

*Hunkering down for summer with our
Laine Cunningham Prize winner - Leah Griffith,
our comics and The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

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FREE MAGAZINE



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"Truth, Justice, and 'Purple Jesus'"

Sometimes, when you're reading a story or a novel by someone you know, you look for the truth – that is, that thing you know really happened because you were there. Perhaps the author himself told you that tidbit before it made its way onto the pages, back when you were grubby kids playing together in the dirt pile out back, slacking off shooting hoops during gym class, or sitting all headachey on the front porch of the frat house squinting at co-eds walking home from church on a lazy spring Sunday morning. You know - you're pretty certain that you know what you know. And then you measure the validity of the whole by the veracity of that kernel.

As writers, and particularly as readers, we should know better, because even made up out of whole cloth a fiction can still be true - should be true - and a really good novel must be true like that or you find yourself setting it down in places where you don't care much whether or not you find it again.

But I find that more and more we think we want *reality*, not truth. Over seventy percent of all books published in the US are nonfiction. All of the memoirs, biographies, histories, how-to books, "event-rehashes," and textbooks take up our literal and figurative shelf space to the point that one must wonder why? The incessant bombardment of the internet news gives us entertainment of a sort - not intended to take the place of creative writing, but inevitably achieving that goal with the fine instrument of the 24/7 bludgeon. The sheer volume of information can overwhelm our sensibilities, and occasionally a story seems stranger than fiction and being "fact," more worthy of our beleaguered attention. And, for many of us, social media requires what is left like a mewling child. I can't change the world; it is, as they say, what it is.

So how can I hope to get your attention about a good story? Do I resort to the tools I just excoriated? How many tweets does it take to tell the tale of Brother Andrew and Bubba Purvis and lovely Martha. Do you know them? Yeah, you recognize Purvis. Maybe he was the boss you had once on a summer job painting houses, or a guy in your boot-camp who secretly still belonged to the Klan because his grandfather had signed him up when he was born. Or he was you, just a ways back. Brother Andrew? He was the fellow who chased you off from the well-pump when you

rode bikes too far from home and were so thirsty you had to climb over the wall of a monastery. Or, he was the quiet priest across the street from the house you grew up in, who came out on Feast Days because of all the firecrackers you set off. And Martha? Oh, yes, Martha. When you were a freshman in college and you needed a haircut and to shave off that peach-fuzz on your upper lip and she still looked over at you when you read the poem you wrote just last night just to get it done, not expecting to be called on by the TA, and there was the hint of a smile in her eyes - not a "what's wrong with you" smile, but a "who are you?" smile - then you knew Martha. And you know the small town where everyone knows someone who knows someone else. And the ladies who sit with full barbecue plates on their laps and ask you to fetch them an RC Cola, wontcha? And you know the dirt path off the highway that leads down to a flat bank by the river where you can sip a jar of sumpin-sumpin, or crank up the tunes on the car radio and just relax throwing pebbles at the mud turtles, or put your arm around someone and mumble "so now what?" and see what happens. That's the reality of it, whether you like it or not. That's the truth.

So in late June, my friend "Bird" - Dr. Ron Cooper - is coming to Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill. We'd all like it a lot if you came out and heard him read from his novel "Purple Jesus." If you need to know something more about it, go to www.roncooper.org, or www.bancroftpress.com. Or check out his Facebook page. There, I said it.

I don't know many storytellers as good as Bird. Just maybe the poetry professor we both had, back in the day. Maybe the Apostle Paul and Will Rogers, and maybe my Pop. A pretty small handful, truth be told.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com



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CAUTION

As clean as a whistle can be, that's us.

The Blotter Magazine

announces with pride the winners of the

2011 “Laine Cunningham Novel Award”:

1st Prize - **Leah Griffith** of Port Charlotte, FL,
for her novel “Cosette’s Tribe.”

2nd Prize - **Rupert Nacoste** of Raleigh, NC,
for his novel “Something That Didn’t Happen.”

3rd Prize - **Isla McKetta** of Seattle, WA,
for her novel “Murmurs Of The River.”

