

*Fresh Flowers, All Kinds: Prose by Katherine Mallette and Rachel Daley; Poetry by Delana Dameron;
The art of Linda Carmel; Cartoon by John Wright; Staccato Microfiction and The Dream Journal*

The Blotter

MAGAZINE

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Where unknown, there place monsters.

Questions, questions...

Cartographers used to leave blank space in the areas they didn't know. This was a convenient way of informing their readers - Vasco, Ferdinand, Hank H. and Chris C. - where they hadn't been yet, and in case they were being expensed on a per-mile basis, how much the boss owed them. Times were a bit iffy in those map-by-the-seat-of-your-pants days, with the off chance that unexplored land still had undiscovered creatures with bloody great gnashing teeth and claws. It was your job to inform, and entertain a little. So, you marked the empty area on your parchment appropriately.

I think an editor can be a cartographer of sorts, mapping out what he wants his readers to see. You see, I'm not really a magazine kind of guy. Over the years, since I used to hand the guy at the train station a couple of bucks for a US News and World Report and a Coors Silver Bullet for the ride home, a lot of things have changed. Rolling Stone no longer prints long-form prose journalism. TV talk show hosts edit their corresponding magazines using the same hammer and saw with which they built their shows. Television breaks scenes into potato-chips of video measured in single-digit seconds. Everything is designed to briefly caress the cortexes of the attention deficit disorderly. The world's white space is filled with snippets of pictures and word-bites and chants and jingles, logos and colophons. Monsters no longer haunt the rough edges and bitter ends of our existence, but snuggle down beneath and alongside us, taking the form of frightened politico-cum-anti-everything blogs and ED advertisements while we celebrate any down time we have sending text messages.

That's not good. I know, because I've been asked "what are you doing?" when I've been sitting and thinking. I wonder: apparently there's no room for thinking. Just for doing. All of which bodes ill for a literary magazine, built for the sole purpose of providing something to do when you have nothing to do. So you can sit and read and look at pictures. Relax and take your mind off of being productive.

What about all of that white space, I ask myself, when I look at the pages of our magazine. What goes there?

There isn't a job listing in the world worth pressing *Send* for that doesn't demand some amount of experience. Ten years face-to-

face sales in the banking industry. Proven success in large animal husbandry. Arrgh! Everyone with that meaty a background isn't even looking for work. So how do you differentiate between the truth and what's meant to scare the respondees down to a manageable number of CV's? You ask your mates; the same ones who told you wine before liquor, never sicker. Old reliables that would help bury bodies, or more realistically, would inform you when there's a crusty depending Eva Marie Saint-like from the Rushmore of your nose. Your friends! Where were they when American Idol came to town? It's not your momma's job to tell you to please in the name of all that is holy, stop unbreaking your heart. Mom loves you in ways that make impossible such critical analysis of pitch and tonality and rhythm. You need someone else to tell you when you can't tote a tune in a tin bucket. That's what friends are for.

Friends let friends help out. When we are too proud to let our buds lend a hand, well, they become confused; like they're not good enough to help, but when we crash and burn they're gonna have to be there to pick us up.

So, as I edit today, so go my friends. Call me Ishmael. Slogging down the hill, never mind how empty my purse, into New Bedford drawn by nothing more than the stank of the ocean and the guiding arrows of mast-sticks.

Even Ishmael had good old Queequeg. Who is my cannibal headhunter? She's a layout person who tells me "here is white space, don't worry about it." She's a writer who can take an idea and return with reality. She's a marketing type who helps design a look heretofore only displaying in my mind, and he's a web guy with the eye for shape and color, and a man with the camera who through his lens sees the truth. And he's a bag-man with a righteous getaway car, or a publisher with a sense of the absurd.

Thanks. To them, and to you, too. And keep reading. We'll be on the lookout for monsters.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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CAUTION

The Blotter may contain certain words or ideas that offend. While this was in no way our intent, it is a gas. Continue at your own risk.

“Collecting Compost”

by Katherine Mallette

It’s winter, and the fruit flies have started gathering in my kitchen again. I could call it an experiment in science:

My daughters and I are watching fruit and vegetable peelings mold on our counters. We’re measuring the amount of decay and taking notes on how much time passes before our first fruit fly whizzes past our noses at dinner. We’re scouring the Internet for breeding information.

But I’m not that good of a home-schooling parent yet. I’m a 36-year-old woman with good intentions. At lunch, I peel a mango for my girls and add the tough green skins to a bowl already overflowing with bits of apple from yesterday’s lunch as well as onion skins, pota-

to peelings and mushroom ends from the soup I had planned to make. As I carefully add the mango trimmings to the heap’s top, I tell myself I’ll get rid of these scraps later. They’re starting to get slimy, but I’ve got a 21-month-old wrapped around my leg crying for food and a 4-year-old bouncing the length of our couch.

