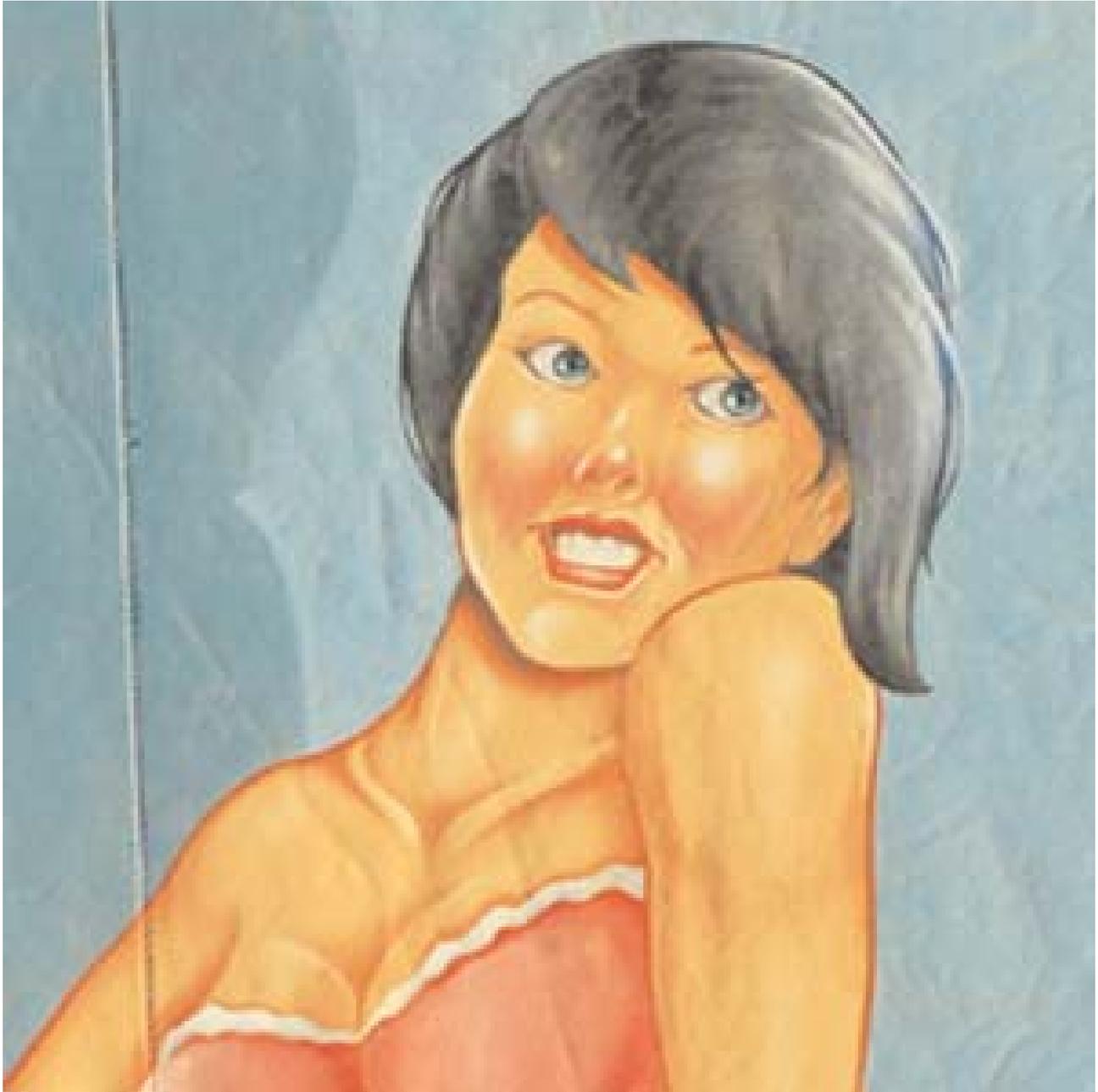


Spring Eternal: Breezes by Jasmine Rizer, Margot Miller & W. Deppeler; Chills & Thrills with Lori Ballard; The Moon & the Stars by Christian Ward & Rob Plath; A Dash of Color by John Wright; The Reawakening of Marty Smith's Paper Cuts; A Cautionary Tale About College; The Dream Journal & 5 Minutes With.

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Spring Forward

A lot to think about this month. Warmer weather. Crappie fishing. Four years of steady publication. We're receiving international submissions! We need help with distribution – we lost Charlottesville and seek helping hands in Greensboro, Charlotte, Wilmington, Charleston, bastions of civilization all. If you want to assist your friend The Blotter with spreading the words, drop me a line.

Unlike the Confederacy, which having left Richmond under Union fire, returned only in tearful, withered gray dreams, the Blotter has come back to Chapel Hill. Plotted on a graph-paper map of civilization, the Hill is the geographical center of Blotterland. Athens, home to the magazine's production for more than a year, has been a most noble and gracious host. My apologies to our Georgia cousins on what might be seen as our premature withdrawal.

Still, I am troubled. It's not like Athens isn't, well, the Athens of the South. It's just that I'm here. What to do? How can we serve you appropriately from way up here? I fear that you will develop a sense of abandonment. Let us nip this in the bud. I need to get out more. Certainly Athens must have coffee and other requirements. I should visit. Yes, quite right.

Four years in print! Some of you may have started reading us when you arrived in the hallowed halls of higher learning, Highlighters in hand, and are now heading off to who-knows where. All grown up and saving China. Our congratulations to you.

I've been making some editorial clinkers – yes, I can see them too. Slightly embarrassing misspellings, line spacing gaffes, et al, and certainly not the fault of our writers and artists. Mama-Mea Culpa. That is, it's my mom's fault. She's the one who told me "All anyone can ask is that you do your best." Truth be told, I haven't been leaning on my editorial staff as much as I should be. Ah well.

For what it's worth, I have a friend in Oklahoma who, like me, made a mid-life career path jibe to port - he went to funeral director's school. This is his true story:

A woman came in to view her grandmother prior to the funeral. I stood nearby, letting her have her private moments with her loved one. Then she turned and walked over.

"Very nice," she said to me. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," I replied. Our funeral home does a nice job with hair and makeup and the other visible details of

preparing the deceased. The woman stood in front of me silently, as if she was thinking about what was going to happen next; friends and relatives arriving for the service, going to the gravesite and so on.

"That blue dress looks very nice on her," she said. I nodded. "She'd like how good it looks." I gave another nod and a slight smile of pride. But the woman just stood there without talking or moving. *Oh, God*, I thought.

"She'd have liked it, if it was hers." Yep. It wasn't grandma's dress.

I blurted an apology, told the woman to stay put – not in those exact words, of course – and rolled her grandmother back into the preparation room. Then I ran to find my partner. He was waiting outside a room where another funeral was going on in the home. You know what happened. The other funeral was also a woman. We both walked in on the in-progress service and made our way to the front of the room. I closed the casket while my partner apologized to the gathered assembly, and we rolled the woman out of the room.

In the prep room we struggled to swiftly undress, switch clothes and re-dress the two dead women. Trust me when I say that this was neither an easy nor a fun thing. As quickly as such a thing can be completed, we got the two prime attendees of their respective funerals rearranged and rolled the one whose service was underway-but-paused back into position, apologizing once again. Hustling back to the woman's grandmother, I rolled her into the room where her service would be held, and where her granddaughter still stood, exactly where I had left her. I opened the casket.

"Yes," said the woman. "That's her dress."

"Sorry for the mix-up," I said. In the funeral business, all you do is apologize. There's no point in being shy about it.

The granddaughter looked me in the eye.

"I liked the other one better."

What are you gonna say? I'm sorry.

To our friends in Athens and all of our graduates, thanks for being there.

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.

“Moonshine”

by Jasmine Odessa Rizer

Once, my friend Mitch, who does genealogy and can tell you how long ago each of his ancestors came to America and why they left their motherlands, encouraged me to research what he called my Irish heritage.

“Mitch,” I replied, pointing to the bottle of corn liquor on my kitchen counter, “I don’t have any Irish heritage. I’m country trash. That’s the only heritage I know.”

“You don’t actually drink that stuff, do you?” Mitch asked, eyeing the bottle.

I do actually drink it. In moderation. Except one weekend when I’ve had too much of it, I take a cab to my workplace.

