

*Blatant disregard for propriety. Stories by Ronald Kaiser and
Farida Samerkhanova; poems by George Moore;
a new Best In Show & The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

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MAGAZINE



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"No... I got nothing."

Some of my college friends and I have reconnected via e-mail. It's fun to reminisce and I deeply appreciate that the electronic conversations make me feel as if there are no years between us, no long and rickety bridge of time that separates the friendship we had in college and our friendship now. It feels like the period between our last moments of academic life and now is but a hazy blink. And that, as they say, is a very good thing. Because that hazy blink was in fact twenty years long and a lot happened in those twenty years, much good and some bad.

One oddity of our notes together is discovering that my friends are also a reliable memory - like a remote branch of the bank inside my skull - of places and people that I had filed away in the most obscure recesses and damp cavities where only a cataclysm might have eventually jarred them loose. I think I'm pretty good at recalling from the family archival vault, but find that I effectively overlook some things, not because of their mundane aspects, but perhaps because I *must* forget or be doomed to repeat them in some obverse history-logic. Hence, it was interesting for me to correspond with our young poet last month - she just pulling out of a dry tailspin - that I, too, had also experienced a long bout with what we writers call *The Block*.

I had forgotten, you see, that I once went years with the inability to tell a tale, to extemporaneously report an event, even to jot a clever bit of doggerel. How painful this was, and the lack shaped my attitude for a handful of those years during the Hazy Blink. When you believe yourself to be a writer or a poet, and you cannot create, you begin to question just what it is that you think you can do.

Oh, at first I thought I was so smart, that this could never happen to me. I was a font of information. I could go to the well whenever I want. *This isn't writer's block - I'm just too busy to sit down. I'm involved in other projects.* But time is against writers. I thought of Carson McCullers publishing her novel at 23. You're getting old, I chided myself. Get a grip!

When twelve months had passed, insidiously, inexorably, since I'd done any worthwhile writing, I stopped sending interoffice memos at work. I imagined myself completely wasting my talent at the office. I began to empathize with the Ray Milland character in that movie, holding the drink, his fourth or fifth, because he can't put pen to paper. That was when my head got in the way. What's your problem? it asked me in an annoying refrain. I probably need to settle down, I told my skull. I'm a bit rusty, eh?

And it wasn't that I couldn't string together a sentence, but that I had nothing to say. My sentences were sludge, as soon as they hit the paper. *It was a dark and...* The clear images, once crisp apples for the plucking from low-hanging branches, weren't available. Or they were the

same old apple-flavor. Or rotten. In any case it was disappointing, and that weighed heavily.

Desperation forced me back to the typewriter. I watched Nicholson in the Colorado hotel. All work and no play makes Jack. I threw out my trash basket and stopped using Corrasible Bond paper, so that everything could be accounted for. Object, subject, adjective, verb. Subject. Crudject. What the hecktive. Flurb. Hey, maybe I'm getting somewhere. I'm sure using up ribbon!

So I did what writers do. I let someone read my stuff. Foolishly, that someone was a girl that I was trying to impress. I'd done such things before; it was why I began writing in the first place. If you can't impress a girl with your writing – or that you write at all – then what's the point, eh? But she was underwhelmed. Polite, even. "Oh, well...this is *something*." Something: a kiss of death word. Proof that you're not going to win any play at all. The only adjectival worse than interesting is *promising*. Which is anything but. But I digress.

The point is that she was right. But I didn't know it. The second year I typed feverishly. I wrote mealy/smarmy/kludgy love poems under the nom de plume Noah Vale. Attempted a techno-thriller as General Hugh N. Cry. The problem was I wasn't in love, and was as techno (or thrilling) as Cro-Magnon man. Think of the trees! said the Lorax.

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CAUTION

Actually, I've been thinking a lot about the past, folks I knew and places I've been. Sitting here with a semi-foolish grin plastered on my face, certain that other customers at the coffee-joint are wondering what the hell is up with this guy? Priceless, I tell you.



"Hell or Philadelphia"

by Ronald Kaiser

When all was said and done Vicky's father had to sew her ear up where she'd torn the flesh herself, dug the earring right out of her ear without bothering to remove the back like a decent human being. Upon hearing this Disco decided they were more or less even.

The 197th Field Artillery Brigade returned from Iraq on August 18, and with it, Disco Integrus. He could hardly believe he was here, staring at the burn holes on the back of his mother's sweatshirt. A year in Iraq, that cured him of morbid curiosity forever, promised he'd never rubber-neck again at a roadside crash.

Had time stopped while he was gone? His step-dad stared straight at the road ahead, his mastoids clenching rhythmically. Disco wondered how he had any teeth left at all, the way he ground them. Ma sat there smoking a cigarette with the windows up. There were still little black holes; cigarette burns, in the fabric ceiling above the passenger seat. Had she been smoking the whole time while he was gone? Thousands and thousands of cigarettes, no

doubt. There was a cigarette burn on the back of her gray sweatshirt. How in the hell did she get one way back there?

Disco said, "I've got to pick up my jeep."

