

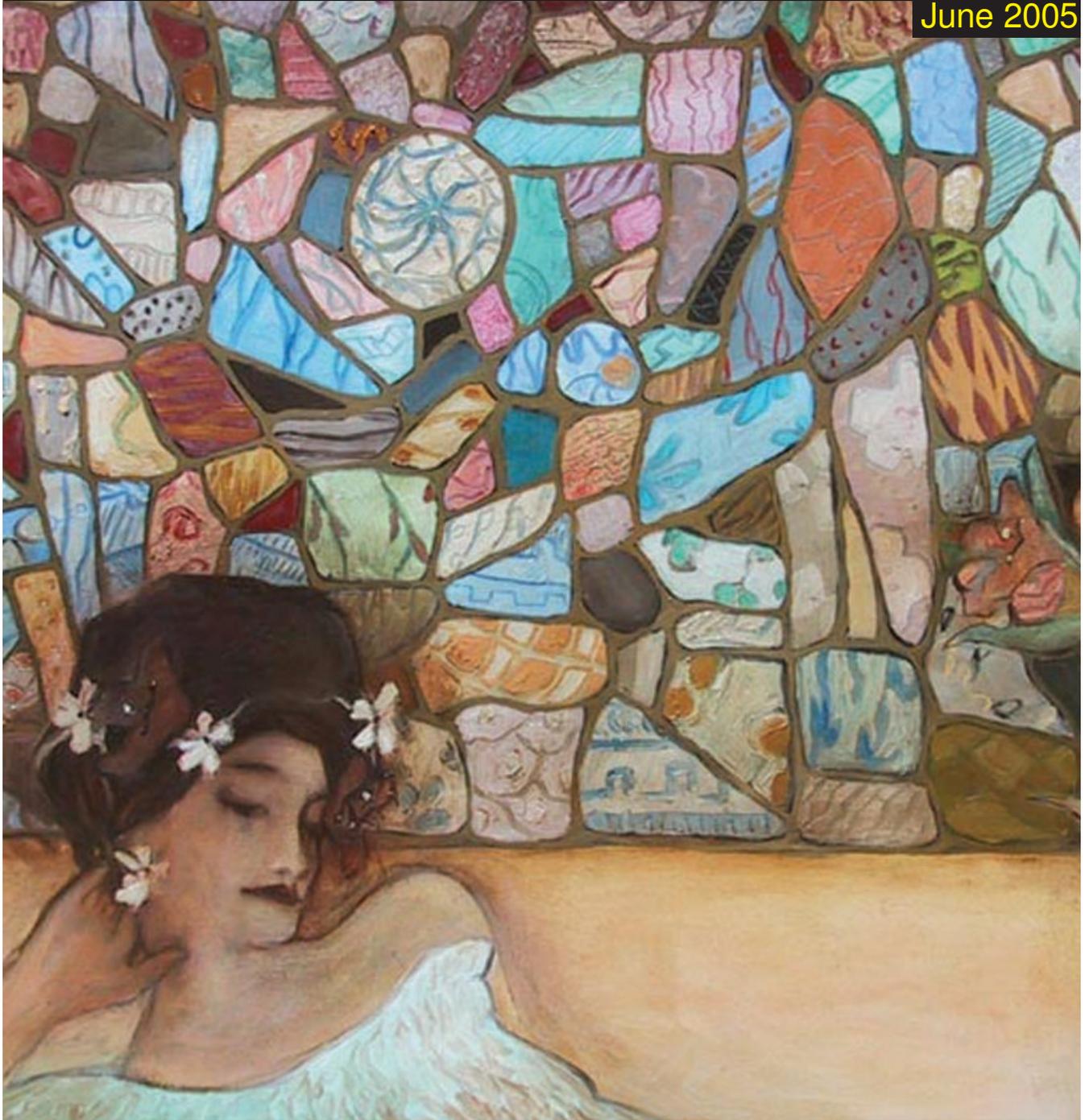
The Blotter

Magazine
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June 2005



The sixth month of 2005 brings us the art of Joelle Voigt, stories by Todd Frei and Brent Powers, poems by Alson H. Wheeler and Jeremy Brown, and the regular stuff you'd find here any old time: Marty Smith's "Paper Cuts," mckenzee's "Sinister Bedfellows," and the Dream Journal. Isn't June great?

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*This magazine may contain typos or
bad words*

Items Worth Mentioning

from the desk of Johnny Pence

News Youse Can Use

I've known since about November that my novel was not going to be published by the publishing company that contracted it. I think I've hinted around here in *The Blotter* that things weren't all that rosy, but I haven't come right out and said it.

