

Have a good time, but remember there is danger in Joel Van Noord's last beach trip; Lara Falberg's love story run amuck; M. P. Powers lesson on brotherhood; the wordcraft of messrs. Nathan Toben and Phillip Barron; Paperhand Puppet Intervention's intentions; mckenzee's next a-viking; and The Dream Journal.

The Blotter

MAGAZINE

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G. M. Somers.....Editor-in-Chief
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Large, Treasurer
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Lewis Copulsky.....Publishing
Consultant
Brace Boone III.....Director of
Development
T.J. Garrett.....Staff
Photographer

Advertisers and Subscriptions Contact:

Martin K. Smith
M_K_Smith@yahoo.com
919.286.7760

Submissions and Editorial Business to:

Jenny Haniver
mermaid@blotterrag.com

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Cover art: Paperhand Puppet
Intervention's inventions. See center-
fold for more.

Garrison Somers, Editor-in-Chief
chief@blotterrag.com
919.933.4720 (business hours only!
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Busy Hands Can Also Be A Playground

Home for Paperhand Puppet Intervention looks like something from the second reel of *Dr. Zhivago*. Not dancing in the Czar's palace, that's for sure. Instead, we're in a great dusty warehouse with all sorts of what looks at first blush like garbage but once you tweak your head so that it isn't in corporate mode is obviously puppet paraphernalia. Long pieces of PVC. Brown cardboard cartons in various states of assembly (and dis-). Paint, in cans and pie-tins and on the floor. Paint on pieces of brown cardboard carton that look like puzzle parts of a Lilliputian city skyline. Be careful where you walk, I warn my team as they scatter to the four corners of the enormous room. Everything might be *something*.

Fans whir in the July afternoon heat. Tunes wend softly from a radio. I shake Donovan Zimmerman's hand. His scruffy face and twinkling eyes are immediately recognizable as the pied-piper of the Paperhand shows I've seen. He's the man with the drum getting everyone excited, loosening their stiff collars, bouncing to the rhythm. In any other organization (or dis-) he would be the go-to-guy, the money-man. But this isn't that kind of shindig. Instead, I feel like fallen down a rabbit-hole, or climbed inside a toy-box with the stuffed lions and the funny little dudes and the thoughtful owls. Here is a desk, Donovan stands behind it, but it's not a business place, as much as a flat surface where the drawings and scribbled notes can safely rest. There's no immediate place for me to sit and take notes, so I stand and face the big oxcart with the giant's shoe in it. Donovan looks over at it, too, or just beyond, where another recognizable face, Jan Berger, somber and neatly bearded as an old sea-captain, stands on a stepladder and works a paint brush.

Time to start asking questions. I'm interrupting productivity, the invention of real things. That enormous shoe in front of me. The shoe's sole flaps in front, like an old brogan with a lot of miles on it, and it has no shoelaces. I am told, however, that this will all be resolved appropriately in the show itself where this shoe is the star. I feel an odd relief, like a child does when he hears that Dad will be home in time for a birthday party. Jan is painting stars on an enormous sheet of black backdrop cloth. The night sky, part of the scenery for their late summer production "A Shoe For Your Foot", consisting of six short pieces, including "The Boat We're In." Right over there is the boat, an arklike structure, with houses and shops popping out of its deck. I ask, and learn, that they do their own painting, and carpentry, and the clay sculpture. Clay sculpture? Oh, for making models for heads of different creatures, like the ox over there on the floor. Papier-mache is molded around the clay – and the clay is removed and replaced with whatever device will be used to move the head. The head is painted, horns added (they're made from long gourds), and then attached to a body. I see a sewing machine, can guess that they also do their own sewing. What makes the shape of the bodies? Chicken wire covered with fabric? Gentle smiles, kind head-shakes. You don't want to carry chicken wire, it's got poky, sharp bits. And who needs all of that weight? What works for the body? A couple of poles? An umbrella? Keep it simple. *Do your own dancing and singing and make your own music.*

Donovan says that this is the overriding theme of Paperhand,

and it carries over into almost everything they do. The concept of simplicity. And it's apparent even in how they gather their supplies. Need cardboard? Downstairs in piles, take what you need. Do they write their own shows? Yes, it's just a matter of finding stories and the sacred in the ordinary. How did *that* happen? How did the empty, old shoe get there? That's the story. Simple. What exactly does he mean by sacred? *Humanity*. Just being human to one another, helping people to understand rather than pushing back against what you disagree with. A story might offer alternatives instead of advocating revolution. For example, man has been endlessly expansionist; the world has always been a place to explore, merely here to provide us with things. We should know better than that, see that the world is finite, its resources have limits. We need a shift in our thinking, he says.

The conversation has slipped over into politics and after a moment Donovan frowns a little, he doesn't want to talk about this sort of thing right now. I sense that he does have strong opinions, and can express them eruditely, but perhaps he chooses not to. Maybe he's tired of it. Or has found it unproductive. From what I see here, Paperhand is the polar opposite of unproductive. In any case, he turns the mood to something more philosophical. We shouldn't surrender to apathy. He wants people to find the light *within* things. The 21 cast members and musicians of Paperhand want people to walk away from a show *thinking* and *feeling*.

Two more of Paperhand's crew arrive, to work on some part of the production that starts in August. As he looks at Jan's handiwork, Donovan reveals that they will have to vacate the warehouse soon. It's being turned into luxury condominiums. *Oh, crap*, I think. *That figures*. But he's not frowning about it. He's smiling, because the Paperhand folks have set their sights on a piece of land just up the hill, where they plan to erect a barn for their new shop, and to do shows as well. Donovan takes a sip from the jar of orange-colored drink on the desk; what I thought was, oh, I don't know, paint thinner. Maybe it is. Maybe it's something magic, that makes him a super-hero. For a moment, I'm totally seeing it; the barn on the hill, crowds of people parading behind puppets of Earth, Wind, Tree and Stone, with Mickey and Judy grinning over a fence-rail. I smile myself.

