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Ways We Wonder

You know how every great sequel has higher stakes, bigger
explosions and considerably less impulse control?

We understood the assignment.



Ever feel like your brain is just circling the drain?
And the ideas on the whiteboard look exactly
like the ideas on the last three whiteboards?

Good news: you're not out of ideas.
You're just asking the wrong questions.

50 More Ways We Wonder is our second
volume of thought-provoking prompts, designed
to interrupt that spiral and crack that brief open
like a bunch of tiny crowbars made out of words.



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How to use
this book

Think of a challenge. A big one. A brief you can't crack. A real nasty piece of work. The kind of challenge that's laughed maniacally in the face of your last three solutions and is now acting all smug about it.

Now flip to a page. Any page...where you will absolutely not find the answer. (Sorry, pal.)

You will, however, find 1 of 50 gentle (but firm!), inspirational nudges to help you get out of your own way and find it for yourself.

Is it time for the
fast food
offensive?



Back in 2015, one iconic fast food company wrote an open letter to another, proposing an all-beef-patty alliance in honor of Peace Day. Without even knowing how their competitor would respond, they'd already won. If the brand said yes, it's a historic collab. If they said no, well...would you like a side of petty with that value meal?* **What move could you make that's so bold and self-aware, the outcome almost doesn't matter?**

*They said no.

What if you
just played

the hits

For thirty years, the Grateful Dead played like every show was for the hundred most devoted people on earth...and then ended up filling stadiums.

What happens when you stop chasing everyone and go all-in for your ride-or-dies?





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Could your
idea survive on
mute?





No words. No copy. No mercy. If the idea falls apart
without language, it might not be ready yet.

What's left when you take the words away?

What if you pulled
the load-bearing

Jenga block?



Every tower has one. The block everything else depends on.

What happens when you remove it — on purpose?

Sometimes what rushes in to fill the void is more interesting than what was standing there before.

What if it came with an
expiration date?





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Here today, genuinely gone tomorrow.

The disappearing act isn't a gimmick — it's a design principle.

What would people do differently with your thing if they knew the clock was already ticking?

What could you put on the

B-si



The A-side gets people in the room; it's the entrance, the first impression.

But what are you hiding on the flip that makes the second look the one that actually matters?

Can you
add a *big* red button?



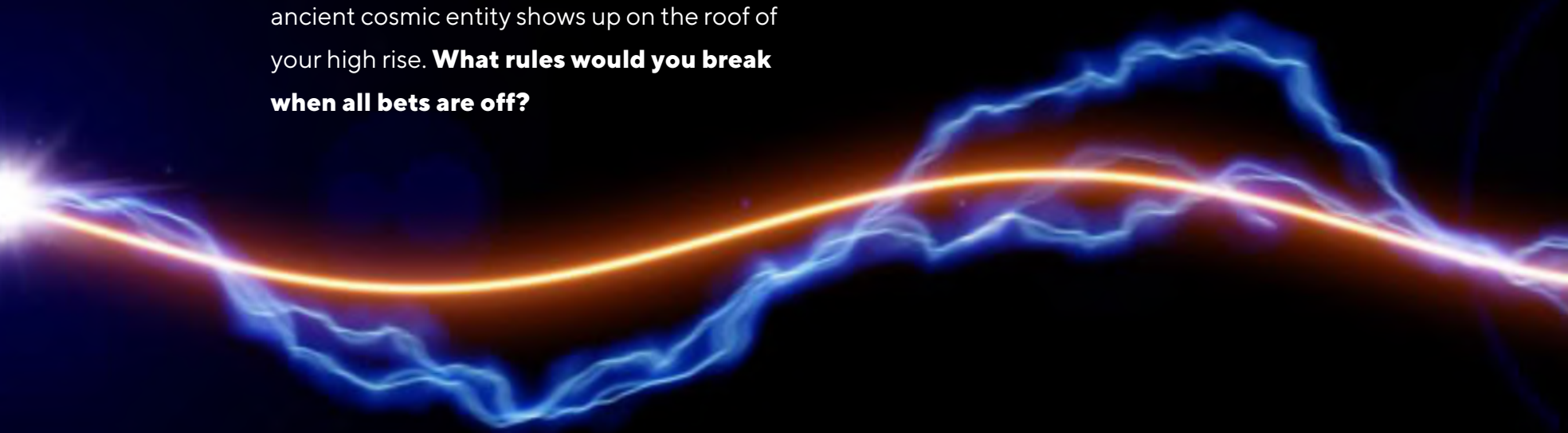
You know, the one you're never supposed to press, which is exactly what makes you so desperate to press it?

How can you trigger that same ancient instinct that drives humanity to just...see what happens.



What if you crossed the
streams?

The guidelines are there for a reason...until an ancient cosmic entity shows up on the roof of your high rise. **What rules would you break when all bets are off?**



What if curiosity
was the price of

admission?

