



CAFFEINE ZINE
A COLLECTION OF THE DIVERSE AND NON-SENSICAL

A Windy Ride From Weslaco
by Andy Cripe

Obviously, I enjoy riding motorcycles. I refer to it as my cycletherapy, and I must need a lot of it because I do a lot of it. I'll ride almost anywhere in almost any kind of weather, any time of year (living in South Texas, that isn't saying much). I've slogged through storms in San Antonio, forded floods in Falfurrias, dropped my wife Mary in a mudhole in Mexico (that was real good), but one of my most memorable rides was a windy ride home from Weslaco. I didn't have my camera along with me that day, so you'll just have to cope with the lack of pictures.

I left Corpus Christi that morning last May to make a day trip down to the Rio Grande Valley for work and was headed home in the afternoon. The weather forecast was for strong west winds with gusts 40 to 60 miles per hour. Since I like to ride, I took the bike anyway. Heading home, I remember thinking the forecasters probably underestimated the wind strength. It was the type of west wind that blows out of West Texas and dumps red dirt all over every car in the Coastal Bend. All the car washes in town just love those winds.

I headed north on Hwy 77 for the 150-mile ride home from Weslaco to Corpus Christi with my bike leaned over so far into the wind, my footpeg was touching down occasionally. Everything was fine and I was usually keeping the bike in my lane, until I raised my visor to adjust my glasses and the wind tore the visor right off the helmet. Then it grabbed the opening in my full-face helmet and tried to twist the helmet around sideways on my head. Since I can't see out of the

side of my helmet, I rode along, bike leaned into the wind, hunching my shoulders trying to keep the helmet on straight. That didn't work too well.

I finally did what any self-respecting biker would do; pulled off the highway, fished around in my saddlebag and dug out my handy-dandy, adjustable-length bungee cord, hooked one end of it into the opening on my helmet and the other into the luggage rack on the back of the bike, got back on the bike and rode on up the highway with the bike leaned over into the wind and the bungee cord holding my helmet on straight. That worked pretty good. At least for the next 40 miles.

Hwy-77 passes through a good chunk of the King Ranch (one of the largest ranching operations in the world) and there is nothing along the highway for miles but mesquite brush, prickly pear cactus and the scrubby oak trees we have in South Texas. About 5 miles before the immigration checkpoint at Sarita, I rode through a construction zone. Coming up on it, I could see something flapping around in the median of the highway. It was a big piece of that black cloth construction companies use for erosion control and it looked like bad news.

I rode down the right shoulder of the highway, keeping a wary eye on that cloth and, sure enough, just as I came up on it, it came loose and blew across the highway directly at me. I threw up my left arm trying to fend it off and the cloth wrapped itself around my arm and around my helmet, knocking the bungee cord loose. The helmet snapped around sideways in the wind, further wrapping itself up in the cloth and all at once, somebody turned out the lights. I probably looked like a cross between the statue of liberty, with my arm stuck up in the air, and blind justice, but I didn't have a torch or a set of scales.

Though I'm ashamed to admit it, I was screaming like a little girl. I lost control of the motorcycle, bounced across the ditch and slammed into the fence along the side of the road, head-on. The impact tossed me over the fence and I wound up flat on my back somewhere in the King Ranch, still all wrapped up in that construction cloth with the wind still

howling. (I looked up that cloth on the Internet sometime later. They said it was a geosynthetic woven textile with a grab tensile strength of 200 lbs. I believe every bit of that!) That cloth decided to turn into a parasail, ballooned up in the wind and started dragging me off across the pasture. I did have my mesh jacket on, a set of leather gloves and was wearing work boots and my kevlar blue jeans so, though I was getting beat to pieces bouncing across the pasture, I wasn't losing too much hide. Everything was gonna be OK.

I finally got my feet under me, stood up, and started reeling in this stupid piece of geosynthetic woven textile so I could finally get unwrapped. It was about then I realized something was stomping around behind me and breathing pretty heavily. I knew it wasn't my wife having a bad day because I'd left her at home. Whatever it was took a run at me and WHAM!, nailed me right in the middle of the back, knocking me tailbone over teakettle. I cartwheeled through the air, smacked into one of those scrubby oak trees and wound up hanging upside down in the tree. My legs were wrapped around a limb. I was holding on to another branch with my one free arm and my helmet was banging against the trunk of the tree in the wind. I found myself wondering, "How come when life throws me a party, I get to be the pinata?"

