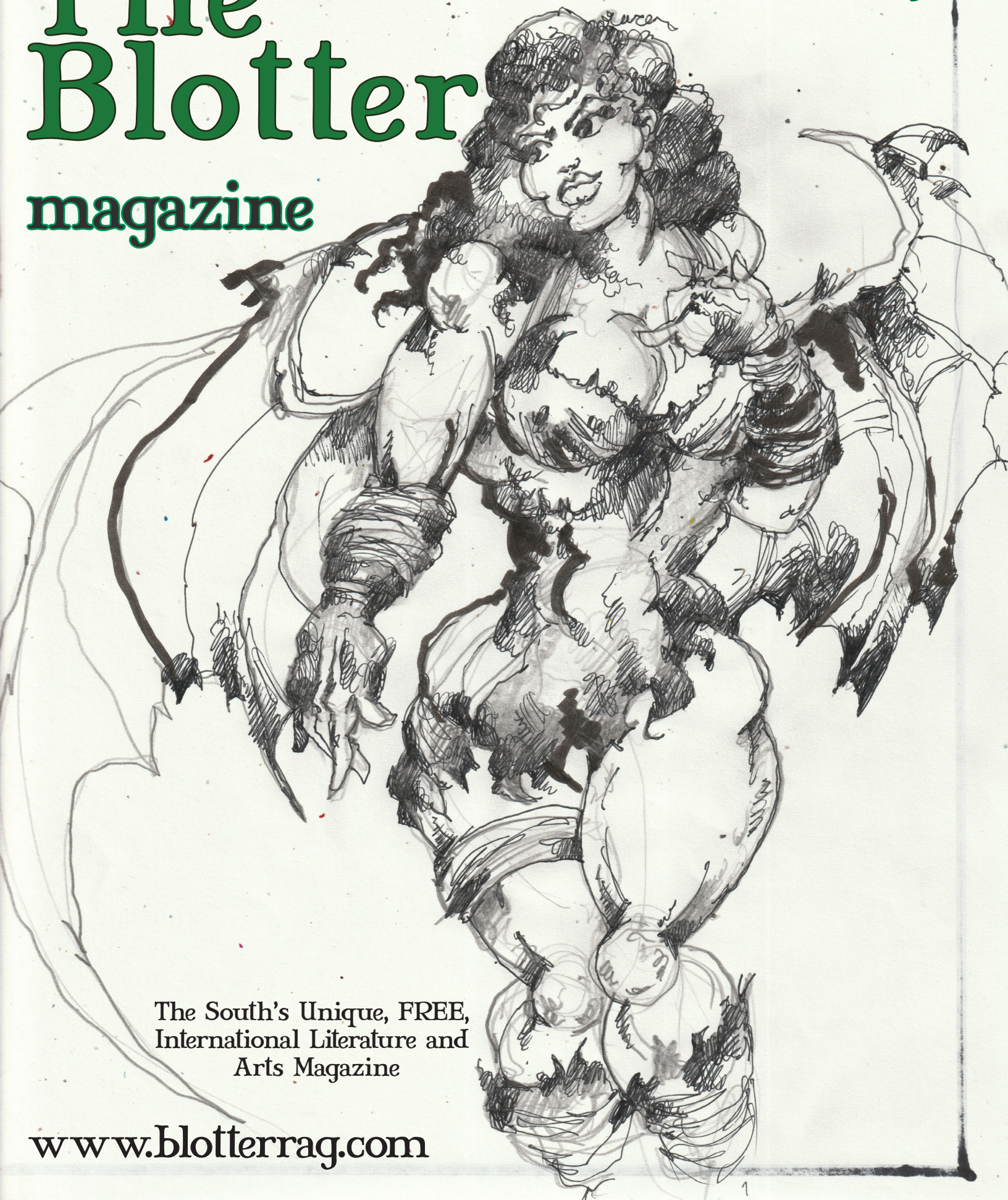


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"On writing and rejection"

I'm having fun writing at the moment. Every day I sit at the keyboard, and more of my story falls out of my head. It's not all gold, but when it's time, it'll still polish up nicely. And so it's fun. My main character is still a bit of a mystery to me, as they should be. I keep asking them questions, and they tell me the truth about themselves, and I really appreciate that. My MC and I don't pull any punches, and there's been some blood spilled, and we've all learned something. Quantitatively, I'm a good quarter into the WIP, and it's a good feeling to know that there's a lot to go. I reckon it will take me into the new year before I have a good bead on the finish line. I prefer writing when the weather turns cool, looking out the window where I type and seeing the oak tree across the street shed her gown of leaves. My apology, that sounded dirtier than I intended. Ah, well.

I understand not every writer has fun writing, and I'm sorry that this is not the case. I have suggestions, but I'll keep them to myself, as not everyone wants unsolicited advice. In our current environment, unsolicited advice is sometimes triggering, sometimes just annoying. A kind of privilege issue, perhaps. Perhaps not.

