

# Complimentary Breakfast

*Aaron Hughes*

---

THE AD in the Preston Leader:

Do you need some extra cash?!\* Right now?! Tax-free?!  
Wanted: Healthy people under 35 to trial an  
exciting new medication for high blood pressure.  
One night's accommodation in a luxurious hotel provided.  
Free meals, drinks, snacks and entertainment included.  
Visit [www.newmedsaustralia.com.au](http://www.newmedsaustralia.com.au) for more information.  
Or call 1800 Med Aus  
What are you waiting for?!

\*Upon successful completion of the trial.

Me: Struggling artist. With a Gucci-lifestyle girlfriend. With three months' worth of overdue rent. With credit cards maxed out. Didn't need to know much more.

Called. Operators were standing by.

Met all the criteria. Under thirty-five. Not on any other other meds. Generally healthy. No recreational drug use. Well, that they need to know about, anyway...

The face-to-face interview. Short and sweet. Collins Street.

Her: Middle-aged cougar. Pearls. Coral-coloured Chanel suit (knock-off from Bali). Spray tan. Target heels.

\$1,000! Whoo and hoo! Twenty-three pages of Ts and Cs. None of which I read. Cartoon dollar signs in my eyes.

'Sign here. And here. Initial here. Copy of your Driver's Licence. See you Friday night. Here's the address. And here's my mobile number, *young*

*man.* My personal mobile number. If you need anything. Anything at all, *baby.*'

Hollywood-vampire-dentist's smile.

I skedaddle.

Kensington. Friday. 6.13PM. Running late. *Shit. Fuck. Bloody number 57 tram.*

*Is this it?* Tall, black, brick fence. Black, metal-sheeted gate. Security cameras. Razor fucking wire. Feels like the Kennedy compound.

Buzz the intercom. Security dude appears. Epaulettes. *Huge* beer gut. Signs me in.

'Go on up driveway. Someone will meet you.' Under his breath: 'Fucking hippy artist.'

'Thanks.' Under my breath: 'Have another beer, mall cop.'

Gate closes with a clunk. Ahead, nondescript black building. Motel-style layout. One storey. Series of one, two... *ten* rooms. Reception area. Not the Kennedy compound. But a swimming pool and spa. *Sweet.*

Ring the bell. Middle-aged nurse appears. 'You're late.'

*You're fat. Lady, that white uniform might have fit you thirty kilograms ago. Are you the security guard's wife? You two bump uglies much?* 'Sorry. Tram delayed.' *Whatevs.*

'Driver licence. Sign here. And here. And initial here.'

Specimen cup appears.

'Pee into this. Drop in the chute down the walkway. Room 9. Keys. Someone will fetch you for dinner. Here's the menu. Gimme your mobile. And your computer equipment. They'll be safe in the safe. Ha ha.'

Room 9. Hilton, it's not. Bates Motel, it kinda is. No minibar. *Fuckers.*

First things first. Cup. Pee. Filled. Spilled. *Shit.* Lid on. Done and dusted. Deposited in the chute.

Girl. Cute. Hoop earrings. Freckles. Poncho. Carrying a guitar. *Hello.*

'Hiya. Room 8. See you at dinner.'

'Cool.'

She smiles.

*Things are looking up.*

Room 9. Sneak a ciggy. Cable. Cable porn! Totes awes! *Memo to self: whack off later.*

Knock knock. Another white uniform. Three-hundred-year-old woman. Make-up applied with a spatula. 'Dining room, five minutes, hun.'

Dinner. Ten rooms; ten guinea pigs. Waitress. Another white uniform. But

with an apron. It's Three-Hundred-Year-Old-Woman's *older* sister: Four-Hundred-Year-Old-Woman. Cautionary example of tanning salon abuse.

'Beef or chicken?'

'Any vegies?'

Level stare from tanorexic.

'Chicken it is then, gorgeous.'

Level stare.

*Yikes.*

Food comes quickly. Small talk. We're all getting kinda excited now. Lots of drug jokes.

The candidates:

Room 1. Hausfrau in salmon tracky dacks and diamantés.

Room 2. Tall, gay guy in cardigan (chartreuse, apparently) and pant (singular).

Room 3. Teenager. Gamer boy. All in black.

Room 4. Goth girl. Says she has twenty-four piercings. I can only see eight.

Room 5. Goth boy. Piercings ratio: twenty-six total, nine visible.

Room 6. Surfer boi. 'Gnarly, dude.'

Room 7. Cheerleader. Saving money for schoolies on the coast. 'Super!'