I finally got myself unwrapped from the cloth, got my helmet screwed around straight and took a look at whatever booted me into next Tuesday. It had to be the scrawniest, ugliest, most beat-up longhorn bull on the King Ranch. It had one broken-off horn, a chewed-up tail and, apparently, not too many brains. It knew I was still in the neighborhood, but couldn't figure out where. Still hanging upside down in the tree, I had an idea: I took that damned piece of geosynthetic woven textile and started lowering it down where it was flapping in the wind right in front of that bull's nose and he

took the bait. He backed up, snorted, did all the cliché things you see bulls do in bullfights or Saturday morning cartoons, and took a run at the cloth. I turned loose just as he hit it.

That cloth very obligingly wrapped itself around the bull's horns, decided to do its parasail act again and started dragging the bull off across the pasture in the wind. We both saw it was headed right for what was probably the largest patch of prickly pear cactus in South Texas. The bull put on the brakes. He had both forelegs out in front of him, squatted down on his haunches and was plowing up four furrows of ground. It did no good at all. He got drug right through that patch of cactus. Prickly pear pads went flying everywhere. That bull was screaming like a little girl. He would have been a lot better off if he had gone through that cactus standing up, if you know what I mean.

I laughed so hard I fell out of the tree. Luckily, I was still wearing my helmet, so it didn't do me much further damage. I picked myself up, got myself squared away and headed off upwind, trying to find the fence and my motorcycle. I located the bike and it was still rideable, so I got it back on the highway, dug around in my saddlebags for my back-up bungee cord (any self-respecting biker always carries at least two bungee cords), hooked it up to my helmet and to the luggage rack on my motorcycle and set off up the highway.

By the time I got to Kingsville the wind died down, but that just created another problem. I had worn so much rubber off the left side of my tires that I could only turn left. I wound up riding around in circles in the Kingsville Wal-Mart parking lot and never did make it home.

MY NAME IS IAN, AND I'M FROM MINOR THREAT

BY F.

She was thirty when she took up smoking, a rare coup for the cigarette companies. Healthy, well-educated, no past history of mental disorders. Marketing patted each other on the back, and bought her a drink. She reached self-consciously for a cigarette, puffed on it to hide her discomfort at the attention. They thought this was delightful, and bought her another drink. She'd come so far, it was remarkable. From zero to nervous tic in a week. Wasn't it grand? Just grand, they all agreed, and patted each other on the back some more.

Marketing invited her to speak at their next meeting, to explain what convinced her. Two of them had a gentleman's bet going, strictly friendly, as to if it was the new print ads, or the Beautiful Men campaign. She laughed, awkwardly, and sipped at her dry vermouth, as the two leaned in closer, with a slightly ungentlemanly glint in their eyes. It was neither, she finally managed to say. Neither one. The Beautiful Men proponent slumped, and the print man leaned back, tense. A third man laughed, slapped them both jovially, told them to buck up. Tough luck, boys. It had to have been television.

She'd been asked to speak to their competition, too, to explain where they went wrong in reaching her demographic. Ladies of a certain age, is how they had phrased it. She'd never thought of herself as of a certain age, and she hated public speaking, but she had agreed, stammering slightly on the phone. Marketing had been amused to hear this, and, laughing, bought another round. Just think of those chaps over there, pulling their hair out over what had worked. Oh, they must be mad. The two who had the failed bet offered her a fifty if she would put them on the wrong track. Say it was print, one suggested ruefully, and we might get some good

out of the campaign after all. They were very good natured about the whole thing.

