

Presents for you! Anna Isaacson, Eddie Jeffrey, Lisha Goldberg,
Jesse Barnes, Holly Day, Joe Buonfiglio, Niles Reddick,
Phil Juliano, and The Dream Journal

The Blotter

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MAGAZINE

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"Persistence of Memory"

I had thought about attending my high school forty year reunion, recently celebrated in my home town, but didn't. I really did consider it. I even received a personal invitation of sorts, from a childhood friend, to come and see all of the wonder of others of my age and origin, but I stayed here, did my daily thing: reading, writing, attending to hearth and home. So why didn't I go? Is the answer as simple as my ongoing rasslin' match with mild-to-middling social anxiety? Or is there more to it?

Of course there's more to it.

Lately, and only somewhat coincidentally, I have given thought to those folks my age from my little town. Which I swear is not how I see them, my old classmates, as only peer groupies, but is merely an expedient method of explaining them to you. Certainly, those folks I have thought about, have looked for on social media, have more in common with me and each other than time and place, but it is not easy for me to decipher what that might be. Still, I will give it a try...

I think what makes us *us* is shared memory. When people are of an age or a place, how we see our environment and experiences must be through a common lens, or at least many lenses pointed in the same direction, with similar focal points. Childhood is one of these focal points, as is the playing field, the neighborhood, college, the workplace. Indeed, my childhood was. My little hometown contained an understandable, reasonable span of education, economy, and culture. Or did it? Was every family close-knit? Did everyone work hard, pay their bills, take their vacations, think similarly about values and valuables? Did they celebrate their beliefs and respect those other than their own? Were there any people of color? Other cultures? Alternate lifestyles? Did anyone have deep-seated secrets, waiting to become shocking revelations? No, and yes. Yes and no.

And at the time I didn't know and I didn't care. If other families had troubles, I wasn't paying attention. If the world was having troubles - and it was - I was busy at that moment contemplating my own navel. The truth is I was a dumb kid, right up until the moment I left home after finishing, barely, high-school. Any sub-compartments of childhood, broken down by what school I attended (elementary, junior-high, high-school), or how I perceived youth (playing at home, playing outside with friends, hanging out doing absolutely nothing with friends), were all in that single, unifying bucket - kid. I might not have been able to see such subtle lack-of-distinction back then, but I sure can see it now. Like pages of a long, rambling and not particularly interesting novel, torn from its binding and scattered across a breezy summer lawn, I am gathering the memories back together, reading them, putting them back in the more distinct order of chronology, rebinding them there. And the volume lacks something.

I remember the people, but prefer to remember the places, the time. Why? There are no rules when looking backwards. You are not bound to hold fast to anyone, keep connections alive, searching for relevance of ancient relationships no matter how much you may feel...bullied by the makers of

Facebook or LinkedIn.

Yet should I speak about my childhood with others, I often stir the soup of bitterness and poignancy brought to boil by such artificial requirements. While my own youth feels pastel and muffled-quiet, theirs is often no place of gentle reflection, but rather a face, many faces, caught in time like an insect in ointment. Each face is a crossed path, long since overgrown, to be stared at with questioning regret or sour nostalgia. Why? I want to ask. That person is no longer there. Time has slowly rolled them up and, like you, they are coated with many additional layers, some sweeter; some, perhaps, not so. Why be contrite?

For me, more than the relationships to people, are my relationships with moments and places. What does that say about me? That I like to think about reading Edmund Cooper's "Seed of Light" by afternoon glare on the gray sofa in the front window of the public library, or still recall with curiosity the shadowy dog-leg hallway in my old church, the linoleum floor echoing my own footsteps after me until my heart thudded in my chest. I love the memory-sensation of galloping home down the steep hill behind my elementary school; the crossing guard seeing me coming first of all students and halting any automobile traffic that I might not have to even slow down on my way. Staring into the glass case of the candy store to see cartons of pink bubble-gum and golden caramel, the warm circles of nickels weighing my jeans pocket. Lying on the grass in my backyard, huffing the pong of newly fallen walnuts and hearing only the electric Doppler zoom of bumblebees.

Is it just luck that these recollections never melt together in the eddies and rills of the river of time? Am I a rare bird that finds this a blessing? And is it a factor of choice that I prefer to think about the dirt bank over the sun-glittering water where I used to fish, where I more than once inadvertently slid in up to my waist, my chest, because I was daydreaming when I misstepped, than that same dirt bank where I sat before beginning a journey that led inexorably to my adulthood: a mysterious and troubling beginning, filled with a long walk and many lonesome nights. I don't know, and I rarely question the results.

We are occasionally too human. More often than not, we cannot stop doing that which is not in our best interests. What good can come from my saying anything critical about others' memories? Instead, I smile and take a sip of coffee, nod my head in support of their mawkish weariness. Because I remember the relationships of my youth, too. The uncomfortable, appalling moments, the victories and defeats, all with glassine clarity. What I have found, however - what has been revealed to me like the miracle of a magic trick - is that I don't mind that I was once coltish, clumsy, apparently thoughtless, pitiful with women my age, rendered speechless, frequently lazy, genuinely foolish. I don't mind so much that I missed out on the brass rings, lost the prize time and time again, left treasure on the table. And, no, I don't know why.