So how can I be having fun writing despite recently being rejected – or rather having received a rejection – for a story that had been submitted nearly a year ago. Can't remember sending it, nor the nature of the organization to whom it was sent. Actually, until I received their note, I forgot it was out there. Apparently, we disagree about some things. Okay then. The note I received from them was polite, vague, somewhat dismissive. What else could it be? Nothing about a rejection makes you feel better, not even a good explanation, or advice. See? If unsolicited advice is not good, solicited advice is only slightly better. In my opinion, keep it short and unsweet. Not going to use your work, thanks. Nothing personal, but not this time.

And I'm still learning not to take it personally. When I receive a rejection, I treat myself to a nice cup of coffee, or a popsicle or something. Why not? I deserve it. I went through the process, came out on the other side. Rejection

is not failure. Not because I learn something from each rejection because that isn't true. I often don't learn anything at all. I did what I could, wrote the story, proofread it, shared it with a couple of people, friends, family. Didn't take the applause too seriously, didn't ignore the critiques. (Didn't necessarily follow the suggestions, either.)

Here's a question: do you care what other people think about your writing? If yes, why? That is, if you think your work is good, then why? Do you write to become read? To what end? Wealth, notoriety, whatever power being a writer of note brings? To prove to someone that your efforts are valid? OK, that's more than a handful of questions. I've been asked the question "why do you write?" myself, and it's a difficult one. Not really, because the answer is "I feel like it, and there's a story I want to tell," but that sounds childish and unintentionally playful, despite how seriously I consider my words. And, therefore, it is difficult to find a way of communicating the "why" factor in my writing. I suppose "why" questions are always the most difficult. They infiltrate so many aspects of life and insist that we qualify what we do or say or think.

Like why am I having fun? You could, if you wanted to, watch me write and find out. Sit at the chair next to mine and observe me typing, stopping, thinking, taking a sip of coffee, saving my file, getting up and walking around a bit, typing another two sentences, leaning back and reading what I've written so far, thinking about a particular word, flipping over to a game of solitaire, coming back when the right word enters my cerebral cortex. Topping up my coffee. Saving my file again. I don't know what you would learn. Maybe the secret. Maybe nothing.

In the end, neither you nor I are responsible to explain our feelings. Not to anyone. And thank goodness for that. Because I felt like it is a good-enough answer for a whole lot of inquiries. Why do you write when so much of what you submit to be published is rejected? I felt like it. Why do you write if it isn't fun? I felt like it.

And if that doesn't work "fuck off" is also a satisfying response.

Garry - editor@blotterrag.com

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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

We've got thrills and shocks

"Saturnalia In The Ruins"

by Anthony Acri

2 January 2024

As I spent most of Saturnalia, like most, under the infernal weather, it still was a fulfilling end to the year to me that i would get more words published here and there than I even did my usual pin up girls as therein are those in that sanctimonious cesspool that Ma and the nuns warned me of, who dislike both.

They do get angered, I noticed, that i keep telling them things like that their hero Biden was calling for the death penalty on Leonard Peltier as was against the needs of the republic, like he sided with Reagan and Chowchilla, even Mister Mike noticed that, as sadly for them among you from Hillary's always low rent buffet, and the white chicks that the nuns warned me of so long ago, I WAS, they told me as close as some of those suburban hacks, now the saints among us, not to Ma, to a negroid penis, I being a dumb wop, and all talk of any frescos still does bother the tree dwellers and their inherent racism. But, still, they do get upset that i recall that past that one would have thought that big mouth disqualified himself from the praetorium at long ago, least of all forever knowing when a man with a purple mantle is bets to suit up.

I was however glad to see house wop Minestrone maker Guy Fieri throw Whopopster, the Moms of now, that peanuts eating negro hag , -she's so ugly it hurts my feelings—got tossed out of his trattoria, as it wasn't the Italians in new Amsterdam they were not devoted to the genteelness agreements as

Melvin Kaminsky, Albert Einstein, the reel life genius, not the one who repackaged Giordano Bruno's fifteenth raconteur genius ass his own Jewish need to make a bomb of all bombs and then hide in Princeton, and get laid with hopefully sandblasted blond sluts, could have told you. I was glad to see her thrown out of whatever wop named dive this was, go eat your anti Adkins somewhere else in the dying new citta, Whoops, as now you know how it must have felt to Joe Califano, whose only crime was finding after a lifetime as the company wop that my pop said they will always get even with, from Star Trek to Rudy, he couldn't in good consciousness vote for a hag who one actually campaigned against his master Lyndon Landslide, and Lucifer even thinking that this could be made a great society and not a Rome of weeds and toxic spills, diners and hamburger stands, pipes and drains, as my pop told me it was, all along.