The drinks were stiff, and she relaxed a little. They were all such nice people. It was rare to have anyone so interested in her. They all laughed, wholeheartedly, when she asked if they minded if she smoked, and then realizing, she giggled, too. Of course they didn't. Of course. One even offered to smoke as well, to make her feel more companionable. Did company make her feel more inclined to smoke? They leaned forward again as they asked, and one, the television man, surreptitiously took a note of her answer, but she didn't mind. It was just their job, after all. Ceci n'est pas une pipe, she ventured, smiling slightly, and they all nodded encouragingly. She was very well-educated indeed. It was wonderfully strange, a puzzle. They were looking forward ever so much to her presentation. One of them, the youngest looking, even wanted to sneak in to see her speak to the competitors. They had all taken such an interest in her that it was very flattering.

The young one complimented her sweater, and asked if she kept a cat. Demographics, he half apologized. You know how it is. She didn't, but pretended. No, no cat. The rest of marketing shoved him to the back of the group, and offered her a third drink. They'd pay for a cab, she didn't have to worry about driving. It was the least they could do. After all, they didn't want to have her taking any risks. One of them laughed at this, but the others looked so sympathetic that she couldn't refuse. They were such great listeners, all of them. The newspaper man signaled the bartender, and brought her something with an umbrella this time. It tasted strange with the tobacco, so she put out her cigarette. The young one had found his way to sit beside her again, on her left, and asked, rather boldly, why she had really started. Started what? She was honestly confused for a moment, before remembering what they all worked for. They all seemed more alert at this, like they had tensed up without moving at all. She wasn't sure why she felt that way, as they were all lounging sightly, all unstudiedly calm and cheerful. One of them quite casually laid an arm across the bar, just on her right side.

Truth was, she didn't quite know. One day, over a morning cup of coffee, she explained, she had simply felt the impulse. This didn't seem to be enough, though, with the nice men all watching her, one with a not quite hidden notepad at the ready. She supposed the fact that her young nieces and nephews smoked helped. It seemed fine for them. Marketing relaxed, as she was silent

for a few seconds, thinking of how to please them with a fuller story. The newspaper man grinned, broke the silence, scolding the young one for getting impatient. Can't rush the revelations. It'll all come clear at the presentation, that's enough.

At the thought of the presentation, she winced slightly. It was getting late, and she had to figure out what she was going to say in front of all those people. Marketing closed ranks around her, as she shifted as if to get up, and bought her another vermouth. She liked vermouth better than the fruity drink they had brought earlier. She lit a third cigarette, and they all smiled at her. Such friendly people. She wondered if they always drank this much on a night out, though. She had never been a heavy drinker, even back in college, but they were all on their third or fourth drinks, too. They all were very indulgent with her. The young one looked like someone famous, and they all made suggestions to help her figure out whom. Someone she had seen on television, she thought. The newspaper man was amused at this, and the Beautiful Men designer was too. They were both so self-deprecating over it now. Everyone watched television.

She had never thought of herself as interesting, she admitted. Certainly not enough for a, what was this, a focus group? Perish the thought, they all assured her. She was fascinating. And no history of mental illness at all. Not even a psychiatrist, and everyone had a psychiatrist. Not her, of course. Perish the thought. They laughed at her almost unconscious repetition. And they were all so nice to her. She took another drag off her cigarette, then stubbed it out and stretched. They're very good people in marketing.

VALLEY OF FIRE: WORKINGS OF A SOUL
BY REBEKAH MILLER

It was a desolate place, the ground was darkened like it had been burned and the sky was a scorched brown color as if the flames had tainted it. In the distance there was a small mound, as I got closer I realized it was bigger than I thought. There was an almost heart shape sitting at the top with a bright and shiny cover over the front extravagantly decorated. When I was standing before it a girl popped out from behind it and moved away the bright exterior. She was holding a shield that strapped to her arm, ducking in the entrance of a small warm red mud cave. In the cave was a stairwell leading down, I have not yet had the courage to go down that way and see what was beyond.

Turning my head from the sky I realized she'd said my name, loudly and clearly. At first I couldn't hear her, her mouth moved but no words made it to my brain. Yet I knew what she was saying at the same time.

