

Blue Crow

M A G A Z I N E

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FROM THE CRYPT !



Justin Bridges ~ interviews ~ the very dead
serial killer, **PETER MANUEL !** & iconic writer, **J D SALINGER !**

Foreword

by **ANDREW SCOBIE**

(Editor and CEO of Blue Crow Magazine)

IT IS WITH PROUD PLEASURE THAT I INTRODUCE to you the very first issue of Blue Crow Magazine. A great deal of hard labour has been performed to reach this point, though, I must admit, it was mostly a labour of love. Much thanks goes to Matthew Ward for his brilliant cover, studious layout work and last-check editing, and to Justin Bridges for his usual unflappable eccentricity.

We have what we hope you will find to be an excellent collection of fiction from inspired writers, including: Grace Andreacchi, Joseph M Gant, Corey Mesler and Laura Solomon; comedy and/or black humour from Janie Spataro, David Day and Ricky Ginsburg, amongst others; plus new talent on the block in the shape of, Lili Pâquet and John Constantine Dodge; a touch of the absurd from Daniel Trask, and wonderful contributions from a host of other splendid, talented writers.

Due to the large number of contributions we received, I can happily say that the book is quality from cover to cover.

Good writing affects us all; changes our mood, allowing us to focus on issues we would rarely contemplate. Good writing is in its essence a path to our better understanding of life around us and the people we otherwise would never know.

For those writers who unluckily missed out on being included in our first issue, thank you for allowing us to read your work and please submit to us again in the future.

We hope you enjoy!

—*Andrew Scobie*

Note

by **JUSTIN BRIDGES**

(Reviews Editor)

I BELIEVE THE STANDARD OF WRITING IN this inaugural issue of Blue Crow Magazine is extremely high, particularly since those authors have been pitted against my quality interviews. I take full credit for the brilliance of this issue.

I know Scobie and Ward have played a small part in proceedings, but it was *me* who did the hard yards to try and make the magazine even better: I wanted to include a short story about the evolution of the cat species and their integral part in the progress of civilisation, and the achievement of the eventual easily-appeased contentment of the human species. (Of course, I was over-ruled—even though the paper was only a mere 60,000 odd words long). So enjoy your moment in the sun, you *writers*, and know that you cost the reading public a valuable insight into why cats are more important than people!

But good luck to all our fine subscribers. My housekeeper, Mavis Pomona (Mrs) asked me to tell you that, “You have all done very well.” Mavis can be like that: slightly dotty, but very charitable. Everyone should aim for something in life; aiming is the most important thing.

When I was young boy and, like most youth, Mother put me to bed with a warm glass of milk and a spoonful of caviar, she would whisper to me that I could be anything in life that I so chose. She told me that I could work on television; radio, even be the president of the United States.

Sadly, she did not tell me that you have to be born in the US to be president, although the presence of that Austrian-born Governor in California gives me hope. If they change the rules for him, *one* never knows...

But now I'll leave you alone to have an enjoyable read. 🐼

—*Justin Bridges*

Promotion

by Les Zigomanis

i.

The promotion should've been mine. Mine! They implied they were going to choose me if I put in the work, if I put in the time. But in the end they went with an outsider, with Irena, Irena (or *Irenna*, which is how she pronounced her name) Kerkow, Irena Kerkow!

I don't begrudge her. She had as much right as anybody to apply for the position. It's not her fault—this woman, this outsider, who'd emerged from nowhere to usurp what rightfully belonged to me; this woman, who was as unimpressive as she was bland, as she was tremulous, and underwhelming; this woman who, even now, thrashed in the stranglehold of my makeshift garrotte as I choked the life, the ambition, and temerity from her.

I hadn't planned to kill her, really I hadn't. Oh, certainly, you can

make a case that I cut the b-string from my piano; I brought my gardening gloves in to work; and I lay in wait, in the parking lot, enshrouded in darkness, surrounded by thickets, obscured by driving rain which bounced from the glistening asphalt, wearing my aforementioned gloves; but, really, I was only trying to feel self-important.

Then she emerged from the exit of the building, whistling a merry tune (usurpers often whistle), jingling her car keys in her hand as she made her way to her company car (a Beemer), a bounce in her step.

A bounce!

