

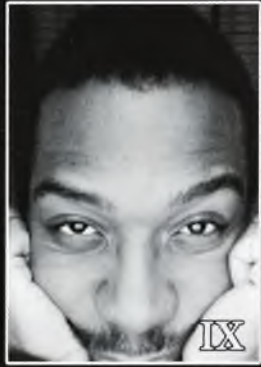
Serpentine

Magazine

FALL 2007



Serpentine Magazine



CAST

- I - DANIELLO CACACE**
EDITOR IN CHIEF
- II - RA'CHAUN ROGERS**
ASST. EDITOR IN CHIEF
- III - BRIAN GONZALEZ**
BUSINESS MANAGER
- IV - ANTONY PANAYIOTOU**
LITERATURE DIRECTOR
- V - ANDREW OPPENHEIMER**
ART DIRECTOR
- VI - ALICIA REBELO**
LAYOUT EDITOR
- VII - KEITH JACOBSEN**
PUBLIC RELATIONS
- VIII - ASHLEY HURWITZ**
SECRETARY
- IX - ALAIN FEQUIERE**
WEBMASTER
- X - PROF. AVA CHIN**
FACULTY ADVISOR

CONTRIBUTORS

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| GINA ABITABILE | LILITH OYA |
| ALAN AURELIA | EVAN PEREZ |
| MARIEL AVADON | ALLISON RYDER |
| STEFANIE CANDELARIO | JIHANE TAMRI |
| ALEX GAUDES | ANNON. |
| CORI HELD | KATIE SELUGA |
| EDEN MARTINEZ | NIKKI ROTTEN |

EDITORIAL STAFF

- JESSICA AULICINO
- NINA DIAB
- DANIEL IYAGEH
- HOBBS MATIAS
- RAMSES MARTINEZ
- MICHAEL MILEY

Letter From The Editor

Dear readers

What's up? Assistant Editor-in-Chief here with a fresh copy of your Literary and Artistic fix in the form of Serpentine Magazine. This issue we bring to you a more mature literary styling and a higher caliber of art. We will also be featuring the continuation of Baby Blues a story written by our very own Editor-in-Chief. Now some of you may be wondering why I, the Assistant Editor-in-Chief, is writing this. It turns out that our Editor-in-Chief was preoccupied and couldn't write it, so you got me instead. I hope you enjoy this installment and we ask that you look out for us on the web at serpentinemagazine.blospot.com as well as our podcast that is coming soon.

Truly yours,

Assistant Editor-in-Chief

Ra'Chawn Rogers

Disclaimer

Serpentine Magazine
2800 Victory Blvd.
Staten Island, NY 10314
Building 1C Room 226

A publication of Serpentine Magazine. A student organization of College of Staten Island. Serpentine Magazine is published by students of The College of Staten Island. All works contained within this publication are the property of their creators and are protected by copyright law. No materials within this publication may be reprinted in whole or part, in any form, without the consent of the creators themselves. Opinion expressed herein are those of the writers and are not necessarily shared by the Serpentine staff or The College of Staten Island. The College of Staten Island and The City University of New York are not responsible for the contents of this magazine. Serpentine is not responsible for return or loss of any/all submissions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVERS FOR SERPENTINE AND ARTIFACTS BY OPPENHEIMER

PAGE 5 - "I AM MY OWN MONSTER" BY RA'CHAUN ROGERS

PAGE 6 - "I AM WE" BY ALEX GAUDESİ

PAGE 7 - "ALCOHOLS DESTRUCTION" BY ALLISON RYDER

PAGE 8 "FOR THE GREATER GOOD" BY MICHAEL MİLEY

PAGE 10 - "LOVES SACRAFICE" BY ALLISON RYDER

PAGE 11 - POETRY BY GINA ABİTABİLE

PAGE 12 - "ANTHROMORPHIC AGNES" BY MARIEL AVDEON

PAGE 13 - 15 - "SULLIED HANDS" BY ALEX GAUDESİ

PAGE 17 - "FRAGMENTED" BY OPPENHEIMER

PAGE 18-20 - "BABY BLUES PART III" BY DANIELLO CACACE

PAGE 21 - "MANIPULATE" BY EVAN PEREZ

PAGE 22 - NYC COMİC CON REACTIONS

I AM MY OWN MONSTER

BY RA'CHAUN ROGERS

My name is Roderick Parker, for all intents and purposes. I need to sit and think while I get over myself before I start again. These sentences are jumbled and odd, like the fragmented pieces of dreams, which they've spawned from.

"Why did I fall into my head?" I shout and the noise bounces off the walls like a ball shot out of a cannon.

"To reconfigure it." The echo came howling back screeching in my ears. "Follow me."

I trek through the words and meanings at the base of my brain like a bushman through a swamp.

The words ricocheted off oddly angled wall, which depicted everything from my most horrifying fantasies to my most beautiful nightmares. I followed it into a dimly lit room. In the middle was a pedestal a blaze like a thousand suns; on it was a handgun.

What the hell am I supposed to do with this I wondered?

"Reconfigure, Take apart your head." The echo called to me distorted and loud. "It's a metaphor."

I picked up the gun and stared at it for a long while. Is this all that dwells in my head a pathetic suicide attempt, a death wish?

"Fuck, Here goes nothing." I pressed the cold muzzle of the gun to my temple, let out a restrained sigh and pulled the trigger.

The muzzle flashed but there was no pain, and suddenly I fell in slow motion, before me I saw my thoughts explode into thousands of pieces, it looked so beautiful then.

I saw her face assembled in a collage of intricate thoughts and beautiful sayings, sweet nothings that I lacked the capacity to deliver with feeling. I closed my eyes and heard the only three words that matter roll off of her lips, into my ears and down to my heart. It rested there my hope, my goal, my reward, my home, and my peace of mind... Reminding me that when this expedition through my Porcelain mind is over, I'll still have that to keep myself from becoming a monster, which I have created.

I AM WE

By ALEX GAUDES

EACH VOLLEY OF BULLETS ZIP PAST MY HEAD, EACH ONE CLOSER THAN THE LAST. WE'VE BEEN IN THIS FIREFIGHT FOR WHAT SEEMS LIKE AGES, AND I AM SLOWLY STARTING TO LOSE MY COMPOSURE.

