

THE NEW-YORK GHOST

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The Weekly Newsletter You Print Out at Work

A four-page concordance to the New-York 'Eye & Ear'

They claim the mustache is mine—as though it's something you can own!

—Subumar Ray, 'Mustache Theivery' (1916)

Questions Posed by The Smiths— Answered at Last

Has the world changed or have I changed?

You've changed.

Does the body rule the mind or does the mind rule the body?

The latter.

Am I still ill?

No, you're fine, but make sure you take the whole course of antibiotics.

How soon is now?

Ummm...NOW. 🦋

Letters From a Fake Mustache to a Piece of Lady Fabric

Day 1 I'm here! I thought getting less than day rate was going to bum me out, but filming in Hawaii makes up for it. (No kidding!) I'm in Makeup Tent #2 with all the other facials—Bruises, Swellings, Cuts, Burns and a few Stubbles. All we've been told is that a plane crashes and some people survive. (I guess all the Reds shouldn't surprise me. It's no yoga session, crashing a plane!) ¶ They say Tent #1 is mostly Torso and Limb stuff. Word is that they're working with a gnarly stomach wound, and had to bring in a French rebar guy. ¶ The vibe in Tent 2 is mellow. We're only getting pages one at a time—a strictly 'need to know thing,' which is odd. I mean, we're just filming a pilot (ha, ha—pilot!) and they're already acting like we're the number one show in America. I didn't even like *Alias* that much. (Don't worry, I'm keeping that to myself.) J.J. and Damon stopped by for a moment but didn't say anything. ¶ How is the Gondry going? Are you a sleeve or a kneepad? I couldn't make out your voicemail. ¶ OK, write soon. ¶ I would describe the weather but that doesn't seem fair.

Day 2 We're doing post-crash stuff now; I am seeing a lot of Lacerations and Surface Wounds. ¶ I am glad this is a TV series and we don't have to get realistic. (I hate working with pus.) The island doesn't have a barbershop (right?) so I assume all of us Hairys are going to kick in soon. The Stubbles are already talking about this actor, Josh. I've seen a few headshots and I think I'm going with Matthew Fox or this older, bald guy. He would be a Grey Strip, though. I'm a full, dark 'stache—gotta be the younger guy.

Day 3 Jesus, how are these guys managing to shave? There are about four or five of us—full beards and 'staches—just sitting around and doing bupkus. Why give a bunch of caterpillars such a deluxe vacation? ¶ I hear there isn't much action in Tent #1; after the crash, there were no full-body wounds except for a shooting, and they just went Wardrobe and Ketchup on that. Apparently there are polar bears on the island: WTF??? I would imagine at least one limb going down in a bear scuffle. ¶ The Nielsens are coming back high, and everyone's strapping in for a full season. ¶ The city is OK, but I prefer it here on the beach. Sucky part? I have to stay covered up; my contract came with a Pantone swatch (Nazis!) and I can't get too light or I'll get bumped. I have to stay under a big hat the whole time. In Hawaii! I can get wet, though. One of the Head Wounds came back cracking up about some big cloud of black smoke. Apparently it clanks. Whatever—I just want to ride the spirit gum and hit some lip.

Day 4 OK—this is weird. There are natives on the island called The Others (one of the writers went to Brown) who wear these fake-ass, cotton ball beards. I think the producers went to Balloon City and bought werewolf costumes. They shipped these Hairys in and out in one day, like scabs. (Not Scabs—you

get it.) I don't understand. I hear the FX have been totally platinum, so this identikit look is a mystery. This guy who worked on *Gladiator* was freaking *out*.

Day 5 Today *sucked*. Evie and Dom came into the tent, blotto, and started playing around. Eve put me on top of her bikini bottom and made jokes about beards and landing strips. She said, 'Maybe Elijah could land on *this*.'



Me and Matthew Fox

The Hairys were cracking up but Dom and Eve started fighting and I ended up on the floor. One of the Cutlets—a muscle, femme?—picked me up and put me back in the tray. So lame. ¶ I know this is the hottest show or whatever, but I am going mental. ¶ The Head Wounds are getting *maje* airtime. ¶ Apparently some guy named Henry or Ben is getting stomped by Sayyid, the British dude with Jheri curls. He already *has* a mustache, and is of no help to me. ¶ I really need to know how these Rambos are shaving. Apparently Baldy has a set of hunting knives. Is that it? ¶ Psyched you got that part in the Dylan movie. Confused, though. ¶ Cate Blanchett is playing Bob? Did I mishear? ¶ Is she Suze Rotolo? ¶ Or are you the '65 collar? Do you have to do a dye job?

Day 6 Got word that I'm going in, though nobody will tell me how or why. If they've been shaving for two seasons, why stop now? Maybe there's a new character. The Others are clean-shaven, and I've seen Lindelof send home a few beards. ¶ Lotta hamburger moving, but the Spots (Gunholes, some Branch Pokes) are hanging fire. I guess the characters are doing hand-to-hand combat. No word on the polar bears.

