

Scam-fluencers: Social Media Grifters

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Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of episode outline)

Welcome to Midnight Facts for Insomniacs, the frankest podcast ever made.

Callback to last episode—our good friend Andy from college, who is also a long time listener—suggested that intro, and honestly, how did I not think of it before? We already have a catchphrase, but maybe we should have a new...what...tagline? Knowledge is power, sleep is overrated, on the frankest podcast ever made.

Also, I want to take a quick second to acknowledge my own failure. I like to perform a personal inventory every now and then, as you know I stand for nothing if not accountability and consistency. I should've just stopped after "stand for nothing." No, but I do need to acknowledge that I promised at the beginning of last episode that I would try not to allow my skepticism to infect the show and then I failed spectacularly. I'd say at least a third of the episode consisted of me mocking the entire concept of the episode. A couple people called me out because I specifically promised I wouldn't be a killjoy and then I hunted down joy like the predator. It was a joy slaughter, although one that I enJOYed, ironically. The pleasure was all mine. And some of yours, we actually got a ton of good feedback on that episode. And I'll be honest, I regret nothing. Well that's not true, I regret saying that I was going to rein it in because that was false advertising...but anyone who had listened to this podcast before already knew that.

Anyway, this one should be fun because it's another concept we can mock, but I think in this case most listeners would happily join in the public shaming. Were talking today about the worst, sleaziest, scammiest social media influencers ever.

An influencer, of course, is someone who has monetized their popularity. They've turned social currency into actual currency. Instagram and TikTok and YouTube are basically just high school on a massive scale, except worse, because the popular kids now get paid for being popular. Most reasonable adult humans over the age of 30 probably do not love the concept of influencers, but as with anything else that sucks, there are degrees of influencer suckitude... not all influencers are created equal. Some of them no doubt think they're contributing positively to the world by leveraging their looks or charisma to motivate their followers, and some of them are even donating to charities or sharing the wealth...but deep down they're doing it for attention. maybe some of them actually want to motivate you to be a good person—that's debatable—but they DEFINITELY want to motivate you to smash those like and subscribe buttons and leave a comment down below. They will tell you so themselves. And look, I'm not immune to this. We're out here creating content right now, I go on stage for attention, I'm not judging people for seeking validation, because that's human nature. But Duncan, you and I aren't misrepresenting our lives online, we're not endorsing airbrushed, impossible-to-achieve standards of physical beauty, we're not presenting a manufactured lifestyle that contributes to other people's insecurities and self hatred. Scammy influencers prey on emotional vulnerabilities and FOMO and our human need to feel attractive and loved and desirable. Online influencers tend to have a lot in common with cult leaders, they are often narcissists who have amassed followers by packaging themselves as aspirational figures. They curate completely unrealistic lives online and then try to make us believe that if we dressed like them or bought their motivational videos or supplements or whatever, we'd have a chance to

participate in those fake lives that they aren't actually leading. Sure, they might have money, they might travel to exotic locations, but even when it looks like an influencer is carefree and relaxing by a waterfall, you can bet that they spent most of their day shoving people out of the frame, shushing children, and waiting for the sun to move ten inches to the left, oblivious to — or not giving a damn — that they are annoying the hell out of tourists and locals alike while they work incredibly hard to make their highly produced videos seem spontaneous and unrehearsed.

There are several common flavors of influencer. There are the Gen Z hippies, and the millennial Coachella brats who are trying to elevate your consciousness and align your chakras while subtly implying that their perfectly toned asses are the result of body shaping yoga pants and wheatgrass supplements—on sale for only 89.95—rather than fasting and Photoshop. and copious Adderall. And speaking of asses there are the ass influencers, just girls who have big butts. And of course there are the hustle-culture douche Bros from a previous episode with their art of war quotes and 10 steps to getting jacked or the five secrets to algorithmic domination... for a small fee they'll show you how to conquer social media and become an influencer yourself, though somehow their foolproof plan for getting you millions of views is always for you to create a video showing other people how to get millions of views. Never stop contenting...keep compulsively making content about teaching people how to make content. And they're definitely not on steroids... the secret to their ripped physiques is that they only eat gallbladders five meals a day, except that they're totally on steroids.

There are too many different types of influencers to mention them all, but today we're going to focus on the worst of the worst, influencers who went beyond shady and ended up in jail. This first scam involves a private island in the Bahamas, famous rappers and A-list music acts, Treasure hunts, Swimming pigs, and cheese sandwiches.