Honorable Mention - **Bruce Bilbee** (Writing as Murdock O’Dailagh) of Eagle River, AK,
for his novel “A Rude Awakening.”



Art by Fran Murphy

An Excerpt from "Cosette's Tribe," the 2011 winner of The Blotter Magazine's Laine Cunningham Novel Award by Leah Griffith

Sometimes I feel like there's too much room inside of me, and that things are knocking around in there. I got a lot of secrets knocking around inside of me for a kid. Things I can't tell anyone. Ma would die if she knew some of the stuff I've been up to. I wish I could feel happy again like when I was little. I didn't have any worries back then because my soul was still white like the truth. I wouldn't be in this big mess if my dad was around but he's been gone for so long that I can't even remember him. Ma likes to tell me stories about what he was like. She says that he was movie-star handsome and a great dancer. I dream about him sometimes but I can never see his face. We used to have a little picture of him but

my big sister tore it up because she was mad at Ma. I never did get to see that picture, so I'm still kind of sore at her for that. Ma says that I have my dad's brown eyes. Everyone else in my family has got Ma's blue ones. Whenever I ask Ma what my dad looks like she always tells me to go look in the mirror... but all I see is me. I wish my dad was here so he could see how much I look like him. I want him to dance with me too, like he did with Ma, and teach me all those fancy steps, and I'll show him that I'm smart and can read better than most of the kids my age. I'm almost ten and I want him to be sorry that he hasn't been around for all those Christmases and birthdays. Boy, he owes me tons of pres-

ents. If he ever comes back here I'm going to hold his hand and walk right down the middle of my street so I can show him off to everyone. I don't think he's coming back though. Ma has a boyfriend named Ken and it's because of me that she got him. I knew Ken first because my best friend Jimmy Elliot (he lives on the first floor of our apartment building) dragged me into his grandmother's apartment to meet his uncle Ken. I guess Jimmy wanted to show



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off his uncle's Air Force uniform. I was kind of shy when I first met him, because of his important job and how handsome he was, but he talked to me and Jimmy like we were grown-ups and told us some good stories. Then he said he'd give us each a quarter if we took his kid, Tommy, to the store. Ken said that he got Tommy in the divorce but his wife kept the three girls. It made me feel sorry for Tommy, his mother not wanting him anymore, and now all he got is his Grammy Green for a mother. Grammy looks like a big round hen and stays worried about germs all the time. I'm glad I got my mother, she's young and pretty, and likes to do lots of fun stuff with me and my two sisters.

Me and Jimmy hauled Tommy off to the store and bought a bag full of penny candy. Then we ate all of it while we were swinging at the side of the house so we wouldn't have to share it with anyone else.

Tommy's seven and looks just like Ken with his squinty brown eyes, dark hair, and no lips; just a skinny line of pink skin under his nose.

One day I decided to invite Ken upstairs to meet my mother. I guess I was thinking that he could join my tribe seeing that my dad hit the road a long time ago. Tribes are sort of like big families,

and I saw in a magazine how the people get to choose who lives in their tribes and who gets kicked out. So I figured because he was really nice to me, and he had a good job, him being in the Air

Force and all, that my mother would like him and then maybe they would fall in love and he could be my father.

That day Ken had on his blue uniform and looked really handsome in it. My mother was washing the floor when I brought him into the house and her face twisted up when she saw him. I could tell that she was mad at me for bringing

him over without telling her, but she didn't say anything right then. She just pushed her hair out of her face and said "hi" to him like she knew he was coming. She started talking really fast about how sorry she was for looking a mess and that she didn't know that he was coming, but Ken didn't seem to care about her washing the floor and her hair being all messy, because he said that he thought she looked pretty just the way she was. Ma turned as red as a raspberry when he said that. I was feeling really proud because I could tell that they both liked each other. When he left, Ma yelled at me and called me a little shit for not telling her that he was coming, but she didn't smack me so I knew that she liked him.

