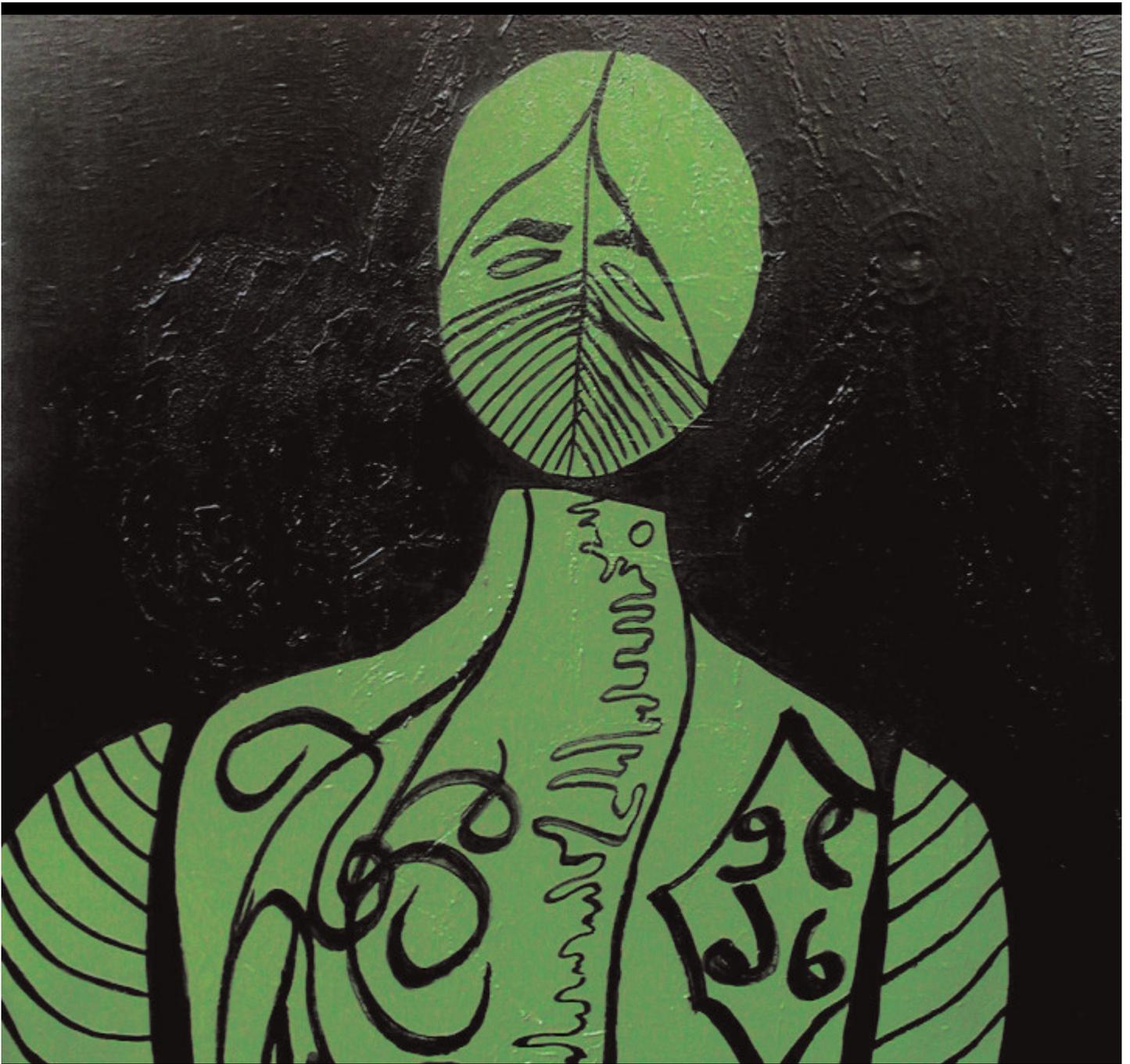


# The Blotter

Febrururary 2004

Brewed in Strict Adherence to the Famous Reinheitsgebot of 1516

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# In

this issue: Mark Meadows goes frighteningly insane in Colorado. B. Seckinger Ash [sic.] takes a bath in the kudzu. Felice Xavier [sic.] talks about hands. Poesy from J. J. Steinfeld, Susan Rakely, Covert [sic.], Isai Jaimes, and Rachael Bloom. The art of Alex Nagy. Plus, the Dream Journal. Whew, what an issue!

**The Blotter is:**

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for more from this artist.