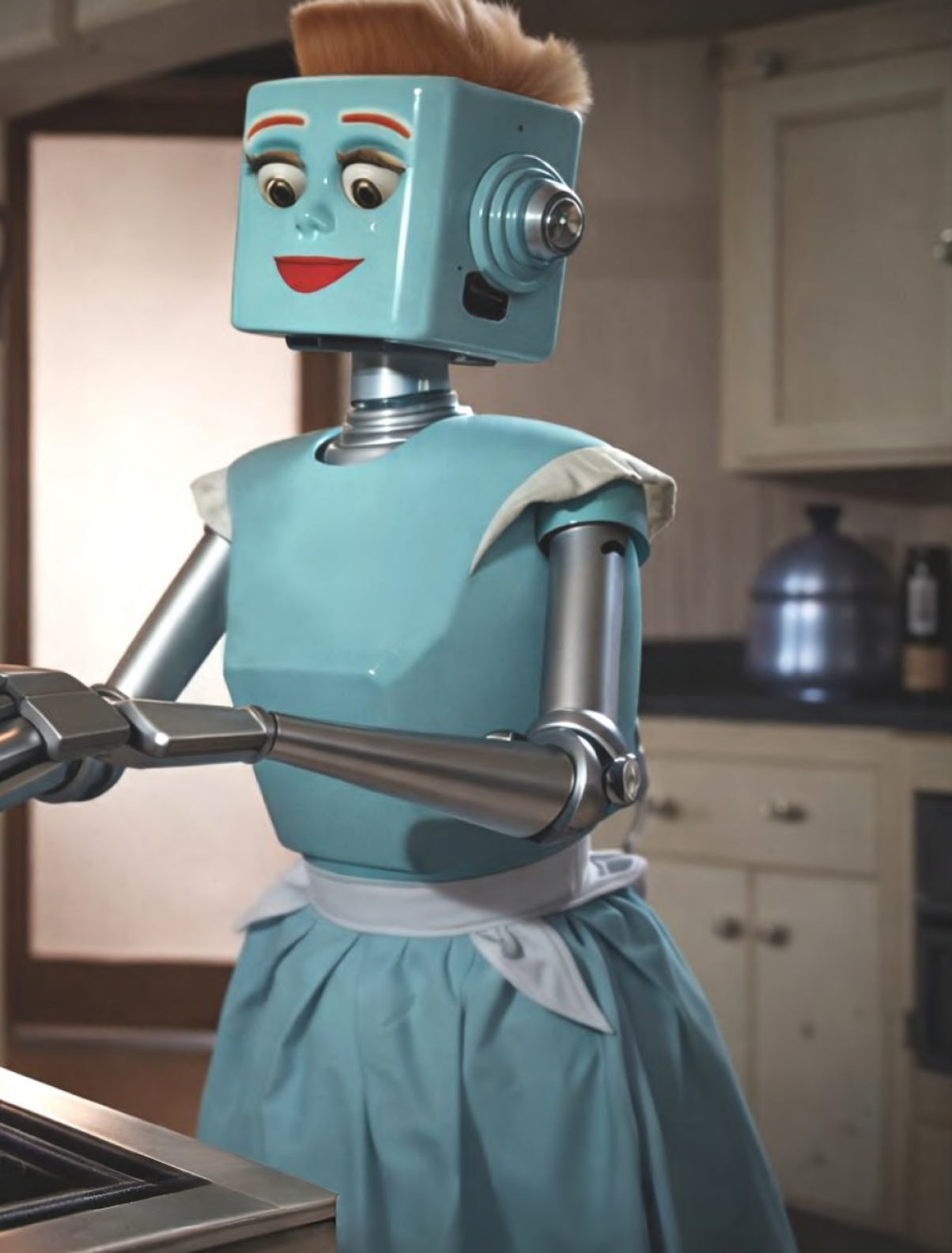


Not every message needs a billboard . Or a button that says “start here.” The most magnetic brands reward the ones who lean in. Peek around corners. Scan the code when there’s no signage. **What are you giving people to discover?**



What if you just let the robots
COOK?





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AI has no feelings. No fear. No concept of 'we've never done it that way before.' Just pure, unblinking, slightly terrifying creative output. **If you just let it cook, what would it make? And why haven't you let it try?**

How can you be this year's

Thanksgiving dinner

debate?



In 1969, two men walked on the moon. Decades later, people are still debating it. Polarization travels. Tension sticks. The internet runs on two fuels: outrage and obsession. Choose wisely.

What could you create that sparks conversation — without losing control of it?

Have you loaded
Chekhov's gun?





The great rule of storytelling: if you show a gun in act one, it has to go off by act three. **What can you hide in plain sight?** Plant your clues early. Don't forget to pay them off.

Can you start a
rivalry?





