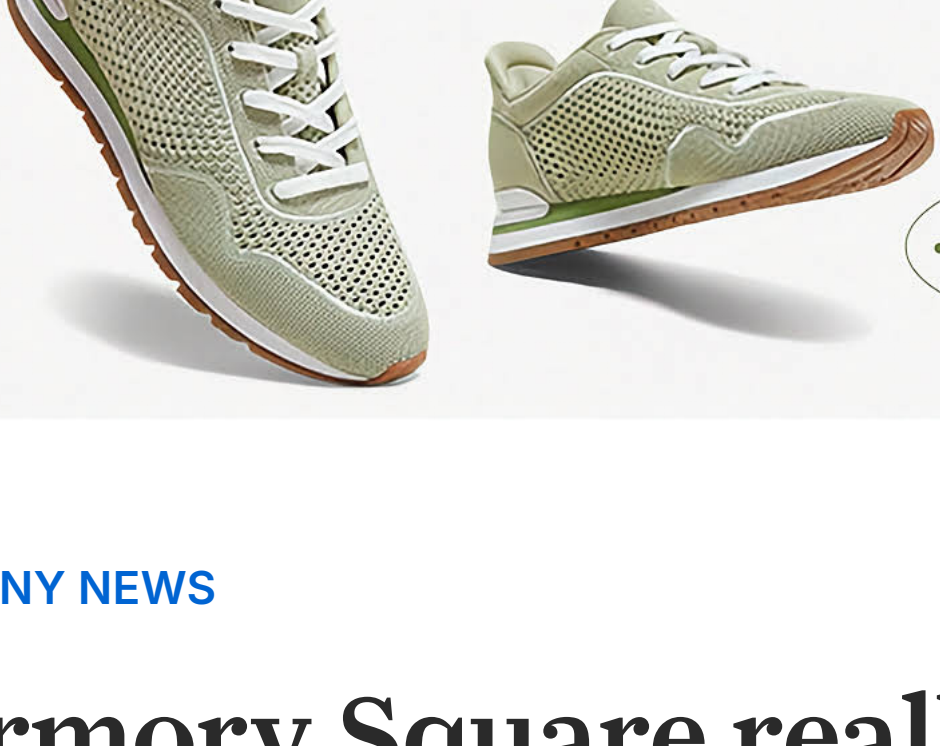


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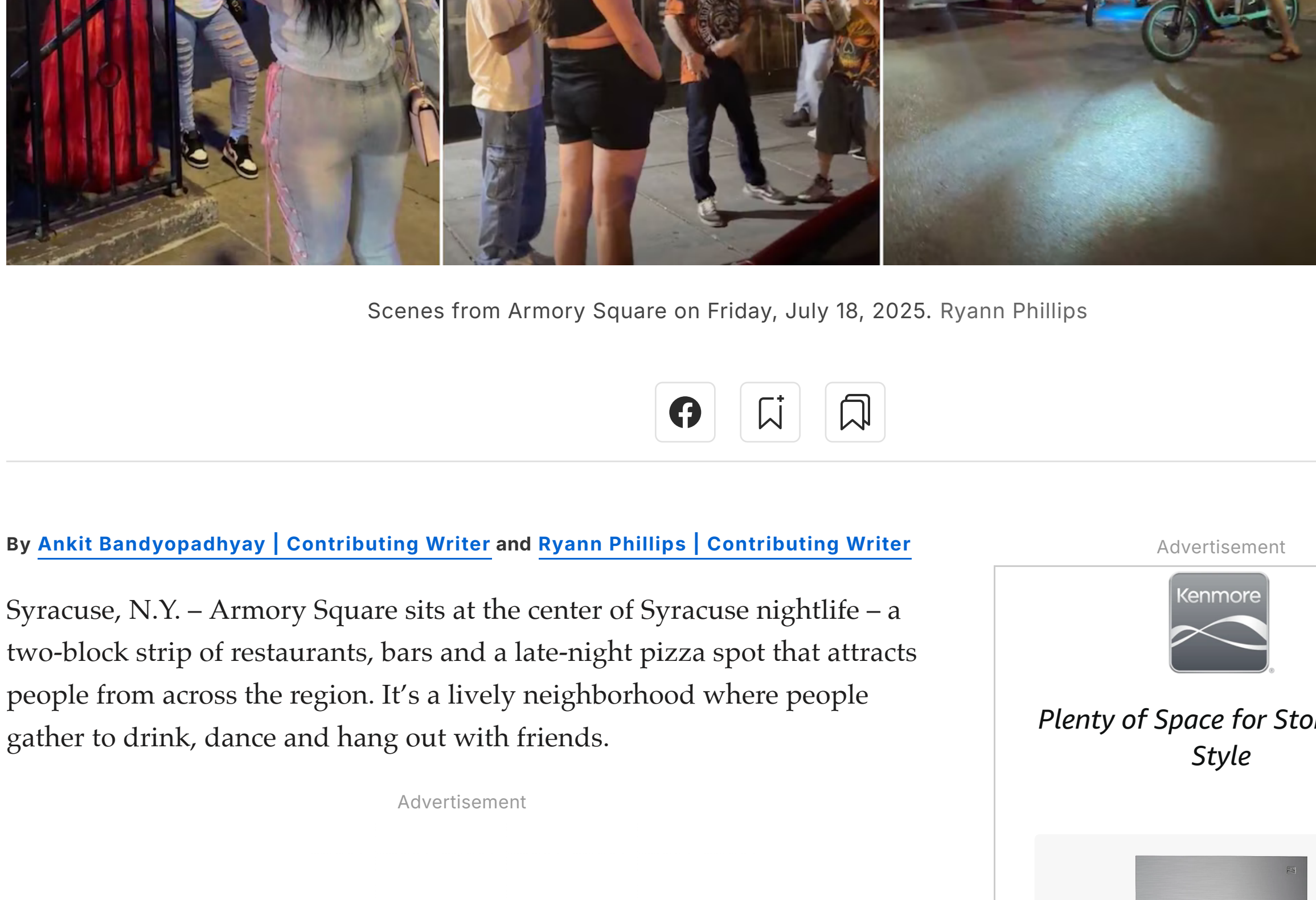
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CENTRAL NY NEWS