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*This magazine may contain typos or bad words*

## Items Worth Mentioning from the desk of Johnny Pence

### The Blotter, Print Pariah

We love our printer, Piedmont Press, out of Garner, NC, but they're going out of business. That leaves us looking for a new one. Don't worry, I think we found one. (**But note that the March issue might be a little delayed—don't freak out if it is.**) In the process of shopping around, we got the following e-mail response from one printer:

From: XXXX  
To: 'm\_k\_smith@yahoo.com'  
Sent: Wednesday, January 26, 2005 10:33 AM  
Subject: Decline to quote

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Thank you for the opportunity,  
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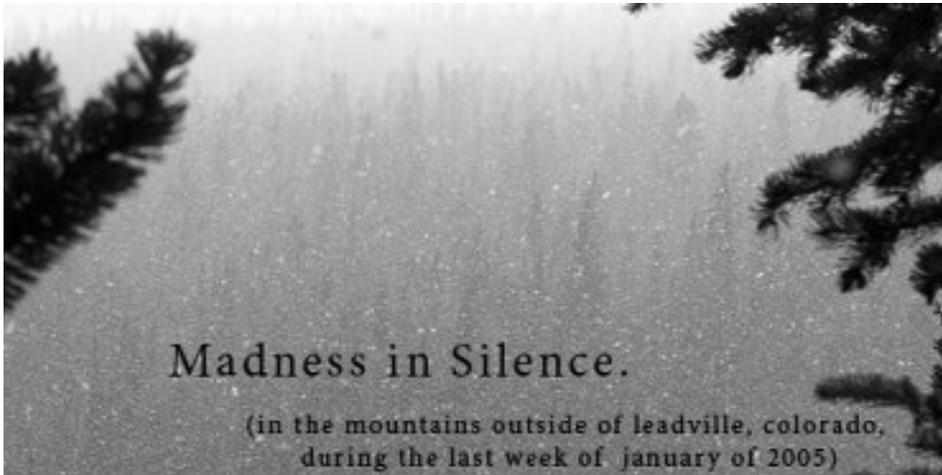
### Hail Atlantis

This issue marks our first distribution in Atlanta, probably just a couple-hundred copies in L5P and East Atlanta, but it's something. Thanks to the kids from Cute Girl Demographics comix publishers for taking the time to help us out. With any luck, you'll be hearing more from them in our pages.

### The Simple Things

After years of eating it almost exclusively due to its price and fillingness, then years where I wouldn't touch it, I recently had a nostalgic return to blue-box macaroni and cheese. You know what? It still sucks, but in an awesome way.

—ediot@blotterrag.com



## by Mark S. Meadows

• haven't seen anyone, not a soul, in days. now, bundled up against the sub-zero temperatures, and squeezing my hands into my armpits, i'm in a world built out of very small pieces of grey. at 10,980 feet altitude, i can practically reach over my head and stuff my hand into that deadly zone known as Timberline, where it's too high; nothing can grow. it's only about five more minutes' trudge through the thigh-high snow. the small cabin where i've been staying should be ... somewhere ... down that ravine a mile or so away.

it damn well better be.

at this refined altitude of nose-bleeds and short-winded expenditures (where even typing becomes a cardiovascular workout), i can't do much other than stand, crotch-deep, in the snow and think about taking my next step. so i'll get to timberline, just for shits and declarations, then head back to the cabin. i've nei-

ther seen nor spoken with anyone (other than myself in the mirror, that is) for several days, so i'm looking forward to leaving tonight. my friend, who owns the cabin, will be here to pick me up at sunset. or so he said.

but something's scaring me, something grim has happened, a change has occurred, and i pray he arrives when he said, because i'm fearing for my life at this point....

several days ago i got to the cabin in the late afternoon. it was cold and so i lit a fire before i even took my jacket off. a recent trip to india was still in my blood so the cabin seemed surrounded by danger, every snowflake a tiny demon, waiting to attack me with their microscopic forks of ice. they would stay outside and the fire and i would talk into the night.

once i got a little heat going i cooked a piece of grade-excellent colorado range buffalo steak. i listened to bulgarian folk music and sprinkled crumbs on the porch so that the jays and the

## The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

*penny for your thoughts*

I'm watching a DVD documentary about Abraham Lincoln. Suddenly it is as if I am there in a log cabin on the steep rocky slopes of Mt. Rushmore. It is around the year 1865. Lincoln has just been found frozen to death on the slopes outside. But his tissues are still alive, so an effort is being made to preserve the body until the experts can make a mold for a statue. He is cut into pieces and his parts are boiled in a pot, a few at a time. What is in the pot now is a hollow trestle of rib segments with translucent skin stretched over them, making the whole thing resemble a box kite. I am thinking this doesn't look like any part of Lincoln. Then I see that the body has been put back together and this trestle is used as an internal support in place of the removed organs. His body is limp and supple as it is stuffed into a feed sack so that it can be preserved in the natural cold outside. He looks young with silky, black, curly hair. He has an enormous tattoo of a sailor on his belly starting just below the breastbone. The sailor is wearing a blue hat and a bright red tunic that goes all the way down to where both Lincoln and the tattoo have no pants on. Things from there on down are natural on Lincoln but appear double-sized in proportion to the tattoo-sailor. A folk singer is singing: "Save \_\_ the liv- \_\_ ing Lincoln. Save \_\_ the liv- \_\_ ing Lincoln. Just a few days more, mean so much more." Now I am standing on a ledge near the enormous copper head of Lincoln on Mt. Rushmore. It resembles the head of a penny, but in 3-D. The rugged copper slopes on his face seem halfway between manly and mountainous. The narrator is saying that the dignified copper corrosion that marks the surface of the monument looks like the result of treatment with piss and vinegar.

