



SERPENTINE

Summer '06

Serpentine Magazine

Summer 2006

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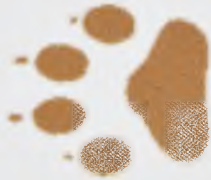
Note from the Editor

The staff of Serpentine Magazine was mistaken in believing this semester was going to be smoother. We thought we had overcome the worst and it would just become easier. However, we were faced with a whole new set of obstacles, something that is bound to happen when you constantly strive for more. Giving up wasn't an option, not when there was still so much to accomplish in our vision for a better magazine. Amidst the pressure, the drama, the deadlines, and the malfunctioning computers the staff pulled together (without killing each other in the process! XD). The end result is a project that I am proud to present to you as my final farewell to CSI. It's SLEEKER, SNAZIER, AND CAN DO YOUR RESEARCH PAPERS. Ahem, well, not really. It is our best work yet by far and I couldn't be more proud of this team's accomplishments.

New artists have jumped on board bringing life and variety to the pages of Artifacts while many have returned with their previous flavor. Interviews with professionals will allow students to see that they too had to survive the struggle once.

Also, here is the conclusion of Barren Chronos.

Overall, this has been a great experience. My only regret is that I will not be returning next semester. I want to thank Professor Sarah Schulman for bringing me the opportunity to do more than contribute artwork to Serpentine and show everyone the beginning of the endless possibilities this magazine holds. I am eager to see the innovations future generations have in store. Artists of all sorts will always come and go in CSI, but Serpentine Magazine will forever remain a place for them to call home.



I Bought a Tiger Once By Kevin SP Mamakas

I bought a tiger once
right before Christmas Day.
It was for my youngest cousin
but my older brother wanted it instead.

Since it was right before Christmas Day
I gave it to him with no question.
He wanted it instead
of the gift I had in mind for him.

I gave it to him with no questions
when I saw the childish look in his eyes.
The gift I had in mind for him
could have never done the same.

The child within him was shown through his eyes
because of a simple stuffed animal.
Nothing more or less could have done the same
because this gift didn't make him older than he wanted to be.

The simple stuffed animal
is a memory now I have of my late brother.
It's not a gift that made him older that he wanted to be,
it's a Christmas gift that made him a child again.

This memory I have of my late brother
was for my youngest cousin.
It's a gift that made him a child again.



The Best of You

By Kevin S.P. Mamakas

You grew up in one of the poorest parts of Brooklyn. At night you got used to neighbors screaming, frequent gun shots that seemed to be inches away from your window, and ambulances driving by with their deafening sirens.

As a child you were abused. You watched your sisters getting molested by the landlord. You were locked in the room next to where they were photographed by your father. It is not your fault though.

You were the oldest of your siblings but still so young. You were not involved in the molestation or photography because they were afraid that you would tell someone. Instead they would whip you with a thin metallic chain and say, "If you tell, we will kill your sisters." Your mother pretended like she did not know what was going on. She drank the knowledge and motherly instinct out of herself.

After your arm was broken in two places at the age of thirteen you decided to run away. You couldn't take your youngest sister with you because you were still so young. You couldn't bring your other sisters because they went a different direction than you. They became involved in gangs and obsessed with drugs. However, your brother was diagnosed with severe schizophrenia after being beaten by cops for a crime that he was not prosecuted for.

After a while you met someone who made you feel protected. You needed a friend and that is what he was. Two years after you ran way, you were able to bring your youngest sister to live with you. You soon got pregnant and had your first of five children.

You had a cruel childhood but you took action and changed your life. You proved that hiding is not the best of you. Recognize your accomplishment and don't be afraid to relive it for the sake of others.



Insecurites

by Melissa Molina

I do certain things because I want you to love me
 I do certain things because I want you to hold me
 I do certain things because you are near
 My whole attitude changes when you are near me
 I feel free that I can do anything as long as you are with me
 There is no fear and anguish when you are there with me
 Everything goes away there is no time
 I want time to stop
 Freeze
 So I can stay in this moment forever with you
 I don't want to face the world alone

Baby Blues

Part 2

by Daniello Cacace

Virgil faintly knocked on the door to Ragnall's office, though it wasn't really a door, but a wooden divider whose purpose was to provide some form of privacy; it failed miserably.

"Please, come in Virgil, I've been expecting you" Ragnall's hoarse but cheerful voice echoed slightly through the caverns, making Virgil's presence known to anyone wandering around nearby. Virgil walked around the divider and got his first full view of the office, it was clear that the same laws, which governed Ragnall's dress code, also applied to his décor. The contradiction that Virgil saw before him baffled his mind. Empty jars, waiting to be filled, what appeared to be sculptures made entirely of old candy wrappers, Trophies and awards that, upon closer inspection, didn't even belong to Ragnall. This chaotic organization worked in a way that if any of the seemingly random objects had been placed anywhere else, it would not be nearly as effective.

"Come now, don't dilly dally" Ragnall motioned to a chair that sat opposite his own, in between them was a rather large table that, despite the eccentric nature of his office, was completely plain and empty.

Virgil took his seat cautiously, being careful not to break eye contact with Ragnall. He was clearly uneasy, like a criminal awaiting his sentence.

"*The bookcase*" a voice echoed in Virgil's mind, unsure of where it came from.

"Did you say something?" Virgil asked,

Ragnall shook his head in refusal, though his unseeing eyes remained focused on the young boy. *That's really creepy*, Virgil thought. His eyes scanned the room again as they fell upon a large bookcase. *For a blind guy he sure has a lot of books.*

"*Go to the bookcase*" it repeated, Virgil rose from his seat and entranced by the voice, walked over to the small library and studied it. In there was every book he could *never* want, a DMV rules and regulations manual, Plumbing for Dummies, Plumbing for Dummies...for Dummies: The No Brainer Edition, a phonebook from 2089.

"*That one*" the voice had returned and guided Virgil's hand to the out of date telephone book, he removed it from its snug fit and stared transfixed at the cover.

"Well, bring it here" Ragnall said, fully aware of his surroundings. Virgil brought the book over to the table and set it down.

"*Open it*" once more the voice commanded, Virgil no longer resisted and just did as it said.

"*Turn the page*"

"*Sit down*"

"Well now, are we all finished?" Ragnall inquired,

"Yes...I think so."

