

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume II, Issue V

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| C. Allen Rearick, Two Poems. | 2 |
| Corey Mesler, "Elvis Presley at the Gates of Heaven thinks of Memphis". | 3 |
| George Anderson, "The Corpse" | 4 |
| D.T. Harris, "Short Letters to Imaginary Friends" | 6 |
| Kuzhali Manickavel, "The Chronicles of Crow: The Revenge of Carson McCullers" | 8 |
| Michael Fowler, "Last Dance" | 13 |
| Rob Rosen, "I've Been Here The Whole Time" | 16 |
| Travis Thomas, "Morten Freeny Show" | 22 |
| Daniel Willingham, "Cows" | 27 |
| Ricky Garni, "A Crispy Week" | 28 |
| Stephanie O'Donnell, "Penpals With God, Episode 2" | 29 |
| Contributor Biographies | 30 |

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Two Poems
by
C. Allen Rearick

Anti-Semantic

Someone

who

has

a

strong

dislike

for

the

jewish

language.

The Right Side Of My Brain

just wrote

this

poem.

Elvis Presley at the Gates of Heaven thinks of Memphis
by
Corey Mesler

He turned back once.
He turned back again.
The line behind him smiled
its indulgence.
They understood that the spirit
before them was still a boy,
really, a boy
with a souped-up heart.
Elvis looked at the
guy working the door.
"My name on that list?" he
said at last.
"Yessir," the angel said.
"That's alright," the
mama's boy then said
and the gathered appreciated a
good joke.
"Back in Memphis," Elvis
finished, "we made a little lightning.
But, I guess ya'll do
that here, too." The angel
handed the dead singer his robe
and patted him on the back.
A guy in the line said,
"That was Elvis," to which his
mate replied, "Yeah,
and I'm Edward Everett Horton."

The Corpse
by
George Anderson

The sea spills in spasms onto the sandy shore
seagulls sit wading knee-deep, grooming
-you're joking, aren't you?
you're not going to get away with those crappy adolescent lines

The frigid winter air
 invigorating
as a curious shape appears
 lulling,
 floating imperceptively closer
to the wharf
-that's not how I remember it
it took place at night, no one was near the foreshore

The body is swollen
 clothesless
genderless
the face blurred
a purple rotting pulp
-you're sensationalising now
is the graphic detail really necessary?

The harbour police
use a fish net & large bucket
to collect the wobbly

fragmenting frame-

a young cop vomits into the harbour

as the body is hauled onto the wharf

-wasn't that you? your reaction?

what do you hope to achieve by that image?

I scratch down a few more details

into my worn blue notebook

& as I bike northwards to Bulli into the headwind

I imagine the corpse/ its rotting frame dissembling/

leaking/

into the primordial fluid from which we once came

-a shonky, sentimental ending, you've stuffed it!

Short Letters to Imaginary Friends
Crossing Over to the Literary Inside
by
D.T. Harris

Dear IF No. 123,

It was purified coincidence -- you know, like in that recipe from "Better Tomes and Garlands": "Carefully distill, over low word heat, one Harley, finely chopped, two gallons super-premium unleaded, one girl with shorts so soft and thin they'd turn each head and camel toe at the oasis."

Friday you asked for ideas on how to make it on the inside. Saturday, at Flotsam's House of Jetsam, a bright blue book by Spenser "Alabama" Acorn caught my eye. "How to Get Inside and Make Your Haul Before the Cops Arrive" contained some tips you might find useful, so I've paraphrased a few below to make them more appropriate for burglaries involving words.

1. Knock softly on the backdoor of the publishing house. If you hear an editor whispering through the door "Is that you, J.K.?" -- whisper back "Yes, and the truck here has the new fourteen-volume How To series for writers, volume one entitled: "How Keeping Fantasies of Early-Bloomer Bloomers Clean Can, Oddly Enough, Aid the Spread of Hog Warts."
2. For your meeting with the con-glom's Print to Film facilitators, come dressed as Angelina Jolie dressed as former husband Billy Bob "Sure like them French-fried taters -- haurnk!" Sling Blade Thornton, so it will take everyone involved years to figure out what Southern California Gothic screen rights really are.
3. In explaining why you need an extra eight hundred thousand for book signing entourage expenses, show photos from the family scrapbook of Granny Mumbletomer's possum shortbread yam extravaganza, spread out on tables that cover the entire football field at Our Mother of the Holy Plebiscite in Turlock.
4. During lunch at Elaine's ask the waiter for a plate of sliced Velveeta as you stand and adjust your chinos to let the quarter-fifth of blush rose you've been carrying around inside all morning, slide down your trouser leg to the floor. When everyone stares at you with disbelief as you calmly napkin-off the bottle, then unscrew and sniff the cap, inform your tablemates that the Gallo brothers are now sending writers a free case for every story that includes someone drinking wine at womb temperature.
5. While standing in the airport security line at La Guardia as you wait for someone to scrape your toenails for traces of C-4, don't let on to the bullet salesman from Miami standing behind you that your collection of former Soviet weaponry rivals that of Long Bone Ellis, the guy who used to make the pharmaceutical deli runs for conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh.
6. After your flight back to what remains of America's left coast, while Bert and Ernie squabble in the front seat about which Liza tape to play as you cross the Golden Gate and look out, don't bother wondering 1) if the wide, black water down below will always seem, now, to be a tide receding, and 2) if PBS decides to kill one off to stop the gay roommate

puppet talk, which one it will be. It's yes and Bert.

7. Having reached the literary inside you should feel the kind of accomplishment that often comes with its own maintenance support system, so with each new day you can find yourself arrived anew at this place where your light now shines above the common dim and unlit, nonlit wordy turdy -- perhaps forever, or at least until the new landlords of your tenant farm of verbal free association have determined that you're herding cows no longer capable of giving moolah.

Best wishes,

dt

The Chronicles of Crow: The Revenge Of Carson McCullers
by
Kuzhali Manickavel

Crow put her book down and sighed. Her strange, twisted heart had been reduced to a pile of lumpy mush; her eyes were misted over and her lower lip was trembling.