No, those moldy scraps by our kitchen sink aren’t going unnoticed. And I probably can spout off more facts about fruit flies than anyone else on my street. Like, did you know a fruit fly can lay about 500 eggs? But the only experiment I’m doing is finding out how long it takes before my husband flips out over the odor in our house and the bugs he has to keep swatting away. I’m composting, and — like my inability to clean out the fridge — it’s wearing on my husband.

“Either do something with this stuff or I’m throwing it away!” he barks in mid-fruit-fly shooing with a soapy dishwashing hand.

“Don’t throw it away! I’m going to compost it.”

“Then do it now!”

“I can’t go out there now. It’s dark.”

“Katherine, there are fruit flies

all over our house!”

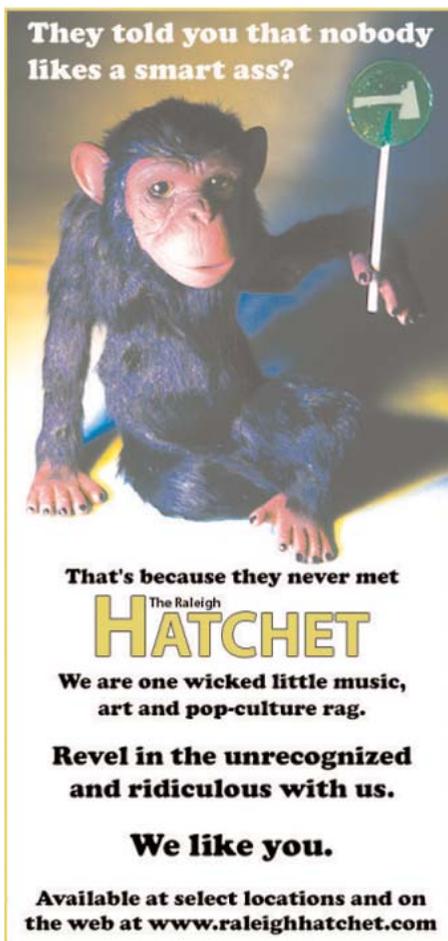
“That’s not a fruit fly,” I tell him. “That’s a gnat.”

Fruit fly. What does he know? I try to flatten one between clapped hands. I miss. I look around our dining room table with hands outstretched and ready. A bug zips past my nose, and I’m after it. Clap! Hmm. It did look kind of fly-like.

Thus began my research into the lives of fruit flies.

Fruit flies are about an eighth of an inch long and usually have red eyes. They can be found any time of the year in places with fermenting fruit and vegetables. And my husband was right: We do have fruit flies. But I wasn’t so far off either. The term “gnat” is a colloquial name used for a number of small insects, including fruit flies. Plus “gnat” just sounds better — like they’re “gnat” much to worry about. Small, whizzing bug? Oh, yes, we have gnats, and I just don’t know where they’re coming from.

To try to stem my husband’s growing stink and fruit fly rage, I start putting my saved food scraps into plastic storage tubs and placing the lids on the tubs. But it reaches a point where even I don’t



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want to risk opening those lids. Plus, my countertops have become nonexistent.

“Mommy, where do I put my plate?” my daughter asks me one afternoon after lunch.

“On the counter,” I tell her.

“But there’s no room.”

I make a deal with my husband that I’ll take out each day’s food scraps the day they’re collected. But we both know it’s a deal I can’t stick to for long. The day the deal is struck — with my husband gripping my shoulders at arm’s length and looking pleadingly into my eyes — I take out the compost before dinner. The next day I’m back to endless collecting.

Maybe it’s some warped version of following in my mother’s footsteps — pairing her love of collecting *anything* with her efforts at composting. My mother’s home is filled with flea market finds: shelves of mugs she’s decided to collect; tables of small ceramic, paper and metal boxes she’s decided to collect; walls, mantels and counters of everything else she’s decided to collect. Nearly every bit of her house is filled — with clothes and other items she can’t get rid of and with gifts she’s found at bargain prices just in case.

“When is the last time your parents saw you?” a friend asked me

recently when I gave away a leather jacket my parents had given me a few years before. “I’m puzzled by the fact that they would think you wear a large!”

Two babies later, I’m now a medium. But at the time my parents gave me the jacket, I was a small. I don’t intend to ever fit into the jacket, and whether I could didn’t factor into my mother’s gift-buying or gift-giving. She’s a collector, and her largely covered walls attest to that.

