



**SEPTEMBER 2022**  
**ISSUE NO.3**

**LIVE FAST, DIE HIGH**  
**ROCK'S TOP STAR IS A DEA AGENT!**

**"WE KILLED FOR A LIVING" SAYS 7TH GRADE ENTREPRENEUR**

# WELCOMING THE SWEATER WEATHER

We're excited about this one. With Summer coming to an end we decided to put out a short story inspired by *Stand By Me*, *The Goonies*, and our childhoods. We call it *Stranger Things*. Nah, just kidding, but we do have a fun one about young kids looking for Dutch Shultz's lost gold. If you're a friend from Matt's childhood and your last name, nickname, or both were used in this story, we hope you like it!

The other short story in this issue is about a disgraced DEA agent who goes deep undercover in an 80s rock band. It has everything you'd expect from the 1980s music scene; sex, drugs, and pyrotechnics gone horribly wrong.

Rounding out the September issue is a list of New Pulp Fiction magazines and publishers not named American Pulps that you should check out. And a drink recipe from the hardboiled writer and prolific lush, Raymond Chandler that anyone can make (it's just two ingredients).

Cheers,

- The Editors

John Borges & Matt Pagourgis  
September 2022

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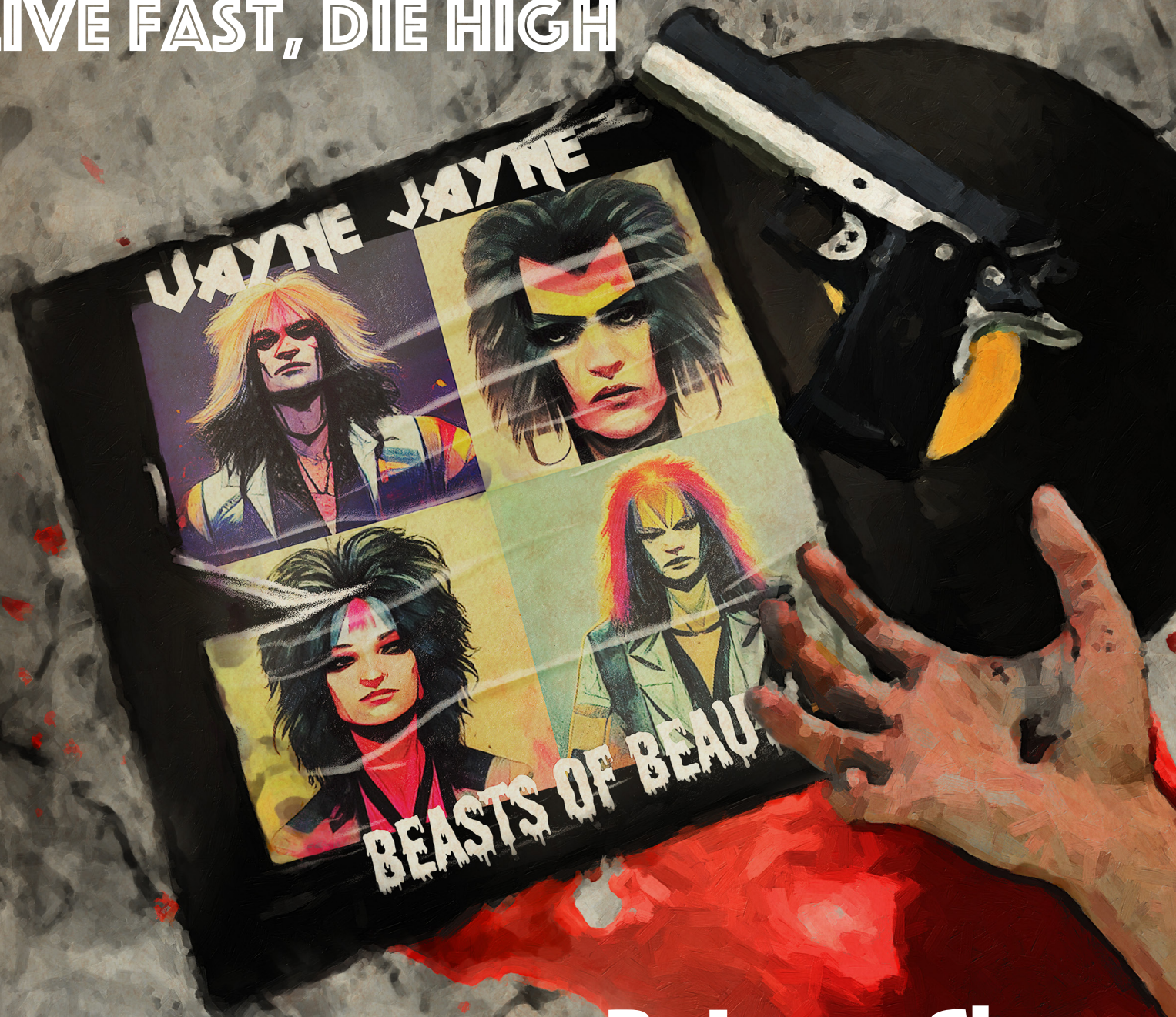
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# POSEUR: LIVE FAST, DIE HIGH



**By Logan Sloan**



**“ROCK MUSIC IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE  
THESE PERFUMED ORPHANS DIE FOR  
THE RIGHT TO MAKE IT.”**

**-LILLIAN WAY**

Fucking Lillian Way was like fucking rock and roll itself. She was the one we remembered, wrote songs about, and killed ourselves over. In nineteen eighty five, we didn't migrate to the Sunset Strip because we wanted to build new lives. We did it to destroy our old ones.

I had her from behind. She leaned on the studio console and moaned into a hot mic. The door flew open and I found myself staring into a .38 revolver. Attached to that gun was my guitarist, Stacey Malone. At six-four with tight muscles, he resembled a starved panther.

Betrayal burned in his pinprick pupils. Lillian lit a cigarette and stifled a giggle. The band's ego squabbles had become her favorite sideshow.

Stacey pulled the hammer back as I spoke. "Okay, man...If you love her the way a square loves his lady, then I won't blame you for shooting me. But, we've got an album to finish and a tour to prepare for. You won't get far without your singer."

The gun's barrel smiled at me. Stacey didn't.

Lillian spoke like she was clarifying dinner plans, "Baby, we did this for the band. The song needed something real."

Stacey's pistol trembled. "You got it on tape? Are you still rolling?"

Lillian and I nodded. Stacey and I broke into spontaneous laughter. Within seconds, we were all passing a bottle and replaying the tape. I saw my reflection in the coke mirror. My hair was teased, held in place with White Rain. My lipstick and eyeliner were perfect. I was a fucking rock star. It felt so good I forgot I was also an undercover DEA agent.

•••

I'd entered the agency right after I finished Yale law school. I was so clean cut back then, they used my picture on the school brochure. Shit, I even sang in the Whiffenpoofs acapella group.

I had big plans to parlay a stellar law enforcement record into a career in politics. Instead, my first major bust turned me into a cautionary tale.

I was still essentially a rookie when I put together a raid on a meth lab. Because the agency felt I lacked experience, I had to work with veteran agents Diaz and Thorne. I didn't care. This bust was going to make me famous.

I kicked in the door and found a young girl

tweaking on a dirty mattress. When I kneeled to comfort her, she pulled a pistol and fired two shots into my torso. One bullet collapsed my lung. The other tore through my viscera and lodged into my spine — my L2 and L3 vertebrae to be exact. I laid there bleeding while Diaz and Thorne left to pursue the suspects. I woke up in the hospital days later.

I spent months in recovery, only to return to the agency as a pariah. When you fuck up a bust by letting a fourteen year-old girl shoot you, the agency doesn't tend to trust your judgement. Diaz and Thorne had taken the meth case for themselves and the brass banished me to a bullshit desk job. I was barely twenty five and I had already been put out to pasture.

Public embarrassment wasn't the only thing keeping me from major case work. I suffered intense chronic back pain as a result of that jailbait psycho's bullets. The pain made it so hard for me to function, I was soon taking enough Percodans to get full. To combat the narcotic effects of the percs, I took Dexedrine pills to stay sharp. I had a few different doctors across town. Between them, I could hustle enough pills to remain pain free and alert. Of course, the dexies made me really jittery, so I kept a pint of vodka (something to take the edge off) with me at all times. I saw the world like I was staring through an iced-over windshield. I spent nights and weekends in a series of dive bars, avoiding the usual agency haunts. I drank, fought, and fucked my way into oblivion. I guess you could say I was coping very poorly with failure. Sure, plenty of people come back from high profile setbacks and pivot into great lives. They're called normal fucking jerks. Those kinds of people didn't rise in the agency, and they didn't become president. I hated my weakness, but I hated the pain of my reality even more. I was a bum with a badge, washed-up during what should have been my prime. The tunnel vision of pills and booze put some very unsavory thoughts in my head. I started locking my gun in my desk at work. I was afraid I'd eat it one night after the bars closed.

I shared an office with the portly and mustachioed Arnold Lazo. Lazo was a legend around the agency. He made some amazing cases back in the day and then killed his own career by speaking truth to power. Everyone sarcastically called him Serpico behind his back. I didn't want to know what they called me. Whatever the name was, it certainly wasn't as cool.

