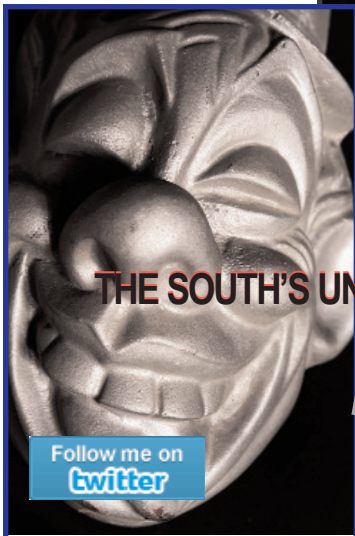


*It's a madhouse...a madhouse! with
Lori Ballard, Jasmine Odessa Rizer, Sarah Ricard,
Phil Juliano, and The Dream Journal*

The Blotter

October 2016

MAGAZINE



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COVER: Selections from the "Carnival"
 gallery of photographs by Lori Ballard
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The Blotter is a production of
 MAGAZINE
 The Blotter Magazine, Inc.,
 Durham, NC.
 A 501 (c)3 non-profit
 ISSN 1549-0351
 www.blotterrag.com

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"Wind, Part 1"

Quite some number of summers ago, I was a sailor. OK, that's not completely true. I was actually the completely subservient, no decision making at all, weak-side-kick to a sailor - the crew. It was sloggin' hard work, mostly involving waking up on Saturday mornings at a remarkably godawful hour to ride in my friend's family station wagon to the "yacht club" to pick up the trailer with our boat on it, tow it to the "yacht club" where we were going to be sailing that day, then putting the boat in the water and following courses for a couple of hours in the summer heat until we could go home again.

There. That's what happened, most June and July weekends in the 1980s. And if I left the story like that, you would wonder what was wrong with me in my youth. So let me try again.

I loved the arrival of summer. I didn't get to sail when I was growing up, because the closest thing to a body of water we had near my home was the Passaic River. The best thing I can say about the Passaic was that it flooded from time to time. The worst is that for a while it was one of the most polluted rivers on planet Earth. By the way, you don't win trophies for that. So when I was a young man, it was a big deal to live near the ocean, a very big deal to have the opportunity to be able to join a sailing club. What I lacked in legacy, cool clothes and any sailing skill whatsoever, I more than made up in...willingness.

In March I would begin to get the itch. I sat at work and did "dips" - raising and lowering myself in my chair with only my arms, over and over again. My co-workers stared. *What are you doing?* the more curious might ask. *Oh, I'm pumping water out of my boat, of course.* Sit-ups on the floor at home while watching *The A-Team* or *Moonlighting* to strengthen my flabby winter belly so I could hike-out for long reaches, my feet through stirrups on the deck and my ass hanging over the transom, the weight of me balancing us against the push of the wind.

By April, I was squatting on a stack of old kapok lifejackets in my friend's garage while he tinkered with the sailboat. All winter out of the water, the craft was as leaky as...as any wooden thing originally designed to float on water but which was so old and so full of tiny holes in the seams between hull planks that who now could tell if it would ride above or beneath the surface more effectively. My friend had a springtime ritual of talking about caulk and splines and waterproofing products and technology sometime during Lent and making a decision come Palm Sunday. He would then wisely use the

school Spring Break week (either before or after Easter, depending) to carefully hand-scrape the hull of the boat and slather on the new stuff, which we consistently called "Go-Fast" no matter who made it, what was promised, and how well it worked. If it kept the water out, it was deferential entitlement. If the marine lacquer failed us, leaving me pumping out water with my mighty office-chair-dip arms somewhere out on the Bay in mid-July, well, it was scathing sarcasm. Note: the Go-Fast never seemed to permit an outer paint job, so our boat - *Gizmo*, she was called - was butt ugly, even among other ancient wooden sailboats of the same design.

The sail was un-bagged to cursorily check for wear and tear. It was worn and near-torn, and if I'm not mistaken, as old as the boat itself. It had a deep belly, which I was instructed made it better for heavier air, or what normal people call windy days. The sail's wood battens were inspected for cracks, bends and breaks. We looked at stays, centerboard, rudder, tiller, mast, boom, and all of the other tools-of-the-sailing-trade, to determine whether they had weathered winter as well as could be expected. Nothing was ever replaced with new. I don't actually know why. Maybe, like us, the bits and parts were supposed to get one year older and still go out on the Bay on summer Saturdays.