We need to let them get back to work. I call my team back from their intrepid investigations, trying on masks and standing for photos besides god-sized Buddhas. It is brought to my attention by one of the crew that Donovan is drinking out of a Ball jar. *Just like we do at home*, tangible reassurance that they're like us, or moreover, we're like them. I want so much to be more like them.

Paperhand Puppet Intervention will be performing "A Shoe For Your Foot" outdoors at The Forest Theatre on the campus of UNC-CH, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from August 10 to September 3, 2007. All shows start at 7:00PM. Tickets are available at the door only, \$10 each. On September 7 and 8, 2007, the show will move to the Museum of Art in Raleigh, with ticket information for the latter's shows available at the MOA's website, www.ncmoa.org, under their Summer Concert Series. Paperhand accepts donations as well; for more information visit their website www.paperhand.org.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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CAUTION

Hi. I have no idea what the fuss is all about. Sure, we're not pleased about our bad behavior. We also wish that steakhouses let us leave our magazine around for those people waiting for a table for seven, but only two of us are here now, the others are coming, I promise.

“Beach and Ocean” by Joel Van Noord

First came the gasp and then the scream. He knew the cause for the scream. But the gasp was from a dangerous place he had no history of. Then there was the sick slurp and the gasping release and collapse. The splatters made no noise.

The surgical pops of the crashing government façade were heard at first as through the filter of a video game. Her arm jerked with the insulting noise and the needle rode through her flesh and broke, the tip imbedded in her arm. Her shrill voice popped the air like a balloon.

“Whoa!” he yelled instinctively. Before the word was comprehended she lost all ability to comprehend. Her body made a horrific grumble as it was hit and sprayed its poison at him. Abstractly, he wiped as the maudlin child began to violently wail. He looked at it as a true chaos began.

There was screaming and buildings were flaking and dust rising and dark figures roaming proud. Wild shots again roared out from the periphery of

the complex. It was fascinating and he was paralyzed. The dead woman was so intense. The child was so real, its wail was so primordial. It had such meaning. The figures at the edge of the complex were so large, so god-like.

“Come, come on!” Jean yelled in her British accent as she rumbled and moved around a row of cots, knocking her foot and stumbling with her arms out toward him.

He held the base of the broken needle. There was an ugly, elongated horror on her face and as she seized his wrist he dropped the syringe. She twirled him and he heard the strange language from a distance. They ran from the tent and his trance was shattered with such a blunt conflict with reality.

Women in colorful dresses and bare-feet ran down the sand road. To his left was the French colonial building that housed the corrupt remainder of the government. A few soldiers were there shooting back at the periphery. He turned his head and watched the butt of a rifle smash down onto a set of hands. He turned and there was a dead body in front of him. There was a smashed jug and wet sand next to the bent right arm. He ran around this as he held the English woman held to him.

*

The HIV tent was sent up outside the government building. The town spread out before this. Behind it was the beach and the ocean. They’d run, quick, around the tent and to the back of the government building. Jean then radioed their position and a seaplane picked them up further south in a

peaceful cove. The young man, Charles, hadn’t said a word and Jean, a decade older, didn’t push. She led him through survival and he held onto her hand as the perfunctory set of images reeled in his head.

There was another tent and other humanitarian services. Jean held the radio to her mouth and tried to ascertain their fate. As the seaplane took off she seemed to care less. They flew inland and got on a larger plane. He had his wallet and passport. He remembered the child as its mother lost her life. He looked to Jean and did not say a thing. He kept a reticent proclivity and they flew to Frankfurt after a night in the humid interior.

*

He watched out the window and Jean sat next to him. They were in first class and Charles had pulled out the screen and a movie with Adam Sandler was playing. The Sahara was like the Atlantic.

Jean spoke to him and he mumbled back. She talked about Kosovo and he listened, then added nothing. She watched him and then spoke about Australia and the Great Barrier Reef, then about Thailand and Phuket. She looked him up and down and turned as if she’d tried all she could.

They landed and he walked away from her. She paced after him for a moment until he slipped into a crowd and made his way down an escalator. She watched him go and hoped he’d be alright. She knew she’d never see him again.

He wandered the airport for hours, watching people and looking at magazines, looking at the brightly lit kiosks and the plethora of candies and goods for sale. Security guards passed him and slowed to tilt their heads at him as they casually strolled past.

He spent his last dollars on a plane



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ticket, flew over the Atlantic, touched down in Dulles and continued to LA. When the plane landed he didn't wake up. Everyone had debarked and he sat there, unconscious. A stewardess in a crisp uniform walked down the aisle toward him with her hands out from her hips. She stopped and bent over him, watching him for a moment, and then pushed his arm. He didn't stir. "Sir." She sang out with a practiced voice. "SIR." She said and moved his arm again.

He opened his eyes and looked at her. She smiled and he undid his belt; then rose as she backed away to let him pass.

"Did you have any bags?" She asked and opened the overhead as he passed. He stopped and paused. She peered inside and he watched her.

"No." He said and walked off.

*

Six hours later Charles was with his brother and his brother's girlfriend, meters from the ocean. They were dressed for the night and walking along the beach north of the pier at Santa Monica.

"I don't remember the flight." Charles said.

"No?" his brother, Stephen asked.

"No, Jean gave me these sleeping pills. They're strong stuff. I didn't even wake up when the plane landed."

"Wow." Jordan said as her hand drifted from Stephen's.

