

*We found the cure for the summertime blues,  
with Henry Charles Gysin, Richard J. Lewis, Phil Juliano,  
and The Dream Journal.*

# The Blotter

July 2017

MAGAZINE



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## "Vocabulary Lesson, Day 1"

Interesting word problem - is healthcare a *right* or a *privilege*?

I suppose that this depends on what you think rights are, have been, or should be. - all good questions. I think that "privilege" and "right" might be difficult words to use in a critical discussion. They are fraught with political baggage – seemingly simple words which in the past were used to communicate clear messages now wrapped inexorably in agenda and opinion.

*Or were they?* Were these and other words like them ever clean, crisp concepts with universally agreed-on definitions? Did Samuel and John Adams – second cousins and contemporary firebrands of liberty – ever disagree on the finer points of jumping out of Britain's nest? I think that they did.

And how much does *where you've been* determine *where you're going* in such discussions? (My guess on this one – a lot.)

So while I had imagined a short essay explaining (mansplaining? Ugh!) what I think about *critical discussion*, using the healthcare debate as my focal point: how we are better served understanding that healthcare is a *requirement* and we need a healthcare safety net and why planning for an unknown future is elementary school logic and how healthcare providers are professionals and need to be financially rewarded for their skills and sharing that cost is thus and such and so on, as my wise daughter says, I've wandered off into the analogy weeds.

Because it's all just words and we're all tired of them.

Wait, what? Tired of words? When did all this happen?

I heard recently (somewhere, out there in the weeds) that most of the communicating done on Facebook will be some form of video. And Facebook is the wave of the future. Right? No?

Maybe it is and maybe it isn't. Maybe Twitter is the wave of the future. The reduction of discussion to its core 144 characters. Reduction of critical analysis to the very kernel. Shrinking of thinking.

My guess, however, is some iteration of Snapchat. The picture that tells a thousand words. Only these pictures are the happy-snaps

pointed randomly out into the fleeting reality of giggly preteens. Not to disparage our youth, or anyone's youth, but, whoa. I mean, like, you know? Or is the winner Instagram – which allows those same vapid photos to exist, but for a shorter timeframe. Disposable value. A thousand wor....

Anyhow, it is moot (which doesn't mean a point not worth arguing, but actually the opposite of that. Holy crap, you guys) because the inventions and apps keep coming faster and more furiously at us, in order to take from us that part of us which is valuable – our time – by selling us a bill of goods. Without actually saying it, offering a promise that they can make us more productive. More useful. More youthful. More...something.

But, time being of an essence, let's return to healthcare, if only because I think the conflict there is about words, and definitions of words and interpretations of definitions and what they mean to us because of what each one of us has experienced. In other words (yes, well, sorry), I suspect that most of the difficulty we have with comprehending *community* is in our language – the words we choose and how we use them. Privilege versus right, socialism versus spreading costs, health tax versus proportional premiums. It is the language, might I say even those words specifically, and others, that cause confrontational behaviors, make many folks heels-dug-in intransigent about their point of view regarding healthcare. They feel that their opinion is not respected. And once we are in the mood for digging in our heels – rejecting any future discussion out of hand because we feel we are being condescended to - we tend to lose sight of the actual goal. Which, looking back up the page, was, ahem, to not be so sick anymore.

And herein lies my conclusion. As we take the act of communicating and radically, capriciously, alter it – replacing essays with videos, taking words and using them differently than they were defined, intentionally taking them in a new direction for which they were not designed, we create a deeper divide between ourselves. Or wider, I'm not sure which. We don't make sense to each other. We become, to paraphrase the old chestnut, a people divided by a common language. And when we let this happen and at first laugh it off as silly, as part of our culture of disposable humor, we do ourselves damage. We inadvertently commit to *double-down* on the problem. Except, ironically, that is not what double-down means.

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CAUTION

*In a railway station*

## “His Grey Diet”

by Henry Charles Gysin

He comes in through the glass doors of the office block, just a face in the crowd. You see him yes? That face above the pinstripe suit, he's buttoned up, greyed down and the face is a little wrinkled. He looks in his sixties but he's only forty-nine.