Is Armory Square really so chaotic? We spent 4 hours there Friday, here's what we saw

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Scenes from Armory Square on Friday, July 18, 2025. Ryann Phillips



By [Ankit Bandyopadhyay](#) | Contributing Writer and [Ryann Phillips](#) | Contributing Writer

Syracuse, N.Y. – Armory Square sits at the center of Syracuse nightlife – a two-block strip of restaurants, bars and a late-night pizza spot that attracts people from across the region. It's a lively neighborhood where people gather to drink, dance and hang out with friends.

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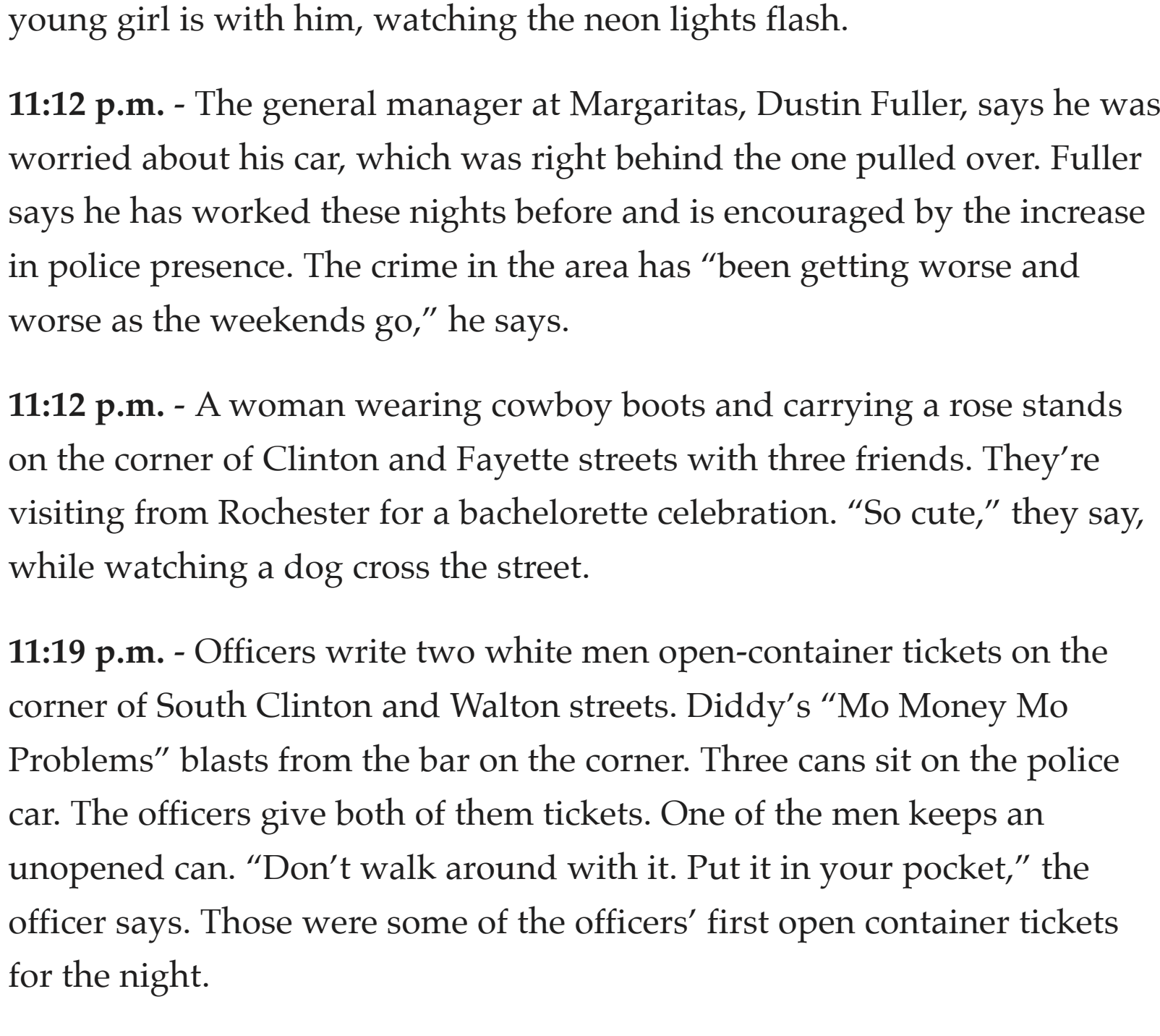
In recent weeks, however, the neighborhood found itself at the center of a heated community debate about safety, policing, crime and late-night shenanigans.

Police and city officials have spent weeks trading barbs after a [Facebook post](#) went Syracuse "viral" this month with over 600 likes and 360 shares. In the post, the police union president said "gangbangers" have infiltrated the square. It described a chaotic, violent scene.

The police chief, deputy mayor and others [balked at the union's description](#). They said problems began after business hours, when people would gather in large groups after bars closed at 2 a.m.

We decided to see for ourselves what Armory Square is like on a weekend night.