The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter.

It was without a doubt the best book she had ever read in her whole life. After fawning over it for a week, she had just turned the last page with a feeling of elation. It was wonderful, wonderful, wonderful...

She looked up and found to her surprise that she was sitting beside Sad Man. She watched him as he frowned menacingly at his computer screen- his days and nights were spent chasing impossible deadlines and designing ads that always got a 360 degree makeover before they were released. So why was he still here?

"Because the Heart is a Lonely Hunter," said Crow, solemnly nodding her head.

"Mm?" grunted Sad Man as he sorrowfully clicked away at his mouse. He suddenly pushed his chair back and regarded the screen with a critical frown.

"What do you think?" he asked.

Crow frowned critically as well. She had no idea what she was looking at.

"I think the Heart is a Lonely Hunter," she said, feeling it would apply here just as well. Sad Man flicked his wrists and loudly cracked his neck and back.

"We'll give this as an option. Got a line ready?"

"Not yet..."

It would have helped if she knew what the ad was for but she couldn't be bothered by that right now.

Right now, her Heart was a Lonely Hunter.

Sad Man stretched and sighed.

"I'm going for a smoke. Why don't you type the line in and then we can finish this off."

Crow stared at him as he walked away.

She still had no idea what he was talking about.

Crow felt it was only fair to share her newfound wisdom with everyone around her. The

generous thing to do, she realized, would be to make inspirational posters for about 50 bucks a piece. Taking advantage of Sad Man's abandoned computer, Crow made a horrific-looking sample and began doing a round of the office. Accounts looked at it for a long time, trying to think of something constructive to say.

"It's very colorful," he said finally.

"Yes, but what about the words! Aren't they wonderful?"

He shifted uneasily in his chair. He hadn't understood the words at all. How could a part of the body be a hunter? What could it possibly hunt? There was something here he was missing.

"Is it..." He cleared his throat nervously. "Is it about...sex?"

Crow shrugged.

"Sure! Why not?"

"Ah!" he said with an air of infinite wisdom. Incomprehension however won out in the end and a few seconds later, he was shaking his head sadly and moaning.

"I don't understand! What does it mean?"

Crow smiled sympathetically and sat down beside him.

"Well, it's like why you do accounts, you know? Why do you do them?"

"To keep track of financial transactions and—"

"But WHY do you do them. Really deep inside."

Accounts folded his arms and thought hard. Why did he do accounts? What was it all for?

"Well..." he said after much pensiveness, "I do it to keep track of financial transactions and—"

"But why did you choose to be an accountant in the first place?"

"My grandmother made me."

Crow stared at him.

"You mean you didn't want to?"

"No, I wanted to study horticulture."

She brought her fist down onto the table with a loud crash, making Accounts jump in his chair.

"See? The Heart is a Lonely Hunter!" she shouted triumphantly. Accounts frowned. For him, the words only conjured up images of a pumping heart holding a bow and arrow, shooting

at squirrels in a forest.

"Shall I put it up on your soft board then?" asked Crow, confident she had made her first sale.

"What? Oh no, I'm sorry. Nothing goes up on my soft board." said Accounts with an apologetic smile. Sure enough, Crow saw that it stretched in an uninterrupted span of green behind his computer. On the bottom right hand corner, thumbtacks were arranged in color coordinated squares.

"But you're supposed to put things up on your soft board. That's what it's there for," explained Crow.

"I like it the way it is," he said with a sober smile. He affectionately dusted an invisible speck of dust from the green expanse and leaned back to admire it.

The Heart was a Lonely Hunter.

The best place to see the domino effect in action is an advertising agency. Insignificant quibbles that were impatiently brushed aside on Monday morning will slowly and surely gather steam until they snowball into a minor disaster on Friday afternoon. This is precisely what had happened to the Servicing Chap, who was running in with silent, awkward leaps as if his butt was on fire but he didn't want anyone to know. A last minute screw up had pushed up a deadline and he had exactly 12 minutes to get his ad to the newspaper- there was no time to get the client's approval.

"But, the line--" wailed Sad Man.

"WE NEED IT NOW!!!" hissed the Servicing Chap hysterically. "WE—"

"But there's no line! How can I—"

Sad Man suddenly gave a weary sigh.

"Hold on, it's here. Just give me a second and I'll place it."

The Servicing Chap's heart was racing. He kept having horrifying visions of the receptionist shrugging and shaking her head. You're too late, you're too late...

"Ok, just check the—"

"THERE'S NO TIME, DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME????!!!"

Stuffing the printout into a brown envelope, the Servicing Chap leapt to the door and was gone.

Mr. Goyal didn't get excited often. True, he felt a surge of electricity when he saw his showroom, filled with shiny new water pumps. His knees became a little weak when he

heard one puttering away in an open field. And he had allowed his jaw to drop once when he had seen a truly delicious specimen at the World Conference on Water Pumps and Motors. But this morning he was really excited. The bouncing, irritating man from the ad agency had put his first color ad through and it apparently fit every one of his specifications.

"Nice big picture of the pump? Close up?"

"Yes sir. Huge shot."

"And brand name?"

"Next biggest thing to the pump sir."

"And you've put 2 lines, something catchy that rhymes and says my pumps are number one in the country with German Accreditation?"

"It's all there sir. Wait till you see the paper tomorrow, I'm sure you'll be very happy!"

Like a child opening a birthday present, Mr. Goyal opened the morning paper. Soon he would be getting kudos from clients, competitors. Nice ad Goyal! What a great—

There it was. A close up of one of his pumps winked seductively at him against a background of shimmering water. His name, almost as big as the pump, was cozily crammed into the corner.

But the line...

It didn't rhyme.

It didn't mention German Accreditation.

In fact, it didn't say anything about pumps at all.

What it did say was that the Heart was a Lonely Hunter.

