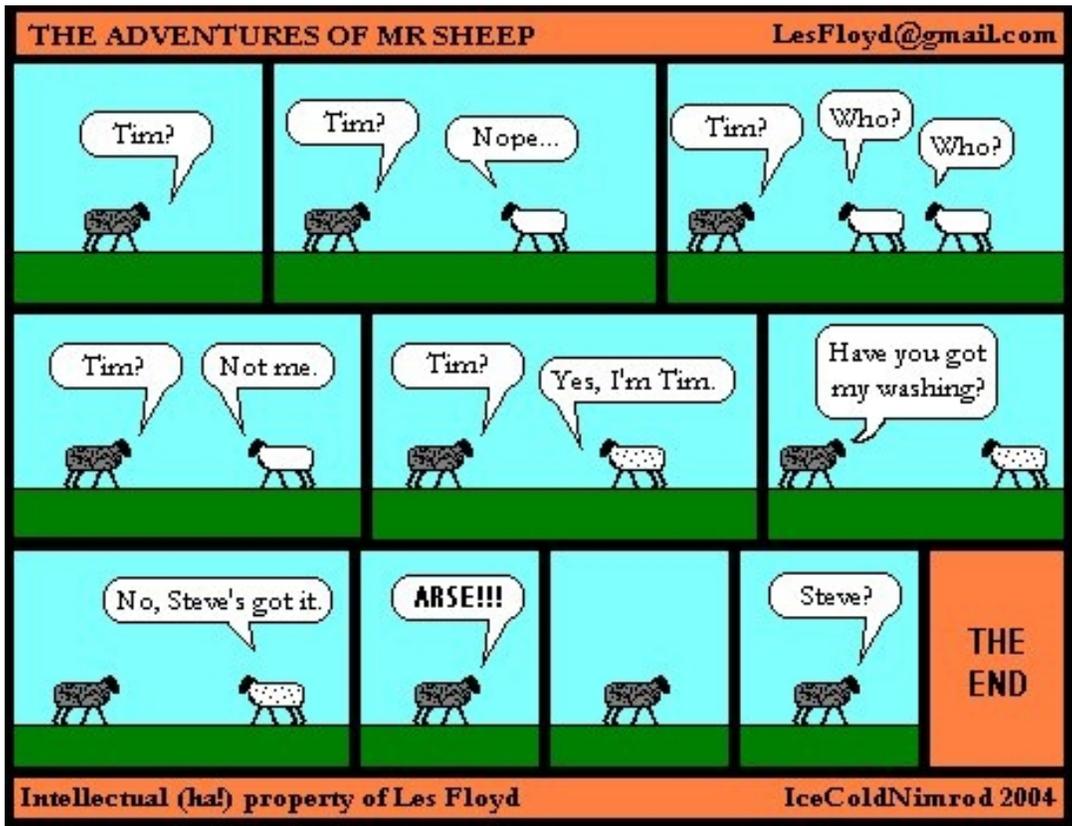




ISSUE TWO
April 2009



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From The Editors

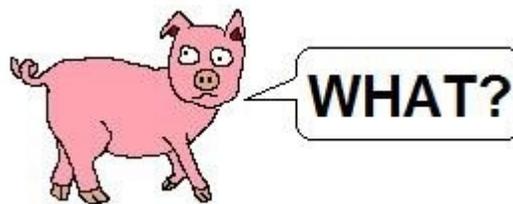
Dying is easy. Comedy is difficult.
- Edmund Gwenn

Humour is a double-edged sword. If you use it properly, you gain points ... people laugh. But, if you do it badly, the sound of your efforts hitting the floor can be deafening. It's true. Bad comedy can 'kill' you.

The key to creating good comedic works lies in timing, technique and motivation. And pain. Yes, pain IS the basis for all humour. If somebody doesn't get hurt, it's just not funny. Of course, the pain has to be inflicted on someone other than yourself. If YOU get whacked over the head with a baseball bat, it's not funny. But if Tweety Bird wallops Sylvester on the foot with a mallet and he runs around the room screaming with stars flying out from his foot, that's funny. Good comedy's all about pokes in the eye, feelings getting hurt, and stupidity taking centre stage.

Get ready to roar. The contributors to this issue of TheRighteyedDeer are no fools. They've mastered the art of 'the painful thing told playfully'. Enjoy.

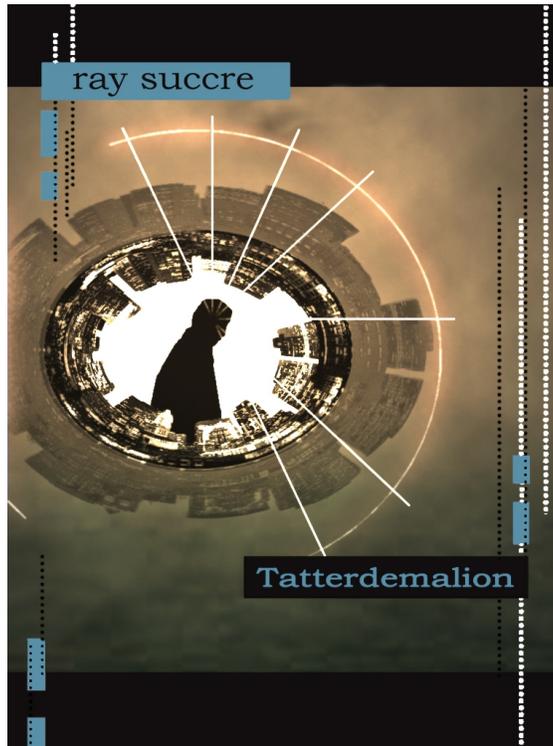
from
Doug Pugh
Donna Gagnon Pugh
Henge Hog



'pig' by Les Floyd

TheDeer talks to poet Ray Succre

“He Tries Hard”



Ray Succre (author of *Touring* which appeared in Issue One of TheRightEyedDeer), lives in a small coastal town in Oregon with his wife and son. He has published hundreds of poems in publications spanning England, Spain, Austria, Ireland, Scotland, India, Canada, France, Finland, Singapore, Poland, Wales, Bahrain, Nepal, New Zealand, Italy, Australia, Saudi Arabia, the Fiji Islands, Argentina, Germany, Israel, and throughout the United States, as well as in many online magazines. Ray has twice been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and is also a winner of the Adroitly Placed Word Award, for spoken word. He is a regular contributor at Blood and Ink. <http://bloodink.blogspot.com/>

His book *Tatterdemalion* is available here:

<http://www.amazon.com/Tatterdemalion-Ray-Succre/dp/0955496489>

In your blog, you mention a 'poetical fugue theory'. What the heck is that?

