

Apostrophe Apocalypse Playground



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APocalypse Playground

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THE DARKNESS THAT ENLIGHTENS...

Apocalypse Playground is a 'zine devoted to the portrayal of strange undercurrents that run within us all. Primarily a gothic literary publication, it's purpose is to use artistic media of all kinds to display the darker side of existence.

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Once again, there is no letters page in this issue care to guess why? Send something to that poor lonely mailbox please.

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Welcome to the Apocalypse Playground, home to those most treasured of possessions ideas. They come as broken angels you know. They are kept here in the hopes that when you come to see them, together we can restore the fragmented spectacle they were when first they came to this hallowed ground. So, in this presentation and your acceptance, humble reader, we will work together to make creatures of majesty...
Creatures of the night

THERE'S A SIGN SOME BLOCKS FROM MY HOUSE
THAT READS:

“ON THIS SIGHT IN 1863,

I laughed until I cried. People leave New York, California, Florida and migrate elsewhere. Anywhere really as long, as its not home. They traverse great distances for the sole purpose of seeing signs like these, its absurd. This sightseeing somehow allows to them the parts of their lives that are all but gone now? They want to be haunted by ghosts. They crave the things that, even as far back as 1863, they never had.

The sight of them, as they stop gawking at trees to read the mock-weathered lettering is even more absurd. They march in procession, armed and flanked on both sides with friends and relatives en route to the Ye Olde Historic Whatever It was. Each one in the motley line stops and stammers in order, one after another. Each announces the presence of the Arcane Monolith to another of 'the company, who then halts the tree gawking of another, and so on.

Children stop screaming-”Look 1863!”

Company politics loses relevance “On this sight ... “.

Grandma's chronic hypochondria vanishes for a moment “Did you see that dear?”

Everyone is fully prepared to learn something from the omnipotence of a historical marker as they read it together, as a family. And then in unison, they utter the strange culmination of the informative ritual.

“nothing happened”

I laughed until I cried. A few miles from where I live, there stands the sweet domicile where John Brown was hanged. I drive past it for shits and giggles on my home from a theater in that same town. The house is not quite as crooked looking as paintings of its moment of glory would have you know. The same trees are there, bowing to let time pass. Steps line a white washed entryway, sagging with a similar degree of despair. The grass is overgrown and yes, there is a sign.

“On this sight...”

Several paragraphs extol the virtues that rendered the place worthy of the funding that placed the sign there. I wonder if anyone reads it. Hangings aren't the kind of quaint history they come here for. I'm sure vibrant revolutionaries with weaponry and the potential to ignite war are all too common in New York, California or Florida. They left to find what they don't have.

What causes these signs to go up then? Why do we insist on reminding ourselves of some time out of mind? We save 'treasures of then' so that we may knock ourselves into a never-ending whimsical bliss hole. Why?

I've been told that you can't know where you're going until you know where you've been. I've seen people traverse the continent, only to find that, where we've been nothing happened. This leaves room for a bleak future. I try not to consider these things, favoring the 'you are here' attitude. The questions are better left to these brave enough to go looking for the answers. This is something I have seen in spades among people my age, we tend to have one question, “Where?” without the have been or are going “Where?” as in, where did childhood. Our heroes nay, gods remind us through their well funded magic that they are no different then we are. But we don't believe them. They are the products of the American dream. The same American Dream the includes additions to the 2.5 child quota: divorce alcohol. While they, the heroes, the gods revel in their purchased innocence, until that dream blows their suicidal tendencies away, and washes the magic off in an overdose. Sometimes the kids just can't bounce back.

Razors,

Dylan

Naught but a Cinder (the poetry pages)

CHRIST FALLS A FOURTH TIME

I saw Jesus in the Detox,
strapped to the table, tied to the chair.
I watched the lord god detoxify
and weep for poisons there
Everything reeked of the devil's alcohol
The taste, trapped and burning behind my eyes
Yet I never loved it
I saw some death to reason
I saw Jesus in the streets,
sleeping with garbage at his feet.
Yes. this is the king
and these garbages his subjects.
I saw the lord cry for these.
The devil danced for me in an alleyway:
"Money in the cup. Money in the cup."
I knew he'd buy more rubbish, more junk,
so I did not stop for him.
I saw Jesus infirmary weeping for his mother,
stripped from her son, the king, the only one.
I saw the lord god abortion,
and he wailed for them.
I heard the devil laughing at me,
nailed to the altar, tied to the streets.
I saw the devil as communion,
cut to pieces and passed on a plate.
oh, but they did believe him and listen to his speeches.
He wept in the garden and swept the streets clean,
but he did not stop to cry for me
or cleanse me of my sins,
though the streets, the streets were clean.
Perhaps I saw no Christ at all.



