

The Blotter

Magazine
www.blotterrag.com

A Drowned Rat in the Meme Pool

Free in Asheville, Athens, Atlanta, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Charlottesville, Durham, Greensboro, Hillsborough, New York City, and Raleigh

April 2006



If you don't go swimming in a natural body of water by the end of this month, you lose. Winners this month are: Fiction from Benjamin Tyrrell and Matt Bender. Photos by Daniel Rumpf. Poetry by Andy Coe and Terra Elan McVoy. Something that is probably a cartoon by OneNeck. Plus, the Dream Journal.

The Blotter is:

Johnny Pence.....Apeneck
Sweeney
Martin K. Smith...Publisher-at-Large,
Treasurer
Jenny Haniver...Pseudonym
James C. Werner..Minister of
Information

Advertisers and Subscriptions Contact:

Martin K. Smith
M_K_Smith@yahoo.com
919.286.7760

Submissions and Editorial Business to:

Jenny Haniver
mermaid@blotterrag.com

Johnny Pence, Editor in Chief
ediot@blotterrag.com
706.583.9098 (business hrs. only!
you may call for info. about snail-
mail submissions)

All content copyright 2006 by the
artist, not the magazine.

Cover art: detail of untitled photo-
graph by Daniel Rumpf.
See pp. 8-9 for more.

The Blotter is a production of The
Blotter Magazine, Inc., Durham, NC.
A 501 (c)3 non-profit
ISSN 1549-0351
www.blotterrag.com

We often use Bobco fonts, copyrighted
shareware from the Church of the
Subgenius. Prabob. We also use
Mary Jane Antique and other free-
ware fonts from Apostrophic Labs
and other fonts from other sources.



The Blotter Magazine, Inc. is a 501(c)3
non-profit. The magazine is published in
the first half of each month, and enjoys a
free circulation throughout the Southeast
and some other places, too. Submissions
are always welcome, as are ad inquiries.

Subscriptions are offered as a premium for
a donation of \$20 or more. Send check or
money order, name and address to The
Blotter Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street,
Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also
available, 5 for \$5. Inquire about availabil-
ity by e-mail: ediot@blotterrag.com.

*This magazine may contain typos or
bad words*

Items Worth Mentioning from the desk of Johnny Pence

You Get What You Pay For

Honestly, I can't sit still in front of my computer and write something to fill this space. It's seventy degrees outside and as sunny as the Garden of Eden. I've spent enough time editing and typesetting this damn magazine all week and Marty can fire me if he wants to. I'm going outside to play.



—ediot@blotterrag.com

Ugly by Benjamin Tyrrell

The bed is cold, as always, and my eyes won't open, but my feet get up anyway. I walk down the hallway and to the bathroom. It's yellow. I saw the color in a catalogue and decided immediately and without reservation that it was the right color for my bathroom. It's kind of ugly. I like that in wall paint.

I walk to the mirror and open my eyes. I look into the sink and open the cabinet backing with the practice of a blind man. I stare into the cabinet, take out a few medicine bottles, and start my day.

I go to work every day. I never sleep in. When I wake up, there's no one to greet me, to start my day, to make me want to stay or leave or anything. I get out of bed and shower. I put on my clothes and walk downstairs, and sometimes, while I fix breakfast, I might read the newspaper or do a crossword puzzle. I usually burn the toast, but I always blame that on the toaster. It doesn't really matter. No one is ever there to hear me say that about the toaster, so the comedy is lost.

After breakfast, I drive myself to work. I park in the same spot and I walk into the bank and I sit in the same armchair for about half an hour before getting to work.

Today is no different. I park and walk in and sit down and

stare, for a minute, at the security guards. They don't notice that anyone walked in. Bank security is shit.

A man walks in and sits down next to me. I wait for development. Maybe a, "How's it goin'?" or perhaps a, "You robbin' this place, too?" accompanied by a quick glance at the bank guards, who are so busy ramming it on about sports and last night's dinner that they wouldn't notice a bank robbery if it walked up and slapped them all in their fat faces.

The man opens a newspaper and ignores me. I, in turn, ignore him. My eyes glaze over, like they always do when I decide I don't want to talk to anybody. I glance out the window at the sound of tires screeching and see a young woman making very apologetic gestures with her middle finger at the driver, who has suddenly decided to park directly in front of her. I thought it was going to be a cat.

The cat was the ugliest damn cat I'd ever seen, and that was for sure. It strutted around on three legs, king of whatever inbred zombie mutant furballs that roamed the night with glazed eyes and the idiot smiles of the dead plastered to their decaying faces like bugs to a windshield. Its fur was matted. Its eyes were mismatched, faded yellow and dull black, and crossed. It fre-

continued, p. 6

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Not a Word about Copyrights ...

