

The Blotter

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August 2006



It's Too Hot to Rock ... Aww, Okay. Let's Rock.

In this issue: Fiction from Jeremy Brown and P. H. Madore. Comix by OneNeck and welcoming Allen Sessions. Art by Evan Crankshaw. Don't forget about the Dream Journal.

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Cover art: "A Hellion, Handy with
a Knife 2," by Evan Cranksaw. See
pp. 8-9 for more from this artist.

The Blotter is a production of The
Blotter Magazine, Inc., Durham, NC.
A 501 (c)3 non-profit
ISSN 1549-0351
www.blotterrag.com

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The Blotter Magazine, Inc. is a 501(c)3
non-profit. The magazine is published in
the first half of each month, and enjoys a
free circulation throughout the Southeast
and some other places, too. Submissions
are always welcome, as are ad inquiries.

Subscriptions are offered as a premium for
a donation of \$20 or more. Send check or
money order, name and address to The
Blotter Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street,
Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also
available, 5 for \$5. Inquire about availabil-
ity by e-mail: ediot@blotterrag.com.

*This magazine may contain typos or
bad words*

Items Worth Mentioning from the desk of Johnny Pence

Reader Feedback

The photo below was sent to the ediot mailbox by some-
body's cell phone at about 7:00 on a Friday afternoon. It looks
like it was taken in a bar to me, what do you think?



—ediot@blotterrag.com

Westward Ho!, England

by Jeremy Brown

Running through a dense, dead forest, he thought he could see a clearing ahead. Desperate to find water, he jumped over brown, brittle, dried-up ferns and fallen branches, dodging tree trunks and ducking cracked limbs. A threatening storm followed in the sky behind him, making the already dark forest darker. He leapt over a dried up creek bed and sprinted toward what looked like a pasture. If he could get out there, he thought, he could find a house where people would help him. Stopping for breath at the edge of the forest, he saw clearly into a lush green pasture. A verdant aroma filled his heaving lungs. Kneeling near him was a white-spotted fawn, patiently chewing the overgrown and brilliant green grass. Tom walked into it sensing the pulsing energy of life. He reached a circular stone well with a metal bucket attached to a rope pulley. Frantically, excitedly, he tugged at the rope and lowered the bucket while beginning to salivate the last of his bodily liquid down his chin. Hands burning from the coarse rub of the rope, he only pulled harder. Then, a dreadful sound bounced along the walls of the deep, dark stone well until it climbed up to his sorrowful ears. The metal bucket clanged against the rock-hard bottom of the dry well. His face crumpled into thousands of folds and he put his fingers up to his eyes, uselessly, as he could produce no moisture to cry.

"Mr. Farnuff."

Tom opened his eyes, only to squint them closed again from bright light pouring in through the

window.

"Do you know where you are," the female voice asked him.

"No," he answered weakly, trying again to open his eyes.

"You're in a hospital, Mr. Farnuff."

"Where is this hospital?"

"Westward Ho!" the nurse said casually, filling a paper cup with water from a clear plastic pitcher.

"I need a drink," he said, opening his eyes and watching her bring him the glass.

"It seems I've read your mind, Mr. Farnuff. Here you are."

She placed the newly filled cup on a small table next to his bed and walked out of the room. Looking around, Tom noticed he had the room to himself. The same urgency from his dream kept him alert. His arms began to ache and he tried to move them, but they were very sore. He eased them out from under the blanket and inspected the pain. Abstract memories descended upon him as he contemplated green and purple stained veins running like vines from his biceps down to two exposed, stitched gashes on his wrists. A needle poked out of his left forearm and stood erect and connected to an IV machine standing next to his bed.

The nurse walked back in. "You ought to drink plenty of water."

"How did I get here," he asked her.

"You've been here for about a month, sir."

"I *have*? But, no, *how* did I get here?"

"Well," the nurse tentatively explained, "someone found you in your house, but that person asked

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

This Explains A Lot

I meet Bill Murray at a party or a bar and he becomes my bothersome neighbor. I come home to my loft apartment and find that he has somehow let himself in and fastened a series of small wooden placards, like notecards, to the stairs. Each wooden card, which is screwed into the riser of each stair-the vertical, facing part of the step-contains one sentence. As I walk up the stairs, I read his solipsistic story one sentence at a time.