—R. G. Raleigh

Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at [mermaid@blotterrag.com](mailto:mermaid@blotterrag.com). If nothing else, we love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.



chickadees who courageously forage through the winter could get a free lunch with me. they were companions, as well. at least then. finally i tossed the leftover meat on the porch step (it was gone in the morning, replaced by tiny undecipherable scratchings in the snow). then, when the sun fell, i lit some lamps, more companions, and sat down to work, several writing and illustration projects being due next week.

i took a nap of three hours, around 2 A.M., and was up to watch the sun rise peaceful and silent.

of all of my companions—the fire, the birds, the lamps, and the tiny meat-thief of the night, solitude was my best friend.

by the end of the second day, however, things began to get interesting. since i had gone up to this cabin to listen to myself

think, and since i walk along that thin concrete lip of the swimming pool of schizophrenia (my grandfather spending the last 2/3 of his life in hospitals), i started to go a little bonky. not *Shining-axe-murderer* bonky (another story about another loopy guy in another wintertime colorado getaway),

but stand-and-stare-west-and-not-notice-for-30-minutes bonky ... hear-the

-pulse-of-the-snow bonky ... talk-to-myself-in-the-mirror-for-10-minutes bonky. you know, ye-old-timey-

colorado-miner kind of bonky. then, by the end of the third day, about the fourth time that a ghost had walked through the living room (when i was sure the ceiling had collapsed, scaring me out of the lazyboy chair that i was typing in [on the right in the picture on the next page]), i real-

ized that i was well-gone bonky before i'd arrived. it had been two weeks since i'd slept more than 5 hours, my clothes needed washing (my only pair of pants smelled like brie), and i'd lost all sense of a schedule, sleeping for two hours at a time, at random segments inside the great daily hoop we call the sun. but no matter, it wasn't like there was someone around i might snap at, so i hiked up my psyche and took a swan dive off the side of my schizo swimming pool.

working on a book of fables, the writing went well. lost in the subcranial scrub i spun my tires in the mud of grey matter (because that's what a writer must do—grind the gears of the ole' intellect and drag some four-headed hydras, screaming and flapping, from the swamps of the subconscious), making a general mess of the ricefields of imagina-



tion i had so carefully weeded just last month. the writing came easy, the work was good, and the vines of madness started to grow out of my head, like the black and grey hair that grows out of the ears of old russian men.

i think these vines, words, and images nearly strangled me. one morning, around 4, i found myself tromping around naked in the snow and ice, waving a knife over my head, laughing and roaring at the sky and the gods that stared down from it. in defense of my insanity, in defense of my



confession even, this was the kind of thing one does, like listening to gregorian chant in a french church, or trying on an ancient italian helmet, when he wonders about the people, a hundred years ago, who breathed this same air, and what it was like to be them, and how they might have done their days. and so, like a crazy fucking miner carrying his knife to the deer-hang to cut off a chestful of dinner, i imagined i would die there too, as he had, on the icy scalp of north america.

yes, dear reader, it is true; insanity lives in the mountains of colorado. ask alfred packer.

but this wasn't what scared me because then, after jumping into my freezing pool of madness, i found that it was nice to be out ... ! ... i dried off in front of the wood stove, my feet tinkling and ringing from the ice they had broken through, my skin hot and stinging, cleaned off and warmed up. i stood there in front of the cracking fire, naked, my unintelligible work done, pleased as pie that i'd managed



not to die while performing idiotic feats of historic recreation in the wilds of the state of insanity. i kept the palms of my hands just above the stove, and water dripped off, hissing as it hit the black metal.

these luxuries are worthy.

most luxuries, like cadillacs, cognacs, and cuban cigars, are fine insofar as luxuries go, but they're also designed to numb the senses, drop the pain of life to a tolerable threshold, and swat the swarm of anxiety that follows us

around. this is not living. this is insulating. these luxuries are easy to separate into a big fat category called "nouns."

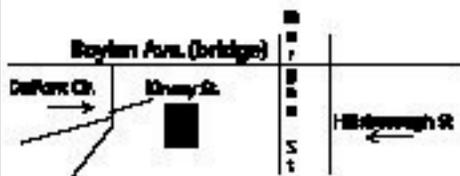
i prefer another category of luxuries called "verbs." the items in this category—acts—consume most of the hours of our lives, so it's a good idea to select them well, like weapons for battle, and sort them by preference and quality. this is art. these art forms of living, these luxuries, include things that are easily found in europe; things like love, food, or friends. but they exist all over the



world. sitting on a porch in tennessee, listening to the sunset cicadas, and smelling the salt pork rind sizzle from the neighbor's smokehouse up the road. or laughing with the hookers and junkies under the bridge downtown, smoking cigarettes, and finding out what shit-hole shaft they tumbled down to get there. or learning how to play a new instrument. or decoding the language of the birds that come to your window for crumbs, even if they are only pigeons. or deep-kissing in the rain then sprinting



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inside to dry each other off before jumping in the sack with a couple of spanish pears, a kind bordeaux, some dark chocolate, and a long, sharp knife.

these are things all of us, for the most part, can do. but the extremes of these luxuries can get shoved out past reasonable limits. this is why they are luxuries. luxury, like vice, can be pushed to limits that are defined only by your physical capabilities. on the simple left we have our sip of cognac, and on the randy right we have a roll in the hay while it rains outside.

you can drink and fuck all day, but only provided you're healthy as a hero.

thus, steeped in blessed luxury, i passed the better part of this january's final week.