Lakers or Celtics. Alien or Predator. Chunky or smooth. The moment someone has to choose, they stop being a spectator and start having a stake in how it ends.

How can you get your audience to choose a side?

Can you give the misfits some

main character
energy?

One of TikTok's greatest gifts is the discovery that your most embarrassing interest has a community 400k strong. **How can your brand make people feel gloriously, unapologetically understood?**

What if you called *your shot?*



Babe Ruth pointed to center field before he hit it there. Confidence? Maybe. Theater? Definitely. The brands that shape culture don't wait for the right moment. They name it. Then, they make it real. **What move are you bold enough to call?**





What if you made it your

legacy?

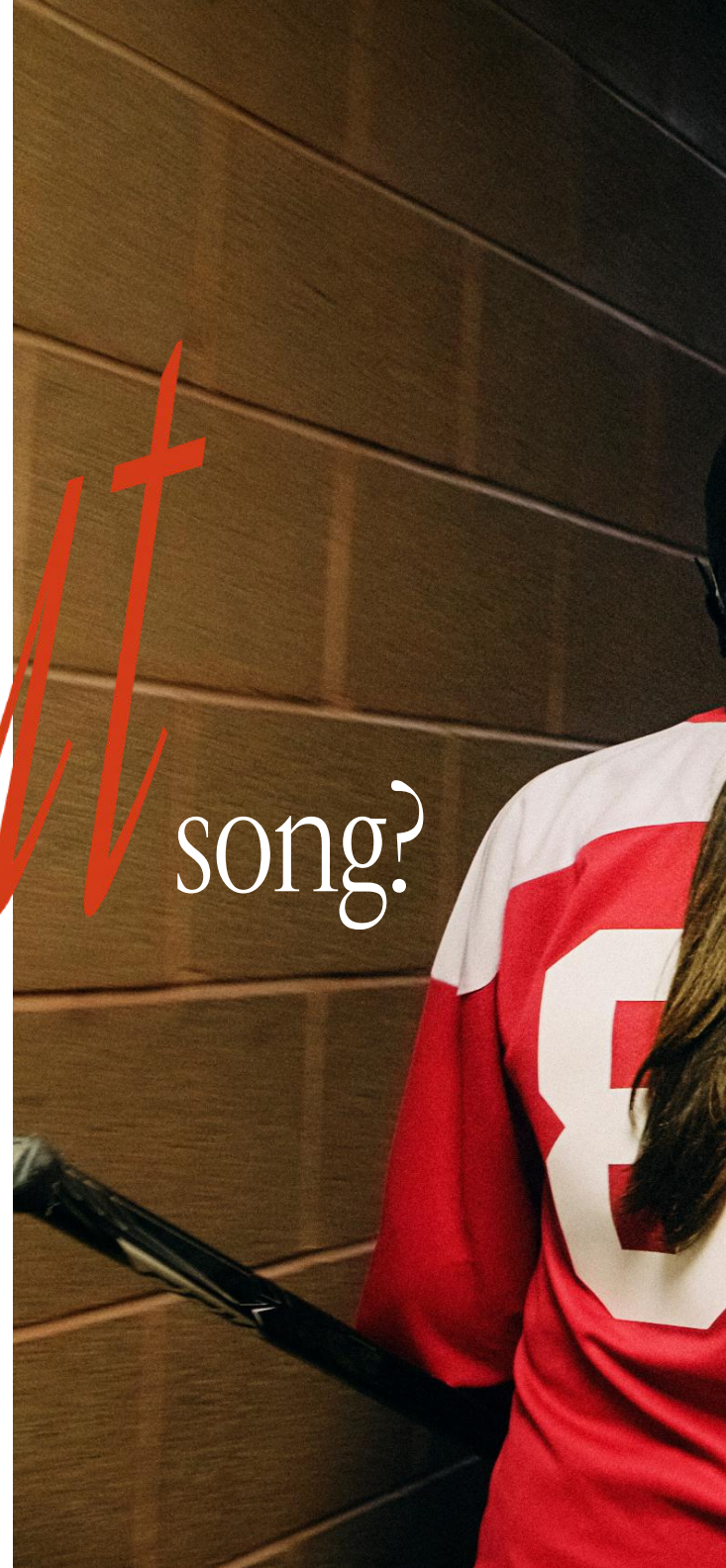
Linus Torvalds handed the world a piece of code and said: here, take it, make it better. Decades later it runs most of the internet.

What happens when you stop protecting your work and start letting people improve it?



What's your *walk-out* song?

Every team's got one. Thirty seconds of pure, distilled self. The crowd knows who's on deck before they've done a thing, and that...is branding at its finest. **What's the needle drop when your brand comes out of the tunnel?**





What if *you* were the one *surprised*
+ *delighted?*

'Yes, and' is the first rule of improv...and the last thing most brands are willing to try. **What happens when you stop directing and leave space for the audience to surprise you?**



What if you were the

worst possible person

to design this?