Watch him as he comes in. Pick out the plastic sounds as they click down amongst the rest of their footfalls. See the old man as he nods toward the receptionist, see that sometimes she notices and sometimes she smiles.

This time he's taking the lift. Note the old man's stride as he presses himself politely between the others. How he holds his hands in, yes the eyes are energetic but the rest of him hangs warily. He's all tensed up. He watches the doors as they close, he's inside now, he watches them again as they open. The lift pours its people out and then it

takes more in, it's a cramped space in there. Sometimes it feels like it's breathing. It wraps itself around him for a while, the steel walls beat coldly and they squeeze him, the winds inside fall over him.

Breath and air-conditioning while he struggles to tell the difference.

Like this they start him off.

\*

Watch him standing beneath the softened lights, the glancing kiss from the warm fluorescence. Observe as it pours over the naked crown of his head.

Here there's no music to soothe him, listen to the silence as they breathe around him.

Recall that his discomfort is only slightly noticeable while he's in here. But remember that it's still there.

It's very much still there.

He just hides it well.

It's sheltered in the little quivers. Like this the wide-angle

lens can only catch fragments of it.

Our camera's hidden behind the mirror.

There's a small haze across its footage. See? The mark hangs like a smear, an imperfect bulging in the one-way window that's set well enough to bounce the light so we might record his mischief. The mark distends his body. Distorts our clarity. It's only a surface marking really, not really that important, a glitch if anything, but it's just enough and it's marked in just the right place-

Settled over him like this it's an irritation, isn't it?

You can see his worry? He wears it. The worry creeps into him from how the time it takes to get to his destination, from how the others around him make it a little different every day, with all their different motions and-

What you need to understand is that these kinds of things make him very uncomfortable.

What you need to understand is that these little delays add up far too easily and when he inevitably starts to count them up, count them back down-

See his eyes sweep around a little, panicked, though the face

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around is numb and impassive. He glances over the brooch on the woman's coat beside him as she steps out on floor 16. He peers into the grey suit and blue tie of the man standing across from him, averts his eyes again when the man shuffles past to fill her old space-

See? The old man's already started to shift on his feet and he's working his hands inside of his pockets to scratch at sweaty thighs.

His nervous habits are returning even though the face is still numb. He's pressing his back against the wall, his sweat is warming as it creeps beneath the collar of his shirt.

See how he begins, how the rank parts resurface when he notices the little disturbances and disorientation. How they all come together as he counts them up and counts them back down.

How it all comes back, the pulse in the lift distorting and growing like that smear across our camera lens as new travelers casually press their backs against it and-

It's as if they were noticeably imperfect, he picks each flaw out and they flash inside him like error messages. It's a blinking light that he can't escape from...

He tries to shut their influence down, tries to send his perception net to sleep but it's like a flashing strobe at the back of his mind.

It becomes all that he can think about.

Can you see the nerves?

Those bloodshot little lines that have already become so pronounced, become so drawn out. They hang behind his eyes.

Usually they only come with heavy system use that's turned to addiction but nobody get addicted to their terminal at Las-Low Incorporated.

No one ever suffered bloodshot lines that grow like the spiders in their wits; the bundled and the web-less left to hang in darkened corners while they wait for their change to bring the facade down.

Their little legs crinkle up and they make him blink. They make him tense. They pull on each nerve as if it were a blood soaked puppet string, and he dances.

Every single one is a fresh tether point.

See how they've been stretched out behind his eyes? Subtle in their obviousness.

They're tightened from having to hold down that half-borne nastier half he tries to conceal- the part that would have let him pass for ordinary,

would have had him accepted by his peers if he'd merely been comfortable showing it...

He's trying to push away from the twinkle in the woman's silver brooch, to hide from that faint stain on the other man's blue tie, the haphazard creases in the otherwise well-dressed man's grey suit.

\*

The doors open and he steps out of the lift. He's with a few others when he steps out on floor 35 at the Las-Low Building. The old man recognizes and waves to some of these people, his hands pat down on their shoulders. See his crinkled fingers stretch out, how he waves into their smiles as they pass him by. How he clenches around their handshakes, strains as he forces himself to deflect their smiles. These are the faces of the 'special ones' and these are the eyes that he can look into without imagining there's something looking back out that might judge him.