Charles nodded to her and looked off into the ocean. There were pelicans at the surface, some dove down and thudded against the water with their heavy bodies as the long heads sliced through the dark water.

"I like the ocean." Charles said as he kicked the sand and turned to them.

"It's a nice thing."

"What is it? Something like 60% of the world's population lives within, something like 50 miles, or kilometers of the ocean, or something."

"Yeah, I've heard that. And by 2050 a third of the US will live on the coast."

"Is that it?" Charles asked, "Seems like it should be more."

"I don't know. I'm not familiar with the stats. But, that's the trend, people keep moving here. Pushing up my rent."

"Actually, California has finally stopped growing. People are leaving." Jordan said.

"Yeah, it's all the bland old people going to Reno, Phoenix, and Vegas," Charles said.

"Good riddance."

"Absolutely." Charles said and they

walked on. Charles was holding his shoes and the sand was cold.

"I remember," Charles began speaking as they trudged through the sand, "the first time I saw the Pacific was after walking about 4 miles in San Francisco, from North Beach, across Chinatown, into Golden Gate Park and then straight to the water. I was with a couple buddies of mine. One guy was a trumpeter, this huge stupid stoner. And we were at Kerouac's bar and he spilled his drink on me." Charles mused and smirked a little as Jordan and Stephen tentatively watched him.

"I just remember it was strange. I was like 18. Reading all the Beat books. Thinking San Francisco was the coolest place in the world. Had the most potential. But it was just rich software engineers in huge SUV's and the bay is incredibly industrialized." He shook his head and looked off.

"Yeah, that's the trend. Times Square is nothing like it was 20 years ago." Jordan said.

"There's a Times Square in every city." She then added.

"Yeah, we went to Piccadilly. Remember that, Stephen?" Charles asked.

"Sure. We were really wasted on

absinthe."

"Yeah. And those girls from Tennessee we tried to find at the Salsa bar, or something."

"Sure, that was hilarious." Charles said, "I just remember being really drunk at night, my head spinning and... just being a strange new kind of drunk off that absinthe, and we were walking downtown, after the Tube was done, and this young English kid just appearing out of nowhere, like, right in front of my face. I didn't see him until he was an inch from my mouth, like he wanted to kiss me. No periphery vision. But, he wanted money. I remember. And I gave him some pence and he looked at it and asked for more and I gave him two pounds."

"Yeah?" Stephen said and Jordan looked across her boyfriend to the younger brother she hadn't seen too often. She gave her fingers to the loose palm of Stephen and he tightened his grip for a moment and held her, then loosened his hand and her fingers slid in and out as they walked.

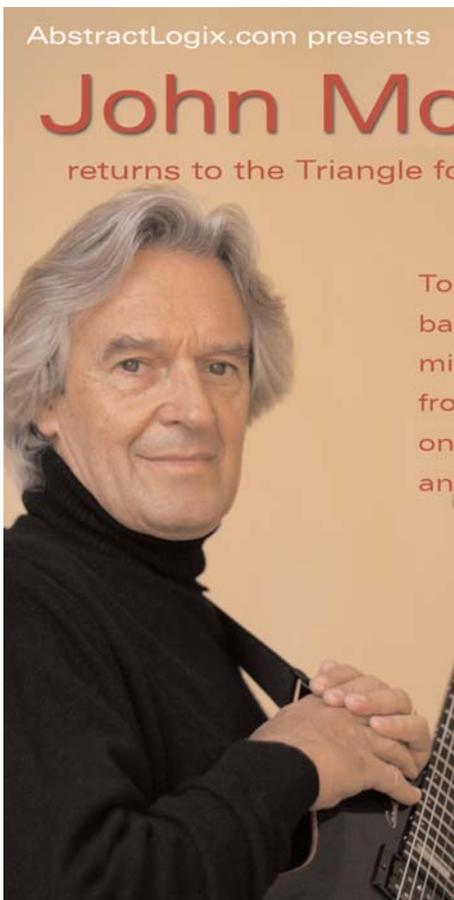
"It's funny what you remember." Charles said. "That San Francisco beach," he shook his head. "We walked all day and then found the beach at sunset. There were a couple

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surfers out and the beach was wide, must have been low tide. The sunset was reflecting on the wet sand. The city was behind us and there was a ton of graffiti on the stone barrier to the city."

"It sounds poetic." Jordan said and Stephen gave her a look.

"An English teacher," said Charles.

"It takes an English teacher to point out poetry in a scientist's own life."

"I have all the poetry I need," Charles defended. They walked on and the sun continued to set. They passed a make-shift wood sign with a laminated sheet stapled to it. The flyer was announcing high levels of bacteria in the water. The three ignored this sign. Stephen was a water chemist with the state and he'd long since abandoned the passion to cry out at such things. He had a PhD and was now more subdued.

"I heard some scientists did a study about men in LA and sperm counts."

"Yeah?" Stephen asked.

"Yeah, they have really low sperm counts because of all the im-particulates and carcinogens in the air."

"Makes sense." Stephen answered.

"Yeah."

Jordan smiled and reached behind her head to collect her mop of hair, she brought it back and slowly let it fall to her shoulders.

"The BBC or somebody did a study and found that the regular condom is too big for most Indians," she then said.

Charles laughed, "You mean sub-continent Indians?"

"Yeah, from India," she answered.

"I bet that study was contentious," Stephen said and Charles slowed and they tacitly turned and began walking south again. The bright lights from the promenade and the pier were both beckoning and revolting. The three fell into a short silence as they watched the lights. Charles was distracted as he stared down the long flank of beach and the couple turned to him. There was a drum circle forming outside a bonfire and the vague drumming was slightly audible. The surf roared onto the beach and quietly subsided, then rushed up again noisily. Sea gulls circled and called and fought above the boundary of water and land.