We made quite a pair, the young flameout and the relec. Lazo hadn't changed his wardrobe or his NASA flat-top haircut since he joined the force in the 60s. I, in my prep tie and Yale ring, was never considered "one of the guys" in any group throughout my life. That was especially true for me in the DEA.

I worked long, pointless days and begged the career gods for redemption. My deliverance finally came in the form of a rockstar's corpse. Ronnie Briggs, singer of the hair metal band Vayne Jane, had died mid-concert from an overdose. He'd left it all on the stage, as they say. It was a true rock star's death. He perished in front of thousands who thought it was part of the show.

The morning after Ronnie's death, Lazo stopped me in the parking lot. I could smell the Wild Turkey before I heard his voice. He had been up all night. He told me that he could get us both out of our desk jobs and back doing real work. I laughed, "You'll get me back in the game? You can't even get yourself in."

Lazo was unphased, "You're right, I need a pretty face like yours."

I told him to go home and sleep it off. I was in a hurry to hit the bathroom and sip my flask.

Lazo was fishing out a cigarette when he said, "I looked at Ronnie Briggs' toxicology report. His blood had coke and smack levels that would kill a buffalo. These Vayne Jayne fuckers are doing a fortune in dope a year, but according to my research, they're broke." He tried to light his cigarette but the Bic just sparked. I shrugged, "So?"

"So, I'm positive they're trafficking, and they're doing it for major players. They couldn't maintain their lives otherwise. They travel all over the world on posh buses and private planes. The record label isn't paying for all that. I checked. Their bank accounts are overdrawn. They don't have a wealthy uncle financing them. Shit, most of them don't have parents to speak of. So, where's the money coming from?"

Lazo paused for less than a second before answering his own question.

"Really, a rock band is a perfect drug front. With all their cases of gear, there's a million places to stash dope. They're hiding it in plain sight."

His still unlit cigarette was bobbing up and down with each syllable. The lighter finally came to life and he fired-up his Camel. Through a rich

wave of smoke, Lazo described the most enticing part of his theory: The traffickers we normally dealt with were hardened pros that were difficult to flip. But, he figured these glam boys would be pussies. If we caught them moving real weight, they'd snitch on everybody.

He had my attention, "You want me to go undercover as a club promoter or something?" Lazo shook his head. "You're gonna be their new frontman."

I laughed, "You're crazy."

Lazo's eyes were level, he seemed instantly sober as he took another drag.

"You sing don't you?"

This fucker had done his research.

"Well, yeah, but not that glam metal shit."

"Just get some songs and some moves down, and you'll be fine."

"Moves? I was in an acapella group, we didn't exactly prance around like Ziggy Stardust."

I still refused. Frankly, I was worried about my political future. If I sobered up and kept my head down, I could still run for Congress eventually. Hell, they'll take anyone.

Lazo snarled, "Look kid, you wouldn't be my first, second, or twentieth choice. I've known too many Ivy League fruitcakes like you. You're bad for deep cover because you want recognition. But, you're the right age and you've got the right skills. Most importantly, you're desperate for a major case. So, put on some fuckin' lipstick and man up!"

Lazo should have been a showbiz agent, because he had a hell of a scheme to get me in the band. He targeted Ronnie's girlfriend, Lillian Way. We were only in Los Angeles a week before we got local cops to bust her on possession with intent to sell. She had a long list of priors, so she was facing a big girl prison stretch. At first she refused to cooperate. But, after twenty four hours in the clink, she was getting dope sick.

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Lillian was nineteen years old and already a legend on the Sunset Strip. She had been everything from a dealer, to a hooker, to the madame of her own stable of girls. Most importantly, she had an opinion that all the major bands respected. Lillian wasn't a star fucker. She was a star maker, and we had her by her massive lady balls.

She was tough, and she was loyal to the band, but I could tell she was angry that they left

her in jail. She'd been abandoned, forgotten by people she'd trusted. I knew that feeling well, and I knew she would get mad enough to help us. Lillian had a sweet, feral scent that cut through the jailhouse stink. She exhaled, "I won't snitch."

I shook my head, "We don't need you to."

She didn't know what to make of that statement. Lazo put a hand on both of our shoulders.

"You two are going to be a team. You, young lady, are going to teach this man to become a rockstar, then you are going to use your influence to make him the new singer for Wayne Jayne."

Lillian laughed until she coughed and croaked out something that sounded like dry heaves.

She sneered at me, "Am I on candid camera or some shit? When did the cops grow a sense of humor?"

Our faces sucked any levity right out of the room. Lazo's voice was dry as fall leaves.

"We're not cops. We're the DEA, and everyone knows we're fuckin' hilarious."

Twenty four hours later, Lillian's withdrawals and resentment did the rest of the convincing for us. She agreed to "that weird, batshit thing" we'd proposed.

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Lillian and I stayed on a ranch out near Big Bear. Her cover story was that she had been sentenced to a ninety day rehab facility.

I sang for her. I did the Whiffenpoof Song, and a couple Perry Como numbers. I accompanied myself on the ranch house's ancient piano. As always, my pitch and phrasing were spot on. To look at Lillian's reaction, you'd think I'd just heated a coat hanger on the stove and drawn crop circles in my pubes. Actually, the crop circles would have at least amused her.

Lillian sighed and gave me my first lesson by taking me out to an isolated lumber yard. She ordered me to scream at the top of my lungs, over and over again. She had me go out and scream like that for days before we did anything else. She told me, "The voice is an instrument that must be tortured."

We lived together while she taught me how to sing, move, and think like a rock star. Soon, she was teaching me how to fuck like one. However, she assured me that the sex was nothing personal. It was just part of my training.

She'd say, "You must be all of our fantasies."

You've got to be the best on stage and backstage." Lillian declared that the fundamentals of rock music could be learned in a weekend. What made a true rock star beautiful wasn't musicianship or sophisticated songs. What made him beautiful was the fact that he put his life on the line to be that. "Nobody ever made a good rock song if they had the opportunity to do anything else." It was the music of people who were out of options, and if I was going to enter her world, I had to feel that hunger. If I didn't, my targets would sniff me out as a phony.

We watched MTV constantly, and played several vhs tapes full of rock videos. Lillian had an encyclopedic knowledge of that world's inner politics.

According to her, Stacey was panicked. The death of a lead singer meant the death of a band. That was gospel. But Vayne Jayne was Stacey's creation, and after getting a taste of stardom, he refused to slide back into obscurity. The problem was, none of the good singers in town would work with Stacey. They were either scared of him or thought he was burnt out.

Lillian had me practice everything I did in front of a full length mirror. My body's vocabulary, down to the way I held a cigarette, needed to be a collection of effortless, but deliberate poses

This "training camp" was taking longer than I had expected. I was very worried that Vayne Jayne would find another singer in that time period. Lillian assured me that scene politics and Stacey's ego would prevent an early replacement. Even if someone did get hired, she could sabotage the guy by badmouthing him to the band. She had total sway over their opinions

Per my instructor, I was on a strict diet of whiskey, pills, and whatever food we could scrounge up. I lost weight and had a wig of golden locks stitched in.

Under Lillian's tutelage, I was developing the necessary swagger and frayed nerves. She ghost-wrote me a few songs and played the instrumental tracks with gear courtesy of Uncle Sam. She knew Stacey would respond to "my" songs because she'd secretly written for Ronnie. We had a four track recorder and made demos. I couldn't remember when I'd had more fun.

One night, Lillian and I were drinking in a bar, blowing off some steam. These locals were giving us a hard time, insulting my hair and

clothes. At first, I didn't realize who they were talking to. Then I remembered my new look. They called me a "fag" and grabbed Lillian's ass. I retorted by smashing a bottle on mister grabass' head. The good old boy fell to his knees like a sack of shit. His buddy took a swing. I ducked, grabbed him by the mullet, and slammed his melon onto the edge of the bar top.

When I was done with them, they spent a week shitting out their own blood and teeth.

•••

Lillian and I arrived at the Sunset Strip with our cover story: We met in court-ordered rehab and I was the singer that Vayne Jayne needed. I came equipped with my demo tape, several thousand dollars in DEA-issued cash, and a care package of dope that Lazo had liberated from an evidence locker.

I auditioned at the band's rehearsal space. Standing in front of Stacey, I felt like a toddler trapped in a room with a python. I played them my demo tape. It had an Aerosmith cover, an AC/DC cover, and two originals that Lillian wrote for me. Stacey liked "my" songs, but he really liked my gifts of fishscale cocaine and black tar heroin. I watched Lillian cuddle up to Stacey as they both fixed. Her face looked harder than it had back on the ranch. Whatever her relationship had been with Ronnie (or me, for that matter), it was clear that she and Stacey had a deep history. I had to remember that our experience in Big Bear was a fantasy. She'd played a role so I could learn to do the same.

Having Lillian's blessing meant that my vetting process was very informal. The band and I jammed for a while and went out drinking. By three in the morning, I was the new singer of Vayne Jayne.

•••

The band had already pissed away all their money, so we booked a tour right away. On my first gig, it took me half a bottle of Jameson to get up the nerve to play. From then on, booze helped me stay in character.

