

*Head over heels with Michael Kalna, Mel Trent,
Jacquelyn Briggs, Holly Day, Hal Studholme,
our comics and The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

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MAGAZINE

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FRONT COVER "Midfield" by Hal Studholme. See centerfold for more.

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"I Hate Change"

If it seems that everything is running off the rails: jobs, politics, finance, the international scene, etc., as participants in the new frontier we're at least somewhat wired to handle such foolishness. We take it all in with a shrug or an eye-roll and a *sotto-voce* "whatever's" as we turn the station. Occasionally the sweat and stress of just getting *out there* every day - shuffling to school, plodding off to work - appears to be so much greater than any other time in history. This is absurd, of course. We no longer duck-and-cover, no longer KBO while the Luftwaffe whines overhead, no longer worry about the annual outbreak of yellow fever, no longer worry that redcoats are coming to camp out in our cabin all winter, we no longer bring out our dead. But good work is hard to come by, and the company gates are being guarded by otherwise useless bean-counters. Our leaders are quislings, nimrods and dullwits. Entertainment on our cruise is provided by talentless beach-bums and *zafitig* professional shoppers with vacuum-packed skulls. But this is a waterboarding we've been receiving for most of our lifetime, and there's something to be said for being jaded. So we suffer the bad behavior, lousy results, intellectual anguish...and if we don't accept the blame for what comes at us, we do receive that responsibility package without signing for it when it's left on our doorstep.

And so what? Everything is what it is. We all have those after dinner conversations that talk about how we're moving forward, making tools that work better, make life easier, less expensive, and give us more choices. If idiots own one channel - change the channel! If you can't stand an entrée - the menu is chock-full. And hey, your car is comfortable, your shampoo smells *terrific*.

There's a niggling feeling in the back of my mind that nothing is quite as good as it once was. Admittedly, I may be crouching towards Curmudgeon. Some things are freakin' terrific - gadgets making life simultaneously so much simpler and complex, hundreds of different sizes and chemical-sugar quantities, with multiple functions morphed into something "market driven" so that they're everything we ever wanted. Tons of choices at our beck and call. Here's the rub. More isn't always better. Hell, *better* isn't always better. It isn't what makes us feel good. We're just convinced that something must and we'll hang our hat on the next thing. Or, they (of the ubiquitous "Them" family) believe that change is necessary for us, and they tweak the perfect for our own good. But sometimes we prefer things just the way they are. The stability of the unchanging is part of the "whew, I'm still OK" factor in our lives. The foundation to our ability to muddle through, well...today. So here's a short list of things that are as good as they ever were. Not faster, stronger, more or better - and not high-tech so that we think they're better. Just as good - and that's all we're asking.

Raisin Bread: Change wrappers and brand names all they want, there's still good raisin bread out there. And shame on you if you didn't acquire a taste for it when you were an ankle-biter. It's got it all: familiar taste, texture-memory, olfactory engagement, and it still goes with anything: butter, stuff that looks like butter but isn't, applesauce, scotch. You name it.

Three-ring notebook paper: Comes in 100 sheet packets with those reliable blue lines and red guides that ride gentle herd on our writing output. Still provides vicious paper-cuts that sting like no one's business - a rite of passage - and you're allowed to key a professor's Volvo if he drops you a grade-point for using the three-holed paper, (or was that just in a pre-Mac dream?)

Jell-O: There are a bunch of add-on products that this purveyor of cheap desserts has come up with in my lifetime, but they've never monkeyed with the original. A colorful cardboard box, a paper packet of stuff, some sugar, hot water, refrigeration and time are all that's required for genuine *fun*. And the flavors remain the same, so iconic that we know exactly where lime Jell-O is served, if not exactly why. Perhaps it really has palliative powers.

Hillerich & Bradsby baseball bats: Turned ash is the most beautiful of woods. Sure, most major leaguers use the harder (and more likely to splinter when they shatter against a 98 MPH cutter) maple bats, and high school boys have swung

clanking aluminum stuff for a generation now, but there's nothing like the feel of a new bat on an April morning; tentative sunshine, standing in the box, tapping dust off your sneaks before taking a stance. Lashing at a curve ball. Sitting in the upper deck on the right field side at Jacobs in Cleveland, or the sunny afternoon Wrigley bleachers, or even behind home plate with legs stretched over the seat in front at a Durham Bulls game when you hear *thock* – *ROAR!* – *Moooooooooo!* and there you go – someone's just won a steak.

Miracle Whip: Personally, I'm partial to Duke's Mayonnaise, but MW has a following like Merry Pranksters after Owsley acid. Turkey, provolone, lettuce on rye. Slather it on, baby.

