

Enough is as good as a feast with David Meyer, Adurline Chellis, James Edwards, Amanda Gorman, Clayton Williamson, a new Paper-Cuts, Who's Gotcher Blotter?, Some (Other) Stuff, and The Dream Journal.

The Blotter

Rockin'-Big Sixth Anniversary Spectacular

MAGAZINE



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"Hanging With The Recession"

We're supposed to be apolitical here at The Blotter, but I feel it's necessary to say something: all the confidence in the world isn't going to fix the uncertainty in the world.

These are tough times, I guess, made all the more miserable because our culture has attention deficit disorder *en masse* and therefore we keep coming back to this: times are tough and all, and they're not better yet and *why the hell not?* Worse? How much worse? Haven't we done all that we could? I mean, we put money in a savings account for two months in a row now, and didn't rent any porno during Lent. We ate potato chips cooked with that funny-sounding-name grease instead of good-old normal animal fats, and we all hate bankers as much as anyone possibly can. So we've done our part, right? Why aren't we more confident? I am. I really am. Then why isn't someone saying that we are? Well, you know...aw crap.

Recently I was asked what I think the difference is between nowadays and the Great Depression. That's easy. Our grandparents and great-grandparents were smarter than we are. How so? They knew stuff. Grandma could wash her own dishes. Grandma knew how to make soap to wash her own dishes. Grandma knew how to make stuff to clean things without soap. My grandmother could make candy, for crying out loud! What's better than that? I mean, they can have my candy when they pry it from my cold, sticky fingers! K's grandmother can make her own potato chips. We grandchildren and great-grandchildren, on the other hand, may well be doomed.

Our forbearers knew how to fix a leaky roof, or a plugged toilet. How to prune a fruit tree. Do you know how to prune a fruit tree? Hey, wait a minute, say you. I don't even have any fruit trees, so why would I need to know how to prune one? Fair enough, although growing a fruit tree might be a good idea.

Let's pick a subject that's more relevant to our times. Do you know what a Derivative is? Go ahead, pick either the Math term or the financial instrument. No? Well, how about balancing your household current? How to install a solar panel? How about repairing your drier - clothes or hair? Balancing your tires? Balancing your checkbook? Can you find your way to work by bus? Can you find Indianapolis on a map? My goodness, it's no wonder we're so uncertain.

A Helpful Depression Tip: Mix Bon-Ami powder with vinegar into a paste and clean your car windshield with it. Oh, that's right. We don't have any Bon-Ami cleansing powder.

We seem woefully prepared for hard times. As unprepared as we were for good times, frankly. Whose fault is it when you buy something you can't afford? Whose fault is it when so many business leaders are as corrupt as Caligula? A friend asked me if I ever watch the TV show "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader?" I have, and I can tell you that I am more knowledgeable, but not necessarily smarter. These Fifth graders are flexible, seem to retain what they are taught (even if it was merely instructions in the green room on how to make adults look stupid), and they raise their hands to ask and answer questions.

One of the refrains we oft-repeat is that we're leaving our world to our grandchildren in miserable shape. I'd like to say that on the whole I disagree. Sure, there's probably going to be some debt involved. Sorry about that. But as a species we've tried to stop having world wars, racial slavery, nuclear Armageddon, treating women as chattel, religious Inquisition, global plagues. As a species, we have tried to solve medical mysteries, advance efficiencies in growing and manufacturing, improve the human lot through technology. Sometimes we fail. Frequently we misuse the very things we intended as improvements. In our favor? Occasionally our motives are good.

I've been lucky. I'm used to pretty hard times already. I gave up on normalcy a long time ago, and with it, middle-class sin, suburban propriety

and Jones-Keeping-Up-Withism. I don't drink anymore, don't smoke anymore, haven't played a round of golf since 1993. My Carrharts have a hole in the knee. I recently ironed on a patch over the hole, so that I look like a fifty-year-old Dennis the Menace. This makes K crazy; she tells me to go get new trousers. OK, I tell her, but I don't. I wear them around the house, and then for taking the trash out to the end of the driveway, which is a 200 yard walk, OBTW. Then I wear them to pick up the girls from school. Uh-oh. Ding-ding-ding goes the fashion faux-pas ankle bracelet K makes me wear. Out go the Carrharts with the evening trash-walk.

In fact, in all seriousness, I think I'm heading to become a bag-lady. That is, I'm not going to become a lady, but up in New York where I come from, there is this phenomenon called bag-ladies. Homeless folks who collect all their worldly crap and put it all in trash-can liners and push it around in shopping carts they liberate from the A&P. OK, maybe I'm not going to go that far, but I've got a box of trash-can liners from the store, and who can say what is the so-called tipping point for the behavior of saving *everything*?

I feel depression-ready. I practice being bummed out all the time. I've taken to storing old twist-ties from loaves of store-bread. I've taken to calling it "store-bread" because I've been baking my own bread. Admittedly, I use a rather expensive bread-maker, but I can make a pretty good loaf of whole wheat, and rather good dough for cinnamon sweet-rolls instead of buying them from the supermarket. I also have a good recipe for easy biscuits. Here it is:

In a bowl stir 2 cups of all-purpose flour, 1 teaspoon of salt, 4 teaspoons of baking powder and a tablespoon of sugar. Pour in heavy cream, mixing all the while, until you have a thick batter-dough. Place tablespoon-sized lumps of dough on a greased pan and put in a 350 degrees hot oven for about 12 minutes or until golden brown..

I keep everything I print out, stories, poems and such, so that I can carry them around to peruse. Then I flip the sheets over and keep them in an old box for the girls to color on. For the most part this is pretty good thinking, except that Bea finished drawing a picture of the Cat, colored it in, then turned her drawing over to read the stuff on the back. She asked me what a couple of words meant, and we decided that she could have a couple of Starbursts and that we'd keep what she read a secret. Hopefully, this will not come back to haunt me.

So I save money, wherever I can. I would love to see the symphony, or even a movie, but most of the time let them come and go. We don't eat out much, and will even less as the year progresses. We're cutting back at the grocery store. I still like good food, but don't care terribly much what I eat. I mean, a good steak is wonderful, but a PBJ will suffice. I'll spend three saw-bucks for a haircut, no more. And a haircut will do me for about six weeks. Those who know me are quite certain that I don't care what I look like. But the house could use new siding, and deer keep eating the azaleas. I can do nothing about this alone. And, although I don't care about most of the social requirements that used to plague me, like one-for-one inviting to parties, I understand them, I really do. You see, if you go to a holiday party at a friend's house, they are on your reciprocity list for your next party. Only I don't do cocktails, small-talk or building casual acquaintances (C-A's). I'm not much good with meat at the grill. So I have trouble hosting parties. Admittedly, this is bad because all the experts say that is my Network. Keep growing the Network, and success can only follow, is the party line. Without a network of C-A's I can't find a reliable siding guy.

Final note: Just now I was making a cup of coffee. In the fridge, there was no half-and-half that I could see, until I saw a small, unlabeled container of what I thought was heavy cream frugally saved from some forgotten meal preparation. With self-righteous certainty, I poured it into my coffee and took a sip. Coffee goes rather poorly with Ranch Dressing.

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CAUTION

It's a kind of magic.

"Emma"

by David Meyer

Xavier, who was playing the role of Emma's (Ms. Adams') boss, had been droning on in the same monotone voice for at least ten minutes and Emma was barely listening anymore. She had paid attention at first as Xavier rambled through what was really just a quick plot recap, but now she was listening only for her cue, and thinking only about what lay ahead in the scene. Moving her pen mechanically along the blank legal-pad, she inched forward in her seat so her skirt slid up her stockingless white thighs. Remembering the words of the director, she reminded herself of the importance of pacing; to make it through the next forty-five minutes without having to start over wasn't going to be easy, and she had to remember not to burn out early.