His step-dad rattled out a sigh as if he'd just asked him to donate a kidney. All he had to do is take the turn coming up and go home a different way. To Vicky's house. Disco was torn between wanting to throw Vicky on the bed or getting in his jeep and peeling out on her parents' perfectly manicured lawn. Three weeks with no email, the three worst weeks of his life. Not that she'd been all that communicative while he was over there anyway.

The van's brakes squeaked in front of Vicky's parents' house, the expansive white colonial that took up half the road, just about.

Disco waved goodbye and walked over to his Jeep Wrangler, where it sat rusting next to the BMW coupe. The doors and hardtop were off and apparently it had rained last night, because an inch of water was pooled in the driver's seat. He poked his head inside. 173,000 miles. Jesus.

How Vicky had managed to put 30,000 miles on his jeep while he was gone for only a year was beyond him. After all, she didn't even have a job. The back seat was a sea of soggy, yellow McDonald's burger wrappers, and floating on top was a navy blue baseball cap featuring a yellow "M". Christ, you'll never meet such a fair-weather fan as Vicky. Since when did she root for Michigan State? It reminded me of high school, how she had her parents buy her all this Yankees paraphernalia just for the notoriety. She didn't know Yogi Berra from Yogi Bear.

Disco stepped over the low stone wall, a rock missing here in there in calculated disarray. He looked at the front door, thought better of it. No one ever used the front door at the Oughsmie's house before 11am, for fear of waking Vicky.

Behind the house sat the stagnant pool, the flat green lawn, and the Jet Ski on its trailer. The four years he'd known the Oughsmie's he'd never seen that Jet Ski move. Disco looked at his watch, and it seemed funny that this same watch, that glowed luminescent green if he needed it to, was the same watch he had looked down at, at three' clock in the morning when the unlit horizon flashed orange because a blast

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ripped a truck full of soldiers six vehicles ahead into two burning halves that he sped past because Sergeant Sage was screaming at him from the passenger seat to "Fucking floor it!"

As he approached the sliding glass door Disco saw that the crack he'd put in it had grown. He had just gotten out of the hot tub on a cool night and slipped running on the patio, smacked his head right into the glass. Disco had knelt, trying to shake the cobwebs out of his reverberating head, and Vicky's sole comment was, "My brother's gonna kill you. Look what you did to the slider!" On the slider was a tiny little spiderweb crack in the bottom right corner where his head hit, which her brother probably never would have even seen, except for Vicky would doubtless tell him about it. She should have been on Broadway, she loved drama so much. Produce it, act it, you name it. And sure enough, as Disco stood there that morning looking at the glass door, what had been a tiny spiderweb crack had spun itself out to cover a good quarter of the door, with the big hairy tarantula of an asshole Phil, her brother, gawking at him from the other side of the glass in his boxer shorts, long hairy spider legs sprawled out, shirtless, watching TV and eating his parents' cereal,

no doubt. The bastard lived in a house his parents owned directly across the street, but apparently he was still too cheap and too lazy to buy his own cereal and sit in his own house and eat it. Those were probably his father's boxer shorts too.

"Nice crack Disco," he said, a dribble of milk escaping his mouth and sliding down his scruffy beard, then down his arm, ending up as a spot on the stained brown leather chair.

"Sorry, I didn't realize it was showing," Disco tugged his pants up uncomfortably high. Whatever combination of wool and sand paper Class A Uniforms are comprised of, it is not forgiving material.

"No, the slider. You put a crack in it."

"My head's fine too, just to set your mind at ease."

Phil arched his eyebrows.

"I suppose you're right. I can always just get a new skull. Vicky awake yet?"

Phil's head jolted back as if Disco had shot him, mouth agape, mashed cocoa puffs on display. "Awake? It's only 10 a.m."

"Ah. I'll wait in purgatory. I mean the kitchen."

The hour-long wait in the kitchen almost killed Disco, but he knew better than to wake Vicky. Disco organized the scat-

tered magazines on the counter before him, then drummed his fingers. If not for the drone of the TV in the background he might have had to leave. Even the whooshing silence on his flight back had made his heart slowly begin to pound faster, like a far off drum-beat approaching. He cursed his sick mind that kept visualizing what it must have been like inside that erupted Humvee.

The upstairs floorboards creaked, and footsteps walked into the upstairs bathroom. The faucet ran for three minutes or so. Then there was indelicate clomping on the stairs, and Disco knew she'd forgotten he was to be there when she awoke, because Vicky only ever walked like that when she thought she was alone. The door swung open and she appeared, one of her tanned cheeks creased with mattress lines.

"Aww, hey!" she said, and straightened her posture. Her sleepy blue eyes widened then crinkled again, and she pushed blond hanging wisps behind her ear, walking toward him. He rose and she wrapped her cotton-scented arms around his neck. There was also the smell of a Yankee Candle in there, Lavender. Her family probably spent more every year on Yankee Candles than most families spend on food. There's likely a hole in the ozone layer



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above their house because of it.