I freak out. What is this guy doing in my apartment? Doesn't he live in New York or L.A.? What's he doing in Atlanta? My wife's friend, a sloe-eyed blond woman of Slavic descent, explains that Bill Murray lives in an apartment complex that is a "sister complex" to ours; they were designed by the same company.

She also explains that Bill Murray doesn't allow any spoons on the kitchen table when he is reading at said table. He keeps his own spoon on the kitchen counter, while his wife wears a big plastic spoon tied to her apron strings. The words on the pages he reads at the table are like money, she explains. Each word is a unit of currency, a coin or a bill, and it would be unsanitary to let the spoons touch this filthy money, these valuable words.

—D.K., Decatur, GA

Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at mermaid@blotterrag.com. If nothing else, we love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

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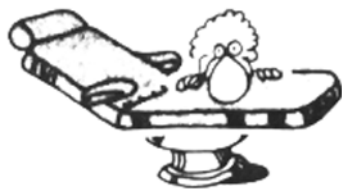
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us to keep him or her anonymous."

After Tom ate dinner in bed that evening, he was given a starchy white frock to wear. The same nurse, who later introduced herself as Penelope, walked him down one flight of stairs and into a comfortable room with a log-burning fireplace, wood-paneled walls, and amateur paintings of schooners and cruise ships hanging. Tom assumed these were hung to make people think about journeys and what they had done to destroy their own personal lives mid-course.

He sat down in the only remaining seat and looked around at a group of six other individuals sitting in a circle, all but one donning similar white frocks.

"Ah, welcome to the group, Tom," said a man with a boulder chin, full-moon forehead, and white lab coat. Displayed beneath the open lab coat, a cream-colored guayabera hung loosely against his body, suggesting a coolness that reminded Tom of Southern California. "Glad you could make it. And welcome back to the land of the living!"

A chorus of voices welcomed him in unison when the man in the lab coat was finished. Tom assumed that he was the doctor.

"The handsome doctor looked around the room at the sorriest

bunch of losers he had ever imagined"—the doctor looked from face to face as he said this, then tilted his head back and erupted in laughter, waving his clipboard around in the air with glee. Tom could feel his own face burning red and his wounded wrists beginning to ache.

"Sorry! Sorry!" He continued. "Please forgive me, everyone. That's just a little habit of mine that I sometimes rely on to break the ice. You know, to lessen the pressure of what, at a glance, looks like a pretty serious situation."

Tom looked around the room at his fellow losers and saw just that. Four men and one woman with dark circles under their bloodshot eyes and messy hair.

The doctor continued,

"Everyone, my name is Dr. Lucienne. I'm not French like the name, thankfully, but my father was before he abandoned me. Now he's nothing. He's dead to me."

Tom again looked around at his new therapy mates. *Oh, joy*, he thought to himself. *A psychologically troubled man is my new therapist.* He looked at his fellow patients to commiserate but they all focused on the doctor.

"And," he continued, "I just want you all to know that I couldn't care less about any one of you."

Now Tom made some eye con-

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tact with the others. The woman, in particular, seemed to awaken from her obvious depression. Her eyebrows were arched and she slowly wrapped her arms around her stomach.

"So, now that we know *my* name and a little about *me*, let's all have a go around and introduce ourselves. Don't be shy. This will be fun!"

A pudgy, red-haired man peppered with freckles was encouraged to go first with an elbow from Dr. Lucienne, so he stood uneasily, trying to hide his bandaged wrists behind his back.

"I'm Christian," he started.

"Oh, well *Christ*, Christian! You've been a sinful boy, now haven't you?" the doctor yelled with a sinister cackle. Tom noticed Dr. Lucienne's eyes bulging from the sockets. He looked like a frog mid-croak.

"I'm sorry, Christian. That was too easy. I'm dreadfully sorry. Please continue." The doctor crossed his legs and placed both hands on a knee.

Nervously, Christian said, "As I was saying, my name is Christian and I'm originally from Yorkshire, but I moved to Torquay several years ago to work at a resort. However, my sister and mother recently died and they were my only real friends in this world, so that..." he looked down at his extended wrists, "that's why I'm here, I suppose."

"Okay, okay. Left your family for a holiday resort so they died, got it. Thank you, Christian. Who's next?"

