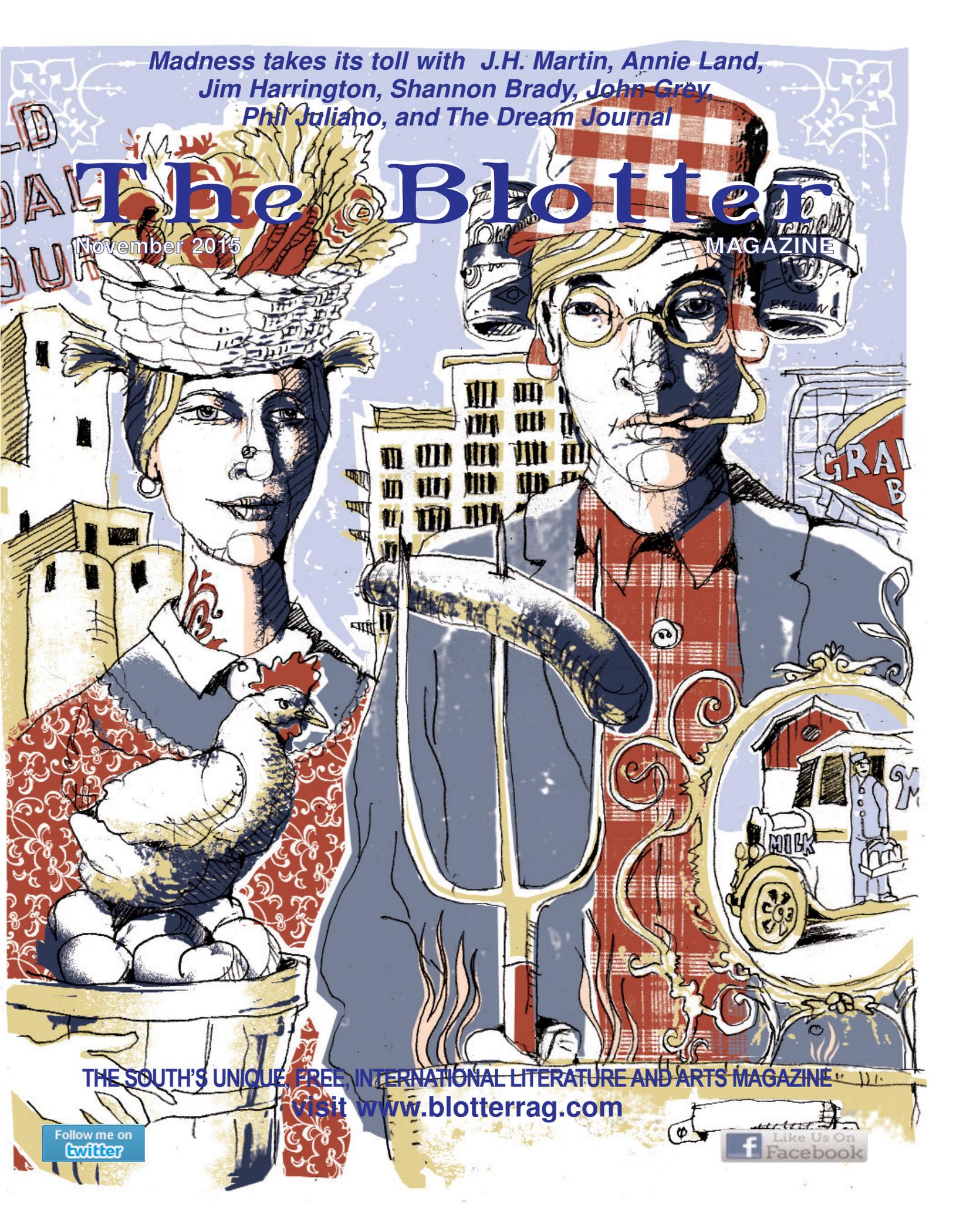


Madness takes its toll with J.H. Martin, Annie Land,  
Jim Harrington, Shannon Brady, John Grey,  
Phil Juliano, and The Dream Journal

# The Blotter

November 2015

MAGAZINE



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COVER: "Omnivore" by Shannon Brady.  
See centerfold for more

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[ c l m p ]

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## "Suburban People"

After a lifetime of living in the woods, I am completing my first year here in the wilds of suburbia. Here's what I have observed...

They are nothing at all alike! They being, of course, the planes of existence, the dwelling places, and the lifestyles, how people interact with one another..

Now all of this may be attributed to my lack of aspiration for extra rank in the officer corps of obvious, but I had no idea that it was going to be like this. Had twenty-two years of near-hermitlike existence, albeit with my family and occasional visits from friends, caused some synaptic disconnect that I forgot what it was like to be...among those of my own kind? Or even to actually be one of my kind?

Or am I a snob? I don't think I am a snob. Well, actually I do, but I'm not a good snob as I have nothing credible to be snobbish about. That being said, if not believed, let's use the scientific method of observation to analyze the evidence that this is a different world than the one I come from:

I suspect that I have spent too much time away from the daily activity of other humans, and that this is not a good time to rejoin the herd. While there are really good reasons that my little house on fifteen acres of hardwoods was a pain in the butt - not the least of which being that it's now the annual festival-month of Blowing the Leaves off the Roof - my shack-in-the-woods was always reliably quiet and cool, or quiet and warm, or quiet and covered in a blanket of snow. And although quiet is a recurring theme, it's not the be all and end all. I am not a...ahem...tree hugger, but I sure like being surrounded by them and knowing that they were making it easy to just be a little bit louder, a little bit less formal. I enjoyed stepping out the front door clad only in my boxers and bed-head to do a weather-check. I like cranking up Jimi and assisting lead with my air-axe. I like cutting up deadfalls with a real axe. I like never hearing a complaint because it was shouted from way over there.