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CAUTION

Never quote Rock and Roll lyrics

"And, David?"

by Anna Isaacson

Where are you going this morning, David? This highway is northbound, and six hours would get you to the Canadian border. The Canadian forests hang like a cloak over the shoulders of New England. How poetic, David. But you're not a criminal on the run. This is not a game of cops and robbers. So where are you driving to?

Last night Maria came home from work with more marriage news: her old friend and the friend's boyfriend. *Fiancé*, David. The friend with the exhausting self-deprecation, and the boyfriend with the strangely flat face. Don't

say that out loud, David. Maria and that girl have been friends since sixth grade. You don't have to like her friends; you just have to act like you like them.

Maria was pleased that you'd remembered the friend and the boyfriend, and she smiled at you. She's pretty when she smiles, isn't she? She won't be pretty when she's old, but neither will you. You already have a little bald spot on the top of your head, and you're getting a bit of a beer belly. You're pushing thirty, David. Maybe you should stop drinking like you're eighteen.

You and Maria went out and sat outside on the porch together. It was a pleasant August night—not too hot, not too cold. See, David? It's nice to sit out on the porch together. Don't you think it might be best to leave the X-box packed up? You have candles in the new apartment but no candle holders, and Maria was trying to drip candle wax into the bottom of an olive jar to cement the candles upright.

"It was really sweet, how he proposed," Maria said. "Beth told me everyone in the restaurant clapped when she said yes." She glanced up from the olive jar and gave you a look. "I think they're basically meant for each other."

That look she gave you? She meant that she wished she wouldn't have to ask you to help with the candle thing. She wished you'd just do it. Yes, same as with your beard hairs in the sink, David. She shouldn't have to ask you to clean those up.

"Yes, they seem good," you said, and you took the candle from her hands. Was that so hard? She smiled at you again. You got the candle to stand up straight, and she shielded the candle from the breeze with both hands as you struck the lighter and touched the flame to the wick. The candlelight lit your faces from below. We must say, in that moment the two of you looked as young-and-in-love as the day you met.

So how are things going in your new apartment? Yes, we do, we have every right to take a look around. It's a really cute apartment. The living room looks great. There's that little window seat that Maria just fell in love with. Are these your boxers on the bedroom

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floor, David? Oh dear. Looks like things are mostly unpacked, but that's probably Maria's doing, isn't it? Oh, of course, you did the kitchen. Is that why the cups are up on the top shelf where only you can reach? Think, David.

You haven't met the neighbors yet, but you clearly enjoy watching them from the porch—the young families, the fathers and sons. Why is that exactly, David? How does it go? First comes love, then comes marriage, then what, David? Last night the tall blond father and the tall blond sons were out playing hacky-sack on their lawn while the mother made dinner inside. The sons were straining to please the father, and the father was supercilious and silent. How interesting, David. You were thinking about fathers, weren't you? About your father? About fatherhood, say? Don't be alarmed. It's natural. Biological, Maria always says. A biological clock, like a haunted heartbeat echoing in an empty cavity. A feeling of time in the womb. All right, all right, David, nice try, but you haven't got a womb, have you. You wouldn't understand all that.

Maria was watching too. "Aren't they *sweet*," she said. You do know what that new note of accu-

sation in her voice is, don't you? She means she wants you to want to have children. *I'm not saying*, she said once, a couple weeks before you decided to move in together, *that you have to decide now. You just have to decide to be willing to decide.* Does that make sense, David?

Next she asked you if she'd shown you the pictures from her coworker's wedding on Facebook. She had, but you let her pretend to forget it. She scooted her chair up next to yours, and she tapped her password into her phone. White lace, pink flowers, strings of little lights, men's faces shining with sweat and their arms over each other's shoulders. All wedding photos look like that. Don't say that out loud, David.

"Wait," you said, and you held her hand to cease its swiping. A picture of the father of the bride embracing his daughter. The father's cheeks were tear-streaked and his face was scrunched as though he were straining to extract something—his final filament of fatherhood. What is that supposed to mean, David?

That simpering look of pity on her face—oh, David, she's just trying to sympathize. She's just trying to understand. What are you so afraid of? She reached out and held

the side of your face with her palm, and in spite of yourself, you shivered. Maria. Your Maria.

Nauseatingly familiar, and yet also achingly beautiful. And, David?

She dropped her hand suddenly. "What are we doing?" she said.

"Do you want me to make dinner?" you said. Nice offer, David, but completely off the mark. Sometimes you make us laugh.

"No, I mean, *us*," she said. "You and me."

You felt sick to your stomach. "What do you mean?" you said.

She stared at you. "Are we in it to win it? Are you? Because if you're not..." She shook her head and splayed her palms upwards—you *leave me no choice*.