Christian sat down and began to cry. A very young bald man stood up. He was maybe 18 or so, Tom figured, and far too young to be naturally balding. Perhaps he was a chemo patient. His head was bandaged like a white cotton

wreath, exposing a crown of sparse patches of blond hair.

"Hello. My name is Nathaniel and I'm here because I tried to commit suicide two weeks ago—"

"No shit, Nathaniel!" the doctor yelled, smiling again. "Is this a coincidence or *what*? Here I was wondering what the bloody chances were that *all* of these pathetic-looking wretches were little cry-baby, 'life is too ha-ard,' quitters. Oh, it's a good thing I'm not a gambling man, Nathaniel. Because if I were I'd be so rich that I wouldn't be able to waste all my time with this bunch of *winners* right here!"

Nathaniel remained standing quietly, looking at the doctor for permission to speak.

"I mean... *sinners*," Dr. Lucienne said and shot a glance at Christian. Christian put his head back down and let out a whimper.

"Thank you, Nathaniel. Have a seat."

Tom was next. As he got to his

feet, he wondered how he ended up there.

"My name is Tom. I used to live in Ilfracombe, and London before that. I lost my daughter, my wife, then starting drinking quite a lot before someone that I don't know brought me here."

"Did you do it because you're a *nancy-boy*, Tom?" the doctor asked him, exaggerating an inquisitive stare like an interviewer on television.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You see, everyone, you all have your reasons for hating your life and for trying to end it. Some of you didn't know how to deal with the loss of a loved one, some of you will blame it on chemical imbalance, some of you will blame it on chemicals that you fill your body with, and some of you will blame it on your insatiable need for a cock in your arse." The doctor motioned for Tom to sit down.

Tom wasn't as offended as he was confused. Nothing he saw

A Cartoon (?) by OneNeck



resembled a dream because everything appeared so clearly. Where his dreams were usually rich in feeling and emotion, they always lacked in visual clarity. But now he could clearly see bandages on heads and arms, wrinkles and bruises on faces, and unbearable pain in eyes. The only thing that resembled a dream was the way Dr. Lucienne was behaving. Tom thought all this while the last two group members introduced themselves and got verbally abused. He didn't catch their names, but heard the doctor say "embarrassed to be near you" and "cock-sucker like Tom over there," before breaking his clipboard over his knee and storming out of the room.

Penelope walked into the room a moment later and began to tell the group to go back to their respective bedrooms for rest.

"What on earth was that all about, Penelope," Nathaniel asked.

The entire group looked up at her, praying for a sensible answer.

"All I can tell you is that Dr. Lucienne will explain tomorrow. I assure you that it will make more sense tomorrow morning when you all meet in the courtyard for your morning session."

"*Courtyard!*" Christian stammered. "It's December!"

"You're forgetting, Christian," Penelope explained in a maternal and forgiving tone, "that this is Westward Ho! The Gulf Stream keeps it mild here all year long—you don't feel the extremes. But you can bring your blankets down with you, if you like. I'm afraid we don't have any coats for you."

Seagulls shrieked and hovered over the beach that lay only a few hundred feet from the courtyard. Sandy, but well-kept grass formed a rectangular lawn that was surrounded on three sides by the two-story, red-brick rehabilitation clinic. The open side looked out to the beach, and the steel-blue horizon beyond that.

The morning was foggy and brisk and each group member sat in the row of white plastic folding chairs facing the sea bundled in a blanket. When Dr. Lucienne arrived, there were still several seats vacant in the row.

"Okay, let's get started. Good morning, everyone."

Tom said, "I think we're still waiting on someone."

"No, no we're not. Christian committed suicide last night. So, you know, he won't be joining us," the doctor explained.

Stunned, the group looked out to the vast ocean. Waves eased their way onto the shore with a gentle, lacy tumble, then retreated.

"But listen," the doctor said, "I don't want any of you to think that what happened last night at our

meeting is going to happen again. It's not that I will suddenly starting *pampering* each of you to make you feel good, because that would be false and unfair to you. Once you understand why pampering is false and unfair, you will understand the essence of rehabilitation."

The group didn't dare take their eyes off the picturesque view. Dr. Lucienne was also looking out toward to waves.

"But last night was essentially hyperbolic. I wanted to make it very clear from the outset that *cruelty* is very pervasive in our society. In fact, cruelty emanates from the very center of where we want to feel comfortable: among our loved ones and within our own hearts," the doctor explained.