(I copy-edit press releases for a bleeding-heart liberal organization with cramped, dingy offices downtown. They can’t afford to pay me well, and I don’t mind because I earn

enough money copy-editing everything else that comes my way, including poorly spelled erotica.)

I seldom drink to excess. When I do, it hits me hard. I have to try every key on my key ring before I hit the one to my basement office. Slowly, I navigate the stairs and walk into the darkened room.

One desk is lit by the lonely glow of a computer screen, as I’d hoped. The harassed-looking boy (or young man, or whatever you call twenty-seven-year-olds who still think they can save the world) sitting at this desk is deep in thought, and hasn’t even noticed my noisy arrival.

After my second glass of corn liquor, I started to form the idea that I would creep across the darkened office and drop into this boy’s lap in a seductive fashion, but that was

before I had the third and fourth glasses. Three steps into the office, my stomach connects with the sharp corner of an empty desk. I give an un-sexy moan of pain and hit the floor.

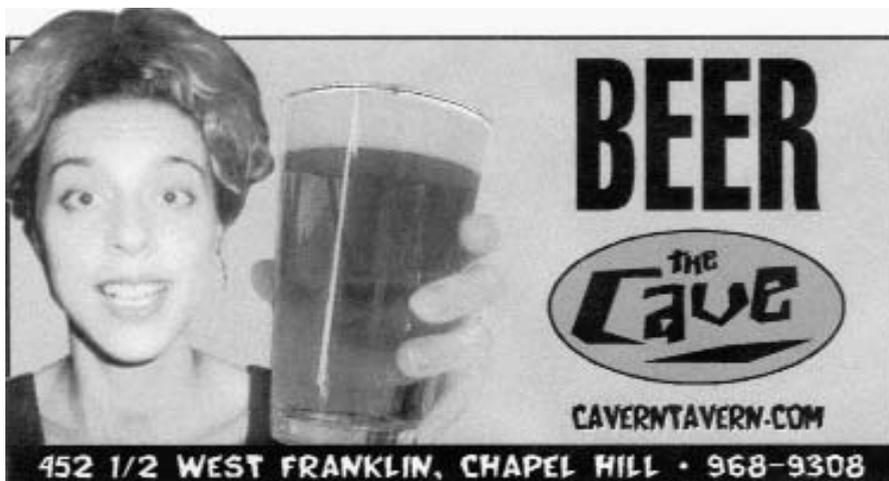
The young man at the desk, a bony, homely boy named Patterson Welch, finally becomes aware of my presence at this point. I can hear the creak of his chair as he gets up. A few seconds later, his hand looms out of the gloom at me. I grab it, using the leverage of his gangly body to pull myself to my feet.

“Are you all right?” he asks, stooping slightly to look into my face.

This question strikes me as hysterically, inappropriately funny, and I start to laugh. “No,” I giggle. “I think I might have delved too deeply into my private supply of rotgut.”

He deposits me in the nearest crappy ergonomic chair and goes over to turn on the overhead lights. “You look terrible,” Patterson says gravely, walking back towards me, kneeling down and getting deliriously close.

If I were sober, I would probably take advantage of this



moment to swoop in and kiss him, hard, but I'm not sober, so there you go.

"You don't usually drink like this, do you?" he continues, clearly confused. I shake my head solemnly. "What's the matter?"

After the third glass of moonshine, I evolved something seductive to say to Patterson Welch, but after the fourth glass, I forgot what it was, so now I inform him solemnly, "I'd like you to sleep with me."

"Okay," says Patterson, backing away from me in an insulting manner, "Phoebe, what the hell? I never thought you were interested in me."

"I wasn't," I admit. "But I was having a drink, and I started thinking about how you wanna save the world, and how attractive that is."

Patterson narrows his large, luminous eyes and tilts his head suspiciously. "Let's get this straight. You want to sleep with me because of my charity work?"

"Yeah."

He sighs heavily and says, "Phoebe, why don't we start at the beginning? What happened to make you want to get – sorry – stinking drunk like this?"

So I tell him what happened, why I came home and started

drinking at six in the afternoon. How when I got to my apartment building, there were two patrol cars in the parking lot, and when I got upstairs to my floor, there were three policemen in the hallway. I asked the girl from next door what was going on, and she said in a hushed, sorrowful voice, "That kind of heavy-set guy across the hall? He passed away."

"No way," I gasped. "I used to see him every day, carrying his groceries in. I never spoke to him because he walked with a limp and I didn't want him to think I'd been staring."

"The coroner says he's probably been dead for two days," my next-door neighbor whispered.

We went into our own apartments and I got out the kibbles for my dog and wondered what he would think if I died and nobody came to check on me for a couple of days. Would he be scared? I opened up the corn liquor without really thinking about it and wondered how a person becomes so alone that their body sits, empty and unloved, for two days before somebody calls the police. I drank slowly. I drank more than I realized. I thought, If I died tomorrow, the only person in the whole city who'd come looking for me is Patterson Welch. Patterson would come to check on me because he wants to save the whole world and everybody in it.

Patterson listens to all of this and then he says, "Phoebe, you are a strange girl."

"Thanks," I reply bitterly. "You're not going to sleep with me, are you?"

"No. You're drunk. It wouldn't be right." He sounds just a little facetious, and he turns his back on me as he speaks, so I can't tell if he's smiling or not. But I'm pretty sure he's not going to have sex with me.

I bet he'll make me a cup of coffee, though.



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“Real Conversation”

by W. Deppeler

Ed. Note: the following conversation was overheard by the author. Any non-dialogue text is a combination of the author’s own thoughts and observations.

“I got 50 bucks for swallowing the worm,” she said.

She was defending her behavior at the Christmas party. I started working there in January.

“They add the worm to begin the fermentation process,” she

said.

“Really?” I stopped in mid-bite, tuna sandwich removed from my mouth to ask the question.

Ilya works at the same health-care company. She is a home health care aid. I manage the office.

“Si. My uncle has a still in Puerto Rico and he adds all kinds of things.”

“Such as...”

“Poop.”

The tuna caught in my throat. I forced it down.

“Poop?”

“And other things. Fermenting grapes, rotting beef.”

“and poop.”

“Uh huh, poop.”

My thoughts: Adult poop? Baby poop? How do you ask someone for their poop? Not dog poop off the road or something!

“Human poop?” I asked.

“Yes. Just a little. It helps with the fermentation process. His still is up in the mountains and he sells his liquor to the police in town for \$25 for a big jug. You can’t taste it. It’s really good. And it’s 105 proof.”

“But it’s poop!”

She shrugged and walked off. Sometimes there really is a cultural divide.



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"Fudgies"

by Margot Miller

One drizzly Saturday, my sisters and I went to watch at the riding ring on the West Bluff; our bikes fell to the ground as we draped our bodies over the post and rail fence to watch the riders in the jumping circuit. We hung suspended by our armpits, hoping someone would offer to let us ride, but it was clear they had a schedule and all the horses were booked for paid lessons. We had neither boots nor helmets. No one was going to propose a charity ride.

Next, we headed up to Fort Holmes, the highest place on the Mackinac Island, where we collected pebbles from the roadway and pulled our bikes inside the stockade. Long carriages filled with tourists came by every fifteen minutes. We called the occupants "Fudgies" because they bought pounds of Famous Mackinac Island Fudge and

didn't know the final C was a W. Lying in ambush, inside the stockade we observed them circling the perimeter.

When we could see a driver, droning on about the War of 1812, flick his horses to pick up the pace, one of us launched a projectile: "Fudgie, go home!" we shouted in one voice. The others sent a secondary volley of pebbles toward the unsuspecting sightseers, and we ducked down, breathless.

The sun came out during the carriage tours' mid-day break, but a pony cart was coming up the hill. We watched from the blockhouse as the Sheridan kids from the West Bluff, turned into the circle with their Appaloosa tall pony.

"Don't let them in," I said.

"They won't stop," said my sister.

But Sherry, who was my age, got down and held the pony's head, while Janet, who was older, turned over the reins to Bobby, who was eight.