Red cotton bandanas: Pre-folded on a shelf at the hardware store – yes, even yours – they need ten machine washings before they stop bleeding red dye and are soft enough to blow your nose or wrap around your train-robbing face. Of course, where you wear them is up to you – around your neck to move dogies along, around your boot as you riff lead axe for a garage band, and tucked in your jeans because it works better than white hankies for clearing sand, snot, tears and blood out of your way.

Guinea pigs: Living things change - grow, live and pass away - so they really don't apply to this list, but here's one truth and there's no getting around it: guinea pigs are cute and virtually interchangeable. They notice when you walk by, making them markedly better than goldfish. They all waddle, nibble, and make that funny squeak when you open the fridge, and they have ever since the Incas domesticated them for use in carving artwork in the Nazca desert floor, either to pull the plows or to be attached to long poles to wipe away the dust, I'm not sure which.

Mason Jars: Dishwasher safe – hell, five-year-old standing-on-a-stool-at-the-sink-helping-Dad-wash safe. Good for pickles, jelly, three bean salad, cold milk to go with a PB&J, Coke and peanuts, Rum and cola, Mint Juleps, Rye Old-fashioneds, etc&c. I think you get what I'm saying here.

And the Blotter Gang weighs in:

Newly-turned soil - Doesn't matter if it's potting soil with those white beads or wet clay or dusty parched earth, it always has the same deeply penetrating scent that drills right into the middle of your brain and makes your entire body relax.

Summer time in Chicago - Generation after generation sharing in the same tradition of opening the one fire hydrant on the block and all us kids running to the corner to get wet while our grandparents and parents sit on the stoops and porches watching us. The fire department parking on the corner for at least an hour allowing us to play, then shutting it down. Someone always got hurt (not too badly though) and punished (for getting hurt!) during our summer adventures! I miss those days of old, and every trip home in the summer takes me to the old block to sit with the grown folks...

Red Beans and Rice - Simple, tasty and filling every time. In a world where colas and burgers keep changing to try and get new customers without having feelings for their faithful, sometimes it's just better to go home and grab a bite.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com



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CAUTION

A new year, playing out like marbles rolling down a macadam path on a steep hill. Plenty of ways for us to slip up.

"The Devil's In Your Clutch"

by Michael Kalna

It was around noon, the time of day when oil stains on the pavement get slick and vapors rise from their outlines and make funny mirrors from thin air, where the dreadful haze softens your body then spreads like butter the rations of your mind. It was mid-August and in just a couple of hours it would be one of the hottest places on earth. Mojave Desert, Death Valley, The Sahara....the parking lot of Paradise Sands apartments in Tempe, Arizona.

I was on my back in the shade of my Ford F-150 trying to loosen the bolts of the transmission. They were slightly out of reach but the heat made me supple and after several attempts was able to get the ratchet around some bolts with both hands. My knuckles banged then

bled on the frame, and the grime of a truck that has charged across three-hundred thousand miles of American highway oozed over my body like a filthy, hot syrup. Nothing budged, not even my own disappointment.

A dually pulled in the parking spot next to mine; its tires were bare, with steel belts busting through. After a few moments the engine stopped and the driver-side door opened. A man jumped out with legs so small that neither one of his boots hit the ground first. He wiped the dust off with a hanky until they shined like a couple of flames. It was Emanuel, my neighbor, and he'd just returned from another long day of preaching to the unbelievers between here and Apache Junction. I thought he'd see

the tools scattered about and at least bend down to say hello but he didn't. Instead he walked away, his body parting the vapors and his boots branding a trail of flames in the burning tar. I watched with the dispiritedness of an abandoned, wounded brother.

It was 4 o'clock and I rushed out of my apartment hoping to catch the mail before it left for the day. There were a couple of bills I couldn't hold on to any longer and wanted to honestly say "it's in the mail." The courtyard had a swimming pool that cut a kidney bean shape into its tight weavings of neon turf. The striking compliment of chlorinated blue with nitrogen green made me think of some days driving alongside the Mogollon Rim and brushing by the gripping hands of Yavapai women defending makeshift stands of artisania, making their roadside offerings with cunning eyes as they focused sunlight with turquoise medallions inlaid in the bark of the palo-verde tree.

I opened my mailbox, shuffled through a few more bills and before I had the time to say "open immediately, there has been a change in your auto insurance policy", Emmanuel slid up next to me. He inserted the key in his mailbox with mastery and peered in with one eye squinting, and smiled as if he'd just received a thank you letter for being St. Peter's own private locksmith.