In May I got my yard mowed, the gardening done. Spring Saturdays were for puttering around, but also for acclimating my pale Anglo skin to summer's upcoming *beneficial rays* of the sun. I checked to be sure I had a supply of zinc-oxide for my nose, cheeks and the tops of my ears. New sunscreen for my arms, neck, tops of my legs. (I wouldn't cut the grass again until August. By then it bolted to seed and the lovely but untamable Rose-Of-Sharon had spread its wiry rhizomes across my yard and into the neighbor's.)

A typical May conversation with myself: Hey, something in my sailing bag smells like it died. Holy crap! My Topsiders! I didn't wash them and put them out to dry the last time I wore them? When was that? Oh, that can't be good. Take a pail of water and a scrub brush and begin carefully cleaning them. See, the salt comes out of the leather - Sperry Topsiders are able to withstand a fair amount of abuse. But some of the stitching in one sole is starting to fray. You'll need a new pair soon - may as well go this weekend.

But my willingness, my enthusiasm for being out there on the water, for *sailing*, would only get me so far. I was "crew". I had missed out on that other criteria, what with my center-of-the-state, riding my bicycle past the blackberry brambles, bobbing up and down in the lukewarm water of the community pool, playing whiffle-ball all evening growing-up summers. My friend, the skipper of our boat,

continued on page 15

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in the Great State of Georgia!



The Blotter Magazine, Inc. (again, a 501(c)3 non-profit) is an education concern. Our primary interest is the furthering of creative writing and fine arts, with the magazine being a means to that end. We publish in the first half of each month and enjoy a free circulation throughout the Southeast and some other places, too. Submissions are always welcome, as are ad inquiries.

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CAUTION

You can't make chicken salad out

Editor's note, rather longwinded, regarding the submission, loss, rediscovery and publication of "Catfish" by Jasmine Odessa Rizer:

Editor's note. When you see these words, you probably, overlook them as some textual trash you don't need to read and care not a whit that you do so. Editors, for the most part, know this. But I would like to take the three and a half minutes you fine readers need to peruse a page of text to hear me out. Ten years ago, this fine little magazine was fading out of business. The editor - my friend J. Pence - had other plans for his life, including moving away from North Carolina, going to school, following his wife's career growth, having a family, doing more of his own writing. He, for reasons I still don't understand, turned to me to see if I wanted to take over the reins. Now, I had placed a couple of poems and a story in The Blotter, was a fan of pulp literary fiction, and, well, that's it. No editorial experience, unless you count proofreading my eldest's second-grade penmanship, which I'm certain you don't. I jumped at the opportunity, like one might jump at Jack Nicholson showing up at a door with an axe, and was transferred all of the accoutrements necessary to keep our little experiment in single-sitting arts and lit. going. Fast-forward to this month: hey we're coming up on

ten years, now. Doing some mailbox housecleaning - I find a story, submitted in 2008, by an author we're familiar with - we've published a couple of her pieces - but this one isn't one of those, or anything we've rejected, or even seen. The story is in the body of the email, so I read it. Read it again. How did this fall through the cracks? - well, I know that. In 2008 the global economy was in a shambles, we were in an election year, our mailbox had been e-bombed, my youngest was starting first grade, I was at sixes-and-sevens.

Good story, though. Really good.

So I contacted Jasmine to apologize, and to see whatever became of this piece. And to see if it was still available - oh, yes,

as an editor you sometimes have to get off your high horse and grovel. If it was in print somewhere else, did she think that maybe they might let me reprint it - with all due courtesies.

The long and short of it is that Jasmine is letting us see this story, letting me talk a little about the process of it finding its way here. For what it's worth, we still make mistakes, but we still keep reading, keep printing. And we're glad you keep contributing, keep reading, keep believing in us. ♦