I have to fight my urge to collect. My husband’s refusal to let my tendencies take over our house has helped. In our bedroom, you can still see his half of the dresser top. The one area of our house that I’ve stopped myself from overly adorning is our walls. My mother’s walls are filled — with framed photographs of every size of her kids and grandkids; with paintings and prints from Thailand, Hong Kong and Germany; with plaques and certificates from my father’s long career in the Army and with other wall hangings, like copper-plated molds, that my mother just likes. The only time I can remember her walls looking as stark as mine are the two days that two of my younger brothers and I helped her wash them. She woke us early with a crazed look. She was itching. Her

fingers scratched at her arms and her legs, and she was sure that it was the house, that dog fur was on the walls and that the walls needed to be cleaned. She put us to work with buckets full of water and large towels. We stood on chairs and scrubbed as high as we could, stepped down, rinsed and wrung our towels, mounted the chairs and scrubbed again. The walls were empty and wet when we were done but — I’m sure — not very clean. Yet that didn’t matter. My mother, with a son in a hospital from a nervous breakdown and a rented-out home reclaimed after an emergency move back to the states, was satisfied — even though we hadn’t touched the dark brown carpet that had been put in nearly a decade before and walked on by tenant after tenant and their pets. My living room walls boast one large Matisse print and two cherished photographs I took on a walk with my grandfather. There’s a stained-glass-framed mirror in my bedroom, and my 4-year-old’s walls hold a Picasso print and a world map. I like to think I’m a believer in that notion that less is more, but maybe I’m just saving myself some trouble in case I ever feel an itch to clean my walls.

Perhaps my mother’s growing tendency over the years to pile up things inside came from years of piling up compost outside. We moved around a lot, but my mother gardened where she could — except for those few years we lived in the Mojave Desert. Even a short film on the Army post we would next call home couldn’t prepare her. My parents rented out our home with its front full of climbing roses and pyracantha that my mother had painstakingly trained on the brick exterior and wooden columns, and we traveled by car halfway across the country. She sat



The Blotter

barefooted, slicing peaches by the armful and dipping them in a mixture of salt and whole crushed chili peppers. She told stories about growing up in Vietnam, and she joked about sitting on Joshua trees in the desert — until we got there. Then she accused my father of dragging her unwillingly to hell. For two days, while we stayed in a motel waiting to move into our military quarters, my mother ranted and my father sat quietly on his bed with lowered head. Finally, she lined up my eldest brother and me. “Tell your father now! Tell him! Who do you want to live with — me or your father?” My youngest brothers, 6 and 1, didn’t have a choice. And, of course, neither did my eldest brother and I. We had just entered adolescence, and we whispered with lowered eyes, “With you.” Somehow, as always, the divorce never materialized and we all moved in together into our new desert home — although my mother vowed she would do nothing to improve it. That was one time she gave her word.

In other homes, my mother planted peach and plum trees, green beans, squash, marigolds and petunias. Always, she grew waves of mint that she harvested nearly daily to eat with bun cha (grilled pork), cha gio (spring rolls), pho bo (beef noodle soup) and other

Vietnamese specialties. I liked smelling the mint, tearing the leaves and crushing them between my fingers. But I didn’t like their fuzzy texture against my tongue. Nor did I like my mother’s compost piles. My back yards stank, literally. The two houses my parents owned were new construction houses, with every tree in the neighborhoods bulldozed and two replacement sticks allotted for each house. My mother always had the trees planted in the back, and then she didn’t water them. “Money doesn’t grow on trees,” she probably said since she seems to like these time-worn expressions. Her favorite is “time is money.” But nothing grew on those trees. My mother put most of her water and effort into the front — maybe because she believed a book *should* be judged by its cover. Our front yards featured roses, crape myrtles and weeping willows. Our back yards featured grass and sticks poking out of the ground. Under each tree, a small mounded moat of garbage baked. The rotting odor of meaty peach pits and watermelon rinds wafted toward us as we half ran and half steeled ourselves against the St. Augustine grass that pricked our bare feet on the way to the swings and slide. Sometimes I sat hunched over on the edge of the hot concrete patio and pulled

the wide blades of grass one by one, slicing their soft, inner ends with a thumbnail. Other times I investigated the compost piles. They were a record of what we had eaten. Often I’d find cracked egg shells on top, still mostly intact but drained of the goop inside that we’d had for breakfast or as part of fried rice for dinner. The piles also were a record of when my father had mown. “Make sure you put the grass around my fruit trees for fertilizer,” my mother instructed him each time — several times. But it wasn’t just our grass clippings she coveted. During her daily runs around our neighborhood, she would stop at our home and tell my father to pick up clippings that neighbors had left at the curb for collection by the city. “Make sure you put the grass around my fruit trees for fertilizer,” she’d say. Then she’d stop again on her next round around the neighborhood. “What? You haven’t gone yet?”

“I was just about to, Honey,” my father would tell her.

“Make sure you put the grass around my fruit trees for fertilizer.”

