The Baby-Sitters Club Is Back

Say hello to Kristy, Mary Anne, Claudia, and Stacey.

Netflix has ordered a 10-episode reboot of The Baby-Sitters Club TV series based on the beloved children’s books by Ann M. Martin. “The themes of The Baby-Sitters Club still resonate 30 years after the original book series was released, and there has never been a more opportune time to tell an aspirational story about empowering young female entrepreneurs,” said Melissa Cobb, vice president of kids and family at Netflix, in a statement announcing the series.

First published in 1986, the books followed the adventures of a group of BFFs in the fictional town of Stoneybrook, Connecticut, with over 180 million copies sold.

HBO first adapted the series for a one-season show in 1990, while a movie was made in 1995 starring Rachael Leigh Cook (She’s All That) and Larisa Oleynik (The Secret World of Alex Mack).

Like those projects, this Netflix reboot will remain sweet and wholesome, unlike the streaming service’s Chilling Adventures of Sabrina, which was closer to the comic book series featuring that character than the show Sabrina the Teenage Witch, which first aired in 1996.

No word yet on casting, but all five main characters — Kristy Thomas, Mary Anne Spier, Claudia Kishi, Stacey McGill, and Dawn Schafer — are making a return.

Martin, the original author, will serve as a producer on the new live-action series.

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Martin, the original author, will serve as a producer on the new live-action series.

“I’m amazed that there are so many passionate fans of The Baby-Sitters Club after all these years, and I’m honored to continue to hear from readers — new grown, who have become writers, editors, teachers, librarians, filmmakers — who say that they see a reflection of themselves in the characters of Kristy and her friends,” Martin said in a statement.

“So I’m very excited about the forthcoming series on Netflix, which I hope will inspire a new generation of readers and leaders everywhere.” — DAVID MACK

Choose Your Uber Adventure

A Seattle driver created a menu to allow passengers to customize their ride experiences. Looking at you, NYC.

A Seattle-based Uber driver is being commended for a simple but very thoughtful idea to allow passengers to customize their rides: He created a “Ride Type Menu.”

The options on the menu created by George Ure, 36, include “The Silent Ride,” “The Therapy Ride,” and “The Stand Up Ride.”

Ure also joked about other common experiences, like “The Creepy Ride,” which he described as: “I don’t say anything. I just look at you from time to time in the rearview mirror.”

Ure’s menu was also accompanied by descriptions of each type of ride commonly experienced by Uber drivers and riders.

“Got something on your mind? Let me help take it off. Talk to me,” read the description for the Therapy Ride.

The documentary explores the disappearance and murder of high school student Hae Min Lee, and the conviction of her ex-boyfriend, Syed.

The charity’s field staff in Asia and Africa have organized anti-poaching missions with notoriously vicious shock troops, and signed off on a proposal to kill treetop pens by a park director who presided over the killings of dozens.

WWF has launched an “independent review,” led by a human rights specialist, of the evidence uncovered by BuzzFeed News. “We see it as our urgent responsibility to get to the bottom of the allegations BuzzFeed has made,” a charity said.

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“Got something on your mind? Let me help take it off. Talk to me,” read the description for the Therapy Ride.
Glenn Close saw Billy Porter during the Oscars, and girl: same.

**How Momo Went From Viral Hoax to Viral Hottie**

She won't hurt your children, but she might break your heart.

By Katie Notopoulos

Momo has gone from nightmare to dreamy, in record time. The creepy character, a hideous gargoyle with bulging eyes, first emerged on YouTube in the middle of a harmless kids video— where she told viewers to harm themselves. Local TV news stations, New York City public schools, and even Kim Kardashian West’s Instagram warned parents about the threat.

But there’s no indication that Momo was ever more than a hoax—or that anyone got hurt.

And now the same digital culture that turned Momo into a global nightmare is transforming her into something else: a sex symbol.

