

The Blotter

Magazine
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Let Them Know Us by Our Follies

Free in Asheville, Athens, Chapel Hill, Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh, and Richmond

May 2005



In this issue: **Stories by Billy Al Silverhorse, Brenda Beach, and Laura Levin.** Poems by Bill Glose, Laura Jent, Wolftrappe, and Daniel Downey. **Ernest Dollar's Paintings.** Plus the Dream Journal and mckenzee's "Sinister Bedfellows."

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This magazine may contain typos or bad words

Items Worth Mentioning

from the desk of Johnny Pence

Two Years Down the Drain

May is our anniversary here at *The Blotter*, and this May marks our second one. At this point in an editor's letter, the editor usually talks about how far the magazine has come and how hard it is to believe its humble beginnings. Things are still pretty humble around here in the editorial office—the same beat-up Frankenstein's monster of a PC, the same framed jigsaw puzzle of the dogs playing poker, and the same damn cat. In the splendid luxury of my office/guest room, with its gorgeous Norman Rockwell calendar that came free from the insurance company and its insulating piles of paper, it is easy to feel cut off, to forget how rapidly our empire is spreading.

Yet, from the fatherland in the NC Triangle, we've spread to Asheville, Athens, Richmond, and the world at large via subscriptions. Let's not dwell on the more unpleasant business side of things, where we're using so much red ink we can't afford to buy more. Rather, on this joyous occasion, let me say that I measure our success not on a financial scale, but on how many minds we can pollute each month. That number is growing. You, **Dear Reader**, make it possible because you pick up our free little magazine and put it on your toilet tank along with your copy of *The Anarchist's Cookbook* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. It's our place in your home, heart, and worm-eaten brain that makes me feel successful. That's what I tell the credit card companies, anyhow.

No News is Good News

Last month I hinted that I had some big doin's that I wanted to tell y'all about. It's not quite ready to talk about. I didn't forget.

If You Can't Be an Athlete

Marty tells me that last month's show at **the Cave** featuring **the Standbys** was totally freakin' excellent. I have no option but to believe that, seeing as how **the Cave** and **the Standbys** are both totally freakin' awesome and Marty has no reason to lie. So thanks to them.

Thanks also to a big heap of people who have started subscribing and giving subscriptions to their friends and beloved. Thanks to a small but growing crop of people who are just outright **donating money** through our easy Paypal button at **blotterrag.com**. It's good to know the subliminal messages and hypnosis I subject you to aren't a total waste. I don't know a whole lot about hypnosis, and I hope I'm not doing any permanent harm to you. Let me know if you experience any side effects beyond dizziness and memory loss, as this may be a sign of something really, *really* bad.

—ediot@blotterrag.com

The Man Who Annoyed a Goat

by Billy Al Silverhorse

One time there wuz a feller name of Bob, but everybody called him Whoopin' Bob fer short, an' he got thowed in the hoosegow one time fer annoyin' a goat.

The main reason they called him Whoopin' Bob wuz 'cause he'd set on his front porch an' whoop'. He'd go "Whoop! Whoop! Whoop! Whooeeee!" to way up in the night. He said the reason he did it wuz to sker off the panthers.

It 'pears he wuz attacked by a panther when he wuz jist a litter shaver an' he fought off the panther an' come home all clawed an' skinned up. His Daddy said, "Son, iff'n you'll whoop an' whooeeee when yer out an' aroun' where panther's might be, you'll be O.K. Ya see all that kind uv specialized racket skers 'em off."

So he thought, an' nacherly enough, iff'n all that whoopin'll sker 'em off in the woods, why would'n it sker 'em off from aroun' yer house. So he'd set on his porch an' whoop. His wife wuz half deaf so it did'n bother her that much, but it shore did bother Ed Hardy, who lived 'crosst the road from Whoopin' Bob.