"Howww yaa doooiin' Aaaalbert?" He spoke with an accent

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so stretched and scuffed as if he'd drug it with him all the way from Oklahoma.

"Doing' fine Emmanuel, just fine. How about yourself?"

"So busy. So busy but with just three things on my mind. The Father... The Son... and the Hooooly Ghost"

Our conversation continued and we kept our eyes forward like we were pissing in the same latrine with too little privacy and too little to talk about. The slight uneasiness of the situation made me think of months ago when he invited me to his apartment downstairs and revealed, in homily tone, while flipping through an entire subscription of evangelical T.V. stations, that at one time he was a down and out mechanic turned preacher. I remembered asking him the obvious.

"So what made you change?"

He sat comfortably in a lazy-boy in a dimly lit corner of the living room. Light from the patio slit the plastic shades and gushed by him, splashing sunset hues on the bare walls then dripping down like a sweet wine to the bottom of his out-stretched glass. Next to him was a clock staging a porcelain scene of the Cheyenne and the settlers. I followed the narrative of its figures as they moved with time, the tick-tock

gurgle of each minute swallowing the next and the thirst that led to hours that must have led to the cirrhosis over the years. He leaned forward from the chair and a remote control pierced the light. His face, adorned with a pencil-thin handle bar moustache, followed.

"The Word of God, Albert. The Woooooord of God. It cleaned up the hands that cleaned up the soul."

Half in and out of the memory and still looking ahead I wondered what exactly did he mean by clean hands. A few of the neighbor's children were racing around the mailboxes on tricycles, ringing bells in between giggles and filling the courtyard with the call and response of falsetto field hollers. It roused me from the trance.

"Hey Emmanuel, you know anything about transmissions...clutches? It's my truck, you know, the old F-150 parked next to yours."

"Whaaat's the proooblem Alllbert?"

The drawl in his voice broke off the tail ends of his words and they fell through his body like sand falling through a prospector's sift, filling his boots with worthless dirt, weighing down the few steps it took to face me.

"Pretty sure it's my clutch." I answered.

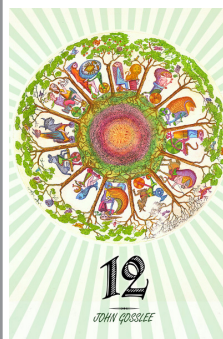
He took a look at my hands stained from the work I did this morning, raised his head and sniffed the air. His top lip twitched and the twisted ends of his moustache quivered from the lingering taint of grease. A reluctant smile was revealed.

"Alllbert, don't think I am able to help you with that." A long pause followed and I could tell he was searching his mind for the memory that made him either unwilling or unable to assist. He continued.

"Listen, my brother will be

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at church this Sunday. He's bringing his piano. Why don't you stop in. Bring that guitar."

"Would love to Emmanuel, I'll see where I'm at. Is the church still down Baseline, a few blocks from the pink Payless?"

He turned towards me and put his arm on my shoulder.

"Oooohh nooo....10 am. My apartment... the Lord Jesus has just moved in."

* * * * *

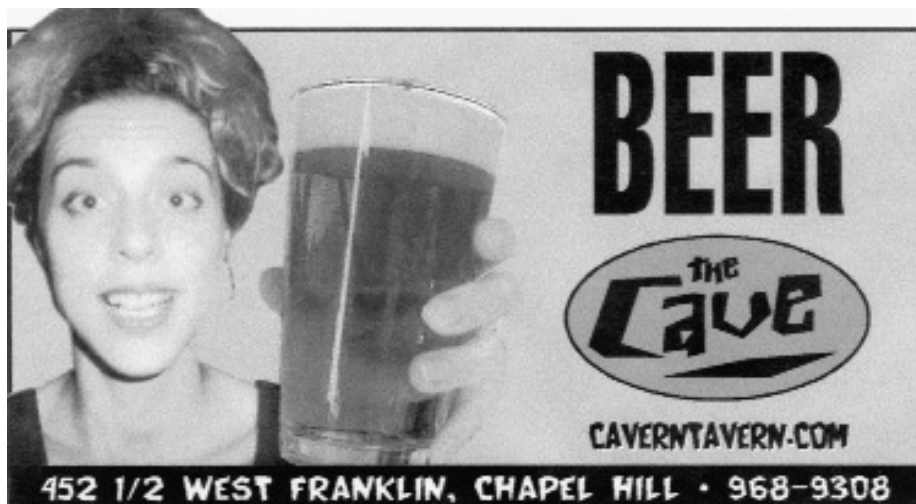
I woke up with the hum of last night ripping alongside the delicate unravelings of desert blooms. My body was aching and my mouth dry but still full of the flavor of the adventures I stumbled upon. There was a belly dancing troupe training at an abandoned mansion on the backside of South Mountain. They gathered around a fire, dressed in