...i'm standing on top of a snow-blown hill, just below timberline, and the wind, as if i were on the bottom of an ocean of motor coolants, sucks away what little body heat i have; the heat leaps from my jacket and gloves. i used to live near here, near this altitude. but that was when i was a boy, and in the last few days i've realized i'm no longer a mountain dweller and no longer a boy.

living on a boat in the belly of los angeles, as i do, does nothing to prepare your body for the wintry, towering, and parched peaks of insane colorado. let me give you an example; i woke up last night with my throat glued shut. somehow, the specifics of which i'll never understand, (an alpine combination of arid ambience, my open mouth; a sleepy, slack-

# The Blotter

The Illiterati Masterminds behind the New World Odor

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*Darling, we really are having a chic little free-underground-literary-magazine moment here, aren't we?*

jawed lack of spit; and steady breathing), my air intake valve, just behind my tongue, got stuck. ever woken up with drymouth? sure you have. well, this was one step past that, and two steps closer to the grave. i couldn't breathe until i got some water down there, and as soon as i swallowed and got my throat running again, i got a bloody nose. then, in putting more wood on the fire (it was 3:12 A.M. and cold) i had to stop loading the stove and stand up just to heave a breath. this is not a gentle land. it is murderous and mean. it is a huge walk-in dry freezer with no food to eat and a door attended by

Insanity, who will, if you are not quick, lock you in and snap off the handle.

i miss my boat, my sun, my girl, my rain, and my seagulls. i feel like jimmy buffet, cast naked onto the arctic ice, left to live as best he can off of raw fish and melted snow with ol' nanuk of the north.

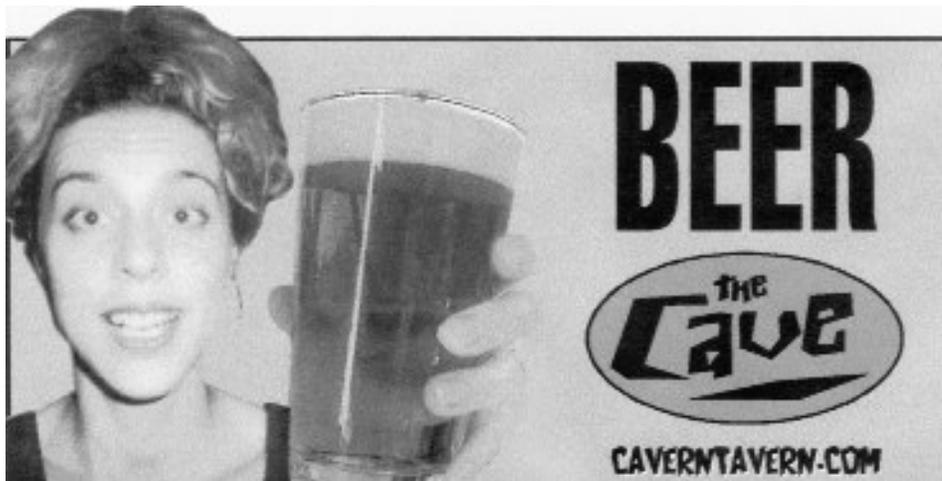
in sum, i've found the physical limits of my adaptability. i've found a new internal frontier. and i've found that, if my friend doesn't come to pick me up today, that i might well die here. i'm actually afraid of this happening right now, as i write. it's ironic, really; i hitchhike through

ghastly killing fields, interview terrorists with eyes like underwater predators, take large doses of lethal drugs south of the border, dodge dysentery and every other disease in india, and yet, here, in a little vacation cabin in colorado, i start to tremble, and fear for my life.

despite the pain it's kinda fun.

the upside is that eventually, probably tomorrow, i'll start the trek home to my boat, my sun, my girl, and my rain. and therein lies the subtle luxury of freeze-drying my ass off in a little cabin far away from humanity.