Over here in suburbia there is a different thematic element. It's called sharing, and it comes in many forms. One is my neighbor, Lawnmower Guy. Of course, I should know his name. His wife, who walks her very sweet old dog every morning at the same time I go down to the school bus stop with my older daughter, has told me hers and his name and for reasons I'm unable to explain nor correct, I can only remember the dog's name. I know, I need better neighbor-skills, but like I said I'm still a novice at this. Anyhow, Lawnmower Guy's attention to his walk-in-shower sized lawn has reached legendary status. The truth is he's a little bit older than I am, and likes to putter around outside. I've made comedy hay telling visitors that my next door neighbor mows his lawn all the time and received chuckles, and then followed up with the lie that I plan to figure out how to get him to mow our little patch of grass, too, and received further chuckles. But I don't goof on Lawnmower Guy anymore. As a writer, I'm actually a big fan of anyone who gets up and gets to work diligently at the same task, every day, day after day. I'm done making light of Lawnmower Guy, although in

some levels of the comedy circle of Hell laughing at an older fellow who likes getting down with his bad self and a weed-eater is considered low-hanging fruit. Instead, I wave to him when I walk by and he's outside. I've discovered that I don't have to stop and talk - he's always working and to do so is interrupting which may be OK, but it's a very convenient thing for me to just wave and walk by. He's friendly, hard-working and only a little bit noisy on those rare days when I want to sleep in on a Sunday, and too lazy to drive five minutes back over to The House In The Woods.. Frankly, I can't decide why I was such an asshole about him at all.

I don't know how to go outside. What should I wear? And what kind of question is that - and how low have I fallen that I have to consider the feelings of my neighbors when I want to take a stroll? How many of my neighbors are wearing spandex shorts while they walk or run or leash up Sparky for a jaunt through the neighbors petunias? When is it appropriate to wave hello? Say hello? What if they're talking on the blue-tooth? Or listening to Smooth Jazz? Should I avoid eye-contact? Should I watch where I'm going or let them worry about wrapping the leash around my ankles. Is it bad form to kick a dog trying to hump my leg? Does the homeowners association have a booklet I might study?

Speaking of which: here is a little pile of dog-shit. I'm taking an enforced "get your lazy butt out there" walk early Saturday morning, and on the main-drag that runs through the whole development someone has taken their...rather large by the look of things...dog for a walk, perhaps yesterday. The evidence is sun-dry and given the right set of geological circumstances would fossilize into a substantial coprolith for happy discovery by some future paleontologist. I wonder if this has hit the "Next Door" app used by folks around here to electronically-passively-aggressively remark about all goings on. Or has the owner of this house decided not to worry about such tid-bits, because they have a dog themselves and occasionally go out sans their own little black baggie stashed in a pocket. Dog-shit is a conundrum. Some of my neighbors would prefer that the whole problem was handled by the Homeowners Association. Sure, why not? Pay some high-school kid \$10 a day to wander around (in a sensible, planned way) with a wagon and a pea-rake, picking up all the crap. Like a modern version of the old Monty Python scene, "Bring Out Your Dead!" But such crowd-sourced plans would still go wrong. The people who own dogs would say, "I clean up after my own," and want a discount for their share of the fee paid the kid. People who don't own dogs wouldn't want to contribute to this pittance at all. And the kid would still find a way to be even too lazy to earn an easy \$70 a week, with a resume-worthy gig as an independently contracted, owner-operator of a waste disposal wagon. Ah, well.

Last winter was tough on green house design. Not the glass-panelled arboreta of the Victorian age, but the well-designed homes of this happy energy-saving, water-conserving neighborhood. The best laid plans of...well, you know, have gone awry. It turns out that no one anticipated the extent of the cold winter we just muddled through, and the humidity drains on some homes' HVAC units froze during the worst of it, causing the units to stop

continued on page 15

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CAUTION

*...over the line. Sitting downtown in a railway station.*

# 勢如破竹

By J. H. Martin

Raising his arm, Jacques hailed the approaching taxi and got into the back.

"Where to my friend? The airport?"

"No. The train station."

"No problem. What time's your train?"

"Soon," he guessed. He hadn't bought a ticket yet.

"Right you are," the driver nodded, pulling out, "So where you going to?"

"Anywhere but here..."

"Very good," the driver laughed, "Well, look, you just relax and get yourself some shut eye. You look like you need it. Yes, don't you worry about a thing my friend. I know a quick route and we'll be there in next to no time, Ok?"

Too tired to argue, he nodded back at the over-friendly driver and let him turn left, even though he knew

full well that it would've been quicker and cheaper if the driver had turned right. He wouldn't be sad to see the back of the city and its lies.

"That's what I said."

"No, it isn't."

"Yes, it is. And if I have to explain to you the reason why, then you don't understand me, do you?"

No, he didn't. The only thing he understood was that she'd been lying to him for months. The proof was all there in the photos she'd put up on-line and shared with the world. Yes, those reflections of other men's faces in the dark lenses of those designer sunglasses bought for her by one of her 'very good friends', who she'd been meeting in restaurants and hotels, when she'd told him that she'd been with her younger sister.

"Do you mind if I turn on the radio?"

Shaking his head, Jacques leaned back and closed his eyes.

- CLICK -

'...The Police have now widened their search for the student who, last week, shot and killed his three room mates from the capital. Murders which have shocked and appalled the local community, as well as turning the usually harmonious campus atmosphere into one of fear and outrage.