IT HAPPENS AGAIN, THAT THING THAT CLOSES ME OFF TO REALITY AND LOCKS MY MIND AWAY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE I GO, BUT I DO KNOW THAT THE "I" THAT CONTROLS MY BODY IS NOT THE "I" THAT CONTROLS MY THOUGHTS; IT IS SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT, SOMETHING INHUMAN.

I AM SOLDIER.

I FEEL NO FEAR.

I FEEL NO FEAR,

FEAR DOES NOT EXIST HERE.

IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN HESITATION AND DOUBT THAT INTERFERES WITH MY WILL TO ACT.

I RETURN TO MY BODY. FOR A FEW SECONDS, I'M BACK IN CONTROL. BUT WHEN I LOOK UP MY RIGHT, I SEE JONES GO DOWN. I WANT TO RUN TO HIM, TO HELP HIM, BUT I KEEP FIRING. I DO NOT KNOW WHY... I JUST KEEP FIRING EVEN THOUGH MY ENTIRE BODY IS SCREAMING AT ME TO HELP HIM AND GET HIM THE HELL OUT OF HERE. BUT THAT FEELING COMES RUSHING RIGHT BACK.

I AM SOLDIER.

I FEEL NO COMPASSION.

I KNOW NO COMPASSION.

COMPASSION DOES NOT EXIST HERE.

IT IS A WEAKNESS THAT WILL RESULT IN MY DEATH.

THE EXPLOSIONS ARE HEAVY NOW, THE SHRAPNEL ERUPTING FROM THE GRENADES LIGHTING THE GROUND LIKE THE 4TH OF JULY. HERE IS THE CLIMAX OF IT ALL, THE ONE MOMENT WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS AND WE GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION WE'RE IN, THE ONE MOMENT WE HEAR THE CRIES OF OUR MEN AND OF OUR ENEMIES ALIKE.

I AM SOLDIER.

I FEEL NO REMORSE.

I KNOW NO REMORSE.

REMORSE DOES NOT EXIST HERE.

IT IS MORAL UNCERTAINTY.

A BULLET RIPS MY RIGHT SHOULDER, JERKING MY TORSO. I BLEED, BUT I DO NOT FALTER. I STAND MY GROUND. I FIGHT.

I KILL.

I AM SOLDIER.

I FEEL NO PAIN; I KNOW NO PAIN.

PAIN DOES NOT EXIST HERE.

IT IS THE COWARDICE OF THE FLESH.

I AM LOSING THE BATTLE FOR THE "I". WHOEVER IT IS THAT KEEPS TALKING OVER MY BODY KNOWS ME BETTER THAN I KNOW MYSELF AND HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT BUTTONS TO PUSH. I FEEL MYSELF FADING, FEELING MYSELF MOVING FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM THE "I".

IT'S ALL OVER NOW; I CAN NO LONGER FIGHT THE MAN WHO HAS TAKEN CONTROL. HE HAS BEATEN ME AT THE ONE THING I WAS BEST AT: BEING ME. BUT HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING AND I AM LOSING HOPE TO EVER RECLAIM THE "I".

FROM NOW ON, "I" AM WE.

WE ARE INVINCIBLE.

WE CANNOT FALL.

WE DECIDE WHO LIVES, WHO DIES.

WE EXIST WITHOUT IDENTITY, NOTHING AND EVERYTHING.

WE ARE NAPOLEON AND WASHINGTON.

WE ARE GLADIATOR AND SPARTAN.

WE ARE CHRIST.

WE ARE GOD.

WE ARE SOLDIER.

Alcohol's Destruction

by Allison Ryder

People always say it - Don't drink and drive - and people always say yea, okay, I would never do that. And then there it is on the news - another teen killed by drunk driving. Even though we all say we won't, even though we all know what could happen and how much we could lose, half of us still do it. Half of us still get into the car drunk, or with someone who has drunk, even if it was only one drink.

Now the semester's coming to an end and a lot of student body is going to be out drinking with friends and partying. Do NOT get into that vehicle if you or the driver has consumed alcohol. It's not responsible, it's not safe, and it's not smart.

Start the new year with making the responsible decisions and not getting too caught up in the "fun" of things. You want to hear your mother saying Happy New Year - let's live this one to the fullest! NOT Happy New Year - the first year I have to live without my daughter/son because drunk driving killed them.

Every half hour there is an alcohol related accident and every two minutes, there is an alcohol related injury. According to the United States Department of Transportation, 16, 885 people died in alcohol related accidents, in 2005. This means that thirty-nine percent of all the crashes that occurred in 2005, were alcohol related. In addition to this statistic, 254,000 people were injured in accidents where alcohol was present. In 2004, The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that "over 1.4 million drivers were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This puts the arrest rate at one arrest for every 139 licensed drivers in the United States."

Are we willing to put this many innocent lives on the line; or our own lives for that matter? Many heard of the victims who were killed this year, some are friends or family; now with the knowledge of what happened to them, will you lose it all for a simple drink and a ride home?

Hear the brakes screech
See the tires burn
Their lives turned to destruction & crumble
because of a red light turn
The cars in complete ruin
The back of one, up in flames
The family of these victims
Will never be the same
They were innocently going out
to a party with some friends
When a drunk driver
turned their lives story to its end
Bodies covering each other
Blood running down their face
The drunk driver lies
With body parts displaced
The ambulance came
the EMT's tried to revive
But the damage was too severe
None of them survived
Out of this accident
the bodies of angels rised
These teenagers
never felt love at its best
Dreams for all their worth
The real good, bad, and the rest
They won't be able to experience college
or be a husband or a wife
They'll never know the feeling of true success
Or how failure cuts like a knife
The driver
of the car that was killed
Was about to have life
happiness filled
He was out celebrating
the greatest of news
But his celebrating
caused him to lose
He was going to have a son
with his new wife
Be a new father
and make his baby his life
Hear all the hearts break
See all these souls lost
But this is the intake of alcohol's
dangerous & deadly cost

Photo by Don

Serpentine 7

"For the Greater Good"

By: Michael Miley

So it ends like this. My once mighty empire-gone. Do you hear that? Off in the distance they've broken through the gates. They're coming for me and they won't be happy until they leave with my head. I never thought it would come to this. The beloved leader of millions and now, now they come for my head. I promised these people a bright future. It was harsh but it needed to be done for the greater good. These people were peasants no more than twenty years ago when I came to power. I took these people from nothing, a third world ass backwards country, and in the span of ten years we became a first class nation.

