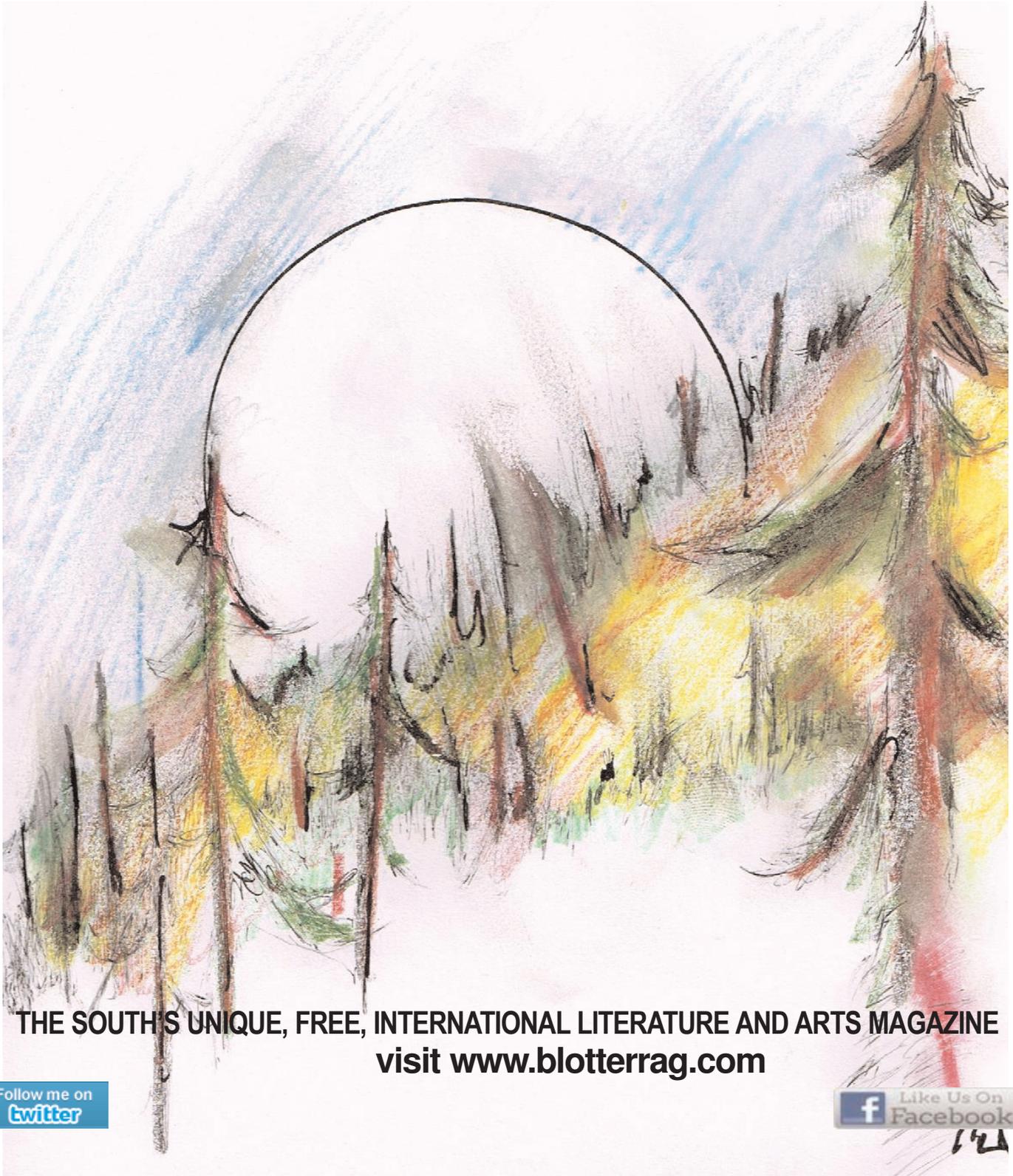


*Something for every cold night: Gene Gryniwicz,  
Matt Athanasiou, Mitchell Grabois, Sagar Patel, Todd Mann,  
Phil Juliano, and The Dream Journal*

# The Blotter

January 2015

MAGAZINE



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COVER: sketch by Gene Gryniwicz

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**The Blotter** is a production of  
MAGAZINE  
The Blotter Magazine, Inc.,  
Durham, NC.  
A 501 (c)3 non-profit  
ISSN 1549-0351  
[www.blotterrag.com](http://www.blotterrag.com)

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## “Hold On with Both Hands - part 2”

I’ve said it before, but the world is often too weird. Don’t believe me? A naked Barbie doll sits on the dining room table at the new house (we recently moved.) I assume that she is resting there because she was unearthed during the relocation, but when I ask, I am instructed by my eldest that she was used at school. Art? (I hope – the panoply of possibilities makes me shiver.) Was she a nude model for some drawing instruction? No; math class. Oh, I say, relieved and confused in equal measure. I do not wish to appear stupid, but there seems to be no avoiding it. Math? Yes, she says, without any condescension. We are measuring Barbie’s different “parts” and scaling them to a person of normal height to see how disproportionately built she is. Ah.