Note their pressed trousers and their neutral eyes above

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jovial expressions. How they hang around one another as they chatter between the little pleasantries. The small words that they value so highly. Watch as the truer meanings come slanted around the brow lines and as they make the scrunching up of skin become a shelter for beaded and greedy eyes-

Together these people are based in the quieter part of the building and he's the eldest left working amongst them. Notice that they leave him apart, it's like he's a wounded animal. Watch these people as they fan out to their different destinations now that this greeting is done. It's only a courtesy really; it's only for others to see them when they turn to admire and shake with the old man.

And then they leave him one by one- and-

Soon he's alone.

The lights hum around him in florescent blue. He walks along the red carpet.

His is the only shadow left in the hallway.

He turns and pushes open

the door to his cubicle at the end of the hall with 'Director' stenciled onto it.

\*

Now it's him only and he's all alone. Lowry Briar, locked away in his sharp shoulders and lengthened limbs. See that his suit holds most of him together, its fabric hanging in the eye of the camera. The lens of it like the eye of a digital raven set to appraise him from its careful nest set inside the air freshener mounted the corner.

His figure looks deflated from this perspective, doesn't it? Slighted and tautened.

See how he exhales and rubs at his belly, how he folds those frail fingers through the join in his jacket. He's done with this commute and there's no more need to puff out that chest. No more need for him to pretend for the others. He's calmer now; he's safer in this shelter.

There's no overhead lighting in here.

He sees he has only one way forward.

He walks against the waiting

terminal's cold blue back-light. The wash from its screen breaking over the cubicle's bare walls. It pours out to him, speckles the skirting and ceiling panels with the ripples of its white dotted lines.

It begs him to feed his secret addiction.

See the characters as they float, their dots and crosses falling as they rise across his face. They drip into him. They curl out and it's like they've been filled out with question. Like they're fleshed out with the little whites of infant finger bones. They brush against his body and they call to him- beg him to make something significant from them.

The old man lets it go and the door draws itself closed behind him. The metal latch marking itself with a soft click.

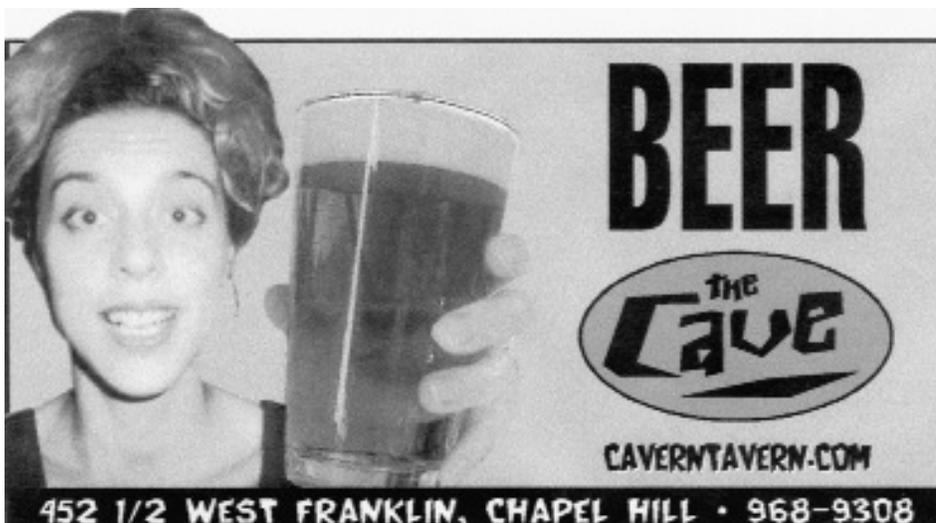
\*

The craftsman is kept alone while he works.

\*

There are certain things that should have been caught and dealt with far earlier on- before the old man became a danger- after all; they watch him from the camera just like we always do, all of the time.

For example when you watch the newer entries in his surveillance logs you can tell that he's becoming nostalgic. He sort of hangs in the places he visits, and sometimes he falls into a dangerous melancholy when he's at home. He drinks a little when he never used to. He



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murmurs to the ceiling fan in his flat before he falls asleep. Little words the microphone could never catch.