That same morning, after having a look at the newspaper, Crow decided she had pneumonia and stayed at home. She was hazy on the details but there was a good chance that her wonderful line was not supposed to appear on an ad for water pumps and somehow, she may have been responsible. Before she could switch off her phone, she received an odd call from the Servicing Chap.

"I heard you have pneumonia," he said quietly.

"Oh yes! It's really bad, hope it'll clear up soon," said Crow, trying to sound sick and cheerful at the same time.

"I heard people die of pneumonia," he said in an odd voice.

"Oh no," said Crow dismissively. "That's like only in...Canada."

"Oh. Well if you don't die of pneumonia, I've decided to hunt you down and kill you."

Crow tried to laugh nonchalantly.

"You don't have to really—"

"I insist." he said with sinister firmness.

Crow was silent. She didn't always understand the Servicing Chap's sudden outbursts of violent behavior but perhaps that was just his way. That was what moved him.

"Well, the Heart IS a Lonely Hunter—" she said.

There was a loud, anguished cry and then the dial tone was humming in her ear.

Last Dance
by
Michael Fowler

When I was 13 my parents enrolled me in a dancing class. On the dance floor a large circle of boys rotated within a large circle of girls to determine partners. Most of the girls were my classmates or girls the same age from other schools. But one was a 40-year-old woman who was almost short enough to be a midget. She gave me a circus feeling.

I could never figure out what a middle-aged four-foot female in a girl's dress was doing there. It didn't occur to me that she joined us kids to make the dance partners come out even, and that she was right height for a boy my age. I was too stupid to think of all that. She never said anything, not even her name, but somehow I found out she was called Laverne. Aside from that, I only knew that a lady with wrinkles and grown-up boobs was no sixth grader like the rest of us, and since she never did anything to correct our dancing, it didn't look like she was an instructor either. I finally decided she was lonely and had to make do with boys, and that I could score with her. Even though her rouge and her cleavage terrified me, she would be my first.

When I made my decision to ask her out, I figured she would drive, since I was underage. I thought she'd be so excited by my offer, she wouldn't hesitate to steal me away from my parents, even though my mother was watching the class from the raised seating area beside the dance floor. But first I had to wait about an hour for Laverne to come around the circle and be my partner. When she finally did, I hoped for a slow dance. I lucked out bigtime. Mr. Gallous, the instructor, called for a box step. Laverne and I pressed our bodies together. I gazed adoringly at her small white glove in my hand, the thick black hair on her forearm, the powder on her bosom, the rouge on her wrinkled forehead and chin. The light pressure of her hand on my back and the aroma of her perfume went straight to my head.

'That's a cute bow you've got in your hair,' I said.

She just smiled. As luck had it, Laverne was still my partner when it came time for the gentlemen to escort their ladies to a seat and then fetch them punch and cookies, so I ran to the refreshment table to satisfy her thirst and hunger. She didn't want the cookies, just the punch and a cigarette. We had to sneak out on the balcony for her to have her smoke. Once we were out there, two stories up from the night street, I watched her take a little silver flask out of her tiny sequined purse and pour something into her punch. I gazed up at the summer moon and said, 'Laverne, I like you, do you like me?'

She knocked back some punch and replied in a deep, almost manly voice, 'Save it, honey. There'll be other women in your life.'

I was let down, but not yet ready to call it quits.

'What do you think of my dancing?' I asked.

'You've got the fire,' she said with a wink. 'One day you'll drive women wild with your feet.'

'Gosh,' I said, not quite sure how my feet could do that. But I was gaining confidence. 'Why are you here?'

'I'm terribly lonely,' she said. She lit a cigarette and dragged so hard it burned all the way down in five seconds, leaving a long, curved ash still attached to the filter end. Then she exhaled smoke thick as rope. 'A boy wouldn't understand.'

'A boy?' I mocked. 'I can fox trot. I can cha cha. I can remove a lady's wrap and help her to a folding chair. What's in that flask?'

'Nothing now,' she said. 'I drained it. Have you ever seen ta-ta's?'

She put the flask in her handbag and now reached with her gloved hands to her bodice. My mind began to swirl as I thought I might see a woman's true nature.

'I guess I saw my mother's, when I was an infant,' I replied. It sounded like the stupidest thing I had ever said.

Laverne lowered her hands from her bodice without showing me anything and lit up another cigarette.

'I'm really a helper here,' she said. 'Boys can grow up fast when they dance with me, if they play their cards right.'

'Jeez, I can't believe my parents are paying for this,' I said.

'Ready to find out if you're built for action?' she asked.

'Sure, Laverne,' I said. 'What do I do?' I made a gesture like a matador waving his cape as a bull passed.

'Not here, boy. We'll go to your place.'

'Impossible, Laverne. I didn't clean my room over the weekend and now I can't have guests.'

'How stupid. All right, I'll take you to my place, if you think you can handle that scene.'

'But if I go to your place, Laverne, it'll mean I can never go home again. Will you raise me and send me to school and all?'

'No, I can't do that.'

'What's your place like?'

'Nothing for boys. All frilly, sweet-smelling things for girls. Come here, boy, let me see your teeth. You have braces, don't you?'

I opened my mouth for her to see my orthodontic hardware. I thought maybe she worked as a dental hygienist when she wasn't dancing. She rubbed against me, and I sighed.

'Did you squirt?' she said, backing off.

I nodded my head. 'I think so. I never have before except when I'm asleep.'

'Now you know your way around the ladies. But I have a confession to make. When the dance class is over, I'm going to commit suicide.'

At that I fainted. When I came to, Mr. Gallous was bent over me, cradling my head in his strange-smelling hands—I knew he had a sideline in chemical toilets. Shamefaced, I got up and told my mother I was sick and needed to go home. I tried not to look around for Laverne. Mom led me away, and I never went back to dance class again.

I've Been Here The Whole Time
by
Rob Rosen

Jackie LeBouf sat on her lounge chair, cell phone in hand, and once again angrily punched her agent's number. Each of the five times she tried that week she'd reached his answering machine. Each time he had neglected to call her back. "Fucker," she screamed into the phone after the fifth ring. Only this time Ben Slaten miraculously picked up.

