

# People Magazine: November 23, 2014

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This piece is a combination of stories I've heard about young adults buying condoms, picking up their prescription for the pill, and going to Planned Parenthood.

Some people are surprised by my lack of familiarity with People magazine, and want to explain away this piece by saying I lead a sheltered life. It might help you to know that there are worlds in which People magazine plays no part. The inhabitants of these worlds are happy and unless we have to play a character outside these worlds, we don't need to be unsheltered. Thank you.

From Anoo: start slowly, remember you're giving the audience a gift.

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A little while ago, I presented here my monologue called "The Introvert". In it, through an unexplained, but cruel, twist of fate, I was turned, for a week, into an extrovert. The first thing I did as an extrovert, was to buy a copy of People magazine. In the early versions of the piece, I just stated the fact and left it at that. I thought that buying a copy of People magazine was so absurd, that no further comment was necessary. However, when I presented the piece to Anoo's public speaking class, she reminded me that I couldn't just TELL people I'd bought the magazine; I had to SHOW you that I'd bought it, read it, and enjoyed it, by gleefully telling you all the really neat things I'd found in there.

Well fair enough; nothing wrong with doing a bit of background reading on the material for your piece. I'll buy a copy on the way home. Nothing to it.

It only took me a few minutes to realise that I didn't know where to buy People magazine. I knew about People magazine of course. The therapist I've been going to every week for the last 30yrs, to cure my introversion, has them in his waiting room. I always ignore them and instead read his LLBean catalogues. So in the next break in Anoo's class, I asked where to buy People magazine. Everyone knew; it's in the checkout line at the grocery store, along

with all sorts of things that long ago I learned to screen out (candy, National Enquirer). It's beyond me how they hope to sell People magazine. They put it in the very spot in the grocery store, the checkout line, that's designed for the stuff that they know no-one's ever going to buy.

So on the way home after class, I dropped in at my local grocery store.

I had expected that People magazine would be a collection of articles on the lives of various people, in the style of the NYT, The Guardian, National Geo. or Wikipedia. Admittedly it would be about celebrities, rather than people who were attempting to make the world a better place, but I assumed that even celebrities must be doing that too, even if it was in a way that I didn't understand. Presumably I'd get a window into the workings of celebrities, tackling the problems of the world from within the framework of their celebrity. I buy plenty of magazines. I had expected this to be a routine purchase, like buying a single issue of a writer's magazine.

On arrival at the grocery store, I was horrified to see the cover of People magazine.

(hold up copy for people to see the cover.)

It's pictures and stories, prying into people's private lives, things that I tell few people, and certainly not to people unless we've been properly introduced. Unbelievably, the people in the stories seem to like this attention.

Do I need to know about Celine Dion's husband's health crisis? How is this going to help my life, Celine's life, anyone's life? When Celine wants me to know about her husband's health, she'll tell me. In the meantime, I'll just mind my own business and leave her in peace. How could anyone's life be better for reading this stuff? It's just social porn.

I couldn't just step forward and buy a magazine like this. Everyone would see me. I can't believe they're all out on display for anyone and everyone to see.

(wave magazine at audience in disbelief.)

They should be behind the counter, in plain brown wrappers. They didn't even ask for proof of age. They should show you the list of articles first and then have you sign a waiver. There should be a state law requiring you to read educational material first, so that you understand the consequences of what you're about to do. They should advise counselling first. How about

a 3-day waiting period?

What was I going to say when I brought it home?

(point incredulously at the cover)

It's like bringing home pornography. I couldn't just leave it out in the kitchen or dining room. Without a plain brown paper wrapper, people will see it. Yes, my friends will believe it's for a class, but it will take forever to explain and I'll have to endure endless ribbing for it. They'll never let me forget it.

"Dad, you've been such a great role model for me as a father. Here's your father's day present, which can't begin to express my gratitude for all you've done for me; a year's subscription to People magazine."

What if someone I know saw me going into the store to buy this? What if I came out and was greeted by a line of people angrily shouting abuse and waving placards at me.