"Give him a nudge," Sherry said as she stepped away. Bobby flapped the leather straps against the cart. Janet called to the animal, "Clipper, Get up!" Clipper saw an



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By John Wright

synonyms - words that sound different but mean the same thing



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opportunity and took it, leaping away. Janet's hands flew to the sides of the cart and Bobby fell backwards off the driver's seat as the buckboard disappeared down the hill. Sherry had not stepped far enough away, it seemed. She was on the ground.

We watched as Sherry stood, touching her head, dazed. Was she bleeding? Should we help her? Probably each of us wanted to, but we only stared as she trudged away. When we were sure she was gone, we unlocked the stockade and walked our bikes out into the humid afternoon.

At church coffee hour the next day, we lurked near the table of sweets and heard about the run-away. Mrs. Sheridan's sister was telling our mother that Sherry had a concussion and a cut on her hand. She'd gotten stitches. Janet and Bobby were all right, but they were forbidden to drive the cart again.

We couldn't look at each other but while one of us reached for a piece of fudge, another of us said, "Serves them right."



The Dream Journal

Real Dreams, Real Weird

I'm standing under a noon sun, in the courtyard of what appears to be, or perhaps just feels like somehow, a Catholic High School. The building is an unexpected expression of religion; two stories of circular, deep-red brick post-modernism, interrupted by huge expanses of curved floor-to-ceiling glass set between bright steel beams, behind which are humming, busy main corridors overlooking the courtyard where I stand, not belonging and unseen, unnoticed..

In the courtyard itself, the sun shines just-warm and the air is without breeze, one of those perfect spring days in which one might curl up as if in a bright blue blanket. Pebbled concrete pathways wind around smooth concrete planters, benches and patches of pale, yellowish grass, while young men and women in ties and shirtsleeves, dark skirts and sensible heels, variously burdened with loose books and knapsacks, mill about wearing calm and perfect smiles.

They are all moving quickly, as

if about to be late for their next classes, but their hurry is tempered somehow with a kind of programmed grace, as if it is not possible that they will fail to be in their seats at the sounding of the bell, no matter how perilously close they may come. They are clean cut, bright, and even-featured, attractive-but-not-too-attractive, and seem wholly contented and happy to be where they are – and they are silent, even their footsteps.

I watch this without thought or emotion, as if I share the uniform of silence within and without, scanning this perfect spring day and all the travelers within it, without aim or motivation of my own, a bystander in the truest sense.

A blond boy, tall and handsome in that slender almost-man way, suddenly appears, standing directly before me, he alone among his peers finding me visible, somehow, and gestures towards the second-floor glass above the eastern side of the courtyard.

I turn to see a young woman, a beautiful porcelain Irish with black hair and clear blue eyes, standing behind the glass and looking down at me. She is white-gloved, wearing a yellow organza Easter dress, a ruffled,

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eyelet-trimmed and crinolined little girl's affair of a dress, cut and formed to a perfect, womanly hourglass, with a white-ribbed and flowered straw bonnet tied under her chin. At her waist she holds a bouquet of flowers with both hands.

She smiles at me, like the others, calm and white-toothed, for a long moment. Then, very suddenly, she thrusts her arms up and out, still clutching the bouquet in her left hand, her right palm and fingers straightened and tilted upward, shattering the silence with a firm, clear and sure voice: "I have seen them as they come from the west.. I will not dream of prophecy!" She closes her eyes slowly, smiling lips-together and serene, then arcs her head backwards, the tendons around her throat taut. For a few seconds she stand so, as if crucified, then, as if she has just been let go, falls feely forward without altering her pose, uncut as she passes through the splintering glass, landing with a dull thump upon the pebbled concrete and the pale yellowish grass below.

I look up to find the blond boy-almost-man has disappeared back into the crowd. The students in the courtyard continue in their pepsodent-hurry, crushing the bouquet underfoot, insensible to the black-haired girl's stilled body in its sparkling shroud of broken window pane and yellow-Easter splendor, as they rush in silent footfall to get to their respective classes on time, to be obediently seated before the bell tolls.

CC - Raleigh, NC

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@blotterrag.com

Five Minutes with: A.J. Jacobs

I discovered A.J. Jacobs' work via a Christmas present from my wife of his book, "The Know-It-All (One Man's Humble Quest to Become the Smartest Person in the World)", which I presumed she gave to me as a joke, as in "too late, bubba" or perhaps "see, honey, you too could get up and get a real job," and which I left in my car. I read it while sitting in the parking lot waiting for my daughter's pre-school to get out. Anyone walking by might have wondered what was wrong with the man, laughing by himself in the mini-van. A.J. and his wife have since had a son, he has written a new book "The Year of Living Biblically" (that is, A.J. has) and he also signed my copy of "The Know-It-All" for me (again, A.J.). He keeps an blog and online journal at www.ajjacobs.com, and agreed to participate in this short interview, which makes him also a great good sport.

A.J., your book "The Know-It-All" contained segments where you spoke of your father's habit of doing something special at parties. I found this to be one of the funniest things I've ever read, so much so that I tried to explain it to others, even going so far as to lend my first copy of the book, which was then never returned by one of my cheap-

bastard friends. Can you explain for us again what your father does and how he behaves at cocktail-and-or-dinner parties?

I'd be honored! Well, he says a lot of odd things at parties, mostly with the goal of creating awkward silences. They're technically practical jokes, but I think they have a more Dadaist flair than your average practical joke. For instance: When my dad is at a dinner party and is offered a drink, he'll always ask for a "yellow lightning." The host will be baffled. "Yellow lightning?" "Yes," my dad will say. "Two parts Lemon Kool-Aid and one part tequila." The host will inevitably apologize for not having Kool-Aid or tequila. My father will then sigh dramatically and say, "nothing for me." My dad concocted the Yellow Lightning on the theory that no one in America has both the necessary ingredients. So...awkwardness always ensues.

Does your role at Esquire ever get in the way of your book writing? (Whew, I was worried that that might sound insulting to the folks at your magazine, but I think I deftly skirted that fine line.) How have your books' publication changed the

The Blotter

way you live – are you getting more famous? More famous than you would prefer to be, or less? Is fame all it's cracked up to be? Tell us, we really need to know. Is all of the rejection worth it? Are you getting better tables at restaurants? Recognized by famous people? (Do you know Cate Blanchett? We like Cate Blanchett.)

No, they're very supportive. They let me work from home – my official title is editor at large. Which I love. It sounds so mysterious. And they do sometimes use my book adventures as fodder for the magazine. Like with my book about following the rules of the Bible; my boss decided it would be fun to send me – in my bearded, lust-avoiding Biblical persona – to interview a hot movie actress named Rosario Dawson. Then I had to write about how difficult that was.

As for fame, I've been recognized in public exactly one time. It was right after the Know-It-All came out, and some guy approached me on the subway platform and

asked me about the letter Q. I thought he was talking about the Q train. So I started giving him directions. And he said, no, he wanted to know about the letter Q from the encyclopedia. I was so thrown by it, I didn't really realize what was going on until he had left. I'm still waiting for Cate Blanchett to call or ask about the letter Q or directions to the subway. So far none of the above.

How has fatherhood changed you, other than giving you ideas like that of your new book "The Year Of Living Biblically"? Have you learned the trick of doing all of the diaper changes, and therefore exempting yourself from any other household chores? Are you and your wife having fun being parents? What do you like, what do you not like so much about being a dad? Were you out of your mind, adding the burden of following God's laws to the letter? (Be kind, I think I just earned an extra three to four weeks in purgatory with that one.) And what advice are you preparing for your son that you can tell us?

I didn't know that trick of doing every diaper change. Excellent tip. (Though from the encyclopedia, I did know that the word 'diaper' also denotes a diamond-shaped architectural decoration. Just so you know.) As for preparing my son, a lot of my friends gave him kiddie encyclopedias when he was born, which he still hasn't read. But that does take the burden off of me. Hopefully he'll find all the wisdom in there. And yes, having a child did make following God's law harder. For one thing, the Bible tells me I have to redeem my firstborn son for five shekels, so it's expensive, at the very least.

Out of time, thanks much.



Know any writers who would give us five minutes? You ask the questions, get the answers, send it to mermaid@blotter-rag.com, and you get the by-line - Ed.

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"Oracle"

by Garrison Somers

Fill 'er up?

No trouble at all; I'll get your windshield, too. Bugs are lively tonight; you don't keep scrubbing them off, it'll be a job-and-a-half to clean up whenever you get to where you're going. I got some spray right here.