"In conclusion, I expect that we will hear back from you immediately about the return of Miss. Jade's family jewels." Xavier concluded his speech with all the excitement of a classical music DJ.

Emma nodded calmly and kept moving her pen.

"Do you like taking *Dictation*, Ms. Adams?" said Richard, the other actor in the conference room, who was playing the role of another lawyer though his connection to Miss. Jade's family jewels was, to Emma's dismay, left completely unexplained in the script. This was just one of many absurdities Emma had been forced to cope with during rehearsals though (another notable one being that Richard's character even lacked a name beyond "Lawyer #2"), and

now during the actual performance she reacted to it completely in character, taking it only as the thinly veiled innuendo typical of Lawyer #2, and as her cue. For Emma and everyone watching the film waiting desperately for the action to start (which, Emma imagined, would be *everyone* watching the film), the line was like the firing of the starter's pistol at a race or the shouting of "Play Ball" at a baseball game: it was time to get down to business.

Emma looked up from her legal pad, giggled, and said that actually she loved "*dictation*," letting her hands slide along the buttons of her blouse as she spoke. She had been waiting for this moment for what felt like ages and now that it had come, she wondered if she was ready. She had been ready two months ago when she had first contacted the production company, but since then there had been an endless process of interviews, auditions, waivers ("we don't want anyone claiming they didn't know what they were getting into"), and even a surprising number of rehearsals ("Dry runs" as they called them), and she had come to wonder if they would ever actually shoot the scene. But now it was time. Now, ready or not, the lights were on, the cameras were rolling, her skirt was hiked up, and Xavier was approaching from across the table.

Emma swallowed hard.

"I bet you like *dictation*," Xavier said as he reached her, running the back of his hand along her cheek.

"Think you could take

double dictation?" Richard said as he approached her other side.

Emma hated that line – another insult to all intelligence that she had come to accept as actually one of the more minor script snafus. In her opinion, it ruined the double entendre which, though obviously trite, provided the only attempt at a segue from typical office activities to hardcore sex on a conference table. If the lonely men watching the film were really supposed to imagine that they were doing this in their own offices, and if Emma's ex-husband ("A Richard himself incidentally," Emma had told her costar, "though it wasn't his name") was any indication that was just the point, then Emma couldn't help but feel the situation should at least be plausible, and no secretary alive took double dictation.

And so since it was all so abrupt and would be so shocking to a real ordinary secretary, Emma put a shocked expression on Ms. Adams' face.

Richard suddenly looked nervous though as if he had offended Emma in some way (he really was far more timid than she had imagined a porn star could be) and started to look around for the director for help.

Emma reacted quickly before Richard could force them to start over and put the scene back on track by glancing at the two bulging crotches on either side of her face, smiling, and delivering her next and last scripted line:

"I could try..."

Running her hands along

the zippers of both pairs of pants, Emma felt a familiar sense of apprehension, but she had dealt with similar sizes in training without any problems and she knew that she could handle herself. Besides, she thought as she unzipped Xavier's pants, she hadn't spent the past two months getting ready for this so she could blow it at the last moment. The key was to focus and remember why she was there, to keep her eyes on the prize. Like a mountaineer seeking the highest peak, or a pilot the fastest speed, the next forty minutes were to be an experience which, if overcome, Emma would have forever as proof of her independence and strength, and so a moment later when Richard slid down his own pants and Emma went to work in earnest, the well-endowed men surrounding her were symbols more than people, and Emma was thinking only of her ex-husband, Peter.

Emma and Peter had met almost eight years before, when Emma was a new twenty-two year old paralegal at the law firm where Peter had just become a new thirty-five year old partner. She had been an English major in college and took the job not because she had the slightest interest in law but simply because it provided the biggest pay check – essential to a new graduate with loans to pay and no particular goal in mind other than grad school “somewhere down the road.” A few weeks after she started, Peter had swept down from his huge office and begun wining and dining her, culminating ten months after they first met with his proposal during a romantic weekend getaway in Maine. Emma had worn a flowing white dress at the wedding,

invited everyone either of them had ever met, and then promptly quit working entirely to be at Peter's disposal. In fact, the paycheck she was to get for this brief scene with two strangers in a fake legal conference room would be the first paycheck she had received since her going away slash engagement party – held in an actual legal conference room.

The connection hadn't escaped Emma, though in reality the similarities between the two conference rooms ended with their names. The going away party conference room had had tall-backed black leather chairs slid into precise evenly spaced places along the table's perimeter; the set she was in now had chairs that looked like they had been pilfered from the dumpster outside Office Max sometime in the late seventies dispersed chaotically about the room. The going away party conference room had had a long polished mahogany table that could seat thirty if set up correctly, with microphones and video conferencing equipment added or subtracted at will; the set she was in now had a solid oak conference table scratched and worn from use, with awkward-looking reinforced legs built specially to endure the abuse they were about to receive (“Can I get a pair of those?” Emma had joked with the makeup artist.). The biggest difference though (bigger even than the black shag carpeting on the floor of the set) was that the fake legal conference room had no ceiling and only three walls, the space of the fourth being an empty opening out onto a sound stage occupied by the film crew – a gratuitously large group of people mostly with no purpose Emma could detect during rehearsals other than hanging around and

staring at her cellulite. Now though, Emma was pleased to find that between the lights of the set and the hairy masses of her costars, she couldn't have seen the crew even if she had wanted to, and as her body was occupied, her mind continued to reflect on the past.

The idea of doing the scene had been gestating inside Emma in some form or another for the past nine months – the nine months it had been since Peter had left her – seven years almost to the day after their fairytale wedding. He had left her calmly, had never lost his temper, had told her simply that she was too old, that she was no fun in the bedroom anymore, that he couldn't possibly love someone who interested him so little, and that he had met someone more dynamic, more exciting, more his type – that he was leaving her for his secretary.

The night Peter left, Emma had accepted everything that he had said about her, and it was only a few months later that she had emerged enough from his mental grasp to even begin to think of revenge. At first, it was the need to prove to him that she wasn't too old, that she wasn't asexual, that she was more woman than his new secretary would ever be, all with the hope of somehow winning him back. Eventually, the idea of getting this role had come to her and, with no idea she would be so fortunate as to play the part of a secretary she had lost some weight, spent a few nights with some well-endowed men she had met online for practice, and called a production company to discuss the possibility of getting a part in an upcoming film. By that time, the goal had become less to win Peter back though than just to

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make him realize his mistake by buying a copy of the tape and leaving it on his doorstep with some nasty pithy little note along the lines of, "Bet your secretary can't do this," or, "Who's asexual now, bitch?"

It was only two weeks into the process of rehearsals that the otherwise obvious thought had occurred to her that revenge was a stupid reason for a foray into pornography. Regardless though, she suddenly no longer felt the need. Emma had woken up one morning after getting the part and unexpectedly felt a load lifted from her shoulders. She couldn't remember having dreamt anything in particular, but something must have happened during the night because with all the clarity of a religious epiphany she had sat up in bed in the morning with but one thought on her mind: Peter was a bastard. And, it occurred to her immediately after, a bastard isn't even worth the trouble of revenge.