Who could have imagined a math class becoming a lesson in body awareness and anti-shaming? I am impressed, but don’t want her to see how impressed I am, because that in itself implies how cognizant we are of the way the world sees us and the insidious way that it wants us to “look a certain way.” I don’t want my daughter to spend hours in front of the mirror, either primping or regretting. Nor do I want my daughter to be a feminist. I want her to be a kind, generous, tolerant human being, who happens to be female. That is a lot to ask of her, so I don’t.

On the other hand, she looked over my shoulder to read this, and told me that she wants me to ask a lot of her. What do you mean? said I. You have pressure enough from all directions. Truth: right now I cannot recall the exact words she said, because at the time I was trying to recover from being busted for writing my essay about her. The gist of her comment was that she is motivated by the standards set (not personally achieved, mind) by my wife and myself. How can that be? So much of what I say seems to fall on deaf ears. Telling her to clean up her room. Asking her to not eat handfuls of Halloween candy from her Smaug-ian stash before supper. Do I know the mathematics that she takes for granted as minimal requirement? No. Can I draw, paint, sing, throw a right-cross after completing a flying kick, with her skillful abandon? Of course I cannot. I can drive better than she can. Perhaps I know more poets’ names and work. Desperation: I am 150 pounds heavier than she is. But she is rapidly becoming someone of note.

Now let us not forget that she is, also and often, a ding-a-ling. She irons her hair. She uses the non-word BAE - (recently given credibility by the OED.) She has not learned the art form of anticipation and defusing frustration in her mother. Well, many daughters never do. Years ago, when I began my stint as a stay-at-home-Dad, I believed I could derail the mother-teen-aged-daughter angst by just being a layer between them - a filter, a

pressure valve, what have you - that would leave only happy moments for them to have. All the daily grind of nagging and whining would be done by us. In other words, by doing all of the laundry, I could create a perfect mother-daughter equation.

Naturally this turned out to be utter nonsense, and the slide into normal inevitable. Apparently you cannot alter genetics. Mothers and their daughters must go through a period of...what? - jostling for pride of position? in the household. A daughter must reject the authority of her mother in order to eventually become mothers and wives themselves. Oh my god this sounds like Eisenhower administration hogwash. Is this still being taught in some accredited university's anthropology department?

Here's what I've observed and what I think. Kids like poking their parents with sticks. It's fun. Everyone with an ounce of creativity in their bones likes doing it. When I was sixteen, I didn't get my hair cut. It made my Dad loony. Get a haircut, kid! No, I don't think I will. Grrrrr. And like that. Then, because young people have a sense of personal immortality that flies in the face of their frequent brushes with impending doom, I practiced flipping my bangs in that, upon reflection, goofy Beach Boy way, in front of Dad. Yes, just to get his goat. I now see that I am lucky that he didn't shear me in my sleep like a sheep (try saying that five times fast.) Perhaps, as I secretly suspect, he didn't care about the length of my hair, but had to put in his two cents to let me know he was paying attention to me in that strange way humans have of using criticism as a sign of love.

So my eldest now sits upstairs in her room and texts me that she'd like Mac and Cheese for supper. I pick up the phone and call her to tell her stop texting and do her homework. (Four feet away she is. In the old days, my mom would have banged on the ceiling with a broom handle.) With a dash of snide, my daughter asks me if I know what a quadratic equation is. With a spoonful of same, I ask her if she knows what Mac and Cheese tastes like, and if she plans to have some tonight, or should I feed her helping to the dog we don't have.

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Subscriptions are offered as a premium for a donation of \$25 or more. Send check or money order, name and address to The Blotter Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also available, 5 for \$5. Inquire re. same by e-mail: [chief@blotterrag.com](mailto:chief@blotterrag.com).



CAUTION

*A brain, a heart, a home, the noive...*

# “About Storytelling”

by Gene Gryniewicz

*One of my favorite stories about Storytelling is anecdotal, at best.*

It involves an anthropologist who takes it upon himself to challenge the local storyteller.

When ... is sometime in the late 60s (according to one version I heard) or (according to another) the mid-to late 70's ... or 80's — “Local” is a small village, somewhere, in South America, or Central or South Africa.

The anthropologist brings to the village a television set, or a film projector, or a vcr (beta, most likely) ... replete with appropriate electricity-generating equipment; he must have gotten a fair-sized grant from his University. Or else electricity had recently been introduced into the village.