Making a good mixture of compost requires half brown ingredients and half green. Compost is made by microbes that digest yard and kitchen wastes. To do their work well, the microbes need dead plant materials (like straw and

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autumn leaves) and fresh ones (like green grass and kitchen scraps). A 50-50 mixture of the brown, carbon-based material and the green, nitrogen-based material helps the microbes work quickly. Brown materials provide good aeration to a pile because of their bulk, while green materials balance out the browns' dry nature because of their high moisture. My mother had plenty of green ingredients. What she lacked were browns — unless you counted my hair. Along with the coffee grounds and egg shells were clumps of hair since my mother often served as barber. Sometimes she took on the role unhappily, like the time I decided to give myself bangs while playing dress-up with a friend. I couldn't get my new bangs even — no matter how many times I snipped at them with the hair scissors I had pulled from my mother's bathroom. "Why? Why did you do this?" she fumed. She made me stand on the concrete pad outside while she chiseled at my hair with a razor. My father swept the cuttings and dumped them onto a compost pile. "It looks good," he said. And my mother grunted. She likes my hair long. For several Christmases after I married and moved away, my mother sent me hair scrunchies and curling irons even though my hair was short. It was out of necessity and a desire

for change that I cut off about a half dozen inches. In addition to caring for my toddler full time, I was spending my first daughter's sleeping hours working. I wanted a style that required little or no blow-drying, and I was ready to shed the weight and familiarity of my ponytail. But I was shedding more than that. My husband and I were married for nearly eight years before I felt comfortable with having a child. I was scared to be the mother I knew, and I was scared to raise the child I was — one who hid in bathroom cabinets and cowered under covers while her mother raged outside hollow doors. In my early 30s, I still lowered my eyes in my mother's presence and shook uncontrollably while my mother slammed pots in her kitchen, yelling that my weeklong visit, across states, wasn't enough time. I was ready to grow up.

A well-managed compost pile can produce dark, earthy soil in three to four weeks. In addition to a good balance of materials, speeding the composting process requires heat. The size of a pile is key. A compost pile that is about three feet on all sides is large enough to keep its center well-insulated. Smaller piles can't retain their heat for long. Chopping up large, fibrous materials also helps speed the process, as shredded materials heat up and decompose

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Do you all still publish dreams? Here's one of mine. Let me know if you prefer a different sort of dream, or a different way of writing them down. I have lots of them.

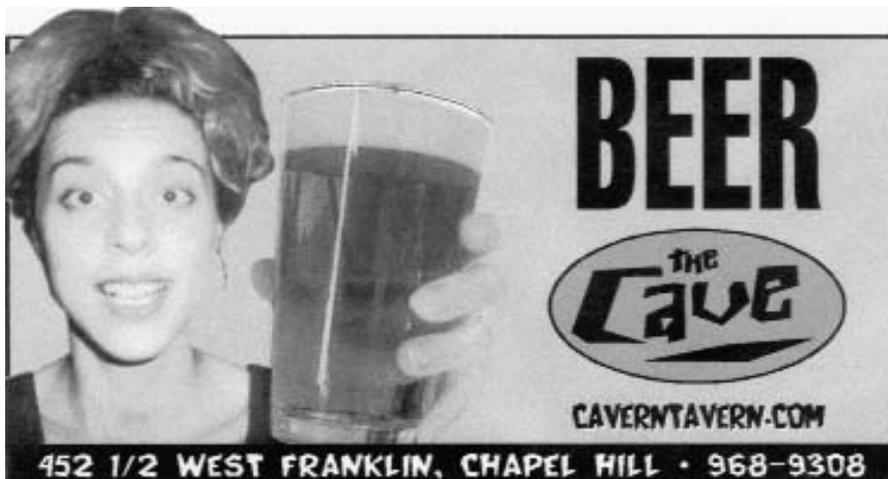
Anatomy of a Snake

My apartment sank two floors down into a basement. This was not another hallucination: the cracked windows let in weeks' worth of whispering leaves. Foot-deep, she waded through, sweeping the corners with a ragged broom. The snake, her pet, enclosed in glass, swayed in laze and boredom before my eyes. "It's broken in two," I cried, seeing its fractured body. True: the snake turned mid-air and saw its own exposed and beating heart, and moved, in sickening precision, towards it with a hungry mouth agape. Hysterical, I fell to my knees; I could not watch as it destroyed itself. When I opened my eyes, the snake was limp at the bottom of the cage, and its body whole again. She looked at me with horror and with love. I had seen what she could not, she said; I had ceased to look upon the mere material of things. My feet were planted firmly in the land of somewhere else. In dreams, in dreams, the wild-eyed blonde boy cried. We embraced in the pool at the foot of a waterfall and he disappeared within my gaping arms. His fading lips still formed the words: in dreams, in dreams. We'll meet in dreams.