It all starts with one of the most punchable humans we have ever discussed on this podcast. Billy McFarland is everything I despise: he is a narcissistic hustle-bro wannabe influencer who has been screwing people over since grade school. McFarland was a spoiled rich kid who grew up in New Jersey, the son of wealthy real estate developers. Here's an excerpt from a letter his mother would eventually write to the court, advocating for her son during his trial and sentencing. "as a child Billy was always ahead of the curve. He walked and talked well before the norm, was first to finish his math times tables...and much more." How is any of this relevant? This is why letters from Mom aren't going to help you much. "Now it is true that my son committed a triple homicide, but that doesn't change the fact that he always finished his vegetables and brushed his teeth every night. He is a good boy."

Did I mention that his mother firmly believes he is a good person...are you really going to put a man in jail against his mother's wishes?

Billy claims that he launched his first business venture in grade school. He said, "in second grade, I was put next to a girl I had a crush on. And her crayon broke. I said, "if you give me a dollar, I'll fix your crayon." What a gentleman. The way to a woman's heart is charging her for favors. Billy claims that he then hacked the school's Internet-connected typewriters so that they all displayed a message advertising his crayon-fixing services. So this is the level of human being we're talking about here, a guy who as a grown man brags about taking advantage of second graders.

As a teenager Billy idolized Mark Zuckerberg, because of course he did, and in college he started a social network called Spling, essentially trying to copy Facebook, but when he pitched the product in 2011 to the investment group "Philly Dreamit," a so-called accelerator for startup companies, let's just say it did not go smoothly.

He ended the presentation with “don’t forget to sling it.” And investors did not forget, they slung it directly out the building. He was slinging something, that’s for sure. Billy then moved to New York, where he came up with his next big idea. He was determined to make credit cards look more appealing. A truly world changing, paradigm shifting concept. In his own words, “I’m like wow, what if I could make these cooler?” I hate this guy so much.

So to achieve his lofty ambition of slightly changing the credit card aesthetic, Billy bought a sheet of metal and created...drumroll please...metal credit cards! so innovative! Obviously he was not the first person to have thought of this—in fact the first credit cards in the 1920s were made of metal—and if you’re above age 20 or so, the modern metal credit card that most of you remember is the American Express black card, introduced in 1999. The black card, also known as the centurion card, is invite only, and reportedly you will only be invited if you’re spending over \$350,000 on your American Express card per year. Must be nice...I’m not in the tax bracket where I could buy a house with my credit card. I mean to be fair, I could definitely put \$350,000 on a credit card in a year if anyone was stupid enough to give me that limit, but I’m not paying it back. The black card also comes with a \$10,000 initiation fee and a \$5000 annual charge. Ouch. It’s obviously exclusive to rich people, and that makes it cool, because how could you not be cool if you have more dollar bills than the amount of dollar bills that someone else has? Who is cooler than Bill Gates, am I right? But it wasn’t just about an exclusive metal card, the supposedly brilliant, groundbreaking element of Billy’s idea was to bring metal cards to middle class or poor people who wanted to look rich. Never mind that pretty much every credit card company has copied the black card with their own metal cards that are much easier to obtain, you can get the titanium Apple Card with mediocre credit and there’s no charge per year. but whatever, Billy was convinced that he was breaking new ground because he’s a tool bag idiot. He called his card Magnises, no relation to the x-men, and because we live in terrible farce of a timeline, at first the idea kind of worked. Perhaps the most unique thing about this credit card is that it wasn’t a credit card. Billy did not have the resources to extend lines of credit so instead the card “piggybacked“ on your regular card, and supposedly offered a

few points and perks. But in reality you were just basically transferring the magnetic strip from a credit card to this metal card so that you could look extra super cool while buying your chicken tendies at Mickey Ds.

So it was right around this time that famously, or maybe I should say notoriously, the rapper Ja Rule became involved with Billy McFarland as a spokesperson for Magnises. Because who better to recruit as the face of your credit card company than a musical artist with no experience in the financial services sector who has been sent to prison on gun charges and tax evasion.

Unfortunately, Ja Rule and McFarland quickly realize that they had a problem, which was that their product was stupid and sucked. They claimed to have hundreds of thousands of customers but in fact never had more than a few thousand and was losing money the entire time. Things got even more dire when one of his investors, an oil tycoon, was convicted of fraud and then died in a fiery car crash. Foreshadowing. When Magnises too crashed and burned and McFarlane and company were booted out of their swank townhouse offices for trashing the place, Billy turned to selling concert tickets as a way to make money...it would be later revealed that Billy was purchasing these tickets on credit cards and not paying them back. Classic. So now Billy needed a new scam—I mean business idea— and his association with Ja Rule provided the inspiration for what seemed to him to finally be his golden ticket. Billy began working on an app that would connect musical artists with potential clients who wanted to book them for private events. To drum up interest in the app and generate Buzz, Billy and Ja decided to create a lavish, high-profile event named after the app, which as you may have guessed was called Fyre with a “y” ....don’t get me started on tech company spelling. Billy envisioned the event as a music festival along the lines of Coachella, oriented toward influencers and the wealthy,... to attract that demographic he knew that the location and

accommodations would need be incredibly lavish and luxurious and so he chose a barren island in the Bahamas with no infrastructure whatsoever and gave himself only six months to pull this off.

