

*Fighting the mid-winter coldrums with a story by Jessica Stilling;  
the art of Eduardo Lapetina; a poem by Ally Motola;  
a new Paper-Cuts; a new Best In Show; & The Dream Journal.*

# The Blotter

February 2010

MAGAZINE



THE SOUTH'S UNIQUE, FREE, INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE AND ARTS MAGAZINE

visit [www.blotterag.com](http://www.blotterag.com)

G. M. Somers.....Editor-in-Chief  
Martin K. Smith.....Publisher-at-  
Large, Treasurer  
Marilyn Fontenot.....Director of  
Development  
Brace Boone III.....Marketing  
Advisor  
T.J. Garrett.....Staff Photographer

**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

Garrison Somers, Editor-in-Chief  
chief@blotterrag.com

919.933.4720 (business hours only!  
you may call for information about  
snail-mail submissions)

**I read all press releases. Gotcha back.**

Front cover by Eduardo Lapetina. See  
centerfold for more.

Unless otherwise noted, all content  
copyright 2010 by the artist, not the  
magazine.

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

## “Efficiency”

This story's been told many times and written down three. Call it, if you will, a chestnut, a yarn, a tall tale or one of them good-old shaggy dogs. It is occasionally still the source of dinner conversation, beef roasts mostly but turkey occasionally, and everyone raises their voice to include their own details, recollected from their own private telling of the story. My Grandpa told it to me and it's a damn fine story. So, because time isn't really of the essence, and because between the holidays and spring there just isn't much else to do, I'll tell it to you. If I forget anything, you can call my sisters and they'll chew on your ear. A note to Dad will help clear things up. Promise.

When I was little, I thought my Grandpa was a serious man. As children we were very lucky - he and my grandmother lived nearby and frequently visited. I could always tell when they were here - Grandma and Grandpa would be sitting in the Mom and Dad chairs in which we kids could only sit if we kept our feet off, and didn't rock so hard that we tipped them over or worse - knocked a cup of tea or a lamp over.

Hey! No roughhousing!

Resting softly on Dad's desk was Grandpa's hat - a rabbit-felt fedora like the one James Cagney wore in *The Roaring Twenties*, gray-brown with a nice wide brim and a tall crown. By the mid-1960's nobody wore fedoras any more. Some men wore no hat at all, Kennedyesque, letting their soon-to-be freak flags fly. Others wore neat, slight-brimmed Sinatra lids. Dad still wore a hat to work, but always something just a bubble off center, like a Tyrolean, with what looked like a shaving brush in the crown ribbon. But Grandpa still had his fedora, unstained, unscuffed, a style out of time.

The grown-up talk was of adult things like politics - Mom and Dad were Johnson democrats who dreamed of Adlai Stevenson, and Grandpa was an Eisenhower Republican who'd hated FDR. They wondered aloud at how strange today's young people were - well, Grandpa did while Mom and Dad stayed silent. (Dad was teaching eighth grade and already getting a first-hand lesson in hair, music, clothes, language and public displays of affection.) Then they talked about finance. Grandpa and Dad discussed stocks like other men talked about the Giants-Eagles game. How 'bout that Bethlehem Steel!

Another cup of coffee, a glass of wine.

In a normal household, a nine year old boy might possibly have excused himself, would maybe have left the room, and would certainly have found something else to do. Picked up the comics. Spun a yo-yo. Gone outside to play. But I knew what was coming next. I liked to listen to Grandpa, after he'd talked about the President, the kids today, and the state of the Street. After he relaxed, sitting deeper in Dad's chair. Staring, perhaps, into the dregs of his cup.

You like that hat? He asked me once. I was standing at Dad's desk, looking at the fedora resting there. Mmm-hmm. I did. It was terribly out of style, and would be even more so in the coming years. But it had something that I wanted. Gravitas. Je nes sai quois.

A hat makes a man. You want to be the part, you have to look the part.

Why, Grandpa? I asked him. And he told me.

He, Grandpa - Cyril Boyd Somers, Cy to his friends - grew up in southeast New Jersey, near Atlantic City. He was going to college at the Wharton School in Philly when he was motivated to join the Navy as the Wilson administration moved from the scant comfort of isolation to the thrill of war with the Central Powers. He became an officer - based on nothing more than having higher education, shuttled men over to France on the USS Powhatan as supply officer, shuttled them home again after the armistice.

He went to work, for a gravel firm. He brought experience to the

table, that's for sure. Studying under Gilbreth – the time/motion fellow. Supplying acoutrements to the doughboys. One of his first tasks was making the company more profitable.

Now – and this is really important – the gravel firm where Cy was employed was owned in part by his uncle, a big fellow named Enoch Johnson. And Enoch, was the boss of Atlantic City. Back in the day, New York and Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston, and other cities had their underworld bosses, their crime syndicates, what have you. What made Atlantic City unique was that while during the 1920's, other cities were learning to dance to the tune of the Thompson submachine gun with its drum-loaded, .45 caliber melody line, Atlantic City was a horse of a different color. The bosses had by tacit agreement declared Atlantic City *open*, a pax romana, a no-fly zone, a place where mobsters and their wives and kidsters could go for a dip in the ocean and a walk on the steel pier without fear of being hit. And Enoch Johnson was in charge.

It was Uncle Nocky who sent Cy out to Chicago to visit the quarry. Fair profit in his companies helped Uncle Nocky at least look the part of the real businessman that he was not. And having young executives like his nephew, *collitch-kid and Navy offisah to boot*, painted on the patina of legitimacy. Cy took the train to the Dearborn Street Station, and a cab to his hotel. After checking in, he head out to the stone-yard.

It didn't require an MBA to see what was wrong. Men leaning on long-handled shovels watched as other men worked steam-drills and jackhammers. Some didn't even have the decency to hold the props in their hands to lend the appearance of impending work. Cy called a foreman over, but that fellow had no explanation for twelve men doing the work of seven. The quarry manager's eyes went wide when Cy instructed him to fire the offending layabouts. "Can't do that," the man told Cy. "They're your problem," the young efficiency expert said. "And the boss said so." So the men were fired.