A.D. - cyberspace

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterra.com



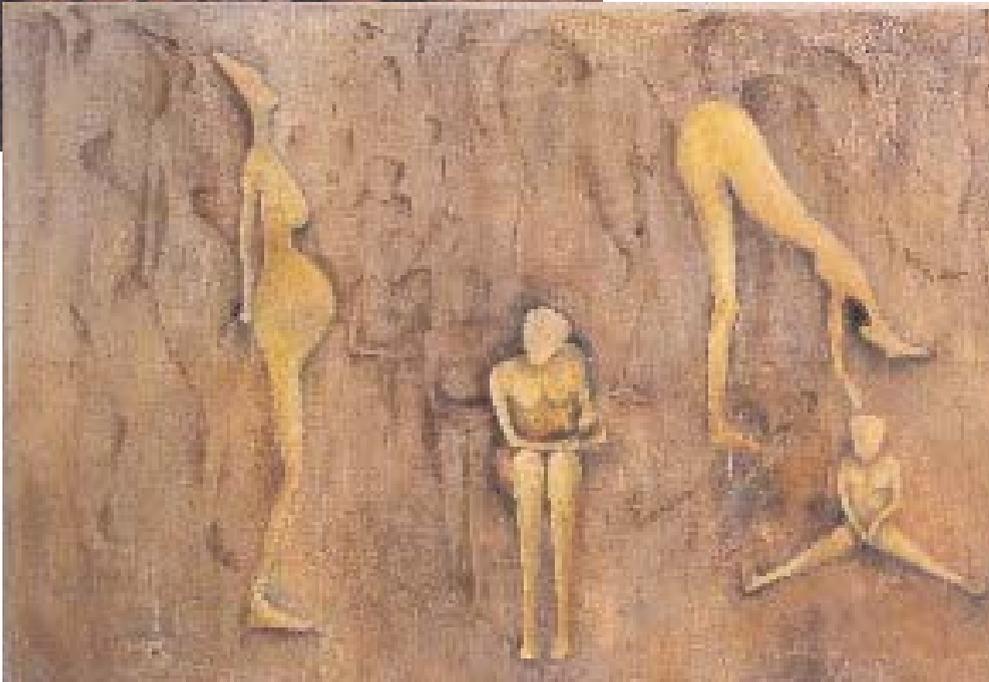
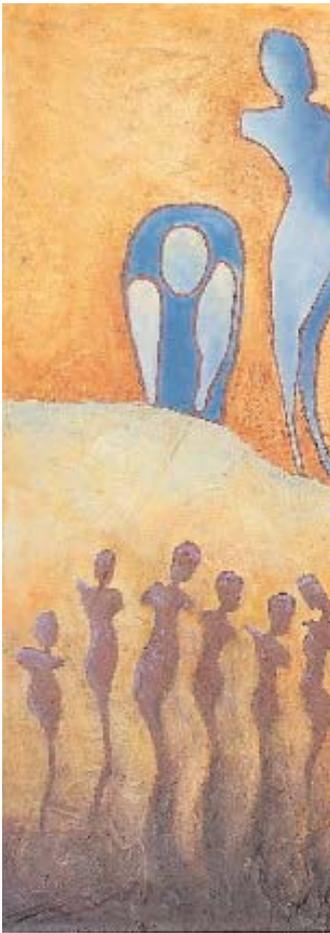
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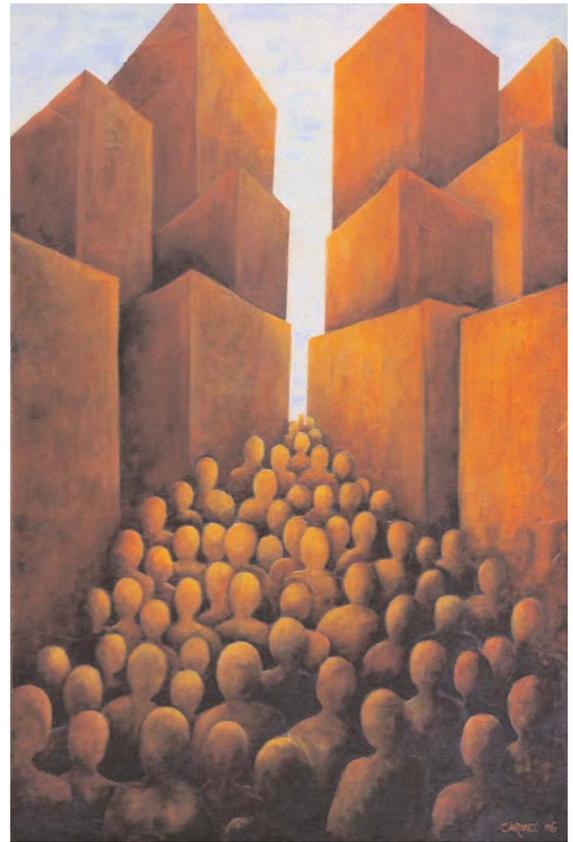
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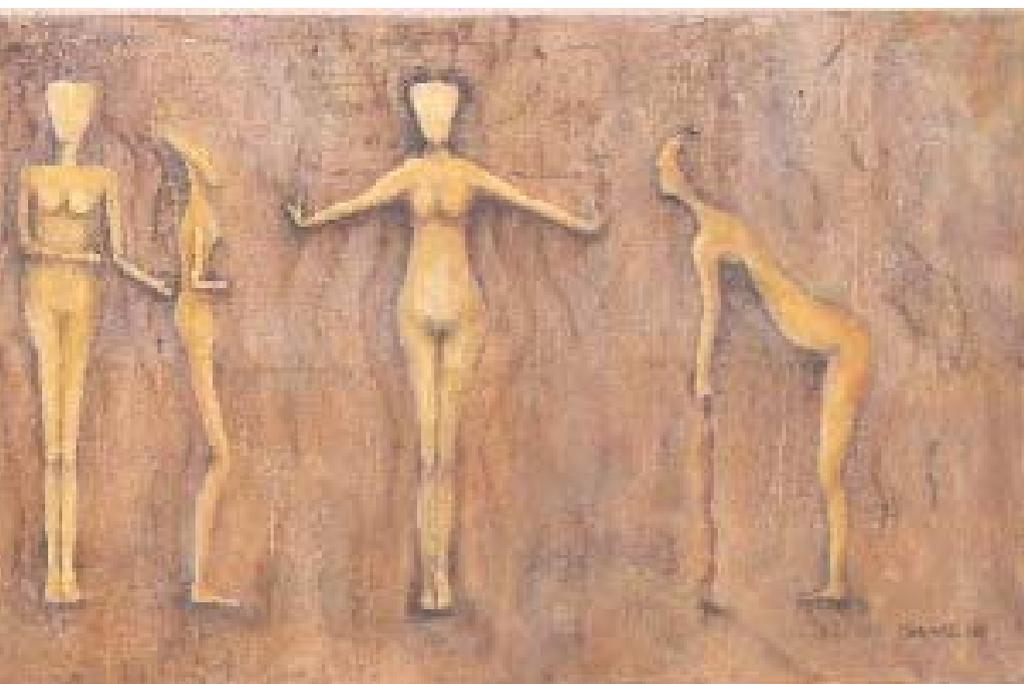