So to be clear, fire fest didn't start out as a scam per se. It started as an unrealistic overreach by a narcissistic delusional sociopath who would inevitably turn to scamming when he couldn't deliver on his impossible promises.

It was the timeline that ultimately sunk this endeavor. And there is an alternate dimension in which Billy gave himself 18 months to put this event together in a methodical, rational fashion, and made a ton of money. Maybe. But we'll never know because this particular narcissistic sociopath was not a reasonable, sane patient individual.

What he was, however, was an incredibly effective schmoozer and bullshit artist. He's charismatic, handsome, and he talks a mile a minute. And he had Ja Rule in his back pocket, and that gave him an air of legitimacy.

To market the festival he hired notorious edgelords Jerry Media, an entire company that was spawned by a single troll account on tumblr called fuck Jerry. The name referred to Seinfeld, Fun Fact. Founder Elliot Tebele was not a fan, I guess. The account became popular for posting memes and jokes without attributing them to the authors, something that Tebele would continue on his popular Instagram account and a practice the company would eventually get in trouble for. This company would also team up with Weiss media to produce the fire fest documentary on Netflix, which I find interesting to say the least... in a shocking turn of events, the company that promoted the fire fest also created documentary absolving themselves of blame for promoting the fyre fest, who would have guessed it, that documentary sucks (other than one part which we will get to), but I strongly recommend the Fyre fest documentary on Hulu instead be susr it's great and because fuck fuck Jerry. Anyway. So these trolling joke thieves were hired to create a media campaign, and they sent some video production professionals along with Billy to visit the Bahamas and make a promotional video. The island Billy had chosen for the festival had once been owned by Pablo Escobar, and was adjacent to another island famous for its population of feral pigs who love to swim around and be fed by tourists and are also surprisingly large and can occasionally be aggressive. So of course Billy brought the fuck Jerry team and a squad of attractive female influencers and his frat bros to the island and immediately started feeding the pigs beer. This is an actual quote from the fuck Jerry version of the fyre fest documentary, "the pigs at one point bit Billy on the balls." A punchable face and bitable balls. Pigs are short and don't have fists, so they did their best.

So the fuck jury team shot a ton of footage of influencers like Emily Ratajkowski and Bella Hadid and also a bunch of pigs and they created an extremely effective viral video; fyre fest began picking up a little bit of steam, but everything kicked into high gear when Kendall Jenner posted on her Instagram saying that her favorite musical celebrities—the so-called GOOD music famil—were going to be performing. One promoter post on Kendall Jenner's Instagram can cost around \$250,000, so this was a huge get for the fire fest. Now the good music family was founded by Kanye West, so the implication seemed to be that Kanye West was going to be performing, and that was a huge deal. Remember, this was pre-Nazi Kanye, he still had some heat and juice, as opposed to just hating Jews.

Suddenly the profile of the festival went nuclear. Influences began clamoring to attend what was at this point a completely barren island with once again, zero infrastructure and now only four months left before go-time. A quote from the Hulu documentary: "Anyone who had ever been involved with event production would've understood that this wasn't possible, like a wedding planner would have known like, absolutely no way."

So to his credit, Billy did slowly began to realize that the private island he'd chosen wasn't going to work, but to his detriment he immediately turned this revelation into a scam. He moved the site of the festival to the comparatively developed island of great Exuma...but still