Back in his hotel, Cy wondered whether he should go to supper, or catch the late train back east.

A knock at the door.

It was the hotel manager, fretful and nervous. Without pause, he tried to explain to Cy that a mistake had been made. Some mistakes. Now it was Cy who was wide-eyed, as the hotel manager told him that he wasn't supposed to fire the men at the quarry. Not those men. Not from that quarry. Cy attempted to understand how the man knew about his business in the first place, but the hotel manager would not be derailed. Cy needed to be aware of the ramifications. The workers that he had fired were working their day-jobs – that is, their cover jobs. Those were sacrosanct positions that kept *the heat* off of men when they did...the things that they did. So Cy was now in a pickle, because a contract had been taken out on him. An open contract – one that anyone could act on and receive appropriate remuneration. But then someone, perhaps the hotel manager himself, had informed the contract originators that Cy was not from around here. Was from Atlantic City, and worked for Enoch Johnson.

Oh, cripes.

And was actually Nocky Johnson's nephew.

Oh, cripes.

The peace of Atlantic City was at risk. Couldn't just knock off a member of Nocky Johnson's family. That wouldn't go over well with the big man.

A phone call was made. They waited, sweating it out.

Heart racing, hat brim pulled down, Cy was led downstairs and into a sedan in front of the hotel. Sedans fore and aft, and flanked on side streets so that no one could breach the caravan and fill the car full of lead. Only when the automobile pulled away from the hotel did it occur to him that this (continued on page 15)

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. (again, a 501(c)3 non-profit) is an education concern. Our primary interest is the furthering of creative writing and fine arts, with the magazine being a means to that end. We publish in the first half of each month and enjoy 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 \$25 or more. Send check or money order, name and address to The Blotter Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also available, 5 for \$5. Inquire re. same by e-mail: [chief@blottermag.com](mailto:chief@blottermag.com).



CAUTION

**Aaaaaagh!**

**Brain Freeze!**

# "This World Doesn't Make...Anything"

by Jessica Stilling

Moira first noticed Drake in college. She was at Columbia University when she first saw him with his pants down, spread eagle over a bed where some girl was trying to... her friend turned the video stream off, and then later that night when these girls from a party down the block gathered in her room and turned on the computer, there he was, spread eagle again, and they all laughed at him. Drunkenly laughed at him with plastic cups of vodka and cranberry juice in their hands, all gathered on the bedspread in her dorm.

After college Moira stayed in New York. She got into PR at one of those boutique agencies, finding it funny that she'd become one of those women, pencil thin, designer shoes, that used the words boutique agency. She wore heels and marched with them, pulled her long brown hair back and let it down at night, alone over a bag of popcorn and the news. Nothing good ever happened, except when they rescued a cat from a tree in Westchester, but that was just too schmaltzy.

She formally met Drake when her career started taking off, after quitting the boutique agency and starting her own. Moira was sitting in Washington Square Park one day watching a cat and wondering if

perhaps it might climb up a tree so that someone could rescue it, when he plopped down next to her. There were many benches in the park, very few of them were filled even at four in the afternoon, and so she turned to him, noting his suit, his hair, the way he carried a laptop bag.

It wasn't that simple. It wasn't as if he just said, "Hi, I'm Drake, want to go out this week?" There was a conversation. Awkward pauses were made, sidelong glances averted, but in the end, yes, he did just say, basically, "Hi, I'm Drake, you want to go out this week?" He offered to pick her up at six on Friday night and it was then that Moira realized she knew him from somewhere. She couldn't figure out where, but there was something about his straight blond hair, and his hazel eyes, that caused her to pause, though it was a very short pause and Moira had learned, while working at the boutique agency, not to dwell on things.

They started dating. Dinner turned into nightcaps, nightcaps became invitations to Broadway shows, which in turn transformed into a weekend in the Hamptons at Drake's sister's place. They met each other's friends. First at parties and then in more intimate settings, like dinners and poker games at Drake's apartment where the cigar smoke lit-

tered the air like a bar in Vegas. His friends were always very entertaining if nothing else, those Wall Street men, bankers, with their suits and Italian leather briefcases and really nice hair, hair that seemed nicer than the hair most of her girlfriends worked so hard to maintain.

Then at a party, a very elaborate dinner party with a catered buffet and three piece orchestra, Moira's friend Tina recognized him. They'd been seeing each other for six months and Tina had yet to meet him. Tina was "the friend" if anyone in Moira's life could wear that title. She was a little chubby but still cute, a bit noisy, and much too loud when the situation did not call for such antics. Tina wore oversized sweaters and leggings as if to prove her "friend" status. Her husband worked for *Time Out New York* and had been doing an article on the role of the Internet in current society. And of course Tina had a husband, a chubby husband with messy hair who always got so awkward at these gatherings, as if he knew he was married to "the friend" and needed to act accordingly.

"I know him from somewhere," Tina said, grabbing Moira's arm as they stood in the living room, looking out at the party, where groups in collared shirts, a vast and colorful array of them, and women in cocktail dresses floated around, drinks in hand. Drake was standing near the bar, wrapped up in a conversation about golf with one of Moira's friend's husbands. He held his drink loosely, as a woman bumped into him, resting her hand on his arm for

106 South  
Churton Street  
Hillsborough,  
N.C. 27278  
919 / 732-2555  
www.  
bluebayouclub.  
com

20% off  
Your first haircut  
at the new salon  
with selected stylists  
**ALTERED**  
image  
Hair Designers  
Appointments: 919-286-3732  
600 Foster Street, Durham, NC 27701  
www.AlteredImageDurham.com  
NEW LOCATION!!

a moment as she laughed at herself and moved on.

"Really? How? Does Todd know him from work?"