Illustration by Doug Kinnett

BABY MOUNTAINS

The boy sees snakes of soldiers
 wrap around mountains in the distance.
 with guns that throw the sun at him.
 toys they seem, plentiful and minuscule.
 Black metallic falcons cry past his little ears
 fingerprinting for him.
 silver streaks across the sky.
 The men come marching,
 as sentinel that tower above his wide eyes,
 not so small anymore and sad
 furious storm clouds scream past
 baby, don't you know that water isn't red.
 He sees the endless lines and files
 less of them now, but bigger
 The baby sees their ceaseless bleeding,
 lest he forget the battle cries.
 Does the baby know what war is?
 Did the baby put his fists up?
 When will baby march his own mountains
 how many ways will they strip the sky
 Does he see the soldiers;
 little men like him, treading over mountains?
 Can he see the airplanes
 stretching silver ribbons across the heavens
 Does the baby know what war is,
 can the tiny cherub cry
 has he yet to march his little mountains
 how does the little baby die?
 Has he spotted the shifting thousands,
 not so small now; saddened
 Did he see the storm clouds scream over him,
 Does he know there's no red water
 Has the baby put his fists up?

Broken. Again

Cold steel begs my eyes to burn through
 you, but gray metal is all I see. I'd die for the
 way your face feels, but not the way it looks at
 me. Sharp flowers drag my wearied dreams to
 visions of your countenance.

I bless the night's vacuity. It's what keeps
 me alone with the memory of your voice and
 away from your doubtful looks elsewhere.
 Black concrete drags my eyes downward the
 sick orbs fight to turn upward to the lights be-
 hind your eyes. Alas, you share my blindness,
 stunned by the look of another.

If I broke myself like glass, would you stop
 to see the pieces? You'd get cut from what's left
 of me but blood's not enough to keep you here.
 Not when there are reflections to catch, reflec-
 tions to catch from better glass, other surfaces
 to look through and better predictions of what
 you'll find glaring back at you. Find reflection, of
 yourself, of me, in other things perhaps some-
 thing without shifted distortions Find some
 answers on a sheet of steel, there shall you find
 yourself.

But that's cold, too sharp to kiss.
 Nothing broken, nothing glass.

THE END OF J STREET

WAILING BECAUSE HER DADDY'S GONE
 TO BRING BIRTHDAY CANDLES
 BIG ENOUGH TO BURN THE WHOLE CITY DOWN
 TO ASHES STREWN ACROSS THE END OF J STREET.
 DADDY MAKES THE BAD THINGS FAIR
 HE SHOOTS HOLES IN THE SKY FOR HER.
 WAILING BECAUSE HER DADDY'S GONE
 TO BRING MOMMA'S BOOTS TO HER
 STRONG ENOUGH TO KICK THE CITY IN
 DADDY'S LAUGHING AT CAMERAS SOMEWHERE.
 WAILING BECAUSE HE'S GONE.
 WHERE THERE ARE NO GUNS
 TO SHOOT THE STARS OUT,
 TO THE BIG ROOM WITH NO WINDOWS
 BIG ENOUGH TO LOSE THE LOST IN
 WITHOUT THE SOUNDS THAT WROUGHT LAUGHTER,
 BOUGHT HAPPINESS.
 AS HE MADE THE CITY FALL FOR HER.

*“ ‘Tis the last rose of summer,
 Left blooming alone;
 All her companions
 Are faded and gone;
 No flower her kindred,
 No rose bud is nigh
 To reflect back her blushes,
 Or give sigh for sigh!
 I’ll not leave thee, thou lone one
 To pine on the stem;
 Since the lovely are sleeping,
 Go, sleep thou with them;
 Thus kindly I scatter
 Thy leaves o’er the bed,
 Where thy mates of the garden
 Lie scentless and dead.
 So soon may I follow,
 When friendships decay,
 And from love’s shining circle
 Thy gems drop away!
 When true hearts lie withered,
 And fond ones are flown,
 Oh, who would inhabit
 This bleak world alone?”*