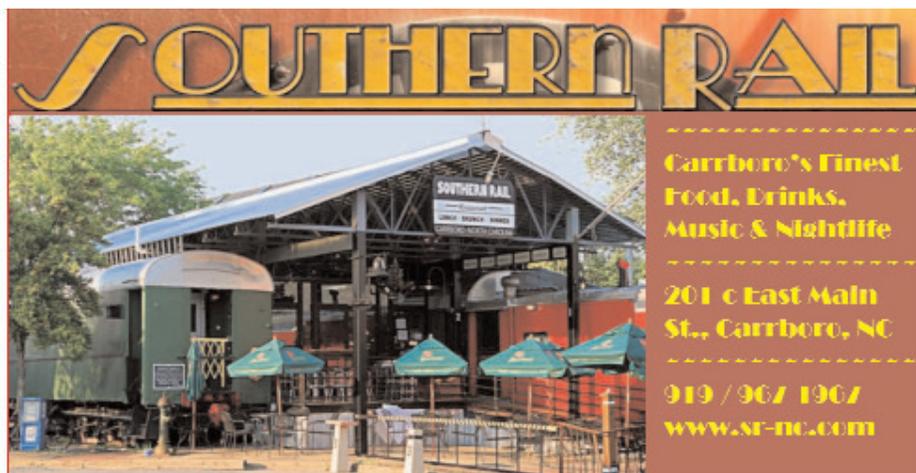
"I am just so scared, you know? Why? Well, he was such a normal hard-working student and yet he went and did that. I mean... if someone like that, so ordinary, could do something like that, well, anybody could, couldn't they?"

Yes, OK, they teased him about his lack of cool clothes and his village upbringing... But to go and steal a soldier's gun like that, and then shoot them in their sleep?! Just so he could steal their things?! That's too much. It really is.

I... I just don't know who to trust any more..."

Qi Qi shook her head and changed the station on her mobile phone.

'...The jasper tone of your clothes haunts me.



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If I never see you again, is that why you're leaving me?...

Qi Qi smiled at the sweetness of the melody, but inside felt the lonely words echo.

'...Standing on the gate tower, I scour the horizon anxiously...'

Yes, things had changed so quickly.

Twelve years ago, when she was a student, she would never have even thought about wearing the low-cut top, or the tight pair of denim shorts that the young woman sitting opposite her was wearing. Clothes that were neither local nor modest in their origin and style. Clothes that drew stares and comments from far too many of the men packed into the train station's waiting room.

'...The days have been so long without you beside me...'

Feeling her face starting to redden, Qi Qi sipped at her green tea to calm herself down. Shaking her head, she looked up at the clock behind the closed platform gates.

No, flowers may bloom spring after spring, but you never have the chance to be young again. Dwelling on the past was a waste of time.

It was 6:59 AM.

Jacques put his phone back inside his black jacket pocket and made his way through the hard and soft seat carriages towards the buffet car, in the hope of finding some where to sit. He only had a standing ticket and it would be twelve hours before he reached his destination. What he was going to do when he got there, he wasn't sure. He'd never been one for plans.

"Honestly, how can I tell any of my friends about you, let alone my family, when you don't even own a house or an apartment? It's embarrassing. It really is. I mean, if you had your own business, well, I guess that would be something. But you don't even have that, do you?"

No, Jacques didn't. He only had a small black rucksack, which was just as well, as navigating the narrow aisles; packed with people and their belongings, would have been nigh on impossible if he'd been carrying anything else.

"Exactly Jacques. You've got absolutely nothing to show for your life. Nothing at all. I mean... What kind of man are you?"

Nodding, he smiled back at the two men in suits, who were stood in the smoking section next to the buffet

car, laughing at something the thinner one had said.

"Hel-o-oo."

Yes, he was a foreigner and nothing he did would ever change that.

- CLUNK -

Inside the buffet car, men raised their eyes and peered over the tops of their newspapers at the attractive female figure passing them by.

'...The glazing of the lady's portrait, hides her truer charms...'

Unfortunately, Qi Qi was well used to the intrusive and unwanted attention and paid it no mind, as she bought herself a fresh bottle of iced green tea then looked for a place to sit.

'...The years of secrets buried in th-



FROM CREATION TO CONTRACT

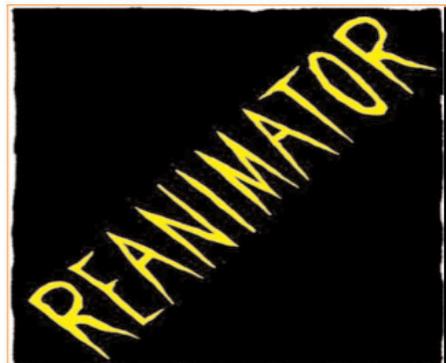


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## The Blotter

Qi Qi switched off the radio on her phone and smiled politely at the blonde haired man; sitting at the only table with any space free.

"Excuse me. Sorry, but can you speak..."

"Yes," Jacques nodded, cutting her obvious question short, "I can. Don't worry."

"Great," Qi Qi laughed nervously, "Sorry, I didn't mean to be..."

"It's OK," smiled Jacques, "Don't worry, honestly, I am used to it. Please... Sit down."

"Thank you."

There was no need. Jacques was happy to have better and warmer company than the beer in front of him, and the frost-covered fields that flashed past the window. Even if it would be for a few hours only.

"Yes, I'm going to a seminar there this afternoon. It's being given by my teacher."

"Your teacher?"

"Yes," nodded Qi Qi, "He teaches us how to improve our businesses.

How to run them more efficiently and, by doing so, increase their profitability."

"I see. So, what is your line of business?"

"I own a number of nail bars in the province, and, hopefully, I'll be opening seven more next month. After the seminar, I have a meeting with some people there. As you probably know, the beauty industry is booming here."

"Yes," Jacques nodded, sipping at his beer, "I do."

Over the previous two years, he had wasted thousands on cosmetics, hair appointments, pedicures, facials, manicures and spas.

"So how many do you own then?"

"Twenty-seven."

"Wow," smiled Jacques, tapping his bottle three times, "Impressive. Your husband and your family must be very proud."

