

INK SPOTS

The Newsletter of the Fremont Area Writers, A Part of the California Writer's Club
Jay Swartz, Editor (triloci@hotmail.com)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

National Poetry Month!	1
Book News	1
Show, Don't Tell	2
Critique Groups	2
Member Activities	3
<i>Killer Crutches</i>	3
Writing Prompt	4
SF Book Festival	5
Events	6
Web Resources	6
<i>Momma Knows Best</i> Carol Hall	7
<i>The Daily Blur</i> Art Carey	12
<i>"Goodbye, Captain"</i> Jay Swartz	14
<i>When Are You Going to Cry?</i> Bob Garfinkle	16
<i>Why I Write</i> Darwin Mathison	19

Also Published:

- ***Twilight – Graphic Novel***
Stephanie Meyer
- ***Wimpy Kid Movie Diary***
Jeff Kinney
- ***FANG***
James Patterson
- ***Organic Manifesto***
Maria Rodale

National Poetry Month!

National Poetry Month began in 1996, created by the Academy of American Poets.

This month we celebrate the vitality of poetry and its place in our culture.

Publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools and poets across America band together to celebrate poetry through readings, festivals, book displays, workshops, and other events.

A "Short" in the System

It's all brains and bucks this month as *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* takes the tops slot with its thrilling tale of the American financial meltdown.

Two books, *The Primal Blueprint: Reprogram Your Genes for Effortless Weight Loss, Vibrant Health, and Boundless Energy*, and *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body: Use Your Brain to Get and Keep the Body You Have Always Wanted*, both discuss modern human health and give you tips for living

Our own April Open Mic will have a poetry focus.

You don't have to attend an event to mark National Poetry Month. You can read a poem or write a poem. Discuss poetry with your friends and family. Maybe it's finally time to show people that poem you've been nursing for a few years.

Join thousands of individuals across the U.S. by carrying a poem in your

pocket on April 29th!

The Academy has tons of events and information about National Poetry Month on its website at <http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/41>

The Fremont Area Writers salutes all poets in our organization!

Bestsellers

The Big Short
Michael Lewis

The Primal Blueprint
Mark Sisson

The Help
Kathryn Stockett

Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest/ Girl with the Dragon Tattoo
Stieg Larsson

Change Your Brain, Change Your Body
Daniel Amen, M.D.

Food Rules
Michael Pollan



Show, Don't Tell by Jay Swartz

People often ask me “What’s the most important rule of writing?” to which I usually respond with the less-than-satisfactory answer “That depends.”

“Show, don’t tell” cuts across style, genre and subject matter. You must show your reader the events, characters and settings of your story.

As always, an example will best illustrate the concept.

Pretend for a moment that your current piece features a scene with a musical performance.

You might describe it this way:

Carrie attended the show, but she didn't like it. Afterwards, she and Natalia went for coffee and dessert.

Wow. Well, that tells you what happened, and even a little bit about how Carrie felt about it. But it only tells.

Here’s another way:

Carrie and Natalia made their way through the throng, talking excitedly about the upcoming show. Thick crowds slowed their progress, heightening their anticipation. Finally, they found their seats and made themselves comfortable...

We haven’t even gotten to the performance yet! I’ve just (partially) rewritten “Carrie attended the show...”.

Take a minute and describe the performance. Is it classical? Opera? Rock or Jazz? Musical theater? A Beatles tribute band or Yo-Yo Ma and the London Symphony Orchestra? What went wrong for Carrie during the show? And (perhaps most importantly) – where did they go for dessert?

So get your keyboards clacking and send me your examples at triloci@gmail.com.

“All right, all right!” you say. “I get it! Now how do I do that for my own writing?”

It’s simpler than you think.

Most first drafts – even those of “The Greats” read like my first example, little more than a rote description of events and general emotions.

The art and science of writing does not confine itself to only the pencil or the keyboard. As Truman Capote said, “This isn't writing, it's typing.” In other words, few writers sit down at the keyboard with a mere idea and write a book from start to finish. That’s just the typing part.

The writing happens with everything you do before you ever write one word of your actual story.

You must find settings, characters and themes that fit your story.

Next month: Dramatizing Thematic Elements

Critique Groups by Jay Swartz

Critique groups are a great way to get your writing on the fast track. Objective input from peers is truly invaluable.

Here’s how they work:

Most groups limit the number of people, usually from three to eight. More than eight can make the process unwieldy.

Each session, some of the members submit a piece of up to ten pages double-spaced for critiquing. All the other members read the piece and mark comments in the margins and spaces.