I walk with a priest through a large, loud crowd at a church convention. We come to the crowned head of the church who passes an elaborately decorated book to me via the priest. I am to make a photocopy of it, so I take it to the church's copy center and tell the cleric behind the counter that His Holiness needs a copy of the book. He tells me to turn the delicate pages slowly. I sit beside a corner table in a crowded waiting room. I look through the book to prepare for making the copy. The book is getting fancier: Now it has carved silver detachable legs and is several booklets inside a case. On each page there is a large color photo showing grand buildings and a grandly dressed person with some text telling me something strange and important. One double-page photo shows people being sliced to bits by hurtling blades as ninjas approach. I want to make a good copy of this beautiful book. But I am sleepy and I fear that the book will be stolen along with its new, silky, green hat box with a red lid, especially now that I am in a rowdy bar. A big guy in a T-shirt and jeans and his skinny helper have snatched the book and hat box. I jump on the big guy and he remains motionless as I bite at his nose and then his throat.

—R.G. in Durham

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

**They told you that nobody
likes a smart ass?**



That's because they never met

**The Raleigh
HATCHET**

**We are one wicked little music,
art and pop-culture rag.**

**Revel in the unrecognized
and ridiculous with us.**

We like you.

**Available at select locations and on
the web at www.raleighhatchet.com**



Archival Framing



301-2 Kinsey Street, Raleigh NC 27603

(919) 828-0964

Tuesday - Friday 11-6 p.m. and Saturday 1-4 p.m.

quently walked into walls. It would stop at any moldy, rotting carpet it could find, pausing to eat, scratch, shit, eat, and scratch some more. And, as an extra added bonus, it was stupid. It would walk into a paper bag, get lost for a week, and claw its way out just to turn around and walk back in.

But that damn cat got more ass than any man I've ever met. Feline hussies lined up around the block to get a glimpse of that mangy idiot. And they purred. Oh, how they purred. You could hear it from blocks away. Whenever I was in the house, the noise was so loud and so steady that I was on constant alert for some bulldozer or airplane or astral body about to slam into the wall.

The worst part was the noise at night. For some absolutely incomprehensible reason, they waited to consummate their brief little relationships until everyone in the neighborhood was completely asleep. It sounded like a mass slaughter. The hideous ringleader would move from one bedazzled jewel to the next, and they would all scream together, getting the mood of it right or something.

And then, one night, the noise stopped.

I sat on the porch, taking in the cold night air. My cat had taken up a place slightly out of reach. The asphalt must have done something for the sores on its ass because it sat there more often than it sat anywhere else. The nightwalkers sat on the other side of the blacktop, wait-

ing for me to leave before approaching. That was fine with the cat. It was patient, and it had ass-sores to attend to. Not wanting to be outdone, I settled in.

I watched the nightwalkers for a while, and then the whole process seemed to take its toll on me. I yelled at them to be quiet, and I moved my chair to the front of the porch so as to make sure nothing happened. Nothing happened. Night moved on, and my eyelids shielded my eyes to the moonlight.

I woke up to the sound of a mass of disappointed strumpets moving off into the night. I looked out at the road and didn't see my cat for a minute, until the lights of a passing car made what had happened clear. I saw red on black, and I started walking.

It took me fifteen minutes to get out to the road. I got stuck on some gum on the sidewalk and spent a good five minutes scraping it off the bottom of my shoe. Then I had to check for cars. I didn't want to end up roadkill. Then I decided that it might be a nice night for a walk, and spent another five minutes arguing with myself about whether to walk into the street or away from it.

When I finally got up the nerve to walk out to it, the cat didn't look much different. I mean, there were the obvious differences, like the huge tire marks that were striping their way though the dull orange fur. The head was spread out across a square foot of pavement, having gotten both wider and thinner as a result of tire pressure and basic

laws of physics. And, the most obvious difference of all, the cat was dead. It had no breath, and it had no pulse, and it had no yowls of idiocy or desire or pain or confusion or anything whatsoever.

That night was the quietest night of my life. I could hear every beetle walk past the window; I could hear every car horn in the city; I could hear every snore from here to the Siskiyou Mountains. I never knew how much I took that damn cat for granted. He was ugly, and he was stupid, and he was loud, and, frankly, pretty disgusting, but he was a comfort. I came home every day to that cat, and that cat was always there to greet me. It would sit on the porch, the only porch in the neighborhood, and

its lady admirers would purr and it would smile the smile of stupid and dependable, and I would see it and think, "There, see? It's there waiting for me. I'm home."