Ken comes by all the time now and Ma acts different around him, laughing at stuff he says even if it's not funny, and wearing lipstick around the house, just in case he stops by. She



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used to only wear lipstick when she was going out somewhere.

Having Ken around was really a blast at first because he took us places in his blue Cadillac. We never had a car of our own because they cost too much and Ma says that her welfare check can only go so far. One time Ken took us all out to eat at a Chinese restaurant and we each got little cups of tea and cookies with fortunes in them. My fortune was the best. It said that I was going on a great journey. Ken told us to eat as much as we wanted and then he paid for the whole thing. Ma was so happy she couldn't stop smiling.

Another time Ken brought us swimming at Mooney Lake. Its way out in the country and it took forever for us to get there. He even let our dog, Crumbs, come along. Mooney Lake is humongous and there are lots of places to swim. We went down a tiny dirt road to a place

where there were no other cars around.

Tommy spotted an old rope swing tied to a big branch so we took turns jumping off of it into the cold water. Me, my sister Janice, and Tommy, kept doing the Tarzan yell every time we swung because we were pretending that we were in the jungle, but my oldest sister, Diana, told us to can it because it was irritating her.

Everything irritates her.

Me and Tommy don't know how to swim yet, so Diana kept a big black tire tube in the water for us to hold onto when we landed. Ken said that he promised he would teach Tommy and me how to swim some day.

I used to want Ken to be my dad because I liked how he would always talk to me like I was a grown-up and act like what I said was important. We spent lots of time sitting on the front stoop together and sometimes he would take me for

walks and I would hold his hand like he was my dad. He gave me lots of stuff too, mostly money, but once he gave me a little red knife that had all kinds of parts, like arms, stuck inside of it. I still have that knife. I liked sitting on his lap, so I could get a good whiff of his aftershave. He smelled really handsome, like a father on TV would smell. I could see all his little black whiskers popping up like those seeds on the rolls at the Jewish deli, and he let me feel his whiskers too. They felt like my cat, Ranger's, tongue, all prickly and rough. I really wanted him to be my father and take me to carnivals and the movies, and vacations far away, but now I don't want Ken to be in my tribe anymore and I wish that I never brought him around my mother. But Ma likes him more than ever. Things turned bad when Ken invited me into Grammy Green's apartment when nobody else was there. I didn't want to go with him because I wanted to go upstairs and show Ma the Mother's Day card that I made for her at school; but I went with Ken anyways because I didn't want



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to hurt his feelings.

The house seemed different without Grammy in it. The lights were all out, like a store after it's closed, and I felt like I wasn't supposed to be in there. Ken said to follow him so I walked behind him through Grammy's kitchen, with her cute little elf salt and pepper shakers sitting on a doily on her table, and down the hall to a bedroom. There were two small beds in the room, one was for Ken, and I could tell the other one was Tommy's because it had cowboy sheets on it. There was a bunch of stuff on the bureau, all boring men's stuff, and a bottle of that after-shave that smelled so good on Ken's face.

Ken smiled and told me to sit on the bed. I felt nervous being by myself in Grammy's quiet house with him. The blanket on his bed was green and scratchy but I sat there anyway. I could hear my sisters. They were in the side yard swinging and talking about buying some

new magazines. Ken closed the window and then pulled the shade down so I couldn't hear Diana and Janice any more. Then Ken looked at me for a long time, but I kept looking at a pair of worn out slippers on the floor. They were lined up nice and neat under the bureau, like he was proud of them.

Ken told me that he loved me, and I told him I loved him right back, and that he was kind of like a dad to me. Then he sat beside me and put his hand on my knee and said that he really loved me.

He moved his hand up under my dress and asked me if I loved him, but I didn't answer him because I felt like I was falling into a deep hole where no one would ever find me. Ken's eyes looked dead black, and his hands were shaking while he touched me. He laid me down on the itchy bed and pulled down my underpants, but I kept my eyes shut tight like I do at the horror movies.