Room 8. Poncho-guitar-hoop-earring-freckles girl. She's single. *Cool.*

Room 9. *C'est moi.*

Room 10. Trucker. Loads of fucking tattts. Brick shithouse arms.

Drug company gift bags for everybody. Heaps of free shit. *Noice.*

Medicine cups appear. Red tablet. Swallow. Water chaser. Down the rabbit's hole?

Room 8's name is Alice.

Saunter back to room. Flirting with Room-8-Alice. Chit chat.

'Catch you later.'

'Sure.'

Room. Cable. Cable porn. *Whack off? Hmm? Later?*

*Hmm. Hot in here.*

Drink. Ice in fridge. *Thirsty.*

Lying in bed. *No way: coin slot for vibrating bed. Broken. Shit.*

*Hot. Thirsty. Take jacket off. Better.*

*Is that Tori Spelling? 90210 re-runs. Her tits looked normal back then.*

*Hot. Take off shoes. Better. Socks, too. Turn air-con up.*

Special guest star, Heather Locklear. *Melrose Place* re-runs.  
*Shit: I'm in the Aaron-Fucking-Spelling-Twilight-Zone.*  
*Hot. Maybe take pants off? Good idea.*  
*Drink. Ice? Need more.* Peek out the door. No-one round. *Pants? Naaah.*  
Hotfoot it to ice machine.  
'Hiya, handsome.'  
Room-1-hausfrau-tracky-dacks-diamantés. Her jacket zip at half-mast.  
Lipstick smudged. Hair mussed up. No bra.  
'Hot, isn't it?'  
'Yeah.'  
'Nice legs, boyo.'  
'Thanks. Ba-bye.'

Room. Ice in hand towel on my face. *Niiiiice.*  
Linda Gray. *Model's Inc.* re-run. *Fucking Aaron-Fucking-Spelling.*  
*Hot.* T-shirt off. *Better.* Ice in towel on chest.  
*Linda Grey: you're one hot cougar.*  
*Horny.* Porn channel. Fifty shades of fucking awesome. Took a while to  
get there. *Odd.*  
Snooze. *Zzzzzzzzz.*

*Wassa time?*  
Full dark outside now.  
*Hot.* Need more ice. *Jocks? Suppose so.*  
'Hiya, handsome.'  
Room-2-tall-gay-guy-in-cardigan-and-pant-singular. Cardigan buttoned  
all wrong. Pant zip undone. Sneaky nuts hanging out.  
'Ahem. Better tuck.'  
'Could ya help me?'  
Grab ice and flee.  
*Iiiiiiiice. Niiiiiiiiiiice.*  
*Charlie's-Fucking-Angels. Aaron-Fucking-Spelling. Farrah-Fucking-Hot-Fawcett-*  
*Majors.*  
Second go. Took longer. *Odd.*  
Snoozles. *Zzzzzzzzz.*

*WhereamI?*  
*Hungry. Snacks. Must have snacks. Snacks.* No mini bar. *Snacks. Fuck. Snacks.*

Vending machine. *Snacks.*

*Jocks? Fuck it.*

'Hiya, handsome.'

Room-4-goth-girl and Room-5-goth-boy.

'Hot tonight.'

*All piercings on display.*

'Too hot for clothes for you too, huh?'

'A-huh.'

'Snacks are totes free.'

'Cool.'

Pause.

'Wanna be the meat in a Goth sandwich?'

Take snacks and run.

*Mmm. Snaaaaaacks. Salty-sweet-chewy-yummy-tasty. Can't talk: eating*

*The-Love-Boat-Soon-We'll-Be-Taking-Another-Run. The-Love-Boat-Promises-Something-For-Everyone. Fuuuuck you, Aaron Spelling!*

*Well, hello Cruise-Director-Julie-McCoy. Not so coy now, are you?*

Takes quite a while this time. *Odd.*

Snoozarama. *ZZZZZZZZZ.*

*Hot. Sooooooooo hooottt. Need iiiiiiice. Ice machine.*

'Hiya, handsome.'

Room-7-cheerleader-saving-money-for-schoolies-super. Momentous tits.

*Must fondle.*

Pause. Fondle.

'Yeah, baby.'

*Must get ice. Get ice.*

'Room-6-surfer-boi-gnarly-dude just did me. Wanna spit-roast me with him?'

Escape with ice. Run back. Fondle tits. Escape with ice again.

*Book of Shadows. Witches. Charmed. Rot in hell in your solid gold fucking coffin, Aaron-Fucking-Spelling!*

Hot trio of witches. *Yeah, baby.*

No release. *Fuck. Sleepy.*

Snoozapalooza. *ZZZZZZZZZ.*

*Soooo hot. Soooo thirsty. Ice. Ice machine.*

'Hiya, handsome.'