She wasn't so pretty with her mouth twisted in a sneer and her



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eyes bugged out. To avoid looking at her, you leaned in to try to kiss her, but she pulled away. "I can't wait forever," she said.

"We're not old," you said.
"We have time."

"Maybe *you* have time," she said. She stood up and went inside.

There, that. That hot dread in the pit of the stomach, as though anticipating, or recalling, some impending loss, or some ancient loss. Life, and thereby death, comes from a heaving, hearty organ, and this organ drains its blood into the genitals like tears, and this draining is quickened, sickened, over time. Is that what it feels like, the sense of time in the womb? No, David, don't bother. You wouldn't understand.

Down below, the father and the sons had gone in. The whole family sat around the kitchen table with their knees bent at right angles like dolls, smugly confident that this would last, that any of it would last. Don't say that out loud, David.

The two of you hardly spoke as you cooked dinner together, and over dinner she thumbed through her phone in silence. She was in bed, face to the wall, by the time you came in from brushing your

teeth. You could tell she wasn't asleep, but when you put your hand on her shoulder, she just lay there, unresponsive. Yes, that's right, David. You could lose her.

The next morning, mourning doves were pecking and cooing on the neighbors' lawn. What was that dream you'd been having?

I was dreaming of the time my father, my sister, and I made a volcano in the sandbox. My father pointed at the mourning doves and said, *They're back*.

And, David?

I thought he'd called them *morning* doves, not mourning, but I understood the message: that there is sadness in the world, that the sadness is interlaced with the joy. When I woke up, I felt the tug of my childhood, or maybe of my children, inside me. The feeling of time in the womb.

Oh David, honey, give it up. What do the mourning doves symbolize exactly, David? Do they represent your longing for a family of your own? Or perhaps your reluctance to love, when to love is to risk loss? Or are you just trying to show us your sensitive side in order to win us over? We won't buy that, David. Your father has been dead

for a decade, now. You use his death as an excuse to keep everyone at a distance. We're just trying to help, David, but you won't let us.

Maria was still asleep when you woke up, and she was snoring softly. You brushed her hair back from her eyes, and her eyes flicked open.

"I'll be back soon," you said.

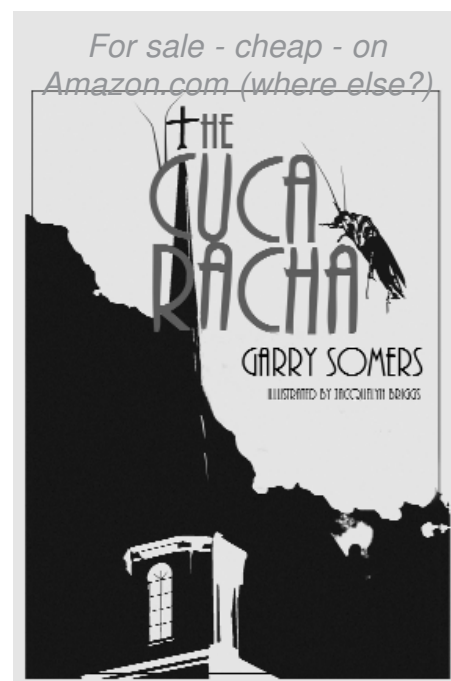
"Where are you going?" she said.

But you didn't answer. You were already out the door. You took the car, wove it through the city streets, and merged onto the north-bound highway.

Where are you going, David? The exit for Maria's hometown is coming up here on the right. Her manic mother, her dyspeptic father, her antiseptic hometown. Don't say that out loud, David. Her grandmother's ring is there, too. What is north of that? Nothing but more towns and more marriages. People get married in Canada, too. So what will it be, David? ❖



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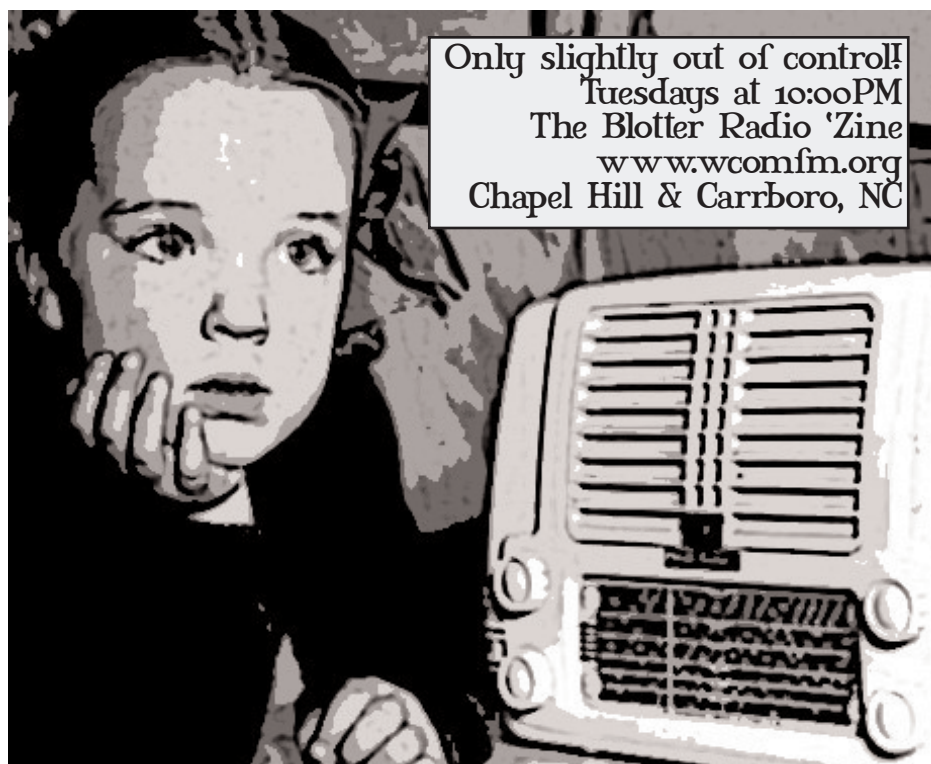