“Momo is just the latest sinister pop culture figure to be remade by the internet in an entirely new way—a process that seems to have become faster and weirder in 2019,” writes Katie Notopoulos in her article “How Momo Went From Viral Hoax to Viral Hottie.”

There are people who celebrate the creature from the horror movie *The Babadook* as a happy gay icon, and others who find Venom from the recent Marvel movie *Venom* sexy. Things have been done to *Pokémon* characters that we simply can’t reprint in this family newspaper.

Momo, who began her life as a photo of a statue by a Japanese special effects company, may have undergone the most dramatic transformation.

“I just really dislike that a really impressive piece of art made by someone is being given such a bad reputation because of people just wanting a little bit of internet fame,” said one Momo defender on Tumblr who drew Momo smiling with a heart.

And so Momo joins a long tradition—predating the internet, even—of turning an object of fear into an object of lust. And while the panic that Momo could hurt your kids is a hoax, the real danger may be that Momo has caused adults to make some really weird images on the internet.

BuzzFeed is the equivalent of those tabloids you buy at the grocery store on the way out that introduce you to Martians and tell you the story of three stars who had anguished lives that you never knew about.” —Newt Gingrich, Jan. 18, 2019, on Fox & Friends
You may have read the story about the 27-year-old who isn’t planning to register to vote: “I hate mail- ing stuff; it gives me anxiety.”

This sort of thing gives millennials a bad reputation: We’re spoiled, entitled, lazy, and failures at “adulting.” We’re shocked at the realities of life: that you have to pay bills and go to work; that you have to buy food and cook it if you want to eat it; that actions have consequences.

And millennials, especially older millennials like me, at 38, love to complain about other millennials giving them a bad name.

But as I fumed about the 27-year-old’s post office anxiety, I was deep in a cycle of a tendency I’ve come to call “errand paralysis.” I’d put something on my weekly to-do list, and it’d roll over, one week to the next, haunting me for months.

These are simple tasks: getting knives sharpened, taking boots to the cobbler, registering my dog for a new license, sending out vote by mail applications. They are seemingly high-effort, low-reward tasks, and they paralyze me — not unlike that 27-year-old too paralyzed to register to vote.

He and I are not alone in this paralysis. My partner was so stymied by the multistep, incredibly (and purposefully) confusing process of submitting insurance reimbursement forms for every single week of therapy that for months he just didn’t send them — and ate over $1,000. Another woman told me she had a package sitting unmailed in the corner of her room for over a year. A friend admitted he’s absorbed hundreds of dollars in clothes that don’t fit because he couldn’t manage to return them. Errand paralysis, post office anxiety — they’re different manifestations of the same affliction.

For the past two years, I’ve refused cautions — from editors, from family, from peers — that I might be edging into burnout. To my mind, burnout was something that didn’t fit because he couldn’t manage to return them. Errand paralysis, post office anxiety — they’re different manifestations of the same affliction.

But the more I tried to figure out my errand paralysis, the more the actual parameters of burnout began to reveal themselves. Burnout and the behaviors and weight that accompany it aren’t, in fact, something we can cure by going on vacation. It’s not limited to workers in acutely high-stress environments. And it’s not a temporary affliction: It’s the millennial condition. It’s our base temperature. It’s our background music. It’s the way things are. It’s our lives.

That realization recast my recent struggles: Why can’t I get this mundane stuff done? Because I’m burned out. Why am I burned out? Because I’ve internalized the idea that I should be working all the time. Why have I internalized that idea? Because everything and everyone in my life has reinforced it since I was young. Life has always been hard, but many millennials are unequipped to deal with the particular ways in which it’s become hard for us.

So what now? Should I meditate more, negotiate for more time off, delegate tasks within my relationship, perform acts of self-care, and institute timers on my social media? How, in other words, can I optimize myself to get those mundane tasks done and keep failing to adequately answer. But maybe that’s because it’s the wrong question altogether.