beads, scarves and other forgotten, unwanted remnants of the Silk Road's past. Their bodies moved to embrace the heat and mimic the flames. Hands stretched upward, twisting, wafting swirls of smoke from petrified wood into the nostrils of the universe, provoking the final sneeze that would eventually open the midnight sky. At the base of the mountain was the town of Guadeloupe, a bastion for Yaquii Indian privilege. It huddled like a shaman on the ruins of elders, blowing smoke rings at the approaching earthmovers, causing them to scatter like fat termites back into the rot of the surrounding city. I caught sight of a mission church in the center of town. Its white, stucco walls flickered from the mountain fire and its roof, made of bundled mesquite limbs, had the gnarled

glow of a moon's driftwood. From the steeple the ring of a bell cut through the dark, silent crevices of the hill until it reached our camp, where it playfully stabbed at the meditations of the mansion with its dulled echoes.

I went to the balcony door and pulled the chain on the blinds. Daylight landed a right hook on my face. I grabbed my head and squinted then braced myself for another blow. Nothing happened. A trickle of warmth seeped from my forehead then dripped down my cheek and I felt grateful to be awake in the soft apologetic light of an avenger that has mistakenly lunged at the wrong man.

Below, a small group of visitors filed in individually from every entrance with about twenty feet between them and walked across the courtyard. They seemed like strangers in every sense of the word, strangers to their place, to themselves and to everyone around. Their clothes were neither casual nor formal but definitely seemed like the best they had. They walked with the stagger of going to an event that was something between a funeral and a back yard barbeque. Eventually, they converged at the sidewalk that divided my building with the next and waited, fidgeting to the sound of a faint, out-of-tune piano. They stood like puppets with



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painted faces on mechanical heads pivoting over a heap of cloth and wooden bones, their emotions drawn from their bodies from trying to share the colors of their lives from smudges of dried paint. Neighbors sat by, peering through the thin glass of their patio doors. Soon, a door opened and the procession continued until the last person disappeared under the breezeway. Looking over the courtyard I saw the mailboxes and remembered the invitation to Sunday service.

Emmanuel immediately noticed my unannounced entrance and lurched to the door, ushering me in with one arm around my shoulder and the other fanning across the room as if he was opening a heavy curtain with the back of his hand.

"Allllberrrt, Alllllberrrt, now everybody, this is Allllberrrrt."

Once again I was in his liv-

ing room, where only months ago I listened to the testimonies and stories whirl from his mouth like snow blowing from the crag of an old mountain. He stood in the center of the room in an ankle length fuchsia gown that covered him like a two dollar vinyl poncho. With one arm still around me he managed to produce a bible from his back pocket and brought it to his chest. He pulled me in closer and I felt his breath, deep and steady and full of awareness as if a threat was lurking about the room, prowling like a lion that's been lured from its den by the aroma of bloodtinged confessions. With a guttural voice he said my name then gently pushed me towards the piano.

"Alllberrrt"

Without a break in rhythm the pianist reached over and introduce himself. The melody stopped but his left continued to wiggle

around the bass keys like worms suddenly exposed in a heap of earth.

"So nice to meet you Albert...Bobby Ellis. Thanks so much for coming down. It means so much to have you here...as a brother and a neighbor. Just join in whenever you'd like."

I threw a hard squint at Bobby and he returned it with a fiery yelp. The flames of his rapture were incapable of being smothered by my hesitations. Secrets eddied around his eyes as he sunk behind the piano to play the white ivory bones of a river bottom, to tap on the settled remains for the answers of evolution then emerge in a gurgle of muddy water to trill a couple of high pitched keys. I swung the guitar around, faced the pew and struck my first chord. Bobby howled.

"That's right Albert! Follow the music... it's in the key of Christ!

After pinning his last bed sheet across the dining room table with a paperweight Emmanuel flattened his hand and swept the wrinkles over the edges of the alter. He spoke up with boisterous delight.

"We have a brother amongst us that's been doooooon on his luck. He's been workin' soooo hard but keeps on getting' broken and beaten."

The congregation chimed in with heavy AMENS at appropriate cadences.