The man next to me rustles his paper and I snap my eyes over for a glance at him before turning quickly to the window. If he sees me looking, he might talk to me, and the last thing I want is distraction. I shift my gaze to the bank guards, who are still talking Monday Night Football and laughing about how funny it would be to actually meet John Madden. I glance at the floor. It's a hard grey. It seems to fit the place: dispassionate and suffocating. I remember why I hate this place.

To tell the truth, I hate my

job. It scares me to no end. Thieves are my biggest fear. Bank security is shit.

I miss my cat.

I probably wouldn't even be doing this if I had somebody to talk to. I saw a movie once about this kid who didn't have any friends because he was so rich, so he bought a bunch of crazy stuff and invited all the kids in his neighborhood over and they loved all his stuff, so they loved him. Or some shit. I would settle for a psychiatrist.

I'd settle for the guy next to me.

I play with my shirtsleeves. Thirty minutes, if you didn't know, can be one of the longest periods in a person's life. Some babies are born in thirty minutes, and I bet their mothers count every second through their clenched teeth like cross-country runners count steps to the finish line. In thirty minutes, a pilot can fully descend and land a plane. In thirty minutes, an everyday, common person can eat an everyday, common lunch. A man can die in thirty minutes. A man can die a thousand times in thirty minutes.

A man can also sit in the lobby of a bank and, if he concentrates hard enough, examine his entire life in thirty minutes. He can think back to his childhood and follow the paths through his memory to find where things changed, where things happened, where things went wrong. A man can sum up his entire life in thirty minutes. If he has the will and patience, a man can prepare himself, so to speak, for whatever comes next.

ALL GIRL FLAT TRACK

ROLLER DERBY

ADDITIONAL DATES
JUN25 JUL2 AUG20
SEP16 NOV19 DEC10

NEXT BOUT
MAY 14TH

TICKETS
\$10 ADULTS
\$5 KIDS

GET TICKETS EARLY AT
CAROLINAROLLERGIRLS.COM

OR AT THESE LOCAL BUSINESSES - PERCOLATOR LOUNGE, SCHOOLKIDS, SKATE RANCH

When I was fifteen, my dad died, leaving mom and I no money whatsoever and no way to make money whatsoever, seeing as how my mother had never worked a day in her life in the professional world and had no idea where to go to find a job. Needless to say, most of our financial burdens fell on me, while mom did her best to keep the house nice and straight, to keep the bills in order, and to keep me comfortable and happy whenever I got a chance to be home. I don't envy her on that last one. There was not a day after dad died that I was in a good mood. Between school, work, homework, and after-school activities (I was required to be involved in at least two after-school activities), I had

about enough time to sleep and bitch. I think I must have gotten a lot more bitching in than sleep.

I'd been going to community college for two years when I turned twenty. At the time, I was living at home to make sure mom was okay. I had, in fact, quite literally, no friends. I talked to no one other than my teachers, and I only talked to my teachers when something was wrong—either my grades were too low (due to my bad judgment), or my grades were wrong (due to some miscalculation of the teacher's). After class I went straight to work; after work I went straight home. I would sit and eat whatever dinner mom had prepared that night and listen to her snore. I only ever talked to her in the morning,

and I treasured those times to be sure, but I think I loved her the most at night. She just seemed so old, and fragile. I would sit for hours, my dinner growing cold in front of me, and listen to her breathe in and out, out and in. Sweet breath of life.

One night I came home and the door was unlocked. I frowned. Mrs. Beeman from across the street would usually visit with mom during the nights and keep her company. She was always so lonely since Dad died, and so it was nice that she had someone she could think of as a friend. Mrs. Beeman always locked the door when she left, meaning that she was either still here, which was good but unlikely, or she had not come at all, which meant Mom had sat by

COMEDY

★
★
★
★
★

SIDE EFFECTS WILL INCLUDE LAUGHTER

MAYBE LOSS OF BLADDER CONTROL * SHOWS EVERY WEEKEND * 100% FUNNY * SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL COMEDY

★
★
★
★
★



Don't forget...

**DSI TEACHES
IMPROV CLASSES**

**NEXT LEVEL ONE
STARTS MAY 2**

<< REGISTER ONLINE >>

TICKETS (919) 338-8150

DSICOMEDYTHEATER.COM

ds*i*

comedysportz



herself all night.

I walked towards the kitchen, passing by mom's room. She was lying in bed, asleep. Mrs. Beeman must have skipped out. That was unfortunate. I walked into the kitchen and found dinner in the refrigerator as usual. I put it in the microwave and heated it up. I got a glass of milk, a fork, a knife, and a napkin, and I sat down at the dining room table. I picked up my fork, and put it back down. I couldn't eat.