Ya see, Ed had took to raisin' goats an' he told Whoopin' Bob he wuz annoyin' his prize billygoat, Willie. He said Willie wuz so annoyed that he wuz a-havin'

problems, iff'n ya know what Ah mean, an' wad'n payin' proper attention to 'is duties. Ed did'n wanna tell inybody Willie wuz skered too 'cause after all, nobody wants a skered billygoat a-sirein' their younguns an' givin' the nannygoats cause fer concern. As a result, the number uv new babygoats wuz a-fallin' off somethin' drastic. Nacherly, Ed wuz concerned 'bout the success uv his goat business.

Whoopin' Bob said, "Ed, it's a fack, my whoopin' is what keeps them there panthers away. Ya know, Ah 'spose next to razor-back hogs, goats is a panther's favorite dish. Ya know, if the fack wuz known, ya orta be A-PAYIN' me fer mah service."

Ed said, "Whoopin' Bob, yer crazyer'n a bedbug iff'n ya think Ah'm a-gonna be a-payin' ya one red cent fer disruptin' everthaing'. An' 'nother thaing, iff'n ya don't cease an' desist"—Ed had been in court one time—"Ah'm a-gonna have the law down on ya.

So Whoopin' Bob did'n an' Ed did.

Sheriff Merle Bodecker wuz called in an' he stood in Ed's goat yard one evenin' an' listened fer a spell' 'fore he went over to Whoopin' Bob an' said, "See here now Whoopin' Bob, yer a-gonna have to quit that there racket. Yer disturbin' the peace

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

june-doom, The List, criticizing fabio

driving south on I-95 in a 1963 belair station wagon, brand new, like the one my family took to FL the same year. i was behind another station wagon towing a big sailboat. we both got off at the next exit. i wasn't paying attention and rammed the sail boat at the bottom of the offramp. ward cleaver got out of the stationwagon and said, "jeez, B.— look at my new boat! june is not going to be happy about this." i told ward to tell june to kiss my ass. ward said, "why don't you tell her yourself?" and leaned into his car and said, "B.— wants to tell you something, june. can you step out?" june said, "sure, honey," and stepped out with a rocket launcher and blew up my station wagon then asked me what it was i had to say.

—B. B., Fredericksburg, VA

i dreamed that i had been crossed off The List. i was never informed what list, exactly, it was that i had been crossed off of, only that it was not merely "a" list, but definatey "The List."

—B.R., Chapel Hill

About 20 adults are in a camp mess hall. The leader tells us to re-tile the floor with sand-colored tiles. We put away the nice wooden folding furniture. I think the others might use sand or paper instead of the tiles that are stacked here. We say in unison: "I am Hermaphrodite." A narrator explains that we have paper cups in our pants. Long-haired, open-shirted Fabio and I leave through a low doorway into the back yard. We lie down and grab a rope that slides us smoothly into a crawlspace under the building. Fabio asks if I will now criticize him. I say "No, not now. Fool! I will criticize you whenever I feel like it."

—R.G., Raleigh

Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at mermaid@blotterrag.com. If nothing else, we love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

an' that's agin the law."

Whoopin' Bob got all het up an' said, "Merle, mah people bin livin' on this here land nye unto five generations an' that there goat farmer's only bin here ten-twelve years.

"It's mah property an' dad-burned if Ah ain't a-gonna do as Ah please on mah own spread. An' that includes protectin' it from panthers an' other wild beasts uv the forest."

Sheriff Merle said, "Aw, Whoopin' Bob, be reasonable. Try to look at Ed's side uv things. Sides, they ain't bin no panthers 'round these parts fer twenty years. Cain'tcha see yer annoyin' Ed's goat? An' he sez it's a-costin' him."

Whoopin Bob wuz a-really a-

gittin' riled now. "You 'spect me an' mah wife to be without iny kind uv protection? Mah so-called 'racket' is the onliest thaing that's a-keepin' us from mebbe from gittin' et up in our beds at night." He stood up from his rockin' chair an' shook his finger at the sheriff. "Now Ah'll thank ya to git off'n mah place an' iff'n ya don't, Ah'll set the dogs on ya!"

Well, this did'n set to well with Sheriff Merle an' he hauled ol' Whoopin' Bob off to the hoosegow, dogs er no dogs!