A person is standing in profile against a light gray concrete wall. They are wearing a white short-sleeved t-shirt, black trousers, and white sneakers. Their right hand is in their pocket. The wall is made of large, rectangular concrete blocks. The ground is a smooth, light gray surface.

Are the screens at a height that works for someone who's 5'3"? Is the type readable to someone who forgot their glasses? The most dangerous assumption in design isn't "they'll figure it out" ... it's "this works for me, so it works for everyone." **Have you empathized with your audience today?**

What if the answer is

simple?

Google's homepage is a white box and a button. In-N-Out has four things on the menu. Okay, maybe five.* In a world that keeps adding layers, the most radical move might be to take something away until there's almost nothing left — and then ask if that's actually better.

What would your thing look like if you made it so simple it felt like cheating?

Are you giving them bullet points when
they came for a plot

twist!

The difference between an experience people endure
and one they can't stop talking about is almost always
the same thing: someone decided to make them care
about what happens next. Story arcs compel your
audience forward. **Where's your cliffhanger?**





5'6"

5'0"

4'6"

4'0"

3'6"

3'0"

What if you lived in
Uncanny Valley?



Almost perfect. Just real enough to stop you cold. Just wrong enough that you can't look away. Most brands sprint toward polished and predictable. The interesting ones lean into slightly, deliberately, unforgettably off.

How far can you push 'almost right' before it becomes the thing everyone remembers?

What if you made them wait... *on purpose?*



Anticipation isn't dead time. It's the experience before the experience. The line to get in is where expectations form; where energy either builds... or bleeds. So here's the shift: **how can you make the queue something to experience (instead of something to endure)?**

What if you showed the
messy middle?

Just like your middle school math teacher, your audience wants to see your work. **How can you make how the sausage is made part of your story?**





Will you ruffle some
feathers?





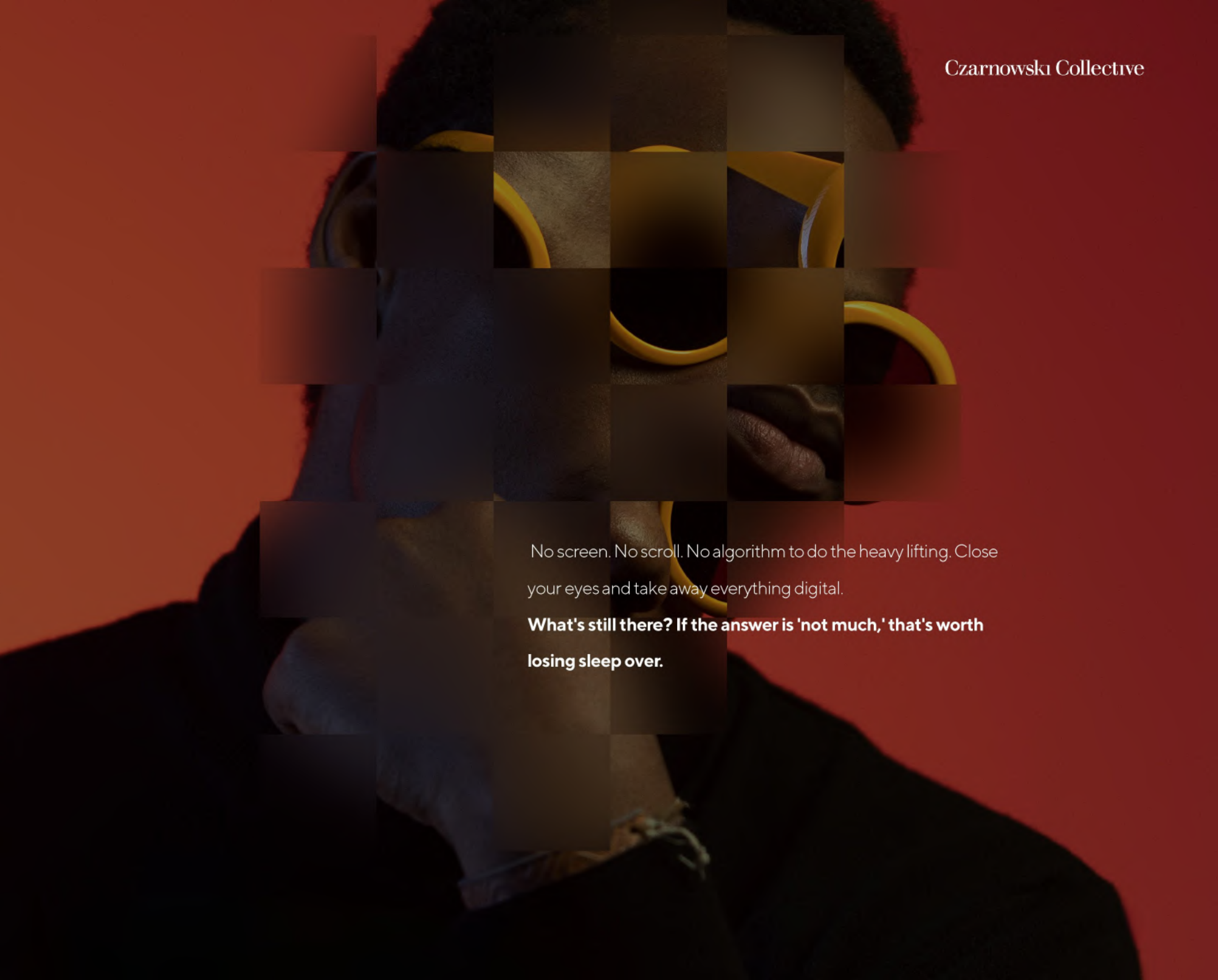
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Liquid Death made a keg of water for pregnant women. Baddie Winkle threw on a bikini at 86 and landed a modeling deal. Both made people deeply uncomfortable for about three seconds, and then completely obsessed.