Mom wasn't snoring.

It was two days before we buried her. She would have loved it. All of her friends from back home, all of her friends from high school, all of her book club buddies and bridge buddies and church buddies were there. They sat and cried and talked about

how nice mom was and how sweet mom was and how mom made the absolute best peach cobbler. They talked about what a good wife mom had been, what a good mother, and they said, "Look at her boy. That Jonathan Reiner is the nicest boy I've ever met. She was truly an amazing mother. Truly amazing." And when they said it, they meant it.

We carried her from the church to the graveyard across the street—my uncle Tim, my uncle Bruce, my uncle Michael, our neighbor Mr. Lansing, my grandfather and I—and we lowered her into the ground, a shovel for each and a prayer and a "Goodnight, Mom." I went back to school the day after she died. I went back to work the same day. There was no time for

mourning. I had bills to pay.

I remember two things from my childhood, only two things that stick out from a haze of hot summers and long school years. The first of these is that my second grade teacher called me "the ugly duckling," or "Little Ugly" for short. I was and never have been very attractive, but my second grade teacher took an interest in me. I think she was trying to mold me into a wonderful person or some bullshit like that. I don't know how well she did, but I appreciated it.

The second thing happened a week before my father died. I don't know if I remember it because of its close proximity to my father's death or because of the words of wisdom my father

Open for Business!

www.still-point-press.com
434.220.1659



Still Point Press

Charlottesville, Virginia

:: Letterpress Printing :: Print & Web Design ::
:: Book Binding :: Handmade Artisan Books ::
:: Special Projects ::

BEER

THE CAVE

CAVERN TAVERN.COM

452 1/2 WEST FRANKLIN, CHAPEL HILL • 968-9308

THE STACCATO MAGAZINE
Accepting submissions
year-round!

send microfiction.
(500 wrds.)

staccatomag@yahoo.com

staccatomagazine.com

CARRBURRITOS

Burritos, Tacos, Nachos and More!

Monday-Saturday 11am-10pm Closed Sunday
711 W Rosemary St. Carrboro carrburritos.com 933.8226

Noah's Ark Kennel and Cattery
Boarding & Grooming

1217 East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514
Telephone: (919) 932-7322

Hours:

Mon & Fri: 8 am - 5 pm

Tues - Thurs: 8 am - 4 pm

Sat: 8 am - 3 pm, Sun: pick-up by appt.

Owner/Manager
Lynn Patterson

sarajo berman

RCSC #190

registered craniosacral therapist
by appointment only

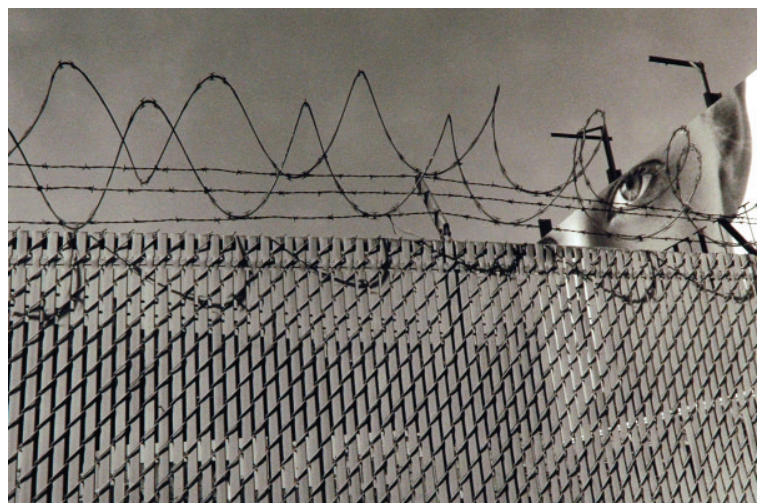
919-688-6428

sjberman@mindspring.com



untitled photos by daniel rumpf





**daniel rumpf is a freelance
photographer from cary, nc.
www.danielrumpf.com**

imparted to me, but it still comes through true and clear, almost more real than normal, everyday life.

I walked into school on a day that smelled like burning leaves and ice fields. I was so excited. I had some ill-conceived crush on some ditzy slut of a cheerleader. That day, I was going to ask her out.

I walked up to her crew. I couldn't see her because of all the jocks lined up on the lockers like they were starving children waiting for handouts from the Salvation Army or something. I slicked back my hair and licked my fingers, grabbed my sleeves and pushed my way in.

"Hi." I was nervous.

"Um, hi." She was not.

"So, uh." I wasn't sure that I

wanted to go through with this.

