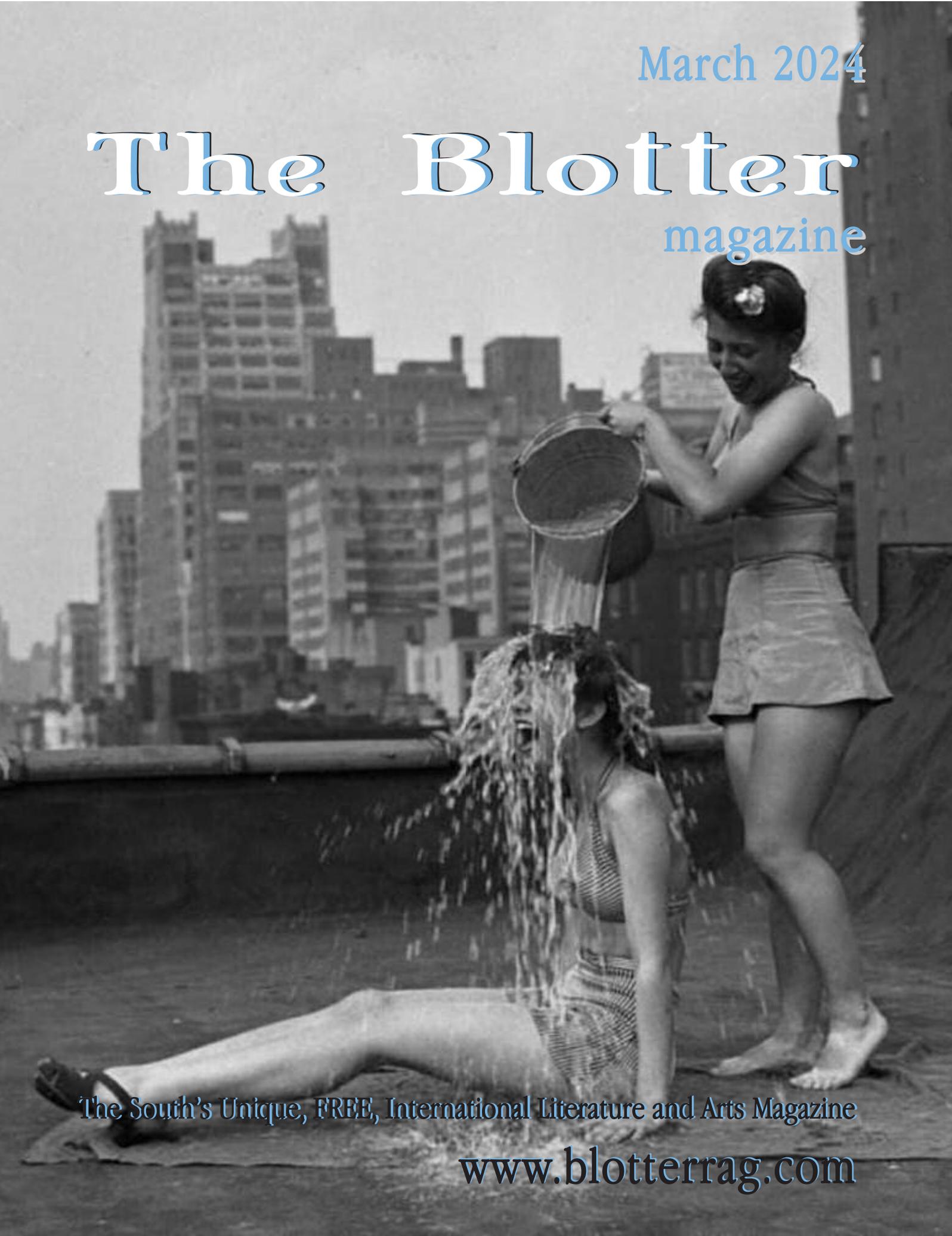


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The Blotter

magazine



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“Coming To Grips”

I saw them outside the coffee shop as I was pulling in to pick up a mid-morning latte. A handful of busy youngsters, standing in front of a folding-table stacked logically with different colored boxes.

Girl Scout cookies.

I slowed, did the math – recalling exactly how much cash I had in the wallet in my back pocket, while simultaneously eyeing a parking space slightly fuddled by a poorly navigated pickup truck. No problem.