"Checkpoint"

by Eddie Jeffrey

I lived in the American Sector of West Berlin when that's what it was called, when The Wall was still up, behind The Iron Curtain when there still was such a thing. I lived there when Reagan made his famous *Tear Down This Wall* speech in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Not long after that, my middle school class took a field trip to the Rotes Rathaus, Berlin's City Hall. We walked by a portion of The Wall on the way. Beyond it a no-man's land of 25-50 yards of concrete (if memory serves), barbed wire, watch towers, the Outer Wall, then East Berlin. As far as we knew, there were land mines everywhere. A few of us were stupid enough to test this theory by tossing rocks over The Wall to see if we could set any of them off. Of course we failed, but we laughed at how lucky

we were and also to cover up the immediately dawning notion of our own stupidity. That same day, a young East German construction worker drove his cement truck up to the East side of Checkpoint Charlie, aimed its grill to The West and to Freedom, and hit the gas. The East German checkpoint guards held their ground with AK-47s and an RPG. Not only did they not fail to perform their duty to prevent this escape attempt, they also succeeded in killing the construction worker and making an orphan of the infant they discovered in the wreckage clutched to the breast of the construction worker's wife, who, according to reports smuggled out afterward, died in the hospital from her wounds. ❖



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The Dream Journal

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I've been reading a memoir about a fellow who attended a boarding school, so it makes sense that the minute I'm not thinking about it outright, such a thing would turn up in a dream. I'm me, only much younger - with legs that can carry me at a pony's gallop for days - and, to my surprise, I belong here. I have friends and the teachers greet me as I pass them on the bricked walkways. And then there is *her* - there is always a her, don't ask me why - and she is coltish herself with smiling eyes. I would take her in my arms if that were the appropriate thing to do, among all of these people walking to their next class. It is, but only a cursory PDA, and then I am off doing something else and for the life of me I cannot say why.