"What?" She was damn sure that she didn't want me to go through with this.

"So, uh, I, uh, I'm in your English class, and I see you, like, everyday. I was wondering if, um, maybe you wanted to, um, like, go out with me sometime or something.?"

"Oh my God, are you serious? With somebody like you? Look at you. You're disgusting. Why would I have anything to do with you?" She laughed in my face and then walked away. I watched.

One of the jocks—the brightest one of the lot—came over to me and put his hand on my shoulder.

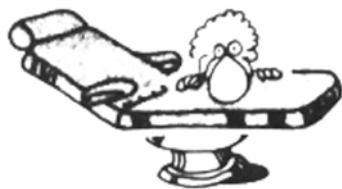
"Don't sweat it, man," he said. "There was no chance she

was going out with you. It happens. You just gotta let it go." He walked a couple of steps away, and turned backface, a smear of teeth and threat. "Besides, she woulda been fuckin' me by the end of the week. She woulda been beggin' for it." I hit him hard in the face. He fell to the ground. He hadn't been expecting that much punch. I hit him twice more in the face and then once, hard, in the stomach. He rolled around on the ground like a fish out of water. I went for him again, but the school security guard caught me and dragged me away.

I'm not that fast, and I still think he could have dodged out of the way. I think he was trying to get me in trouble. I was so quiet that I was marked as easy prey, and

Howard L. Shareff, DDS

.... Dental Care



We Cater to COWARDS

817 BROOKLYN ST.
RALEIGH, NC 27605
(919) 834-1432

OFFBEAT MUSIC

DURHAM'S INDEPENDENT MUSIC STORE

Offering a wide variety
of music genres

- ❖ Imports
- ❖ Indie Music
- ❖ World Music
- ❖ Classical Music
- ❖ And More



(919) 688 7022

Brightleaf Square - Durham

it didn't help that I was no looker, either. It's law that a jock makes life hell for kids like I was. I think it's in the rulebook or something.

The principal, a nice old man with a broken grin and sad, worn eyes smiled and shook his head when he gave me my sentence. "Son," he said, "you can't let 'em bait you like this. You got to overcome." It was good advice.

But the best advice I got, I got that night, when my dad got home from work to a sobbing wife and a sullen child and a note from the principal about my behavior. He'd picked up the note and my mother and had gone into their bedroom. I'd waited outside. After about ten minutes, my dad came out and led me over to the couch where he put his arm around me and said, "Jon,

the best thing you can do is ignore it. I know it hurts, but you just gotta ignore it and take care of yourself. Make something of yourself that they can't touch. That's the best way to get back at anybody."

It's funny, really. I always have this thirty-minute period where I can sit and reflect about my life and my choices and all the shit that got laid on me throughout the years that got me to this point, but I usually end up thinking about the most random things.

Like today, I could be thinking of my mother. I could be thinking of school. I could be thinking of my father or my house or my car or anything, but I'm thinking about that damned cat, the cat that was the ugliest, most eligible bachelor

I've ever seen.

I find myself thinking about it a lot. It was ugly and stupid, sure, and it could be annoying as hell, but whenever I came home from a bad day on the job or after some botched attempt at socialization, I could count on that damn cat.

Oh, Hell.

I might as well do this.

I find that a gun in the back is a very persuasive reason to talk to someone, especially since bank security is so bad.

"Everybody down on the floor," I say. "Stay quiet and stay calm and nobody gets hurt. I'm robbin' this bank."

Tell Me You Love Me, 1989

by Matt Bender

"Mom," she is in the front yard, laid out on a lawn chair.

"There's a hurricane coming, Mom, you should really get inside now."

The pine trees are dropping needles that twist and careen in the wind, landing miles away from where they should. The same wind blows and clacks her earrings, large hoops. Plastic.

"Don't, darling," she says, "only strangers talk about the weather."

This is true sometimes. Even the best weather-talkers rarely get sex. This is not my voice. I

am 9 years old, and hurricane Andrew is washing away most of southern Florida. I won't know about sex until I turn 12 and my friend Vinnie convinces me that women have a giant crack, spanning their undersides from vagina to asshole. That when girls do handstands, they run the risk of splitting in half.

The sun is sinking red behind our house. Down into the canals where it goes every night. Where everything winds up eventually.

"Whenever people talk about the weather," she says, "its because they have something else on their mind. Tell me what

you're really thinking and I'll come inside."

The wind is picking things up now, moving them around.

"Promise. Tell me that you love me."

"I love you, come inside."

She does, and her skirt catches the chair on the way up. And the wind catches her hat.

I am 9 years old and the wind is catching my Mother. I look back towards our house, dark now, with the storm shutters pasted shut. Dark like some asylum, burned down years ago, haunted.