promoted the now-bullshit idea that the event was happening on a private island. Of course, in order to save money Billy had negotiated the use of a part of the island that didn't have any of the infrastructure necessary for an event of this scale. The only real benefit of the new island was that there were a few luxury villas within driving distance already built, and he could provide those to his top-tier influencers. Despite the fact that there were only a few of these luxury villas available, Billy began selling dozens of them, charging up to \$25,000 each; in some cases he was selling packages for \$250,000 for villas that did not exist. I have no idea what his strategy was at this point because by now he was very high profile, he wasn't going to be able to just skip town to Mexico. So he must've thought he was going to be able to somehow pull this off. Figuring, I don't know, he could just buy a plastic villa, plug it in and blow it up like a bounce house? Of course the biggest problem was that the Fyre fest website was promising high class accommodations to pretty much everyone, and wasn't going to be able to deliver. Rather than constructing expensive villas, or even inflatable villas, Billy began purchasing emergency tents left over from hurricane Matthew. Running out of time and money, Billy resorted to wire fraud. Basically purchasing items and pretending that he had already sent the money for them while not actually sending the money. Stealing. It was the ticket scam redux, on a much larger scale. Again, the sheer level of delusional narcissism required to believe he was going to somehow pull this off at the last minute and be carried away from the Bahamas on the shoulders of his adoring fans, it's staggering. Meanwhile, of course none of the musical artists had received their promised upfront payment. We're talking blink-182, lil Yachty, Migos...I have heard of one of those three, but I'm told that the other two are real musicians who have made songs that some people actually listen to. I'm not taking one for the team and downloading any Lil Yachty tracks, so i'm just going to have to assume this is true. The hits just kept coming. due to his ongoing financial issues, Billy canceled the festival's \$6 million contract with star catering and apparently fired them over the phone, leaving the festival without the high class catered cuisine that had been promised. But at least he still had water, right? Wrong. At one point there was a complication with the bottled water Billy had ordered, and one of the producers, Andy King, was asked to fix it.

A moment of silence for that man's dignity. There's nothing wrong with sex work, but this seems very much coerced. Add "gay pimping" to Billy's charges, I guess.

So by this point with vendors not being paid and artists not being paid and scams flying left and right, words started to leak out that this was going to be a fiasco. A few journalist started calling BS online. But Billy enlisted his army of influencers and the FuckJerry team to shout down the naysayers and block their comments, ban them from the Fyre fest social media accounts, and meanwhile Billy was applying for loans by submitting fraudulent financial documents. He misrepresented his finances by peppering these documents with a bunch of money he hadn't made nor paid and artists that had no intention of showing up, the whole thing was snowballing into chaos.

Bill then orders \$2 million of alcohol either not knowing or not caring that the Bahamas imposes a 45% tax on alcohol, leading to a \$900,000 tax bill. He takes out a loan with a maximum interest rate of 120%.

All I can picture at this point is the dog chilling with the coffee mug in the middle of a room on fire. This is fine.

Before the concert attendees even showed up, while most people were flying to the island, blink-182 announce that they were pulling out. This would be the first high-profile domino in a chain of tumbling consequences and karma for the festival promoters and maybe a little bit for the people who spent a bunch of stupid money just because influencers told them to. When the first batch of concert attendees showed up, they found partly constructed stages, porta potties, and rows and rows of FEMA tents, those white tents that look like disaster relief igloo. Trash was whipping around in the breeze, bare wet mattresses no one was providing direction

or updates, all of their luggage showed up in giant semi trucks and was mostly dumped on the ground for everyone to scavenge and pick over. zero food or water was readily available, and that's when the second domino fell: some hungry concertgoers reported that were given "sandwiches." Two pieces of wonder- style wheat bread, no mayonnaise or mustard, two sad limp cheese slices. A tiny bed of lettuce and a slice of tomato with no dressing. It looks like the saddest cafeteria lunch you've ever seen.

Now this cheese sandwich would become the most famous and perhaps famously misunderstood element of the fiasco. I'm not saying Fyre fest wasn't a disaster. I'm not saying that these people weren't screwed out of money and despite my lack of sympathy for millennial and gen Z rich kids, I do believe that they probably deserve some kind of restitution. they had been promised "local seafood, Bahamian-style sushi, and even a pig roast." so the food that was going to be provided was definitely not going to live up to the standard of the food they had been promised...BUT, according to Vice news, that famous picture of the cheese sandwich was actually a meal that had been provided to festival staff, not to attendees. I mean, it's not great that anyone was given that meal, but it does make a little bit more sense that they were providing bare bones sustenance to people they were paying rather than to the people who had paid.

The aftermath was ugly. Especially for people in the Bahamas: all of the white people immediately bailed, no one got paid, one of them described fire festival promoters leaving their rental cars running and basically sprinting to the planes. Locals were left to mop up the mess and pay for the damages and cleanup. Billy was charged with fraud; he got out on bail and immediately went back to scamming ticket sales, creating a fraudulent enterprise called NYC VIP. Billy would eventually be sentenced to six years in jail and forbidden from serving as a corporate officer. He is also a wanted man in the Bahamas, which makes me happy, because he seemed to have been obsessed with the Bahamas and now he never gets to go. It's the little things that give me joy. However, you'll be happy to know that Billy is finally out of jail, and he has a message for you.