I did in the cold Janus darkness, watch however, **ONLY MURDERS IN THE HOUSE**, which seems to me to be a much more sanctimonious and pompous than he should be Steve Martin doing basically when i noticed as a boy and his fetish to ape Woody Allen, I'm not shocked should he also have a life end up in tatters and shards with a vindictive ex-wife egging on the Medea to make him a perverse, they we all are you know, everyone is a disposable except that Centaurus from Primary colors who right then and his Jewish Petronius i knew deep down , that Ma was right and that his ideas of living out a Roman parallel life , well, they

were at right angles to each other and we would get, as Mussolini said, the inevitable intersection of parallel lives. The older I get that more I realize that Benito, little Ben was a sissy, as Gore called him and fellow journalist playing Caesar, Winston, who would try to save him, lest, you know, the letters would fall into the wrong hands an all, but he may have been despite himself, righter than not. Why did a show starring a man who sang King Tut when I was a kid, a show in New Yonkers drag lest anyone recall the arrow, and with an SCTV alum, and the darned Nathan Lane doing His less than Zero Bit, remind me of the Where Eagles Dare attempt to save Benito Mussolini from the partisans who they at the OSS were scared to death would own the street in front of the Flavian Circus....who knows why?

I sat in the dark cold room of the theater of Janus, any nice December days they is gone, the Cold Miser sings his Love Power Dick Shawn songs in the deep cold darkness, and i have to admit, always a fan of Martin Short and heart stolen by young and lovely unrepentant black haired , even the gals at the New Yorker THAT ONE, brunette Selena as the out of place Girl of the piece, I found i rather liked it and will watch it again. I am not as Vito Stillino said when he told the dread Myrrtin cop that he was indeed voting for Earl Cambell as a first ballot hall of famer, could you imagine that Jew not ...?

I am not an evangelist.

3 January 2023.

After Christmas a package did finally come from Amazon, as my sister did buy me a copy of The Neon bible, an early boyish attempt at tomes and new Yorkerese by the



great John Kennedy Toole, that I had read in a Mellissa Morgan, Mindy Farrar laden copy of Penthouse, whose girls from that era HAVE BEEN LOOKING UP AGAIN. John Toole, who was made to jump through hoops by rags and rag merchants who basically do nothing but venial suburban and Jewish wet dreams, coming of age comediennes and of course diet books, and all that coldest blood that was spilled everywhere. Also, a copy of Christmas with the superheroes, of dc variety did come, but as things were winding down, I let that stay in its smiling singing pack, and will take it out as lamppost an adornment next years. I sat as the ruins of Saturnalia have been swept up by us and a mother recipe for an immaculate Xmas

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fish cake is down to its oily dregs, I did lay down to wrath maybe a sports show, as a truly horrid all about eve creature named Kenny Pickett is playing out his hands with all due diligence and to the mezzanine who have been egging him on, while a good, capable Clark Gable lookalike named Rudolph vanquished as the tagger supposed winning coach, an affirmative action Tom Landry, whose bell curve isn't like the great Cowboy winning for twenty-two years but having "non losing" seasons, which means he goes .500 most of the time and calls it as a virtue. John Facenda, he is dead.

4 January 2023.

I was waylaid as were many, it seems even most, in Biden's latest wave of phlegm upon which to steer his Styx barge that is his showboat. It does bother some, I note, but it was Bill Clinton and his occasional pearls of wisdom without having to be seen through the lens of a man cosignatory telling them what they wanted to hear, it was Bill the altar boy from Georgetown who said and told us all what Joe Biden as and what he wasn't all along. So right out of nowhere on a Sunday night before the in rush of the holiday, I started to shiver and be cold, and covered myself in a Cowboys fleecy blanket unused before, as a station that still Binges through the weekend, did as a Christmas gift of sorts an over the air channel did show the whole run of the Dick Van Dyke show, as later learned an anniversary of his caused Bye bye Birdie and even wayward caper movies from that era like Fitzwilly be shown suddenly on all the channels devoted to the era of Technicolor American empire.

Supinely struck by the flu planned-demic that won't die, unlike your grandmothers, that Biden calls a political bandwagon, come

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on down to the river side, where we bury dead Pee Wee and leave the wretched as he is a lobster red and a penis tip causing the news media minions to laugh our loud and have their belly laughs be stricken from the RECORD, AS HAS HAD TO BE DONE ONE TO BOOS AND NOW IS DONE TO LAUGHTER SINGSONG A FARCE WILL OUT, MARCUS, AND WE ARE HEAD-ED TOWARDS THE SULPHUR FROM WHICH HE CAME, AS I HAD WARNED IN PLACES I HAVE ACTUALLY GOTTEN PUBLISHED. Also fittingly, aging Jewish thief of circuses, Norman Lear died while we were all ill, not that a hundred year old man dropping dead is a tragedy or worthy of oat songs, but still, happening on the first day of Saturnalia as it did, it did show that Signora Fortuna does adore Ariosto's much more than any mere Paddy Chayefsky, or any Studio One, that that named channel has dropped, much less anyone who worked at the writers room with Melvin Kamminsky, Carl Reiner, or Larry Gelbert, who I, as a child, who had read every MASH book available as if they were comic collections done by Stan first, didn't get the basic tenants of another show that celebrates its sesquicentennial, as do they seemingly all. It was fitting, the way he turned Christmas tough and sad enough, into a pyre on which to of all people, fag hating ERAS TO MAKE THE DEATH CULT KNELL AND FUNERAL MARCH FOR DRAG QUEENS TO AN America MY POP SAID THAT HE PRETEND TO HATE AS HE WAS ALWAYS AVAILABLE, like the others to give the mid Continental drifts and Prairies its Plautus like due and always made sure as did the Roman playwright, that things by the credits were still always believe in as they were at the beginning, and that say what you want, it was always meathead who was the always biggest phony in the room. I was