"No, Todd does not know him from work...I just...maybe he does," Tina replied, and sticking one finger in the air as if she'd had an aha moment (as only the friend can), she turned blindly into the kitchen. Moira followed Tina through the kitchen and into their bedroom. New York apartments could be ever so crowded and bedrooms hung off of kitchens while bathrooms stood with two doors between a living room and closet.

Tina and Todd's bedroom seemed like a miniature version of itself and felt as if it should have been stretched out a couple of feet. The light orange walls closed in on an unmade bed and two dressers that bookended a cluttered desk where a computer sat between stacks of old magazines. "Here," Tina called, taking a seat at the computer and clicking away. There being little room Moira sat carefully on the bed, mindful not to ruffle the blankets any more than they already were. "Here, I totally remember this guy. Todd's doing this story on the Internet and he did a segment on porn."

"Porn?" Moira asked, laughing nervously. "What are you talking about? Why on earth would he want to do a whole segment on porn?"

"What can I say, sex sells," Tina replied generically, a self-consciousness entering her tone as if she knew just how stereotypical she sounded. "Here, I saw him."

"You saw what?" Moira asked as Tina clicked a couple of boxes and Drake came up. She could just see the back of him, bare assed, muscular thighs standing over a large black bed. Then the camera turned and she saw his face. And it was his face, a younger face, cleaner, clearer, wearing gaudy black glasses and nothing else.

"That's him, right?" Tina asked, swiveling around in her small office chair. Moira nodded and then shook her head.

"That appears to be him. Maybe he has a twin brother."

"You're okay with this right?" Tina asked, just realizing that her impetuosity might not have been such a helpful thing. "I mean, it's just one thing, right? I can Google him, see if he's in any more."

"That's all right," Moira replied. She had yet to feel shock, or upset, by the turn of events and wanted only to return to the party, to grab Drake's upper arm and pull him into a corner so that he might explain himself.

"Here, just let me see...." Tina went on, typing furiously as she clicked, once, twice, three times with her mouse. "I don't see anything else under Drake or...what's the name he used in the film...it's under the link....Chuck, Chuck Scarsblock, that's his porn name..." Tina went on clicking. "No, no Chuck Scarsblock either, apparently your boyfriend had a very short career in porn."

"Maybe," Moira replied, standing up, she moved away from

the bed. "I'm going back to the party. Would you like to stay here and look up porn?"

Tina giggled and followed behind Moira. "I hope I didn't cause any problems," she mused as they returned to the party. Moira shook her head to fill space.

The party was still hopping when Moira reentered it. Collared shirts and wine glasses gathered about the living room, bumping into televisions and end tables. Drake was still in mid-conversation, though they did not appear to be talking about golf anymore when Moira parked herself next to him. The conversation, it appeared, was naturally on its last legs and people shot off every couple of seconds until the two of them were alone.

"What's up?" Drake asked, drink in hand as he carefully sipped his scotch.

Moira might have just nodded and said "nothing," waiting for a more opportune time to bring this up, but Tina fluttered out of the kitchen with a bowl of popcorn in her hands and Moira pulled Drake's arm slightly until they'd reached a more secluded corner. "Tina just showed me a video," Moira started and Drake nodded. She wasn't sure if he understood where she was going, but he didn't appear to have any idea. "A video of you. When you were younger. In a certain video."

"Video?" Drake asked and then, a split second later a flash of recognition came over his face and he shook his head, chucking. "Yes, all right?" he went on and Moira



*The magazine for your ears  
from your corner of the world.*

[nightsound.com/radio](http://nightsound.com/radio)

Looking for an Artist?

find a great artist @...

Are you an Artist?

expose yourself @ ...



...The Raleigh Artist.com

[www.theraleighartist.com](http://www.theraleighartist.com)

## The Blotter

watched him, not understanding what else there was to say. "What did you think of it?"

"I thought you looked a little silly. I mean, I didn't watch the whole thing."

"It's all right, it's not that good."

"Why didn't you tell me about this before?" Moira asked. She wanted to be angrier at him, but his nonchalance was making it hard for her to be anything but flabbergasted.

"Come on, it's just porn. I did it in college. And it's not even that hardcore. And no one at work, no one I know until now, has ever recognized me."

"But I don't understand why you couldn't have told me."

"I would have, eventually. Come on, it's been six months, are you telling me that I know everything about you, every dirty little secret."

"Every secret I have that has since been posted on the internet, yes. You know all of that. No one is going to blindside you at a party."

"Fair enough," Drake replied, placing both his hands on Moira's shoulders. "But it's just porn. Don't worry about it, I'm not."

"You're not afraid of losing your job?"

"I am not. And if anyone recognized me, they would be too ashamed to admit it, especially where I work."

"But if you're not ashamed of it..." Moira started and Drake laughed, shaking his head.

"Then I might as well just broadcast it to this party, right here, is that what you want?" With that Drake stood up straight, taking a deep breath he seemed as if he were about to make an announcement. At the last second Moira grabbed his arm and he stood down.

"No, don't tell them," Moira urged him. "Never, ever bring this up again, I just want to forget about it."

"Sure," Drake laughed. "But I don't understand what you're so upset about. It's just porn. It's a billion dollar industry that no one talks about. You'd think people would get over it." He laughed again and Moira watched him carefully as they returned to the party.

The next day at work Moira couldn't help but wonder who knew. She called her assistant into her office to talk about the Cryberger account and thought she caught a chuckle in her voice. Moira watched the intern all day. Usually she just sat at a computer, typing up spread sheets while checking her email. Today Moira kept an eye on her, to make sure she didn't let her mouse wander to any of those sites little girls should not see, sites that might expose her boyfriend. Expose her boyfriend as what? Moira thought after a while. For what he really was? Is? No answer arrived in her head, not that she'd been expecting one. Maybe he was right, it was just porn.