But don't let that distort your observations. After all, it's just a surface smear. In his cubicle you can see him when he escapes from all that and the flare comes from the inside. He's better when he's in here, isn't he? You can see how he doses on a 'terrible purpose' given him by this work, how to taps out fresh lines to pressurize empty wounds. How the eyes bounce like they're frantic from an itching somewhere unseen-

And sat before this screen you see him as he comes back a little. He's sitting in front of the terminal and all those pieces of the puzzle that the old man used to hold fall back into his hands and all the words he'd smiled around and all the faces that he'd enjoyed learning to value-

Colleagues and supervi-

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or

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sors...

You can see the people as they float around in his eyes when he sits in that chair.

What he's held onto is more than just a lump of ice that hangs behind the eyes. It's more than just a stubborn glint beneath his smeared glare-

To him, working like this is the most natural thing... it's like he's finally earned something eternal. It feels just like he might be able to keep what he does here without the inevitable consequences...

\*

Now his eyes are open and the hands are lying flat, he's still sitting down. Note his prey, the digits as he presses them around on his screen.

From here he goads each new row into its staggering perfected placement. He presses the characters into their neat white lines and he stretches them out over the inside of his walls. He manipulates them, but they never touch him in return.

Watch him as he sits and stares, presses his fingers down into his work. You can see that the mouth is tight. You can see that his eyes have found their own way onto his screen. How their reflections hang there from how he's been brought so close. How he's been led into this logical abyss so perfectly.

\*

Two more hours with his eyes and hands the same and then comes his lunch break. There's no buzz to announce it. The craftsman just gets up and

goes into a different room. It's a long tabled hall where there's no talking wanted nor allowed and there are replica ferns in every corner. The others are silent at this stage, casual clothes with a spattering of suits, no one remarks on the uniform of the 'special' old guard, their exclusively formal garb.

He sits with his food, it's a plate that's never bad but it's always the same. Perhaps that makes it bad? He keeps his meals at home unusual, only eats simple when he's forced to do so at work. It's a strange streak of rebellion to ply from a conformist life, don't you think? In their defense it is said that the standardized meal makes the connections of the craftsmen easier, though others say it merely makes dealing with the craftsmen easier...

When he's done watch him get up from the table. He places the empty plate on top of the bin. Now he's back in the hall and then he's returned to his cubicle. Now he's back at his bench. Watch him as he completes the final stretch.

Eyes wide and his mind filled with sets of new commands. He lays his hands down and stares, fills the orders. Like this he gives each new directive a sliver of his flesh. He re-tunes himself to suit what they want, gives their homunculi life by sheering off parts of his own.

He's looking for the next.

Done, gone through, and after that-

He gets closer, and the clock

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ticks closer...

\*

Watch him as he rubs at his eyes and presses his hands against his cheeks; they're refreshingly cool. He holds them there. Now he leans back in his chair, stretches away his end-of-shift stiffness and squints into the blank screen, he rubs at his chin and he yawns a little.

Mr. Briar gets up. He fetches his overcoat from the hanger in the corner and opens the door. He steps out into the hall and the old man turns toward the lift.

\*

On his way back to the lift Mr. Briar watches. He examines the woman who runs the cubicle next to him. See that they're expecting one another; mark the unmarked width in each open posture. Their smiles as they walk past one another.

They'd had a drink together last week but Mr. Briar doesn't think it went well.

She used to be interested in

him, the oldest and wisest. She used to seek him out after hours, couldn't imagine working like he does for as long as he has. He doesn't see how she carries herself for him. He refuses to notice how he makes her lighten up each day. She doesn't even see it herself. She just feels drawn to smile and somehow...

Instead of a chat they pass in silence. Sometimes she hesitates when this happens. Frowns after he walks past her at the end of the day and sometimes she doesn't.

This time she takes the stairs. See, he looks over his shoulder. Wonders a little more at that passing smile. She frowns while he watches her back but she doesn't turn around.

Instead she keeps on walking.

Watch as he turns and pushes the button at the end of the hall.

When the doors open the lift is empty.

Mr. Briar stands in the hall-

way, his black wrapped feet on the mauve carpet.

