

*Minding our peas and queues with Tiny United,
Matthew Maslowski, Laura Tabor, Don Ward, Lara Falberg,
our comics and The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

October 2011

MAGAZINE



photo credit: Bradley Kampa

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"Behind the Curve"

My Dad (whom I call Pop) and I have not had a fight since 1979. I can't remember what that fight was about, although I suspect it was about cleaning fish. I've since learned to clean fish without complaint. Pop and I haven't had even a disagreement in many years. He's politically liberal and fiscally conservative and has had occasion to stand in the middle of the road, looking at something or thinking about something else, and when we talk we *talk*, long and longer and with fervor and passion and that is what we do together well, father and son. I like to listen to him and he likes to listen to himself and this makes for good times. His arguments run the gamut from Shakespearean monologue to professorial lecture to long-form stand-up comic *schtick*. I flatter myself that my own may take such shape from time to time. When I visit them, Mom goes to bed early and Pop and I talk and talk and stay awake at night and eat peaches and drink coffee and then we watch baseball until all the scores are in. We make each other laugh. A lot. It's our *raison d'être*.

Pop is a scholar of history, with particular emphasis on the American Civil War, World War Two and the Old Testament. He is also a master winemaker, brews beer, writes poetry, is a fine amateur nature photographer and videographer, and sings in the choir. Belay that. Change all verbs to past-imperfect. You see, each of these "hobbies", if you will, has piqued his interest, absorbed his time and skill, and resulted in things of quality and beauty. Then Pop's attention moved on to something else.

Long story short? Ha! Not a chance. My point is I've always been troubled because it seems like I am forever one or two hobbies behind him. When I finally found American history interesting – some time after I wrote that strange college paper about how the Yanks copied the French idea of having a *revolution* – Pop was already, well, as they say, "off topic." I sought little nuggets of gold about Chickamauga or Corregidor to bring to him to assay. But Pop already knew them all and while he had his own polite tidbits to offer me in payment, it wasn't long before we were moving on to discussions about his more current intellectual stimulation.

When I tried to grow grapes out in the yard, then grind and press them and make a little home-vintage, I thought he would come roaring up I-95 to join the barefoot dance of Bacchus. But, no. I probably should have agreed with my wife that I understood the ten-gallon carboy of hooch did indeed make the kitchen look like the Hillbillies-pre-Beverly, and calmly explained that you can't put fermenting wine out in 100 degree heat because it kills the yeast. (No, I can't have told her that. A man can take only so much eye-rolling and the mumbling of *idiot* under his wife's breath as she passes in earshot.) And I've learned on my own it's a pretty bad idea to dump ten gallons of molding grape juice on your garden in the middle of summer. Ah, well. In any case, Pop had long since moved on from his *Somerwine*-making days to the next hobby.

It often felt like I was waiting at a train station, without a schedule,

ticket or suitcase, hoping that something would pull in that I could jump on before he reached the next station and jumped out, or leaped off the back of the train like James Garner in "The Great Escape," tumbling down the embankment to hide on me behind a hayrick. But he wasn't intentionally trying to leave me behind, scratching my head. And it wasn't ADHD on Pop's part, either. Just a healthy imagination and the ability to want to learn something, to learn as much of it as you can, then move on to a new interest. Call it Attention Surplus Syndrome. Yeah, I know. (And don't believe anyone who tells you that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Pop lays that chestnut to rest.)

Admittedly, it's been a tad frustrating never to be able to anticipate where Pop's mind is taking him, and to meet him there. To have long discussions about chili recipes or plate tectonics, crime scene pathology and Appalachian musicology, epidemiology and etymology, episiotomies and epistemologies. A while back I bought a really nice Nikon and took pictures of blooming wildflowers. Never developed the rolls of film. What was the point? Pop had just recently turned off that road and was now studying the nuances of Faure's *Requiem*. I stopped drinking wine because the health risks outweighed the fun-factor of talking to Pop about vintage and nose and that hint of Brazilian rosewood or some-such nonsense.

We only get one life - that is my understanding - and maybe Pop is trying to outrun death. If that's so, well he's a good mile-and-a-quarter ahead of the scythe swinging rascal, and far be it for me to try to ask him to hold up while I catch my breath. But I feel like I might have an even better time with Pop if I could just anticipate where he's going next. Is it paleontological research? Maybe birds did come from dinosaurs. Why does everything tastes like chicken? I've no idea. Or we could start making crossword puzzles. Or untangling string theory. What about the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson? Samuel Taylor Coleridge?. Sir Richard Francis Burton? Holy crap, there are too many three-name writers to try and guess.

Of course, I can always just brew the coffee, turn to the baseball game and wait for him to land.

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CAUTION

Thank goodness I'm not restricted by that 140 character thing, you know? I'd go nuts. Couldn't get a word in edgewise, cut off in the middle

"Breaking the Third Rule"

by Matthew Maslowski

I've always promised myself that if I were ever endowed with the requisite authority I would erase all evidence and memory of Michael Bolton's rendition of "Georgia On My Mind." I am no academic, but I assume that media specialists and cultural critics agree, at this point, 30 some years later, that large swaths of the '80s were an embarrassing blemish on the already heavily pockmarked visage of American popular culture. And this meandering, saccharine, Pert-Plus induced drivel should be exhibit A. Perhaps my unabashed and highly subjective loathing is disproportionate weighed against the aggregate....