with enough deprivation, a



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# alex nagy

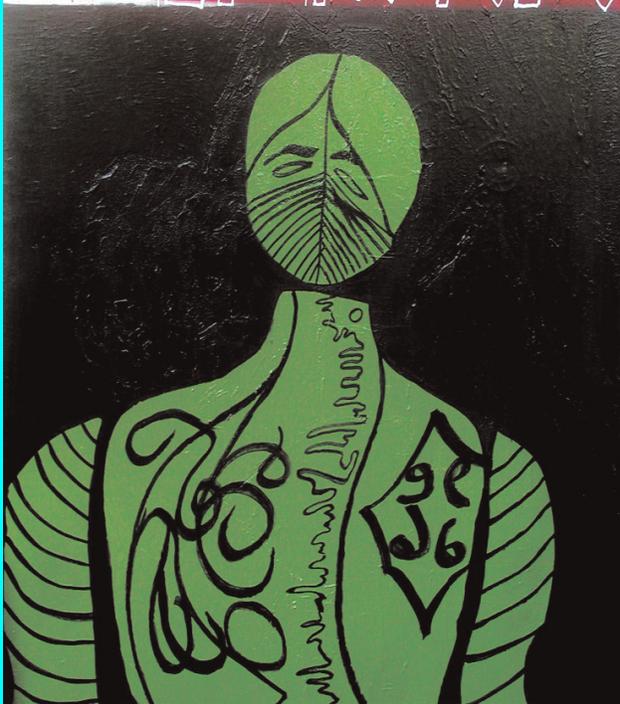
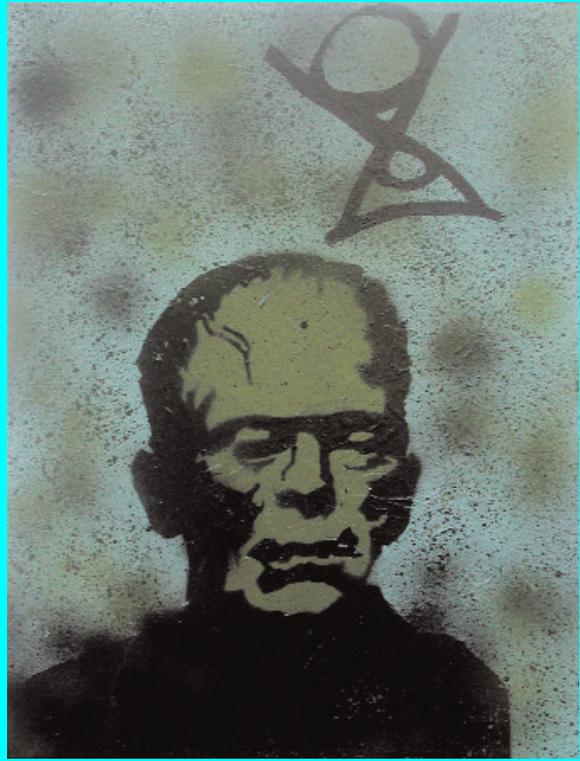
alex nagy works in acrylics  
and spraypaint. he's showing  
at the chapel hill public  
library.

[tlkheads83@aol.com](mailto:tlkheads83@aol.com)

this page: i draw better  
now; the hero, neal cassidy.

opposite: V.A.A.D., eclipse,  
mistress of the satellites,  
birdscape.





glass of room-temp water becomes decadent. and that's pretty cool, if you think about it.

my recommendation and reason for writing this is like so: place yourself, intentionally, even stupidly, in positions of low comfort levels, adapt to them, watch, and learn. you will change a little. this is what luxury demands. it is what exploration demands. it's the getting out of it that makes the rain a pleasure. it's the drying off that makes wet fun. and the things you already know—the pillow that you carefully selected; knowing where your lover is when it's dark; falling asleep; your morning wake-up ritual; the familiar fit of a mug in your hand—these are the luxuries that make up the thing called Home.

and that, in the end, is the most important luxury of them all.

**Mark S. Meadows** is an artist and writer. He wrote a fairly authoritative work on interactive fiction called *Pause and Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative*, but has also written a couple other books, done a ton of hitchhiking and traveling, and was smart enough to snag the domains **boar.com**, **bore.com**, and **boor.com**. He lives on a boat that is currently docked in Los Angeles.

This story originally appeared on boar.com.

## Viola and Me

by B. Seckinger Ash

I drop-kicked my Smith-Corona typewriter and broke my big toe. I was trying to wake the damn machine up. The doctor gave me some Percocet and I went back home and wrote all night long, painkillers making my face itch, eyes all bloodshot from tunnel vision. I was trying to write a story about a man who, while finagling his genitals for carnal complacency, is caught in the act by the very woman he's secretly infatuated with. It was going to be a story of redemption, ending with her falling in love with him. But for one reason or another I found myself digressing, and by the time the sun came up I had written a fifty page narrative about a nuclear apocalypse.

The story was set in Appalachia; the protagonist being a young man whose name was Roy-Boy. It was an emotional tale that explored the dark depths of man's depravity in the face of social and cultural collapse. In the story's most visceral scene, Roy-Boy is forced to cut off his big toe with a gardening shovel after he stumps it in the woods and it becomes infected. The severing of the toe is a symbol of his being cut off from the old world. Writing the last scene of the story, I brought myself to tears and had a cathartic moment, weeping at the beauty of the world. I soon fell into a deep and wholesome sleep, wakened fresh and reread it. I gave up on the third paragraph and burned the motherfucker, all fifty pages.

I took a 7-iron to my Smith-Corona, killed the bastard in its sleep.

The next few days were spent taking the remainder of pain pills and going to Coleman's Tavern around noon, wearing out the bartender with talk of how I wipe my ass with post-modern American literature. One day a young girl with dirty blonde hair appeared at the bar the way she might in a story: I just looked up and she was there, lighting a smoke and staring at me. She bought herself a beer and a shot of whiskey and asked could she sit at my table. She told me she was new in town, said that I looked like the right kind of fellow to talk to. Five minutes later I was pouring my bohemian heart out.

"I just want to create," I said. "To write, to make the world a better place with my art, my letters. I want to be the butter that is spread over the bread of the earth."

"I'm Viola," she said. "and I don't ever want you to give up."