"Excuse me?" he said, in his nasal, New York drone.

"Oh, sorry, Ben. It's me, Jackie." There was a long pause on the other end. "Jackie LeBouf," she added defiantly before finally receiving a reply.

"Hi Jackie. Listen, sorry I haven't gotten back to you. It's been a madhouse around here. My secretary's on vacation and my wife, er ex-wife that is, has been after me to pick up the kids, and, well, you know how it is."

"No, Ben, I do not know how it is. What I do know is that I'm languishing here. Dying on the vine, so to speak. And if I don't get plucked soon, it will be on your ever-balding head," she scolded, loudly.

"Hey Jackie, you shoulda been a writer. You got a real knack for turning phrases."

"And you shoulda been an agent, but instead you're a shithead who clearly doesn't know his ass from his elbow."

Bitch, he thought to himself, but instead replied, "Now Jackie, calm down. I've been trying my hardest to land you a plumb role. But at your age..."

"Forget the plumb, I'd settle for a raisin right about now." Jackie was well aware of her age and didn't need any more reminders. Her bathroom mirror was reminder enough. And it told her exactly what she had been avoiding for years: Hollywood casts its actresses aside when they reach a certain age. Jackie had reached and then traveled way beyond that age years ago. Many more years than it said on her resume. Many more than she'd admitted in well over a decade. Even her plastic surgeon was left in the dark on that one

"It's just that it's been awhile since you've been in the public eye, and..."

"What, now you're saying I'm a has-been?"

"Jackie, you had to actually *have been* in order to become a has-been. I'd say you're more of a wanna-be."

Jackie slammed the phone shut and crossed her skinny arms over her narrow chest. "What the fuck does he know?" she screamed out over her tiny, lap pool. "I'll show him. I'll show all of them."

With a devilish grin she reopened the cell phone and dialed 911. She then promptly placed the phone down on the cement patio and sauntered unhurriedly into the pool. She knew she

had at least several minutes before someone came to answer the call that was being placed on the phone that lay ten feet away. She swam a couple of laps and bided her time.

Moments later she heard the telltale sirens and counted to ten before she dove down to the bottom. She always loved the silence down there. And the blueness. Her record for holding her breath was a good minute. She figured that was all she needed. Then she let her body float to the top, her face submerged, and her arms splayed out. Within seconds the water around her was displaced by two men who promptly dragged her seemingly lifeless body back up to the concrete patio.

Minor roles in "The Devil & Sahara Smiles" and "Once, Twice, Three Times Your Dead" had well prepared her for what was to come next. Feigning death was a snap: hold your breath and don't move until the director yells, "Cut!" Or in this case, until the policeman is finished giving you mouth to mouth resuscitation; which couldn't have come soon enough for Jackie. The man obviously hadn't shaved or brushed his teeth that morning. It was all she could do not to retch. She knew she was a much better actress than that, though, and played the part of the victim with Oscar-worthy aplomb. And after many fetid breaths and plunges on her less-than-ample bosom, she twitched, coughed, and promptly tossed the ruffian off her nearly naked body.

Her head rocked back and forth and her eyes suddenly open. She was greeted to the site of two police officers, two paramedics, three firemen and, thank the good Lord above, a team of cameramen that were rushing, at that very instant, through her fence door and into her backyard. She might have lived in a less than fashionable area of Beverly Hills, but it was still Beverly Hills, nonetheless. The local news always responded anywhere in the vicinity in case an actor or actress was either in trouble, or if the reporter was lucky enough, getting themselves into trouble.

Jackie pushed herself up and shook her hair in as seductive a pose as was possible for a recently revived drowning victim. Granted, she wished she was better dressed for her first television spot in ages, but desperate times called for desperate measures.

The light from the camera crew bathed her in a warm glow. Jackie would take that over the sun any day. But she was quickly blocked by the paramedics who started checking her vitals almost instantly after being "revived". She tried to push them out of the way of the camera, but was rebuffed, rather rudely she thought, considering who she was and all.

"Ma'am, can you hear me? What is your name, ma'am?" one of the paramedics asked, as the mob of onlookers watched?

"My name? My name? Are you joking young man? Do you not know who I am?"

The paramedics looked at each other, then up to the cops and over to the policeman for guidance. "Um, an actress of some sort?" one of them finally answered. All things considered, it was an easy guess.

"Some actress? My dear, I am not just some actress. I am Jackie LeBouf," she responded, with a flourish.

Again, everyone looked at each other quizzically. Apparently, the name didn't ring any bells. But just as the news team was getting ready to pack up their things and head out to the

next call, one of the policemen snapped his fingers and said, "Jackie LeBouf. Yeah, I remember you. Weren't you in 'The Thing That Crawled From the Deep'?"

"Yes, and the sequel to it as well, but that one is sadly often overlooked," she responded, brandishing her radiantly capped pearly whites.

"Geez," the officer added, "I thought you was dead."

"Apparently not," one of the paramedics said, causing a round of laughter from the encircling group. Jackie pushed the man out of the way of the camera and started to stand up. The officer that recognized her offered his hand in assistance.

"Thank you," she purred, and stood defiantly in front of the camera.

"Miss LeBouf," the reporter shouted, "How did you end up in the pool? Were you pushed? Was someone trying to harm you?"

Jackie's mind swirled around the possible answers to that. She hadn't actually thought that far ahead. Perhaps those endless improvisation classes would finally prove useful.

"Harm me?" she asked. "Why, yes." A look of absolute terror all of a sudden crossed her face. "It's all coming back to me now." The camera crew edged in closer. "A man. A tall, dark man in a black overcoat and black baseball cap." She breathed harder and clutched at her swimsuit. "I'd been lying here half asleep when I heard him enter through that door. I thought it was probably the pool man and didn't bother to look up. That is, until it was too late." She paused for effect and watched the crowds' eyes grow larger in anticipation. At that moment, she wished she'd been a stage actress, but, alas, she had always been destined for the big screen. Or at least that's how she pictured it. Though most of her movies had barely made it to video.