Next thing I knew, I had the piano string tightening around her neck—tightening so that it carved into her throat; shearing industriously through flesh, muscle, and tendon. It felt—and sounded (for what muffled, grinding sound it made, and could be heard through our exertions, not to mention over the rain)—like leather ripping.

She couldn't scream, couldn't use that voice which had inexplicably impressed the Associates into choosing her over me. But she did struggle, for what little it was worth. I was, however, too big. Too strong. Too determined—as determined as I had been when I'd put in the work, the time, because they'd implied the promotion was mine.

I felt a pain slicing into the bottom half of my right hand—it was the piano string which, in my efforts, had cut through my glove and was now in the process of doing to my poor hand what it was doing to the beastly Irena's neck. Oh, the damn woman! Would her inconsideration never end? First my promotion, then my hand! What

more need I go through? Need I suffer?

Gradually, her struggles abated, and her body slumped in my grip, supported only by the piano string. I stood there momentarily, stricken. Irena's keys fell from her limp grip, and the sound of them hitting the ground startled my still thoughts into mania. Where to now? I had not considered this at all, and now that the act itself was done, I was unsure what to do. However, I was an editor, and was used to cleaning up messes. Not to mention that I'd also read my share of mysteries.

The scene! I had to clear the scene!

I went to my battered Ford and opened the boot, which was filled with sacks of remaindered books. I'd collected them periodically from the office, with the intention of disposing of them, but had not gotten around to it yet, (such is the busy life of an editor). But underneath them, I had a tarpaulin, which I pulled out and used to wrap up Irena's body.

Slinging her into a fire-person's carry (if indeed, firemen and firewomen use the same carry), I dumped her in my boot only to find I hadn't the room! Damn remainders! I considered laying her in the backseat, but that was risky. What if I was stopped? And why have her there anyway? Laying there reproachfully as I drove. Hadn't the damn woman cost me enough!

The Beemer!

I recovered her keys, opened the boot, and slung her in there. Ah, a perfect fit! Then I drove to the bay, taking a long, and scenic route—the Beemer was a beautiful car, and who knew whether I would ever have another opportunity to drive one? It was just too good a motoring experience to abbreviate as I had abbreviated Irena.

When I eventually arrived at my destination, I removed Irena from the boot, unwrapped the tarpaulin enough to weight her down with rocks from the bank, wrapped her back up snugly, and threw her into the bay.

So much for her. Now for the Beemer.

For one insane moment, I contemplated keeping it. Why not? It should've been mine! Of course, now it was connected to a disappearance so it had to go. I abandoned it in the northern suburbs—the demesne, I thought, of stolen cars, (not to mention scoundrels).

Then—via our wonderful and ever-helpful public transport systems—I returned to the parking-lot, fetched my own car, and drove home, where I washed out the wound to my hand. It stung bitterly, and I imagined it would hurt worse tomorrow. Oh, that damn woman! I wish she could feel this pain!

Still, it was a small price to pay.

• • •

ii.

It started with the *Gems*—not real gems, but books, old classics, which the Associates had wanted me to repackage and re-release. They say you should never judge a book by its cover. Maybe that's true. What's truer is that you can sell books with really nice covers.

I met the Associates in their conference room, taking the elevator up to their floor. The elevator itself rattled and heaved in its shaft, and had a propensity to short-circuit if you pushed too many

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The Justin Bridges

Interviews:

Interview with **J D
Salinger:**

*The Late, 'Catcher in the
Rye' Author!*

This is the record of an interview I conducted in February this year with the celebrated author of 'Catcher in the Rye' and renowned recluse, J D Salinger. The author had recently died and so with the help of my housekeeper and cleaning lady, Mavis Pomona (Mrs), who channels the deceased from the other side, I attempted to capture Salinger's thoughts and comments for posterity. (J.B)...

...

Mavis? Are we ready to go?

Mavis gave a slight nod to indicate that the spirit of the great J D Salinger was within her. (J.B)

Mr Salinger? Or may I call you J D? I am so looking forward to this interview. I realise you seldom gave interviews during your lifetime and the last one you agreed to was way back in 1980.

(Silence)

I am particularly interested in your inspiring character, Holden Caulfield—I used to have an old Holden sedan when I was doing my degree in communications at Sydney University, you know—and I understand that your stories were refused by the New Yorker numerous times before they finally accepted your work—that’s just like me, you see. They’ve rejected me so many times I’m beginning to think they don’t like my stuff—Last time I sent them one of my longer sonnets, I got an email back saying, ‘Stop stalking us!’