Dorian - cyberspace

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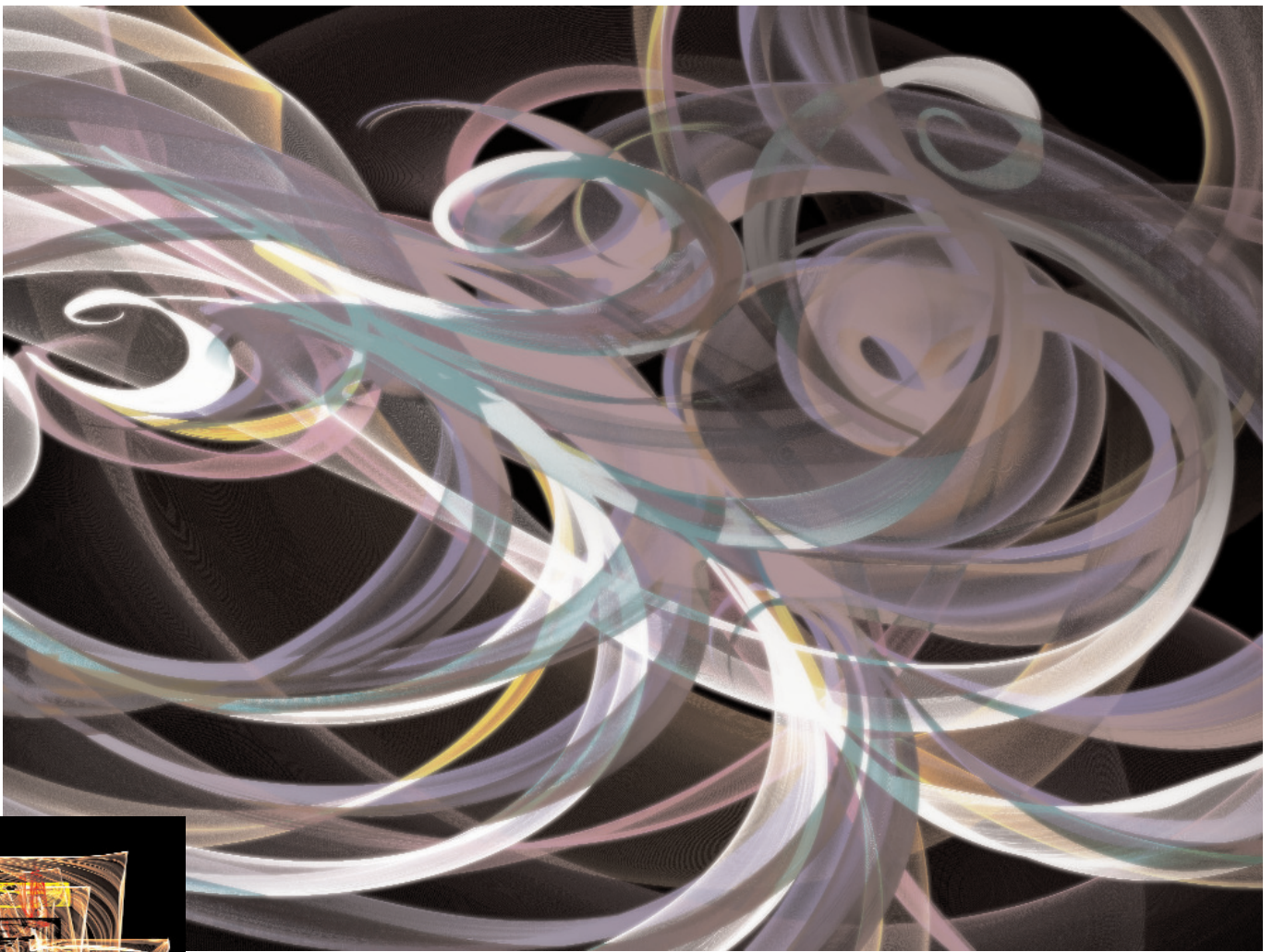
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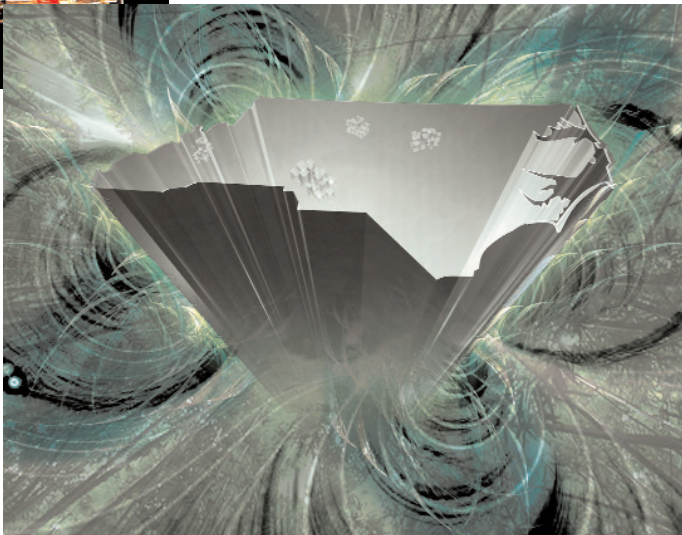


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"At the Deli Counter"

by Lisha Goldberg

Man 1: You look familiar.
Man 2: You look familiar, too.
Man 1: Maybe I knew you from prison?
Man 2: I've never been to prison.
Man 1: Where do you work?
Man 2: Newton. Where do you work?
Man 1: Brookline. Did you live at Foxwood Circle?
Man 2: Yes, did you?
Man 1: Yes, in the home formerly owned by Mrs. Steinberg, widow of Ellis the Tire Man. So how's business?
Man 2: Business is okay.
Man 1: Business is like sex. You can have it good, you can have it bad. You ever have bad sex?
Man 2: No. You?
Man 1: It's a shame about the business that burned in Newton.
Man 2: Eleven years ago, this week.
Man 1: Good for you, exactly eleven years ago this week.
Man 2: I'm surprised they didn't sue.
Man 1: They should sue, believe me. I know things about that building that I can't talk about. I was there. I helped save someone's

life. I told the fire department, look at that man who's about to jump out the window. He's hanging there like a wet duck.

Deli Counter Man (to Man 1): Here, take your bag of barbecue chicken.

Man 1: Why do you always leave the bag open, what's wrong with you?

Deli Counter Man: The bag's open so you could check inside to see if the order's okay. You always check inside. Why do you give me a hard time?

Man 1: Why do you give me a hard time?

Man 1: (To Man 2): Look at me, I don't shop like a woman. I buy everything while I'm here.

Man 2: None of this pick, pick, pick like my wife does.

Man 1: Pick, pick, pick? What did you do, marry my ex? So bring her over, we'll have a party, talk about old times.

Man 2 (to Deli Counter Man):

Give me some potato salad for my friend's party.