She decided, as the day wore on, as if she had not been impetuous enough watching poor Sophie like a

hawk at her intern's desk, that she was not going to have sex with Drake anymore. Not for a while. Maybe not for weeks, for months. Before this the sex had been good. They'd been together less than a year and it was still happening five times a week, sometimes six or seven, depending on how their work schedules were looking. And it wasn't as if she wanted to punish him. Not really. It wasn't as if she were actually *that* disgusted with the video. Moira might say, if she'd been asked, that the decision came from a mixture of reasons. She might even say she was afraid of catching something, though that, she knew, was just ridiculous.

That day when Moira returned home from work Drake was at her apartment. When their relationship had hit the five-month mark they'd exchanged keys. Usually that only meant that someone was always available to water the other's plants or feed the fish when the other was away. They had never really snuck up on each other, but there Drake was, still in his work suit, sitting on her couch watching television when she walked in at seven that night.

"I wasn't expecting you," Moira said, setting her bag down and hanging up her coat.

"I know, I'm sorry. I wanted to order Chinese, could we do that?" Drake asked, turning off her television and standing up to greet her. He kissed her softly on the cheek, stroking her arm before sitting back down. Moira took a seat across from him on her salmon colored couch, growing concerned as he looked at her pensively. Moira might have told him that she'd decided to stop sleeping with him, that she'd made a conscious and very informed decision, but she'd forgotten that decision on her way home from work when some guy stole her seat on the subway.

"I'm thinking about becoming celibate," Drake announced and Moira's earlier decision returned to the front of her mind.

"You're what?" she asked. She didn't think people still did that. They went through dry spells, sure, or they joined a religious order, but



**CARRBYRRITOS**  
Burritos, Tacos, Nachos and Margaritas!

Mon thru Sat 11am-10pm - Closed Sunday - 933.8226  
711 W Rosemary St. Carrboro www.carrburritos.com

that was different. People, regular people, did not just decide one day to stop having sex. Unless of course they have just found out that their boyfriend had been in porn without telling them. But that was different. "Why?"

"I've been thinking about it for a while. Before I started seeing you. And then we met and I really liked you, and it just seemed silly. But then, last night, I mean. I feel like I should just, you know, take a break for a while."

"Are you breaking up with me?"

"No, of course not," Drake replied, chuckling. "And I hate to thrust this upon you, I really do. I think maybe, I mean, just for a few months. How does that sound? It might be really good for us."

"Or it might make nights really boring," Moira replied. "Do you really want to be one of those couples who sits around in their ugly underwear watching television and eating Entenmann's cake until eleven o'clock?"

"I don't think it will come to that. And really, just for a month, I think we should try it."

"Is this about the porn? Because I think I can get over that. I mean, it was just a little bit of a shock."

"I thought you told me to never bring that up again?" Drake chuckled once more and shook his head. "It's not about that. And the way work is right now. I mean, I'm a banker at a time in history when it's not a great idea to be a banker. But really, everything is fine."

"It's fine?" Moira asked and she wanted to be annoyed with him. It was not fair that he'd taken all the triumph out of finding out that her boyfriend had done porn in college and neglected to tell her about it. Drake sighed, draped an arm around her shoulders and they settled into the couch. He grabbed the remote and turned the television on and Moira felt as if she should reach for the Entenmann's cake.

And so the Entenmann's cakes abounded. Moira picked them

up on her way home from work, even when Drake was not planning on stopping by. She snacked on them in her office and brought them out for her staff to nibble on. She didn't really gain weight. Perhaps that's what she wanted, to show Drake what would happen if he let her wither for too long. And who does that, what young professional, living in New York, with no significant religious beliefs, decides to just stop having sex? But Drake had made the decision and as far as Moira could see he stuck to it. Some nights, after a particularly nice dinner, he'd come by, they'd cuddle on the couch, but he'd always leave before things got going, turning it off like the flip of a switch so that Moira wondered if this man was something more, or something less, than human. But he seemed okay. One day, out of the blue, he even said to her, "you know, I really feel better now. Much more grounded now that we're not...." He couldn't even say the word, like he was back in elementary school and his mommy was watching.

"And when do you think we'll go back to?" Moira asked and Drake shrugged.

"When it feels right."

Moira left the room, a little insulted, though she could tell by Drake's demeanor that he had no clue how insulting he'd been. When it feels right. Was it that things were not feeling right anymore?

Five weeks after Drake's announcement Moira started look-

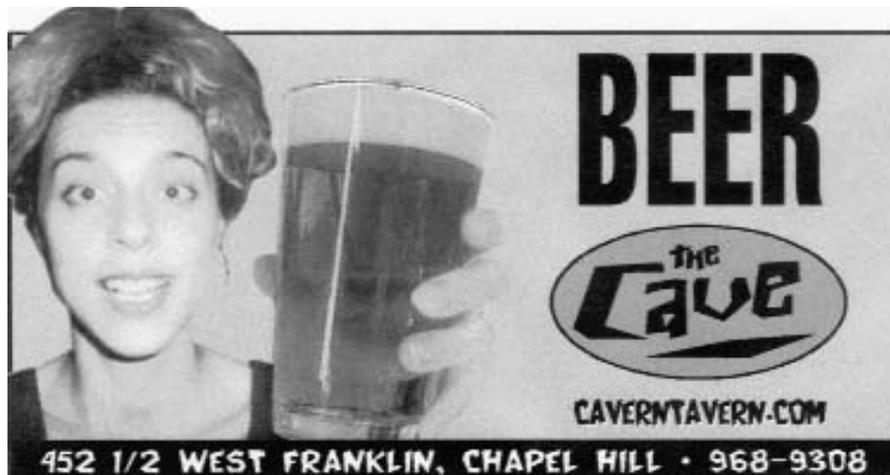
ing him up on the Internet. Actually she looked Chuck Scarblock up and got just one video. She'd stare at the screen at night, gazing at his nude form, which she hadn't seen for weeks. He spread his legs and hovered over some girl (and who was that girl? Did he like her? More than Moira, even now? Was he pining for this trappy blond with big tits who moaned at the very sight of him?), the camera angle jumpy and jagged as it hovered around their sweating forms. And where was this taped, Moira wondered, watching hard, scrutinizing, staring intently. With them not... she had to do *something*.