Two [syracuse.com](#) reporters visited the square for four hours on Friday, July 18.



By the numbers, there were 26 SPD officers assigned to the area that night, plus probation and other officers. Sassy Cuse had six bar tabs open while people danced to Mariah Carey. Hundreds of people streamed from bar to bar. A police drone flew overhead.

Throughout the weekend (both Friday and Saturday nights), Syracuse police told us they made arrests for four felonies, eight misdemeanors, and three DWIs. They issued 31 appearance tickets (for things like littering and open container violations), eight traffic tickets and 42 parking tickets. They recovered one gun.

Here's a rundown of what we saw and heard during our four hours bouncing around the square:

10:53 p.m. - Two police squad cars block the road in front of Margaritas, and another blocks Franklin and Walton streets. One has pulled over a blue Ford sedan.

11:00 p.m. - A visibly intoxicated man accosts a reporter standing next to Margaritas, asking a few times, "Are you coming home with me?" He mutters "all right" after refusal and continues to walk down Franklin Street.

11:08 p.m. - Cops search the blue sedan, putting an asthma inhaler on top of the car as a younger Black man records the interaction on his phone. A young girl is with him, watching the neon lights flash.

11:12 p.m. - The general manager at Margaritas, Dustin Fuller, says he was worried about his car, which was right behind the one pulled over. Fuller says he has worked these nights before and is encouraged by the increase in police presence. The crime in the area has "been getting worse and worse as the weekends go," he says.

11:12 p.m. - A woman wearing cowboy boots and carrying a rose stands on the corner of Clinton and Fayette streets with three friends. They're visiting from Rochester for a bachelorette celebration. "So cute," they say, while watching a dog cross the street.

11:19 p.m. - Officers write two white men open-container tickets on the corner of South Clinton and Walton streets. Diddy's "Mo Money Mo Problems" blasts from the bar on the corner. Three cans sit on the police car. The officers give both of them tickets. One of the men keeps an unopened can. "Don't walk around with it. Put it in your pocket," the officer says. Those were some of the officers' first open container tickets for the night.

11:32 p.m. - The blue Ford's owner and Tatiana Ince, a passenger, say the car was pulled over because of an alleged stolen license plate. Ince said the interaction between them was a little upsetting. A police officer threw a package of cookies during the car search, making a mess. "I don't think I'm ever coming back here again," Ince says.

11:39 p.m. - Michael Watson, a manager at Nick's Tomato Pie, rings up customers. The crowd is minimal this early. He says he hasn't seen much from down the street, but he's got a limited view from the back of the restaurant. "People are down here to get drunk. They're not here for safety," he says. Watson has mixed feelings about the police presence. He's happy they're here but feels the effort to police the street is targeted. "Now we're getting more, and it's scaring everyone down here," he says.

11:50 p.m. - At the corner of West Fayette and South Clinton streets, cars line up in front of Sassy Cuse. Someone is in the back of a squad car.

11:58 p.m. - There's a man on a Vao bike, performing tricks in the middle of the blocked-off Walton Street. He's swerving from lane to lane, seemingly having the time of his life.

12:02 a.m. - A bouncer at The Hops Spot says the law enforcement has been cracking down heavily on underage people nearby. He said that after 3 a.m. is when things start getting out of control. He echoes Watson's sentiment about Armory Square being a hub for drunk people.

12:11 a.m. - A cop blocking Walton Street smokes a cigar; the streets are mostly empty.

12:17 a.m. - A seemingly intoxicated woman asks an officer in front of Sassy Cuse questions about jaywalking, as one of her friends crosses the street in front of the police.

12:19 a.m. - A person in a red dress, long hair and a white masquerade mask approaches the West Fayette Street intersection. She's been walking around Armory Square for the past hour, greeting people and stopping to take a few pictures.

12:20 a.m. - Nearby, police take handcuffs off a Hispanic man. The man, David Gonzalez Jr., says he was ticketed for throwing a cigarette butt on the street in front of an officer. He's upset he now has to show up in court. Gonzalez, a local hospital employee, says an officer had his eyes on him before the incident.

12:34 a.m. - Outside The York on Fayette Street, music bumps so loud that you can hear snippets outside when the door opens. People dance on the floor, while a line of people wait outside.

12:39 a.m. - A girl with silver streaks in her hair twerks in white cargo pants and a crop top to Beyoncé's "Get Me Bodied" in Sassy Cuse. A woman with black curly hair and red glasses starts patting her head nearby. Many women fan each other as Beyoncé sings "Cool off, cool off."

12:50 a.m. - "All I Want for Christmas Is You" by Mariah Carey blasts through the speakers. It catches people off guard, and people begin dancing and singing.

12:52 a.m. - A crime scene unit van sits outside Sassy Cuse. A woman in red boots and a red jacket takes a selfie with another woman in denim shorts, a white shirt and a gray hoodie. Probation officers patrol the street nearby.

12:55 a.m. - An elderly white panhandler with a "Why lie? I just need a beer" sign takes photos with several people outside of AI's Wine and Whiskey Lounge.

12:56 a.m. - Next to the Taphouse, a Black man is cuffed while repeatedly exclaiming, "I just got out on parole, man!"

1:06 a.m. - Down the street at the Penny Pub, the mystery \$3 shot wheel spins while "São Paulo" by The Weeknd plays.

1:08 a.m. - Still at the pub, the crowd is growing steadily. There's a crowd of people playing pool. An elderly white man watches a Yankee-Braves game by himself. He leaves after one beer. The pub is hazy with smoke, mostly from vapes.