After reading it several times I begin to think about all of the images that enter my head as I yet again peruse its length. and a story starts to form. It brings to mind an pale woman lying among her sheets with a multi colored afghan sifting through her hands possibly made by some distant grandchild as a final attempt of a summer spent at her grandmothers where she painstakingly learned to knit. Her family still comes to visit but it is only for the obligatory appearances, Ceremonies to save face for when she leaves them. So they can say the customary “ But, I saw her only just last week.” All of them vicing to be the last to have spoken to her, to have exchanged bland formalities, Not wanting to see the burning pain in her eyes, the longing to ask about the truth, to be able to once again hold the children close and not see them after scamper with fear back to the safety of their parents embrace, to no longer have to hear the whispered “ Mommy, if Grandma is sick ,will it make me sick too?” And then to hear the hushed reply “ You don’t have to come if you don’t want to. The nurse will let you wait here.” Her husband left many years ago, they had been driving back from a neighboring town where they had the market he liked, it started to rain and they slid on the fertile ice made by the late October leaves. The small car collided with a pole by the side of the rode in a shower of conversations and lives cut short. The woman survived with a punctured lung but her husband was not so lucky. He died two days later in intensive care while the nurse was outside having her last cigarette of the evening. That lung had given her trouble for a long time and now it was going to be her death. She had been in this place for seven months and she knew she wouldn’t leave. The pnunomia had weakened her too much. All she wanted now was not to feel so tired, she had always promised herself that she wouldn’t end up in hospital, that she would die in her own home at night with the sound of her memories playing in her ear. Now all she wanted was to die. She wanted to leave them, she didn’t want to see their tears or hear their pain anymore.

She looks up as she sees her son enter the room. She watches him wince at the tubes and he flinches everytime the moniters sound their mechanical signal of life. “Hi, Mom. How are you doing today?” he intones not quite meeting her gaze. “I’m fine ,” she exhales,” Don’t worry about me. You have enough on your mind. I want you to tell everyone that I miss them. They don’t come around as much as they used to..”

“Mom, stop the guilt trip, you know I can’t make them come.”
 “Yes, I know. It makes me happy that you are here, I wanted to talk to you. I don’t want to leave you. You’re my child that I am closest to I don’t want you to forget my. For me to just become a vague memory.”

“I could never forget you Mom, you’re my mother. I love you. How could you think that I would forget you. I would give anything to make you well again. You don’t know how it hurts me to see you like this”

“I just wanted to know that you still love me.”
 “Of course Mom.”

The woman died in her sleep that night, In the silent moment before she died she awoke for a single breath of time and felt her life. She felt absolutly everything and absolutly nothing both in that same moment. And so she slipped away into her dark enfolding eternity.

She was buried next to her husband. In the same cemetary where all the friends that passed away were buried. And her son went home that night and as he put his arms around his wife and felt an overwhelming joy for her for the incredible pleasure from the way that, in her sleep, she would snuggle her body up against his he would envelop her in his arms and so perfectly content he would fall into an incredibly relaxing. And while he did feel grief for the loss of his mother he knew that she had been ready a long time ago and it was his release and reassurance that she needed. Besides he would always have memories of her and those were more precious to him than anything at the moment. And as he fell asleep the old woman’s son promised himself that he would not did alone in a cold hospital bed with nno comfort but the peircing beep of the moniter to tell you that “No you haven’t died yet.” and if it has anything to do about ot you won’t for a very long time.

L A S T
 R O S E
 O F
 S U M M E R

- R O S E
 B Y R N E

I belong to a lost generation, and am comfortable only in the company of others who are lost and lonely.

-Umberto Eco, "Foucault's Pendulum"

When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions.

-Shakespeare, "Hamlet"

Believe there is a secret and you feel like an initiate. It costs nothing.

-Umberto Eco, "Foucault's Pendulum"

You can't ACT death. The FACT of it has nothing to do with seeing it happen...it's just man failing to reappear...an exit, unobtrusive, unannounced, a disappearance, gathering weight as it goes on until, finally, it is heavy with death.

-Tom Stoppard,

"Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead"

Those who hate fervently must once have loved deeply. Those who want to deny the world must once have embraced what they now set on fire.

-Kurt Tucholsky

"Then we are living in a place abandoned by God.", I said disheartened. "Have you found any places where God would have felt at home?," William asked me.

-Umberto Eco, "The Name of the Rose"

Childhood is the place where nobody dies.

Nobody that matters, that is.

-Edna St. Vincent Millay

Chantal is having a relationship with a sentence. Just one of those things. A chance meeting that grew into something for both of them.

-Neil Gaiman, "Sandman"

Disguises are useless when shame is irrelevant.

-Poppy Z. Brite, "Calcutta, Lord of Nerves"

The author should die once he has finished writing. So as not to trouble the path of the text.

-Umberto Eco, "The Name of the Rose"

DANCE OF THE DAMNED (STORIES)

Step down. Kiss fire. The blue blue eyes are a calling. they come for me to go dancing under a Georgia sky. I can taste the rain in my face. It tastes so good. Like a forbidden city. The blue blue midnight calls me to go dancing under it. Step down. Kiss fire

Silence passes as the moments do not. waiting for the taxi cab. It comes calling step down. Kiss fire. from across the city. I can hear it over the sound of crying bag ladies and laughing addicts.-- and, after silence passes over them and me and the rest of an entire city lost in the Georgia springtime. The taxi comes. Step down. Kiss fire . "Rain, I said rain! Why do you be so unkind. Why do you taste like this city's guilt and oppression, and it slides down the back of my throat, like the tongue on a better woman than lady Georgia. The taxi dance takes be two blocks too far. I ask to be let out now.