"And I must tell you that I am *not* sorry that Christian decided to kill himself. If I were sorry, then I would be a hypocrite. That is not what I teach here. That is not how you will become better, rehabilitated. No, what we are going to do here is break down your need for other people, for conventions that make you feel loved and comfortable, because those are all vulnerable constructs, and, when closely examined, magnificent lies that enable us to pretend that life is a good thing. I assure you that it is not."

The doctor flattened the front of his lab coat against his body with his hairy hands. He knelt in front of the group and began running his fingers through the sandy grass. The group watched him as Tom attempted to process everything Dr. Lucienne just told them.

He had to admit, it was making more sense the more he thought about it. Just then, Dr. Lucienne stood back to his feet and showed the group his cupped palm, which was filled with sand. Little by little, he let sand pour out and the breeze

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picked it up and blew it behind them in an evaporating curtain.

"I don't see any of you attempting to catch the sand," he remarked with a smirk.

"Not one of you is flailing his body around like a chimp, desperately attempting to catch each grain of sand, to keep it from getting away. So I see that this new method is already comes to you naturally, if only in a small way."

Tom felt empowered. He was already good at this. As far as he knew, all that was required of him at this place, and probably when he got out, was sitting in a chair and dismissing everything he had been expected to care about.

Several days later the group was in a dark room on the first floor of the clinic. They silently sat in chairs lined up in a row like a movie theater.

"Okay, my Rejects." Dr. Lucienne walked briskly into the room through a back door. Tom turned back and noticed a projector suddenly clicking and shining a ray of light onto the wall in front of them. Dr. Lucienne had recently

started referring to the group as Rejects for several reasons. First, he said that society had rejected them all. Although they *thought* each had chosen to take their own lives, society had really pushed them out. They were all shown a world that was glued together by love, and they had no place in it. Each had been rejected and it was important, he thought, for them to acknowledge that. Second, he told them that because he was akin to a man of science, it was fun and playful to refer to them not as the traditional Subjects, but rather as Rejects.

"Underneath your chairs, you will find a pad of paper and pencil. Pick these up and use them to write while some images project on the wall in front of you."

Tom looked under his chair and saw the paper and pencil. He made sure the rest of the group were picking up theirs, because he wasn't sure if this in itself was an exercise. He saw that they were, though, so he picked his up and placed them in his lap.

"Right. Okay, now we are going to view some images on this wall. All I want you to do is write

down what you think when you see them. There is to be no talking whatsoever as we do this."

This first image jumped onto the screen like a flash of lightning and froze there. It was an image they all recognized. A young, naked girl ran toward them, away from a napalm attack in her Vietnamese village. Tom heard several gasps at the sight of this, and saw that the woman of the group, Bernice, was beginning to cry.

"And as you do this, *Bernice*, I want each of you to remember our conversation from last night. Remember, 'knew love....'"

The previous night the group gathered in the room with the paintings. Dr. Lucienne had the following to say to them.

"As I have been trying to ingrain in your minds for several days now, you have all been rejected by the world. Your loved ones, strangers, politicians, policemen...none of them wanted you around, and so you chose to give them what they wanted. You decided to leave because they showed you that you wouldn't receive the love required to exist on

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Evan Crankshaw is a 21 year-old dirt eating American from Chapel Hill. His painting studio is in a Red Barn. He likes to ride alligators and eat coyotes. He's been to Spain but prefers Mexico. If he could make love to one animal, it would be a tigress. He believes in record players, plain brown cowboy boots and what some people call "the Old, Weird America," and he hopes his work reflects that.



A Brother, a Fist



A Hellion, Handy with a Knife 1



A Hellion, Handy with a Knife 2

CRANKSHAW, EVAN

cranksh@joimail.com



Flesh Angel



American Jesus



The Tail

this earth. How's *that* for elitism. They decided that you were not worthy of the spiritual sustenance required to live among them, in *their* world. Well I have this to say to you ..."

Captivated at this point, Tom assumed everyone else in the group was, too, because he was on the edge of his seat.

"... Forget about *their* world, because it's not worth a salt, anyway. If you can so easily be asked to leave their, their *club*, if you will, then it doesn't amount to much on its own, does it."

Tom was shaking his head.

