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**From:** Alan White <alan.white@buzzfeed.com>  
**To:** Tom Phillips <tom.phillips@buzzfeed.com>  
**Sent:** 3/12/2015 7:20:20 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Can you give this a look before I send to Craig?

cool

On Thu, Mar 12, 2015 at 11:17 AM, Tom Phillips wrote:

Yes, this is A+++.

On Thu, Mar 12, 2015 at 10:56 AM, Alan White wrote:

CEN

The M.O. of CEN appears to be to pick up stories from foreign social networks, rip the images and present them with without much looking into the claims being made about them, or occasionally exaggerating what little detail there is. When the agency does provide quotes, their origin is often dubious when seen in the context of the original story. In some cases, stories have been found to be entirely incorrect. In others, details have been found to be exaggerated. In many others the story appears to have some truth about it, but surrounding details simply cannot be verified: no other news agency within the country the stories are taking place will have covered it.

CEN stories have regularly appeared on the MailOnline, Metro, and Mirror websites - three British tabloids with online presences that are attempting to move into “viral” news. They’ve appeared less frequently on other tabloids and broadsheet papers’ sites, but have been found on the Telegraph and Independent’s websites. The British tabloids generally cause the stories to take off, their stories have in the past also appeared on American websites including Gawker, the Huffington Post and on BuzzFeed.

Stories proved to be fake or exaggerated:

The Chinese Backpacker Offering Sex for A Holiday

In October 2014, the internet blew up with rumours that an attractive 19-year-old Chinese woman called Ju Peng was planning to fund her travels by spending a night with a different man in every city. As well as the likes of Metro, Elite Daily and the Mailonline, even the Telegraph published the story, reporting that she had “posted an advert on social

media site Weibo looking for ‘temporary boyfriends’ who must be ‘good looking, under 30, taller than 1.75 metres and, of course, rich.’” The Telegraph and Metro subsequently published follow-ups explaining the truth. The reality, as reported by Shanghai Daily, was that it was a hoax to to promote a dating app called Youjia, which the paper said had been banned as a result.

## The Argentine Sex Tape Scandal

A month later, a number of outlets reported that a teacher was facing the sack after a teacher's secret sex tape, made with a pupil, appeared on a porn site. The Mirror's website, for example, reported: "Argentinian beauty Lucita Sandoval was unwittingly recorded having sex with a 16-year-old pupil who switched camera phone on after asking the teacher to turn around." The website referenced CEN for its pictures, as did the Metro - it's unclear how much of the copy was provided by the agency. The NY Daily News credited Europics for its pictures.

However, two weeks before the British tabloids had picked up on the story, it had already been debunked by a local paper. It didn't show an underage boy, and the woman was a teacher, but from a different city to the one reported. As BuzzFeed pointed out, British tabloids even went so far as to claim that “there would be a criminal investigation and that this isn't the first time Sandoval has had sexual relations with a student.” A woman's (presumably) private sex tape had gone viral with fake information attached to it, and people all over the internet were accusing her of a sexual assault as a result.

A number of updates followed, some more chastened than others. Amusingly the Mirror, for example, wrote: “Internet gossip sites incorrectly stated that Miss Sandoval was a teacher and was secretly filmed by a grinning pupil of hers.”

## Sashimi Tapeworm

In September 2014 the news (accompanied with pictures) circulated that doctors at Guangzhou No.8 People's Hospital had dealt with a horrific case - a man had gone there with a stomach ache and itchy skin, but they found his entire body had been invaded by tapeworm parasites, likely the result of him eating sashimi contaminated with tapeworm eggs. It began to spread around Chinese websites, including one which claimed to verify it.

After CEN picked it up, it appeared on a number of sites including The Independent, Huffington Post, MailOnline, The Daily Express and BuzzFeed - which at the time of writing appears to be the only one to have added an update - as revealed by Snopes, the images, apparently taken from the British Medical Journal, show the aftermath of a parasitic tapeworm infection caused by the eating of raw or undercooked pork: the marks you can see on the X Rays are calcified cysts rather than the worms themselves.

### The Thief Who 'Pretended To Be A Baby'

In February 2015 MailOnline reported that a 25-year-old thief in “the south American city [sic] of Paraguay” had “conned his way into the homes of dozens of elderly women by dressing in nappies and sucking a lollipop”. The story was also in the Star and in the Mirror. All of them carried quotes from a local, Lara Orta Ornelas, 59, who said: "I am surprised that the police have only just now arrested him. He has been doing this for years and I know the police have had complaints before but it's incredible that they never realised the baby is actually a fully grown man."

A Spanish language report four days earlier, however, only says that the thief pretended to be mentally ill. Ms Ornelas's quotes only appear when the story makes its way to the English-speaking media - they don't appear to be in any of the Spanish-language reports.

### Thief Made To Walk Around In The Knickers He Stole

According to the Mirror: “ Chan Chun Chee, 32, was forced to walk around a block of flats in Singapore with bras and undies hanging from his neck after residents laid a trap following a spate of kinky thefts.” Also appeared in the Metro and on a whole load of mid-level blogs.

A reverse search led to this news post with watermarks from this Weibo account. The post is from a girl named "Yeeyee" (from Singapore, but it'd usually be written out as "Yiyi" in pinyin). She says on Nov. 1 at around 2am she caught this guy in her house stealing her undergarments. She then "caught him" and wanted to "shame him". The recount sounds brief, but it sounds like she posted the images as a warning to other women. There also appears to be a video of the incident. Origin of the other quotes in the story not yet found.

### The woman who stayed in KFC for a week

A hugely viral story - a heartbroken woman stayed in KFC eating chicken wings after being dumped by her boyfriend. Covered on MailOnline, Time, Gawker, Telegraph, Huffington Post among others. It appears the story came from this site, originally - which reports it as news - but it doesn't have the same workers' quotes.

Suggest Tanya sends KFC china press office an email just to see if we can verify.

### The Cat Who Saved A Baby

A long haired cat in Obninsk reportedly found a baby boy abandoned in a cardboard box, climbed inside and kept him warm, saving his life. This was everywhere, and seems to have happened - reported on Ruptly, subsequently in the IBTimes, Independent, Huff Po, Toronto Sun and many more. The story appears to be true - it looks like it came from this news site with screengrabs from VK, again, we don't know where the quotes came from.

### Mob Strips Adulterous Woman

Reported on MailOnline, Mirror, Star and many more. We've failed to find any local source for the story - apart from, possibly, this video. This does happen relatively frequently in China.

### Man sets his college on fire

This is just interesting on the process - Shenyang Evening News uses Weibo as its online presence, and Sina presumably sells stories on Weibo to CEN. In this case there's nothing to suggest anything improper has happened, but it would be good to know exactly what Sina's selling to them - and how much they're then adding. Appears to be the same deal with this sceptic tank story, which came from the Chengdu Evening News (verified account).

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