I went through a somewhat long phase in my late twenties where I thought that my primary focus in verse should naturally involve being a big smarty pants. Being highly uneducated and having no collegiate background or foreground, I struck out on my own and plotted a somewhat feasible path towards getting my homemade degree in smarty pantsing. I also knew that a strong study of verse patterns and literature's past would better my work, so I spent years studying Spenser, Milton, Dante ... you know, all the long dead ones we still talk about (and I still use Spenser and Milton as go-to authors whenever I want some good material to pour over). During this portion of my life, I also studied much in the way of metrical devices and rhythm. I started working with the pantoum, the villanelle, and many others. Anything I could get my grubby mind around. Near the end of this phase I decided to row out into the big blue on my tiny skiff and make my own contribution, creating a form of my own, the fugue.

[Ray's aside: If anyone currently reading this response has no interest in classic forms and metric devices, please replace the remainder of this question's answer with the following sentence, and then skip to the next question: "Oh the fugue theory? I thought it'd be cool to do. Big headache, really, and it's a little out there. No big deal." If anyone currently reading this response *does* have an interest in rhythm and meter, consider the following

explanatory paragraphs to be viable in the forming of a basic, literary semi.]

The fugue, apart from the longstanding musical form relying on contrapuntality and recursion, is a verse form I invented. The rules and makeup of a poetical fugue are inviolably strict, and are designed to create symmetrical poetry with a rhythm one can plot, and voice structure, but with a system of rules that are altered based on the starting verses. The fugue is incredibly intricate, and it gains further rules and volume as you write it. The rhyme scheme is recursive. The rhythm patterns follow an equation that increases the poem's size with each stanza until a middle point is reached (also determined by the same equation), at which point they fall in on themselves and begin contracting in subsequent stanzas by size and length. It should be stated that, when I was younger, I didn't even need pants to be a smarty pants. I could function smarty nude. Now, I just talk less.

A link to my argument in poetical fugue, as well as an example of the rules in action, is as follows:

<http://www.kunstderfuge.com/theory/succre.htm>

I should note that I spent a long time working over that form, but a very short time explaining it in the text that the previous link will take you to.

Simplistically, all rules in the fugue are in the hands of a few variables chosen at the start, and these are based on metrical rhythms and their measure. The entire structure and system is based on repetition and recursion, and is heavily reliant on variables interacting with line and stanza lengths, and their metrical count. I was inspired by a biography of Bach I'd read, in which the musical fugue was featured much. I didn't want anything all that subjective working its way into the theory. There are people out there who invent verse forms on occasion, but most of these are so subjective, they border on just being frivolous and silly, i.e. a new verse form where you make a statement, then write a three syllable line personifying something from the statement, followed by four lines in which you describe a season of the year and some emotions. (Geh.) I wanted classical ruling, objective plotting, true English meter, symmetry in system. I think I got it, too. Strangely, I've had much contact with classically trained musicians due to the poetical fugue, but virtually no contact from poets over it. The sites I managed to get it published through are tablature-sporting, classically oriented music sites, not writing sites. In truth, you're the first publication not based on concertos and orchestras to have mentioned it. I'm a little enamored that musicians seem to get into my new poetic form much more than poets. On a side note, I only rarely write in stringent form anymore.

After creating the fugue, I looked up my name in the dictionary and found the following: **Succre, Ray:** *Pers.* American author in late 21st century responsible for invention of poetical fugue theory and practice, a system largely ignored by everyone. See also: Smarty Pants. Rambler.

Wow. How incredibly fascinating. I'm going to have to read through your answer a few times ... later, okay, 'cause right now, I think my head's about to explode. Could you get me a drink or somethin'? Wait ... there's dirt on your hand. Whoa! There's more on your wrists ... are those tattoos?

During the record-heat summer of 1996, and later in the spring of 2005, and after that in the summer of 1993, I was the unfortunate victim of abduction. The difficulty of transcribing the events of those three abductions is manifest in my hazy memory of them, a dilemma of having my mind altered by extraterrestrial technology. What I remember of these abductions is as follows, and each instance is remarkably similar to the others:

I wake from sleep in the folds of a great light, and seem at first unable to move. I am alone. There is a staggering pressure in the room's air. Against my will, I sit up, step from bed, and walk toward the bedroom window. Once there, I climb outside in my pajamas. The light increases in power, until I can't see anything, and then all becomes distant, obscure. I become cognizant of my surroundings later, though how much time has passed is unknown. I'm in a strange room, surrounded by my abductors. They don't speak through their mouths, but I can hear them somehow. They are all speaking Spanish, and seem to want to comfort me. Though they have abducted me, and while I am strapped down on a small table, they exude a kind of care, as if I am a delicate specimen or something of value. They have apparently combed through the databanks of my mind, and know I enjoy camping, because the strange, Spanish-speaking beings have made the interior of their spacecraft resemble the woods, complete with tents, a nearby fire, and Coleman lanterns, in order to better keep me at ease.

Here's an awkward paragraph break.

Their technology regarding holograms is incredible, and encompasses many sensory appeasements; I can hear a

nonexistent stream nearby, in the illusion of the woods, and even the air smells of typical forest. The beings are wearing brightly-colored ponchos, similar to what hunters on Earth might wear when out hunting and not wanting to be mistaken for deer. Beneath this orange outerwear, they sport camouflage outfits and hold aluminum cans containing the memory-diminishing drug they will use on me, which they cleverly disguise as domestic beer, to keep me docile with familiarity. To aid in this, they also possess the keen, transformative ability of resembling humans. During their examination of me, I can note the details of their appearance are made to be exacting. The stubble on their faces looks real, they exchange very human looks with one another, like smiles and knowing glances. They tell me everything is fine, that they'll take care of me, but I don't understand what they're saying because I don't speak Spanish. I only understand their meaning because, as I grow drifty again, about to pass out on their examination table (which they've designed to resemble a comfortable mattress), I note that several of them begin caressing me and gently toying with my hair.

I wake the following day with a new tattoo, some sort of mark they leave to track my whereabouts and note me as a specimen. I smell of the strange, alien beverage and the woods, am sore all over, and have the nagging sensation of confusingly vague intimacy.

'CAPACITY' is tattooed on my right wrist, and 'COMPRESSION' on the left. There is also a single, vertical line tattooed on the center of my right palm. In explaining the meaning of these to you, I must refer you to the above abductions, as well as to the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/ahyda9>

(The Deer sits open-mouthed, staring in awe at Ray.) Man. Aliens, huh? They did such a nice job on your tattoos. (Takes an overly large gulp of the Spanish-smelling drink.) Um ... I see a bunch of paper wadded up in the trash can over there. Are you working on something new?