He extracted his head from over her shoulder for a long-awaited kiss. His lips met her open, bleach-smelling palm. "Ooh, Haven't brushed my teeth yet Disco. Say, did you wash your hands?"

"Oh, come on with the hand washing already. You can leave my jeep a mess, and then lecture me on washing my hands?"

"It is clean, it's just messy." She stepped back and folded her arms. "Just please wash up. You know it freaks me out. It's not even a big deal, ok?" She grinned. Let the bitching begin. Vicky took perverse pride in a good bitching, stepping back and taking it in as a carpenter admires a well-built house. He went to the sink.

"Use the anti-bacterial stuff, ok?"

He sighed and strangled out half the soap.

"So what did you bring me?"

"From Iraq?"

"Well duh! Did you forget my birthday?"

He scrubbed his hands.

"Your birthday isn't until September. Besides, you don't want anything from that place."

"I mean you were gone a whole year, Disco, and it's my birthday in three weeks. You did-

n't even make me anything?"

"What the hell would I do, knit you a quilt? That would be mighty tough to do while holding a rifle." He sat back down on his stool and looked up at Vicky. The mattress lines still on her cheek made her look aged. "So what did you do, Hamburgler, rob a McDonalds in my jeep?"

"Ha! Oh, you should see what it looks like when you drive down the street. Wrappers flying everywhere." She pulled his black beret off and ran her hands over his dirty-blond hair. "Now that you're back are you gonna grow your hair out?"

"I can't grow my hair out. I'm still in the National Guard. I still have drill once a month."

"How long are you in for?" She was on her tip-toes watching each stiff hair spring back up after her hand's passing.

"My contract's up in five years."

She withdrew her hand, unsmiling. "I can't believe you'd limit yourself like that."

He rubbed his eye, which had begun to throb as if something was trying to break out through it. "And where exactly have you been driving my jeep, that you put 30,000 miles on it?"

She looked at the ceiling and stretched her arms over her

head languidly, her white T-shirt revealing her brown stomach. "Oh, you know, the beach."

"The beach? The beach is only six miles away."

"No, the ocean...a lot. And you might want to get an oil change."

"Oh, thanks."

"But hey, I want to hear all about Iraq and stuff, but first I want to talk about college. You're still taking a year off with me, right?"

"I wanted to talk to you about that."

"We already talked about it, remember? You promised to take a year off with me." She bared her teeth.

"Well that was last year. I just don't want to waste time now, is all."

Vicky walked behind him and squeezed his shoulders. "Why not? Don't you want to take a break after being in Iraq a year?"

"That sounds like hell."

She removed her hands. "Oh, thanks. Spending time with me would be hell. I get it."

"No, I just hate wasting time."

"Because I'm such a waste of time."

"Please, Vicky. Please don't make a goddamn reality TV series out this one thing."

"You didn't even get accepted anywhere, so I can't believe you're even arguing about it."

"I'm going anyway. I'll go part time at first if I have to. The



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GI bill will pay for it.”

“Oh, the GI Bill. Must be nice.”

Disco stood, the stool clattering down behind him. “Are you out of your goddamned mind? Do you have even a clue what the GI Bill has cost me? You don’t even want to know.” He hated the tears he felt welling.

“I do want to know. I want you to tell me all about it. At the beach.”

Disco pretended to yawn, wiped his eyes, blinked. “The beach again? Jesus Christ, don’t you think the beach is sick of you?”

She punched his arm. “Oh cut it out. I’ll meet you there at noon. Can you grab some lunch for us?”

“Ok, fine. Just let me run home first. Hey, where are your parents?”

“Aruba. I could have gone too, you know.”

“Yeah, you also could have changed the oil in my jeep after 30,000 miles.”

Vicky feigned a scared look and walked delicately up the stairs to her room. He stood and stretched. The flight from Germany had taken nine hours. He winced, felt his side. He’d been feeling sharp stabs during the flight, figured it was probably the change in climate. Leaning back, he noticed the row of little brown and white hand-painted Guernsey cows that lined the top of the wooden doorframe. There was a hole in their ranks; one cow was missing. The one missing Guernsey cow belonged to Disco. In a far sweeter gesture than anything Vicky had ever even thought of doing, Vicky’s father had broken the set of the valuable antique cows, and given one to him last summer the night before he deployed to the desert. “You’re

part of the herd now,” Dr. Oughsmie told him.

Disco saw beads of sweat on his forehead in his jeep’s rearview mirror. Just starting the ignition did it. Driving was wed with the possibility of a bomb ripping his vehicle in half. It was one thing to hear the punk-punk-punk of bullets puncturing the chassis. But an IED; Disco couldn’t visualize what that kind of annihilation looked like. He couldn’t shake the feeling that everything was fragile, like he was living in a snow globe. Even with the doors and the top off of his jeep it still felt like a cage. A seatbelt was out of the question, made him claustrophobic. He did twenty miles over the speed limit all the way home.