The anthropologist sets up shop in the village longhouse – or community center ... lights low (or non-existent) ... perhaps he provides popcorn. At any rate, he draws a crowd; every man, woman and child in the village gathers before the

black box (or white screen) and sits, enthralled.

Are the movies in English?, or have they been translated?

Are the television shows ‘cop’ dramas or sitcoms?

Does he show “I Love Lucy”?

Does he screen Shakespeare?

No matter. The crowd grows ... as villagers gather from neighbouring villages, and from villages not-so-neighbouring ... until his audience his peering through windows, hanging from the rooftop, sprawling in doorways ... .

A week passes.

Perhaps, two.

The anthropologist takes notes, dutifully.

And the numbers continue to grow, as travelers arrive from even farther away ... but ... the anthropologist notices that the make-up, the com-

plexion of the crowd has shifted. Some familiar faces are conspicuously absent. So he looks about for them.

And finds them ...

At the Storyteller's hut.

The anthropologist is taken aback by this. He waits ... then accosts them – a couple, a group of familiar faces – as they are leaving the Storyteller's he asks them, “Why?”

Why have they abandoned the Black Box?

Why did they go back to the Storyteller? “The Box knows many more stories – hundreds of stories!” he argues. “The old Storyteller knows few by comparison ... what? A dozen? Two –“

“It is true,” they reply. The familiar faces. The ones who have turned away from the TV. “The Black Box – it knows many, many stories ... but,” one man speaks for them all: “our Storyteller knows me.”

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*And so it goes.*

We have our movies – *and they are good* – and our DVDs ... *and they are better*. We have our surround-sound, and in-home entertainments centers ... laptops, wireless pdas ... pagers, cell phones, don't leave home without one; *they are awesome*; they can give you the weather, the news, your stock quotes, advice in traffic-jams or about your love-life one family recently had chips implanted into their arms that contained their complete medical history as contingency against disaster which has no thing to do with anything or everything "Can you hear me, now? ...

"Good ..."

*And so?*

We are more in touch with each other, now, than we have ever been. Twenty-four/seven. We are – or can be, if we choose to be – in constant communication with one another. With the internet, the world and all of time and space bend to our fingertips! ... *so ...*

We are more comfortable talking to each other by cell phone than we are face-to-face. We'd rather e-mail ...

than walk next door to talk-up a neighbour. We choose Peapod over the local supermarket, and Amazon.com v. Borders. Dot-com.

It out

*We're busy!*

We work hard. We need to play hard. And fast. We need to grab up all the gusto we can. Now. We want what we want when we want it

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# The Blotter

... which is, of course, now! And the best part of this all is *we can have it*.

Now.

At what cost?

We are more comfortable talking to each other by wireless than we are face-to-face. No big deal. We'd rather watch television or play with our cube-6400-XL-playstation-whatever ... than go for a walk ... Why walk when you can drive to the ... what is a corner store, anyway? We'd really rather not think, you know; it's so much easier just being told what to like or dislike or buy or vote for –

Who needs imagination?

It's over-rated.

Art?

I know what I like.

Who needs to read?

Why do you think God made spell-checkers?

*I walk into Cubs.* It's a supermarket. And make my purchases. And stand in line, at the checkout ... "Thirty-seven-fifty-four." I hand over two twenties, and four pennies ... I like to do that.

The checkout guy only stares at me a heartbeat longer than he should. He punches in forty-oh-four; keys change ... and the screen before him lights up: 2.50, and a recorded voice monotones, softly: "change: two dollars and fifty cents." And a visual – of his change drawer ... and two single dollar bills, and two quarters – appears. It's in colour.

And my change is correct.

As long as there's power.

...

which makes me sound like a luddite, I know ... I am not a luddite, however. Really. I am merely concerned; I am afraid we have forgotten how to play – a six pack and

thumbed machinations of a cyber-warrior on a video screen, now that's playing. I'm afraid we've forgotten how to relax; we can multi-task ... but can we *dream*? Can we breathe a deep breath and close our eyes without seeing rows and rows and rows of descending spaceships of diamond demons or mushrooms <?> We've forgotten how to measure our heroes, and our leaders, and even ourselves – I'm afraid we have. There is a lot of grey out there, these days, and no real right or wrong ... no real, solid black or white –

*That's life*

isn't it"