"AMEN!" Emmanuel continued. "It's a shame to see a man with his face so low to the ground...AMEN!...who has lost the will to lift his head to the voices calling his name from above...AMEN!... ho has no other choice than to heed the answers of man and walk along the empty footprints cast down in the pavement...AMEN!...Heed the answers that fester, the answers that keep your head low, the answers that keep you looking at a pool of



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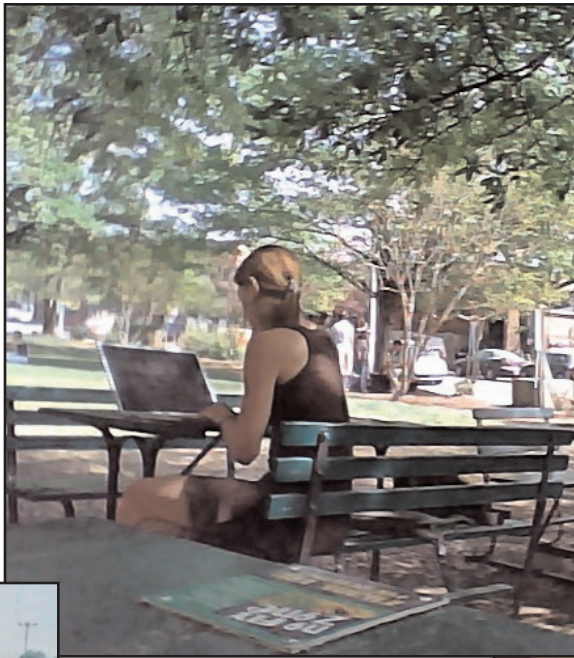
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fire where reflections squirm under the weight of the beast...*AMEN!*...The beast that has fallen and looks to perch its abominable shadow on your bare naked back."

"AMEN!"

He stepped out from behind the altar and walked silently towards the piano. His head turned to the ground and his eyes steadied in their sockets as if they were spying on his own unraveling thoughts. In one hand he held a tiny glass tube, the kind you see on the stems of single red roses at a convenience store. It was filled with oil. He raised his other hand and signaled the congregation to join him.

"Now everybody, join me over here, circle around and hold hands as we pray."

The crowd drifted from their chairs and settled around the piano like a dense fog. Emmanuel continued his gesture. Opening and closing his fingers like the light beams of a beacon high on a bluff strobing the fringes of an endless sea. The music stopped but the strings of our instruments still resonated. Vibrations of familiar songs splintered under a buzz of anticipation then gathered again behind the slinky echoes of the congregation's nervous rustlings. By the door hung a mirror and I saw Bobby's reflection. The edges of his hard luck features crumbled in the vaporous fill

and the keys of his piano collapsed under the dusty print of fingertips.

Again, Emmanuel spoke.

"N o o o o w eeeverybody...We all know the better you dooooo...the better you dooooo...but Alllberrrrt...Albert's been having some problems. I know he's a fiiiine upstanding young man but yeeessss, he's been haaavin' some troubles."

He stepped next to me and I felt at ease, looking up at someone convinced their purpose was larger than life. His face lifted until his cheekbones became perpendicular to his arms. The amber hue of wheat fields under a late Oklahoma sun blushed over his face. He stepped closer and spoke again, on the verge of weeping.

"It is in the dark we reach helplessly for that disobedient, contrary hand...*AMEN!*...And in the dark that hand turns to dust....leaving us alone, so alone...*AMEN!*...Alone to wallow in the terrible spiritual predicament of the lost."

"AMEN!"

His words stripped me down like thinner, like a torrid, left-over afternoon heat caught under the veil of the cool desert night, stirring in the dusty flicker of a thousand white candles, filling the shadows of a Yaqui Deer dance. I stood with eagerness in front of the believers, prepared to walk through the

cavernous halls of their dry, gaping, faith-filled mouths, ready to exchange my own flesh for that bare boned disguise that would let me slip by the Angel of Darkness and finish my dream.

Emmanuel's hands began to shake and the convulsion revealed the small tube of oil in his right hand. Again he spoke, vigorously repeating his first words. He called my name and it whined like a chainsaw in the night.

"Now Alllbeert...you are a fine upstanding young man. And yeeessss, you've been haaavin' some troubles. But Alllberrrrt... the devil's...."

With the flash of a lightning bolt and the gusto that would send a thousand trumpeters over a mountainside he waved the open palm of one hand then smashed it into the fist of the other. The oil exploded and splashed and before anyone could get a Hallelujah off the tip of their tongue he hit me square on my forehead and finished the judgment.

"THE DEVIL'S IN YOUR CLUUUUUUUTCH!"

I went numb.