The green green money at nightfall calls to me, and the cabby. Step down kiss fire. Through the back alleys in the rain to get to where the dancing is. All the faces say. "Cut yourself the way people do. The taxi cab pulls away screaming "Razor Blades," all the way home. The alley faces call to me. Drink the rest of the city, not just the rain. I hear the call, Be what they call for. Be justice, be reason as the moments pass the way the alleys do not. Be ecstasy and agony. Be pain, they call for that too. I know what they mean when they say that the city is calling for you. Step down. Kiss fire. Or the alcoholic in the street. I smile, as adept a lie as they could ever claim in an alley. I will be all of that tonight, I tell myself as I pass them by. I'm going dancing tonight.

The trumpets SCREAM and the drum beat beats the Georgia rain away.

I count them with my heartbeats. The door man knows. He sees me Step down. Kiss fire he tells me. I count that too. A brief moment passes as I do not, between myself and the doorman.

He has the blue blue eyes of a midnight in the sun. The doorman wants me to be that astral anomaly, as his ankles are bad and he can no longer step down. and there is no fire in him. he says, be blood be motion.

Kiss fire.

Bartender smiles at me, but I take my place on the floor. and the lights go way down. and everyone looks at my painted face. They step down, they kiss fire.

Everyone's a devil tonight. the cabby, the junkers in the streets and the doorman, the other dancers and me. Everyone's a devil tonight tonight They will have to excuse me for wearing that.

The trumpets SCREAM, the drum beats my thoughts away, and the smoke machine blows. The space around me is gray before the strobe light starts in. When it does, all the world is silver for seconds as lights pass and moments do. It's me on that floor, and sound

Someone in the back room fires up the old church organ. and it moan There's sweat on me, across my forehead and in my eyes tastes like flame. I spin until the room does flash my hands up in the air, laughing louder than the storm outside.

Step down. Kiss fire. Dancing deep with in the city, with the Georgia rain dancing the way I am on the roof. It's rusted and some of it gets through. Deep within the city, to put me where it is. Step down Kiss

UNDER THE STORM

-DYLAN
KINNETT

A dear friend of mine happens to have ready access to a quite lovely island retreat. Many are the weekends I have spent there, attempting to leave all manner of emotional clutter and profusion of inconsistency behind on the mainland. (FYI-it has since ceased to work it's magic, but that's another column entirely) Trying desperately to enjoy some of the peace that accompanies short periods of isolation.

We are an odd group of friends, we few, we (at the time I wrote this) happy few, with so much in common and yet so far apart from one another. As I look around at our faces, I wonder..What draws people to have these same ties, to proffer their lives in such a feeble attempt to grasp a better half? Why must we spend such a significant amount of time searching for, as another friend so eloquently put it, the even number? Why are we so afraid to remain odd?

It's not really that I don't feel "whole", or that I feel empty or lonely. I'm not particularly happy with my so-evident codependance. It's simply that I LIKE these people, and I often look forward to their presence in my life. My days seem unfinished without a glimpse, a splash, a pinch of a friend (ooh-did you catch that?). I've come to rely on them, to expect them, to feel comfortable around them.

And I suppose then that's what I've come here searching for - comfort. A sort of sense that I belong somewhere. That I am pert, but yet perfectly capable of existing as a whole - I simply choose not to at the moment.

Stranded on a small, buoyant, relatively unstable chunk of earth, surrounded by vast quantities of nettle-infested water, I find a word bobbing up and down in my psyche. I reach out, grasp it in my fists, force it down my throat and through my blood, carried only by force of will, until it reaches my hand and spurts itself out onto the page. A word that I've always been able to pronounce, but never to define; a word that feels good on my tongue, is smooth in my hands; a word that I've never really known the power of...home.

- Lady Dementia H.R.H.

Dear Dementia-

Recently, my boyfriend of six years just got up and left. We had been together since high school, and have been considering marriage, when he just got up in the middle of dinner and left. I have neither seen nor heard from him since. What gives?

-Baffled in Buffalo

Dear Baffled-

First of all, he's probably been screwing around on you for years. Suddenly, he realized he could eat another one of your grotesque culinary mishaps or gaze upon your hideous countenance for one more second. Personally, I don't blame him.

Dear Dementia-

Speaking of dementia, I awoke yesterday morning in a completely unfamiliar house, with a strange woman. Since I am a heterosexual woman, this entirely freaked me out. Help!