"Maybe my family," replied Qi Qi, shifting in her seat, "But, no, not my husband. I'm divorced."

"I... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry... I... I just thought that..."

Red-faced, he closed his mouth and shook his head at his assumptions.

"It's OK," Qi Qi smiled, "Don't worry Jacques, I'm used to it."

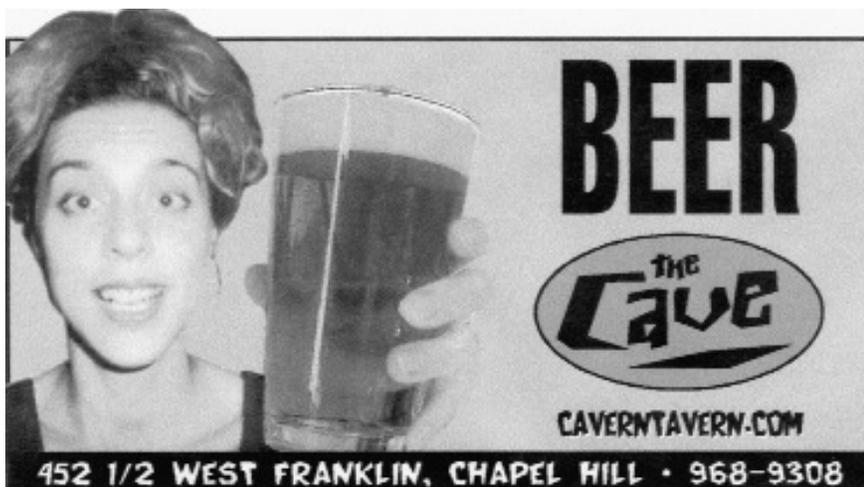
She was. And, unlike many of the other women that Jacques had met there, Qi Qi didn't have any issue with talking about her ex-husband either. She knew that Jacques did not look at things with the same eyes as people from her country did.

Whether they were blue, grey or green, Qi Qi couldn't make up her mind, but she liked them all the same. Their polite attention made her feel as relaxed and comfortable in his company as Jacques felt listening to her talk about how she'd met her ex-husband at school.

"Yes," Qi Qi smiled, her brown eyes fixed upon a point far beyond the backs of the passing concrete apartment blocks and their mildewed balconies lined with buckets, mops and drying clothes, "Even then, he always had a fan club of girls watching him. Although, when he was a boy, I think he used to find it embarrassing when they screamed and cheered like that when he scored a goal."

"So he was a good player then?"

"Oh yes, very good. He had a real talent and he knew that if he worked hard at it then he had a chance to maybe do something with it. That's all he would do when he



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was not in class - practice, practice, practice."

"Which was just as well," Qi Qi laughed, shaking her head at the memory, "Because he wasn't exactly the brightest student. Far from it. So he knew he had to make the most of his ability if he wanted to get ahead. Yes, he always used to tell me how he wanted to make his parents proud and give them all they'd ever wanted."

Turning her eyes away from his, Qi Qi nodded back at her reflection in the scratched window pane.

"Yes, it was those values that first made such an impression on me, rather than his good looks or his ability."

Jacques nodded. He knew exactly what Qi Qi meant. That's what had first brought him to the country. That dream of something older, something wiser, something different from the 'modern' world.

"Honestly, I don't know why you translate that old rubbish for. No one reads that kind of thing these days. No, that's why there's no bloody money in it, is there Jacques?"

Qi Qi couldn't help notice his attention drifting back to the beer bottle. He looked so tired, sitting there, rubbing his eyes. Perhaps that's why he was drinking so early in the day.

Looking back up, Jacques apologised.

"Sorry Qi Qi... Drifted off there..."

Yes, it was a dream. There was nothing new or different about the passing city and its billboards, with their

advertisements for SUVs, skin whitener and push-up bras modelled by tall and slender Caucasian girls, nor the wistful far-off look in Qi Qi's eyes that echoed how he felt inside. The fear that, from now on, everything that he was going to experience would be nothing but a pale reflection of everything that he'd done and felt before.

"You OK?"

"Of course," smiled Jacques, his mood lightened somewhat by Qi Qi's concern, "Don't mind me. I'm just tired that's all. So... Did he make it then?"

Looking to her left, Qi Qi nodded and slowly traced the outline of her reflection; lit up by the lights inside the buffet car, as the daylight disappeared and was replaced by blackened tunnel walls.

Yes, that was the moment he began to change. It hadn't been as obvious then. If anything she'd enjoyed it. The money from his signing-on fee. The new clothes he'd bought them. The gifts that he'd lavished on their parents and their relatives. It had all felt so fresh and new. Why would she have minded him going out now and then?

"I thought we were going to be so

happy, as did our families."

"Yes," nodded Jacques, "I can imagine."

He could. He could see it in her eyes; glinting with a hope that his could no longer see.

In the blue-grey of his, it just wasn't possible to stay untouched by the culture that surrounded them and stared rudely at their table. In a country where one of the first things that a child learns to do, is how to check if money is fake or not, it was inevitable.

"They are my friends. Very good friends. Good people with jobs that pay a lot more than yours. Why shouldn't they take me out? Why shouldn't they buy me things?"