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above - The Chosen
left - Above and Below
far left - When I Was Your Age
below - Eve's Echo



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more quickly. The compost bins in my back yard are large enough to keep any compost I make well-heated, and I once placed the bins in the sunniest spot behind my house. I figured the heat from the sun would keep my compost decomposing through the winter months and the easy access to my back door would keep me adding to and turning the compost frequently. After two years of building a good place for ants to nest and not much else, my husband moved the bins to a more secluded spot in our back yard. They sit under stands of dogwoods and maples, and we can take one of several winding paths to them. The shortest brings us past our ever-widening Japanese kerria, with its multitude of yellow blooms in spring, and past various camellia bushes. Off the side of one path and quite close to the bins, we

believe a chipmunk has set up house. We try not to disturb his hole but always hope to catch a glimpse of him enjoying one of the fat worms from the bins. Like my path to becoming my own person, I'm taking the slow approach to composting. My husband adds grass and leaf clippings at no urging from me, and this past summer, my indoor compost collections disappeared often — and not into the trash. Sometimes my husband will clean out the fridge and leave whole bags full of scraps by our back door. I'll take the longer, winding path, stepping on grey flagstones and brushing past azaleas, liriopse and periwinkle to add the food to our bins. It's probably been 10 years since I first started trying to compost, and I still have no plan for it. I may use it as topsoil on our flower and vegetable gardens, or I may just give it away.

Like my mother, I'm not that good of a composter. But that's by choice. Other similarities I'm finding are just natural — like the way I wake up each morning now on my back, with my legs stretched the length of the bed, and the way my face, hands and feet seem to resemble hers the more I age. I can't fight that. But I am finding I'm more at peace with who I am. Maybe it's the realization that I have important choices to make every day. Who I am is my choice. I'm still adding my own ingredients — and mixing them the way I want. So, I'll add another fruit peeling to one of the containers in my kitchen and I'll take my daughters with me down the winding path to our compost bins. We'll look for the chipmunk, and I'll hug them for as long as I can.



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"Silent Movie"

by Rachel Daley

CANDY WRAPPER

Since it's laying on the floor of the train, you're flashed back to afternoons of eating slices of processed cheese, knotting the wrappers into bowties and feeding them sequentially to your hope for passing currents. This is a canal though it's deep. So currents won't come. The wrappers generally stay where they're dropped, forming a bushy disintegrating plastic head below your feet. Your motivation is the willed memory of happier, tropical days during which you sneaked into and out of kitchens and onto trails along the side of a local highway. Two things to absorb into any gesturing: the dominance of horizon and the smell of rotting salt. Trails is a strong word for what you find to be mostly cracked cement and generous lots with Lincolns parked for Chinese. The wrapper/wrappers are equally your charge; they make you observant in the daylight. You fathom that you might one day live to regret your lack of investment in the physical burden that comprises your stay here, if only you could outlive the way everyone looks at you, looking at pieces of trash. While pieces of trash are also energy, you seem to indicate either your lack of regard for the people's stylish scent or your fierce concentration on the train's swing. You are determined not to sit against the back of the seat.