glad he died, actually and glad a Christmas was at least freed from him, and could turn back into Roman Saturnalia again, with Gore's adieu that wise career moves make me sound as viscous as i can be, as whatever God who drank all of that blood on the Gaza strip, as was said no less in a rerun of Arte Johnson in a *Laugh-In* rerun no less doing Moshe Dyan, wow, there are still October wars that i was pilloried for for having seen come or at least gone in Roman Iberia, as they don't like knowing that I placed green eyes on Sertorius, all that while ago, but did take the heinous to overfed middle brow sensibilities, the line from fat girl hated Machiavelli out, but did just that to make sure Signorina Fortuna and her minions of Wendy's, that somehow flew despite and because of bumble bees, would take a certain Hesperia pity one me as she indeed has. Outside of a few blowhards and devoted Praetorian i have alas done well, with even Amazon lauded Ancient Romance about the Etruscan pope and his Wendy and Leslie like Dionnes and vestals doing well.

Watching ole' Van Dykes though, I noticed a real distrust of certain types i had not sensed nor seen as a boy who just fell for the UR SHOW OF SHOW QUALITIES of that show, and its New Rochelle illumine and the idea of having a Laura to take the evening train to back then, which was admittedly below being a Donald Hollinger type, and toiling around the emerald city, really, with Ann in my Ford Galaxy. But sated there in the cold as the Saturnalia tree twinkled and hummed and lit against barbarian darkness that year more than most, I saw within episodes and a night given over to it, a hatred of brunette Laura that no blond wife seemed to have to go through. HERE, was a hatred of New York-er like mush mouths played by Carl, double-talk and

pidgin-English meaning nothing, and then to a Casey Kasem-like Hef whose Empire, and thus Roman echoing, magazine was seen as an anathema to wedded American Jewish then to pretty Italian wedded bliss. It all sickened me, but i did notice that for all her set speeches about the statistics of marriage, that Mary was again back to being Sam Diamonds gal and Della Street, and she was placed in a whoopy pajama era white vestal dress that showed off, irrevocably, her gorgeous legs and dancers figure. I studied ethics under Gay Talese, and wish I was allowed to write that obit play for Bill and Hillary as it was always going to be less The Best Man by Gore and more Love American Style anyway.

My brother came into the front room, as we grew up calling the living room. He held a small phone. Will you, he said with some unexpectedness, Tell this Lisa Ann Volocheck, or-whatever her name is, that you accept her friend request at one of those social sites,? Thai is like the seventh time i have seen this on my phone, he said. You said, I said, I could use that particular phone for my, uh, I said, Business Dealings...I think, I said, She is an editor at one of these literary magazines, I said.

Christ, He said, It took forever to get to January 4th. It's the feast of Janus, he said, as i have said sharper and more classically minded than I was, and he as, to be fair, way suspicious of my admiration of Sweet ole Bill, calling him, as a satire of my admiration, Byzantine And not Roman Bill. I take it through that copy of Roman lives, like the brunette I have gathered was in and at and kept at some well, buried like some vestal worthy of the madness of Numa, was left far, far behind, and that as i wrote in a piece that bothered some goon lit rag, who got back to me with a terse antimissile at

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two am in the morning on the useless week between the day of the indomitable sun and Janus day, the first, which puts the lie to the idea that Romans, unlike Jews and Asians didn't make January 1st the first day of the year. That they had to almost everel in Biden-aged disdain for such shady Groves back at the dead of night when i may or may not have had a nightmare that night about the revealed dirtiness that in ways botched me anyway, i was sorry that I darkened their foyer with a Song of Ice and Fiore, as i sometimes do, and being a bitch, I sent in the whole essay that I have sent out hither and yon, "Acceptance letters in the decline and fall", anyway. Somehow, though - though not wanting to chase my losses as I learned in a Saturnalia season in which I was the only one who saw, as opposed to Cowturds that Huck Finn is not the messiah that Urine-town, or at least Castro Street thinks he is, and how i managed to make some wayward street shackles, uncut into by betting corporate partners of the always watching NFL, and took the under and the money line against the forty niners in all the games - i had a hunch they were going to, and that they did, lose. But, sending in the whole 11k essay at its best to me, I did get an answer at that very page of google docs and a gal with her own attempt at a magazine and breaking off and away from the pompous rag mentioned before, as they asked if I'd like to resubmit it to her that time, and that was exactly what I did.