A prelude of wind and rain like this is usually invigorating.

My friends and I run around, pretending that we have superpowers. I am always Nature-Boy and Steven is a mad scientist, looking for the patch where rain never falls. The others change their minds frequently, but nobody goes inside.

A prelude like this and the frogs are usually singing, ready for their gods to come in tiny pellets from the sky. Wet aphrodisia, making their lives better. It wasn't until the morning I finally moved away from Florida that I remember feeling something like this.

The wind picks up again, eerily silent. It unclips my

Mother's hoop earrings and heads off down the street. They roll like frosted donuts to wherever they go, and I am wondering what tunnel they will find. Someplace where swimmers get lost, between a metal sieve and thousands of gallons of green water. How long will it take plastic like that to degrade? How long will I be able to hold my breath, when it's my turn?

I am 9 years old helping her back into the house, and this is what I'm thinking.

This is what I'm always thinking, and sometimes the weather is important, too.

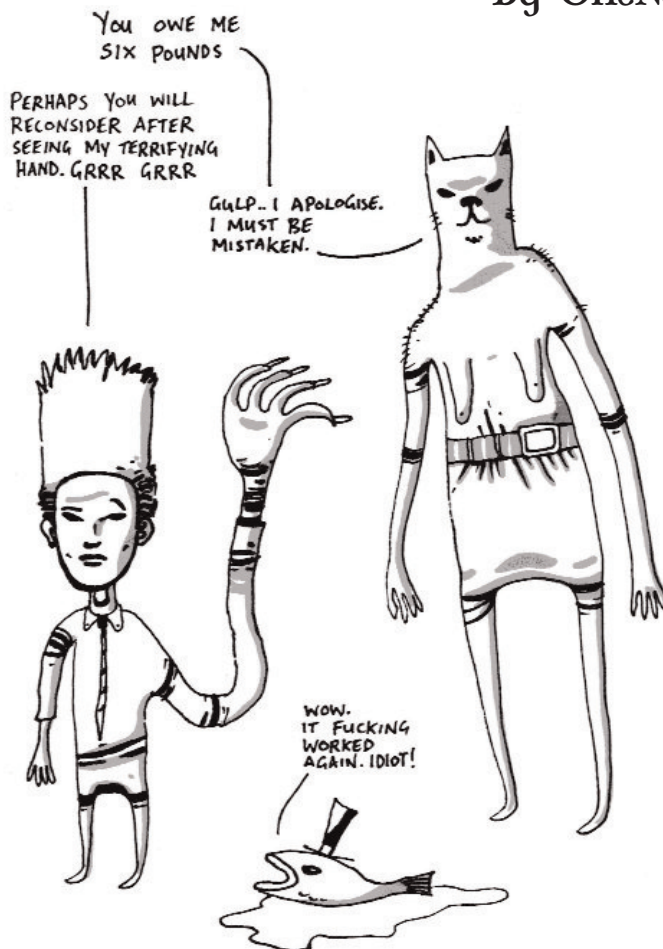
This is me, now 23. I am home, overnight, for what may be my last visit in a long time, and noone seems to be here. Splayed out across the dining room table, in order, are:

1. *The Celestine Prophecy*
2. *The Alchemist*, and
3. *The Moosewood Vegetarian Cookbook*

They lay there haphazardly, opened to dog-eared pages, as if some furious research had recently been done. I bought her *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* two years ago for her birthday. She had expressed interest in the title after seeing it on one of my senior reading lists. It now lays open at page 46 on the TV stand, nearby.

In the kitchen, a cat I've never seen before yawns and contemplates me standing there. The front door closes hard, then there is the sound of crinkling leather and plastic from the front hallway. She is either looking for her cigarettes or her wallet. It's intrusive, I know, me knowing these

A Cartoon (?) by OneNeck



the indie

breakin' hearts

THE INDIE presents a multicultural perspective to current sociocultural issues by providing a community-based monthly newspaper.

THE INDIE
 70 Woodfin Place, Suite 001, Asheville, NC 28801
 Tel: (828) 225 5994
 E-Mail: raindance60@hotmail.com



things. Listening in on this private life of crinkling plastic as she stands, just inside, wondering where I am and who is here with me. I had come in through the back door, which was always unlocked.

With light steps, I make my way to the foyer.

"Oh honey, you're home," tossing a small, cotton grocery bag to the floor and wrapping me up in her dark, egg-noodle arms, "when are you ever going to get a new car? I hate that old thing. I'm surprised it hasn't broken down on you yet."