Growing up in a town of 20,000 in the Bible Belt awarded a boy of 8 three radio stations, only one of which was ever to be played in the family station wagon. This station billed itself as Adult Contemporary, a label constructed solely to justify McCartney's output after 1970. The catalogue supposedly included "the best mix of yesterday and today," which to my recollection reduced the whole history of recorded music to 13 tracks. And so, with my feet barely touching the floor of the car, I would hear Bolton's "Georgia on My Mind" on average 5 or 6 times a week, nestled comfortably between Frampton's "Baby I Love Your

Way" and Steve Winwood's "Valerie." And look, I know it is stupid to try to package time in convenient decades with universal themes and ethos. The problem is "the '80s" didn't start in 1980. And they sure as shit ain't over.

But I digress. Or stall, as it were.

That song was the first sensory memory I have of sitting in the counselor's office in high school a year before projected graduation and one week before imminent failure from every required course needed to advance. That damned song, masked by the ambient sounds of the air conditioner and the din of properly molded minds roaming the halls, swelled a fever in me.... And then the counselor's eyes. The mixture of intent concern and frustration caused the orbs to quiver back and forth as if she couldn't decide into which of my eyes to direct her queries. With each question I could feel my will to respond further recede.

"Don't you realize you are drastically limiting your choices?"

"Are you struggling emotionally?"

"I mean, what is it that you want to do?"

I looked up to meet her gaze. The sudden and unexpected eye contact forced her stare to stabilize as every cell in her body suspended all mitosis for this one breakthrough, a focusing of energies that would allow her conscious self to receive the answer

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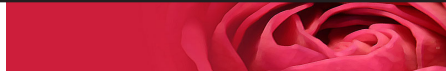
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and compute a therapeutic retort.

I spoke: "I have a very keen interest...dare I say passion?...in devoting the rest of my life to learning the ways of subsistence farming."

Summer school wasn't all that bad.

Twenty-some years later I found myself in Berlin standing in the freezing cold rain of early spring. I had been crashing at an apartment outside Treptower Park, the old eastern district, bumming off some cats I did not know. Friends of a friend. That doesn't explain why I was in the rain at midnight, though.

I mentioned to my reluctant hosts that I had been down to see the East Side Gallery. "That was the *past* – you should see the Berlin of today." Evidently this included standing outside an abandoned apartment-building-turned-club for over an hour. The line of people hoping to gain

entry wrapped around the block of what seemed to be an otherwise empty quarter. I was underdressed, hungry, and operating on perhaps six non-consecutive hours of sleep over the past three days. Oh, and I was on an insane bout of self-imposed sobriety.

The bouncer stood at the door with the archetypal authoritative air, a curious sense of purpose mixed with the threat of potential violence, like a cop, but lacking the scruples that burden public officials. As we inched closer I saw he was wearing even less than I – donning a set of lederhosen complete with Bavarian hat, feather and all. What I thought was face paint or heavy make up turned out to be tattoos, with multiple facial piercings glistening in the dim street light. With a mood of detachment he stood as a Teutonic Osiris, weighing his seemingly arbitrary judgment, separating the wheat

from chaff, casting some back out to the night while granting others the privilege to enter his guarded underworld.

I was chosen, entered the fold, and gladly pressed the ten Euro cover into the hands of the girl in the warm hallway.

Techno. All the world's a stage and all of Europe is a goddamn discotheque. Three deejays were spread across as many floors separated by the natural divisions of what were once separate flats. The continuous pulse of music bled from one idea to the next as I made my way up or down stairs, through hallways, in and out of restrooms, stepping over or around the casualties, kids lost in themselves or each other. The few places on the walls that weren't covered in graffiti were jet black.

Within the hour I was approached by an Irishman who had convinced himself that I had in my possession a cornucopia of

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delicious and exotic drugs that I was going to sell him. He would not believe that I did not have any pills. Or coke. Or pot. Or heroin. It was as if he felt that I was giving him the runaround until his desperation reached a fever pitch that would benefit me, the supposed dealer. (Though not a thought at the time, as I have since recalled this exchange I have been reminded of Burrough's statement of how the law of supply and demand is completely reversed within the dealer/junkie relationship.) And this cat would not let up.

"Come off it, man, I can smell the hash on your breath...."

"That's halitosis. I lost my toothbrush two countries ago."

"Bullocks. No hash?"

"No man. I've even flushed the last of my mood stabilizers. I don't have so much as an aspirin."

I could see the appetite in his eyes tighten to agitation. He turned and started to thread his way through the current of revelers, bumping into a doorway as he left.

I plopped down on an old sofa in a sort of alcove. Looked at my watch – two am. I stared at my shoe for a while, watching the lights cast shadows as the music washed over everything. Suddenly a body dropped down next to me.

She had to lean close to speak over the din, her hand on my shoulder, an eyelash barely brushing my ear as she pressed in. The voice had an accent, though not German.

"You are the picture of loneliness..."

I spoke into her heavily pierced ear. "You're cheating. That's a line from something."

She threw her head in laughter, her fingers held against her lips. Her green eyes were the first physical trait I noticed and the only thing I can still clearly recall. Funny how time erodes the ability to conjure a face in memory.... But those eyes can still gleam if I think of them, disembodied against haze, wreathed in red curls.

Something tickled in my mind for a moment, a question I'd had for these sorts of encounters since I'd been roaming.

"I've been in a dozen different places, many where English wasn't the main thing. Yet without fail when I am approached people almost always start in English, like they can tell...."

She only cocked an eyebrow and grinned.

Some guy came out of the mix and squatted in front of her. His eyes grazed over me without any sense of absorption. He said something to her in a language I

could not place. She laughed, brushed the sweat-matted hair from his face, kissed his cheek. He disappeared quickly. She sat for a moment, her head slightly to the side, eyes starring but unfocused, lost in reverie, a slight smile turning the corners of her mouth. She blinked, turned.

"My friend...he said that only I would find the most wilted wallflower in the middle of all this shit."