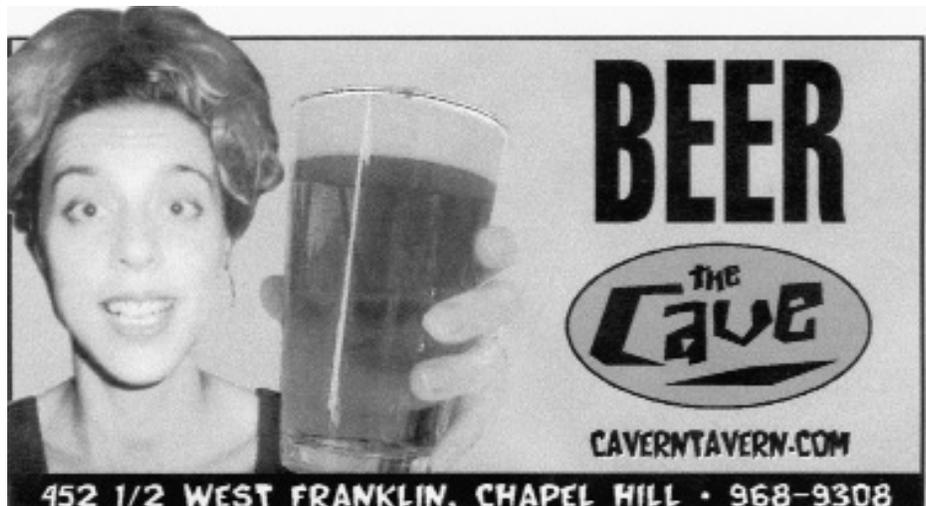
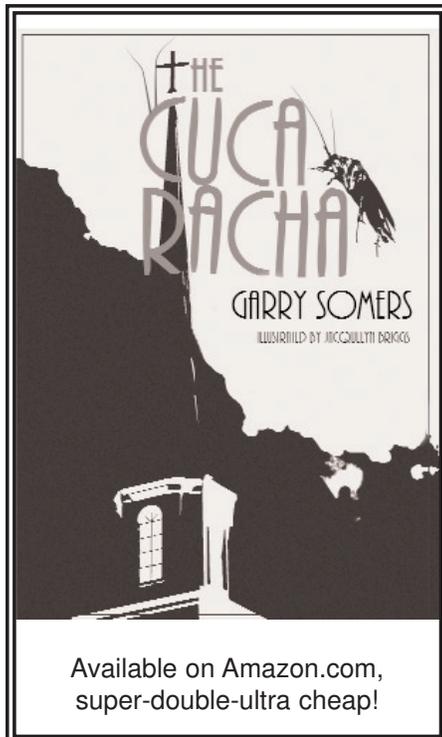
Is it?

And Storytelling is going to change that?

It can't *hoit*.

Storytelling is going to change me?

*Not* Storytelling already has.



# “The Pleasures of the Borden Family Massacre”

by Matt Athanasiou

*Lizzie Borden took an axe / And gave her mother forty whacks. / And when she saw what she had done / She gave her father forty-one.* —Popular rhyme concerning the Borden family murders.

The rhyme on the cover of the brochure suggests she saw what she had done, but did she foresee the bed and breakfast and museum her childhood house would become, a roadside attraction, a haunt of orbs in windows, a home for the neighbors' ghosts as well? Or is the real question, as the price chart on the second page details, which quarters you should bunk in for the night?

The third page offers a heck of deal and a heck of a photo: For little over two hundred dollars, for little more than your mind at odds, maybe you would enjoy Father's room to Abby's, Stepmother's. Mother never received her forty slashes, and Stepmother hemorrhaged from twenty-one or twenty-two fewer, but specific contusions, particulars of skull fragments, trifles about a severed spine can be ironed out in the bed sheets, of which are cleaned, pillows fluffed, graying carpet vacuumed daily for everyone's convenience. Father's blue-green wallpaper and its ornate bone-white patterns need a scrubbing, is a touch dusty, but occupants have claimed if you lean close, crush your nose right up against those skeletal lines, slack-jawed grimaces appear.

Beneath this description, another promising option that begins: Uncle

Morse's room may sound cozier, though, underlit, a headboard slanted forward, grating bedsprings, less costly than father's. Father's fame, where you'll most want to acquaint yourself with him, truly lays on the couch, lays by the new hatchet and plaque that adorn the cushions where he was discovered, eleven gashes, a crushed cranium, a lacerated eye.

Options the description reads. More alternatives, more pictures, more lines that say: Why settle for Uncle Morse's, when Emma's can be combined with sister Lizzie's, forming a suite? The window beside the bed welcomes a gander, while your profile reflects in the mirror, as it did Emma's when she gazed outside too, her possibly thinking about an upcoming vacation, about Lizzie returning early, perusing drugstore aisles, denied the purchase of bane. Will your face crease and pale, hair part for a slash of flesh, lashes darken, and will Emma's reflection be glaring back, pointing at that unknowable something hanging over your head? A premonition? Some have said, some have.