"The flood of darkness put out the flames," she was explaining motioning to the burnt field surrounding the heartcave. "The first time a fire was lit in this place, it was to keep bad fires from burning any further. This was the only protection from them and it worked. You can grow flames here once more, but you must renew the sky so the soil will nourish them with oxygen." I look back to the sky, the light dull through the misty brown that scorched it once. "Awaken the sky." She says calmly as though I would know how to do such a thing. "This is your sky and it is mine. You know this the same as I know this. I am a branch of you, you left me in this place, that you might find it once again. Just as promised you are here, though much different looking to me." She is me, as I look at her. Her robes are long and dirty, she rests her shield in the burnt earth. Her hair is put up nicely with strands loosened here and there, but her face, that pale skin and those full lips. She is indeed me. "Will you be going downward then?" at first the statement confuses me and then it strikes, she's referring to the cave. The heartcave lying with it's mouth open to me, the stairs like a tongue in a mouth leading downward. I look at her, me.

"I can't, not right now. I am not ready. First I will set this field alight once more, then I will discover what awaits in the belly of this place." I realize that the world in which I live is the sky in this world. When it is tarnished in my eyes, the sky grows black within me. I will light a fire, in the sky, on the ground and with every step I take.

I wondered at it, looking down at my small, pale, scarred hands wringing each other. I question my methods and means in a

reflective haze. Longing to understand or decipher any meaning from this life. I force my attention on the desolate field in front of me, a coolwarm breeze brushes my hair against my shoulders. I suddenly feel like I'm missing something, I want to reach for my sword to remind myself I am safe. I ponder what is beyond the field when a voice behind me addresses my unspoken thoughts.

"I bet you will feel it calling soon," my eyes scan the horizon, flat in some places, hilly to mountainous in others. I feel that there are mountains further than my mind can sense. "You're an amazing swords woman you know." There is the soft glow of a low hanging moon, no matter the time of day or night.

"I don't really think I should leave now that I've found this place, beyond the clearing, life is unstable." It's quiet but the whisper of the soft wind.

"You probably shouldn't enter the heartcave without some protection, since we don't know what's down there." We watch orange clouds pass over the valley of fire. Memories of weapons clanging are faded trying to reach me, I sigh observing the warm moon bouncing around the sky. Eyes catching again on the images in the sky.

[CHANGE]

BY TAYLOR ANNE PRESCOTT

THE RIDER

BY JOSHUA CRIPE

DEDICATED TO DAD

Count the dots on the
ceiling and wonder if
the stars match.
Your spirit was free
[once]. Open to
experience and change.
Welcoming the scent
of [a stranger's] skin
and the taste of
familiar lips.
Young and idealistic
you could conquer
[old] ghosts and
haunts just by smiling.
It's a shame you couldn't
[want to] understand.
And so you lay
down [on your back]
and count the dots in the
ceiling wondering if the
stars you could
[never] touch, match.

He let the miles roll by beneath him
As the clouds rolled on above him
The weather rained
The weather poured
But never could defeat him

He rode through mountains
And Death Valley
Across the grandest canyons
Under trees
And through the seas
All that the world could hand him

With the eyes of a hawk
And a tank of gas
He'd find the furthest reaches
Never dropping
Only stopping
When he made it to the beaches

He was a rider as his daddy rode
A rider as the women know
A rider
Always riding
Down the longest roads

TRANSLUCENT
(A BASTARDIZED SESTINA)
BY ALISON WADDY

When it is three a.m. and I
crave poetry more than rest
I read and so begin to
fear that even poets are not right
that we aren't saying anything
words translucent as tea

So I drink jasmine tea
without sugar or anything
Bukowski on the armrest
mug steaming on my right
I've had enough of him to-
night. Just this tea and I

Remember my mom tried to
tell me jasmine smells like rest-
aurant restroom soap or something
but when I breathe this tea
It is all wildflower steam I
don't think that she was right

Or maybe it is just too
late to think of poetry and the rest
of these words are as deep as tee-
shirt slogans I
can't wear this silly thing
I have to write!