-Straight? in Syracuse

Dear Straight-

What is there to help you with? Obviously, you're a dyke. You have every right to be confused; this behavior is not NORMAL. Most people with half a brain figure this out in high school...What in the hell is wrong with you?!

Dear Dementia-

What does it mean when, after 20 years of marriage, your husband suddenly leaves you for an 18-year-old blonde?

-Distressed in Dallas

Dear Distressed-

It means that you're ugly and fat and your boobs are sagging, and the man is in his sexual prime. Why should he stay with you when he can have Bridgit the aerobics instructor? My advice: Marry old. Marry rich...Marry happy.

Dear Dementia-

I am enraged. My darling wife has just left me because of some half-wit advice she claims that she got from your column. How dare you break up a perfectly good marriage, you shameless home wrecker!

-Furious in Phoenix

Dear Furious-

*Obviously, your wife didn't view your marriage quite as you do, or she wouldn't have come to ME. As for the advice, she asked, I delivered...which is more than I can say for you, if I remember her letter correctly. *smirk* And one more thing - obviously I'm shameless. Otherwise I wouldn't work for this trashy magazine. (It's a Trashy 'Zine. dementia. God! can't you even keep your hip lingo straight?..-Editor)*

Are you feeling
overblown
?

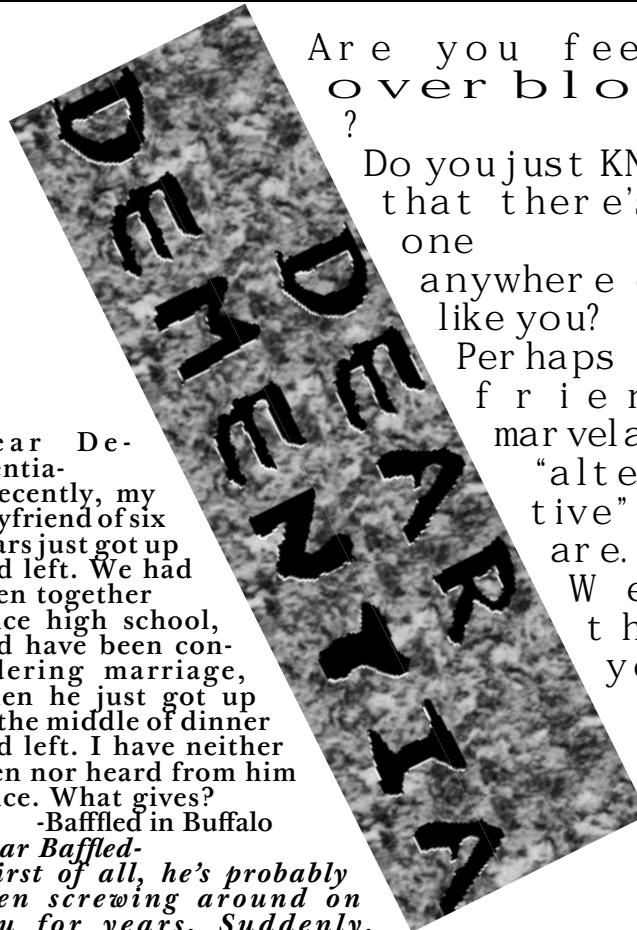
Do you just KNOW
that there's no
one

anywhere quite
like you?

Perhaps your
friends
marvel at how

"alternative" you
are.

Well
then,
you'll



"You know what I hate? Those street corner scum bags, with their trash can outlooks and incessant begging. They sit there all day with plastic cups screaming, 'Man needs a dollar.' So I give up arrogance for a moment, swing low sweet chariot and all that. I give the man the change in my pocket. I get in response, 'I said, man needs a DOLIAR!' You have to be very careful. The bums are everywhere."

Two young men braved the morning traffic, one talking, the other listening. It was too early for anything to be open. They were already hot, and not yet awake, neither one cared.

"You know what I hate? Money grubbing brat packs strutting down the hallway the way they do with their Adidas T-shirts and Nike sweatpants, starter jackets and food logo ball hats. Jesus Christ! I wish to hell that they could decide which prefabricated fat-man corporation to support? You can't pay all the people all the time. So, which will it be, Nike or Adidas, huh?"

Bits of flower petal danced with the trash that fluttered in the wake of rush hour. Shrill cries from a saxophone followed a light fog all the way down to the river. There was no wind and the sky was white with candy clouds. The boys crossed at the corner leaving the music to change with the stop light, shifting toward the flowers behind them. One was talking the other was listening.