I thought of my F-150, the adventures and the three-hundred thousand miles of American Highway. I thought of lying in the heat of the parking lot, grappling with its greasy undercarriage, spending weeks trying to fix something

Best In Show

by Phil Juliano



any good mechanic could have done in a day's work.

Emmanuel's fingers spread, and with his palm he massaged the Wesson oil into my forehead. I thought again. Was this entire undertaking a flirt with curiosity or was it the mischievous impulse to meddle in the affairs of things that are none of my business? Was the time spent staring dumbfounded and perplexed a moment of patience, a natural pause between diligent acts, or was it idleness and the rebellion to a busy life?

I looked out and the congregation began filing back out the door. Emmanuel relaxed and returned to the altar. He grabbed a small wooden cross and hung it back on the wall above his Lazy-Boy. A faint honky-tonk rendition of "There is Green Hill Far Away" filled the room. It brought something far away and nearly for-

gotten back under my breath, filling in the words to something I've been humming my whole life.

Was I really trying to get this truck back on the road? And if so, what road? Idleness...diligence? Was it the road to death, the road to life...or was it just trying to get on the road back home? Emmanuel finished straightening the cross and turned to me. His words rose like vapors from the outlines of his mouth, making funny mirrors from thin air.

"IN. YOUR. CLUUUU-UTCH!"



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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

The waves were blowing in sideways - literally - and I still wanted to go swimming. It is dream-beach -- no place like it exists anymore because Hugo flattened it and it wasn't replaced with anything resembling what it once was. I prefer the wind-pastelled colors of old beach houses, and the too-small for the whole family to visit shacks that used to pepper the waterfront. Outdoor showers, old linoleum covered kitchen furniture. Krispy Kreme man comes by every morning with warm dozens. And the sound of the waves crashing in your dreams because it's too hot to leave the windows closed in the pre-air-conditioning beach world.

eric - cyberspace



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"Blues for Insomnia"

hard to come by
like honesty or unbroken
promises; hard to come to
terms with the shadows
in the hall that creep
across the nightlight's path;
hard to think of a
way to stop thinking;
hard to find a reason to
give up and get up and sit
in the dark; hard to care
when the silence is this empty;
harder still to close my eyes
when it's black here already

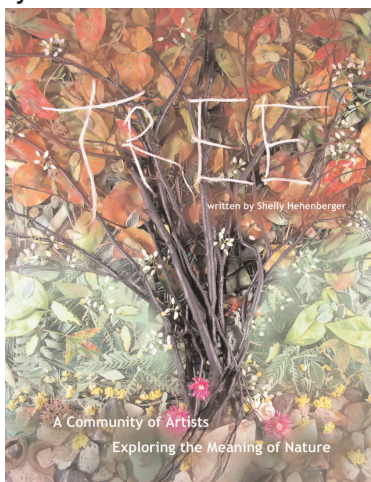
Two by Mel Trent

"Haunting Me"

I dreamed I was singing
songs about your ghost again
and in the morning, you just
smiled and sent me on my way
I walked around in the rain
with no destination and
always one step behind
I sat and drank coffee
while the sky slid down to
the streets and if Escher
engraved puddles of sky
in the mud, I walked
right through them
I stared the color out of a
photograph of you and left
myself with a slick white
space in place of your smile

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Pinkemon

It's 1996---ANYTHING can happen.

"Gary Oak, your ass is mine!
My Harvard exams are over,
and I'm now ready
to unleash
the power of the
Pinkemon
upon the world!"

"Jigglypuff, I choose you!!
Use
**OPENING
TRACK
ATTACK!!!!**"

I'm tired, so tired
I'm tired of having sex (So tired)
I'm spread so thin
I don't know who I am (who I am)

Monday night I'm makin' Jen
Tuesday night I'm makin' Lyn
Wednesday night
I'm makin' Catherine

Oh, why can't I be
makin' Love come true?

"Haha--what an aimless,
failed attack! Did you
produce that shit yourself?
Here I was expecting the
Power Pop
of your Debut Attack,
and instead you give me
this dark, abrasive
Power Poop!"