The answers to these questions are longer than I can fit in this throwback print column — only the sprawling internet has that kind of space. (You can find the long version at bzfd.it/burnout.) But I’ve come to the conclusion that its origins are about work and economics, not some generational quirk.

Our paths were defined by the 2008 financial crisis, and while the economy recovered, we moved out of our parents’ houses and found jobs, many of us never found financial security. Because education was situated as the best and only way to survive, many of us emerged from those programs with loan payments that our post-graduation prospects failed to offset.

But we didn’t try to break that system, since that’s not how we’ve been raised. We tried to win it.

I knew the system was winnable for only a small few. I just believed I could continue to optimize myself to become one of them.

And it’s taken me years to understand the true ramifications of that mindset. I’d worked hard in college, but as an older millennial, the expectations for labor were tempered. We liked to say we worked hard, played hard — and there were clear boundaries around each of those activities. Grad school, then, is where I learned to work like a millennial, which is to say, all the time. My new watchword was “Everything that’s good is bad, everything that’s bad is good.” Things that should’ve felt good (leisure, not working) felt bad because I felt guilty for not working; things that should’ve felt bad (working all the time) felt good because I was doing what I thought I should and needed to be doing in order to succeed.

Now I realize that individual action isn’t enough. Personal choices alone won’t keep the planet from dying, or get Facebook to quit violating our privacy. To do that, you need paradigm-shifting change. Which helps explain why so many millennials increasingly identify with democratic socialism and are embracing unions. We are beginning to understand what all us, and it’s not something an oxygen facial or a treadmill desk can fix.
What No One Tells You About NYC

Once you have these facts down, you’ll feel like a native New Yorker.
By Matt Stopera, Illustrations by Ben Kothe

- One in every 38 people in the US live in New York City.
- Eight hundred different languages are spoken in New York City, making it the most linguistically diverse city in the world.

**GTFO**

- All scaffolding stays up for 4 to 20 years.
- Your apartment will either be hot as hell or cold as ice. There is no in-between.
- All apartment pictures on Craigslist/StreetEasy/wherever you’re looking for an apartment were taken with a potato. Basic rule: If it looks too good to be true then it 100% is. There are no deals or “steals.”
- New Year’s Eve, Halloween, 4th of July = most expensive Ubers. Just stay home.
- There are no public bathrooms. Have fun waiting in that 20-person Starbucks line.
- There are no such thing as spring. Also, fall is like two days.
- If a subway car is empty, it’s empty for a reason. Half of the time it’s because it smells terrible. The other half it’s because it doesn’t have AC.
- JFK is the worst airport in the world. You will never have a good experience there. Everyone is very mean.
- Yes, there are roaches and mice... but there are also HUGE flies that somehow always magically end up in your apartment.
- Yes, the subway never works, but it REALLY never works on weekends. Good luck reading that sign.
- Yes, the guy with the cat on his head is not nice.
- The worst time of day in New York is 3 to 4 p.m., when school gets out and teens take over the city.
- It’s never OK to wear flip-flops.
- SantaCon day, whenever it falls, is the scariest, most awful day of the year. It’s like that movie The Purge, but with drunk people from Jersey and Long Island puking all over everything.
- You’ll never, ever have time for those poor street canvassers. Just don’t make eye contact or say “I already donated.”
- You will buy 700 of these cheap umbrellas and they will always break after one or two rainstorms. You will also never have an umbrella when you need one.
- For some reason, people think it’s okay to cut their nails in public here.
- Slush-puddle season will test your will to live. Snow is nice for five minutes, then huge puddles form and every corner is an obstacle.
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**NYC**