Cookies first, then coffee. Why? I don't eat cookies. I'm not allowed to eat cookies. But there are the uniformed saleswomen, all about second or third grade, smiling at me as I walk up. Would I like to buy some? Absolutely. Thin Mints. Shortbread. I part with the cash, for, as the man said, it is money I have.

My youngest selling cookies: how many years back? More than a few.

I would jumpstart the process, by ordering an absurd number of boxes. There may or may not have been awards for most boxes sold, I don't recall. She would camp on the phone with Grandma and Nana – wheedling a double-handful more boxes ordered. Sometimes they wouldn't even get the goods delivered, being out of state. So goes capitalism. Around the neighborhood, I waited patiently (or was it menacingly?) on the street while she rang doorbells, order sheet in hand. Looking wistful, like a Dickens character. *Please, sir, or madam, can you please buy a couple more?*

She faithfully made sales. Less enthusiastically delivered the boxes, when they arrived, filling the back of our minivan. Perhaps that is what makes me think that there was a sales-perquisite she had already received. A stuffed animal of some ilk? A badge for her sash?

So wife and I did the order fulfillment, collections, modifications. Everyone wanted one or two more boxes than they originally thought they did. Late January is a miserable time for most of us. Cookies make it better. So we borrowed some from Grandma and Nana. So it goes. We contacted the scout leader – do you have spare Thin Mints? No? Why not? They're already all gone? What were you thinking when you didn't order an additional 144 boxes, just to be on the safe side? What do you mean, you got stuck with them last year? Why didn't you call me – I would have bought them all.

Sometimes July is a miserable time for some of us. Cookies stored in the freezer until summertime make it better.

It is no surprise that I miss the days when we would all sit on the floor with an open box of peanut-butter cookies and little glasses of cold milk (for dunking, not drinking) and watch *Kipper* or *Caillou* – I can't believe I can remember the names of those shows – and talk about what happened at pre-school this morning. How much she likes painting (like her older sister.) Can we go to the school playground tomorrow and swing on the swings? Yes. Is it OK to play *Zoo Tycoon* later? A very good idea. Finish that cookie and I'll boot it up.

Time, as the ubiquitous they say, marches on. It soldiers forward, or is it scouts? My youngest is now in the spring of her senior year at university. She is tackling courses with names like Coastal Environments, Invertebrate Biology and Animal Phylogeny. Have I mentioned that she knocked Physics II out of the park, much like Shohei walloping an inside fastball? Soon, she may travel to work a distant somewhere other than here. A lump catches in my throat whenever I think about it, while walking around the block, or sitting on the comfy chair in my office, sipping the last bit of cold coffee from a cup she gave me a couple Christmases past. I want to be a good father, release her into the wild to do what she's ready to do. I also want to be what I think is a protective parent, holding her close. Sometimes they don't seem to mix well. Stay here, I think. Do something where you and I can get lunch together.

Get a grip, the other part of me says, calmly, cool under pressure. I'm trying, I tell the other part. It's difficult. The other part explains - she has places to go, people to see. Animals to feed and care for. More school, maybe. The world is waiting for her.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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in the Great State of Georgia!



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CAUTION

go into your dance

“The Last Post”

by Paul Harper-Scott

A neat young woman sitting at the extreme right of the nave, under the cheap resin statue of Mary that cast a languorous, disinterested, but sentimental gaze over the congregation, uncrossed and recrossed her legs, shifting her weight on the pew, inaudibly sighing. She watched a mote of dust, animated by the light filtering through a stained-glass window, fall onto a liver spot on the church warden’s scalp.

“But we must not hope that God will provide manna for today’s migrants without aid. For it must be through us, his church. . .”

Heather picked at a bobble on the knee of her trouser. Banality dressed up as hermeneutic wisdom. Were it not for his evident sensual pleasure in grasping and stroking the stole round his neck as he intoned, she may have suspected the priest was a piece of high-functioning AI.

Margaret, a wax-jacketed meerkat who cycled the three miles from Marston each morning to perk up the lilies before morning Mass, slumped to her knees, found a handkerchief in her handbag, and during the silence that followed Fr Thomas’s yogic descent into his cushioned seat, rang a few efficient salvos around the walls. The altar party patted six soft hands onto thighs and

rose from their seats with the perfect synchronisation of a boy band reaching an emotional key change. A respectful beat behind, Margaret stood too.

