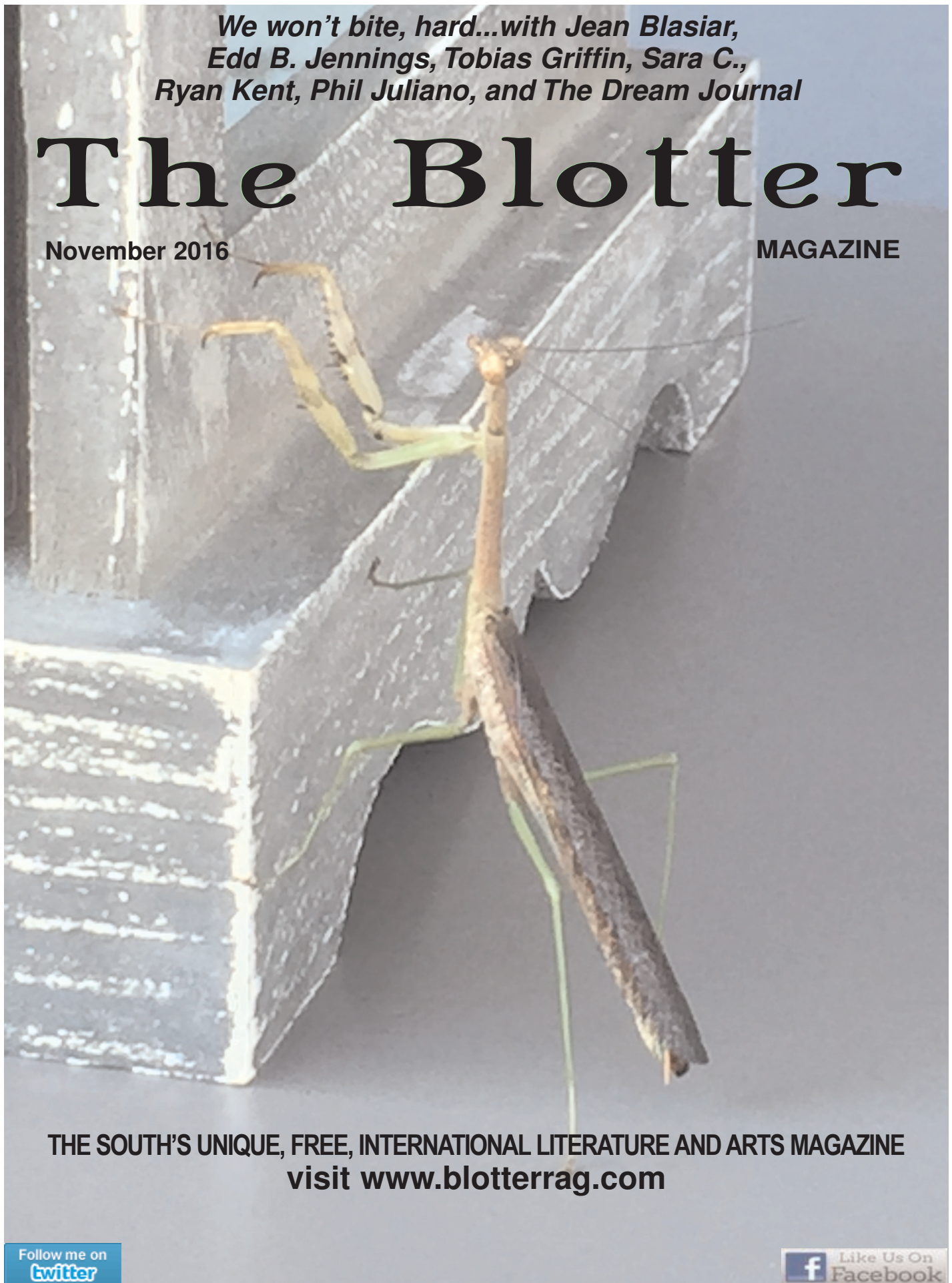


*We won't bite, hard...with Jean Blasiar,
Edd B. Jennings, Tobias Griffin, Sara C.,
Ryan Kent, Phil Juliano, and The Dream Journal*

The Blotter

November 2016

MAGAZINE



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 w w w . c l m p . o r g

"Wind, Part 2"

So what was there to be scared about? I could swim and the water wasn't particularly deep, wasn't very cold by June and less so in July. Still my heart thumped uncomfortably in my chest with something other than excited anticipation.

Our boat rigged, we pushed away from the dock in our turn and pointed ourselves down-river. I always clambered aboard first; all clutching hands and clumsy feet, to get to my spot as carefully as possible. Although the boat was fifteen feet long, it drew but five inches of water. That is it only settled five inches into the water when empty. And the boat's hull was curved and the centerboard was up when we lowered the boat into the river with the mechanical lift - a kind of boat-crane - so there was little to prevent it from tipping and spilling me out as I unhooked the lift's cables. I, on the other hand, was that counterbalancing thing - that ballast - when my friend climbed aboard. He had a sense about him of being at ease on this wobbly paper cup floating on the river. He stood on the bow, hoisted the gaff and sail, tied off those lines, and seemed to stroll thoughtlessly back to his place at the tiller.