Then, the members meet to discuss the comments with the author.

While grammar and spelling mistakes are important, it’s best to assume

that those will get fixed in the editing process and keep comments story and character based.

FAW supports several critique groups, although only one is open right now. It meets the fourth Wednesday of the month at Mission Coffee at Washington & Mission Blvd. Email submissions to me at triloci@gmail.com by the previous Sunday evening.

Member Activities

FAW President **Bob Garfinkle** has reviewed member **Myrla Raymundo's** new book, *Union City Historical Museum Oral History Book* TriCity voice for March 10-16, 2010. You can find it online [here](#).

A hearty welcome to new

member **Kevin Morrison** of Dublin. Thanks for joining!

FAW member **Jeannine Vegh** has launched a [website](#) via WordPress.

FAW **President Bob Garfinkle's** lunar observers' hand-

book is under consideration for publication for Cambridge University Press.

Send your activities to Inkspots Editor Jay Swartz at triloci@gmail.com



Killer Crutches

By Jay Swartz

A crutch does the work – so you don't have to! Killer Crutches focuses on words and figures of speech that kill your writing. This month: Evil triplets Have, Has and Had.

Come on. You know you've seen it:

He had gone to the store, and now he headed back home.

What's wrong with that?

If nothing happened at the store, why mention it?

If something important happened at the store, why skip over it?

I can think of few examples that better show the danger these crutches pose to your writing.

That single word, "had" contains a wealth of story – of your story! Instead of skipping parts, using "had" like a contraction, figure out what should take place to get the character where you want her. What goes in place of that

"had?" What did you leave out?

Take a minute right now to rewrite that sentence.

Here's a second example:

She had had several of them, but none remained.

Several what? How did she lose them?

The author tells us what the character "had," but if he shows us, we never need to use such awkward phrasing.

Here's a rewrite:

She continued forward, rummaging in the bag. She wiped crumbs from her mouth guiltily. No cookies remained.

Instead of telling what happened, this shows us.

Send me your rewrite at triloci@gmail.com and I'll print some of the answers in next month's Inkspots!

(Next Month: Shoulda Would Coulda: Yes you should!)



Steinbeck Country - Salinas, California

CWC Members: register before April 15, 2010 and save!

Only \$325 for Full Conference Registration includes:

- All 3 days - September 24, 25, and 26, 2010 - all meals and events!
- 48 workshops!
- Pitch Sessions - multiple opportunities to pitch your work to literary agents at no additional charge!
- Saturday evening gala dinner and Writing Contest awards ceremony (grand prize is \$1000)

That's \$110 off the regular price and a \$50 savings compared to the public early registration fee!

Saturday Only (7:30 am to 5 pm) option available for only \$179!

For more info, conference details, and to register, visit southbaywriters.com.

Offer ends April 15, 2010 - Sign Up Today!

FREMONT AREA WRITERS

Fremont, CA

(510) 489-4779

president@cwcfremontareawriters.org

<http://cwcfremontareawriters.org>

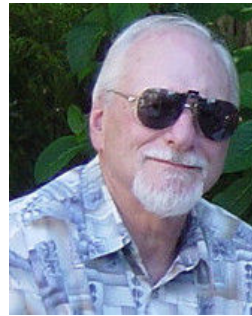
Your FAW Officers

President - Robert Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net



Bob has published reviews, articles and short stories. He is the author of the best-selling astronomy book *Star-Hopping*. In 2009, Bob received Jack London Award for outstanding service to the CWC.

Vice President – Jim Stewart
james.stewart4@comcast.net



Jim Stewart, BSEE and Master of Arts in Business Administration, has worked as an integrated circuit design manager and technical writer for many years. He is currently writing his first novel.

Treasurer – Carol Hall
cahall@rocketmail.com



Carol has been a free-lance writer for eleven years. She writes novels, screenplays and a blog. As an eBay Trading Assistant, she also helps others sell on eBay.

Secretary – Myrla Raymundo
ligfinio.raymundo@sbcglobal.net



Myrla founded the Union City Historical Museum. She writes and edits numerous newsletters in addition to her column in the *Tri-City Voice*. She just published her latest book, *Union City Oral History*.

Every month brings a new prompt to get you writing! Email your results to me at triloci@hotmail.com and I'll publish some in next month's Inkspots!

Writing Prompt

As I fell, I felt the wind rush by me, razor-sharp and merciless. I saw her then. I thought my life would flash before my eyes, but all I could see was her face. I turned to face my doom. I wouldn't die like this. Not like this...