My '84 Firebird slumped slightly in the driveway. I had bought it before I left to attend school in North Carolina, only a few months before my father died. My first real thing.

"I don't know, Mom, its not so bad," I say, reaching down for the bag she had dropped, "here let me get that."

"Don't bother, dear," she says, walking off towards the kitchen. She is gone now, leaving everything to flap empty in the doorway.

I had saved up for that car all through my senior year of high school, foregoing Homecoming and the Prom. It was old then. A

good color, though, a light teal blue, faded from the original deep crystal. That was all I had cared about in high school, that it was blue and shaped like a can-non.

Deaf, I pick the bag up off the floor. Inside is a large canister of salt.

She is making coffee. I put the salt above the stove, in the spice cabinet, where it looks suspicious between the dusty bags of cumin and mustard seed.

"I asked you a question," from behind.

"Oh, sorry, what was it?"

"Daydreaming again? How was Wellington? It sounds like such an English town," She pauses, touches her sunglasses, "I remember doing Paris when I was your age. My friends and I were all dying for egg-and-pickle sandwiches, and the Parisians just refused to serve us any. They even scowled at us all in the market. Horrible people, but tell me, did you have fun?"

She pauses. She is looking past me. Turning around, I see white letters scrolling up the screen of a muted television. Some time is lost between us.

"And you're happy?" she says,

"now, with your place in life? No matter what, no matter how much money you make, or how ever rich and powerful you become, happiness is the most important thing. You do know that, right?"

It's automatic. The subtitles, I know, are moving far too fast for any real sentiment. Still, with my head half-turned, I smile, taut with all the power this private moment deserves.

It is going to kill her when she finds out my plans for the next three years.

We bustle around with nonsense talk as the sun sets, in all its Florida grandeur, outside. Blue clouds against a Warhol sky. This happens almost every night here, I promise.

We talk through it all. What is that nice girl (Denise, the art major) that I brought home last time doing now? Why isn't she here? She's visiting her family and we've separated. You two seemed to get along so nicely together. We did. My mother hopes that we're still friends as she putters around in the kitchen, glancing occasionally at a recipe for Moroccan beef.

"I've been listening to that Yo la Tengo CD you sent me. It's

HAD A PIECE LATELY?

Cherry Pie
Get a piece...

**1000'S OF ADULT MOVIES
INTIMATE TOYS, GIFTS & GAMES
EXOTIC SMOKESHOP**

1819 Fordham Blvd
(Next to La Hacienda)
Chapel Hill
919-928-0499

HOURS
Mon-Thu: 10am - MID
Fri & Sat: 10am - 2am
Sun: NOON - 10pm

www.cherrypieonline.com

CLIP & SAVE 20%



Altered Image

Hair Designers, Inc.

1113 1/2 Broad St
Durham, NC 27705
(919) 286-3732

CREATIVE METALSMITHS

Don H. Johnson | Kim Maitland
117 E. Franklin St., Chapel Hill
919-967-2037 creativemetalsmiths.com

good,” she says, “I’m really surprised at all the culture that you picked up as a Biology major. I didn’t think doctors liked that kind of stuff.”

My mother had found a lump on her breast last year, only two weeks before her birthday. She called me frequently during this time. Would a raw kale diet help, did I think? Sulfur tablets? Could I ask my professors? When was I coming home again?

I sent her the compact disc on her birthday, stapled with a Get Well Soon card, as opposed to Happy 50th. It was a good disc, very easy to listen to. It was the best advice I could give. The lump had apparently disappeared by Thanksgiving without a single doctor’s visit, and my card was still sitting, cock-eyed, on the mantle in the living room.

“It was plant biology, mom. And I only just got my 4-year degree. I’m nowhere close to being a doctor.”

“Oh, well that’s different,” stirring stirring stirring, “that’s different. Now I understand.”

Moroccan beef turned out to be finger food. Steak tips dipped into a bowl of shredded peanuts and cinnamon.

It’s me again, 23, in Yogi sheets. Yogi Bear, that is, in the bed I grew up in, with every pubescent night I ever spent here flashing through my head, keeping me awake. Not lingering thoughts, just all of them at once, then repeat. Jenny from gym class. That asshole Mike

Sanders, who smeared lipstick in my hair. I will not settle yet. I am tired of college, tired of being indoors. I am tired of learning about other people and what they’ve done. A job is even less appealing. Young graduates and friends of mine, selling out their talents for 5-year contracts. For security. Marrying young, like maggots to the stench.

I squinch up, soured by these thoughts. They all go horrible and nowhere.