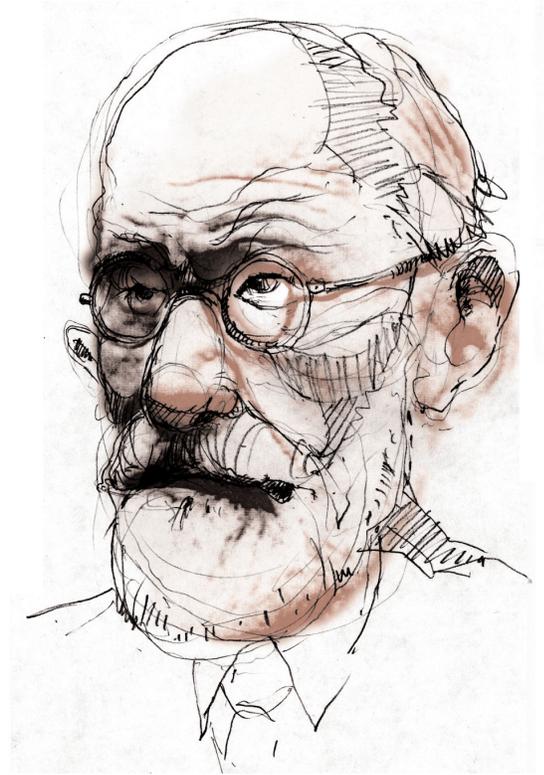
Yes, all those bright and shiny new things, like their new cars - The Audis, Buicks and BMWs. He'd seen the photographs that she'd taken of her standing next to them outside those hotels and restaurants. And he would have had to have been blind not to have noticed the expensive designer clothes that she was wearing, which she could not afford.

"And did it make you happy?"

