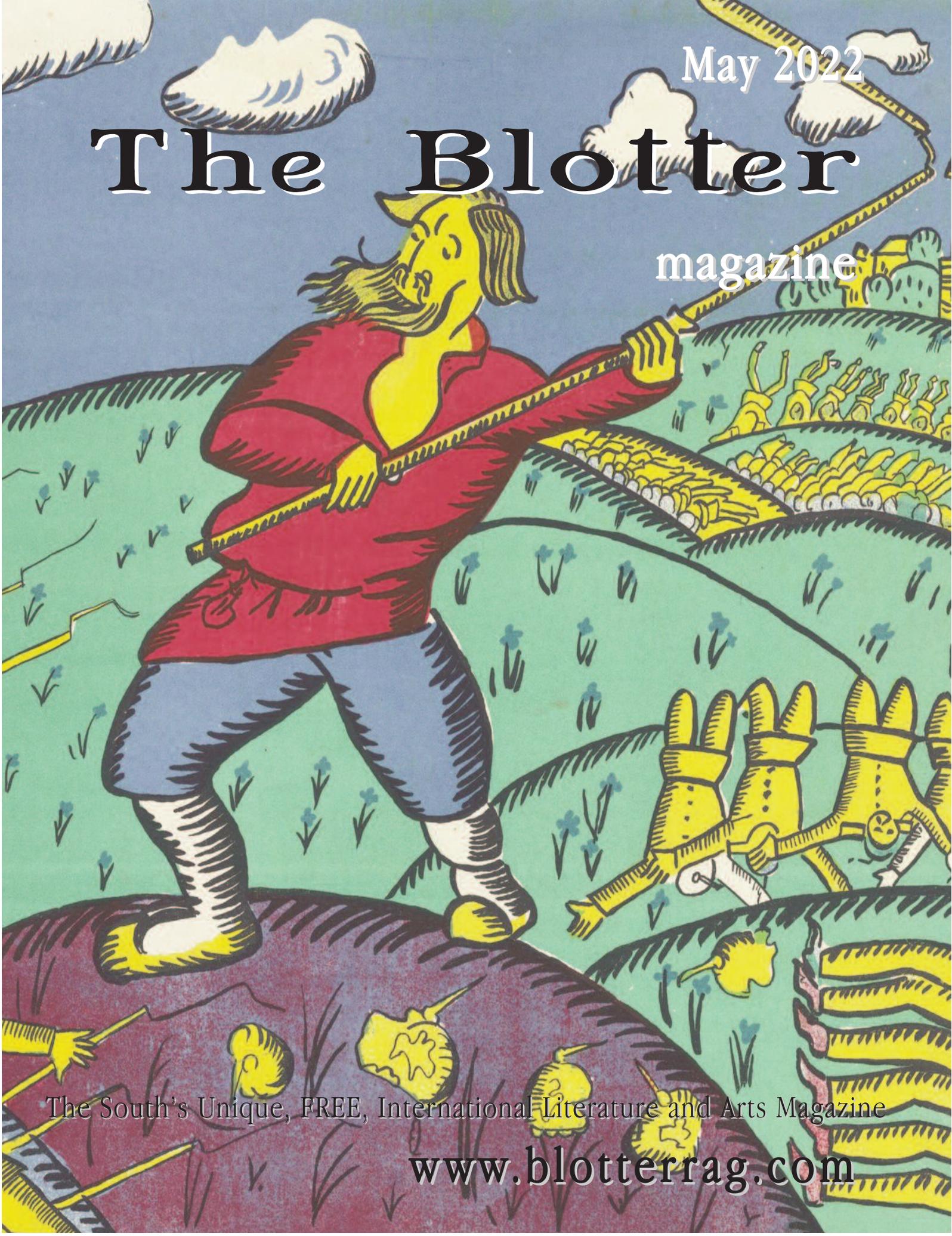


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“Why don’t you like me?”

Funny, it’s easier now. Easier for me to receive a rejection for something I’ve written and submitted for publication. Easier to be told “no, thank you.” Or even just “nope.” Post card, email, what have you – no further explanation.

Wow- it’s good to get that lie out there in the open so we can pick it apart like buzzards. Rejection is definitely not fun. But it can be useful. Or maybe not. Or it depends.