Deli Counter Man: You two gonna introduce yourselves, or what? ❖

"Inhale"

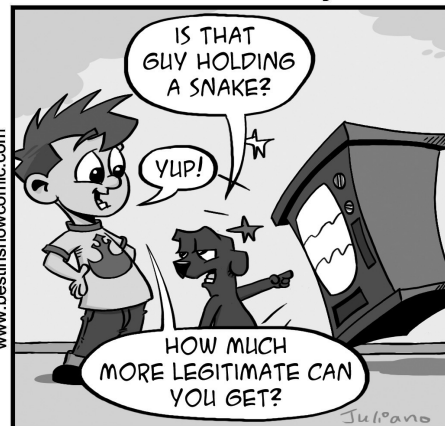
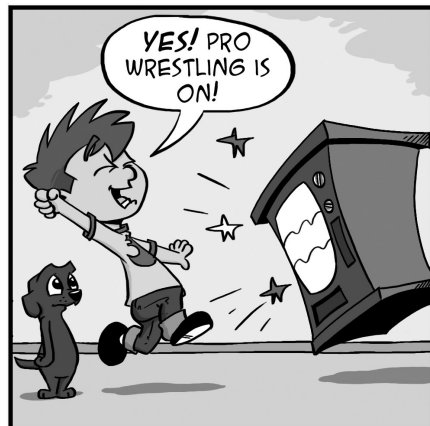
my daughter lies in her crib &
some formless, aimless rage a

suck angrily at my cigarette s
I'm glad that I'm going to die

picture her crying silent remi
over me in a coffin, lying bac

I wonder if it's me she hates :
don't understand a word she?

Best In Show



by Phil Juliano

Three by Holly Day

screaming
and I
say
e someday
inisce
ck, eyes closed
so much I
s saying

"In My Closet"

ghosts grab at my skin every morning, remind me
that I shop mostly at thrift stores, that the previous owners
of my skirt, this hand-stamped leather belt
are dead. I imagine

the woman who owned this blouse has
died horribly, leapt to her terrifying death
out an open window, leaving emergency workers
with careful fingers to remove her clothes
and wash them in cold water
before sending them to Goodwill.

these shoes are definitely haunted
possessed by an angry ghosts—I can tell
by the way they pinch at my toes
and rip at the back of my heels when I walk
like they're trying to kill me.

"Sweets"

There was so much candy in my grandfather's house
sitting in bowls around the living room, tucked into
drawers in the kitchen
as if he was expecting hordes of children to drop by unexpectedly
or perhaps was worried about the approach of
Christmas or Halloween.

I bagged up all of the candy
brought it home with the few knickknacks
my grandmother had left behind
a few sets of blankets that'd come in handy
a box of pictures of my mom and me.
My daughter saw the candy and knew it was for her
asked for a piece, and another, I said

"Just one piece a night, sweetheart.
This candy's haunted."

"It's The End of Everything, or What's with All the Monkey Fucking?"

by Joe Buonfiglio

Many of those who know me and are — possibly to their discredit — familiar with my work noticed that I recently and not-so cleverly blew off more than a couple weeks of writing projects, blog entries, social-media posts and all other pseudo-literary endeavors. Well, there is actually a good reason for this act of apathetically wanton procrastination. I'm not sure what is going on in your part of the world; but where I am, the Apocalypse has started.

That's right, my friends. It's the Apocalypse with a capital "A." The Ultimate Omega. The End to top all Ends. The Big Kahuna of dire denouements. The "All your paper money ain't worth shit now!" of societal epilogues on a biblical scale. And so far, I don't see anybody just mysteriously disappearing while leaving their clothes on the stool with a hot cup of coffee and a half-eaten chocolate doughnut still on the counter a la the Rapture. It didn't happen to any of my friends at any rate, and it sure as hell didn't

happen to me.

I knew I was gonna get burned in the end by this whole Agnostic thing.

So far, I'm making do. While I'm getting a little bored consuming nothing but cling peaches and cold canned lentil soup, stashing all those printed porn magazines instead of relying on the Internet over the years is certainly making this homemade bunker much more habitable now that electricity is a thing of the past. Watching all those End Times' prepper shows on reality TV pre-"It's all gone to shit!" has certainly paid off in the self-pleasuring department.

Nevertheless, even with all the forethought I put into preparing for this inevitable consequence of humankind's foolhardy and self-destructive nature, it's not all guns and roses, so to speak. The

Apocalypse can be a bit of a drag; what with all the opportunistic cannibals, roaming gangs of the highly flatulent engaging in Druidic fart-lighting ceremonies before terrified virginal sacrifices, and, of course, all the incessant monkey-fucking.

What?

Oh. Right. As if you wouldn't be fucking monkeys if it was the end of the world. Relations with our simian friends never crossed your mind. That's just me, I guess.