I could hear his belt buckle clanging and his zipper going down. Then he climbed on top of me and put his thing on my stomach and started moving around. His chest was rubbing against my face and I could taste the salt from his sweat. Warm spit filled my mouth and I felt like I was going to throw up. I asked him to stop but he kept moving around, and making noises in his throat like a growling dog.

I thought about Ma upstairs waiting for me, thinking that I was outside playing, and I wished that I was safe at home giving her that card that I made for her. There was a big picture of the Virgin Mary on Ken's wall. Her face looked long and sad with her black shawl over her head and her watery eyes staring down at me. I turned my head away because I couldn't look at her any more, and then I closed my eyes and prayed for Ken to stop, and promised God that I would never do it again.

Ma was fixing the kitchen faucet when I walked in, and she asked me why it took me so long to get home. I told her that I was out playing in the yard. I was going to throw the Mother's Day card away but Ma saw it in my hand and asked to see it. She made a big fuss over the card and then she taped it to the refrigerator for the whole wide world to see. It

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was a big red heart with her smiling face in the middle of it. When I drew that card in school I could smile in Ma's face true blue. Now I feel like a faker because of the secret I'm carrying. I just want to go back to being the way I used to be. Ma gave me a bear hug, and a kiss, for making her that card, like I was the best kid in the world. But that just made me feel curled up inside, like a traitor, because of what Ken and me did under that big picture of the Virgin Mary. I don't want Ken in my tribe any more. I want him to move back to California and leave us all alone. As soon as Mother's Day was over I tore that card to pieces and threw it away. I haven't seen my Uncle Richie for a long time. He's my favorite, and only, uncle and Ma's little brother. He has no wife and kids yet, so he acts like we're his kids. He's a ton of fun to be around and he always buys us the best presents ever. One year he got us all brand new bicycles for Christmas. It was too snowy to ride them outside so Ma let us ride them up and down the long hallway in our apartment. Uncle Richie is a butcher and has to wear a white coat, like a doctor, and a clean white shirt with a tie to work every day. Sometimes he comes to see us straight from work and still has blood all over his white coat so

it looks like he just murdered somebody. I don't care though because I know that he didn't kill anybody.

We're Catholic, and we can't eat meat on Fridays, so Uncle Richie brings us fish almost every Friday. I don't really like fish, but Ma fries it up so that it doesn't taste like fish any more, and then she makes crunchy corn fritters and French fries to go with it. I love Fridays!

Last time Uncle Richie came over he had a new girlfriend named Carla with him. She had blond hair piled high on her head like an ice cream cone, and her eyes looked catty with heavy black lines traced around them. She's a little fat, but I think that she's pretty. She was nice to us but Uncle Richie acted kind of funny.

When I ran up to him for a big hug he only gave me a half of a hug because his other arm was wrapped around Carla's chubby waist.

He wasn't paying attention to

me like he used to do. My sisters said the same thing. Diana said that Carla doesn't like us because we're poor and our house isn't nice like Uncle Richie's. He has a three story house with an attic and a cellar with nice furniture and stuff.

Things are boring around here without Uncle Richie stopping by every week. I miss him playing with us and taking us for rides in his car with the top down. I wish he never met Carla and that my dad would come back and move us all far away from here.

Ken comes by all the time now and I'm so sick of him that I could gag. Sometimes he eats supper at our house and hogs all of Ma's attention. After supper they sit in front of the TV and watch everything that Ken likes. Ma shushes us so that he can hear his stupid cowboy shows. He sits there and picks at his fingers and drops the little pieces of skin all over our couch. My sister Diana calls him a snake because snakes

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shed their skin every year. He watches me all the time too, and winks at me because we have a secret. I want to tell Ma what happened, but I can't.

My sister Diana says that Ken is trying to steal Ma away from us and that she hates his guts. Diana is nearly fourteen, and is Ma's big helper. But now Ma treats her like a little kid again because she has Ken to help her with stuff. When Ma goes out with Ken she still leaves Diana in charge of me and Janice, and Diana smacks us when we talk back to her, just like Ma does. I hate that about her because she's a lot stronger than we are so we can't fight her off. Sometimes when Diana gets real bossy we say that we're going to tell Ma on her, and she quits. We never tell on her though.