I seen your decal. You making it a weekend down to Athens, I bet. Yeah, Go Dogs! Oh, they'll play hard, though. Rivalry is what makes 'em so tough against you. It's like if football's a season, well a football rivalry is what you might call a force of nature, a hurricane blowing ashore during the season.

Me?

I'm a Cock. No, a Gamecock. You know, out of South Carolina? South Calinky! Ooohaa!

No, I didn't graduate. Never got all the required courses under my belt. I played ball some, though, back in my day.

Most folks find a way to disagree about almost everything. Thank the good Lord it's all just talk. You asking what kind of bee-bee-kew's best, well that'll get you a fistful of family recipes. Demy-crat or 'Publican? Like as not they go one way or tother with only a fuss. "All crooks, anyway," everyone says. But there's sure one thing galvanizes people. Back home when fall comes around, they're united as the boys in gray following Bobbie Lee. You can ask a preacher or a fool what's their team, they'll tell you it's the Gamecocks. They crow right down to the bone. And being Cocks means hating the Tigers of Clemson. You laugh. I seen sweet little old ladies will damn all things orange. You driving around home with a Clemson bumper sticker or an I Pay Ten A Year decal on your back window,

might be that someone comes and remove it for you with a crowbar.

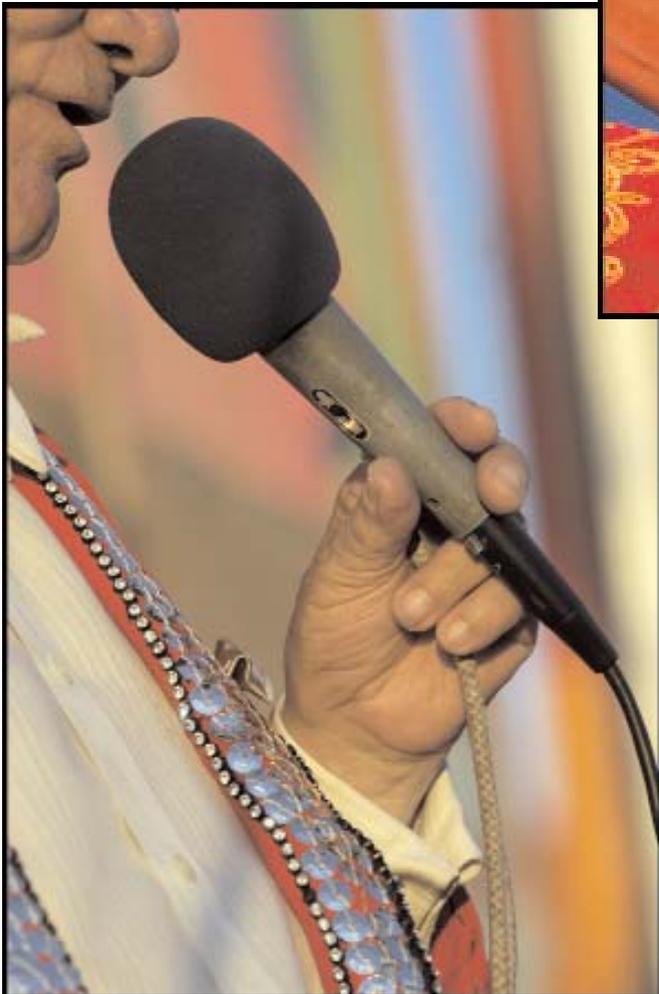
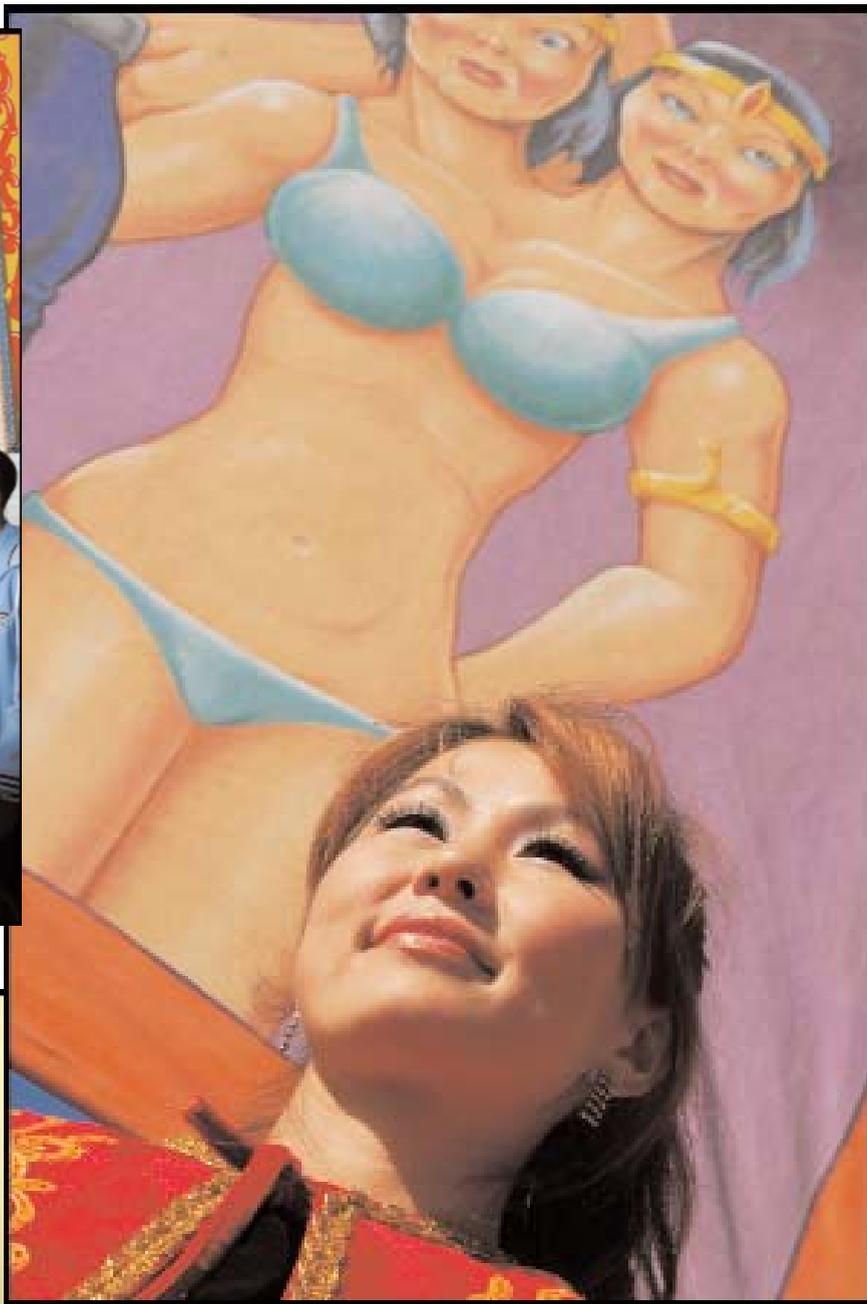
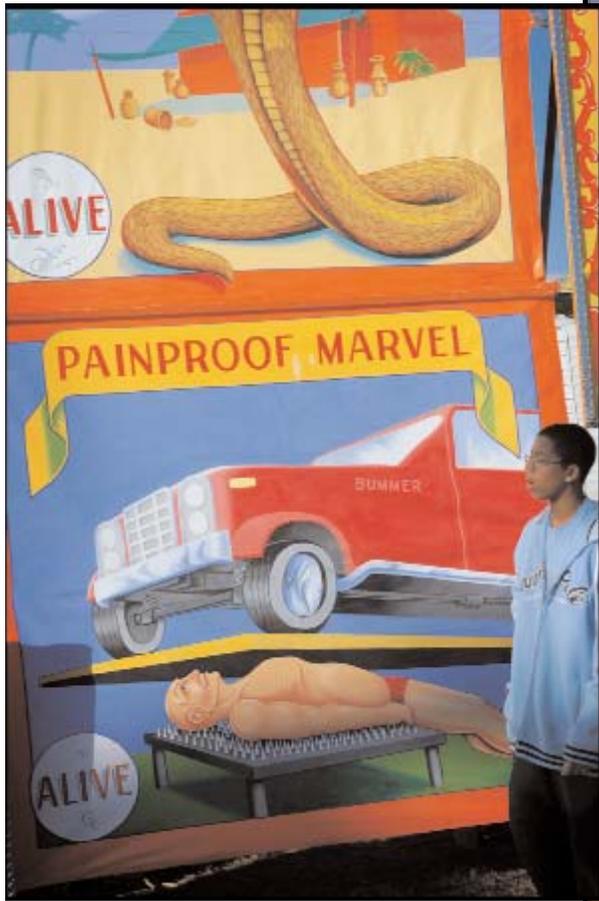
I had the misfortune to be on the team during a bad stretch. We were hanging our heads, I'll tell you that for nothing. Coaches that still had some were tearing their hair out; Board of Regents was looking real hard at the boys in the windbreakers as the cause of all Carolina's ills. Hell, you hadda feel for them, out blowing dust off the wishbone and other damnfool formations so that they could put the hammer on the Tigers. All of them would have seen pink slips except that one of them seasons we went to the Peach Bowl in spite of four losses, including a big one in Greenville. Yep, for three straight years, we just couldn't put together a win against Clemson for love nor money. When I was a senior we finally broke the curse. Hey, you're a good listener. That's nice of you to say. A lot of folks think I look older than my age. Nope, it was just a few years back.