The real drag of it was that I basically had an edited and typeset galley that was all ready to go to the printer after a proofreading (i.e., for you non-publishing types, I was pretty much done with the whole damn thing and about six weeks away from having a paper book to sell). So I'd done a lot of work, I'd had all the big editorial fights, I'd lined up signings and book festivals, and even did the typesetting myself to save a buck. Then, poof.

So faced with this—by “this” I mean hard work, frustration, a nearly finished product, and the as-yet unmentioned “authority issues” I carry around as baggage into any situation—I decided that what I wanted to do for Me and Myself was to self-publish. Of course, you know what I do for a living, so you know I don't have any money for it. But I used to have a real job in publishing, and I know *how* to do it.

But why just me? I know a half-dozen good writers with unpublished books that really, really deserve to be in print. So why not, I asked Marty one day, why not start a Blotter Books division?

Marty has been a great sport about it, and has not forbid me to pursue the idea or mention it here. So here it is:

We're looking for money to start publishing books.

There's my book, *Waking Up*, which is about dreams and sorcery and pretty summer days and a mythically enormous alligator. That's one. Then there's also a couple-few others by people you've read in this-here magazine. I probably shouldn't mention them in print because we don't have contracts written up, but I don't know. I totally *do* know how to make a book out of a manuscript and have an idea of how to sell it, but there's all this legal stuff and money stuff that has me baffled.

Anyhow, what do we do? We need about \$15,000 to put out three or four titles. Do you have any money? Do you like to work with non-profit literary adventures? Do you just wish us well?

Please let me know. I got no idea. Grants exist, but most aren't open to us because we have only been non-profit for a few months. What I'd really like is lots of money without a lot of paperwork and no strings attached....

But I realize how likely that is.

—ediot@blotterrag.com

Stumbling into Prague

by Todd Frei

I am in the basement of the Clown and Bard. At the bar taking shots of Absinth with some German. Attempting to follow a crumbled conversation. His broken English is slurred into some mumble of hard consonants. I think there's a transvestite running around somewhere. Is that right? Is that red dress a guy? I'm not sure. I bum a cigarette from the German, and trace back the last day. How long has it been since I slept? How many shots of Absinth have I taken?

I woke up at the Jaeger; in Munich. That was the last time I woke up. And I think that was yesterday morning. The day was bitter rain slashing the cold German streets. I walked around looking for any excuse to sit down. My train left at 11 PM. I had to pass thirteen hours somehow. I went to the art museum. Droog; ten years of design. Looked through English-language travel guides in a bookstore. Drank cups of coffee. And at some point ate a doner. After four days in a city, walking in the rain doesn't hold much appeal. And besides I needed my energy. I wasn't going to allow myself to sleep on the train.

I blame my paranoia on Steve. He's the first person I met in Munich. Actually in all of Europe. A Brit-turned-German who lived in the hostel between

travels. Worked as a waiter. In the lobby he sat down with a beer, began rolling a cigarette, and asked me where I'm coming from, where I'm going. I was writing in my journal, looked up and told him this was my first stop, I was heading to Prague next. He sealed the edge of his cigarette and gave a snicker. Said he hoped I wasn't taking a night train. After I mentioned I was he told of his recent trip to Prague. Just a few days before. He'd taken a night train. Was in a cabin with four or five other people. They were talking, drinking but not drunk. The next thing he knew he was staring up at a police officer. On the seat beside him was his wallet. In it were twenty euros and his passport. He'd left with over four hundred euros. The door to the cabins on the trains never close completely, always leaving a small crack at the top or bottom. Result of years of being opened and slammed closed. Someone had slid a small tube through the crack, then filled the cabin with sleeping gas. Once everyone passed out, they came in and robbed them. The twenty euros in Steve's wallet were so he could get back to Germany. Call them thieves with compassion. Only twenty euros wasn't enough, he had come all the way into Prague. Steve made it as far as some small rural village in the

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

ghosts cut a kid in half

Back when I was a kid, I always used to get these terrors that there were ghosts in the bedroom with me at night. I'm pretty sure there were, but it was a long time ago.

Anyhow, I'm not sure if this is a dream or a hallucination or an out-of-body experience or aliens or what, but one time when I was just *freaking out* about the ghosts, it got real bad. I'm pretty sure I was "awake" for this:

There was a throbbing in my ears and it got faster and faster. As it got faster, I got more scared, and the more scared I got, the faster the throbbing went.

I could tell there were ghosts in the room with me, and they were trying to get my attention, trying to scare me or get me or something. I had my face in the pillow and I knew if I turned over, I'd see them. I figured that the only chance I had was not to turn over, so I kept my face in the pillow.