5 December 2023.

I had to take a certain medicine during the season of Saturnalia, which did not jive with an ingratiating in pain medicine, like Tylenol or Ibuprofen, so the casehardened Saturnalia festival since Ma passed was made all the more hard by me having to not www.blotterrag.com

even being able take over the counter pain reliever to at least mitigated some of the leg and neck pain I have has as an Arthritis condition has over meddled me the past few years, mostly since i hit that side of 50 years old. I trudged through the Saturnalia season and adhered as best as i could, thinking I could have been a real bitch and moaned and bitched all December, but then what sort of Roman would I be, and that that was far too Lutheran or too Savonarola, at least in my Ma's eyes for me to ever be. They always go after Saturnalia, do the pompous elites and commie pinko hags, then they find, the revere at the circus Maximums or Chappaqua cellars will always will out.

The girl i re-met from the old days at the local dollar store at the cusp of the holiday did in fact get in touch with me at the various social places, though I had only given her my brother's phone number, she did find me on Facebook and other places, and I dutifully accepted all her requests as I was shocked that I came this far with her, I was sure it was at best polite and at worst a set up on her part, for reasons i am still unsure why. I want back into the black bag I got as a portfolio at Art Institute, and the black Alcoa bag with in that, given to me by my father as a place to keep my art and which is where i keep the oldest arts, heavy as it is with crayon, watercolor and primal color markers that I CAN FIND NO WHERE ELSE, BUT HAVE FOUND THANKS TO A YINZER OF FACEBOOK, AKAPAD, FOUND AN EQUAL SORT AT FIVE BELOW, BUT OF ONLY THE MOST THROW AWAY COLORS, BUT ARE FINE WITH ME AS THEY GO THROUGH THE THICK PAPER, AS MY OLD DRAWINGS OF Virgil and Tagus did a good whole back. I found the pictures of sketches based upon her and others like her, many of the gals of penthouse, a magazine that so bothered Jer-

ry Seinfeld in ways that brandishing an Uzi doesn't, hummmmb, shades of the Venus again and how Hillary and her ilk can be so decent as they drop bombs for the patriots at the drop of a three-concurred hat, and there was the collected pictures i had some of her, back in study halls, hidden as it WAS IN AN ALCOVE OF THE TOWERS OF THAT NOW TORN ASUNDER AND NO LON-

GER A RATS NEST SCHOOL, and the pencil drawings of her type that NEVER MUCH FINISHED TO THIS VERY DAY, THOSE THAT ARE LEFT THAT IS.

I thought of the story that like beehives in Virgil buzzed and spun about her and her young girls sexuality sensuality and her mixed race Allegheny loveliness. It was a



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tale I knew of that even is in whatever shards are left of Beggillimini, a crime drama I also wrote then, what was i to do, homework, i had given up on all of that just then, as rededicated as a gal named Teresa Piccolo, she did recommend me of an Italianate girl more than whatever Coptic Ural princess she was, and it was created by me in the tale of a wayward maniac priest in love now made a criminal, Father Evon who was taken with her, and how she had returned from the cesspool of playboy, and skin flicks, and soft R-rated movies and violets un-picked up as i had heard then along the way. I thought of the story of how she was a latest, then, brunette lovely taken up and spit out as i had come to know or hear in the wings of all of this. **RECALLED HOW I HAD HEARD THAT A LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER, IN THOSE DAYS BEFORE A STRANGE SANCTIMONY AND UPRIGHTNESS COULD SLITHER OUT TO USE** Mary McCarthy's word, , from the Ozarks then, there were certain peeka-boo shots of her while Roman Bill was at the fairs, shots and what is called Boudoir, cheese-cake of Lisa Ann, (not her name as an editor with self-aware dying praetorian torches, checks my Facebook for this name and doesn't see it, ah days of **LIES AND THE DECENCY OF THE WASHINGTON POST** i GUESS, though i recall what Biden had to say about Janet Cooke.) I went up to the scruffy photographer, that had heard had taken these pictures, as he was doing a Seinfeldian sortie to Ridge Avenue Junior High, and I would indeed pay him for four overly glossy, over shining images of the girl at sixteen, unthinkable in the age when a familial annihilator pervert dares call himself Caesar of DuPont, that he took of her in lingerie, and a Fosse-like hat and silk or nylon better shining shirts, and recalled how I kept those pictures for yeast in my www.blotterrag.com

own quiet and alone and lonesome room to which i had escaped along ago, and I wondered how and why we have gotten to the kind of a world where Bill Clinton and his perpetual I Claudius or Maggie and Jiggs has left us behind. I finished one of the drawings I had cribbed out of Penthouse drawings still had and still kept, then in sketchy misapplied, Michelangelo Roman diaries scratchy anatomy, as in was certain that I had to make not only Lisa Ann, but the entire certain the way I had as a boy, had expedited and wanted it to staunchly have been. We are pretending we are in a world where Bill Clinton never jacked off to his beloved brunette as i did those warm days with these Penthouse pictures in the lonely eighteens, and as this d student still has no idea his perpetual smile will destroy him, that is sanctimony that is irrevocably sad.