With 150 square feet of sail, *Gizmo* was a touchy creature. A gust of breeze at the wrong time could tip her. That is, a bit of wind and an unready, unsteady (me, in a nutshell) crewmember. A tip and the race was over, particularly because the boat we chose to sail seemed to be designed to take in water quickly and go down with all hands. Not that you could honorably drown like a normal sailor. Instead, you had to float in the Bay beside your overturned boat until the committee boat arrived to look down at you with hands on hips and scornful smirks. And what happened here? they wouldn't ask, didn't have to. Now you had to un-step the mast, tie it all up with the sail to the boat as best as you could so that you could be towed ignominiously to the closest dock. No, one might decide in that situation, please don't bother. Just load the starter gun with real slugs and put us out of our misery!

While I made sure that everything was stowed - our lifejackets, the hand-pump, we slid before the morning breeze down river to the course with its beach-ball shaped marker "barrels" moored in place against the tide in the river's mouth to the Bay. The rain, which might have postponed the race until the afternoon, or indeed some other Saturday, was slacking. The wind remained stiff. Good, I told myself. I'm here, we're ready. Let's race! But the truth was I always felt like a novice, like a liar, because I couldn't get my heart to settle down, couldn't stow my anxiety, relax and have fun. All I wanted to do, once I was out on the water, was be done. How long until we get to start? How long was the race itself? Now that the rain was gone there was little likelihood of a "scratch," so we'd do our race. Uh-oh. Would they have two races, perhaps, this morning, instead of one in the morning and one after lunch? That would be good. How nice it would be to be done for the day when lunchtime came.

We were in a cluster of other racers of different sail-shapes and hull styles,

tacking forth and back in the fresh Bay breeze (read gusty wind, with unpredictable changes in direction) determining the best positioning for us prior to the start of our race. A beautiful collection of different colored sails, like birds on the wing. We watched the other classes, my friend nodding as one by one they were off with a blast of the committee boat's air-horn. He already knew what to do, but was looking left and right to see what the other sailors in our class were doing. What are they thinking? his squinting eyes asked. The first leg looked to be a broad reach - wind coming at a 90 degree angle to the boat. A straight shot to the "barrel," it would be like runners racing to the first curve in the cinder track. Great fun, all of the boats being tested against one another. Pinch at the barrel, and take a big curve without jibing to conserve speed. Go out to clear air as long as possible, then come about and make a run back at the second barrel. Yes. This was strategic knowledge I didn't have (like not completely understanding wind direction versus apparent wind direction), and was not able to just...accumulate despite its not being my first rodeo. Or even my second. Would that it were already over!

And that, ladies and gentlemen, was the story of my life. I was terrible at just being in the moment, and doing what that moment required. I was terrific at preparing - oh, my arms were as strong as steel cable. OK, maybe copper cable. And I was good at being done, great at cleaning up and leaving. But I didn't have much stomach for being in the here, and now.

And it wasn't just because the weather sucked (or, rather, blew). Or because I didn't fit in with the salty bastards who sailed on summer Saturdays. I kind of understood all of that. It was a club, after all. I was like this at work, at home. Back in school? Good at studying, lousy at being in the classroom. In the office, I was good at preparing for the sale, not happy in front of the customer. Great at driving home after the dinner date was over.

We were the fourth firing of the starter's "pistol", but still it made my heart jump. We timed our getaway to perfection out of the chaos of other boats, and I was leaning back as my friend pulled the sheet that controls the sail just a bit tighter. My feet tucked beneath the straps, my legs and belly burned with the effort of keeping us upright against the wind. I wished I had a drink of water, and was simultaneously glad I didn't have to pee. Go figure.

And that, I thought, must be the thing. I'm from the land. I don't know how many years of being out here every Saturday it takes to be comfortable out here. (God! I ached already. My hands ached from helping set the mast, from holding on to the transom, from white-knuckled gripping in anticipation. My stomach muscles ached from being someone trapped in an office chair every Monday through Friday.) Maybe it's an undefinable number. I would never get there, would never fit in, would never get to the point where I'm not frightened. Stop thinking, I told myself. Inhale, smell the salt and the Bay and the exhaust from motor boats and the pong of mildewed lifejackets. Exhale and sail.

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CAUTION

We're releasing our tax forms, because we like you.

"A Matter Of Who"

by Jean Blasiar

There was something. I couldn't put my finger on it, but there was definitely something wrong. I asked my wife all the time, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she'd said. But there was something. I knew there was something.

I tried a new tactic. "You know, we're going to have to tighten our belt with this financial crisis."

"I understand, darling."
Too damn understanding.