Once they got him in locked up, he kep up with his whoopin' an' a-cussin' Ed Hardy an' a-callin' 'im ever name under the sun. He set down on the bunk an' shook his head. "Ah wisht Ed Hardy wuz in Halifax er summers else!"

Sheriff Merle said, "What in the cat-hair's wrong with ya? Ah cain't even think uv lettin' ya outta here iff'n ya don't stop that there racket. They ain't no panthers within a hunnert miles uv here! Yer a-actin' like ya lost yer mind er somethin'!"

Whoopin' Bob had'n lost his mind, he'd jist got hisself in a

swivet from the way things wuz a-goin'. He liked Sheriff Merle an' he did'n wanna be thought uv as crazy so he said, "Aw shucks Merle, Ah reckon it jist a habit. Sides, Ah wanna keep in practice. Iff'n ya stop an' think 'bout it, Ah could well be the reason they AIN'T no panthers within a hunnert miles. Didja ever think uv that?" Sheriff Merle jist shook his head an' went back to his desk.

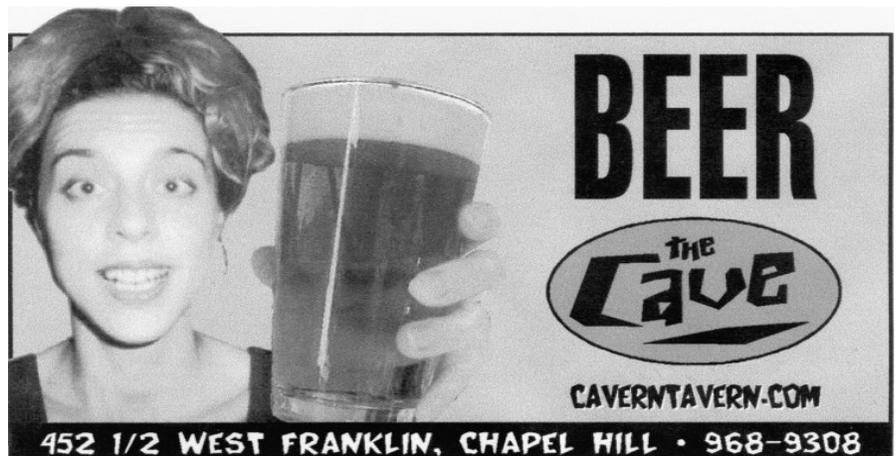
Eventually they let Whoopin' Bob outta jail an' he went back to his rockin' chair on his front porch an' started in with his whoopin' agin'. Ed Hardy finally give up on the goat business an' sold his place to a couple from Oklahoma City.

Ed sold off all his stock, but the couple wanted to keep Willie, so he included 'im in on the deal. Willie wad'n much good fer nuthin' though. He usually slept all day 'cause 'tween Whoopin' Bob an' the hoot owls, he did'n git much sleep at night.

Sheriff Merle realized he could'n do nuthin' 'bout Whoopin' Bob, but he got to feelin' sorry fer the wife, so he snuck over to Whoopin' Bob's



DURHAM, NC



place while he wuz away an' tried to give 'er some sleepin' pills so's she could git some sleep. He knew she wuz hard-uv-hearin', so he took 'er the pharmacist's note a-sayin', "Take one of these after supper each night and it will help blot out unwanted noises and help you sleep."

She jist laughed an' said, "Oh, that don't make no never-mind to me, seeins a how Ah went totally deaf last Thanksgivin'."

Goddamned Dogs

by Brenda Beach

The back roads were deserted as I headed home from Lake Anna to Aquia Creek at two A.M., so I could keep the speed right about 80 miles an hour. I did slow for the meanest of the turns, though, because my 4Runner sucks on curves and because the dogs roll all over the cargo area if I don't knock back a little on the speed. I was in a hurry to get home and start the rest of my life without Walt, the overweight bald guy with no eyelashes and lots of money who I'd been seeing for about a month.