Where is the line in your category? And are you brave enough to stand next to it?

What if the *Wi-Fi* goes out?





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No screen. No scroll. No algorithm to do the heavy lifting. Close your eyes and take away everything digital.

What's still there? If the answer is 'not much,' that's worth losing sleep over.

What if you *show up* where you don't belong?

A jazz band in a hardware store. A Michelin-starred pop-up in a parking lot. Juxtaposition isn't just a tactic — it's a statement about who you are and how seriously you take the rules.

Where's the last place anyone would expect to find you?

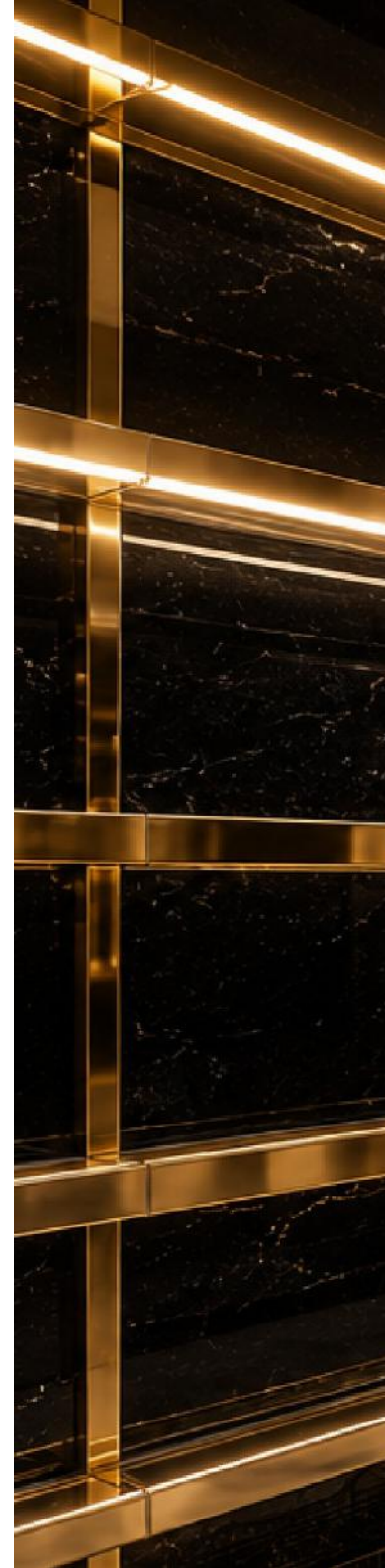


What if



was the strategy?

When Supreme makes a drop, it's forty hoodies on Thursday at 11am. And they're gone in under four minutes. The scarcity isn't a supply chain problem — it's the whole strategy. **What would you do differently if 'out of stock' was a feature, not a failure?**





What if you gave your most complex concept a

cheat ¢øø€?

Confusion is just clarity waiting for the right analogy. Afterall, nobody understood the concept of the internet until someone called it an information superhighway.

What does everyone already know that unlocks everything you're trying to say?

AB



What if we told you
there's no such thing

as new?