New book project from Phil Juliano!! 'Little Peej and Spencer: The Amazing Time Traveling Toy Rescue'. A novelized version of the syndicated comic strip, 'Best In Show'. This story has all the typical issues a seven year old has to deal with: bullies, homework and a little sister. What's different? Our seven year old hero begins his story as a middle-aged comic geek so nostalgic for his prized Star Wars toy collection that he devises a way to go back in time to retrieve them. Of course, things don't go according to plan. Expected release Winter 2016. Follow along with the project at www.facebook.com/PeejandSpencer. and help fund / advance order via <http://www.gofundme.com/peejandspencer>

"We may not be able to go to Hawaii next October." Actually, I had already booked the tickets.

"That's okay, sweetheart. It wouldn't be right with all our friends losing their jobs. We can go to Hawaii when things get better."

Damn! I was going to have her followed.

His name was Jennings. Oscar Jennings, Private Eye. I got him out of the Yellow Pages.

"Another man?" he said.

"I don't know. Maybe." I hoped to God not. "I don't know what it is. She's just too damn happy. Smiling all the time. Singing. Cooking. Making my favorite meals."

"Guilty as hell," Oscar said.

"How will you find out?" I asked.

"I'll follow her. You sure you want to know what I find out?"

"Absolutely. If it's another man, well, at least I'll know. I'll be

able to deal with it. But this... this is driving me crazy."

"I hear you. Happy wives are a nuisance. Is she pregnant?"

"Oh, no. She's too old."

"But not too old for an affair."

"No, I guess not. Are they ever?"

"I had a lady in her late sixties. Ran off with a geezer in his eighties."

"Why?"

"Her husband ignored her. You ignoring your wife?"

"No. Absolutely not. I'm home every night at 6:30. We watch television and go to bed at ten o'clock."

"How long you been married?"

"Twenty eight years."

"Ever cheat on her?"

"Absolutely not."

"She ever have an affair, one that you know about?"

"No! Jane is a very good woman."

"Pretty?"

"Yes."

"Sexy?"

"Sexy? I guess."

"When's the last time you two...?"

"Is that any of your business really?"

"Yes, it is. If the wife isn't get-

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ting it at home then she's..."

"She's getting it at home. Can we just leave it at that?"

"This your address?" He held up my card.

"It's *our* address.

"She work?"

"You mean, outside the home? No."

"What's she do all day?"

"You know, Mister Jennings, I think that's what I'm paying you to find out."

And so we left it. Actually, I felt pretty good about it. I went back to work and tried to forget whatever it was, whoever it was, but I couldn't help but start thinking about "who". I thought about a guy in our couples bridge club that was always complimenting Jane. David Donovan. Yeah. David Donovan. Married to plain, dull Emily Donovan.

It was right there in front of my face. David Donovan. They were probably planning on running away together. No wonder Jane wasn't upset about canceling the Hawaii trip. She wouldn't be here for it. She was running away with David Donovan.

I thought, maybe I should retire early. Tell the boss I wanted

early retirement. Go home and tell Jane. Sell the house. Buy that condo in the desert. Jane could take up golf. Get her mind off David Donovan. Get away from everything here that was making her miserably happy.

By the end of the week I'd made up my mind. I was actually shocked to see how my boss jumped at my suggestion of early retirement. He even told me to take two weeks vacation now and all the sick leave I accrued. I found out through a friend in sales that my boss had been told to trim some fat from our department and my early retirement took care of that little problem for him.

It was surprising the few mementos I'd collected in twenty five years at the office. I took the pictures of Jane and the girls, a papier-mache teddy bear the girls made me for father's day, a pen Jane gave me for my birthday and that was it. It all fit into an 8 by 10 envelope, my entire career in an 8 by 10 envelope.

Oscar Jennings called as I was packing up to leave.

"I got something," he said.

"She's working out. That's not a good sign."

"It isn't?"

"No. Three things someone does when they're thinking about having an affair. Lose weight, work out, buy new clothes. Guaranteed."

"Mister Jennings," I said, "I've had second thoughts about this. I'll pay you for your time so far, but I don't want to hear any more."

"Sure," Jennings said, "don't look at it. It's better that way. Save yourself a lot of heartache. Only when she hits you with

divorce papers, give me a call. I know a guy can get you photos you can use in the settlement."

We hung up. It was ten o'clock in the morning. I stopped in a bar on the way home and ordered a Bloody Mary. I took one sip. It tasted terrible. I paid the bartender and headed home.

Jane was in the kitchen when I got home.

"Peter," she said, the smile fading. "Are you sick?"

"No. I quit my job."

There was no smile now.

"Quit?" she said.

"Quit. I took early retirement."

"But..."

"We can sell the house, move to the desert. You can take golf lessons. It'll be wonderful."

"But..."

"You'll see, Jane. You won't be... miserable any more."

"But Peter, I'm not miserable."

"Yes, you are. All you do is smile."

"What?"

"Maybe it's the change.

Maybe what you're really looking for is change. We're going to do it. We're going to change everything. You'll be happy."