Thanks to Karen Penniman Lysik for this one....

Poetry is a matter of life, not just a matter of language

Lucille Clifton

Lucille Clifton, 1936 – 2010

by Jay Swartz



I had the honor and privilege to know **Lucille Clifton** as her student twenty years ago at St. Mary's College of MD. She remains one of the most powerful and

lasting influences on me, both as a writer and a person. She died on Saturday, February 13.

Professor Clifton also taught at the Squaw Valley Community of Writers, who were looking forward to having her there this year as a Special Guest. She started with Community in 1991 and has continued to return almost every other year since then. She last taught in Squaw in 2008.

A Community of Writers scholarship to honor Lucille has been established. If you wish to contribute, please send donations made to Squaw Valley Community of Writers and mail to:

Squaw Valley Community of Writers
Clifton Scholarship
PO Box 1416
Nevada City, CA 95959

Tax ID: 23-7179177

Or visit JustGive.org and donate with a credit card.

www.squawvalleywriters.org

2010 San Francisco Book Festival Call for Entries

SAN FRANCISCO _ The 2010 San Francisco Book Festival has issued a call for entries to its annual program celebrating the best books of the Spring season.

The 2010 San Francisco Book Festival will consider non-fiction, fiction, biography/autobiography, children's books, compilations/anthologies, teenage, how-to, cookbooks, science fiction, audio/spoken word, history, wild card, gay, photography/art, poetry, unpublished, travel and spiritual works. There is no date of publication deadline.

Our grand prize for the 2010 San Francisco Book Festival winner is \$1500 cash and a flight to San Francisco or Paris for our gala awards ceremonies. The winning author will also have a choice of a free vendor table at our family of festivals day events, including events in New York and Los Angeles.

Submitted works will be judged by a panel of industry experts using the following criteria:

- 1) General excellence and the author's passion for telling a good story.
- 2) The potential of the work to reach a wider audience.

In addition to honoring the top selections in the above categories, The San Francisco Book Festival will award the following chosen from submissions:

- 1) Author of the Year- Honors the outstanding book of the competition.
- 2) Book Design of the Year - Honors outstanding and innovative design.
- 3) Publisher of the Year- Honors the top publisher based on materials displaying excellence in marketing and promotional materials, as determined by our judges.

FESTIVAL RULES: San Francisco Book Festival submissions cannot be returned. Each entry must contain the official entry form, including your e-mail address and contact telephone number. All shipping and handling costs must be borne by entrants.

NOTIFICATION AND DEADLINES: We will notify each entry of the receipt of their package via e-mail and will

announce the winning entries on our web site (www.sanfranciscobookfestival.com). Because of the anticipated high volume of entries, we can only respond to e-mail inquiries.

Deadline submissions in each category must be post-marked by the close of business on April 25, 2010. Winners in each category will be notified by e-mail and on the web site. Please note that judges read and consider submissions on an ongoing basis, comparing early entries with later submissions at our meetings.

TO ENTER: Entry forms are available online at sanfranciscobookfestival.com or may be faxed/e-mailed to you. Please contact our office at 323-665-8080 for fax requests. Applications must be accompanied by a non-refundable entry fee of \$50 in the form of a check, money order or PayPal online payment in U.S. dollars for each submission. Multiple submissions are permitted but each entry must be accompanied by a separate form and entry fee.

Entry fee checks should be made payable to JM Northern Media LLC. We're sorry, but entries must be mailed and cannot be delivered in person or by messenger services to the JM Northern Media offices.

Entry packages **MUST** include:

- 1) One copy of the book;
 - 2) A copy of your official entry form or a reasonable facsimile;
 - 3) The entry fee or receipt for online payment;
 - 4) Any press/marketing materials you wish to send.
- Marketing is used as a tie-breaking consideration by our judges.

Entries should be mailed to:

JM Northern Media LLC
 attn: San Francisco Book Festival
 7095 Hollywood Boulevard
 Suite 864
 Hollywood, CA 90028-0893
 Phone: 323-665-8080

AWARDS: The San Francisco Book Festival selection

Events – April 2010

28	29	30	31	1 April Fools Day	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 Board Meeting	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 7:00 PM, Open Mic Barnes and Noble 3900 Mowry Ave.	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 Club Meeting
25 SF Book Festival Entry Deadline	26	27	28	29	30	1

Web Resources

Chicago Manual of Style Online: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Contests: <http://www.fundsforwriters.com>, <http://www.fanstory.com>

The Word Detective: <http://www.word-detective.com/>

Online Thesaurus: <http://thesaurus.reference.com/>

Writer's Digest: <http://www.writersdigest.com>

OWL, the Purdue Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Grammar Errors: <http://www.grammarerrors.com/siteindex.html>
<http://www.writersrelief.com/blog/post/Dos - and - Donts - of - Dialogue.aspx>

Strunk and White online: <http://www.bartelby.net/141/>

MOMMA KNOWS BEST

By Carol Hall

A Frisbee full of water soaked the front of my shirt. “Aahh!” I shrieked. At the same time someone behind me dumped water down my back. What started out as a sedate game of softball suddenly turned into the mother-of-all water fights.