After a while, when she'd been watching the video over and over again, sometimes three, four times a night, Drake caught her and merely laughed. "And why is it that you're not embarrassed of this?" Moira asked as he took a seat behind her, watching as if this short seven-minute clip were something to relax over, perhaps with a bag of microwave popcorn.

"I don't know," Drake replied. He'd just come home from work and was wearing a gray suit, his briefcase was laid at the side of his chair. "It's not that big of a deal to me. And other than your friend, I mean, no one's ever recognized me."

"Who's that girl?" Moira asked, pointing.

"No one. I don't know. They put us together. It was more of a dare than anything else. A friend of mine knew this guy who directed porn. I was in college, I needed the money."







Eduardo Lapetina -  
Chapel Hill, NC  
[www.eduardolapetina.com](http://www.eduardolapetina.com)

## The Blotter

"Whatever," was all Moira could say, eyeing the Entenmann's cake she'd picked up on the way back from her Pilates class. "I still think it's silly."

"If you think it's so silly why are you watching it?" Drake asked, chuckling as he walked out of the room. Since his declaration of celibacy Drake appeared to be getting very chummy with Moira's apartment; though he appeared not to have any relationship with her bed, her toilet, her microwave and entertainment center had all become very close acquaintances of his.

The celibacy was still on, full throttle is what Moira was calling it, when she came back from work particularly early one day to find Drake sitting on her couch. She'd found him there countless times before, but never in the middle of the day, he had work, he had clients, and a cat to feed. She unlocked her door and slipped in, hearing *People's Court*, its audience screaming at some unsavory litigant, as she entered her living room, tossing the mail on her table.

"What's up?" she asked and Drake turned around. He was dressed as if he'd gone golfing that afternoon in slacks and an orange polo shirt, his hair slightly gelled, but less so than the amount of goop he put into it to go to the office. He didn't appear embarrassed as he stood up, scratched his head and glanced at Moira.

"Well, I got fired," he admitted. "I mean, it's not that simple.

They did a mass lay-off at the bank today. Fifty guys from our branch went. I was just one of the fifty."

"You what? Are you okay?" Moira asked, shaking her head. "I'm sorry."

"It's fine, really. I wasn't expecting to be able to ride this recession out, not in the industry I'm in. I'll just have to find something else. I'm still young, I'm thinking of going into psychology."

"Psychology? Why?" Moira asked growing more and more annoyed, though she did not know why. Perhaps it was the fact that she had not had sex in six weeks, or that she'd had to discontinue health insurance benefits at the office, pissing off all of her already overworked employees. "It's the porn isn't it? They found out about the video."

"No, what?" Drake asked, shaking his head, a little shocked. "I thought we weren't going to talk about that anymore? No, nothing like that. Moira, you know how things are right now."

"I know that your bank employs two hundred people and fifty were let go."

"Then I guess I'm just not very good at my job," Drake replied. "No one knows about the...no one cares, even Tina thinks it's funny, we laughed about it over bunch the other day. I mean come on, it's just porn."

There would be no more brunches, Moira decided, growing angrier as she moved through her apartment. She marched to her com-

puter and tried to turn it on. The button stuck and nothing happened. She stared blankly at a dead black screen fuming at its ineffectuality.

Lifting her hands in the air as if she were in her Pilate's class, Moira grasped the monitor, pulled the plug, and threw it to the ground. It did not shatter, but sat there, worse for wear but not broken. Moira took her left heel off and started pounding the thing, cracking the monitor before going after the actual hard drive. She tossed that as well, picking it up with all her strength and throwing it across the room. It did not hit a wall, but fell short, landing on the floor where she could hear the parts dismantling inside. She marched back to the hard drive and picked it up, tossing it again before Drake rushed in. He kept his hand up at the level of his eye as if there were a hurricane raging in this room and he needed to protect himself from flying objects. Moira picked up the keyboard and smashed that as well, before falling on the floor, amidst the broken pieces.

"Moira, what is wrong with you?" Drake asked, kneeling near her once she'd stopped. With tears in her eyes she looked up at him. It was all apart, falling apart, breaking to pieces. None of it had any staying power, not Drake or his new need for celibacy, not his job, her job, or her lovely little apartment. It was all a catastrophe.

"Let's just not talk about it," Moira replied finally, shaking her head.

"Yes, all right," Drake replied. "We will never, ever bring this up again. It will be like it never happened. You'll get a new computer, I'll block that site, I'll get them to take it down and we will never—"

"Never," Moira broke in, tossing a piece of broken plastic in the air, though she did not have the coordination to catch it on its way back down.



BOOTLEG  
magazine

the area's source  
for art, music &  
culture journalism,  
fiction and random  
profiles of life

www.myspace.com/avenuemagazinepresents



# Paper-Cuts - Books You Might Not Have Read

by Martin K. Smith

## What Maisie Knew

(Henry James, 1897; Library of America edition 2003)

One approaches the works of Henry James with a kind of cautious respect, as if venturing into a prominent institution of venerable age and lofty intellectual repute. An image arises of polished floors and echoing high ceilings, tall windows admitting a pale New England-y light, stuffed things in glass cases, and evidences of dust in the more shadowed corners. I know I was intimidated. James has a reputation for verbosity, and for over-elaborating down to the last nuance every detail of his characters' emotional workings. (Similar things are said about Proust. I tried to start *Remembrance* once and couldn't get past the first page, bogging down in that tea-soaked madeleine like it was quicksand.) The only reasons I picked up *Maisie*, honestly, were that our library's copy had a cover by Edward Gorey, and that its title reminded me of the titillating names they used to have on old nickelodeon reels: "What the Butler Saw" and "How Bridget Served the Salad Undressed."