But now it ends. The barbarians have breached the wall. Some will remember with fondness my accomplishments and they will speak of this day in hushed tones of when the walls fell. But it will matter not for I will be dead and my body disgraced by the touch of those unworthy of my vision. I must admit this is almost ironic, for even I, the Great General Richardo De'Ouschbagge, started as a revolutionary. But now, ah the sadness. My vision will never be complete. NO! They've broken through the courtyard. Abandoned by all, I look at them—the vanguard of my once Grande Army. Wait, I hear the sounds of resistance. Few have remained loyal enough to stay behind, but too few we are, too out numbered. I look from my once glorious view of the city from my window and it burns. Fires are raging through out the city. Firefights between my troops and these rebel scum. These Jiboia is what they call themselves, and how true of a name it is, and they have slowly squeezed us to death.

DAMN! There they are. It took them long enough but now they are outside my doors trying like hell to break them down. They will hold for now, but all I have left is this, my America Colt revolver and only five bullets left. Well, if they're going to come through that door than I'm going to take some of these bastards out with me. I just wish I knew where I went wrong. Well, there's not much time left to ponder on the faults of the people and why they rejected my glorious vision for our futures. Well they're about to break through the hinges. I never did think it would end like this.

I remember the day we stormed the palace of the pig, De'Ouschbagge. It was a proud day for the Jiboia. Breaking through the front gates of his damned fortress and then a

running battle with his "Internal Security Forces;" the fascist pigs that they were. They took pride in killing their own people, in torturing and killing them for that pig's pleasure. But they fought hard all the way to the inner courtyard and we broke them. Oh, a few stayed behind to fight for that fat pig. They didn't last long, and we got to his door and he was barricaded in tighter than a virgin daughter on prom night. But we broke through eventually. We were afraid the coward would have run off by then, but no. There he was sitting behind his desk, wearing his best uniform from when he served the people, then went onto killing them for his own sick amusement. The fat bastard shot the first four people through, killed two of them, including my younger brother, and then shot himself.

I remember walking out of that Pig's villa where he lived in such comfort while the people starved. I remember the celebrating. The people were happy and we were free. "What happened, where is he, that pig?" Asked my lieutenant Rogers.

"DAMN IT! The son of a bitch is dead. He killed himself; but not before taking Jesse and Carlo," I told him.

"Carlo? Your brother Carlo? You've got to be kidding me, Daniel." He said with shock on his face.

"No Roger. He's dead, but at least the pig is too and there's much work to be done."

"Yes, El Presidente. I shall go round up the rest of the cabinet," Roger said. If I only knew what was to come.

"And, Roger, find the Russian. I haven't seen him all day."

"I heard he was on the north side of the city securing the television and radio stations, but I'll go give it a look," he said and left.

Ah, there's nothing like the collapse of a society. I remember back when the wall fell and then Communism ended. It was a sad time for myself. Most of us ex-KGB went to work for the Russian Mafia. Never did like them, murderers and scum. Instead, I came here, down into the tropics. I lost my ideals years ago, but as that English man said, 'Power corrupts,' and I must say I liked power. You didn't get to be a general in the KGB if you don't. And the power-hungry are attracted to power vacuums, like sharks to blood. Yes, this is going exactly the way I planned.

NYPIRG

come see what NYPIRG can do for you

Voter Mobilization

Environmental protection

internship credit

Mass Transit

Consumer Rights

Affordable Higher Education

Hunger and Homeless Outreach

learn valuable skills while
working on meaningful campaigns

contact Ben at the NYPIRG office for more information:
rm: 1C-218, (718) 982-3109

Love's Sacrifice

I rolled snake eyes
when I rolled the dice
going into this love
is a deadly passionate sacrifice
are we willing to
let ourselves bleed
for this love
we've convinced ourselves that we need
it's like a match to gasoline
watch the fire roar
trust in this
spread our wings and soar
is it worth it
for cupid and hearts
taking such a dangerous risk
just to take your hand and have a new start

let me stab my heart
fight it to the ground
so when you hurt me
it won't bring me down
love will never
hold victory over me
love won't make me blind
because pain has already made me see
do we really want to
risk losing it all
love makes you climb up
a height that hurts when you fall
if I go forward with you
will my broken heart turn black
let love be alone
let our fears hold us back.

By: Allison Ryder ♡

Untitled 1

By: Gina Abitabile

*As I lay in my bed replaying each night we have
spent together
Seeing you snake your arm around her, from the corner
of my eye
Pretending that I was there
I just pushed it in the back of my head as if it didn't
happen
I convince myself that I was the only one for you
But I can't help the pain that it's causing me
Or help escape the love that I will always have for you
Maybe I will end it,
That I will be strong enough to say no to you
But it's all just a game to you, that I am only the piece
to it
All the lies you told me
Just making me believe that I was your only one
With each night you would sneak off to her house
I just became so crushed, so numb inside from the un-
wanted pain I feel
You would always come back to me
Each night she wasn't around
I was sure that killed each of your lonely nights?
From the pain she would cause you
And I fall for it each time
Because all I ever wanted was you
For you to hold me every night
But as I woke every morning
You were always gone
Like a sick routine that I trapped myself in
I was all game
It was all a lie
That I must end
But I can't help the love that is still burning inside me
The game I am addicted to play.*

Untitled 2

By: Gina Abitabile

*The room becomes dim
And I feel so lost I look around for a sight of light
To rescue me
You are my light at the end of the tunnel
Following you each step of the way
Every time I close my eyes
It's your face that I see
To hold me up each time when I fall
So you can't move from here
And leave me so empty
You can't just look for someone else
Someone that you will just replace me with
Because I may say that I don't love you
But the truth behind this all
Is I will love you till the end
So don't you dare begin to
Question everything that we had
And change your mind
Running scared from it all
Because I know that you feel it too
That you hold me in your heart
With one look that you save for me*

Anthropomorphic Agnes

by Mariel Avedon

Once upon a time, there was a crocodile. He was anthropomorphic. He could speak, despite having stiff crocodile lips and a stringy crocodile tongue. He could read, despite having a primitive crocodile brain and sideways crocodile eyes. And he could walk on two legs, but it looked quite tragic, because he had stumpy crocodile legs and a hugely disproportionate crocodile head that waggled with instability every time he took a step.