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**Everything Else**

- What No One Tells You About NYC

By Matt Stopera, Illustrations by Ben Kothe

- OK BUUUUT...the real truth is that while street canvassers are annoying, the people who work for TV shows and movies who ask you to cross the street or “wait a minute” are even more annoying. I HAVE TO GET TO WORK — I DON’T CARE ABOUT YOUR EPISODE OF CAKE BOSS.
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Dublin. As the pair at Trinity College in and then university, through high school of each other's lives star, the latter more between Connell and Rooney's novel for Normal People human relationships gold) — and it's a and 15 pounds of ball, a candlepin, on her but a bowling opens the bowling full of whimsy (Bertha Bowlaway by Coventry: Essays by normal People by Rooney's novel follows the relationship between Connell and Marianne — the former a popular football star, the latter more of an introvert — as they socialize in and out of each other's lives through high school and then university, at Trinity College in Dublin. As she discovers new desires and temptations, she rediscovers the boundaries of her identity and in her fiction — family, gender, politics, art, and the conflicts between private and public selves.

We Cast a Shadow by Maurice Carlos Ruffin In We Cast a Shadow, Maurice Carlos Ruffin presents a Faustian tale of anti-blackness in the US, imagining a New South so plagued by violent racism that many black residents are turning to Dr. Négrona for a “complete de-humanization.” When a father sees his brash son seemingly getting darker every day, he considers the procedure, realizar for Nigel’s fate — but there’s such a fine line between protection and harm.

Women Talking by Miriam Toews Between 2005 and 2006, residents of a Mennonite community in Bolivia, more than 100 girls and women were dragged and assaulted by men in the colony — who dressed themselves in these as acts of demons. This sharp and devastating novel imagines the aftermath. While the men leave to post bail for the attackers, eight women gather to decide their next steps. What follows is a two-day-long discussion of forgiveness, faith, and anger.

On Earth We’re Briefly Blooming by Ocean Vuong Vuong’s debut novel is written as a letter from Little Dog, a man in his late twenties, to his mother, who has just left him. She writes down into their family’s past, beginning in Vietnam before Little Dog’s birth and continuing into the US. Through this history, the son is able to visit his mother into parts of life his father never shared, contemplating class, masculinity, and trauma.

The Affairs of the Falcons by Melisa Rivera Rivera’s novel presents the long and exhausting struggle of living undocumented in the US, as seen through the experience of one family. When Ana Falción fled Peru for New York with her husband and two young children in the 1990s, she was looking to escape her country’s political situation. But when Ana Falción finds herself in the midst of a sex scandal, she realizes she must come to terms with who she made with her, too. The novel is hilarious, deeply moving, and full of heart.

Mostly Dead Things by Kristen Arnett When Jessa Lynn Moran finds her father dead by suicide in the middle of their daycare shop, the family business falls on her while the rest of her family falls apart. Her mother is sneaking into the shop and putting the traumatized animals into compromising positions; her brother goes silent, her sister-in-law (who Jessa happens to be in love with) looks around the way. The novel is hilarious, deeply moving, and full of heart.

Normal People by Sally Rooney Rooney’s novel follows the relationship between Connell and Marianne — the former a popular football star, the latter more of an introvert — as they socialize in and out of each other’s lives through high school and then university, at Trinity College in Dublin. As she discovers new desires and temptations, she rediscovers the boundaries of her identity and in her fiction — family, gender, politics, art, and the conflicts between private and public selves.

The Collected Schizophrenias by Esme Wang Wang’s intimate essay collection opens her experience of schizoaffective disorder to those who live with it, as well as those who want to better understand it. Wang writes generically about the manifestations of schizophrenia in her life — how she’s learned to present it to hide it from the world. How it shapes her relationships and affects her body — and lends her keen analysis to the big, ethical questions about how we treat those whose experience of the world differs from ours.

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If you haven’t heard “Baby Shark” by now, chances are you will soon. The song started charting on Billboard’s Hot 100 in January 2019 — and on YouTube, the video has hit 2.4 billion views (and counting).

Which got us thinking: Is there any artist that has yet to be devoured by the “Baby Shark” juggernaut? Circle all the music videos that have outlasted the viral hit.