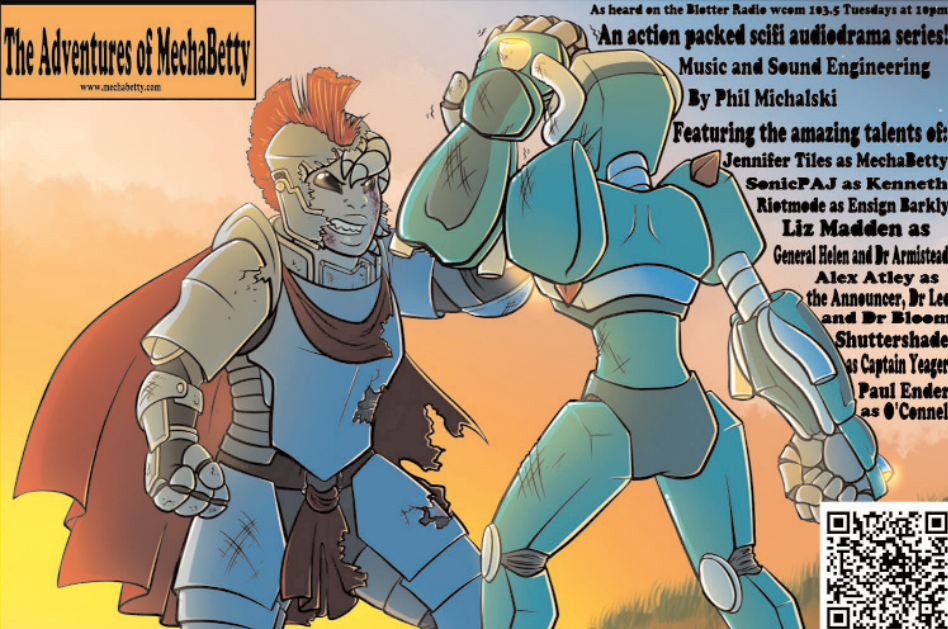
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"Catfish"

by Jasmine Odessa Rizer

Once upon a time, when I was in college, my hot blond college boyfriend and I were watching an interview with Dolly Parton on TV, and Dolly said that her husband called her Catfish because she was all mouth and no brains, and my hot boyfriend looked over at me and said, "Heh. Heh heh heh heh heh. That's what I'm going to start calling you. Catfish."

"You'd better not," I said, bristling.

Eight years later, my college boyfriend was long since married to a stage actress named Betsy, and people were *still* calling me Catfish. Catfish Harris, office manager. It was embarrassing.

Polly and I were the last of the great Mean Alcoholic Harrises. Our fathers and all of our respective siblings had managed to escape the genetic destiny that

drove our granddad to reel around in front of the Newman County courthouse, telling tourists who asked him for directions, "Some people go this way, and some people go that way, and I don't give a damn which way you go." Polly was something administrative down at the O'Connor Theater, where I had once had the pleasure of seeing her walk into a rehearsal

for *Macbeth* and bellow, "Hey, Macduff, your boyfriend just called. He wants you to pick up some flour on the way home."

At the moment, I had a day off from my own job and was sitting in Polly's office watching her read my Tarot. I didn't exactly believe in Polly's readings, but I didn't exactly *disbelieve* in them, either.

"Page of Swords," Polly said,

Friendship, loyalty, nostalgia; and the joy and healing power of music...

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A lost tape of a beloved band's legendary show...

A record label, poised to break big, which certain people want to be part of - by any means necessary...

Two visitors, whose own music has been muted by regrets over long-ago bad decisions: Chuck McDonough, former grad student, who skipped town after learning things about himself he couldn't face; and Penny Froward, whose attempt to help a friend in danger almost destroyed another woman's life...

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



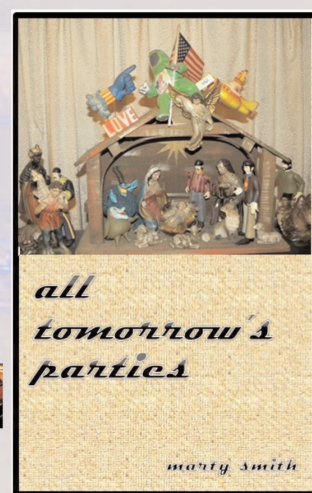
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by Marty Smith

(publisher & book reviewer, "The Blotter Magazine;" contributor to the "Urban Hiker;" former host of "New Frontiers" and "Laugh Tracks" on WXDU - FM, Duke University Radio)

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pointing at a card, but before she could tell me what it meant, this tall, frantic guy burst in the door.

"Sebastian," said Polly, looking suddenly tired.

Sebastian was carrying a pair of needle-nosed pliers in one hand and swinging a champagne bottle in the other. He was bug-eyed and nervous-looking and something about him made me want to edge behind a door until he was gone.

