



Group Hug?" was my response when asked to write about group hug.us.

I was one of the handful of the internet-enabled unacquainted with the filthy high that is the web's largest confession site. The site's founder, Gabriel Jeffrey, describes it aptly as "entertainment, catharsis, voyeurism, disgusting, funny, beautiful, sad, and kinky. Also other adjectives and nouns."

At four years old, the site boils down to a human train wreck nearly half a million bodies deep, piled one atop the next so you don't know if the smell is coming from one corpse or the next. Quickly, anyone excavating their way through the excrement will find that everyone's shit stinks, and the only real denominator is how fecal-smearing the cadavers may be.

Group Hug's confessions rummage through the deepest ranges of the human psyche. Some are heartrending, like this: "the day after new years i attempted suicide. sometimes I feel bad about calling for help." Some display the geekish awesomeness of "I fantasize about my guild leader," or are just disgusting, "i can't remember the last time i brushed my teeth." Some are more enigmatic: "she can effin open it." Whatever the case, Group Hug has something for everyone, and, as remarkably, something from everyone- if you read long enough, you'll find confessions that feel like your own.

The site is approaching the half-million confessions mark- Impressive especially given that each confession is vetted by the Group Hug moderators, and more than enough to swing a U.S. Presidential election. But the site promises that "the new group hug is coming soon." Jeffrey is uncharacteristically shy about this upgrade, saying that while it's taking longer than he would have liked, when it launches it will "rock so hard- it'll be epic."

In 2004, the site spawned the successful book

DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS

WORDS BY NIC WILSON. ILLUSTRATIONS BY NULSH.

'Stoned, Naked, and Looking in My Neighbor's Window'. This book contains 200 confessions Jeffrey chose, "and organized into sections. Each section starts with a personal confession that's absolutely true. When it came out, my dad told me that my grandmother had ordered it online. I told him to call her immediately and tell her to throw it out when it arrived. She did."

The site also spun off into Audiocrush, a podcast that started as an excuse to play phoned-in confessions and drink good scotch with friends, but eventually grew its own audience and its own identity. Sadly, Audiocrush as we know it is over, and while the 28 shows (plus the edited-down chunks of the near death-by-liquor experiment that was the third episode) are online, the archives lack some of the energy and immediacy of a show that's still current and updating. Jeffrey does, however, state that there has been "chatter" about a new show, but nothing confirmed.

Group Hug also nearly sired a dating site, which, given the audience/participants of the site, would certainly have ended up in an inbred three-eyed baby or two. Although Jeffrey states he is happy

"EVERYDAY FOR THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF I SEE MORE AND MORE OF THESE ALIEN PEOPLE WALKING AROUND AMONGST US, BUT APPARENTLY MOST OTHER PEOPLE DO NOT SEE THEM."



“GROUP HUG ISN’T SIMPLY JERRY SPRINGER WITHOUT THE KICKBOXING TRANSSEXUALS, IT’S A RAW, DRIPPING POUND OF FLESH TORN FROM THE WOMB OF HUMANITY- AND IT MOVES YOU.”

the dating site was aborted (see what I did there?), it’s hard not to wonder what aspects of that will be added into the secretive upgrade he promises will be “a lot more social.”