The next page is devoted to your attention, to your desires because: Really, if you join Emma and Lizzie's rooms, reason permits you should sleep beneath infamous sheets, the entire grounds for house tours from one until three. Snoop through the bedside drawers, the pink cabinets. Find the groove in the wood she furrowed with her fingernail, that notch that deepened

with her sharpened dreams, mayhap fantasizing of notches severing the good-for-nothing, yet, relationship she and Emma prolonged with parent and stepparent. Maniacs and devils, men with stained shirts and sharp weapons and woes for the poor Miss Borden are killers. True and testified words. So be at ease, let that imagination creep a bit more.

The ensuing page is dedicated to a lesser known yet as valuable room and adds: Perhaps you want an intimate night in Bridget the maid's bed, on that deafening mattress she claims she had been while she never heard a scream, a scuffle, a whack of a body striking the sofa, the floor. Perhaps you knew Lizzie had been acquitted, always knew the maid seemed to know more about Lizzie burning a dress, why the hatchet was missing a handle and blood. Bridget might even share the niceties as she lurks behind the white lace drapes on a drafty night, you tucked in with the flowery quilt resting on your throat.

The disclaimer on the back page adds a benign warning: Despite the facts and dodgy details, despite groaning stairways, flicking lights, silhouettes stalking by the corners of eyes, you will stay with your friends, your lovers, sleeping on linen others have sweated on, ruminated on, bled on. In the suggestion box you will leave a leaflet with a checkmark above the statement telling how you slept: *As if someone had taken an axe / and guarded the bedroom door.*



# “The Urinal”

by Sagar Patel

A musty man in reddish brown suede exterior settled into the urinal space next to me. Some people have large feet that range from a size ten to a size twelve. And some people just have large feet where if they told you the size you would respond, “holy shit.” He had “holy shit” feet. His feet grazed against mine and as I looked down my pupils slowly dilated and my heart rate sped up faster than a Tasmanian devil spinning in 360’s. As I averted my gaze away from his corpulent feet and to the yellow bathroom tiles diligently placed in front of me, level with my eyes, my

mind shut down. What if he was a serial killer? What if he could sense my nervousness and planned on taking advantage of me? Did he lock the bathroom door so that it would just be him and me, alone, enclosed in this somber space filled with hard tile, feces, and metal?

After putting his arm in a bent, ninety-degree angled position over the separator of both of our urinals, he said, “I call this assisted pissing.”

My head conspicuously turned at the slowest possible rate to my left as I nodded and fake laughed at his joke. I could’ve been

a typical bathroom jock and said, “Yeah man, you got that right,” but I despised agreeing with anything or anyone.

“Yeah man, you got that right,” is the go-to line during bathroom conversations that range from how shitty the weather is to how expensive whores have gotten. I didn’t care for the weather, as I liked to stay indoors with the blinds closed. I have a sharp sense of hearing so thunderstorms and heavy rain were the only two forms of weather that alerted me to their presence; sunshine and clouds were denigrated in my household for they had no benefit nor did they give us something to complain about. I did care for

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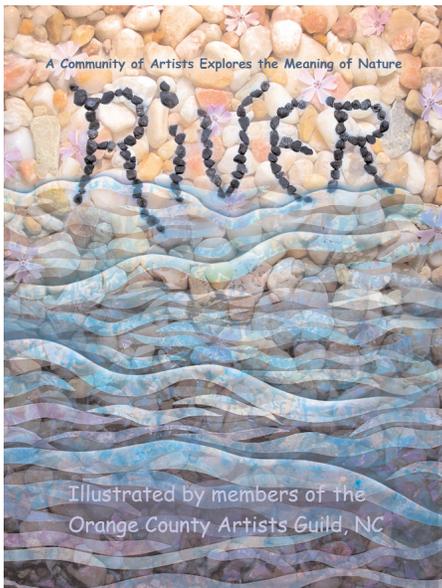
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whores but in a way most men mocked; I asked them about their career aspirations and what led them to this point as opposed to haggling prices for a blowjob that I might've received in my new Nissan Venza. My wife wouldn't like that. If I didn't make a mess or spill, I'm sure she'd notice the new car smell was replaced by an old whore's perfume: pheromones to be polite. I prefer to be polite. That is why I fake laughed at this behemoth of a man's joke.

"Yeah man, you got that right," I said fifteen seconds after he'd zipped his pants back up and pressed down on the silver urinal lever. He was nowhere to be seen. He didn't wash his hands; instead he walked right out the bathroom door after his twenty-five second piss. He was the most eerily honest person I'd encountered on that day. And that is why I'm hanging out in the bathroom until sunrise.



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## The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals.

If nothing else, we'd love to read them.

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[mermaid@blottermag.com](mailto:mermaid@blottermag.com)

It is school, or college or something like it, but many of the people I recognize as old friends from work, when I used to go into an office and do things for a company for money. Work friends are sometimes stronger and longer lasting than school friends because there is an adult sense of camaraderie - united against a common foe, the boss - that you don't quite achieve in school.