1:28 p.m. - Across the square, cops pull over a white Cadillac in front of a parking garage. A few women exit the vehicle. "I should've brought my jean jacket," one says to her friend. Two people watch the situation from the parking garage roof.

1:31 a.m. - Back on South Clinton Street, cops question the guy with the "I just need a beer" sign. He's got an open container. He's upbeat, but disappointed as he dumps his beers in front of them. "People should be able to come down here and enjoy themselves on a Friday night," he says. He says he's been roaming these streets for 10 years. In the past, officers have given him beer and money. The "new guys," he says, have been less charitable.

1:37 a.m. - An SPD drone flies directly above Armory Square. One officer says it's to help cops see all aspects of the street.

1:41 a.m. - In The Taphouse on Walton, two girls dance together. They pull a third friend to join them. "Can we get a Starburst?" they ask the bartender. The bartender tells them they don't have "sorority girl" drinks. Another guy at the bar says, "I've been here since 10 o'clock. I've been drinking since 1:30."

1:49 a.m. - "Last call, last calllllllll," the bartender sings the last word for three seconds. The security guard tells a woman to finish her drink before she walks out of the bar and he hugs her. He hugs the girl who walks behind her, too.

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2:08 a.m. - A woman sells roses on the corner: yellow, red, pink and other colors. A police car is parked on the street behind her.

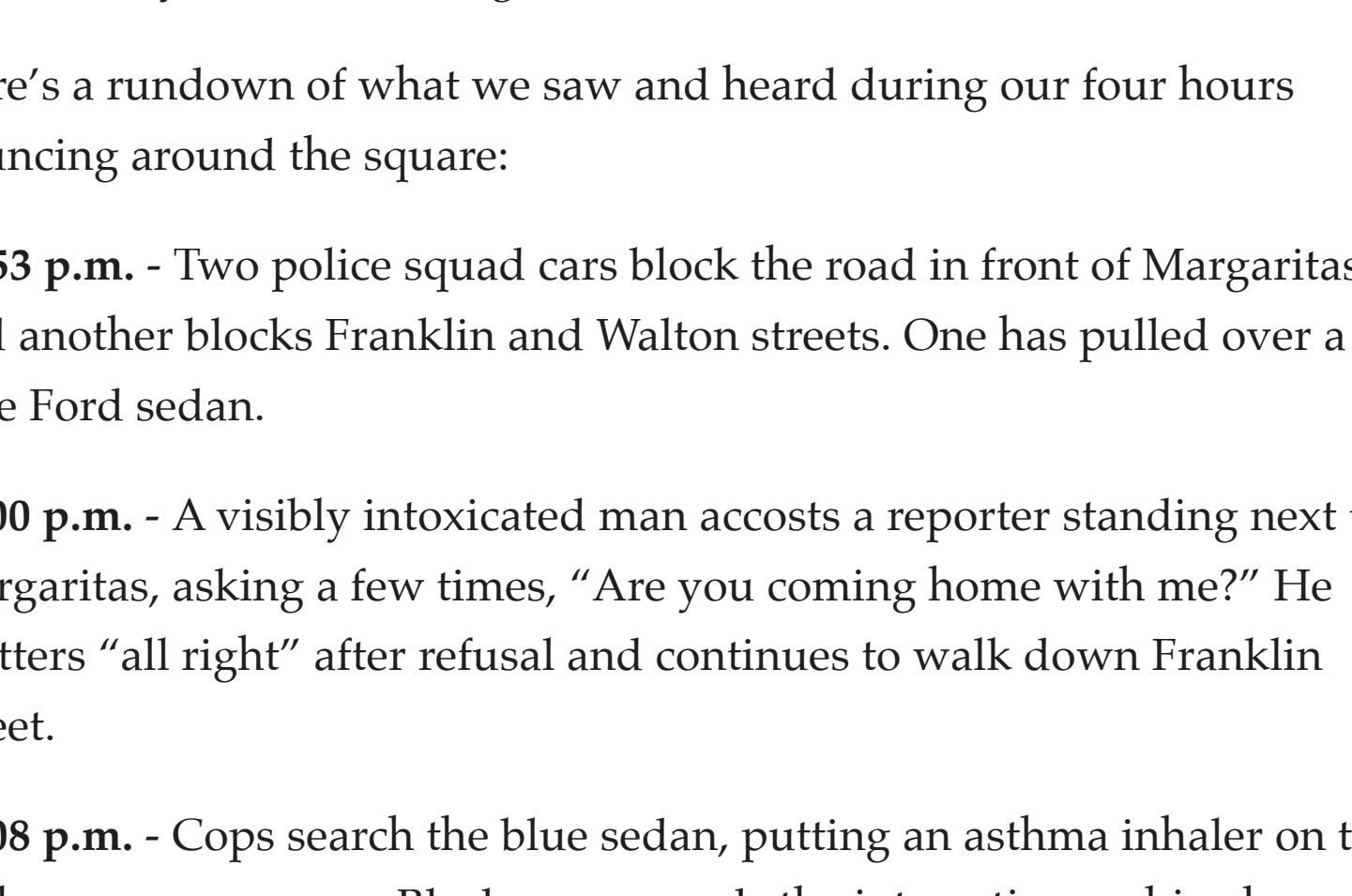
2:13 a.m. - More than a dozen people chat in separate, disconnected groups outside the Forum barbershop on West Fayette. Some are making TikTok. A few people who bought roses show them off to their friends.

2:18 a.m. - A girl poses in front of a police car. She begins twerking and her friend shouts "Get it sexy, get it sexy." The police let it go on for a few seconds, but then the officer says, "Move along."

