

One day
soon

I'll take
my shirt
off in
public

By Mark Nutter



My shirt is coming off. It's going to happen. The big day looms large. And then, there I'll be, naked to the waist, available for unrestricted viewing.

I am almost nearly fully mentally prepared for this event.

Why, you may ask, has it taken so long for me to feel secure enough to remove my top, thereby allowing strangers to scrutinize my man boobs?

Maybe you think I think I'm repugnant, or maybe I really am repugnant, or maybe a combination of both.

Guess what? I used to believe I was repugnant, but not anymore. Now I simply believe I'm unalluring, which is easier to live with.

So what's taken so long? What have I feared?

It's been a gradual process. Ironically, the more I resembled a bush gorilla, the greater my self-acceptance.

Now I realize I need not compare myself to others, except for that guy over there with the flabby belly hanging down over his belt buckle. I like him. I'll call him Arnie. I want him around for the big reveal.

Not that I'm obsessing about my moobs, but here's another thought: I'd like you to consider my ample tits a physical manifestation of the commonality I share with womankind. I, too, know the discomfort of attracting unwanted stares when running along the beach in slow motion. And though I may never suckle a babe, if I ever did I'd probably attract even more stares than women, especially if I attempt to suckle while running along the beach in slow motion. Please keep that in mind, womankind.

Also, look. Arnie's are bigger. Thanks, Arnie.

The location of the reveal is key. Where will it be?

The impact will be greatest if done in a busy public park, about 2 a.m., when the paths are filled with nocturnal joggers. I'll do it

when the clouds part, under the blazing light of a waxing crescent moon.

Off comes the shirt, while I'm standing behind Arnie.

Then I'll step out.

The runners will halt and cheer. My bold gesture will inspire them, and they will follow suit. I will be hoisted onto the shirtless shoulders of an army of my grateful semiclothed brothers.

We'll march down the road, gathering followers in each small village. The highway will be littered with discarded Eddie Bauer piqué polos.

We'll arrive at the capital at daybreak, a hundred thousand strong. The transition of power will be peaceful. I will be anointed king. I won't wear a crown, because then people will stare at the crown and not at my garden-variety body. Arnie will be my jester, whispering in my ear, "All glory is fleeting, so gobble up that tub of caramel corn."

History will mark me a benevolent shirtless leader.

I will be asked to perform acts of gallantry, like feeding the poor or defending the kingdom against a bellicose enemy, and I will say, "Look at the unsightly anatomy I have exposed for you. Is that not enough?" and they will say, "Yes."

Mothers will celebrate their shirtless sons, and vice versa.

Wait. Maybe I'm rushing things. Maybe before I take my shirt off, I should work with a personal trainer. Just for a while, say six months, long enough to get a four-pack—I'm not greedy.

Say, I could be missing a bet by taking off my shirt before I'm really old. Can you imagine that? That would blow people's minds. People will say, "Look at that old fart with no shirt. He must have seen some stuff."

One day soon I'll take my shirt off in public. After the trainer. When I'm really old.

About the Author



MARK NUTTER
grew up in a motel
near Joliet,
Illinois, which is
not as glamorous
as it sounds. He
acquired a taste for
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Texas: Darkly Humorous Tales, and *Sunset Cruise on the River Styx: Dark, Absurd Tales*. He's been published in *Jokes Review*, *HAVOK Magazine*, *Mystery Weekly*, *Dear Leader Tales*, and *The Daily Drunk*.

He's the winner of both the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award and the LA Weekly Theater Award for the music & lyrics for *ReAnimator: The Musical*. Mark wrote the music & lyrics and cowrote the book for *The Bicycle Men*, named Outstanding Overall Production at the New York International Fringe Festival. With Cynthia Carle he created *Christmas Smackdown*.

Mark has also written for television (*SNL*, *3rd Rock from the Sun*) and film (*Almost Heroes* starring the late Chris Farley).

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