Maisie is the daughter of Beale and Ida Farange, who have just had an ugly divorce. The courts have decided that she is to shuttle between each of them for six months at a stretch. James doesn't specify her age, but she seems about six: old enough to have the beginnings of self-awareness and detachment, and to look at her situations with thoughtful curiosity as well as emotion; but still young enough to take everything the grownups say literally. "She was at the age for which all stories are true and all conceptions are stories," James says. She certainly has some situations to puzzle over and some stories she could tell, if she chose. Her mother hires a governess,

Miss Overmore, who then falls for and marries her father, calling herself "Mrs. Beale." Her mother takes up with a lightweight and much younger fellow named Sir Claude. Then, of all things, Sir Claude and Miss Overmore / Beale become mutually enamoured. Maisie's biological papa and mama are meanwhile following the call of, shall we say, "biology," with other ladies and other gentlemen (some of whom might not quite qualify for the "lady" / "gentleman" classification). The various members of this quadrille vary between wanting Maisie, not wanting Maisie, not wanting some other member they're quarreling with to have Maisie, and wanting the other to be saddled with Maisie as a Reproach and an encumbrance to romantic escapades. Maisie's only real defender is Mrs. Wix, the governess hired after La Overmore's defection: an old maid, devoted and slightly piteous (her own only daughter, Maisie's age, got squashed by a hansom in the Harrow Road).

Verbose though he may be, James nails the kind of chatter which surrounds an ugly divorce:

*"The many friends of the Faranges drew together to differ about them; contradiction grew young again over teacups and cigars. Everybody was always assuring everybody of something very shocking, and nobody would have been jolly if nobody had been outrageous."*

and the terrible ways a child in an ugly divorce can be misused:

*"...the only link binding her to either parent was this lamentable fact of her being a ready vessel for bitterness, a deep little porcelain cup in which biting acids could be mixed. They had wanted her not for any good they could do her, but for the harm they could, with her unconscious aid, do each other."*

The chattering friends aren't much

help:

*"...the associates of either party sometimes felt that something should be done for what they called 'the real good, don't you know?' of the child. The only thing done, however, in general, took place when it was sighingly remarked that she fortunately wasn't all the year round where she happened to be at the awkward moment..."*

(There is dry wit in some passages, something which I had not expected of James; dry as the martini my former lover favors:

*"Maisie [admired the photo] of her prospective stepfather – only vaguely puzzled to think that she should now have two fathers at once. Her researches had hitherto indicated that to incur a second parent of the same sex you had usually to lose the first."*

*"[Ida] was a person addicted to extremes – sometimes barely speaking to her child and sometimes pressing this tender shoot to a bosom cut, as Mrs. Wix had also observed, remarkably low. She was always in a fearful hurry, and the lower the bosom was cut the more it was to be gathered she was wanted elsewhere."*

I also noted the dry Dickensian similitude quality in names like "Farange" and "Overmore".)

Maisie is not piteous. She's sadly troubled by her situations, but not crushed. She soon gets her parents' number:

*"She puzzled out with imperfect signs, but with a prodigious spirit, that she had been a center of hatred and a messenger of insult, and that everything was bad because she had been employed to make it so. Her parted lips locked themselves with the determination to be employed no longer. She would forget everything, she would repeat nothing, and when, as a tribute to the successful application of her system, she began to be called a little idiot, she tasted a pleasure altogether new. When therefore, as she grew older, her parents in turn, in her presence, announced that she had grown shockingly dull, it was not from any real contraction of her little stream of life. She spoiled their fun, but she practically added to her own."*

On the other hand, she likes her

# The Blotter

step-folks: Sir Claude is handsome and kind, Miss Overmore beautiful and kind. Mrs. Wix also is devoted and kind and slightly tragic, what with her late lamented squashed daughter. Maisie wants to be kind in return, wants to please them and help them; so throughout the book she's saying "Yes, I know!" when they appeal to her in their self-justifications – which are numerous. (Her grownups' favorite exclamation seems to be "I'm free; I'm free!" which they rush in to declaim whenever they've untangled themselves from their prior romantic linkage, thus clearing the way for their next one.) Sir Claude is particularly familiar, calling her "old boy" and "old chap" and talking his situations over with her, with a pretense of adult-to-child reticence but mostly like she was one of his fellow rakes down at the club. "What's a fellow to do, old chap? – don't you agree?" They're all occupied with living inside their fantasies of themselves (see "following the call of biology," referenced above), and act as if she's a fellow narcissistic grownup who'll understand and condone their behaviors.

Maisie seems to be a good kid, with a half-decent head on her shoulders. I say "seems," because I wasn't able to develop any emotional connection to her character beyond mild sympathy. The London fogs of James's prose are thick enough to where it's never quite clear exactly what Maisie does know. I guess she wants the same things any child does: love, stability, honesty; respect for her as a person manifested as straightforward answers to her ques-

tions. Sadly, none of the adults surrounding her have a halfpenny's worth of clue that children want, and need, such things. (A hundred years hence, Tom Robbins, in *Still Life With Woodpecker*, noted a similar situation in the divorce-ful Age of Aquarius: "...romantic relationships took on the character of ice in spring, stranding many little children on jagged and inhospitable floes.")

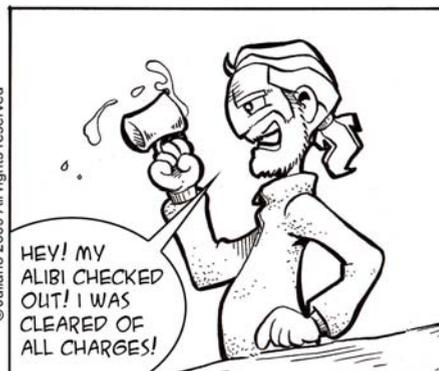
We leave Maisie on a Folkestone-bound steamer – not, thank goodness, on an ice floe – with Mrs. Wix, returning from Bolougne and from an intense Scene in a hotel suite there; a scene I had to reread thrice before I could even begin to get a clear fix on it. Sir Claude and La Overmore / Beale each appeal to Maisie to ally with them and cut the others loose; and Maisie, out of some combination of good instincts and what she "knows," declines to join either one of the lovers unless they'll renounce the other one. She "knows" that she was the unwitting agency of them being brought together, and seems to sense that things would have been a lot better and less messy if they'd remained separate. But since they're narcissists they don't do renunciation; so Maisie casts her lot in with Mrs. Wix.