I would like to exhume my old baseball trophies and cassette tapes. My first chemistry set, my old sheet music. I would have a good cry, a good laugh, and beat that metaphor to death. But I am leaving tomorrow and these things are objects now. My mother would understand, I think, if I could only explain. I tell her 10 times in my head.

Like my father’s last words: “I’m sober enough. Leave me alone already.”

In the morning I pack my things early. There is a fresh copy of the Nation lying on the countertop that I thumb through over a bowl of cereal. At some point, I accidentally bite down on the inside of my cheek. The loose skin waves like so much cilia throughout the rest of my meal, throughout the mess of cereal and soyamilk with its red, red fingers.

After breakfast, I wash the oats and soy curd out of the bowl and place it, along with the spoon, into the drying rack located beside the sink. Mom is already up. She is out on the

back porch in a gray rocking chair, smoking. I wander out there and, sitting down, take one of her cigarettes. In my hand is the gift I had forgotten to give her yesterday.

For a while, neither of us speaks. She coughs into a clinched fist and the noise mixes with a passing boat motor. I sip coffee, light the cigarette, and plop a package down next to the ashtray on the small folk art table beside where she is sitting. It looks odd on the warped wicker, wrapped up, bulky in tin foil. She picks it up, blinking, then wordlessly unwraps. The foil comes off in shiny crumbles, refracting the early light like Christmas.

“*One Hundred Years of Solitude*,” she reads, stopping to contemplate the cover. The new Penguin Classics edition. “That sounds nice. I could sure use that.”

A heron floats down into the back yard. Another hot, beautiful day.

Gauguin's Bastard

by Andy Coe

A painting you will probably never see
is the one with the beautiful Tahitian paradise
in the background. The subject is
a very angry and sad child
staring out to sea.

He is wondering where his father is
and what it means to be the product of
the juxtaposition of a European's mid life crisis
and a naïve island girl's romantic fancy.

If you did, you would note the vibrant
use of color that drew your eye
to the bowl of tropical fruit
smashed on the ground.

Kewpie

by Terra Elan McVoy

Benjamin Tyrrell is a student
at the University of North Carolina
at Greensboro. He is majoring in
Music and English, and plans to
write as professionally as possible
once he graduates.

Matt Bender lives in Athens,
GA. He is a pending rock star
and a grad student at UGA.

Andy Coe? Now *that* guy is
Director of Student Life at a
boarding school in southern
Virginia,

and **Terra Elan McVoy** is one
half of the ATLiterary juggernaut
known as the Duck and Herring
Company, also on staff at Verb
audio quarterly and a director of
the Info Demo performance
series in Atlanta.

She was so little,
she could barely hold up her own head.
Also she was always wet.

He found her in a dumpster.
Took her home.
Propped her on the bed.

She had a very small hole
between her two pink lips,
and in it he would stuff everything he could.
A hole too between her powdery legs.
There, also, he would put things in.

The other toys did not like her.
He had to turn their faces away,
against the wall.

In the morning he tried to stuff her under the pillows.
She did not like it and cried.
So he carried her around with him all day
-an ugly, unwanted thing
thumping dumbly against his leg-
his fist angrily gripping her
by her hair.

SAINTS SINNERS

LGBT Literary Festival Supporting

NO/AIDS Task Force of New Orleans

May 12-14, 2006 New Orleans, LA

APPEARING:

Toni Amato, Charlie Anders, Poppy Z. Brite, Dan Boyle, Jameson Currier, Becky Cochrane, Judy Doenges, Amie M. Evans, Charles Flowers, Trebor Healey, Greg Herren, Martin Hyatt, Thomas Keith, Timothy J. Lambert, Shaun Levin, Jeff Mann, Kay Murphy, Achy Obejas, Ian Philips, Joseph Pittman, Martin Poussan, Jim Provenzano, Radclyffe, JM Redmann, Brad Richard, David Rosen, Carol Rosenfeld, Justine Saracen, Steven Saylor, Scott & Scott, Kelly Smith, Caro Soles, Ron Suresha, Robert Taylor, Michele Tea, Patricia Nell Warren, Greg Wharton, Jerry Wheeler, Emanuel Xavier, and more...

A Weekend of Literary Revelry in the Heart of the French Quarter

For complete schedule of events and to register online:

www.sasfest.org

Call with questions or register by phone: 504-581-1144

You've seen the terrible images and read about the frightful destruction Katrina inflicted on New Orleans. But after the initial shock, we're working hard to rebuild the city Tennessee Williams referred to as his spiritual home. Literature, music, theater, the visual arts, museums, galleries—all the elements that make up the incomparable culture of New Orleans *are coming back!*

Poppy Z. Brite



Anthony Bidulka



Michelle Tea



Radclyffe



Steven Saylor