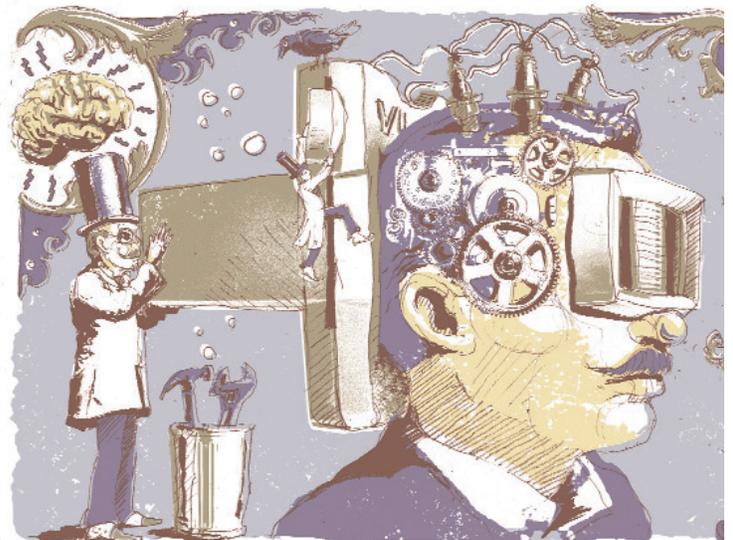


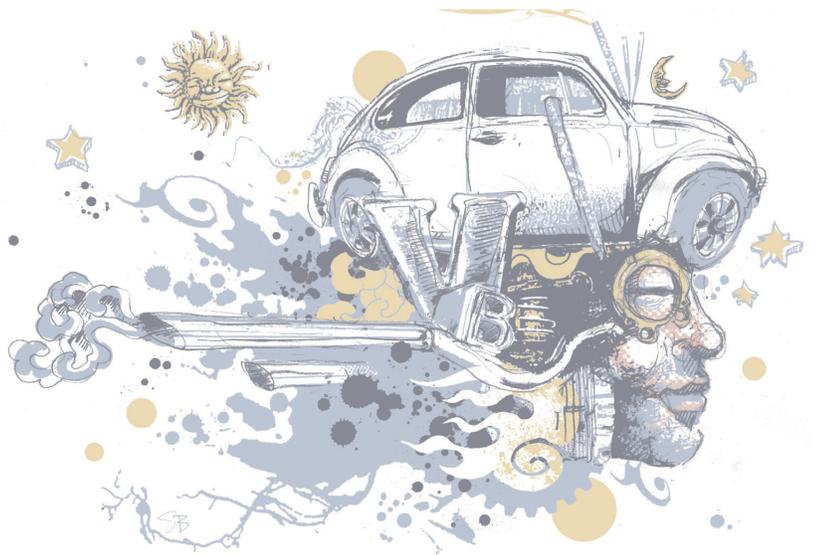
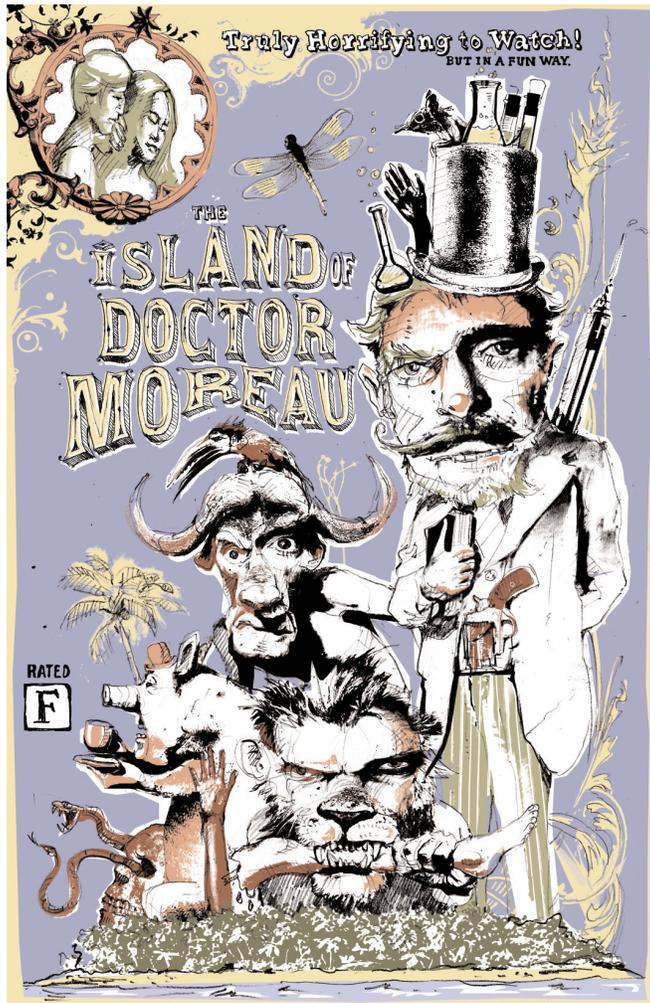
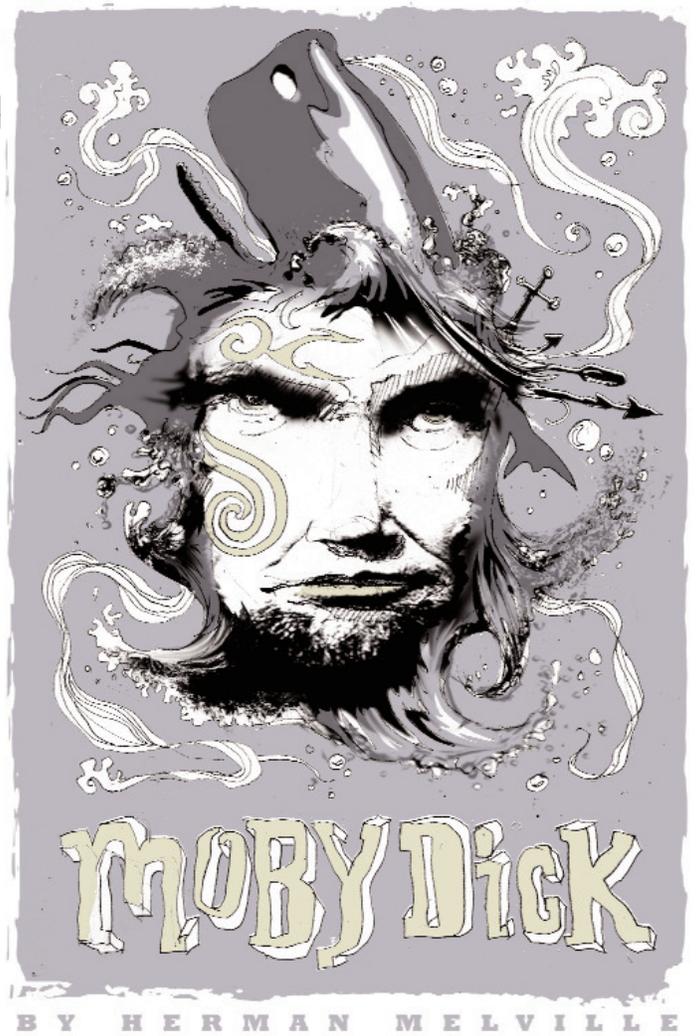
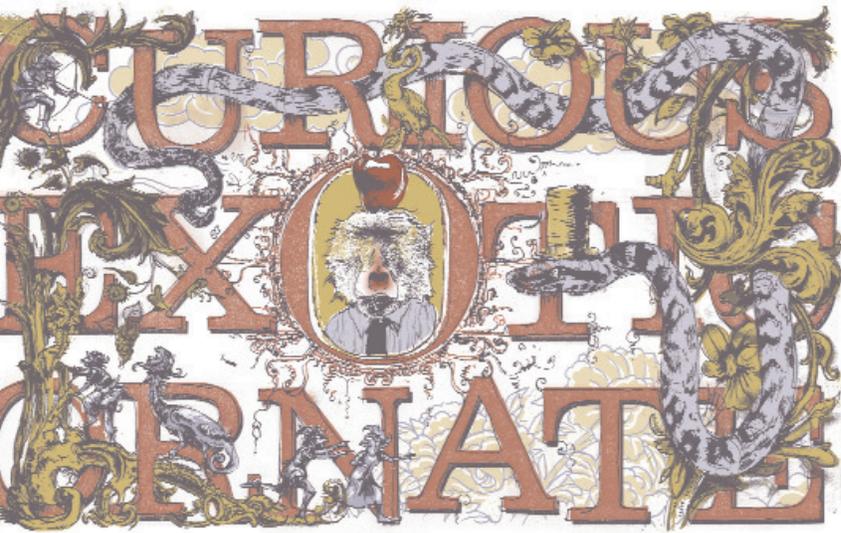
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## The Blotter

Qi Qi's eyes widened with surprise. Not at what Jacques had said but at the expression on his face. It was a look that was cruel and cynical. One that didn't suit him at all.

"Happy?"

Her hand dropped back down to her lap.

"Yes, the wedding was perfect. Yes, our house was beautiful. Yes, we had more money than most people could ever dream of. And, yes, our parents were so very, very proud of him. But happiness?"

"Well, if you think waiting for a drunken phone call at 3 AM from a bar, a hotel, a massage parlour, or even worse, is your idea of a marriage then maybe it would bring you happiness, but I don't. No, our marriage brought me nothing but misery."

"I hadn't given up my studies and all of my dreams to listen to other women laughing at me in the background, when I'm thousands of miles away, sitting alone in a big empty house crying my eyes out."

Qi Qi shook her head and folded her slender arms.

"No. That is not marriage nor is that my idea of love. I don't care if

our parents think I should have understood and forgiven him. I couldn't. I married him because I loved him for being the loyal and loving man that he was, not the jumped up, selfish pig that he has become."

Trembling, Qi Qi put her right hand to her mouth and then coughed, before taking a sip of green tea to compose herself.

"You OK?" asked Jacques, lifting then resting his hand back on the beer bottle.

"Sorry," Qi Qi blushed, "Even though that all happened more than six years ago, it still hurts sometimes, you know?"

"Yes," Jacques nodded, "I do..."

His eyes told her so, and Qi Qi felt her face flushing redder.

Her soft lips opening, Jacques didn't know what to say.

Turning their heads back towards the window, they looked out together at the half-built housing complex, with its giant cranes, pile-drivers and row after row of white tents for the migrant workers.