"I am happy."

"No, you're not. But you will be. You'll see."

"Peter?"

"Yes."

"Maybe you're the one who isn't happy." ♦

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"Rank Growth"

by Edd B. Jennings

A spider web stuck to my face, a reliable sign no one had passed this way in hours. Constant checks of the worn leaf meal underneath my feet only offered partial reassurance. I didn't trust it to hold reliable impressions. If I expected to have these woods to myself, I still liked to confirm my solitude. Few loved the rank growth of the mid-summer woods, a place of stinging wood nettle, greenbrier thorns, and closed in humidity. I walked under and among linden, mulberry and spicebush that enveloped and protected me. The blue cohosh ran to waist high. I could drop to the ground and disappear.

Most of my education that mattered came from these dark woods. Sometimes events unfolded in front of my eyes. I was there for the three days in May when the mountain magnolias spread their yellow blooms. More often I came later to read the physical evidence; a doe trying to drink stump water from a rotten depression in a

decaying tree caught her neck in a fork and died.

Somewhere ahead a wood warbler I neither expected to see or identify sang its heart out.

Early lessons came back. I stood next to my Aunt Stacy, my grandfather's oldest sister, who lived past one hundred years. She would have been of the age to date Roger Tory Peterson. She listened to the redstart. I should know the redstart, she said. I didn't and don't. I've glimpsed one once. These woods are alive with life I'll rarely or never see. Flying squirrels inhabit hollow trees and float in the gloaming, their magic unsullied by human eyes. I go years between sightings. Five minutes in any direction, and I'll come to a plant I don't know, even after a lifetime of looking in this place rich with life. Somewhere near ginseng matures that I'll never get to watch.

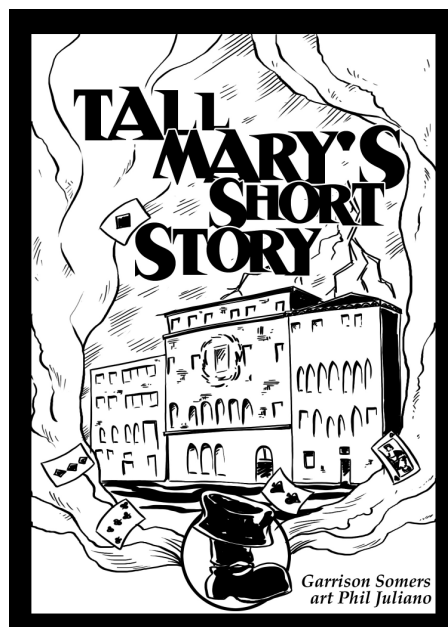
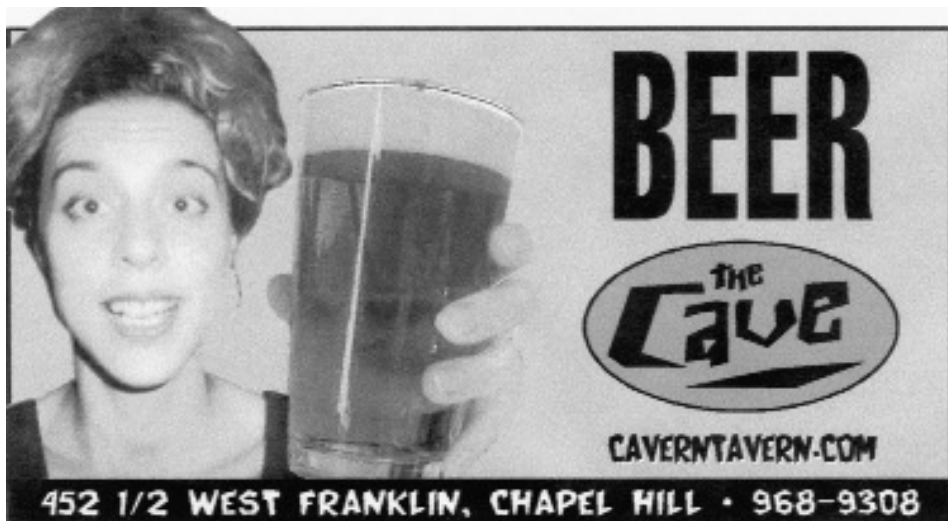
I don't explain the hidden hours these woods claim. The warbler has quit. The hot woods sleep.

I don't expect to see or learn anything today. That I watch doesn't presume that I expect to see.

I love and hate the change. I want the new growth and the renewal. I don't want where the light penetrates into the empty spot left in the canopy by the great red oak that went down two years ago. I'll never stand under it again and wait for the coming dawn as the young turkeys hidden in its branches exchange their timid pre-dawn chirps to confirm that they are not alone.

I want to be a child again and follow my Great Uncle Jimmy across Hematite Ridge. My brothers and I follow him in a line, all of us carrying ancient military rifles and shotguns, taller than we are, in pursuit of deer we are too noisy to see. He creates the world of a patrol in the Highlands of New Guinea in World War II. His squad pushes a pair of Japanese soldiers up into the headhunter territory of the Owen Stanley Range. His whispers bring back the fear.