"They also did this study about prayer and patients." Charles said and they turned to him. He was now in the center of the couple. "They actually found that those that were prayed for did worse off. Had worse recovery rates." Charles finished and Stephen didn't say anything. There was a road-block for Stephen where Charles saw a

continuous highway.

"They presume it caused anxiety in the patients that were told they were prayed for. Wondering 'why me'. I would assume they did it blind too."

"Charles is an atheist and wants me to be one too because he's lonely."

"I never said I'm an atheist."

"You make it obvious though,"

Stephen said and Charles shrugged and stole a glance at Jordan. She was watching him with a smirk and she didn't speak. She, herself, had one described herself to Charles as 'extremely secular'. But she found it easy to play a role with Stephen.

"I just thought it was interesting," Charles said as they walked.

"What do you want to do tonight?" Stephen asked as the lights became brighter and the drumming louder and the smells more pungent.

"Go to a huge techno club and get tight," Charles said.

"Tight?" Jordan said.

"Hemingway uses that a lot. Why not, eh?"

"It's always interesting how slang changes."

"Yeah, tight almost means the opposite now," Stephen added.

"Yeah, in Spain they say, 'estoy flip-pando', for messed up or whatever."

"I am flipping?"

"Are you?" Charles smirked and they fell silent again.

"So you want to go to a techno club and get wasted?"

"Yes."

"Ok. I don't think that'll be a problem, you want to get a bunch of people together and what not?"

"Yes."

"Ok, babe, can you call your friends and tell them we're going to Sugar?"

"Sure."

And the couple took out their cell phones and began calling. Between calls Stephen said to his younger brother, "You should move here."

"I have," Charles said from his seat on the sand, watching the circle of hippies dance and smoke to the drumming.

"So you're staying here, then?"

"Yeah, we're gonna go surfing every day and I'm gonna drive an ambulance around Compton."

Stephen smirked then looked off in thought; he shrugged and put his phone to his head again.

*

Charles had undone the first few buttons on his shirt and Amman and Alex, two of Stephen's friends were on E and Charles loathed them. They writhed about the dance floor as the

lights dimmed and the colors changed. They were more than content without the search that Charles was undergoing. Charles pent up a rage against them from the moment he shook their hands and they rolled his named across their tongues and stared at him with lazy eyes. He felt rage and thought about smashing their heads together. It would be too easy, the two would probably cry in joy from the contact, fall to the floor and finger each other as Charles put boot to their face.

The club was more like a warehouse and Charles was sitting at a table with Stephen and Jordan; he was fomenting, and burning his cash on drinks. He was trying to stay positive but he felt hot and wanted to smash the walls with his fists. He felt fervid temerity and needed to placate something impossibly forbidden in him. He was frustrated until a few of Jordan's friends arrived. Charles started to breathe easier.

They exchanged names and anecdotes under the loud pretense of the DJ. There were three girls and Charles. One had a boyfriend and Charles was tan and had strong shoulders and a clean face and short hair pasted up and over to the side.

He asked Jennifer to dance and they were out there. The hedonists on E were next to them and rolled their weightless heads toward the two as each pair went after what they could. As the DJ brought the crowd to a crescendo with a fragile, angelic female voice soaring over the percussive predictability, the crowd brought their hands up. Charles did and Jennifer bounced from leg to leg looking at him. She was showing him her stomach and the undersides of her long slender arms. He smiled at her as the bodies in the clubs pressed together in the sweaty warehouse. Charles brought his elbow down and caught Amman in the side of the head. Amman stumbled and Charles felt good inside and put his hands to Jennifer's hips and they circled into the interior of the crowd.

The club was becoming as packed as the holiday streets of Manhattan and Charles danced with Jennifer without any need for words. He put his hands on her waist and she flung her arms around his neck. They kissed and cheered in solidarity as the DJ, high in his booth above the sea of writing, half-naked bodies, pounded his fist in the air. They danced harder and Charles pinched the front of his shirt in his hands and pulled it out to air himself. With a gesture, Jennifer began to free his buttons and his shirt

fell against his naked torso. She let out a female howl and put her fingers to the muscles on his stomach. He pulled her closer and their bellies touched.

She turned and he had his hand on her flesh. He was rigid and she toyed with this. He put his hands under her belt line and felt the smooth fabric. He reached further and touched the moist hair and she turned and pressed hard against him.

Soon they were off the dance floor and Charles hugged his brother and Jordan like he'd never see them again, he asked his brother for cab money and left. They went to Jordan's apartment in West Hollywood and they held hands and gently kissed during the ride.

She was in the bathroom and Charles lay out in her bed. Stephen had said she was 'good'. Jordan had probably said something similar about Charles. Outside pressure had condoned the act. It was easy to oblige. Momentum oriented them together, the atmosphere of the club almost forced the act.

He sat there in her bed and waited. He tried to think of something profound. His experience had been radical. He thought about the screams; first as the woman understood the attack, then as the needle tore into her and finally as she gasped and slipped away. They were all different.

But there really wasn't anything profound in the juxtaposition of the extremes. It was simply a case of being in two different parts of the world. Charles felt good about the way he was handling it. It was absolutely in no way his fault. He was a victim. But more than anything was a desire to not think about it. There wasn't any need. There was no wise poetry to be drawn except an insipid conclusion about the divergent realities of the world. Daily, he could read of attacks and suicide bombers. At Columbia he had been a first responder and many times traveled through Harlem at midnight to pick up a corpse. He heard water running in the bathroom.

Depravity made him eager to abandon himself to small joys. Charles used to hold out for a female that was perfect. Every now and then lowering himself to the bottom when he was desperate enough to pick up the trash, like a pizza crust on the top of a trash cylinder. In this moment, though, Jennifer was perfect and she smiled coyly as he opened up the sheets and she fell down into his arms.