It had been about twenty minutes since I left Walt standing in a hailstorm of flying gravel as I tore out of his driveway in a real nasty snit. I had been looking for an excuse to stop seeing his boring ass anyway, but the materialistic side of me found it hard to say no to dinner and theater, driving his Jag or the big old ski boat he owned, or to smoking the killer

weed he always had on hand. Besides he was very nice to my two mutt dogs, Scout and Scooter. He always had special treats for them and let them ride in the boat. He even got them a special pad so they could ride on the back seat of his car without scratching the leather.

It turns out that Walt was only sucking up to the dogs to try to get to me. Earlier in the evening, Walt had suggested taking the dogs on a canoe ride in the October moonlight. Both dogs are Labrador mixes, and love to do anything in or on the warm lake water, endlessly recycled through the cooling towers for the two nuclear reactors at the power plant. Steam was rising off the water in the dark, and the dogs were smiling great big old dog smiles as we paddled around pretty much aimlessly. Then, an owl flapped about and hooted, calling attention to himself in a big, white-skinned sycamore tree on shore. Both dogs jumped out at once and the

Billy Al Silverhorse writes in the vernacular of Eastern Oklahoma where 78.9% of Bakersfield, California comes from ... or goes to. Your choice.



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canoe started to rock in that way that means you better just give up and get wet. A few seconds later, I was hanging on the upturned canoe, laughing my ass off as Scout and Scooter swam hard for shore. The owl swooped from his tree to buzz their heads.

Walt was all gray in the face, treading water, cussing me and my dogs. "Jesusfuckingchrist. Why don't you train those god-damned dogs to sit still? Are you fucking crazy? This isn't funny. Everything in my fucking wallet is soaked. We could have drowned—Christ, we don't even have life preservers with us. I'm done putting up with those fucking dogs."

I kept laughing. Hell, the water was almost 90 degrees. I can swim forever. I hadn't been dumb enough to bring my wallet. And I was glad that Walt was so pissed. He continued to cuss me for not realizing the potential for calamity, for not having better control of the goddamned dogs, and for being flip about life in general. He took a breath, then said something about doing everything possible to make the goddamn dogs welcome and this is how they act.

The part about the god-damned dogs and their ingratitude did it for me. Did the idiotic man actually think dogs cared at all about whether or not he got wet when there was a noisy bird to be chased? No use trying to explain that to a wet fat man, so I told Walt I'd be taking the goddamn dogs and getting

the hell out of his life as soon as I could get some dry clothes on. I was out of there in less than ten minutes after we hit shore.

I'd smoked a joint in the first two miles after I left Walt's house. The sun roof was open, the heat was on low. If I closed one eye, cocked my head back and to the side, and looked out, the stars whirred past like snowflakes in a blizzard. I wasn't half as mad at Walt as I'd been an hour ago, but I sure was glad to be done with him. The Stones were slamming "Happy" at me from all eight speakers, and I was feeling right good about being almost home to my two-room cabin, way out in the country at the end of a dead end-road. I was getting sleepy and I really didn't want to be driving in the boonies on the tail end of a buzz.

A time warp had sucked me up while I relived the canoe mishap, and I was quickly home and inside, getting ready for bed. Since the day I left my mean, drunk husband, I've taken to keeping my .38 snubnose on the night stand in case he made good on his promise to find me and drag my ass home. Part of the ritual of getting ready for bed involves opening cylinder and spinning it, then clicking it shut and putting the gun just-so on the night stand, so that I could grab it and get my finger on the trigger without even thinking. Nightly, the dogs hover by the bedside watching me until the gun is back on the stand. Then they go take their guard posts at

the only door to the tiny house.

I don't know how long I was asleep before I woke to Scout's growling a low warning growl out of his guts. I hadn't heard this sound from him before, but it was obvious he was prepared to kill something to protect me. I could hear Scooter beside him, growling nastily, too. It was rare for Scooter to even bark, and she had never growled. I sat up in bed and blinked hard, forcing my eyes to adjust to the dark.

