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The Blotter

magazine



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“Rejection”

My daughter told me “you’re rambling” the other day, while we were on a drive. Stopped me cold in my verbal tracks. *Rambling*. What does that even mean? Well, according to the dictionary, “lengthy and confused or inconsequential.”

Holy crap. That’s bad. Real bad. Lengthy I can live with, but confused or inconsequential? Those are crimes of the first order to a writer.

My first reaction was to be hurt. My god – she basically told me to shut-up. Was she even listening to me? What was I talking about – it had to be something worthy of note. I mean, I’m entertaining, enlightening, filled with as many nuggets of truth as the Klondike River once was with tracer. I can’t even remember. Uh-oh. What went wrong? We were in the car, so she wasn’t doing homework. Was I interrupting her listening to L’il Nas X? My subscription to many-channel radio recently ended, so I was listening to locally broadcast classical music – very quietly because I respect her sensitive ears and despite the lessons of *An American In Paris* not everyone enjoys waltzes by *Ssssbbbhtrauss*.

But then I started talking. Asking her about her day. Telling her about mine. And she asked me, in her inimitable way, to stop. Begging the question: am I tone-deaf to what she wants to talk about, or read, or hear – or was there something else afoot?

No one of us is exempt from the feeling that our ears and eyes are being subjected to unwelcome input. I just googled the word *barrage*, and in addition to “talking too much” the definition of the word included the example of an army firing many cannons over the heads of its soldiers to protect them as they move forward in battle. In addition, a barrage is a kind of dam which raises the level of the reservoir behind it in order to provide water to canals built off the reservoir, for navigation. I’m struggling to see how those go together with “talking too much.” Is it a French thing?

Gotta think about this. One word – three apparently unrelated definitions. Or are they?

I’m finished with this summer’s beach books – and I have to admit, I like when things...ramble. I enjoy a thousand page read. Am I a dying breed? The truth is I don’t get out much, so I have less interaction with others – don’t talk enough on the phone, and when I do I like to talk about books

and music and politics and current events. I like to talk about what I want. Surely that's normal, right? Doesn't everyone?

Yes, I looked at the sentences I just typed and saw how insensitive they are.

From the moment we wake each morning, we're part of the input of others and they are part of ours. Despite the instagramming of our culture shrinking everything down to infertile kernels and inedible chaff we somehow still communicate with each other. And no matter how much I may choose to feel...rebuffed, am I not guilty of hanging up on cold-callers who...ramble, trying to fit in their sales pitch in one long robo-breath? Don't I flip the thousand-words-in-one bird at the driver who cuts me off in traffic?

And when I'm on the horn with close friends or my sisters – that is, people with whom I share at least same-generation communications skills, do I ramble, oblivious to others yet pleased with the sound of my own voice?

At this point I might say “long story short” but I fear that such an old chestnut would turn this into a farce. What my daughter did – and thank goodness – was send me a simple rejection. As a writer I should be used to that, and as an editor, I am reminded that rejections almost always aren't personal. Hopefully, they're part of the process of improvement. With that in mind, I need to be more cognizant of my longwinded speechifying, my off-the-cuff storytelling, my unsolicited soliloquys and rants. I must learn to pull the plug on myself earlier, or expect the offstage hoo....

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in the Great State of Georgia!



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CAUTION

corn and I don't care

“Dream Journal”

by Jason Sallinger

My way into work was again accompanied by my music on random. The beginning of this Interpol song was one I'd heard a thousand times before, but the pitch was off. It wasn't a live- or demo version. It sounded like a re-release, or remaster. I looked at my music display above the center console and it read “InterpolToy”. Ok. That cleared things up.

I had taken the back streets this day. Less traffic allowed me to open her up. The cool morning felt good through all my opened windows. I managed to beat all the lights and came to rest in my usual spot abutting the loading dock, which rose about 7 feet from the ground. From my back right I could hear drippy Southern rock coming to park next to me. I looked right and saw a pickup truck whose chortling engine chuff sounded like racism. The driver had very close-cropped, black wavy hair, although its length didn't qualify it to have waves. The pickup came to rest about 20 inches from the loading dock.