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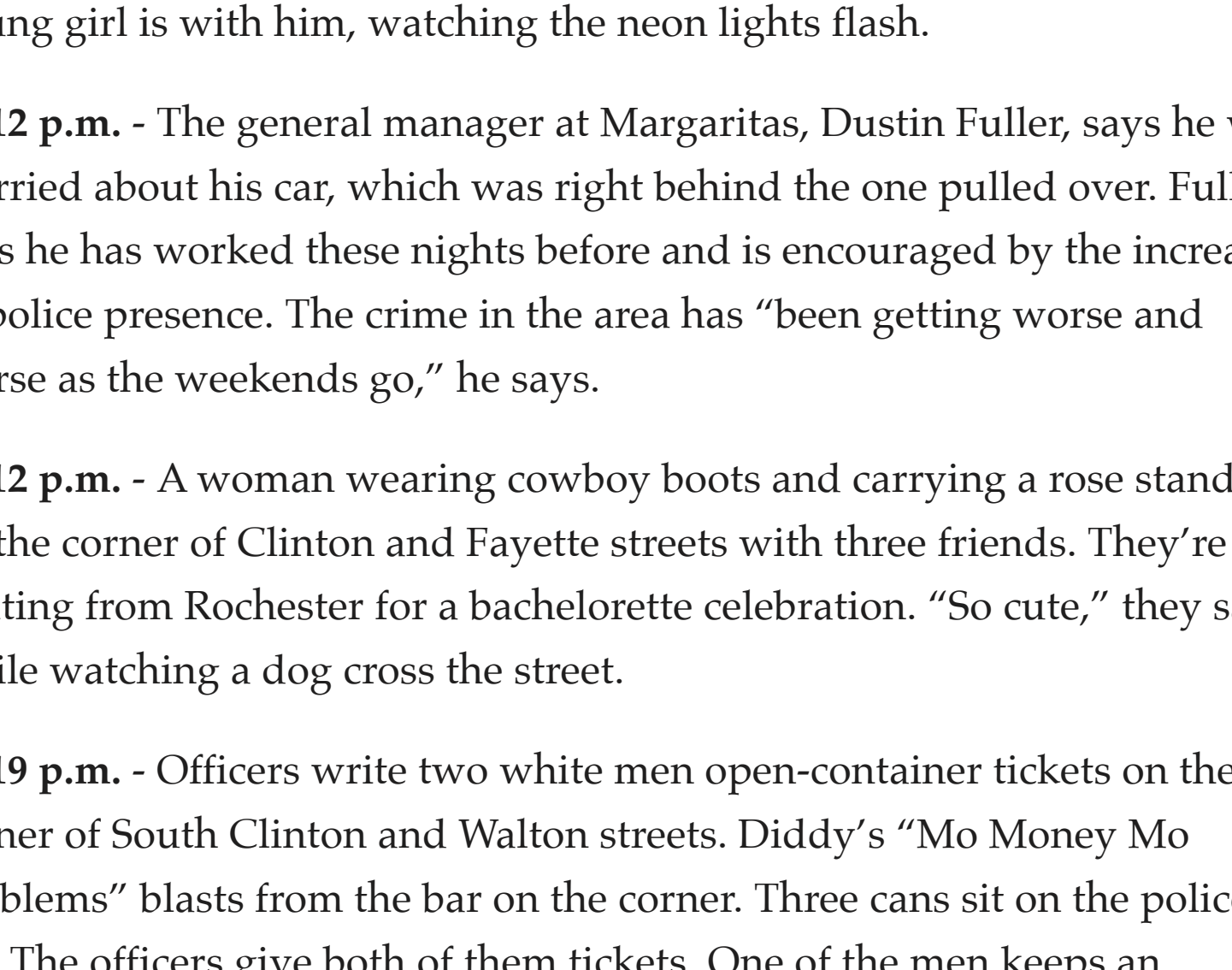
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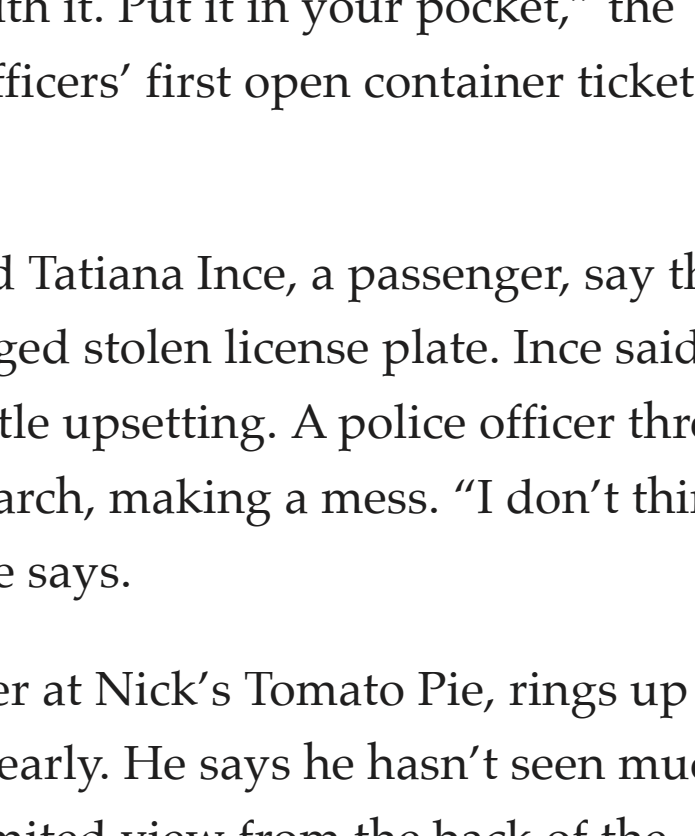
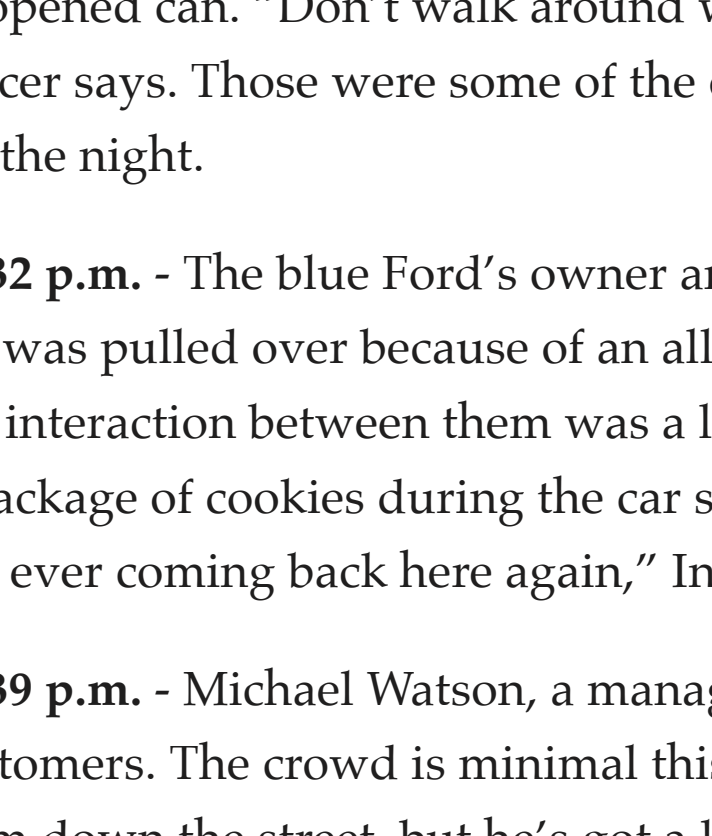