Really bad vibes were coming from outside the house even before I heard a fairly large engine coming up my gravel driveway. Still in bed, I looked out the bedroom window toward the car noise. I saw the glint of the moon off of a dark-colored SUV coming up the hill with no lights on. For about a millisecond, I thought it might be Walt coming to beg me not to be mad at him. Maybe my ex? But the calm fear that was starting to fill and expand my chest also caused my brain to go on autopilot. I knew that what was going on was very bad and had nothing to do with either one of those rats.

In one dreamy motion, like the blobs flowing around in a lava lamp, I swung my feet onto the floor, took the gun into my hand, and waltzed the two steps to reach the window that looked out on the driveway. I noticed that the floor was very cold, that I was naked, and that the gun smelled like Hoppe's. I saw the vehicle crawling to a stop fifteen feet from me. It was a Nissan

Pathfinder, new and black and loaded with passengers. I breathed in, stepped back from the window enough to take aim, and started to sight in the general area around the Pathfinder.

The dogs were going crazy in the next room, growling and barking louder and sounding fiercer than I'd ever imagined their sissy selves could. They were actually throwing themselves against the door, trying to get out.

Almost before the SUV stopped rolling, the front passenger's door and the two back doors flung open and young black men spilled out into the yard. They immediately took notice of my dogs raising hell, saying, "What the fuck! Shit! We fucked up now! Hear that shit?" They hovered close by the open doors of the car, then the driver stepped out and turned toward my house. I pulled back the hammer on the .38, thinking, "Shit, I hope there ain't but five of them."

I was ready to kill that kid and anybody else who I had a bullet for. I was only waiting for him to take the one unmistakable, definitive step toward my house, and then I'd plug his ass. I had a plan: I was already thinking that I would shoot any of them that came toward my house, but I wasn't going to run after any that went the other way. I was already thinking about making the call to the police to come get the body as I was willing the kid to take the

cont'd., p. 10

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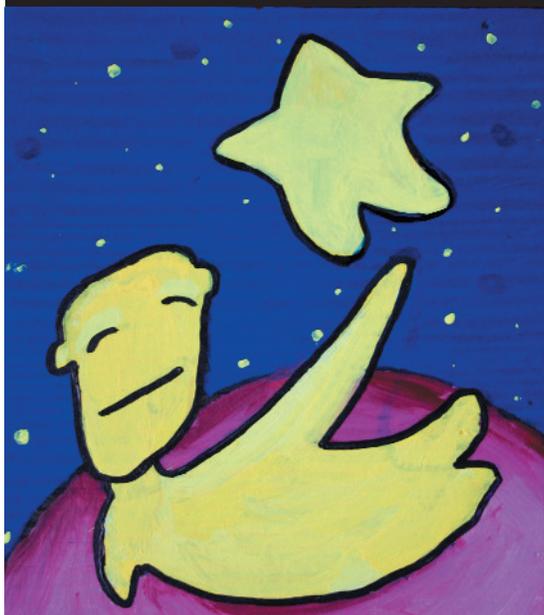
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This page:
Stars,
Flower, Mama

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Clams, Two-
Liter



Ernest Dollar has recently gone back to school at UNCG for his MA in Museum Studies, while also working on the skills of new-fatherhood. He is active in the Third Mind Collective out of Chapel Hill, (www.thirdmind.org), occasionally illustrates pieces for *The Blotter*, and will be taking the exam to become a space cowboy next month.

step toward me. I was truly itching to shoot him.

By now Scout and Scooter sounded like a whole kennel full of rabid pit bulls inside the little house. The driver heard the noise and reacted as his passengers had. "Fuck, we got to do

something quick. Fuck. Goddamn dogs. Down the hill, ya'll. Come on." The driver turned and headed toward the swamp, with all his fellows at his heels. I counted five forms running down the steep slope into the woods.

I let the hammer down easy and lowered the gun. The dogs were beside me now, not barking, just wagging their tails. "Good dogs," I told them. I put on a bathrobe and was about to sit down and try to figure out how this dream got so many real parts to it when I heard a helicopter right overhead and cars with sirens coming fast up my driveway.