"You know what love is. You felt the pain that love leaves you with. So *you* be the rejecter now. Reject love to its face. You knew love, and you choose *no* love. That's N-O. Say it with me now, *Knew* love, *no* love. *Knew* love, *no* love."

The circle of suicide recovery

patients stared intently at the doctor, repeating this again and again, then began to look at each other. They chanted it in a harmony of dead voices, not gaining confidence from one another—that would be sacrilege—rather looking through each other and beginning to consider each other people from which not much could be gained or lost.

The Vietnamese girl ran motionless for another few minutes while the group wrote their thoughts. Her image then morphed into a new one. A young, brunette mother lay on a bed, holding an infant in her arms. She smiled, looking in adoration at the small face and the baby stared back, stupidly, innocently. Then the Vietnamese girl was brought back. Bernice began crying again.

Another few minutes passed before a new image appeared. It was a

luminous spiral galaxy matted on the deep blackness of space, and at first it appeared to be a still photograph, but after several minutes of looking up and down, between his written comments and the screen, Tom noticed that several stars sparkled majestically. Dr. Lucienne left this one up for about twenty minutes.

Fresh wind rushed over the low-crashing waves of the Atlantic, crawled across the beach, and feathered over the group as they sat in their white plastic folding chairs wrapped in gray woolen blankets. Tom no longer wore shoes out for the beach sessions. Penelope was right: his feet did not get cold. For that matter, his body did not get cold, either, even in an English December.

Dr. Lucienne stood in front of them. They all sat in a straight row facing the sea. He held his clip

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board behind his back with both hands and spoke.

"Before we begin discussing what each of you thought about the images you saw a few minutes ago, I'd like to begin this talk with a few comments: We're in the furthest reaches of the West. We couldn't go any further without drowning. Each of you can see the ocean behind me. It is powerful, vast, and unforgiving. You should know that whether or not we hear you, your words will, without question, be swallowed whole by the sound of the crashing waves and it will be as if they never left your mouth. Your words are thus insignificant. So, who would like to go first?"

Intoxicated with the doctor's philosophy, Tom rose from his chair without hesitation. He began.

"Okay, I wrote *First image – little girl running naked. Looks like she hasn't eaten in a while. Yes, quite skinny, indeed. Perhaps she's running to the market.*"

Dr. Lucienne furiously scribbled notes onto his clipboard. Tom continued,

"Right. Okay. *Mother and infant lying together. That mother has a very stupid look on her face. Very stupid. Perhaps the baby gave her some disease during labor that made her mentally retarded. That baby is so ugly, too. It looks like a bloody baboon. Anyway, it'll probably die before its first birthday.*"

Tom looked around. He scorned himself when he realized he was hoping to hear laughter, a cheap kind of affection.

"And lastly. *The galaxy.*"

Tom began to feel ridiculous about what he had written. He wasn't able to muster the same sentiments from this image.

"Um, *The galaxy. Twinkle twinkle little star. How I wonder what*

you are. How I wonder why you are there."

Tom sat down when he finished. His last comment rung in the air, humming over the sound of the crashing waves while the patients looked at the ocean. Dr. Lucienne looked at Tom. He appeared to be calculating, or deeply contemplating Tom's entire set of comments.

Bernice went next.

"*Right now I am looking at one of the most horrifying photographs ever seen. A precious young life is frightened to death and someone had the nerve to take her picture. I want to reach into the wall and save this girl. I want to give her my clothes and protect her with big hugs.*"

"*The next image is a young mother and newborn. The baby is adorable. You can tell it needs love from her mum. It looks like mum needs love from her baby, too. This reminds me of my sister and her son when he was first born. I miss them both.*"

"*This image looks like the Milky Way. It reminds me of God. It is so incredibly beautiful and I am mad at myself for wanting to die, because if I had succeeded I never would've been able to see this beautiful image. It's sparkling now. It's magnificent and I'm happy to be looking at it with others, even if they don't care about me.*"

Dr. Lucienne's pen never stopped writing as she read from her paper.

Nathaniel stood up next and read his comments.

"Here's what I wrote. *Love let this happen to this little girl. There are two soldiers—two adults—standing behind her as she runs. Why are they not comforting her? Why is there napalm in the area in the first place? Because love drove men to drop it there. Men loved their country so much that they decided to drop*

napalm on another country to keep it safe. Love scared a little girl with napalm."