When I performed, I felt like I'd scooped up the entire crowd in my hands and lathered them all over my dick. I thought, No wonder these rock guys fought, died, and shot dope to keep this feeling going. *Any life compared to this was a slow, painful death.*

For a while, I was able to avoid getting high



with the band. But, it was clear that I would get kicked out as quickly for refusing hard drugs as I would for being a bad singer. That soon became a moot point. The rigors of touring were murder on my back. We would finish a show at two in the morning and be on the bus by two fifteen. There was no time to get to a pharmacy. Besides, I was in deep cover. I couldn't exactly risk showing my real identity while trying to get my scripts filled. The pain became overwhelming, and it got to the point where I was drinking a bottle of wild turkey 101 just to get through a show. I soon wanted relief more than anything - more than the glory of a major case or my newfound stardom. Of course, Stacey was only too happy to accommodate me.

One night, the boys were smoking heroin on the bus. I regarded "chasing the dragon" as a much more palatable alternative to spiking up. When they passed it to me, I took a hit. It was very pure. I was carried on a cloud of self assurance and I didn't question where it was taking me.

The rest of the tour was a blur of savage behavior. I was doing lines, smoking heroin, and fucking the coed population of the USA. It became harder and harder to remember that I was there to work a case. I felt at home on the road and I felt like a poseur when I checked in with Lazo. If I wanted to live fast and die young, then I was straddling two of the most effective ways to accomplish that goal.

Regarding the case, Stacey and I had only engaged in small time drug deals. I was worried that I was wasting my time. I clung to my ambition like a life preserver. If this case didn't amount to a major bust, I was going to be the laughing stock of the agency... again. I saw my opportunity to ratchet things up when Wayne Jayne was invited to a party at Raffa Sharon's house.

Raffa was a gentleman gangster that owned several rock clubs and absolutely loved entertaining musicians. His Laurel Canyon home had a cellar full of vintage wine and kilos of dope. He had an endless supply of girls for his guests and young boys for his own relaxation. After a couple days of partying, I convinced him that we could carry serious weight. Raffa trusted us to deliver two million dollars worth of China White.

This should have been a career making bust for me, but I didn't tell Lazo about it. I told myself that this deal was only small change compared to what was to come. In reality, I didn't want my

rockstar life to end. But who could blame me? We'd just been booked to open for Mötley Crüe on the "Theater Of Pain" tour.

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The night of the China White deal, we rode out to the desert to meet with the Vagos biker gang. We were in a hurry. We needed to deliver the goods, get the money, and get to the stadium for our gig.

The bikers were cordial. They were actually fans of the band and asked for autographs to give to their girlfriends. As we made the exchange, rifle shots rang out from a distance. Several of the bikers' heads split open and their bodies fell like stringless marionettes.

The Vagos thought we had double crossed them, and the desert erupted into a firefight. I assumed another gang had trailed us with the intention of robbing the deal.

As everyone dove to find cover, Stacey grabbed the suitcase full of money and sprinted into the darkness. I ran after him. The air was thick with gunpowder. One of the Vagos followed us on his bike and fired a shot into Stacey's back. I grabbed the .38 pistol from my boot and dropped the Vago.

Stacey was hurt badly. I put him over my shoulder and carried him away from the gunfire. We collapsed in the bushes. He was barely conscious, but he still held on to the case of money. Two men appeared from the darkness with guns drawn. I was overcome with relief when I saw that they were DEA agents Diaz and Thorne. I was desperate to help Stacey, so I identified myself as an agent and said I needed them to get us to a hospital. I had blown my cover. Now Stacey knew everything. Incidentally, my career as a cock rocker was also in serious jeopardy.

Diaz and Thorne shared a look and aimed their guns at our heads. I realized then that they had fired the sniper shots. They had planned to take the cash and dope. It was suddenly clear why they left me for dead years ago. They'd been pulling jobs like this for years. They were shitbird gangsters with badges.

Diaz hesitated and asked me, "Who knows about this?"

The only way I could stay alive was to let them think that the agency knew about my "bust." I told them that Lazo was waiting for my signal.

Diaz and Thorne told me that they were out there on a bust as well, and that the agency needed better communication.

They had been caught, and they had to let me live through the night, but they'd also have to kill me soon. Diaz and Thorne vanished before I could ask about the hospital again. I was in the middle of the desert with my guitarist dying of blood loss and a biker gang on our tail.

I carried Stacey to the car and dressed his wound. It was going to leave a hideous scar, but luckily we had no shortage of painkillers. We got to the concert venue with minutes to spare. Stacey injected a speedball and performed brilliantly. On stage, I was able to forget that we now had crooked DEA agents, a motorcycle gang, and Raffa's men after us.

The next day I heard Lazo had been killed in a car bomb. Diaz and Thorne used enough explosives to ensure that body parts rained down over a two block radius. I had no friends left at the agency.

Ever since the shootout, Stacey refused to sleep. He was convinced he would die if he did. He stayed awake and numb with the help of his trusty syringe. After forty eight hours, he went into a full babbling psychosis.

While backstage at our next show, I tried to convince Lillian to run away with me. With Lazo gone, her immunity deal was off. I didn't realize she had already given this situation a lot of thought. She said, "You're right about one thing. I don't have a choice."

It was time for us to get on stage. I fixed my makeup. We had the show of our lives. I was delirious from my wound and Stacey was dying from his gunshot. Lillian stood on the side of the stage and watched the two men she'd put so much energy into.

I may be biased, but I think we put on a better show than Mötley Crüe that night. After the concert, Stacey beckoned me into our dressing room. With his grey bloodless skin and flaming red eyes, he looked like a rabid bat.

I walked in and the door shut behind me. I was surrounded by Raffa's men, a quick head-count told me it was enough to field a basketball team with a deep bench.

Stacey and Lillian had led me into a trap. When Raffa learned of the botched Vagos deal, Stacey told him I was a cop. Raffa agreed to let

them live if they returned the money and delivered me.

I had no intention of letting Raffa's men torture me. I twisted Stacey's arm behind him and held him in front of me like a human shield. Raffa's men pulled their guns. I charged at them. They fired into Stacey's body. I killed one man with a broken bottle to the throat and one with a drumstick through the eye.

Stacey was dead. Lillian picked up Stacey's Flying V guitar and slammed it into my head several times. She stopped short of crushing my skull. I'd like to think sparing my life was out of the remaining affection she felt for me.

Lillian pulled the gun from my ankle holster and aimed it at me. I stood up and a bullet exploded in my flesh, but the gunshot came from behind my back. I turned to see Diaz and Thorne. Diaz had shot me and was fixing his sights on my head. Lillian squeezed off three shots. One of them hit Diaz in the shoulder. One of them destroyed Thorne's right hand. The last one hit a random food tray exploding a club sandwich and a can of Tab cola.

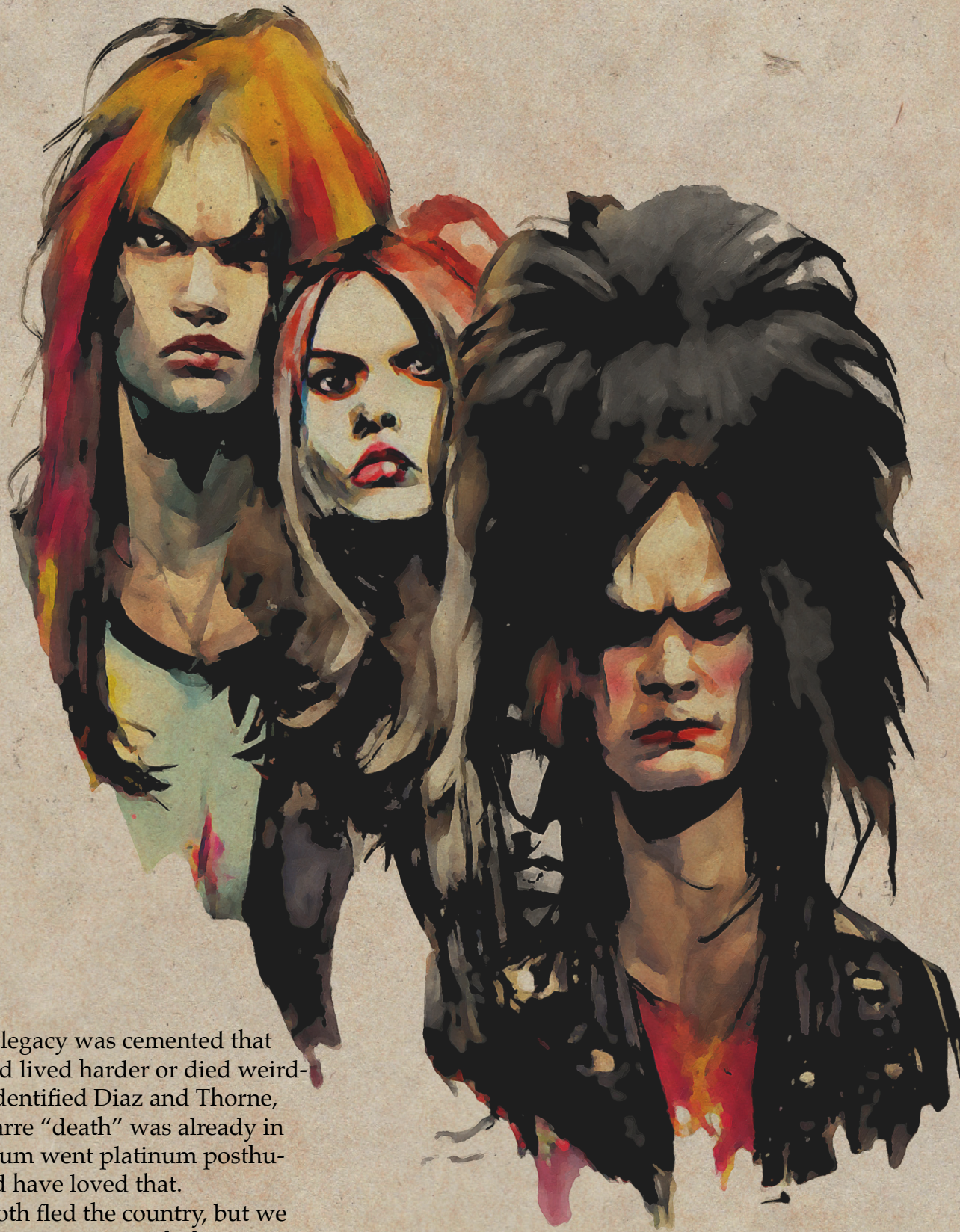
I tackled both men and yelled for Lillian to run. She did, but not before she grabbed the suitcase full of money. Diaz and Thorne tried to pursue her, but I held them at bay. We fought like dogs locked in the violence of the moment.