I'm working on numerous things right now. The paper wadded up in the trash-bin isn't related to any of them, however. That's just a rejection from a publication. It's near the top of the rim because there are a lot of other rejections beneath it. I empty the bin every few days. As for new projects, I just finished a book of poetry, *If It Should Happen*, and am very busy working through revisions of *Amphisbaena*, my newest novel (the story of a struggling calendarist who begins dating two women that happen to be a giant, two-headed snake. Yes, it's an experimental romance novel, and yes, men can write romance novels, too, just with things like snakes), which will be released this Summer through Cauliay Publishing. Other things I can put into italics would be *Tatterdemalion* (also through Cauliay), my first novel, released last year, which I am trying to get you to read, and *The Rat*, a one-time, one-issue-and-by-invitation-only publication I've created. I'm the editor, and *The Rat* exhibits the work of 19 still-living writers I am very fond of. I'm not in *The Rat* because the editor ignored my emails. That wadded up rejection at the top of the trash-bin? I got it from a guy named Ray, who didn't invite me. I've been outlining a new novel, as well, but I can't talk much about that or I'll feel too constricted. I am making the promise to all, however, that this next book will finally have a title longer than a single word.

You're a stay-at-home-dad. How's that going? When do you make time to write?

When our son, Painter, was born, my wife and I decided one of us would stay home to raise him, and that we did not want to use daycare or any network of other people to watch over him. She out-earned me by quite a margin, and so it was concluded I'd be the one staying home.

It's going well. Painter is an astute little progeny, a wondrous pocket of energy, an eager little spider. I love every minute of it. Making time to write is a major portion of my day. Until he began preschool, this was entirely random. My wife would come home from work at difficult-to-predict times, due to split-shifts and unpredictable schedules, and I'd find myself with anywhere from ten minutes to two hours' time in which to rush out and write a chapter or some poetry (I can't write at home. Ever. I've never been able to do this. All of my work takes place in public, usually in a restaurant or coffee shop, anywhere that will let me sit for an hour or so without paying a lot, because I'm a writer and paying for things is somewhat of a challenge). I made do with what I was given. I wrote daily, either several poems or a chapter in a novel. I missed very few days, but had to plan well to maintain my time. Now that Painter is in preschool, I have a dedicated schedule. I have from about 12:30 until about 3:30 to get my work done. I spend the first hour or so of this answering emails and charting out bits of information I receive. The remaining two hours are writing time. I'd do a flip from my roof for a six-hour per day regiment ... a flip from the roof, I tell you. First grade is only two years away ... I can almost taste it. Of course, every moment I spend with my son at home is more than grand. Spending playtime with Maisy (my wondrous wife) and Painter is the only time I don't really think about writing. That includes sleep.

Time I spend away from a page is time in which the pressure to write increases quickly. I go a little out of my skull at around day three, on those rare occasions when that much time passes without getting myself to a page (holidays with hectic schedules and visitors, mostly).

In much of your poetry, you shine your light on everyday things (see "Goodbye Goodbye" from GypsyMag below). What really drives you to write?

I tend to favor intricate themes, and much of the time, layered themes. I'm also a bit on the abstract side of the fence, with strange conceits. However, allow me to talk about myself more.

I focus on sound first, giving it more of me than most other traits in a poem. Because of this, I'm somewhat forced toward simplistic or common subjects. If I were to begin using uncommon subjects, combined with all the wordy abstraction and multiple themes, I'd be incomprehensible. Gibberish. Much of my work is a give-and-take of various things I lean toward.

Trying to pin a meaning on why I write is difficult. The simplest answer I can give is that I've made a place on the page that is my own. I'm in there, and it's as real a place to me as the house in which I live, or the various locations in which I write. I taught myself to read at three. When I was four, my favorite toy was a Speak N' Spell. I actually sat around all day spelling things. It's all I enjoyed doing.

I moved around incessantly throughout my childhood, was enrolled in school after school, and so never had time to settle in and become a part of any place I lived. I hadn't any friends until high school. My instructors in some of the elementary schools would send me to higher grade classrooms when the time of day came around for reading and writing. An instructor in the 7th grade (a meaty, towering Irishman) singled me out and read my poetry to the class on a few occasions. When I began junior high, I was enrolled in my nineteenth school. I spent my childhood writing poems and stories hardly anyone read and playing Nintendo by myself in my room. I'm not trying to throw a sob-story your way, only that this particular childhood was the sort that can make for an odd young man. Odd young men often write, I've found. It's not difficult to see why I became a writer. It's just about the only thing in my childhood for which I was given any attention. I decided to be a writer in junior high and I've been writing books ever since. I didn't attempt to find publication for anything I'd written until I was 28, however. There are times in one's life when you simply have to grab hold of something you know and run with it. Run fast and hard. It's yours. I've never thought to look back. Very few things fit my mind, and I consider myself lucky to have discovered my comfort with the page early on.

The poem below was written many years ago. Belinda Subraman was kind enough to give it a print several years back (one of my earliest printed poems, by the way). It's certainly a younger poem, but I'm still fond of it. *Goodbye Goodbye* is an example of that balancing act I've described. It's essentially a restaurant scene, characterized by an any-you, as we see in a lot of modern poetry, with themes of defeat and escape, and the idea of 'public isolation'. The images and sound are abstracted heavily, placing the character between the ground and sky, and juxtaposing the things on the ground with the things in the sky, with 'you' outside of one thing while inside another. The poem ends with the character leaving quickly, in a manner that is alluded to be like explosion or bursting, sudden, gone, goodbye goodbye. A couple of things are repeated here and there, to reinforce their importance in the scene or meaning.

Goodbye Goodbye

by Ray Succre

Spoon polishers, order takers,
and then spinning tops wrapped
in hostess uniforms—

These under the crashing night of
herons and rocks thrown high.

Near the reds of brake lights,
on a bench set for smokers,
outside in cold, you
smoke a straight, make

The Arrangement

by Oscar Windsor-Smith

She dismissed her crime with a flutter of scarlet nails and tinkling bling. 'It's only a *scratch*,' she said. That *scratch* was a two-inch-deep gouge down the wing of my classic Volvo 480. Her tank of an SUV displayed not a blemish on its acres of chromium plating. With a wriggle and a sway she climbed back aboard the monster and slammed the door.

'Hey.'

The driver's window slid down.

'Don't you scream at *me*,' she hissed through a cloud of Chanel No.5.

'I was *not* screaming.'

'Oh, yes you were.'

'Well, look what you've done.'

'You shouldn't have parked it there.'

'What?'

'That's where *I* park.'

'Not when *I'm* here, you don't. I have every right to park here.'

'You have rights? – Huh!'

'I'd thank you not to make those insulting gestures.'

'I was adjusting my bangles.'

