

*Taking it out behind the woodshed with Laine Cunningham,
Shanna Zentner, Jeffrey Wright,
our comics and The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

December 2011

MAGAZINE



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FRONT COVER "The Lantern" by
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[c l m p]

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"OK, Pencils Down"

It's only mid-October here, and the weather is getting long-pantsish but not quite sweatshirt-y. I know you'll be reading this a couple of months from now, and by then we'll be coated up and I'll be scrambling with the holidays, and there are some things on my mind right now. One of them came up because my twelve year old did poorly at the squirt-races at the State Fair. For those of you who don't have the foggiest idea what that means, let me explain. Squirt-races are those Midway contests that allow people to sit in a row holding a water-pistol attached to a hose (allowing a steady stream of water to shoot at a target that somehow measures how much water is hitting it) and when the hawker says go, they "race" each other to win a stuffed animal or some other just as fluffy gimmick and you do it by participating in an event appearing to require skill, but which is mostly luck and sometimes rigged. It was her goal to win a stuffed animal about the size of a Volkswagen, and she'd worked herself up into a froth, the lights and smells and her hunger to win and for actual food driving her to this logical progression: that the god of wanting something was on her side. She spent six dollars (of my money) and of course did not win, was disappointed in the *extremis*. And suddenly she wanted no more of the fair.

Now six dollars is either a passle of money, or not very much at all, but here's the thing. To my daughter it is an unknown quantity – she doesn't know what, and doesn't know earning (she does chores, but because it is her responsibility as a member of the family), cannot differentiate between hierarchical needs and wants, and isn't quite sure what she wants to earn money to do (except probably to "buy" songs to listen to) and the whole financial system is very nebulous to her. And I'm not sure why but it seems strange for me to try to explain away some of that nebulosity, to help her understand *value*. Something not logical, but emotional.

I've been a stay-at-home Dad for eight years, formative for both her and me, and it appears we've suddenly hit a slick in the road; not quite an impasse, but still *something risky*. She's twelve, in the middle of middle-school, with so much information bombarding her that the lessons I've taught her are, well, as taut as a mandolin string. Sure, there have always been things that are easy to teach. How do you play solitaire? The game has rules and the rules are rigid. The results of following the rules are myriad, but on the same logical plane, if you will. Winning means you followed the rules and losing means you followed the rules, and everything else adds up to luck, actually. Frankly, it is a more complex (but not more logically complicated) version of tic-tac-toe. Yeah, those are my words, but her message. And we are done with it, she and I. We have completed the parent/child conversations about logic and winning and losing in that regard. She comprehends: solitaire and things of that ilk are used for clearing your brain for more important things, like writing. Chess is for engaging your thinking brain. Everything else is generally...crap. Ah-ha.

But give luck a tweak and it's off logic-road. Make the prize some-

thing...wonderful. Hide the chance in it and make it seem like skill. And this is us at the fair, looking like some Rodgers & Hammerstein characters waiting for the orchestra to kick in for our learn-a-lesson musical interlude. Only I came up a day late and a dollar short. Six dollars, actually. And that was that. She didn't want to understand the seedy history of the Midway. She felt she'd done her best, and that had always worked before at getting her what she thought she wanted – desserts, allowance, grades, roles, *wins*. What went wrong? She looked at me and I actually flinched. Was I supposed to step in and win the teddy bear, or was that role meant to be someone in her future (her not too near future if you please)? Or was I supposed to let her spend her own money (which she was desperately willing to do)? Were the giant banks supposed to let people buy the houses of their dreams, whether or not they could truly afford them? Were we supposed to bail out any boat full of stormwater, no matter how mindless the fishermen? What terrifically apt analogies, and how utterly useless between a father and his tween-aged daughter. In the Dad-manual it says don't let your daughter cry, and certainly don't make her cry. So we walked around the fair, the crowded, noisy, smelly old fair and I kept my mouth shut and after a while we stopped at a gaudily lit stand and got a bag of cotton candy and shared it and in a while she cheered up. I leaned in and took one in the glucose for the team. And pondered an impending future where some skinny kid was going to wink at my daughter and win her a giant Snoopy.

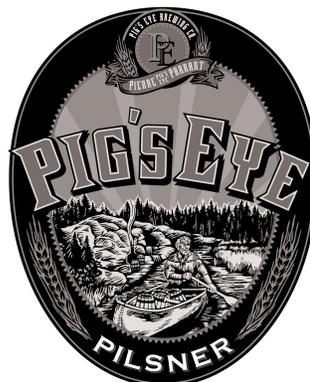
And so, here are a few of the lessons I've tried to impart to that someday-young-woman.

Hard and fast rule number one: Never take part in a contest that you desperately want to win and you have no actual control over your ability to win. Lotteries, beauty pageants and squirt-races all come to mind.

