

## TRIVIA BARKER CANT LOSE

I'm addicted to game shows. One of the first things to pop into my head every morning is me standing face-to-face on a stage with Bob Barker, the fucking Elvis Presley of game show hosts. Every day I hear good ol' Bob telling me to spay and neuter something or another in one ear and good ol' Mom whispering to me how much, "Bob's gonna love you," in the other.

I have spent my entire life learning the answers to questions that are completely useless in the real world. These answers only mean something in a world where promotional consideration is paid for by **HASBRO: There's lead in the toys**. Where answering the kindergarten level question, "*This virus is named after the Ebola River valley in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,*" entitles me to glamorous vacations that are advertised on giant cardboard cutouts with a model wearing an evening gown. Just so you know: "The Ebola Virus."

As a kid, I'd wake to the sounds of game show music and hear the announcers calling out the title of the show: "*THE PYRAMID. THE PASSWORD. TIC TAC DOUGH.*" I would grab a bowl of **SUGAR TIME Cereal: Sweetened with whole cubes of sugar. It's so good; you'll go crazy,** and plant myself on the scratchy red and orange and black speckled shag carpet. The morning was a world of magic, fabulous prizes, and oppor-

tunity. I would sit there with my mother while she wrote her weekly correspondence to Bob Barker. Letters that she'd spray with floral perfume. Letters that had a picture of me inside. I'd eat cereal until I got to the bottom of the box and pull out the plastic, piece-of-shit toy. My mother would sit on the couch, half passed out from finding her own prize at the bottom of a bottle of **ANDERSON SCOTCH WHISKY: Enjoy it with your cigarettes.**

Once she told me, "I am going to teach you to be the most well-known person ever. You may get old and die but they are going to talk about you on a game show. You're gonna be worth a million dollars. You are going to be the answer to the million-dollar question. The bonus question."

She also told me that we'd all grow up as one big, happy family. Me, her, and good ol' Bob. So not only was she insane, but she was also a liar. Or maybe he was the liar. One way or the other, he's gonna know who I am. When I meet him, I'm going to offer my left hand to him to shake. Just like Bob Barker did to my father years ago on the day of the famous "Massengil Incident."

My mother was so excited to be there at the Price is Right studio. She had hoped and prayed that Rod Roddy would call her name. When they said his name, my dad looked angry, and my mom looked disappointed. I thought it was exciting. I could feel electricity on the chair. My dad stood up and walked down the aisle. He didn't run. He stomped his feet. He walked like he would walk when he had to go to the can. Like it was a chore. He had to price a fabulous product. "**HOW MUCH DOES THIS PRODUCT COST?**" The lovely spokesmodel picked up the large, red

box to reveal a smaller box with a smiling lady on the front that looked eerily similar to my mother.

*Let's play the Family Feud! Reasons to hang your head in shame. Top three answers on the board: Asshole Dad. Drunk Mom. Massengil game show incident.*

"Massengil? Mary Jo! How much does your douche cost?" the asshole dad said to the audience.

My mother retreated under her seat so low that her shame sucked me down onto the floor with her. It was the first time I ever saw women's underwear. There was complete silence. Not even Bob Barker could think of anything clever to say.

Weird how a feminine deodorant product for a lady's private parts is one of the reasons why I ended up here, at a bar, playing some low-rent version of Quizzo with a host named Johnny Good Times. A fat fuck of a host who can't help but fellate his microphone after every question. He swallows it and asks, "*Animal Husbandry is the practice of doing what?*" If there were a category for best blank stare, these four idiots sitting next to me would be tied for Grand Champion.

"Breeding livestock," I answer. Before Johnny WhatEver tells me that I'm right, I say to the rest of the contestants, "If I wanted to play with myself I would do it while watching Wheel of Fortune."

**Promotional Consideration is paid for today by ANDERSON SCOTCH WHISKY: It tastes like shit.**

I stopped off here at this Quizzo-for-dummies to get my juices flowing for my appearance later tonight on *The Genius Gauntlet*, hosted by game show legend Bob Barker. One of the most stressful, but orgasmic experiences of an info junkie's life. The most difficult game show ever conceived. Hours and hours of intense questions and answers. This show makes Jeopardy look like Press Your Luck—stupid and made for babies to entertain themselves. The line in Vegas is that the finals will come down to me and the Russian. He's my nemesis. The Russian follows me around like the Clap to local Quizzo nights, trivia times, or whatever-the-hell you want to call them. We trade victories—he usually cheats, or I let him win. The Russian is the closest thing to a rival that I have. He's always my second. My runner-up. He pushes me. He makes me better at what I do. He's a necessary evil. He's the closest thing to a friend that I have. Right now, at this Kindergarten Quizzo Time, he's just standing in the back scouting me, not participating. He's saving his jib for the *Gauntlet*. So, in his honor, I order a strong Black Russian on the rocks from the bartender as the glow of white, ivory piano keys nestled between the botoxed lips of the Russian catches my eye. I send the bar girl over to him with a White Russian just to be a dick. He's lactose intolerant. I hate him and every day I hope for his death, but right now, but if my plan is going to work, I need him now more than ever.

Johnny Bang Bang over-enunciates the last word of the question, "**JACKSON.**" I slam my hand down on my buzzer and on the bar, the force vibrating my glass, sending premium Russian vodka hopping up into the air in a tight drop, then diving back

down. “William Harding Jackson. Deputy Director of the CIA in the 1950’s.” I scream my answer out. “Can you guys hear the questions? You’re not answering any of them,” I say, looking down the line at the morons with the collective IQ of 88, still nursing their beers.

Right before the lightning round begins, we’re on another commercial break. I walk down the bar to congratulate two of the contestants for making it as far as they did. They’ve been eliminated and will get a nice consolation prize from one of the sponsors today: **WISK. Ring around the collar? Yes. The unmistakable odor of guilt? No.**

Johnny Blah Blah kicks off the lightning round and I make it a point to let everybody in this room know who the real threat is. If good ol’ Bob could see me now, he’d know who to watch out for. I fire off my answers, rat-a-tat, like a machine gun, “Don Pardo—the voice of the Price is Right from 1956 until 1963.” “Sunscreen.” “Beach Towels.” “The Declaration of Independence.” “Gary Coleman.” “Potato Soup.” “The Chinese.” “Hamburger Helper.” “Pantaloons.”

The answers come out of me like a reflex. A reflex that makes me want to win fabulous prizes. Possibly a new car. Makes me want to be the answer to the million-dollar question. A subject on Jeopardy. A reflex that wants people to say my name in the form of a question. “Who is Trivia Barker?”

I am going to dominate *The Genius Gauntlet* and stand face-to-face with the Angel of Death. Nose to nose with the man who ruined my life. A reflex that wants to hurt him like he hurt me.