The scene then, which she had already come to look forward to in a way she had never expected – not quite as a sexual fantasy to fulfill, but more as a sexual mountain to climb, proof that she could do something totally crazy, that she had had a youth, a

last pre-30th birthday notch on the belt that no one would be able to take from her – became something else again. It became an experience which, she reasoned, if she could get through would prove not just how strong she was, but how far she had come from her time with Peter. And so it was with an unmistakable air of pride that Emma suppressed her gag reflex and alternated her attentions between the two men standing on either side of her. Every time she made eye contact with one of them they would look away or stare back at her surprised, and Emma sensed what the defiant expression on her face looked like.

Nevertheless, ever the professionals, the men continued to act, mumbling lines that they, who had probably never worked in an office for a day in their lives, seemed to think were appropriate things to say when having sex with a secretary in a conference room.

"If you're lucky I'll let you make us coffee later," Xavier said. If "making coffee" was an industry term, Emma was definitely not interested.

"She's better than Monica Lewinsky," Richard ventured. The newsy-twist was nice, but Emma lost her rhythm as she

debated whether to point out that Monica had been an intern and not a secretary.

"I think you're going to have to cancel my three o'clock," Xavier said and Emma almost choked.

"Does this mean I'm not getting anything for secretary's day?" she asked after regaining her composure. She couldn't tell whether the silence that followed that line was because neither man had ever heard of secretary's day before or just because she wasn't really supposed to be doing too much talking just then. She couldn't pass up the chance though, she was enjoying herself more than she had expected, and in the thrill of the performance she could feel the imminent climax and wanted to make the most of it while it lasted.

Neither man answered, and Xavier began unbuttoning her blouse – an easy task since it had been picked out of wardrobe precisely for being two sizes too small for the sylaconnically busty Emma, and undoing just one button had the effect of popping them all.

"A new white blouse would be thoughtful," Emma said as one of the buttons disappeared in the black shag carpeting.

Xavier shot her a menac-

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ing glance but ignored her still and Emma reminded herself to focus more and not make too many unscripted comments or the director would intervene and they would have to start all over, which, even if she was enjoying herself, was not something she was particularly interested in. Instead, following the script, she stood to help Xavier get her skirt off, returning her attentions to Richard, who seemed to still be confused by her having spoken.

Settling back into her chair, fully naked at last, Emma suppressed the instinct to cover herself and tried to relax as Xavier lowered his head between her legs. With the intensity of the lights and the growing beads of sweat on her bare skin she suddenly felt light-headed, and knowing there was no chance to rest or get water before the conclusion she focused again and tried to pace herself.

"Eyes on the prize," she garbled, her mouth too full for anyone to understand.

She thought again about Peter, and like someone picking at a scab her mind returned to the early days of their marriage. Now that Emma couldn't deny how much of a bastard her ex-

husband was, it bothered her to recall how much she had relished the fairy-tale wedding and how eager she had been to quit the dismal office world as soon as they were married. She had enjoyed the nice things Peter bought her, the nice car they drove, the nice clothes she wore. She had had no trouble with the transition from working sixty hours a week to waking up at ten, reading Jane Austen or Flaubert in the bath, going to the gym, and being home for when Peter got back from work. She would go meet friends from college or high school for lunch when they could get away from the office and they would always envy her for her free time, for her health, for her apartment, for her clothes. She had enjoyed that envy too, though when the conversations turned to the future and what she planned to do with her life, she always felt a tinge of embarrassment. She was going to go to grad school, "a PhD in English," she would say as her default answer, though when pressed to suggest a term to start she would demur.

After she and Peter had been married for a year and a half Emma finally bought some books on studying for the GRE. That same night after dinner she had taken them out and sat at the dining room table to start studying for the test.

"What're you up to?" Peter asked a few minutes later as he peeked over her shoulder on his way to the living room.

"I just bought some GRE books today, I think I'm going to take the test soon."

"Really? Why?"
"Well if I'm going to go to grad school I need the test and I was thinking of applying to start next fall."

"Grad school?" Peter sounded shocked though Emma knew she had told him about it countless times before. "In what?"

"English. My PhD, c'mon, I told you I wanted to do that."

"And do you really think you'll get in?" Peter said, his voice suddenly full of derision, disdain, disgust.

Emma was floored and couldn't respond. Peter looked at her intently as if he had said nothing at all.

"Umm, I don't know," she said to fill the silence.

Peter looked at the cover of one of her books and scoffed before leaving the room and more than six years later, after their divorce and after the epiphany about Peter, Emma lying on a fake conference table

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still remembered that moment with shame. She had been unable to focus on her books for the rest of the night out of anger, but then when together with her husband again hadn't even had the strength to tell him what was upsetting her. He was, after all, thirteen years older, and a partner at a law firm to boot; just because his opinion was insensitive didn't mean it was wrong. Maybe she wasn't as smart as she thought she was.

After putting the GRE books away that night she hadn't taken them out again, and though she persisted for a few more months in telling people she was planning on going to grad school, she soon dropped that too. Instead, to avoid the awkward moments with friends she stopped seeing the ones that made her feel inadequate and started spending more time with the wives of Peter's coworkers, or with people she had met at the gym during the day. By the time of her divorce, she had lost complete contact with all but a few of her former friends and even those she was still in touch with were no longer close enough to call and confide in. In the months since Peter had left there had been moments when she had been tempted to call just to hear

a familiar voice, but she couldn't quite find a way to tell them what she was doing, and regardless didn't really think it was worth the effort. She had cut herself off almost completely from the world in preparing for the scene, and no one from Emma's life knew where she was or what she was doing.

Certainly none of them would have guessed that she was in a fake conference room on a soundstage off a back road somewhere in the Los Angeles sprawl, and that she was lying naked on her back with her legs bent, surrounded by rolling cameras.

The threesome hadn't been in this arrangement for long, and Emma found the whole situation suddenly amusing: the position, the coldness of the table, and the glaring lights reminding her of some kind of sick gynecologist's office – the doctor, of course, having been replaced by a naked man with a high school education, his instruments replaced by, well, his instrument, and the nurse by another naked man who was just then squatting over her chest to begin using *his* instrument for what could only be some new kind of mammogram. Emma almost laughed but then, remembering that Ms. Adams, who was

probably going to have to clean the conference room when this was all over, would probably not have found this sudden detour in the middle of a meeting so funny, tried to turn her laugh into a passable moan.

Actual moans had been surprisingly forthcoming for her so far in the scene though – at least more than she had expected they would be. Xavier crept her out, there was no way around that; he was aggressive and there was a disregard in the way he touched her that made it clear he didn't like her much at all. But the relatively gentle Richard had actually managed to give her some pleasure; his timidity made him cautious and he tended to move a little slower, which was more her style anyway.

Emma was glad then that it was he who was at the foot of the table and Xavier who was occupied so ridiculously on top of her with the mammogram. She couldn't really understand this sequence, had even asked the director to try and explain it, but he had just told her not to worry, to leave the "choreography" to the professionals. And so Emma reminded herself that this was just what it was like to have large breasts and that these were the things men liked to do with them. Being new to large breasts, she needed such reminders from time to time.

Emma's breasts were only four and a half years old at the time of the filming ("They start kindergarten this fall," She had told the casting agent.) They had been a present for Emma and Peter's third anniversary, though only afterwards did she realize that it had been a present for her, since Peter hadn't given her anything else. Somehow, he had



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managed to propose the surgery, encourage her to do it, and then act as though it had been all her idea.

"You would be the most attractive woman alive if you got this done," Peter had told her. Saying she was so close to being the most attractive woman alive was so close to being a compliment that Emma had actually blushed.

"But the breasts I have now aren't exactly small, ya know," she had said a moment later, and they weren't either. They weren't big, but they weren't small and she had always liked them. She had liked that she could spend an hour on the treadmill while the bustier women at the gym were confined to the elliptical trainer or the stair-master; her breasts never got in her way when she was sitting at a table like she knew some friends' did; and they were perfectly adaptable – with the right bra she could create or eliminate cleavage as the outfit required.