"Polly!" said Sebastian, bouncing up and down on the balls of his feet. "We're throwing a birthday party for Rachel down the hall! There's *booze!*"

"No thanks, Sebastian," Polly said grimly, holding up her thirty-day chip. "Girlfriend's on the wagon."

Polly, like myself, did not play

well with others. She had about as much fun at her 12-step meetings as an atheist at a tent revival. Still, she was always saying to me, it was better than waking up in a puddle of her own vomit every morning.

Sebastian's slightly protuberant pale blue eyes settled on me and I jumped a little in my chair. "Who are you?" he demanded. "And what's wrong with your hand?"

I held up my hand, which had a band-aid on the middle finger. "I have a wart," I said. "It's not very attractive. I've got this medicine –"

Sebastian leapt across the room, grabbed my hand, and said, "You don't need *medicine!* You gotta pull it out by the roots!"

I said, "Ow! Stop that!", but

in the time it took me to utter these words, this strange person had made a determined effort to perform amateur surgery on my hand with his pliers. Blood started gushing everywhere.

"Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" quoted Sebastian. "You shouldn't have *moved.*"

"Oh, Sebastian, stop it!" cried Polly in exasperation, pulling a handkerchief out of her purse and giving it to me to wrap around my hand. "Go away!" She pushed him out the door and said, "Actors!" in a voice that packed more malice than all the cuss words in the dictionary. "I'm sorry about that, Catfish."

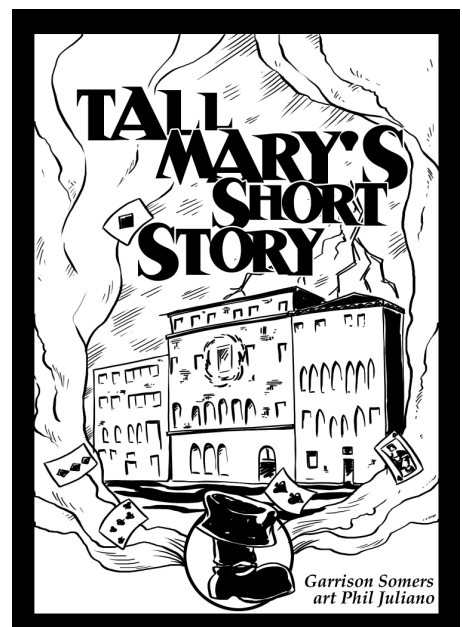
Sebastian poked his head back in the door. "Your name is Catfish?"

"No! My name is Theodora!" I immediately regret-

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ted having handed out information about myself to a mad theatre person. It wasn't all that common a name. "Now go away before I staple your dick to a chair!"

Sebastian moved along, and Polly looked at me, clearly impressed. "Staple your dick to a chair?" she repeated.

I shrugged. "Creative insults are in my genetic code. You should know that."

Part of what the O'Connor Theater did was this Shakespeare In The Park business that I found depressing. Even a barefoot hillbilly like me couldn't deny the brilliance of the English language's greatest playwright and all that, but his plays still made me depressed.

"Why can't it be Tennessee Williams In The Park?" I complained as Polly and I walked across the grass. "That wouldn't be half as depressing."

"And which of Tennessee Williams' plays do you find most uplifting, dear?" Polly asked archly. "The one where they castrate the guy? Or the one where they *eat* the girl's

uncle?"

I didn't have a good comeback for that, so I punched her in the arm. She pulled my hair.

Polly had dragged me to Shakespeare In The Park because she had the hots for the philanthropist who had donated the money to make it happen, and she was hoping to bump into him outside of work, while she was looking all sexy in her little print top and not wearing a suit.

I myself was wearing shoes that hurt my feet and a brand-new-second-hand shirtdress that I was beginning to suspect made my breasts look funny.

Polly contrived for us to sprawl on our blanket quite close to her philanthropist. She then pretended to be very surprised when he said, "Polly Harris? Is that you?"

The philanthropist's name was Dr. Walter Gray, and I could see why Polly found him appealing, in an absent-minded-professor way. He pointed at me, blushed, and asked, "Is this your special lady friend?"

"Oh, no," said Polly. "This is my cousin, Catf— uh, Dora."

I said, "We may be from Kentucky, but we're still not *that* kind of cousins," and I thought Dr. Gray scooted away from us just a little bit, as if he thought my stupid might be catching.