A great big swimming pool morphs from pool to swimming hole to rocky pond. Many people in the water; in my mind it is winter but it is warm enough for swimming and no one misses the opportunity to do so. My friends are jumping in the water and having fun. I want to impress them - I have always wanted to impress them and have failed over the years and now of course it is far too late to impress. Any type of "enfant terrible" possibility is over because I am no longer an *enfant* and certainly not *terrible*. Not in real-life, anyhow. But my friends are there, and *she* is there, and that is enough to inspire me. In this dream, I run down to the bank of the pool-pond-hole and jump into the air, to perform my greatest, perhaps final, *cannonball!!*

I rise into the sky, inexplicably high - except that in dreams we can sometimes rise inexplicably high into the sky if we are lucky and don't think about the physics of it, the truth of it. I look down from high in the air, to prepare for my splash. There are now suddenly great clusters of boulders in the water, scattered like rubble beneath me. Some even break the surface, like a jetty does on certain beaches where they are placed to rebuild the sandy parts. I begin my descent - they are all watching, she is watching. *Cannonball!!*

LS - cyberspace

## Three Prose-Poems by Mitchell Grabois

### Mangroves

There's a hot spot on the bottom of the ocean. It builds the island chain, with intent. There's a hot spot and there's mangroves. Together they create the islands.

Lava is hot. Mangroves are cool, red, black and white. Red's the walking tree, the voodoo mangrove, the mangrove with the spirit of man. Black's the old timer, larger, taller, cold tolerant. He's the gravelly voiced singer, dreaming of slide guitars. White is upland, up, gwine go home, get away from that hot spot, get away from the confederacy of creation, the constant creation of new islands in the chain.

Masochism is not hot. It is warm on the tongue, and pungent like a cheese biscuit made with sun-dried tomatoes. We are cold. We live in cold climes. Our souls gravitate to the Arctic.

The most compassionate way we relate to others is through our black belts in Karate, some of us first

degree, some second. But masochism is warm in our mouths, like a muffin fresh from the oven, like pumpkin-white chocolate-macadamia nut cookies, warm milk still a memory in the cow's mind.

The delivery man comes at two a.m., just as I am waking with insomnia, again and again, the nightly ritual, sleeplessness and milk. *Good morning*, I say through the dark screen. I startle him every time.

Masochism is warm on the tongue, in the mouth. The old woman still bakes. Now, in this moment, her husband is cold. His soul has gone to the Arctic. Three Jews sit at his bedside to wave it goodbye, but the biscuits are still warm.

Hold one on your tongue until it too is cold.

\*\*\*

### Guilt

Sir Paul McCartney follows Fred Astaire: he's sweet and lighter than

air. Bones of sexuality underlay marshmallow sweetness. Be as normal as you can in your public life, so you can be as crazy as you are in private, on the page, on the canvas, in your body as you dance. Don't fall for the myth that being abnormal is always better.

Armed with such profound wisdom, I spent my life honing my craft, but when I sent out my novels, agents complained that my work was too literary, too quirky, too feminist, or a combination thereof.

I finally got old enough to set my ego and ambition on a much lower flame. In other words, I became resigned. I put my best work on Amazon as an e-book for 99 cents. Then I stumbled upon this, in a review by someone named Pearl Luke: *After all, no one has ever suggested that 50 Shades of Grey is great writing. Nonetheless, I was surprised at just how dreadful the writing is. By any standard, it is only slightly better than all those unedited 99 cent*

Best In Show

by Phil Juliano



novels cluttering up Amazon of late....

I suppose I could claim that my 99 cent novel is much better than all those other 99 cent novels, but it's like being in prison: No one is guilty there.