We broke apart and stalked each other as the music from the stage blared. I brained Thorne with a mic stand, grabbed his gun, and aimed. I considered giving mercy to a fellow corrupted agent. Then, I thought about Lazo and pulled the trigger.

My gun was empty. Diaz shot at me and I scrambled up into the rafters. We fought on the catwalk while Mötley Crüe played Shout At The Devil.

I shoved Diaz into a pyrotechnics blast. The heat cooked the skin off his face and body. The music drowned out his screams. Diaz was unrecognizable, which gave me an idea. As he lay dying, I removed my jacket and other signature items, then put them on Diaz's charred body.

It was time for me to retire from rock. I hoped people would see my clothing and think I died in the flames. Another blast of pyrotechnics went off and I lost my grip on Diaz. His body fell from the rafters onto the stage, and the concert came to a grisly halt.



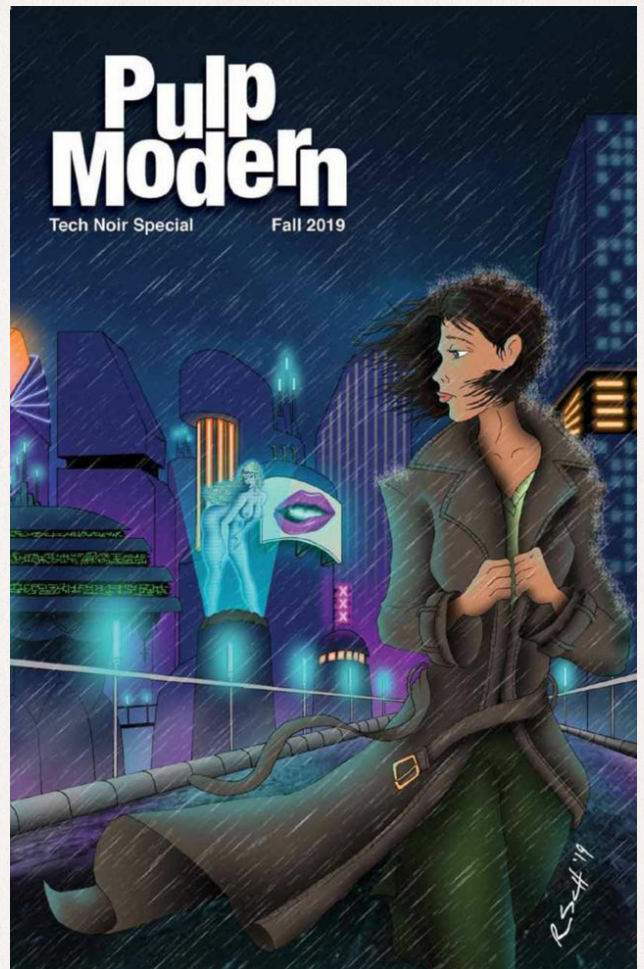
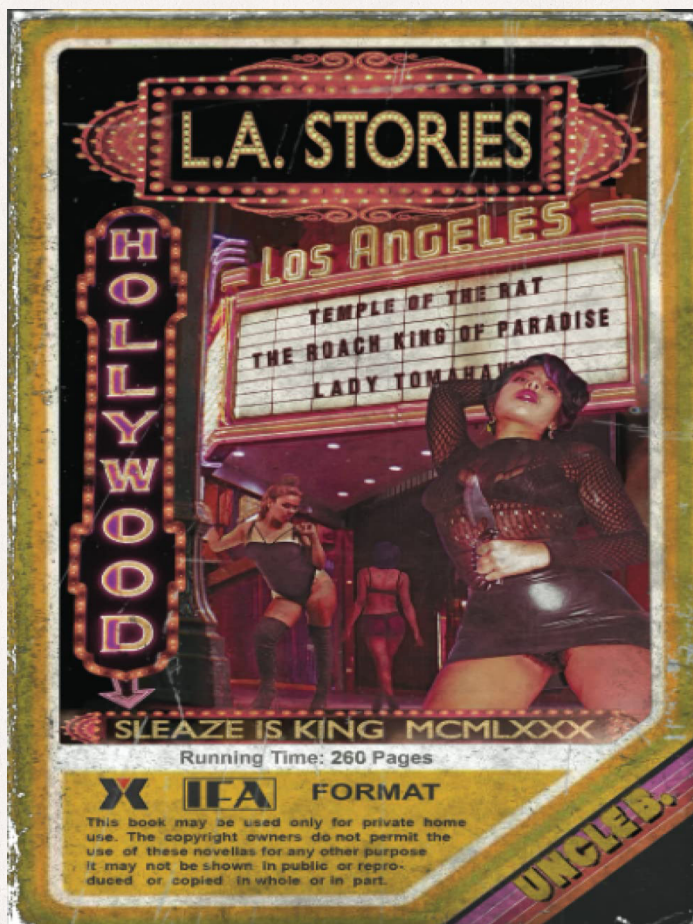
Vayne Jayne's legacy was cemented that night because no band lived harder or died weirder. By the time they identified Diaz and Thorne, the legend of my bizarre "death" was already in the universe. Our album went platinum posthumously. Stacey would have loved that.

Lillian and I both fled the country, but we did so separately. Lillian escaped with the money and opened a bar in Belize. I went to Mexico and ultimately made my way to Eastern Europe. It's been decades, but I still occasionally grab my guitar and play the songs she wrote for me. The other day, I was in Macedonia and I saw a teenage kid wearing a Vayne Jayne T Shirt. I gave him the "rock on" devil horns. He gave me the finger.

# FRIENDS OF THE PULPS: NEW PULP MAGAZINES

The American Pulp community is filled with tons of talented people. One of the reasons we wanted to start the magazine was to shine a little light on other artists, writers, podcasts, and publishers in the pulp community. This month we're talking about other New Pulp/Crime Lit magazines and publishers. Let's dive in.

*If you want to purchase these books/mags, click on the title or the images and it'll take you to a storefront.*



Cover Art by Ran Scott

## [Pulp Modern](#)

Established in 2011, *Pulp Modern* is the longest running New Pulp Mag out right now. They're a part of [Uncle B. Publications](#), who have published the work of "Doc" Clancy (*Caveman Magazine*) and Scotch Rutherford (*Switchblade Magazine*) among others.

Uncle B. Publications has also published [L.A. Stories: Three Grindhouse Novellas](#), of which, Scotch wrote the novella *The Roach King of Paradise*.

If you're looking for modern day pulp/crime/noir fiction, *Pulp Modern* has a healthy roster of great writers. Check them out.

## Caveman Magazine

Edited by "Doc" Clancy, *Caveman Magazine* is a fairly new men's magazine with a modern and intellectual bent. Their quarterly magazine is temporarily put on hold, but throw them a follow on social media so you can be the first to know when they're back up and running.

[Doc is also a writer.](#) If you're into our writing, you'd probably like Doc, who's work is heavily influenced by the pulps, horror b-movies, exploitation films, and classic mid-century television. His work has been published in *Bachelor Pad Magazine*, *Worlds of Strangeness*, *Smut Butt Magazine Presents Freaky Fiction Vol. 2*, and *Night Owl Magazine*.

Caveman does take submissions, [click on the link here](#) to read more. Like we said, they're on hold for now but when they're back up they'll need material.



No book cover to show off yet. But you can buy some merch on their site.

## Starlite Pulp

The newest Pulp publication on the list. They are so new that their first issue is still in the works. The first two books are set to drop in December 2022. They will be, *Starlite Pulp Review #1* (Various Authors) and *Outlaw Ballads : A Sonny Haynes Collection* by Brian Townsley. They will be coming out with two review's a year. And the content will be Pulp — noir/hard-boiled/mystery, Sci Fi, horror, adventure, western. All of the food groups.

They also [have a podcast](#), which we will be guests on in the near future. So you might want to subscribe, just sayin.

They're currently taking submissions (the reading period is through October 31st), so if you're a writer, [here's their submissions page](#).