The crocodile's name was Agnes. He went about his days, quite naked, in the swamp. He was a very bad hunter, because he walked rather than swam, and his horribly unbalanced head made him totter over mangrove roots. He longed for human company, but he had trouble hitchhiking into the city. Nobody wanted to pick him up. He yearned for intellectual conversation, but the frogs would rather make mating calls, and his own kind regarded him with contempt.

And so Agnes attempted to kill himself with a ball of string and a small kitten he had found wandering in the swamp. He had eaten the kitten's mother. Ubercat, which he had named the orange and white ball of fuzz, was his only friend. He had forgiven Agnes for eating his mother and they would have brunches of fish and Bloody Marys every Sunday.

Anyway, the plan was that Agnes would tie the string to one of his big, nasty, sharp crocodile teeth, then roll the ball of string down his throat. Ubercat, being non-sentient, would chase it. He would then tear up Agnes' insides with his rough kitten play. Agnes would finally find bliss in death.

However, just like everything else Agnes had ever attempted, this ended in failure. His only friend was digested by his powerful crocodile digestive juices. In despair, Agnes tried the more casual method of hanging one's self, but he lacked a neck. He next tried slashing his wrists, but his arms were too stubby to reach.

Weeping crocodile tears, Agnes became enraged at the gaming industry by promoting happy images of anthropomorphic animals.

He decided to become a lawyer and named himself "Jack Thompson"...



Thomas stopped short of a door that was directly in front of him. The person within was someone Thomas knew all too well, and truth be told, Thomas was afraid to go inside to meet said person. The person within was his Grandfather Virgil, a man who fought and served in Vietnam, a man who came back shell-shocked, a man broken and sullied.

'It was ten years ago,' Thomas recalled, running his finger underneath his left eye, a small scar visible and one that still pained him to the core upon remembrance. 'It was ten years ago when Grandpa Virgil wasn't Virgil anymore, but as a man who scarred by the things he's done, a man who would no doubt take it all back if he had the chance. He wasn't my crazy grandpa to me anymore; he was just someone who was misunderstood and one who wasn't given the time of day to speak freely... until that day...'

Thomas recalled the day ten years earlier when he came home from visiting a friend. He set foot in his house and noticed the darkness. It was pitch black; no light at the end of the tunnel... nothing.

"Thomas," a voice said from the other room. "Get your ass in here!"

Confused, Thomas cautiously, yet clumsily set foot into his living room and noticed his Grandfather Virgil sitting in one of the sofa's Thomas' mother bought simply for decoration, not for comfort,

which he always found pointless. "What is it, Grandpa?" Thomas asked, standing a distance from he and his Grandfather.

"Come a little closer," Virgil urged, patting a seat beside him.

Thomas shook his head and took a seat on the floor. His Grandfather reeked of booze and was sweating profusely. He was just finishing smoking a cigar to hide the smell, but that only made it worse, singing Thomas' nostrils. "Grandpa, you're drunk again. You should go to sleep."

"Nonsense!" Virgil exclaimed, grabbing the concealed bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey from his side and pressing the bottle to his lips, consuming a large amount in the next instant. "What the hell do you know about being drunk, boy? You getting drunk now?"

"Still am," Thomas admitted, smirking. "You gonna tell Mom on me? She won't believe you, you old nut."

"What did you call me?!" Virgil exclaimed, slowly getting up and smacking Thomas across the face. "Is that any way to talk to a war hero?" He asked him.

"War hero?" Thomas laughed, rolling to his side. He seemed to be too intoxicated and didn't feel the blow his

grandfather laid upon him.

"Yeah, that's right, War Hero, boy," he repeated with much more

emphasis, sitting back down. "You don't know how many of those yellow bastards your senile Granddad put down, did ya?"

"Then due tell," Thomas said with a wide smile. "I mean, if you killed as many as you say you did, then you obviously have some stories to share, don't you?" Just then, Virgil gripped something else—a slightly heavier object that seemed to be concealed within the sofa—and pointed it at Thomas, who shook with fear. "W-where did you get that gun?" Thomas asked with pure terror, pointing to the .44 magnum revolver his grandfather was holding. "Does Mom know you have that thing?"

"Your Mom doesn't know about half the shit I have in this damn house. I got more weapons here than your damn police precinct, boy. Yeah, that's right; Grandpa is all hooked up, isn't he? Still think he's crazy?"

"I think you're insane, that's what I think!" Thomas blurted out, shaking his head.

Virgil looked down and laughed at him. He handed the revolver to Thomas and Thomas grabbed the revolver and closed his eyes, afraid that his grandfather really was as senile as many people said he was.

"Open your eyes and look at the handle, boy. You

notice all those scratch marks? I put one for every man I killed.”

Thomas looked down and noticed that the entire handle of the revolver was covered in tiny scratch marks. It still wasn't enough evidence to prove his fact, but it was something that intrigued him. “So, what happened over there?” He asked.

“It's nothing to talk about, boy,” Virgil replied, sitting back to get more comfortable. “Body parts flying all over the place, grenades going off, your buddies dyin' left and right... it's not glamorous. You won't understand even if I told ya.”

“But I want to understand, Grandpa! You can't start a story and just cut in the middle of it! Just tell me!”

“You want to understand what we suffered?” Virgil asked, sighing and shaking his head. “It can't be understood by those who didn't suffer it. You see, boy, one who knows nothing can understand nothing.”

“And what's that supposed to mean?” Thomas asked, looking on with confused and anxious eyes.

“I'll tell you in ten years when you're old enough to understand and when I've had enough time to figure it out myself,” Virgil said, slightly wobbling as he got up but regaining his composure. “You don't want to know what I've been through.” He looked at his hands like a child would look at a phantom or a predator entering his bedroom. He threw the now empty bottle of

whiskey at a nearby picture of himself in his military dress.

