

an exhibit of Behrend students' expressive thoughts

The Desert Magician

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continued from the Oct. 2 Showcase

"You got a permit for that thing, Hop? And don't you lie to me!" I interjected. Guns were something I was touchy on. Some say I'm more concerned with them than the written law is, but it is what it is.

"Yes, I certainly do, sir," he responded, calmly plying his wallet from his back denim pocket. "I've got it right in here, sir. Good ol' boy over in Sante Fe said I best be protected. He also said these Mexicans ain't to be trusted, but I wasn't quite ready to go as far as that one. I'm one to believe in those types. You know me, sheriff."

"I do," I reassured, grabbing the yellow slip with my thumb and knuckle, scanning it over for a purchase date and a notarized stamp. "Go on."

"So, I had my shotgun pointed at him, and then I lost my sight. I know it sounds like a load of bullshit, sir - pardon my French - but I swear, some kind of bright light came out of this here stone."

My gaze fell from the permit to the oddly-shaped rock that was laying on the table. The craziest part about it all was... I believed him. Sure as shit, I knew... this stone wasn't an ordinary desert slate. There was something more to it, and when Hopper went on, I knew I'd be hearing more about this magician fellow down at the station.

"So, I was blinded, ya see? And, I'm ashamed to say this, but I pulled the trigger. I fell backwards and landed hard on my lunch bag. Sara's famous Texas Spaghetti got all over my backside, but I was too scared to laugh. I got my sight back and stood up to find out he was gone."

"Disappeared?" I asked, still staring at the stone, which now seemed to starting to glow a light blue. I wasn't sure if it was my own imagination or if it really glowed, so I didn't mention it. "Like gone or left the store?"

"I'm not quite sure, but what I am damned sure of is that I didn't hit him with the pellets," Hopper informed and pointed behind him. "I took out a bag of dog food."

I stared behind him, perplexed by the whole thing, watching a few chunks of red and brown dog food occasionally drop out of one of the many holes onto the stock floor. It was the beginning of the end for Larkin, New Mexico. I didn't quite know it then, but I soon would.

After a couple more cups of coffee and a good discussion about what Hop thought the motives were behind such an incident. He didn't have much to say other than maybe some sort of alien force. Myself, I never understood why weird events always sparked these sudden beliefs in aliens among most of the locals. I was rather partial to demonic activity. At least that had some resonance, in my opinion. The whole alien thing just seemed entirely too farfetched for a southern sheriff like myself, and to an extent, seemed even more farfetched to me that the locals would believe such things. Hell, it doesn't matter much, I suppose.

Anyways, I figured it was best to confiscate the stone and put in our evidence locker down at the station. I wondered if the lock and key could keep something so mysterious in its place. I ain't ever heard of something being stolen from the evidence locker, let alone broken out. It scared me to a degree, and that was probably where I went wrong. The idea of being scared was a proposition to all of those evil forces out there, saying, "Take me! Do what you will!" That was certainly not something I wanted to throw into the desert air. Janet began to convince me that the demonic thing was malarkey, as well. My wife of 20 years, and station secretary of the same, often read books about crazies that broke out of prison to commit crimes on the locals and stir up a big scare. Living in the scenery she read about was, from this old man's point of view, a horrible thing for her. I remember the night I explained the events to her.

"Who would do such a thing?" I questioned her after I finished. It was an automatic response to her long, sullen pause. Apparently, the story had driven her to lose her speech. "I've never heard of a good ol' boy like Hop being messed with in these parts."

That statement was only true to an extent, considering we had those rowdy teenagers every once and awhile, but suggestions of curfew change on the local news recently changed those tendencies. Jane finally began, "He was one of those mental cases that escaped San Quentin a couple months back. You remember that story, don't you?"

I just grinned at both her memory and her novel-inspired theories being showcased. However, I did remember the case. The headline read: Seven Men Escape San Quentin Prison. It was an exaggerated story, from my perspective; a lie to the public. The truth was that seven men escaped, but they were all killed in the desert by the heat and lack of water. You don't get far from San Quentin Correctional Facility without a sense of direction. Most men find that the haze creates a sort of a directional labyrinth, and the seven reported mobsters from New York ended up circling a large perimeter just out of sight of the tower guards.

"Guineas never had a chance in this heat," a friend of mine, who worked over at SQCF by the name of Rick Thomas, reported. "The sun ate 'em up like there 'uz no tomorrow, found 'em face down, almost covered in sand, shirtless with their skin drier than a cactus' ass."

My wife never followed up her paper reading chronologically. If she did, that wouldn't have ever have come to her mind as a possibility. I didn't tell her she was wrong. I figured it wouldn't have mattered whether I did or didn't. She would've just picked the paper off of the kitchen table, read for a second or two, and came up with a hundred more theories of this magician fellow. Instead, I had thanked her for the help and let her return to preparing the potato salad for the family reunion the day after. It was a beautiful day; nothing like firing up a grill out in the desert evening. There really is something magical about it.

to be continued in the next Showcase

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Vermont's road-side waterfalls are breathtaking in the fall. Meisha Freeborough, sophomore business and finance major

Autumn in Vermont



Support for a Tattered Soul

He thought that by leaving them with me, maybe I'd eventually understand where he came from. Maybe I'd understand where he wanted to go. He didn't know the only person's shoes I was gonna put myself in were my own. Meisha Freeborough, sophomore business and finance major

... tongue.
... up with blood.
... from saying your name,
... and call you again,
... but I can't make it real.
... but the pulse remains.
... to feel the absent love's pain.
... grand.
... a bad hand.
Jennifer Sch...
freshman environmental science and education major