“Karen, get up!” my mother called.

I rolled over in bed. “It’s Saturday.”

“Club meeting today. You said you’d go,” she said. “And wear your new shirt. Don’t look like a street urchin.”

“All right.” My tone of voice did not hide my annoyance. I brushed a strand of long hair out of my face and my arm stuck to my forehead. *Will this heat wave ever end?* I had wanted to escape with a good book to the Oakland Public Main Library where the tall ceilings allowed the heat to rise and cool air sink. But Momma insisted I go to this club meeting. “You need a social life,” I said to the bathroom mirror mimicking Momma’s tone of voice. *Who needs people? I see enough at school.*

We met at Joaquin Miller Park to play softball. On most Saturdays in 1971, an equal number of boys and girls attended the junior school club, but today only three girls and about fifteen boys showed up. Shielding my face from the morning sun, I dropped a fly ball in right field.

“That was an easy catch!” Dave yelled.

Easy for a big ninth grader like you, I thought. Seventh grade bookworms like me can’t play softball.

At the end of the inning, the two other girls, Joanne and Heather, beckoned to me. “Let’s take a walk,” Joanne said, pointing toward some shady trees.

Glad to get out of the sun, and happy these sophisticated ninth graders wanted me to hang with them; I walked with them toward the trees. As we approached, we came upon a large circular fountain.

“Hey cool!” Joanne said. “A gigantic wading pool!”

“Too bad it’s not shooting up,” Heather said.

“But at least there’s water.” I estimated the outer ring to be about one foot deep.

At the edge of the fountain, Heather exclaimed, “Are those mosquitoes flying around?”

“Yeah. Some dead ones too.” I peered at the inside perimeter. “Yuck! Pond scum!”

“It doesn’t look that bad,” Joanne said. “Let’s just stick our feet in.”

Not wanting them to think I was a spoilsport, I sat down on the edge with them. We all took off our shoes and socks and gingerly placed our feet in the water. “Ahh, that feels good,” Joanne sighed.

“Ooh.” Relief from the unbearable heat overshadowed any lingering doubts about the cleanliness of the water. Looking at my new friends, I felt proud to be in their company, even though I figured they didn’t have much choice with so few girls around.

Joanne and Heather talked about boys, make-up and clothes while I listened in fascination. Joanne kept fiddling with her auburn ponytail until it was just right. Heather brought out a tiny mirror from her pocket to check her eye makeup. Heather’s short-sleeved collared cotton shirt looked similar to mine in style, but she wore it differently. To be more like her, I rolled the short sleeves up further, pulled the front shirttails out of my pants, and tied the tails into a double knot.

After awhile Joanne said, “I’m bored.” We got up and sloshed around in the outer ring, then splashed toward the deep middle and stood before the metal circle of water jets.

“Wonder how deep it is.” I carefully looked over the circular barrier.

“At least four feet,” Heather said.

I turned around at some talking behind us. Davy and his buddies, Phil and Rick, each held Frisbees. They punched each other as they walked over from the field. Davy’s tall frame bent when he filled his Frisbee with fountain water. He looked like a giraffe taking a drink.

“You better not throw that.” Joanne warned him.

With a mischievous grin, Davy put his fingers in his Frisbee and flicked a little water at her.

“Hey!” Turning away, Joanne’s ponytail whacked the side of her face. She skimmed the surface of the water with her fingers towards Davy.

Davy turned away from the oncoming spray, but at the same time flung a Frisbee full of water onto Joanne’s arm.

“That’s it!” Joanne yelled. Using both arms, she slung water at Davy with all her might.

“You asked for it!” Davy said as he vaulted into the fountain, shoes and all.

Phil and Rick jumped in after him. “Oh no!” I said. Heather and I sloshed as fast as we could to the other side, screaming.

Other boys ran toward us. “Water fight!” They threw off their shoes and jumped in too.