Its passenger door opened, and the Southern rock became a little louder. I could hear some indistinguishable dialog between the driver and passenger. It seemed the passenger had special needs, and the driver did not. The passenger shut his door and moved to pass in front of

the pickup, between it and the loading dock. When the passenger was halfway across the width of the pickup, the driver began moving the truck in a direction I wasn't expecting; it moved on an arc, with the tail hitch as the tail of this vector, and the radiator grill as the head. The truck moved side to side, causing the passenger to roll between the front fender and the loading dock wall. The passenger bleated out with mild displeasure, almost as if this were commonplace. Then the vector of the truck also moved forward, pinning the passenger tighter and tighter.

Aghast and utterly horrified, I'd seen enough - “STOP!!” My objection rang out and the truck stopped gyrating, and immediately moved to its initial parking spot. The passenger hung his head and finished his traversal. He then made quickly to pass in front of my car, then continued to my left and into the restaurant. Remembering the offender, I looked right, into the driver seat, and he was gone. I looked to my music display and it showed I had another 4 minutes left on InterpolToy.

As I finished listening, all the while tapping my palms to the rhythm, I sensed the driver coming to my driver window. Wearing a white apron, he had a somber face and at once I knew what it was. “You can

turn in your apron. Your last check will be mailed to you.”

“But, you?!”

Now his face was aghast, like I said something utterly ridiculous or insulting.

I thought phrases that would become my mantra, ‘This is complete bullshit. I can't wait to tell her. I'm pretty sure I have a lawsuit here.’

As I opened my door, the driver vanished.

I walked into the store and I saw Big Burly Boss. “You are done here. I will take your apron.” I started to recount the scene by the loading dock, but Burly wouldn't have it. “I'm not interested.”

I balled up the apron and threw it onto the top of the desk.

I must have passed out, because the next thing I knew I was talking to my wife. “And then he comes back out and says I'M fired!”

“You never needed that place.”

“I will sue them. This is a home-run.”

When I looked next to me again my mother said, “No. You will never win. You aren't well-versed in Distribution.”

I felt like arguing, because what I did had little to do with Distribution. But she was right. I needed them to understand.

The ride back was only room temperature, and the songs weren't noteworthy. That's probably why I

don't remember it.

I walked to the back of the store and prepared to supplicate to Mother Hen Boss.

"I don't understand why I was let go. He was terrorizing that poor man."

"I heard you making fun of him. You made faces. Like this:"

I certainly did not. This was hopeless.

The next morning, I went to Globo Diagnostics for my pee test.

She gave me a cup for the business. I looked down. It was a small paper coffee cup with a thin plastic lid with a perforated sip opening. "You can put it on the ledge when you're done." She directed me to the door where I'd seen the woman before me give her sample.

When I finished filling the paper cup, and fighting to put on the cheap lid, which didn't fit properly, I went to put it on the ledge. The sample left before me was put in a transparent, thick plastic sample cup, with a yellow opaque top and a white piece of tape with the patient's name, rank, and serial number. I compared it to my coffee cup. Its only identification was a line on the outside, where the coffee company name should be, instead with my name in magic marker.

On my way out I asked her why the difference in collection cups.

"The one with the yellow lid is sterile." I felt like telling her to turn in her apron. ❖

"Exit Plan"

by Dixon Winwood

I sleep with my phone under my pillow. I have a single pillow and I sleep with my phone under it so that when the alarm rings I can hit 'snooze' quickly and sleep for another nine minutes, nine minutes being the amount of time allotted for the 'snooze' function on my phone. And then 18 minutes.