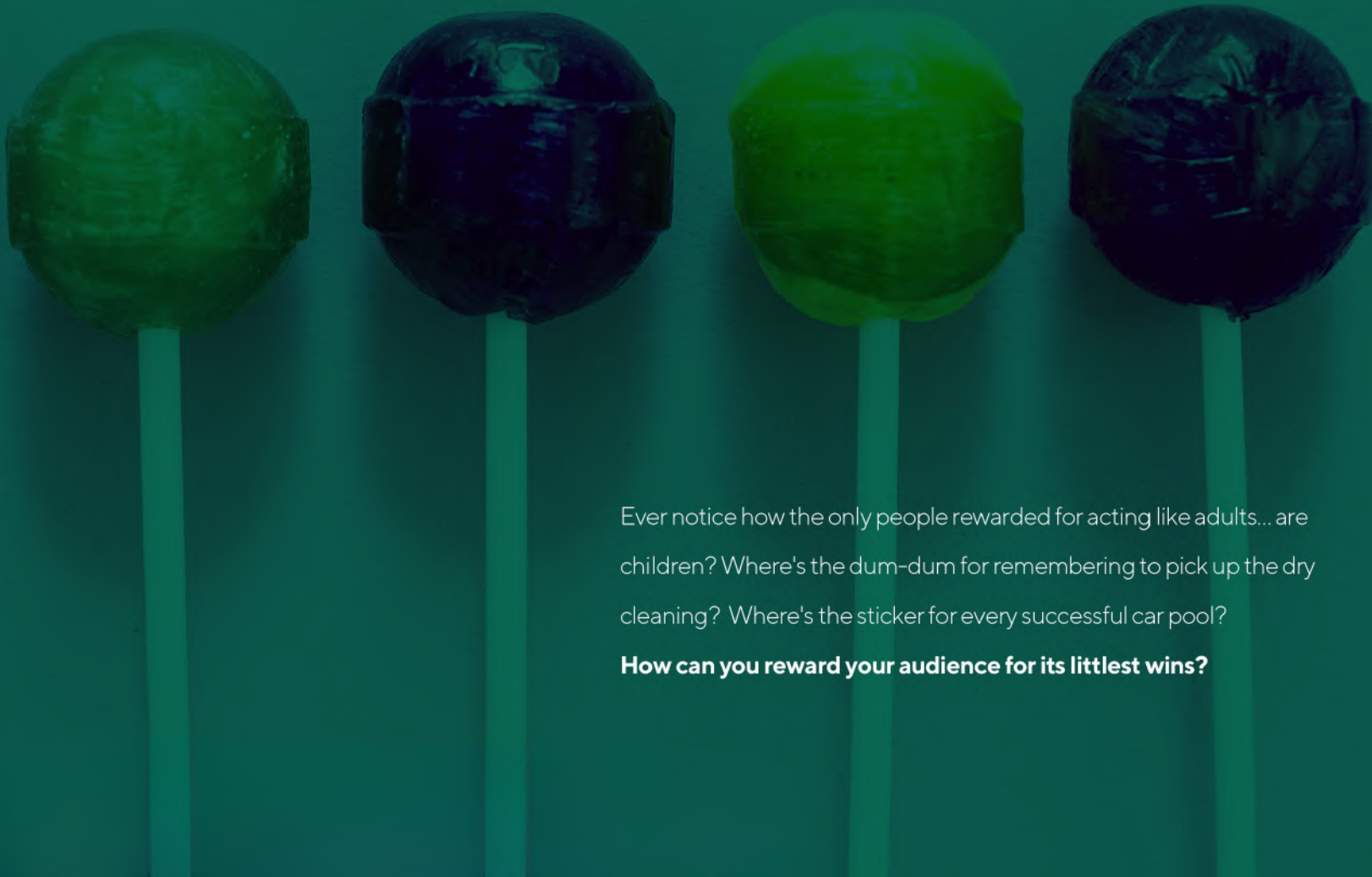
Originality is a red herring. Every new idea has an ancestor. Shakespeare borrowed plots. Apple borrowed the mouse.

Stop asking "has this been done?" Start asking "has this ever been done...like THIS?"

What if you treated everyone like a

child?





Ever notice how the only people rewarded for acting like adults... are children? Where's the dum-dum for remembering to pick up the dry cleaning? Where's the sticker for every successful car pool?

How can you reward your audience for its littlest wins?

What if you

spilled

the tea?

A rumor, a screenshot, a whisper. Sometimes the most powerful reveal is the one you pretend didn't happen.

What would you let slip?



What if you practiced

radical honesty?

In 2009, a national pizza chain ran an ad admitting their pizza tasted like cardboard. Then they fixed it. Then they told everyone they fixed it. Sales went up 14.3%. The brands that own their worst moment publicly don't just survive it — they become more trustworthy than the ones who never messed up at all. **What would happen if you said 'we got it wrong' first?**



What's the



?



The speakeasy didn't survive prohibition
because the drinks were better — it survived
because getting there felt like being chosen.
Add a gate. A riddle. Make them earn it.

**The harder they work to get in, the more
they want to be there.**

What's really *for sale?*



Vacation sunscreen isn't selling SPF. It's selling 1987. The smell. The sunburn. The uncomplicated joy. Nostalgia isn't retro. It's real estate. The brands that stick aren't loud. They move in early. Claim emotional square footage. Stay.

What memory are you occupying?