In front of the altar, whose gorgeously carved wooden front was bashfully draped by an embroidered frontal sheet, was an ancient ledger stone. The monument preserved in imperishable memory someone whose name and dates had been worn so smooth as to be no longer legible.

“I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”

“Amen,” Heather said, in conscious unison with two thousand years of believers. During the prayers, her mind was caught on an image of the bodies of children washed up on beaches. Bromides about Christian charity seemed so wickedly ineffectual in the face of this that she felt her faith itself was some kind of sin in need of forgiveness.

#

Heather drove. The approach to the Roman palace was via an incongruous street of smart, unemotional 1970s houses and a concrete road to a car park. They had not visited any truly ancient sites since their first summer together, twelve years ago. He had a boyish urge to prove their fitness by showing that he knew

and felt as she did. “I love this,” he once said in front of an old Assyrian pot in a museum display case. “It came to the Ashmolean in 1922.’ Like it just walked here.”

“A bit coy about its travels, you mean?”

“Pretty much. Like imperialism didn’t happen.”

They had walked then to the water meadow, whose central depression, grazed by cattle a few weeks ago, now twinkled with autumn rainwater. Though the air was still too warm for a scarf, he wore one anyway because he thought it made him look rakish. They held hands. Heather always found his hands hot, like being cradled by a cup of tea.

An odd-looking duck barked ‘Ow! Ow!’ at its mate. “Hang on, I’ll use the bird identifier,” David said as he took his phone out of his pocket. “A ring-necked duck, do you think? It says it’s quite rare. Like you, my funny little duckling.”

To a few percent of women David was irresistible, and Heather knew he had had one affair, before they met; but since they met when they were students, and ‘affairs’ aren’t strictly possible until the rot of adulthood fully sets in, they both judged the term too grandiose. They were still friends with both women, and Giulia and Heather had organised

a conference together a couple of years ago on 'Death and the limits of the Self'.

At the heart of the Roman palace ruins was a sophisticated mosaic which was once the flooring to a dining room. "Pretty, isn't it?", observed a visitor leaning on the barrier rail. "You'd think that was laid yesterday." At its centre, between sea monsters and huge wine vessels, was Cupid depicted as a winged boy with a trident, riding a dolphin. David said that he looked overbalanced by the energy of the creature, and as if he will topple backwards into the sea. He thought this a playful touch which added to the sense of fun.

"You can imagine a family here, a couple of boys, maybe, running in and out of the garden as the food is prepared, or with a stick between their legs, pretending to be on dolphins themselves."

"That's cute," Heather said.

"But I think it's a lovely image of adult love, too: free, fluid, dynamic, a force against all obstacles."

"That – or it's chaotic and destructive, like a child. Why has he got a trident anyway? I thought Cupid was meant to carry a bow, to shoot love's dart."

"You're right, maybe there's something of Poseidon there too. He's also sometimes depicted riding a dolphin."

"Or just showing off his massive phallus," Heather added. "Dirty little lecher that he was."

David squeezed her arm. "I

love you."

#

They stopped for dinner at a Turkish restaurant that hunched between a pub and a pie shop. Externally unprepossessing, inside it was smart and modern, with the ersatz London aesthetic of self-consciously fashionable provincial restaurants. One of a group of women celebrating a sixtieth birthday wore a loose-fitting lime jacket that clashed tragically with the nasty chartreuse green of a phalanx of couches along the wall. On the bar, bottles of wine lay in the hollows of a stump of reclaimed wood. Heather couldn't tell whether the ocean or an artisan's hand had carved their pretty, welcoming tombs.

"I think Ömer would have told me to try the octopus casserole, so I'll order that."

Ömer had come to England as a teenage refugee. Heather first encountered him when she was at school in Manchester and he was a Turkish-language instructor for the children of local immigrants. At assembly one morning, the head teacher asked him to speak for five minutes. Assemblies often had guest speakers – local businessmen, the nit nurse – but Ömer had been asked to speak about his experience of coming to the UK following the Mara massacre. "I hope you can also tell the children about the welcome you received in Manchester," Mr Erskine said.

After his talk, which focused heavily on local colour and left the violence behind his departure

as a half-sketched mystery, a boy from year seven asked whether he was a United fan now. Then Heather raised her hand. "Did they kill your dad?"

Her best friend had asked Heather that about a month ago, when she came back to school and said that Dad got an infection when the doctors took out the cancer and had died. Heather could not answer that question herself then, and she did not get a satisfactory answer from the man with the head teacher now.