I always sleep at least 18 minutes past my initial alarm, hitting 'snooze' again when the alarm rings after the allotted nine minutes are up, and waking between 7:18 and 7:20, depending on how long it takes for me to find my phone under the pillow and hit 'snooze.'

Sometimes, groggy for having just woken up, it takes me almost a minute to find my phone under my single pillow, the phone quacking its alarm, making me panic in a way only an alarm can, said panic making it even harder for me to find the phone, thus making me more panicked, taking even longer to find the phone. *Ad infinitum.*

Sometimes I sleep for another nine minutes, 27 minutes extra, but most of the time I don't. When I do I have to take some part of my morning routine out, typically my morning shit, and I end up feeling uncomfortable the entire morning and have to drive home during my lunch hour to shit. This, for the most part, ruins my entire day.

I cannot shit in a stall. Which

my work has. Stalls. With single-ply toilet paper and chrome latch locks which are, for me, too ineffective for comfort, the doors loosely rattling every time someone enters the bathroom. Not to mention you can see the shoes of anyone who takes a shit in the stall next to you. The stalls are forest green polyurethane and the walls and doors don't quite meet and so I'm always nervous I will make eye contact, through the crack, with someone in the mirror as they wash their hands. Or I would be if I did, shit in the stalls. I don't. I drive home. I have to be comfortable, to be able to relax.

I work in a building just off of the highway. You can see it looming over the cars zapping past for approximately eight minutes before you actually pull into the parking lot. The myriad windows catch the sun and reflect it so as to be blinding. A thousand little suns caught and thrown back by the office. It would be beautiful if I didn't know the building was an office building. For some reason I find the words "beautiful" and "office" incongruent, impossibly different. So different they cannot exist in a sentence together unless the sentence reads "the office is not beautiful." Or something similar. Or if the sentence reads "I find the words 'beautiful' and 'office' incongruent, impossibly different."

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I've used the word 'loom' with regards to the office, though this may be a misleading descriptor. It, the office building, does 'loom', yes, but lacks the negative connotation I tend to associate with the word 'loom.' Dark castles 'loom.' Dictators 'loom.' The office, however, lacks both negative and positive connotations altogether. The building is nondescript, which I think is part of the reason it cannot be beautiful, even with a thousand suns shouting off its windows like a thousand revelations.

I work in an office, in a cubicle approximately six feet by five feet, decently sized, from what I understand, when compared to other typical office spaces in the United States. I have a desk which curves around the three walls of my cubicle, and a chair with six wheels in hexagonal orientation so that I may easily traverse the space between one side of the desk and the other – although, truthfully, I could span the distance with only my arms, without any real movement at all. The biggest perk of the chair, however, is the way it leans back, almost at a 135 degree angle, so that I can put my hands behind my head and stare into the fluorescent tubes of light above my cubicle until I almost feel high. Doing so for fifteen to twenty minutes each day helps the day go by faster. I understand it may not be the best thing for my eyes, and I do already have a slight astigmatism and wear glasses because of it, but, frankly, I'd rather the day just go by faster.

I work in an office and copy numbers from one Excel spreadsheet into another. I have been told not to alter these numbers in anyway. Where the first Excel spreadsheet comes from I haven't a clue. Above. Below. I imagine it's all very much the same.

I have never actually seen anyone else working on an Excel spreadsheet is the thing. I've looked over the walls of the cubicles butted against mine and have never seen anyone working on a spreadsheet. Jerry and Michael always seem to be staring at blank screens, though, admittedly, this may be an optical illusion caused by the refraction of fluorescent light against their monitors. I cannot say with certainty they in fact stare at blank screens all day. Richard, whom I hate for the simple fact once a week he brings fish into the office to eat for lunch and microwaves it so as to eat it warm, thus making the entire floor smell of microwaved fish. And, despite the notes I leave on the microwave when I see he has fish with him, which, I admit, could be seen as passive aggressive, continues to do so. Richard plays Spider Solitaire, one of the preexisting games on the Microsoft desktops provided to us for work. He's playing every time I chance a peek over the wall of our cubicles. Richard does not work on an Excel spreadsheet, nor is he particularly good at Spider Solitaire.