I was in the defense backfield, third string. I'd never redshirted before, but everything changed on account of the first string fella cracked his spine against Georgia and the second string back, a buddy of mine named Wilkie, got hurt humping his girlfriend on two single mattress beds pushed together. They were so – randy, you might say – that the beds bounced apart and they fell through. Girl ended up with her can all black and blue and Wilkie got his ankle caught in the boxsprings and wrenched his knee out of joint. It got covered up – they said it was a practice injury. You could still do such as that back then; tell the newspapers an outright lie and they'd print it, calling it sportsmanship and keeping things in

the community. I suppose all that ended with OJ.

Anyway, we already had the worst defense, and it was getting worse by the minute. We won a couple games out of the chute, with a good air game and some sad opponents. SC Anderson was mostly a high school game, and they called our game with Tennessee-Chattanooga a tune up. Like I said, week three was big for injuries; our fullback also broke his collarbone on Georgia's middle linebacker. He was so busted up, they had to cut off his uniform and pads and he was squealing like a teenage girl. Yeah, I guess it hurt some. We lost bad, and again to Kentucky in Lexington the following week even though that year they stank to high heaven. On the sidelines you could hear their cheerleaders shouting "Cocks suck, Cocks suck." Pretty little things in skirts so short. I kept thinking *you eat with that mouth, your mother'd be shamed*. Then came a by week, and thank God, because ol' Wilkie decided to bust up his knee and I'm all of a sudden bumped up on the playing squad.

I aint never been much of an athlete. God gives natural ability to some folks. Boys faster out of the gate than a betting pony and could keep a lead for forty yards. Fellas could dodge raindrops falling out of the summer sky. Other boys were born one man and as they was growing up another man added to them like some accident. A child two hundred seventy odd pounds that could pull open a beer can in the middle or twist a hunk of hot-water pipe around a light pole. I once read about these Titans that put even God on notice. Third string defensive backfield coach warned us all about what he called the death zone; where them big boys bashed each other with no regard at all. "You lean ones could lose a limb," he said, "if you go in the D-Z between the whistles." Well, I was smart enough and had pretty good



Lori Ballard - Tampa, FL
www.lballardphoto.net

Upper left: "Bummer"
Above: "Three Heads"
Left: "Mr. Hall"
Right: "Clown 2"
Far Right: "Four Legs"
Upper Right: "Spidora"



The Blotter

sense for the ball, and that made me a passable defensive back. I aint no bolt of lightning. Not too many receivers couldn't outrun me if they got a step, but I was on the ball, and did my job in practice. So it was good getting some playing in.

With all that, it's hard to believe things could get even worse. With the injuries and two more L's at home and folks in Columbia were red-hot. The State was struggling to find something nice to say. Called us in a rebuilding year. Some said the rebuilding needed to take place in our coaching staff or maybe we should fill up the stadium with water, stock it with bream and charge folks to go fishing - it couldn't stink worse than we did. Nobody wore their jerseys around campus, kind of a protest against how poorly we were playing. And that's saying something, because there'd been worse seasons. I've heard of fans burning players and coaches in what they call

effigy and writing foul things on highway overpasses about the team, but not in Columbia. I mean, their team and all; it's like family. You got a problem with family, you work it out with family. You don't air out your drawers in the neighbor's yard. I didn't know what the deal was that made everyone hold that season against us. Folks had decided that we were supposed to be better than we were, and they'd had about enough.

Ya'll want another Co'cola? Here you go, one for you, one for me.

Well, at this point in the season, everyone in the Piedmont was thinking about Carolina, dwelling on it - getting single-minded. And that was because beating Clemson when you're blowing everything else was a damn sight better than winning every other game and losing to the Tigers. It was a crazy sort of sense. It was a strange thing how losing to them left you feeling empty.

Nothing felt good after they beat you, not going to a bowl, not graduating. The sky seemed to lose its blue, fried chicken didn't taste so fine as it once had. Nobody had any answers, but their brains were straining the ether for something to help. It's like everyone knew that we were in trouble and that's what was on their minds. The season couldn't be saved - hell, for some of us our college careers couldn't be saved - unless we beat Clemson.

I lived in the Bus Station, which was what we called the dorm where the third and fourth string players lived. It was down the street from the top players' dorm, where the guys with full scholarships lived. You always knew that's where our best players were, because the yard was full of fine cars parked around, signing gifts from the alumni association. These were the guys with god-given ability. The Bus Station was so-called because you were

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always one injury away from a ticket for the bus ride home, though we did once have a fellow who went on to do pro-wrestling in Atlanta. When I got bumped up to playing, after Wilkie's bonehead move, I stayed in the Bus Station anyway. You just get used to things.

Well, it was almost homecoming weekend, and the mood around town was strained. We were going to Death Valley. Everyone on TV and in the papers predicted a Clemson victory. The alumni association was pissed, what with another bad season, forced to go to Greenville to support the team, seats for Carolina fans dear to come by and the usual crapdoodle with misplaced visitor tickets.

The guys in the Bus Station were torn between wanting to go to the game in what was surely to be a losing cause and suffering the dishonor of staying home because road trip games only dressed forty-five players. I'd always found it just one more example of a failed college education to play for Carolina and not dress. Then suddenly I was one of that fall's Bus Station heroes, not just dressing with the team, but actually playing for the defensive squad. So I guess there was a certain righteousness that I should have been the one who met her.

She knocked on the dorm door, just below my window. It had once been a normal door, but had been broken by frustrated athletes so many times that the school put in one of those steel doors with a push-bar. Their logic was to make it unsmashable, rather than deter the boys from smashing it.

"Hallooo?" I heard a woman say, just once, soft like an evening breeze. I got up from watching the TV instead of yelling for someone else to see who it was. Poked my head out the window. It was close to Thanksgiving but I kept the window open for the fresh air. Athletic socks will make you do

that. I looked down and she looked up. My jaw plunked against my chest.

"Hey there," she said. Her voice was as soft as margarine left out on the counter. She had cultivated the kind of speaking that you had to shut up to listen to. And it was like she assumed the right people were listening, never repeating herself or raising the volume. I closed my mouth so that I wouldn't drip spit on her, because I was salivating like that Russian fellow's dog. I stared.

"I like the strong silent type as much as the next girl, but it's cold out here, fella," she said. Apparently I had misplaced my capability to talk, so I pulled my head in the window, banging it on the jamb on the way, and ran down the stairs to the front door. She was still there. She wasn't no mirage.

I knew I was looking at the prettiest gal I had ever seen, or ever would. I been to an art museum before and there were paintings of women, portraits of maybe the most beautiful women in history, that couldn't hold a candle to this girl. Her hair was a honey blonde so soft that it looked like downy feathers framing her face. Even in the yellow glare of the lamp in the doorway above us, the blue of her eyes pierced me through. Her lips pouted.

"Hey, sport," she said sweetly, and it broke me out of my trance. I leaned back and she sidled past me.

I followed like a puppy. She seemed to know her way, because she tip-tapped up the stairs and walked to my room. I was instantly impressed, because she wasn't put off by the stench of a lot of men living together without moms or maids.