Hard and fast rule number two: Don't go hungry into an environment where the food is of questionable quality. Eat before the big business meeting.

Rule number three, pending further analysis: Never make a boy do anything for you that doesn't make sense just to see if he'll do it. You'll have learned nothing about him, and he'll believe he's done everything for you. Addendum: Today she came up to me first thing and said, "Dad, friends are like snowflakes – if you pee on them they disappear." I don't know. Just maybe the tables are turning and she's teaching me.

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CAUTION

Hey boyo, move over to the side of the street! Can't you see there's a parade coming?

What the Pub?!?!

Economic and Tech Trends in Publishing

by Laine Cunningham

A long time ago, books were sold in a way that is so shockingly different than how they are sold today that publishers might as well have been operating in a parallel dimension. The big difference between how books were sold a century ago and how things work today is summed up by one word: remainders.

Books are the only product sold on the open market that can be returned if sellers fail to move them. Jeans are made in a stunning array of sizes, lengths, cuts, styles and colors yet manufacturers don't offer to take back anything retailers can't sell. Cars require an investment of materials, labor and capital that for most consumers is topped only by the purchase of a home yet there is no giant parking lot in Detroit that takes back unsold vehicles.

Every year publishers spend money to bring in new authors, print the authors' books, market those books, ship those books...then take back any and all unsold copies. If you've ever wondered why books cost so much yet advances for authors have been notoriously low for decades, you now have one tiny piece of the answer. No other industry that is expected to earn money has such intensely profit-killing behavior at the heart of its business model. Puzzling, to be sure.

Puzzling behavior becomes downright bizarre when the returned books arrive back at the publisher's warehouse. Those unsold copies are, in industry terminology, remaindered. That means pulped. Shredded. Destroyed. No one keeps close tabs on the number of remaindered books in America but some

estimates have placed the number as high as 65 percent. With publishers producing nearly 300,000 books every year, that means a whopping 16,000 titles...titles, not copies...could be shredded every month. Very *Fahrenheit 451* of them.

It didn't used to be that way. In that long ago world in that parallel dimension, publishers sold books just like any other commodity. Whatever was ordered by a bookstore was purchased by the store. If they didn't sell right away, stores found a way to sell them. Then the Great Depression arrived. Lest we believe all the modern media's comparisons of the current recession to that time, remember that in three years industrial production fell 47%, the GDP fell 30%, and the wholesale price index declined 33 percent. People couldn't afford to purchase bread or shoes let alone books.

In a desperate bid to keep themselves afloat, publishers offered a deal booksellers couldn't refuse. They magnanimously offered to ship books for which the stores had not paid, take back books the stores could not sell, and didn't expect payment for copies that did sell for a month or



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more. By the time the economy recovered, bookstores were so accustomed to the terms that publishers were stuck with a business model that would be unacceptable during any other time.

Which of course is one of the primary problems publishers face today. Before anyone pillories them for being thickheaded wastrels, imagine a world where jeans manufacturers or car companies shredded, burned or compacted 65% of their inventory every year. Obviously they would rather quickly stop producing quite so many styles or models or colors or types. If the same were to occur in publishing, the world would rather rapidly become a much less interesting place.

Publishing is not just an

industry that produces products and manages a payroll and gives publicists something to do between calls from Fortune 500 companies and minor celebrities. Publishers are companies that have boards of directors and retirement plans and stockholders to satisfy, yes. They are also giant machines that disseminate ideas and thoughts and cultural concepts into the hands of anyone...*anyone*...who has fifteen or twenty bucks in their pocket. Even people who have no money can access the same books for free at the library. Book publishing is one of the great levelers of our modern world.

We cannot afford to lose that. A world in which publishers produce only those titles that are

sure to sell would be a world filled with genre romances and celebrity memoirs. It would be like watching only three channels on TV or being forced to buy ill-fitting jeans that are always too tight in the crotch.

Now you might think that most titles available today already consist only of the ill-fitting, crotch-rubbing type. To a degree, that's true. It's so true that both James Patterson and James Frey (he of the discredited memoir and subsequent Oprah stink) have both created virtual sweatshops wherein "coauthors" write books based on the famous authors' ideas.

Patterson, by the way, justifies his sweatshop by claiming that he has far more ideas than

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any one person could ever write in a lifetime. The truth is that every author has far more ideas than they could ever write in a lifetime; an important part of the author's job is to sift through the pile to find only those that are truly worth writing.

But the same industry that supports as-filling-as-popcorn tales and gristmill pulp also supports breakthrough ideas, swooningly ethereal literature, utopian ideals and fiction that sweeps readers into new worlds. Despite the increasing pressure over the past several decades to reduce publishing costs, the number of titles produced in the

United States has increased every year. That 300,000 new books produced every year doesn't include the ones being churned out in the increasingly popular self-publishing arena.