"Tell me Virgil, why did you do those things?" The large grin on his face indicated he knew more than he was letting on.

"This voice kept telling me to do it, I'm sorry. Should I put it back?" his tone was fearful.

"No no, you actually saved me the trouble, I was going to ask you to do that eventually, though I'm afraid you're a bit early. There was something I wanted to say to you first but I suppose this makes it all the more relevant." Ragnall reached to the floor next to his chair and brought up an old fashioned battery operated CD player, "Have you ever heard of Ludwig Van Beethoven, Virgil?"

"Yes, Miss Hewitt taught us about him, I don't remember all that much though, only that he

wrote music and that he was deaf.”

“Yes, that’s all you need to remember for right now” Ragnall pressed the play button on the CD player and sat back to enjoy the music that emanated from it. “This piece is called ‘Ode to Joy’, it was his 9th symphony and one of my personal favorites, but onto the relevancy of this demonstration. You see Virgil, Beethoven, even though he died roughly 300 years ago, is not unlike you and I, and anyone else in this facility.

“He had blue eyes?”

“Er...well, I don’t know, I suppose he could have, but that’s not what I meant. Despite the fact that Beethoven was deaf, he was still able to write beautiful music with nothing more than his memory. Because he couldn’t hear the notes he played, he had to remember what each one sounded like just by looking at the notes on the page.” He reached to the floor once again, pulled up a yellowed paper and placed it in front of Virgil, “This is the first page to Beethoven’s Ode to Joy, I would be very surprised if you could look at this and tell me exactly what it says.” Virgil took the paper and examined it closely; to him it was nothing more than little dots arranged in a crooked line.

“I can’t read it” Virgil admitted shamefully,

“Oh, that’s quite alright, the important thing is that Beethoven could. You see, time is really nothing more than a symphony of events that take place to create the harmony known as fate. Each person plays their own music, their own tone, and their own rhythm. Our gift allows us to see the ‘Sheet music’ of the universe and to read ahead, giving us a bit of an advantage. We hear the symphony of time like no one else can, and this makes us the composers, the conductors, the musicians. Do you understand?”

“Um... yes, I think I do. So, before, when I did all that stuff, it’s because time was talking in my head?”

“Not exactly, time is neither animate nor inanimate, it is not alive or even conscious but it evolves and grows, always flowing. The voice you heard was actually your own. It was your inner composer telling you the events before they happened. This usually occurs when one is feeling scared or tense. It’s a natural defense we have so as not to be taken off guard, but don’t always count on it happening when you need it. Your abilities are still far too weak, though impressive for one your age. Now onto the real reason you’re here, this would have been the part where I ask you to fetch the phonebook. I trust your page turning has brought us to the A’s, why don’t you tell me something about... Patricia Albertson.” Virgil scanned the page and sure enough, near the bottom was Albertson, Patricia

“Well, um, she lives at 45 Harbor Road and her phone number is...”

“No no Virgil, I mean, tell me something about her, is she married?”

“I...I don’t know.”

“Well of course not, you have to find out.”

“But I can’t see anything.”

“Sure you can, you just need to try: see her like you’re watching a dream, let it play for you in the back of your mind, be aware of her and what she sees, try again.” Virgil closed his eyes tightly; now focused on the blackness he saw before him, while Beethoven still played from the CD player, the music that entered his ears carried with it the pictures he sought, it played like a movie “The life of Patricia Albertson.”

“I think I see it now. Yea, she’s married, with 2...no, 3 kids, they’ve all grown up, and she’s very old. Her and her husband live in Nevada now. Next month... next month something will happen, they’re planning a trip to Arizona, to see the Grand Canyon. She won’t make it though; she’s

going to die a week before they leave.” His voice became soft and scared, and though his eyes were closed, a tear trickled down his face that left a shimmering trail across his cheek. “What are we going to do?”

“Do?” Ragnall repeated

“Yeah, aren’t we going to help her?”

“And what would you have us do?”

“We can call her, let her know. We have her number, she might have kept it when she moved.”

“I wish it were that easy, Virgil. But what you’re asking is, I’m afraid, impossible.”

“It’s not impossible! We can at least try.” Virgil’s defiance was prominent,

“Very well then, call her.” His eyes narrowed and his face had lost most of the pleasant charm it once had, “Pick up the phone and tell her that a boy, who is not supposed to exist, just witnessed her death that hasn’t yet occurred. You see, in a world where the truth hurts and ignorance is bliss, people would rather not know.” He stood up and walked to the shelves behind his chair. On a particularly cluttered shelf sat an assortment of old wine glasses; Ragnall picked one up and held it to the light, he allowed the beams to penetrate the fine glass cup. “Virgil, if I were to drop this, what would happen?”

“Um...Break, I suppose?”

“Are you sure? What if I were to tell this cup that I were about to drop it, would it still break?”

“Yes,” Virgil said snidely.

“Really? Let’s find out. Cup, I am about to drop you, ready?” After he spoke his warning aloud, Ragnall dropped the glass and it shattered into hundreds of pieces across the floor. “Hmm, it seems you were right. I guess knowing something will happen doesn’t always change the fact that it will. The only thing I succeeded in doing is giving that poor cup a few more seconds of misery by telling it what was going to happen. I myself chose long ago not to know what fate has in store for me. Am I curious? Of course! But could I live with the fact that I know when and where my life will end? I don’t think so. Life is not a fairytale, as you just witnessed; there is no ‘happily ever after.’” He sat for a moment in silence and allowed Virgil to take in what he had just said. His face was still rigid but slowly it returned to its former self. Once he settled down, Ragnall shifted the conversation back to the phonebook. “Regardless of the outcome, that was very good for your first time, it usually takes a few tries to get it right. Now, if you’re ready we can start again...”

“Why?” Virgil interrupted,

“Why what?”

Virgil stood from his seat in an accusing manner “Why Continue? What’s the point? If we aren’t supposed to help people then why bother to even learn our power?” He felt a scowl creep across his face.

“And how exactly do you define people? Are we people? Don’t we matter? We do help people with our gift, Virgil; ourselves. I have been around longer than anyone in this community, the things I’ve seen, and the people I’ve lost. You have no idea how I wish I could have just picked up a phone and saved someone’s life; saved their lives.” Ragnall was almost in tears as he reminisced on his past. This was a side of him that very few had ever seen. After a moment of composure he returned his attention to his task. “Turn the page and lets begin again. This time, lets try Rudolph Annex.”