Then, the throbbing got much faster and my body split into two halves, right at the waist. It didn't hurt, but it surprised the heck out of me. The top half, from my head to about my belly-button, started spinning counterclockwise, and my legs spun clockwise, real fast. I could feel both halves spinning. I bet I could have wiggled my toes if you'd asked me to.

After the two halves spun around, they snapped back into place. The throbbing stopped, and I wasn't scared anymore. I fell asleep exhausted.

—J. P., Athens

Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at mermaid@blotterag.com.

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Czech Republic. He said the town had pipes running along all the streets. Looked like something out of Super Mario Brothers. Said the town had no color. Felt like he had stepped into a 1950's television show cloaked in despair and sadness. From there he had to hitchhike.

Steve had many other stories. About the trains. Said not to give my ticket or passport to anyone, not even a conductor. Especially not a conductor, because they'll take it then charge me to get it back. And he told how thieves will rob you while you sleep. When I get into Prague, don't trust any girls. It doesn't matter how cute and innocent she seems. I'll wake up broke without a passport. Do I know how much an American passport is worth on the black market? I said I didn't. Thousands. All they had to do was find someone who looked vaguely similar to me.

So I decided not to sleep on the train. Or close the door on my cabin. I would stand guard all night.

The train ride took eight hours. In the middle of the night we sat still in a station for an hour. I was reading *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and distrusting every shadow that passed by. Talked to a guy from California for a while. We took shots of Jagermeister out a flask he carried. Then he went to sleep, but I sat up. As day broke old Czech women filled the train. My vision began to blur as I faded in and out of consciousness. Hating the glare of sunrise. Then hating

even more the storm that followed shortly.

Once I arrived in Prague I realized I didn't know how to get to the hostel. Add to that the rain, and my lack of a map. I had to use a vague poster of bus routes of the side of a bus stop. Getting senselessly confused, returning to the poster numerous times. It took over an hour to get the fifteen minutes to the hostel. On the same street was a car with the windows smashed out. There was dog shit on the sidewalk. I walked in the door wet and cold to find some Czech reincarnation of Dostoyevsky's Underground man working reception. He snarled more than talked; hissing directions as he showed me to my room. Six beds, two occupied by blonde Slovak girls, the type you could imagine trading sex for heroin. A few minutes later they lurched out of bed, exposed thongs, napped greasy hair. They quietly crammed their belongings into camouflage packs and left, closing the door behind them. On the back of the door was written: five of these six beds have bedbugs. The toilets had no seats. Fuck it; I brushed my teeth and left to explore. The sun had come back out and I needed a fresh perspective.

I remember the bridge lined with saints and angels. The sound of jazz. There was a castle and Kafka's house. I ate a sausage with mustard, and drank Fanta. There were bum saints whose begging looked like prayer; kneeled, head down, arms

extending a cup in reverence of generosity. Bought a beer for about fifty cents. Got light-headed and returned to the hostel.

This place is getting crowded. Foreign rock screams through the bar. The German hands me another shot of Absinth, a spoon of sugar, and

the lighter. Then staring at me asks, "Do you know ecstasy?" The drug or the feeling? Fuck, it doesn't matter. I dip the spoon in the shot and light it. Let the sugar crystallize then blow out the low blue flame and mix it in the liquor. Goddammit, I need to go to bed.

Todd Frei sent this along with his story. I can only assume it is what it claims to be:

"Short bio: I have a degree in English and Philosophy, and live in Raleigh."

'Nuff said.

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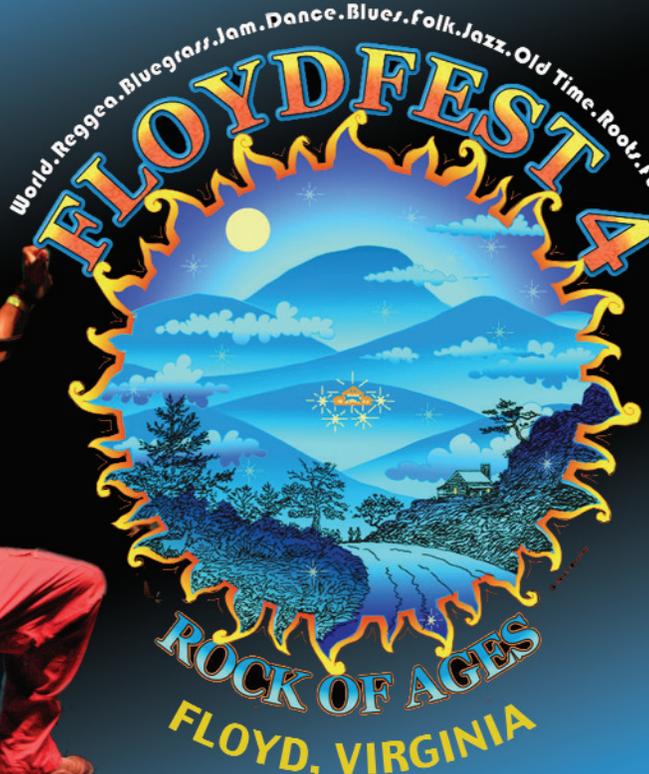
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Paper Cuts