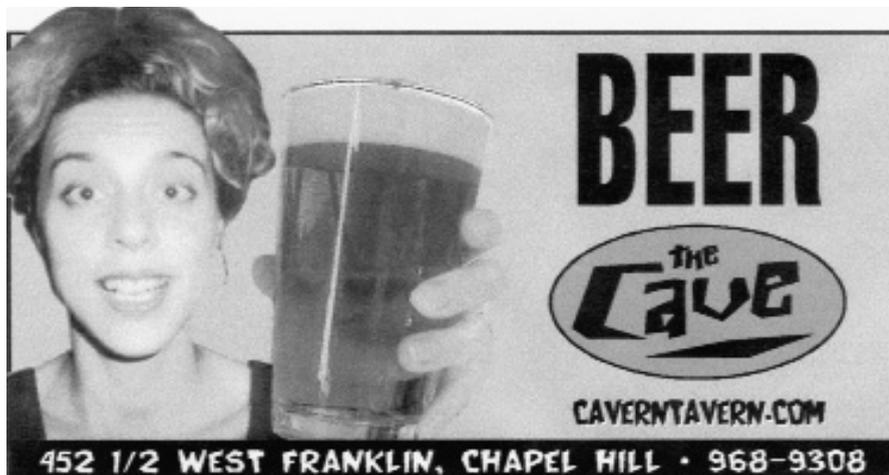
When Disco got home he sat on his bed next to his pile of accumulated mail. He closed his eyes and inhaled, trying to soothe his rapid heart and headache. After a year of anxiety his nervous system was like a hyperactive child that suddenly had all its toys taken away, and was looking to start mischief. He pawed through the mail pile and found an already opened letter from White Mountain University. Ma had read it over the phone to Disco, her voice catching when she got to the word “unfortunately.”

It was then he noticed the

letter from Temple University. His mother must have missed this one. It had a little weight to it, surely at least three pages in there. Could it be a letter berating him for his impertinence, daring to apply? He slid his index finger beneath the crease and slit it open and unfolded it and saw the first word was “Congratulations!” He was even pretty sure they weren’t being sarcastic.

Philadelphia. How would Vicky take the news? The place behind his left eye throbbed and he pressed his knuckle into it. I do not have the luxury of ennui. I risked death to pay for college, and I’ll be damned if I’ll wait a second longer than I have to. Vicky could stay in her room for four years and when she came out she’d still have enough money from daddy for it not to matter where she was and what she was or wasn’t doing. I’m riding the GI bill anywhere it takes me, to heaven or Hell or Philadelphia. But what about Vicky? My resolve has a way of ducking out the back door when she’s around.

In his mail pile Disco saw a white envelope addressed from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, then found six others just like it. He peeled one open and unfolded the crisp white paper. The first thing he noticed



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was an inset black and white photograph of his jeep, taken from the back. Peeking out from the top of the driver's headrest was the "M": The University of Michigan hat he had found lying in his back seat, turned around backward on the driver's head. But he knew one thing: Vicky would have had to be sitting on about ten phonebooks for her head to be above the headrest. And the shoulders on this guy...it had to be a guy, or a severely large and well-built woman, that probably would have had to have been a man at some point, to have shoulders like that. And in the passenger seat he could make out someone about Vicky's height. The whole document became a bit blurry, and what it turned out to be was a \$75 dollar fine for blowing through an EZ pass lane at the tollbooth in Portsmouth. These bastards were not only joyriding around in his jeep, but they didn't even bother paying the tolls. He ripped the other similar envelopes open one by one. Not only was this Michigan State fan driving in all the inset black and white pictures, but Vicky was only in the passenger seat in two of them. Who the hell was blowing through the tollbooths in his jeep at \$75 dollars a pop?

Suddenly there was another stab, and this time pressure his bladder. He lurched up off the bed and ran to the bathroom.

'Agh, Jesus!' he cried. It burned, and his pee was brown with blood.

Disco's eye pounded as he covered one eye with his hand and drove to the hospital. Two hours later he was laying on the gauze-covered table in a white t-shirt and green army slacks, awaiting the results of the x-ray. The doctor walked in.

"Ok Mister soldier. Are

you by any chance here for chest pain as well?"

"Chest pain? No," he lied.

"Okay, well your heart rate was pretty elevated when you came in. Hospitals make you nervous?"

"...Yes."

"Alright. Looks like kidney stones," she said, and handed him what looked like white coffee filters. "Urinate through these so you can catch the stones, then bring them back here so we can analyze them."

Sweat broke out on Disco's forehead. "Analyze them? Why? Is there something wrong with me?"

She smiled. "Don't be so nervous. It is very common to have kidney stones."

She held up the X-ray. "See? Two little ones. You're lucky. Just drink lots of water and you should be able to pass them naturally. It's going to feel like you're peeing out a burning basket ball."

"Can't wait."

The sun was down when Disco got home and walked into the living room, where Dad and ma sat watching TV. He walked in front of the T.V., and ma scooted over on the couch to see around him.

"Vicky been by?"

"Not since I've been here," said ma, smoke curling out of her nose.

Disco sighed. Of course. She just went on to the beach without him, not bothering to even call to ask where he was, if he was ok.

"I'm moving to Philadelphia next week, I guess."