Last Night I Dreamt I Was A Chicken, Part II

by Lara Falberg

(editor's note: When we last left our girl Shannon, she'd decided that the relationship probably wouldn't work. See the June Blotter for more)

"Vic?"

"Yes?"

"Want to trade sometime?"

"Trade what?"

"Ya know, I'll do a dream analysis for you, and you can hypnotize me."

"No."

"Why?"

"Because Shannon, I don't want to reveal myself in that way nor do I want you to."

"But, people pay us to do this."

"Yes, they make themselves vulnerable, but we are not vulnerable in return. You and I would both be putting ourselves in potentially awkward situation and I don't want to do that."

"Oh. Okay. Why?"

"I just don't."

"Okay, but what if I want to try hypnosis? Can I just come to you as a paying client?"

"I think we should just keep our relationship professional."

"Um, Vic, we have never had a conversation before until today, and we've only glimpsed each other a few times. We don't have a relationship."

"Yes, we don't."

Well, that takes care of that. Wait, why is he rejecting me? I'm hot.

"Hey, do you have a girlfriend?"

"No."

"Wife? Lover? Concubine?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Shannon, it would seem that you might require certain skills to analyze dreams, is this correct?"

"Maybe."

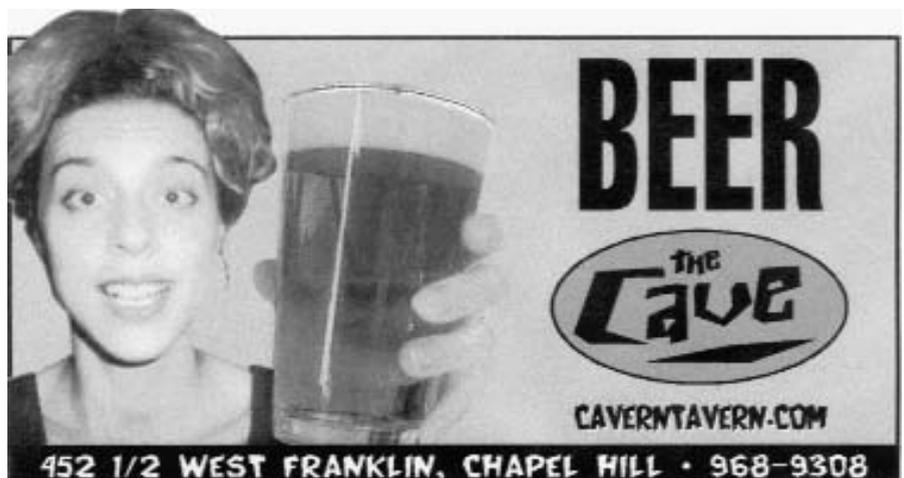
"Okay, let's assume you do. Wouldn't one of those skills be the ability to read your audience?"

"Probably."

"Well, in my case, you're not reading your audience."

"10-4."

So, I left. What else could I do? For







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whatever his reasons are, he is not feeling me. Wait, that's unacceptable. Why is he so guarded? Could me not locking the door a couple of times really warrant this type of animosity? Doesn't seem right.

The next day, I took my time leaving the space Vic and I share. We crossed paths in the hallway. I said, "hiya," and he said nada. That's just rude.

Fifteen days later, I'm in the coffee shop. I was telling my friend Nicole about a client who had a dream he was naked in a coffin. He felt overexposed and threatened that people would judge him and laugh, even when he ceased existing. Severe self-esteem issues, so I sent him to my therapist friend Doug. Doug is good people and very good at boosting people's egos and making them believe in themselves. Nicole got up to get more tea. Vic sits down in her place. He stares at me, and I see he has very light brown eyes, unusual. There is a small gray spot in one of them. This is the opposite of me. I have gray eyes, with a small brown spot in the opposite eye. This means something, because I want it to.

"Shannon, I was rude to you."

"Yes. True."

"I apologize."

"Okay."

"I've been thinking about your offer?"

"Why?"

"Because I have had a reoccurring dream almost every night for the last two weeks, since you and I spoke here last."

"Do you blame me?"

"Yes, so I need you to help me figure it out. Do you still want to get hypnotized?"

"Not sure."

"Well, think about it."

"What happened to keeping our relationship professional?"

"You were right, we don't have a relationship."

"Oh, well, that's good then."

"Yes, think about it, and leave me a note when you decide."

"Okay, that's what I'll do then."

So Vic curtly nods, then spills his milk, which I learned is what he drinks, 2%. Was this a metaphor? Yes, because I want to see it that way. Most people don't know they are absurd, but I am well aware of it.

I make him wait five days. Why? Cause he makes me nervous and it seems like he doesn't trust it if you give him what he wants too easily. I'm trying to read my audience. I write him a note in my fake, stylized handwriting: Vic, I will barter with you. When is your next availability? I can see you on Thursday at 11:15a.m. Let's do the dream analysis first. Maybe we can do the hypnotism session the following week? Let me know by tomorrow. -Shannon.

Curt, to the point, and I'm calling the shots. Yeah.

The next day, Wednesday, no return note from Vic.

Thursday, I get there and he left a note saying, "Shannon, I will be here today at 11:15. Thank-you, Vic." Okay so now what do I do? I told that presumptuous fuck to let me know by Wednesday. I'm a game player; totally believe it the necessity. Here's what I do: "Vic, made an appointment since I didn't hear from you yesterday. Tomorrow, be here at noon. If you have an appointment or conflict, cancel or reschedule it, because I'm only making this offer once." And I put the note on the outside of the office door along with the 'In Session, please do not disturb' sign. Put that in your hat muttonchops/gap-tooth.