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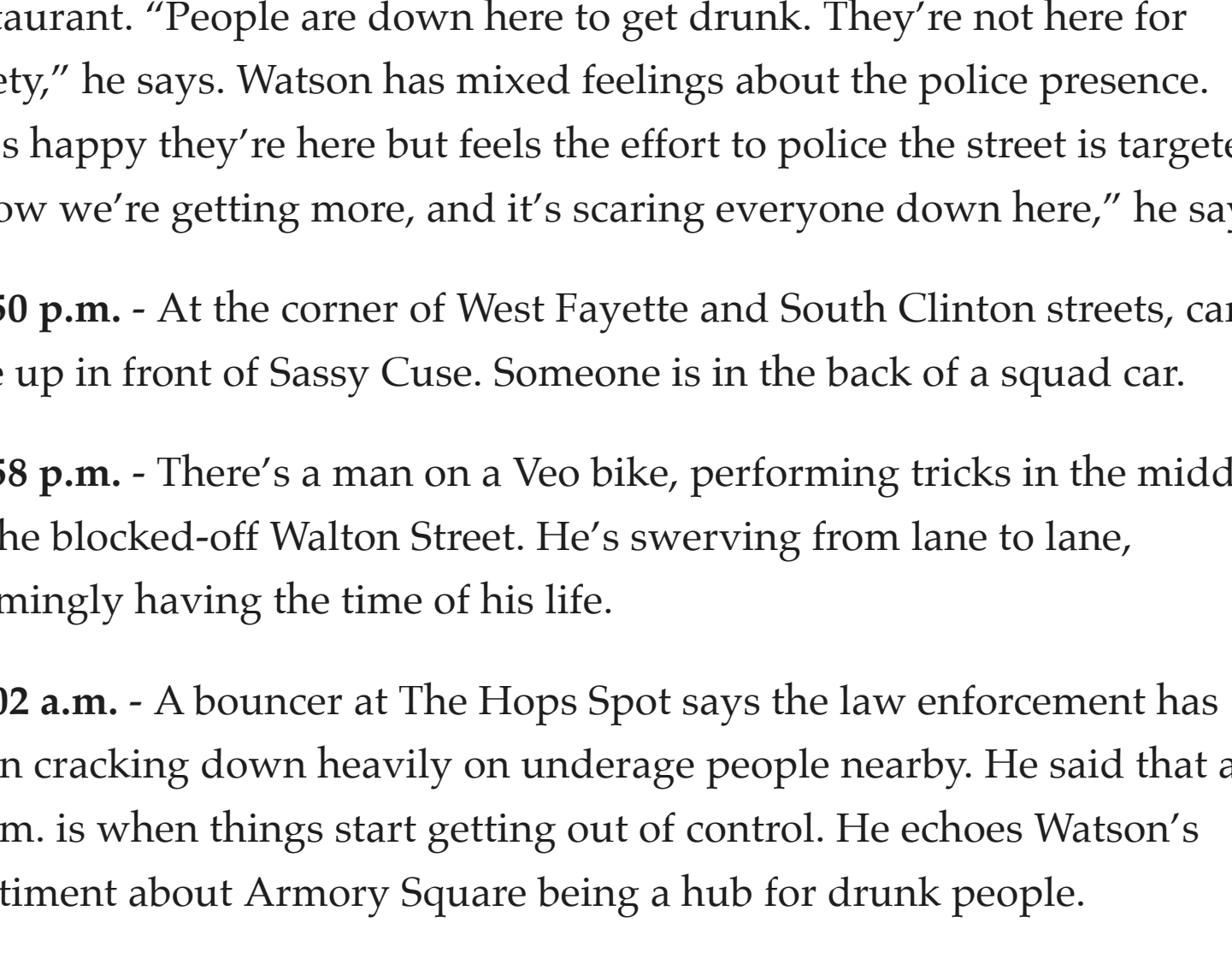