'I might believe you if you weren't laughing. Look at it. That'll cost a fortune to repair – *if* they can get the parts. It's irreplaceable, you know.'

'Get a life!'

'I had a life once and I had a car too until you wrecked it.'

She leaned out of the window and surveyed the deep crease in my Volvo, diverting my attention to an entirely different deep and generous cleavage. She looked up and smiled coquettishly.

'Mmmm,' she sighed. 'Yes, I suppose it is a mess.'

'It's only insured third party.'

'So? Go to three parties and then torch it.'

'Oh, hah, bloody, hah.'

'Will you settle for a ...?' She winked and nodded.

'The full business?'

'OK, Big Boy, it's a deal.'

What a passionate and *crazy* woman; just two of many reasons why I married her.

Oscar Windsor-Smith was born on the Wirral, UK — that's the sticky-out bit below Liverpool and above Wales — but drifted to various points of the compass and finally settled in rural Hertfordshire where he lives with one wife, three cats and a Volvo 480. He has had non-fiction articles published, had a novel long-listed for the Writers' and Artists' Yearbook centenary novel competition and has accumulated various short and flash fiction competition credits.

Tastefully Innocent

by Gary Hewitt

oh how you can't resist
stop now, you must desist
for you want me inside,
your lips betray,
your fingers engulf me,
here I come, wahey!

(Bardish pause here to say: *this is not erotica despite the undoubted innuendo.*
Ahem, Bard? If you wouldn't mind could you carry on!
Only if I must, dear reader, and I do wish you wouldn't interrupt.)

oh my, I taste so salty,
tickle your tongue, you're ever so naughty
saliva sweetens me, enhancing the taste,
pleasure like this, so base, so base

(For heaven's sake bard. This just won't do. This is supposed to be innocent.
It is, I tell you. How dare you interfere, you prudish bore?)

I feel myself shrinking, my load released,
inside your oesophagus, your senses pleased
smaller I go, I shrivel to pieces,
finding your mouth's every creases

(Now, this really has gone too far. I'm having you banned.
Banned? How dare you? My art will out! My talent will not be stopped by the likes of you.)

and then I'm gone, vanished entirely,
you lick your lips and think not bloody likely,
for your fingers find a new parcel to deliver,
and inside, I oh so quiver

(Surely not another discharge. I feel quite sick. Sick.
Sir, you have the mind of the gutter about you. Truly, I have never met such an odious imagination!)

for almost empty I stand in a packet of pink,

I dare not wonder how long you'll think,
how long it will be before this snack fails,
the flavour of crisps: Prawn Cocktail

(Crisps? You mean to tell me this was all about crisps?

Ah, a moment of illumination in a most obtuse fellow. Yes, of course it was about crisps. I would have thought that obvious. What else could I possibly mean? Readers these days, such filth, such filth ...)

Gary Hewitt lives in the depths of Kent, UK. His work appears at Smokebox.net and he is a regular contributor at The Write Idea.

The Comedy of Writing

by Su Laws Baccino



“Rejects.”



“Accidental Recycling”

'**Su Laws Baccino** ... writes like a painter; her close observation and arresting descriptions efficiently re-create events and surroundings, and draw us, fascinated, into her very special world.'

– *UA Fanthorpe*

Su was amused when described as 'an artist, poet and writer'.

'More like a rebel turned eccentric,' she replied.

every day this week

by Casey Quinn

every day
this week
i sat at
my desk

and listened
to four men

from
the comforts
of their cubes
and office chairs

with feet
kicked up
on their desks

coffee
in hand

argue about
how obama will
never succeed

he will never
make
a difference

he is just
more
of the same

and when they
were done
agreeing with
each other

they turned back
to their computers

and spent
the afternoon

surfing
the web.

Casey Quinn is a writer of prose and poetry. His first poetry collection "Snapshots of Life" is expected to be published in April 2009. He is also the editor of the online magazine Short Story Library - <http://shortstory.us.com>.

Barnsley Bear: Episode One – The Phantom Menace

by Les Floyd

Barnsley Bear shuffled in from the kitchen with a tray, carrying a pot of steaming tea, a china cup and a plate of freshly-baked honey biscuits, which he laid on the small table beside his chair. Then with a groan of satisfaction, he sat down, ready to watch his favourite programme.

As he reached for the remote-control, and the television flickered to life, he thought to himself that his was the most comfortable chair ever made, and he shuffled his bottom until he was perfectly settled.

Anne Robearson greeted him from the television with a stern glare which made Barnsley nearly spill the tea as he poured it.

"Steady on, Anne," said Barnsley, chuckling, as he dunked a honey biscuit. "I don't think the old ticker can take shocks like that."

He liked 'The Bleakest Wink' but that ginger bear frightened him. Once, he had such a terrible nightmare that he woke up in a cold sweat, and couldn't get back to sleep until he checked under the bed to make sure she wasn't there.

"You are obviously an idiot," sneered Anne at one of the contestants, raising another chuckle from Barnsley, who sipped at the piping-hot tea. "As a binbear, you don't know that the atomic weight of Nitrogen is 14.0067 and NOT 15.9994 ... which is obviously Oxygen? "

The contestant began to cry.

At that moment, there was a tap-tap-tapping at the window... very much like the sound a dyslexic woodpecker would make.

"What on earth?" Barnsley asked himself.

He put down the cup of tea, and lifted wearily from his chair to investigate the noise.

With more puzzlement than shock, he watched the half-brick smash through his living-room window on a trajectory that led it to bounce from the top of his head and knock him solidly backwards into the arms of his comfy chair.

"Goodbye!" said Anne Robearson, winking from the television screen before Barnsley slipped into unconsciousness.

When Barnsley awoke, the Ambulancebear was covering a nasty wound on his forehead with vinegar and brown paper.

"Ouch!" said Barnsley, as his vision began to return.

"Sorry about that," said the Ambulancebear, securing the stinging paper bandage with butchers' string. "Management cutbacks, I'm afraid."

The whirling image of Detective Sergeant Panda floated into view. "Listen Barnsley, I'm not mucking about with your problems any more. This is the nineteenth time bricks have been blown through your windows this month, so I suggest you contact the Council. If I have to come over here again, I'm arresting you for murder - and you just see if I can't make it stick."

"But I didn't call you!" protested the injured bear in confusion.

Something solid swiped across the back of Barnsley's head and he looked around to see PC Polar turn away and replace his baton. He was eating the last of the honey biscuits.

"Needless to say, Barnsley, if you so much as think of calling us again ..." continued DS Panda, "it will be the last phone-call you make as a free bear."

"But I don't even have a telephone ... Oof!"

Barnsley rubbed the tender spot on the back of his head as PC Polar began to whistle innocently.