"What happened, ma'am," one of the police officers asked.

Jackie continued. "He rushed me and before I could scream or kick or punch, he had his hands wrapped around my throat." She grabbed her throat for effect and then finished her tale in that stance. "He squeezed, and squeezed, and squeezed, and then everything went black. The next thing I remember is waking up with all you lovely people around me." She smiled and nodded at her admiring rescuers.

There was a momentary silence before everyone started screaming questions:

"What did he look like?" the police asked.

"Had you ever seen him before today?" the fireman asked.

"Do you need to be taken to the hospital?" the paramedics asked.

And, last but certainly not least, "Are you working on any movies right now?" That came from the reporter and that's the question Jackie chose to answer first.

"I'm currently in between projects, but my agent, Ben Slaten, is fielding offers. Now, if you all wouldn't mind, I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed and need to rest for a while. I feel as fine as can be expected. I don't think I need to go to the hospital, but will consult my physician

as soon as possible." Her only physician was her plastic surgeon, and if all went as planned, she'd be consulting him even sooner than possible. "As for the man in black, I've never seen him before today, and I didn't get a good look at him. He strangled me from behind. All I can remember is that he was about six feet tall, slim, and strong. Perhaps he simply wanted his fifteen minutes of fame by murdering a star." Jackie prayed that *her* fifteen minutes would stretch a bit farther than that.

She was grateful, at least, when they respected her wishes and quickly departed. The police were the last to leave after they wrote down as much as Jackie could remember, which, naturally, wasn't much. And then she was alone and once again resting by the pool. She fell asleep with visions of Oscars, Emmys, and Golden Globes swirling around her head, each with her name emblazoned across them.

When she awoke it was already starting to get dark outside, so she went back inside, fixed herself a snack, and flicked on the television. She had only to wait a scant few minutes before she found her story sandwiched in between an arson fire and a downtown robbery. She merited a mere two minutes.

The reporter that had been in her backyard was speaking. "Jackie LeBouf, B movie actress of such films as 'The Thing That Crawled From the Deep', 'Hold the Mayo', and 'Slow Train to Nowhere', was found floating in her pool today, apparently the victim of an attempted murder, perhaps at the hands of an obsessed fan." Scenes of her pool and backyard were quickly flashed across the screen, and then there was Jackie, wet and haggard looking, recounting the scene that never happened.

If the camera truly did add ten pounds to her, it apparently plucked it from her face and chest and stuck it on her stomach and ass. *Perhaps I should have checked myself in the mirror before placing that 911 call*, she thought to herself. Still, at least she was in the spotlight again. "The phone is bound to start ringing any time now," she whispered to herself.

Though when the phone did start to ring later that night, it wasn't at all what Jackie was hoping for.

"Miss LeBouf, what brought you to this desperate act?"

"Miss LeBouf, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"Miss LeBouf, when did you realize your career was shot to hell?"

"Jackie, it's your mother. Call me!"

That last one really worried her. The first three, she figured, were obvious cranks. Still, with a shaky hand, she flicked the TV back on. Again, they were showing her poolside interview. Again, she looked like crap. Again, she heard the familiar reporter's voice. But this time, the story had a new and unexpected twist.

"Jackie LeBouf, the B movie actress who earlier today reported a break-in and attempted murder, was caught on tape by a photographer who was filming the house next-door to Miss LeBouf's, apparently from a tip that Britney Spears was shooting a video there." The camera switched from Jackie's earlier interview to an angle from a nearby rooftop. The house next-door was in the center shot, but then the scene panned right to Jackie stepping

into the pool and then, a minute later, popping up face down, followed by an edited scene of the police, etc. arriving.

"Oh shit," Jackie said out loud.

"Miss LeBouf, apparently, was only a victim of her own deceit," the reporter finished the piece with. Jackie flicked the TV back off and unplugged her phone.

A half hour later she was taken into custody and arrested for filing a false police report. The one saving grace was the throng of reporters that were at the police station to greet her. The mantra that ran through her head as she was whisked inside was, "Any publicity is good publicity. Any publicity is good publicity. Any publicity is good publicity."

She was then booked, questioned, and placed in a one-woman cell, where she spent the night before being bailed out early the next morning. She was too depressed to ask by whom, though she assumed it was her mother. "Bitch will never let me live this one down," she said, as she entered her dark, empty house. A minute later her cell phone rang and she ran to pick it up, though she was terrified at whom it could be.

"Jackie, thank goodness you're all right," came the familiar New York accent. "I've been worried sick about you."

Jackie paused before answering. She knew that Ben only worried about himself first and his wallet second. Jackie was certain that she wasn't even in the top one hundred. "Cut the bull, Ben. What's up? Calling to gloat?"

"Gloat? What kind of a way is that to thank your agent?"

"Thank you for what, Ben?" Jackie wearily sat down and closed her eyes.

"Well, for starters, for bailing you out." Jackie's eye's popped back open in disbelief.

"Bailed me out? Now you're bailing me out? Where have you been for the last ten years while I rotted in this house?"

Ben ignored the question and countered with, "Well, if you don't want to discuss your upcoming interviews with Access Hollywood, Extra, and Miss Mary Hart of Entertainment Tonight, then I guess I should be going."

"Wait!" she shouted, emerging from her stupor. "They all want to interview me?"

"Them and about a dozen others, not to mention Variety, USA Today, and People Magazine." Jackie flushed with glee. She said a silent thank you to the Lord above and fell back on the couch in shock."

"Well...then...thanks, Ben. But what about this, this mess I'm in?"

"Mess? Nah, already have my lawyer's working on it. Minor fine and some community service and it'll all be water under the bridge. Besides, you start filming 'The Thing That Crawled From the Deep III' in about three months. The producers called me last night and asked if you were available. I assume you are, right?"

Jackie flashed a true, honest-to-goodness smile for the first time since she could remember. That could only mean one thing: she was in need of a Botox booster, and quick. "Yes, Ben, I'm available. But you better be working on something bigger than that as well. I'm not getting any younger, you know?"