"How do you define *small*?" Peter had responded sarcastically, staring brazenly at her chest.

Emma withered under his gaze and crossed her arms, feeling suddenly naked.

"Listen," Peter had said after a moment's silence and another of his customary scoffs, "why not think about it? Talk to Julie, she had hers done last year, she seems to like them."

Julie was one of the new friends Emma had picked up since her marriage to Peter. She was the wife of another partner at Peter's firm, a proud graduate of LSU, and, Emma was fond of remarking, the walking definition of the word *vacuous*. She had had her breasts enlarged the year before and they had gone

from being something small and unnoticeable to something she carried around with her like a pair of watermelons the grocer hadn't been able to fit in her shopping bag. Emma knew that if she talked to Julie Julie would say she loved them, but Emma suspected that if you asked her about her lobotomy she would say the same.

"I'm not getting breasts like Julie's," Emma shot back, hands on her hips, offended at the suggestion of a comparison.

"No, of course not, hers are gigantic, but there's a range of options between hers and... yours," Peter gestured at her chest like a used car salesman pointing to the oldest and cheapest car on the lot, one a week away from the demolition yard that he was ashamed to even have around, and Emma crossed her arms again.

Holding back tears out of a last vestige of pride, she hadn't responded and the conversation had ended. The damage had been done though and when she looked at herself in the mirror that night before bed, her breasts had seemed suddenly smaller, misshapen even, their height and spacing uneven and exaggerated, her nipples disproportionately big. A week later she had agreed to consult a plastic surgeon and Peter had been overjoyed, had offered to pay for the whole thing (a not quite magnanimous gesture since he was the only source of income in the relationship), and had even made first mention of it as an anniversary present.

And so on a Monday, a week before their anniversary, while Peter was out of town with clients, Emma had come out of anesthesia to see a smiling Julie (who had offered to drive her home from the surgery – know-

ing just how Emma was going to feel she was sure) and a pair of D cup breasts. For the next week they were sore and she had to be careful about the wounds, but by Saturday when Peter's return flight got in, they were "ready for use," as the doctor had phrased it.

When Peter came home from the airport she met him at the door wearing an ankle length black dress with a neck line that dipped down almost to her navel. She had bought the dress the day before but never wore it again after the tears Peter inflicted on it in his haste that first night. He enjoyed her anniversary present very much, it seemed.

And other men had too. In fact, without her improved breasts it was unlikely that she would have gotten the part of Ms. Adams, and Emma liked the idea that finally she was going to get some use out of them herself. In the past few weeks she had even come to finally regard them as a part of her body, and to take some pride again in her figure rather than walking with her arms across her chest, as if trying to keep the world from noticing. The world always noticed anyway. In fact, the first man who didn't seem totally obsessed with her breasts was Xavier, who, having probably seen more silicon in

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his career than the doctors on 'Nip 'n' Tuck," had tired quickly of his improvised mammogram and had instead slid up to be directly over Emma's face, muffling the moans Richard had been eliciting and giving her something more to occupy herself for a while.

Shortly after he moved though, there was a noise off screen from the director and time came to rotate, like some perverted volleyball team that had just won back its service. Xavier got off Emma's face, Richard gave up his rhythm. Emma got on her hands and knees and they moved to the middle of the table. Xavier knelt behind her, Richard knelt in front, and with a momentary pause to make sure everything was right, play resumed.

The new position involved a lot of rocking back and forth on her hands and knees, and given the hardness of the table it wasn't long before Emma could feel her knee-caps chafing and her shoulders growing sore. She had told the director beforehand that she could only keep that position for so long, but he had insisted they try it since it was a standard position for a guy-girl-guy scene, and if they did it on the floor then it would make it clear that there

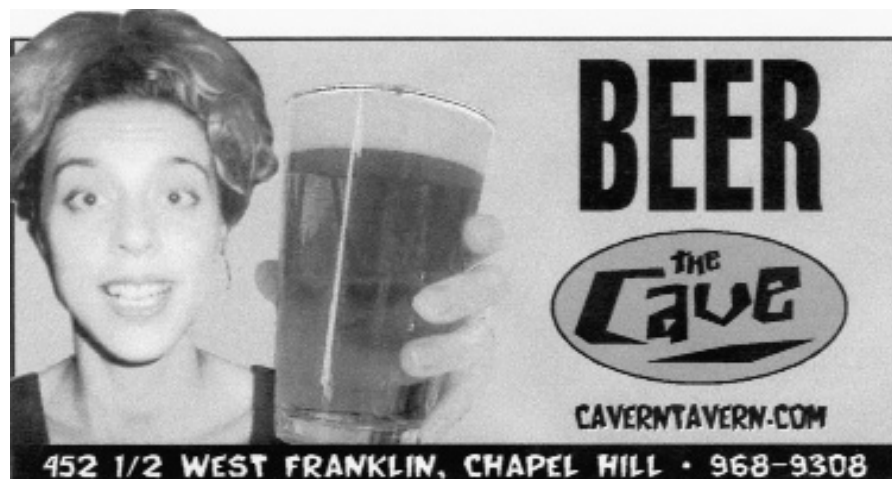
was shag carpeting – and, as Emma only then realized, he was well aware that there isn't a non-porn conference room on Earth or the sweet hereafter that has shag carpeting.

So Emma had resigned herself to the table and had come to see this sequence as one of the tougher ones of the whole scene – topped only perhaps by what was to come after. They were more than half-way done, which was reassuring, but her body was starting to feel the toll. Aside from her knees and shoulders, just about every orifice she had with the exception of her ears, nose, and tear ducts was sore, and her breasts were aching from so much bouncing back and forth – a sensation Emma recalled vividly from her first few post-op forays on the treadmill, before she had given up trying and resigned herself to the stair-master. Unfortunately for Emma though, she knew Xavier wouldn't take her feelings too much to heart. The director was a higher power though, and since Emma had heard he had a reputation for taking care of his actresses, she held out hope that he wouldn't let things go on too long and she ignored the raw feeling of her knees, the soreness in the shoulders, even the growing ache of

her neck which was bent at an odd angle by Richard's position. She reminded herself that it was no different from the workouts she did at the gym and though she was feeling the burn she knew she could persevere. After five minutes, she guessed that her knees might be bleeding, but they still hadn't switched positions. After seven her moans took on an added edge. She was tempted to stop and ask for a break, but felt that that would be quitting and letting Xavier win. Ten minutes passed and the director had said nothing and Emma thought that maybe this was a punishment for her smart-alecky comments earlier in the scene. Maybe they had seen through her and were trying to break her. They wanted her to beg them to stop, to admit that she was nothing, that she was powerless, that they were better than her. She girded herself for the sequence to last an hour and then after it had gone on for fifteen minutes the disembodied voice of the director came in from somewhere in the darkness of the fourth wall, "Okay, move to the next position."

"Rotate!" Emma thought as she practically jumped up on the conference table and Xavier laid down on his back below her. She was proud of herself for having made it through the sequence and noticed that her knees actually didn't look bad at all.

She laid down on top of Xavier and they exchanged tongue intensive porn-star kisses while rocking back and forth, waiting for Richard to lower himself into position on top of her. Once he was there Emma stopped kissing and only moaned dully through the remainder of the sequence, trying not to drool



on Xavier's face.