# Men's Adventure Quarterly



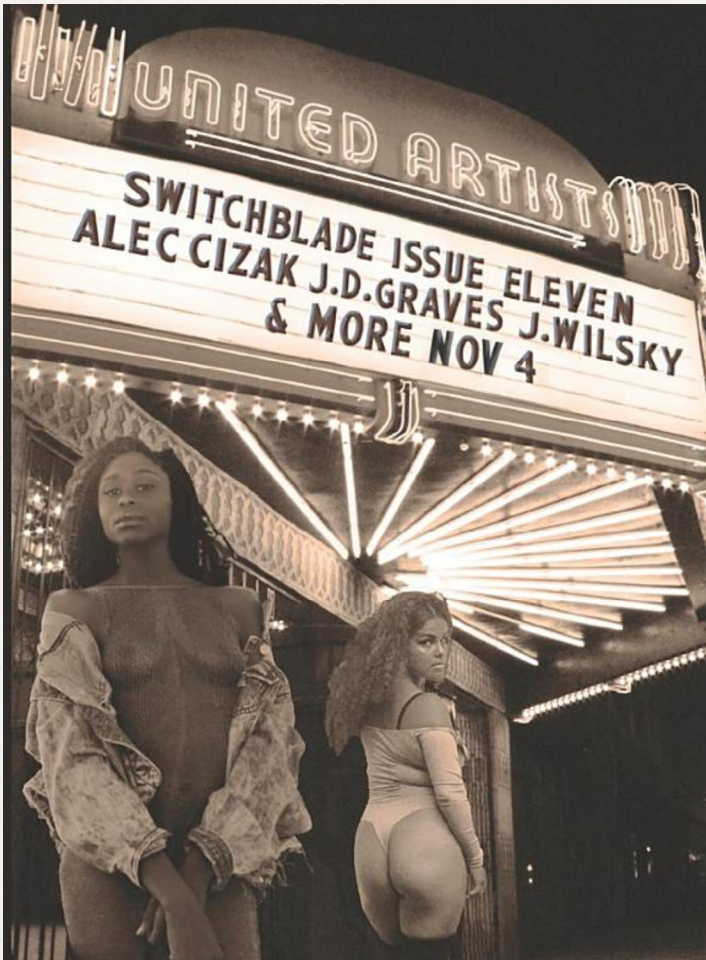
These guys were on last month's reading list, but I can't have a list of new pulp magazines without mentioning the *Men's Adventure Quarterly*. Bob Deis and Bill Cunningham have put together a great magazine that captures the essence of the *Men's Adventure Magazines* of the mid-twentieth century. They provide a blend of short stories, artwork, and pinups from those old men's mags and add history and perspective from editorials and articles.

Each issue has a theme, Issue #1 for example was Western Pulp. My favorite so far has been issue #3, which has two Mack Bolan (*The Executioner*) book bonuses by Don Pendleton. Each issue features short stories from old men's mags with a write up giving some background to the story or the writer. Issue #3 has a guest editorial by Linda Pendleton, which is pretty cool.

They also feature the "MAQ Gal-ery" with pinups like Bette Paige, Juli Reding, Jane Dolinger, and Eva Lynd.

[Click here](#) to purchase your copy of MAQ.

# Switchblade Magazine



Outlaw fiction of the noir/hardboiled variety, aka our kind of content. Now defunct, Switchblade's slogan was, "The World's Only No-Limit Noir Digest Magazine." I'm kind of upset that Switchblade has stopped publishing because we at American Pulp have definitely written some stories that would have been great submissions for their pages. Not to mention they had the kind of attitude and swagger we could get behind.

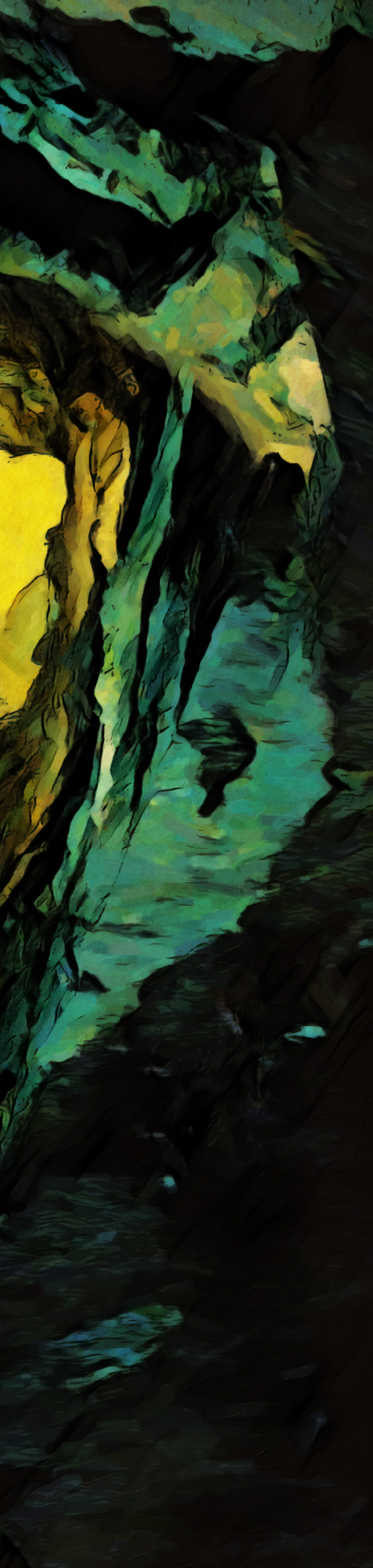
Scotch Rutherford (Great. Fucking. Name), was the managing editor of *Switchblade Magazine* (it was published by Caledonia Press). [Scotch has also written a whole lot of grindhouse/pulp fiction](#) (including *L.A. Stories*). The magazine is no longer, but you can still buy back issues, they had a sixteen issue run. [Click on the link](#) and you can get most of them in paperback or eBook form. And [here's the link](#) to their merch.



# The Extermination Squad

By: P.R. O'Neil





Skeeter and Sam-Sam were playing in the woods — setting rotted tree trunks on fire — when they came across a treasure trove of porno mags and VHS tapes in a hollowed-out log.

“Wuh-we sh-sh-should go to yuh-your place and wuh-watch them ski-skeeter,” said Sam-Sam.

“I dunno, my Ma comes home from work in a few hours.”

Skeeter’s mother was not a nice lady. She called him Skeeter, because “He sucked the life out of her.” Everyone, even the school’s Vice Principal called him Skeeter. His real name was Gerald, he goes by Gerry now.

The two boys were in the 7th grade at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High. It was a muggy Saturday in late May when they found the porno mags, the year was 1997, and summer vacation was weeks away.

“Why don’t we just look at the magazines instead?” Skeeter really didn’t want to risk getting on his mom’s bad side.

They both knew they couldn’t go to Sam-Sam’s house. Sam’s mom worked from home, doing accounting and other menial tasks for the church. When his friends came over she wouldn’t leave them alone. Besides, they had one TV in the living room which was open to the kitchen/dining room, and in full view of the landing upstairs where the bedrooms were. Watching porn in Sam-Sam’s house was a suicide mission.

“Wuh-why would we-we lu-look at pic-tures wuh-when we cuh-can wu-watch videos in-in-inst-ed.”

Sam-Sam had a point. It wasn’t worth arguing. They put all of the magazines and VHS tapes in Sam-Sam’s L.L. Bean backpack and took off on their bikes.

It was just outside the woods where they found Money Mike and Gags wearing only bathing suits and backpacks, on their way to the rope swing at Quarry Lake.

Quarry Lake, used to be a Quarry (obviously), which gave the town of Quarryville its name. Back then, everyone in town worked there. Until one day when the workers went down to the Quarry and found it underwater. Now it's just a fishing spot with a rope swing.

Money Mike and Gags were the only other friends that Skeeter and Sam-Sam had. All of them were misfits, outsiders. Aside from Sam, they all lived in "The Campgrounds" — the poor part of town. It was a former settlement of rustic shacks some guy tried to market as summer rentals for the rich after the Quarry filled with water. In an attempt to make lemons out of lemonade the town went all in making this new lake a recreation destination, stocking it with trout and putting on elegant Summer Balls and Midsummer Night's Dream-themed parties.

For two years curious rich folk actually did come down to the lake to escape the heat. But after a jealous husband shot his wife, her lover, and then himself in one of the shacks; The Campgrounds lost its luster with the rich folk. Then came Prohibition — and the Campgrounds became a haven for bootleggers and prostitutes. Not the kind of place you'd find the Rockefeller family.

The boys knew a kid, Walter Humphrey, who lived in the shack where the double-murder-suicide happened. The place was supposedly haunted. One kid they knew, Tommy Frey, slept over Wally's house and woke up to a young girl holding a one-eyed teddy bear singing *Ring Around the Rosie*. He turned his back to her and the singing got closer, it was like she was whispering in his ear. The next morning, Tommy told Wally his sister was freaking him out. Wally told him he was an only child but that Tommy must have met his imaginary friend Esther. Later Wally just started humming *Ring Around the Rosie* while they were playing. Nobody slept over Walter Humphrey's house again. He works in a bank now.