"Am I correct to detect some anger, Nathaniel?" Dr. Lucienne asked while scribbling at his clipboard. Nathaniel nodded while looking down at his comments.

"Next says, *A mother will love her child, hold her and make her feel safe. She will feed her from her own body, filling her with milk and love. But, as we all know, when that infant girl grows up into an older child, napalm will drive her away from her mother, who is dead in the village, recently burned to death. It was love that made this all possible.*"

Dr. Lucienne now just watched Nathaniel, his hands resting behind his back clutching the clipboard.

"And finally, *The photo of the universe is trite. We've now seen love at three different phases. One is the absolute horror it produces at the very climax of its destruction—an innocent child running from it in terror. The second was the kind of love we see promoted in the real world. A mother adoring her newborn child. Now, we see this galaxy, which is love from a satellite's eye view, if you will. From here, love is non-existent, and this is where we want it to be in our everyday lives.*"

Dr. Lucienne motioned for Nathaniel to sit and the next patient reluctantly stood to read.

Later that evening, Tom was lying in his bed, reading a colorful and glossy pamphlet he found on the nightstand called *I Don't Love You, Too: A Guide for Married Couples*. A knocking at his door got his attention.

"Hey, Tom, mind if I come in for a minute?"

It was Nathaniel. He was wearing his jacket and has his shoes tied looking ready to leave.

"What's up, Nathaniel? Are you going out for the evening or something?"

"No, Tom. That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I'm leaving for good. I've been dismissed. Dr. Lucienne just got done telling me that I'm rehabilitated and ready to start life again."

Tom didn't know how to respond. His instinct was to shake his hand and give him a pat on the back but he didn't want to exhibit and feelings of fondness.

"Listen, I don't really care what happens to you. But, even though I'm not sure if I'm supposed to say this or not, I think you've got the hang of it. I think you'll be out of here quite soon."

Tom didn't want to let someone else make him feel good, so he chose to look away from Nathaniel, toward the window.

"So long," Tom said. "Turn out my light when you leave."

Moist minty breath awakened Tom. It was dark in his room in the middle of the night. Someone was breathing right next to his face. Tom's eyes acclimated to the dark and he thought he saw Bernice crouching next to his bed, leaning over him.

"Tom," a whisper called out. "Tom, it's Bernice. Please don't be alarmed."

"Bernice, what are you doing here? It's the middle of the night. Are you—"

Tom stopped himself from asking after her well being.

"Tom, I hate this place. I don't know how I got here but I know that I want to leave. And I'm *going* to leave soon. I know that you like it here, Tom. I can tell. And I'm *glad* for you. I really am. But couldn't you agree that it probably isn't for everyone?"

Tom nodded his head. He felt

bad for her despite himself. He had never paid much attention to Bernice, but now he was realizing that he found her quite attractive. She was as short as a child, but otherwise a well-proportioned woman with dark, possibly Mediterranean features.

"Tom, listen. I have liked you from the outset. Even with all this brainwashing, you have a kind demeanor. So I'm going to ask you to do something that I've never asked a stranger before. I want you to sleep with me. But please know that it's not for you at all, Tom, so you don't have to worry about loving me, or even acting like it. It's just that before I leave this place, I have to prove to myself that I'm capable of feeling something strongly, because I'm afraid Dr. Lucienne may have permanently made me nutty."

Without waiting for a response, she mounted Tom and began kissing his face as he lay there, staring out the window at the moon over the ocean. He lay as still as possible, thinking that this moment should be one of the greatest of his life. But suppressing all feeling was his focus and he was determined. All traces of Bernice were gone in twenty minutes and Tom fell back asleep.

Tom awakened from a rank stench. When he opened his eyes, he was startled to see Dr. Lucienne's face inches from his own, his mouth open and breathing hot air directly into Tom's nostrils. The doctor's eyes were squinted and he looked angry as he lay on top of him in the dark, like he was ready to beat, maim, or even devour Tom.

"I need you to know something, Mr. Farnuff."

Paralyzed with fear, Tom quivered under the gray woolen covers.

"Right now I could kill you and no one would know. If there are people out there that care about you, they would all think that you killed yourself because you are a weak man that they rejected. In fact, they would expect it."

Tom continued watching him, trying to understand.

"And I swear, part of me wants to kill you, just to get through to you one final time why people should stay away from love. Tell me what you think of that."