I can't say where my spreadsheet goes when it's finished. I place it in a wire mesh repository on the edge of my desk,

next to the wire mesh pencil cup, which I'm confused as all hell as to why I even have pencils at all, considering the work I do is done entirely on the computer and then printed off, and a young man, a boy, comes and takes it, the finished spreadsheet, and walks away. The old spreadsheet, the one I've just copied, is run through the paper shredder under my desk. Also on my desk: my keyboard, stapler (brand unknown), staple remover, and a 2017 desk calendar with pictures of various Mustang models, presented to me in last year's annual office secret Santa gift exchange. The top page of the calendar reads April 17, 2017 with a picture of a blue Mustang. I do not know the year of the Mustang.

On the floor which I work, the sixth, there are two exits, excluding the elevator, one on the north side of the building, the other on the east. That is to say there are three entrances including the elevator. I'm 66.67 percent confident I will survive in the case of a mass shooting occurring in my office; I have an exit plan which seems the most likely to ensure my survival. These are the things I think about as I copy numbers from one spreadsheet to another.

I've written Evelyn about this, my plan regarding a mass shooting inside my office building. She's written back not to worry; nondescript office buildings are rarely the target of such events. These type of shootings, the ones in office buildings, tend to be low cas., almost always the shooter, maybe the boss, maybe another

coworker who drank the last bit of coffee and left he/she, the shooter, only mushy grounds. In short these are rarely mass shootings, but rather specifically targeted shots made by a begrudged employee or ex-employee. I concede the point.

Nonetheless, with the availability of semi-automatic weapons, not to mention the notorious 'bump-stock,' I'm not confident that any employee angry enough to blast away our boss wouldn't take the opportunity to blast away any- and everyone else they could. Thus is the animosity within our office, possibly all offices everywhere. I cannot be sure.

The plan is simple, really. I head to whichever entrance, excluding the elevator, the shooter has not emerged from, staying low and pushing aside my coworkers as needed. Frankly, these are people I have low affinity for. I imagine they would do the same to me, but we've never explicitly spoken about it. I understand to speak candidly of mass shootings and your own personal preparations in case of such an event are somewhat taboo subjects for office conversation. That is, "water cooler" faux pas.

If the shooter, he or she, were to come from the elevator, which my own cubicle is situated fairly close to, I believe I would die. I keep a string of rosary beads in my drawer for such an occasion.

Today was a day where I slept for an extra 27 minutes, and thus had a tumultuous time at work, having to hold my BM the entire time before lunch, making coffee consumption a daring endeavor,

and so I was groggy, not to mention irritable. And after lunch too I was irritable, due to the fact I had to drive back to work, and even it being the middle of the work day there were a disturbing amount of cars on the road, such is my city, one where there are always a disturbing amount of cars on the road. Which driving is never a relaxing time for me. I tend to be skeptical of anyone who says it is. Even listening to podcasts or a Schoenberg piece fails to calm me when I drive.

Evelyn says I should invest in a bike, which is unrealistic. I'd be sweaty the whole day, and physical discomfort is almost as unpleasant as psychic. I've tried to explain this to her, but there seems to be some sort of misunderstanding - she keeps giving me the same recommendation. And the public transport system in my city, maybe it's a town, I can't say the exact population, but the public transport is just absolutely horrible, and inconsistent all around, and I could never trust it to get me to and from work in time to shit during my lunch hour. And so today my nerves are just absolutely frayed during the afternoon work session, and I really get few numbers transferred from one spreadsheet to the next. Even the carrier boy notices and says something slightly condescending, and I look at him and say nothing back, just think about pushing his slight frame onto the ground as I run with a stoop towards the stairwell opposite the shooter's entrance.