The trick to this part of the scene, Emma had told herself when she first read the script and realized what she was getting herself into, would be mental, and in that regard she had a distinct advantage over other female actresses – not because she was smarter or more confident, but simply because mentally she could fit as many things as she wanted into her abdomen – mentally, it was completely empty to her, and had been for almost two years. It was a secret that she had kept from her friends easily enough, even from her family, and it was the thing which she was most ashamed of after her time with Peter. But ever since her tubal ligation surgery, Emma had felt a void, a dead space, in a whole section of her body, and she knew that nothing two strange men could do could ever fill it back up.

"It's the surest form of contraception," Peter had told her when he first suggested it.

The occasion for the discussion was Emma's second abortion in the six years that they had been married. She had used the pill for the first five years, but after almost two years of feeling depressed and experiencing dramatic mood swings, a psychiatrist Peter had sent her to had suggested the extra estrogen might be a cause. Though Peter had hated the idea of having to use condoms, he had hated the idea of having a crazy wife just as much, and so he had agreed to let Emma give up birth control at the end of her next pill cycle. The change had succeeded in addressing some of Emma's mood swings, and she had felt much better in that regard, but getting Peter to put on a condom had proven a bit more difficult

than expected. Emma had to keep a stockpile of the morning after pill in her bathroom and still had had occasion for two abortions in the previous year. It was too much for her system, she knew she couldn't take another, and yet whenever the moment came while they were having sex for them to stop and for Peter to get a condom, he would get one but lose his erection, or suddenly wouldn't be able to find a box, or would just ignore her pleas entirely, gripping her body so tight she couldn't move, explaining afterwards that he had been too "caught up in the moment."

Emma had complained to him about it during dinner the day of her second abortion, hoping that if she phrased it right he would understand; that she could make him see the doctor's office he never visited, make him feel the procedure he never felt. She had gone on at length, describing the waiting room, describing the nurses and the doctors, describing the physical and emotional sensations, describing how the doctor himself had told her not to have it done again. After listening with only a fraction of his full attention, Peter had come back with nothing more than, "you should get your tubes tied then. It's the surest form of contraception."

"If you like sterilization so much why don't you get it done?" she had shot back in a rare burst of defiance though she knew full well what he would say.

"Oh don't be so stupid, you know I can't do that kind of thing with my heart. No doctor would let it happen, it would be putting my life at risk, do you want that?"

"No," she had said automatically.

"Well then do you want

kids?" he had asked, the emphasis on the last word so strong that he might have been asking if she wanted Chlamydia or Gonorrhea or a tape-worm rather than children.

Again Emma had lowered her eyes and mumbled a "no."

"Well condoms aren't working for you I take it, and the pill doesn't work for you either. We could start with a diaphragm or an IUD, but those aren't as reliable as surgery and I have a feeling we'll be sitting here again in five months talking about why *they* don't work for you."

Emma had planned the whole conversation in advance but it was well out of her control at this point. He was right that she was the one who had the problem with the pill, and he was right that she was the one bringing up the problem with condoms, and so she assumed he was right that she was the one who should get the surgery. The time in their relationship when she might have disagreed was beyond memory to her by then; it had never happened. She had stopped having her own opinions years before, she had stopped having her own friends, reading her own books, dreaming her own dreams. He was right that she didn't want to have children, but she couldn't even have said at that moment a single reason why she didn't want them, she would have had to wait for him to explain it.

And so Emma agreed once again, and a month later had gone to the hospital for another surgery. This time though, unlike the breast enlargement when she had come out feeling different but generally the same, something unexpected happened when she was under the anesthesia. It was like the



Adurline Chellis - Summerville, SC



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doctor had accidentally removed something doctors were never supposed to touch, something much more precious than a bodily organ. She had gone into the hospital as a living breathing woman, and had come out deprived of the very thing which had made her a woman in the first place; with a procedure that had all the complexity of tying a pair of shoelaces, any chance of Emma ever having a family had been erased. In the morning, she had been a woman like any other with the ability to carry a child inside her body and nourish it while it was still young and helpless; in the afternoon, she was a sculpture of a woman, fully transformed at last into Peter's masterpiece: breasts of silicone, a wardrobe from Gucci, a hassle-free reproductive system, and all the free-will and independence of a block of marble.

A year later, when Peter told Emma he was divorcing her because she didn't interest him anymore, she knew that he was telling the truth. Since the surgery, she had stopped working out as much, she had stopped watching what she ate, she had stopped reading books; she had spent her days wandering their apartment, trying to find a way to quantify what she had lost. She frequented parks and schools during the mornings while parents were dropping off their kids. She had never really wanted children before, but she hadn't not wanted them either, and now that she knew they were gone from her life she knew she would have preferred to have them. Peter had responded by sending her to another psychiatrist, but he had been no help, and she had only escaped her reverie in the first days of plotting her post-

divorce revenge.

In planning her revenge, Emma had also met the first men who had been able to give her physical pleasure since her surgery – though even that had been fleeting. She had simply become empty “down there;” just a bag of air surrounding some holes. Richard had done better than them even, but Xavier's presence had mitigated any real pleasure he could have given her and so still, while lying between the two men on the conference table, Emma felt only emptiness, and the last part of the scene which she had been most nervous about passed disappointingly easily for her and the moans that were emitted from her mouth were all fakes.

It was her own fault though, she reminded herself as the trio moved at last off the conference table and Emma knelt on the floor between her two costars, it was her fault that there was nothing down there, that she would never have children, that she had a plastic body, that she was almost thirty years old and had nothing to show for her life.

As the two men beside her moaned and she busied her hands with ending the scene, Emma knew that those days were past though, that they would

never come again because she knew what it was to be an object now, she knew what it was to stop being human. She had passed through the fire and was reborn to the world, laughing giddily as her co-stars anointed her, all the while fighting not to shout what she was thinking: that no one can degrade you if you don't let them, and that no one would ever degrade her again.

Emma stared at the camera and smiled: powerful, in command, triumphant.

“Maybe,” she said to Richard several weeks later when they watched the final version of the film, “I'll put that picture on my grad school applications.”



"First Communion"

by James Edwards

The last of the dishes exploded in a welter of gunfire.

The men were done washing up.

Franklin leaned against the double wide with a sense of satisfaction, and spat on the ground, the brown wet mass of twiggy chaw steaming on the frost.

He eyed his nephew contemplatively with the lazy regard of a man whose system is suffused with tobacco, tryptophan, and a half-case of Coors Light. He had great affection for the boy, who seemed a little abstracted from the grey crisp afternoon.

"Whatcha thankful for, Bossun?"

His sister's only son had been conceived in the only moment in her life in which Flossie Mae had peered into her own soul, in the fiction section of the town library upon a table bearing the works of Melville. As nearly as Franklin could understand, it had been her sole sexual experience, provoked by the sudden discovery that she had an unfettered spirit and imagination, a discovery which, deferred too long, had produced unexpectedly violent results.

Nobody could say for sure, but the odds were good the father was a boy everyone called Tinker, who could barely speak English but who sat day after day with a Larousse translating dirty French novels. The only other people who went to the library were those who came religiously on the first Wednesday of every month to read Popular Mechanics, but that was kept in its

own room on the far side of the library before an altar of back issues. Whoever the father was, Franklin had reflected at the time, he hadn't known precisely what hit him: Flossie Mae's awakened spirit had exploded in a libidinous outpouring so sudden and riotous (and short) as to be almost chaste. The gentleman in the case, as Franklin referred to him, likely had no real memory of the event.

Flossie Mae became inward after this, and would show sudden dispositions to get up off the couch, sometimes in the middle of Oprah, and walk restlessly down the length of the double-wide as though she were searching for something she had misplaced. During her pregnancy she seemed distant to the family.