Virgil wiped away his own tears, shaken from this event, and concentrated once more on the name given to him, though he didn’t have to try as hard this time. “He’s older, but not too old,

around his 50's. He was married, but divorced now, with 2 children... and a dog. Tomorrow night he's going to a singles bar and he'll meet an old friend from college, she's divorced too. They'll hit it off and get married in a few years."

"Married, ah, how wonderful for them." Ragnall sighed. "Now turn the page once more and lets turn our sights to Mr. William Arnold. Whenever you're ready."

With his eyes closed, Virgil once more played the scenes in his mind, it started off as it usually did, hazy, and out of focus, but as he watched, he grew queasy and tired, something which he hadn't experienced before.

"This one's different, it hurts to watch, and I feel sick."

"Sick? How?"

"There's... There's a man, standing in the sun, there are a lot of people around him...everyone is dressed funny, the women are wearing puffy dresses, and the men are wearing dusty leather and suede, there's another man, he's standing in front of me."

"You? You're there?"

"Yeah, wait, no, it's not me, but it feels like me, it's William. I'm...he's scared, he has to fight, if he doesn't, he'll die. The other man, he has a gun, I can see it. He's going to shoot me! Him!"

"Virgil, stop! You need to stop this! Please RICHARD!" Ragnall rushed to Virgil's side, he felt the boy's face to read his expression, it was one of terror and pain. This was probably the first time in a long time where Ragnall was clueless as to what was happening. Suddenly, Virgil gasped for air as his body went limp, he sat like a rag doll in his chair while Ragnall still held the boy so as not to fall out.

"Virgil! Are you all right? What happened?" the shaken man, wrought with fear, eagerly awaited an answer.

"He...shot me...him." The poor boy was exhausted and panted furiously as he tried to regain his breath, "Can we stop for today?" he pleaded.

"Of course, this was more than enough for today, I'll take you someplace to rest; besides, there's something I'll need to check. Can you stand?"

"I think so, I'm starting to feel a little better." Ragnall helped Virgil to his feet and escorted him back to his room; he collapsed onto his bed to conserve what little strength he had left.

"Ragnall?" he inquired

"Yes Virgil?"

"I'm sorry if I upset you before."

"It's alright Virgil, sometimes I let things get to me that I probably shouldn't. I have seen things that I hope you must never endure. I wish we could save everyone, but the fact is, if our power could change the world, would we be living like this?"

"I suppose you're right, I just always thought that if everyone could do a little bit of good, then people might not hate us anymore." The fatigue on his face had grown more evident as he resisted the urge to sleep.

Ragnall gave a sad smile, "My son used to think the same way, you remind me so much of him."

"You have a son?"

"Had, but now is not the time for such conversation. Go and get some rest." Ragnall felt Virgil's face once more, but his hands weren't quickened with panic. They took their time, remembering a feeling that has lain dormant for so long in Ragnall's heart. He rose, and exited.

The Inevitable Love Triangle

By Ronide Louisma

When I come into your presence I often act shy,
 Being mindful of the way I constantly think of you and still lie.
 I ask myself why, but can't help it.
 The only way I can actually slow down, is by thinking of all the pain I bring back to you-
 After you got your hands dirty to redeem a few:
 Of infidels that is.
 Don't get me wrong, it's not that I don't appreciate you-
 I just sometimes forget your face value.
 Voices in my head tell me I should let you go
 But that would be a terrible mistake, I'd lose everything I saw.
 You're the only one who didn't hesitate to sacrifice for me;
 The main source of my life, you are-the air I breathe.
 I want to stop being the stumbling block for you
 The one you constantly pick up and help go through
 Oh my gosh! What am I doing?
 You're the only one I trust
 And this ain't lust,
 I'm telling you how I really feel don't consider it dust.
 If you must, Go! But don't leave me here alone to rust.
 When I least expect it somebody else comes into my life-
 He keeps me in check since you call me your wife.
 When I long for you he comforts me,
 When I shed tears he shows me sympathy,
 When I slip and fall he reminds me that you'll forgive me,
 When I can't speak because I'm too weak-
 He speaks to you for me
 Until every expression pours out and over leaks.
 From me to him, from him to you,
 From you to the one who is equal to you-The Supreme.
 Majority of the time I lose connection
 There's so many people on my line that I have bad reception
 Part of it has to do with the conditions you find me in-
 And you tell me to put on the lights because it's just too dim.
 I come to realize I'm messed up
 I confessed up all the things sealed within,
 You're the one I love take all the sin.
 There are moments I feel lonely,
 Which is because you only dwell where it's holy.
 Please console me, don't depart-
 Give me a clean heart,
 Erase all my past so I can have a fresh start.
 After all these years I can say I belong to thee,
 Drawing close to you took me some time
 But I'm sure I want to tag a hold of thee.
 The reason, simple: You make me complete
 Our love is so strong
 That even when I doubt I know I can't go wrong.
 Every morning the desire keeps burning, to reflect thee
 I get in the midst of crowds and tell others about you and me
 Can't you see I've given it my best shot
 Now please don't leave me alone, out here to rot.
 A promise is a promise, that you must keep
 Though my eyes get shut, I trust that I'm only asleep.
 You promised you'd be back for me,
 And I believe thee,
 Because many attributes testify of your justice through trinity-
 The Father, The Son & The Holy Spirit:
 The Inevitable Love Triangle

Evan Perez's Interview with R.G. Wells

This interview with R.G. Wells was made possible by the kindness of Rene McCallum. She runs a poetry reading called *Poetry Without Borders*. It's a way for people to listen to authors such as R.G. Wells, ask them questions, and find out more about them. It's also a way for inspiring writers to get some of their works noticed because there is an open mic after each reading. To learn more about this, contact me at evperez@gmail.com, and I'll give you the information you need to join in the Poetry Without Borders.

Evan Perez- Well first off great reading today. It was very inspirational. I have been writing for a while myself, but from what you heard today I am not that good, or at least that is what I think.

R.G. Wells- Well thank you, and the more you write, the better you get. So stick with it, don't give it up.

E- Well my first question is when did you start writing?