No one this stupid and petty should have ever disgraced the chair of Caesar. --Lucius Sejanus. Too late to wash your hands now, Lucy...--Bitchy Roman senator when Tyberius cut his throat. ❖

"On the Line"

by Eileen Nittler

"What I wouldn't give for a cigarette," said the man to Joseph's right.

"Those things'll kill ya," Joseph responded, and his neighbor chuckled.

"Tell me," Joseph asked, wanting to keep the conversation going, "when did you become aware of your own mortality?"

"Oh, I was young, very young. My father died when I was six and I knew it would happen to me one day. So I've always tried to live an interesting life...memento mori, right?"

Joseph couldn't see the man next to him, but he found his voice soothing. "And did you live an interesting life?"

"I did. A few regrets. I watched a man die once, didn't stop it, just sat on the stool and waited for him to bleed out. And I regret that now. He wasn't a bad man. Had a family. Could have lived. You?"

"No, I'm not a bad man," Joseph deadpanned and his neighbor chuckled again, which was very satisfying. "And I wasn't very adventurous. I'm here now because of something I said that got twisted around, and then I had to defend myself. I wish I had a better reason to be here. I wish I deserved it more than I do. I wish"—his voice faded.

He knew his neighbor understood. Everyone has wishes. Everyone has regrets. There were rustling sounds in front of them, though they weren't able to see those uniformed men to their front.

He searched for the right words, "I wish I realized how short life is."

"Amen, brother. Hey, what's your name?"

"Joseph. Yours?"

"Miguel. Nice to meet you."

Before Joseph could give a polite response, the command came.

Ready!

They quieted.

Aim!

They prayed.

Fire!



The Blotter

"My Childhood Was Fine Until I Met Another Child"

by Bradford Middleton

I never realised I was different, a weirdo
An outsider
Until I met another child & the hell of
School came
With constant beatings & the thought
That I'd never fit in.

I was 5ft tall at the age of 7 & everything
Was blamed
On me & the fights grew more savage
& the beatings
More regular as I just wanted to hide
& then I found them.

The glory of the word came to save me
& the library
Became my new home away from home
& my parents
Were happy as, at last, I started to read
& I loved it.

The deluge of words drowned out the
Feelings of
Loneliness until I found some kind souls
Who took me
In & said I was their friend & life was,
At last, great

But the weirdness has remained all
Through this
Life & now means on this Friday night
I'll be sitting
Here writing these words whilst the
World goes
Crazy out on this early summer paradise
Of a night.

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.

I only go out for bare necessities. Or so I think. Carrots, ginger snaps, Kleenex, coffee filters. Nevertheless, I end up in two places. One is a motel, across the main highway from my apartment, where there are people gathering in the parking lot, because a car won't start. One of the people looks like she could be Scarlett Johanson's stunt double in the Marvel Universe. I don't know anything about cars, but with the others I help push the vehicle out of its spot to a place where a tow truck can hook it up and pull it away. Kids are skateboarding in the parking lot, with those electric ones that move themselves. They're not as daring as when I was young. There's a radio on, playing old rock I don't recognize, but it feels like the eighties stuff. The woman, Scarlett II, puts her arms over my shoulders and I feel like she's actually going to go in for a kiss, but she leans over and puts her cheek against mine and starts to slow dance, which is surprisingly better than receiving a kiss.

Then I am in an office made out of an old church. The desks are where the pews used to be, but the altar and communion rails are still there. One of the executive salesmen is mad, and someone asks me to help him with his problem. Another fellow is also there to lend assistance. He doesn't want technical support. He has made a big sale (of what I am not certain) and is talking to his phone about it, and how he is part of the ____ concern, someone high in the company, so no one should ignore him. What he wants is some women to do the installation (computers? Furniture? A charcuterie platter?) so that his client will feel like we went the extra mile. The other fellow explains to him why this can't be done, why it's inappropriate, but the sales exec. won't put down his phone and listen. I want to leave, but it's not the end of my shift, apparently.

CBD - Cyberspace

"Read It Or Don't..."

book review briefs by
Mary Fallon

Asians, Asians, Asians

I made a mistake. I read a book set in Japan about geishas, then a book set in China about foot binding, and now a third set in Hawaii, but the characters are from Japan. All the characters, yes in all the books, have unusual names I am not sure how to pronounce. All the characters believe in karma, fate, and the ancestors. There is no self-determination or pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, but all major life decisions are foretold and there is no escaping your class status.