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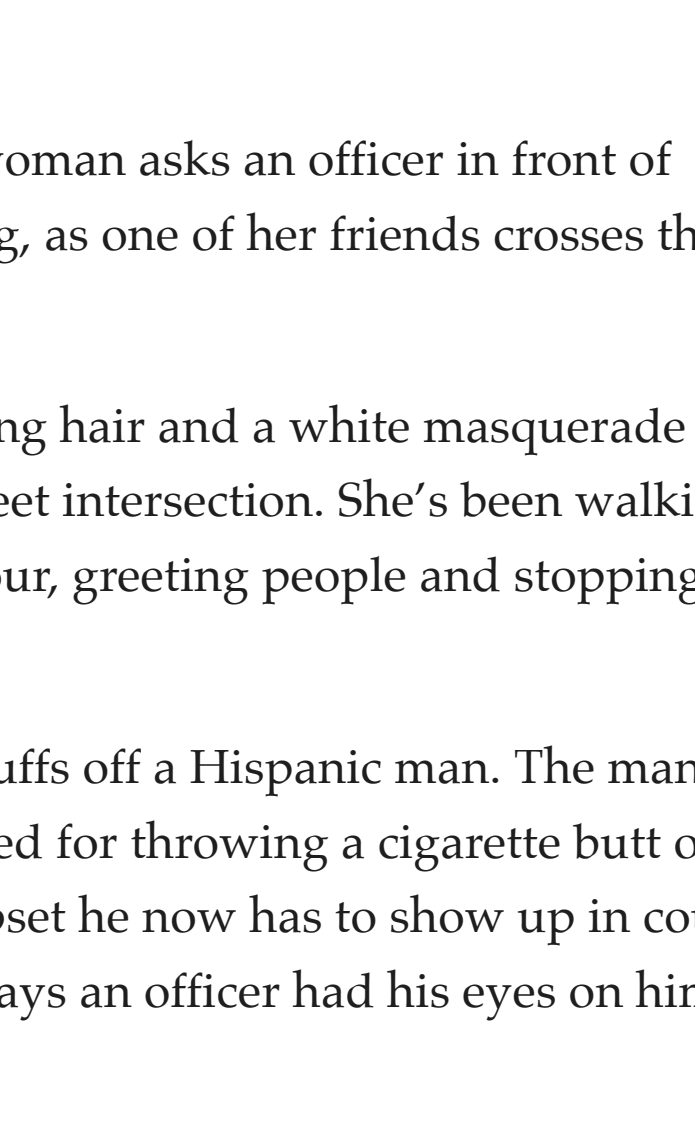
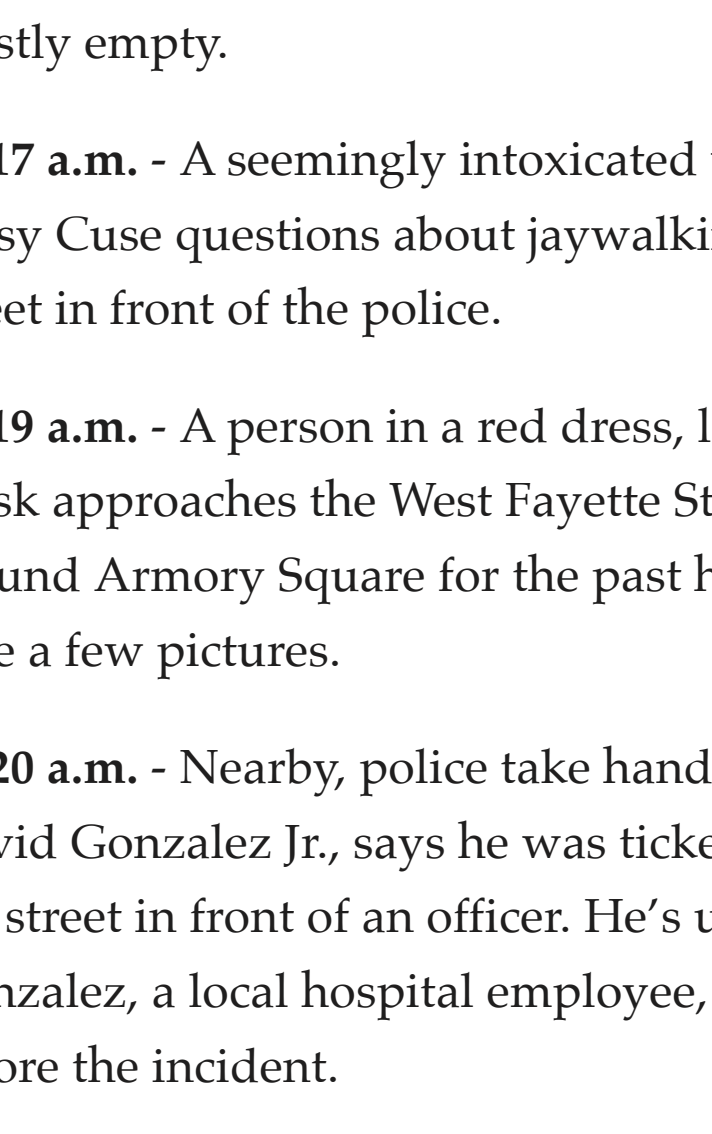