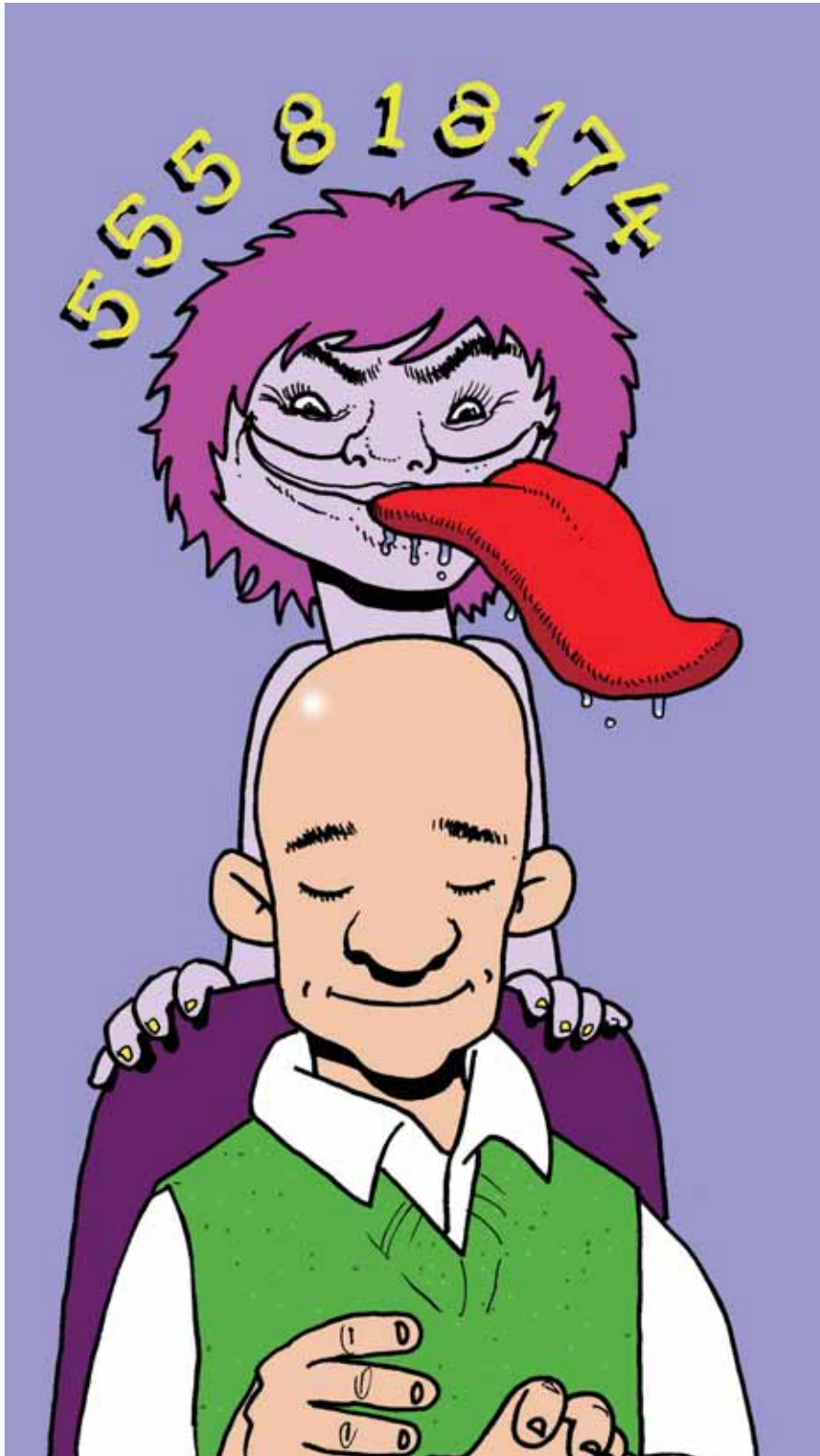
And for those of you titillated, considering your first foray into the deep-seated deprivations of others, be forewarned - the site is addictive. If the internet were the tube Ted Stevens believes it to be, tube traffic would be at a constant stand-still as passersby stopped to watch the car accident that is the lives of the Group Hug confessors.

But Group Hug isn’t simply Jerry Springer without the kickboxing transsexuals, it’s a raw, dripping pound of flesh torn from the womb of humanity- and it moves you. Sometimes to laughter, sometimes to tears, occasionally to pity; at times you know people got what they deserved, or even got off light. But if you’re counting up your demons, this is a good place to go to see that however many you may have, there’s someone, somewhere, with more. Many, many damn more. Sometimes, just knowing that helps- and therein lies the real value of a Group Hug.

“I NEED TO GET THIS OUT. YEARS AGO I TOOK LSD WITH A GOOD FRIEND. I ENDED UP THINKING HE WAS A SPACE ALIEN AND BEATING UP WITH A BASEBALL BAT WHICH I THOUGHT WAS LIKE A STAR WARS LIGHT SABER. HE ENDED UP IN THE ER AND TOOK ANOTHER THREE WEEKS IN HOSPITAL TO RECOVER. IT FREAKED ME OUT AND I NEVER HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL HIM IT WAS ME.”

“I LET MY DOG HUMP MY LEG FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES BEFORE HE STOPPED. TO BE HONEST IT TURNED ME ON A LITTLE.”

GROUP HUG CONFESSIONS



“I just wrote confession number 685011748. I am considering reading it out loud to my fiancé when it becomes live (whilst fake laughing about how it could almost be us!), to see if he twigs that it IS us. He is such an idiot that he probably won't. Yeah that's it, I'm gonna do it.”

“A friend and I found a postcard in Newquay which had been addressed and written on but not yet posted. It was from a [teen] girl to her mother. There was some space at the bottom so we added, in the best imitation of her handwriting we could muster: “I have also been taking it up the arse from some nice local men” and posted it.”

“Even though I know my boyfriend's mother is diabetic I still take candy from emergency sugar stash.”

“One time when I was drunk, I smeared a dirty baby diaper all over the windows and door handles of a random car. I'm sorry to whoever that car belongs to.”

“I SWALLOWED THREE QUARTERS AND A DIME YESTERDAY AND STILL HAVENT POOPED THEM OUT.”

“I just bought two goldfish about 3 days ago because I'm twenty and deemed too irresponsible to look after anything of some significance. It's sad because it's my boyfriend who tells me this. What compounds the situation is that I'm already dreaming of over feeding them to see what happens. Or catching them and keeping them out of the water just to observe them flapping about.”

“As a longtime failed romantic, I find myself most often sympathizing with the unrequited love crowd, but wherever your soft spot is, you're guaranteed to find something to suit your appetites.”

“the day after new years i attempted suicide. sometimes I feel bad about calling for help.”

“i hate the fact my girlfriend beats me in every single area of my life.”

“Last night my cousin and I got a little drunk at a party and I ended up fucking her brains out. I have always thought she was attractive, but we are cousins so she was off limits, but man she was the best lay I have ever had. I really want it to happen again, but I really can't bring it up with her.”

“i would've slept with you if you had shut the hell up.”

“THIS BALD GUY (TOTALLY BALD, LIKE SHAVED) SITS NEXT TO ME AT WORK AND SOMETIMES I REALLY JUST WANT TO LICK HIS HEAD.”