

that several uncomfortable months of miscreant clown sightings are really just bizarre foreplay leading up to a manic Devil's Night (Oct. 30) wave of ultraviolence.



Thankfully, widely publicized clown frenzy caught the Eugene Police Department's attention a long time ago.

EPD released a statement Oct. 4 saying they "have been getting media calls regarding the national stories about 'creepy clowns,' and are aware of information online at #wenotclowninaround."

A troll's paradise, Twitter handle #wenotclowninaround goes back to September. At this point the feed reads like a social media clearinghouse of murder and kidnapping threats, as well as furious backlash from normals who aren't in the mood for any funny business or pointless psychological warfare, even if the holiday sort of demands it.

The cops say they're "also aware of concerns from the public regarding clown sightings in Oregon, but have not received information to suggest that there is a credible threat in Eugene."

EPD's statement continues on to list personal safety tips, like: Buddy up; be always alert; avoid dark alleys; don't climb into cars with strangers; keep your distance from weirdos and avoid making eye contact; fight back if grabbed.

All of which somehow does nothing to calm frayed nerves. Boilerplate public safety tips sound empty when you've got garish visions of weaponized clowns and mass violence running through your mind.

In the swirl of increasingly bizarre news coverage, it's hard to determine rationally what is the appropriate response to our nihilist clown epidemic. Coming to grips with something this weird is like trying to pick up greased marbles with chopsticks.

Like, isn't it obvious this probably is all a persistent hoax that won't die so long as modern teenagers can create dummy social media accounts?

But even if it's as simple as that, it wouldn't take much for the feared clown purge night to become real.

"Reality," author Philip K. Dick said, "is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away," and if he's right, then our clown problem is as real as it needs to be.

If the Clown Hunters are correct, then EPD's advice probably isn't enough to keep marauding clowns at bay.

In that case you may as well try meeting the enemy at the gates after smearing your face with white grease paint and slapping on some bright red lipstick.

A wise man once said: "If you've gotta go, then go with a smile."

Another one said: "Goodnight, and good luck."

## FUNNY TERRORISM

### Clowning around in the Post-Fun Age

BY BEN RICKER

**P**olice in August responded to calls from a South Carolina school saying that scary clowns tried luring some kids into the nearby woods. Around the same time and not far away, goofballs in face paint and fright wigs taunted a little boy outside the apartment complex where he lives.

Law enforcement agencies from Eugene to Florida, and beyond, are fielding panicked calls from traumatized parents who say demented jokers are harassing their little ones.

Clowns in Alabama sent schools into total lockdown by making vague death threats on Facebook.

Ensuing panic led major retail chains to pull clown

costumes off the shelf. Some counties have forbidden the wearing of clown costumes this Halloween. Most surprisingly, corporate whizzes at junk food giant McDonald's agreed recently to keep Ronald out of the public eye until anti-clown sentiment has somewhat abated.

In a short span of time, things have gone from weird to impossibly bonkers.

What started out, probably, as a mindless prank went and snowballed big enough to become an internet-age self-fulfilling prophecy. And every new clown sighting adds more unpredictable spin to an unnerving phenomenon that major news organizations have started calling "clown hysteria."

Things took a swerving turn for the scary two weeks ago when clown-intolerant vigilantes sounded the alarm

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