We’re curious people – writers. We want to know stuff. And then we want to talk about stuff. We want to tell you about it, whatever *it* is. We’re driven to do so, for a multitude of reasons. And after we’re done doing so, we want to know what you think. And when we’re done hearing from you, we want to tell someone else. An ancient but efficient way to do this is to write it all down and send it to someone for the purpose of getting our tale to you. Someone who decides whether or not this will happen - editors and publishers.

Editors are curious people, too. They want to see what you have to say. And an editor is not a critic, in the classic sense. I know it seems otherwise, but they really want to like the things they read. Just like the rest of us. Unlike the rest of us, however, they have to say something after they’re done reading.

And so they inform us that the answer to a submission is a happy yes. Or no. Way more often, we are told no.

And herein lies the conundrum. Having been told so we want to know what the editor or publisher thinks about our tale, the one they don’t want to publish. No. Come on, because we’re curious people, like I said. No. What didn’t you like about our story or novel, poem or essay? Let’s say, for the sake of argument, that we could really use the input to make changes, corrections, improvements. Wouldn’t that be good, a nice thing to do? Better for your karma? Why can’t you take the time to tell us? It would make being told “no” ever so much more palatable, yes?

Still, *no*. That just isn’t going to happen. Or, if it does, it will be monetized as an author feedback program. And it will teach you next to nothing, because even armed with information about your work, you will still feel hurt and confused after you get back to the process of writing and submitting.

And yet another enigma. Why this love story instead of that? Why her dragon or wizard or alien space pirate and not mine? It can’t actually be because you read that one first, can it? Tell them no and pick me!

How you visualize rejection drives how quickly you recover from the wound of disappointment and the possible infection of discouragement, if you will

forgive the heavy-handed metaphors. It is one of the non-secrets of publishing that rejection should never be taken personally. How you are told no is not a measure of your talent or skill or dedication to the craft.

I apologize for the irony but cannot say precisely why writing is an “industry” of assumptions and guesses as to what is good, or what good even means. Come to think of it - everything about writing and publishing is anecdotal. Sure, sure, there are algorithms to determine what readers are looking at, what they like, what drives them to click and possibly purchase. Metrics show publishers and editors and agents what interests are trending. But there is also a “you just never know what will be the next big thing” thing about writing.

Each submission you make, I make, is different. Distinctive in the effort expended during creation, in potential value, different in how it makes us feel when we hit send. I think about that old chestnut - you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. This is cutesy, but true. I've been told no a lot. I know the drill: the stages of rejection. Or I think I do...

The sharp slash of disappointment, followed by a period of discouragement. They're not the same thing. Disappointment is thinking something might happen, that a brass ring was within reach and it was always just a matter of effort/timing/luck/your turn/destiny, and then it does not happen. Discouragement, on the other hand, is feeling that you were wrong about something ever happening – wrong from the beginning. Your effort was never going result in success, no matter how excellent you imagined your work – you were thwarted by circumstances outside your control. It was never going to be your turn – that was just crazy thinking. Why bother sitting down and getting back to work?

Nest – giving and/or getting the kick in the seat of your pants, either by yourself (yes, that seems physically impossible) or by someone else, whose opinion you trust. Where you brush yourself off and sit back down, pen in hand, and start to create again.

Finally, finding the energy to keep going.

I've heard of something called “manifesting” – keeping a positive attitude throughout the work you do, and willing a thing to happen. This doesn't relieve a writer from doing the actual hard work - the creating, crafting and polishing - but it keeps you going, because you have a certain kind of hope, the one that comes from confidence that you will accomplish...something.

Hope is a big part of writing, I think.

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CAUTION

life I've got someone who

Mister IF and I are talking. One of our usual arguments:

"Are you really going to send this in?"

—"Yes."

—"Nobody will make any sense out of it."

—"Yeab, maybe not. But here's the thing—it's real. That's what counts in the long run."

"My mother's aunt was living out near Sacramento when she wrote this—our snail mail letter (and postcard) exchanges."

"I didn't remember my great-aunt from my childhood in the Midwest. But she said she remembered all of our family. I guess that means she remembered me as a little kid."

"My mother told me to look her up when I went out that way, on the way to San Francisco."

"This was the end of the 1970s, during the Jimmy Carter years. And I'd been trying to get out there for years."

—"When you were out there playing 'Junior Detective'..."

—"Yeab—when I went out there trying to find out what had actually happened to my older brother."