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



Anything could be watching from the deep shadows. A pair of elusive figures appear from the wall of growth. Something they drop hits the center of the trail with a sharp clunk. They slip back into the sanctity of the jungle. My Great Uncle approaches the place the two figures crossed the trail, suspecting a trap. The two shrunken heads of the Japanese soldiers constitute a warning. They, we, had no need to intrude further into the headhunter territory and turn back.

Hidden in this rank growth, I return to what is past and watch for the miniature scene, which may be no more than the flash of the blue tailed skink scurrying under a log, or a dragonfly floating on the dead air among the midges. These miniature scenes, which may or may not come, are my life now. Maybe they always were. ❖

"The Terrible Vengeance"


by Tobias Griffin

Jonah Richmeier had always been plagued by bureaucrats. One of his earliest memories was of his mother dragging him to a school board meeting when he was three years old. He must have been there because she had no one else to watch him; his father had just left the family. All he could remember was a sterile, government room with a limp U.S. flag clinging to a pole next to a commission of three school board members. The talk was, of course, over his head, but he did remember one statement, noteworthy for the vigor and forcefulness with which it was expressed to his mother:

"YOU JEWISH LADIES

WITH BIG GLASSES ARE NOT GOING TO CALL THE SHOTS IN THIS DISTRICT *ANY-MORE!*"

It was, perhaps, the first time that he had any inkling that he was Jewish; maybe he had not known because his father was not, and his mother did not cling to any religious rituals. But the main point was that people with bad, polyester shirts and unconvincing comb-overs, who worked in arid, official environments that always had that odd look of being extremely clean while at the same time very worn and common, were bent on depriving him the privileges and rights due to any citizen of the Republic. If other students had been placed in a class with a teacher known to be effective, and he was placed in a class with a teacher known to be ineffective, his mother would try to get him transferred. There was a special class at his elementary school, taught by one Mr. Darcy, that was famous for performing the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan. It was so identified with these productions that the whole class was always known as the "Gilbert and Sullivan Troupe." It was no secret that the students who were in this



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A **The Dream Journal** *extra special* section - our first ever!!

Ed. Note: We were e-mailed a dream so...mature in nature that we decided that you should see it, but didn't want to be regarded as so blatantly dismissive of the delicate sensibilities of our region of the planet. (As you well know, violence is OK, but _____ is verboten.) So we took out all of the words that might offend, leaving you blank space and some grammatical suggestions for filling in those blanks. You know, like you did on long road trips when you were a kid! So, without further ado, have fun creating your own sexy dream, as contributed by Sara C. of Raleigh, NC!!

“I had _____ with a teenage David Bowie”

I had _____ with a teenage David Bowie, but strangely it was not good. I was

Noun describing a physical action,
you know...

in some sort of dorm with a female roommate. She liked David and didn't want

me to _____ with him, but while she was out we did anyway.

A noun referencing what college
students want more than life itself

I felt his _____ spasm and spurt into my _____ and worried about

noun the opposite of “go”

Noun that rhymes with the Queen's title

pregnancy. He was _____ me from behind at one point and reaching

Pick an action verb, any action verb

around to grab my hanging _____, which caused him to say “ew.”

an innocuous body part

In the dream I knew he didn't really like me but still wanted to

have _____ anyway — effectively _____ with the aid of

A noun that is the be-all and
end-all of existence

An action verb that is the be-all
and end-all of existence

another person's body.

Afterwards, he was playing a video game in the _____ and I whis-

A place in your house, where you drop all
your stuff when you come in the door

pered in his _____, "Can I _____ your _____?"
noun Rare action verb noun

He said, "Oh, _____," as if I'd just offered him a _____. I was
Exclamation comestable noun

whispering because my roommate was back, doing _____ in the other room.
some sort of vague action verb

It started out well, with his _____ _____ sliding
multiple adjectives
tied together with a
dash noun

effortlessly to the back of my _____, but when I looked down it had turned into
noun

a _____, _____, _____ _____ appendage like a scorpion's
adjective adverb adjective adjective

_____. He said sorry, but that's just how he is. I couldn't finish _____
noun action verb - slang

him, although I remember thinking later inside the dream that I should have tried

_____ his _____. ❖
action verb plural noun

The Blotter

class went on to great success in middle school, high school, and beyond. All of Jonah's friends got into the Troupe—but for some inscrutable, official reason, Jonah himself was placed in another class. When his friends protested, the bureaucracy of the district formed ranks and pushed back to make sure that Jonah stayed where he was. His mother, always her son's champion, went all the way to the superintendent to plead her son's cause, but he gave her the same answer that she always got:

"Mrs. Richmeier, your son is not special. Therefore he is to be accorded no special treatment. Good day."