I told the dogs to stay inside, and went out to talk to the cops. I hadn't put down the gun or put on shoes. A female sheriff's deputy jumped out of her car and came toward me, giving me the lowdown as she approached.

It turns out some juveniles stole an SUV in DC, drove it about fifty miles down I-95 while the cops pursued in cars and with a chopper. The kids took the Stafford exit and got ahead of the cop cars in a series of turns, but the chopper never lost them.

The cop took a breath, looked at my gun and bare feet, and told me to get in the house and stay there. "With four K9s and the chopper, we'll catch the little bastards in a minute. I'll let you know when we got them all."

The deputy didn't ask if I'd fired the gun. She didn't ask me what I saw. She didn't ask me shit. So, I went inside and sat down, and made much of petting my dogs until daylight when the chopper flew off and the cop cars drove away.

Not exactly knowing what

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else to do, I continued to sit, petting the dogs for another couple of hours until I got a call at around 8:00 A.M. from the sheriff's office, thanking me for my cooperation in apprehending four of the five suspects, who, by the way, were armed.

I asked what about the fifth. The deputy said he was bound to get cold soon and come on in. I said okay, and hung up.

I reckoned it'd be okay to go outside now and let the dogs do their stuff. I took my gun. Scooter stayed right by me like she always does. Scout tore out for the woods, and in seconds brought back a black stocking cap. After a whole night of adrenaline, the hat somehow made the whole thing scary and I started to feel really alone and not at all brave.

Wanting to tell someone about the thing so they could tell me I should lay off the dope, I called Walt and asked if he wanted to hear the latest story about my goddamn dogs. He said no and hung up.

Losing Thyself (Where the Fish Swim To)

by Laura Levin

The dark water bounced up and down around the ship's sides. Katy Benford peered over to watch the fish swim by. As she wondered where they were swimming to, a crewmember came up and reminded her that she was due to steer the ship in five minutes.

Pete lingered a moment longer than necessary. He hesitated than asked, "Captain?"

"Yes?"

"Um, what are you looking at on the side on the ship?"

"The fish of course."

"Oh, okay."

"Get some sleep, Nolan, you look tired."

"Yes, Captain."

* * *

Water surrounded her ship. There was no land in sight. There hadn't been in days. Yet,

somehow, Katy knew exactly where she was going. She stared into the distance for hours on end, guiding the ship. None of her crew ever questioned where she was leading them when they were working on deck. First mate, Martin Wilson, had noticed that Katy had been quite possessive of the wheel lately. She barely let anyone else pilot the ship. She also had a peculiar habit of staring at the ocean for hours at a time, then spend the remainder of her day, in her cabin.

One night, when Martin had finally persuaded her that it was his turn at the wheel. He saw that she was still on deck, standing nearby looking into the water. He found himself staring at Katy for several minutes. Martin discovered his voice at last.

"Why do you always watch the water? Nolan told me you

cont'd., p. 14

I've known Brenda Beach for years, and am surprised that this is the first thing of hers we've seen in these pages. I also know the .38 snubnose mentioned in this story.

Had a piece lately?

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Springtime for the Disinclined by Bill Glose

It must be spring again
for I can hear the birds
twittering outside my window
cooing and cheeping until
I want to claw my eyes out.

Calls to codes compliance
won't shut them up
like it did my neighbors
with their outdoor parties
and. teenage boys,

who even now
are spraying dad's car
before they take it
on a double date
with Barbie bubble-heads,

or worse yet,
plan to bring them home
to romp and giggle
in the yard,

unmindful of those
who only wish for
the sequestered silence
of winter.

Movies and Breakups by Laura Jent

guess who's coming to disaster?
like it's a beachtown like it has a cottage
with green shag carpet and a lamp post
made of shells, like it's a table
we can sit at, with your whiskey eyes
and your drumalong hands. like it's a show
with the clashbash percussion and delirious sighs,
like it's anything but what it is:
blank canvas in a scream, then the bright-blue burn,
and then the end.