"Ah. A poet."

She winked.

Later we sat in her Peugeot as I watched her roll a cigarette, carefully sprinkling some weed on the tobacco before closing the paper. The dawn was only thinking of breaking. She offered, I politely declined. She smoked in silence and I enjoyed watching her. She smoked with such dispassion, never holding the draw in her lungs. So ungreedy. A voice startled me from my thoughts. The spark of irritation extinguished as I recognized it was hers.

"My father was a fellow traveler, as they say. He left us for a time after the Wall came down. I was only 10 or so. He had never spoke of going west before that..."

She paused to inhale.

"He never talked of where



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he went exactly, but I do know that he went to the States eventually. Once, after he returned, I walked into the kitchen and he was there, sitting at the table holding a book. I almost asked what it was, then I noticed he was trembling, only slightly. He never looked up but he knew I was there. I know he knew. He dropped the book on the table and stumbled out. After a moment I picked it up. It was softbound, red cover, heavy. Maybe a hundred pages? The strangest thing was that it was in English. I could read a bit at the time but I had no idea Tata could. I think the title was something like *The Coming Soviet Civil War and How You Can Make Money*. There was a quote by Gorbachev right on the cover, saying that if the bloc did begin to break we would all fall into a bloody civil war. I never saw that book again."

She stared at the windshield without looking beyond the glass.

"He was dead two months later. They told me it was due to 'natural causes....'"

She took a last pull from the shrinking cigarette, exhaling through the next sentence, releasing the smoke as she spoke.

"But I knew it had more to do with the Makarov."

I had seen what she was describing. I knew the look. A man broken, his schema dismantled, or at the least threatened. But the recognition fell short of empathy. I had never felt any sort of allegiance to such things. Though neither of us mentioned it, I assumed that my nationality had sparked the story, or at least had reminded her of those circumstances. But I thought I shed that moniker long ago. Like a husk. How can a man expatriate without a fatherland to claim him? The globe is speckled with walking wounded orphans spawned in the sterile test tube of modernity longing for the warm uterine embrace of the natural past. A live birth. Apologists argue that the US never had gulags. But we never needed them. Our guys learned early that it is far more effective to absorb dissent than suppress it. Totalitarians need not always stifle the voice. Better to allow the cacophony to swell until the slogans turn up on t-shirts at Wal-Mart.

Man, do I have a contact high? Did I say any of that bullshit out loud?

She spoke, saving me from my thoughts.

"What do you want to do?"

I heard myself answer. "I

have to catch a flight. Gotta get to the airport soon."

She smiled. "Then I shall do you the service of a free ride."

"Thanks."

The sun was coming up as I stood at the platform for the S Bahn. We had not spoken for a while. She looked up at me, her eyes still cloudy and pink. I turned from her smile and stepped toward the train.

"If you're ever near Ostrava look me up. Find me."

"That might be a chore without your name."

She only shrugged, arms out in feigned resignation.

"Good luck."

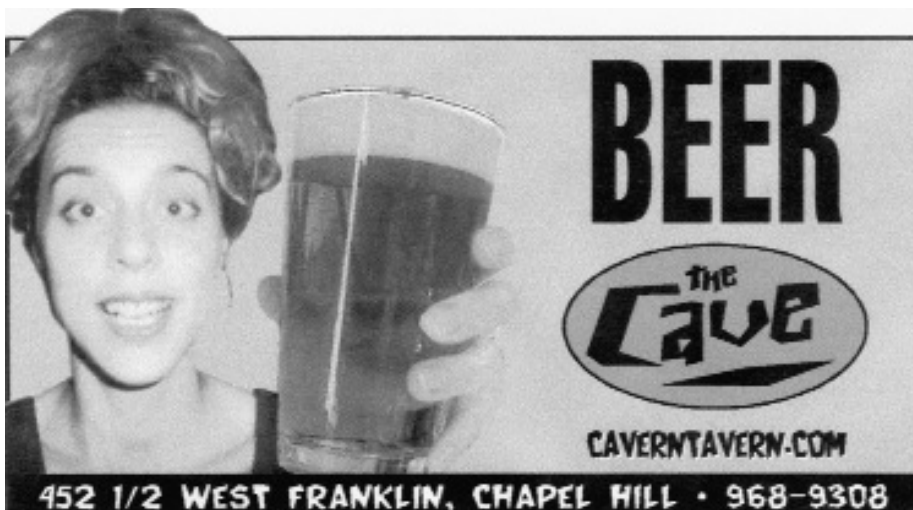
"With what? The flight?"

"No. Finding me."