"Very well," accepted Barnsley with a sigh of resignation.

"Good, good," said DS Panda, with a crooked smile. "Now," he carried on, turning to the Ambulancebear, "I suggest you have this bear checked out in hospital. We wouldn't want him dying on us now, would we?"

PC Polar sniggered.

"Well, I normally would," said the Ambulancebear, putting the ball of string back into his Tesco carrier-bag. "It's these cutbacks, though. The Hospital Manager had to sell the ambulance so he could get a nicer car. You know how it is, you can't get funding if you don't make the right impression, so he needs it for conferences and whatnot. So, I'm on me bike. Can you take him in your car?"

DS Panda muttered something sharply at the Ambulancebear.

"Right away," said Barnsley, wobbling to his feet. "Sugar and milk?"

The three uniformed bears looked at him with bewilderment.

"Four coffees? I think I've got a jar of Goldilocks Blend somewhere."

The Ambulancebear patted Barnsley on the shoulder. "You get some sleep. It seems you're having a little trouble hearing, so if you get any discharge from your ears later on, just plug it with cotton-wool and get yourself to the hospital in the morning."

"Put the lights and siren on, Polar," whispered DS Panda to his assistant as they left with the Ambulancebear. "I'm late for my dinner because of that hairy wanker."

Barnsley sighed. He hated to cause trouble.

With a visit to the cupboard, he placed a wooden board over the smashed pane and nailed it into place. The wintry breeze still crept in.

After sweeping up the broken glass and washing his dishes, he turned off the television and the lights, and clambered up the stairs to his warm bed, which was cold.

With bleary eyes, and a wide yawn, Barnsley surveyed the damage in the light of day. There was nothing that couldn't be fixed with a little work and he liked his little odd-jobs. It kept him busy. The only concern was a patch of dried blood in the carpet. It was too late to simply mop it out. He would need to make a visit to the village shop for some cleaner.

With that, he put on his coat and scarf -- making sure he remembered his keys -- and walked out of the front door, pulling it tight behind him.

It was a bitterly cold morning, but looked jolly seasonal with the layer of frost that covered the trees and buildings. The sound of swearing birds filled the air as Barnsley, with a spring in his step, paced down the street. It was all the circle of life, he thought, as he whistled to himself. Without the beauty of winter, he wouldn't have the joy of summer.

Pushing through the shop doorway, with a tinkle of the bell above his head, Barnsley loosened his scarf

and approached the counter.

A beautiful young lady-bear stood behind the till.

She'd made quite an impression on Barnsley since she came to work in the village as part of her care-in-the-community rehabilitation programme.

"Hello there, Miss Bear," greeted Barnsley with a blush behind his fur.

"Good Morning," replied Miss Bear, before shouting "Woof!" at the till.

"I'm afraid I had a little trouble last night."

"What's with the ... the ... the ... BUMPS on your head?" interrupted Miss Bear. "It makes you look like a ferr ... a ferr ... a FERRUCKING triceratops!"

"Oh Miss Bear, you do make me laugh with your observations."

Miss Bear looked past Barnsley with unblinking eyes. A slug of drool dribbled from the corner of her mouth and dangled from the fur on her chin.

"Well, I had a mishap last night and took a few bumps on the head," said Barnsley. "I have a bloodstain on the carpet and I wondered if you stocked any stain-remover?"

Miss Bear blinked fast, returning to the land of the living.

"Yes? Can I f-f-f help you?" asked Miss Bear, before barking again.

"Erm. Perhaps I should have a look myself?" suggested Barnsley with a warm smile.

"Perhaps you should WHAT?" yelled Miss Bear at the counter.

Barnsley edged away from the till, and walked to the back of the shop. Miss Bear was definitely the loveliest bear he'd ever set eyes on, but he sometimes wondered if the assurances from the police and medical-assessor were true. But, he smiled, if her ex-boyfriend hadn't fallen on the scissors, that jury would have convicted her. That's the way the law worked.

Searching the shelves, Barnsley found a bottle of 'New Improved Remove-o-Blood'. The advertisement on the television said that it was even better at removing bloodstains from fabric than 'Remove-o-Blood' and that would be perfect.

He walked back to the counter and Miss Bear slammed the till.

"Just this," said Barnsley, smiling and placing the bottle on the desk. "What do I owe you?"

"THIRTY POUNDS! I DON'T DO IT FOR LESS THAN THIRTY!" screamed Miss Bear.

Barnsley frowned. "But it says eighty-five pence on the bottle."

Miss Bear smiled and keyed the eighty-five pence into the till. "Lovely weather?"

Back on familiar conversational ground, Barnsley took a twenty pound note from his wallet and handed it to Miss Bear. "I think we may have snow for Christmas this year." He looked through the window to the early-morning frost of Christmas Eve and smiled at the hope of it being layered with white for the following day.

With a slap of her hand against the counter, Miss Bear stared at Barnsley.

Fifteen pence lay there.

Barnsley blinked hard. "But I gave you a twenty pound note?"

"Prove it," hissed Miss Bear, stuffing a crinkly piece of paper down the front of her trousers.

"Erm ... I only had a twenty pound note ..." said Barnsley, opening up the leather wallet and looking down to ensure he hadn't made a mistake.

As he checked, he heard the shop door slam behind him. Looking out through the window and on to the

street, he saw Miss Bear waving her arms in front of a large truck that had slid to a halt on the icy road before her.

Barnsley wondered what on Earth had happened. He rushed, as much as his tired legs would allow him, to the shop door, and pulled it open.

"He wanted me to kiss his dirty gerbil!" wailed Miss Bear to the truck driver, who was already climbing down from the cab. She pointed over to Barnsley.

The truck driver -- a very large brown-bear -- looked across at Barnsley with disgust. He rolled up his sleeves and stomped in the direction of the shop.

Barnsley quickly went back inside. He didn't like the look of things.

The truck driver pushed through the door and broke the bell, sending it spinning into a shelf of cornflakes. He sneered at a cowering Barnsley.

"She's playing a trick. I didn't do anything, honestly," whimpered Barnsley, stepping further and further into the back of the shop. "There's some sort of mistake."

The muscular truck driver cornered Barnsley and bared his teeth. "I'll show you what happens to mistakes."

Suddenly, a loud grumble startled both bears, and they turned around to see the headlights of the truck smash through the window of the shop ...

A roaring fire lit the room with a soft orange glow. Barnsley lifted his son onto his knee, giving him a warm cuddle.

"And that was how I met your Mum." He smiled as he kissed the top of his boy's head.

Barnaby Bear looked up to his Father.

"After the coma, I was so surprised ..." continued Barnsley.

"Why, Daddy?"