Back at my place we made hard love. Afterwards I lay naked on top of the bed sheets watching Viola read everything I'd ever written. It was dawn by the time she finished, and Viola yawned and said that my work was contrived, full of platitudes, maudlin clichés, and stilted dialogue. She told me I had no poetic sense, that my sentences read like shit smells.

"But," said Viola, "that is no reason for you to give up."

We rode all the way to Gatlinburg that night on my motorcycle and got married as soon as we got there. Viola bought me a new

Smith-Corona Intelligently Quiet typewriter as a wedding gift, and I tattooed her name on my back.

For a few months we were happy as mudfish. Viola had coffee waiting for me by the typewriter each morning, and she would sit on the porch for hours listening to Amos Milburn and Vic Chesnutt records, smoking Mexican hash and throwing acorns at dragonflies and hummingbirds.

Viola had a past she wouldn't tell me about.

She had one pair of jeans that she wore every day, washing them with stones three times a week, leaving only her panties on while the pants dried in the sun.

There was an old tub that had been in my back yard amongst the kudzu since I moved in. Viola scrubbed it clean with S.O.S. pads, and whenever I finished a story, she would fill it up with hot water and soap bubbles and we'd stay in it all afternoon drinking generic whiskey,

basking there in the sun for all the world to see, she scrubbing my back I while read the story to her. Viola never said anything, never told me what she thought, just fed me that whiskey until the initial rush of having finished a story had worn off.

The stories were awful, every single one of them dreadful, so bad that Viola would leave that same night while I slept in a drunken stupor. She'd disappear for days, sometimes weeks depending on how bad the story was, kidnapping my Smith-Corona along the way. In her absence I would forget to eat and barricade myself in my bedroom, heartbroken, crying myself into severe dehydration. Remaining in a deep slumber was my only purpose for living. I'd wipe Vaseline on my eyelids to force myself back to sleep.

I wrote Viola haikus in blood on our bed sheets, awaiting her return, and if I drank enough liquor it would thin my blood sufficient to squeeze

out an entire sonnet.

But Viola always came home. She would find me reduced to infantile cries, pitiful hygiene, a broken spirit, too weak to stand. She'd fill the tub outside with hot water and drag me filthy as a hog into it, me turning the bubbled ivory water a pinkish brown upon entrance, and then she would strip naked, kicking her jeans in the grass before getting in, wrapping her legs around me and scrubbing me clean with her hair, telling me in her sweetest voice that sometimes my stories just drove her away, but that was no reason for me to give up.

**B. Seckinger Ash** gives one of those terse bios: "B.Seckinger Ash was born and raised in Helen, Ga. He graduated from University of Georgia. He lives in Athens."

I love a bio like that.

**Ernie Dollar** curates the Orange Co. historical museum and is a member of the Third Mind Collective art troupe.

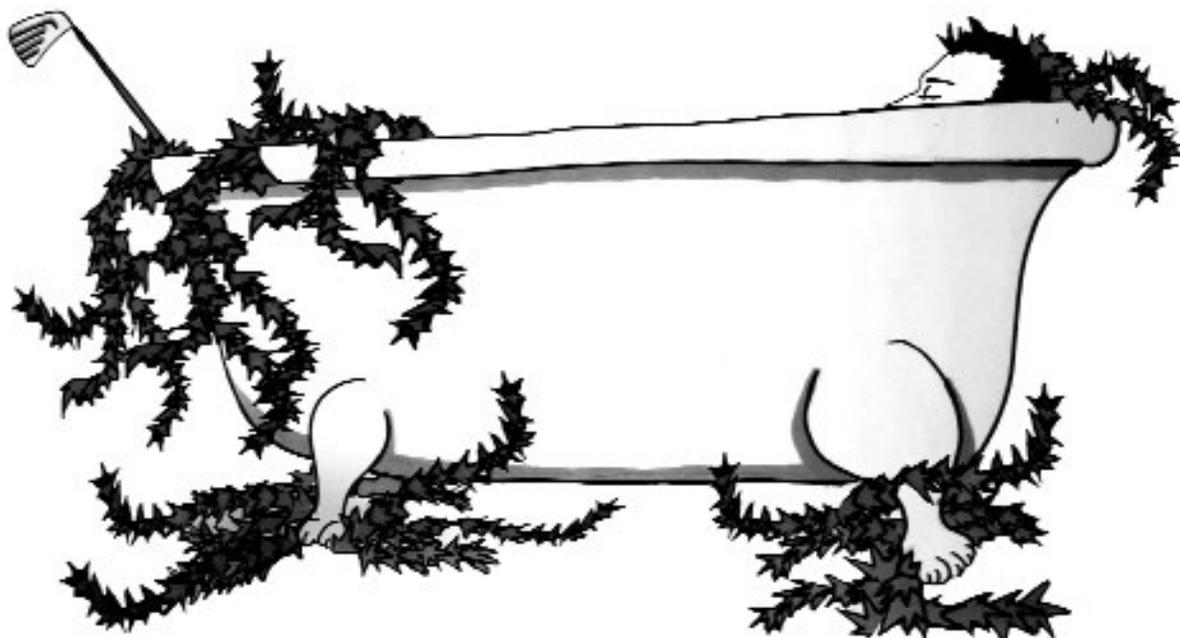


illustration by ernie dollar



**FRIDAYS**

MARCH 4: FIRST FRIDAYS  
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**FEBRUARY 12:**

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**MARCH 12:**

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MICHAEL PRYOR'S 80'S DANCE PARTY  
& SPECIAL DRAG SHOW



## Both Hands

by Felice Xavier

Princess Not-On-Your-Life and Princess Never-You-Mind wandered through a desert, looking around madly at everything but each other, playing badminton with half-truths and singing the desert songs of the kangaroo rats.