I searched for the counselors, wondering when they were going to stop us. The five twenty-somethings sat under a tree laughing and fanning themselves in the shade.

Using only my hands, I flung water at Davy. “Payback!” he said as he soaked the entire front of my clothes. At the same time someone behind me dumped water down my back.

“Aahh!” I wheeled around. Phil was doubled over, laughing like a donkey. “You’re gonna get it!” I tried to fling water back at him. But he dodged, hee-hawing all the way. Then the whole fountain of screaming kids seemed to attack me.

Someone knocked Phil’s glasses off his nose. They fell into the water not three feet from me. Snatching them up, I hid them in my pocket, tee-heeing to myself. Phil said, “Wait, I can’t find my glasses.”

As quickly as it had begun, the water fight stopped. Everyone turned his attention on finding the lost glasses. I pretended to look too, all the while fighting a smile that threatened to burst into full-blown laughter.

However, Phil wasn’t laughing. He was practically blind without his glasses. His best friend, Rick, even frog-kicked several times under the deep middle part of the now murky water to search for them.

I just had to share my hidden triumph with someone. Pulling Joanne aside, I showed her the thick glasses. But instead of sharing a secret laugh with me, she simply said, “You’d better return them.”

My victory deflated like a balloon. I tried to think of a way of giving them back without giving myself away. When I thought no one was looking, I placed the glasses near one of the water jets. Stepping back, I pointed. “Look! There they are!”

Davy waded to the spot as fast as his long legs could carry him. He glared at me. “You put them there!”

“I did not!”

Davy returned the glasses to Phil and everyone got out. Dripping wet, we brought our shoes to the grass and sat down with our backs toward the counselors’ tree to rest and dry off. Joanne redid her ponytail while Heather tried to wipe off her runny eye

makeup. I twisted water from my hair the best I could, but it lay in long fat wet strings. I fumbled with the knot in my shirt, but it wouldn't undo.

Joanne turned to get her shoes. "I thought they were right here." She pointed toward an empty patch of grass. All our shoes were missing! We looked around. The boys and shoes sat in the tree. "Hey, give them back!" Joanne shouted with her hands on her hips. The boys just laughed and Rick the frog, climbed even higher to place the shoes further out of reach.

Heather pled with the counselors. "Allen," she whined. Allen looked at the other twenty-somethings and shrugged. Heather turned away in disgust. Suddenly, a flash of inspiration popped in my head and a picture quickly developed.

"Let's grab the boys' shoes and run," I whispered.

Joanne and Heather giggled and we casually edged closer to the patch of grass where Davy, Phil and Rick had laid their tennis shoes. Davy's muddy brown ones stood out between a blue pair and a red pair. With each step my heart beat faster as I anticipated the caper. "Now!" I said, and we each grabbed a pair of shoes and took off across the grassy field.

Before I got half way across, Davy's giraffe legs caught up with my monkey legs and he tackled me to the ground. The impact knocked the wind out of me, but I held on to those wet, muddy, smelly shoes for dear life. "Give 'em back!" He rolled me over and pried my skinny arms apart.

"I don't want 'em," I panted as the shoes fell onto the grass and he quickly snatched them away. I lay there laughing and gasping.

Joanne and Heather had run farther than me, but Phil and Rick caught them too. The counselors told us it was time to go. The boys threw their shoes up at ours in the tree to knock them down.

Despite the heat and excitement, my hair and clothes were still damp. I tried to pull grass out of my hair, but my efforts only made it more tangled and matted. The front of my knotted flowered shirt sported a big muddy stain. Even my brown shorts were darker than the stain.

The counselors each drove three or four kids home. As Allen unlocked his car, I said, "I hope I don't get your seat wet."

"Don't worry, it'll dry real quick," he said.

I stared dubiously at the fake leather seat and got in. All during the drive home I kept thinking *That was a lot of fun, but what will Momma say?* She would at least ask, "What happened to your new shirt?" A knot tighter than my shirt's squeezed my stom-

ach as I dreaded recounting the day's events to her. Surely Mrs. Clean would yell, "How could you go into mosquito-infested water? Haven't I taught you not to run on the grass with bare feet? You could cut your foot on a rock! What kinds of adults are in charge of that club?"

The knot grew with each step to the front porch. When my mother opened the door, I looked straight ahead and mumbled, "Hi, Momma," and headed to my room.

She smiled and didn't say a word.

Art Carey's The Daily Blurb

In the face of increasing competition from alternative media, newspapers have been struggling for survival for some time as both subscriber and advertising revenues continue to shrink.

