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Dudes Gone Wild

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New Orleans, La.—These trips for journalism conferences always begin with the promise of a rewarding and enriching educational experience. As journalism students, we, Paul Kix and Justin Kendall, attend to improve our craft. Then it happens. We go out, drink and are transformed into Dudes Gone Wild.

**wednesday**

New Orleans smells worse than Saturday night with the Saints' Ricky Williams' jock. You wish the smell of urine was contained to the trash bags lining the streets. You wish. It's hot as hell, too.

We head to popular pub Pat O'Brien's, home of the Hurricane, not to escape our senses but to dull them. Onstage dueling pianos stop playing for an old African-American man. Guy must be at least 100 years old. His parted hair might be his own, but the metal clip-on fingertips he wears are definitely not.

He places his hands under the silver serving tray, and his metal fingertips clink out the beat for the pianos, which have started up again. Ratatatatatat, Ratatatatat. He wants your money. And he wants it on his silver platter. It's hard not to give it to him. He's good. But we're poor. And our money we spend is going to Lady Liquor.

We don't know what makes up a Hurricane. It could be rum. Could be vodka. We don't care. By the time we leave Pat O'Brien's, our voices hoarse from renditions of "New York, New York" and "The Piano Man," we're wasted.

In search of a good "I saw..." we head to famed Bourbon Street. The smell is worse here, but the visuals more than make up for it.

Place is loaded with people. Picture Ames during a riot with 50,000 more hooligans helicoptered in. We run into some bar — that and souvenir shops are all Bourbon Street consists of — run up some stairs, and we're on the balcony.

Everyone else has shelled out for beads in souvenir shops. Tourists. We'll get ours the old-fashioned way. We yell for beads, but the ladies are making us work for it. Kix drops his pants and is showered with beads. Kendall claims most of them without dropping so much as his Bud Light. Kix throws them back when women cover their faces with their shirts.

Kix leaves Bourbon Street with a torn-up fake ID (courtesy of a fun-hating bouncer after the balcony). Kendall leaves with dignity intact.

**thursday**

We attend conferences.

Skipping out on the last one, we hail a cab from Lady Liquor. Skipping out on the last one, we hail a cab from Lady Liquor. We head to popular pub Pat O'Brien's, home of the Hurricane, not to escape our senses but to dull them. Onstage dueling pianos stop playing for an old African-American man. Guy must be at least 100 years old. His parted hair might be his own, but the metal clip-on fingertips he wears are definitely not.

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**friday**

We attend fewer sessions.

Tonight is the night for the real drinking so we go back to Bourbon Street. What better way to honor our return than to buy "Huge Ass Beers?" This isn't a 20. It isn't a 40. It is 1/2 gallon of Miller Light goodness for $10. Walking around with a beer the size of a lawn gnome attracts some attention.

"Dude, where'd you get that fucking beer?"
"You guys are my heroes."
"Hey, can I take a picture with you?"
Kix is more than willing to oblige tourists.

Kendall and fellow journalism student Tim Paluch are left alone with their brew.

A half-hour later, our beers drank, we wander the streets. Wander a bit too far. Too many shirtless men in leather chaps. Three too many oversized beers resembling something phallic. We leave the gay district.

Jell-O shots from a syringe follow for Kix. He shoots them into his mouth, not a vein. Grenades follow the Jell-O shots.

"What's in them?" Kix asks.
"If you knew, you wouldn't drink it," the bouncer says.

And then a man gives us a lesson we didn't expect or want, not in the middle of so much binge drinking and possible promiscuity. He says the end of the world is near, and Jesus (he's knocking on our chests now) is the doorway to salvation. He was once like those around us, he says. Drinking, coveting, sinning. Then he found Jesus.

We quit him with our pockets stuffed of brochures and comic strips and booklets. The church is not the next place we head. It's back to the Hyatt for pizza, but we pass out before it arrives.

**saturday**

We are the pizza for lunch.

We attend no sessions.

We learned more about life on our trip than about journalism. We learned that women will flash you for beads.