(Silence)

You don’t appear to be very talkative, Mr Salinger. I know you are a recluse, but this is starting to become a touch annoying.... I’ll try again... Do you believe you were scarred by your wartime experiences and that is why you hid from the public for most of your latter life, indulged in Zen Buddhism and, other, slightly



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Twins

by **Laura Solomon**

I have two heads. I say 'T', I mean we, me and my conjoined twin. She is Trinity, I am Stella. Between us we have two hearts, three lungs, two spines and two heads, as formerly mentioned. Currently, we are learning to drive. We are ever so co-ordinated. People are impressed. Trinity takes control of the wheel, the lights and the indicators, and I take control of the pedals. Off we go, wheee whizzing round traffic islands, ducking and diving through the dirty streets of London, then on to the M4 to Bristol to visit Aunt Margaret. At birth, we had a one in thirty million chance of survival. We beat the odds, we pulled through, survivors. We love life; how grateful we are to be here, how thrilled; each day is a tiny little gift. We make the most of it, get on with it. Wallowing in self pity is not for us. We are battle-hardened. Our parents protected us; said no to the medical men who wanted to make lab specimens

of us, poking and prodding and mauling, documenting, labelling, filing away. The world is obsessed by us. We have no desire to be a freak show, though we are one of course. In the street, people stare and take photographs, as if we are Beyonce or J-Lo or Madonna. We hate it. A normal life is what we crave; dignity, composure—heads held high. After all, we are not disabled, not technically. Mentally we are in fine working condition.

At school there has been some cruelty, but also compassion. Nice girls, those Benson twins, is what people say, and we are nice, we do unto others. Mockery is inevitable, it's typically short-lived and then one of our friends, Evelyn or Kylie or Diana will step in and tell the mocker to shut their fat face or they'll shut it for them. A good group of mates shelters us from storms that might otherwise blow our way. Academically, we excel, Trinity's the mathematical type, I'm more of the arty sort, into poetry and painting, though we're also careful not to try too hard in case the other kids get jealous and pick on us even more. Anything to try and blend in. Other people project emotions onto us—hate, fear, pity, love. That's their problem. We shuck it off, off it slides, whoosh, water off duck.

There are fights—we are not saints. We bicker in the morning about what clothes to wear; I'm very 'street'—hoodies and baggy jeans worn down low with the knickers poking out the top and big chunky, brightly-coloured necklaces. Trinity's more conservative, into neatly pressed slacks and dressy shirts, a classy pearl necklace to top the outfit off. Our mother has told us that we must learn to compromise, to take turns; Trinity dressing us on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays and me taking the other days, swapping the regime round the following week. We tried it, but we

still bicker. There is sometimes conflict between us. Omigod, I'm not wearing that. That's hideous. What do you think we are? A gangsta? Or, Wouldn't be caught dead in that in a month of Sundays. We look like a forty-four year old corporate exec. People say that Trinity has the dominant personality, that she's very outgoing. 'Bubbly' is the word they use. I exist primarily in an interior world, a landscape of words; I see everything through the lens of literature, I have been shaped by Keats and Yeats and Wordsworth, by Maurice and Maggie Gee, by Janet Frame and Jeanette Winterson. My mind produces snippets of sentences at random moments, fragments, ill-shaped pearls.

We arrive safely in Bristol. Aunt Margaret is in the kitchen, baking a lemon meringue pie, Trinity's favourite. She hums as she works, hmmm, a pleasant sound like bees swarming around a hive. In the past, Aunt Margaret has been severely depressed, lying in the corridor, weeping and wailing for days on end. Now she takes antidepressants and lives her life at a slow, manageable pace, just one steady footstep after the other, left, right, left, though she does have relapses, falls into crevasses of the mind. She does gardening and yoga. She's never been married and personally I think that loneliness is one of her big problems, rattling around in that big old house that her father left her when he died, all those empty rooms, too much time on her hands. She doesn't have to work; her father left her a wad of dough. Aunt Margaret is fragile; we pay her these visits to cheer her up. She loves us, throws her arms around us, smothers us with affection. She feels for our plight, people often do, but no, we are not to be pitied. Fate dealt us a certain hand; it could have been better, but it also could have been a whole lot worse. We are expert in making the best of things. We are practical girls. Two heads are better

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