R.G.- I started writing primarily in high school... I've been a writer all my life but I guess I got encouragement from a couple of my high school teachers. I graduated high school in 1981. We're talking about in the late 70's early 80's a couple of ladies read some of my writing and encouraged me to submit some of my stuff to my high school literary magazine. I got my first publication and I have been writing ever since.

E- Well what was the first poem you have written?

R.G.- The first poem I remember ever writing, was so bad. You said that you write, but you don't believe your stuff isn't very good. The first poem I ever wrote, I remember the first two lines. "Death came calling last night, ding dong Avon calling." It was really terrible. But it got published in the school's literary magazine, and the next year I wrote stuff that I still look back on. I figure, it's still pretty good.

E- While writing, was it ever hard for you, or did it just come natural?

R.G- Well it's always hard. If it comes naturally, you are lucky. Everyone once and a while you get an inspiration... A lot of people are familiar with the idea of inspiration, but that's very rare. Like something that comes into your head like a transmission from a radio. It takes a lot of hard work and a lot of writers will say write everyday. I do agree with that, although I don't do it, because one of the ways you become prolific writer is by lowering your standards and understanding that everything you write isn't going to be a piece of gold. Sometimes, you are going to write some crap.

E- While looking online, I actually found two of your poems, *Family Album with Nude and Chimpanzee* and also *The Forecast*. I was reading both of them, and I was trying to understand them. Would you care to elaborate them?

R.G- (laughs) *Family Album with Nude and Chimpanzee* I wrote as kind of a goof, although it is a true story. It's a poem about what the title implies a family album with nude and chimpanzee, when I was a kid, my mother had this photo album where you put the different photos all in one frame, and my father clipped this picture of a nude model out of a playboy magazine. She was walking hand and hand with a chimpanzee, and he stuck it in there as a joke, and it just stayed in there, and it might still be there for all I know. I was thinking back on that when I was writing this poem thinking, "what a strange thing that was for my father to do, put a nude picture in our family album," and the poem took off from there. And *The Forecast*, when my daughter was just learning how to walk, there were these huge forest fires in Canada, and the smoke was dipping all the way down in New Jersey. I remember looking at the weather forecast on the TV and they were showing the actual smoke coming down from the Canadian Fires. There was something about watching my daughter learn how to walk and seeing that smoke on the screen sort of combined to show the passage of time, and how time moves very quickly and little things like that are fleeting. I'm flattered that you looked me up online.

E- Found out you have been in a numerous amount of things such as *Comstock Review*, *Patterson Literary Review*, *Weird Tales*, and the one that came up a lot was *the Wicked Hollow*

Magazine.

R.G- That was a magazine that I found out about, it was a digest. The publisher intended it to make a magazine that you can hold to your hip pocket. It was a very small magazine.

E- Pocket Size.

R.G- Yeah pocket size. In the first issue, they published one of my stories called, *The Man Who Holds Your Hand Beneath the Pale Moonlight*, which is a line from an old song I think, and that was my story that recommended for a *Prom Stopper* award. I was very happy about that.

E- How many awards have you won?

R.G- One. I have come in second and third place in a couple. I won a Philadelphia supernatural fiction writing contest one year, so I did win that one. But it is always an honor just to be recognized for your work, whether you win, or just get recognized for honorable mention.

E- So you've been writing all your life as you said. While walking down the path of writing, have you ever said, "What would have happened if I changed my career to this," or, "What would it have been like if I was this instead of writing?"

R.G- Well writing is not my career. Writing is something I do because I love it. The level I am writing in, there is not a lot of money in the publications. Poets don't get paid for their poetry, almost every poet has to support themselves doing some kind of other work. What I do for a job is a high school English Teacher. I have been doing that for twenty years, so that's my job. My writing is an avocation kind of labeled as something I do on the side.

E- Have you ever thought about not writing?

R.G- Not writing? Anytime the writing is not going well, or when the rejection letters starts coming in from magazines, I always think about not writing. But it's not a necessary choice I have, it's a compulsion. I have to write. It is part of who I am. When I don't do it, I feel almost physically ill. When I go a long time without writing, it is something I need to do. Whether I send anything into publication or not, it's very much a part of me, I can't imagine not doing it.

E- What would you say, if someone told you had to change your career in writing, would you do it? Like say your wife, instead of writing, she would rather you do something else, would you?

R.G- Writing is such a thing that you can do it...I'll try to answer your question too, because I think you are trying to make me say something that I am not prepared to say here. I need a creative outlet, and I am also a guitarist, a poem writer, and a singer. So I'll always have that too. So if I never write another poem, I am happy as long as I can play my guitar. I need some sort of artistic outlet. If there came a time where there was something that got in the way, and somebody said you can't write anymore. Writing is something that you can do on the side, you can do it anywhere. You can stay up late at night while your family has gone to bed, write during your lunch break, and get up early morning and write that way too. Writing, its hard finding the time to write, and if something were to stand in the way of my writing, you are not going to be able to have this. I just find another time somewhere else.

E- I am suspecting that this isn't your first public reading, correct?

R.G- Correct.

E- How many have you done over the years?

R.G- Well, actual readings like this, not many. Maybe half a dozen I was a feature reading, but I have read my poems from NYC, to Cape Cod, to South Jersey, to North Carolina, anytime where there is a reading, and I am there, and if I have something to read, I like to read.

E- Has there been one point in your life that it was the most memorable?

R.G- <pause> That's a good question. Well actually you mention the poem, *Family Album with Nude and Chimpanzee*. It was accepted in an Anthology by a New York publisher named George Held, and the name of the publication was *Touched by Arrows*. It was a Valentines Day love collection. And I went to New York to read this poem for the release party. That was very memorable, going into the city, and reading it for the poets I knew like Angelo Verga, and House Verowitz. That was my most memorable moment.

Eyes of the Damned

by Lisa Roberts

Sage winced in pain as she felt the piercing of her skin. Her plump vein pulsed and blood slowly emerged. The thick substance trickled down her arm like smooth wine. He took hold of her fragile wrist and sunk his teeth deep into her open wound. With every suck she fell deeper into darkness. She felt her blood draining.

Her heightened senses took over. She could hear his heart beat slowing. "Enough!" Sage yelled and yanked her wrist away. She held her bloody limb to her chest. She stared intensely at him as he moaned on the cold October ground. His mouth gaped open as he tried to find air. His eyes popped as he stared into the empty night sky. He was dying and she knew it. She loved it. Then there was silence. His heart beat stopped.