And so today was stressful. But

Marcus came over afterwards to drink beer. Which is fine. Marcus has been on an IPA kick recently. Which is fine. I like IPAs. I much prefer them to the standard American Lager, Budweiser or Yuengling, for example. Marcus tells me the water here in the mountains is some of the best in the country, perfect for IPAs, hence all the new breweries popping up. I tell him I haven't noticed all the new breweries. He's astounded, I can tell. He tells me I need to get out more. I concede the point.

Marcus works for an elevator maintenance company, though this fact helps me nil WRT my plan in case of a shooting. He's the one who advised me to keep the rosary in my desk, understanding the basic layout of my office floor. He's confident I will not survive.

I suspect Marcus has few friends, which is why he's over to drink beer. He tells me apropos to the brewery emergence that the acronym IPA stands for 'Indian Pale Ale.' He says the 'Brits' (which is his word, not mine) brewed it with extra hops to better preserve the beer as it traveled from England to India during the days of British rule. He jokingly tells me this is one of the main benefits of colonialism still felt today. I ask why I would ever need this information. He tells me it will help when I'm on Jeopardy. I ask him if he thinks they will continue the show when, you know, Alex Trebek can't host it anymore. Marcus is confident Trebek cannot die. He says Trebek is a cyborg, so much so he's almost completely robotic at this point, and so cancer simply

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isn't an issue. Marcus says the only reason the network came out with the whole cancer business in the first place was to throw everyone off regarding Trebek actually being a cyborg. Not to mention the clear PR benefits of having a terminal host, and the obvious bump in viewership when Trebek inevitably 'beats' the cancer he doesn't have to begin with, being a cyborg and all. So Marcus says. I simply cannot concede these points, though I do not mention this to Marcus, weary of any sort of conspiratorial diatribe, which Marcus is unfortunately prone to.

Marcus lives with his mother, for free, but his mother still attends four, sometimes five meetings a week, and so she won't let him bring the beer inside the house. Which he begrudges but I understand. It's a disease, from what I read on the internet. So he keeps the beer in his car. And the beer is warm, almost hot, at least the first two we drink waiting for the rest to get cold in the freezer.

Marcus tends to pace about the room as he drinks, which makes me nervous - there are things in my house I'd rather no one else see. I'm not sure what, but I know something here would make me uncomfortable knowing other people knew I own and/or use. The thing about these items is you never really know exactly what is going to make you uncomfortable until it's held up in the air and someone asks 'Why do you own this?' And you have to come up with a lame excuse on the fly, which everyone knows is an

excuse to cover up the embarrassing real reason, a reason you didn't even think embarrassing until the possibility of actually articulating it out loud presents itself. So Marcus paces about, mostly looking through my bookshelf and talking of river water and beer as I sit uncomfortably watching him browse around. I can understand why Marcus has few friends, though I keep this understanding to myself.

Marcus leaves when we finish the six-pack, only one of which we're able to drink even slightly chilled.

I sleep on my back because I'm prone to sleep paralysis and I find the experience intriguing and something which helps differentiate myself at work parties. That is, my sleep paralysis gives me something to talk about. I'm unsure whether other people find the actual act of sleep paralysis or the abject horror felt during the process, which I take pains to describe, the more interesting aspect of the discussion. In other words, I'm often unsure whether I'm being laughed *at* or *with*.

But I talk about my sleep paralysis nonetheless. Otherwise I sit quietly in the corner and peruse the hosts' bookshelf, which I'm sure looks both awkward and antisocial. Sometimes, after I tell my anecdote about sleep paralysis and the way it relates to the baroque painting of the demon on the woman's chest, which I've never actually seen, it's somewhere in Italy, I think, which I've never been to Europe, I still sit by myself

in the corner and peruse the bookshelf. Sometimes I steal a book, slip it into my jacket coyly and promptly take my leave. But stealing the book really depends on the host. If I don't think they'll read it I'll take something interesting, but if I'm confident they do actually read I won't. This is one of the reasons I consider myself an essentially ethical person.