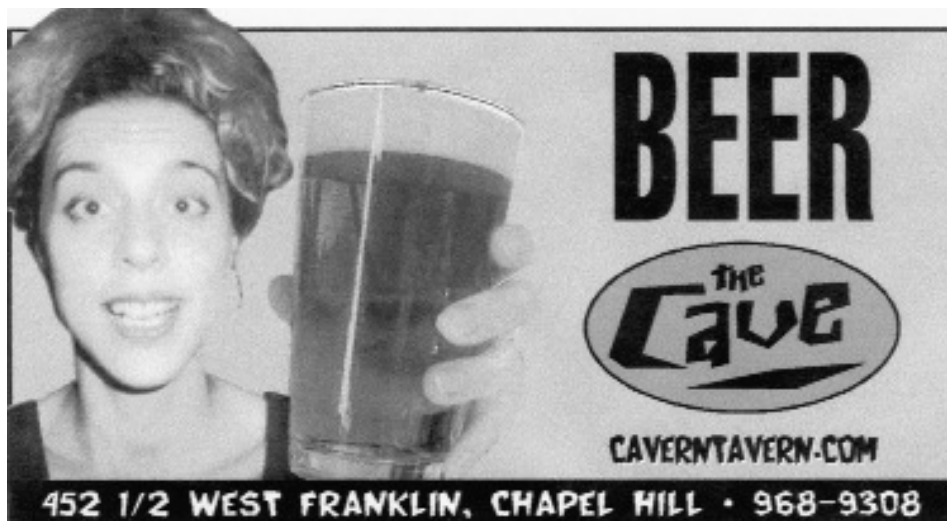
For the next four hours, I focused about half my attention on *Hamlet* and about half my attention on imagining what my gorgeous friend Alex might look like in his underwear. (The mental exercise of picturing Alex actually naked I reserved for true emergencies such as department meetings.) Alas for poor Polly, my patience as all in vain, because as soon as the curtain fell, Dr. Gray jumped up and strode away with a hurried goodnight.

"Shit!" said Polly. "I wonder what's wrong with him."

"I hope I didn't scare him away with my dubiously tasteful cousin-cest joke," I said.

"No, I don't think that's it. He looked to me like he was going to meet someone." Polly scowled. "I should have known. I keep meeting these guys I like, and they keep being taken already."

We got up and started making our way out of the park. We'd gone about five steps when the heel snapped off one of my



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shoes. It was proving to be a memorably bad evening, and it got worse after Polly said that she knew a shortcut around the side of the park that would get us back to the parking lot faster.

"Polly," I said after about ten minutes, "I don't think this is a shortcut. We're not lost, are we?"

"No! No, definitely not," Polly replied valiantly.

We kept walking. I had to take off my shoes and pick my way along in my bare feet and hope I didn't step on any syringes or used condoms or dog

shit. We could just see the lights and the shapes of cars in the parking lot a few blocks away when a truck pulled up in the street alongside us.

"Hey, ladies," a man's voice said in an unpleasant, overly friendly tone. "Y'all look real pretty," he said, leaning out of the window.

"Um, thanks," said Polly. There was a great big guy in the passenger's seat. We didn't want to antagonize these people, that was for sure.

"Were you just at the play?"

Polly and I started walking

just a little faster. "Uh, yeah," I said.

"You know, pretty ladies," he said, gesturing at the big eight-foot-tall bastard in the passenger's seat, "my uncle, he has a lot of money and he knows how to have a good time."

I asked, "Wait, are you trying to buy us?", and at the same moment, Polly squealed incredulously:

"*Sebastian?*"

We had just come up under a streetlight, illuminating the truck driver's face to reveal him as being, indeed, Sebastian from the O'Connor Theater.

"P-Polly Harris?" he gasped. "Oh no." And then he floored the accelerator and left us standing there slack-jawed.

Neither one of us wanted to speak as we finally started moving again. We hustled in horrified silence to the parking lot, where a T-shirt vendor threw a handful of gravel at us, and despite being white himself, called us "stupid white crackers" for declining to purchase unofficial Shakespeare In The Park merchandise from him.

"This has probably been the strangest damn night of my life," sighed Polly, taking her car keys out with a visibly trembling hand when we reached her car.

It quickly got even stranger when she unlocked the door and let out a scream.