Last night Ken made Diana madder than a wet wasp. She was going to have some cereal before bed, but Ken saw her digging around in the refrigerator and said, "Isn't it kind of late for cereal?"

Diana told Ken that Ma always let her eat cereal at night because it helped her sleep. Ken swallowed hard and looked at Ma, and then Ma looked over at Diana and told her to put the cereal away and go to bed. I could tell that Ma didn't really care if Diana had the stupid cereal because Ma's eyes were smiling like she was

hoping that Diana would go right along with her. But Diana didn't go along with Ma's little game and she got stiff like a soldier and said, "He's not my father," and then she threw her spoon across the kitchen. Ma jumped up and slapped Diana across the face and screamed "Don't you ever talk to me like that again!" So Diana ran into her room and slammed the door. Ken smiled at Ma and said "You did the right thing; a kid needs to know their place."

I think Ken knows that Diana doesn't like him so he's trying to make her life torture.

When all the yelling was over I tiptoed down the hall to Diana's room and peeked in. She was crying so hard that she couldn't talk to me. I went in anyways and sat on the end of her bed, waiting for her to stop, but I didn't say anything because I didn't want to get her mad at me too. Pretty soon my sister Janice came in and sat on the floor and all three of us whispered about what a jerk Ken was, and how we hoped that Ma would ditch him. I almost told them about my secret, but I couldn't do it because it was too awful to say out loud.

After a while Ma came into Diana's room and caught us all up whispering and told us to get to bed. When Ma came into my room later, to give me

a kiss goodnight, she smelled good, like Ivory soap, and it reminded me of when I was little and she used to stick me in the kitchen sink for my bath. I liked playing with the soap because it floated like a boat. We were happy back then.

I cried a lot last night and today Diana is still in a sour mood.

"Cosette! Will you go get me some cigarettes?"

"Sure," I said, stuffing my bare feet into my sneakers. Ma usually asks my older sisters to go to the store for her, but Diana is still mad about last night, and Janice is in Diana's room trying to cheer her up. Ma handed me the money and asked, "Where's your socks?" I lied. "They're all dirty, Ma."

Ma folded her arms into a pretzel and said, "Go get a pair of Janice's socks or you can't go to the store for me."

I ran back to my room and I grabbed a dirty pair of socks off the floor and put them on. I like going without socks because all mine are gray, like old snow, and I hate gray socks because they make me feel poor.

"I'll be right back," I shouted out to Ma, letting the screen door slam behind me. I cringed, waiting for Ma to yell at me for slamming the door, but she didn't, so I climbed onto the shiny wooden banister in the hall, like I was sitting

backwards on a horse, and then I let goswoosh! At the end of the ride I bumped my butt on a big wooden ball, but it didn't hurt a bit. I was just about ready to slide down the next banister when I heard a man's voice floating up to me from the first floor. I knew right off that it was Ken's voice because of the way that it made my stomach twist up. I stood as still as a statue hoping that Ken wouldn't hear me. Ken's always watching me, and smiling at me,

like he wants to do that nasty stuff to me again. Ken went back into his apartment, so I snuck down the rest of the stairs and ran out the front door.

I looked around to see if Jimmy was outside, but he wasn't. I didn't see any other kids hanging around either so I walked by myself with Ma's money in my fist. We have a bunch of three deckers on our street and all kinds of people live in them. Ma calls our neighborhood a melting pot. When I walk to school in the morning sometimes I hear other mothers calling their kids in different languages. It seems to me that the people who can't speak English are extra careful about how they do things. Like they want to be the best so that nobody can tell that they're different. Nikko, the Greek kid, pops out of his

house every day with his hair plastered down like Alfalfa's, and a spit shine on his shoes. Ma says that I'm a mongrel; a bunch of nationalities mixed together like the mutts at the pound. That's where we got our dog, Crumbs. She is part German Shepherd and some other stuff too. My Uncle Richie says that mutts make the best dogs because there's no inbreeding. We got our cat, Ranger, from the pound too, but I don't think that cats can be mutts.