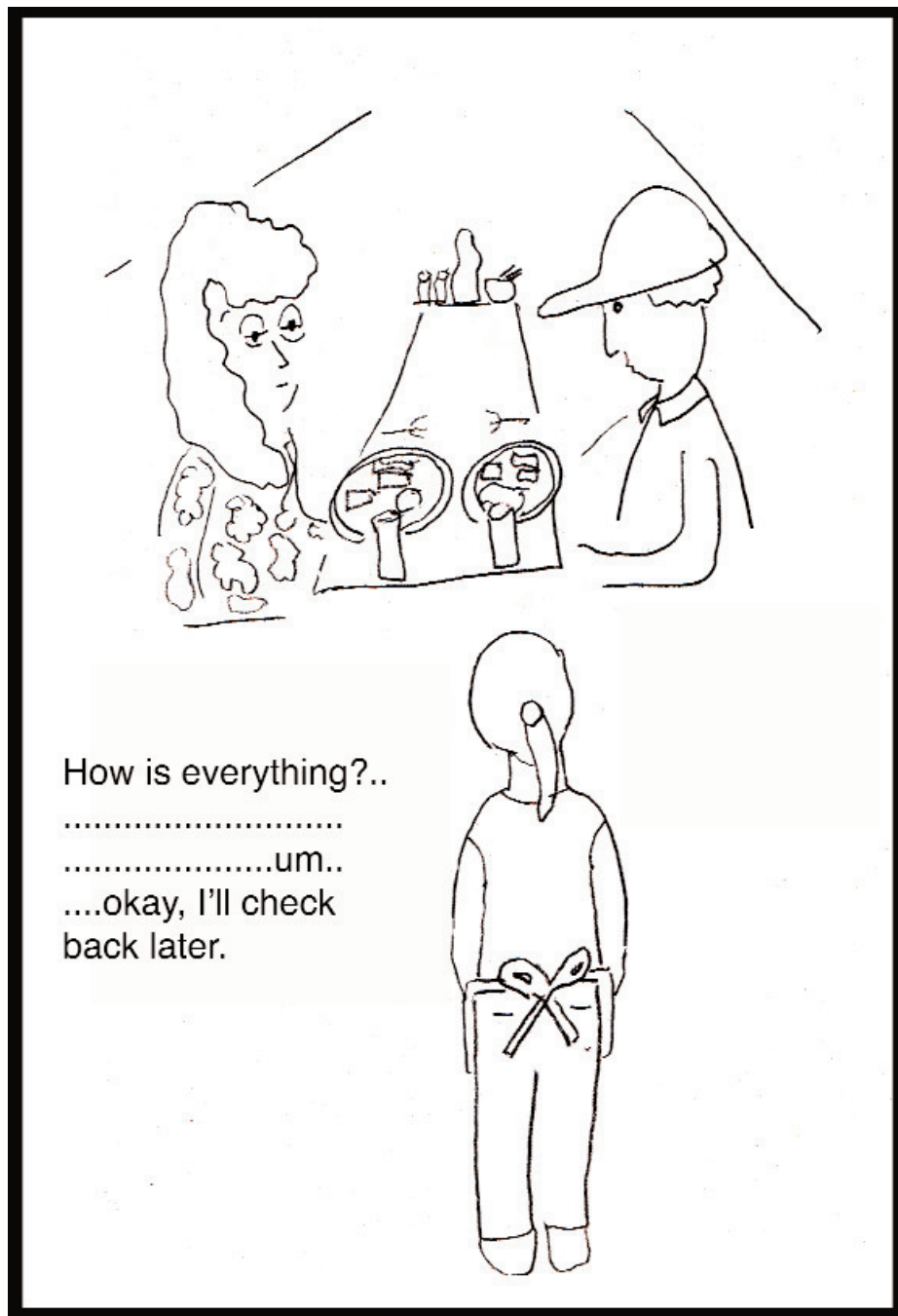
The doors closed. I wandered to a seat and looked out the window expecting to see her standing in a polka-dot dress, white veil hanging from a bonnet, handkerchief pressed to the corner of her left eye to catch a single tear, solitary, stoic, as she wished her doughboy farewell, with "It's Not Over 'Till It's Over Over There" playing in the background.

Instead she winked and hopped down the stairs to the street.

Once at the airport I retreated immediately to the restroom to escape the fact that I no reservations let alone any clear intent of destination. I looked up at my reflection in the filthy mirror. The lingering acne of adolescence rose just above an eight-day growth of stubble, making a highly textured contrast to the smoothness of my expanding forehead, the marker of an early onset of male-pattern baldness, wore proudly as an esteemed cross passed down from my forefathers. Toss in a set of neglected teeth yellowed from coffee and Balkan



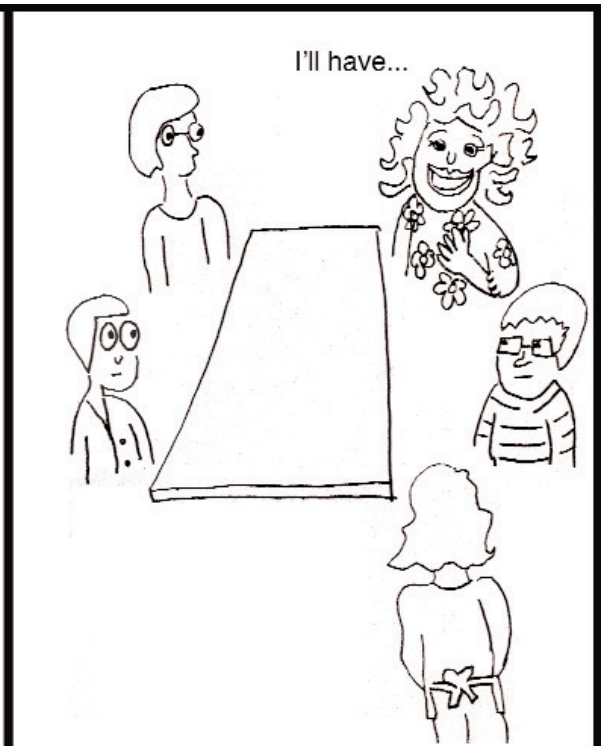
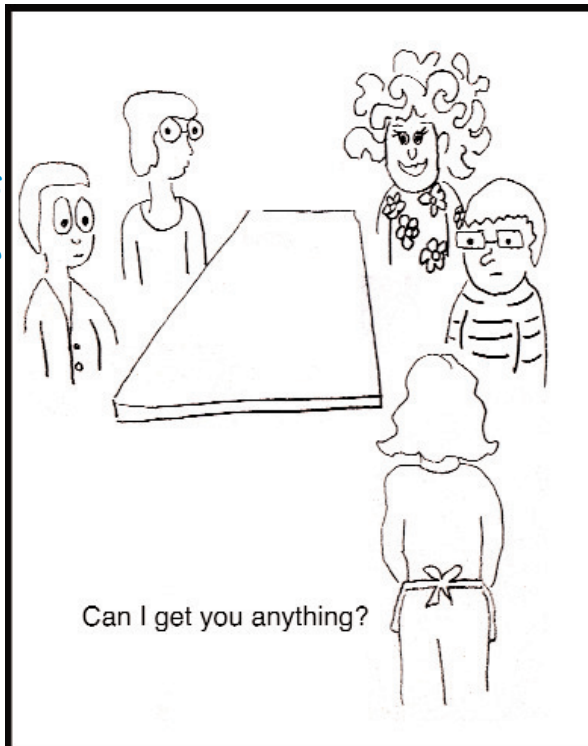
Please, people, we're just trying to do our jobs, so if we ask you questions, just answer; verbally, physically, whatever way you can. Please, please don't just stare at us. It's uncomfortable for everyone. And really, how hard is it to just say, "fine", "bad", "great", "come back later?" We don't want