"What? What?" I demanded, racing around to the driver's side and knocking her out of the way.



Two new book projects from Blotterfriend and artist Phil Juliano!!

First: 'Peej and Spencer: The Amazing Time Traveling Toy Rescue'. It's a novelized version of the syndicated comic strip, 'Best In Show'. This story touches upon all the typical issues a seven year old has to deal with: bullies, math homework and a little sister. What's different? Our seven year old hero begins his story as a middle-aged comic geek that is so nostalgic for his prized Star Wars toy collection that he devises a way to go back in time to retrieve them. Of course, things don't go according to plan. Expected release date is Winter 2016. Fans can follow along with the project at www.facebook.com/PeejandSpencer.

The second is a collaborative effort titled 'Adventures of Chipmunk Jones' written by John Castello and illustrated by Phil. 'Adventures of Chipmunk Jones' is the story about Chip, a comic loving kid that can't catch a break. He lives with his mom and sister and all he really wants is a best friend and some stability. Chip's story resonates with just about everybody that ever wanted to have friends, fun at school, and catch the pretty girl's eye. Expected release date is October 2016. Check out the GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/chipmunkjones>.

"People!" she gulped, pointing. "Making out! In my back-seat!"

Of course, what with all the commotion, the people had stopped making out, and were looking around in bewilderment.

"Dr. Gray?" Polly whimpered as the rumpled and embarrassed-looking couple got out.

"Betsy Langdon?" I said in horror, recognizing Gertrude (still in full costume, albeit with her greasepaint badly smeared) from the play, who was also the actress wife of the college boyfriend who had saddled me with the nickname Catfish.

"Journeys end in lovers' meetings," Betsy said, weakly and nonsensically.

"My goodness, Polly, I thought this was *my* car," babbled Dr. Gray. "I drive one just like this, and you left your door unlocked, so naturally my friend

– "

But Polly had had enough. "You fornicators!" she said, waving her car keys in the air. "You'd better get out of here *right now*, and you'd better leave a trail of breadcrumbs like Hansel and Gretel, because I'm not coming to rescue you if you get lost and some guy tries to buy you both for his uncle!"

Dr. Gray and Betsy slunk away into the darkness without another word. "Fornicators!" Polly screamed after them one last time.

"I'm so sorry," I told her after we got in the car.

"Oh, it's not your fault, Catfish," she said. Then she pounded her fists against the steering wheel and let loose with a stream of impressive and innovative profanity.

At that moment, Sebastian from the O'Connor Theater stuck his head in the driver's side window, causing us both to scream.

"Ladies?" he said. "I just

wanted to apologize for my behavior earlier this evening. If I'd known it was you, I never would have attempted –"

"I should have known it would be you!" cried Polly. "I am having a very bad night, and I think you jinxed this day when you tried to maim my cousin here with a pair of pliers! Now just shut the fuck up and get your head out of my car!"

"All right, pretty lady," said Sebastian, and before my astonished eyes, he planted a quick, almost-but-not-quite chaste kiss right behind Polly's ear before retreating.

"What do you think about that?" I asked her.

She sat very still and wide-eyed, staring at the steering wheel in a state of shock. "I don't know," she said. "But it's the first thing that's happened tonight that hasn't made me want to put my fist through a wall." ❖





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"The Doll Section"

by Sarah Ricard

The dolls are on the second floor.
You take the elevator, not the stairs.
Their blank, lifeless stares await.
Glassy eyes and painted eyes,
blinking eyes and eyes
ever to be so flat and still.
There's row upon row of them.
Like a murder of crows.
There's something you're told,
about only getting to browse;
but you know that before you leave
you'll be picking one out.

Well-worn pink sneaks
travel to their corner.
It's a thrill to a young heart,
imagining a yearning
both for adventure and a home,
inside the bloodless chests.

There's a sterility to the upper floor
scented of floor cleaner and price tags.
You got some toothpaste in your hair, earlier;
you think you can smell that, too.
Those grubby child soles on polished linoleum,
take you to the shelves of the mausoleum.

Dolls made to commemorate
recent movies you love.
And dolls dressed as hip,
or as darling, as you could wish for.
Porcelain cuties and Barbie beauties.

With unholy shine to rival shampoo commercials,
locks flat and straight as egg noodles
sprout from their heads, lay on shoulders.
While the tresses bound in spirals:
my, how those curls bounce!