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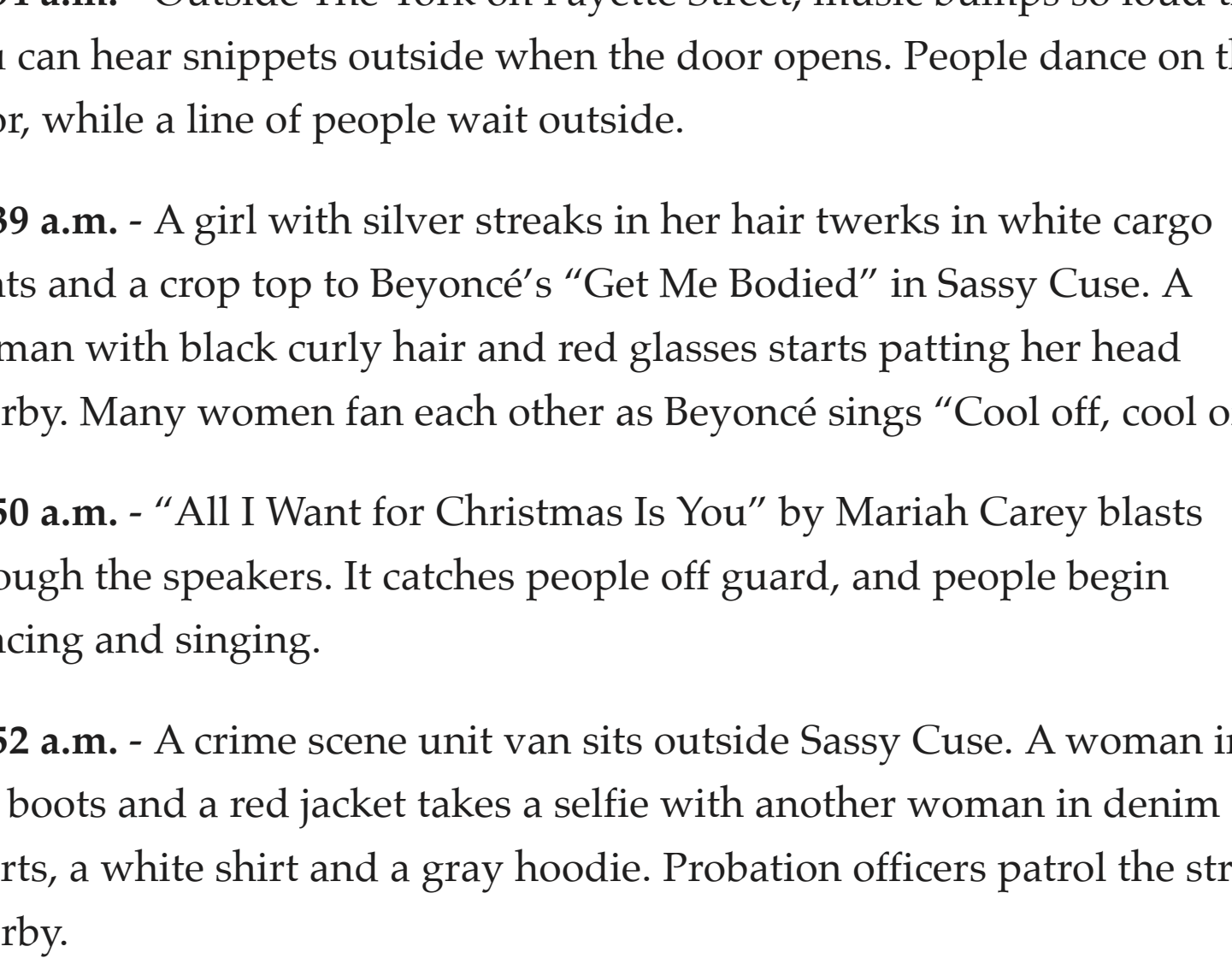
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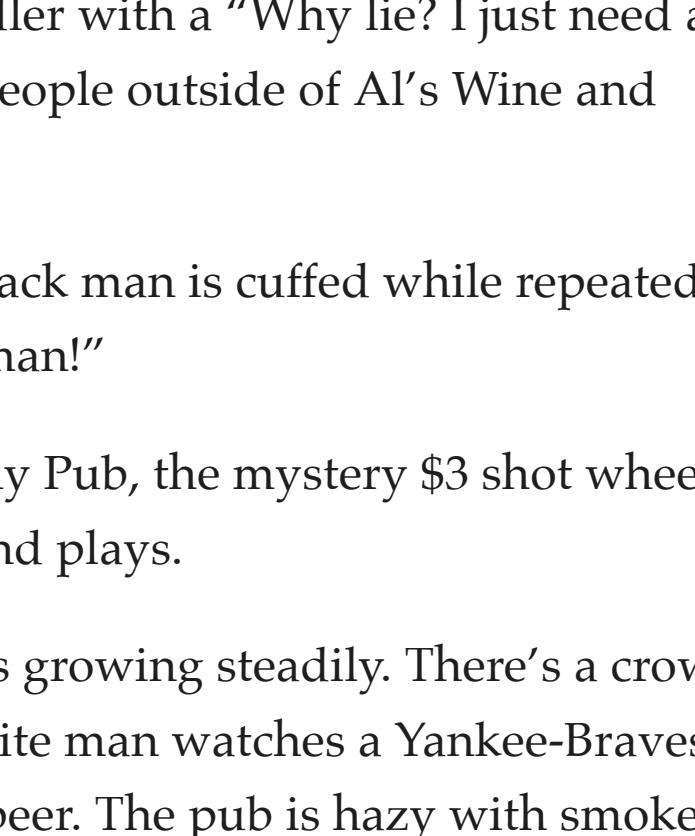
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