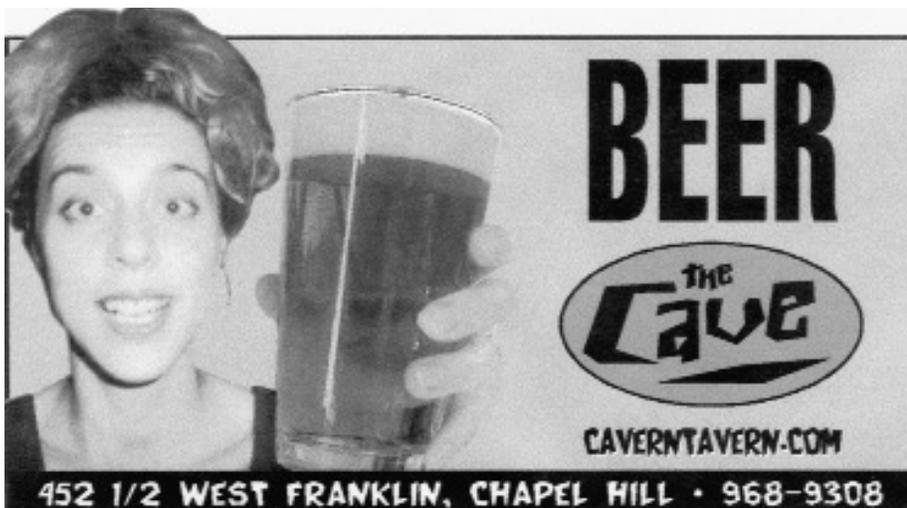
Unfortunately, to continue along this path, publishers have had to cut costs somewhere. The author, the one who produces the valuable ideas and ethereal fiction, has born a not inconsequential part of the burden. Along with shrinking advances, print runs have also been shrinking. An average contract twenty years ago used to be what I dubbed a standard 5-5 deal: a \$5,000 advance and a 5,000-

copy first print run. Now the average is more like 5-3 or 3-3 or even 1-1.

During the past decade, publishers have fallen into the habit of producing only half the agreed-upon number of copies for the first print run. (Yes, it's a breach of contract but try enforcing that when you've received a puny \$1,000 advance and the publisher has an entire floor of its building filled with attorneys.) Why manufacture something that is just going to be remaindered? Which brings us back to the nasty little expectation that has burdened publishers for over a century: remainders.

The practice of returns has to be changed. Slowly it is changing. In recent years, a few of the top publishers have taken tentative steps toward eliminating returns. Their efforts have often been met with a strong backlash from booksellers who of course don't want (and who often can't afford) a business model that eliminates one of the few things in their favor.

Yet technology is also playing a hand. Small publishers are rapidly converting to print on demand (POD) technologies because they can no longer afford traditional offset press processes (and all those remaindered books they're going to create through offset printing). POD books are created one at a time as needed. Since publishers don't generate a first print run that is stored in some warehouse, there is no warehouse to which the books



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can be returned.

There are thousands of small publishers compared to only six very large publishers. If booksellers have customers who want to buy something more captivating than the latest sweatshop title or more interesting than thoughts geared toward the lowest common denominator, they have to buy at least a small number of non-returnable titles.

This explains why more bookstores offer discounts on new releases, deeper discounts on books that have passed the ninety-day sales window, and remainder bins with bargains ranging from \$5 down to as little as a

buck. Like viewers who decide where in the distribution cycle they want to see a movie (at the theater, through their cable's on-demand service, or on DVD), readers who want the latest book pay full price and those who catch on later or who don't mind waiting pay the discounted price.

"Ah," you say craftily as you heft your twelve-ounce electronic reading device and stare with superiority at the vast shelf space available in your home because you no longer buy print copies, "what about e-books? Aren't print books already dying a slow death?"

Well, no. Again we have

only to look back a hundred years to see how the exact same dynamic impacted the entertainment industry. It used to be that entire families gathered around radios every night to listen to the news and be thrilled by audio plays. Movies were supposed to entirely supplant the need for radio. Later, television threatened the movie industry with exactly the same doomsday prediction.

Yet not only do we now have more radio channels than ever before, a hefty percentage of us actually pay for specific content or channels that are free of advertising. Most of us pay for television channels that offer better content than the free channels. Movie studios produce far more titles today than ever, and Indie studios are a living part of our culture. Rather than replace any specific format, new types of media simply forced the industries to shuffle their approach. They ended up with less attention from individual consumers than before yet they all survived and even thrived.