"You know what I hate? That feeling you get just after your third cup of coffee, before the caffeine really gets the chance to kick in. Its like climbing a mountain with plenty of shit covered third world foothills to trip over before reaching the summit, which is wrapped in smoggy splendor I'm sure. Its not so much the view from the top that I love. After all, from the top there is no where to go but down. Its that at the top of three cups of coffee, your heart beats happily along with the song that's been in your head all day. Even the air is faster."

Halfway across a river bridge the two stopped. The tall one's feet hurt and his shorter companion is out of breath. They had been walking for or blocks. A woman pressed herself against the railing beside them as their vision fell downward to the white water below. She casually flicked her cigarette over the edge. The shorter boy turned to see a someone on a skateboard rocket past, faster than the bus in the lane beside them. The other watched the cigarette fall forever into its reflection while his friend continues the raspy conversation.

"You know what I hate? The ignoramus that will inevitably sit next to you on the subway. He either smells like he hasn't bathed in years, or makes you afraid of whatever it is that he has been bathing in.. He is the one that always gets caught in the doors because he's too damn drunk to hear the conductor. Although, even sober people have problems understanding the lobotomy patients on the other end of that microphone. Everybody gets out of the way when they hear the speaker, except him. Then he'll sit there rubbing his new bruises moaning about the communists. It's amazing really, That guy can relate every single minor pain in the ass to either communism, Vietnam or the Kennedy administration. After all as he'll have you know, Kennedy was the anti-Christ. When he's done placing his blame, he ganders at the station map, turns to me and says 'so, where do you get off?' I usually smile and tell him that I get off wherever I damn well please thankyouverymuch."

An hour after their morning began the two noticed that a bookstore has opened. They enter. Chairs sat vacant for them near the new releases. The taller-boy attuned himself with a nearby window, and it's view of a 23 story apartment. He was still listening.

"You know what I hate? Salesmen. Especially those quiet ones. When I grace the retail environment with my presence I want confrontation in an all out war. I wanna hear 'for a limited time only' and 'you cannot possibly live your life well without this product'. That way, I have the chance to defend myself. Defense, my friend is no option when Mr. Merchant shows you that even the whites of his eyes want to know about your particular interests as a consumer. He says, 'can I help you? Is everything to your approval?' That's when I know I'm done for. When the only pressure is that of the sicko's sweaty hands on my shoulders I know that's the end of this war I just know I am about to buy something. I hate that"

They stoop to admire glossy magazines before leaving their chairs for the street. The cashier does not return the short one's smiles. No one has bought anything all day, and the boys know why.

"You know what I hate? I hate that scum that grows on ice cream when it's been in the freezer too long. I like my food to be dead, really. I suppose I should be a vegetarian for that reason. I know, I just know that sometimes I will drop dead on the spot if I don't gnaw on a big slimy chunk of beef by the end of day. Now, I know as well as any well-informed media whore that there are little slivers of death hiding in every drop of cholesterol. I can handle this setback. When I consider that 'yes, I am at the top of the food chain' the reassurance tastes better than the burger itself. I'm on top, like the crap on top of my ice cream. Actually, I don't hate it that much. Its mother nature's way. She's just doing her job, ensuring that the creamy goodness underneath that stuff stays just as fresh as the day it was made."

Both boys spit on cracked pavement, as the bus crawled away from their bus stop destination a full block before they reached it. Neither one seemed to care. From somewhere several blocks away the saxophone has caught up with them as they sat on a crumbling curb.

Each turned to the other and stated

"You know what I hate."

"Not your local grocers comics"

Comic books. C'mon, you know there's a little kid in you somewhere that still wants to be read well colored exaggerated renditions of reality, hidden within some textbook. The ones in the paper just aren't good enough. More than the standard anatomically laughable super heroes, comics have grown in recent years to accommodate an increasingly adult, and literary audience. Don't let the fact that you read them as a kid stop you, these are NOT what you read as a kid. I've got some recommendations for you. I have noticed a trend among comics fans and former comics fans. The latter outnumber the former (who are quickly following suit and joining the ranks of the former readers). Readers are becoming enraged at the amount of violence and narcissistic marketing ploys enacted upon them by comic's publishers in order to drain their wallets. They pass puberty and quickly bore with the base scenarios, made to look complicated by being stretched over the course of months, even years. The "heroes", all too often the result of some freak mutation or a scientific mistake, look to be just that, mistakes. Those anatomical studies might make a renaissance master proud of the skill it took to draw them, just don't stand up to the modern definition of "character". More and more people are turning away from comics and graphic novels, dismissing them as "Juvenilia" without ever looking for the obscure publications that make the best of their media, and tell some truly wonderful stories. I would like to do my part to reverse that trend. Too many fine artists and writers have sweat too hard for their work to be simply ignored.