Wow. The sheer magnitude of this man's hubris is staggering. The balls on this guy. Rich people lost millions of dollars, poor people lost everything they had, he was the laughing sock of the world, he couldn't stop himself from scamming even after his scams were made public, he went to jail, and he's still scamming. This is when addiction beats narcissism. It's honestly gross and fascinating. I'm perplexed as to who is going into business with this man. I have to know who his partners are. Because I too would like to have stupid amounts of money thrown at my hopeless endeavors.

Fyre Fest 2 is scheduled for December of 2024. The website claims that the first batch of tickets has sold out, but it's Billy McFarland so.

## GoFundMe Scam

This next scam might be stretching the idea of influencer a bit. None of the people in this story started out as influencers, but they quickly gained an online presence by going viral, and this is a great example of how absolute power corrupts absolutely or money is the root of all evil or one of those clearings, you choose your cliché. Let's go back to 2017. It started with a GoFundMe campaign. And I'm generally a fan of GoFundMe and crowdsourcing in general. Unlike some large charity organizations, many of which use the bulk of the donations for "administrative fees," GoFundMe charges a flat 2.9% plus \$.30 per transaction, which isn't great but pretty much just covers the credit card processing fees and a small premium on top. This particular GoFundMe post, written by a 27 year-old woman named Kate McClure was especially compelling.

“This is Johnny.

Driving into Philly one night, I made the mistake of thinking that I would be able to make it all the way down I- 95 with my gas light on. Needless to say, I was wrong. I never ran out of gas before, and my heart was beating out of my chest. I pulled over as far as I could, and got out of the car to head to the nearest gas station.

That’s when I met Johnny. Johnny sits on the side of the road every day, holding a sign. He saw me pull over and knew something was wrong. He told me to get back in the car and lock the doors. A few minutes later, he comes back with a red gas can. Using his last 20 dollars to make sure I could get home safe.

Johnny did not ask me for a dollar, and I couldn’t repay him at that moment because I didn’t have any cash, but I have been stopping by his spot for the past few weeks. I repaid him for the gas, gave him a jacket, gloves, a hat, and warm socks, and I give him a few dollars every time I see him.

I wish that I could do more for this selfless man, who went out of his way just to help me that day. He is such a great guy, and talking to him each time I see him makes me want to help him more and more.

One day I stopped to see him and had a few things in a bag to give him, one of which was a box of cereal bars so he could have something that he could carry around and eat. He was very appreciative as usual and the first thing he said was “do you want one?” Another time I dropped off 2 wawa gift cards and a case of water.. the first words that came out of his mouth were “I can’t wait to show the guys” (there are 2 others he hangs out with and they all take care of each other). If just those 2 statements alone do not give you a glimpse of the good heart this man has I’m not sure anything will.

I am raising money for Johnny. With the money, I would like to get him first and last month’s rent at an apartment, a reliable vehicle, and 4-6 months worth of expenses. He is very interested in finding a job, and I believe that with a place to be able to clean up every night and get a good night’s rest, his life can get back to being normal.

Truly believe that all Johnny needs is one little break. Hopefully with your help I can be the one to give it to him.

Please help this man get into a home. It is already getting so cold out in Philadelphia, and I can’t imagine what it will be like to be out there all winter. Any little bit will help.”

The post was accompanied by a picture of a pretty blonde young blonde woman next to a disheveled, middle-aged man with long unkempt facial hair, wearing a beanie. They’re both wearing jackets, it seems like it’s cold, he’s wearing one glove and maybe pulling on another one or maybe he only has one glove. It’s hard to tell.

The feel-good story went viral, and donations began pouring in. Kate McClure and her boyfriend Mark D’Amico, who btw would stubbornly stick with his signature haircut—a sides-shaved fauxhawk—during the entire ordeal, so that’s the kind of guy we’re dealing with here, posted updates and pictures with Johnny celebrating all of his new clothes and purchases, there were Christmas photos of the three in pajamas, it was all very Hallmark. Soon the couple started showing up on daytime talk shows explaining how they were helping Johnny get back on his feet. Johnny himself gave interviews pouring out effusive praise for these random strangers who had made such a difference in his life. The public was captivated, GoFundMe even used the story as a marketing opportunity, adding Kate McClure’s campaign in a yearly round up of their most heartwarming successes, labeled as “strangers helping strangers.”

And then it would all implode.

