becomes more apparent on the edges, as the blue turns a transparent bluish-gray before completely fading away. I wave my hands around. Blue tracers trail behind, then slowly catch up when I settle my hands.

“Interesting,” I say. I press my palms together.

“Ahhh,” I moan. The muscles in my arms contract. It feels like something is trying to pull me forward by my arms. I resist. The contractions becomes stronger and more focused, first on my forearms, then slowly inching along toward my hands. I hold still. Mick is staring, frozen and slack-jawed.

The corg unit emerges. From the tips of my fingers a green glow rises up out of the blue pixels. It forms... a leaf. A green leaf. A little droopy, but I can make out the three prominent points on it.

“See?” I say. “It’s a maple leaf. The corg offers maple syrup.”

“Okay,” says Mick. “Could be worse.” He’s tapping his fingers on the tray. “Now what?”

“Now I fulfil my promise. I taste your latest creation.”

The tapping stops. “Cybon, let’s think about this. How will the

corg know to infuse the McGriddle II evenly? What if it screws up and, like, the bottom griddle takes the brunt of the syrup and then becomes too soggy to hold all the layers above?”

“This unit is forged from within my own sphere. Its transholonation, as we see it now, contains not only the ultimate ingredient, but also the method to perfectly enforce the mixture.”

“But look how the leaf droops...” He squints. “Why’s it doing that?”

“Oh, it’s nothing really. The development process saps—

“Ha!”

“Um, it saps endorphins from my system and transmutes them into prime logic mechs. As a result, while it ends up focused and prepared, its character can be a little sullen and... hrm, that’s interesting.”

“What?” His hands come off the tray and onto the counter as he leans closer to the corg.

“The veins on the leaf seem to be showing some tiny brown and white spots. And, hmm, the spots are moving along the veins.”

“Wait, I can’t see it,” Mick says breathlessly. “C’mon, hold your hands closer to me!”

I move them to a few inches in front of him, and about a foot directly over the McGriddle II.

“Hmm. Ah! I can see them, too.” He smiles, and the

lifts in shade accordingly. “Fascinating. Ah! I know.”

He pops open the cash register. With his eyes still on the corg, his hands rummage madly through the drawer. Finally, he pulls out a hand lense.

“Let’s see,” he muses, “it could be the other way around, but it

looks to me like the brown spots are trying to move away from the white ones, but the white ones are sometimes catching up and hopping into them. What the...”

“What?”

“After that the white spots disappear, and the brown ones continue on. Cybon,” he pulls back and looks at me. “Did you wash your hands before beginning the corg cycle?”

“What?” I pull my hands close to my jacket. “Well, I was in a hurry this morning, and, and yeah I washed! I knew I was then going to have to pass through the pavilion on my way here. That place is grubby, so I wore gloves. I didn’t even end up buying anything.”

“But you perused some items?”

“Um, yeah, when I first entered the zone I ran across this one spice merchant who had—”

“Christ, Cybon, even with double-tachyderm gloves – or whatever those beasts were – some system contaminants will still find their way onto your skin. And at that point your gloves probably provided a nice little ecosystem for the contaminants to fester.”

“Yeah, but the bleach!”

“Hmm, that’s true – the bleach.”

“Waitamminute,” I say, “these white spots are probably the bleach compounds!”

“Well if they are, they’re losing the battle. Damn EcSon...”

I shake my head furiously. “We have to try it still, before the corg gets too dirty.”

“No, Cybon! It’s too risky at this point. Lemme show you my syrup charts, and maybe together we can formulate a new batch that will

finally work.”

“Nuts to your charts, Mick! It’s now or never.” I pull my hands apart – the leaf fades – and reach into my pocket.

“What are you doing?” He reaches for the tray.

“What has to be done. So,” I pull out the exacto-bomb. “To speak!”

“No!”

“Catch!” I drop the exacto-bomb directly over the McGriddle II. Mick whips his hands forward and cups them. The bomb drops into his palm. I pull the tray toward me and pick up the McGriddle II. He squeals and chucks the exacto-bomb behind him. It hits the pile of trays, then with a slick “vriiiiiiiiiiiiiip” quickly vaporizes a dozen of them, including, unfortunately, his left leg. With a horrific scream he falls to the floor behind the counter.

I grip the McGriddle II in both hands. The corg’s blue aura enshrouds the breakfast sandwich. And I can see the griddles themselves tint a slight green as I pull it to my mouth.

I take a giant bite. My teeth feel extra large and strong, and the entire McGriddle II seems to surge with power as the corg infuses itself into it.

“AW! Pwaugh!”

“Cybon...” I hear Mick groan from the ground.

“Dude, this is gross!”

“Mwhat? No way...”

“Yeah, it tastes like crap, man.” I throw it down on the tray. The top griddle bounces off and over the counter. I hear it is squish down on the tiles someone near Mick’s fallen body.

I lean over the counter. "Are you trying to poison me? Is that what's going on?" The glow from my hands is gone. The corg unit has been expended. Mick's on his side, reaching for the griddle.

"Mmblech, yeah," he says with his mouth full. "Your stupid sullen corg contaminated everything."

"Shit."

"Cybon. You gotta help me up. My leg is gone, man."

"Yeah, I know, Mick." I hop over the counter.

It's a clean cut. But it's bleeding heavily.

"I'm sorry about this," I say. "I really wanted this to work. But now... look at you. And look at the McGriddle II."

Mick groans as I pull him up and set him on the counter. "You screwed me over bigtime," he says. "I was almost there."

"Maybe we have to accept that there might be no possible way to improve upon the McGriddle."

"Maybe you're right."

"Listen, I can probably get you a replacement leg down there in the pavilion. Don't worry too much about it."

"Too late. I am worried." I grab some napkins from the dispenser and place them on the wound. "I loved that leg," he says.

"Well," I look at him and smile as best I can. "Look on the bright side. Now you have a pretty damn exciting news item for the next issue. Right?"

"Yeah," he rolls his eyes at me. "Hey, I have a crate full of sani-wipes in the storage room. Go grab a couple packs, will ya."

"On it."

the adventure continues... (it never has to end)

You are lost in thought, savoring the taste of the sandwich, when Dr. Astounding breaks you from your reverie by clearing his throat. “Ahem... the murder? We are losing precious time...”

He raises a good point. The first moments after a crime are the most important in catching the culprit. You really should be going. But at the same time... McGriddles. The bag calls you to like a siren song. Surely one more couldn't hurt....

To leave right away, turn to **page 14**

To enjoy another delicious McGriddle breakfast sandwich before you go, turn to **page 25**



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Made in 2009.

Goodbye.

free

Thank you for
reading!

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