The doors close.

\*

For a few seconds he imagines watching the floors as they tick down through the display, orange 34, orange 33, orange 32... 31-

Notice the old man as he turns around. As he lightly brushes the wall with an open hand, feels a little lighter. He runs his fingers through the joins in the paneling as he walks back along the empty hallway on floor 35. Mr. Briar looks towards the stairwell at the other end of the hall and he stands there for a while. He wonders if he should follow her. But then he turns and goes back into his cubicle.

He closes the door behind him. See that he dumps his coat onto the floor and boots up the company system, watch as he sits in his chair and taps out his personal access key.

Today Peter Briar doesn't

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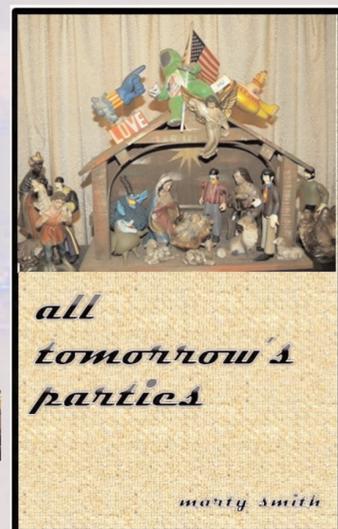
### ***All Tomorrow's Parties***

by Marty Smith



(publisher & book reviewer, "The Blotter Magazine;" contributor to the "Urban Hiker;" former host of "New Frontiers" and "Laugh Tracks" on WXDU - FM, Duke University Radio)

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feel like going home.

Instead of the lift and that woman in reception, the street, his train and the flat and then something else before he has to go to sleep he feels like-

He needs to do something.

The old man goes back inside and he takes that same seat.

He goes back out onto the wire. He's in the garden that his work helps to sustain. The reality his numbers ordain ought to be.

\*

Peter waits for her under the user tag that they'd agreed for last time. The name is in his scent and it's pressed into the way he's seen and heard. She'll certainly notice him. He stands and there's an aqueduct curving around his horizon and the floor is set like he's standing on a frozen cloud. The structure around him is brightly colored, the aqueduct is about hip height and is filled with data arrayed to



be scooped out and absorbed, to be poured out into the skin.

News, social co-opts and emotional disclets, their connection points set as a sort of liquid so they might ebb and flow free.

In here people gather and they chat and interact, the world changes a little to suit them...but never enough.

The old man is in one of the backwaters; it's a simple and safe site really. Half of it is left public and the rest is sheltered just a little so the young and the flippant just pass it by...

He has a history here. See, he makes himself look younger when he's here, it's like he cares enough to play a little with how others might see him... He wonders how many of the old might still dwell, might still watch or may even remember.

He's fully immersed and he sees and feels like he's really there, like he might belong.

\*

He's a presence amongst the rest of the viewers, another user snug in the folds and safely watching the rest. There are open chats and other viewable things to distract. They offer such warm distractions...he scoops one of them from the font and sips a little. He likes guessing in the affairs of strangers while he waits for something better to come sweep him along. And some people like the feeling of being guessed into. There's a woman and man so close he can't tell one from the other...

He begins to wonder at what their proximity must feel like, but then she finally arrives.

They approach one another, there's intent hanging behind the smile as they remember the strange fuzzy world that had happened the last time they'd linked. The last time they'd hung between one another.

'The joining' offers those who participate a true thrill. Its consequences are often perverse and sometimes even illegal. To be so close is to be too vulnerable, some adore it and some despise the effects of its existence. With someone in Mr Briar's position it's dangerous, with Mr. Briar his partaking in it should have been noticed.

They embrace and he whispers something into her ear. A brush of the arm says she's ready to leave and the pair move towards the exit, they go hand in hand.

A few strangers watch them as they go, but when you're in here there's always someone watching-

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They leave to go somewhere that they think is private.

\*

And I follow them.

When the pair finally think they're alone he asks her how she's been and she does the same for him.

It's really just a different kind of foreplay. Eventually they talk about the pleasure they had last time. The old man wearing the ghost of the younger tells her where he's logging on from. The office block and the company reputation flash through her mind, she imagines the power of his terminal, the speed of the uplink- Her face lights with delight. Without discussion, they know what they're going to be doing for the rest of the evening.