Can you share a *bite?*

The Costco sample. One perfect cube of something delicious, no obligation, no pitch. Just: here, try this. The brands that lead with their best thing — no strings attached — create something a sales funnel never could.

What's the delicious nugget you've been holding back?



What if boredom was the

goal?





We've been sprinting toward stimulation for so long we forgot what it feels like to just...sit with something. **What if the most radical thing you could offer right now was nothing to do?**

Can you cut the participation

ribbon?





*You
tried*

Everybody gets a trophy. Everybody makes the team. Everybody wins. The problem with making everyone feel special is that it makes nobody feel special.

What happens when you bring back actual stakes, actual competition, actual winning – and remind people how good it feels to earn something?

Are you *exclusive?* Or *excluding?*





One makes people want in. The other shuts the door in their face and calls it brand strategy. **How do you build something worth wanting to be part of...without making people on the outside feel like they were never welcome?**

Can you make it a

ritual?

Wordle. The morning scroll. The podcast that plays every commute without anyone deciding to play it.

The most valuable real estate in someone's life isn't the ad they see — it's the thing they do without thinking.

How do you get from 'something they tried' to 'something they just do'?



What if wealth was measured in .
minutes?



Premium is relative; it shifts with your frame of reference. But there's one thing that resets the scoreboard entirely: none of us, regardless of budget, can make more time. The most powerful thing you can give your audience isn't the highest quality or the lowest price. It's the feeling that this was worth the hour.

How are you respecting the clock?

Can you embrace your inner

heel?





In wrestling, the heel isn't the loser... they're the one you can't stop watching. **What if you stopped trying to be universally liked and started being impossible to ignore?**

Can you make it feel like

magic?

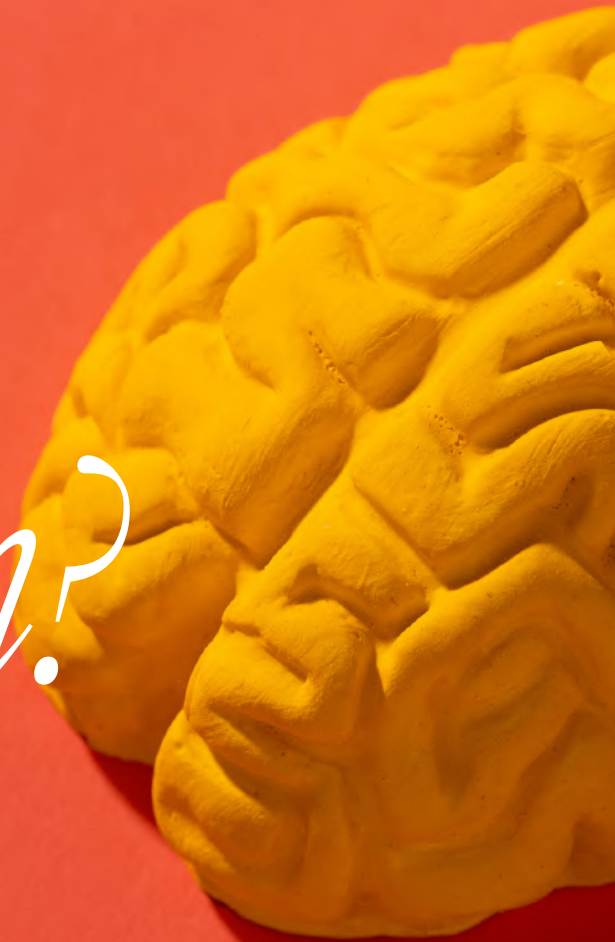
Every great magic trick has three parts: the pledge, the turn, and the prestige. The pledge shows you something ordinary. The turn makes it disappear. But the prestige — the reveal inside the reveal — that's where the real trick lives. Your audience expects a payoff. They don't expect a second one. **How can you use this mechanic for your brand experience?**





What if you outsourced the work to the

human brain?





Your brain is a pattern recognition machine with one standing order: flag anything that doesn't fit. The most memorable brand experiences have been exploiting this forever. The thing that breaks the pattern is the thing that gets noticed. **How do you become the thing in the room that makes everyone look up?**

What if you had a *fafo* budget?



A little scratch, set aside every year, for the thing that has no business case, no guaranteed ROI, and absolutely no one's approval. **Just, what happens if we try this?** Some of the best ideas in history started exactly there.

What if a surrealist built your

brief?





You write the first part. Fold the paper. Pass it left. The next person adds something without seeing what came before. The surrealists called it exquisite corpse. Most brand teams call it terrifying. A brief handed to a stranger. A concept handed to your biggest critic.

What happens when you give up the last word — on purpose?