Sage's child-like giggle filled the vacant air. She innocently observed his still body. She focused on his chest and waited to see if it would rise again. Sage ran her tongue over her pearly white teeth. The taste of his blood still lingered, enticing an orgasmic urge inside her. The feeling was reminiscent of her first sexual experience but better. This one was different. Her body heaved with anticipation. Wait.

Then it started to happen. His chest filled up with air. His body appeared to get longer. His hair grew a few inches and was no longer dull, but a golden brown. His skin once riddled by puberty, was now smooth and blemish free. The scar over his eyebrow disappeared. His lips reddened and fangs emerged.

Sage jumped up and let out a delighted scream. Never had death been so beautiful. She praised herself for making a fine companion. The once skinny, dorky, comic book lover was now a masculine God, and he belonged to her.

"Draven," she whispered.

His eyes fluttered open and glowed, as he stared up at the full moon.

"It's time. Look around. You've never seen life like this before. Look at the world through your newborn vampire eyes."

Draven stood up like a toddler learning to walk. He peered out into the night at the existence we all take for granted. Color had a new meaning because up until this moment he never appreciated it. He could smell the vanilla latte being drunk by a college girl blocks away. He could smell the flowery scented perfume on her neck. He could smell the cherry lip gloss on her lips. He could smell the blood in her veins. He looked at Sage who stood silent. "What did you do to me?"

"Welcome to eternity Draven." Sage smiled wickedly.

"My name's not Draven." A confused and uneasy look shadowed his face. "My name's Michael."

Sage shook her head and approached him smoothly, seducing him with every step. "Michael is dead. Draven is alive." She pulled the confused youth to her and rammed her lips into his.

He tried to resist but then his body calmed and his lips returned her gesture. It was like he had always known her. Was he Draven?

Heaven and Hell

By Evan Perez

May Devils rise,

And Angels fall,

And one to stand before them all.

May Heaven's light,

Shine with all of its glory,

And push back the darkness with all of its might.

May Hell's darkness,

Cloud over helpless victims,

And show them pain and misery.

Let the spirits of Heaven,

Live amongst the Angels in peace,

With wings spread wide open.

Let Hell's captives,

Live in fear of fire and grim stone,

And lie motionless.

May the victims be spared,

As Heaven and Hell,

Fight this never ending battle,

To seize control,

Of both these mystical realms

One Journey Ends

By Evan Perez

Two paths of white and black,
 The path of white leads to a life of confusion, of pain, and many more things,
 But the results of these chosen journeys,
 Are worth more than you can ever dream of.
 The path of the black road leads a life of your own choosing,
 You decide what is right,
 And what is wrong,
 How to end up,
 And where to start,
 There is no end,
 But then again,
 No beginning,
 I chosen black,
 While you choose white,
 You say that I am wrong,
 I say that I am right,
 You don't understand with your mind,
 I decided to see with my eyes wide awake.
 We took our paths,
 And walked our ways,
 First a few miles,
 Holding each others hands,
 Next another few miles,
 Barely holding you by your finger tips,
 The next few miles,
 No longer touching each other,
 Only to see,
 A few more steps taken,
 And all that can be seen is a shadow,
 Walking alone,
 For miles
 A new path shows up once again,
 One on a slant, to the white side,
 And one comes on the other side to the black road,
 I don't see you coming,
 And I don't plan to change,
 I continue to be alone,
 For years on end,
 Our paths cross one more time,
 I look at you,
 And I don't see the person I fell in love with,
 You are no longer the same one,
 You look too different to me,
 You look at me,
 And no longer recognize me,
 And walked by without so much as a hi,
 I smile as you leave me,
 I recall our journey together then,
 And gave them my final gift to end our journey,
 Farewell,
 With a tear drop,
 Rolling off my cheek and onto my lips.

Barren Cronos II

The Edge of Time

By Ra'Chaun Rogers

"Where the hell am I?" A well dressed man with leather buckled shoes and a gold pocket watch stumbled along a darkened corridor. The loud tapping of his heels on the floor echoed.

An eerie voice crept into his mind and beckoned him forward, "Follow the stairs."

"What, who are you?" The man squinted as he passed a dimly lit torch.

"Keep going your almost there." The man reached a large wooden door with a bronze knocker with the form of an hourglass. He knocked once and the door flung open. Inside was a wooden chair with leather seating held down by copper nails. Across from the chair was a mirror.

"Sit down!"

The man looked about him, "Where are you?"

"Just sit down and everything will be explained."

Reluctantly taking the chair he turned his eyes to the mirror, "Now what's this all about?"

"This is about... time, Jeremiah it's about time."

Jeremiah moved his head rapidly. "How do you know my name?"

"Oh I know all about you. I know how you lost your precious Madeline and I know how you attempted to travel back into time to stop that from happening."

Jeremiah was surprised and frightened, "How do you know?"

"Because I am the very medium in which you used to accomplish this," The disembodied voice grew louder.

"How is that...possible?" He jumped out of the chair.

"Sit down you fool!" The voice became menacing.

Jeremiah sank down into the chair.

"Now. You created this, you're going to fix it." The image of a faceless man with long dreadlocks appeared. "Now to go about fixing this problem, you must choose a time line." The mirror shifted and the image of the eight travelers appeared. "These eight are from a timeline separate yours. Now, in their timeline, Madeline didn't die, but you did."

"So what does this mean?" Jeremiah looked perplexed. "If I save their time line then Madeline gets to live?"

"Yes, but you will not get to see her."

"What is the other optional timeline?"

"The other time-line is the one you are native to." The face appeared briefly only to shift into the image of a woman dressed in Victorian attire on a train, "However, Madeline will still die in the train accident."

"So there's nothing I can do to save her?"

"Trying to save her got you this, but we'll change that right now." The mirror shifted into the image of a corridor.

"How?"

"Through the corridors of time. There you will choose your champions."

Jeremiah walked through the mirror, which shifted with every step he took. "What is this place?"

"I just told you it's the corridor of time you dolt."

"Well you don't have to be rude!"

A bright light could be seen in the distance. Jeremiah squinted as he approached it. "What is that?"