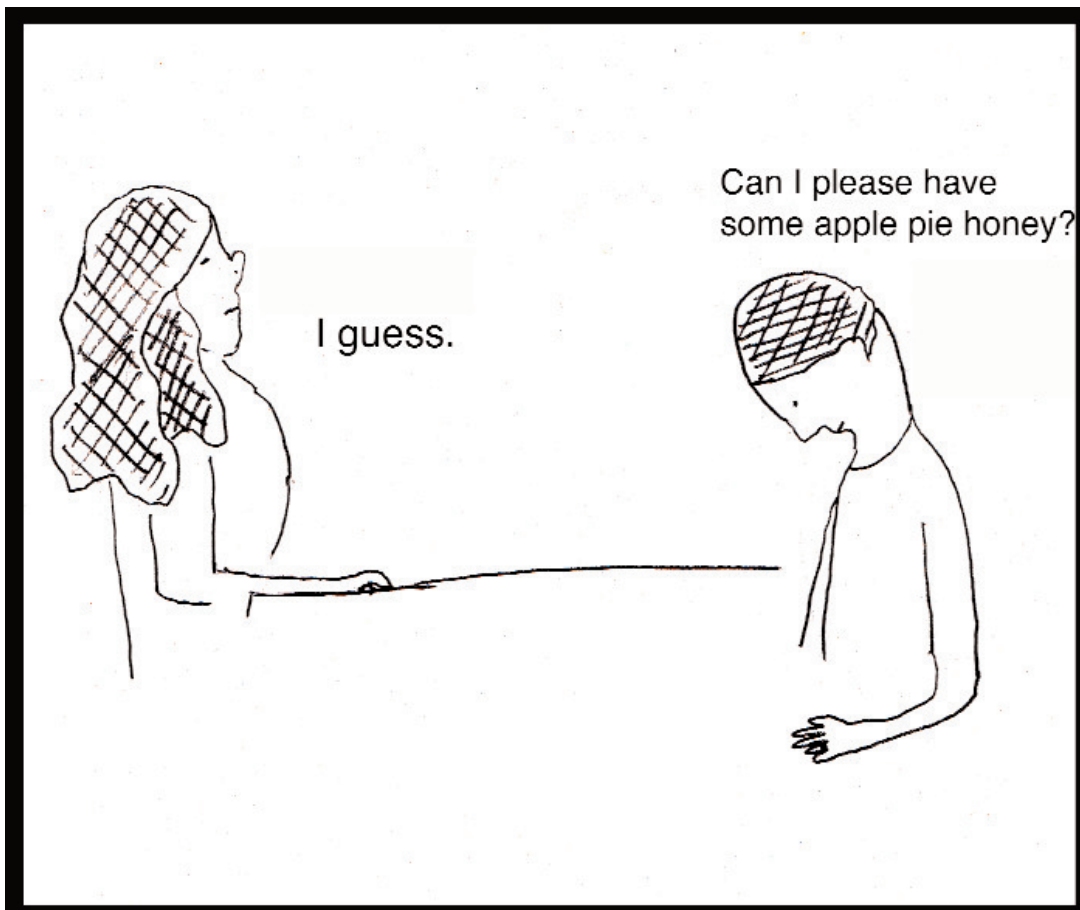
to interrupt an argument, an uncomfortable silence, a break-up or a breastfeeding, but you came out to eat. U came to be waited on by another human and so that means that someone will be coming up to you and talking and rechecking on you. If you want to be left alone, stay at home and save us from the awkwardness.

Tiny United - Out There in the USA
<http://fridaymorningzine.blogspot.com>

Friday Morning and I can guess who's in charge of this table. No one talks until the head of the group speaks and everyone waits til she gives the okay. It's a wonder how these people have all come together to become friends when they clearly



don't appear to be having any fun. Now that I know who is the alpha I will refer all of my questions, about anyone's order, to her for the needed answers.



Poor Fellow. It was a sad Friday Morning. It was clear that he was under restrictions. We all wanted to pound on his chest and tell him "LEAVE HER!! YOU DESERVE BETTER! YOU CAN HAVE PIE!!" But he wasn't even allowed to look at us, nor talk to us. Poor Fellow, we hope he finds a way out and she finds a therapist.

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tobacco, add two ridiculously recessed raccoon eyes, and you've got a pretty good sense of what I was subjected to. It was truly a face for radio.