—"Trying to find the actual facts, to cut through the denial and the bullshit and all the vagueness."

—"The usual family stuff!"

—"Yeab."

—"So why is the physical format of this Momarola document so chopped up? Margins changing, white spaces, outdated fonts."

—"Because we wrote it all decades ago—circa 1990. That was the beginning of computers and whatever now long-abandoned word processing software programs. I think it originally started out on one of those Smith Corona electronic typewriters. And then moved from .TXT to Word Perfect, to god nose what else."

—"Well who was Aunt Rola?"

—"She passed away at age 86. She was my mother's aunt from the California branch of the family. She was that generation where people believed in Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan (who had been governor of California before he was President) And simple statements. She seemed to have no real awareness of the cultural upheavals of the Vietnam Era or the Baby Boomers."

—"Yeab you've talked about all that: 'the heartbreaks you embrace...'"

—"No, that's a Bob Dylan quote. My father had done so many mean things to my older brother, and my Mom was so tuned out or unaware...all the casual outrages that the "Greatest Generation" visited on all of us when we were still young."

—"People won't see much of that in these letters here."

—"No—I didn't tell Aunt Rola that I was out there to find out about my brother. Instead I told her I was out there sight-seeing, and 'looking up some friends'."

"We'd all learned that if you wanted to even try to relate to your parents' generation or the one before that, you had to keep a lot of things to yourselves."

—"Teach you children well, and the parents' hell..."

—"Will slowly go by."

—"Yeab the thing is she had information about my Mom that I never knew. And we'd spent so much time trying to 'figure out' why..."

—"Never ask them why. If they told you you would cry..."

—"Nobody remembers that era any more. This might all sound irrelevant to most people."

—"Yeab, well—as he said, "The low cry sifts unfeeling through the lumps of years..."

—"Meets insensate metal and moves on."

—"WHEW!— This must all sound pretty morose. Should we add some fart noises here or tell bad jokes or something.—To lighten things up?"

—"No—just read it. Like I say—it's real."

[Momarola]
(Bruce Westbrook)

(copy)

Card:
In 2-9-90
Dear Bruce

Today I am 84 years of age. can hardly believe that number when I see it written. The orthopedic Dr. told me there is a chronological and a physiological age—and acc/ to the latter I am not that old. That was supposed to make me feel good. I guess.

2-9-90

Bruce, I am embarrassed! I had every intention of sending you the letter your mother wrote. True I first thought it might make you feel badly. But, just now I cannot locate the letter. You would understand if you knew what a ratpack I am. I keep everything. I have boxes and boxes of papers. I keep all cards, etc. I am sure the letter will surface again. Have had a problem with sciatica nerve pain so haven't been up to making an intensive search. But I will soon and will send the letter as soon as I find it. It was very short. Just two sentences but I think it's very brevity screamed out the anguish she could not put in words.

You do take interesting pictures—. You must have inherited grandfather Rudd's artistic talent.

Hope you'll hear from me soon. May the new decade be good to you.

As ever,
"Aunt Rola"

[Postcard]:

2-20-90

Dear Aunt Rola-

Thanks for your card, and HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

I'm still composing a letter to include with the book of Tommy's poetry, so it'll make sense.

"2 -20-90

It's funny you should mention Harry F. Rudd in connection with my photos. We grew up with all his paintings around, mostly stuck behind my bed [and Tommy's bed] upstairs. (Ellen seems to have them now.) And Grandmother Rudd showed me many of his photos of her and Mother. (Both she and Mom would often repeat the story of when they left him in California and went back to Dayton).

Mother would get depressed when she talked about him and his art—about how unhappy she was as a child.
—More to come.

-- [date]

Dear Aunt Rola-

I wanted to answer your card. It's Sunday evening, so I have some time right now. It turns out that we have a few days off work suddenly, because we finished up one of our projects early. Also, it's very cold today. For the past few weeks it's been very springlike here and all the trees and bushes were starting to burst into bloom. Some of them were even beginning to put out flowers. Now they're claiming that this weekend's freeze is going to kill all that, which means we won't have peaches or apples this year—except in the supermarkets, I mean.

It was interesting to hear about your “boxes and boxes of papers and letters” and things—That's pretty much the way I live. And believe me, since I've moved twice in the last eighteen months, I'm more than aware of them. And of course each of these scraps of paper mean something to me—something emotionally important, or something I keep for some practical reason—maps of bicycle routes, plus all my creative-writing stuff. I even have a lot of stuff in storage right now, but somewhere deep inside of me, I know and need each one of those things.