"What, you? Jackie you're ageless." If only, Jackie thought. Still, ageless is a hell of a lot better than washed up, she figured. Ben waited for a reply from Jackie, but quickly added one more thing before she could respond. "Your back, Jackie! Your back!"

Regaining her usual composure, she replied, "Ben, my dear, I've never been away. I've been here the whole time."

Morton Freeny Show
by
Travis Thomas

Official Transcript
Episode #3215 August 25, 2005

[Morton Freeny] Hello everyone, and welcome to the Morton Freeny show. I'm Morton Freeny, and tonight—it's the case that has transfixed America. Wendy Wooten, B-Movie star, socialite, and mother of two, murdered in her Hollywood condominium. The accused? Her lover and pool-boy, Miguel Sanchez.

Sanchez goes on trial next week, and the prosecutors claim their case is airtight. Miguel, as we all know, is being represented by high-profile attorney Leland Way. Last Thursday on this very show, Lee predicted that Miguel will be acquitted.

Joining me tonight to discuss this case are two very special friends of the show: first, please welcome Gloria Nasgool, former federal prosecutor from Utah. She joins us via satellite feed from Salt Lake City. Gloria is also proud to announce the release of her new book, entitled *Up from Hatred: A Crime Victim's Story*. Welcome Gloria, it's great to have you back on the show.

[Gloria Nasgool] Thanks Mort, it's good to be here.

[Mr Freeny]: And joining me right here in the studio is much-sought-after Hollywood defense attorney Parker Larkin, 'attorney to the stars.' He has represented such luminaries as Ruth Westheimer, Clara Peller, and that guy from *Diff'rent Strokes*—Todd something. Parker, welcome.

[Parker Larkin] Morton, I have to tell you in all honesty, it's wonderful to be back.

[Mr Freeny] It was Todd something, right?

[PL] That's right, Mort, it was Todd something or other.

[Mr Freeny] Okay guys, let's get down to it. A beautiful young woman, an actress in several low budget movies, Wendy Wooten, is found partially nude and bludgeoned to death in her bedroom. No shirt on. Just her panties. Police are baffled, until a tip leads them to pool boy Miguel Sanchez, an illegal immigrant with a mysterious past and the face of an angel. After his arrest, one explosive revelation after another, giving us all a fascinating glimpse into the twisted world of Hollywood high society. Cocaine, heroin, nude pool parties, nude finger-painting, nude sex. An inter-racial love triangle. Gloria, just what is it about this case that has captured America's imagination?

[GN] Well, Mort...

[Mr Freeny] Is it the sex?

[GN] ...I think it's got to be the sex aspect, that's uh...that's....

[Mr Freeny] What do you think Park?

[PL] No question, it's the sex. The sex and the money. And we got a Mexican guy boffin' a white girl, don't forget that.

[Mr Freeny] Right...hmmm, so okay, this is a classic whodunit, isn't it Gloria?

[GN] Absolutely not, Mort. We know who 'dun' it: it was Miguel Sanchez. Leland Way can spin all the wild theories he wants, but at the end of the day the American people are too smart to be sucked in...

[PL] Here we go...

[GN] ...by this kind of—can I please just finish Mr. Larkin—this kind of obfuscation and lies. In fact, the prosecution...

[PL] In fact, here's Gloria Nasgool convicting the defendant on national television without the benefit of even a...

[GN] Mr. Larkin...Mr. Larkin...

[PL] ...trial by a jury of his peers, which is what this case is about, not the histrionics of a vicious ex-prosecutor, but the considered judgment of twelve open-minded...

[GN] Oh please.

[PL] ...real Americans.

[GN] Oh please.

[Mr Freeny] Now, Park, there's really a lot of evidence that Mr. Sanchez will have to explain away, is there not? For example, we have a story out today in Newsweek alleging that he has a history of violence...

[PL] Inadmissible. Not relevant.

[Mr Freeny] ...and there's that tattoo on his left arm, what's that say, Gloria? 'Born with...'

[GN] 'Born to Kill', Mort. It says Born to Kill on his left arm.

[PL] Oh, come on now...what does that have to do with--

[GN] With big drops of blood dripping down.

[PL] Did you actually see this tattoo Gloria? Have you seen it yourself personally?

[GN] It's in the police report, Mr. Larkin...did you read—

[PL] So the answer's NO, you didn't see it yourself. Can you just answer the question Gloria? I just want to hear Gloria answer the question for everybody, will you just--

[Mr Freeny] Well, it's in the police report Park, uh, I think--

[GN] I have not personally visited this sicko, no Mr. Larkin, but...

[PL] Right, thank you. Thank. You. Very. Much.

[GN] ...I don't need to open a sewer lid to know what's--

[PL] Thank you Gloria. Thank you.

[Mr Freeny] It's laid out there in the police report, though, isn't it?

[PL] Well, uh...that's what you're saying here now, uh, but look...I read that it wasn't that clear, is what my sources tell me. It MIGHT say 'Born to Kill' but it's smudged. It's a very amateurish tattoo, it's borderline illegible....I've heard it might actually say 'Born to Fill', or even something else...

[GN] Oh right, Parker, sure...Born to Fill...

[PL] ...or something else, I said...Did you see it yourself, Gloria? I thought we--

[GN] Look at me, baby, I was Born to Fill!

[Mr Freeny] Okay, well, tattoo or not, this guy has some explaining to do, doesn't he Park? I mean there's the blood evidence. What word did the prosecutor use, was it, uh...covered? In blood?

[GN] 'Drenched' Mort. He said Sanchez was 'drenched' in blood. Wendy Wooten's blood. From head to toe.

[Mr Freeny] And so, how do you handle something like that? Park? I mean...

[PL] Okay, that's just typical prosecutor's hyperbole. What does that word mean, anyway--drenched? Is that word standardized, or does it mean something different to you than it does to me? Look, here's the defense: you can't tell if those little drops of blood got on his sleeve, you know, before death or after. He admits he was in the apartment, he admits he found her. He might have tried to give her mouth-to-mouth...