Sam-Sam may not have lived in the Campgrounds, but he was an honorary Campgrounder — a distinction any pupil at MLK Jr. Jr. High would never strive for. But with his stutter he was a misfit like them, so the Campgrounders took him in. Now he was acting as the porno-pied-piper.

"Guh-Gags. Mu-money Mike. We got puh-pornos!"

"Where in the hell-fuck 'ya get pornos?" Asked Money Mike. He had just seen the movie *Die Hard* for the first time at his older cousin's house and took a liking to the word "fuck," although he rarely used it in the proper syntax.

"In a hollowed-out tree. We were gonna set it on fire. Glad we didn't!" Skeeter held out the VHS tape labeled, *Havana Hunnies* for emphasis. "We got a tape too."

"FUCK!" Said Mike. "You fuckers lucked out. Can we watch?"

"Of course. We're going to my house, we've just got to be ready for when my Ma comes home from Denny's."

They went into the house and marched to the living room. Skeeter was about to pop the tape in the player when Sam-Sam yelled, "Wait!" He took the tape out of Skeeter's hands, went to the kitchen, grabbed masking tape and a Sharpie, put the tape over *Havana Hunnies*, and wrote *Police Academy IV*. "In case your muh-mom comes."

"Good thinking Sam-Sam."

Now, with precautions in place, they popped the skin-flick in the tape player and hit play. The tape was unwound, but they were excited and didn't really care about the movie's plot, so they just watched it from the mid-point. None of them knew entirely what was going on. But just as they were comprehending what they saw, the VHS tape, after years of deteriorating in the hollowed-out log, after years of snow and rain and heat; cracked, fell apart, and got stuck in the tape player. The screen was frozen in the most unfortunate angle it could possibly freeze frame: Looking up at a man's ass as he thrust inside one of the Havana Hunnies.

The boys panicked, as any boy would in this type of situation. Money Mike just paced and muttered "fuck" as the other boys tried in vain to get it out of the player. The tape had unraveled and shards of plastic smashed the shit out of the VHS player's insides like a timing belt does to a car's engine when it snaps. The damage was considerable. In an attempt to get it out, Gags (he had the smallest hands), cut himself on one of the plastic shards. Now he needed stitches. That was when Skeeter's mom came home from working a double at Denny's. To the sounds of Money Mike screaming "fuck," a whole lot of blood coming out of a tiny hand, and some guys asshole on the TV screen.

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Two weeks had gone by since “the incident.” Skeeter’s mom called it nothing other than “the incident.”

Instead of grounding him for a full summer like she had threatened, she only grounded Skeeter for two weeks. She realized that the more he was with his little dipshit friends, the less he was in her hair, and that was a-ok with her.

They had a clubhouse where they would all hang out. It was a rickety treehouse that overlooked The Campgrounds. The walls were made of wood pallets and particle board they found at the dump. The roof was mostly sheet metal, also acquired from the dump.

Aside from providing the boys with their building materials, the town dump was where the boys would spend most of their time. During the previous three summers, they would meet at the town dump and play Indiana Jones looking for treasures. But while Skeeter was grounded, Money Mike Lancelotta got tetanus. The boys found themselves forbidden to hang around the dump and had to find a new spot to hang out.

This is what they were discussing when Skeeter got back to the clubhouse for the first time since his incarceration. When he arrived the other guys were so engrossed in an argument about pickaxes, they didn’t acknowledge his presence. It was Money Mike who spotted him first.

They caught him up on Money Mike’s tetanus and Sam-Sam’s idea for the next Summer project. It made perfect sense, the way many things seem plausible when you’re twelve years old.

Apparently, Sam-Sam had heard about Dutch Schultz’s lost treasure in an *Unsolved Mysteries* rerun back in May, when he was with his grandmother, “watching her stories.” The next day he went to the library and found out Schultz had some place where he hid his bootleg liquor not far from Quarryville — back when Quarryville was a den of depravity and the Campgrounds was a Volstead Vegas.

Also according to his grandmother’s “stories,” Dutch Schultz had a giant gold chest like some gangster pirate and there were rumors of his treasure all over upstate New

York and parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania where he conducted business. Schultz, the Bronx-based bootlegger was gunned down in a Newark steak house in 1935 on Lucky Luciano’s orders. Ever since Schultz died of lead poisoning over that plate of rib-eye, treasure hunters have been after his gold. And so far, everyone has come up empty. Since the boys were broke and didn’t have anything better to do, this became their Summer project.

This project had two goals in mind, becoming rich and famous. The gold would obviously make them rich, but it was important to become famously rich. Even if they had to give up the gold and never made a cent, if they were on the cover of the Quarryville Journal and were *perceived to be rich*, they wouldn’t get picked on for being poor ever again.

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They needed money to fund this excursion so they started a lawn mowing and rodent extermination service. They called themselves The Extermination Squad, but truth be told, they mostly just mowed lawns. They started out going door to door in the most expensive part of town. When they discovered that everyone in the most expensive part of town hired landscapers to do their lawn they spread out to other, less McMansion-y areas. Old people became their main demographic.

All of the kids in tank tops and cargo shorts worked on their tans and mowed with their parent’s push mowers, knocking out 2-3 houses every morning before the sun got too hot at noon. Money Mike, who was the best shot in the crew, brought his pellet gun. He killed three gophers that whole summer. He liked to say he killed for a living.

Sam-Sam wasn’t allowed to wear a tank top because according to his mother that would “invite the wrong kind of woman,” so he wore the smallest and tightest undershirt he could find. It went up to his midsection and was as tight as an extra layer of skin. He looked like an adolescent Hulk Hogan and developed the weirdest tan lines known to man.

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That summer, while they were engrossed in their lawn mowing enterprise and Dutch Schultz’s treasure, there was a modern-day criminal everyone else was preoccupied with: The Somerset Slasher.

# Quarryville Journal

Friday, June 6, 1997

## **Manhunt of the Somerset Slasher Widens** **Escaped Con Kills Two Prison Guards in Daring Escape**

By: Bill Lander

**SOMERSET** — A manhunt spanning the tri-state area is underway for an inmate described as “very dangerous” who escaped from Morton Maximum-Security jail in Morton County, after stabbing two prison guards, using tools to cut through steel bars, and then rappelling from a prison laundry room with ropes made of bed sheets.

The authorities said they believed the inmate — Thomas Hallock, 37 — escaped from the Morton Maximum Security Prison soon after the 8 p.m. headcount on Friday. His absence was not discovered until the 5 a.m. headcount the next day, the Sheriff’s Department said.

Mr. Hallock was incarcerated for murder, kidnapping, aggravated mayhem, and burglary. He is incarcerated for the abduction, torture, and murder of a postal worker in 1994. He was found guilty of taking the postman and an innocent bystander to a hideout asking about “hidden government money,” and cutting off the man’s penis when he did not obtain the money. He then slit the man’s throat, sometime after the other hostage got away and alerted authorities.

Hallock is also thought to be associated with the abduction and murder of an exotic dancer in San Francisco in 1992. He is still awaiting trial for her disappearance and presumed murder.

Sheriff Bruce Montgomery, the county’s top law enforcement official, issued a stern warning to the public Sunday: “Presume that he is armed and extremely dangerous. Do not approach this man.”

“Based on the charges that he’s being held on, I think there is no question that he is very dangerous and disturbed,” said Lt. Jeff Hutchins of the Sheriff’s Department.

In the neighborhoods around the jail, residents heard helicopters overhead on Friday and Saturday nights, and dogs had been searching the area. For some, the prospect that a suspect in killings and kidnapping being on the loose was terrifying.



“I’m really scared right now,” said Monique Bussey, 38. “I probably won’t walk the dogs by myself when it’s darker.” Others, however, felt sure that the escape was far away by now. “He long gone,” said Chloe Thomas, 25. “He ain’t anywhere up here.”

Sheriff Montgomery said the Morton Prison is an older facility, with outdated systems. “People in jail have a lot of time to sit around and think of ways to defeat our security systems,” Sheriff Montgomery said, adding that the authorities “It’s not an excuse but still, they get bored and pick apart our security.”

Authorities have not ruled out that the man the press dubbed “The Somerset Slasher” had some help in his escape.

“This seems to be a coordinated effort. We aren’t ruling out that this man had some help,” said Montgomery. It was believed that there was another man who helped him with both murders back in 1992 and 1994 but when he was apprehended Hallock claimed to have acted alone.

In addition to the Sheriff’s Department, the F.B.I. and the United States Marshals Service are assisting with the manhunt, which spanned multiple counties and states on Sunday. The authorities said there was no indication that the suspect has left the country.

A reward of up to \$85,000 was offered for information leading to his recapture.

### **Generation of Slackers:** **Nobody wants to work**

Opinion By: Phil Rawls

Parents have been too soft on today’s youth. The Baby Boomers, the last great generation, know what it was like to scrape knees and play outside until the street lights came on

“Kids these days just want to play video games and smoke pot. This Generation X — whatever they call themselves — are a bunch of slackers. I blame the Clinton Administration.”