Friday, Vic shows up at 11:58a.m. My friend Amy was right, we teach people how to treat us. He comes in, and won't look me in the eye. I ask him if he is sure he wants to do this. He nods. I ask him if he is sleep deprived. He nods again. I ask him if he plans to use his vocal cords today. He looks at me and he looks pained. Then he starts to cry.

He cries softly, and without moving any facial muscles, at least none that I could detect. Then he looks me directly in the eye and he says, "I'm ready, but I'm pretty uncomfortable with this." I tell him he doesn't have to go through with it. He says, "I really do. It's plaguing my every thought." I tell him to get comfortable and start when he's ready.

"I wake up in water, but I can only feel it. When I look down I'm just in my bed, and can't see any wetness. But when I touch my dry-looking clothing and comforter, they are soaked. I get out of bed and hear myself sloshing across the floor, but I look down, and I am leaving no wet footprints. I go in

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the bathroom, but in my dream I think of it as the Loo, like I'm British. Somehow it's pink, but a really garish pink, like magenta/carnation. Then a woman I have never seen appears behind me in the mirror. She's blond, and I have never dated a blond woman in my life. I'm looking in the mirror and I have a corkscrew in my hand. She wraps her arms around me and smells my neck. She's smiling and I smile back. She lets go and sleepily saunters out. I look in the mirror and I put the corkscrew in the soap. The soap is pink too. I let go, and drag my soggy-feeling/dry-looking body back to bed. Now my bed is round and there is a trampoline in the room. I get on the bed and all of the sudden I'm dry again but beyond feverish. The bed begins to spin and I see there is a mirror above the bed. I'm watching myself spin and I notice my body is hairless. I mean my head and eyebrows too. I have very prominent brow-bones it turns out. I hear the blond woman talking. She speaks in clipped orders. She says "Stop being feverish. Don't be hairless. Cease spinning." The spinning gets faster and I am burning up and now no longer even have hair follicles. I yell at her to stop it. I wake up yelling at her to stop it. When I wake, I'm soaked in sweat, and I'm crying, and I'm freezing."

He stopped talking very abruptly. We stared at each other for a few seconds. Then I began to speak.

"You often feel very disconnected from what you are feeling. It's hard to make the leap with what your brain is telling you and how your body responds. Pink represents the feminine influence in your life. The garish, extreme shade exemplifies your resistance to this influence. The

blond woman could represent that part of you that wants intimacy and the idea of her coming up behind you is probably what you have as a fantasy of how living with a woman you love would be like. The blond hair could either be a woman you recently have come to find intriguing, or the unobtainable since you say you have never been with a blond. The corkscrew is a phallic symbol and by plunging it into a pink bar of soap, you are trying to merge the masculine and the feminine. You and a round, spinning bed represent change and the unexpected. The mirror is showing you that the way you see yourself is different than how others view you and the loss of hair means you feel vulnerable and without protection. The spinning is the loss of control you feel and the blond ordering you to stop feeling what you are feeling is indicative of your fears of not being understood and accepted, and believing that a woman would want to change everything about you in order to find you worthy of love. I don't know about the trampoline. Maybe you just happened to see one recently and it got stuck in your subconscious or it's something you want."

We stared at each other again. He got up and left without a word. I needed something stronger than coffee.

I never saw him again. I never got paid, nor did I get my opportunity to be hypnotized. He took without giving, or so I thought. I later appreciated the lesson 10 weeks later when I met my husband. I knew it was him when the first thing he said to me was, "You look like you either have something to say, or you wish someone would ask you the right question."



The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

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

mermaid@blotterra.com

"One Short, One Tall"

12/28/06

hospital scene where a patient lies in bed, seemingly asleep while another man sits at the foot of the bed and a doctor is standing nearby. The man sitting is in a dreamlike state, staring vacantly into space and he says "almost...". Suddenly the sleeping patient sits up and points a handgun directly at the sitting man's head and pulls the trigger. The chamber is empty and the gun clicks harmlessly. The doctor holds a car cigarette lighter to the end of the gun barrel until it glows hot. The shooter puts the lighter to his own eye and slumps over, dead.

2/2/07

At a party at a large old house in the countryside Michael Jordan and his entourage are walking down a hallway towards me. There's Michael, a young white woman, a young black man and a young, fidgety white boy who seems kind of "slow". They are all dressed in exquisite white suits and the others seem to be trying to keep the fidgety boy in line. He suddenly runs ahead of them and out the door. Outside, it is dark and I am watching the low clouds, upon which someone is projecting the image of a Chinese symbol. I hear a plane approaching and I think how cool it would be for the plane to suddenly come bursting through the clouds and projection. Instead, an old biplane comes flying sideways and out of control from behind a tall stand of trees. As it passes overhead it turns completely upside down and skids across a frozen pond into the far shore and up into a house. I run up to see if everyone is ok and out of the house comes the fidgety kid from Michael Jordan's entourage. He is annoyed, mutters "just give me an estimate" as he plops down on the ground. I go inside where a poor black family is just getting out of bed. The mother seems frightened of me initially but I spend several minutes talking to them and trying to get a plan for them to leave the house so we can go get the insurance company and some carpenters and get everything taken care of. The longer I am talking the worse my southern accent becomes until I am almost slurring unintelligibly. I go outside to wait for them and notice what a beautiful view there is. We are high on a hill and a huge forest stretches below to a large river. On the front stoop of the house is a scale model of a city. I notice the model is of a large asian city and then I see the Chinese symbol from the projection inscribed on one of the buildings.