The glass bottle erupted upon impact and the shards flew wildly through the air, one of them managing to come in contact with Thomas, cutting him below his left eye and leaving a small trickle of blood as proof.

Thomas' whole body shook and he put his hands over his head to make sure he was safe from the remaining glass shards, all the while putting pressure on his new wound.

Virgil looked at the hand that threw the bottle and noticed the shaking. His fearful eyes glared at Thomas, who fearfully gave him back the revolver. Virgil proceeded to walk towards the stairs, not turning back as he spoke.

“You'll never understand... because I still don't understand. But what I do understand is that there's blood on these hands of mine, boy.” The words echoed in Thomas' mind, filling his thoughts with anger and curiosity. But there he was, ten years later as he promised, and he was going to make his grandfather make good on his proposition.

The nurse attending his room came to the door and acknowledged Thomas' presence. “You can go in now if you want, Thomas,” she said in her boring, monotone voice. Thomas nodded and thanked her, turning the knob on the door carefully and slowly before entering the vast white room that was hooked up with all things medicinal which were keeping his grand-

father alive.

He saw the oath keeper on his deathbed, saw how fatigued and weary he looked from all the tubes that were running through his body. Thomas tried to keep his eyes away from the scene, but he couldn't help but look. He sat down beside him. “You awake, Virgil?” He asked, looking as the weary-eyed man looked to his right and noticed his grandson.

“How are you... Thomas?” he asked in turn, his voice breaking.

“I'm doing well, Virgil,” he answered, “I had to take all the way from New York to make it here to see you get better.”

“You mean to see me die?”

Thomas shook his head, but knew his grandfather saw right through him. “That isn't the case at all. Virgil; I miss Florida and I missed you too.”

“You don't need to lie to me, boy. I know all too well that I'm going to kick the bucket soon. It's the lung cancer that's spreading throughout, so don't let your lies join it.”

“To tell you the truth, Virgil, I came here because ten years ago you made an oath that you would tell me all the things that I wouldn't understand then. So, tell me: what exactly happened out there on the battlefield?”

“Oh... this old story...” he trailed off, grinning. “I see that it has had more of an impact on you than I previously thought possible.”

“I have a scar to prove

it, Virgil," he spat out, pointing to the scar below his left eye. "And now you get to keep your end of the bargain... so tell me and quit stalling."

"There's nothing to tell, Thomas. We few naïve souls went overseas to fight a battle that was nothing but a waste of lives. We didn't get anything accomplished, just managed to cut the population down some. We were told that it would give us honor, that it would give us boys into fine men, but there was no honor about it, you know? Killing a man in cold blood, watching and waiting to see if your number was up on the battlefield, that's what you lived for."

"Did you lose someone close to you, Virgil?" Thomas pried, absolutely glowing at the story his grandfather was telling him.

Virgil nodded. "My friend, Murphy Seeker-you could even call him my best friend. We signed up together and were fortunate that we were in the same platoon. He was my sanity as I was his, until the day renegade grenade found its way by us, and Murphy covered it with his body, his insides being blown and his blood staining my face. I completely lost it then; I wasn't afraid of death any longer."

"So what did you do?"

"I fought, boy. I jumped out of the trench, took a bullet to my thigh and my chest, but I fought until every man was dead. I remember one man, as I stood above him with my rifle at his forehead, who began to look at me teary-eyed and start-

ed praying. I believe. I told myself, 'You don't speak their language, but you know that a bullet is the same in every language,' and I pulled the trigger."

Thomas' eyes widened. He didn't think his grandfather could be so deep of a person and understood fully why something like that could scar him like it did. Still, he kept listening.

"And they gave me a medal for it; a medal, for God's sakes! They gave me a medal for orphaning many children. Sick world we live in, huh?"

"Virgil... I mean, I didn't know, grandpa. But that's the world we live in, and you were man enough to stand up for what you believe in and fought, and I'm sure, wherever he is. Seeker is proud of you for doing the things you've done. You should treasure the knowledge that you protected people by killing others, people that also had wives, children, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. War is nothing but a cycle of death and suffering, but you managed to pull through, Grandpa, and I'm damn proud of you."

"Tommy," Virgil said, his voice more weak than when he began.

"Please, no more," Thomas said, hushing his grandfather. "You've told me more than enough, grandpa. I think it's time for you to get some rest now. I'll send the nurse in after I leave."

As Thomas began to walk out, his grandfather called his name. He slowly turned

and looked at the broken man. "Thank you," he said, nodding his head, tears falling freely from his eyes. "Thank you for putting this old man's mind to rest."

Thomas smiled and shook his head. "It was all you, grandpa," he said, walking out of the room.

It took Virgil another three weeks to finally give up the ghost. He left the world gracefully and with his honor, and Thomas knew that he was with Seeker and his grandmother now, and he couldn't be happier.

When lawyers sorted out all the things that Thomas and his family received, he returned to his old bedroom, the one right next to his grandfather's, and saw the box that Virgil had left him. And as Thomas opened the box, his eyes grew wide at the contents within. It was the revolver Thomas saw all those years ago, and as he picked it up, a piece of paper was under it in plain sight.

Grabbing it, Thomas read, "To Protect". Thomas held the revolver and piece of paper close to his heart, remembering his grandfather for who he was, not as a man whose hands were sullied with the blood of his enemies, but as the brave soldier who would put his own well-being on the line for the sake of others.

And for the first time in his whole life, Thomas was proud to have a grandfather like Virgil.

THIRD RAIL

VOLUME 2007 : 1980



IF YOU WEAR CLOTHES,
YOU SHOULD READ **THIRD RAIL**
(IF YOU DONT, YOU MIGHT GET CENSORED)

"FRAGMENTED" BY OPPENHEIMER

THE ABSENCE OF ACTION GIVES WAY TO THE BUBBLES OF THOUGHT ON A PLACID PUDDLE OF CONTENTMENT. THEY EACH POP, RAISING A NEW QUESTION. THE QUESTIONS BUILD ON EACH OTHER UNTIL THEY ARE A MONSTROUS OGRE, TALLER THAN I. THEY RAISE THEIR THICK, HEAVY FEET AND CRUSH ME, BREAKING ME LIKE ICE AGAINST THE COLD UNFEELING GRANITE.

