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The Assholes Of Silicon Valley Deserve Our Hate

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‘Mark Zuckerberg is a different kind of cringe – but cringe all the same. His cringe moments drip through more sparingly but, when they do, my body tries to turn inside out at my bellybutton,’ Rebecca Shaw writes. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Opinion Technology

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I knew one day I’d have to watch powerful men burn the world down – I just didn’t expect them to be such losers

Rebecca Shaw

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Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg’s desperation to be cool as they suck up to Donald Trump is so cringe

It makes my skin crawl

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I don’t know if anyone else has noticed this but everything seems to be going down the tubes quite fast.

And not fun tubes, like at a waterpark. The “ending in shit” kind. The issues are complicated, the

reasons diverse, but there are a few culprits who have been making themselves extremely visible.

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Alongside those holding political office, tech gargillionnaires (I had to invent a new number) like Elon

Musk and Mark Zuckerberg obviously wield huge global influence with their computers and numbers

and whatnot. There has been a lot written about them and there will be more, as they continue to shape

the world and win favour with Donald Trump. Big, scary, probably ruinous things lie ahead. But I’m

here to discuss the smaller part. The insult to injury, the sprinkling of salt in the wound.

Whether I am engaging with the news, or with Musk tweeting constantly like a man with no job or friends, or with Zuckerberg sending out weird videos and appearing on Rogan, I am in pain. Not just because I don’t like what they are doing but because they are so incredibly, *painfully* cringe.

Move fast, break things – sprint to kiss Trump’s ring. It’s the tech bros inauguration derby

Marina Hyde

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I knew that one day we might have to watch as capitalism and greed and bigotry led to a world where powerful men, deserving or not, would burn it all down. What I didn't expect, and don't think I could have foreseen, is how incredibly *cringe* it would all be. I have been prepared for evil, for greed, for cruelty, for injustice – but I did not anticipate that the people in power would also be such huge losers. I've always been someone who cannot tolerate embarrassment. I hate being embarrassed more than just about any other emotion and I've always skipped content based on cringe humour like Meet the Parents, Borat or Nathan for You. It makes my skin crawl and it makes the contents of my stomach try to crawl out of my mouth. But I cannot skip world events.

Nor can I skip Musk's clear desperation, even as he holds this much wealth and power in his hands, to be thought of as cool. There are endless examples of him embarrassing himself while attempting to be funny or to gain respect. Unfortunately, while you may be able to buy power, it's impossible to buy a good personality. Watching his Nigel-no-friends attempts to be popular, his endless pathetic tweets that read as though they come from the brain of an 11-year-old poser, has made me start to believe we should bring back bullying. If yet another humiliating report in the last couple of days is to be believed, he appears even to have lost the respect of some of his gamer audience, who the report claims suspect that he may have been lying about his achievements in hardcore gaming (cursed sentence).

Zuckerberg is a different kind of cringe – but cringe all the same. His cringe moments drip through more sparingly but, when they do, my body tries to turn inside out at my bellybutton. His physical makeover for Maga reasons, performing music because no one will stop him, trying to look cool on a surfboard – all these are extremely difficult to watch. He has been trying to suck up to Trump, going on Joe Rogan's show to say society has been “neutered” and companies need “more masculine energy”.

Putting on what is clearly a bro disguise to join the boys' club and sit at the big boy table – it should feel humiliating. This came as Zuckerberg rolled back hate speech and factchecking rules at Meta, in a clear swerve to the right before Trump's inauguration. What could be more masculine and cool than selling out vulnerable communities and women to impress the alpha male?

Climate crises keep coming, genocides continue, women keep getting murdered, art is being strangled to death by AI, bigotry is on the rise, social progress is being rolled back ... AND these men insist on being cringe? It's a rotten cherry on top. This combination of evil and embarrassment is a unique horror, one that science fiction has failed to prepare us for. The second-hand embarrassment we have to endure gets even more potent when combined with other modern influences on young men, like Jordan Peterson and Andrew Tate.

Is Andrew Tate going to reinvent himself as a politician and 'save Britain [sic]'?

Arwa Mahdawi

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Peterson is a big voice in men's rights – well, a small Kermit's voice in men's rights – and he's also an embarrassment. So much so that he has his own Know Your Meme page, which covers that time he reportedly retweeted an image from a fetish film, apparently believing it was a Chinese communist "sperm extraction" facility. He deleted it shortly afterwards.

Tate is facing human trafficking charges but rose to fame as a voice for young men, a misogynist in bad outfits who does really cool things like smoking cigars, wearing sunnies inside and trying to drag human rights back 100 years.

Living your life to impress other men by hating women is one of the most embarrassing things I can imagine. Looking up to any of these men for how to live your life is even sadder.

I've worked hard to keep these kinds of men out of my personal life, to keep them away from me, out of my goddamn sight. Now they are in my face daily, not only influencing the world for the worse but making me nauseous at how uncool and pathetic they are, on top of their other sins. It's too much, I can't take it, there needs to be a change.

It's time for us to start getting revenge on the nerds.