The same dynamic is currently taking place in publishing. In addition to e-books, printed books are also competing with the free content available on the internet...which includes entire books. This shift is industry wide and impacts all print forms from books to newspapers and magazines. As history shows, publishers will most likely survive and even thrive. The advent of e-readers that can handle newspaper and magazine formats are gener-

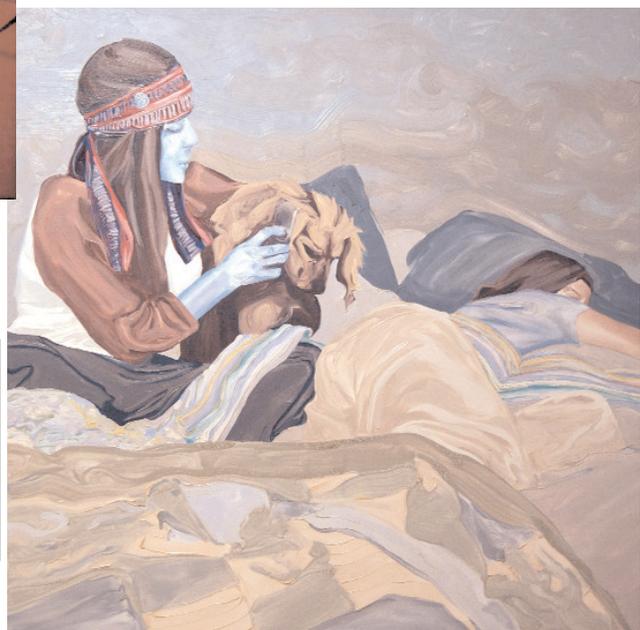
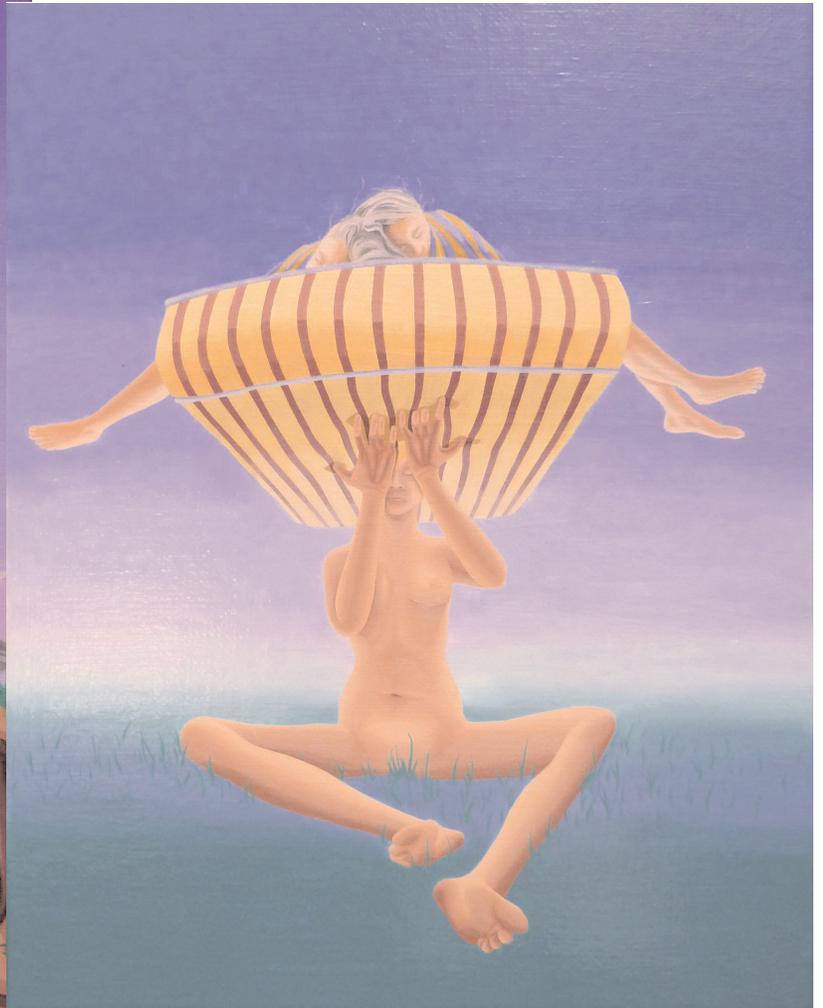


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Far Left: The Miser and the Ant Kiss