THE SMALLEST BITS OF ME BEGIN TO MELT, AND MELD BACK INTO EACH OTHER, RESTORING THE PUDDLE.

I AM WRITER.

SOUNDS BUZZ ACROSS THE SURFACE OF MY BEING, THEIR VIBRATIONS DELIVERING RIPPLES ON MY SURFACE. I PICK UP THE SMALLEST BITS OF PHONEMES, MY PROCESSORS NOT FULLY COMING BACK TO ME YET. THEY MATTER LITTLE TO ME. I SAVE THEM IN MY MEMORY FOR A LATER USE. I CONTINUE TO MELT AND CONVERGE.

I AM ARTIST.

THE AUDITORY PROCESSES RETURN TO ME AND THE FRAGMENTED SOUNDS BEGIN TO MAKE SENSE. MORPHEMES FORM, AND THE SEGMENTS OF NOISE START TO MAKE SMALL SENSE. "HELLO...?" HELLO. ONE MORPHEME, ONE MEANING. THE VIBRATIONS MAKE ME RIPPLE AGAIN, THIS TIME WITH GREATER FORCE. "ARE YOU THERE?"

ONLY ONE MORPHEME HAD SIGNIFICANT MEANING. "YOU ADDRESSED ME". I TRICKLE INTO A GREATER REALIZATION.

MY NAME IS FORGET.

I TRY TO SPEAK BUT I HAVE NO VOICE TO RETURN WITH. I MOVE MY HANDS BUT ALL THAT COMES FROM IT IS A B PULLED TO AN S WHERE MY FOREHEAD SHOULD BE. I SAY MY NAME. THERE ARE NO MORE VIBRATIONS, NO MORE RIPPLES. MY SOLID PARTS HAVE MELTED INTO ALMOST NOTHING, THE FINAL FLUIDS STARTING TO MERGE WITH MY BEING.

I AM ANDREW, I AM GREATER THAN ANY QUESTION.

I RAISE MY ARMS, AND FLOW LIKE A RIVER. MY ELBOW CONNECTS WITH PUZZLEMENT'S SMALLEST TOE WITH SHATTERING FORCE. THE BEAST SCREAMS IN PAIN WITH VOLUME MASSIVE ENOUGH TO SEND RIPPLES THROUGH MY LIQUID FORM. THEY ONLY AMPLIFY THE PAIN I DELIVER INTO ITS FOOT. MY FINGERS BECOME SHARP AND CLAW-LIKE AS I RIP INTO ITS FORM AND BARREL UP ITS LEG. I CLIMB AS IF FERAL. MY TEETH BECOME SHARP AND CANINE IN NATURE. I'M THE PREDATOR NOW. I STOP AT IT'S KNEECAP, AND DIG MY FANGS INTO THE FLESH, BEFORE CRAWLING AROUND TO ITS THIGH.

PUZZLEMENT FALLS FORWARD AND I LAND ON TOP.

I RUN ACROSS ITS BACK, MOVING FASTER THAN I EVER COULD IN MY CORPOREAL FORM. I ROLL AND DIVE, LANDING AT THE BASE OF THE SKULL. CLAWS WIDE AND FANGS MORE THAN WILLING, I MAKE SHORT WORK OF THE QUESTIONS' MANIFESTATION, PLACING ITS HEAD SEVERAL YARDS FROM ITS TORSO.

MY FLUID FORM FADES OUT AS I STARE AT THE UGLY YELLOW WALL PAPER THAT LINES THE SLANTED WALLS OF A SECOND STORY HOUSE'S ROOM. I BLINK, SHAKE MY HEAD AND DECIDE IT'S TIME TO GO TO SLEEP. MY DAYDREAMS HAVE BEEN GETTING PRETTY STRANGE LATELY.

Baby Blues (Part III) by Daniello Cacace

Virgil awoke the next morning to an eerie silence. He had grown accustomed to Miss Hewitt's shouting as she called the children to school. Am I early? I must be, Virgil thought. It was difficult to gauge time when you lived underground. Though they had electricity, natural light was a treat to behold. On occasion, roughly once every month or two, the children were allowed to leave the cavern, but only for an hour and only with direct supervision from Ragnall himself. This, the wakeup class, the scheduled eating times, rationed food and water, and the nightly curfews made home feel more like a prison.

If it was the time he thought, Miss Hewitt would come by any minute to rouse the children for their lessons. Might as well get dressed, he thought. Virgil partially disrobed and went to fetch a clean pair of clothes from the pile he kept in a crate near his bed. Suddenly, a catcall broke the silence and he turned sharply toward the source. A GIRL! Virgil panicked at the sight of a raven-haired female who stood nonchalantly in his doorway, leaning against the wall with her arms folded.

"What are you doing?!" yelled Virgil as he quickly covered himself with his blanket.

"What? Can't a girl enjoy the view?" she replied lightheartedly.

"Get out! I'm naked!"

"Trust me Hun, you're not naked, and besides, most guys your age would kill to be in your position right now. Consider yourself privileged."

"I don't care who you are. What are you doing in my room?"

"Geez, calm down a bit. I was only teasing. Raghsy told me you were serious for your age, but I didn't realize you lacked a sense of humor." She abandoned her post at the doorway, moved further into the room, and took a seat next to Virgil, who was still wrapped in his blanket cocoon. "My name is Lily. Ragnall assigned me to you for today. He told me about what happened to you and thought you could use some company."

Virgil felt embarrassed that this stranger knew all about what had happened to him the night before. He wanted to keep it a secret, and hoped that Ragnall wouldn't tell anyone either.

"What did he tell you?" Virgil asked.

"Not much, really, just that you got sick last night and passed out. Oh! He wanted me to give you this." Lily handed Virgil a sealed envelope with his name scribbled on the front in the big bubbly letters. He opened it carefully, like any sudden move could cause the letter to vanish forever, and read it to himself. He cast suspicious glances at Lily on occasion to make sure she wasn't reading it with him.