Eyeless, alone, and hand-in-hand (holding hands but not looking at their hands) they stumbled into a place where there was a storm. And a great and wild storm it was. The rain so thick and the sky so black that even had they stared and stared eyeward through the thick water-curtains, all they could have seen was the lightning, when it deigned to show its face, screaming an arc from sky to sky.

That was when they looked, at the same time, down at their hands, to make sure that the other hand was still there.

Maybe that was a mistake. They could see and feel the fingers through the water, though not the Princess thereto attached. Princess Never-You-Mind had long, thin, exploring fingers, with tapered little nails and tiny knuckles you could barely see. Princess Not-On-Your-Life had her mother's hands, made for holding and molding and kneading, with great rounded palms padded with the thickest of skin. Princess Never-You-Mind had the softest hands and skin ever to be tasted by the friendly palm.

So they stared at and studied finger by finger, and that is how they saw one another for the first time, that is to say: fingertip-wise.

Eyeless and alone, their curious hands discovered wrists and elbows, crept through the sopping blindfold to cop a visionary feel and discover a small something of what someone might have been looking for, looking straight at, and never seen....



Felice Xavier is a California-born transplant mesquerading as a native of Durham, North Carolina. She currently attends free food events and movie screenings at Duke University. She is the author of several profoundly obscure avant-garde websites. She enjoys dried cranberries, Cat Power, and the writings of Milorad Pavic.

## Cowboy Story by Isai Jaimes

I  
-El Miedo Desert.

The journey brought Jesse to the farthest tip  
of the stretching civilization in the new continent.

His horse follows besides him.  
Their knees jerk, their steps are slow-  
but break the arid ground crust out,  
and make the canyons, past their legs,  
a boiling O' Keefe panorama in dust curtain.

Sweat on his forehead drops,  
accumulates on the nosetip  
and falls from his downcast gaze  
a few inches ahead—he hasn't  
lifted his vision further than that distance,  
and suspicious of a rotating-spiked-shadow around them,  
he's convinced, "There's a dark halo weighing our walk!"

Jesse jumps back and as a settlement appeared  
—and twice surprised: he pulls the reins and points,  
"a settlement?"

He turns, "Sorry Quentin.  
Isn't this place said to be desolate?"  
Pets his horse.

When they enter, the cowboy  
(sharpened by the harsh route)  
is seen by the settlers: in their porches/  
windows/ opened doors:

as strong, determinate, fierce maybe.

A woman looking from a balcony window  
crosses his vision:  
the soul in her eyes woos around her blue iris' feathers...

\*\*\*\*\*

There's a bone tumbleweed, pushed by the wind,  
rolling and bouncing misteriously before them.

Isai Jaimes is in Athens, GA. He writes, "if you yourselves want to know about me i'll tell you whatever but i think i would rather not say anything about myself at the moment."

I like that bio too.

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23, 7:00 Contributors to Original  
Sin: The Seven Deadlies Come  
Home to Roost | Thurs. 24, 7:30  
Michael Schwalbe; Remembering  
Reet and Shine: Two Black Men,  
One Struggle | Fri. 25, 7:00 Marshall  
Chapman Reading, Signing, and Live  
Music | Sat. 26, 2:00 Shelia P. Moses

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## <i>for physics and high school</i> by Rachael Bloom I

it was all there, no one came in and  
changed the knobs or anything but  
we feel the need to explain it all  
with the four fundamental forces and  
the unified theory that governs everything—  
but physics is just pushes and pulls which  
is playground politics, really, and it  
still doesn't explain shakespeare's love  
sonnets, nor communism, nor why  
we smile when we are alone but it  
says that the universe is constantly  
expanding, and one day it will break—  
but plan on coming to school tomorrow  
anyways.

## Dog-girl by Susan Rakley

Dog-girl on a blue leash  
Tangle of brown hair

Blue leash held by a man  
Impatient eyes, fossil mouth

Dog-girl sings and hums  
Dog-girl fingers the painted roses on her shirt  
Flakes of rubberized pink  
falling petals.

Dog-girl looks up  
She is not perplexed  
She is not hurt  
She just looks up and sees  
A tall, tall man holding  
A loop of blue webbing  
A man who pushes her to walk in front  
into the crowd.

Dog-girl stops at the jingling of bells  
Finds a comb-tooth feather  
Does not smooth it  
Puts it in her hair  
Pats it gently in place

Dog-girl smiles

## *Poets and their Bios!*

**Susan Rakley**, well, she doesn't give a bio, but she's from Chapel Hill.

**Rachael Jin Bloom I** is still waiting for her train to come, still sipping on last years memories & still in high school.

**J. J. Steinfeld** is from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada and he seems to like being Canadian. He has some publishing credits. From Canada.