Pressed to declare who the father was so the ineffectual males might pretend to be outraged or perhaps even to talk angrily but idly of doing something about the situation, Flossie Mae never spoke of the experience in the library except to mutter as though to herself that in that glorious moment, "All hands had been called to the deck, every man to his station, every harpoon to the ready, to seek and to find the Great White Whale." Whether the whale had been found or not she never revealed, but, persuaded she was dying in childbirth, had made her concerned brother and entirely indifferent mother swear that the child would be christened Bossun.

Franklin had been more changed by the birth than Flossie Mae. She

simply appeared defeated and deflated by her own survival. Bossun she raised with abstract love. But Franklin hurled himself into the role of uncle with as though he had been waiting for it his whole life.

He knew, as all kind adults do, that the adult who asks a child a serious question both deserves and must be prepared for a certain sullenness. So it was, for Bossun dug in the frost with the butt of the 12-gage which was his constant companion for domestic chores of this kind. "Dunno," he said.

His uncle maintained that most blessed of adult postures: he waited kindly and attentively. No-one really knows God until he has fallen in love with someone or something which seems infinitely greater than himself, but the next best thing is to have had good uncles who love not because they must but because they choose.

Franklin's grave attentive face deserved, felt the child, something better than this, so he made an effort.

"I guess I'm glad I didn't meet Tiny before school yesterday." Tiny was responsible for the tape that held Bossun's glasses together. "I guess I'm glad for grandma." This was one of the necessary tissues of lies that holds families together: the matriarch of the family was a huge evil mass of flesh and malice that controlled her spawn by complex machinations of guilt and silence. She was almost literally the center of gravity in the double-wide, but she

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was much, much more than that. She was that necessary fiction, the devil, against which all good energies must be called into being and brought to bear.

Bossun was silent. "I like to read," he said quickly, as though confessing sin. "I like books."

Franklin's face remained gravely kind, but he felt in himself the small tremors of a man who knows his nephew doesn't shoot well, has only once caught a fish (and that an embarrassing matter of six inches over which even an uncle's kindness was hard-pressed to make a great deal), and that cannot manage an impact drill. It wasn't for his own reputation that Franklin feared, but he seemed to see Bossun's life opening up as a great blank sky in which no sun ever rose.

And Franklin heard this confession that the boy, perhaps having been conceived upon letters and in a hot rush of spirit, had absorbed some instinct that Franklin did not understand. He felt it meant something. He looked at the boy almost with wonder, now, spat again on the ground, and kicked at a frozen wormcast. He felt as though Bossun had opened up a world of loneliness to him, and he stared into it with the courage of love.

Bossun, if he perceived this insufficiency in himself, gave no sign. He seemed perpetually bewildered that the world should be cruel to him, and if he cried, he did it in private, a fact of which Franklin, for the first time, disapproved. He read, that was all. He felt something in words, some stirring that he knew was a world away from the constant hum and flicker of the television, the

loud explosions of gunfire and the trash-fires that formed the highlights of autumn life in the double-wide.

There was something, he felt, Out There, or perhaps In Here. He wasn't sure.

He didn't know. But he felt it moving as though it were a benign but terrible beast slouching through his room at night after he had switched off his flashlight and composed himself for sleep, a fragile thing that time fingered with hungry patience.

Franklin's hand was on his shoulder. With an effort that Bossun could feel, his uncle said the words, "That's a good thing to be thankful for. You got to be what you are."

The moment was embarrassing, and they both knew it. Franklin reached instinctively for the tin of Skoal. He offered a pinch to the boy, who took it. A little fell towards the ground, and Franklin reflexively caught it before it hit the mud. "Never drop that stuff, boy," he said sternly. "Three dollars a tin. Don't waste it."

Bossun nodded solemnly, and for the first time fit the bitter-sweet plant between his teeth and gum.



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The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

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We dwell on dreams as if they were cracked oracles, future truths partially portended. Sleep teases us, like a BFF that calls at importune moments, whispering promises of renewal, rebirth, re-evaluation and revelation. Then it whisks away and leaves us to the devil we don't know.

What we seek is safe and restful *Sominex* sleep. What we win is a nightshow that flings us like cutworms in a salad-spinner throughout the night, only letting sunlight finally crack our brittle eggshell of sleep to tear us cheeping from the 700 channels of subconsciousness.

Well, now! How did you sleep? we ask each other? Did you have a good night? Quite well, thanks. Oh, fine, fine, we lie unabashedly, because to sleep tentatively and perch antsy in dreams is our lurid lot. The light, the occasional color, the horror. All madness.

All that is left is to give ourselves over to this theater of our minds, to beg interpretation, to lean against the ear of others and ask, "what do you think that this means?" while the dreams soar off like ravens on updrafts, fading into black spots in the blue, blue sky.

BG - Chapel Hill, NC

Paper-Cuts: Books You Might Not Have Read

by Martin K. Smith

The Slammer

(published weekly by CorMedia, LLC, Raleigh, N.C.)

We here at *The Blotter* warmly welcome to the ranks of local magazines this new enterprise called *The Slammer*, a publication so far beyond the frontiers of good taste that it elicits the same two reactions as an episode of *South Park* at its most brilliantly sick: “Sweet holy Jesus, our civilization truly is doomed,” followed by “What a sick but brilliant idea. (Why didn’t I think of it?)”

It’s a simple idea, as brilliant ones often are: a gallery of mug shots, garnered from the public record, printed colorfully and inexpensively on newsprint, and sold for \$1 at the counter of your friendly neighborhood convenience store. Each of us has an interest in crime and punishment; everyone harbors a touch of voyeur. People with Good Taste will discreetly slow down at sight of a roadside arrest. (They just won’t discuss it afterwards, which is one reason they’re rather dull company on road trips.) *The Slammer’s* credits page is up-front about its purposes: “to inform the public of suspected criminal activity in the community; to assist law enforcement in deterring crime and solving cases; to foster public involvement in matters of safety and awareness” (all virtuous sentiments, to be sure; but here’s the clincher:) “and to satisfy the natural curiosity of readers.”

Why do people like to read about crime? Catharsis, for one thing. When they say, “My God,

did you hear what happened?” they’re really saying underneath, “I’m glad that didn’t happen to me.” It puts me in mind of how, when a zebra or elk is suddenly pounced on by predators, the rest of the herd will stampede for a bit; but then stop, shake off the stress and go back to grazing, even though they may be in full view of where the lions who lunch are shredding their former herd-mate. “My therapist says that’s why zebras don’t have ulcers.”

“Entertainment” could well be added to *The Slammer’s* list of purposes. The mug shots are sorted into everyday categories like Recent Arrests, DWI and Domestic Violence, but also into featurette categories the magazine has playfully made up: “Slammer Salon” (arrestees with bad hair), “Joys and Sorrows” (people grinning for their mug shots), “Mature Menaces” and “Kiddie Korner” (very old and very young suspects, respectively), and “Doctor!” (people who came to their mug shots variously bruised or battered). The post-Thanksgiving issue has “A Taste of Crime”, with suspects bearing food-esque names like Butcher, Hamm, Apple, Gin and Pye. The pre-Christmas one has a centerfold spread on criminals who did their deeds while dressed as Santa. Sometimes they’ll single out a DWI suspect and write a few lines on them, as a “Featured Impaired Driver”:

Oh Brother, it’s too late to pray now. The jig is up and your name is engraved in stone in the...Book of Woes. It wasn’t very late at night so it

wasn’t because he got all crazy, necessarily. And [Mr. X, the suspect] didn’t have a hair out of place last week when the Sheriff handed him holiday greetings, so he couldn’t have been getting all freaky. The freak part came later, when he sat down and started figuring how much all this is going to cost a soul, and it right here at Christmas. So yeah, it makes sense that one might call on ones creator when one ponders the thousands of banana peels one is going to watch slip out of the wallet.