The big metal bell clanged when I opened the store door and Mr. Mancini looked up and smiled at me. I think Mr. Mancini is about a hundred years old. He's missing three fingers and wears thick glasses that make his eyes look owly. Ma says that Mr. Mancini is a war hero. I don't know about that. It's hard to picture him trying to shoot at anything with those weak eyes and no fingers.

"How's the family?" he asked, smiling up at me with his big eyes.

I looked away and told him that the family was good, (big fat lie) and then I asked him for Ma's cigarettes. Mr. Mancini put the cigarettes on the counter and then laid three tiny Tootsie Rolls on top of them. I handed over the money, smiled, and said, "Thanks Mr. Mancini." Mr.

Mancini's a nice old man and I bet he doesn't pull down little girl's underpants.

Back at the house, Diana was crying again so I asked Janice what was wrong. Janice pulled me aside and said, "Ma's downstairs at Ken's house inviting him for supper, and Diana is crying because Ma smacked her in the face for mouthing off about Ken being here all the time." Ma always goes for the face. My stomach felt like it was full of wet dirt because of all this fighting that I caused by bringing Ken home to meet Ma.

I didn't want Ken coming over tonight either. On Saturday night Ma usually makes us a picnic on the parlor floor and we eat it right in front of the TV. It seems like we never get to have fun with Ma any more because Ken is always butting in. And tonight we'll be watching his corny Westerns instead of what we want to watch.

I went to my room, grabbed my stack of Archie comics, and started reading. I like Betty the best. She's pretty and nice too. Veronica is nothing but a snob. Ma came in the back door calling my name. "I'm in here!" I said, in my best normal voice. Ma peeked in and asked me where her cigarettes were. "They're on the kitchen table." I said, pointing like she didn't know the way to the kitchen. I tried putting on my sad eyes,

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hoping that she could tell that I was unhappy, and maybe ask me what was wrong. But she didn't. Instead she tossed me a fake smile and then she told me that creepy Ken was coming over for dinner. I guess she could tell that I wasn't happy about Ken coming over because I wasn't smiling, and her million dollar smile melted into her mean face and she snapped, "You better not act up tonight either young lady; I've had about enough of that shit from Diana."

"What? I didn't say anything!"
 "Well, you better not."

Ma stomped off to the kitchen. I could hear her clanging the pots around and slamming the cupboard doors. It seems like everyone stays mad lately. It's too late to ever tell Ma about Ken because she likes him too much. My nose started tingling, so I let myself cry while I read my comic book, and watched my tears drop all over Archie's face.



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"It's official--Soren and Regina are splitsville!! What say you, him and I hit da clubs 2-night? The Triple Axe Attack, just like when we were in college!!"



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"JK!!! This blank Czech is ready to be filled out with some sexy amount and deposited...on the dance-floor!! Ladies ALL UP in this penal colony!!!"



"Whew! For a minute there I thought I'd dialed a I-HATE-hundred number!! I'll go get Kierkegaard, then pick you up!"



"Sorry fish sticks---looks like I've got plans!!! Don't wait up, okay? Haha!"



Quickly George got The Blotter from the desk, but it was no help, the puddle grew bigger all the time.

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Spotted Salamander-
Ambystoma maculatum

Illustration by
Jennifer Armstrong

THE CAROLINA ROLLERGIRLS HAVE GOOD TASTE

They read *The Blotter* and so should you!



PHOTO: KELLY MARIE HURD

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The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterrag.com

I never dream about her. I rarely think about her, and when I do it is of photographs, not the real, live her. That seems strange to me, to only be able to draw on memories when I sit up, put my thinking cap on, and say to myself, "remember tubing on the river?" Or, "sitting on the futon by the fireplace that night it rained, how the firewood was so damp." So when I dreamed about her, at the mall near my old apartment, and she was there, it was odd, like a guilty pleasure. I don't even know her name now – certainly wasn't invited to her wedding. I wonder, even, if she's still married. There was one of those I love him, but I don't like him very much relationships. He was very busy, still very much into himself before anyone else, when they got married. She was resigned to the plans they had made and too young to understand the ramifications of such a decision.