If either of them heard anything they didn't show it, just stared at the Wheel of Fortune spinning behind Disco. Then he noticed Dad's eyes were closed in his chair, and the only indicator that Ma

noticed anything was the volume of cigarette smoke around her, which increased in ratio to the anxiety level in the house. Perhaps she was trying to devise a smoke screen to cover her escape. Then again, with the amount of time she spent immersed in game shows, Disco figured she'd made her getaway long ago. Just then a commercial came on featuring a talking monkey dressed in overalls, and Ma jolted forward and erupted into a laugh that split her head like a Pez-Dispenser.

A searing cramp awoke Disco. He chugged water from an empty milk jug until he felt like an over inflated pool toy. Standing over the toilet, he grabbed one of the white strainers and peed through it. He winced and cried out as a "Tick!" sounded in the little white strainer. Incredulous, spraying piss all over the ceramic toilet tank and wall behind it, Disco held the basket up to see: a little brownish stone lay in the bottom. 20 minutes later it happened again; it felt as if he was peeing vinegar and glass shards.

He laid the two stones on his white bathroom sink side by side. They were pretty: tiny, shiny and brown with sharp little points sticking out, like miniature comets. He felt proud of what he'd made.

Disco spent the following morning thinking about Vicky and making her an early birthday present. Maybe it wasn't her fault after all. Could she help that she never had to earn a damned thing, that she was constantly resupplied like some reckless general, no matter what she did? But the year in the desert has heated him up to a boil, and he cringed at the thought of living in this luke-warm place with goddamned tepid people like Vicky. He wanted to be around

people who couldn't wait for a damned thing. Just as he set the completed gift on his nightstand to dry, his bedroom door flung open. It was Vicky.

"Disco? Your mother told me you're going to Temple." She stuck out her pink lower lip. "Are you?"

Disco stepped back and sat on the bed "Well, I was, but at first—"

She crawled on top of him, pushed him down on the bed. "But you're gonna wait a year with me, right?"

Disco started to answer, but Vicky muted him by planting a kiss on his lips.

She said, "You wouldn't abandon me, would you?"

"Well not *abandon*. Leave, maybe."

"But you said you'd wait for me."

"I said I'd think about it. Could I...I mean, I'd have to find a full-time job and everything if I stayed here."

She put her arms around his neck. "Look, I know I've kind of short with you lately. I've got some things I need to work on. We both do. It's just I missed you, is all. And there's this other stuff I need to talk to you about. But it can wait until later. Ok?"

"What, is it about..." Disco's eyes flicked toward the partially concealed papers on the bed. "Never mind. Just let me think about it, ok?"

"Ok, just you think about it. My parents are coming home today, and they want you to come over for dinner. Will you give me your answer then?"

"Even Before then."

That night a tanned Doctor and Mrs. Oughsmie sat at the dining room table with Vicky and Phil. Phil had his Cell phone to his ear and Vicky was furiously punching her 5th expletive-loaded text to Disco on her phone. It was 5:55 by the kitchen clock and finally a long horn blast like a departing steam ship sounded in the driveway.

Vicky marched outside mumbling, preparing to berate Disco for not showing up early like he said he would. When she stomped out the front door, though, the retreating orange sunlight showed her the white stone driveway was empty, save one little parti-colored gift bag.

Vicky brought the bag into the kitchen and stopped at the sink. She sprinkled Comet into her palm, turned the water on and scrubbed her hands with a small, stiff brush. She rejoined her fami-

ly, plunked the bag down, knit her brows in consternation as she ripped out the pink ruffled paper.

"What a fag," Said Phil, his cell phone still pressed to his ear. "Pink paper? Who does that?"

Vicky removed a blue envelope from the bag and set it on the table. She then produced a small brown box. Her mother and father exchanged a smiling glance.

Vicky opened the box and produced a small brown and white hand-painted Guernsey cow.

"That's not good," said Dr. Oughsmie.

"Shh! said Vicky, producing another small box, this time a blue one. She opened it and plucked something out, something small. "Earrings!" she said, holding one out. She scrutinized the small stone set on a silver backing. She shrugged, removed her earrings, removed the backing from the new earring and placed it in her ear. Vicky tore open the envelope, but all that was inside was a letter with a grainy, black and white picture of Disco's jeep on it; a fine from the Department of Transportation. Very funny Disco.

Vicky stood and walked around the table, shooting her brother a snake-lidded look he didn't notice. She bent down to her father and swept the strands of blonde hair behind her ear, revealing a stone that was tiny, shiny and brown. "See, Daddy?"




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"My Second Death"

by Farida Samerkhanova

Steve sat on the bench in the park and did not notice anything around. All suicidal people are like this. Separation with his girlfriend felt like the end of the world. I was sitting beside him, but he neither saw nor felt me.

People shouldn't die when no one intends to take their lives. I died in the fall of 1974 in the Soviet Union. Now they call it Russia. I was a freshman in a University and lived in a campus. The campus was ten minutes away from the University. I could make it in five minutes if I ran.