The latest book was *The Color of Air* by Gail Tsukiyama. I have read her *The Samurai's Garden* and *Women of the Silk* and liked both of them. But the Color of Air, not so much. Poor, uneducated people were brought over from Japan (and the Philippines and other countries) to work on the huge sugarcane plantations. They thought they were getting an opportunity for a new life but ended up owing their soul to the company store. Their working conditions were brutal and the accommodations promised were crowded and not sturdy.

The plantations and the town are near a volcano which begins to erupt. Everyone has begun to worry if the lava will flow into the town, but can only wait for the god Pele or the US Department of Volcanos to confirm the path of the lava. There are many twists and turns of the relationships of the main characters; one woman loved by two men. One man lousy and unfaithful, the other

true to her throughout all the years. Two people of the next generation leave the island to become a teacher (Maile) and a doctor (Daniel) but return only to reunite and find true love and happiness home on the island. Although Daniel no longer wants to practice medicine, he miraculously cures the ancient mother (Mama to all) with a little motivation and a wheelchair. All happy-ever-ending too easy for my taste.

The sad part of this story, set in 1935, is the current New York Times article about the sugar plantations in India. There are large plantations producing sugarcane for all the Pepsis and Cokes in the world, overworking the workers, not providing safe conditions, all for our sugary beverages. Will a volcano, or the gods, affect the workers?

Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan

Here we go again with rereads. A dear book loving Irish friend of mine recommended *Small Things Like These*. I like Claire Keegan's writing style (read Foster by her) but couldn't seem to like *Small Things* the first time around.

Its another book where the Irish are poor and cold and drunk. The nuns are powerful and mean. Children are poor and cold and abused by the church. There are out of wedlock births that result in questionable parentage.

The convent in this village is austere, secretive and takes advantage of young girls. Many people look away and pretend they don't know what's behind those holy walls.

I did learn a new word for drunk – stocious. Yes I had to get the dictionary out. Well, the dictionary online.

Because my friend liked it so much, I reread it 8 weeks after the first read and I did like it better. Keegan expresses the internal thoughts and struggle of the main character Bill. He appears to go about his daily rou-

tine of delivering fuel and taking care of his family. But his mind and soul are full of thoughts of charity, how people are raised and the breaks we get or don't get our lives.

The book is only 114 pages long and has been made into a Netflix movie. Bill will be played by the now famous Cillian Murphy. So yes, give it a read (or two) and watch for our Irish Oscar winner Murphy.



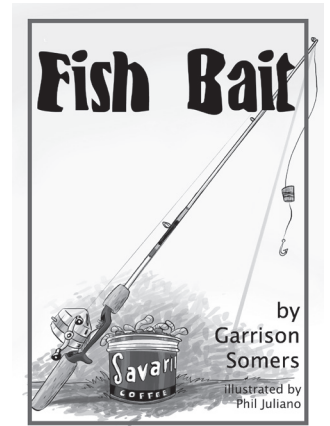
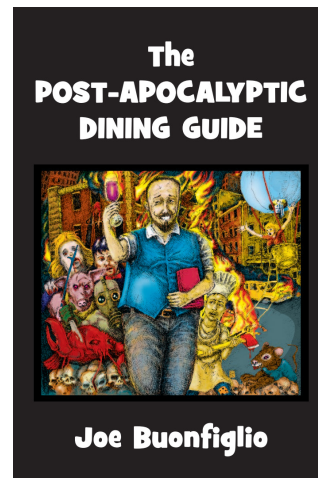
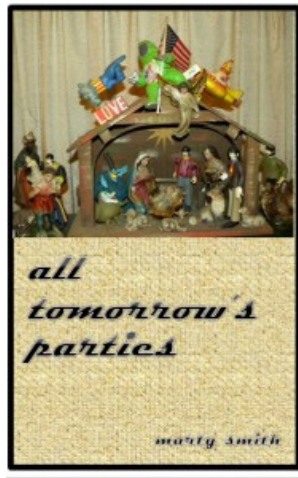
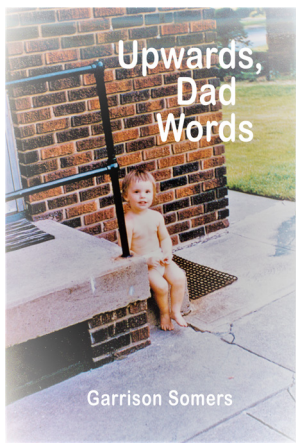
CONTRIBUTORS

Anthony Acri writes, “This is a hopefully literate response to forty years of diminution by Hollywood and television of the Italians. It is a story of perhaps in the Tuscan, the only indigenous people who were actually more sophisticated than the barbarous Romans who supplanted them, and in a classical way, not some noble savage meaning either. It would have made my father laugh to know that Tommy Smothers and Norman Lear would have died under a segregationist that said Mario Cuomo was unelectable and who let Oliver North not be under oath...proves their lives were meaningless.” <http://antoniusradiocomix.blogspot.com/2024/03/sacrificiaque-prandium-per-ientaculum.html>