She bundles a file for him. It's an access route, all simple numbers and ugly code stuffed in a portable package. She tells him he's to smuggle it back into the company system. See him smile a little shyly, his hands lingering at her side. The younger figurine takes it and he goes. He wades the vetting screens and tries his best to evade the attack

barriers and other firewalls, he murmurs, prays that he won't get stopped, that he won't get searched, there's a sudden, artificial hunger inside that helps him overcome his fear... And with a little help and a few lucky malfunctions the lust drunk younger man succeeds and survives to grow old once more.

\*

He waits for her to follow the access route that she'd given to him.

Peter stays as something small; he's an inhibited speck in the dream-sphere. Mr. Briar has already prepped it all. He keeps himself all bunched up. After all, the slow reveal makes it more pleasurable. He hangs like a seed in the darkness and after a while-

"Peter...?"

It's a whisper on the wind.

He knows that she's here.

Together they let their channel unfold.

In here it always feels like the first time, it feels like there's a light creeping all over that's so very warm and slightly heavy. He reaches out for that light and he hopes to hold it. To cradle it

and then to draw it nearer.

He grasps. His fingers strike through their thoughts and goals, gather up the agreements they'd made before each joining. He pushes his hand into their private promises and secret desires...such privilege must be intoxicating, I would share if I could reach and...

See? His body's back in the office, he's sat in his chair, his eyes are closed and his head is titled back. The hands are on the desk. But together they're in here and Peter's far from that old man's body and that old man's life. He's the younger figurine and together they're dreaming in their dollhouse-

\*

All of their relationship comes back to him like it's brand new, the bits in the beginning seep into his hopes for the end, her hopes for a future where they won't have to contemplate the end and-

There's also what they were like to one another when they'd first met. Alongside it they keep how they've grown together and how they'd slowly made themselves familiar to one another



and...How they'd worked to share in one another...

It's in all the conversations and the memories of their sensations. All of it is right in there and; you can see it, can't you?

There are the conversations above the dinner dates, the parts said with voice that hangs above the straight up sex and all of the smut spread out between. All the time before that he'd spent in his private flat with the private terminal and private bedroom, the bathroom with tub and shower and kitchen with their chrome taps. The heat of the half-hearted 'private life' he was told that he should just go back and 'enjoy' when he was 'free' from his gardening as a company craftsman. That job in the office building where he closes his eyes and pretends he's not slowly dying for just a little while-

\*

He remembers the evening when the weight first became too much, when he'd first gone that evening to meet her boss. That wide dark coat of the man in the street, the darker places that he led him and the money that was passed, the musky powder on the man's fingers...

He remembers the night he'd first entered the bed where

she entertains. When he'd arranged the dreams that they'd shared. She planted him with a bed of lilies. It was like there was a complex nest past that soft blond head of hair. The wispy length of it brittle like narrowed white glass that might snap and scrape blood from the trim of eye and cheek that he'd traced with finger so tentatively...

All this old information is a fluttering burst of info let lose into the dream sphere. See? Watch as it comes to rest in the cradle of his outstretched palm. The precious contents become beaded into noise, it's faint but it's dreadful, it's like the blades of a weightless feather scraping into the wind.

\*

Suddenly hands weave out in front of him, sprouting fingers from fingers into infinity. He presses them to separate the brackets, sets it so he can heave his body in between. His laces make a scratching sound beside the slap of each rubberized sole. He chases his feet around a corner in a city that wasn't there before. An obsidian city where

the streets are streaked with blood. His eyes are panicked, he looks over his shoulder.

There's no control.

I see there's fear, see it as I send shadows to snap at his heels and chase him further and-

His eyes say that he knows something follows.

Suddenly he asks: "Where's Marin?"

There's a smile on someone else face, he realizes that he's left her.

It comes out as a moan; "Where's Marin!" he screams.

The lights are shrinking; they're burning further away- "Marin-" he whimpers, a mouse's sigh.

And then something I made finds him.

He forgets and then the distant lights go out.

And he feels himself fade with every bite that is taken from whom he once was.