“The Temporal Nexus. It’s where all points in space meet”

As he neared the Nexus, Jeremiah realized that his mind wasn’t able to focus and that he was slowly being bombarded with memories. “What’s happening to me?”

“You are experiencing a Temporal Flux.” The voice seemed to come from the walls of the corridor. “It’s happening because you are in close proximity to the Nexus.”

Jeremiah reached the end of the hall and fell to his knees. “This is too much.” Images of Madeline’s death swarmed around in his mind. “How do I make this stop?”

“Get up and touch the Nexus.”

Jeremiah lurched forward with an out stretched hand and made contact with the Light. In that instant everything was still, his mind had completely calmed. “It stopped,” He sighed in relief.

“Yes, and now you must choose your champions from either time line.”

Two large white portals opened up in front of Jeremiah. “What now?”

“The Portal on the left is the doorway to your timeline where Madeline dies. The portal to the right is the timeline of the eight travelers you saw.”

Jeremiah rubbed his chin, “When I touched the Nexus what happened to me?”

“You were given the ability to navigate and influence time.”

“So I can essentially control it, right?” Jeremiah smirked

“To some extent yes. But time isn’t something to be fooled with.”

“But I could use time to bring Madeline back.”

“Hurry up and make your choice. We haven’t time for this!”

“No. You don’t have any. I have all the time in the world.” Jeremiah stepped into the left doorway and it closed behind him.

“How long have we been walking?” Wong Fei Hong groaned as he trudged through the murky swamp beyond the forest.

“To damn long.” Shinn wiped his brow with his scarf, “Why are swamps always hot?”

“Should you be doin’ that with a holy gahment sugha?”

“Eh, I figure God will forgive me.” Shinn shrugged.

Lilith and Noir moved forward slicing through vines and moss.

“It shouldn’t be that long till we’re out.” Lilith stopped to wipe off her fogging glasses. In the lenses she caught a glimpse of something moving in the trees above.

Noir noticed her expression change, “What’s wrong?”

“Someone’s following us.”

“What, who, where?” Kitsune readied his crossbow.

“Above us. Don’t do anything yet. Just keep walking.” Lilith continued to move and the rest followed.

The sound of moving branches and wading water was all around and getting closer.

“Everyone slow down.” Shi whispered

The sound of splashing water could be heard in front of them but the source of the noise wasn’t visible. The travelers stopped, each of them getting into their respective stances. The moving of the branches increased and then suddenly stopped. Six figures leapt from them.

“Here they come!” Shouted Noir.

Four more came from under the water. Their bodies were gray with featureless faces. They attacked with clawed hands and extreme ferocity. One of the creatures, which came from the water, leaped for Wong claws first. Wong artfully rolled around the attack and caught its face with a back fist. The creature flew back into the water and did not come out.

“Wow, you’re strong for a drunk.” Kitsune dodged a blow from one of the creatures.

“Thanks. Now let’s see what you’ve got.”

The creatures had seemed to double in number. As each one was knocked down another two rose.

“How in the hell are we gonna kill these bastards” Shinn wrapped his scarf around the neck of a creature and slammed it to the ground.

Adelaide rapidly stabbed at one of the attackers in the chest with her rapier. “Well none of the weapons seem to be effective.” A creature rushed at her from the swamp water but caught two arrows in the head courtesy of Kitsune and Riku.

“We need head shots!” Kitsune fired rapid shots into the heads of oncoming creatures.

Lilith flew into the trees above followed by three of the monsters. She somersaulted off a branch, her wakazashi making contact with the neck of an attacker, to decapitate it. She then buried her blade in the head of another and for the last she stabbed in the throat, using its body to break her fall.

Riku put away his bow and unsheathed his swords cleaving through his opponents skulls effortlessly. “Humph, These creatures aren’t that tough”

“Hey you know you’re right” Shinn wrapped his scarf around the throat of a monster, jumped over a tree branch. He smiled and let it hang in his noose for a second before separating it’s head from its body.

“You seemed to enjoy that a bit much, eh Priest?” Noir swung his scythe in a circle killing any nearby attackers.

“Oh you should talk pirate!”

Wong played around with the creatures darting drunkenly through their attack. Throwing his gourd around the neck of his assailants, he pulled, snapping it, “Hey I don’t think these guys can see.”

“Gee, ya think they don’t have faces!” Shinn sliced the head off a creature.

“They seem to react to movement and vibration.” Shi stabbed his daggers into the head of a creature and threw a firecracker at another.

Kitsune watched the monsters patterns and how they out numbered the travelers. “Everyone take cover!”

“What?” Lilith screamed “We can’t, we’re surrounded.”

“Just trust me.”

“I hope you know what you ah doin sugha.”

Everyone except Kitsune dove into the water. Feeling no movement but the lord’s shuffling they all surrounded him.

“Ok you bastards come and get me!” Kitsune took out his quiver and loaded his cross bow to full capacity. He then fired a wave of arrows into the sky and dove into the water. The arrows rained down embedding themselves into the creature’s skulls causing them to drop like flies. Minutes later the travelers emerged from the murky water.

Lilith walked up to Kitsune and grabbed him by the collar, “You madman! You could have killed us and yourself.”

Kitsune brushed her hand off and backed away. “But didn’t I save us? We’d be fighting them until we died of exhaustion.”

“Save the fights for latter, let’s just leave this dreadful place” Adelaide said wiping her blade of with her handkerchief.

“I agree, we should just hurry and get to the spire.” Noir began to walk ahead as the others followed.

Lilith and Kitsune shot each other hard looks and proceeded.

A dark skinned monk wearing a gold crown, a chef eating a pastry, a woman carrying a large sword who wore a red kimono, and a man in black suit wearing a fedora stood on a large balcony on the twisted spire. They looked down at the desert below and saw the eight travelers exit the swamp.

“Is that them?” The woman in the red kimono spoke holding the all to large sword.

“It has to be,” The man in black pulled out a .45 Caliber pistol and cocked it.

“Yes, that is them,” said an ominous voice.

Jeremiah walked on the balcony followed by a woman dressed in ninja garb, a cowboy carrying a rifle, a young man with a baseball bat wearing newsboy attire, and a man wearing a hood and claws.

“Do we get to kill them?” whispered the man in the hood.

“Yes, but wait until they get up here.” Jeremiah walked back into the main room.