Barnsley chuckled. "After the shop was destroyed, she wasn't allowed to work there any longer. Can you imagine my surprise when the first face that greeted me, when I work up in hospital, was that of that same lovely bear from my own local shop?"

Barnaby was cross-eyed with perplexion.

"A clever man in the government thought it would be a good idea for those people under community supervision to help out in the hospitals and he made your dear mother a nursing assistant," explained Barnsley. "It's still a mystery who threw those bricks, though."

"Dad?" asked Barnaby.

"Yes, my boy?" Barnsley said, giving his son a bigger cuddle and a soft smile.

"You really are a ferrucking idiot, aren't you?"

Les Floyd hails from Carlisle in North West England. He loves cats and is one heck of an amazing writer of humorous stories. His Mr. Sheep cartoons are rather funny, too.

Chaos

by Rachel Green

There is a point to Chaos, Lucifer mused. It is what keeps you from going stale. It's all very well to say that infinite things were possible in an infinite void but eventually even a god ran out of ideas. Look at the huge number of fir trees, for example. God had got really stuck on fir trees to the point where sixty varieties all looked identical but for a slight change in leaf pattern. Far better to kick a bucket of chaos over and see what was left after the biggest lumps were cleared away. Apples, for one thing.

Rachel Green is a forty-something writer from the hills of Derbyshire in England. She lives with her two female partners, their kids and their dogs. She was the regional winner of the Undiscovered Authors 2007 competition and her book 'An Ungodly Child' was published in 2008. When she's not writing, Rachel studies Iaido and Ju-jitsu. Please visit her web site at: <http://www.leatherdyke.co.uk/>

Rebel Without Applause

by Jonathan Pinnock

When I told my colleagues who I was interviewing for this feature, their reactions ranged from “Who?” to “I thought he was dead.” In fact, out of the dozen or so that I spoke to, only a couple of them could actually come up with anything about my subject without some heavy prompting. Truly, James Byron Dean – or “Jim” as he likes to be called these days – is the forgotten man of American cinema. It wasn’t always thus: a brief glance in the index of Halliwell reveals that he actually starred in upwards of two dozen films in a career spanning several decades. But, then again, who really remembers “Honey, I’m a Zombie!”, “Monkey Pie” or “A Weekend with Uncle Spume”?

No, it’s only his first few early films that command any respect at all. It’s “East of Eden”, “Rebel Without a Cause”, “Giant” and “Sayonara” that Jim Dean should be remembered for, not the terrible C movies that he was forced to do in later years to pay the bills. Anyway, this month sees a lavish Blu-ray re-release of “Rebel Without a Cause”, and that’s why I’m sitting here in Jim’s clapboard bungalow in Marion, Indiana, trying to follow all the twists and turns of what is, by any stretch of the imagination, an extraordinary life.

Jim’s front room is tiny, littered with empty bottles and odd bits of memorabilia. He seems almost embarrassed by the state of the place, and at first he’s reluctant to talk at all. There’s a guitar leaning against the side of my chair, and I remark to him that I didn’t realise that he played. He shakes his head.

“Nah, that’s one of Charles’. Charles Holley, that is. We were big buddies back in the early sixties.”

Must be worth a few dollars, I say. He shrugs. So when did you first meet him?

“Well, we were filming in Iowa in – when was it? – must have been early ’59. What was the film? Snow something?”

Snowblind?

“Yeah, that was it, ‘Snowblind’. Jeez, it was cold. I remember the cameras kept freezing up. Anyway, Charles was performing with some other guys nearby in Clear Lake, and he heard we were filming, so they all stayed the night and came over to meet us the next day. Charles ended up with a cameo role as a farmhand, I seem to remember. Terrible actor, mind you – couldn’t see a thing without his glasses. Thing was, they were all enjoying themselves so much that they completely forgot they had another date to get to that night. Believe me, there was hell to pay about that, I can tell you.”

Wasn’t he known as Buddy in those days?

“Yeah, that’s right. Used to like the sort of stuff he did a lot. Can’t say I managed to follow what he did with his music after that. Y’know, all the psychedelic stuff, and the collaborations with that German guy ...”

Stockhausen?

“Yeah, that’s the one. Sometimes wish he’d go back to the stuff he used to do with the Crickets. Don’t you? Tell you what, though, there used to be a great English tribute band who did their stuff to a tee. Called themselves – what was it? – the Beetles?”

I say that I’ve never heard of them. I notice that Jim seems more eager to talk about other people than he does about himself. Maybe it’s modesty, or maybe it’s just a sense that he frittered away a major talent somewhere along the line.

“During the ‘Snowblind’ shoot, my nickname was ‘Snowblind drunk,’” he says. “You can’t imagine the pressure I was under. I was still only 28, and I’d worked non-stop since I was 21. I was burning out fast. I managed to hold out for a few more years, but, man, the quality of my work was heading due south.”

In the end, of course, it wasn’t the drink but the driving that first brought his career to a halt. Jim had always been obsessed with speed, and by the mid-sixties he had built up an impressive collection of high-performance sports cars, which – when he wasn’t racing them – he used to drive around the freeways of the USA with little or no regard for his personal safety or, indeed, that of anyone who happened to cross his path. One day, you’re going to kill someone, they used to say. Sure enough, on April 3rd, 1968, at a junction near Memphis, Tennessee, he jumped a red light and crashed into the side of a pickup truck. Dean was thrown clear and escaped with two broken legs and the loss of an eye. However, the driver of the pickup, a small-time criminal called James Earl Ray, was less fortunate, and he died three days later of his injuries, without recovering consciousness.

“And that was the end of my career as a matinee idol,” quips Dean, ruefully, gently stroking the scar across his right eye. He shakes his head sadly.

In the wake of the accident, the seventies were Dean’s lost decade, when he all but vanished altogether. In fact, it wasn’t until 1981, at the start of President King’s second term in office, that he re-emerged into the public view and accepted the role of a UN Goodwill Ambassador, working in Africa during the heady days of the Jackson Plan.

“They were probably the happiest times of my life,” says Dean. “Working with Martin and Jesse and people like Biko and Mandela – well, they were an inspiration. What those guys have done to turn Africa around is nothing short of a miracle. Let’s face it: at the start of ’77, they still had *apartheid* in South Africa!”

For a moment, his face lights up at the memory. However, like so many things in Dean’s career, the UN job didn’t last. Two years in, he couldn’t resist taking time off for the Paris – Dakar rally, during the course of which he very nearly lost his life in another accident near the border between Mali and Algeria. He was only saved by the intervention of the son of the British Prime Minister, although the incident is still the subject of some controversy.

“Pah! I saved *that* schmuck’s life,” comments Dean. “The idiot was completely lost until he came across me. I would’ve survived without him.”