Room-10-trucker-tatts-brick-shithouse-arms.

He's being enthusiastically felled by Room-3-teenager-gamer boy.  
Ice and I'm gone.

*7th Heaven.*

*Lord, give us this day some decent fucking TV, and deliver us from Aaron-Fucking-Spelling. Amen.*

*Cute mother, though. Flagpole, but nothing happening.*

Nighty night.

Morning. *WhatthefuckwhereamIwhathappenedwhatshatinmymouthlastnight?*

Find clothes and dress. *Star Trek* marathon on TV. *Live long and prosper, fuckers.*

Look up at wall above TV.

*Whoa.*

Someone's been busy.

Someone's been busy drawing.

*I've* been busy drawing.

Lots of my 'art'. Pictures of people. Pictures of the people from the other rooms. Doing all sorts of things. *To each other.*

And Tori Spelling.

And Heather Locklear.

And Linda Gray.

And Farrah Fawcett-Majors.

Not to mention—according to her badge—Cruise Director Julie McCoy.

And those witch-bitches from *Charmed*.

Underneath, in large, gothic letters, the words: '7<sup>th</sup> Heaven'.

When did I draw this? Slept most of the night, didn't I? *Oh wait.*

*Ohhh...*

*What did I draw this with? Is that... is that—dry retch—blood? Is that chocolate?*  
Is that...? Smell my fingers and heave. *Yep, that is.*

Wash hands under hothothot water with soap for a veryveryvery long time.

Back to look at the wall again.

*Is that my naked girlfriend?* Step closer. *Yup.* My spread-eagled, naked girlfriend. Labia majora and minora.

*Does she have... does she have teeth in her 'map of Tassie'.* I Wiki it later. *Vagina dentata.* Latin again. *Cunt teeth.*

*Is that my landlord? Is that... is that me stuffing money... up his arse?*

*Is that... me with an Uzi? At my local ANZ branch? Throwing credit-card ninja stars?*

*Down the fucking rabbit's hole, Morpheus.*

Peek out the door. Sneak down to Reception. Ring bell. Fingers drumming the counter. Fat-White-Nurse's-Uniform-Might-Have-Fit-You-

Thirty-Kilograms-Ago-Lady waddles out.

'Phone and laptop, please.'

'Here you go. And here's your money.'

*Hmm.* I have an idea.

Duck back to my room. Grab phone. Turns lights on. Take heaps of photos of all of my 'artworks'. Also take many videos of the room. Including the pile of hardened towels on the floor. And the fresh stains on the carpet.

Out the door.

'Hiya, handsome.' Room-8-poncho-guitar-hoop-earring-freckles-girl.

*Alice.* 'You look tired. Rough night?'

'You could say that. You?'

'Slept like a baby. Never woke up once.'

*A-huh.*

'Got your money?'

'Yep. Did you count it?' I counted it. \$2,000. *Whoa.* 'They doubled it.'

'Wonder why?'

'No idea.'

'Me either.'

'Did you get your voucher?'

*Que?*

'Your voucher? For your complimentary breakfast? At Macca's on Racecourse Road?'

Look inside envelope. Voucher. 'Yeah.'

She pauses. 'Join me?'

I smile.

'Love to.'

I look back.

There's something brown floating in the swimming pool.

And in the spa, there's lumpy bits floating in the water.

And there's a white lace bra. On the roof.

Eyes ahead.

Macca's. Breakfast.

Alice's smile.

'I just met you. And this is crazy. But here's my number. So call me, maybe?'

One month later.

Page twelve of the 'Health' section in *The Age*:

Wunder-drug hypertension medication withdrawn  
by pharmaceutical company following trials.

*A-huh.*

My new art show: 'Tee-Vee'. Gertrude Street, Fitzroy. Photographic and video installation. Aaron-Spelling-TV-show-and-pornography-inspired prints. Multi-coloured-1970s-style-motel-room photos. Huge fucking success. 'The new Howard Arkley', they call me.

Back rent: paid.

Credit cards: paid off.

Gucci-lifestyle girlfriend: out.

Poncho-guitar-hoop-earring-freckles-girlfriend: in.

Through the looking-glass. *Alice*.

Art critic: 'Where do you get your inspiration?'

Me: 'Dunno. Suburbia?'

Smile widely. Offer another very large glass of very cheap bubbles.

What happens at the Bates-Fucking-Motel *stays* at the Bates-Fucking-Motel.

Thank you and fuck you very much, Aaron Fucking Spelling.

Art isn't easy. But Alice's smile is.