Books You Might Not Have Read

by Martin K. Smith

Casino Royale

Ian Fleming, Penguin Books, 1953

Last Thanksgiving weekend, Spike TV had the wholly commendable idea of running a James Bond marathon—*Goldfinger*, *View to a Kill*, *Octopussy*, *The World is Not Enough*, et al. All the various Bond incarnations were on view: Connery, Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan. (They may even have had George Lazenby's one-off, probably at some unwatchable odd hour.) This in turn gave me a notion to seek the original Bond at the source: the novels of Ian, later

Sir Ian, Fleming.

Here's the Bond/Fleming legend as I've heard it told. Fleming (1908-1964) was a Brit newsman with Reuters, who worked for Naval Intelligence in World War II. Around 1950 or so he retired to Jamaica (where he built himself a house called Goldeneye) and began writing Bond books, of which *Casino Royale* is the first. Although they were praised by fellow genre writers like Eric Ambler and Raymond Chandler, they didn't make any particular splash, as peo-



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ple figured they were just spy thrillers; the sort of thing one bought at a railway bookstall while waiting for the Orient Express. Then, John F. Kennedy happened to remark that he was a Fleming fan. That of course was like Royal Approval: Bond book sales took off, with Hollywood following close behind.

And so, to the tale. At the Casino of Royale-les-Eaux, a seaside resort in northern France, M. le Chiffre ("The Cipher") is a frequent high-roller patron. He's prominent in a Red-friendly transport workers' union, and secretly a Soviet Agent. His finances are secretly on the verge of collapse and he's been plundering the union's till; so MI5 has the notion that if a skilled gambler were to take him on at baccarat, he could be bankrupted and disgraced. The Russkies would then be forced to "retire" him (nudge nudge, wink wink). James Bond is given the job. He's assisted by his CIA contact Felix Leiter, and a fellow MI5 agent, the beautiful Miss Vesper Lynd. Bond succeeds in cleaning out le Chiffre, who then kidnaps him and Miss Lynd and tries to torture the money out of him. Le Chiffre and his henchmen are shot by an agent of SMERSH, the NKVD's internal-affairs enforcers. Bond meanwhile has fallen for Vesper; but just as he's about to propose, she tearfully reveals that she is Not What She Seems and harbors a Dark Secret. She meets a

tragic end.

That's it. There are no amazing high-tech devices to save Bond's hide. "Q" is merely mentioned as a go-to person for train and hotel reservations "and any equipment you want".* Bond doesn't even escape from le Chiffre by his own cleverness, but only because the man from SMERSH takes out his captors. Nor are there any mega-archvillains with secret underground lairs the size of Shea Stadium, manned with battalions of jumpsuited henchmen. (I always wondered where Blofeld and his ilk got the money to build such palaces and hire such huge staffs. And how were they as employers? Did they pay well; did they offer health insurance, child care, domestic partner benefits?)

There is instead a surprisingly complex and philosophical James Bond. While in hospital recovering from le Chiffre's torturings, he has a long intriguing conversation with another agent about right vs. wrong, God vs. the Devil, etc.

"You see," he said, still looking down at his bandages, "when one's young, it seems very easy to distinguish between right and wrong, but as one gets older it becomes more difficult....A Double O number in our Service means you've had to kill a chap in cold blood in the course of some job."

"Now," he looked up again

* Speaking of which, a moment of silence, please, for dear Desmond Llewellyn, who played "Q" in just about every Bond film that ever was. He decided to retire; but just weeks after shooting his last film—in which "Q" is shown handing over the reins to "R", played by John Cleese—Llewellyn died in a car wreck.