By Whitney Jefferson

Pharrell’s “Happy”
Carly Rae Jepsen’s “Call Me Maybe”
Katy Perry’s “Firework”
Fifth Harmony’s “Work From Home”
Meghan Trainor’s “All About That Bass”
Taylor Swift’s “Bad Blood”
Drake’s “Hotline Bling”
Miley Cyrus’s “Wrecking Ball”
P!nk’s “Gangnam Style”
Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance”
Dua Lipa’s “New Rules”
Jennifer Lopez’s “On the Floor”
Justin Bieber’s “Baby”
Sia’s “Chandelier”
Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars’s “Uptown Funk”

Quiz: Is “Baby Shark” Bigger Than Bieber?

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Whether you’re listening to a new bop, catching up on your favorite podcast, or simply want to mute Jim from accounting who won’t stop talking about his standing desk (no one cares, Jim), below you’ll find the best noise-canceling headphones across three different price points.

By Colin Gorenstein

Photograph by BuzzFeed News
Steak Out

Whether you’re cooking a cheap cut or an expensive one, here’s how to do it right.

By Adam Bianchi and Claire King
Photograph by Kate Bubacz

Steak is just a term for a cut of meat that doesn’t have a lot of connective tissue, which makes it suitable for quick cooking. Whether you’re buying a cheap or pricey cut, it’s more about how you treat it and how you’re cooking with it that’s going to make the biggest difference. A cast iron skillet is a great option no matter what type of steak you’re working with, as it holds heat really well; ideally you should use any oil with a high smoke point.

Cheap Steak
Look for: hanger steak, tri-tip, flap, chuck-eye, and chuck tenders

PAN-SEARED FLAP STEAK
Servings: 2–4

INGREDIENTS
1 pound flap meat
1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons ground black pepper
4 large cloves garlic
3 tablespoons vegetable oil

Gallon-sized plastic zipper bag
Cast iron skillet

PREPARATION
1. Place flap meat, soy sauce, and pepper in the gallon-sized plastic bag.
2. Place garlic cloves on a flat surface and crush with hand using palm. Just enough to crack the clove open a bit.
3. Add garlic to bag and seal, removing as much air from the bag as possible.

4. Massage the contents of the bag to ensure the soy sauce mixture is completely coating the meat.
5. Leave bag in the refrigerator to marinate for 1–12 hours.
6. Place cast iron skillet in cool oven and preheat to 475°F/240°C.
7. Once oven is preheated, transfer skillet to stovetop and place on high heat.
8. Once oil starts to shimmer, but before it starts to smoke, carefully place steak in pan.
9. Flip steak every 30 seconds to a minute, moving the steak to the hottest parts of the pan each time.
10. Once internal temperature reaches a few degrees below 135°F/57°C, remove steak from pan and place on a cutting board to rest.
11. Let rest for 8–10 minutes.
12. Slice steak against the grain and serve!

Expensive Steak
Look for: New York strip (also known as Kansas City or sirloin) steak, tenderloin, and rib eye

REVERSE-SEARED RIB EYE
Servings: 2–4

INGREDIENTS
1 1/2- to 2-inch-thick rib eye steak
Salt
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
Pepper (optional)

PREPARATION
1. Liberally season steak on all sides with salt and (optional) pepper. Place steak in fridge for 1 to 24 hours. If leaving for more than an hour, cover with plastic wrap.
2. Preheat oven to 275°F/140°C.
3. Transfer steak to a wire rack on top of a baking sheet.
4. Bake for about 20–30 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches about 95°F for medium-rare.
5. Preheat cast iron skillet on high heat for 10–15 minutes.
6. Add oil to skillet.
7. Once oil starts to shimmer but before it starts to smoke, carefully place steak in pan.
8. Cook for about 1–2 minutes per side, or until the internal temperature is a few degrees below 135°F/57°C and a dark crust has formed.
9. Rest the steak on a cutting board or wire rack for about couple minutes.
10. Slice steak against the grain and serve!