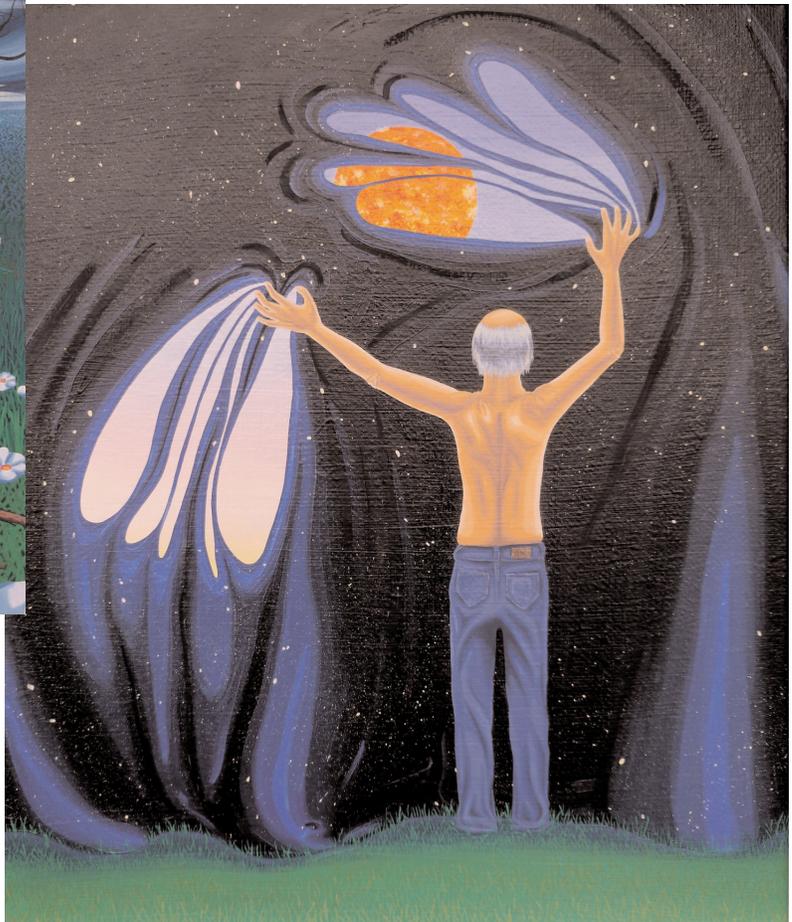
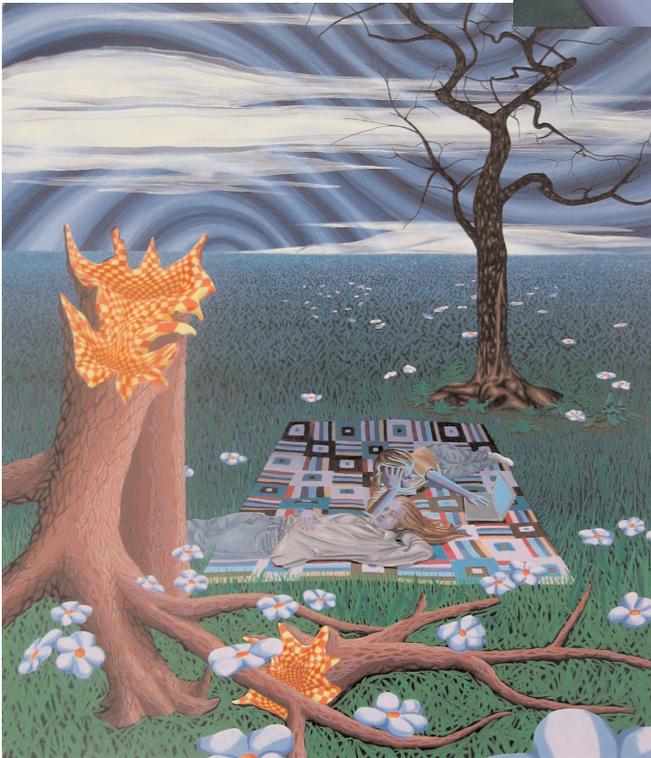
Left: A Shape Shifter Wakes Up

Lower Left: Talking to Kodiak

Below: The Picnic

Lower Right: With A Story That's Hard to Believe, Reenactment Isn't Easy

Right: This Neuron's Notion of the Human Machine



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ating new profit streams for the nearly defunct mags and rags. E-books now represent as much as 35% of top publishers' revenues, which is injecting much-needed cash into their bottom lines.

Still, the short-term upheaval is painful. Publishers continue to produce and heavily promote the fluffiest books. The world doesn't really need yet another celebrity memoir or, more disheartening for readers of every generation, children's picture books written by the glitterati. But think about what those fluffy books are really telling us: people buy them. In droves. In barbaric hordes. In mind-numbing, stampede-at-the-rave numbers.