It was only when the Ömer who was teaching the introductory lecture course in Islamic theology during her undergraduate degree told the class that the strong social-justice emphasis of his theology sprung from his experiences as a refugee Alevi boy in Manchester, that she realised this was the same man she had watched weeping in front of cruel hyena schoolchildren.

They struck up a friendship and when in time she wrote a doctoral research proposal, it was for him to be her potential supervisor. Although their faiths were very different, their political conversations drew them close, and they often spent hours together with his other PhD student in the pub, discussing the limitations of Marxist approaches to theology. When her thesis was published as her first book two years after her graduation, she dedicated it to his memory.

Heather looked out of the window. A man shambled out of a betting shop to the bus stop out-

The Blotter

side, lit a cigarette, and coughed revoltingly.

“Darling, have a bite of this. The smoke is just incredible.” Heather leaned slightly across the table. David held out a forkful of yoghurt mush that smelt of lemons and sesame seeds and garlic but mostly, gloriously, of wood smoke. “Oh my God,” she said, “that is amazing: you’ve definitely won dinner.”

And she thought of Evie, in her kimono, fresh from the shower but already lighting up. Her thin hips and small, girlish breasts made no suggestive distensions in even that exquisitely delicate silk wrap, but the thrill was all in the thought of unwrapping her. Some mornings near the start of their relationship, while David was in the library, she would cycle down the Iffley Road to hold Evie for a couple of hours before meeting him for lunch. After a while they had drifted apart – they had little in common – but had exchanged a few relaxed words during a chance encounter at a theatre bar in London with David and Evie’s partner, sharing the bare outlines of twelve years of missed development with no pretence that they should arrange to meet again.

Heather realised very quickly that she could never be without David, but before meeting him she had always wanted physical intimacy without the compromise of a relationship. Her analyst told her that she seemed to interpret intimacy as a form of abuse, to damn herself for having feelings that tested but did not break her,

and to doubt the commitments of others. But this seemed too shallow, too neat.

She had first encountered Evie at the end of a Sunday brunch at college, a couple of years into her PhD. The food was gone, but Evie had come for the coffee. There was plenty still stewing in a samovar that a former student union president had found somewhere and thought would lend a decadent air to the common room. Evie rose late, like all art students, and rolled her own nicotine breakfast, which she provocatively inhaled in the common room. Her long mousey hair was lank and untidy, and resting on her left shoulder, a small Egyptian-blue ceramic bead seemed to be stuck to the ends of her hair by a clump of resin. She caught Heather staring at her.

“Would you like a drag?”

“Thanks, I don’t smoke. I was just going to get a coffee, though,” she lied. “Would you like one?”

Evie said she wasn’t bashful about sex. “As far as Max is concerned, you can touch me anywhere above the belt. Anything else is fine too, but then I’ll have to tell him about it.” Heather lay on the couch in front of the unlit fire, and Evie knelt by her. They kissed. The room was cold and smelt of damp but the scents of coconut and fresh smoke rose in warm pulses from the kimono. Evie climbed onto the couch and lay back on Heather, who cupped Evie’s left breast meekly in the crook of her elbow, and rested her hand on the opposite shoulder

while she stroked her hair. Sighing so as to explain her movement, she dropped her hand from Evie’s shoulder to her breast and rested.

Now and then these days, in a taxi home or while watching television, Heather caught glimpses of David and herself dying together. Sometimes it was her in his arms, sometimes the other way. She had first foreseen their deaths a few months into their relationship, when he had asked her if she ever saw herself having children. It seemed to her just one more confirmation of the rightness of their love. She saw herself dying in David’s arms as she lay under Evie too, and she held her tighter.

#

David always cooked Heather breakfast, even midweek.

“Is that bacon *and* eggs, darling?”

“We had some jarred hollandaise left over, so I thought I’d fake you an Eggs Benedict like that one we had in Ottawa.”

“God, are you even real?”

The newspaper had come early. She folded and stroked the corner as her eyes passed without much interest over the front page, her mind on an undergraduate lecture she had to give this morning on Lazarus. David set her breakfast on the table and she poked her poached egg with the tip of her knife, moaning with pleasure as it oozed over her bacon.