"Still," shrugged Jacques, reaching for his bottle, "You've made a real

success of yourself since then, haven't you? How many nail bars was it that you own again?"

"Twenty-seven."

"Exactly," smiled Jacques, raising the bottle, "Well done you."

"Thank you," smiled Qi Qi, bowing then sitting up straight, "That's why I don't care what people think or say when I tell them that I'm divorced. You know what people here think about women who divorce their husbands, don't you?"

"Yes," Jacques nodded. It wasn't pleasant.

"Well, let them think whatever they want to," said Qi Qi, her eyes glaring back at the stares that were coming from the other tables, "I really don't care. I'm too busy making a success of my life to pay them any mind at all. I am not a mad, bad or loose woman. I am a very successful thirty three year old divorcee. I know who I am."

Yes, smiled Jacques, she really does.

Walking down the platform, Qi Qi held her head up high, the morning breeze billowing in the folds of her ankle-length peach coloured dress, as she weaved her way through the crowd with an effortless grace.

### Best In Show



by Phil Juliano

Turning, she stopped by the platform exit and, smiling, waved goodbye to Jacques. She had very much enjoyed his company, and hoped that maybe one day he'd call.

Nodding, he stared at Qi Qi's business card.

Yes, although Qi Qi had got on at the first stop, her office was in the northern city from which the train had departed. It was on a street which was less than two minutes walk from the apartment that he'd just vacated.

Zhuang Zi was right.

'Better not to move but to let things be.'

Smiling, Jacques shook his head then reached for his beer.



## "Collateral Damage"

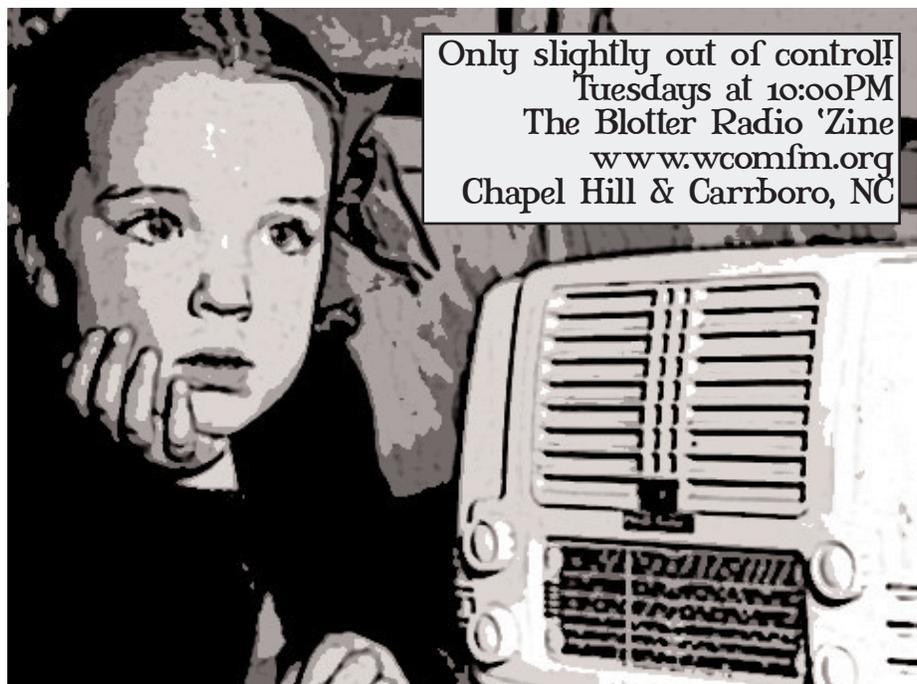
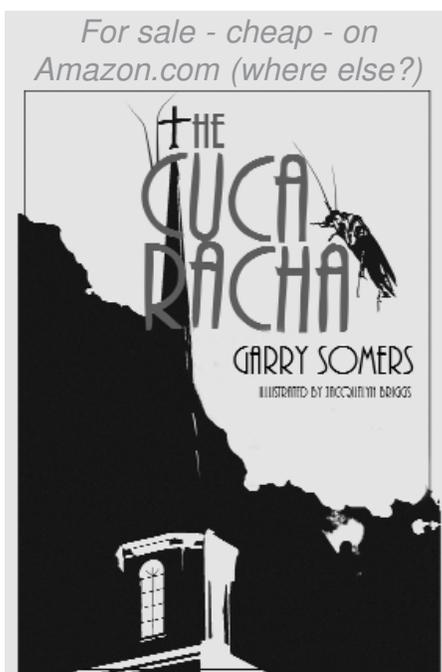
by Jim Harrington

She needed time to herself interacting with people she didn't know, learning how to live an uncomplicated life. No, it wasn't the sex, or my companionship that was lacking, driving her away.

I understood—for the most part. She'd survived an abusive father and a socialite-wannabe mother. Cancer hadn't defeated her—either time—both before she was twenty-five.

I offered to quit my job and go with her. She said that wouldn't work. She needed to learn who she was, who she was supposed to be, who the person inside was that she could live with for the rest of her life.

I told her I'd be there when she returned, watched her walk down the ramp to the waiting plane, blew a kiss to her back, pocketed by hands, swallowed a few times, stepped outside the terminal, yelled "Shit," ignored the man and woman with two small children standing at the curb.



## “Two Years Later”

Your ex-wife has a new husband.  
Washington DC is still the US capital  
so some things haven't changed.  
But another slips in beside  
that oh so familiar shape each night.  
Hands you may have shaken once  
cup her breasts, drift down between her thighs.  
And when your daughter cries at night.  
you only wake up on law-sanctioned weekends.  
Every other three a.m., it's his eyes that part-open,  
that see the fog of woman rising from the sheets,  
slip into the next room for some  
rocking, whispering and soothing.