I've stolen six books from Richard, because I know he doesn't read. I know this. This is how I've acquired many of my postmodernist works, authors like Pynchon and Calvino. For not being a reader he does have good taste. I am willing to concede this point. But it really depends, me stealing a book.

Laying on my back tonight I end up thinking of Evelyn. Innocent enough until it isn't. I hold off but eventually it's too much. I've never actually seen Evelyn naked, is the thing. Just the pictures she's sent me, which, knowing the guards look at, really don't make me all that excited. They, the pictures, aren't naked, or, rather, she isn't naked in the pictures - she's not allowed to send me naked pictures. But they're seductive, she bites her lip and all that. There's one where she has her canvas jumper, which I assume is standard garb for her penitentiary, unbuttoned just enough to see the slight shade of breast as she bends over to pick something out-of-frame off the ground. It'd be enough if it weren't for the guards and the fact someone else, not Evelyn, had to actually take the picture. I imagine

a guard, most likely a male, but sometimes I imagine a female, though this changes none of my feelings about the process, waving the developing Polaroid through the air as Evelyn stands erect and rebuttons her jumper.

Evelyn and I met via correspondence. She had posted an ad in the back of a manly magazine and I responded. Nothing like Playboy or Maxim, but I'm embarrassed to name the actual magazine, which still runs ads in the back for women in prison to find suitable mates. Or partners. Mates is a misleading word. Suggests something physical. Which this is not. But I still can't help it, imagining us as mates. A girlfriend is a girlfriend anyways.

She has never told me what she did, nor have I asked. I've read that such a question is often responded to with hostility, which I don't want to experience with Evelyn, given the already sparse nature of our conversations. I've read you should assume everyone in the prison system is innocent unless they themselves tell you otherwise. I do know her family is dead, her mother and father and brother. I do not know how they died. I know they were Moonies and Evelyn had to fight hard to get out, coming to the realization in her early twenties, already fairly enmeshed in the church, that she hadn't chosen the lifestyle on her own accord, but instead had adopted it unconsciously from her parents. And I know she is now 34, two years my senior. I know she grew up in Texas. I know she hates

both cats and dogs.

The phantasmal images boiling in my mind take their toll, they always do - I stroke myself, eyes closed, telling myself only my imagination. To come to the thought of Evelyn might be a fact with which I could account for love. That is, to say I got off based solely on my thoughts of this woman whom I've never actually met nor seen in person, let alone naked, could in fact suggest love, could suggest some sort of deep connection between two people felt in the mind and the senses.

Love and its constituents are things which I often consider. These and my escape in case of a shooting. Yet love and its constituents seem much more abstract concepts, much more so than mass shootings, I think everyone would concede the point. And I'm not sure exactly what I think about them, or at least I lack the language to talk about them meaningfully, love and it's constituents. What makes 'love' 'love.'

But once I'm into it and ten minutes have past my arm gets tired and I have to resort to pornography. I come quickly then. And afterwards I feel empty and can't think much of Evelyn at all, carnally or otherwise, and I can't help but wonder if what I have is actual genuine love or just some sort of unattainable physical attraction. Something I can think about to get off but never actually get off to. I clean up and again lay on my back. My phone is under my pillow. The alarm is set for seven

AM. Tomorrow I will have to make up for the spread sheets I did not complete today. In the morning I will not sleep for an extra 27 minutes. This is what I think about as I drift to sleep.. ❖

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.

Dream for D.

We were at a backyard party of a mutual acquaintance or a friend of a friend. I filled a plate with food, found a glass of wine, and sat on the edge of the pool. The water felt soft and cool on my dangling legs. You and several others sat to my left—I knew you were there and that you'd recently married. Putting down my plate, I ducked my head under the pool's surface and saw a hive of activity, the surprise of an underwater community. Ignoring conventional party behavior, I dove in. I swam along the surface, my summer dress billowing around my legs. I was certain you were watching me. Diving deeper I began to explore, stopping to talk to several people along the way. I knew by the time I surfaced the party would be over and you would be gone.