\*\*\*

### Dwarf Nookie

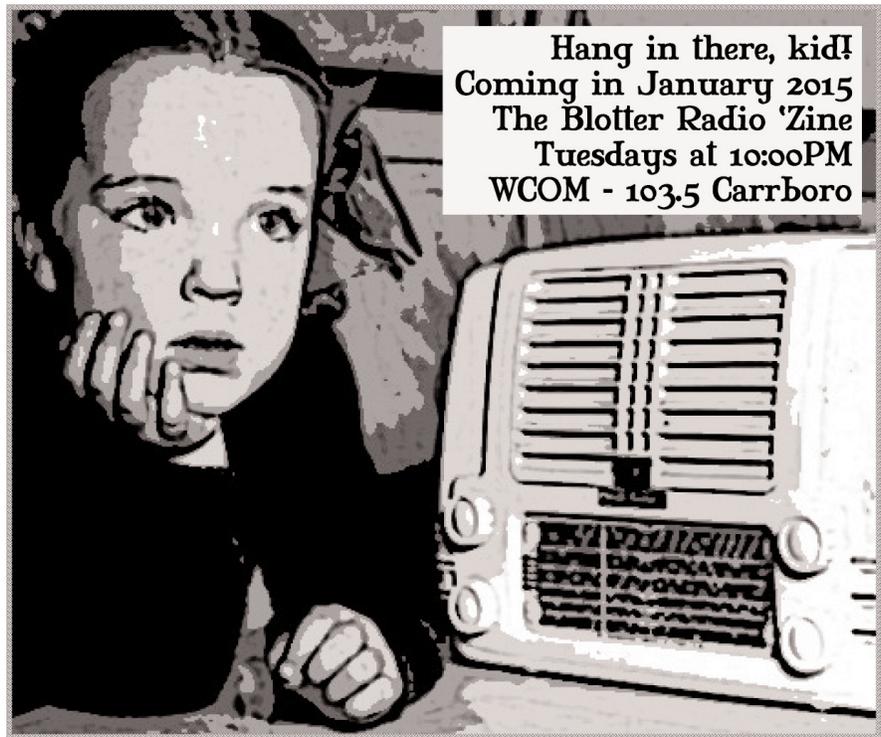
A little over a century ago, when Israel was still Palestine, and Zionists had not yet begun to plot Tel Aviv, Arab and Jewish scholars met on the high plateau of Masada. There they discovered that there exists no true translation of Arabic to Hebrew or Hebrew to Arabic. Yusef el-Yusef muttered: *We should have convened at the top of Mt. Sinai.* Rabbi Yosef ben-Yoseph shrugged his shoulders: *My friend, geography is not wisdom. Why should we expect a miracle now?*

I asked myself the same question as I watched our high school's dwarf. We all knew that a foxy slut was balling him. She was a new arrival from Texas, our Janis Joplin—she had a lousy voice and fronted a band, but also had California blond hair and a willowy body. But she took too many drugs and, later, her looks were ruined.

I guess she was turned on by my classmate's dwarfism. Maybe she liked the idea of being his "arm

candy," though, owing to their disparity in size, she was never literally on his arm. But he was handsome and a nice guy, also very strong, a good and dirty fighter. I guessed he was a good lover.

All us guys envied him for the tall nookie he was getting every day after school—her parents worked until late. Still, none of us wanted to be a dwarf.



Hang in there, kid!  
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## “Riding in a Taxicab with my father”

by Todd Mann

Being with my father was like riding in the back seat of a taxicab  
You never wore your seatbelt  
Because you always felt safe.

When my father was born he was already a year old  
But it wasn't some miracle  
You see  
My father was born at home  
And his father was so drunk when he filled out the birth certificate that he wrote 39  
Instead of 40  
Thereby putting a pace onto my father that no man could sustain

Now my father was born in Harm, Texas  
And that ain't poetic license  
Not everybody's hometown can be Pleasant Valley  
Or Pleasanton  
Or Paradise  
Sometimes hometowns are a little more sinister  
Like Hell, Michigan  
Or Deadhorse, Alaska  
Or Washington, D.C.

One year older than he was supposed to be, my father stopped going to school and started  
taking the bus to Houston to work as a shoeshine boy  
One year older than he was supposed to be, my father joined the Navy  
Sailed the seas  
Was pictured in National Geographic  
Then—  
Came home  
Became an  
Ironworker  
And fell in love  
One year older than he was supposed to be  
My father retired  
Which made us all wonder,  
Maybe grandpa had a deeper plan with his drunken hand.

My father had a temper like a hand grenade  
And he was known to pull the pin  
But he also had a heart the size of a blanket so big that when he tossed it over you it

would block out the sun for a brief moment  
Before it covered you  
Warmed you  
Made you feel safe  
Like riding in the backseat of a taxicab without wearing your seatbelt.

And he used to always ask me  
“What are you thinking?”  
And I would reply, “About what?”  
And he would say, “About anything.”

And while that used to annoy me a little bit  
I would give anything to answer that question now

I would tell him  
I am thinking about when I was a little boy in Arizona  
Sitting on your shoulders in the pool  
My fingers rubbing against the stubble of your face  
Waiting for you to throw me in the deep end  
I’m thinking about your booming voice coming across the soccer fields  
Shouting—  
Go Toddo!  
I’m wondering why you used to call me “Rooskie”  
That I want to know where you got the idea to get a pair of lips tattooed on yer ass—  
Cuz I think that’s fucking classic  
I would say I’m thinking about that Christmas when you and mom  
And Arlo and me  
Got so drunk watching Singin’ in the Rain that we couldn’t even eat dinner  
So we just left the table all set up and let the candles burn down  
I would tell him I’m thinking of how much of him I see in me  
That I’m trying to become the man that he is—

was

On August 8th at 7:02 p.m. 2004  
I was just beginning to pass out watching television through the row of empty Sierra Nevada  
bottles on the coffee table  
When the phone rang  
It was my mother

And while she tried to explain to me that my dad just seemed to nod off while they were discussing a color scheme for their new bedroom

I—

I fell apart.