Fess up! You know you'd be fucking monkeys and eating pandas just like the rest of us, so don't go all holier than thou on me. The world is coming to an end and, if you're reading this, you haven't been "taken up." It looks as if God ain't giving you a pass on it all and you're fucked right along with the rest of us. So, you might as well try to have some fun with it, right? Get out there in the fiery abyss and do everything you've always wanted to try, but were impeded by all those cumbersome laws and mores civilization imposed upon you



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A mysterious will by an unknown hand; and murder...

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by Marty Smith

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before its collapse.

So yes, go fuck a monkey or two. Nobody is going to look down his or her nose at you. They're too busy either saving their own asses or engaging in acts of sex with garden gnomes or other such formerly inappropriate intimacies with inanimate objects. Go ahead, bang the tailpipe of that classic muscle car your snobbish neighbor rolled out and shoved in your face every weekend for the last six years.

Run naked through Disneyland donning nothing but the sneakers on your feet and an indelible Sharpie in your hand while you race about drawing penises on all the costumed characters' faces. You know you've wanted to do that to that fucking Little Mermaid for years now. Smug aquatic bimbo!

Ride through the streets with a shotgun systematically taking out every cyclist you see wearing neon-Lycra shorts so tight they've developed permanent camel toe or binding ballsack impressions whether the rider is wearing them or not, yelling "Who has the right-of-way now, bitch!"

Drop your cellphone in the toilet ... *on purpose*.

Let all your gamer friends see you reading a hardcover print-on-paper book in broad daylight.

Sing Frank Sinatra's greatest hits while you masturbate on the dais of the local town council that approved the rezoning that placed a shopping mall in your backyard while the mayor is tied to his chair with toothpicks forcing his eyelids open.

Burn that shopping mall to the ground.

Burn ALL shopping malls to the ground.

Say "Yankees" without using "Damn" or any other expletive as an adjective first.

Eat an ice cream cone in the summer heat without taking extra napkins.

Admit to your Republican friends that you believe Global Climate Change is real.

Admit to your Democrat friends that government is as much a part of the problem as big business is.

Admit to your religious friends that religion does more good than harm. Admit to your Atheist friends that religion does more

harm than good. Admit to your Agnostic friends that nobody has a fucking clue as to what's right when it comes to religion. Admit to yourself that Cap'n Crunch is the God of breakfast cereals.

If you've never done it, have anal sex with your significant other. You know you've always wanted to try it.

If you've been having anal sex for years, stop it. That's disgusting.

Eat carbohydrates a LOT of them in public.

Steal a city bus and take it on a joyride while humming the theme song to *The Love Boat*. (I've always wanted to do that.)

Smoke weed right in front of the police station ... WITH a cop.

Realize Smokey was right: "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires" ... and then light up that tree-huggin' son of a bitch! Just set him on fire and throw his preachy ass into a

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The Blotter

canyon. If I want to make s'mores in the middle of the woods, I'm gonna make goddamn s'mores in the middle of the goddamn woods!

Drink Irish whiskey until you go tits up with alcohol poisoning right there in front of the kiddies and all the other helicopter parents in your child's kindergarten class for "Parents Talk About Their Bullshit Jobs Day." (However, don't die choking on your own vomit in front of them; that's not cool.)

Refuse to clean the toilets in your house until the "red ring of death" gets so bad it uses Toilet Duck as an apéritif right before it crawls up your ass to attend a bacterial lecture in your lower intestine on the mass slaughter of mold throughout history.

Take up smoking again.

Kill your best friend for his or her cigarettes.

Feel sad about that act of murder against someone you care about ... and then take the cigs anyway.

Punch a clown.

Kill a mime.

And yes, fuck a monkey.

Therefore and in conclusion, it is time to say goodbye to polite society as we know it. This is curtain call on the final show. I hope you enjoyed it. Don't forget to tip your waitress.

Ah, fuck your waitress. It's the Apocalypse. ❖

"The Voice"

by Niles Reddick

She woke me at 2:00 a.m. I jumped out of the bed. My heart was racing and I thought the voice was my wife or daughter, that someone was sick or breaking in the house. She had whispered my name loudly and quickly as if something were wrong. I went to the restroom and I knew my blood sugar was high again because my shirt was soaked.

It had been a while since I heard the voice. I believe she was assigned to me. She amused me when I was a toddler, opening drawers and moving furniture. My mother had heard me babbling and had been stunned when I hadn't left the crib, stood pointing, and everything my bedroom furniture was askew.

She stayed with me and saved me from death several times: once when my car spun on the wet interstate like a merry-go-round, leaving the road and landing in a ditch; once when I drank so much I passed out cold in college and aspirated on my own vomit; and once when I left house hunting in a subdivision and the place was obliterated by a tornado minutes later.

I have always appreciated and respected her. One day we will meet in her world and I will know more. I'm afraid if I take my new medication she'll go away and I won't be protected. Life is better with her. ❖

CONTRIBUTORS:

Anna Isaacson writes, "I live in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I am currently working on my MBA at Boston University. My work has appeared in *The Saint Ann's Review*, *The Writing Disorder*, and *Stickman Review*. I received an honorable mention in the *Glimmer Train* Short Story Award for New Writers in November 2012."