TJ - Ethernet

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The Bunker Brothers, Chang-Eng

by M.P. Powers

When they were born in Siam, no midwife would touch them. They were thought of as a curse and a bad omen, and when the king caught wind of this "monster" that had been conceived, he condemned "it" to death. He soon changed his mind though, and Chang-Eng grew up and into their freakishness raising ducks and selling duck eggs. Eventually, a British merchant discovered them and told their mother their destiny was lofty and noble and held the promise of great prosperity, but was outside of Siam. She at first was incredulous, but after much conning and coaxing, she finally fell prey to his proposal. He paid five hundred bucks for the pair, and shipped them to America where they were artlessly exhibited, in dimly-lit theaters and crowded concert halls, in all of their subhuman glory.

They were conjoined at the breastbone by a ligament of cartilage, blood and nerves just five inches long, and they carried each other around like Jesus carried the cross, though with more grace, and with much deftness. They learned to coordinate their movements with a sprightly and instinctive synchronicity, playing games of battledore and shuttlecock and doing back-flips and somersaults with each other. And their strength too was awe-inspiring. Once, they plucked a big three-hundred pound businessman out of the audience and hoisted him over their heads for several minutes, and for several years they made a living that way, as stage-freaks, performing their vaudevillian exploits for anyone with fifty-cents for admission and a taste for the absurd.

After almost a decade of touring, they decided to settle down. They bought land in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, took up farming, fishing and hunting and, amid much disparagement and objection among the townspeople, and despite the grave physical adversities they were burdened with, married the daughters of a well-to-do farmer named Yates and a woman so fat she had to be weighed on a scale constructed of enormous steelyards and a swinging platform. But even that wasn't enough counter-weight, for her. When she stood on it, the beams came flying up and the platform crashed down and the house shook and even the mountains seemed to

tremble. It could've been enough to land her in a Big Top sideshow, but she wasn't one for the circus. She was content as a housewife, as a doting mother and perhaps, in all her elephantine morbidity, as the initial grounding wire between the Sisters Yates and Chang-Eng.

Between the two couples, they had twenty-one children; one or two almost every year. But the domestic lives between the families eventually soured, and there were numerous quarrels among them, and between Chang-Eng especially; mostly because of Chang's weakness for the bottle and Eng's love of late night gambling. Once they even came to blows, flailing fists and elbows at each other, and then Chang brandished a knife and threatened to square the whole thing up in one fell swoop. But quickly he sobered up, and it ended the same way all their other fights had - working their differences out somehow, saving their grudges for someone else, someone they weren't a part of, and continuing on the only way they knew how - bearing the cross of each other, lugging and yanking and dragging it around for as long and as far as their love would allow.

Several times in their lives they sought surgical separation. Everything from red-hot wires to the notion of draping them over a fine cat-gut cord was considered, but the doctors deemed those and every other alternative fatal for them. They then more or less gave up on the dream and concentrated on separating things more reasonable and better suited for splitting up, like money, and their

possessions and estates. They had accumulated over one thousand acres of farmland through the years, and established a tobacco plantation upon it with horses and livestock and thirty-some-odd slaves. The Civil War, though, took a great toll on their fortunes, and when it ended they struck out on tour again, first around America, then abroad, to England, Italy, France and a few other European countries. On the way back to the States, while playing a game of draughts with the president of Liberia, Chang suffered a stroke that partially paralyzed the right side of his body. When they arrived back home, he put himself under the care of the family physician, but there were no remedies for his ailments, and as he slowly languished, Eng too must've sensed he was also languishing. Then it happened. On a bitter and icy morning on January 17, 1874, Eng awoke to find his brother dead. He started sweating and grew pale from fright, and called for his family; three hours later, he too was dead.

In Surry County, North Carolina, twin bridges spanning the creek dividing Chang-Eng's property have recently been dedicated to them by the Board of Transportation. Their descendents, numbering well into the thousands, have scattered all about the country, but many still live along that same creek, on the same lush Bunker land at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. They speak often of the brothers' strength of spirit and all their noble traits with much reverence and an almost gloating haughtiness. There's one problem that still plagues them however, and is the cause of endless quarrels - the division of the land, heirlooms, and artifacts left behind by the twins. It's only fitting though that problems like that still orbit the Chang-Eng legacy. Sometimes division doesn't come easy. And sometimes attachment doesn't either.



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The Dialogue by Phillip Barron

A telephone pole snapped at Lamond and Gregson
splayed wires spill conversations into the street
the twisted, splintered creosote tree
tugged down the conveyance of a dying art

When we bury our wires, do we bury our conversations?
In a wireless society, is meaning weightless as an ether? Net?

Enforcers of law send traffic to another street
for fear that steel-belted radials might squash the conversations
dialogues preserved as endangered species
soon men will coddle and coax them back into wires.

Silent Room by Nathan Toben

Moonlight is
an iron curtain
in a room
of eastern
Europe.

The skylight
drips ink
that rolls along
bowed floorboards
to collect in
a depression
by the armchair.



Cduhuvida

II. Hymir the Giant

A giant called Hymir kept a camp on the coast of Vinland, where he fished for whales. Hymir was an ugly man, short for a giant and stout, grey-faced with wide pale eyes, and he could not grow a beard. Hrod his wife looked the same, save her beard was fine. The camp was on a bay, surrounded by craggy cliffs grazed precariously by a herd of cattle.

Now in years past this had been a prosperous camp, and Hymir had caught whales without number. But of late a darkness had fallen upon the bay. Whales were scarce and the cattle were growing unwholesome.

When Thor arrived at the camp, Hymir was out to sea, so Hrod welcomed Thor to their home. She recognized the Thunder God as a friend of her son, Tyr, and recommended that he disguise himself before Hymir returned, as there was no love lost between the Gods of Asgard and the Giants. Thor disguised himself as a red-haired youth and told her to call him Voerr.