Once in the 1970's I was visiting Mom and Dad back in Louisville—when she was sick, I think. Anyway, I was digging around in this metal filing cabinet in the basement, looking for a copy of my birth certificate or something like that—I remember I needed it once to apply for a passport or something. Actually, I can't remember exactly why I was digging around in the basement there, but it was for

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some real reason, and I believe that Mother told me that if I looked in this drawer of her file cabinet I'd find whatever it was that I was looking for.

I think I actually found a folder with my name on it, but I'm not sure of that. What I did find was a letter from Harry F. Rudd which was clearly written to Mother right before she got married. I don't know exactly what his situation was exactly at that time, but Mother, and to a lesser extent Grandmother and Dad, would refer to him being “in the institution” out there —meaning out in California I suppose. I do remember reading that letter. It went on and on to Mother, whom I believe he addressed as “Janie” or “Mary Jane,” I forget which, describing how he could imagine she looked in her wedding gown. The thing that struck me about his letter—don't forget that I had two graduate degrees in literature at this point—is the sense of general stasis in it—I mean, it went on and on but it didn't go anywhere.—I read this letter mostly because I had grown up hearing about Harry F. Rudd and seeing his paintings, but I'd never seen anything he'd written. I guess I was curious to know what he'd have to say.—Now that I think of it though, I do remember Grandmother Rudd going through some of her papers when I was much younger

and pulling out something she opened up and said “this was the last letter he wrote,” and she looked at it, wistfully, I guess. Things like that, when I remember them from my childhood, make me wonder who had the hardest time in the

1950s—the adults or the children.

—continued-

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Anyway, getting back to Harry F. Rudd’s letter and the way it was written—that feeling of ornate stasis, repetition, circularity of narration, etc. If someone of my own age group had written that I would have said, “Hmm. Sounds like he was stoned.

But on the other hand, I knew all about the story of
the parts

Grandmother and Mother and Harry F. Rudd, or at least I’d managed to piece together from all the tales and unhappy anecdotes Mom and Grandmother Rudd had told me over and over for the first twenty years of my life. So I guess the feeling I got from reading his letter to Mother right before she got married sometime around 1940 was sort of sadness. Sadness, and poignancy at mother saving that letter all those years. But I guess another part of me felt a lot of curiosity—saying something to myself like “hmm, this is literature.” Or, “Well, maybe this explains something.”

—Explains a lot of things, I guess I was hoping, maybe like those scraps of paper you find in a ledger at the end of the story in a Faulkner novel—I guess I’m thinking of *Intruder in the Dust*—it used to be required reading for high school English students.

There was a time for years when I thought if I came to understand all the stories that Mom, and Grandmother Rudd, and Dad told about their own childhoods, I suppose, that I would also be able to understand them—that I’d be also able to understand the strange way(s) they acted to Tommy, and to me and to Linda—and to all the older children when we started growing up and leaving home.

[not legible]

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I guess everybody tries to use what they know—or to do things in the way they know how to do them—in order to understand the world around them. And what I knew was literature. After all, I was an English major in college and graduate school.

I’m not sure now that literature is a very suitable window for looking at the dynamics of family life—what I guess might be called the “family psychodrama,” or “psycho-trauma,” but that’s what I had to go on then.

Oh, another thing: I did find that folder with my

name on it in that filing cabinet drawer—a folder or a
in it

big envelope or something. One of the things I founds, interestingly was an essay I'd written in school in the third grade. I was twenty-seven or thirty four at the time I was digging through this file cabinet. So of course I'd long since forgotten about this kiddie-school-days essay that Mother had saved over all these years (as mothers do the world over, I guess). But when I read it actually (I) did remember it —(I think there is a part in each of our brains that retains every word we've ever put onto paper.)

Anyway, what this essay basically said was that I remember when I got too big to sit on my mother's lap any more. It was a pretty short essay—we were only third-graders after all. But the assignment we were doing was something like write about something you remember.