And thank goodness they do. Without those titles to pad their bank accounts, publishers wouldn't produce beautiful books or thoughtful books or life-changing books. We would have no categories that serve the elusive young male reader because female readers vastly outnumber their counterparts in every age group. We would have no books that present the lives and goals

and desires of immigrant or ethnic populations because their demographics are too small. There would be no risk-taking novels that go against the established religious or political or jingoistic or governmental authority, no GLBT voices, no stories of the poor or disadvantaged. We would have nothing to inspire us, no characters who share some of our own experiences, no tales that reveal how similar we all are regardless of race, beliefs, nationality or age. There would be no magic.

Publishing isn't a perfect industry. Every company in every industry has to balance their profits against their goals. But in this arena, there tend to be more individuals who want to make the world a better place. They want people to understand how difficult it is to grow up biracial in America, they want underserved voices to sing as clearly as those of the majorities. Considering that there are already too few corporations that have any redeeming value, publishers almost look like they are riding white horses. Their

mounts might be gelded and a little grimy but by god, they're still in the battle.

So, of course I will continue to cringe whenever I see yet another big-name title about how hard life is as a celebrity or how much being rich sucks. And I will never begrudge the publishers the money they make from those sales. I can't. I'm one of the authors those glitterati titles support.



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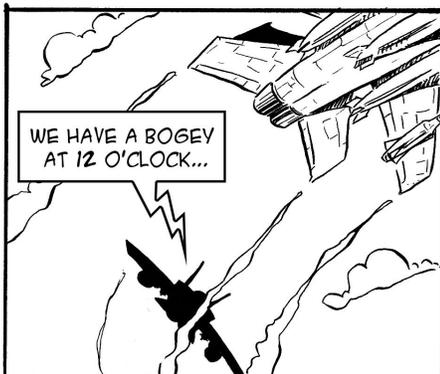
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Best In Show



by Phil Juliano

Five Minutes With: R. A. Salvatore

by Jeffrey Wright

R.A. Salvatore is the author of over 50 books. He is best known for the adventures surrounding his fantasy dark elf character Drizzt Do' Urden in the *Forgotten Realms Dungeons and Dragons* books and for killing Chewbacca in his *Star Wars* novel *Vector Prime*. "I was *told* to do it," he noted.

I sat down with Salvatore this past summer at Gen Con Indy to discuss writing and publishing. Below is an excerpt from that interview.

JW: Give us some tips for budding authors.

RAS: Anyone that comes up and says, "I want to be an author," my first response is: "If you can quit, quit." They always think I am being funny, but I am not. Because if you can quit, you are not an author. Because this business will beat the ever-living tar out of you. You have to love the writing. You have to have a need to write.

JW: So it is unforgiving?

RAS: Absolutely. If you are going to write anyway, you might as well try to publish. Right? So, if you can quit, quit. If you can't, you are a writer. If you are a writer, you can't be lazy. It begins and ends there. So many people think that what they've written is golden, and they walk away. You have to sit down and when you are editing your work, you have to read it out loud and listen to it. When you read your book out loud, you catch typos, awkward sentence fragments, point-of-view changes; you really catch tense changes. You slow yourself down. You hear the rhythm of it; you hear the pacing of it. You should do that ... whether you are writing a paper for college or whether you are writing a novel. You can't be lazy because there are a thousand people who want your job.

JW: Regarding e-books and self-publishing, are the fans buying?

RAS: My backlist is selling very well on e-books. It's taken off

faster than anyone anticipated.

JW: Is that a good route for first-time writers?

RAS: It used to be that we would always say, "Do not self-publish." It used to cost \$20,000. Now it is pretty much free. Now, are you going to sell a lot if you are an unknown author? Probably not. You might, but probably not. But what you can do is you can actually build a following, build some circles on Facebook, and then you build it like any other business. But once you get that going, it is probably going to be easier to talk to a publisher.

JW: Borders is gone. The publishing world is changing. What do you think about finding new readers?

RAS: About five years ago, a friend of mine that runs one of the major New York publishers said to me that the biggest challenge facing the publishing industry was point of sale. And even though you have the Internet, it's not the same thing. ... It's not so bad for people like me because I am established. So people look, they seek out the books on Amazon. But to try to break out a new author today, with less stores, is much harder. Once upon a time, we had 1,200 Waldenbooks and we had 900 B. Dalton's. And I remember when my first book came out, my first hardcover was because of Waldenbooks. ... They said, "We want a hardcover and we want a dark elf hardcover from Salvatore." And they put in a huge order because they were such a large store. And that was



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how I got into hardcover. And you just don't get that anymore.

JW: So what are publishers doing?

RAS: The thing I am really hoping is that people will start opening bookstores again. I think there is room now because the superstores are so spread out, you can find a niche area and open the small, independent, mall bookstore. It's hard because of the Kindle, the NOOK and the other e-book formats, but I think you can still do that.

JW: Would the smaller stores have a harder time getting an R.A. Salvatore in?