OK, so what we're going to do now is walk through what actually happened. Unexpectedly—at least for me—it all seems to have started with good intentions. Kate McClure encountered Johnny while he was panhandling in Philadelphia, and their first interaction seems to have consisted of her giving him \$10. Which kind of makes me hate her less, I have a soft spot for homeless people and people who give money to homeless people. And Johnny Bobbitt does seem to be a likable character, whose backstory is genuinely heartbreaking. Beginning with that name. Being named John Bobbitt has not worked out well for very many men, as far as I can tell. At least this Johnny is presumably intact, and oh my God at some point we have to cover John Wayne Bobbitt. Insomniacs, request that topic immediately. Anyway, this particular John Bobbitt grew up middle class in rural Henderson North Carolina, joined the marines, and eventually became a paramedic. So he was on a decidedly positive trajectory, but at some point that trajectory was derailed by addiction. He developed a heroin habit, and it consumed his life. Soon he was doing whatever he needed to do to it is hands on drugs, including stealing from family members. Having burned his bridges in North Carolina, he fled town, spent some time in Montana and eventually wound up on the streets of Philadelphia, shoutout to Bruce Springsteen. Do you know that song? Street to Philadelphia? It's a classic. Johnny fell in with a group of vagrants who slept under an overpass, and he took to panhandling outside of the sugar house casino near the entrance to the I 95 freeway. His nickname among the homeless population was "Country" due to his rural roots.

At some point On October 17, 2017, then 27-year-old Kate McClure sent a message to her 38-year-old boyfriend Mark D'Amico saying "IDK why but that homeless guy by Sugar House keeps popping in my damn head." Mark replied, "dude I just thought about him!!" They seem to have been genuinely moved by his plight, they talked about helping him get some food and a job and maybe a house and a Nintendo switch. I'm not making that up, it was mentioned on the list because priorities. I think that's on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? Food, water, shelter, Mario. But anyway I have to admit that I was kind of shocked by all of this backstory, it turns out that there was no master plan from the beginning, this was a scheme that developed over time as the money started to roll in...this appears to be a situation in which good intentions were twisted by the intertwining of greed and opportunity. i'm not absolving anyone, as we will see they all deserved what they got, but it's good to know that there were redeeming circumstances here.

So Kate launched the "paying it forward" GoFundMe campaign on November 10, 2017, and barely an hour later a friend messaged her asking why she had never mentioned that she ran out of gas. Kate admitted that the story "is completely made up." She continued "I had to make something up to make people feel bad... So, shush about the made up part." a few days later McClure also responded to skeptical messages from her mother, dismissing the concerns by claiming that it was just a "little lie." It's just some mild fraud, mom, geez. Chill out. Her mother was not exactly pacified by the idea of her daughter casually engaging in an online felony. A couple days later Kate would text to her friend: "my mom just called and said that people go to jail for scamming others out of money. So there's that... That's what my own mother thinks of me." can you believe that? My own mother thinks that committing crimes is a bad idea and could result in negative consequences! What a stupid cow!

A couple days later, that same friend messaged Kate again, saying, "this gas story is going to backfire LMFAO." To which McClure replied "nah, it's all good...how would it?" How indeed? When has crime ever not paid? Isn't that the saying, crime always pays? How could a half



baked amateur Internet swindle possibly go awry? This plan is fool proof. It has been disclosed to multiple people and requires the cooperation of a homeless drug addict.

Her friend's response: "they're going to interview him one day and ask him! But you need to tell him first. Make sure he knows."

Kate said, "yeah we will tell him... This week we have to..."

So just to clarify, at this point they hadn't even talked to the guy who this entire scheme was based on, the guy was in the photograph with Kate, the guy whose regular panhandling location she had disclosed, the guy who hung out always in the same spot asking for money with the same face, it's not like he would be hard for a news crew to find.

But this was when the greed kicked in, because almost 2K had already been contributed and I can only imagine that Kate and Mark began to see the potential. And see dollar signs. I imagine their eyes spinning like cartoon slot machines with dollar signs

However, on November 15, as more donations flooded the GoFundMe campaign, Kate and Mark began feeling the pressure to control the narrative and get ahead of any negative publicity, so they finally did tell Johnny Bobbitt about the campaign. Of course they recorded his reaction on video and posted it on social media.

Between November 16, 2017 and November 22, Kate transferred \$20,000 from GoFundMe to prepaid debit cards; five days later, she transferred 328,000 to her bank account.

On November 28, Kate posted an update on GoFundMe.

"First off, we would like to thank everyone who had a part of this amazing ride we've been on for the last few days. Your kind words, donations and help getting the word out meant the world to Mark, Johnny and myself. This would've never happened with out all of you!

