



**9<sup>30</sup>AM SATURDAY** I awake to scattered laughter and applause. Crap. I don't actually know how long I was out for, but that time apparently included some kind of misadventure to Drumheller and a few new characters getting tossed into the mix. The improvisers currently outnumber the audience. I finish off the energy drink I started before I had passed out, and, with the residual flavour of taurine staining my teeth, I wonder whether or not I remembered to bring my toothbrush. After searching my bag, the answer is, regrettably, no.



**4 AM SATURDAY** Heading into this next two-hour block, its title—the Hours of Gratuitous Nudity—lent too much leeway to my imagination, and prodded my consciousness with questions, like “how naked are we talking?” and—well, that's pretty much it.

This timeslot started off with the promise of raunch: an actress' shirt came off not five minutes in, and although her bra covered any actual nudity, the collective male portions of the audience grinned from ear to ear. One dude in the audience booed when it came back on, and I couldn't help but silently echo his sentiments. We were promised gratuitous amounts of nudity, weren't we?

And so it went, with little teases, dropped pants, and shirtlessness, but nothing that was genuinely graphic. A prosthetic penis was used in a variety of ways, but there was no real skin for the first while. An hour passed, and I'd just about written the Hours of Gratuitous Nudity off as being plain old 14A when out popped a pair of testicles. It was gross, hilarious, and, at 5am, less mortifying than you'd expect such a sight to be.

Testes were as vulgar as it got, however—much to the disappointment of the whistling male audience members. Spurred on by the theme of the hour, a few more romantic complications cropped up, pairs of pants flew off, and a bunny suit was worn in the context of good ol' furry love-making. After all, who doesn't love yiffing? Me, weirdos, that's who. It's creepy.



**10AM SUNDAY** As morning number two dawns, the audience is a small but dedicated one. Traditional theatre etiquette is out the window: legs are kicked up over adjacent seats, and I'm sprawled out over two or three. Comfort's the top priority at this point, though my theatre seat has held up well considering I've been planted in it for more than a day.

**5<sup>30</sup>PM SUNDAY** The theatre put some free food out in the lobby for those of us still hanging on. Cold pizza, carrot sticks, hummus—leftovers from backstage, no doubt, but who cares? At this point it's either these free goods, or more of 7-Eleven's hyper-processed foods that come with a price tag. I gorge on cold pizza, and it's never felt so good. On the chalkboard, a few 46s sit proudly next to their corresponding names. Disappointingly, mine is not one of them.

**8PM SUNDAY** Three hours remain. It's almost the end, and everyone is feeling it. The same is true of the plot: all of the love-triangles have been resolved, the onstage movie is almost finished, and the actors seem to be picking up with the end in sight. They're making in-jokes for those of us who have been here for the long haul, and although the rest of the quickly filling audience chuckle at the seemingly random absurdity of a man digging his testicles out with a spoon, those of us who haven't left laugh a little harder, as we know this didn't just come out of nowhere—it was first established more than a day ago.

**11 AM SATURDAY** The audience has gained a few warm bodies. I'm starting to get hungry but don't want to go to the 7-Eleven again.

**4<sup>30</sup>PM SATURDAY** A moose just crucified a man. I laugh hard, and then question what this weekend's turning me into.

**10 PM SATURDAY** The Varscona's almost full again, and with the increased audience comes a renewed energy in the improvisers. There's a chalkboard in the lobby that lists who's stayed up for how long, and some of these people have been going for 28 hours straight.

At the same time, staying up is a little easier for them than the audience—after all, they move around, talk, interact, and work their brains while we sit silently in our seats and just take it all in. Earlier in the day, a Hunter S Thompson character appeared—a perfect representation of this weekend long improv bender. They can't stop here—this is improv country.



**7<sup>30</sup>AM SATURDAY** The sugar and caffeine of my energy drinks are finally wearing off, and I'm starting to fade in and out, having trouble focusing on the onstage action. I've taken to stabbing at my arm with a pen to retain consciousness—it works for a while, but then just leaves me sore.

On stage, they've started to shoot the movie now, meaning some progress is happening plot-wise. Unfortunately, there are only eight or so semi-conscious audience members to follow dimly along. I regret not taking a pre-show nap Friday afternoon. I'm approaching the 24-hour mark myself, though I've only been here for about 15.

The label on the energy drink that I'm consuming tells me I shouldn't drink more than one litre's worth per day. Now that I'm cracking open my third, I may have already passed that mark—but is a day defined simply as a 24-hour period, or does that include the body's recovery time spent sleeping? Whatever the answer is, I'll find out soon.

**12AM SUNDAY** Some random fellow whom I've been chatting with periodically throughout the weekend brings me Timbits and apple juice. I owe you, man, wherever you are.



**11PM SUNDAY** In the final hours, time's finally an issue. The action gets absolutely madcap as the cast scrambles to tie up any and all remaining loose ends. There's a chase that leads into, over, and through the audience, which has by now swelled to near capacity.

The last hour is the “movie” that's been in production for 52 hours, and it speeds by. The cast takes a bow and thanks the audience, the techs, a few audience cameos, and the three of us who managed to stay there the entire time.

When I leave the Varscona, there's a gentle rain coming down, and I'm left to contemplate the weekend as I zero in on my bed. Although a good sleep's my top priority, I can't help but feel a little bittersweet about leaving the theatre behind. Over 53 hours, I watched a group of dedicated actors create an entire world of their own. We saw them meet, fall in love, make love on the bed, break up, find new love, make a movie, get kind of naked, leave the movie, be assaulted by zombies, and dig their testicles out with a spoon. That isn't something you can find anywhere, and it wouldn't have meant the same in spaced out, smaller doses. The Soap-A-Thon took up my entire weekend; but in exchange, I got to bear witness to a group of actors truly living in a world of their own—one that lasted long after other plays had lowered the curtains. G



**6AM SUNDAY** The second block of themed hours is upon us—the Zombie Attack hour. Whenever a certain sound rings out, everyone not currently in the scene rushes the stage—except for one cast member who, whether due to sleep deprivation or sheer hilarity, would just snatch the prop TV each time and walk off.

Despite the comedy—which is holding up impressively well into hour 36—I'm barely awake, and I've caught myself slack-jawed and drooling multiple times. Not that I'm alone—the rest of the assembled audience is in various states of consciousness. I feel like a zombie myself