Whatever the truth of the matter, Dean was invalidated home again, and then began the long spiral into drink, drugs and terrible films that blighted his later years. Mark Thatcher, of course, came home to a hero’s welcome, bagged a safe Tory seat in parliament, and became the first son ever to follow his mother into No 10 Downing Street.

“Well, I guess *he* made good, didn’t he?” says Dean.

For the first time, I sense a slight feeling of bitterness, so I ask Jim about the woman in the picture on his mantelpiece. At once, the frown disappears.

“Aw, that’s Mary Jo, that is,” he says. “She was a fine woman. Believed in me when everyone else had given up.” He shrugs. “But I guess even she got tired in the end.”

I’m curious, as I’d never heard of her before. Who was she, and when did he meet her?

“It was a year or so after the Memphis accident. I was asked by Teddy Kennedy to a party on Chappaquiddick Island, up in Martha’s Vineyard. Kind of a reunion for the guys who’d worked on Bobby’s ‘68 campaign, plus a few celebrity hangers-on like yours truly.”

Although in reality, the start of Teddy's victorious '72 run?

"Yeah. Well, anyway, Mary Jo was one of Bobby's campaign workers, and we just – y'know – clicked. Spent the whole evening talking, and then I drove her home. She stayed with me for four years, which is longer than most." He sighs deeply.

How well did he know Teddy?

"To be frank, I didn't have a lot to do with him. I spent most of the seventies drunk, after all, and you don't want Mr President hanging around with drunks. But he was a great man, and a great president. I admired him."

And of course he paved the way for President King, didn't he?

"I guess you could say that, although I can't imagine he planned it that way. Then again, maybe he always knew that there was another bullet out there with the name Kennedy on it. Right at the start of his second term, as well."

I remember that Dean had turned up out of the blue at the King inauguration, along with just about every other star, has-been and wannabe that ever was. It must have been an emotional occasion.

"Too right. Only time I was sober in the whole decade. When James played the Star Spangled Banner, I've never felt goosebumps like it, I tell you."

James Hendrix? The Christian fundamentalist country and western singer?

"Yeah. Met him once in the autumn of 1970 – I was filming some low budget horror crap in London, and Mary Jo insisted on dragging me along to see him. Seemed a nice guy – never really kept in touch, though. I guess he was a bit too clean-living to want to hang out with the likes of me."

And of course, everyone remembers Marvin singing ...

"... 'Teddy, Bobby and John.' Believe me, you coulda heard a pin drop."

Marvin Gaye! Now there was another superstar to be filed under "Where are they now?" I was sure I'd read somewhere that Dean had had some connection with him as well.

"Marvin? I ran into him on my way out to Africa in 1981. He was hanging out in Ostend, wondering what he should be doing with his life. He'd written a few new songs, but he was coming up with nothing worthwhile. Anyway, I introduced him to a Belgian girl I knew, and he decided there and then to retire and settle down. He was running a patisserie last time I heard from him. I knew his dad as well. Nice guy. Snappy dresser."

So how come it took Dean so long to get the Africa job?

"Ha! That's an easy question to answer. I may have been sober for the inauguration, but apart from that I was at rock bottom. I was a drunk, I was out of work and I was broke. What saved me was getting a proper job. In August 1977, I took a job flipping burgers at a fast food joint in Memphis. Having to turn up for work every day gave me a routine to structure my life around. But it took me four long years to regain my self-respect."

There's one question I still have to ask him before I go. Does he still see Marilyn?

He snorts, and shakes his head. "Does anyone see Marilyn these days?"

But surely she's gone on record to say that you saved her life? If you hadn't been there for her, she claims that she would have killed herself.

"Hah!" Dean gives a sad, wistful smile. "Well, it *was* a pretty terrible film we were working on together."

That would have been the Macbeth musical? "Darned Spot"?

"Yep, that's the one," he replies, laughing at the memory. "My idea, I'm afraid. I wanted to do something

different, and I was still pretty bankable at the time. But Marilyn?” He pauses. “I was nothing to her. Remember – she was five years older than me. I was just her – what do you call it? Her toy boy. Anyway,” he sighs, “it was all a long, *long* time ago, and I’m just a tired old guy now.”

What do you think you’ll be remembered for, I ask him. He shrugs, then gives a typically modest reply.

“Maybe I made one or two films that somehow touched people. Maybe I didn’t. Maybe I did some useful work in Africa. Maybe I didn’t. Apart from that, well, Jim Dean might as well not have existed, my friend. I might just as well have been a butterfly flapping its wings in the Indiana cornfields, for all the effect I’ve had on the world.”

Jonathan Pinnock was born in Bedfordshire, England, and despite having so far visited over 40 other countries has failed to relocate any further away than the next-door county of Hertfordshire. He is married with two children and a 1961 Ami Continental jukebox. His work has won several prizes, shortlistings and longlistings, and has appeared in such diverse publications as *Smokebox*, *Every Day Fiction* and *Necrotic Tissue*. His moderately interesting but unimaginatively-titled website may be found at www.jonathanpinnock.com.

A Dick Move

by Nathaniel Tower

I was fired today for banging my boss's secretary during my lunch break. Those were his words. I would never use such a harsh phrase to describe such an intimate moment. He called me into his office in the afternoon — after he had caught us and given me ample time to pull up my pants — and said, “James, I am going to have to fire you.”

“Why?” I asked, surprised that he would fire me after working for him for four years.

“Because you were banging my secretary. I can't have people screwing my secretary during lunch breaks. What if I need to get a hold of her?” He sounded serious, but really he was just a hypocrite.

We all banged secretaries on our lunch breaks. It was almost part of the job description. In fact, after he told me that he was firing me, I offered him my secretary, who had yet to give in to the workplace demands, as recompense.

“No,” he said after a long pause that he likely used to settle an erection. “I have to fire you.”

I shook his hand and told him that it had been nice working for him, and I asked if he would write me a good letter of recommendation. He agreed on both accounts.

Truth be told, I was angry when I left his office. I really enjoyed my job, and secretly I think he had set me up. It was no secret that his secretary, Julie, had had an eye on me for awhile, and it was no secret that he—Mr. Winston—feared that I was moving up the ranks a little too quickly. Nor was it a secret that I could not resist a secretary.