cont'd., p. 10

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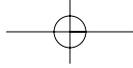
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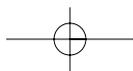
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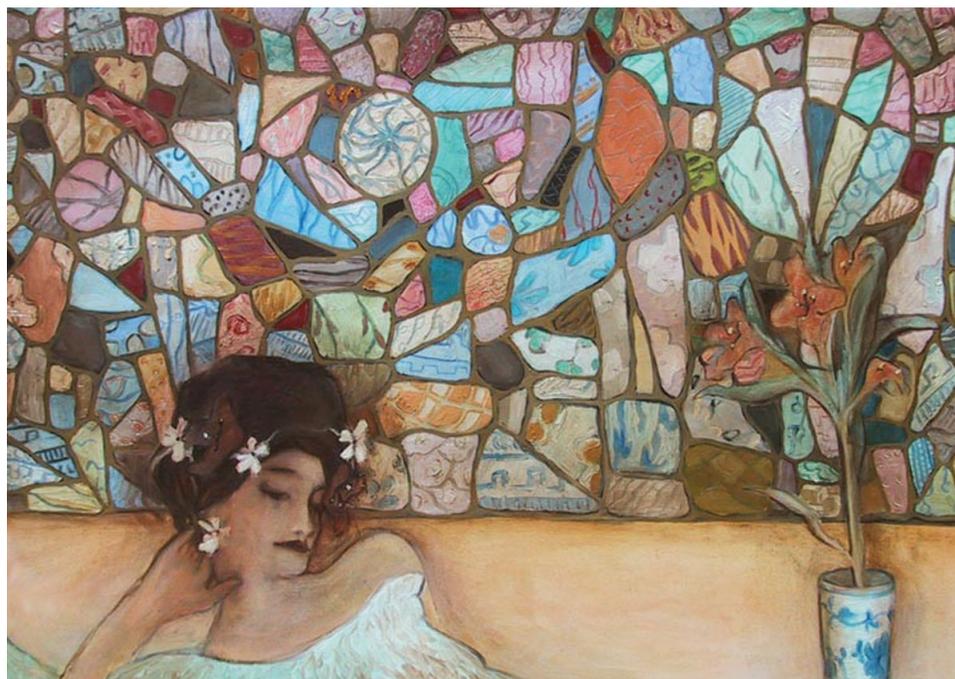
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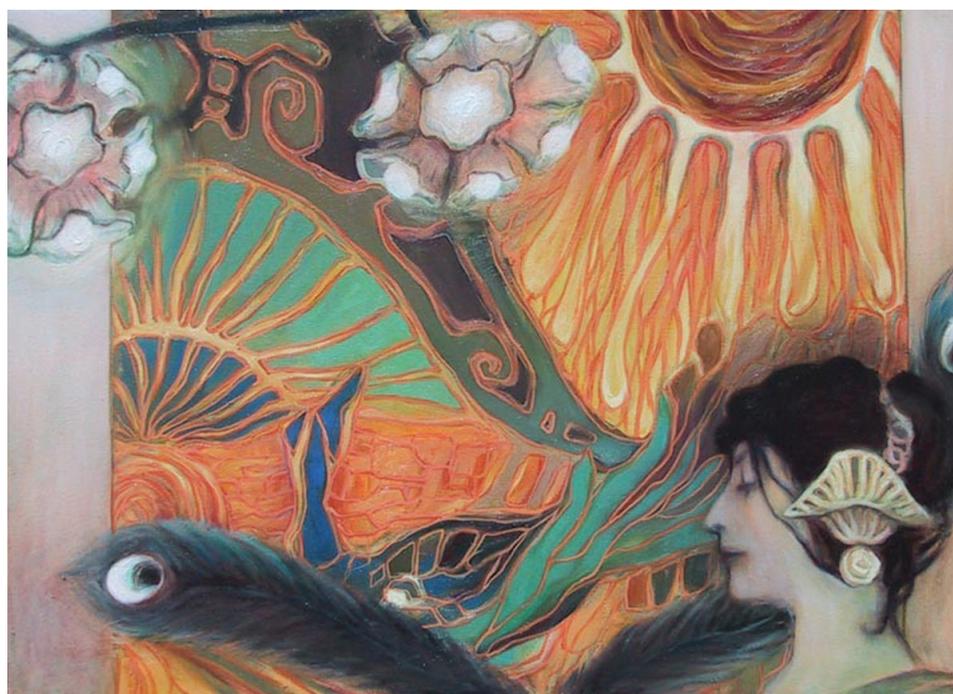




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at Mathis, "that's all very fine. The hero kills two villains, but when the hero le Chiffre starts to kill the villain Bond and the villain Bond knows he isn't a villain at all, you see the other side of the medal. The villains and heroes get all mixed up."

"Of course," he added, as Mathis started to expostulate, "patriotism comes along and makes it seem fairly all right, but this country-right-or-wrong business is getting a little out-of-date. Today we are fighting Communism. Okay. If I'd been alive fifty years ago, the brand of Conservatism we have today would have been damn near called Communism and we should have been told to go and fight that. History is moving pretty quickly these days and the heroes and villains keep on changing parts."