What's your *Wu-Tang x Versace?*

Staten Island met Milan. On paper, absolutely unhinged. In practice, one of the most talked-about collaborations of the decade. The weirder the pairing, the harder people look. **Who's the last name you'd expect to see next to yours?**



What if you channeled your inner

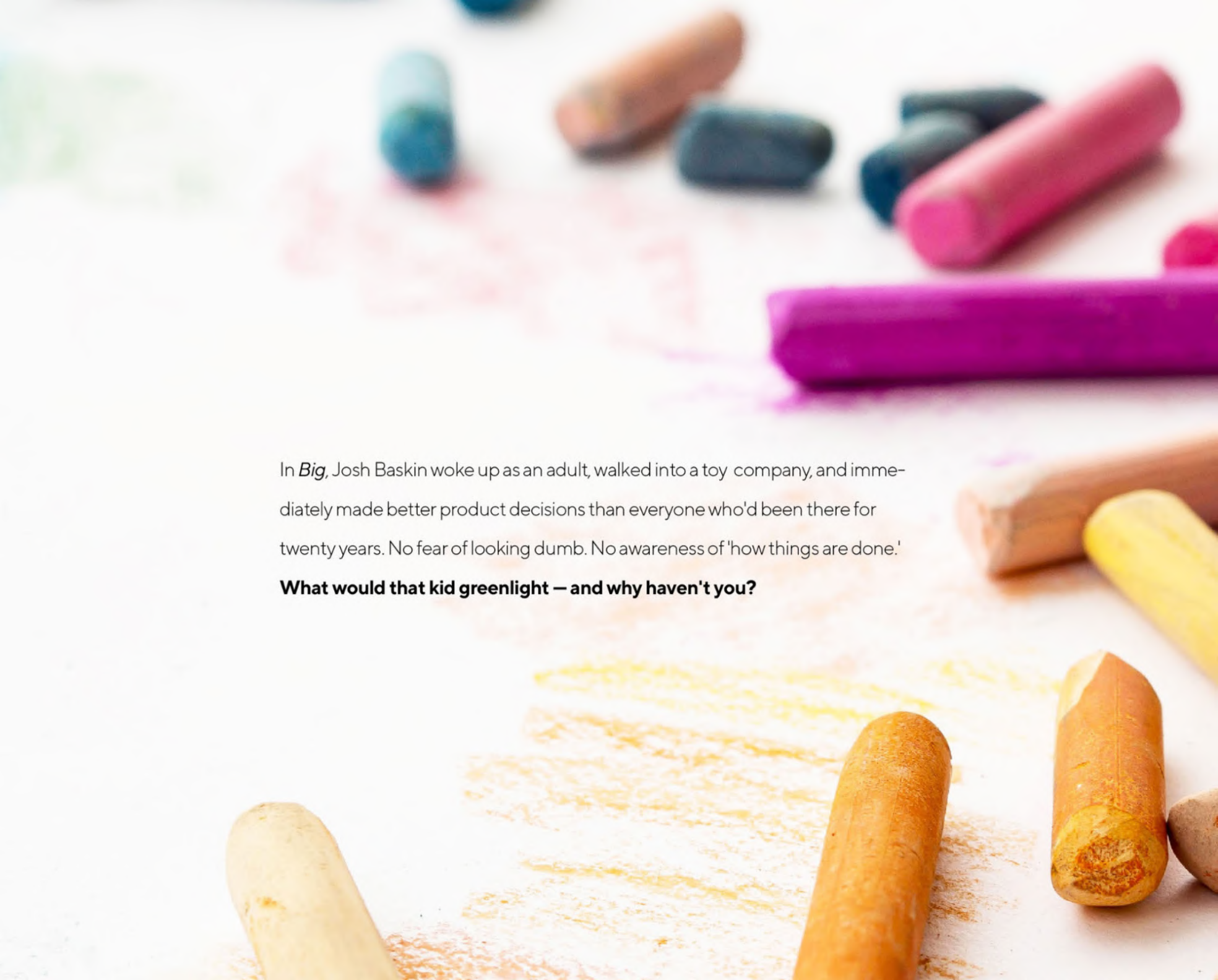
90s-era hip-hop
producer?

Take something beloved, flip it, make it yours.

What's the cultural moment, the classic format, the iconic thing in your industry that's just waiting for you to flip it and reverse it?



What would your *inner child* do?



In *Big*, Josh Baskin woke up as an adult, walked into a toy company, and immediately made better product decisions than everyone who'd been there for twenty years. No fear of looking dumb. No awareness of 'how things are done.'

What would that kid greenlight — and why haven't you?

Is it time to write the

director's commentary?



The deleted scenes. The failed takes. The version where it almost didn't happen. The most interesting thing about any great work is usually the part that almost killed it. Turns out people trust brands that have scars more than brands that don't.

What's yours?



You've made it to the last page, which means you're either
wildly inspired or dangerously close to a breakthrough.
Either way, we should talk.

Click here to *Wonder* with us.

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