(All of *The Slammer’s* articles are written in this perky / smartass tone – “Fashion Victim Robs Clothing Store,” with security-cam pictures of a suspect in garishly embroidered, ridiculously low-slung jeans.) There’s a Restaurant Health Ratings section, detailing violations found in certain Raleigh kitchens – “pink algae growing inside ice machine” was my favorite. (Some yupscale bar should invent a house specialty drink called a Pink Algae.) There’s a columnist on crime issues and even a comic strip, “Officer Jimbob”, featuring a policeman, his police dog, and their cohort, a strange, feisty creature resembling a cross between a teddy bear and Yoda. The back cover carries a bail bondsman’s ad, showing the bondsman in evening dress cutting a curve on a jet-ski, with the promise “We will come get you out by Land, Sky or Sea” (My husband remarks that the guy’s trying to conjoin the concepts of bond as in bail with Bond as in James.)

Good clean American fun, it would seem. So why will the good-

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taste crowd be kind of uncomfortable around *The Slammer*? Because we believe in, or try to believe in, the ideal of “there but for the grace of God.” We believe in such things as extenuating circumstances. Jean Valjean from *Les Miserables* steals a loaf of bread because he can no longer bear to hear his sister’s children crying from hunger. Civil-rights marchers get beaten-the-crap-out-of by racist cops, blasted with firehoses and shredded by police dogs. Father Daniel Berrigan is arrested for protesting nuclear weapons and death squads. All people are at least created equal; and even virtuous people can be driven to lawbreaking by the extremes of an unjust and cruel society.

Unfortunately, the numbers of the virtuous are few. Most crooks are the all-too-common kind of common criminal, like the death row resident written up in Issue 36: he went out looking for people to rob so he’d have money to buy pot, and ended up shooting a defenseless cabdriver twice, in the back. His kind ruins things for the Jean Valjeans because they spark the visceral reaction that, sadly, we also know well: the desire for retribution. Vengeance may be the Lord’s, but wanting it is universally human, even in people of Good Taste. We

too want to see bad guys like him collared by a large strong policeman who’ll play Whack-a-Mole on their evil bad-guy heads.

Our human nature contains both aspects: the “There but for...” and the “Exterminate the brutes!” Civilization, we say, is what happens when the former reins in the latter. What’s troubling about *The Slammer*, with its perky / smartass tone, is that it doesn’t seem much concerned about taking a turn helping out with those reins. Instead, there’s a feeling of “us against them”, the two aspects separated, “them” the Bad Guys and “Us” the readers, the law-abiding Good Guy public, “informed” by the magazine as to what Bad Guys look like, what their names are, and how very many of them there are out there. (The credit’s page dutifully reminds that “all suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law,” but does so in very small print and under the large slogan “All Crime, All the Time.”) When there’s an Us and a Them, the former will fear the latter. And if people get fearful enough, they may start handing over freedoms – their own, ours and everybody else’s – to any large strong-acting policeman-type who makes convincing promises of safety. Us against Them, taken too far,

wields the firehoses and lets the shredding dogs out.

Of course *The Slammer* is not going to bring down Civilization all by itself. If you asked them, they’d say they’re all in favor of Civilization, and that informing the public about crooks etc. is their contribution towards sustaining it. The average *Slammer* reader will probably agree. I expect there’ll be a lot of such readers, all of whom will be paying \$1 a go to have their natural curiosity satisfied. They’re a smart bunch, that *Slammer* crew; they see a potential market and have jumped right in. (Too bad people don’t have the same natural curiosity about Fiction, Poetry and Art: we here at the *Blotter* could charge \$1 an issue, too, and actually make some money.) So keep in mind “there but for grace”: the right set of wrong circumstances, and your face could end up in those pages (or even mine; under a spurious charge, Dangling Participles or some such...)



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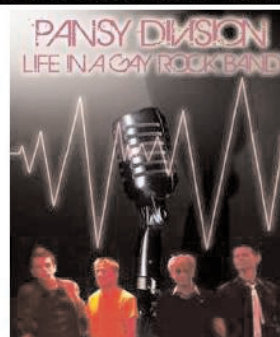
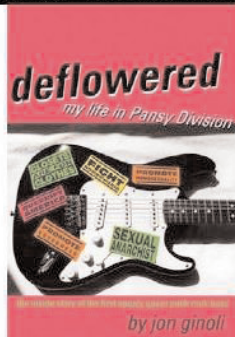
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and form creates an informal balance of light and dark. Now I try to work within the counters of the medium and exploit the grain and textures of the wood and I usually make the original drawing directly on the wood, which gives a more sensitive print.

A woodcut is a union between a creative thought and a grain of wood. Primarily the creative thought or visual happening becomes the subject. Next there must be a diligent search for the wood block which becomes the nuptial mate. I develop the design directly on the block because the grain is an integral part of the design. There is much give and take between the grain and the subject. The next step is blocking in the light and dark. I try for a balance of light and dark. Often the negative space becomes positive. The final step is one of skill in using the tools and inking the plate. I consider a woodcut as a challenge of working within the counters of a medium. A challenge that is rewarding and lots of fun!

The medium of a painting is determined emotionally but occasionally it is altered by practicality. Sometimes I think in water color, sometimes in oil, but acrylic only when I'm hurried. My paintings are products of conceived visual experiences. The sincere ones are not planned, but come as a "happening" or birth.



Mrs. Adurline Chellis, of Summerville, SC. Wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, professor, artist, philosopher, friend. 92 years of age. The following words are hers:

Everyone is creative, differing only in degree. Because creativity is a characteristic of all learning it cannot be neglected in the education of children. A child must be encouraged to think creatively.

Although paintings represent a variety of styles (non objectivity, abstraction and realism) they are consistently emotional ordered and original. My strongest element is the order or design.

Art is expression and any attempt to express that which has not been experienced is insincere, shoddy and unworthy to be called art.

The birth of an aesthetic thought isn't premeditated or willed, it is an intuitive "happening". The artist's problem is to describe visually this experience to an audience. If successful the aesthetic experience is manifested in a work of art.

My woodcuts when I first began were made from drawings done in a *Nicolaides* manner. The unbroken line brings space and form into an integrated order or "oneness" of design, an interplay between the positive and negative space

Before I choose a canvas, I have a well-formed mental image and have made quick sketches on paper, or I may make detailed accurate drawings in order to better understand a subject.

After selecting the canvas size with proportions in mind, I roughly draw with my brush a few ordered or directional lines. From this point, the painting is mostly rendered intuitively, working on all areas at the same time, so that all areas of the painting are brought to completion more or less simultaneously. Individual viewers approach a work of art with varied interest, taste, and experiences. Differences in training and viewpoint may cause one viewer to appreciate a work while another deprecates it. Be that as it may, I have enjoyed creating them, and I hope my pleasure will be yours.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I thank God for giving me a large degree of creativity.

Some say I paint like Van Gogh, others call me another Grandma Moses but my grand children affectionately call me "Big Mamma".

"Poetry in Stasis"

Sitting in a Japanese restaurant
I take a pen from the counter
And I compose
I doze into my thoughts
The fire flows through the ink
Deep in passion,
I put the stylus in my mouth
Without thinking
Oops
I just caught HPV
From wicked little vipers

The guy across the room
Keeps looking at me
Thinking up opening lines
Eyeing me like a piece of meat
Not me, buddy
Go talk to the butcher
I've seen him put his shame
Into a honey-baked ham
What a waste
Of good pork.