I looked around. There was no-one I knew. But the checkout person would know; she sees me all the time and recognises me. I'd have no credibility with her anymore. I'd just be zeroed out; "another dumb schmuck who doesn't have a life". Maybe I could order it on-line. But then it wouldn't arrive in time for my performance. Oh please, isn't there something else I could buy instead? I scanned the shelves desperately for an alternative. I saw Cosmo "Ten ways to drive your man wild!!!!", with 5 exclamation marks. No, I couldn't make jokes about that. The other magazines were even worse (or irrelevant, eg Good Housekeeping). Oh, I'd never be able to look the checkout girl straight in the face again. I'd be so ashamed.

It was the only thing I came in to buy. Couldn't I just fold it under my arm, while waiting in line?

(fold magazine under arm)

Oh please? No, I would have to flop it on the conveyor belt.

(look like you're about to flop it on the conveyor belt, but you're looking around and you don't do it)

What if the person in front of me and behind me said "Hmm. People magazine! You made a special trip? You must really like it."

"No! no! It's for a class. My teacher told me to buy it, really. You don't think I'd buy this for myself do you?"

It shows how little credibility I have in the world, that no-one would believe this.

Maybe I could buy a chapstick, or a comb or anything to put on the belt as well. Then no-one would ever notice the magazine.

(sigh)

This must be what it's like for sociologists, you know the people who live in the ghettos for a year, living on a student's stipend. They do this so they can find out what it's like out there. They then write a book about their experiences. This is for people like me, who spend our lives reading books, so that we too can learn what the outside world is like. Sociologists must have to buy People magazine too, so that they fit in. I had no idea how awful a sociologist's life must be. They have to read People Magazine, just so they have something to talk about, with the people living in the ghettos. Some people really earn their tenure.

I waited till there was no-one in line, I flopped the magazine on the belt, before a line could form. The belt stopped.

(head in hands)

There was a problem with the cash register. The checkout girl called the manager. OMG there'll be a line a mile long, all looking at my People magazine. It's the only thing on the belt. I should put a bag over my head. Oh no, now there's a person in line behind me. The cash register still isn't working. Now there's a second person in line. I'm so embarrassed. I just want the earth to open up and swallow me whole.

The belt started. Saved!

"Did you find everything today?" The checkout smiled cheerily at my purchase and then at me. She knew what I'd bought.

(give big wink)

(put hand on forehead)

She'd never believe me if I said I'm just doing this for a class.

"That will be \$5.36." she said, running my credit card through the swiper. Ah, whew, I'm done. I picked up the magazine.

Then loudly with a flourish she handed me a pile of coupons

"Oh no, no coupons please! You don't understand, I'm holding a copy of People magazine. Everyone can see it. I've got to go! Please let me outta

here. Really.”

”Here’s 50c off on your next purchase of PEOPLE MAGAZINE!”

”No! no! I’m never going to be buying another one, just keep it. How about you use it yourself?” (OMG, what an awful thing to say. She’s doesn’t have money to waste on anything like this.)

”Oh never mind.”

It was easier just to take the coupons.

”and here’s \$2 off on the special Robin Williams issue of PEOPLE MAGAZINE!”

”uh, thanks.”

Thank goodness she’s finished.

”Would you like a bag for your PEOPLE MAGAZINE?”

”Can I just have my stuff and go? argh!”

I grabbed the magazine and ran out the store, with it folded under my arm in case I ran into anyone I knew in the parking lot. I didn’t look back at the line of people staring at me. They’ll all avoid me next time they see me. No-one will ever talk to me in the grocery store again. I ran past the line of people angrily shouting abuse and waving placards at me.

(make like I’m running out of the store with People magazine under my arm, open the car door, get in, close the car door, put on the seat belt, start the car, put it into gear...)

As soon as I got home, I put my People magazine under the bed. No-one will ever see it there.

It took two days to steel myself to look at it.

I have to thank Anoo for this wonderful educational opportunity. Without her, I would never have found out that Scarlett Johansson was pregnant.

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