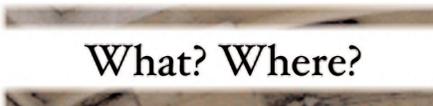
untitled by Wolfstrappe

he had the wiry body of a hardcore junky
left-handed, with cheerful eyes cadaver-colored
leaves his house, leaves his glass house
with a pocketful of stones
there's a cloud cover visible through the
skyline, perhaps it will rain
it might just rain he thought it might just stay cold
he stopped to buy a book for his lover, a tea-cup for
his mother now it's raining
and he might just drown if he isn't careful
no present for his father, a Tampa Bay alcoholic---
the dead need nothing, they aren't speaking
he'd pick up the phone and call,
but a twelve year velocity can't stop on a dime.

Sinister Bedfellows by mckenzee



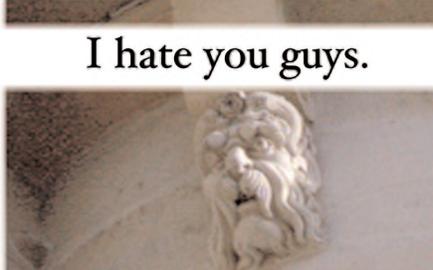
Look at that sunset.



What? Where?



That's so beautiful.



I hate you guys.



Larry "mckenzee" Holderfield has traveled the world, taking photos, writing bad poetry, and falling in love. He now combines these interests in "Sinister Bedfellows," online at SinisterBedfellows.com.

Bill Glose is a freelance writer who lives in the Tidewater area of Virginia.

Laura Jent, 26, lives Durham, NC, where she carries on indiscreet love affairs with big cities who sleep far away. She is a nanny by profession and a poet by obsession, and she is working on a collaborative project with visual artists from across the nation.

Wolftrappe is a writer, collage artist, and existentialist who lives in Athens, Georgia.

Daniel Downey wondered how people ended up where they did, in those places where you'd never live but only pass through.

Now he is mostly just stunned. He lives in Commerce, GA.



Eternally Battered by Daniel Downey

We're delivered
Encased in walls.
Running us down
the road,
Captive.

Might I see?
the other side. To tell
I'll never know.

We huddled close
together
Shouting
And still
We could barely hear

"I'm going," I said,
no doubt.
"Right through here," the
stub of a cigar clenched tight
juts, awkward, like
a movie,
from my beak.

"You're crazy!" clucked someone.
"Never make it," squawked
another one still.
"Larger guys your size are
pulverized every day trying this.
Won't you learn, from the
lesson."
The joke that we all know.
Perfect

A hole, a chance,
opportunity
just enough
Force would make it give

The noise a presence,
everywhere, the wind
the stench
the nervous energy
of transit
of a life in wait
suspended here
above the road
a thousand miles an hour

A spec, a blip
Significant.
The sound a pulse, louder
than blood in ears, than
doubt in that instant.

Gone, distant, rolling
One life well planed,
However

Brief now gone.

Fast now
moving faster
Fast as ever
no run,
no fly but

fall down
free
And
Stop.

Sit. Stand. Forage
now.
patiently, I do.
Along the interstate
Watching, waiting
patient, still
Knowing, the inevitable
and momentary
crossing
Desire.
The same road,
every day

Sisters, family all
head one way loaded
in containers
No wire sided trucks
no more
Closed containers
Containers and holes
prolonging a
deathblow
lent upon arrival

Empty return
No deposit
The endless container
parade
of death, of life,
of purpose.

The mess interminable
Along the roadside
Species all
Indiscriminate
carnage
along the way

Life was more savory when...
when all we had to do
was try and
cross the road.

Chicken.

look at the fish, Captain. May I ask why?"

"I watch the water and wonder where all those little fishes are going."

With no way to respond, he began whistling as he often did. With that, Katy walked back into her cabin.

Martin resumed steering the ship, occasionally gazing into the sea, watching the colorful fish swim about.