In Ukraine he used to be Stepan. His girlfriend was deported from the country after her refugee claim failed. First they took her to jail. Then they put her on a plane and she left. They sent her back to Israel after ten years in Canada. He could do nothing to stop the removal. He had no money to hire a lawyer. He had no documents to travel overseas; otherwise he would have followed her. He was desperate, like only very young people could be.

When I died, I had just finished school. I did not see much in my life. I came to study in a big city from a small remote village. I did not speak Russian. I knew only the language of my fathers. It was so hard for me to study, but I did my best.

When the sun set, Steve headed to

the subway station. What was in his mind? The best thing for him was to have a good drink. I had never had alcohol in my life, but I saw in the movies that they drank when they felt gloomy and it helped.

The deputy dean of the University department was very obsessed with discipline issues. His people searched students' rooms for vodka. We did not have drugs at that time, but students liked wine and vodka.

Steve was a handsome man. His girlfriend was lucky. I had never had a boyfriend. I was seventeen. I never kissed a boy. I thought that maybe I could fall in love with Steve. He stood on the platform

Минем икенче үлемем.

Стив тирә-ягында бернәрсәгә дә игътибар итмиң паркта эскәмиядә утыра иде. Үз-үзенә кул салырга теләгән һәркем үзен шулай тотта. Яраткан кешең белән аерылышу донья бетүгә тиң.

Гомерләренә бернәрсә дә янамаса, кешеләр үләргә тиеш түгел. Мин 1974 елның көзүндә Советлар Союзында үлдәм. Хәзел ур Россия. Университетның беренче курсында укый идем, тулай торакта тордым. Тулай торак университеттан ун минут ераклыкта урнашкан. Чапсаң, 5 минутта да өлгереп була торган иде.

Украинада аны Степан дип йөрттеләр. Аның йори торган кызын, качаклыкта оттырганнан соң, чит илгә депортацияләделәр. Алдан аны төрмәгә яптылар. Соңыннан самолетка утыртылар һәм ул очып китте. Аны яңадан Израильгә сөрделәр. Ул Канадада ун ел яшәде. Егетнең депортацияне туктатырга һәленнән килмәде. Аның адвокатларга акчасы юк иде. Аның паспорты да булмады, булса, ул һичшиксез кызы артыннан китәр иде. Аны өметсезлек биләде. Яшьләр генә шулай өметсезлеккә бирелә алалар.

Мин үлгәндә мәктәпне тәмамлаган ғына идем. Тормышта әллә-ни күрергә дә өлгермәдем. Шәһәргә ерактагы кечкенә генә авылдан укырга килдем. Русча сөйләшә белмәдем. Үземнең туган теләмдә генә сөйләштем. Укырга бик авыр булды, ләкин мин тырыша идем.

Кояш баегач, Стив метрога таба юнәлде. Ул нәрсә турында уйланды? Ана хәзер берәр нәрсә эчеп куярга кирәк иде. Минем гомеремдә беркайчан да эчеп караганым булмады, ләкин кинодан күргәнәм бар, күчел булмаганда кешеләр эчәләр, һәм аларга жинел булып китә.

Факультетның декан ярдәмчәсе дисциплина дип саташты. Ул кешеләрне тулай торакка жибәрә дә, алар арагы эзләп бөтен бүлмәләргә айкап чыгалар. Ул вакытта наркотик дигән нәрсә булмады, но студентлар арагы һәм шәрәб эчәргә ярталар иде.

Стив бик матур егет. Аның йөргән кызының бәхете бар икән. Минем егетем булмады. Миңа унжиде яшь иде. Минем беркайчан да үбешкәнәм юк. Мин, бәлки, Стивка гашыйк та була алыр идем. Ул платформада баскан килеш, рельсларга карап торды. Поезdlар килделәр һәм киттеләр. Ул уйга баткан. Мин кайвакыт чит кешеләренң уйларын ишетә алам. Ләкин һәрвакыт түгел.

Безнең шәһәрдә метро юк иде. Метро, Мәскәү, Ленинград шикелле зур шәһәрләрдә генә булды. Бездә автобус һәм трамвай йөрде. Университет белән тулай торак арасында да трамвай юлы сузылган. Чапканда, ике ярим минут эчендә әлегә юлга, соңыннан, шул ук вакыт эчендә юлдан университетка барып житеп була. Яки киреченчә.

Стивның куллары калтырады. Ул курыкты, кәефе китте. Тирләп чыкты. Мин аның нәрсә эшләргә теләгәнән төшендем. Ул, платформада читендә, зур тизлек белән поезdlар үтүче арка янында баскан килеш торды. Минем шәһәрдә трамвайдар шулай ук тиз йөрләр иде.

Шул вакыт Стив мине күрәп алды. Аның мине күргәнлеген мин ачык аңладым. Иске киёмдә мин бик кызык тыелганмындыр инде. Минне башка беркем күрмәде. Башкалар, мин һавадан ясалган сыман, минем аша үтеп йөрделәр. Ул минем инде үле икәнлегемне белә иде.

looking at the rails. Trains came and left. He was thinking. I can hear human thoughts, but not always.