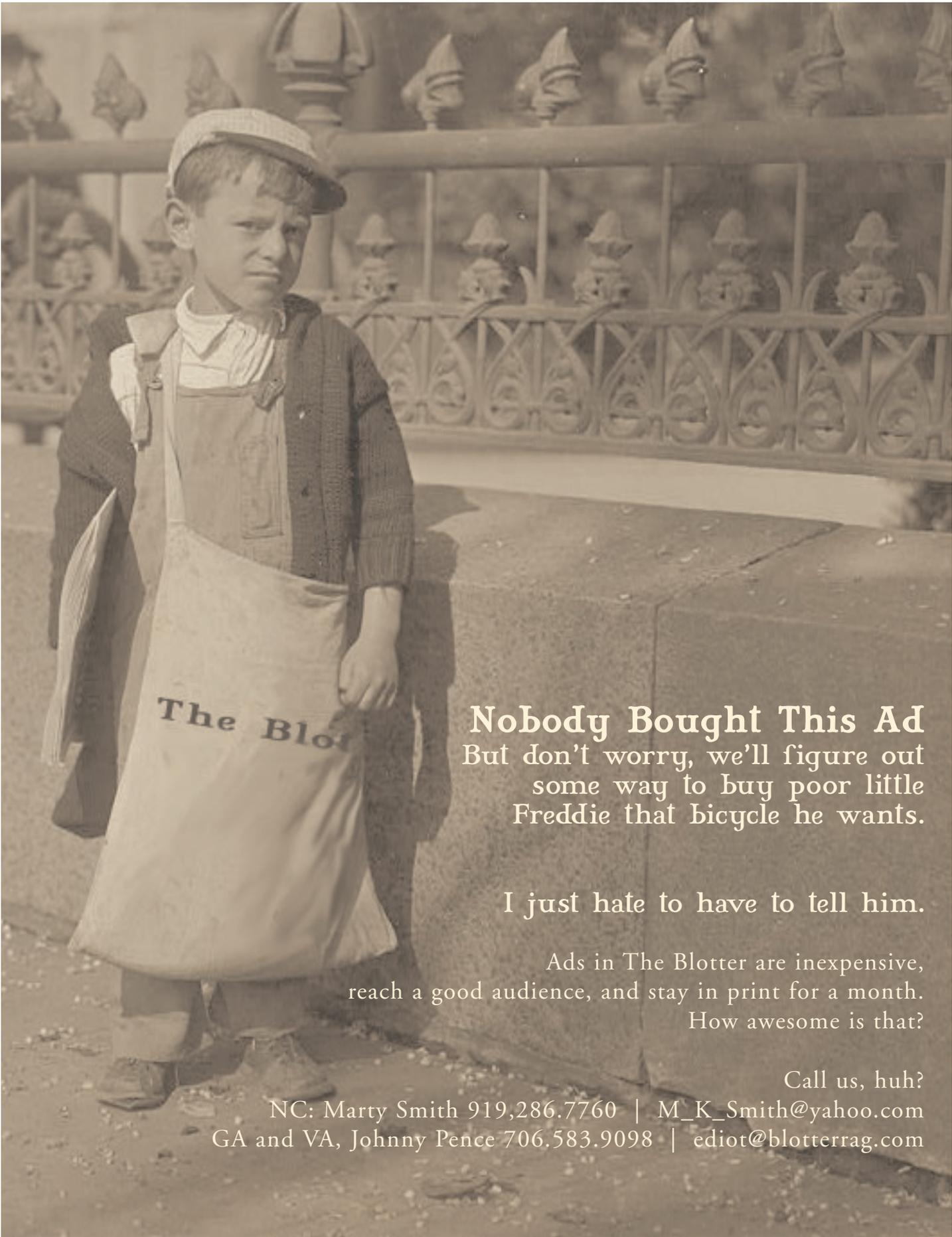
## TREADMILL

You, a compiler of lists and deadlines  
always seem to be a day behind  
errands to run, tasks to complete,  
how your heart aches with the insufficiency of time  
and when the clouds scurry across the sky  
like impatient friends unwilling to wait  
you up the estimation, a day, a week,  
and when you attempt to get God's attention  
it becomes a lifetime behind  
so out-of-step, so downcast, so unembraced,  
you pray in desperation, a little too rapidly,  
perturbed by some interruption or oversight  
and when God attempts to get your attention  
you are nowhere to be found.

by J. J. Steinfeld

## APPALLING, THESE PLIABLE TRUTHS OF YOURS

appalling, these pliable truths of yours  
hardly courageous enough for musculature  
or a nomenclature of desperation and avoidance  
but what can I say or do  
you know no adequate maledictions  
your last adequate prayer was a decade ago  
during a revelation that knocked you off your feet  
you stood back up, cleaned off the misunderstandings,  
a truth might get you a coffee  
but not a refill or a confection  
you must learn the transactions of the day-to-day  
you should learn the economics of sleight-of-hand  
either that, or learn the finer points of robbery  
and fleeing the scene of the crime  
but then you write with conviction  
and attention to detail  
and have little time for morning theatrics  
and explaining why you've done little with your life  
will have a shortage of pallbearers  
and have discarded arguments  
over meaning, purpose, and the shortcomings of answers



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