Standing in the middle of my room, she put her hands on her hips. She turned and looked at me, in the doorway.

"I understand you have a problem, hey big fella?" And she smiled at me. Damn. I was thinking, not problems but a whole passel of questions, like

who are you and what are you doing in my room and where did you come from and how do I keep from having too obvious a rocket in my pocket? I was still tongue-tied. I swallowed air and tried to speak.

"Problem?" I croaked.

"Close the door, kiddo."

Now, I've dated a pretty girl or two in my time. I aint shamed to say that I can hold my own with the girls that like athletes, the ones who think that we're a different breed or are star-struck, like we're famous or might someday be famous or can help them meet folks who are famous. And I wouldn't have believed it, if it hadn't happened before. There was one alum even sponsored a dance once where the football team was invited and no other men. Girls as far as the eye could see, tall and short and blonde and brunette, as pale as moonlight or as smoothly dark as brewed coffee, and all shades in between. Not one had been asked to attend - every last beauty was a volunteer, you might say. They didn't seem to care that a lot of us never played a tick of the clock, that we were third string or permanent Opposing Team Prep. And these were good girls, co-eds from Carolina and the junior college and the county college and whatnot. But damn if they didn't get star-struck. I'll tell you right here that their daddies wouldn't have wanted to hear what they offered when they whispered in their dance partners' ears.

And still I was frozen in place with this girl in my room. As shell shocked as you can be. It was like I was waiting for something else to happen; a shoe to drop, Alan Funt saying "Smile", for the girl to roll her eyes and stomp out of the room. Instead, she looked around and joked.

"I like what you've done with the place." It was a typical man's dorm room. There was three pair of tighty-whiteys hanging to dry on the back of a

chair. I never walked barefoot in my room. But she sat on the bed and ran her hands over the sheets like they was softest silk. Then she patted the spot next to her, invitingly, like something out of a movie.

"I'm sorry," I finally blurted, for no reason other than I suppose that I was.

"Surely," she said, ignoring my apology, "you're wondering why I'm here. Well, I was sent for you." My jaw dropped again.

I sat on the bed next to her. Collapsed is more like it. Weak legs.

"Maybe I ought to explain," she said, patting my knee. She told me.

It was the alumni association. My mind raced. This was some strange bribe. They loved us - Cocks To The Bone and all - but they hated that we couldn't beat the enemy, the true enemy up the road. And I guess they were willing to try anything.

"They bought you?" I

asked.

"They rented me," she said. "I can't be bought."

"To help us beat Clemson?"

"Not exactly. I don't work that way," she said. She looked up, as if thinking. Then she smiled. "Actually, nothing really ever works that way."

I thought about that for a moment. It was so. Rare was the plan that went unaltered, the play that worked perfectly. I suppose that everything cost something and even after it was paid for, there were likely to be complications.

"So I don't get it. It's like a riddle I have to figure out?" I asked.

"Like a riddle, yes. I thought you'd like that," she said. She smiled even wider. I felt apprehension drain away. "My name is Delilah."

"Like in the Bible?"
"I suppose you could say that."

"You want a Co'cola?"

"Yes, please."

I went over to the cube-fridge that they gave each Senior red-shirt player. It was a perk that had only just arrived in my room, and it was stocked with Cokes and cold Milky-Way bars. I swear I could live all semester on Cokes and Milky-Ways. I popped the top against the door corner and handed her the little bottle. She took a tiny sip and tipped her head at me in thanks.

"Well, then, let's get started," she said.

Now we're talking, I thought.

I stood up and began to unbuckle my belt in spite of myself. You would have, too.

"Hang on there, lover. You need to know the rules," she said sweetly. Any other woman in the history of the world would have made those sentences sound cheap and trashy. Delilah could have been singing the Carolina fight song. I sat back down obediently. She patted me on the leg again, and then set the Coke on my nightstand. Turning back to me she looked into my eyes. The lamp framed her face in light; her hair was a halo of burnished gold.

"You have choices to make," she began. "I'm yours, you understand, that's part of the deal. What you do with me is up to you."

She was right. I nodded, my ardor banked like a homecoming bonfire. At this point I was confused and horny and as pliable as modeling clay. What was I supposed to do?

My whole life I been trained to listen to my coaches. And there's an old coaches' chestnut that says women weaken knees. Take your pins right out from under you. This girl was proof-positive of that. My knees had been shaking since I stuck my fool head out of the window on hearing her knocking. I will tell you right now, I couldn't ascribe any truth to the theory of no poontang before a game, on account of I hadn't played in a game since high school.



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So, torn between the night of my life and the game of my career, I asked her what the deal was. Delilah's face got hard. She sounded like a CIA spy.

"Tonight there's going to be a little accident at the Clemson football stadium involving the underground sprinkler system. They didn't say how, but I'm guessing there'll be broken pipes. By tomorrow morning, the field will be one of the largest swimming pools in the upstate. The game will have to be moved, unless they want to play on some pot-holed high school field in Easley. Which they don't. Not for a nationally televised game, that is. So it will have to come back here, to Columbia. You won't be the home team of record, but you'll certainly get all of the other home-team advantages. After that it's up to you."

"Up to me," I repeated.

She ran a finger around the curve of my ear, raising the hair on my neck in a chill. "That's right," she said.

"What's up to me?"

"The game is up to you. That's why I'm here. For you," she said softly. "What do you say?"

"I say..." Still pretty confused, I could think of nothing to say. But what do you do when a dream comes true? But what did I have to do with playing a game that was going to be rained out. Drained out, I mean.

"There are a lot of fellows who don't look the gift horse in the mouth," she said coyly. I thought I could see the beginning of a wink in her eye.

"No, I expect not," I replied. "But I'm not sure I understand everything. If you're all mine, I need to know what all the options are." Delilah's look turned solemn for a moment and then she smiled once more.

"OK, then."

"Is that alright?" I asked, starting to feel the fool again.

"You bet," she said, without missing a beat. "It's just that no one ever asked me that before."

"What did they do?"

"Just assumed," she said, her sexy smile changing into a big grin. It was a friendly look, the kind between folks who like each other. I stopped caring that she wasn't a good girl, had probably been around, if you know what I mean. I finally began feeling like I'd won a prize.

"Well, I aint no rocket scientist," I said. "Are you allowed to help me?"

She laughed out loud.

"Sure. But only if you ask for help." Even her voice changed. It was no longer sexy, but more down home. More like one of the gals.

"Help me understand?"

"That's right," she said.

"I'd like some help."

"Ask me who hired me to come here." Delilah's eyebrows raised conspiratorially.

"I'm asking."

"Alumni association," she said. She had already told me that. I didn't get it.

"They hired you to come to my room and sleep with me?"

"That's right," she said.

I scratched my head. It didn't make no sense. "Because the game is up to me."

She gave a small nod. Standing, I got mad. You would, too. "That's crap. Nothing has ever been up to me. I'm nothing, just a third string back on a losing team. You're saying that you told the alumni association that I was going to be responsible for beating Clemson? That's crazy."

"Keep going, big boy. You're doing fine," she said softly, not rising to my anger.

I shook my head, ready to surrender. It kind of fell out of my mouth. "So how's it up to me?"

"Because you're going to win the game," she said. "Day after tomorrow, you'll intercept a pass in the end zone and Carolina will win by four."

"How do you know that?" I asked. "I'm flattered and all, but that's doubtful."

"Because it's what I do," she said. "Folks come to me when they want to know what's going to happen."

"And you help them do those things?" I asked. She gave me the smile one more time. I felt like the top of my head might twist off. "You make sure that they happen?"

"That's the million dollar question, baby," she said, chucking me gently on the arm. My arm broke out in goosebumps. "Good for you. No, I don't help do those things. I help prevent them."

It was slow coming, but I finally understood.

"You're a witch, aint you."

"Some would say that. A seer. An oracle. I have a gift. I can see what is going to happen. Then I can help it not happen."

That was a real poser. I didn't know the word at the time, but paradox was what I was thinking. A thing that simultaneously is and isn't what it is. "You're here to keep me from playing?"