Years later, despite the bureaucrats' best efforts to subvert his attempts to get an education that would allow him to flourish and succeed later on in life, he somehow made it to graduate school in Computer Science. He had done exemplary work, winning an award for the best dissertation in his field the year he graduated, but still his difficulty with following bureaucrats' rules and filing paperwork on time still plagued him. However, academic achievement did not keep assuage the pain resulting from the traumas inflicted on him by the poorly dressed, overly made-up, diamelle-encrusted flunkys of the State. One result of this early oppression and suppression of his fledgling spirit, and the tortures inflicted on him by arbitrary and tyrannical authority, was that he trusted no one, and was hence eternally and permanently alone. Whenever anyone would try to get close to him, he would lash out with bitter anger, fearing that the person requesting trust would do him like the army of State lackeys

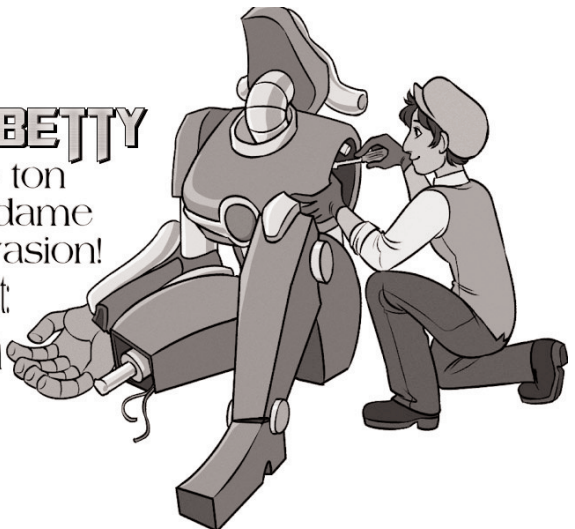
had done throughout the course of his childhood struggles against an evil, malignant power structure. The person who is alone can survive, but cannot live; he can achieve great things in the spirit of the contest or *agon*, but all of these achievements seem hollow, given that there is no one with which he can share them. A lifetime of academic achievement and mental development had given him the objectivity to reflect on these personal deficiencies of his; and one bright Thursday morning, the course of these reflections had led him to commit suicide. For several hours he repeatedly placed a large, soon spit-soaked and congealed wad of valium tablets on his tongue and then spitting it out when he didn't have the nerve to swallow it.

While he was thus occupied, the phone suddenly rang. From the Caller ID readout, Jonah saw that Derek Carleton, the graduate secretary of his department, was calling him at home. This surprised Jonah: he had just finished laboriously filling out a long set of forms submitting his dissertation for approval by the Graduate School the day before. Having turned them in just the day before, and knowing how

long it usually took Derek, a sloth-like and lugubrious petty official, to file paperwork, he did not expect to hear about it until the next week at the earliest. As he went toward the jingling receiver, the same fast carousel of images and ideas rushed through his mind every time he was forced to think about Derek Carleton. The first that came to mind was an image of Derek's bloated, pasty face. It was one of those chunky men's faces that had a relatively normal set of features peering out of its bland corpulence; however, they were surrounded by a peculiar kind of fat-halo, that spread from its thick double-chin up alongside both cheeks, reminding one of nothing so much as the face of a mandrill or baboon. It was like a face within another face, with a fleshy border running around its edge that appeared to afford some kind of warmth or protection for his pinched, rather delicate visage. After this image had flashed across his mind, the narrative of Derek Carleton rushed through his consciousness: the fact that he had been a lit major at the University many years ago, a star student from whom great things were expected;

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that he had decided to become a science fiction author, and had taken the graduate secretary job as a day gig to keep him going until his writing career took off; that, in his capacity as an up and coming author, he had met a girl far, far out of his league, a tall, giggly and nerdily captivating redhead named Franny, a sci-fi enthusiast strongly taken with the idea of both loving this odd, squishy man and supporting him as he worked his way towards his first Hugo Award; that, after suffering setback after setback in his career, he realized that he was only a graduate secretary, nothing more; that as this realization set in, he became more and more entrenched in his position; and that the only thrill he got out of life, as he desperately tried to hang on to a wife who evinced more and more disgust with his growing depression and palpable failure, was to execute the Byzantine rules and official order with more and more ruthless exaction, particularly when it came to the grad students, who were all writing what he saw as meaningless, dry, elitist tracts which would, to his infinite chagrin, be published and read by somebody someday, unlike his own work.

These facts about Derek Carleton had become such an ingrained part Jonah's common store of knowledge that they could all occur to Jonah in just an instant. After that instant had passed, he strolled over to the phone and picked up the receiver.

"Hello?"

"Is this Jonah?"

"It is."

"This is Derek Carleton."

"Oh, hi, Derek."

"I just wanted to call you about the form you filed with the department about the finalization of your PhD."

"Oh."

"Well, it's not at ALL the way it's supposed to be."