Day 7 This is it. I got measured and clipped today. There a bunch of Pyro guys lurking around the tent, high on Red Bull and looking

for Pubes. God, I hate action scenes. ¶ Woah—gotta go. Only took three years, but I'm on! Talk soon.

Day 8 OK—guess what's worse? Being used or *not* being used? ¶ Wrong answer: doing nothing was heaven compared to what happened today. ¶ I was right the first time—they had me on Fox, but everyone was stressing way out and nobody paid the slightest attention to the fitting. ¶ People are mumbling about a writer's strike and somebody came up, last minute, with this flash-forward idea. (I didn't tell you, but half the story's been told in flashback. Several Hairys went in for Locke but none of them could figure out the wheelchair thing.) They just slapped me on, too big and about five clicks too dark—and that was it. They did *nothing*, no adjustments. Fox looked like f--king Groucho Marx. ¶ We shot a scene on a plane, and he was knocking back many boozes. I know it wasn't another crash scene re-up, because Jack hit the island without NO 'stache. ¶ In the next shot, Jack hopped in a car, started blasting 'Scentless Apprentice,' and we went to a funeral home. *A funeral home?* I think we're supposed to think it's L.A. but it was so clearly Hawaii. ¶ Then he was jacking Oxycontin from his own hospital. Dig *that*. How did he get his job back? How did he get off the island? Am I going to help him rob a bank? ¶ That's what I looked like. *A total lame-o* in some fake ID John Hughes C-lister. ¶ If I'd held out and gone for tonsure, I could have done the godd--ned monk documentary. Yeah, they're scripted.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

Trusted Networks

Ghost correspondent **Ben Greenman** writes: I have a friend who has always been interested in the margins of technology. In college, we had a toaster, and somehow he connected it to the TV in such a way that when the bread popped up, the tones of the people speaking phased into absurdly high registers. We asked him how he had done it and he shrugged. It wasn't just that he didn't want us to know. He genuinely didn't know. Later on, he took his computer, which was rudimentary by contemporary standards, and used it as the monitor for a makeshift security camera he

had installed at the end the hall. However, he was the prisoner of his own disdain for convention, and the camera did not show the faces of people in the hall, but rather their shoes. This excited him. 'You can tell everything about someone from shoes,' he said. 'Height, weight, where they've been recently.' ¶ We expected him to end up in working for the CIA or shoved into a corner at a high-powered defense research laboratory or shivering in an asylum. None of those three would have surprised us. Instead, he became a respectable suburban dad and an accountant in a small Midwestern city whose identity I am obligated to conceal. The reason for this is below. ¶ About eight weeks ago, I heard from this friend. He had alarming news. It's hard to keep calling him 'a friend' or 'this friend,' so I'll call him Andy, which isn't his name. I was online, and Andy popped up in a chat window to tell me that he had found a way to steal personal information from people via their Wi-Fi networks. 'I'm not sure exactly what you mean,' I wrote. ¶ 'It's hard to explain,' he said. 'You know when you go to connect to a wireless network and you see all those crazily named networks? One might be called RoyBee. One might be called WLAN-890. One might be called JuneTastic.' ¶ 'Hey,' I said. 'Those are the exact names of the networks in my building.' ¶ 'Ha ha,' he said. I assumed he was being sarcastic. 'Seriously. Don't you ever wonder about those people? Who they are? How they came up with their names? And do those names reflect real circumstances in their lives? Let's say RoyBee is Roy and Beatrice, who are dating. If Beatrice has an affair with the woman down the hall and leaves Roy, does Roy keep RoyBee, or does he change it to RoyLone or something like that?.' ¶ 'Wait,' I said. 'Beatrice had an affair with a woman? Did you get it on tape.' ¶ 'Ha ha,' he said again. This time the sarcasm was clear and had a fringe of hurt. I rushed to make amends. ¶ 'So tell me what you mean,' I said. 'You actually figured out a way to extract personal information from those wireless networks? I thought you put Mad Genius Andy in a box.' ¶ 'Well, I was working in a coffee shop the other day, he said. 'The place advertises itself as having free Wi-Fi. I went to sign on and I saw a whole list

of networks there along with the coffee shop's main network. It occurred to me that if you enter the network over the top of the firewall and then reverse-engineer the connection protocol so that passwords are scooped from the air, just pithed out, you might be able to force the machine to disclose basic information: which websites the person visits, the names of their most common email contacts, and so forth.' ¶ 'Andy,' I said, speaking his name slowly to give additional significance to what followed. 'Isn't that a huge security threat to everyone?' ¶ 'No and yes,' he said. 'My first thought was to do that. My second thought was that it was wrong. I pulled back. But I stayed curious. Later on I rationalized that if I had a way of finding information that was a little bit more roundabout, I could live with it. So I converted my machine so that it emanated barely perceptible sub-bass pulses each time it