"No, sweetheart, not at all. When we're done, you can play, but you won't play as well. You won't make that interception, that's all. It'll be like I cut your hair and then you're all weak." Delilah reached out for my hand and slipped hers in. I could feel the intricate bones of her fingers, tiny and fragile. "But we'll have the night of our lives. You'll never regret it. I can promise you that."

I thought, not certain that she couldn't hear the goings on inside my head, that I knew there are strange things in this world, and a whole lot of people who believe in strange things. Ancient Greeks and athletes in particular. We're a mighty superstitious crowd. But it was like discovering that Santa Claus wasn't real. My heart was breaking, torn asunder.

"Why would they hire you to do this? Why does the

Alumni Association want us to lose?" I whispered. Delilah looked at me with sympathy, and then that big grin popped out again.

"No, baby. You don't get it. The Clemson Alumni Association," she said. "They're the ones that hired me."

"God. The IPTAY folks?"

She nodded.

I sat back down, my legs done in like a full day of running sprints. Of course, I sighed to myself. I hadn't asked the right questions yet.

"Then why did they blow up their field? They can whup us on home turf. Aint that what they want?" I growled.

"Not as much as they want to beat you in the last seconds in front of your own home crowd, on television. That way it's worse. It will make all of the sports pages in the country."

"Hell. That's just mean," I said.

"You bet it is," she said, squeezing my hand. She leaned against my shoulder, and I could smell that soft combination of scents that make a woman a woman, her perfume gently tapped on pulse points at her neck and wrists; and that other – heady and indefinable – hidden beneath, drawing me closer and keeping me confused.

I expected her to ask me what I wanted to do, but she didn't. I tried to formulate a plan, but I couldn't. I couldn't get my game-face on with her there, the one that let me get ready and concentrate and know what to do. I supposed that it had been so long since I had used it, letting practices and classes and exams pass by one after another without the fever of focus that I had shown in high school games.

Delilah was so very beautiful and completely there for me that night, and I still wasn't sure I thought the story about the interception wasn't crapdoodle. I was a senior, probably in my last game. And I wasn't going to graduate – no light-in-

the-loafers advisor had to tell me that. But this wasn't some virgin offering herself to me. She'd been there and back again. Did I care? Was I on a slippery slope? My brain rattled around in its cage.

"They hired you to tell them how it would happen, and then they sent you to come change it."

"That's how my gift works. I can see things," she said.

"How do I know you're not just making this up, so I look like a fool?" I asked.

"You don't. But I never lie, baby. It's part of the gift. I can only tell the truth or I'll spoil it. Lie and I lose it forever."

"And the riddle is part and parcel, too?"

"Naturally. But I will tell you that I have to do whatever you tell me to, even though someone else paid for me. That's also how it works. You're the boss tonight." I hesitated a second, all jittery inside.

"You'll do anything I say?" I asked.

"That's how it goes, hon," Delilah replied, her hand still tucked in mine. Then another thing occurred to me, just a nugget of an idea forming.

"But, say I say no. Won't the Tiger alums feel cheated if things don't work out like they want?"

"Maybe. But then that's what they get for assuming." She stuck her tongue out a tiny bit. "Does that bother you?" I shook my head, just once. This was some woman, indeed.

Well, now. I needed a way out and a way in at the same time. Guys like me don't get second chances. You go for the ball when the quarterback tosses it up. So I did the only thing I could do.

"Will you marry me?" I asked softly. "Marry me."

"Marry me?" she repeated. Her eyes went wide and inviting. I nodded. "Tonight?" she asked.

"You bet. There's a JOP

used to fish for stripers with my dad. We could wake him up. It's a little old drive. We'd need to use your car." That she had a car outside was an educated guess.

"Alright," Delilah smiled, one eyebrow raised. "Let's go."

And so we drove up to Darlington County courthouse and got a license, even though it was already Friday morning. That's how I dealt with the Clemson Alumni Association and Delilah the Oracle's riddle. I had my big game against the Tigers my senior year, at home. We won by a touchdown. My new wife was in the stands. No, I didn't get my interception, but I knocked down a pass or two. Later Delilah supposed that my marrying her probably did something, changed the equation of time and place so radically that all bets were off. Maybe in the end the game could have gone either way. Still, just to be safe, she and I held off consummating our relationship until after church on Sunday on account of I do believe that poontang weakens the legs.

I'm guessing the IPTAY types were pretty pissed, but that's what happens when you monkey around with rivalries and folks with special powers and such. Delilah kept the fee for services rendered, and I got me the prettiest girl in the whole state and then some. I only think a little bit about how I used her own rules to make her marry me, because things seem to be working out. Delilah don't care that I didn't graduate, or that I played in only one winning game, or none of that. We do OK.

Alright, that's twenty-seven for the gas and the story was gratis, as they say. Yeah, you take care and have a safe trip.



Paper Cuts: Books You Might Not Have Read

by Martin K. Smith

Paradise: the last place on earth

(Scott Morgan / Livingston Press at the University of Western Alabama / 2005)

Full disclosure: Scott Morgan is head singer-songwriter of Memphis The Band, who did a "Blotter Presents" gig for us once. (Like all the "Blotter Presents" nights, it was a kickass show that nobody came to.) I've partied with Scott and the band, and they're good people. Scott is also Sexy and Cute, and personally autographed my review copy. Take these grains of salt as needed.

The story describes itself as "somewhat of a western." It begins in familiar enough noir-thriller territory. Greg Carter, ne'er-do-well of Santa Cruz, falls for a stripper named Cindy. She returns his affections and moves in, but is

promptly summoned back to her home town, where her parents have died in a curious car accident. Greg accompanies her to the home town, Paradise, a desolate crossroads somewhere in the middle of Nowhere. They visit the town bar, where Cindy first began professionally undressing, and where a wild night of reunion, over beer, tequila, pot, meth and Lord knows what else, ensues. The next morning Greg awakens to find his lady-love stone dead, with a heroin needle in her arm. (Don't you hate it when that happens?) At the bar, a man named Cecil had been brought to Greg's notice: a large, foreboding, blunt-smoking personage, once a major figure in Cindy's life. Greg forms the conviction that this Cecil fellow gave Cindy the fatal dose.

Then, things begin

drifting slowly to weirdward. Greg's attempts to leave town mysteriously fail: cars are stolen behind his back or run out of gas, or he gets lost trying to find a road out. A crazed redneck tries to kill him but instead gets killed by him; and none other than Cecil turns up to help him dispose of the carcass. Cecil runs Paradise's main landmark, an authentic replica of an Old West town, built by his father as a private amusement park. Every year, wealthy men come to spend a week there recreating life Old West style, with gambling, whoring, drinking of rotgut whisky, and gunfighting. The recreations have taken a decidedly dark turn under Cecil's running – the gunfights use real guns, shooting real bullets – a trend Cecil and his father argued fiercely over before the old man's

Hi-Definition

By John Wright

homonyms - words that sound the same but mean different things



Miss Leading



Misleading

mysterious death. And Greg, despite brief moments of better judgment, is slowly drawn into the situation. In Cindy's family home he has found a stash of cowboy clothes, and cowboy weapons:

"...two holstered six shooters on a belt hung from the barrel of a 12-gauge shotgun...I strapped the whole thing on and stood in front of the mirror drawing once then twice then drawing both pistols simultaneously, all the while emulating the old Western movie-style gunslinger. I was completely high from the narcotics and beer yet the feel of the pistols took me higher. They had this strange voodoo about them. An unmistakable voodoo, the kind only the dead can pass off. Inside each revolver rested six beautiful bullets. I was immediately overcome with the sensation of wanting to shoot something....The Colts produced minimal kick and I immediately felt a surge of adrenaline...It was one of those holy moments when obsession ceases and a whole new magical world opens up revealing all its secrets in one glorious rush..."

The re-enactors are coming that very week, and Greg, with Cecil's sponsoring, is soon gambling, drinking and whoring amongst them.

The tale has a unique strange aura about it, and not a good kind of strangeness: an ominous, unsettling, *Twilight Zone* strangeness, as in, "our hero is deep in a situ-

ation where the normal workings of society cannot be relied upon." Is Cecil friend or foe? Are Cecil's dad's cronies, who have come to the event, plotting a fatal showdown between Cecil and Greg? Did Cindy lure him to Paradise for just such a purpose? Does Paradise actually exist? (Greg has no idea what state, geographically, the town and he are in.) The heroes of modern novels are not guaranteed a happy ending. I would not have been surprised to see Greg gunned down at some point and continuing his narration from beyond the grave; or awakening back in Santa Cruz to find the whole thing merely a meth-fueled phantasm; or both.