We did not have subway in my city. Subway was only in big cities, like Moscow and Leningrad . We had buses and streetcars. There was a streetcar line on my way from home to the University. If I ran, it was two and a half minutes from home to the line and two and a half minutes from the line to the University, or vice versa.

Steve's hands were shaking. He was scared and very much frustrated. He was sweating. I knew what he was up to. He was standing at the side of the platform where the trains emerged from the arch, moving very fast. Streetcars in my city also ran very fast.

All of a sudden Steve saw me. I knew he did. His eyes were wide open with surprise. My old-fashioned clothes must have looked funny. No one else could see me. Others passed through me, as if I was made of air. He knew I was dead.

The subway trains rattle like streetcars. Metal against metal makes a screaming sound, which is softened when flesh happens to be in between. I was running my two and a half and two and a half minutes' distance. I was being late for the class. I knew the deputy dean was at the entrance with his notebook, registering those who were not in time. Afterwards the notes would go to the students' council and the freshmen in the list would

Моя вторая смерть

Стив сидел на скамейке в парке и не замечал ничего вокруг. Все так ведут себя когда хотят покончить с собой. Разлука с любимой равносильна концу света. Я сидела рядом с ним, но он не видел меня и не чувствовал.

Люди не должны умирать, если их жизни ничего не угрожает. Я умерла осенью 1974-го года в Советском Союзе. Теперь это Россия. Я была на первом курсе университета и жила в общежитии. Общежитие было в десяти минутах от университета. Если бегом, то можно было успеть за пять минут.

На Украине его звали Степаном. Его девушку депортировали после того, как она проиграла беженство. Сначала ее забрали в тюрьму. Потом ее посадили на самолет, и она улетела. Они выслали ее назад в Израиль. В Канаде она прожила десять лет. Он не мог остановить депортацию. У него не было денег на адвокатов. И у него не было паспорта, иначе он бы поехал за ней. Он был в отчаянии. Только молодые могут так отчаиваться.

Когда я умерла, я только что закончила школу. Я не очень-то много успела увидеть в жизни. Я приехала учиться в большой город из маленькой далекой деревни. Я не могла говорить по-русски. Я знала только свой родной язык. Мне было так трудно учиться, но я очень старалась.

Когда зашло солнце, Стив направился к метро. Что он задумал? Ему бы надо сейчас хорошенько выпить. Я никогда в жизни не пробовала, но я видела в кино, что когда нет настроения, люди пьют, и им становится легче.

Зам. декана факультета был помешан на дисциплине. Он посылал людей в общежитие, и они обшаривали комнаты в поисках водки. Тогда не было наркотиков, но студенты любили вино и водку.

Стив был красавчиком. Везет его девушке. У меня никогда не было парня. Мне было семнадцать. Я никогда не целовалась. Я подумала, что может быть, я могла бы влюбиться в Стива. Он стоял на платформе и смотрел на рельсы. Поезда приходили и уходили. Он был в раздумье. Я иногда могу слышать чужие мысли, но не всегда.

У нас в городе не было метро. Метро было в больших городах, таких как Москва и Ленинград. У нас были автобусы и трамваи. Между общежитием и университетом была трамвайная линия. Если я бежала, то за две с половиной минуты я добегала от дома до линии и за такое же время от линии до университета, или наоборот.

У Стива дрожали руки. Он был напуган и очень расстроен. Он весь вспотел. Я знала, что он собирается сделать. Он стоял на краю платформы около арки, откуда на полной скорости выскакивали поезда. Трамваи в моем городе ездил тоже очень быстро.

not be getting scholarship.

I threw myself between the wheels and the rails. I heard the screaming sound, softened with my body, exactly like thirty five years ago. Before I died again I looked at Steve. Now that he saw me disfigured he would not jump.

He would go home and Skype his girlfriend and they would figure out what to do. When I was alive,

we did not have Skype. And computers were as big as a wardrobe.

Editor's note: On the left-page is this story translated into Tatar by a friend of the author, Gulnaz Abdulvalieva. The version above is Ms Samerkhanova's own translation of this story into Russian.



"A Note on the Type"

This type is *Rubiconilogue*, long thought to be the work of Jack Ruben (1546-1583), an apprentice to the famous typesetter, Mario Vanduzi (1520-1558), who was accidentally killed by a bull near his home in Venice before completing this master type work, but was later proven to be an early effort of Dutch painter and typesetter, Hugus Van de Van der Heep (1729-1770), following the style of the Dutch Master, Claude Hopeles (1684-1700), and for some years the type was so identified, but has now been indisputably identified as the work of the infant Charles I (1700-1736), after an excursion into his parent's attic, where, following a spider with his finger, created the font in the dust, which was then discovered and deciphered by his grandmother, herself something of a fortuneteller of local renown, and later copied out by his uncle, Haphaz Urgmo, the immigrant Catholic calligrapher and priest in a proto-type later made applicable for typesetting by Sugy Mushmo, during his internment, and now known almost certainly to be the source of this type's most eloquent flourishes.