The dream-her – all of smiling twenty-five – came and left like a messenger in a Greek play: here's news and something you audience members need to know, and then I spent some dream-time looking for her. The buildings were tilted on each other like Tim Burton film set buildings. I wasn't sad that I couldn't find her – I hadn't expected her at all.

L.M. - Carrboro, NC

DRAGIN

by Michael Cole



Best In Show

by Phil Juliano



CONTRIBUTORS

Leah Griffith writes, "I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for the 2011 Laine Cunningham/Blotter Literary Magazine Novel Award, and for the exposure that this award affords for my first novel, *Cosette's Tribe*, and the validation it has provided me as an emerging author.

I discovered the magic of words when I was very young. My mother was a swooning romantic, so as soon as my two older sisters and I were able to hold a pencil, Ma had us writing poems. She would start the poem and then pass it around so that each of us would contribute, resulting in a smattering of words somehow as synchronized as a galaxy. Journaling has always been my favorite form of writing. I was never one to write every day; instead I wrote in developmental spurts with thought filled pauses in between. In my early twenties I began writing short stories and pages of spiritual/inspirational pieces. I kept these to myself, never considering the option of publication.

With my marriage, and the birth of my two children, my writing took a back seat to being in love and all the trappings of domesticity. As my children grew I became hungry again for writing, reuniting with my neglected muse after a long separation.

Craving the company of other writers, I joined a local writer's group where I enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow writers. I recall one week in particular when we were instructed to write a childhood memory. This was a scary step for me, for although I had a great mother and some good years, my childhood was eclipsed by a brooding darkness which, up until then, I had managed to avoid thinking about too deeply. But once I began writing I couldn't stop. I wrote about everything, and although there was breath hitching tragedies in my life, I also noticed that there were an abundance of wonderful memories.

Cosette's Tribe is a work of fiction inspired by the footsteps of my childhood.

Although I'd never sought publication early on in my career, I've recently published some of my short stories. I also have a blog entitled, *Eating Life Raw*, a place of ruminations and revelations on the randomness of life. Imagine Erma Bombeck and Gandhi doing the tango...that's my blog.

I worked with troubled teens at a children's home in North Carolina for five years. This was one of the most rewarding times of my life. I currently live in Florida, with my husband Mike, where I work full time as a Living Coach for people with disabilities. I am actively seeking representation for *Cosette's Tribe* and have begun working on my next novel.

You may visit my blog at eatingliferaw.blogspot.com. Be sure to follow my blog to get up to date information on the publication progress of *Cosette's Tribe* and sneak peeks of my next novel." *And we at The Blotter thank everyone who submitted, judged and otherwise participated in our fiction contest.*