Epapercentral

Feb. 6, 2009

See what's new in your Daily Blurb!

There's a different look and feel to The Daily Blurb today!

First, we've trimmed the width of the paper by three inches and gone to a thinner grade of newsprint. Your Daily Blurb is easier to fold!

To make reading more convenient, we've consolidated news previously scattered throughout the paper—world, national, state, and local—into one tightly focused section called It's All Here! This exciting feature will carry information condensed to meet the needs of active readers.

Lifestyle, which chronicles the busy world of people on the go, will join It's All Here! on Mondays and Wednesdays rather than appear daily.

And don't miss Catch Up, the special two-page supplement that appears after Tuesdays and Thursdays when the paper is no longer printed.

As part of our redesign, the sports and business sections will be combined on Saturdays into another exciting new section, Spo-Biz. On Sundays, these enriched and combined pages will reverse and be called Biz-Spo, alternately sharing front and back section pages.

Want more? Our online edition, The Daily Blurb.com, now includes blogs! Subscribers will discover a slight additional charge for this expanded coverage. Get your credit card and log on!

To take advantage of the benefits of a global economy, we have outsourced portions of our reporting and editing to a highly qualified editorial service in Bangladesh. Will this affect the quality of the product you receive? Not to worry! In fact, The Daily Blurb now offers coverage of field hockey, cricket, kho-kho, and kabaddi.

Can't find your favorite columnists on the pages where they appeared before? They're still here! Just keep looking. Since there are fewer ads, everything is easier to find! To read columns by writers no longer with us as a result of staff streamlining, look for the "Best of..." series, which will run on Tuesdays and Saturdays. You'll find it in the space formerly occupied by the TV listings, which now appear in more compact form Sundays in the classified ads.

But wait! There's more! To launch the new Daily Blurb, we've created a contest, Count the Errors! Each day, the reader who can detect the most spelling, grammatical, and factual mistakes in the paper will receive a gift certificate for a classified ad (under three column inches) to run when space is available, which is most of the time.

And as a special bonus on days in which there isn't enough advertising to fill all the pages, we will leave the last page blank. Turn the kids loose to draw or play Tic-Tac-Toe! Write shopping lists or line shelves or birdcages!

Make reading The Daily Blurb your daily habit! *

* Interested in buying a high quality, little used printing press at a bargain price? Dial (555) For-Sale.

“Goodbye, Captain”
by Jay Swartz

I crested the rocky outcrop with the remnants of squad. Mintz, Tackover and Zhang. Mintz limped heavily, pain stretching his face. He sure couldn't fight.

“Mintz!” I shouted. He turned, grimacing.

“Sir!”

“You're fucked, Mintz! Stay here or turn around, but if you try to come with, I'll have to shoot ya.”

Mintz sank gratefully to his knees.

“I'll fuck them, sir! I'll fuck them!” Mintz said.

“Sure you will, Mintz,” I said. “It's what you was born for. You two each toss him a pounder.” Two dull thuds as the high-explosive grenades landed in front of Mintz.

“Grace-a-God,” he said, gathering them up.

We moved on. He could survive. Theoretically. Tackover and Zhang fell in behind me.

My head unit beeped. “Incoming Transmission from Kali Rubinov,” said a soft female voice. Projected two feet in front of me, the face of Kali Rubinov, President, Chairwoman, CEO, COO and CFO of GlobalCorp filled my sight. Kali hated to hear the phone ring once, let alone twice. Motioning the other to two to stop, I hit the answer button.

“Zhis mizzion hasz been a-boor-ted,” Kali said, her Czech accent making that sound like a good thing. Small hyposprays in my head-unit puffed, filling me with a euphoria I could not deny.

“Fantastic!” I shouted wildly!

“Vundink hasz been re-duc-ed to zhero.”

“Wonderful!” I choked on hysterical laughter. “How do you expect us to –”

“Awll unzalvagable rezourczes are szubzhect to immediate termination.”

“What the fuck does that mean?”

“Goodbye, Keptin,” came the curt reply.

The ground jolted beneath me as something gave in the gargantuan GlobalCorp Complex inside the mountain below. Even here, nearly three miles away, the concussive blast nearly knocked me over, leaving my ears ringing.

“Thank you for doing business with GlobalCorp. She smiled. Just a routine announcement.

“NO! KALI! DAMMIT!”

I rattled off the rest of my clip in frustration. The ground began to disintegrate beneath me as the explosions continued, and as I fell, I felt the wind rush by me, razor-sharp and merciless. I saw her then. I thought my life would flash before my eyes, but all I could see was her face. I turned to face my doom. I wouldn't die like this. Not like this...