Two by Clayton Williamson

"Upon Dealing With Lizards"

Girls are great.
They are pretty.
They smell good.
When they smile, they show all their teeth.
The average gorilla charges at girls.
Girls comfort me when I cry over Tetris.
Tetris comforts me when I cry over girls.
I like them when they are short.
I like them when they are tall.
I like how their clothes grasp their bodies.
I don't like restraining orders.

I have telekinesis.
I practice by squeezing bosoms with my mind.
By my mind I mean my hands.
I like it when they pose for sexy pictures.
They don't like it when I take sneaky sexy pictures
I like to be exciting for girls.
When kissing, I pretend to have a seizure.
Girls love over me more, and then I laugh
Girls don't like ambulance bills.

Girls like a man in uniform.
I like girls naked.
I'd rather kiss a Maine Coon than work at Arby's.
My friends call me Sauron
I want the lady ring-bearers for my tower.
I stare at women on the subway.
It's not my fault they are pretty.

"Overcoats"

by Amanda Gorman

It's been a hard time
pulling threads on my own sweater
thinking things will turn out alright,
until the whole thing unravels
and I'm freezing from mistakes.
When it gets like this, what can I do
but pray for warmer weather?

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The Blotter

Who's Gotcher Blotter?

Ed.: We at the rag are quite aware that we depend on many folks to be the entertainment empire that we are - artists, advertisers, editorial interns and printer's devils. But there are some unsung heroes, the guys and gals who tote the magazine out to the coffee shops and bookstores and other samesuch places. One of these folks is a familiar name to Blotter readers, Ms Lara Falberg. We want you to know who she is. Here's a little note about her, from her.

Hi,

I'm at Octane coffee in Atlanta, and there are about 11 people here, other than me. Four of the eleven are reading The Blotter. They look amused and intrigued. I love this idea to feature those of us who deliver. Thanks again for running the Yoga Dose ad a few months back too! I attached a yoga pic, and here is my brief bio:

When not attending to her paper route, Lara Falberg is oing/teaching/thinking/breathing/pondering yoga. She has a DVD out on that thing we call the market called Yoga Dose with her best pal, Nicole. Please visit yogadose.net and give it a look-see. Lara has been published by The Blotter after bartering a possum, a terry cloth quilt, and her Pi Beta Phi lavalier. She lives in Atlanta and struts around her neighborhood a lot, mostly to show off her foxy and hilarious dog Edie, but sometimes just because it feels really good.



CONTRIBUTORS:

David Meyer is a modern ex-pat living it up in Brussels.

James Edwards is what I believe to be a secret submitter. All notes came from this other person who kept referring to James in the third person. Mysterious and interesting....

Adurline Chellis - see page 20

Martin K. Smith says that anyone who wants to take a stab at a "Paper-Cuts" is welcome to go for it. Pick an author, a genre, a book you once loved and wish to love again. Send your "review" to us, and we'll consider it. Oh, and thanks.

Amanda Gorman of Raleigh writes, "I'm a typical college student who has no clue where her life is headed. I'm not an anxious person but I have trouble sleeping. So instead I usually stay up and write..I'm a firm believer in Karma and think good deeds bring good deeds. Oh, and I also hate long walks on the beach."

Clayton Williamson writes, "I saw an ad for The Blotter in a Greensboro, NC art gallery today, and became intrigued. I've always enjoyed art 'zines like The Blotter, and figured I'd submit a few things for your consideration. However, the mermaid@blotterrag.com mailbox was full, so I've forwarded my submissions here in hopes that I can reach a living being. If you care to view it, my blog is <http://thebrokenclavicle.wordpress.com> and if you see something you'd like to use or mock, be my guest. They're all for fun, anyway.

Ed. note: We've had a problem with spam. Never liked the stuff, even fried and cubed and mixed with onions in scrambled eggs.

"Some Potluck-supper Dishes of the Rich and Famous"

by the Market St. Books noontime lunch crowd

Lieutenant William Bligh's "Green Bean Casserole" – Bligh doesn't get invited out much, his best friend was Fletcher Christian, after all. But at least you won't be set adrift with this simple comfort-food. The special ingredient is diced salt-pork, the old sailor's staple, mixed in with the Campbell's Cream of Chicken soup before baking in the oven at 350 degrees for twenty minutes. Add the French-Fried Onions and pop it back in for ten more. (see Fletcher's Bread-Fruit Compote for nice salty-sweet companion dish) Par-tay Ho!

The God Of Thunder's "Pfeffernussen". Other residents of Valhalla claim that Thor's cookies are store-bought. But he really does make them himself, with real ground ginger instead of powdered spice. His other special ingredient is Cointreau lightly sprinkled over the goodies before they go in to bake, adding new meaning to the word "hammered".

Alfred Hitchcock's "Shepherd's Pie". No, there's nothing untoward going on under the lightly browned mashed potato cover. Just ground round and venison instead of lamb. Hitch never liked the idea of baby sheep used as food. The gaminess of the venison is offset by a sharp dash of Lea and Perrin's Worcestershire sauce. Yum! (OK to use "Veg-all" instead of fresh greens and taters from the market, but don't tell anyone I said that.)

Nero's "Under the Tuscan-Sun Corn Chowder". No secrets, just the absolute freshest ingredients and

no fiddling around while working the *mirepoix* into a good chicken broth.

Julius Caesar's "Beef and Barley Soup". This takes a full afternoon to make, and you'll need someone standing behind you to tell you you're not a god when you dish up this treat. Keep in mind that the recipe makes a lot of soup, so invite all of your friends, Romans and countrymen.

Sir Robert of Loxley's "Ragout of Venison". Not your normal "potluck" fare, but Robin Hood was always one to nab the best for his buddies. You'll have to hit up Friar Tuck, for a good dry red for the rob-from-the-rich broth. *Welcome to sure good!*

William Faulkner's "Marshmallow Sweet-potato" dish. Bill always apologized for not giving this a grand name, but it's true, there's nothing complicated about it - just everybody's favorite and no potluck supper can be without it. And, you have to admit it, it's a guilty pleasure.

Che Guevara's "Beef and Dill Pickle Roll-ups." They look like a lot of work, but they're not. Trust me; it's always good fun hitting the beef with a tenderizing mallet. (Putting some diced jalepeno pepper in with your dills is revolutionary!)

Ian Fleming's "Waldorf Salad." Please! Shaken, not stirred, Miss Money Penny.

Richard Nixon's "Spicy Pecan Pralines." "What's the point of supper without dessert?" Dick always used to tell Pat and the White House bad-boys. But no dirty tricks here. If you forget to add just a dash of Allspice you only have yourself to kick around.

Evita Peron's "Three Bean Chili." When I tried this, it was freshly ground Argentine beef, of course. Dark Red Kidneys, Italian Garbanzos, or "chick-peas" and Spanish "Frijoles Negros" make this "Juan" worth crying over.

Josef Stalin's "Develed Eggs." Who else but Uncle Joe would you trust with your appetizer? Turkish paprika from just across the Georgian border and French champagne mustard will warm the coldest Siberian evening.

JP Morgan's "Peanut-Butter Celery Sticks." You may think old Ponty's a cheap bastard, right up until you take your first bite. He'll tell you the wise man invests wisely. Yes, that's freshly fried-crispy bacon in your peanut butter. Trust me. Yummy!

Mary Shelley's "Brunswick Stew." Come now, you know this recipe already. A little bit of this, a little bit of that and *It's Alive!*





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Illustration
by Leslie Nivison