Spent the time between long distance calls learning to pray  
Learning that all the things I do in an attempt to earn karmic points couldn't be cashed in  
Or transferred to another account

That sometimes the words

Life

and

Fair

Seemed to be mutually exclusive

You see I had always followed my father  
And now that it seemed he had stopped moving—  
I didn't know where to go.

On August 9th at 4:26 a.m. 2004

My mother held the phone up to my father's ear so I could say goodbye to him  
Someone had told her that a person's hearing was one of the last things that stopped functioning.

The next few days were a blur of airports, rental cars, picture boxes, and "I'm sorrys"

I recall being offended that someone was taking pictures

That this was the first time I had seen the ocean and didn't care

That I just wanted to hide under the covers and wait to be shaken

Awaken

That if all this could just be some nightmare

I would learn whatever lesson it was trying to teach me

But it wasn't

And all I learned is that a heartbeat doesn't mean you're alive

That aneurisms can T-bone taxicabs.

On the flight back to California a woman walked past my seat as she was boarding

Face streaked from her tears

Red from her fingers wiping them away

It was the first time I truly understood a stranger

Understood that she was beginning that same sad journey I was coming from

And I wanted to say something profound

Something that would comfort her

But I just let her pass by without saying a word  
 Because like her  
 I wanted to be invisible  
 And sometimes words are just meaningless vibrations

I decided on that flight home that one year to the day I would get my ass tatted too  
 Walk out in the middle of a meadow and read my poems to an open sky—  
 Arms raised  
 Waiting for my dad to block out the sun as he throws down his blanket over me  
 Covering me  
 Warming me  
 Making me feel safe again

Like riding in the back of a taxicab without wearing my seatbelt.

## CONTRIBUTORS:

**Gene Gryniwicz** of Tinley Park, IL writes, “is sixty-two years old, pushing one hundred (and two), and looking forward to the creative acts he has yet to commit to fill in the spaces between. I wrote poetry in college...some forty years ago. I had poems published in magazines that have, perhaps for the better, not stood the test of time. I stopped writing poetry when I left college – that is – I devoted less time to composition and more time to teaching high school English...raising a family...developing Parkinson’s – I was an illustrator for a while but I stopped drawing...though I don’t really know why. I stopped drawing; I blamed it on the tremours...I couldn’t control my hand. Couldn’t stipple or crosshatch even simply. I never could draw a straight line, but at least now I had an excuse...I am a Storyteller! I have been a Storyteller forever – of course, I still tell stories. Folktales, mostly. And, recently, I started writing again – children’s stories, poems, notes toward a novel. I still can’t draw a straight line ... but with meds, and exercise, and patience ... I am running out of excuses for not drawing crooked lines.” \*\*\* Long time Blotterfriend **Matt Athanasiou** of Chicago, IL writes, “I hope you’ve been well. Attached is my prose poem, “The Pleasures of the Borden Family Massacre” for consideration. This was originally published in a 2010 online issue of Danse Macabre, but the web magazine lost the poem, and dozens of other pieces, in 2011 to corrupted files, and the poem has been unpublished since. I would love to find it a home with Blotter Magazine.” Matt’s writing has also appeared in publications such as NewMyths, Menda City Review, and others. Read more of his words at [www.therewasamatt.com](http://www.therewasamatt.com). \*\*\*

**Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois** has had over six hundred of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad, including The Blotter Magazine. He has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize. His novel, **Two-Headed Dog**, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition. He’s been married for 39 years to the artist Concetta diGesù, and has two adult sons. He lives in Denver. \*\*\* **Sagar Patel** of North Brunswick, NJ writes, “Here is some information about me. I’m 24 years old and I write as an escape. By escape, I mean a distraction. I’m an economics graduate and a psychology dropout but am more proud of the latter. A link to my website: <http://sagarjaypatel.wordpress.com/>” \*\*\* **Todd Mann** is a writer of poetry and short stories. Originally from Northern California he now makes his home in Greensboro, NC. \*\*\*

**Phil Juliano** (Minneapolis, MN) has been cartooning for over twenty years. “Best In Show” is currently being featured in several newspapers and magazines and is syndicated by MCT Campus where it is distributed to college and university newspapers across the country. To see more of Phil’s work go to [www.bestinshowcomic.com](http://www.bestinshowcomic.com)

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