Elias: Very nice! Let me give you a card. I take photos of dogs.

Woman: Oh! You're The Dogist! She follows you!

Elias (narrating): I ask people sometimes, "If you had all the money in the world, what would you do?" If I had all the money, I would probably travel with my camera and hang out with dogs. I'm doing it. At the beginning of the project, no one knew who I was. I was just walking around every day and having these interactions with dogs. It made me feel good about being sort of unemployed. But, you know, as the project's grown and everything, I've become this sort of, uh, figure. So, here we've got the image queued up, got the caption, and… post. At this point, it's five hundred likes per minute, something like that. There's a lot of activity. It's still baffling to me how many people like each of these photos I put out. I haven't done any outreach. I haven't paid for any advertising. It's something people want and need.

Elias: Very nice! Georgia comma Boston terrier comma six months old.

Elias (narrating): It's a, uh, beautiful sight for a dog photographer. New York is a special place to be a documentary street photographer. I can't really imagine doing this blog anywhere else.

Elias: Very nice!

Elias (narrating): The city has its canine personalities in each of the neighborhoods. I like to shoot downtown. Weekends are the best because you get owners walking their dogs during the day versus the walkers with five other dogs.

Elias: Very nice!

Elias (narrating): Central Park has great dogs. The Upper East Side has a lot of poodles, exotic breeds. Brooklyn has more pit bulls.

Man 1: Cut it out!

Elias (narrating): Midtown doesn't have any dogs. There's a lot of visual noise given the street context.

Elias: Woody, woody! Treat, treat!

Elias (narrating): But I shoot a pretty shallow depth of field.

Elias: Treat, treat!

Elias (narrating): I like to isolate this sort of moment in time for this dog in its life. The dogs, they're not posing for a picture. They're sitting for the ball. They're sitting for the treat. It's my challenge to make it seem like there's something dramatic happening. I guess what it is is personifying the dog and making them seem like a person. That's where, to me, the humor is. I don't feature their faces, but when there's something interesting about the owners I like to shoot a little wider and include their lower half because there's a lot to glean from that relationship.

Elias: Who are these guys? Both of them!

Man 2: I love what you're doing. It's so great! I tell everyone about you.

Elias: Awesome! I think we got a good one of him.

Elias (narrating): I don't have a dog right now. I don't have a girlfriend. I don't work with people in the same way that most people do. And I sometimes feel that sort of loneliness. I come home and I'm, like, talking to my rug. But, I do connect with people through their dogs. I think, even though I don't have my own dog, dogs have opened up a whole world for me that's made me less lonely. I think they show just an innate human emotion… is to want to love and to want to give love. And dogs have that in abundance. I've only been doing this for two years, but I do feel more, sort of, spiritually aligned. Dogs don't need that much to be happy. They need food and love, right? It's something I've always aspired to do… is to take a page out of their book, become more simple in the way I look at the world.

UNIT 13

Page 205, Celebrating Mardi Gras in New Orleans

Narrator: New Orleans Mardi Gras is more than just a celebration before the Christian season of Lent begins. In this city, preparations for the big day begin weeks and even months in advance. Early mornings are nothing new for bakers, but the pre-dawn workload grows during Carnival season. From January 6th through Fat Tuesday, New Orleans Cake Café & Bakery is a beehive of activity, where they make as many as 50 king cakes a day. Here, they make nontraditional goat cheese and apple-stuffed cakes.

Baker: There's very old-school king cakes in New Orleans. They've been at it for 50, 60, 100 years, some of them, and they have a loyal following.

Narrator: The old-school king cake has a tiny baby or other trinket baked inside, and whoever gets the trinket has obligations, such as buying next year's king cake. Here, the baby goes on the outside.

Baker: The king cake is a traditional New Orleans Mardi Gras pastry. You'll find pastries like this all over the country and all over the world, that they're only served for a certain season during the year.

Narrator: In another part of town, Sally Hedrick and her son are making 150 or more ornate costumes. These are for the social organizations throwing the lavish balls and parades. Some may go for more than $3,000. Hedrick works on costumes year-round, refurbishing ones that took a bit of a beating during last year's Mardi Gras celebrations and creating new works.

Narrator: For a look back at years past, the Louisiana State Museum lets visitors see more than a century and a half of New Orleans Mardi Gras traditions.

Museum curator: The oldest item in the Carnival collection is something that we were very fortunate to acquire just a couple of years ago. It's a ball invitation that dates to the 1850s.

Narrator: The Carnival exhibit at the museum on Jackson Square only shows the tip of the iceberg. However, the museum's warehouse periodically offers tours where visitors can see the thousands of costumes and other items.

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Narrator: As Fat Tuesday approaches, warehouses throughout the city come to life. Float dens, as they are called, house the floats that can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to construct. It can take a month or more to build and decorate the elaborate floats, some of which date back to the early 1900s.

Float maker: It… It's part of the economy here, too. It puts a lot of people to work. I mean… You know to make a float like this you need carpenters, you… you need artists, you… you need welders, you need tire people, you need mechanics. That's a lot involved.

Narrator: And a final, vital ingredient for Mardi Gras is the music. Grammy-winning artist, Irvin Mayfield.

Musician: From television, you see these parades go by, people throwing beads, but what you really don't see is that Mardi Gras lives out in people's houses. It lives out on the streets. It lives out in the halls, in the parties, in the receptions. And it's not a thing over one day. Um… so I would say in terms of music, you know, it's very hard to have Mardi Gras without the music.

Narrator: And he says any musician growing up in New Orleans is shaped by Mardi Gras.

Musician: You're a… a leg on a table that helps the table stand up. The music, the food, the people. For a young musician, you wouldn't start playing music because of Mardi Gras, necessarily, but if you are a musician you will be involved in Mardi Gras a certain way.

Narrator: Most New Orleans natives say anyone hoping to understand Mardi Gras needs to come back often and stay awhile, not just for one day.

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