Now lets get down to some business. We've received a lot of comments and questions about what johnnys plans are for this money and how it will be used. Hopefully this will answer them while keeping his privacy and the privacy of the people he is helping also. The first thing on the list is a NEW Home which Johnny will own!! He will never have to worry about a roof over his head again!! Second will be the dream truck he's always wanted... a 1999 ford ranger (yes I'm serious). There will also be 2 trusts set up in his name, one essentially giving him the ability to collect a small "salary" each year and another retirement trust which will be wisely invested by a financial planner which he will have access to in a time frame he feels comfortable with so when the time comes he can live his retirement dream of owning a piece of land and a cabin in the country. A bank account will be set up for him with funds for every day needs that will get him through until he finds a job. And lastly, he will be donating to a few organizations and people who over the last couple of years have helped him get through this rough patch in his life. This is a well thought out plan that Johnny his lawyer and financial advisor came up with in order to give Johnny the means to acclimate back into a "normal" life and also to protect him and ensure he has a bright future. I hope this will answer all the questions we have been getting about his plans. Once again, we couldn't thank all of you enough for the kindness you have shown. Mark and I are beyond humbled and grateful that you took our little project and turned it into a world wide cause that thousands of people supported. The next update you receive will be from Johnny himself. He finally got his new computer and he is dying to thank all you personally!! You guys are amazing, keep checking in with us from time to time"

On December 4 the couple purchased an RV for \$18,000 and moved Bobbit onto their property. So you could say that they were being incredibly charitable, or you could say that that they wanted to keep their golden egg/cash cow nearby and figuring he'd be easier to control and monitor if he was under their thumb. Notably, the RV was registered in their name. Also around this time Mark and Kate began chatting via text message about their ongoing money problems, with Kate saying at one point, "I can't believe we have less than 10 K left. I'm so upset..." Mark told Kate that everything would be fine if they continued dipping into the funds,

because they'd make all that money back from a book deal. He said, "in a year you'll be laughing about when you blew hundreds of thousands." I don't think I would ever laugh about blowing hundreds of thousands of dollars...even if you have millions of dollars, if you blow hundreds of thousand of dollars and laugh about it, you're a dick. Because money is Life-changing, that's what this entire GoFundMe was supposed to be about. Like that's the whole point of charity, the positive impact that money can have on someone who doesn't have any, and you're gonna laugh about wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Less than a month later on December 9 Kate McClure recorded a series of conversations in which she and Mark and a literary agent discussed potential book and movie deals...strangely, there was no discussion of how these deals might benefit Johnny. That would be a short book. Even if it were true, how are you going to stretch "I ran out of gas and a guy gave me 20 bucks" into a novel? Absolutely nothing else interesting had ever happened to these people.

Now a couple days after Christmas 2017, the couple did deposit \$25,000 into Johnny Bobbitt's bank account; presumably this was his Christmas bonus for working so hard as a good little accomplice. Mark D'Amico would later claim on the Megan Kelly show that Bobbit spent all 25K in 13 days. That seems unlikely, but I do understand the frustration they must've been feeling because Johnny was absolutely spending money on drugs, in fact Kate vented about it in another message exchange with her friend. She said that Bobbit was refusing to go to rehab, and I sympathize with her disappointment, but this is where for me it gets sinister. She ended her message with "fuck him though... i'll be keeping the rest of the money, fuck you very much." Her friend, prophetically, replied with, "he could out you." ya think? Stealing money from someone whom you yourself have put in a media spotlight and given a ton of public exposure seems dubious, strategically. Also, what happened to putting all of this money in trust funds, buying a house, buying him a truck, things that he couldn't easily spend on drugs. Sure he could sell them, but that's up to him. At least you're doing your best to give him assets that he can then use to get his life on track if he chooses.

Speaking of publicity, it kept ramping up as the money kept rolling in. Mark and Kate appeared on good morning America and the Ellen show, fumbling through some very painful interviews, I'm not sure if it's because they were experiencing some underlying guilt and stress or what, but these two are incredibly socially awkward and frankly unlikable. Especially Mark. He just oozes dickishness, it's his defining characteristic. By this time the GoFundMe campaign had ended, and you would think the couple would be staying under the radar, but no one ever accused these two of making good decisions. I literally every juncture, they took the absolute most ill advised path. Casein point: the couple did themselves no favors by splashing their lavish expenditures all over social media. Trips to casinos, helicopter rides, fine dining, Louis Vuitton handbags. In February 2018 Kate purchased a BMW for 25,000. This is a woman who was working as a secretary making 40K per year dating a guy who was a sporadically employed contractor. It wasn't a good look. by March 19 of 2018 Kate McClure's bank account had been completely wiped out; they would sell the RV in June 2018 for some quick cash...and the next month Kate booked a trip to Disney World for her and her best friend. These idiots could not hold onto a dollar for five minutes without spending it on something stupid.