Stephen Stevens, a hedge fund manager at Staki and Staki further elaborated, “It’s the skateboarding and the rap music that’s the problem. That kind of music has no appeal to me

This was also the first summer where girls occupied the boys minds more than treasure and blowing stuff up. Money Mike was the one who crossed that rubicon and had a girlfriend. It was obviously serious after his girlfriend, Michelle gave him her Tamagotchi to take care of while she was at summer camp on a lake that didn't allow electronics. He would check in on the thing incessantly, it started to annoy all of the boys. The thing would beep and he'd go, "Oop. Gotta feed it." Or "Uh-oh, the little guy shit himself." They all hated the Tamagotchi and Michelle for bringing it into their lives. Now she's a makeup artist in Vegas and has two kids, according to Facebook.

The Tamagotchi situation came to a head in Mid-June when the boys were at the clubhouse after mowing only a handful of lawns. Quarryville was experiencing an unseasonal drought and this really dipped into their bottom line. The boys would roll up to one of their customers and the old men would say, "not today." No sense in cutting dead grass. After a day of baking in the hot sun and getting rejected, Skeeter was already a little miffed. So when the stupid Tamagotchi started beeping and Money Mike took it out of his pocket, Skeeter grabbed it.

"If you don't stop with this fuckin thing I'm throwing it out the window."

"Hey man, that's my girlfriends. Give it back!"

"Well if she cares about it so much why are you the one cleaning up it's digital shit while she's getting fingerblasted by a camp counselor at Camp I-Wanna-Lay-Ya!" Skeeter regretted the words as soon as they left his lips, but he couldn't un-ring that bell. Mike flipped the foldup table, soda bottles came crashing down, and before Skeeter knew what hit him, Mike had grabbed him by the shirt, threw him on the ground, and was punching him in the face screaming "TAKE IT BACK MOTHER FUCKER!"

Skeeter raised his arms in defense, he didn't even try to fight back. His shirt was ripped, it was covered in blood and Jolt Cola stains. After Mike tired himself out and walked away from the boys, Sam-Sam gave Skeeter the extra tee shirt he had in his backpack. The kid was always prepared.

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In true adolescent male fashion, the fight was forgotten in a matter of days. After a week

Money Mike and Skeeter were joking about it.

Three weeks after the fight was the 4th of July and the boys were celebrating America's independence with a shit-ton of boom-boom sticks. Gags' dad owned a roadside fireworks stand (TNT BANG-BANG was the name, it was located in a Wal-Mart parking lot from April to August), and every year Gags got the rejects. From this arsenal, the boys would blow up cans and jars at the dump all summer. But every Fourth they went ham with a fireworks display that, looking back, probably terrorized the families in the Campgrounds.

This was their Super Bowl, they lived for deafening their neighbors and terrorizing the dogs in the name of freedom. However this year, Money Mike's head wasn't in it.

His girlfriend was back from sleepaway camp, but her family spent the fourth, and the week after, at a house on the ocean. Mike wasn't invited. He took this as a slight, and when she handed him her Tamagotchi to take care of, he looked at it as a last ditch opportunity to win back her heart. Mike spent the whole summer babysitting the thing. It was basically his at this point.

The other kids dutifully set up the mortar boxes and other apparatus Skeeter built to safely set off fireworks while Mike was busy "playing" with the Tamagotchi, because it was "sad." In order to "play" with this thing, you guess the direction the thing would go in. If you guessed right, it was happy, if you guessed wrong it fell into even deeper depression. The other guys were still very annoyed with the thing, but after seeing how long it took Skeeter's face to fully heal, they decided to leave Money Mike and the Tamagotchi pet alone.

It was game time and Mike's head was in the clouds. He did a half-assed job securing the mortar's shoe they shot the fireworks out of. The shoe was an old lead pipe they found at the dump and although it had some heft to it, the force of the Roman candle knocked it over on the first blast. With the pipe now horizontal, each blast sent it spinning in a different direction like Curley on the Three Stooges running on the floor. The fourth blast was a direct hit with the cardboard box containing... the other fireworks.

Gags, was closest to the blast — before it exploded he was trying to douse it with his can of Coke. He ran away with seconds to spare. The soles of his Nike Crosstrainers on fire as he ran like Sonic the Hedgehog getting a fire boost.

Smoke billowed above the town dump, the

Sheriff came over to inspect the explosion but at that point, the boys were long gone. They spent the rest of the Fourth of July hiding in their clubhouse hoping the Fuzz didn't find out they were behind the explosion.

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After the excitement of the Fireworks explosion, the boys decided they needed to take up safer hobbies, like their pet project trying to find a dead gangster's buried treasure.

The Quarryville Historical Society is an old Victorian Home. The Houghton House, named after its original owner and town founder, Elias Houghton, looked like a creepy doll house.

The place was no stranger to the boys, MLK Jr. Jr High had field trips over there at least once a year. But the guy at the front desk wasn't the usual old man with the pants up to his nipples. It was still an old guy — for them, he was in his thirties, which to a few 12-year-olds is ancient — wearing a fedora and sunglasses indoors. He was reading *Ellery Queen Magazine*, had a goatee, and seemed to have caught the "swing revival" craze of the late 90s, where Gap commercials had swing dancers and Louis Prima songs to sell khakis. This guy probably had the Cherry Poppin Daddy's CD in his car, blasting *Zoot Suit Riot* on his commute, ripping clove cigarettes.

The man looked at the four of them, and pointed to a plaque on the wall, "If you guys do a self-guided tour I can keep reading my magazine and you don't have to hear me talk."

"Wuh-we hu-have a qu-question."

The guy put his magazine down and let out a sigh, "Fine. But only if anyone other than Stuttering Steven here asks it, I don't got all day."

"His names Sam."

"Stuttering Sam, whatever."

"Hey man, you don't have to be a dick.

We're paying customers."

"This place is free shithead," he pointed to the "HELP FUND THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY" plastic jar that formerly housed Cheese Balls as emphasis and continued, "I'm just here to do research on the Campground Murders and then I'll be out of this dump writing for a living."

"We live in the campgrounds, maybe we could help you do research if you're a little nicer."

"Yeah, we'll even introduce you to the kid Wally who lives there and is friends with the ghost. That is. If you're not a dick."

"I suppose a ghost story could add some nice color to my book. OK, what do you want?"

"We want to know everything there is to know about Dutch Schultz in Quarryville."

"Going on a little treasure hunt, huh kids. Well, that I do have a lot of information on. They say he kept his hooch in an old abandoned mine."

The Brian Setzer wannabe got out from behind the counter and took them to the back room. He showed them where to find the old town maps, dating back to when Quarryville was a part of Lancaster in the 1700s. But it was the maps from the 1920s and 30s that Sam-Sam grabbed and made photocopies. Before going back to the front desk, and his magazine, Daddy-O Writer handed them his own personal book about Schultz. Sam-Sam was about to make copies of that but Money Mike grabbed it from him and put it in his backpack. "Fuck that, the guy was a dick to you."

An hour later they were back in the clubhouse with copies of the maps and a book on Dutch Schultz. The Swinger dude highlighted all the gruesome stuff Schultz did to competitors as he rose to the heights as the Bronx Beer Baron — polluting the Harlem River with a lot of men in cement overcoats on his way to the top.

The boys spent most nights in the clubhouse, telling their parents they were sleeping over Skeeters, whose mom didn't give a shit where Skeeter was. They'd get up at the crack of dawn and survey the land with a compass, some binoculars, and a topography map of the town that Sam-Sam had.

It took them a few weeks of surveying the town but Sam-Sam spotted a cave not far from the campgrounds. Well, they thought it was a cave, it was actually an old mine from the 18th Century that pre-dated the Quarry. It fell out of use before the Revolution and was used by Patriot Pirates who would harass Tories throughout the war.

Armed with flashlights and Gags' old Tee Ball bat, a Robin Ventura autographed Louisville Slugger, they started trekking down the best bet they'd had in their quest for Schultz's treasure thus far.



The cave went deep, and they soon discovered that it had offshoots, little caverns that developed naturally from sinkholes and cave-ins since the mine's operation. There was light coming up from one of these offshoots, along with the faint hum of machinery, so they decided to go towards that.

When they got up to the thing making all that noise, it was a gas-powered generator, directly below an air shaft so the man in the cave didn't die of carbon monoxide poisoning. Next to the generator was a card table with a bowie knife sticking up, as if someone stabbed the table. The walls of the cave were decorated with pictures, like pinups in a GI barracks. But instead of naked women, there were pictures of dead people. Not just dead people but mutilated bodies in

varying stages of decomposition. Some of the pictures were polaroids but a good many of them were photocopies of crime scene photographs like the Black Dahlia and the work of famous serial killers.

"I think this is someone's spank room," whispered Money Mike

"This is a messed up spank room," Skeeter whispered back.

Suddenly there was a booming voice from behind the boys, "Are you making fun of me?!"

The boys turned and looked into the vacant eyes of the Somerset Slasher. To them, he seemed eight feet tall. Dressed in all plaid, he looked like a murderous Paul Bunyon. And they dared laugh at his spank room.

Mike dropped his pellet gun in panic. Gags took a swing with his bat in vain, the only thing he hit was the cave's wall. After knocking down a bunch of rocks he dropped his bat. It rolled into the darkness of an old sinkhole. The kids ran in the opposite direction they came from, knocking stuff over to obstruct the man's path.

As they were running towards daylight off in the distance, a silhouette of another man in a fedora materialized in front of them.

"It's the ghost of Dutch Schultz!" Yelled Money Mike. It wasn't. It was the swinger guy from the Historical Society, holding some takeout Chinese food. "Hey I got you some General Tso's like you — Hey! Those are the kids who stole my fuckin' book!"