The style also is striking. Metaphor and description dive and swoop and spiral like one of those extreme roller coasters. Greg wanders through a party at the town bar:

"The lights and the music joined together to form an erratic dance of vibration and pressure almost visible now to the drunken eye. In and out went the room breathing with the chorus of laughter, with the inhalations and exhalations of every distorted monster that occupied it. A cloud of incoherent words gathered overhead forming a new language of broken poetry. It was the language of the insane and it read as it spoke and there was no beauty to be found in it."

He plays poker with Cecil's dad's cronies:

"Just like that, the pot soared to heights far greater than I could have ever imagined. Sitting there in front of me, taunting my every move, tickling my every nerve, working its way past my every religion. My vice, my toy, my little encapsulated world of dollars and cents....the hunger and the want had me. It was the pleasure and pain of knowing nothing at all, the swinging of the invisible pendulum, the march of the invisible army, dreams swollen and erect."

After Cecil has dumped Greg's would-be assassin, along with his car, into a flooded quarry:

"I lay back on the ground and closed my eyes and had a vision of Randy sitting in his Trans Am at the bottom of the quarry; there were other cars down there besides his, along with other friends and family. He had the radio on and it was pumping out the muffled likes of Boston. "More than a feeling," was coming out in aquatic stereo sound...The bottom of the quarry was alive with these scrubs that somehow fell short in life, dealt one too many bad deals, ran into the wrong man at the wrong time. They sang the same song, shared the same story. I wondered how many had gunshot holes through their guts, how many lost it under the knife or with a heart-stopping shot of that bad stuff Cindy had got. Some sat in

their cars while others dangled from wire-like floats in a Macy's Parade. A great party they were having."

(I did get a laugh out of Boston in aquatic stereo sound. *Paradise* is not all foreboding and gunplay: "Off in the distance, down the street, a lone shot went out and Lisa jumped. 'Men with their goddamn guns,' she said. 'Rarely can a man take his dick out without pissing on himself. Why would you give him a gun?'"

The book is brimful of such passages; so much so that I began wondering what deeper meanings might lie beneath. Late in the tale, Greg goes tripping on a hallucinogen custom-designed by the town druggist, and has visions including this:

"My mother was the only person out there. She was seated on a bench across the hall, bent over an open notebook scribbling. She didn't see me walk up yet she acknowledged me immediately....I leaned over to try to read what she was writing and was drawn into the page. It was some kind of black hole, animated all the same. A cave of some sort, fleshy and vascular. My mother had carved words upon its wall...The farther I went the narrower the passage became until I found myself crawling, clawing my way out of the fleshy caverns, coming to stand, somewhat stunned, in front of my mother once more. 'How awkward was that?' she asked, not looking

up from her writings."

I am obtuse, and do not catch Deeper Meanings well. Drama, pathos, humor, mystery, plot twists, sex, drugs and rock & roll I happily take in; but pitch me subtleties of theme and symbolism, and you'll get the dull-eyed, jaw-dropped *duhh?* of a very drunk hetero guy watching strippers shake their jumbles. Yet through *Paradise's* haze of gunfire and poesy I sense the framework of, not so much a western, as a classic quest-tale: the hero leaves familiar surroundings, faces trials and tribulations, beholds a shattering new reality, and returns reborn in some way, enlarged in soul and spirit. Greg is not the most heroic hero I've ever met. He thinks with his dick, is damn fool enough to do crystal meth, and lets himself be tempted into the deep dark shit of Cecil's world (whereas I would've hitchhiked my skinny faggot ass out of there ASAP). I hoped for his survival rather than cheered for it, and was merely relieved to see him safely back in Santa Cruz. (It was the relief of someone who's just gotten off one of those extreme roller coasters.) Yet survive he does, with some hard-earned if hazy wisdom:

"Past pleasure is pain – Cecil tried to show me that. And it sits there on the fringe of everything that is real. It's what illusions are made of. We come out of the womb chasing it...In being nothing

but myself I inadvertently killed the queen bee and in return became the great traitor to that decadent lifestyle that so propelled me, fed me, and made me who I thought I was...For every gunslinger that dies, there is one to be born."

(And what did I learn from his adventures? Well, I didn't learn, so much as have confirmed, the advice of many a hetero friend: never fall in love with a stripper.)



Altered Image

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by Christian Ward

The Cloud

It hangs wistfully
above the knuckle
of the canyon,
waiting to slash
open its belly
and jettison

its babies
into the dark below,
anticipating nothing
will catch them.
Not air, not eagles,
not the fist

of a thunderstorm
already growing
at the bottom.

Attic

There is always one thing
you leave behind whenever
you move house. In my case,
it was an attic.

It could never be packed
away, wrapped in bubble-wrap
and cushioned between a sofa
and two china throats.

So I handed over the spare keys
to the full moon and let it
occupy that space I used to live
when I was fleeing cowboys,

pitching my tee pee between
an old punching bag and a moth
eaten dressmaker's model,
hammering pegs in the insulation.

I would watch stars stutter
as they flew over the roof tiles,
make a wish and climb down,
shutting the eye of the house,

blocking its tears slowly wetting
the floorboards, flooding everything
that had been built in its gut.

CONTRIBUTORS

3 a.m.

by Rob Plath

two goldfish
in the bowl
gills working away
like tiny, underwater
bellows

the snail inching
across the glass
like a restless
spiral Buddha

my cigar glowing
like a ripe cherry
in the dim light

smoke climbing
the walls
like a mesh
of gray vines

the ashes, the ashes
we all don't dream

Poetry

the
gotten
down
word
is
a
hard
tough
baby

tower
rose
and
shark
go
to
pot

but
words
will
bear
the
bomb

Lori Ballard is a photojournalist who says her photos are “a natural reaction to the subject matter.” She has been the official photographer of the FL State Fair and has been aboard those cool NOAA planes that enter hurricanes, with her camera in hand. We can't top that.

Jasmine Rizer was in the 9/05 Blotter, UGA's lit. magazine “Stillpoint” and has reviewed books for the Athens Banner Herald. See, this is why we dig Athens the most.

W. Deppeler of New Jersey giggled when we told her that we would like to publish this piece. I'm guessing that's a good thing.

Margot Miller earned a mid-life Ph.D. in French Lit., and divides her time between the eastern shore of the Chesapeake and the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. You can see more of her stuff at <http://miller.margot.googlepages.com/home>

Christian Ward lives in London, UK, and yet, like the Banks children, still found his way safely home to us. His second chapbook “Goddess & Other Poems” was released in January, courtesy of Scar Publications.

Rob Plath's book of poems “Ashtrays and Bulls” was 2003's Nerve Cowboy's chapbook contest winner. He was also a student of Allen Ginsberg's for two years. He says that he thinks The Blotter is very cool. Well, alright then, now we're talking.

John Wright, who always comes through in the end, is our friend with a pen in Halifax, Virginia.

Martin K. Smith is the capo di tutti capi of The Blotter, and said it was OK to do a 24 page issue for May. Next time you see him, tell him thanks.

Garrison Somers' muse appears whenever it suits her, argues the theory of morphic resonance and wears conical party hats over her breasts. Now you understand as much as anyone does.

2007 SEASON
SCHEDULE

~~March 11 (Sun)~~

~~April 22 (Sun)~~

May 20 (Sun)

June 9 (Sat)

Sep. 15 (Sat)

Nov. 18 (Sun)

Dec. 2 (Sun)

ALL-GIRL FLAT-TRACK

ROLLER DERBY

One of our home teams
will take on the
Tragic City Rollers
of Birmingham, AL!

NEXT BOUT
MAY 20

5:00 doors \ 6:00 game
Dorton Arena
1025 Blue Ridge Road
State Fairgrounds, Raleigh

TIX
in advance: \$10/adults, \$5/kids
gameday: \$14/adults, \$7/kids
available at Skate Ranch of Raleigh,
305 South, Percolator, Schoolkids



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The Blotter

MAGAZINE

Needs Money



special guest: **DANTE THE MAGICIAN!**
You help too - the Cave, May 12th