



A BOY A NECKTIE + A NEW WORLD ORDER

BY RAMI SALAMÉ

Growing up, my biggest fear was the actual growing up. I didn't want to become a "man" because men are boring and predictable. I was willing to do anything to avoid becoming a man. For me, men held office jobs and wore neckties. So, my young logic said I should avoid those two things.

I hate the necktie*. For me it will always symbolize a boy's passage to adulthood; his succumbing to a life of labor; the surrender of his childhood dreams. Maybe that's why, in the movies, strict schools force students to wear neckties, and they refer to them as "young men".

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In my fight against evolving into a "man", I earned a B.Sc. in geology. I thought it would be my ticket to the great outdoors; so that I would never have to report to a cubicle, or be forced to do tedious work on a daily basis with that cloth leash under a starched collar.

And yet, here I am, working a 9-to-6 job in a cubicle. Granted I don't wear a necktie, but still... every day is a battle to keep the "boy" from being kidnapped by the "man". So I spend every day scheming ways to turn the world into a boy-friendly place.

I'm secretly re-designing the world. One day, I'm going to put this plot into effect, and unleash the "boys" from the men who hold them hostages. And this is my plan:

I designed the houses. There's no white paint involved. Just colors. All houses would have rotating doors, with minimum rotation requirements to enter. You must make at least 3 rotations. Or until you get dizzy. You walk in and slam into a wall, and everyone would have a laugh.

Some houses would be made of chocolate brick, because that's where I would like to live. There are no witches in the new world.

On the planet I designed, there are no elevators. To go up, you take an escalator. This escalator is moving downward because the boy in you likes to run in the opposite direction, as a challenge, with a big smile on his face.





EVERYONE DRIVES BUMPER CARS. THERE ARE NO ROUNDABOUTS; JUST GIANT ARENAS FOR ALL TO BUMP INTO EACH OTHER.

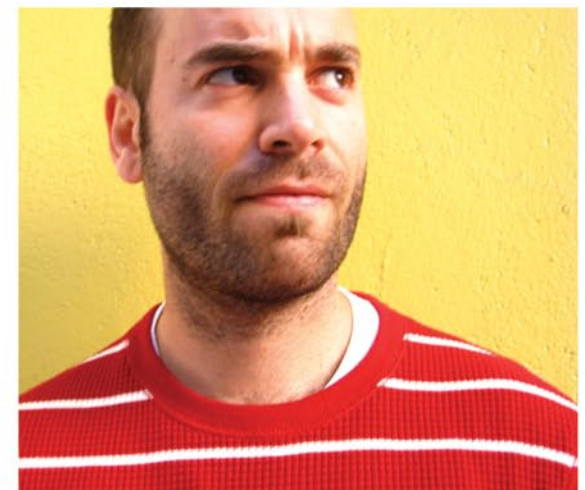
And the only way to go down is by slide. Imagine you lived on the seventh floor, and every morning you had to slide down to work. Wouldn't that be amazing? The more fun-loving you are, the higher the floor you'd want to live on. What a jolt in the morning! Everyone drives bumper cars. There are no roundabouts; just giant arenas for all to bump into each other. And popcorn waiting for you when you arrive at the parking lot. The office would be a wonderful place to go to. It would be like your first day at school. You walk in, place your lunchbox next to your desk, and spend the entire morning doing some hard tasks, like connecting letters to animals, and deciding which shape goes through which hole. The cafeteria at work would serve candy and cornflakes. There would be compulsory food fights during lunch break. It would be ok to spill soup on your shirt because the stain wouldn't show against the other crayon and watercolor stains.

Of course, this plan is going to take ages to execute. I doubt I'll have much support from the colleagues in the cubicles around me, because I think they've all completed the metamorphosis. They are "men". Irreversibly.

So until I put the plan into effect, I'm keeping the boy alive by other means. Like this:

At the end of every year at work, I get an employee assessment report. It's like a school report card. So, when I visit my parents in Lebanon, I try to get my father to sign it. I pretend that I can't go back to work unless he signs my report card. "Dad, I tried my best. I just don't get this business growth part," I say to him. "I promise I'll do better next year. My boss doesn't like me. He picks on me. I don't even wanna go to work any more. I'll just go back to school and study!" And then, before I go to sleep wrapped in my ghost-proof blanket and with the nightlight on, I head back out, look at my dad with a sad face, and say, "My boss wants to meet you. He wants to talk to you."

* I believe the necktie was invented by an unhappy man. Observe the movements involved in tying a necktie. It's an opportunity, every morning, to strangle yourself because you hate your job or your life. I see the inventor standing in front of the mirror, necktie halfway around his neck, mumbling, "One of these days, I tell you, I'll have the courage to tighten this damn thing around my neck and put an end to all this crap."■



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