For the last four years, ending today, I worked at Dickhouse Publishing. During those four years I had worked my way from junior copy editor all the way to Senior Layout Design Manager. At Dickhouse we published mostly pornographic magazines—specializing in teen and dabbling in the unusual—and erotic novels. I'm not talking about the romance novels that you catch your mother or wife reading. I'm talking about porn without the pictures. Explicit descriptions of hardcore scenes with no real plot to tie them together. I had always thought Dickhouse was a nice subtle name for such a venture. It wasn't overtly obscene, and it could easily pass for someone's last name. It wasn't like we used a logo that had a giant hairy Johnson piercing a quiet suburban home. Rather, we had a tasteful logo, a bold 'D' with a classy roof and door. No one would ever have guessed the type of work we published from our logo, and most wouldn't have guessed from our name, although it likely would have warranted a few snickers from the immature crowd, many of whom would have imagined huge houses full of enormous cocks.

The secretaries at the office were not what you are probably thinking. None of them would have been at all suitable for any of the magazines that we published. They were all modest in appearance, not old and unfashionable, but certainly not slutty and busty. Their appearances were greatly enhanced by the mandatory dress code of high heels, silk stockings and business skirts that were not allowed more than an inch past the knee. It may have seemed a sexist practice to uphold such a dress code, but none of the secretaries ever objected. Deep down, we all expected that they worked there because they couldn't quite cut it in the porn industry. They wanted to exploit their own bodies, but their bodies weren't quite exploitable enough, leaving them to be screwed by the men that were exploiting the women they really wished they could screw.

After returning to my office to pack up my things—Julie gave me a playful slap on the butt as I walked past her desk—I began to think of revenge. I had to get back at Mr. Winston. The bastard had clearly sabotaged my promising career with the company. There had to be something I could do to get back at him.

At first, I thought about sleeping with his wife, but then I realized that wouldn't really faze him all that much. I had already slept with his secretary, and no one really wanted a coworker, especially not a subordinate, to sleep with his secretary without permission. Besides, I wouldn't know how to go about sleeping with someone outside of the office. At work it was easy; I would just bring them into my office and in a few minutes, it would be over. Nothing messy, no attachments, no real risk (unless of course you were sleeping with the boss's secretary). At home, you had to worry about the wife or the kids finding out, and there was always the potential for some feelings of attachment to develop. Intra-office affairs were never romances; they were simple acts of instant gratification that made us feel bigger than we really were.

My next thought was that I would tell his wife about all the secretaries he slept with, but that was too risky. Perhaps she already knew and didn't mind, and there was always the chance that she would tell my wife. Then I would be in trouble and he wouldn't be, and that was pretty much a worst case scenario. I already had a big enough problem trying to explain to my wife why I was fired. Of course, if she had known what I did all day, designing the layouts for various nude teen magazines, constantly staring at the private parts of girls just a couple years older than my daughter and much bustier than my wife, she probably wouldn't mind all that much that I was fired. It was good that we didn't talk much at home about work. In fact, we didn't talk much at all at home, and that was also good.

A third possibility for revenge was to sleep with Mr. Winston's secretary again. I was sure by her playful slap that she would be willing, and I was certain that this would really get to him, but I was a bit worried that she might lose her job. Ordinarily I would have no concern over whether or not a secretary lost her job. Secretaries were fired almost as often as we had sex with them. Unfortunately though there was always the possibility that if I cost Julie her job, and then she might end up seeking revenge on me, even if it would make much more sense for her to seek revenge on Mr. Winston for firing her. Maybe there was a tiny part of me that didn't want her to get fired because I actually cared about her, but I just don't quite feel it right now.

After realizing the futility of my first three plans, as well as the ticking clock that indicated my last day of work, I began to pack up my things, hoping that one of the objects on my desk would spark a sudden stroke of genius. Unfortunately, spreads of the female anatomy in provocative positions didn't really spark anything except for a slight bit of lust. I had always thought that working with the nude depictions all day led to our propensity for extramarital sex with secretaries. Somehow the women that looked nothing like the women we lusted after could satisfy our fantasies.

When I was almost all loaded up with the possessions I felt were actually worth keep from Dickhouse, I came across a simple paperweight bearing the company's tasteful logo. At the precise moment that my fingers caressed the glass, my plot of revenge came into full fruition in my brain. Since Winston had sabotaged my career, I would sabotage his. Unfortunately I had only a few hours available, so I would have to abandon the notion of hooking up with any secretaries for a final time. It was a bit of a dilemma, but revenge was ultimately more important and more lasting than secretarial-induced orgasms.

With my desk nearly cleared of any boner-inducing distractions, I began to execute my plan, one eye always looking over my shoulder just in case Winston strolled by. That would have been worse than getting

caught with my pants down with his secretary.

I slaved away until after four o'clock, working longer and harder than I ever had before. I was changing the face of Dickhouse publishing, and Winston would suffer the consequences.

When I was satisfied with what I had done, I took the drafts over to Julie. "Can you give me Winston's stamp of approval on these?"

With a flirtatious wink she said, "I thought you were fired."

"Well, I am, but that doesn't officially take into account until five today. I just wanted to finish up a few projects before leaving. It's part of our plea-bargain."

"Well then," she said with a lick of her thin red lips, "let me give you a nice firm hand with that." Effortlessly, she stamped Winston's signature on the pages and handed them back to me. "It's beautiful. Looks a bit like yours."

I glanced down at my work. A big hairy dick piercing the window of a quaint suburban home, all surrounded by a giant 'D' that looked more like a vagina than a letter. Proud of my work, I considered reciprocating her flirtation, but I decided it best just to submit the new stationary to the printers. With Winston's signature, the logo was officially approved, and when Mr. Dickhouse — or whatever his real name was—himself saw what Winston had done to ruin his good name, Winston would surely be fired without a glowing letter of rec.

Without a word but with a smile, I walked back to my desk for the last time. I quickly faxed the new design to the printers and fired a copy to Mr. Dickhouse while I was at it.

One minute to five, I walked away from my desk and to the door that would lead me out of Dickhouse publishing and all the perks it offered. Somehow it seemed that most of the secretaries eyed me with disdain on my way to the exit. I ignored their looks, assuming they were just jealous that I hadn't given any of them one more go around on my last day.

As I passed Winston's office, I noticed Dickhouse himself was standing in the doorway talking to my soon-to-be ex-boss — and ex-Dickhouse employee. I slowed my walk to hear the conversation, a sly smile across my face.

"This was exactly the edge we were looking for. Our old logo just wasn't bringing in the big names anymore. Consider your salary doubled."

My jaw dropped. My hard work had given that asshole a promotion. There was only one thing left to do as the minute hand swung past the twelve.

"Hey Julie, want to go to my office one last time?"

"Sorry. I don't fuck unemployed dicks."

Nathaniel Tower writes fiction and teaches English. His fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in Cantaraville, Mud Luscious, Bottom of the World, Inscribed, Skive, Toasted Cheese and many others. He is also the founding editor of the online literary magazine, Bartleby Snopes (www.bartlebysnopes.com). He currently lives in St. Louis, MO with his wife.



THE END