She seated Thor in Tyr's highchair so that he could reach the giant's table. Night was falling and the sky was lit with an eldritch glow, far out to sea. Outside they could hear the icebergs grumbling like distant thunder; indeed, the very earth shook with fear when Hymir strode home from the hunt. He entered the hall wearing a beard of icicles and tossed his cloak to the floor.

"No luck again today. Not a nibble. But what of your day, wife? I saw footprints in the snow and I know that we have had a guest."

Hrod replied that a friend of his son, Tyr, had come to visit. "He is called Voerr and is waiting at the table for supper."

Hymir sat at the table and eyed Thor with suspicion, for he knew Tyr lived with the Gods, and he suspected that this was one of them, though he could not tell which one.

Having no proof, however, and being famished himself, he thought it best to be polite. So he told Hrod to prepare a great feast. Three cows were roasted and placed before the giant and the god.

Thor was a valiant fellow at the table as well as in war, and even in his reduced guise, he fell upon the meal with gusto. He devoured an entire cow while Hymir and Hrod split one.

Hymir's eyes widened when Thor reached for a second cow, for the giant had a cruel custom when he had uninvited guests. If they should fail to eat as much as he, then he would feign offense and slay them.

"Truly, friend Voerr, you do have a giant appetite for a mewling babe. Seldom did that chair see so much duty when Tyr sat there. As you have eaten all the meat that Hrod had in the larder, if you plan to eat with us tomorrow, you will have to catch your own fish. I cannot be expected to provide beef for such a gluttonous child."

Angered at this lack of hospitality, Thor growled that he would be honored to learn from such a great whaler as Hymir. Perhaps they could catch twice tomorrow what Hymir caught today.

At last the table was bare, so Hrod showed Thor where to sleep.

To be continued...

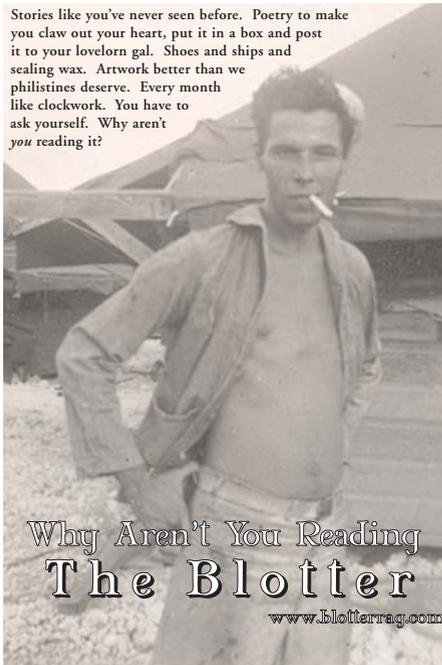
CONTRIBUTORS:

Joel Van Noord lives in California, but is a son of Wall Street. Look for his work in Laura Hird, Dogmatika, and Thieves Jargon. For some secret reason he sent us this story from Panama *** Our Lara Falberg is possibly the reincarnation of Dorothy Parker, only without the self-loathing and probably the alcoholism. She promises to swear in her next piece *** M. P. Powers has also been published in Nerve Cowboy, Identity Theory, Entropy and other magazines. He's originally from Chicago but makes his home in South Florida, and has provided us with our first unsolicited, academic-quality non-fiction, which was darned nice of him *** Larry Holderfield - mckenzee is a new husband and author and cartoonist, and general all-around Retro-renaissance man. If you enjoyed "Cthulhuvida", see more of mckenzee at <http://mckenzee.comicgenesis.com> *** T. J. Garrett is one of those people; you know, a friend who will make the beer run after he helps you bury the bodies. He's our staff photographer, and for good reason: the cover, the centerfold photos and the one below are his. You, too, can contact him at fotobro@yahoo.com *** Phillip Barron is a writer living in Durham, NC. His works, which have appeared in philosophical journals, newspapers, and literary rags, consistently ask "why... why do we make it harder than it has to be?" *** Nathan Toben writes, "I write poems. My interests are phonetics, Maybelle Carter and road signs. I may have sent some stuff a few years back, but I lost touch with the Blotter when I went to school out west. Now that I'm back living in Chapel Hill, I've been reading it again. I haven't seen much poetry of late; here is some." Now that's what I'm talking about! *** Paperhand Puppet Intervention's Jan Berger, Donovan Zimmerman and friends (below) start their magic in Saxapahaw, NC, but take it with them wherever they go.



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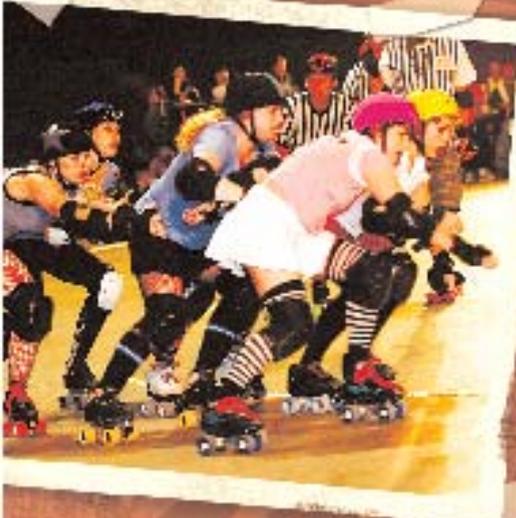
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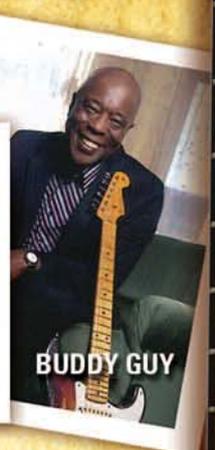
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