Within days, Martin, and the rest of the crew, had found Katy's condition a distraction. Many had become worried about her and distrusted her navigation. Martin found she was steering the ship in the completely wrong direction, yet she remained stubborn. Katy refused to eat or let anyone else steer the ship. Once the weary sailors had managed to pry her off the wheel; she would spend the remainder of the day staring into the deep, dark waters; or in her cabin, declining to speak to anyone.

"How could we have lost her

so quickly? What happened?" Martin asked Pete and his buddies, once, when Katy had locked herself in her cabin.

"Are you sure we really lost her, Sir?" one sailor asked.

"What do you mean, Greenberg? Our dear captain has obviously gone insane. Tragically, we have lost her good mind," answered Martin.

Later, Pete strolled up to Katy's cabin. He knocked. Hearing no answer, he turned the knob and found it to be unlocked. Pete was shocked to see his captain knitting. Her tired eyes gazed upon the red wool and wooden needles. She didn't seem to notice him. Pete coughed politely to catch her attention and she looked up. Katy gave him a small smile.

"What happened? What has become of you?" he asked quietly.

Tears began to stream down her face. "I can't believe I've lost you. All of you," she whispered.

Pete looked at her in amazement, but said nothing.

"Good-night, Captain," he managed to say, and turned to go.

"Get some sleep, Nolan. Maybe you aren't as mad as the rest of them. You might still have some sense in you."

Pete left and walked on deck to stare into the water, trying to understand the fascination in the mysterious blue waves that Katy saw.

The next day, Martin was steering the ship. Katy stared at him from a short distance, not making a move.

Her constant gaze was making him uncomfortable. Finally she said to him, "Why don't you whistle anymore? You used to do it all the time."

"I ... I don't know," he muttered and Katy left to return to her cabin. .

Soon after she left, he noticed a small strip of green in the distance. So this is where she's leading us, he thought. The sight of the faraway land gave him an eerie feeling. Martin decided to get a closer look at the island but not set foot on it.



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Two days passed. Katy spent all her time steering on deck and knitting in her cabin. The patch of green became larger as the hours past. Martin called for Pete when they were about a day from landfall. "The captain is steering the ship right now," Martin said quietly. "Pack her a bag in her cabin. Only she shall walk on these mysterious beaches. I don't want any of the crew getting hurt or ending up like her."

"Yes, Sir."

Pete snuck down to Katy's cabin and packed her a knapsack with her clothes and other belongings. He paused over her knitting needles, Pete noticed she had finished a long bright red scarf. He was pondering whether to bend over to touch it, when he heard a soft yet distinct voice.

"Don't pack the needles. They belong here," Katy said.

"Yes, Captain."

"I can finish my packing, Nolan."

"Yes, Captain."

"Good-bye ... Pete. Get some rest."

"Good-bye, Captain Benford."

* * *

A few hours later, the ship was less than half a kilometer from the island. It was made obvious to Katy that she would be the only person to go on land. Martin was getting bad vibes from the still solidly green island. It just didn't seem right. Dark blue waves pounded against the ship and wind pushed them forward.

Martin ordered that Katy use a lifeboat to travel the rest of the way to the island. No one was to travel with her.

Before she went, Katy called for Pete.

"Here," she whispered to him and handed Pete the red scarf she made. "You'll be needing this."

"Thank you, Katy," Pete answered try to stop from crying.

She entered the lifeboat and took the oars into the water. He watched her in the indigo ocean. She hummed a little tune to herself as she rowed unto her island. Pete gazed into the sea and saw several fish swimming after her.

Katy's feet fell upon the mint-green sand. All was quiet. She smiled. Katy started laughing and turned to the ship, which was beginning to slide away from her.

Smiling sincerely, Katy called out to her old crew, "Thank you dear comrades! I owe my life to you. Too bad you couldn't join me in Paradise."

Laura Levin doesn't always give a bio when she submits stories. She's cool like that.

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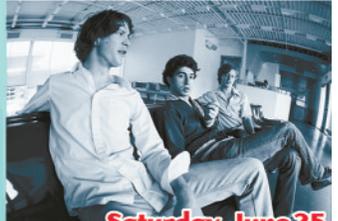
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