—SJay

Two by Kevin LaTorre

“Strand”

There are grooves in the sand,
Rivulets in the land which the
Sea washes so diligently.
All these acute canyons

Suffer merciless cratering feet,
Bear the tide’s cleansing lashes.

For all these little tragedies, I couldn’t
Bring myself to leave this place,
Taut, glittering with
Would-be raspberries,

Haunted by one-eyed murmurs of
Immortality along the waters.

Even when the wind snatched away
My song, mine, so that I couldn’t
Hear my own voice.

After all, this skinny land-against-the-sea
Offers one good stone bench,
Complete with an old man, well-dressed but
Craggy from the sins of his pleasure.

He sits on the one side,
I on the other, friends for sake of
The view included with every bench.

"Warped"

Underfoot this landing flexes,
Straight boards now
Curled like the longbows of those
Wars I read about,

The whole dock rising into the
Ribs of a great boat.

Afternoon dictated I bring shoes
When I sat to wait
For the evening, for the wood sears;
It is heated with glorious purpose.

Hovering so fondly over the waters,
This precarious construct might
Break free with the groan of eons,

Simply drift away.
The ways to go are infinite.

Or it may have loosened
Under me already,
As my seat boiled, as I've been writing this
In the envelope of the dark.

I have the fee of passage
Treasured in my palm, my coral
Drachma from the ocean.
Maybe it can satisfy
These waters with its Atlantic salts, its pockmarked smile.

There's no telling now where this
Accidental Argo will bring me tonight,
So I'll begin already to
Imagine the morning.

Two by Fizza Abbas Rabbani

“The lament of a broken house”

I am a house
walled by inhibitions
and surrounded by hopes.

When I cry,
windows shudder,
ceilings fail to accompany me
I feel dependent
The need to hold them overpowers me
and I ask them to stay
But they have other engagements to attend to,
so they leave.

Now I'm at that point in life
where nothing makes sense to me -
My kitchen has lost its flamboyance,
I no longer hear the tinkling of plates
Or the daily brawls of saucer and tea
The taps of my sink, too, have become rude -
I wonder, do they even know I bore them for so many years?

My beautiful incandescent lamp that I brought from a local bazar
where it was lying in a large sack
among stained clothes and the wreckage of a crashed plane,
has too averted its eyes from me.

Remember the navy-blue curtains that I adorned my bedroom with?
They have signed an anti-harassment petition:
'She is a controlling boss who doesn't know how to behave thus she should take a
break and leave things as they are',
My beautiful broken window-pane told me this good news today
while I was enjoying a tete-a-tete with my unhinged door.

The green, beautiful plants in my garden
initially decided to stay with me,
but faced such a massive backlash that they had to go:
Peace lilies yelled,
Baby toes protested -
Aloe Vera helped them heal
Chrysanthemums bade farewell.

Soon they all left
leaving me with a few nasty neighbours
who were too showy and pretentious.
Often, they showed me their newly-built brick walls
and pearl-white sash windows,
wearing such a sly smile on their face
that I was forced to think of those days
when I was the pride of the block
and people used to escort their guests
by telling them about me.

“Unlocked”

I was a lark of silence prior to your entry in my life
I used to entice silence out of the illegible scribbles
to set them free.

Coiling out your footprints from the barren
lands and soothing your feet by little precipitations
of kindness—used to strengthen me.

Now I enjoy the perks of a transient state.
Restless emotions horrify me.
Ice and fire exchange their raiment,
deluding the upcoming generations of human beings.