“You must go through the corridor and use the Nexus to recreate the time line,” said the voice in Jeremiah’s head.

“Yes I know.” He walked to the corridor, “Greet our guests when they arrive.”

The corridor lit up as he walked through it and he left his eight champions to face their counterparts.

“Why do we have to kill these people anyway?” The woman in the red kimono asked.

“They are from a time-line opposing ours and if we are to live we have to kill them to insure our place in Jeremiah’s new time-line.” The woman in ninja garb cleaned her blade with a thin sheet of rice paper.

“I don’t attack unless I am assailed.” The monk tightened his grip around the staff he held.

“Well, I think extinction from a time line is worth defending against.” The boy with the baseball bat adjusted his cap.

The sounds of footsteps approaching the highest level of the spire, the group readied their weapons. Suddenly the eight travelers burst through the door only to stop in their tracks and stare at the doppelgangers in front of them.

“What is going here?” Shi raised an eyebrow.

“All of you must do battle to decide who of you will exist in the new timeline.”

“Did everyone hear that or was it a side affect of my drunkenness?” Wong looked at his companions.

“No we heard it,” Shi responded. “But what is it?”

“I am the voice of time.”

“And who are you to tell us that we need to fight?” questioned Lilith.

“It doesn’t matter anymore. You have no choice. As we speak my avatar Jeremiah is recreating the time-line in the corridor of time.”

“Ok, it’s fucking simple. Kill them and then kill the douche behind the corridor!” Shinn yelled.

The fighters advanced on each other, crashing like a wave, the screeching sound of steel on steel.

Lilith and her counterpart took to the air as Noir and his doppelganger tore up the ground. Adelaide fired at the woman in the red Kimono, who nearly sliced her in two with her large sword.

In the corridor, Jeremiah took pieces of each old time frames and put them together. The sounds of the warriors clashing outside didn’t bother him in his efforts to right his wrong. The glass sphere, which represented the new time-line, was being put together bit by bit.

Kitsune shot rapid arrows at his well-dressed twin who responded in kind with bullets. The bullets just barely missed him as they traveled in almost slow motion and then disappeared into the corridor. Shinn and the clawed man assaulted each other ferociously neither of them able to get the edge while Shi and the cowboy fought outside on the balcony. Wong and the chef did nothing more than sit down and enjoy some spare pastries the Chef had been in possession of.

“This is it! I’m almost done!” Jeremiah yelled in excitement.

The sound of a slow impact was heard and Jeremiah hit the ground. It seemed that the bullets that passed through the corridor did not disappear. They slowed down due to the temporal energy being produced by the new Nexus. The unfinished sphere began to shine and rumble and then it exploded into millions of fragments. At that moment the spire began to shake and the combatants were all surrounded by light.

“It has not yet been finished, thought it will be restored, even if it’s distorted.”

The sun set on the planet one final time as all of the world’s inhabitants ceased to be. The spire crumbled adding to the waste of the desert every thing was wiped away. Leaving only ash floating in the cosmos.

I walk behind you
 Step in step
 Wishing you will only look up
 And give me one glance
 Just to show me that you notice me
 That I am not as invisible to you
 As you make me feel
 I open my mouth
 To try to speak these words to you
 Wanting to only share my dreams
 And my deepest desire with you
 Because you have always been apart of them
 How I have long to be the girl of your dreams
 But I could never open myself up to you
 I have always wore this mask for friendship
 But I have always wished I was one of the girls
 You would always tell me about
 But never could I be more than a friend
 Never could I be the one that kisses the spot of your neck
 That on neck that would drive you crazy
 The person that could wrap their arms around you
 The one that holds you during the night
 The one you would look in their eyes and say
 "I love you"
 To know that I was the only one you see in them
 I know these wishes could never come true
 But here I will stay
 Behind you in everyway
 Because
 I know I could be that person in your life
 That I'll never disappear and be
 Your first call

Untitled Poetry

by Gina Abitabile

You pulled me into your arms
 Revealing the scars from my past
 I tried to fight you
 Pulling my arms away from you
 But I was unable to
 Not sure if I wanted this
 All to come clean and be discovered
 Or could I just not overpower you
 I fall to my knees
 As you would hold me close
 Crying
 Screaming out of pain
 Breaking down in your arms
 Unable to hold it all in anymore
 I crawled into a little ball
 In your arms
 And cry onto your shoulder
 Not telling you
 That you were the one person
 That pushed me to this point
 But only letting you know
 That you were the one
 That helped me
 Overcome this
 Monster inside me

Lovecraft's Blow-up Doll

by Roger Matthews

A raging tempest was beginning in the sky above me. Jolly fat men were dancing about nimbus clouds as they sang old songs in their pearly white diapers. A banshee materialized out of the dark red sun and threw a blow up doll down to the low Earth.

Around me all was a flat plane that stretched on for lengths longer than a thousand strip malls. The land was so barren that nothing stood above its base, and I could look around and see nothing but the tempest in the deep purple sky. The blow up doll was flying towards me.

Suddenly, the Earth shook, and a gargantuan hand reached out of a mile-wide hole that had ruptured the perfect plane surface. The entire figure of the hand was covered by tumbling cascades of sand - I tried to see what was behind the waterfalls of sand, yet all I saw was more and more of the stuff.

I tried to run away from the sandy monstrosity, but it soon flew towards me and snatched the blow up doll out of the sky. It seemed to howl an ethereal cry of triumph, yet I could see no lips from which such a sound would emanate.

The banshee screamed, and as I looked up to the heavens I saw it cast a damning finger upon the giant hand that had sprung from the Earth. The earth rumbled once more, and suddenly the mile-wide rift began to close itself. The hand frantically tried to squirm its way down the closing hole to safety, but all I heard was screams as it was soon crushed against the quickly closing hole. The Ground pushed mightily into the writhing hand, and huge mounds of sand burst forth in all directions. The volumes of sand grew quicker and quicker in number, until all I could see around me was a whole universe of flying sand.