An old man, no longer. ❖

## CREATIVE METALSMITHS

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## "October 29th, 16 degrees"

By Richard J. Lewis

You know it's coming but you're never ready,  
And then it's here.

October 29<sup>th</sup>, 16 degrees.

Peaches pulls up short after 3 steps on the deck heading for her morning property line check.  
One paw up, a glance over her shoulder to me, "It's here," she telepaths glumly.

Peach is a Georgia road dog mutt that followed us home from church one Sunday afternoon at about 95 degrees. She sports a southern coat that barely protects her from sunburn let alone...this.

Her jaw muscles flex and off she goes, hind quarters shivering.

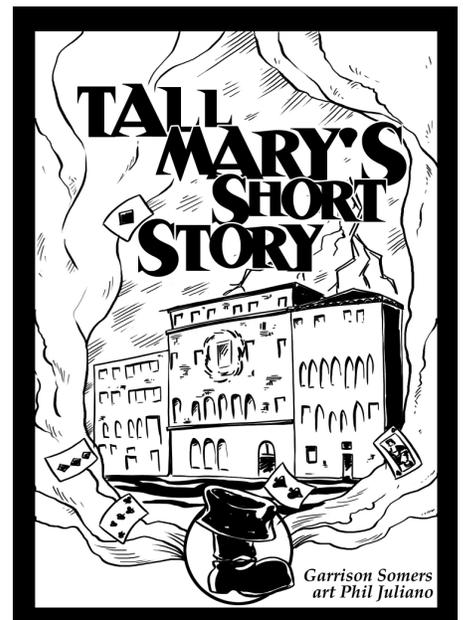
I walk to work, just up the hill, rain, shine, hot, cold, snow, ice.

I own three pair of YakTrax for the winter climbs and descents.

Open the front door and stumble on Jack Frost busy on the storm door window. He's been busy on the curvy brass handle, too, now white, with ice. The glass sculpture grows with the new supply of H2O from the inside air, mostly leftovers from my shower, a pot of tea.

Step outside, check the smoke from my breath.

*For sale - cheap - on  
Amazon.com (where else?)*



No wind. Super long con trail coming from my exhaust port. Hangs in the air a good long time, then gone. Just behind mine, another con trail 33,000 ft up, the big silver bird headed to the west coast, maybe Hawaii? Maybe? Someday, brother con trail maker.

Forward march, a good bye con trail from me to the missus. Purple asters planted in the front garden look a little droopy. Glowing an indescribable purple, the sunrise just hitting them. I hope they held their breath through the freeze to let the sun warm them into glory for one or two more days.

A strange sound piercing the cold air sharply. The tree across the street. An insect-like steady clicking that makes me think grasshoppers. This tree has the bulk of its green leaves still hanging. A quick look reveals they are all curled up. Frozen solid. Falling fast.  
Green chlorophyll-laden botanical popsicles.

They bounce off each other and the branches making that clicking sound. That's a new one for me.

Trudging on. Up the hill. Made the parking lot. Nice breath con trails behind me. Evidence of a dumped out Coke on the passenger side of that F-150. Those inconsiderate.... Wait a second.  
The Coke is frozen! The ice cubes ain't melting!

Yeah Peachy, baby, it's here.



# 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.

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The subway car is beneath Brooklyn – I know this despite the truth that the signs in stations flash past too fast to read. It must, I also deduce, be an express, but this doesn't seem to matter as I don't see many speed-blurred faces on the platforms. Where am I going? Coney Island? The lights in the car are surprisingly stable right up until the moment they go out for good and we slow, not braking but just no longer accelerating, then come to a peaceful stop. The only light – dull red emergency bulbs.

It's broken, a black gentleman sitting near where I am standing says. He heaves himself to his feet and we stand at the double-doors for a moment, like they might open automatically, the way they are supposed to. They don't and we pry them open together.

Jump down to the track. It's very dark and we're not alone. Other passengers are now down here, on foot, making their way. Where's the motorman? I've no idea. It is enough that everyone knows where they are going and so I join the flow. Rubble on the tracks says this is not a breakdown just of the trains. Light from above – a hole all the way to the street? So it seems. We climb, reaching above us to grab helping hands, holding our own behind us to provide the same.