Tom struggled for words, then gave in and said,

"Dr. Lucienne, I just don't care. But if you did decide to kill me, you would be a walking, preaching hypocrisy. It would be love channeling through you that made you murderous. Love that your absent father stole from you that made you feel weak enough to need to take my life. So go ahead and prove your point. Make your philosophy fact and take my life."

In one motion Dr. Lucienne leapt off Tom's body and onto his own feet. Tom felt a great relief at being able to breathe easily, free from both the weight and breath of Dr. Lucienne. He flipped the switch and the room was filled with fluorescent light. Standing by Tom's bed, he busily scrawled with a pen, then walked out of the room without another word. A minute later, Penelope was in the room. She was also writing on a clipboard, then handed it to Tom and said,

"Okay, Mr. Farnuff. Dr. Lucienne has recommended that you be released from the clinic. He has deemed you rehabilitated, so I just need you to read this, tick one of the boxes, and sign your name where I've marked X. I'll be back in a minute to collect this."

Tom reviewed the sheet of paper. Part of it was a release form that looked fairly normal, but at

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the bottom was a section that asked where he would like to be taken. He examined closer and found that the clinic would bus him to one of several destinations: London, Manchester, or Glasgow. He checked London, seeking some familiarity, then handed the form back to Penelope when she returned.

"Penelope, can you tell me why the clinic goes to such lengths as to pay for my bus fare to London, or Manchester, or *Glasgow*?"

"Well, Mr. Farnuff, Dr. Lucienne believes that his patients are the best form of advertisement. He's willing to send you to any one of these major cities with the hope that others will come to him to be more like you."

"You mean Rejects?"

"Yes, he wants Rejects. But he would soon like to branch out to just ordinary people, too."

"Why doesn't he open clinics in other cities?"

Penelope flashed a patronizing smile.

"I know it's not very exciting, but there's only one Westward, Ho!, Mr. Farnuff."

Tom pondered over that for a moment, then asked Penelope again before she left the room for the final time.

"Penelope, would you please tell me who I have to thank for bringing me here?"

"I'm quite sorry, Mr. Farnuff. The person who brought you wanted to stay anonymous. Who knows, maybe he or she will tell you his- or herself one day."

Penelope then stuffed one hundred pounds in bills in Tom's hand.

"The bus stop is just about one mile down the street."

"Thanks, Penelope."

"Godspeed, Mr. Farnuff. I mean, goodbye."

"Though We Were Passionate"

by P. H. Madore

I'm listening to Counting Crows when Time slaps me in the face, insists I have somewhere to be. Reality returns and greets me—she's not a super-model, she's not that outgoing, she only plays the game with me. She told me she was very picky and I told her everything was about personality and a decade struggled by with us doing the same.

Neither of us pretended to know what love was but passed a weekend without a drink though we were alcoholics and without sex though we were sluts and without cigarettes though we were smokers and without arguing though we were passionate—we blinked and the mountains were no longer before us, and Time informed us that it was right.

Characterized Lenin's statue on paper when we left for Russia (her idea) and she painted her impression of God when we discovered the Berlin Wall together (my idea).

She tells me it's eight o'clock again and asks if I want to get fired again and says I should go to work if only to keep her company. I tell her it's time for a change in scenario again and ask if she remembers yesterday and say she should trade eyes with me so maybe I could see things her way.

She laughs. I touch her. We shower, prepare for work together.

Words fail all day and actions blind me. She's been on the phone with the flower shysters today and asks me to stay on the counter and try to speak to the customers—lie to them if I have to. I tell her I'm very picky as to who I spend my energy on like that. She says she knows. I touch her and she makes

a verbal ultimatum out of anywhere. I think it's my ultimatum so I close my eyes, then I realize the flower people are being assholes again so I take the phone from her.

"You are dying," I say.

"Scuse me?"

"You're dying, Jack, so get the flowers to this shop and act like it. Also respect that we're dying just's quick and that means you're wasting our time.

"You fuck."

Silence.

"Thank you, Jack. Also, I would like a Pepsi."

Click.

"Thank you, Jack," I say.

I tell her to stay on the counter and take a risk on the customers if she has to. She tells me she's very picky and I step outside the shop for a smoke.

I'm wondering what it's like to count birds, thinking London would be ideal for finding out in when Time slaps me in the ass, insists I've got nowhere but here to be. Reality returns and she greets me lighting a replacement cigarette, seeing that mine is gone.