Nature laughs wickedly
Man confuses their union

“How Deep Was The Ocean”

when we bloomed over cobblestone
toward the cracklin of jazz and
swung from ancient street poles
like the wind of hashlit night
black saints with golden horns
blew like melting tulips from
their beds of blue-lit smoke and
like wells of nodding eyes
in the holy joint of sorrow.
I saw then from a booth
soul of opium incarnation
buoyed stone of bourbon
haunt of shackled highs
memory lost of age and
my mind of boiled butter
swam through pints of cheapest ale
my hands of cherried smokes
leapt from ash of rounded table.
now between my maddened dreams
I beg this suffocating question,
how deep was the ocean
on that wailin night of death
when they made the flowers spin
within the rust of broken horn

Three by Tanner Boutwell

“Dime”

bout 5 of em
robbed us of a dime
so we got to drinkin
ruj had a new blade he
wanted to poke em with
show em we arent kids so i
took the keys and circled the
buildin point bein soon as
they got out id run em all
over right there on the sidewalk and
just drive away less ruj had to
finish em off but of course they
never showed and the chief of police
cuffed us after a 20min chase when
we hit a dead end cause we had no
more lights to run and the boys were
screamin stop as i was bout to make
nother break so as bottles became
evidence i pissed on the sidewalk
the 4 of us in a squad car rappin
bout pigs and how they never would
know we were plottin easy murder

“You See”

papa said a bullet
 rolled between his
 fingers aimed at the
 station after his release
 blew like a mortar when
 he struck a match
 held it to the back of it
 and split his lip

so i put one in my hand
 grew crosshairs on my chest
 when it shattered from the sou
 nd of gunpowder sendin brass
 fangs into the wall where
 my head had been just
 a second before
 see id been livin in
 the room where papa
 grew up

CONTRIBUTORS:

Jason Sallinger is a regular contributor to *The Blotter Magazine*, and we love him for it.

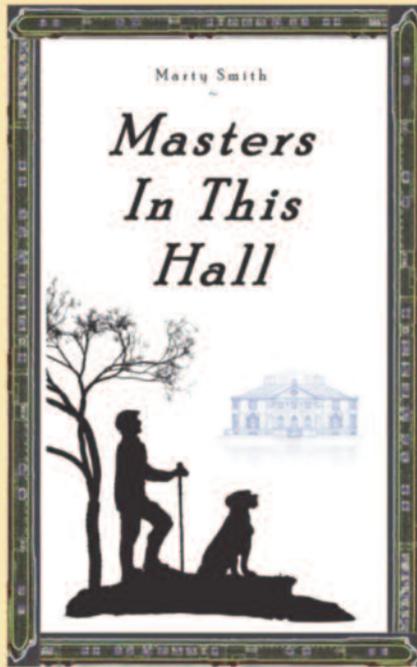
Dixon Wingrove writes, “I’m a graduate of the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, with a major in English Literature. I’m currently serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Myanmar, teaching middle school children English.”

Kevin LaTorre is a content writer and soon-to-be grad student. He has just arrived in North Carolina after fleeing the Univ. of Texas with an English degree. His poetry has appeared in the *Echo* and *Nocturnal* magazines back in Austin.

Fizza Abbas is a Freelance Content Writer based in Karachi, Pakistan. She is fond of poetry and music. Her works have been published at many platforms including *Indiana Voice Journal* and *Poetry Pacific*.

Tanner Boutwell writes, “I am a ragamuffin traveler, musician, and poet. My work has appeared in *The PIF Magazine* and *The Enigma Rag*. Currently, some of my favorite poets are Tony Moffeit, Steven Jesse Bernstein, and Elizabeth Bishop. My poetry draws from experiences I’ve had growing up, and they are often dark. I try to abandon any academic form, punctuation, and common structures so as to build a kind of suspense in my rhythm. I briefly attended Seattle Central College studying creative writing, but have no further formal education beyond that. My goal is to start my own press company within the next few years with which I can publish outlaw poets. I live in Seattle, Washington and I work for a local construction company.”

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