For some reason I think that it - the street, the neighborhood where we find ourselves, is far too empty for Brooklyn. And there's no explanation for what's going on, either. The good news is that there is no smoke, no collapsed buildings. So not terror? But there's also no people. So we all look at each other. What is going on? The black gentleman from my train is nervous. This is bad, very bad, he mutters.

Then, to our relief, we see a group of folks down a side street, coming toward us. Good, I think. But they are not responding to our calls, our waves, just coming steadily on. What kind of disaster has there been? We'll ask when they come here. They'll know.

We gotta go, now, the black man says, like lyrics from an old song. Let's get out of here. I can't explain why, but I'm with him, instinctually. Something, I don't know what, is wrong with everyone who wasn't down in the subway. The people coming toward us are...weird. But we can't convince all of the others. Only a few people run in the same direction as us. A man in a

hat. An older woman with a nylon shopping bag. We go up a hill. I didn't even know Brooklyn had hills. Oh, yeah. Brooklyn Heights. No one wants to go in any of the buildings.

We reach a park. There are more of the silent people here, in clusters of three and four and more, coming our way. For a moment I think about that old playground joke – I don't have to run fast, just faster than you.

Maybe there's been some kind of chemical or biological disaster, maybe we need to find a radio, a TV, pull out a cell phone and find out. I don't know why we're running. I don't want to think of the word zombie, but it pops into my head anyhow. It's too silly, too campy, to be something actual, something in Brooklyn.

I run anyway.

Johnboy - cyberspace

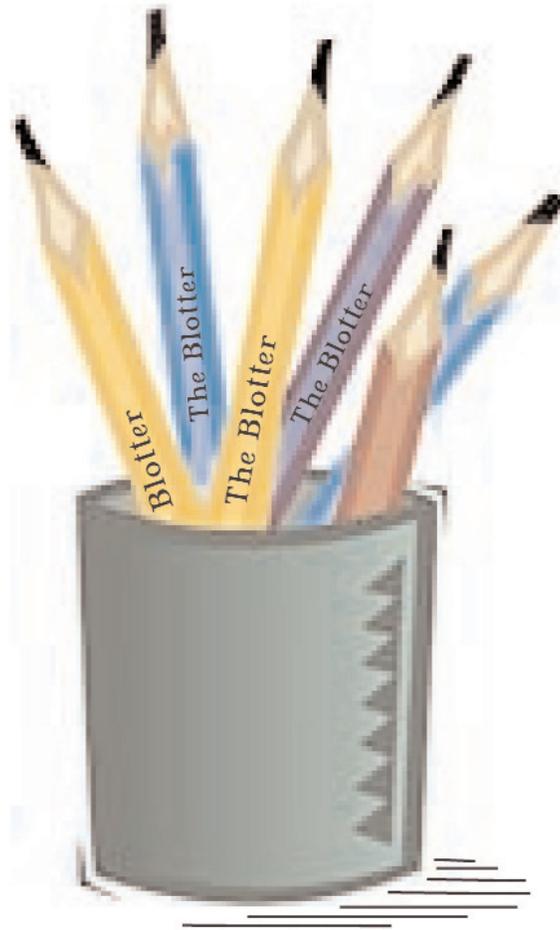
## CONTRIBUTORS:

Our fiction contributor is from West Sussex, UK, and writes, "**Henry Charles Gysin**, Ghost Writer, English Teacher, some guy who likes to read- he sent himself to University, studied Linguistics and that led him into Teaching. He now finds himself skipping from country to country, leaving little stories here and there and growing more comfortable with referring to himself in the 3rd person."

**Dr. Richard J. Lewis**, of Aberdeen, SD, is a good Blotterfriend, a surgeon, a world traveler, a surfer, an essayist, a motorcyclist, a bass-baritone and a poet. And a dog-whisperer. Not bad for a day's work.

**Phil Juliano** of Bloomington, MN, just informed us via Facebook that Spence the dog is now 14. Happy Birthday Spence!!! Follow Peej and Spence on [philjulianoillustration.com](http://philjulianoillustration.com) and purchase their new book at <http://bestinshowcomics.bigcartel.com/>.

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