Henry James never married, hence never divorced; and never had any children (that anyone knows about). In fact, a number of scholars believe that he was gay; or rather, that he could've qualified as gay by modern benchmarks. (The concept didn't really exist in his day. It was described with terms like "a proclivity for Greek love," like it was some vague cross between a fetish and a

hobby.) I have a sympathy for him because a play he wrote, *Guy Domville*, was literally booed off the stage after its first and only performance. *Maisie* is not among his most famous novels. Where it may rank in quality in the Jamesian pantheon, I'll leave to the Jamesian scholars. I personally found it, as I've said, verbose and not always clear. But its subject is an important one, now as then; it adds its quiet, decorous voice to the chorus of opinion saying that children should not have to suffer the consequences of narcissism, selfishness and general dumbass-ery committed by their grownups. Maisie feels like a survivor. If she keeps working out the difference between "know" and know, she may grow up sadder, but hopefully wiser.



## "Best In Show" by Phil Juliano



**CREATIVE  
METALSMITHS**  
Kim Maitland  
117 E. Franklin St., Chapel Hill  
919-967-2037  
www.creativemetalsmiths.com  
Weekdays 11 - 6 • Saturdays 10 - 5 • Sundays 12 - 5

## The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them.

We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterra.com

The occasional nightmare disturbs my sleep. Although I have learned to awaken myself from these events, breathing hard and with heart thumping, they prevent any further restfulness and tend to color my mood for the subsequent daytime. It has been so since my childhood, and I find it tricky to explain to my friends and acquaintances. *Why the long face? What's up with you today?*

I think that our dreams are patterned from our experiences, and become fully-formed for us when we are most receptive. Different life moments take on dream reality and are revisited, both happily and in the twisted darkness of nightmare. My nightmares, fortunately, do not take on the hyper-darkness of inexplicably missing children, endangered spouses, riding disabled airplanes down out of the sky. No, my subconscious is childish and low-budget.

How to describe being chased by faceless thugs, reaching out to grab at loose shirttails? Reptilian creatures beneath the water ready to snag my fragile craft? Stairways that shrink as I climb, or rooms whose walls refuse to hold their positions? There is no method for weaving such a tale.

Truth: no one wants to hear about your fears. What can you say to a nightmare? *For crying out loud – that IS scary. I'd be afraid, too. You were very lucky to survive.* Of course not. Even though we all have them, in the end there is no empathy to be shared. Instead the pall over this morning's activity is explained away as a headache, or some other bad mood. So I keep them to myself. No cataloging exists, no journal of night-frights. And although they tend to arrive in clusters, like migraine headaches or adolescent pimples, I try to shield my wife from them. I'll take the couch tonight.

MS - cyberspace

## Call for Entries!

### "The Laine Cunningham Novel Award"

The Blotter's Long Form Fiction Contest  
for Novella and Novel length works

1. The purpose of our contest is to provide a venue for writers to have their work read and commented on by our editors and judges. Additionally, the winner of this contest will have his/her work published here on these pages. And last but not least, the winner will receive the monetary prize of \$500.00. (Award monies are provided by the prize sponsor and the entry fee for the contest helps boost this lil' rag's ability to keep on truckin'.)

2. Our pre-reader judges are intelligent and highly proud of their educations. Our final judge is smart, well-read and mean as a snake. But we told her that she could be the final judge and what can you do?

3. Transparency is very important to us, and we make every effort to eliminate any conflict of interest situation from going down in our contest. In that light, Blotter volunteers and their family members and/or employees are prohibited from entering our contest.

To enter the contest, please submit your work with a \$25 entry fee by check or money order to: The Blotter Magazine, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705.

Your entry must contain the following: no less than 10 pages, no more than 20 pages of the opening of your novel or novella, typed & double-spaced, without your name. On a separate cover page type your name, the title of your novel or novella and a one page synopsis of your novel or novella. Remember, you have to have the entire book written, so that if and when you win, you can show us the rest!

BONUS: Enter the writing contest AND get a year's subscription to The Blotter for only \$30! (Regular annual subscription donations are \$25 total and you don't even get to enter a writing contest with that price!)

Once again, first prize is \$500, plus a "library" of books selected by The Blotter (many signed by the authors). Second prize is \$125, again with a "library" of recent releases. Third prize will be just the "library." All placements, including honorable mentions, will receive an award certificate, proof positive of your success as an author, suitable for mocking your sophomore English teacher, who always wondered how you graduated, et al.

Our contest will be run in line with the rules of ethics and mechanics recommended by the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, as outlined in their 2006 monograph on the subject. You can't view for free, but you may purchase the monograph entitled "Publishing Contests: Ethics and Mechanics" through the CLMP at <http://www.clmp.org/about/monographs.html>. This is the document we have used in coming up with the rules and conditions of this contest.

Download music. Downsize cancer.



[www.cytunes.org](http://www.cytunes.org)

## “ Poor Humbert, Humbert”

by Allesandra Motola

A temptress and Tutor meet under appropriate circumstances  
And by the mere exchange of stolen glances  
An understanding was established  
Lines of right and wrong were blurred by unseemly urges  
To give in and ravish and ransack the forbidden, the deplored  
Yet the boundaries remained intact

But the rules were never meant to last  
The young and old could play together  
But never for forever

In truth I shall not deny my guilt  
I batted my eyes and cocked my hips  
Kept my head at a steady tilt  
An always kept a candy right between my lips  
I was a determined little heathen with nowhere else to go  
Except into the arms of this humble fellow

Who possessed such eloquence  
When he spoke, I submitted  
To this domineering decadence  
That I most certainly detested, but still could not resist

Yet as the months passed by  
It was I who realized  
In this relationship, he holds no control