Actually that's something I do remember—or remembered when I reread that childhood essay about fifteen years ago—not getting to sit on Mother's lap very much. I remember

[illegible]

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once—whether it was before or after my third-grade essay I definitely don't remember anymore—when Mother was cutting our kiddie-fingernails for some reason.—It wasn't something she normally did—cut her children's fingernails. I think it was probably something she thought up to pass some time on a rainy day. Anyway there were three or four of us there in her bedroom—there at the bottom of the stairs, and we were sitting there at what we called “the dresser”—some sheet metal vanity bench with a large mirror, which was basically used to put the clean laundry on every day after it came out of the washer and dryer and before it got folded and put it away. —In fact one of our ongoing chores “to learn responsibility” for all the years of our childhood and adolescence was folding the clothes—“Folding the clothes”—“Time to fold the clothes.”—“It's your turn to fold the clothes,” etc.—Along with changing diapers, as each one of the new babies came along. The dresser—sitting in front of the dresser, folding clothes in front of the dresser, and later picking pimples and blackheads in front of the dresser—it had a large mirror. It was one of the everyday details of the first twenty years of my life, because we—Tommy, Linda, Peggy and I lived in that same house for the first twenty years.

Anyway, back to the early childhood fingernail clipping. I remember that Mother was cutting each of our nails in turn, and when my turn came I thought it went too fast. I wanted to get my nails cut again!

The reason that I wanted my nails cut a second time

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was that when we got our nails cut, Mother would pick each

one of us up and let us sit on her lap. I wanted to sit on her lap some more, so I wanted my fingernails clipped some more. In little-kid logic I didn't understand that my fingernails had already been trimmed and that once they are cut off, there's nothing else there to snip at. To me it was all one unified experience—sitting on Mother's lap and having her hold each of our hands and then clip each fingernail. I'm not sure I understood what exactly was happening—the point of it/to trim fingernails. I just knew that it was fun being up there, on Mother's lap. It was a whole neat world up there, just sitting on her lap. I felt safe and happy—I felt somewhere, not just some vague idea of a feeling of somebody talking at you. I felt like somebody, I guess. I felt good. (I think this is a feeling I was recreating years and years later when I spent several years driving around and off and on living in a van—my “womb on wheels” as I jokingly called it.)

Anyway, my few moments on Mother's lap went all too quickly. I remember clearly how she ran the nail scissors over my fingernails again sort of pretending to clip them. Maybe she was trying to fool me, but it seemed more like “play-like”—the way children pretend. Then I was back on the floor again.

I don't remember Mother letting her kids on her lap all that often. Not unless you were one of the newborn ones—the latest one, who of course needed a lot of caring for and carrying around, and diaper changing. Years later,

[illegible]

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when we older children were in our later years of grade school and on into junior high and high school, we took over many of these child-care duties—carrying the toddlers around, changing diapers. By the time I was fifteen I probably changed more diapers than the average parent today in his late thirties ever does.

I guess that freed Mother up for more of the things she wanted to do. I don't remember Mother doing all that much sitting down when I was a kid—lying down in bed, yes, but not all that much sitting down, at least when she was around us kids. Sitting down was reserved for watching tv, usually with Dad, or eating dinner, or playing cards when all the relatives were over—although honestly I've got to say that I don't remember her being all that enthusiastic for Canasta or the other games they might have played. I think she watched tv or just generally sat in the living room talking to people while the relatives and in-laws played cards in the dining room.

The one time you could catch mother sitting down was in the kitchen, when she was cooking for dinner. She would usually sit down on the “kitchen stool” while chopping celery or crumbling up handfulls of hamburger meat. Here you could

in fact
talk to her, or mostly/listen to her. This is where, and
when, you could find out about her high school days, or
some of her happier childhood stories. The unhappy stories
about her childhood —about her father, and she and her
mother having to leave him in California and return to Dayton,
or when she'd talk about his paintings and then say, "You

know that was the unhappiest part of my life."—these were
reserved for the dining room.

—(I think I was about ten years old when I started hearing
that story from her. It would usually start with me doing tables

—I usually did my art projects on the dining room
some art project —my parents had decided that I was the
one with "artistic" talent, or when I'd bring one of the
paintings downstairs or start talking about them. We
were just kids—as my mother had too been a kid of about
ten when her parents had split up—we didn't understand
the kinds of things she was talking about. It was just,
like so many things that happen at that age, surreal. All
these things—the paintings, the dresser in the bedroom
with the unfolded laundry on it, the kitchen stool, and
eventually Mother's stories were just the details, the landscape,
the walls of our childhood—part of our world which we
lived in. We didn't accept or remark on or particularly
even take notice of these things, they were just always
there. —As we were there as children, soaking them into our beings.)