There was a rustle of brush and a soft thump as the post pushed through the letterbox and

landed on the mat. David smiled across the table. "Are the strikes still on? I don't remember when we last had post." The postman knocked at the door, lingering over the second, dull strike.

"There must be a parcel to sign for," Heather said, picking up the coffee pot and setting it neatly back on its hot plate as she passed the counter.

She reached the hallway. A stained-glass rose in the transom window over the front door – a very sub-Charles Rennie Mackintosh affair – cast a pretty smudge of pink on the narrow Victorian hallway wall. 'Well, your *Economist* has arrived at last.' Heather turned the key in the lock, which slightly resisted her hand, and bent to pick up the small pile of post on the floor. As she turned the handle, the door opened hard towards her. She sprang backwards and out of the way of the falling postman, who had seemingly been leaning on it. She felt three deafening heartbeats before realising that he was not going to move.

He had fallen awkwardly, and his left arm was trapped beneath him, jerked backwards by the strap of the satchel which had crumpled under the base of his spine. It lifted his pelvis forward, as if he were suspended in the act of preparing a horse to jump. His knees had buckled and rested on the wall to his right. His shorts had ridden up and she saw that he had grazed a knee slightly in his fall. His torso twisted hard to the left, the angle of its rest dictated by the tightness of the hallway

in which he now lay confined. His cap had lifted slightly proud of his forehead and his face was turned expressionlessly towards Heather. Sunglasses obscured his eyes, and his mouth gaped.

Heather knelt beside him. She reached across to his right hand and drew it towards her. No discernible pulse in the wrist or neck. She heard David's steps coming from the kitchen. Looking down at this man, holding his hand and cradling his head under the neck, felt intimate and wrong. A wife or a daughter, not Heather, should be the woman sharing this secret moment with him.

"Everything all right, love?"

Heather twisted round to see David's expression change from enquiry to horror. She reached out towards him, her hand trembling, and he gathered her in his arms.

#

The three clergy processed into the bare, flowerless church silently in black vestments. Undemonstratively, they hitched up their cassocks to aid flexion, got down on their knees, and prostrated themselves flat to the floor, their arms extended like crosses to their sides, fingertips not quite touching, so that no warmth, no hope, no humanity could be felt.

After several minutes, Margaret and the other acolyte set their candles reverently on a side table and approached the altar. Its naked wooden tracery was beautiful in the bright April light which came in low through the windows. They covered the altar's

stone top with a single, thin piece of fabric. Heather's throat caught. The Good Friday liturgy was always the most moving event in her church year, but this would be her last.

"Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews: and they smote him with their hands."

A plain wooden cross was brought into the church and set in front of the altar. Fr Thomas, with nave dust on his forehead, opened the prayers in front of it. 'And as you step forward to this humble cross, I invite you to hold migrants and key workers in your hearts as we venerate the Cross on which our Saviour died for us.'

Heather dragged herself forward and stood, ashamed, for a moment before dipping her head in a gesture that Fr Thomas took to be deep piety and returning to her pew. The small, dedicated congregation individually paid their respects and one by one, without exchanging glances, returned to their places to kneel.

The service ended in dignity and doubt. "Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."

Heather was already gone. ❖

“Saturnine”

by Paul Perilli

A word derived from Saturn, sixth planet from the sun known for its rings. Immediately I recall *Solar System*, a book my mother brought home from the A&P in the era grocery chains had promotions like that for their customers. That was a while ago. For \$1.99 you could take a book home with your pound of hamburger, box of cereal, and bag of apples. That’s right, not so long ago some of us obtained knowledge from The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company. Oh, I know what you’re thinking. It’s why some of us boomers are so damn unenlightened. Maybe so. Maybe not. I’m not afraid to admit the A&P was where I also purchased an entire encyclopedia, the topics in Volume 1 ranging from “Aardvark to Army.” I’ll also admit those books weren’t written for future distinguished scholars, but, rather, for kids that lived in apartments with the brown- or green-themed wallpaper (ours was tan), who went to public school, who hoped to get “decent” jobs and become “informed” citizens, and voters not so dumb as to fill in the blank in the voting booth for... Never mind that. Reload back to Saturn. I knew every-

thing about the planets then. Correction: I knew everything about the planets published in *Solar System*. In fact (unverifiable but true), my father, a machinist, tinkerer, and amateur inventor, built a telescope. It might have been for my brother and me. It might have been just to do it. He was like that. He’d spend weeks or months making things that may or may not survive the cut to the next place we moved to. For whatever reason, he built a telescope. Not a Mt. Palomar-sized one. But one big enough it took two hands to carry out to the back porch to eye those twinkling spheres in the sky. And when I say he built it I mean he made the whole thing, the tube, the tripod it stood on, the adjustable focus, *and* he ground (using a fine sandpaper?) the lens by hand out of a special piece of glass that cost a few bucks. “It was a little bit of dough, Paul, a little bit of dough,” I remember him telling me. I believe that little bit was a few hundred dollars, which, to someone making about twenty grand a year was a bit of dough for sure. I recall watching him working on it in 36 Eddy