Once upon a time, **Eddie Jeffrey** was a cemetery groundskeeper. He now works at a medical school where, in 1807, a mob destroyed an anatomy theater for fear the cadavers used for instruction there were provided by grave robbers. He has been an editor of *Baltimore Review* and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in/at *Gravel*, *PARAGRAPHITI*, *3QR*, *O-Dark-Thirty*, *Murky Depths*, *Thrice Fiction*, *JazzTimes*, and *The Alexandria Times*.

Lisha Goldberg of Needham, MA writes, "I am an elementary science teacher and an avocational writer. My previous work has appeared in: *Earth's Daughters* #82, One if by Land, "Lizzie Borden's House". *Teaching PreK-8*. Humorous story published under "Laugh Lines" column, January 2006. *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. "Powerful lawyer was just Dad" published in a syndicated column, Dec. 2002. *Writer's Digest Magazine*. My non-fiction story, "The Celebration," won first prize in the Inspirational/Religious category for the 2000 short story writing contest."

Jesse Barnes is a graphic artist based in Chapel Hill, NC. In addition to traditional and digital art Jesse regularly performs projected show visuals and creates promotional materials for local and touring musicians. Jesse's first solo art show is on display at Krave kava bar in Carrboro for the month of December. Jesse is also part of an ongoing group show at Zog's Art Bar and Pool Hall in Chapel Hill.

Holly Day has taught writing classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, since 2000. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Oyez Review*, *SLAB*, and *Gargoyle*, while her recently published books include *Music Theory for Dummies* (3rd edition), *Piano All-in-One for Dummies*, *The Book Of*, and *Northeast Minneapolis: A History*.

"Writer & Literary Absurdist" **Joe Buonfiglio** of Chapel Hill, NC loves monkeys ... and peanut butter ... often at the same time. Oh, and his best friend is a rusty unicycle named Bobo. That's probably important to know about him. If you're weird enough to want to experience more of his locker-room intelligentsia, go to his Twitter page @JoeBuonfiglio (<https://twitter.com/joebuonfiglio>) and his dark-humor Absurdist blog "Potpourri of the Damned" at <https://potpourriofthedamned.wordpress.com/>

We now return you to your regularly scheduled program.

Niles Reddick's collection *Road Kill Art and Other Oddities* was a finalist for an Eppie award, his novel *Lead Me Home* was a national finalist for a ForeWord Award, a finalist in the Georgia Author of the Year award in the fiction category, and a nominee for an IPPY award. His work has appeared in anthologies *Southern Voices in Every Direction* and *Unusual Circumstances* and has been featured in many journals including *The Arkansas Review: a Journal of Delta Studies*, *Southern Reader*, *Like the Dew*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *The Pomanok Review*, *Corner Club Press*, *Slice of Life*, *Deep South Review*, *The Red Dirt Review*, *Faircloth Review*, *New Southerner*, and many others. He works for the University of Memphis at Lambuth in Jackson, Tennessee. His new novel, *Drifting too far from the Shore*, is forthcoming in 2016. His website is www.nilesreddick.com

Phil Juliano of Minneapolis, MN is a good Blotterfriend. Follow his adventures on philjulianoillustration.com

THE WORLDS OF M. C. ESCHER

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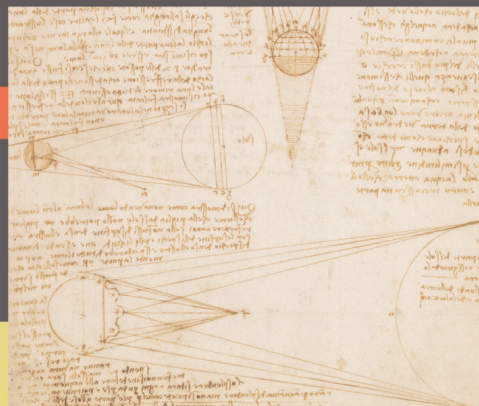
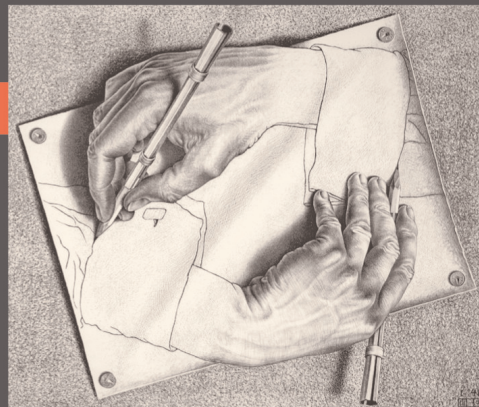
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Leonardo da Vinci, *Codex Leicester* (Sheet 1A, folio 1r) (detail), 1508-10, ink on paper, 11 3/8 x 8 1/2 in., Courtesy of Bill Gates, © 1994 bgC3

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