My head unit flew off and collided with a rolling boulder, smashing to pieces. Kali face faded slowly from my vision. I had no parachute. My wing-pack lay miles back, a casualty itself. I rode the tide as best I could, trying to grasp something – anything – in the torrential landslide. I fetched up heavily against a flat slab of dark rock. I felt something crack in my chest and pain flared up as a rib or two fractured.

I heaved myself onto the rock and rode the sliding earth like a surfer at Mavericks. Ahead, I saw my chance. I leaped from my makeshift surfboard onto a high promontory facing south. The only level land for miles, it stuck out of the land like a finger. I hit with my left shoulder and rolled. My momentum carried me off the other edge. I stopped my fall by grabbing the edge, wrenching my shoulder, my legs dangling over a vista thousands of feet below.

I climbed back on the outcrop and turned to watch the GlobalCorp Complex collapse like Usher's House into a mountain of rubble.

I stood and surveyed my surroundings. Thousands of feet in the air, with no discernable way down. I sank to my knees and put my hands on the dirt.

I would get down. And I would have my revenge.

When Are You Going to Cry?

Bob Garfinkle

The moment I entered my home that dead-leaves-scattered-across-the-lawn fall day, I sensed something amiss. No music came from the stereo; no dinner awaited me; a cool and foreboding darkness pervaded the house.

“Honey!” I called as I set her birthday present on the kitchen table. “Rosey?”

I peered out the kitchen window. Perhaps she was on the deck tending her flower boxes.

I turned away, picked up the mail from the counter, and headed toward the bedroom. As I neared the guest room, I heard a whimpered “Honey!” echo from within. I opened the door and saw my petite wife, cross-legged on the couch, her head propped up by the flowerprint pillow on her lap. Around the edges of it I could see the opal whiteness of her bare body. Rosey’s honey-brown hair draped, uncombed, around her angelic oval face. The slight breeze puffed the shade away from the windowsill and gently allowed it to thump against the wood ledge. Streaks of light penetrated the darkness. Even in the uncertain light, I could tell by the frightened expression frozen on her face that her “little problem” had progressed. I could no longer fool myself into believing she was going to return to normal.

Rosey’s doctors had informed us almost two years before that the causes of a breakdown are sometimes hard to determine. During the period when she should have been home raising children, Rosey had put in long stressful hours at her job. Shortly after her thirty-sixth birthday, I began to notice slight changes in her, but nothing that would cause alarm. Her bouncy step gradually evolved into a stooped-shuffle, like a person forty years older. The perpetual smile on her lively face disappeared. Her blue eyes lost their sparkle as her body and spirit slumped into a pit of muddled depression. No matter how hard the specialist and I tried, we failed to get Rosey to reveal what caused her such distress.

I guess what shocked me the most was that in the fifteen years I had known her, she had always been the strong and steady one in her family. When her sister had slit her wrists, Rosey had rushed home to assist Julie’s recovery. When her mother lost a breast to cancer, Rosey flew to Chicago to console and nurse her back to mental and physical health. I did not have to think long about who was going to come here to California to help Rosey, because he was already here standing in the guest room doorway.

Rosey glanced up at me, lowered her head, and timidly held out her hands.

INK SPOTS

The hands I grasped were cold, clammy. I had become accustomed to the coldness, but this time they felt like she had just taken them out of the freezer. I kissed one, then tenderly rubbed it with my fingertips. I lifted her chin and asked softly, “What’s happening? What’re you going through right now?”

She had heard those questions so many times before—she just shook her head.

“Nothing?” I asked.

The corners of the delicate mouth curled down. Her cheeks contorted into an embryonic cry, but her eyes refused to cooperate.

“Let it out.” I comfortingly patted her head. “Don’t hold back.”

In the frailest voice I had ever heard, she said, “I can’t.” As though weak with fatigue, her whole body shook. “I can’t do it.”

I put my ear next to her lips, so I could hear better.

“I’ve been trying all day.” She sucked in two shallow breathes. “It hurts.”

“Where?”

Her lips quivered. Her glassy eyes drifted from side to side like those of a black cat pendulum clock. After a moment, she held out her hands, palms up.

I touched her palms. “Here?”

“My wrists.”

“I don’t see anything, Rosey.”

“They hurt. Believe me. They hurt,” she pleaded in a clear, yet weak voice.