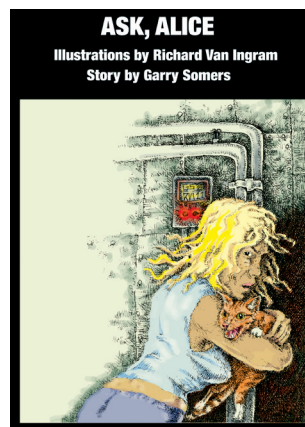
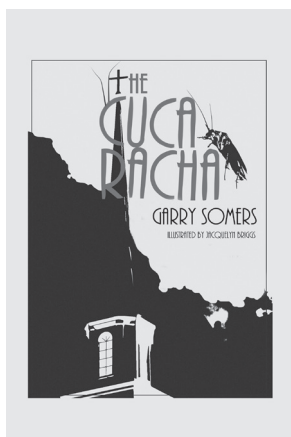
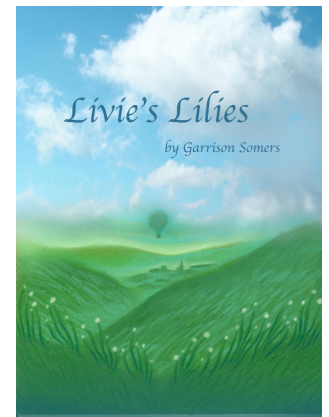
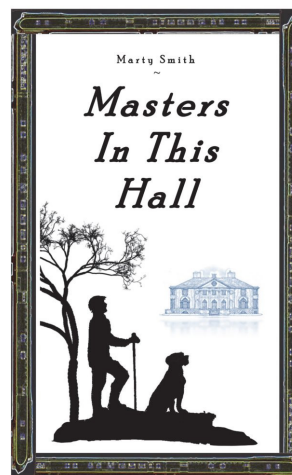
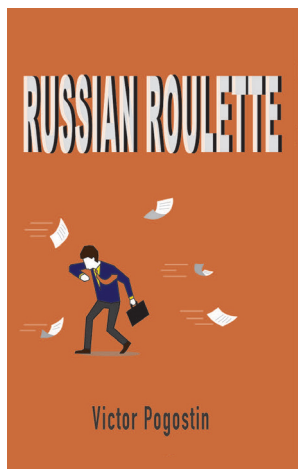
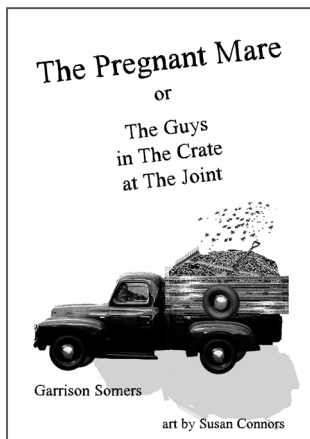
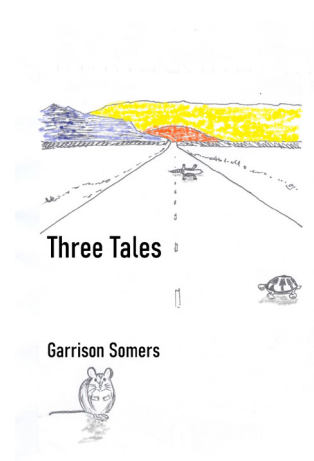
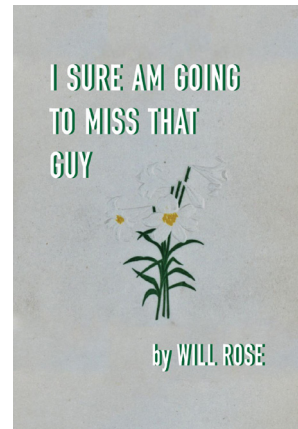
Eileen Nittler has been a social worker, retail worker, artists' model, and camp counselor. Now she writes, which is the best job of them all (except maybe for camp counselor). She is moving from Oregon to Montana with her husband. She has been previously published in *Oregon Humanities*, *Epistemic Lit* and *MUTHA*.

Bradford Middleton lives in Brighton on England's south-coast where he works part-time in a books/art supply store. His fifth chapbook of poems came out last year from the Alien Buddha Press and previous poems have appeared in the *Chiron Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *Mad Swirl*, *Horror Sleaze Trash*, *Yellow Mama* and *Cacti Fur* amongst many others. He occasionally tweets @bradfordmiddle5 if you're into that sort of thing.

Mary Fallon writes, “I was born and raised in Buffalo, moved to Raleigh/Durham in 1996 to continue to work for IBM. After retiring, I have worked at a golf course, and have played many many rounds. My life goal is to play a lot of golf, read a lot of books, see many plays and movies and travel the world. This column is a part of all of that!”



Blotter Books



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