I also wondered what hap-

pened between movie James and all his Bond girls after the credits rolled. At the end of each film he's shackled up with someone; but by the start of the next she's disappeared, not even mentioned, leaving him footloose and fancy-free. Fleming's Bond hints at an answer:

The lengthy approaches to a seduction bored him almost as much as the subsequent mess of disentanglement. He found something grisly in the inevitability of the pattern of each affair. The conventional parabola—sentiment, the touch of the hand, the kiss, the passionate kiss, the feel of the body, the climax in the bed, then more bed, then less bed, then the boredom, the tears and the final bitterness was to him shameful and hypocritical. Even more he shunned the *mise en scene* for each of these

acts in the play—the meeting at a party, the restaurant, the taxi, his flat, her flat, then the week-end by the sea, then the flats again, then the furtive alibis and the final angry farewell on some doorstep in the rain.

(At least *Vesper* fulfills the Bond-girl tradition of exotic names.)

He's still the sensualist Bond, expert on the details of good living. His cigarettes are "a Balkan and Turkish mixture made for him by Morlands of Grosvenor Street." His car "was his only personal hobby. One of the last of the 4 ½-litre Bentleys with the supercharger by Amherst Villiers... in London, a former Bentley mechanic, who worked in a garage near Bond's Chelsea flat, tended it with jealous care." The actual recipe for a Bond martini? "Three measures of Gordon's, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it's ice-cold, then add a large thin slice of lemon peel...[and] if you can get a vodka made with grain instead of potatoes, you will find it still better."

Fleming's writing has some old-fashioned racial and topical touches, which I found quaint. Le Chiffre's MI5 dossier remarks "Ears small, with large lobes, indicating some Jewish blood.... Subject is probably a mixture of Mediterranean with Prussian or Polish strains." Royale village has a natural spring with "enough diluted sulphur to have a beneficent effect on the liver. Since all French people suffer from liver complaints, Royale quickly became

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'Royale-les- Eaux'..." Leiter's suit "hung loosely from his shoulders like the clothes of Frank Sinatra." Bond's appearance reminds Vesper of Hoagy Carmichael. Looking at one of le Chiffre's henchmen, Bond guesses "he would kill without interest or concern for what he killed and that he would prefer strangling. He had something of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*, but his inhumanity would not come from infantilism but from drugs. Marijuana, decided Bond." (Hmm—Sir Ian must've fallen for all that *Reefer Madness* hogwash.)

There's also a sufficiency of tasty atmosphere and description. "...the clock on the *mairie* was stumbling through its midday carillon. There was a strong scent of pine and mimosa in the air and the freshly watered gardens of the Casino opposite, interspersed with neat gravel parterres and paths, lent the scene a pretty formalism more appropriate to ballet than to melodrama."

(Another amusing detail of this particular Penguin edition: The pages are numbered "001, 002, 003," etc. There's nothing special on page 007, though; no pop-up figure of Bond pointing his Beretta* at you and saying "I do recommend you buy my next book, old chap.")

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The clear difference between Fleming's Bond and the movie version is that Sir Ian took his man seriously. His 007 is equipped not with fantastical gadgets and suave witty remarks, but with feelings, doubts, weaknesses, passions—in short, a credible persona. He's also credible as a spy, doing plausible spy-stuff against plausible opponents. The films by comparison are garish explosion-filled cartoons, their Bond an invulnerable superhero-without-tights. (Garish exploding cartoons do have their place, of course; and Dame Judi Dench is fun as the new "M". The Bond films also gave us Shirley Bassey, for which a great many aesthetic sins may be forgiven.)

* Waitamminute. A Beretta? Yep. In *Casino Royale*, Bond carried a .25 caliber Beretta. Geoffrey Boothroyd, a British Gun Enthusiast and Nit-Picking Pain wrote Sir Ian a letter pointing out the weapon's inadequacy and called it a "ladies' gun." Bond carried his now-trademark Walther PPK thereafter. Boothroyd's audacity earned him a paid consultancy on arms-related matters for future books, the title of James Bond's Official Armourer, and a fictional cameo in *Dr. No*. —ed.

Casino Royale was made into a movie too, twenty-some years ago. It's not considered part of the Bond canon because it's a total high-camp satire of that canon. The actor playing Bond's role, supposedly with Sir Ian's tacit approval? David Niven.

Sir Marty Smith holds a double-0 License to Ill granted by The Blotter Magazine Inc., of which he is the publisher.

He is also a DJ on WXDU Duke University Radio and lately has a part-time job at a hobby train shop.