Dearest Virgil,

I do hope you're feeling better this morning. I know last night proved to be a bit more intense than either of us expected. I admit that I myself didn't even know what was happening. But the important thing

now is that you're all right. I've decided to hold off on any further meetings until I am more aware of what really occurred. In the meantime, I have sent you someone to keep you company. Her name is Lily Ondrea. She's a bit on the wild side but she has good intentions. I'm sure you two will get along fine.

Best Wishes,

Ragnall D. Talbot

P.S. Don't worry about school; I've already informed Rebecca that you won't be going today.

"So," Lily interrupted, "What do you want to do today?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, come on! You're a kid who's free from his responsibilities for just one day. Is there something you want to do?"

"I don't know," he reiterated. "I just woke up, it's still early."

"Honey, it's one in the afternoon. You're lucky I looked ahead to see when you would wake up. If I had to wait outside that door for five hours, I'd be very pissed."

1 P.M.? I never sleep that long. Virgil locked gazes with Lily; he gauged her credibility as best he could before he came to a decision.

"Can you leave?" he asked.

"What? No! I can't just leave! Ragnall told me to take care of you today so that's what I'm going to do. If you want, I'll get Ragsy down here right now to tell you what he said himself." Her voice was huffy and forceful, like she had been greatly offended.

"No, it's not that," Virgil reassured her. "It's just, can you leave so I can get dressed?"

"Ohhh, um...yeah, sure!" Her voice changed from a harsh tone to that of a chipper squirrel almost instantly. She bounced off the bed with a victory smile from ear to ear and left Virgil to his privacy. He finished getting dressed and went outside to join Lily.

"So Kiddo, what do you want to do?"

"Um, I like to read. Maybe we could read?" The uncertainty in his voice gave away his obviously clueless methods of having fun.

"Hmm, yeah, how 'bout NOT." She thought for a moment, staring intently at the ceiling. "Oh, I know! Do you like to throw rocks? I know this place we could go. My friends and I go there all the time and have contests to see who can throw the farthest. Doesn't that sound like fun?"

"...No. Is that what you older kids do all day? Throw rocks? It's nice to know what I have to look forward to growing up here."

"Ugh, and I thought this would be an easy grade," she muttered to herself.

"What grade?" asked Virgil.

"Huh? Did I say that out loud?"

"Yeah, what grade?"

"Oh, it's nothing that concerns you." She made a dismissing motion with her hand.

"Well, if it doesn't concern me then you can tell me."

"I, well, okay. It does concern you, but you aren't supposed to know, so please keep this a secret."

"I will. I promise."

"You see, Ragnall didn't just assign me to you to be your playmate for the day; this is going to count toward part of my final assessment in human interaction - to see if I'm qualified to be a field operative."

"I don't really understand what you mean." Virgil's face showed mixed looks of curiosity and confusion.

"Field Operatives are specially trained to live in the outside world. There's all different kinds, like the people who rescue babies from hospitals. We even have people working in the government making sure the sure the anti-blue movements stay as hindered as possible."

"Really? That's so cool! I want to be one of those." His eyes were lit up with excitement. He always enjoyed reading spy novels. The tactic of espionage intrigued him, how subtle manipulations could change the world more than brute force. "Which kind do you want to be?" he inquired.

I don't care, as long as it takes me away from this place. I'm like a flower, Virgil, I need fresh air and sunlight, I need lots of room to blossom, to reach my full potential. It's something I could never do here." Lily reached into her pocket, pulled something out, and handed it to Virgil.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's called 'bubble gum.' Kids out there chew it all the time; they don't bother to get any for us here because it's not nutritional. I know a guy who's an operative. He always gets me a pack when he comes back to make his report. But make that piece the last! I mean it, he's not due to come out back for another four months."

Virgil opened the foil wrapper very carefully; he ripped a small piece off the end and put the rest back, slipping the uneaten piece into his shirt pocket. He chewed it intently; the smile on his face told her how much he enjoyed this new experience.

"Like it? This is just one of the many pleasures that await me once I leave this place, like fast food, beauty parlors, driving, and especially television. Speaking of which... come with me Virg, I know what we can do."

Lily led him through the caverns, twisting and turning, going deeper and deeper, farther than he'd ever gone before. They finally came to a room, which, to Virgil's surprise, was already full of people. About five or six others, all around Lily's age, hovered around a strange device at the far end of the room.

"Lily!" One of the guys noticed them enter and went to greet them with a kiss on the lips for Lily and a firm handshake for Virgil.

"Nicolas, this is Virgil. Virgil, this is my boyfriend, Nicolas."

"Nice to meet you, Virgil. Are you here to watch some T.V. with us?"

"T.V.? Is that what that is?" He moved closer to the television and noticed the rest of the group repairing it.

"That should do it," one of them said as they sealed it back up and turned it on. The picture slowly came into focus and the crowd let out a cheer.

"Alright, lets see what we've got."

Nicolas had taken control and began to flip through the channels to see what was available. "Let's see: news, cartoons, Public television, scrambled porn..." Lily smacked Nicolas from behind.

"Virgil is fourteen! You can't watch porn!" she exclaimed furiously.

"I said it was scrambled, geez. If you're so worried, then how about if I just let Virgil choose?" Virgil flipped through the few available channels, pausing at each one for a moment to see what it was. He stopped on the news, sat back and watched and watched and watched. The stories seemed to repeat themselves, even though they were obviously different. Almost all of them were about tragic accidents, murders, robberies, and kidnappings. It was painful to think that such things happened in this world. It was harder still, knowing that someone with their abilities could easily stop it, make it all better, if only someone would give them the chance.

Minutes quickly turned hours and much of the group had already left. All that remained were Lily and Nicolas who were too busy with each other to notice their surroundings. Only when they overheard the announcer mention

the 11 o'clock news did they look up.

"Virgil, I think it's time I took you back. You've been watching T. V. for over nine hours."

"Just 5 more minutes, please?" he pleaded.

"No Virgil, I need to get you back or I'll be in serious trouble. Besides, you still have school in morning."

Reluctantly, Virgil stood up and turned off the television. He didn't want to leave but he knew he had overstayed his welcome. He followed Lily back to his room.

He had opened his door and was about to enter when she stopped him.

"What, I don't get a hug good night?" Lily asked with her arms outstretched.