Back in the terminal I saw there were only two flights scheduled to leave within the hour. One to Stansted, one to Krakow. The last time I was in Krakow I spent hours watching sugar cubes dissolve over an Absinthe spoon then wandered the streets with wormwood on my breath offering passersby a slurred yet emphatic declaration that I was the next Kurt Vonnegut. Luckily there was a seat left on the Stansted flight.

While waiting at the gate I dozed fitfully. Dreamed my priest gave me a box with soil – three plants and a grub worm. I watched the grub worm slowly uncurl itself and devour the three plants.

I awoke to the boarding call with her eyes in my mind.



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"Choose Your Weapon"

by Lara Falberg

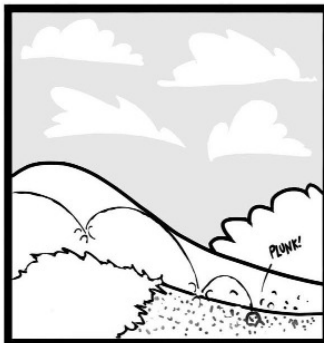
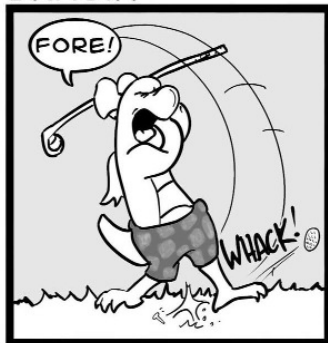
We all have one. Some of us wear them more conspicuously than others. But we all have them, and one dominates the other lesser identifiers. I'm talking about our badge of honor. The thing we let speak for us and define us so that it's how others associate us. But choose wisely or rethink the one you are currently featuring most obviously on your sash, depending on how you want others to react, respond, and either come hither or retreat. In the dating world, this can be your go to weapon to ward off unwanted suitors.

The most common badge I encounter is the badge of being *sooooo* busy. It's a race, a competition for busiest person ever. Our badges protect us, and operate as our shields against expectations and criticisms. They are always the first place we go when we need an excuse. So, your girlfriend wants to spend time with you, but you want to watch the game. Ya know, The game, any damn game, doesn't matter, it always gets a 'The' connotation. So dumb. You don't want to say, "Babe, I want to watch the game and you're going to want my attention, so nope, would prefer not to

minge the two." Instead, you shine up the badge and direct the glare right between her eyes to blind her. You say you have a lot of work to do and have to get up early. Our badges always stand in for the truth so we can do what we want. The busy bee badge is problematic in that anyone with a molecule of common sense knows we all make time for what's important to us. If boyfriend tells girlfriend one too many times he's too busy for her, that badge better be prepared to morph into a real doll.

Work, that's a popular one. There is always that person who is working. Night and day, in the shower, while peeing and walking their dog so she can pee. No matter what, that's what they talk about, that's what defines them. That is their only focus. So boring. The work badge is actually closely related to the busy badge in that they are both always the excuse/reason for not having any time. Work keeps a work badge-bearer very busy. A busy badge-bearer usually has a rotation of things that keep them busy, work being one of those time-sucks. See? It's important to understand the distinction.

DRAGIN



by Michael Cole

Parenthood. The ultimate badge. No childless person can trump it, no matter what's going on. Lots of folks have no idea when to shut the fuck up about their kids. I have a few friends who do, and they rock. But guess what? Parenthood isn't their main badge, yo. The parent badge is all about being okay with your child/ren defining you and letting go of any remnant of your childless self. That person is deceased and the vestiges are generally faint. A lame badge, although parenthood isn't lame, it's cool. Just do it without it being 'the' badge and all is well.

Morbidity. Man is this badge a searing suck of an ornament. If it were a girl-scout patch, I know the woman who would have a sash full of them with various differentiations. This woman, who wears the constant, "I'm grieving, pay attention to me and forgive me anything, especially my *insufferability*" look on her mug. Even though she has known many people who have died, to wear that as a badge is beyond comprehension. And she's that person you see coming and think *Oh God, no, I don't have the energy to muster up false sincerity and sympathy right now. Plus, everyone she knows seems to die, so I'm thinking maybe don't hang with her.* Inarguably, it's sad

when people die, and it's the eggs when it seems like a person has had more than their share of people close to them die, but don't wear it as a badge, or no one will want to be your friend or sleep with you.

Closely related is illness. That person who will never say 'fine' when asked how they are. That's who I'm talking about. Now to clarify that I'm not completely insensitive, it's awful when people get cancer or goiters. But most, oh relax, I said most, illness is brought on by the person not taking good care of themselves. The people who never/rarely get sick are generally those who eat well, exercise, get sleep and wash their hands. I'm just saying. Illness is just as sucky as death to talk about on the incessant. Don't let this be your badge. You can have a disease and when people ask, you can acknowledge it's cool of them to ask, give them the one-sentence update and move on.

So what's my point? Just that everyone wants attention and we're all pretty transparent in the methods in which we try to garner this. Just decide what works, what doesn't and choose your badge wisely. It can be a weapon just as easily as it can be your shield. Put that in your hat. Positive/surface badges are groovy.

Good ideas for badges: contrasting hair and bang color, tattoos, white polish on your nails, a distinctive voice or laugh, a healthy activity like running, yoga, or making film noir shorts. Being known as the lover of the spiciest foods. Being good at Connect Four. Love of a certain era, such as the 1920's, and things from that era works as a badge just so long as you know the line between endearing and overboard. Having a Manhattan as your favorite drink - lovely. If I go on a date and he wears saddle shoes and smokes a pipe, but does it camp-style, awesome, he's getting some. What do these things have in common? They are fun and generally shallow and frivolous like a good shiny badge should be.