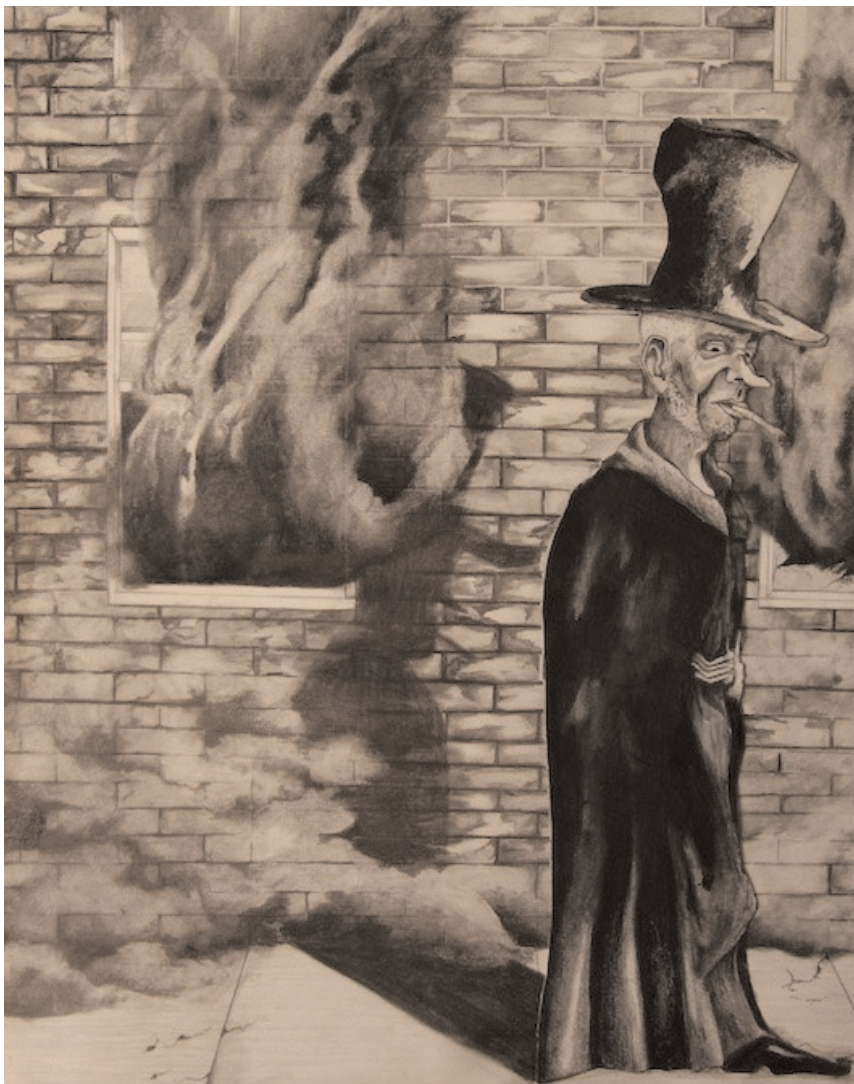
"Gary, you're right! It's a hideous
attack! It's like getting
really drunk at a party and spilling
your guts in front of everyone and
feeling incredibly great
and cathartic about it,
and then waking up
the next morning and
realizing
what a complete fool
you made of yourself!
I'm distancing myself
from this shit!!"

14 Years Later...

"Pinkemon was really ahead
of it's time. I'm so
stoked that the Deluxe
Edition of Ash's
sophomore attack
is being released.
It's definitely one of MY
desert island attacks,
and without it, there'd
be no Emo-mon."




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art & doggerel by Jacquelyn Briggs

Mr. Spiggs and his nasty wigs;
they all caught on fire.
He smoked so much,
wearing wigs and such,
they burnt with his attire.

⇒ Now all he's got left
is a cloak,
and a vest,
and a shoe,
and a hat,
and his cigarettes.

But none of these things satisfy.
You see,
he loved those poor wigs,
that died via cigs,
but too bad, Mr. Spiggs.
Too bad.

Three by Holly Day

"93 Minutes"

I saw this movie where this girl's
life was ruined by boys, a
lot of boys, and I just had to watch it
because my life was
ruined by boys, too. My husband told me
about the movie, said I
should watch it, wanted
to ask me questions about
what it was like to be a girl like me, because

he had new insight into who
I was because
he had seen this movie, and wanted to
share these new thoughts and feelings
with me after I had
watched the movie for myself, this movie
that was full of things
I want so badly to save him from

knowing, there are so many things I don't
want him to know.

"Nymph"

how nice it would be to find a man
sprouting from the ground like a wild seed or a sapling stray
from a nearby forest, quiet, eyes closed, the centerpiece
of a bed of wide-eyed daisies, purple clover
fluffy dahlias and ranunculus. each day
I would visit the man in my garden

gently pinch his skin to test the texture, run
my fingers over the new hair on his head, his face
wait for the day when the cilia-covered eyes uncloud
and open, for the roots holding him to the ground
to loosen and fall away.

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 prize!)