Don't you ever
wonder about JuneTastic,
RoyBee, WLAN-890?

received data pertinent to an acquired network. Then I connected it to my son's Ouija board. I know that seems crazy, but so did the toaster wired to the TV. Let me explain how I did it. It's very simple.' ¶ He did. It was simpler than I had expected, but it took a long while. ¶ He continued. 'I had an idea that the Ouija planchette would spell out the basic information about the proprietor of the wireless network. I tried it for a network called KayBFour, and the first two words that came up were 'Leg' and 'One.' The next day, I saw a one-legged man going into a house next to the coffee shop. Then I tried a network called Loomis. The first three words were *silver*, *star*, and *law*.' Guess what?' ¶ 'You saw a policeman?' ¶ 'No. I was sitting in the coffee shop and there was this hot young woman. She had her nose buried in a book. At one point she got up to go to the bathroom and left her book on the table. It was called *Silver Star Law*. Pretty amazing, don't you think?' ¶ I did think Andy's story was amazing. I also thought it was nonsense. When I say that we thought he would end up in an asylum, it was

because of things like this. I made an excuse to sign off and told him I'd talk to him a few days later. When I told my wife about the call I made the 'crazy sign' next to my head and she laughed. ¶ She had not met Andy but she had heard stories. She said that she pitied Andy's wife and I felt a pang of guilt but it was a weak pang and went away entirely when we went to bed and she said something to make me laugh and I unbuttoned her shirt and began to slide her pajama pants down toward her ankles. I woke up the next morning and did not even think of Andy until lunchtime, and when I thought of him I found myself laughing cruelly. ¶ There was no doubt in my mind that he was lying, or worse. But something turned in me over the course of the afternoon. My conviction shrank slightly when I remembered the toaster, and the camera, and the way he had once attached a tiny device to the condom vending machine in the bathroom and later reported to us exactly who had purchased condoms, and when. After the weekend I contacted him again. 'Listen,' I said. 'Could you tell me how to connect the computer to the game board again? I got most of it, but not all, and to be honest I'd like to try it myself.' ¶ 'Sure,' he said. He gave me instructions that were even more detailed than the first account. Once or twice I found myself drifting. I recovered my concentration, though, and determined to follow them to the letter, though. I was trying to either do something amazing or discover a sad truth about an old friend. ¶ To say that what I am about to tell you is shocking is a shocking understatement. ¶ The system *worked*. ¶ I know that sounds like absolute cr-p, not to put too fine a point on it, but it worked just as he said it would. I stayed at home instead of going to a coffee shop, and for my first experiment, I picked a network I knew, one that belonged to the couple upstairs. The planchette shuddered and moved and went to B first, then O, then K. The man upstairs is a book editor. Then I picked the network of a woman one building over. B again, then U, then S, then T. ¶ *It was her*. ¶ No question about it. I grabbed my computer and went to the local coffee shop. It was unwieldy to set up there, with the laptop and the Ouija board and the [name of

electronic connecting device deleted], but I found a corner and I did it. The first network I picked wasn't cleverly named, even. It was just the alphanumeric string generated by the computer, some gobbledygook like a3h4b2k. The Ouija planchette began to move immediately. It went fast this time to the W, then the O, and spelled out YOUNG WOMAN WITH SMALL WHITE DOG. I looked around the coffeeshop. No one like that there. I went outside and sat on a bench. About five minutes later, a young woman with a small white dog sat down opposite me. I had to know if it was just coincidence. 'Excuse me,' I said. 'I just moved to this neighborhood. Are there lots of coffeeshops like this, with wireless networks?' ¶ 'Yes,' she said. 'In fact, I can pick this one up on my computer. I live right next door.' ¶ I think I may have frightened the dog with the speed with which I stood. My head was reeling. I called Andy. He didn't answer. I went home and tried to find him on chat, to no avail. I emailed him, and emailed him again. To calm myself, I set up the Ouija Board and tested my own network. It said C-A-R. That was strange. I tried again. It said L-O-S-S. The third time, it got to F and R before I felt a cold prickling at the base of my neck. I called Andy's wife and left her a message. When she called back, her voice was thick with sorrow. 'I don't know what happened,' she said. 'It was like he vanished all at once. I mean the sane, good version of him vanished. He could always be manic, you know that, but he usually settled back down. This time, he started raving in the middle of the night. He had discovered something, he said, something that would change the entire world. This morning, he told me he was going down to the local newspaper to tell them all about it. I guess he was driving too fast, or not paying attention. He ran a red light and got broadsided by a truck. I guess he was killed instantly. I've been crying all morning but I can't really cry anymore. Had you talked to him recently?' ¶ I said yes. ¶ 'Did he tell you what he was working on?' ¶ I said no. ¶