Tip:
It’s always a good idea to have a kitchen thermometer on hand. For a medium-rare steak, you’ll want to serve it at 135°F, but you can take it off the skillet a few degrees earlier because it’ll carry over cooking slightly.

RECOMMENDATION
The Best Cast Iron Skillet

Ozark Trail Skillet
Who It’s Best For: Campers, fire-pit cooks, DIY-ers
A rugged budget option for the great outdoors, this skillet is the ideal campfire companion. It’s also light enough to fend off bears if need be. $10

Victoria Long-Handled Skillet
Who It’s Best For: People with fine-motor issues, people with small hands, frequent movers
You’ve heard of Lodge — now meet Victoria. She sears and braises just the same, but with a longer, curved handle for better grip. $20

Field Company Skillet
Who It’s Best For: Aesthetes, eco-conscious cooks, people with limited hand and arm strength
Field Company ups the ante with next-gen cast iron that’s lighter, smoother, and, somehow, still made like it used to be. Unbox it and get straight to cookin’. $80
How did this sweet, buttery dessert rise to the level of American icon?

By Gabriel H. Sanchez

As American as apple pie — it’s a phrase synonymous with American identity, aligned with those red-blooded, patriotic symbols like baseball, backyard BBQs, and bald eagles. But how did this sweet, buttery dessert rise to the level of American icon? What is it about pie that conjures, by its mere mention, those American values we hold so dear?

The origins of the pie predate the United States by entire millennia with records of pie-like dishes enjoyed among Egyptian societies as far back as the Neolithic Period, around 6,000 BCE. Later, pies were a staple in medieval Europe that were often served as savory dishes filled with meats like magpie or turtle. When the Pilgrims made their journey to the New World in the early 1600s, they brought with them family recipes along with apple seeds and other ingredients from Europe. Bakers also began to incorporate local berries and fruits native to America into their pies. While pies have since become a cornerstone of Thanksgiving celebrations, there are actually no recorded mentions of pies at the first Thanksgiving of 1621.

As consumerism modernized in the early 20th century, pictures like these aligned baking products for pie making with American values as a mass-marketing strategy. Apple producers, baking suppliers, and other produce growers seized the opportunity to portray their products as vital to upholding American identity — and it worked. Advertisements quoted the fictional Betty Crocker: “If I were to create a coat of arms for our country, a pie would be its heraldic symbol.” During World War II, a phrase often repeated by soldiers when asked what they were fighting for (perhaps a little sarcastically) was “For mom and apple pie!”

“As American as apple pie” has since become more than just a catchphrase. It’s become synonymous with the American dream, with the pursuit of happiness. But hey, chasing pie in the sky is always better than the alternative: “Let them eat cake.”

From top: Six-year-old Richard Baranski caresses a full belly after being crowned cranberry pie-eating champion, upon eating a 10-inch cranberry pie in 15 seconds flat, winner of the 23rd Annual National Cherry Pie Baking Contest. Six-year-old Marine Walker of Huntsville, Alabama, tastes a sample of her prize-winning entry. Teddie Hoff (left), 8, takes a peek at his pal, Rex Loft, 9, as they practice for the big, twice-daily pie-eating contests at the 1950 Los Angeles Food Show.

Easy as Pie
**Sex Education** (2019–present)
This British teen TV drama is based on the coming-of-age novel of the same name. The series follows the lives of a group of friends at a British high school, including two gay teenagers who fall in love.

**Glow (2017–present)**
A wildly entertaining comedy series about two female pro wrestlers from the 1980s who return to the ring, only to find that they’re now closer to 40 than they’d thought. The show’s a tribute to the most under-appreciated women of the ’80s—professional wrestlers.

**The Good Place** (2014–present)
This sci-fi comedy series follows the lives of a group of people who have died, only to realize that they’ve been placed in a simulation called “The Good Place.” The show explores themes of morality, purpose, and the nature of existence.