I know now, from things both Mother and Father said
years afterward, that Mom was going kind of stir-crazy just
about that time when she was uncharacteristically sitting
down and letting us sit on her lap and cutting our fingernails.

—Years later, when I was in my mid-twenties, I think,
my wife and I were seeing a marriage counselor, and this
counselor said something like "The problem with both of
you is that neither of you had very much individual attention
from your parents when you were children." Looking back,
I suppose that's true.

"But how can that be true??!" I thought at the time.
My parents were all over the place when I was a kid. They

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were always talking. They told us what to do and what not
to do. They talked about everybody they knew. They talked
about money. They talked about all the relatives. My father
talked about how responsible he was, and how good with money
he was. They talked about people on television, and people
in movies that were made before we were born.

—How could they have not paid much "individual attention"
to us? They were always talking at us.

Anyway, Mom was going through some kind of trapped-
housewife thing when all four of us oldest kids were still
at home, before we were old enough to go to school. And
for some reason, this was about the same time we got our fingernails

clipped.

I guess here I should say something like, “Well here’s the end of Part One,” or “This looks like a good stopping point,” or “The point was, they weren’t talking with us, they were talking at us. And we were just kids, we didn’t know. We thought we were part of them.” Or, “We thought they were listening to us.” Or, “We thought they knew us.

Anyway, this is the stopping point.

* * *

Part Two

People sitting on laps....

Yeah, I always make sure kids get to sit on my lap when I baby-sit for friends. Parents don’t have much time for that today either. Two career families. But the real reason

I do so much child holding, etc. is probably because that’s the way I grew up—holding, carrying around all of my many younger brothers and sisters when they were babies, toddlers, kids. It’s just the way I’ve always been—holding a child under one arm and a bag of groceries under the other—I had plenty of training in that.

When I was younger—ten, or say fifteen years ago it seemed to be big girls who would sit on my lap.—Now it mostly seems to be little girls.

* * *

Part Three

The bedroom....

The bedroom was the center of our house when I was growing up. Mom and Dad’s room was at the bottom of the stairs—all our rooms were upstairs;-and halfway between the dining room and the living room. It was where

we

folded the clothes, changed the diapers and just generally hung out, when we weren’t in some other room. The big double bed there was just another piece of furniture to sit on or do things on like writing homework, read a book or hang out with Mom and Dad.

And yes, there are those photos of all of us when we were kids—maybe I was eight.—Family photos of five or

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six of us kids gathered around the bed with Mother in the

center, lying there reading. That's as good a photo—taken by Dad no doubt—of my childhood, of all of us kids' childhood} as I can think of.

I guess you could say this is where Mother held court. I remember Linda, after she had graduated from high school and found a job and started dating—all over tremendous objection from Dad, sitting on the stairs next to the bed, telling mother all of the details of her latest date—not because Linda was supposed to do this—she just wanted to talk to somebody about her social experiences: “_”and then they did this, and then I saw this,” etc.

I remember more than once during my childhood sitting there on the edge of the bed while Mother went through her high school yearbook and talked about all the people in it. It seemed strange to me then, for her to be talking in such detail about people she hadn't seen since years before

and years /any of us were born, and how five or ten Years later she could pick up her high school yearbook and remember all the same things all over again.—Of course now that I'm many years older that doesn't seem strange to me at all.

Well, I can sit here three and a half decades later and several hundred miles away and reconstruct all the details—the rooms and the people—of that household I grew up in.

I can conjure up Grandmother Rudd and see her talking to Mother in the dining room —”Jane...” But somehow in my mind I don't really see them in the same room together, although I know they often were. I see Grandmother Rudd up in her room, doing some strange chalk drawing of sunset cliffs somewhere, or doing one of her oil paintings—her room always had that spicy turpentine smell. I see Grandmother Rudd taking us down the streets to play on the steps of the neighborhood church. There was some game we'd play, where we'd beat the heels of our shoes on the backs of the stairs we were sitting on. I forget if we were playing “train” or “horses” or what.

Lots and lots of other things went on in that bedroom, that house when we were kids. It was the center of everything. If we got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, we had to go through the bedroom. If we were playing downstairs and wanted to go upstairs to/do homework, we went through the bedroom.