Street’s gloomy basement. A dingy space it was. Like Saturn, it was a place not so hospitable to life. Damp and cold. Dusty and cluttered. Spend enough time in it and it might turn someone sardonic or gloomy. And that was him. Which is why, in my reaction to seeing this word, his memory came up. ❖

“A Hen In The Wind”

by Peter Mladinic

Paul Arthur shed light on Yasujiro Ozu.
In Ozu’s A Hen in the Wind
the father shouts at the mother,
the small boy in his crib looks up, shock,
anger in his two year old eyes, fear too.

The boy has known only his mother.
His father, a soldier home from war,
in another scene bumps the mother
so she tumbles down a flight of stairs.
He didn’t mean to, but he did.

Ozu hit the nail on the cinematic head.
Paul, a friend, a PhD in cinema
with whom I’d spoken briefly at a reunion,
(high school, I only knew who he was),
schooled me in Ozu subtleties.

He spoke via email of life in Oswego
with his dying partner, and of Japanese
directors: Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, Ozu,
then silence. I found out Paul
had passed in White Plains.

A Hen in the Wind isn’t about poultry.
A small boy and his mother,
the mother briefly selling herself for money,
the boy’s illness, his getting well,
a husband forgiving a wife’s transgression.

As in other Ozu’s, the extraordinary within
the ordinary, human beauty unfolds.
Not without strife. Estranged from people
who were dying, I stopped talking, they
stopped talking, we stopped wanting to talk.

Ozu knew that wall of silence.
Paul’s emails stopped because he died.
A Hen in the Wind I’ll go back to,
the little kid raising up from the crib,
the look on his face.

“Benazir Bhutto”

You stood in the open car, you went down
quickly mortally wounded.
The car picked up speed,
leaving the crowd and your assassin.
Nothing personal
or, as he aimed at the half of you nearer
God, deeply personal, his desire to end
your fifty-four years in Rawalpindi.

You could have been in New York,
London, Paris, anywhere but Rawalpindi,
Pakistan, leader of democracy.
Sharif denied sending the assassin
a fifteen year old suicide bomber.
History tells us the air was still.
Helmeted guards held carbines,
supporters raised signs,
a boy sat on his father’s shoulders.

You were there to lift the poor
out of squalor. Rubies on your fingers,
your hair hidden by the hijab, your eyes
looked out over the crowd.
You spoke five languages.
Your British English sounded like music.
Then you were silent. Benazir
Bhutto is no more. History tells
us the day you last visited the mazar
that enshrines your remains.

“The Gleam in Your Eye”

Pather Panchali is a pinpoint of bright
in the darkest eye, a first film in a trilogy,
Satyajit Ray’s The World of Apu.

It’s walls, a girl beating dust from a rug,
a woman taking wash from a clothesline,
a man feeding chickens.

Seven year old Apu
hidden in depths of sleep, lies so still.
It’s his beating heart, animate soul

under the village sky, a burlap sack Durga,
Apu’s sister, walks up to and gently shakes.
Through a square, jagged hole

his eye opens, the world begins: goats,
trees, a dog, its shadow, an old woman
bent, an adolescent girl burgeoning.