I know, I know. Why should you care that those poor artists aren't making any money when you aren't either. And I venture to guess that you have a REAL job. Trust me, I'm in the same boat, but I've found ways to feed my comics addiction (and the local comic shop) without burning my wallet of spending money on countless issues of endless series in the hopes of an improvement therein. I'm going to recommend some comics that will be interest to the mind and budget of anyone interested in things dark and strange.

This one's a staple. The original was printed monthly throughout most of the eighties, why buy single issues when you can get the graphic novel reprints? The story is excellent, the first one's called "Preludes and Nocturnes" but I'm certain you already know all about the sandman. In fact, I'm going to have to recommend the entire line of comics produced by Sandman's publisher. The line is entitled "vertigo" and seems to specialize in some truly innovative work : "Preacher", "The Watchmen", "Hellblazer" and some of or older readers might remember "House of Secrets" newly re-incarnated for the nineties. Most Vertigo comics are available at a comic shop near you.

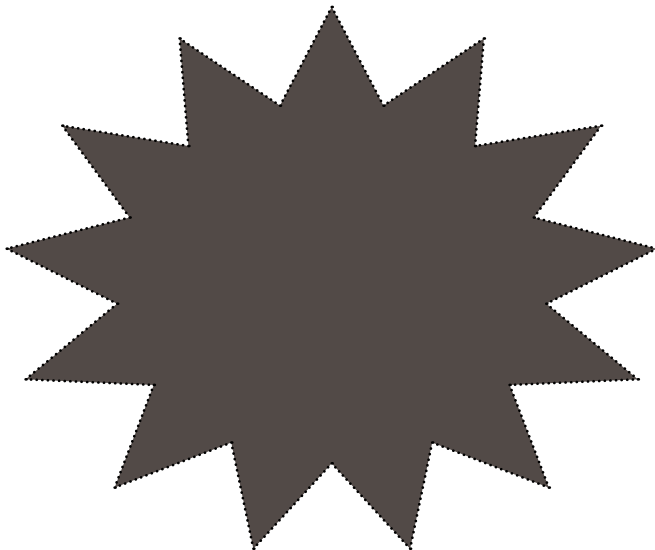
- now if that doesn't sound like the title of a comic book, what does? This series appeared in Carpe Noctem Magazine for a while, and was then given its own mini-series by Slave Labor Graphics. It's only six issues. I recommend them all. Mister Blank, a new series, also On Slave Labor Graphics. I would check this series out as well, it has a wonderful sixties underground comics feel to it. It'll poke fun at anyone, no holds barred.

, If you read anything on this list, I think it should be this one. The Art is revolutionary, the story is something unlike anything in comics anywhere. and I dare say that. The plotline, as presented in the first issue is still a bit cloudy, it's winding up slowly. but I like that. there's none of that macho superhero bullshit. The supernatural element are not treated as normal "just part of THIS world" kind of events as so sadly the case in many titles. Insanity, grittiness, loss perversion. Truly, a dark treasure.

Well, you didn't honestly think I'd get by without mentioning that one did you? The movie adaptation quickly rose to cult classic status, and has become a staple of the average gothic media diet. How many times have you heard "The book was better than the movie" It's pretty tough to beat that kind of movie's quality rating in the eyes of some. That said, let me say that the book is better. This resurrection tale is told with none of the splatterpunk B-movie chicanery that you might expect. It's a story of revenge, and love, and death and it's somehow strangely beautiful. The series is available in its reprinted entirety as a graphic novel.

Hopefully, I've started you in the direction leading to "real" comics enjoyment. I should note that the selection I've chosen to mention highlights my interests, and I hope, some of yours, There are however comics and graphic Novels out there to suit every eye, young or old .

It's not up in the sky!
The damn thing can't even fly!
(It's the new thick paper)
Able to withstand swarming
hoards of goobing kids and
their non-pimpled adult counterparts,
and still come out as colorful as ever. Look it's a...



- Dylan

Since this past Summer, I've been on an author kick, If you've ever experienced one of these ailments then you know of what I speak The victim is subjected to a book by a particular author, perhaps out of simple curiosity, advise from a friend, or assignment. At any rate, immediately after the initial contact, the patient begins to exhibit symptoms of the author kick, the patient recommends the parietic book to every person within a ten mile radius (verbally or on paper) am side effects often consist of depleted budget; the patient has purchased every available text by, or pertaining to the author of the initial contact. The object of this particular patient's affliction is Poppy Z. Brite, one of the up and coming presences in the gm modern gothic genera. At the ripe age of thirty, she has amassed a body of work consistent of three novels, a compilation of short fiction, the editorial work behind a twofold vampire anthology, and several magazine articles, nationally syndicated, of course. It all started with wormwood ... well, actually I had taken a particular liking to her writing in the Borderlands anthology (published by Borealis) and decided to find more of her work.