[GN] Her head was torn almost completely off, Parker.

[PL] ...or, okay, just a last embrace, you know the Mexicans are a passionate people...do you have any Mexican friends, Gloria, do you understand their culture?

[GN] Oh, I just can't [unintelligible]

[Mr Freeny] You know, the part I find the most damning, really, is Miguel's own statements to the police, when he was found wandering around outside the condo after the murder...

[GN] Drenched in blood.

[PL] Splatters of blood.

[Mr Freeny] ...and let me read here from the official police report, let's see, it was down

here...oh, okay here it is. It says, 'at this point, suspect brandished the aluminum bat at Officer Merck, saying You want some of this? You want some—like that bitch I just offed?' Suspect then broke down in tears, saying: I just wanted to love her, oh God oh God what have I done?'

Now, Park, what do you think the jury will make of that?

[PL] Nothing. It's inadmissible. He was not Mirandized, which is just emblematic of this, this sloppy, botched investigation. You can't use a confession that...

[GN] Excited utterance, Parker. Totally admissible...

[PL] ...was given before—excuse me, EXCUSE ME GLORIA—before he had an attorney available...

[Mr Freeny] Still, everyone might start to wonder about Miguel's claim that he was not involved.

[GN] Everyone but Leland Way and Parker Larkin will wonder. Here is this young lady in the prime of her life, I mean, I look at her and then I look at this vermin Sanchez and this sick...gnome... Leland Way and I just want to...

[PL] Okay, here come the personal attacks, the hateful personal attacks.

[GN] ...vomit. Just vomit.

[Mr Freeny] Hey guys, lets maybe try to...

[PL] Credibility? Did I hear Gloria talking about credibility?

[GN] No.

[PL] Let's look at the credibility of this woman, this Wooten woman. You think just flashing her incredible rack on Night of the Vampire gives her credibility, is that what you think Gloria? Well, I have to be perfectly honest here for a minute...

[GN] What the hell are you trying to...

[PL] ...but this woman, this Wooten woman, she has quite a past herself. I've seen—personally seen—her high school yearbook. You know what she was voted? By her own class? She was voted...

[GN] Oh good God...

[PL] 'Most likely to get bitch-slapped through a trailer house wall.' By her own class.

[GN] This is really [deleted] incredible.

[Mr Freeny] Whoa, whoa, uh, thank God for the seven second delay. I think--

[PL] She has no credibility, NONE, when she claims that...

[GN] She's [deleted] dead you [deleted]...she's...

[PL] ...when she claims that—hold on, hold on, let me finish, can I just finish? Can I...

[GN] ...on a [deleted] slab down at the...

[PL] ...can I just ask you one [deleted] question? Can I ask you one question Gloria?

[GN] morgue...what? WHAT?

[PL] Here's the question: can I finish? Can I [deleted] finish?

[Mr Freeny] I think Gloria raises a valid point, Park...

[GN] Go ahead. Go right ahead and finish.

[PL] Thank you Gloria. Thank. You.

[GN] Go ahead, I can't wait. Tell us about credibility, because you're so very [deleted] credible Parker.

[PL] Okay, let me tell you about it, and here I'm talking to the American people, not to you Gloria...because you know it all, don't you? You know, I'm starting to feel like I'm the one on trial here, Morton. Can I just say that, in all honesty? I think...

[Mr Freeny] Aww, hey, Park...

[PL] ...its just, well Gloria, maybe if you could stop being so [deleted] bitter about how your boyfriend finally snapped and popped you, maybe if you could just get past that...

[GN] You [deleted]! You [deleted]! He was NOT my [deleted] boyfriend you—

[PL] ...and be more objective, well, fine maybe he was just some guy you were sleeping with, I don't know what you called him...

[GN] He was a total [deleted] stranger, you [deleted] weasel! I was beaten and raped by a total stranger! Who the [deleted] do you [unintelligible]...

[Mr Freeny] I think it was a stranger that assaulted her, Park.

[PL] Whatever. Gloria, you should just try to relax. You're making a fool of yourself here.

[GN] [Deleted] you [deleted] your [unintelligible]

[Mr Freeny] Okay, we need to take a break for some important messages. Thanks Gloria, thanks Park. When we come back we'll take your calls. This is the Morton Freeny show.

[End Segment: To Commercial]

Cows
by
Daniel Willingham



A Crispy Week by Ricky Garni

A CRISPY WEEK IN AUGUST: THE AUGUST THAT HE FOUND OUT THAT THERE WERE NO NATIONAL HOLIDAYS IN AUGUST, AT A TIME WHEN HE WAS PRETTY OLD TO LEARN THAT, NOT RETIREMENT OLD, BUT PRETTY OLD, STILL, PERHAPS IT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS CHARACTER THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW THIS UNTIL HE WAS OLD, OR AT LEAST, PRETTY OLD, I MEAN, NOT GREY HAired OR ANYTHING OR PROOLING OLD, JUST NOT YOUNG

MONDAY



WHEN I REFLECTED ON MY WEEK, I REALIZED THAT I HAD WATCHED ONE GUY BEAT UP FIVE DIFFERENT GUYS ON TELEVISION IN FIVE DAYS.

I COULDN'T KEEP DOING THAT! WHAT ELSE WAS ON? WELL, ONE CHANNEL HAD A MOVIE WHERE ONE GUY WAS WHISPERING INTO ANOTHER GUY'S EAR. THAT LOOKED KIND OF INTERESTING.

TUESDAY



HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THE FACT THAT ALL THE MAJOR DECISIONS THAT YOU HAVE MADE IN YOUR LOVE LIFE SEEM TO INVOLVE DISHES? NOT FOOD, MIND YOU, BUT DISHES, AND USUALLY IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH WASHING THEM. I THINK THAT IS REALLY INTERESTING. I REALLY DO. I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYONE WITH THAT SORT OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOVE AND WASHING DISHES BEFORE. IT'S USUALLY VERY INDIRECT.