It’s Indir, the old woman,
in a Hindu squat. Asleep.
Durga’s hand topples her corpse

like a table toward earth. It’s Apu
sitting in a tree. Durga saunters
into a downpour, runs fingers

through wet, long, long dark hair in rain,
like she’s washing her hair in the rain,
and catches cold and fever fades

to death. In the trilogy Apu’s parents die
and years later his bride. Indir,
not a local Ray found but the acclaimed

Chunibala Devi, played her role to a tee.
Unwanted, shunned, she wept dry tears,
her bent body vital as that gleam.

two by Livio Farallo

“angelica comes home to talk”

picture a bandanna
around your eyes where
the color

is a rainstorm
and all the sweat
daring to bead
is unthought and already
slaughtered.

a cemetery

sprouts scarecrows;
bees, the size of sunflowers,
knock over scattered wooden fences
and deafen
small dogs. an orange drops
from

a picker's basket
and she is burnt by the sun swinging on a wire.
she is muddy and unhinged as a sparrow.
she sits down to fill a crack in the asphalt; to

hear music from
the tar pits.

picture a bedroom

you
slept in but
don't remember why:
window shades you have also forgotten
in this tiny city losing its hair.
and without a single sacrifice from the moon, picture
brown bears refusing honey
as if plutonium were the simplest element.

“twilight with sarah”

By Livio Farallo

the dawn is deadly, she
thinks; the
sun, a bright embolism
ready to break free from the
horizon and kill and
kill
and kill
again. she is

the kind, i know,
that says “ouch”
when she
touches something cold.
she is

the kind that stubs
a painted toe on the sand.

but she doesn't need
crutches, she
doesn't walk fast,
and
her legs bend as
snakes coil but
never break.

her hair tears off in
clumps, so does her skin.
but she's taking nothing
therapeutic: she's healthy
as a horse;

healthy

as a burro; healthy
as an ass.

she writes with
lead pencils because she can
see them wearing down. because
she knows when they won't
scratch the skin anymore.

so, to lessen self-decay, she
disrobes carefully; she disrobes
slowly but still
shrinks to a glitter like
cars waving goodbye; like
cars waving
goodbye she doesn't know. i

think
the beating heart is deadlier
than
a
bullet.
i think a bullet is the beating
heart of a long road.

i think
she squints at cars,
laughing,
aimed at
the brink of the
sun.

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.

All of us are at the facility, supposedly to have a meal together. It is very crowded, and all of the tables are full, and the wait staff is flustered, busy. I am tasked with finding my way back to the car to put coins in the parking meter. Done with that, I turn to make my way back, but now there is a building in the way where there wasn't one before. A hospital, by the looks of it. I enter the heavy revolving door, there are white-coated doctors and technicians milling about, and I follow the corridors – arrows on the floor – towards the back of the massive building. No good – I have to go up some stairs and then down an escalator – I'm not certain that I'm going in the right direction anymore. And now I'm worried that some uniformed security personnel will ask me where I'm supposed to be. It's the "you don't belong here" dream – second only to the "you're late for class" or "you're inappropriately dressed for this occasion" dreams in discomfort. I can't find my way, nor any of the family I'm supposed to be with. Not good at all.

Lee - cyberspace

Contributors:

Paul Harper-Scott is the author of several non-fiction books on music. He started writing fiction last year, after a career change into the civil service, and my first published fiction has just appeared in an anthology of short stories. He grew up in County Durham during the miners' strike. Class and identity were important themes in his academic work and have remained so in his fiction. He's writing a novel about the relationships between three women who come up against the limits of their freedom in their personal and professional lives. It explores themes of desire, identity, and social expectations across boundaries of class, geography, and time.

Paul Perilli, of Brooklyn, NY, writes, "my fiction and non-fiction have been published in dozens of magazines in the US and internationally. Recent fiction appears in *Fairlight Books*, *The Write Launch*, *The Fictional Café*, and *The Writing Disorder*. Recent essays appear in *Rabble Review*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Journal of Arts & Letters (O:JA&L)*, and *Otoliths*."

Peter Mladinic's fifth book of poems, **Voices from the Past** is available from Better Than Starbucks Publications. An animal rights advocate, he lives in Hobbs, New Mexico, United States

Livio Farallo is co-editor of *Slipstream* and Professor of Biology at Niagara County Community College in Sanborn, New York. His pieces have appeared in *Beatnik Cowboy*, *Otoliths*, *Ginosko*, *The Cardiff Review*, *The Cordite Review*, *Triggerfish* and elsewhere.

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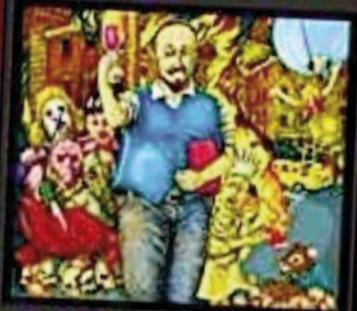
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