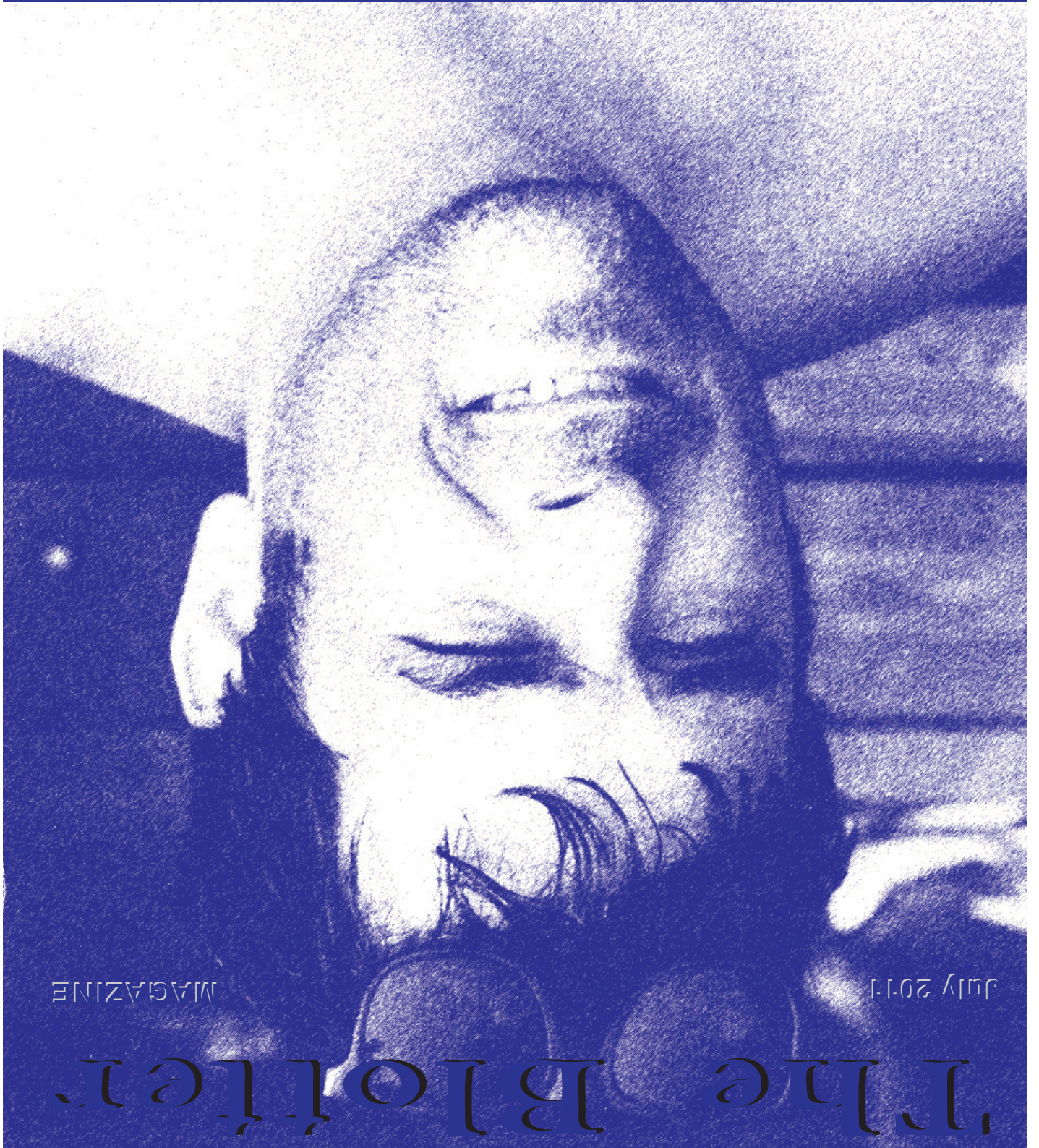
Chris Fox is just in time, every time.

Michael Cole and Phil Juliano are waiting for the deepest of summer to arrive, so they can sit back and smile about how nice it is in Asheville, compared to everywhere else on earth.



Final Tidbits: Great time was had at The Blotter Benefit in May at the Cave! If you need something good to read at the pool, go get a copy of Ron Cooper's "Purple Jesus." Want proof? There's a copy at the Durham Public Library!!! I expect to see you every one of you at FLyleaf Books on June 26th. Pop's had a cold for a week or so, but he's feeling pretty good, because it's tomato season now and peaches are coming in soon. We've been selling books and paintings and prints for our first release, "Tree," for a couple of months but I still haven't seen your pre-order. Lots of fine people are helping with the project and we want you to do your part. Talk it up, think about who you like giving gifts to, and go on over to paintbrushforest.com or pencilpointmountain.com and do it. While you're mulling that over, consider a donation to The Blotter (www.blotterrag.com) as your good deed for the year! And visit your local independent bookstore, they've missed you recently. I don't want to see any of you sitting around saying, "I'm bored." Got it? Good!

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MAGAZINE

July 2011

The Blotter

**Hunkering down for summer with our
Laine Cunningham Prize winner - Leah Griffith,
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