With the money to dwindling down to nothing and increasing scrutiny of their unrealistically lavish lifestyle, the couple started bickering constantly about finances and the money they were spending, Mark was every bit the addict that Johnny was, but his addiction was gambling. When he wasn't going to casino he spent his days playing online poker rather than working. Simultaneously this is when Johnny Bobbitt, having burned through \$25,000 worth of heroin, started getting restless. He messaged Kate on Facebook messenger using his brothers account and said, "we should really talk about things... There has been a lot of people asking

questions and I really don't know what to say. We really should get out of here before things go public."

Apparently he didn't get the answer he wanted because in August 2018 he started publicly accusing the couple of holding out on him.

The couple panicked. I'm not gonna get into all the text messages at this point because it's basically just shady people feeling increasingly persecuted about the fact that they've been caught being shady.

Johnny Bobbitt filed a civil complaint on August 28, 2018 alleging that his money intended for him had been withheld by the couple. If the press had seemed to eat up the heartwarming story of a couple helping a homeless guy, they went absolutely frothing-mouth-rabid-raccoon over the story of a middle-class white couple swindling a homeless guy. It's a pretty great story, I'll be honest. I was captivated. This is when I heard about it, because this was when the story went nuclear. Hounded by the press and persistent questioning, the couple went on a reputation-repair tour starting with the Megan Kelly show, and if you're willing to associate with Megan Kelly that is already a red flag, she is awful, but I understand why they did it because Megan Kelly is always going to be firmly on the side of attractive middle-class caucasians over filthy poor people. Although she will believe filthy poor white people over minorities, there's a hierarchy in the Megan Kelly universe. This is the woman famously insisted that Santa Claus, a made up character, is white, and that black children whose father's dress up as Santa Claus just need to understand that they're living in a fantasy world, and not the real world where the men with the flying reindeer who come down your chimney with magical toys are Caucasian. So during their appearance on the Megan Kelly show, the couple claimed that the only reason they were controlling the money was because Johnny kept spending it on drugs. What they didn't mention was that they weren't just controlling the money, they were spending it like water. Their answers are thoroughly nonsensical, but Megan likes the cut of their jib, so it's all good.

So Megan Kelly fully defended this couple, until a week later. The police obtained a search warrant on September 6 and charges followed on November 15.

Here's more recent Megan Kelly video.

With the walls of justice rapidly closing in, Kate immediately rolled over on her neo-Nazi husband. I'm convinced this guy is a Nazi. It's the haircut and the general demeanor. He gives mad Nazi vibes, Sorry not sorry. So Kate recorded a conversation in which she threw Mark under the biggest heaviest bus she could find. And this is when you can really feel everything unraveling, and also detect a slight bit of friction between the two. No, that's an understatement, there was a genuinely unhealthy and abusive dynamic.

So, trigger warning for at the very least some verbal-abuse-related domestic violence, because this gets ugly. Now it's very hard to find the uncensored audio, pretty much every News outlet censored it when it was released by Kate's lawyer, but I think you really need the full effect, and the only version that had all of the colorful language was a terrible and sensationalistic so-called documentary and it was more like a long episode of dateline, so there's some melodramatic heartbeat-style techno in the background. Just a heads up.

I love how she started the recording and immediately busted out with "you did this. Everything. " She might as well have been like, "Listen here, Mark D'Amico, I Kate McClure on 29 February 2018, am very upset about the fact that you forced me to perpetrate a fraud."

Kate McClure would eventually plead guilty to one charge of theft by deception and be sentenced to three years in prison. She claimed that she was in an abusive relationship with

Damico, which yeah, and that he had forced her to perpetrate the entire scheme. Which... hmm. Regardless, Mark was sentenced to more time—five years—plus gambling, and drug and mental health counseling.

Johnny Bobbitt would be sentenced to 5 years probation and a \$25,000 fine, and he had to enter an inpatient drug treatment facility and submit to drug testing. He also testified against his codefendants.

So if we've learned anything from this episode, I have no idea what that would be. If you scam people, keep it off social media. Is that not the best lesson? I guess Just don't be a shitty person who scams people but if you really want to then make sure you get a good lawyer and blame it on your partner, it also helps if your partner is an abusive fuckwad. Which doesn't make her any less shady, to be clear. Two things can be true simultaneously: a woman can be abused and also be an absolute piece of shit.

So these two stories ended up being longer than expected and we have so many more to get to, these ones were barely influencers, I was working my way up to the real insta-famous peeps, so we might have to do a part two next week. We'll run it by the discord.

We have a new Menace

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