You leave, getting up from the respective edges of the seats and head toward the back of the gate. You've already much-romanticized this layover, this feeling of intrepidity and cushioning, and you

want to try it out once again – because the color of the wrapper has reminded you of your childhood, and the tastiness of silver and pink things. It is something you are either promised in the wrapping, literally, or is suggested by way of your secret movie. How has it come to this. Hopefulness is a medical term: intussusception. What you once effected by way of clogging the sensations of time and place with animated movies – rejection of responsibility for your petrification of weight – you fold back into a premeditated dalliance with ideas about sugar and gelatin. Dyes and petro-chemicals make up your connection to consistency. Your singular identification with

previously indentured things has met its end in your return to substantiation. You believe in the violence of the pink geometry knotted on the train's floor. You make no apologies for your instant summarizing. It has its utility. More than that, as a color it grasps what you nostalgize as your future. Your soundtrack.

FIRETRUCKS

You walk along the street in order to imagine the end of one season for the sake of your arrival at the next. Significant cloud cover can force this artificially, and the general blue tone about the size of the road names the time and peculiar faithlessness of the day. The scene,

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as you come upon it, is a celebration of declension. From intrusion to invisibility, from smarmy trucks past an eighteen-year-old stopped undoubtedly on his bike.

You arrive at this appearance of ease after decades and decades of argument with exiled crowds appearing in your neighborhood. In relation to them, you've been outspoken, yet reticent. Your walking now signals a desire to participate in the management of the syntax of this street. And this is a job for anyone interested in the wily travelogues of men's fashion magazines. There, the pretense to invisibility is mitigated by invitation to drink, and soft cooing angles and shapes set the stage for dream sequences too ridiculous to protest. You notice also that the metaphorical honey at stake is always a little bit sour. But the tales of foreign explosions in foreign places, you reckon, are nonetheless creeping out from under their former homes in nightstands and are surrounded by coffee shops, to scratch behind the ears and stare, and somehow they've scratched you too. You feel it. You look like you feel it. And so you make this funny little journey in the name of your consequent fate; you embrace the simplicity of franchise art. Even though your own experience, mind you, has thrust you forth in the name of how things indeed do fall apart, you notice this firetruck, one explosive foreigner, and make it yours. You are content to skim the cream for leftovers.

Haha. You bump into what looks to be a pile of rubber waders and belts. What are they doing there. You glance sidelong at the movement of a bunch of people just off the street; they've congregated near

a house, and you continue to be in motion towards the presumable end of this street. They should be so presumptuous. It is upon this presumption that you bank. It would be the cessation of your own movement that would cause some trouble, to make yourself some part of a new element of the scene. Jumbled as it is, it is a closed surface to your reliable implication on the path towards away from the house, that scene. You're not thinking of looking, are you? Indeed, you wouldn't dream of turning back. It's true that you will be re-treading this same path eventually, but you could do so with your practiced nonchalance, and even with brusqueness, or fatigue. It's not necessary that you appoint yourself as witness. Who are you to become an astringent, a donut hole, a diamond necklace? Then again, perhaps it is something happy, and they wouldn't mind anyway. Maybe the ease with which you now travel guarantees that nothing you will henceforth witness will be anything but pure pleasantness. You turn the firetrucks into firekittens and the rubber waders into sex toys and what else. That boy on the bicycle he could be the central narrator for what would be your ultimate photorealist epic. Give up on retirement plan. Plead a new found love for pleasant senselessness and artificial trees.

Others have done so before you. But what about you. The heavens are teeming before you and a group of well-versed but taciturn salesmen linger above. You've never fit in like this before and so you consider this your chance to use girlhood innovatively. Though the fact of your being a werewolf ultimately befouls the sublimity of the

night.

THREE DOGS

You have in mind a highway that once was far away. You're on it but you're able to keep it at length, so you can listen and look, to make the shininess and your special investment in the length the same. Even while you're with an escort. The angle of sun over the highway, in an approach to the overpass you will be taking, and the relevance of the make of the car in relation to this special time of year: you must first plot the course and duration of these fundamentals. You are indebted to a certain celebration forging its way through the atmosphere of the possession of this highway. So you are pretentious, and greedy in filling the car with an insistence upon the domain of your memory. This requires not conversation and is simply part of your jaunty way of sitting there.

You are hearing about the gas station. The temperature of your side of the car can be adjusted independent of the driver's settings. You are listening for keywords that will disseminate your physical membership in the sun's pointed reflections, like in the chrome decals on the dash. You are enjoying this descent into recognition of the highway, the seat's composition, the set-up of having been to this place before for lunch. But that was during winter time.

A group of dogs now passes ahead on the other side of this highway. Again, a local two-lane highway that requires no irony or even contextualization as a preamble to the tremendous expectation placed upon its bumpiness. But still the dogs are there, and they instantaneously enact the highway's com-

plete divorce from its line-by-line scripting. The break occurs in the space between driver and passenger, a kind of genre break signaling a vacuum in that utilitarian space. The shield between a guarantee of that territory, the dogs', and the highway collapses and what you have left is the inability to reply or replay. You decide to wait for the stimulation of a new memory. It might point your direction to exactly what you need to build up as what you've been neglecting, at least in the transition between senses seasons. You once took this to be as much a result of your effort as it was the effort of a car's inevitability, but in either case the highway is the recipient of the memory. It leaks into the suppression of transition-as-corporeal. It gives off strong enough odors.