James Barrett for Orange County School Board

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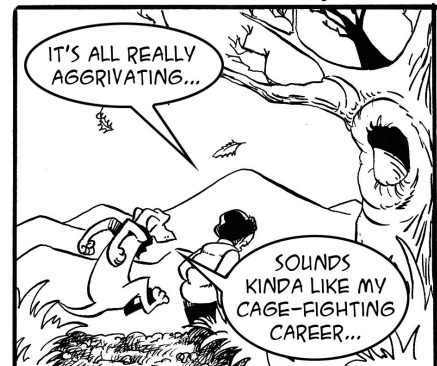
Best In Show



I MEAN, I'VE BEEN LAYING THE GROUND
WORK FOR THESE PROJECTS FOR MONTHS!
TALKING WITH PEOPLE, MAKING
CONNECTIONS, GETTING COMMITMENTS...
NOW THAT THE BALL IS IN THEIR COURT,
EVERYTHING STALLS OUT!



by Phil Juliano



Call for Entries!

"The 2012 Laine Cunningham Novel Award" The Blotter's *Third* Annual Long Form Fiction Contest for Novella and Novel length works

1. The purpose of our contest is to provide a venue for writers to have their work read and commented on by our editors and judges. Additionally, the winner of this contest will have his/her work published here on these pages. And last but not least, the winner will receive a monetary prize! (Award monies are provided by the prize sponsor and the entry fee for the contest helps offset The Blotter's costs.)

2. Our pre-reader judges are intelligent and highly proud of their educations. Our final judge is smart, well-read and dangerous if she doesn't have her morning coffee. But we told her that she could be the final judge and what can you do?

3. In a world chock-full of scandal, transparency is very important to us, and we make every effort to eliminate any conflict of interest situation from going down in our contest. Blotter volunteers and their family members and/or employees are prohibited from entering our contest.

To enter the contest, please submit your work with a \$25 entry fee by check or money order to: The Blotter Magazine, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Entries must be received between October 1, 2011 and January 31, 2012 (you see, we're already giving you an extension, so don't put it off!)

Your entry must contain the following: no less than 10 pages, no more than 20 pages of the opening of your novel or novella, (or subject/character-connected short story chapbook) typed & double-spaced, without your name. On a separate cover page type your name, snail-mail and e-mail address, telephone number, the title of your novel or novella and a one page synopsis of your novel or novella. Remember, you have to have the entire book written, so that if and when you win, you can show us the rest!

BONUS: Enter the writing contest AND get a year's subscription to The Blotter for only \$30! (Regular annual subscription donations are \$25 total and you don't even get to enter a writing contest with that price!)

Well, now. \$650 in cash prizes, plus anything else we can wrangle together that we think has value. All placements, including honorable mentions, will receive an award certificate, proof positive of your success as an author, suitable for mocking your sophomore English teacher, who always wondered how it was that you graduated at all.

Our contest will be run in line with the rules of ethics and mechanics recommended by the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, as outlined in their 2006 monograph on the subject. You can't view for free, but you may purchase the monograph entitled "Publishing Contests: Ethics and Mechanics" through the CLMP at <http://www.clmp.org/about/monographs.html>. This is the document we have used in coming up with the rules and conditions of this contest.

So that's it, then - now get to work!



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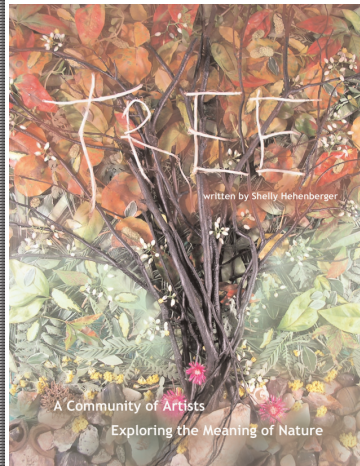
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book publishing imprint, **PencilPoint Mountain,**
and **www.paintbrushforest.com**

present **Tree,**



A collaborative, all ages, fine arts book illustrated by members of Paintbrush Forest, a group of artists from the Orange County, NC, area. All proceeds from **Tree** support the Haw River Assembly, a NC environmental organization. Check out www.paintbrushforest.com to bid on the original book art, to make a donation, and to order your own copy of **Tree**.

Thank you.

"Airmass"

by Laura Tabor

Astronomy class taught me
 The truth about sparkly stars.
 I always thought that light from them
 Flickered on its thousand-year journey
 Just to reach me, sending a message.
 I entered that class one Thursday
 Only to discover
 Airmass, defined as
 Clouds and dust in our own little atmosphere
 That do the vast majority of the obscuring
 Of the heavens.
 It makes the stars flicker –
 They are constant,
 It's our own vision that is blurred
 By our blanket of air.

I thought
 That the winking glances
 And all the shared grins
 Were something coming from you,
 With point-of-origin being those
 Milliseconds before,
 When you had some volition over it.
 It turns out, there must have been something in the air
 Between us two,
 That made me think that
 There was anything real coming from you.
 It's alright – it was never your fault:
 It's airmass,
 Making you sparkle,
 Clouds in my own eyes,
 An atmosphere of intentions
 Keeping me blind

THURSTON MOORE, SONIC BACHELOR IN: "CABA-HATE VOLTAIRE!"

BY CHRIS FOX

"Aw yeah! Hitting da
 clubs tonight with the
 ULTIMATE
 WINGMAN..."



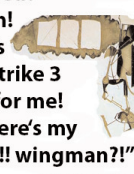
"...Duchamp's 'Fountain'!!!"

"Ladies,
 'urine' for a treat.
 Thurston my
 man,
 LET'S
 DO THIS!"



...at the club...

"You're married?
 Damn!
 That's
 strike 3
 for me!
 Where's my
 @#\$!! wingman?!"