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The Sands

by Brent Powers

We had a big fight in Las Vegas. The wife and I. I'm standing outside the motel room in the roasting heat. Let me in, I say. It's hot out here. Nothing doing. I beat on the door like Fate or something. No answer. I could kill her. Two hundred degrees out here. Are you hiding, Beata? Are you hiding under the bed? Do you think by means of Avoidance Technique to get out of life? Find some new and better life under the bed where there is no discord in a marriage? Where marriage can be just fun with a lot of square dances and kaffe-lattes?

I didn't say all this, how could I? But I was thinking something like it. She sure as hell could hear me thinking it. And I could hear her. There was a tell tale heart there under the bed, it was going doink doink doink there under the bed. Son of a bitch. Don't think you can fool

me. Beata? We've been together thirty-five years, you think you remain a mystery? You do not. I know your every sly little move, your every slide and slither, guilt strategy, indirect speech act, momentary lapses also ... of speechifying ... what do you call that, her eyes go dark like the Sleep of Reason; she's no longer available to Big Science. At the sound of the beep go fuck yourself. That's my Beata, my catatonic baby.

Open the goddamned door!

Nothing.

Except for the heart. I know that heart. Thud. Thud. Thud. She takes medication for it but it's still too loud. She gets looks in quiet rooms. Where you would expect silence as of awe in the face of the drop dead gorgeous here comes Beata with her jack hammer heart and blows the whole thing. "What's that SOUND?" others want to know. "Why is that SOUND here now

when there should be only a vast non-howling void, maybe a little breeze, some birdees, not THUD. Stupid effect here, that THUD." Well, that's my Beata, I have to explain. She's off her meds again and she's making it terrible for everybody else. "Well, you arrogant son of a bitch, why don't you give her the attention she deserves instead of just doping her up or just standing there and trying to disappear?"

They probably don't say all this or none of this is real in the first place but it may as well be for all the hell she puts me through.

The heat. It's the heat. I told you, it's a scorcher. You can't spend that kind of time out of the pool in Vegas and expect to live. Even better go inside where there's near-arctic air conditioning. Keep it refreshing, feel like your inside a frozen Daiquiri or something after you come out of God's own wrath of daylight into this soothing cool room with all the bubble gum pop tunes and tits, too, but mainly row upon row of blinking slot machines,

Sinister Bedfellows

by mckenzee



It was a typical party



ice cream, cake, balloons



a piñata full of bees.



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sometimes a buzzer goes off and there's a ringing downpour of silver coins, shrieks and hollers, a win, a win. There is the promise of unearned income inside. Please come inside. Don't just stand out there under God's own wrath but surrender unto temptation, fool.

But I rave. Do I rave? Ah, yes. But Beata. The goddamned door is locked. I swallowed my key, or lost it in the jaws of some delusion. I lost my way in the heat. Out there in the desert moments of truth await me and I'm not ready for them, Bea. I've just had a re-org. People in the department are no longer speaking. Many are no longer there. Old Worthington is sitting on a curb with his whole life in plastic bags overflowing a shopping cart. Prendergast is weeping still over voice mail. He won't shut up. Life has been cruel, Beata. We've been asked to lower our expectations and still they let us down. Is this why we fought the Revolution? To end up standing outside, pounding and pounding? To push shopping carts. To weep out in the desert and wonder where our precious life style has gone?

But wait. I hear laughing. Is that you laughing now, Bea? Do you think I'm funny again? You used to. You laughed and laughed at all the funny things I said. At least smiled. Can't you smile now? I love that, your sad, untrained smile. The sincerity in your eyes, also sad. What is it about round eyes and slanted brows followed by a little smile that pulls at soft, full lips? To

suffer woes, it seems to say. You can't imagine. So little suffering, thou child of illusion. Go on. Tell me about it. Say how I'm shallow, callow, fallow. Just let me in. We'll drink to it. I'm not always stupid. I have these moments. A mind I can't lay claim to knows exactly what to say. When I with Ozymandias drift unknown upon the sands it will always say the right thing.



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Brent Powers says, "My short fiction appears in *Doorknobs and Bodypaint, Pedestal, Right Hand Pointing, Story Garden*, upcoming issues of *Dream People, Mad Hatters*, and *Prairie Dog 13*. I've also published a novel, *The Dog's Tooth*, which enjoys a small, if silent, cult following. I write for fun and for revenge. Mostly I write because I have to."

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.




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The Way Bad Novels and Worse Movies Always Begin

by Alson H. Wheeler

A drink was sent over
I was tapping on the table to a pretty good jazz tune...
I started to say it wasn't mine
the bartender...see...there were no waiters here...
motioned to a lady at the bar
and
isn't this the way bad novels and worse movies
always begin...

the ice in the drink I had
had lost its exactness and sharp see through edges
it still tasted true
this early the place is pretty empty
and the bartender isn't watering anything down yet...