Skeeter slapped the paper cartons of lo mein and General Tso's out of the guy's hands and the food splattered to the ground. They all ran as fast as they could. In the dark melee, the other boys didn't see Gags and his fire melted sneakers slip on some lo mein and fall on his ass. The Somerset Slasher and his swingin' accomplice pounced on the little kid and tied him up in their dank dungeon.

By the time the boys were a safe distance from the cave, up in the sunlight and behind several trees, they felt it was safe for them to look back and see if the two men were still in pursuit.

"Duh-did you see th-that guh-guy? It wuh-was the Some-Somer-set Slasher."

"Yeah and the guy from the Historical Society is his friend?"

"I knew that guy was a weirdo."

They looked around for Gags to say something in the affirmative. Their friend's absence meant one thing and one thing only. Gags was in a whole lot of shit. Probably tethered in a literal dungeon with a serial killer. They had to save him. And quickly. Mike was certain he was a eunuch already but Skeeter told him there was no way they could cut his balls off that quickly.

"I know what we've got to do, but we've got to go back to the clubhouse to get some stuff." Said Sam-Sam.

"Sam, you didn't stutter."

"I didn't?"

And that was all they had time to discuss. Sam's stutter, which never came back, it was like he was scared out of it. They all hopped on their

bikes and took off for the clubhouse.

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Sam-Sam's plan was very simple: They each take an M-80 from the clubhouse basement (a hole they dug underneath the clubhouse to hide their valuables) and set them off in successive order in a perimeter around the cave. Last, Skeeter — who had the best arm — would throw one into the cave. This would act as a flash grenade and hopefully, daze everyone in there. In the confusion, they would save Gags. This all made perfect sense to the twelve year olds who watched a steady diet of *The A-Team* on *Nick at Nite*. They saw no problems with the plan at all.

When it was time for a little shock and awe, Mike was a little overzealous with his M80. He lit it before Sam-Sam flashed the "go ahead" sign. He was too engrossed in being John McLane, he even let out a "Yippe-kay-yay mother fucker" as he lit it. And right before it went off he said, "Geronimo Mother Fucker."

Money Mike's M80 blast was returned by Sam-Sam saying, "Mike. What the fuck?" Followed by the Somerset Slasher coming out the mouth of the cave and a shotgun blast in the air.

They all froze, including Skeeter who was holding onto an M80 with a lit fuse. If Sam-Sam didn't shout out his name, he would have lost his hand. Instead he threw it at the Somerset Slasher's feet. The man dove out of the way and the boys ran inside like Marines kicking down doors in Fallujah. The blast from the M80 knocked a bunch of rocks and dust up at the Somerset Slasher who twisted his ankle trying to dodge the thing. The rocks hit him like shrapnel and really succeeded in pissing the man off. He limped after them as the boys charged deeper and deeper into the mine to save their friend. Brandishing crowbars and other objects they acquired from the town dump.

The man in the Fedora was standing in front of Gags, who was splayed out like the Vitruvian Man in handcuffs. They were about to "put him on the rack" before Money Mike's M80 disrupted the fun.

Sam-Sam, took a warning swing in the air with his crowbar, "Let him go!" A reasonable request to unreasonable men. To their right they heard the chuh-ch of a shotgun. The Somerset Slasher had the barrels trained on Sam-Sam as he walked between them and the man in the Fedora. Gags was gagged behind them, wailing his arms like an inflatable tube man at a used car lot.



"Wuh-wuh, what are you guh-guh-gonna do about it, freak?" Mocked the man in the fedora. Behind him, Gags successfully slipped his little hands out of the handcuffs, grabbed the bowie knife sticking out of the table, and stabbed the guy in the neck.

The man couldn't scream, he was too busy drowning in his own blood. Perhaps Gags would have quietly escaped that way, but Skeeter just blurted out, "Holy shit. Gags just killed that guy!" and pointed at him.

The Somerset Slasher turned, let out an animalistic roar, and fired both barrels in Gag's direction. He missed Gags and shot his friend in the stomach, blowing a hole straight through, cutting the man in two.

The killer ran to his friend to try to save him, but, both parts of him were long gone. And so were the boys, he looked up and they were already out of sight somewhere in the cavernous tunnels.

They weren't far. They were hiding in an old sinkhole just feet from the man. Their eyes were level with the killer's shoes.

He limped down the tunnel, scanning the darkness with his flashlight. They could tell from the light that he was far away, but not far enough away to take any chances running. Not after seeing what the shotgun blast did to the man in the fedora.

Mike couldn't contain himself, he had so many questions for Gags, "How does it feel to kill someone?"

"Shut up man. He's gonna hear us," shushed Gags.

"Dude, you killed that guy."

"I didn't kill him. Alright, he was dying, sure. But the shotgun killed him."

"No man, I like, saw the light come out of his eyes n' shit."

Sam-Sam shushed them both, "Mike, shut the fuck up. You see the hole in his stomach from the shotgun? Guy was cut in half. Gags didn't kill him." The last thing Sam-Sam wanted was for Gags to start getting self-conscious for murdering a guy. Because, he *did* murder that guy.

"Sam, you didn't stutter."

"Oh yeah, we forgot to tell you, he stopped stuttering after you got kidnapped."

The killer was coming back towards them. That was when the Tamagotchi went off (it was hungry), and the stupid thing started to beep, giving away their location. Sam-Sam kicked Gags' baseball bat with his foot causing more noise.

The Somerset Slasher came over to investigate. He pulled up his sites, and fired it at the Tamagotchi Mike left sitting on the ground, illuminated. The blast destroyed any evidence that the toy ever existed, it also left the man vulnerable, hanging over the sinkhole, off balance, with his ears ringing from the shotgun blast.

That was when Sam-Sam slugged the Somerset Slasher with the tee ball bat. The first swing connected with the man's jawline and the side of his head. Forgive the pun, but it was a home run. He knocked the man out cold. The guy dropped like a felled tree into the sinkhole, hitting his head on a rock.

"Fuck, did you just kill that guy too?" Mike was starting to feel a little left out. He wanted to be John McLane, but he was standing there like Argyle. "I'm gonna go find my gun."

Sam-Sam checked the man's pulse. He was still breathing. Mike felt a little better after that and offered to shoot the man with his pellet gun. Instead, they handcuffed his wrists and ankles with the cuffs Gags escaped from and got a hold of the cops. It turned out the baseball bat to the temple rendered the Somerset Slasher a vegetable. He is now eating out of a straw in Mapleton Correctional down in Florida.

Even though the boys never found Dutch Schultz's treasure, they ended up on the front page of the *Quarryville Journal*, heroes.

# Drink Like A Character:

## Gimlet - *The Long Goodbye* (1953)

**"We sat in a corner of the bar at Victor's and drank gimlets. 'They don't know how to make them here,' he said. 'What they call a gimlet is just some lime or lemon juice and gin with a dash of sugar and bitters. A real gimlet is half gin and half Rose's Lime Juice and nothing else. It beats martinis hollow.'"**

**– Raymond Chandler *The Long Goodbye***

### Recipe:

- 1 ½ oz Gin
- 1 ½ oz Lime Juice

### Instructions:

- Pour gin and lime juice into a mixing glass filled with ice.
- Stir well. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Can also be served on the rocks in a tumbler glass.
- Add a lime wedge as a garnish if you want to be civilized.



The cool thing about this recipe is you don't have to act like Tom Cruise in *Cocktail* when you make it. You don't get bogged down by dumb things like "ratios" to keep you from your drinking. But, Chandler's recipe is a bit tart. Feel free to call an audible and go with 2/1 gin/lime (which is what we suggest).

## Raymond Chandler

Like Rodney Dangerfield, Raymond Chandler was a late bloomer. After losing his job as an oil industry executive at the age of 44, (because of his drinking) Chandler started writing fiction and the world is better for it.

His style has been mimicked by many writers but few have done better than the OG, Raymond Chandler. He wrote 8 novels, all with Private Detective Phillip Marlowe as the main protagonist. He also earned two Academy Award nominations as a screenwriter for the two Film Noir classics, *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Blue Dahlia* (1946).

Funny story about *The Blue Dahlia*. Before production, Chandler promised the producer John Houseman that he was 100% sober when he started turning his half-written novel into a screenplay for Paramount. But about half way through, Chandler got writer's block. He was so stuck he told Houseman he had to jump off the wagon if they wanted the script done on time. He needed his talent juice.

Houseman was cool with it and for the final leg of shooting (they were shooting without a complete script, yeah, it was a tight deadline), Chandler wrote from home. Soused out of his gourd. Later, Chandler earned an Oscar nod and Houseman found out Chandler was never sober to begin with. It was just a ploy to stay home and get hammered.



# UNDER THE KNIFE

A painting in a dark, expressive style. The central figure is a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white dress, looking upwards with a shocked or terrified expression. She is being held from behind by a man in a white shirt and dark pants. In the background, there are other figures, including a man in a white shirt and dark pants, and another man in a white shirt and dark pants. The scene is set in a dark, possibly industrial or institutional environment with greenish-yellow lighting.

She dreamed of  
being Hollywood's  
leading lady

She ended up  
becoming the  
world's greatest  
Nazi Hunter.

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