**The Magicians** (2015–present)
This smart, hilarious, and action-packed TV series follows a group of young magicians who enter a graduate program at a school of magic where they learn to control their powers.

**The Invitation** (2017)
A thriller about a man who becomes involved in a dangerous game of cat and mouse with a mysterious and dangerous antagonist.

A drama series that follows the lives of a group of people who have lost loved ones due to a mysterious event that wiped out 2% of the world’s population and left the survivors searching for meaning and purpose.

**Ex Machina** (2015)
A sci-fi thriller that explores the ethical implications of developing artificial intelligence and the potential consequences of creating life-like robots.

**Sleeping Wild Women** (2015–present)
A true crime series that follows the story of 10 women who were found murdered in a remote area of the United States.

**True Detective** (2014–present)
A crime drama set in the Deep South, following the investigations of two mismatched Louisiana state police officers as they try to solve a series of brutal murders.

A drama series that follows the lives of a group of people who have lost loved ones due to a mysterious event that wiped out 2% of the world’s population and left the survivors searching for meaning and purpose.

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In the annals of Ben Affleck’s career, there may be no moment in which the personal and the professional have converged as masterfully as when the star took on the role of Tom “Redfly” Davis in J.C. Chandor’s new Netflix movie *Triple Frontier*. It was while shooting the heist film last year that Affleck was famously photographed taking a break on an Oahu beach, gazing out at the ocean, towel wrapped high around his waist, with the sizable back tattoo he would initially deny as real on full display. Even for Affleck, a celebrity whose paparazzi shots frequently demonstrate an almost novelistic pathos, this shot has a singular melancholic eloquence, speaking wordlessly of a man who appeared to be Going Through Some Stuff, including the well-publicized end of his marriage.

It’d be a year before any of us would be able to lay eyes on the actual movie he was making, but it’s a reverberant pleasure to watch *Triple Frontier*, now out in theaters and headed to Netflix on March 13, and to realize that Affleck is playing an actual sad dad in it. A divorced ex–service member struggling to sell undesirable condos in order to cover his bills, Tom’s a former tough guy brought low by civilian life. He’s humiliated by how much he’s been floundering — so much so that when Santiago (Oscar Isaac), a former brother in arms, comes calling with a paid recon mission in South America, it doesn’t take much for him to say yes. It doesn’t take much for his other old colleagues to say yes, either. Tom’s the most grandly downtrodden of the bunch, but there’s also Francisco (Pedro Pascal), whose pilot’s license was suspended after a coke bust, Ben (Garrett Hedlund) channels his frustration into MMA fights, while his brother William (Charlie Hunnam) gives pep talks to enlistees that include a less-than-uplifting story about choking someone out in a fit of rage in a cereal aisle. While they’ve all been struggling with life after the military, Santiago never really left it — he just went private, leasing out his expertise to local police in their battle with the cartels. He has to do a little coaxing to get them into what turns out to be a robbery and assassination attempt on a drug lord, but the truth is they all want to go. They need the money, but even more than that, they need to feel like highly trained warriors again, instead of drifting failures — even if what they’re doing is criminal.

*Triple Frontier* kicked around for years before it landed at Netflix — at one point, it was a Kathryn Bigelow project with Tom Hanks in talks to star. Bigelow stayed on as an executive producer for this incarnation, which was also written by her frequent collaborator Mark Boal, and helmed by Margin Call’s Chandor. The result is a deftly made, intentionally uneasy thriller that oscillates between can-they-pull-it-off thrills and oh-god-how-many-people-will-die dread. But it’s not hard to wonder what Bigelow’s version might have been like had she been able to apply her distinctively feminine, almost romantic gaze to this hypermasculine environment. As is, *Triple Frontier* is a movie about masculinity adrift, with Affleck as its mournful heart, but it doesn’t have the right degree of vulnerability to fully balance out the macho posturing. Where’s a beach towel when you need it?
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