Yes, I, the girl so sweet, yet sadistically sick,  
Snickered, as his heart rapidly ticked and ticked  
As I picked and picked at the very wounds I struck so quick

Oh poor soul so alone and helpless  
Brilliant in my own right, but righteously relentless  
Our love is wrong, but we continued to dabble in the post-pubescent babble  
That I carefully contrived in words he could never unravel

I, the wicked, could not help myself  
Discussion of our love grew tiresome and bland  
My body yearned for the touch of his hand

So one night, after a delightful round of witty word play  
Our lips met and years of frustration melted away  
However, with this one kiss I learned a dangerous lesson  
A woman's persuasion is unrestrained by age  
(I know this as he became my slave)  
I was amazed by my uncanny influence  
I, so young, could tempt a man...  
Secrets can be kept, and messes can be swept  
But I took to heart the sweet art of seduction  
Which I learned to be a useful function

And they say I was the one who was “victimized”

(continued from page 3)

might be a very effective method for actually performing a murder in the location of one's choosing. He waited.

Instead of cement galoshes or a piano-wire neckerchief, however, it was a ride to another hotel. A suit met the sedan, hustled Cy inside. No words yet, just directions. Up the stairs to a suite. The door closed behind him.

Sitting at a desk was a well dressed but unpleasant looking man. He waved Cy to a chair and offered him a cigar. Cy sat. Declined the smoke.

The man shook his head and smiled. And Cy received his first and final post-graduate education in "how things really are" from Al Capone. They talked for an hour, then Cy was returned to his hotel, gathered his things, and caught the late train east. The contract was defused.

It was time to go. Hugs all around. Peppermints-and-tobacco smell.

Fetch my hat, if you would.

I handed Grandpa his fedora. Whatever those lessons from Scarface were, Grandpa never said. He did teach me to save my money. To work when it was time to work. That there is no substitute for good planning. To dig a hole twice as deep and wide as the rose bush, and prep the hole with limed compost.

I saw the *The Untouchables* a while back. Could only imagine Grandpa sitting and talking with DeNiro's Capone. Now Scorsese has made a film about 1920's Atlantic City. We're trying to imagine Steve Buscemi as Uncle Nucky. I don't know. I just don't know.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

## Alternative Wine Shop

[www.WineAuthorities.com](http://www.WineAuthorities.com)

No Corporate  
Wines.

No wines  
over \$50

919.489.2884  
Durham, NC



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jessica Stilling** writes, "I am a recent graduate of The New School with a degree concentrating in creative writing. I have been an editor for *The Muse Apprenticeship Guild*, *The Olive Tree Review* and *The Castalia Project* online zine. After college I began working at the Frances Goldin Literary Agency and am an MFA candidate at City College in New York, where I also teach. I have been previously published in *The Northwest Herald*, *The Riverwalk Review*, *The Mini-Mag*, *Release*, *City Writers*, *Birmingham Words*, and *The Hawai'i Pacific Review*. A story of mine was a finalist in the *Summer Literary Seminars Kenya Contest* and I was recently awarded *The Geraldine Griffin Moore Award in Creative Writing*. I have just completed a novel, a literary retelling of Alice in Wonderland, which won the *Bronx Council on the Arts Chapter One Award*."

**Eduardo Lapetina**, an Argentinean-born son of Italian immigrants, moved to North Carolina in 1976 to do cardiovascular research in thrombosis and arteriosclerosis for Burroughs Wellcome. In 2002, after 35 years in medical research, the then-62-year-old renowned medical researcher and father of three had to retire when his multiple sclerosis worsened. At one time an art collector, Lapetina decided to take art lessons. His vision states, "The steps leading to my abstract paintings are the art of hiding and disclosing. It is the discovery of mysteries of the subconscious mind that are part of my own personal legend. Personality counts. These abstractions hold the promise of dreams, visions, fears, intangibles, and will."

**Martin K. Smith** wants you to consider doing a Paper-Cuts of your own. Send us a review of one of your favorite authors or your analysis of a well-thumbed book.

**Allesandra Motola** of Raleigh, NC says that she's just now pulling out of a two year writing slump. I assured her we'd all been there before. Welcome back, and keep putting the pen to the paper, kiddo!

**Phil Juliano** lives in Asheville, where you can sit outside in July and not sweat too much. Just imagine worrying about sweating. Kind of nice, isn't it?

## NOAH'S ARK Kennel & Cattery

1217 E Franklin St # 3 Chapel Hill, NC 27514-3307

(919) 932-7322

[www.noahsarkkennel.com](http://www.noahsarkkennel.com)

Final Tid-Bits: We extended the contest for a handful of weeks - just in case you were hemming and hawing. My hope is that you will let us have a look at your work. Visit your local independent bookstore, they have plenty of things to read - I don't want to hear any of you saying, "I'm bored." Got it? Good!



... have good taste.

They read "The Blotter".

So should you.

Subscriptions \$25.

[www.blotterrag.com](http://www.blotterrag.com)



*look what we found: a way to help The Blotter, not spend any money, and surf the Net all day. check this out.*



**GoodSearch**  
YOU SEARCH WE GIVE™

- 1 Choose Your Cause**  
Enter your charity or school below and click Verify.
- 2 Search**  
Search the web just as you normally would.
- 3 We Donate**  
We'll donate to your cause for every search. *Yes, it's that easy!*

powered by **YAHOO! SEARCH**

Web Images Video Yellow Pages Shopping

**who put the bomp in the bomp sh bomp sh bomp** **Search**

Please use this site honestly. Fraudulent searches will result in your charity being delisted.

WHO DO YOU GOODSEARCH FOR? **2**

enter your charity here ... **The Blotter Magazine** **Verify**

Enter the charity or school you support here then click "verify." Next, search from above and earn money for your cause!



*whenever you want to search the Web for something, go to "www.goodsearch.com", and type in "The Blotter Magazine" under "who do you Goodsearch for?" for every search, they'll donate a penny to us. and pennies do add up, eventually. give it a try.*

*xxooxoox - The Blotter Gang*