And I can conjure up other people in my memory, in those rooms. I can see Tommy in there. Talking to Mother in the kitchen. Talking to Mother in the bedroom. Him leaning on one arm, her lying back, propped up on the pillow. Tommy—he was such a trusting kid in so many ways. He thought, like all of us I guess, that the adults knew what they were doing. He was never prepared for Mom and Dad letting him down the way they did. He never knew what hit him. And

his whole story—his whole tragedy, or whatever you want to call it, is basically a story of unrequited love.

(I can see Dad, as I write this, trying to think of everything Tommy did as a kid that he didn't like, and trying
—continued—

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to list, as if he's trying to win some kind of debate, all of Tommy's shortcomings as he saw them. It never did and never would occur to Dad that he was supposed to be the adult and Tommy was supposed to be the child. I think that idea was really light years beyond Father's comprehension, but we didn't understand that then. How could we? We were just kids. We expected people to know what they were doing.

And I can see Mother's strange irksome mysterious silences in the face of Dad's strange attitude toward his children. If I wanted to get really subtle and really analytic about Dad's competitive, critical attitude toward his children I guess I could say something like, "Maybe he felt he had to compete with his children for Mother's attention." I don't know. That's just a guess, really, and probably a wrong one.

What I do know from things sociologists, social workers will tell you is that people from "lower socio-economic classes"—relatively uneducated people—are unable to see their children as children. They see their kids as basically extensions of themselves and they talk to their children the way they'd talk to other adults—they dump their problems on them. They really don't have a very clear idea of what children are or aren't.

Maybe that is a true description of the Westbrook household. Maybe that's how Dad could always feel that he and Tommy were in some kind of contest with equal rules for both of them and how he was always going to prove that he was infinitely the better of the two.—Although I've got to say that looking back Dad always felt that way about everybody—his friends, his in-laws, his relatives, his business associates—that he had to

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tell everybody how he was better or wiser or smarter or more responsible than any of them. A lot of this energy

Dad

went into/putting down his own brothers and sisters, or in getting in fights with the neighbors. But God knows Tommy bore more than his share of the brunt of this, and he never knew what was going on. Like I say, we were just kids. We didn't know what to expect.

Well, this seems like a good stopping point.

* * *

Part Four

Postscript, Etc.

About the book of Tommy's poems. I guess you'll notice all the photographs in it—photographs from our childhood days in Louisville. That was my doing. I thought they belonged in there. The poems of course were all written in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mostly when Tommy was out in California, between the ages of twenty and thirty.

[illegible]

He never got to "go backhand see these photographs. but the simple fact is that many of the worlds he was writing about from his memory are contained in these photographs. I don't know how he would have reacted to them—the childhood photos—if he had seen them. I think they would have just made him angry—because he was never able to understand how he could have such happy memories of those days when the people in them seemed so mean and hopeless when he was grown up. It was like a puzzle he was never able to resolve.

continued

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Well this must seem all very vague and confusing and general.
will have
Guess I'll have to add more details—but that
to wait for another letter.

-Bruce ❖

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.

Outside the wind picks up dust and dirt and lashes it against the window. My bedroom window, I will later assume, so that the sound of it foreshadows from reality into my dream where it becomes something completely different – the spray of ocean during a storm that may or may not be a hurricane. The TV is out – there is no electricity anymore and the battery of the phone is dead. I wish for only a moment that we had left for the airport when we were supposed to, but swallow that wish back because there are gods – petulant and spiteful that find small happinesses in causing the revelation of truth – who might act on that thought. I want to be here in the storm. I want to be hungry and thirsty and not at all tired. I want to lie here next to you on these sleep-rumpled sheets, the warmth from you radiating thirty years across time. I will pay for this moment by not reaching out to touch you, not saying hello or asking how you've been all of this time. I will let the hurricane be.