-Dylan

The first Poppy Z. Brite book that I found was a collection of her short fiction entitled "Wormwood". This also happens to be the first book that she wrote (or rather, assembled) It contains several of her magazine stories from the now defunct HORROR SHOW magazine, some of which serve as studies for her first novel. They range from highly supernatural tales of magic to psychological drama. I've given

through the book is quite delectable. overall 4

"Drawing Blood" by Poppy Z. Brite Amore recent, and obviously more mature brainchild for poppy. She has gone the better way than many of her contemporaries in the genre, and actually parted with the vampire tale. She has found a way to portray the dark side through other means, this time through the persons of Zach and Bobby, the former a computer hacker, the latter a cartoonist haunted by the murder of his family by his own suicidal (and cartoonist) father. They both find themselves in Missing Mile NC living in the house where the murders were committed and each grappling with their

the book an overall rating of 4 "Lost Souls" by Poppy Z. Brite Praised by the likes of Harlan Ellison as thermonuclear talent on the back cover, this first novel by an upstart then twenty-six year old certainly had a lot to live up to, and a lot on the line. Nothing ventured, nothing gained I suppose, and a lot was gained By this book. Poppy had added to the vampire mythos, a difficult task given such hackneyed subject matter. She told the story of two boys and a band, their trip to New Orleans following a boy named Nothing and his newfound vampire family. Her descriptions of setting are particularly strong. And the dream sequence half way

own ghosts. With this work Poppy infuses the haunted house tale with the same electricity she had pumped into the vampire story a few years earlier.

overall 5
Drawing Blood dealt with several themes prevalent within the underground comics movement during the sixties,, so as a reader, it was a natural transition for me to go from that book to one by William Burroughs. His book,, "Junky" is famous for it's portrayal of life with a heroin addiction during this time. "Junky" by William Burroughs. This book is short. Don't let that fool you. The memoirs of an heroin addict presented within its pages are more then involving. Burrough's prose disguises the entire affair as casual conversation. The local diction of New York, the sanitarium and all the other

places that Junk takes the protagonist to are used to trick the reader into the belief that he's there. That the sickness can consume anyone. That they are the brunt of human weakness. This book tells the life of an addict without the tinted glamour that is almost always portrayed by lesser storytellers. This is a story of everyday life, in a life with a little guest. overall 3.5

"Servant of the Bones",
Anne Rice, copyright 1996.
Alfred A Knopf, pub.
Hardback, \$24.95

In Rice's newest novel, she finally veers from the inventive but ultimately tiresome worlds of her Brat Prince and the Mayfair Witches. A Jewish history professor is saved from certain death by an angel wishing to tell his story and have it recorded for posterity. Actually, Azriel is not so much an angel as a jinnee (that's "genie", for those of you used to Americanizations.) who has learned to master his own whereabouts. The book is well done, in as much as character development, and even storyline, but one is left wondering what the book's purpose is. Why is Azriel confessing all of this? And why does a writer with such obvious talent as Rice continually write pointless novels? And why, oh why, did I read all 387 pages of it? Don't get me wrong - I really enjoyed The Vampire Les-tat and all, but the Servant of the Bones is a major disappointment in

thor/artist.

**APOCALYPSE PLAYGROUND
- SUBMISSIONS
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Both electronic and standard postal submissions are accepted, although, if it is possible, please provide both. Preference is given to works which focus on experimental topics and/or contents in the gothic genre. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable if notification is made at time of submission. An author whose work(s) is accepted for any particular issue grants Apocalypse Playground *One-time rights to publications, the work remains the sole property of the au-*

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Apocalypse Playground is searching for columnists to write quarterly on Gothic, Industrial or Punk themes. If you have an idea that you think would belong in an upcoming issue of Apocalypse Playground, send in a description of your idea. Your input is needed.

'A reflection of the human face, shot back at itself from the front of a mirror will remain smiling at itself until that glass is broken. The smaller pieces reflect the ceiling, walls, little bits of sky and light bulbs. Shards of face appear in that broken reflection if luck prevails. The same is true of water, the face is fine until a stone is thrown, and the face, as well as the mind behind it is stretched outward forever.

Circles.

Circles.

Circles."

The Next Issue of Apocalypse Playground will be a study of the stream of consciousness. The theme will be one of randomness, undefinition and the surreal. We'll be stepping into the realm of infinity for a while, her kitchen to be exact, to see just what it is that makes things tick the way they do.



Gasp! The dawn draws near, oh whatever shall I do? I want to read six issues of Apocalypse Playground alas! whilst I bake

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since a sharp razor very slowly across the dotted line

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