RAS: They would, and they wouldn't. They would unless they are persistent — because if it ever got back to me, I'd find a way to

get there. Most of the authors feel the same way that I do. We love the science fiction, fantasy, mystery bookstores. You know, I go to a couple every time I go on tour.

JW: Do you ever just go into a bookstore on a trip unannounced?

RAS: I do. I go in and sign stock for them. One time they asked me for my ID. I gave it to them, and they still said no because they said they can't return them if you sign them. And I'm like, "Yeah you can, but hopefully you'll sell them." Isn't that the point?

JW: If you were starting out today, knowing what you know now about writing, what would be different?

RAS: There are two things that would be different. I would find someone who is publishing books on something I know and love. It's gonna be hard for a first-time author to get into the A list license, like *Star Wars*. ... I would try to find a tie-in on the B list. Maybe someone is doing a series of novels for *Deadwood* or something — smaller scale, smaller expectations. If it's something you love, you can probably bring something to it. So if I were trying to get published, that might be a way I would do it: "I love this. You are doing books on it. I

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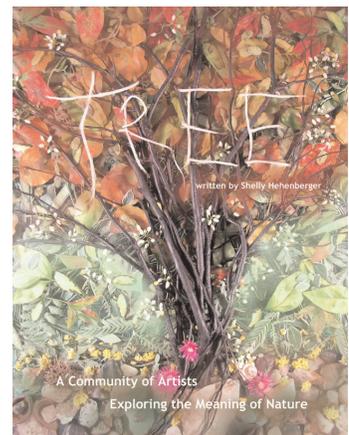
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The Blotter Magazine's book publishing imprint, **PencilPoint Mountain**, and www.paintbrushforest.com

present **Tree**, a collaborative, all ages, fine arts book illustrated by members of Paintbrush Forest, a group of artists from the Orange County, NC, area. All proceeds from **Tree** support the Haw River Assembly, a NC environmental organization. Check out www.paintbrushforest.com to bid on the original book art, to make a donation, and to order your own copy of **Tree**. Thank you.



have a great idea that would fit in. What do you think?" That type of thing.

If I were just creating my own world, my own books, I would send it out to all the publishers. I'd keep working for a few months while they had it, and if I didn't hear back or all I got were rejections, I'd self-publish.

JW: What would your self-publish route be?

RAS: E-book. And I'd set up a huge website, a huge Facebook page and I'd probably spend a few thousand dollars or a few hundred at least and get some people to go in there and start building up traffic.

JW: Do you see yourself writing books when you are 70 or 80?

RAS: I'll be writing books until I die. I don't see any way not to.

JW: If you can quit...

RAS: Quit. I can't.

R.A. Salvatore's latest book, *Neverwinter*, debuted at No. 4 on *The New York Times* Bestsellers List. Go buy it.

Ed. Note: We'd like to thank Mr. Wright for going out with a Blotter Magazine press pass to the Gen Con to look for interview opportunities. If any of you have a similar thought - to find authors and talk to them about the writing call and biz, we'd like to see what you have to say.



GLENN DANZIG, STAND-UP COMEDIAN

IN: "HELL-O-L!!!"

LET'S KEEP IT GOING FOR ALL THE COMICS YOU'VE SEEN TONIGHT! THEY'VE BEEN POUNDING THESE MICS LIKE FUCKING JACKHAMMERS!!!

SO I'M TRYING TO GET MY PILOT'S LICENSE...

BUT I KEEP FREAKING MY INSTRUCTOR OUT 'CUZ EVERYTIME WE'RE AIRBORNE I START SINGING:

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Call for Entries!

“The 2012 Laine Cunningham Novel Award” The Blotter’s *Third* Annual Long Form Fiction Contest for Novella and Novel length works

1. The purpose of our contest is to provide a venue for writers to have their work read and commented on by our editors and judges. Additionally, the winner of this contest will have his/her work published here on these pages. And last but not least, the winner will receive a monetary prize! (Award monies are provided by the prize sponsor and the entry fee for the contest helps offset The Blotter’s costs.)
2. Our pre-reader judges are intelligent and highly proud of their educations. Our final judge is smart, well-read and dangerous if she doesn’t have her morning coffee. But we told her that she could be the final judge and what can you do?
3. In a world chock-full of scandal, transparency is very important to us, and we make every effort to eliminate any conflict of interest situation from going down in our contest. Blotter volunteers and their family members and/or employees are prohibited from entering our contest.

To enter the contest, please submit your work with a \$25 entry fee by check or money order to: The Blotter Magazine, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Entries must be received between October 1, 2011 and January 31, 2012 (you see, we’re already giving you an extension, so don’t put it off!)