Well, now. \$1650 in cash and 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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"The Tree"

my neighbor tells me her hemlock tree
has gotten too big, that the floor of her garage
has a new crack in it from the pressure of roots
crawling beneath the soil. I tell her
that there are gentle ways to tricking the tree into growing
in another direction, iron nails in the soil, a splice in the root
concrete fill. I pray she takes the hint but can see
the determination in her eyes. The tree
must go.

I gather up the tiny pine cones from my garden
for perhaps the last time, crush the broken ones with my bare heel
save the perfect ones from Christmas wreaths and
seasonal centerpieces. Soon, I'll have to reshape my garden
take the shade plants out from under the tree
that will soon be gone, plant sunny daisies and peonies
where lamium and lilies once thrived, morning glories and irish moss
to fill in the holes.

Final

Tidbits: Great time at the
barbecue bash! The folks at The
Pinhook in Durham were perfect
hosts, Olde North State Barbecue hit
the spot - and they had fried okra!!! The
Latecomers and The Gonzo Symphonic
Presents entertained everyone (and TGSP
has an EP coming out - look for our tweets
on it.) And speaking of which, follow us
on Twitter @blotterrag - that's where we
tell you about art and music and other
stuff goin' on. Still time to get your con-
test entry to us. Buy a copy of *Tree*, pub-
lished 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 t-shirt while you're there. And go
visit your local independent bookstore,
they're putting books on shelves that you
never imagined you would ever read!
Stop spinning in circles, asking "what do
you want to do?" Open a book, turn
on some tunes and argue about
something with a friend.
Got it? Good!

CONTRIBUTORS

On a stool, next to a pot belly stove above an old man's woodshop, **Michael Kalna** whittles away at his memories and the last twenty five years of travel. Born in Youngstown, Ohio, and the son of a Jack, he now resides in Durham, NC, where he is pursuing his writing. *** **Mel Trent** writes, "I live in Raleigh. I write poetry and short fiction and have had several pieces published in The *Piker Press* (pikerpress.com)."
OBTW, that's Ms Trent; she's very polite, and I am occasionally an idiot. *** **Holly Day** is a housewife and mother of two living in Minneapolis. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *The Oxford American*, and *Slipstream*. Her book publications include *Music Composition for Dummies*, *Guitar-All-in-One for Dummies*, and *Music Theory for Dummies*, which has recently been translated into French, Dutch, Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese. She answered our question about where her poetry comes from: "I spend most of my time running after my kids and husband, all the while thinking about how much fun it would be to sit down and write. By the time I do get to sit down, most of what I've got in my head comes out jumbled and crushed into something entirely new, and I'm lucky if I remember half of the really good things I was planning on writing about. It's sort of frustrating, but I figure that someday, the people in my life will be able to take care of themselves, more or less, and I can spend more relaxed, regular time writing instead of trying to cram an entire day's thoughts in these short half-hour bursts I get now and then! So, in short, no process, just frantic typing." *** We asked **Jacquelyn Briggs** to tell us a little about herself: "Oh, alright. Well, I am from Newport, NC. Currently living in Cary. I graduated last August from Appalachian state university with a BA in studio art. I plan on attending grad school for illustration in the fall, and plan on a career as a writer and illustrator. Is this enough information?" *Her URL to see more is www.jacquelynbriggs.com.* *** **Hal Studholme** is a believer in small cheap cameras, so he is always ready to capture what others might overlook - that certain slant of light, the telling gesture, the weird angle, the funny combination. He stays at the periphery of things, and nudges us to look more closely at what is right in front of us. An interest in basic composition informs and shapes all his work. New Jersey, New York City, Minneapolis, Chapel Hill, Pomona, Madison, Orlando, and Oxfordshire, England are all places he has called home. He has studied Asian philosophy and education in addition to studio art. He has worked with homeless teenagers and autistic children. He loves Iceland, the sea, and obscure psychedelic music. He also loves Kiki the wonder dog. *** **Chris Fox** provides us with 'toons, which we unselfishly let you see. And you thought the world was evil... *** For more from **Phil Juliano** click on <http://www.gocomics.com/best-in-show>.

Friday, January 6, 2012

David Quick Presents

Saturday, January 7, 2012

April Mae & the June-Bugs
TCB '56

Kelley & the Cowboys
Kitty Box & the Johnnys

Straight 8's
Phatlynx

Blood Red River

Bo-Stevens

John Howie Jr. & the Rosewood Bluff
The Cogburns



Curtis Eller's American Circus
Delco Nightingale
Alvis

Dusty Booze & the Baby Haters
Reverend D-Ray & the Shockers

Mad Tea Party

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