Emcee - cyberspace

Contributors

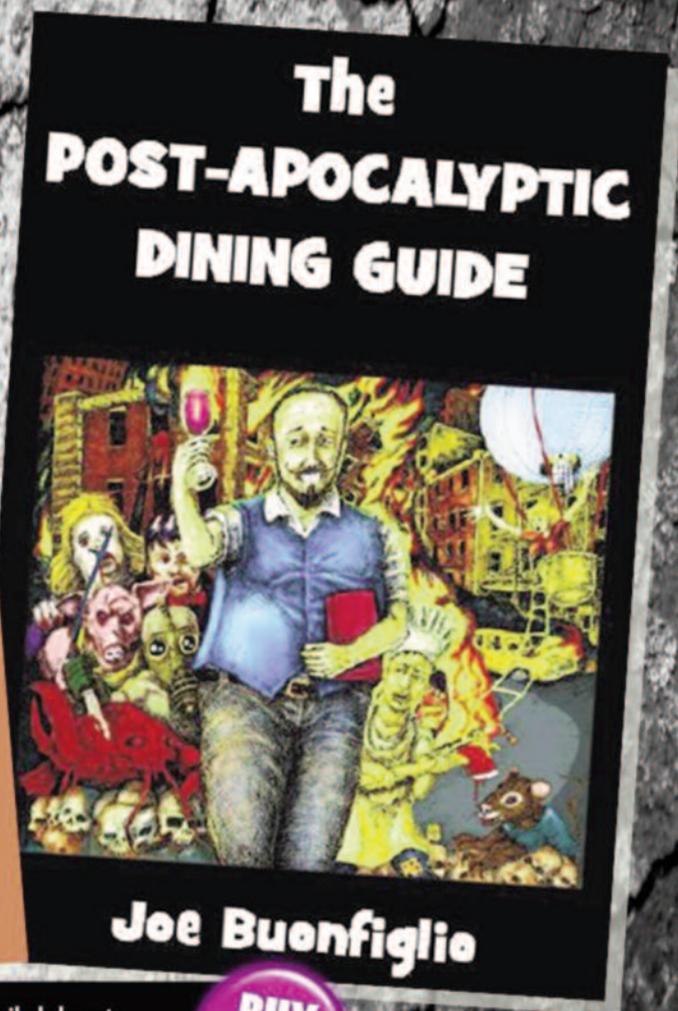
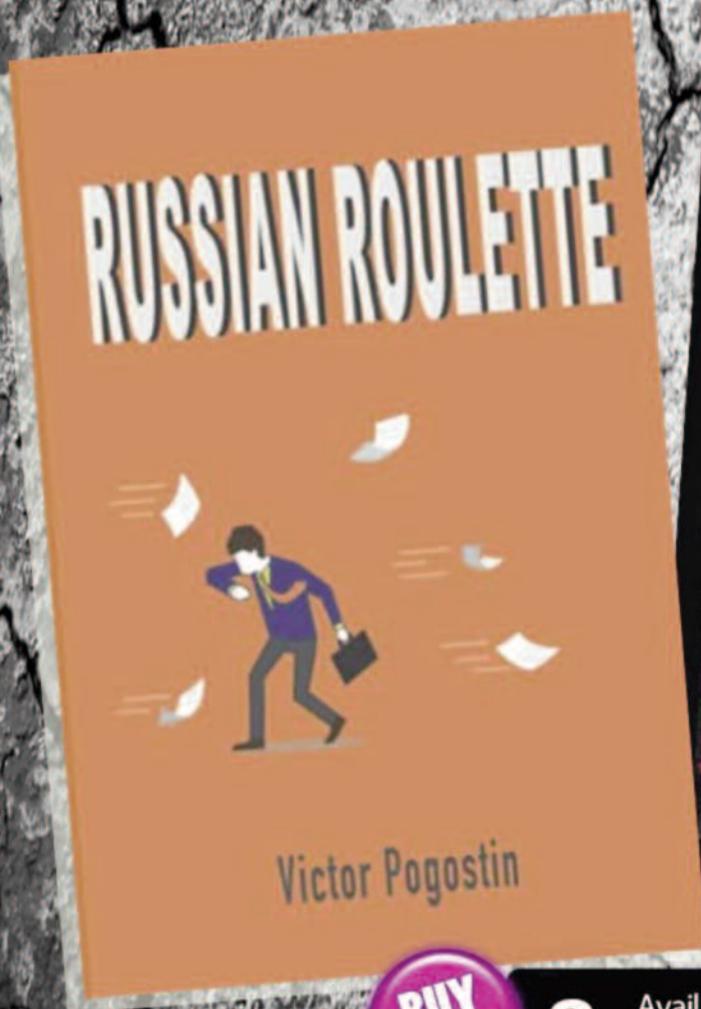
Bruce Westbrook says that the events of this prose/poem are based in the 1970s, but that it was put to paper sometime in the 1990s.

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says

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