She makes his coffee in the morning.  
He kisses her cheek. She hugs him back.  
They look in on the child together.  
He has your old happiness down pat.

Three b

## “The Last Pickup Line”

There will be no more saying,  
“Don't I know you from somewhere.”  
All such lies  
will buckle up to gravity,  
thud down to your feet.  
And the mask will peel away  
leaving just the expression,  
smug smirk losing out to hapless grimace.  
With ghosts of pickup lines past  
fouling your breath,  
and fondling fingers shrunk  
to aimless reaching,  
the woman will shudder,  
then pity, then move away.  
The crowd will lap up  
your desperation,  
laugh in their drunken dancing aisles.  
You will no longer know  
someone from somewhere.  
They will know all of you  
from everywhere.



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By John Grey

## "The One With The Hair"

She had so much hair,  
like she was hiding in it,  
the way it covered  
half her face.  
And the sheer length of it...  
when her hair  
sprayed across her shoulders,  
its journey was hardly  
a quarter done.

McDonalds wouldn't hire  
her, she said, because  
she wouldn't tie it up  
above her head.  
Same with the assembly line.  
No net big enough for  
that effusion.  
Couldn't be a nurse  
for fear she'd suffocate  
her patients.  
Or even drive a cab  
with that hair  
wedged between the door.

All she could do was be a lover,  
lie across my shoulder in the dark,  
flooding my chest, my chin,  
my groin, with velvet,  
all smelling of Chamomile.  
Best days of my life.  
She had so much hair  
it was just enough.



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## "On Fresh Starts"

by Annie Land

I remember you breathing  
Sorry if  
You hurt me,  
As if it were a question  
You'd just remembered to ask.

Whispering I deserve mores,  
Should not come here agains.  
Phrases not strangers—  
Know the lines on their faces.  
Private Father, forgive mes  
Knowing exactly what we do.

Embraced by sleep,  
You cover two kind eyes  
From arrows of premature light.  
On instinct expecting  
Accepting  
These Matters of Time  
That baffle and wound me.

Through slow days ahead,  
I'll soon be repeating  
Out with the olds.  
They'll say mercies are new.

But just how many beginnings  
Can one soul bear?

How many novelties  
On the shelf I wonder?  
And how many Forevers  
Have we already abandoned?

## 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](mailto:mermaid@blotterrag.com)

By way of explanation: I go to sleep with good intentions - kind thoughts in my head, memories of a dy spent behaving myself to the best of my ability. I pull the covers up to my chest, my arm pinning them down against me. My feet alternate between peeking out from the blanket or hanging off the end of the bed, naked and afraid. And I dream. I don't know that person, walking down a city street, looking, perhaps at the window of the store, or at some inner vision between her eyes and her heart. I take her hand - it is soft and in spite of the truth that we don't know one another, her fingers wrap naturally around mine, not tightly in fear. Dinner somewhere? I ask. She doesn't reply - and I am glad because I don't want her to say yes, and I don't want her to say no. I am not dressed for every restaurant in this city, but I know there is money in my thin wallet, enough for us to eat. Or is my reality invading my dream?

Orpheus - cyberspace

## continued from page 3

working. Mid-winter, no heat. Imagine grandmas going outside in the snow to pour hot water on frozen pipes. Things are being dealt with, in that way that things do. A local TV station grabbed hold of this “story” and interviewed a couple of the neighborhood citizenry, and herein lies the crux of this paragraph. Little old ladies, and I use these three words without malice towards gender, age or even size, should not be interviewed for television. They are far too polite to get their message across. One of the interviewees was explaining how she had been jerked around by the builder of her home, who cobbled together some Jules Feiffer shenanigan of a fix for her run-off drain hose that bordered on the surreal, so that the television “consumer advocate” could then report that she was able to force them to go back and get it right. Hurrah! Unfortunately, the poor owner relating her story was unable to explain that repair silliness in a way that translated her frustration to the viewing audience so that they could understand the problem well enough to get righteously on her side. Instead, she came across as someone who might actually have wandered out onto the prairie during a blizzard and all we found come springtime was her wolf-gnawed bones. All in all, a journalistic fizzle. I conclude that there’s a time for “bless their hearts” and a time for “those bastards.”

As I mentioned above, there is a shared appliance called Next Door that folks hereabouts (see how I try to keep my rural tone in my new suburban digs?) use for letting other folks know what they don’t like about activities performed still a third group of folks - all in paint-blistering passive/aggressive prose. And I’m new to this - so much so that my wife won’t even let me get a sign-on because she fears crowds of pitchfork and torch bearing neighbors descending in droves on the new house. Was it something I said? Of course, you idiot. So she relates some of the comments some of the time, and I wonder about the state of the species, because we were probably never meant to live this close to one another after the advent of recorded music, internal combustion engines, and pets you don’t plan to eventually eat.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

## CONTRIBUTORS:

**J H Martin** is from London, England but has no fixed abode (at present he is in Cambodia). His writing has appeared in a number of places in Asia, Europe and the USA. This story’s name, he revealed to us, translates to “Irresistible.” For more information about him, please visit: [A Coat for a Monkey](#).

**Annie Land** is a Raleigh teacher and coffee shop enthusiast. She studied English Literature and Teaching at NC State University.

**Shannon Brady** is an illustrator based out of Minneapolis, MN. He received an MFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. His job history has included refilling gumball machines and teaching English in Vietnam (shades of Adrian Cronauer!!) He is working as a freelance artist, illustrator and instructor.

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**John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Perceptions* and *Sanskrit* with work upcoming in *South Carolina Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Owen Wister Review* and *Louisiana Literature*.

**Phil Juliano** of Minneapolis, MN is a good Blotterfriend. Follow his adventures on [philjulianoillustration.com](http://philjulianoillustration.com)



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A mysterious will by an unknown hand; and murder...



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