However, that transition is palpable to everyone, you figure, and you take your obsession to be simply your acceptance of the responsibility.

The rest of the day is enjoyable and uncomplicated, and you appreciate the chance to disrupt in small increments your usual operational mode, a constitutional insufficiency. You don't know how that comfortable stride would work with respect to the appearance of the dogs, and the subsequent inversion of your defects. Apparently, they have yet to surface. The dogs have insured that you will build up your indestructible witness. You will have at your disposal an undeniable origin of each narrative digression.

You offer to a guest the recipe of

your newfound béarnaise. You swim briskly and with unexpected strength in the neighbor's lap lane. You borrow two pairs of socks for the train ride to the show.



"Like we need a, duh, *raison d'être* to get together and talk and drink uine.
Gaaahd!
As if."

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“Living Space”

by Sarah Vickers

We each have our foibles. The little things we cannot do without: the holiday we must take every year, the programme to be watched, food that must be consumed. It's reasonable, no need to call it an addiction: merely a fancy, an indulgence: the human condition.

Every evening I indulge myself with a trip to the basement. It has become a ritual. Starting at the back corner, I examine every crevice for webs, for insects, for droppings, for any living creatures in my space. Occasionally, I find something and bring my nauseated self to kill it, swiftly. There was a time when I would put out a trap but now it must be instantaneous. A swift blow.

The insects are easy; an accurately applied broom is usually sufficient. Spiders are crushed. Sometimes their legs are separated from the body and slightly liquid patterns, like tiny Rorschach blots form on the hard white surface.

I had to remove the furniture. They were hiding there, in the dark shadows and crevices. The basement is a beautiful vision of white now; there is no place left unlit. I thought it was sealed, but somehow they still get in. Perhaps I should cover the windows, wall up the door and make it a pure cube. But that, perhaps, would spoil the fun. I will give them a sporting chance. My power over their lives brings me pleasure.

Last night I saw a mouse. The revulsion overwhelmed me; I know it is still down there, in my space, in my beautiful white room. Living its life

without my permission, sully my basement.

I must kill it with my own hands. I am resolved. I will catch the mouse and break its neck. Feel the tiny bones snap beneath my fingers. A wave of death to calm me. A tiny scream to soothe me. A lifeless body to give me living space.

Staccato Microfiction

is a holding pattern, per se, of Staccato Magazine, Matthew Boyd, Editor.

Submissions, five hundred (500) words or less, to staccatomag@yahoo.com.

Don't change a hair for us, not if you care for us.

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Twelve Meditations

by Delana Dameron

- I.
Soldiers plant mines in fields
to keep us from harvesting
- II.
Death lingers Jabalia
- III.
Vultures scour crops
pregnant flies pierce festered
skin of those that did not cross
- IV.
Rice-like offspring weave
through wounds as if to suture
- V.
We cannot reclaim the dead
- VI.
Home is a wasteland
dry desert waiting for rain
- VII.
Time is our enemy
like wheat that waits
the downward swing
time's sickle scythe
- VIII.
We are fallen olive tree limbs
our broken branches
- IX.
We await the rains that nourish
we await the rains that precede rainbows
we await the rains that keep soldiers at bay
we await the rains
we await
- XI.
Our love mourns constant
simple song sung in shadows
- XII.
We wear black for three days
when loved ones don't come home
black coffee for the fathers
the blackest black they can stand
with sugar and cream
still in the bowls

1967

We piece together what's left after war.
The war that stole my poor uncle's sight.
After that instant flash, he has known only night,
the night he walked by his brother's blue car
That exploded with bomb-protest. I read
To uncle his only letter. The same
words I must repeat. I find now he needs
Love in this war, to hear his brother's name
within a letter he will never see.
We have lost much more fighting for this land:
My father, brother, uncles. Men who can't
Return to Palestine, so they must flee.
We without working bodies - defenseless.
Girls fight off soldiers. We protect our nest.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rachel Daley co-owns and -operates Open Heart Farm in Burlington Vt, and works as Farm-To-School coordinator for Burlington schools. We can't lie, though; she also writes a cool dizzy.

Delana Dameron, a history major at UNC-CH, made me ask her five times to send poems. Grovelling may be one of my best things.

Katherine Mallette is a pen name intended to keep the writer sufficiently anonymous. And so we respect that.

Sarah Vickers moved to St. Louis with her husband in 2003. She's on the lam from real work juvie - that is, the old nine-to-five. Keep on sticking it to the man!

John Wright is our court cartoonist, so be nice to him when you see him.

YOU'LL LAUGH!

YOU'LL CRY!

**YOU'LL WRITE your
CONGRESSMAN!**



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