As I covered my eyes, I could hear a faint screeching sound... which was odd, since the blasphemous din of the sand was unlike any mere wall of sound I had heard before. Whatever sound it was, however, was soon cutting its way through the psychotic din of the sand. Its feverish pitch both increased in volume and insanity as I heard it approaching me...

please insert twenty five cens to continue

Creative Writing Panel

By Elizabeth D'Ambrosio

Among all the events available at I-Con 2006, one that immediately caught my attention was the Creative Writing panel. Five sci-fi/fantasy writers, including the Authors Guest of Honor, Terry Brooks, held it. Attendees had the opportunity to ask the advice of these professionals who have been in publications for years. I was eager to hear what they had to offer, curious if it would be any different than all I had learned from Professor Schulman during my years at CSI.

One of the earlier questions asked involved money. What should an author expect out of their first publication? The magic number given was \$5,000. However, it was emphasized that money should only flow from the publisher to the author and never the other way around. If you are asked for money in any way, shape, or form you are to run! For those looking to just get their work out there, then maybe it's not that bad of an idea. Overall, you will be paying to Xerox your work in a fancy format.

The popular topic of clichés sparked most of the conversation for the rest of the panel. Is it possible to come up with a truly original storyline? "Everything has been done! All of it, everything! Even when you don't think so, even if you think you've just come up with the most brilliant original idea, you will find out not only has it been done, it was done by Doc Smith back in 1929!" It is also possible that your idea may not have been put into print well, but the chances are one in a million. The trick to make a cliché idea work is by adding something new to it. Tell it in a fresh way, from your perspective, and with your own voice. Find out what it is you can do that's comfortable and fits who you are. This is what writers need to discover and it is important to do so in order to be successful. Another author suggested that you should write what you love first, "Life's a long time and you will need to stay fresh, interesting, and wonderful for more than one book. What is it that speaks to you? If it's not worth doing then don't do it!"

What do you do if your writing and the story takes on a life of its own? According to one of the panel speakers, "Just because it's lovely and speaks to you doesn't mean it belongs there. You have to be conscious that if characters and events don't advance the story line in some measurable way, then it shouldn't be in there." If you are faced with this problem it may be best to hold off for another story. There are times when the author only discovers what is happening while they are writing, others always know. Either way, you have to be able to say, "I can work with this," or, "This won't accomplish what I want," and act accordingly.

A panel as interesting and informative such as this deserved a lot more time than it was given, however, it definitely shed light on very important issues. It seems that for the most part, professionals have come to the same conclusions about the industry over the course of their own experience leaving us with one of the most important pieces of advice; keep on writing.



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Sniper

by David Hansen

I sit in my perch...on this hill, surrounded by trees. I view the path...the road. On one side, my left, there is an opening, a field of bloodstained grass. To the other side there is a swamp that is dark, grotesque, and hungry. The road leads to a forest...no, a jungle where I lie in wait. I am calm for my purpose will soon be here. For I am the sword of my cause. I am the honor behind those of whose souls I take...I am the one who brings forth chaos and order, without me the monsters will destroy the world...I the brother of the fallen, I keeper of their spirits. I am but a guardian to the after life considered a monster by those beasts of destruction. For I see them in my scope and I know that with this last, first, and infinite bullet I will kill them. I see the bullet enter and exit for the bullet is but an extension of me; it is my sword, my sickle. I became but a reaper...a grim reaper behind my scope. A skeletal hand and finger rests on the trigger while my red eyes spot and mark the one upon my death list that will be struck down. I am the judge, jury, and executioner. I am the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega of this world. My nostrils snort fire from the pit telling the other demons that this one is mine...Here they come,

I see nothing more then shells possessing mortality. Their leader is marked for he bears the stripes. I flip the glass that measures time for if I live beyond its sands I will have to flip it again. I have him locked in deaths embrace my eyes piercing through his heart... I lightly squeeze the trigger knowing that I extinguish his flame—I reload spot the next—fire—reload—shoot the next in the knee before they are all concealed...wait...wait...they will help while I reload and wait...there is what I am waiting for...while the injured screams for help two fools walk out—fire—one down—quickly load and fire—that makes two. Now fill the chamber once again as I did before I perched. Spot the injured and end his suffering, that means plus one to me...reload...come out...accept your death like those before you. Stop—I hear the planes...the bombers. The first hit is one hundred feet away—the second gets closer—the next, closer—next, closer—next, closer—now behind...they missed, so I do not die yet but the final five soldiers below won't be as unlucky as I. Yes come out. I am not here, come to the demon that awaits in this beast destroyed field of blood and death. Spy the glass; see the time...lock back onto their hearts. Fire—load—fire—load—fire—load—get the com—fire—load and wait...that's plus four to me. And so stands one. Now the last chance for my immortality to die...I see him first...fire...load. Plus one and pity to me. I survived beyond the glass' sand. My immortality has snuffed out their mortal flames and brought a small order. I guess it's time to move to the next field and beasts. But if my immortality and their mortality destroy each other, will it finally bring order? No. It will bring chaos and chaos will reign for eternity in the souls and blood of humanity.



Haiku's by Anthony Panayiotou

animals come out
of slumber to find the world
as it was before

the pond remains still
stagnant waters shelter new
life till dawn appears

thriving blooming life
wildly extending into
new frontiers forever

serene silent calm
a voice heard chirping afar
sleeping seedling sprouts

the long cold is done
it is time to rebuild what
the cold took away

the sun shines longer
shines brighter warmer better
it shines for rebirth



Space

By: Earl Gatchalian

I used to be in a box.
The box was walled and cornered,
but it wasn't dark nor was it empty,
instead it had lots of handles.
Handles you could grab on to and tug with everything,
every ounce of strength you got.

They never moved.

Ever.

Now the box is gone.
The handles are floating around with the walls.

They spin.

I wish I was inside a box again,
maybe with different types of handles.

Plastic, brass, copper,
handles.

Windows.

Door knobs.

It's really stupid being trapped inside a space.

But I liked it.

What do I do now?

I can't float around forever.
Maybe just a little while longer.

A box with a door
that's unlocked.

Writing

by Earl Gatchalian

The text message sent to your girlfriends .
The words you keyed on a car.
The text written on the ass of your pants.
The thoughts in your head before the sexual harassment of a coworker.
The lies you tell your friends.
A bumper sticker that isn't funny.
The eulogy at Pete's funeral
That story at last call.
The lacerations you cut on your arm.
Your grandfathers alztimers rants.
The background of your Hooters waitress.
The excuse on why you missed your wedding.
Your gay MySpace account.
The greeting you have to give in your retail job.
In other words, anyone can write.
So just fucking write already.

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