Jeremy Brown ("Westward, Ho!, England") lives in New York.

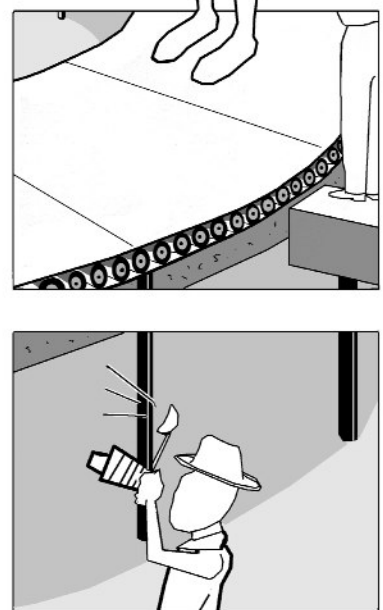
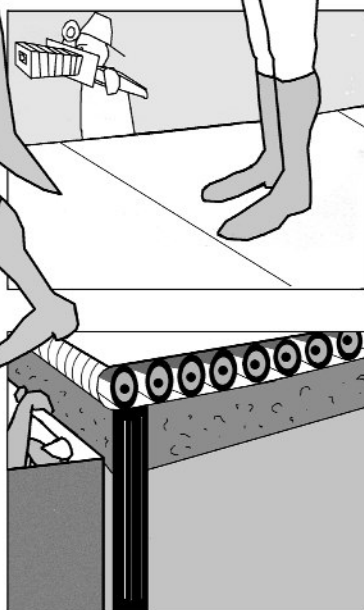
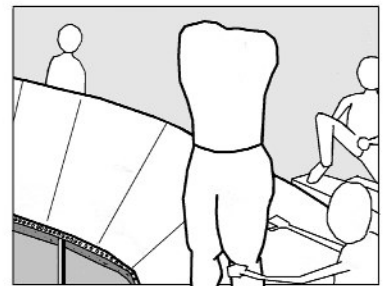
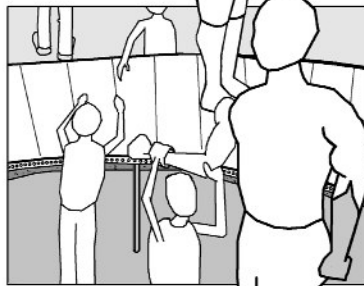
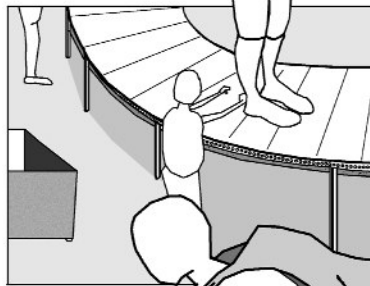
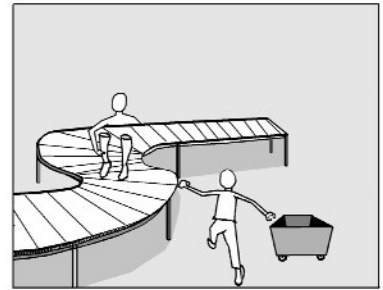
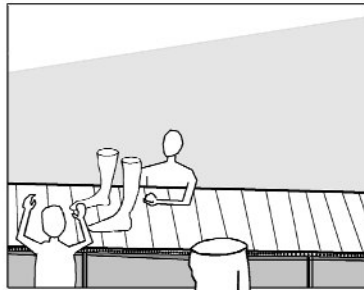
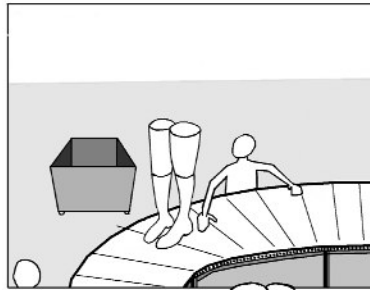
P. H. Madore ("Though We Were Passionate") is the father of *Dispatch Litreview*, currently living in Athens, GA.

Allen Sessions ("Manifest Destiny") recently doodled 17 years away as a molecular geneticist. He now doodles and does carpentry in Raleigh, NC.

OneNeck is a crazy cartoonist from Edinburgh, Scotland.

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