"WHAT A COOL 'R. MUTT'
 TATTOO! WANNA DANCE?"



"Sure!"



"Sorry, Thurston! Looks like
 the WINGMAN
 has become the
 PILOT, HAHAHA!
 Don't
 hate!!!"



sigh

"'Criminal Minds'
 Marathon,
 here I come!"



"Paper Clips"

The principal elements of kindergarten,
She insisted, instruct the fashion curriculum.
She had filled her lunchbox with paperclips,
A stationery commodity with suitable shimmer.
She pumped her legs harder and raised the schoolyard swing
Over the lowest bowers to peek into her classroom window
Certain she glimpsed tiaras and ball gowns and sequined smocks,
Notre Dame's spires, and what paper clips had done for the
Champ de Mars.
The girl with the pink ribbon loosened the knot
And decorated the Carrousel du Louvre.

Three by Don Ward

"An Uninvited Guest"

When the stairs creak at 3:20 AM,
I know it is the uninvited guest.
Although the pull chain remains asleep and the
light is dark,
I know it is the uninvited guest.
The dog doesn't bark.
My wife doesn't stir.
The phone didn't ring.
The doorbell announced no arrival.
When the stairs creak at 3:20 AM,
I know the name of the uninvited quest.
He is called Regret after Midnight.

"The Getaway"

It's best to hide from a distaff world on Mars
where the atmosphere is mostly carbon dioxide.
Obviously the inhabitants are auto-friendly.
Revving engines and the periodic whine of power tools
render conversations delightfully inaudible.
Temperatures on that planet range from a balmy eighty degrees at noon
to a bracing one hundred below at midnight.
That's great for night skiing.
The Red Planet is coated thick with dust.
And since there are many active volcanoes,
occasional manly verbal outbursts go unnoticed.
Venusians don't know "Klaatu barada nikto" means: "ESPN available here."

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

Another hurricane dream - the wind is mostly noise and what breeze there is is cool and regular, as if there were a ceiling fan over my bed. The lightning-flicker and thunder rumble is Rocky Horror Picture-Showish and I'm still scared. I know that there is no place in this house to hide, no place secure if the storm chooses to get me. And a storm this big is alive, isn't it? Anything this big and unpredictable is alive. I think that I pop out of bed and go to the computer to look at the NOAA website - feeling wise and exposed at the same time - but the computer will not let me tap-tap on the keyboard, for some weather related reason. For just a split second I have the feeling of sheepishness, a sudden realization that I am still asleep and cannot, therefore ask the computer to provide me any insight.

JM - cyberspace

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CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Maslowski of Raleigh, NC writes, "Though technically a snow bird, I grew up in the mountains of NC outside of Asheville. Transplanted to Raleigh two years ago with aspirations of graduate degrees, tenure tracks, and corduroy jackets with leather patches on the elbows. Exited the academic pipeline prematurely. I have been dabbling for a few years on fiction work and this is my first piece seen through to print."

Laura Tabor is teaching English in Madrid, Spain and wandering into the many other countries located nearby on the weekends. Long-term, she aspires to write extravagant lies for a living, either as part of a comedic fake-newspaper staff or perhaps as a political speechwriter.

Blotterfriend **Lara Falberg** is teaching Yoga and working on her first novel. She's currently a resident of Columbus, Ohio, a fact that makes all of the other university cities in our fair nation jealous.

Don Ward writes, "I teach English and Humanities nearby at Durham Tech and at far off and exotic Wake Tech. I've published poetry in a couple of *Chicago Poetry's* booklets (Cram 4 and 6) and *Tipton Poetry Journal*, Issue 14. I've also written a college textbook, two children's books and a number of non-fiction articles. I am a member of Living Poetry at Briar Creek, The Write to Publish Meet-up of Raleigh and co-facilitate a bi-monthly poetry session at Sunrise Senior Living in Raleigh. I'm always happy when my wife brings home *The Blotter*. Subscribe, you knucklehead, you reply. Okay, okay."

Ed. Note: Not just good advice, really good advice.

Our artist, known collectively to us as **Tiny United**, writes "I am Bluespruce Goose. I am involved in the most intimate of your moments, along with my service industry co-artists. Together we hear the secrets shared between you and your loved one at dinner and see how you really treat other people. Through the experiences that we capture at work we can show you what it look like, looking in from an outside perspective. Some of you are amazing, some terrible and some just think you are super funny. This is a one panel comic composed of real experiences that we have had, maybe with you or you're friend, or a blind date. It's meant to be related to, laughed at or be enlightened by. Mainly it's made to help us service industry artists, get through a tough day of serving. Somehow, interesting exchanges always happen on Fridays, leading to the name Friday Morning Zines. We hope you enjoy them."

Chris Fox, makes Pop laugh, among other people. That is a very good thing. Keep it up, buddy.

Michael Cole and **Phil Juliano** talk pen-and-ink and punchlines long-distance between Asheville, NC and somewhere in Minnesota (home to our Pig's Eye Beer folks!!)

Final Tidbits: Many cool things you can try - enter the long form contest (our third annual, that is). Follow us on Twitter at blotterrag. Buy a copy of "Tree," published by PencilPoint Mountain (www.pencilpointmountain.com), an imprint of The Blotter Magazine, Inc. Make a donation to The Blotter (www.blotterrag.com). Buy a Blotter tee-shirt while you're there. And visit your local independent bookstore, they have hot cocoa! Dare to eat a peach! Talk about Michelangelo!!! I'm serious, I don't want to see any of you hanging out at the Student Union saying, "I'm bored." Go get that paper on Dostoevski done, ask a friend to proofread it and have a Chai Latte. Got it? Good!



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