I motioned for her to come over
all sorts of questions could be asked
soon sandwiches came...and the bartender
then came with Happy Hour food...and it way too early
he mentioned with holiday type cheer...that once
bars offered free lunches...in the old west or something
he'd seen it on TV...a documentary several nights long
we listened to this with philosophy student intent
I figured the bartender was seeking something lost
and
To someone just coming in I guess we'd be taken for a couple...

There is no control in how things seem
we shared small talk without making it
so often the early sentences in any meeting
are rehearsed from so many meetings that are now over
but the echo of them is certain...there...stacked like yardsale
stuff you just aren't ready to part with
and that finally no one will buy...

I noticed sunrays coming through a window
and these rays just touching selected places
seemed out of place here
they would seem more at ease in a church
or in a dining room of an upscale house waiting for a glance
in the middle pages of a glossy magazine
but
the sunrays were here...tiny dust pieces in solitary orbits
breathed within the sharp brightness
I almost mentioned this but surely she saw them too
and
isn't this the way bad novels and worse movies
always begin...

Shut-eye (1)

Damp South Carolina wind warmed our faces
and arms.
She rested at my side, eyes closed,
head leaning on her shoulder.
Her sleep wrapped around my body
like a boa.
My eyelids closed and revealed
a plush red theater curtain as alluring as any
show.

But the curtain didn't rise.
It morphed into a red rolling boil.
Three of the larger bubbles took shape
and became oranges lying on our royal blue
beach blanket.

"I'm going to swim," she told me,
agitating the fruit with her stepping feet.
I took the oranges in my hands,
two in the left and one in the right,
and held all three together in front of my face.
They formed a triangular hole where they met,
through which I saw her step into the surf.
Then, as if walking off a cliff, she dropped out
of my frame
and into the suffocating depths of the ocean.
I screamed a hollow vowel.

Our car jumped a root and jostled us awake
an instant before we hit an old palmetto.
South Carolina air hung heavy and thick,
a dusk quilt padding the jagged broken win-
dows.
Her head hung down to her chest
as the blinking house lights called me back to
attention.

My fingers stuck to each other and smelled
sweet
as I sniffed at them through the coastal air
and watched her swim toward the horizon.

Familiarity (2)

A mechanical rover explores on the television
hanging in the corner of the hospital room.
Alone, he lies in bed watching,
healing from a drunken car crash.

"That thing looks like my pick-up."
Drool escapes his vicatin-numb mouth and soaks his
gown
making a circular wet stain on his chest
where his flag pin usually shows.

A bony blond, all elbows and sickle spine
peeks into the room and smiles at the floor.
A bouquet peeks in from behind her back.
She kicks off her shoes and curls into his body.

Together they face the television and gaze.
A second rover climbs out of a red crater
and approaches the first at a cautious speed.
She shifts her hips to better fit his form.
The rovers allow less Martian terrain between
themselves,
sensing one another, collecting data.

He rolls onto his back and looks out the window
to the sharp image of a full moon.
She follows his lead and stares out the window.
"The moon looks like a big Epcot Center."

3 poems by Jeremy Brown

Alson H. Wheeler is an artist from Greensboro, NC. He'll be at Temple Ball Gallery in Carrboro, NC on 7/23 reading some poems and showing off some paintings. Y'all come.

Jeremy Brown is a teacher from Raleigh who writes poems and stories. Kind of a mystery beyond that.

Generation (3)

Seated next to my father
I gaze out at the bright blue ball
hovering directly in front of us.
I look over at him.
He rests one hand on his knee,
the other slowly rubs the back of his head.
His azure eyes glow against the never-ending
backdrop.
I notice my bare-knuckled grip,
grasping a very modest satellite.

I release my hands and recline onto my back,
spreading my arms in imitation of the two solar
panels
that glow golden and give this rig energy.

I close my eyes and remember a trip in the car
when, in the passenger seat, I followed
my father's finger, pointing over the wheel and to a
pasture.
Two men with shot guns and question mark backs
walked away
from another who lay prostrate in the grass
staring upwards, well beyond the sky.

"Why don't we take care of each other?" I ask him,
sitting up again and looking out at the earth.

Rich white swirls trail and spiral over the brilliant
blue
like winding candle-wick smoke trapped in a glass
bowl.

I peer over and notice I am alone now.
I turn back to the earth and cup my hands out in
front of me,
like I'm offering a gift.
From where I sit it appears that the earth is resting
in my hands.

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