“I believe you.” I sat next to Rosey, pulling her close. I remember the lightness of her head as she rested it against my shoulder. In my attempt to soothe her, I said, “I’m sorry they hurt. Just because Julie cut hers doesn’t mean you’re going to do the same thing. Your wrists look fine.” I pretended to be a doctor performing an examination. I held them up to her. “See. No cuts. You believe me now?”

She shook her head. Again, her face twisted into a dry cry.

“When are you going to cry?” I shouted and pushed her hands into her lap. “You’ve got to let go and start telling me what’s wrong with you. You scare me when you act like this.”

“I want to, but Daddy’ll be mad at me.” Her voice reminded me of a plaintive, wailing five-year-old.

INK SPOTS

“Your daddy can’t hurt you anymore. He went far far away, so you can tell me. He’ll never know.” I began to feel like I was talking to a five-year-old.

“I’m sorry for what I did, Daddy. Don’t get mad at me. Please.”

Her continued child-like talk frightened me. Again, I groped for a way to help her overcome her delusions—get her back to realize she was nearing forty, not regressing toward her own birth. She babbled a few incoherent baby sentences, then stopped and shivered. I put my arm around her and held on as tightly as I could. I felt the frailness of her body and wanted to cry out for her, but restrained myself. One of us had to remain strong.

A few minutes with her head resting on my shoulder, I heard her breathing in the steady, slow rhythm of sleep. Carefully, I lowered her so that she was lying on the couch. But she needed a blanket. Standing at the linen closet, I could see into the bathroom through the slightly open door. Reflected in the yellow tile-framed mirror, I saw her lying in the tub, her head resting serenely against the band of blue tile. One hand hung limply over the side of the red-stained porcelain. “What in God’s name . . .” I shoved the door open and stared in wide-eyed total disbelief. Stringers of brownish dried blood discolored the walls and trailed down the side of the tub. A veiling of fluid that should have been inside Rosey coated her body. For a moment, all I could mutter was, “No. This can’t be happening . . .”

I touched her to reassure myself that what I saw in the tub was really my wife, not an hallucination. Her arm was stiff and cold. Coagulated blood had pooled in the cup her hand had formed as the muscles contracted in death. I suddenly realized something that terrified me like nothing ever before, or since. If Rosey was really there with me in the bathroom, then who, or what, was I talking to and holding moments before in the guest room?

I dashed back to see. The couch was empty, except for a pale pink rose with large porcelain-like petals. The flower lay where her head had been. Frightened, I stood motionless for a moment. I could hear my heart thrumming in my temples, as though it had risen to my head. Carefully, I stepped to the couch and picked up the flower. Its intense coldness stung my fingers. I dropped it. Like my life, the pink rose shattered on the hardwood.

It’s taken me several years to get over losing my Rosey, but tomorrow, her birthday, another rose will appear on the guest room couch, and I’ll have her back again, if only for a few minutes. Maybe then I’ll cry.

Why I Write.

Darwin Mathison

I know someday, someone will want to read what I put down in print this day, as there is always something to be said, or touted of historical value, of words extolling the ring of things said in my head this day. I am no literary giant, thou I think I might, continue to learn and grow, getting into craniums depths over the ensuing years, virtuously exclaiming, unfolding, my own thoughts and fears.

Thus, I have to challenge and practice, so manage words to rhyme with exactness, all of the time to my advantage, placing to paper a poetic script with pen ink tipped. I do want to condition my speech, for others to teach, (rough hewn) ways of rhythmic voices submissions. In fewer words, I want to converse in rhyme all the time, with crystal clarity of voiced dubbed epistle, spoken in order with inner sincerity.

If grand Shakespeare, that glorious seer, makes his verse quite clear, I to can demand, of brain and hand, a flowing style of expression, so exacting small smile or tear, from gentle Man, Woman, Child ear.

My GoOD GOD only knows, why from my head burst these prose, as I am not well read, this all can see, of this literary starved me, cutting and carving this poetry. Thou it is fun to write, thus bring delight, to this unknowing one. In a rut I am, cannot cease or desist, for my brain does insist, rhyme for it's peace, pent up exploding release, I have held with intent, in a skull eroding, by virtue of age, desire to page. Thoughts brought to light, others to gage. I just have to write; in brilliant Sun light, or dark depths of night, no harking decent of inner intent, for others no fear, only hear, what booms loudly to this ear.

With determination, I will quill, till the brain be still, in Earth green foundation, I rest, fulfilling said quest, A GoOD GOD gentle request. That I Write!!

No end in sight.

No end in sight.

No end in sight. (only Earth bed)