"Um, sure, if you want one." He returned the hug in a wary manner. It was nothing against Lily, he just wasn't used to such open physical contact.

"You know, Virgey, I realized today that you and I aren't so different. When you chose the news over those cartoons, I saw it. You yearn for the real world, just like me. You take it any way you can get it. Sure the news is bad at times, but at least it's the truth. That's something we both want. You only didn't know you wanted it till you found it. What I'm trying to say is, you're alright, kid. And as far as I'm concerned, you and I are friends. Okay?"

Virgil nodded his head in agreement; she had left him speechless with one little word. All he could do was watch her skip away before retreating back into his room. He changed his clothes and lay down. He closed his eyes, which felt good after the long exposure to television. A smile crossed his lips as they parted, uttering a single word, audible to only Virgil himself:

"Friends."

MANIPULATE

MIND OVER MATTER,
IT IS NOT A HARD TO GRASP,
JUST NEEDS AN OPEN MIND,
AND SEE WHAT'S CLEARLY AROUND YOU.

AN EASY CONCEPT TO UNDERSTAND,
THOUGH MANY WHO WOULD LISTEN,
WILL NOT TRULY HEAR,
AND THOSE WHO SAY THEY UNDERSTAND,
TRULY ARE JUST LYING.

NEEDLESS TO SAY,
THESE WHO ARE TRYING TO PREACH,
THIS IDEAL,
ARE JUST TRYING TO UNDERSTAND IT,
BETTER AS WELL.

IDEALLY,
WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW,
THE WHAT'S WHAT,
AND THE WHO'S WHO,
OF THIS WORLD,
AND UNIVERSE,
BUT THAT IS JUST NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN.

PUTTING IT SIMPLY,
THERE ARE THOSE,
WHO WANT TO UNDERSTAND IT,
AND THOSE WHO JUST DON'T CARE.
UNDOUBTEDLY, YOU DECIDE THAT THE DAY YOU
GET PUT INTO THAT CORNER,
AND BEING ASKED THESE TYPES OF QUESTIONS.
LIKELY,
THEIR WILL BE THOSE WHO RUN,
WHILE OTHERS STAND THEIR GROUND.
AT THAT MOMENT,
WILL DECIDE EVERYTHING ELSE YOU WILL DO.
THUSLY CONCLUDING,
WHAT IT IS,
THAT YOU BELIEVE.
EVERYTHING BECOMES CLEAR,
ONCE YOU REACH THAT END.

BY:EVAN PEREZ

New York City Comicon 2007: Reactions

Ra'Chaun Rogers



Earlier this year, members of the Serpentine staff took a trip to the New York City Comic Con to find out what's new in the industry.

What we found was the evolution of manga (Japanese graphic novels) and comic books.

With the advent of the Internet the world of graphic media has changed drastically now, allowing for the viewing of graphic medium online. This means that full comics and manga can be viewed right from the home computer. Another medium gaining momentum in the world of comics are animated movies. With the success of the live action films the major companies have turned toward their roots in pursuit of animated features.

Along the way we met up with up incom-

ing writers and artists from independent comics as well as big names from the mainstream companies. Over in the Marvel booth we talked to the Editor in Chief about his new comic, *The Santerians*, straight from the pages of *Daredevil: Father*. We also found out about the yearlong comic *The Initiative*, an event following the *Civil War* comic series. Over at the DC Comics' booth, we witnessed the unveiling of the "DC Nations" new year-long series, *Countdown* that directly follows their comics *World War III* and *52*, *Countdown* has five main themes, which are integral to the story line. In the end we all have to wait and see what's on the horizon, but from what we've seen, it won't be disappointing.



Ashley Hurwitz



While attending the New York Comic Con '07, a few of our Serpentine members had the chance to partake in a DC panel and listen in on their new comic,

Countdown, a sequel to the comic *52*. The new comic will debut May 9, 2007; one week after the conclusion of *52*. *Countdown* consists of 52 issues and will be published weekly for one year. Although the sequel to *52* also consists of 52 issues, it will be numbered in a reverse order starting at the number 51, and ending with comic number 0.

What characters will be headlining this new comic series, you may be asking? Paul Dini, the primary writer for *Countdown* revealed that Jimmy Olsen of *Superman* fame will be the main character. Also, fans of less popular superheroes should be rejoicing. It

has been stated that *Countdown* will be featuring mostly second string characters from the DC comics. This comic series allows fans of the DC Universe to see a lot of their favorite superheroes fighting together, and puts them through what is expected to be an epic storyline.

The comic features a number of writers, the most notable being Paul Dini, Jimmy Palmiotti (of *Punisher* and *Superboy* fame), Sean McKeever and many more. The artists used to illustrate the comics will also be rotated, starting with artist Andy Kubert, who will be illustrating the first four covers for *Countdown*. If this is anything like *Infinite Crisis*, it'll be a sure treat for hardcore and casual fans alike.



You like word searches? Awesome.

C O L L E G E V O I C E J K V B B G N Z
H A N D S J T S L U S T O R I E S R O A
L C G Z A S Z C E H O B B E S V J A N S
E T J E S U S A D A P P E R U A G P F S
E H W I I T H E B A N N E R A L T H I K
S U B M I T Y S W A Y A U J L A D I C E
M L C H R I S U H U N I S E A N B C T T
Z H T H I R D R A I L L E M R I J D I C
F U O D A N I A S E R P E N T I N E O H
I S T H E G R E E K S P M A S Z U S N E
C W E L I T E R A T U R E R O C Y I K S
T O M I L E S N E L O U P A I N T G U V
I R K O P O E T R Y O S P R G U Y N P A
O D L M A O F T W A S H L E Y S T I T S
N U N K N O W N A R M I E S F F V I I I
N Y C O M I C C O N J T O G R A P H E R

Word Bank:

Serpentine ThirdRail TheBanner CollegeVoice

SeeMe Caesura Literature VisualArts

Poetry Sketches Stories Nonfiction

Fiction Paint NYComicCon GraphicDesign

...and many, many more.

Send any submissions, feedback, and comments to magazine.serpentine@gmail.com

1C Room 225, or visit us on the web at serpentinemagazine.blogspot.com