Your entry must contain the following: no less than 10 pages, no more than 20 pages of the opening of your novel or novella, (or subject/character-connected short story chapbook) typed & double-spaced, without your name. On a separate cover page type your name, snail-mail and e-mail address, telephone number, the title of your novel or novella and a one page synopsis of your novel or novella. Remember, you have to have the entire book written, so that if and when you win, you can show us the rest!

BONUS: Enter the writing contest AND get a year’s subscription to The Blotter for only \$30! (Regular annual subscription donations are \$25 total and you don’t even get to enter a writing contest with that price!)

Well, now. \$1650 in cash and prizes, plus anything else we can wrangle together that we think has value. All placements, including honorable mentions, will receive an award certificate, proof positive of your success as an author, suitable for mocking your sophomore English teacher, who always wondered how it was that you graduated at all.

Our contest will be run in line with the rules of ethics and mechanics recommended by the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, as outlined in their 2006 monograph on the subject. You can’t view for free, but you may purchase the monograph entitled “Publishing Contests: Ethics and Mechanics” through the CLMP at <http://www.clmp.org/about/monographs.html>. This is the document we have used in coming up with the rules and conditions of this contest.

So that’s it, then - now get to work!

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@blotterrag.com

My old roommate, who looks a lot like the actor playing Judas in Jesus Christ Superstar, only way after he's thrown the pieces of silver back at the Pharisees and gone off to wrestle one last time with the Devil, spends all his time at the beach, wearing old t-shirts and taking pictures of surfers. I'm quite certain that this is why I recently dreamt about sitting on the beach while waves cascaded in one after another and the sunset glowed in ever gloomier shades of what my wife's grandmother lovingly calls "pank," and a handful of surfers sat far out in the brass-colored water waiting for one or even two last waves to ride in before hustling off to some night job making sandwiches for stone-hungry college kids and sweeping up the parking lot of all the wax-paper detritus. I was thinking how I miss being that young and happily pointless and the day after the fair stale smell of seafoam and even the annoying zip of mosquitoes in my ears when the wind switches around 180 degrees in the evening to blow them out of the marsh. It was a luxury to have that nostalgic ache in the dream, because I surely wouldn't do it all over again.

Ed - cyberspace

CONTRIBUTORS

Laine Cunningham has been a publishing consultant for nearly twenty years. Her company, Writer's Resource, guides authors of book-length fiction and nonfiction through the publishing process from creation to contract. In addition to ghostwriting, rewriting and editing services, Laine provides in-depth assistance with query letters and book proposals. Her opinion has been sought by CNN, Canada's BNN, Media Bistro, and other international media on issues ranging from The Oprah Effect to the end of the Harry Potter series and Sarah Palin's ghost-writer.

Shanna Zentner writes, "My paintings are primarily inspired by nature and science. Some paintings are contemplations on what becomes of sensory input within the human imagination, and these paintings usually employ people dreaming and sleeping as metaphors. The paintings sometimes present the figures as landscapes and their surroundings as projections of their thoughts and sensations. Some paintings incorporate biological structures into the landscapes. For example, what seems to be a forest is in fact a field of neurons. They are musings on the human desire to understand and imitate nature."

Jeffrey Wright of Hillsborough, NC is a systems-tech guy with Duke University, and has been noodling around with the sci-fi genre for a few years. This is his first of two pieces for us from the Gen Con.

Chris Fox is flexible unflappable and amenable, all good qualities that might in fact be synonyms in some households.

Phil Juliano is now based in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, which we love, because it seems like the NC Triangle with really cold winters that last a long, long time.

Final Tidbits: Some things are up. By request of our cartoonist Chris Fox, we ended the "Thurston Moore..." run. It turns out that reality does influence art in some cases. Others are on! Our Barbecue is coming up soon, hope to see all of you there. The Cardinals won the World Series, and the girls and I had a lot of fun watching it on TV (at least until their bedtimes, at which point they kept yelling "Dad, be quiet!" from the bedrooms.) Follow us on Twitter @blotterrag - that's where we tell you about art and music and other stuff goin' on. Other cool things you can try - enter the long form contest (our third annual, that is). Follow us on Twitter @blotterrag. Buy a copy of *Tree*, published by PencilPoint Mountain (www.pencilpointmountain.com), an imprint of The Blotter Magazine, Inc. Make a donation to The Blotter (www.blotterrag.com). Buy a Blotter t-shirt while you're there. And visit your local independent bookstore, they have hot cocoa! Dare to eat a peach! Talk about Michelangelo!!! I'm serious, I don't want to see any of you hanging out at the Student Union saying, "I'm bored." Go get that paper on Dostoevski done, ask a friend to proofread it and have a Chai Latte. Got it? Good!

Had enough turkey? (and enough of the relatives?)
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