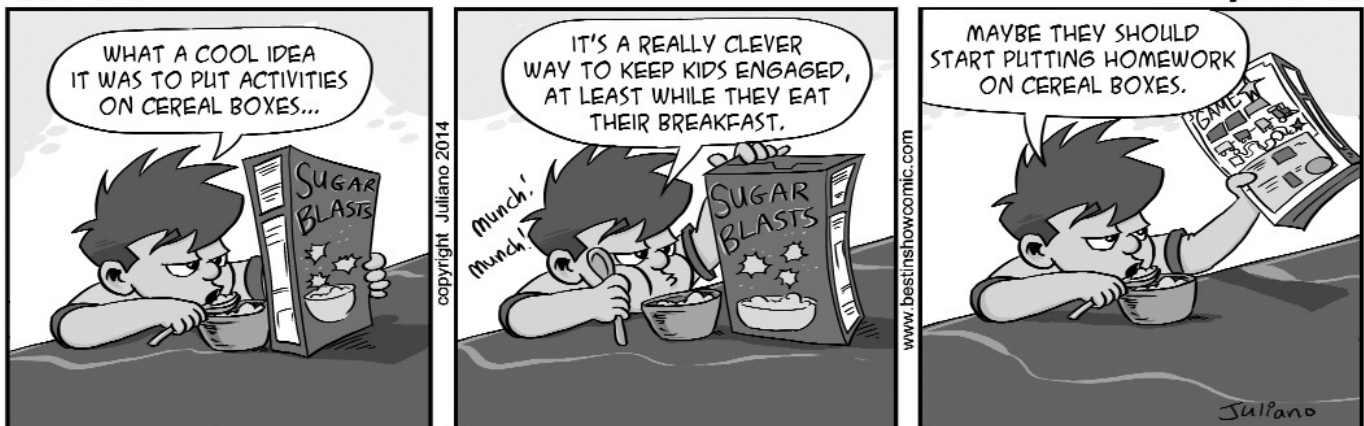
And new dolls made to look vintage,
that both enthrall and creep you out.
Haunted somehow even in their newness
Fresh off the assembly line
There's a wisdom and jadedness
in a blue, brown, green
gaze, in the manufactured
sophistication, in the fake anachronism.

Are they prisoners in the packaging
they're never supposed to leave?
It's a fact they have value
beyond merely being a child's
cherished plaything.

As soon as the cash is exchanged
for the department store's bag,
a ghost in the bones already settles in.
That preemptive sense of failure,
of she's too good for you.
You'll never, ever make her proud.
Too many stories ever to know.
Too many stories ever to tell.

Best In Show

by Phil Juliano



"Moons Made Out of Clay"

by Sarah Ricard

When the child chose to form
a moon out of clay, when
all the other children chose the sun,
what was to happen?

The child could not make
the moon reflective
like a glittering disco ball.
The clay in his hands was like a living thing.
It hardened to coarseness and not into cheese.
Tasty tales that all heard wrong:
"touch the sky"
"live your dreams"

But how to touch the sky?
And how to know one's dream?
Fulgent eyes and insecure nerves
deciding on his assignment,
wondering what it means to be artistic.
Fears he has no genius
but he has enthusiasm.



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Runny, muddy slop
in overeager, childish hands
and what he could have fashioned
was a crescent; not inviting
comparisons as the globular sun's
dark and gloomy cousin.

But the moon is full and
more like a cookie than like cheese.
The kiln cooked crisp
around the edges.
A toothpick had been involved
to make designs, skewering cheese.
Now that the plans have dried
they look busy, made to stamp upon

A dissatisfied child can only wait
for the eyes of otherness to see
not failed cheese, not a failure sun-
something swelled with discovery,
like something an astronaut had made.

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**NIGHTSOUND
STUDIOS**



The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

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mermaid@blotterrag.com

I don't really ever want to go back to school, particularly not high school. It is one of my fairly rigid life-plans. Why, therefore, do I keep having dreams about being back in high school? Or is it college? Inquiring minds want to know. In particular, the dream where I am playing an instrument in the school marching band, an instrument with which skill I have none. I don't know why the mouthpiece won't stay straight, why the reed breaks, how to play the notes, finger the...fingering bits. Or even see the music, because it keeps blowing off the little brass stand thing attached to my clarinet or English horn or whatever it is I'm carrying, trying to march while carrying, trying to play the right song while marching while carrying.