SARAH TOLD ME. IT WOULD NOT BE LONG BEFORE SHE FELL OFF HER BICYCLE AND INTO A CLUMPY CACHE OF DARK, MOIST, GREEN GRASS.

WEDNESDAY



I BELIEVE IT WAS BUNNY WHO TOLD ME, THIS WAS A LONG TIME AGO NOW, BACK IN THE 8TH GRADE I THINK, THAT POETS LIVED UNTIL THEY WERE 63, AND THAT WRITERS LIVED UNTIL THEY WERE 67. I MEAN, ON AVERAGE, WE WERE TALKING ABOUT WHAT WE WANTED TO DO WHEN WE GREW UP. BUNNY, OH BUNNY-WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DIE AT 32?

THURSDAY



SHOULD I BE HAPPY TO HEAR SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SONG, OR SHOULD I BE SAD THAT I DID NOT WRITE THE SONG? AH, TO BE SKINNY AND WRITE SONGS, AND YET, ON THE OTHER HAND, TO EAT STRAWBERRIES AND NOT WORRY ABOUT QUALITY, OTHER THAN THE FLESHY FRUIT QUALITY OF STRAWBERRIES. AH, TO BE WAVY AND DO BOTH.

FRIDAY



GOOD-LOOKING GUYS HAVE PICKY LADIES AND A SEXUAL POWER SHIFT DURING PRIMATE EVOLUTION TO THANK FOR THEIR SCULPTED CHINS, PROMINENT CHEEKBONES, AND BABY BLUES.

SATURDAY



I AM SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT DO YOU SEE THOSE BIRDS FLYING IN FORMATION? WHERE DO BIRDS FLY TO IN JULY? I HAVE ONE OTHER QUESTION: WHAT KIND OF MUSIC SHOULD YOU PLAY AT A FUNERAL SO THAT PEOPLE WON'T GET TOO SAD BUT WON'T GET TOO HAPPY EITHER?

SCOTT JOPLIN

Penpals With God, Episode 1
by
Stephanie O'Donnell



Contributor Biographies

C. Allen Rearick is a lazy migrant farmer from Peru with 3 ingrown toenails and a raccoon's leg for an arm. He strains raindrops threw a purifier to garner wisdom and inspiration for his poems. Visit his website or else he will cast a spell on you with the heave of his chicken bones. www.geocities.com/c_allenrearick/index.html

George Anderson says: "I was born in Montreal and presently live in Thirroul, New South Wales. I teach high school English and History and edit the school literary magazine Ephemeral. I love body surfing, biking along the South Coast and showing contempt whenever it is deserved."

Corey Mesler, a Trappist Monk, was raised by wolves. He has Canadian blood, which, unlike Canadian Bacon, doesn't stay fresh if left out. He has rambled around some, mostly from the bed to the bathroom, and once saw Prince in the Los Angeles airport. He also dated Vanity's sister, but has no claims to ethnic insider information. He published a novel once that some people liked. He also claims to have written "It's my Party." His wife tells him which shirt goes with which pants.

For the record **D.T. Harris** (<http://members.aol.com/calamostreet/page01.htm>) states that he, like many others today, works very hard to stay well below the Creative Threat level established recently by the Department of Homily Security (color code "forever gray"). And he assures any federal monitors reading this that responsibility for all lapses of non-creative potential that may appear in the above story are not his, but rest solely with the misguided editorial efforts of people who, apparently, can't leave "good enough" alone. As every fourth-grader now learning to the test knows, challenging the status okay quo is, really, not what made us better pigeons.

Kuzhali Manickavel offered up the following biography: "The author resides in India. The end."

Michael Fowler is interested in most areas of the philosophy of mind (except theories of trance) and in jazz drumming. His research for the last decade has been largely concerned with the nature of the concepts of shuffling and petty theft. This last holiday season he played the part of Melchior in an outdoor Nativity scene, and was well received.

Rob Rosen lives, loves, and works in San Francisco. His first novel, "Sparkle", was published in 2001 to critical acclaim. His short stories appear regularly on more than forty literary sites worldwide, and have been published in the literary anthologies *Mentsh* (Alyson, 2004), *I Do/I Don't* (Suspect Thoughts Press, 2004), *Travel a Time Historic* (Cyber Pulp, 2005), *Short Attention Span Mysteries* (Kerlak Publishing, 2005), *Brotherhood* (Alyson, 2005), and *Modern Magic, Wizards, and Witches* (Kerlak Publishing, 2005). Rob was also the winner of the Muse Apprentice Guild's annual international Chapbook Competition and will have a collection of his short stories published in the spring of 2005. Feel free to visit him at his website www.therobrosen.com or email him at robrosen@therobrosen.com

Travis Thomas is really a lot smarter than he looks and sounds. He dreams of someday becoming a paid assassin, but realizes he will probably always remain an enthusiastic amateur. He was recently quoted as saying 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't just shoot it for no good reason.'

Daniel B. Willingham is currently 22 years old and going to school to learn what a bad artist he really is. He draws comics to escape from reality and to amuse complete strangers. He has his own website, <http://headdoctor.keenspace.com>, where he posts comics and drawings.

Ricky Garni has devoted many years to the illustrated biographical study of the enigmatic early 20th century Andalusian symbolist poet CRISPY FLOTILLA. A work in progress, Mr. Garni now struggles to capture in prose the painful later years of Mr. Flotilla when, broken and penniless, the brilliant poet spent his last days living in obscurity with a cocktail waitress known only as Captain Bob.

Born and raised in New York, **Stephanie O'Donnell** created the character "Poley Polarity" when she was 10 years old. At age 15, she had the character copyrighted on the advice of her father, a full time artist who also was interested in cartooning in his youth. Recently, Stephanie has developed her characters into the comic strip "The Original Nutty Funsters", which ran during the 2004 summer edition of the K-State Collegian. Bill Watterson's "Calvin and Hobbes" is at the top of her list of major influences.