The sentence was delivered with such an infinite passive hostility that, in the time that it took Derek to sneer out the last syllable of his utterance, the entire history of government interference with his life and how it had scarred him coalesced within his mind like an all-comprehending, inevitable apocalypse. He saw now why he was the way he was—it was the fault of Derek and all his ilk, a disreputable chain of rogues and devils who had marked him out for emotional failure since that first

anti-Semitic remark at the District meeting when he was just three years old. The awful perfection of the conspiracy wrestled his mind to the ground and held it there. He shook his head, blinked his eyes twice, and croaked into the phone.

"That it?"

"Yes."

"You specifically called me at home just to tell me that?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Goodbye, Derek."

"Goodbye."

Jonah promptly hung up the phone and swallowed the mushy saliva-soaked bolus he had been toying with all morning. After having his stomach pumped, he spent three days under observation at the local psych ward, an experience that was not unlike being in prison. The whole time one thought and one thought only possessed his mind, and even his body: the bureaucrats had done it again—and this time they had nearly killed him.

The brutal aftermath of his total psychological collapse prevented him from pursuing an academic career in Computer Science, so he worked fitfully over the next fourteen years at various part-time jobs in retail and construction,

Best In Show Comic



The Blotter

never amassing any savings and barely getting by from day to day. He finally got a full-time job at a private sector corporation that was so huge that it had its own massive, sprawling bureaucracy. But before he could be hired, he had to fill in more paperwork than he ever had to at any previous job. He went over the forms laboriously, first fill them out in pencil, going over them to make sure he hadn't made any mistakes, and then, with a long, flowing hand, tracing over them in pen. Proud of his handiwork, Jonah walked into the office of Beryl Gleykin. She was a short, pug-faced woman, with straggling, greasy red tresses that clung stickily to the sides of her dull, meaty face. She dressed with no flair, and had a constant look of hostile surprise on her blunt, grotesque features. She led Jonah into her cubicle, pulled out a chair for him to sit on, and busied herself with organizing the papers Jonah had brought. Apparently something caught her eye as she lifted a meticulously filled-out form. She held it up to the light, squinted at it and turned her monstrous face toward Jonah.

"This form, here."

"Yes?"

"Well, it's not at ALL the way it's supposed to be."

Something, a hazy notion that had hovered cloud-like over him for the good part of his life, suddenly took on shape within his mind: after a lifetime of passively enduring the oppression of these petty tyrants, he was finally going to get the revenge that he had craved ever since he was three years old.

After leaving her office, Jonah

drove to his local public library. He went to an available computer terminal and, using the hacking skills he had picked up while studying software engineering, accessed both Beryl's bank account number and that of a large mutual fund the corporation used for its pension and retirement accounts. With a few deft keystrokes, Jonah had transferred several hundred thousand dollars from the mutual fund into Beryl's account. He then went to a disreputable part of town, purchased an untraceable burner cell phone, and proceeded to anonymously alert the Corporation, the local police, and the FBI about Beryl's embezzlement. He wished he could be there the moment that they arrested her, but that was impossible: he had duties to attend to at his new job, for one thing, and there was no telling how or when the authorities would deal with her transgressions. After two weeks, however, he noticed a commotion brewing in the back depths of his division's cubicles.

"What's going on?"

"You haven't heard?"

"No, what's up?"

"That Beryl in Human

Resources? It turns out she's been embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars from the company."

"You're kidding!"

"No, this is for real. The cops just took her away. It's the funniest thing—I never would have figured her for the type. Would you?"

"No—never."

Jonah settled back into his swivel-chair and stretched, his hands trembling as they reached toward the heaven of fluorescent lights above him. For once in his

life he had struck back against pure evil, and the retribution had been glorious and swift. He wondered how different his life would have been if it had occurred to him to resist the army of life-ruining, soul-destroying officials that had deformed and deranged the course of his up to that point.

He googled Derek Carleton. It appeared that he was still graduate secretary of the department at his college. Perhaps he would take a trip to the old alma mater. It would be hard for everyone to accept the fact that Derek was an embezzler—the news would probably be hardest on Franny. But then, he decided, it would be his duty to help her while her husband rotted in some cold, airless, windowless Supermax prison. He was sure Derek would be worried about her. So Jonah resolved to let him know that he was comforting her while he was in stir—comforting her perhaps up to three or four times a night, if necessary. He was sure that Derek would appreciate that. ❖



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@blotterrag.com

I had a dream about an unseen fire – inching toward us, just out of our view. A helicopter swirled in our front yard in the early morning darkness while E— and I stood exposed through the nursery's lit windows, caught in the act of picking out clothes for the boys in order that they might begin another day.

Like deer in the headlights, simultaneously mesmerized and terrified without knowing why, we stood with whirring and ripping in our ears. Pale, expressionless faces studied us from the hovering bird – somber and scientific. Trees bent and swayed in violent submission in the yard... but they were fewer in number than what I knew should have been. Gone were the proud, lanky trunks; the thick blankets of bark reaching to the sky... always reaching. In their stead were low, sprawling twig-of-a-trees, scattered with bald fragility. Young teenagers ran up, knocking on our windows – their lips forming warnings we could not hear, and pointing... but I could not turn my head to follow their panicked gaze.