And I have a feeling that this is a big concert, like at The Ohio State University's stadium with everyone depending on me to keep in step, head in the right direction, know the notes, and not get in the way of the Sousaphone when he runs over to dot the I. And I'm probably naked, which isn't good. No not good at all.

JD - cyberspace

CONTRIBUTORS:

Lori Ballard is based in Tampa, FL. Her work can be seen at www.loriballard.com.

Jasmine Odessa Rizer puts up with a lot of Blottercraziness. She wrote, back in 2008, "Previously, my work has appeared in *Stillpoint* and *Orb*, and it has also been my pleasure to be published twice in *The Blotter*. In 2000, I worked writing book reviews for the *Athens Banner-Herald*, and from 2004 to 2005, I was a columnist, regular contributor, and section editor at the e-zine *Mosiac Minds*. I am currently a regular contributor of both writing and artwork at Robin Fay's arts-centered e-zine, *Moonshine*."

Sarah Ricard is a poet and fiction writer based in Iowa. Her poems have appeared in *Leopardskin & Limes*, *The Release Magazine*, *Stepping Stones Magazine*, on *The Sheltered Poet Blog*, and are forthcoming in the compilation *The Soul's Bright Home*.

Phil Juliano of Bloomington, MN, is a good Blotterfriend. Follow his adventures on philjulianoillustration.com (and check out his current projects on page 8).

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was a child of the shore; with three decades of learning watery nuance of each club's course, and the mysterious proclivities of the wind. I was a forever-novice, would never accumulate the experience to sail against my friend and the other sailors in our class of boat. Not to mention that there were but sixteen of these boats, each between thirty and fifty years old. Perhaps, I dreamed, I could have one made by one of the old builders? Ha. I would need to win the lottery. Or sell my house. And each November I could sneak into the other fellows' garages and poke holes in their hulls, to even the odds..

No, I had to reluctantly accept if not embrace that I was along as ballast. Admit to myself it was sufficient that my friend woke in the pre-dawn hours of a summer Saturday morning and stuck his head out the front door for a weather-check. If it was windy, or raining, or windy and raining, he called me.

On ring one I shook myself awake (literally - it was, I am sure, a weird thing to see), found my lanolin-smelly Peter Storm sweater and waited silently on the front porch for him to drive up the road. Closed my eyes in the passenger seat, woke when we got to McDonald's (two egg McMuffins and two orange juices) ate like it was my last meal ever and immediately nodded off again. Note: Down-bay racing was perfect for a power nap, up-bay not so much.

To my constant chagrin, other sailors looked like sailors. Their eyes were crinkled at the corners from being out in the sun so much. Their own spring-refreshed tans more...tan. I don't know why, but perhaps a childhood filled with *community pool* sunshine doesn't compare to Bay sun. Those fellows with zinc-oxide slathered on their noses (although it was but seven in the blessed AM. And overcast. With a good chance of rain) looked more like *warriors in war-paint*, while I just looked nerdish. Or rather, more nerdish than usual. Their sweaters seemed more casually ragged than mine, and they wore ball-caps that didn't have logos on them, just sweat lines and an elegant fading of the original colors. I wore shorts, a tee-shirt, my sweater tied around my waist, my hair cut for the weekday workplace, my face was, well, mine. I was, I knew, a *bennie*: someone only recently here, temporary, just enjoying the beneficial rays. You could probably look it up. Bennie, noun, a term of derision with regards to sailing. Someone likely to leave before the end, to give up under the strain. Out of place, no matter how much they participate. Gomer Pyle was probably a gunnery sergeant when he left the Marine Corps, but he was still Gomer Pyle.

Or maybe my hands gave me away, never certain where to place them as we arrived. Carrying the sailbag under one arm, our McDonald's breakfast trash in the other hand, looking for a can to dump it in, I was always self-conscious.

My friend and I readied our boat. I worked very hard at looking like I knew what I was doing. Or at least trying to look like I knew what my friend wanted me to do. Competent. Pushing the heavy things. Towing the heavy things. Lifting the heavy things. Barge, bale, etc. Burned all of the breakfast calories in one fell swoop. And then waiting in the rain like a wet cat at the front door, while my friend the skipper signed our boat in. If it was raining, I got wet and stayed wet. If it was raining I got cold. If it was raining and windy, I got cold and scared...

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