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The Nepalese boy of ten was almost
 There, without five of his fingers.
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In the world. Watch that edge,
 Lady! No religion please,
 This is a mountain! Frostbite
 Never happens in the spring.

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Like a post-apocalyptic nightmare or cable-TV channel flipping run amok, a flurry of dreams plague me just before dawn:

Herding children down a hallway to class. Like the white rabbit, we're late, we're so very late. The children won't stop talking, but it's OK because they're fairly quiet.

Waiting for a bus on a corner in Chicago. Carrying luggage, so I must be coming home from the airport. I'd never take a bus to the airport, would I? The sky is as gray as the street. Perhaps it will rain. Come on, come on! For some reason, no one is walking on my side of the street, and the cars pull up to the intersection but the lights don't change. A bus comes but does not stop, so I set down my suitcase. I'm tired, and there's no bench, but I hesitate to sit on the suitcase, because it's borrowed.

Rooting through my wallet for a gift card. I'm either in a bookstore or a Target/Penney's kind of place. I have just enough cash for a cup of latte and don't want to use my credit card, either. Where is that gift card? What does it look like? Did I drop it on the floor of the car?

Kitchen garbage out for tomorrow pick-up. Lightning rips open the sky, but there's no thunder. It seems so close that I flinch, but it's just the bright flicker of flashbulbs. I'm famous, but I can't for the life of me say why. *Here he comes with the trash! Hurry, hurry! What a story this will make!*

A back-ache turns into a trip to visit WW2 vets at a hospital. Only in some dim recess of my brain does it occur to me that I am half the age of these alternately puffy and wizened gargoyles, but have all of their pains. A little exercise then! We march cautiously in our bathrobes around a mineral spring, prosthetic limbs and morning mood determining who wades through the oddly shaped pool like Marines hitting a beach, and who gingerly steps around the wet spots. I hear the refrain in my head, "Thank you for your service. Thank you for your service."

TD - cyberspace

Best In Show

by Phil Juliano



(continued from page 3)

It was piteous, and I sank deeper into un-scribbling. The third year, I didn't send thank-you notes or birthday greetings because I just didn't know what to write. *Uh, hey there . How ya doin? Have a good'un.* For two more years, my typewriter remained covered, my notebooks blank. I considered writing a children's story using characters from the Cabbage Patch Kids. Or Cabbage Patch Kids in outer space. Or anthropologist Cabbage Patch Kids fighting Nazis. Or a Christmas carol.

Go back to what you know, my brain chirped. I don't know anything. Sure you do. You know *you*.

And that is how I broke out of *The Block*. I could confidently tell on myself. My defrosting began with a poem about sailing badly on a cold day. I won't bore you with it, and trust me it would, but that's not the point. I still feel good about that poem, because it had a couple of clear, fresh images. And that's a lot, and a good restart.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Ronald Kaiser of Bristol, NH writes, "My stories have appeared six times in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, as well as in *Limina*, *Farmhouse*, *The Harrow*, *Centripetal*, *Carved in Granite*, and other places.

Farida Samerkhanova writes, "I lives in Toronto , Ontario . My native language is Tatarian, my second language is Russian and English is my third, which has become my passion. I write in English, but there are poems that appear in English and Russian. They are not translations - they come to my mind in both languages, it just happens. I am the head of a big family; four generations reside under one roof in South West of Toronto. I fight with everyday routine, play chess, collect coins and skate. My poems, short stories and essays were published by *Canadian Stories*; *Inscribed~A Magazine for Writers*; *The Maynard*; *Ygdrasil*, *A Journal of the Poetic Arts*; *blueskiespoetry.ca*, *Danse Macabre* (including *Totentanze*, *All Saints' Evening* and *Weihnachtsmarkt* issues), *Seeding the Snow* (The illustration is also my credit), *The Write Place at the Write Time*, *Calliope* (Issue #125 - Fall 2009), *Word Salad Poetry Magazine*, *Tower Poetry* and *Of(f)Course - A Literary Journal*. Some of my poems were included in *The Maynard Anthology 2008* (Canada), the collection of poetry "*Immortal Verses*" (USA) and in "*Favourite Memories*" book of poetry (UK).

About **George Moore** of Lyons, CO: His work has appeared in *Orion*, *Colorado Review*, *Nimrod*, *Meridian*, *Chelsea*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Southwest Review*, and he's the featured poet this fall in *The Blue Fifth Review* and *The Centrifugal Eye* (Canada). He's also published recently in journals in France, Australia, Canada, Ireland, England and Iceland, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize six times, including twice this year, and for "Best of the Web" for 2009 and 2010. He was a finalist for the 2007 *Richard Snyder Memorial Prize*, from Ashland Poetry Press, and earlier for *The National Poetry Series*, *The Brittingham Poetry Award*, and the *Anhinga Poetry Prize*. His most recent collections are *Headhunting* (Edwin Mellen, 2002), and an e-Books, *All Night Card Game in the Back Room of Time* (Pulpbits, 2007). He teaches literature at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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Final Tid-Bits: Thanks to everyone who sent us a contest manuscript. We're quite pleased with the response. 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!



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