What do you do when you cannot find your babies? Where do you go to escape your fear? When considering preservation (not just of myself, but of all I knew), my mind reeled with what I should grab – My wallet? My phone to call for help? Somehow, they did not seem adequate. I thought to take a blanket to guard against the bitter cold and wrap my babies within... My babies...Where were my babies? I ran about the house, room-to-room, calculating the risk, planning my next step. Strangely, I was hesitant to leave – the dark cold outside my door stood gaping....

I knew my children were there, even though I could not reach them. I caught a glimpse of little J—, leaning in nonchalant repose against the living room couch; playing with something small (maybe a car?) among the cushions. Still, I could not scoop him up and carry him from this invisible harm...and seeing him there, so peacefully, I didn't want to. I knew he was okay. I scurried on. I never caught a glimpse of N—, but in the end, I knew he was fine too; a resourceful, independent young lad he is becoming. E— remained throughout, a calm and composed figure in the background. I, on the other hand, was aimless, wandering in mind and body.

~~~~~

Dreams. They are riddled, mysterious oddities. Sometimes they act as a soundboard, bouncing back random fragments of memories like a television with bad reception. Other times, they have the profound power to express what otherwise may go unrecognized. There is a lot of uncertainty in my life right now. Gears are moving that I have yet to define. But I feel them... Maybe that is why I feel compelled to understand this dream. The details within it shared with me an answer for a question unspoken. What is my question?

Like unseen fire, I recognize the anxiety of my future unknowns, looming just around the corner. It is difficult to brace for what you do not see. All you have is the warnings, mouthed by silent messengers.

Upon first waking, this dream left me troubled and restless. Yet, in rumination I find peace. I am taking it as a sign...a promise...that my family *will* be okay. There is nothing in my power to ensure this, but I trust it. When logic defies – when circumstances say, “run” – I feel my babies...my husband...will be fine. I find comfort in that, even though my default reaction is worry. My attempts at preservation seem trivial and irrelevant now. Maybe that was why I could not do it. It is not in my control.

Amanda G – Durham, NC

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NIGHTSOUND  
STUDIOS



Two by Ryan Kent

## "SEIKO 665559"

opened the jewelry box  
looked down at a gold watch  
it had s t o p p e d  
9:43                      july 2

chronologically  
crib death came for his sister  
his mother at 34    stomach cancer  
then his grandmother    just o l d  
a younger brother    sarcoidosis  
    his father    stepmother  
    both of them    over 80  
wife at home at 78    heart failure  
then the younger younger brother  
l y m p h o m a    april 2013  
seiko 665559    outlived him  
b a t t e r i e s



## "National Geographic"

the zebra got enough footing  
to heave itself from  
the bank to solid ground  
striped hide tearing from the  
abdomen to just above the hip  
like mary's dress did that summer  
we hopped the chain link fence  
tossing it aside before she dove  
into the neighborhood pool

it stood stunned on the bank  
panting as the crocodile eased  
back down into that thick water  
and i remember her looking up at me  
with just the top of her head  
the eyes showing  
waiting to see if i'd drop in  
or if she'd have to climb  
out to get me

## CONTRIBUTORS:

**Jean Blasiar** is an author, novelist and prizewinning playwright from Pasadena CA , In addition to *The Blotter's* August 2015 issue, her recent work includes pieces in *Romance Magazine*, *The Flash Fiction Press*, *Clever Magazine*, *The Foliate Oaks Literary Magazine* and the production of "Am I Good" in the Santa Cruz Actors Theatre: 8 at 8.

**Edd B. Jennings** runs beef cattle on the banks of the New River in the mountains of Virginia. Since spring of 2016, he has placed work with *Trigger Warnings*, *The Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Jotters United*, *Bedford 87*, *Thread Magazine*, *Quail Bell*, *Roane Publishing*, *Sicklit*, and *Ginosko Literary Journal*. His nonfiction Arctic canoeing books and his novel, *Under Poplar Camp Mountain*, are with the Leslie E. Owen Agency.

**Tobias Griffin** is a short-story writer, novelist, poet and scholar of Renaissance literature who lives in Marin County, California. He has published a short story, "The Jersey Devil," in Volume Seven Issue Three of *EFiction* magazine, as well as poems in *Fourteen* and *Prole* magazines and scholarly work in *Spenser Studies*.

**Ryan Kent** is the author of two books of poetry, *Poems For Dead People*, and *This Is Why I Am Insane*. He drinks in bars, apartments, and rowhouses in Richmond, Virginia.

**Phil Juliano** of Bloomington, MN, is a good Blotterfriend. Follow his adventures on [philjulianoillustration.com](http://philjulianoillustration.com) (and check out his current projects on page 4).

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A mysterious will by an unknown hand; and murder...



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