With only these translucent tea
words I love you too
words don't bother it's nothing
words. I found some in a rest-
room stall. The format wasn't right
at all but I still got a few ideas, I

fear you'll have to wrest
this pen from my right
hand if you want me to do anything
tonight but write about toothpicks and tea
until the east sky breathes orange and I
write about that too

Or maybe I'd just like to rest
Sip tea and not write anything

EXPLICIT.
BY S. JOHNSON

my pulse beats harder with one thought of you
and my heart thuds louder in my ears
but the room grows silent as i trace your silhouette in just memories.

flirt.
smile.
kiss.
touch.
trace.
explore.
pleasure.
heat.
motion.
come.
sound.
coming.
breathe.
came.
satisfaction.
climax.

porcelainandred.
onblack.

mylove.
myarms.
myheart.
mylife.
mine.

i want you.
i crave you.
i dream you.
i taste you.
i cherish you.
i respect you.
i worship you.
i. need. you.

you are horrible and incredible,
justified and wrong,
my one true thriving conviction.
you are my religion and my constant.
you are the best in my evils and the worst in my truths.
you are me, my better half, my lover, my best friend.

FOLLOWING LANDSCAPE

MOUNTAIN POOL

BY BLOODOVE PHOTOGRAPHY

COVER ART

BIRDS AND THE FLIES

BY BLOODOVE PHOTOGRAPHY

CAFFINE ZINE LOGO

UNTITLED

BY ERIN KOPPY



MEMORIES
BY COLIN SHIELDS

Whatever happens from here, this must continue. If it doesn't, things will never change; I will never change. The most important moment is right now because it's all we have. It's all we've ever had and will, each one passing by the next forming an endless vortex of 'this' moment; constant, unchanging, no more or less relevant than the last. It is here that we as an intelligent species of mammals dwell. Here in the present is exactly where it is, where it always has been and always will be as long as there is a 'you', an 'us'.

Ohayocon...what a weekend! I don't really know how exactly to describe it; I think doing so would do it injustice. The experience is too dense for words, no amount of detail or description can capture the aura of that place in time. Even now people are still texting me about it, people who I met over that weekend and some I can barely picture in my head. The upshot is they're all girls! So I guess there's no sense in complaining about the rampant buzzing of my phone. One after another after another, con girls talking to 'the Joker'. Interesting that none of them have seen my real face; it remains an anomaly to all of them. I'm sure they will see it though eventually, seeing how a few of them would more likely than not be willing to hang out sometime. Take advantage of the choices open to you: don't let them slip away. Do remain vigilant as not to scare any of them. We're talking about all chance encounters at a con, so assume everything is on good terms. (Looks at phone) and there's another text.

:SOCIAL NETWORKING:OR:SPILLING NONSENSE
BY REBECCA LYONS

Today I bought Duct Tape and sang a song about Tabasco sauce with a random HEB employee. I was ecstatic to see how far I have come in being able to interact with random strangers. I need someone, preferably not a stranger, to remind me to not take two classes during the same semester that are centered around war ever again. I am afraid the horror and depression of wars are beginning to affect my genuinely positive outlook on life. Like the other day, when I felt like an inadequate Google. People ask me questions and I usually don't know the answer, but they still keep asking. Do they expect that someday I'll suddenly know all of the answers? Should I be expected to expect myself to be capable of knowing these expected answers and meeting others' expectations, whatever they are? I did manage to exceed my own expectation the other day by totally owning (lingo for "doing well") on a history test. This certainly helped return me to feeling like my perky self. I wondered if anyone else would notice and be excited.

Sitting under the stars writing. (Why can't all homework be like this?). Frustrated.

She likes when people handle things like the adults they claim to be...
...blowing bubbles...
predicting another fun, adventured-filled 9am-9pm day!

--"Although I live in a merchandise society, I don't try to keep up with it. I don't even watch TV unless it is a live sports event or something happening right then. When you watch someone pretend to live life, you[re] wasting your time."

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE END
by Valerie Valdes

In the beginning, they had no eyes; they wove in darkness with black thread. Then He Who Is gave eyes to the spinner, and fibers of many colors, and so the world began. But it was chaotic and without form, so He Who Is gave eyes to the weaver, and she ordered many threads. She separated sky from earth, ocean from land, and every living thing was woven into the tapestry to please He Who Is with their beauty.

But the tapestry grew chaotic once again. Too many threads needed constant weaving and reweaving, and new threads were added. She who had once cut the threads still had no eyes, and was afraid to damage the great work her sisters had created. He Who Is saw the world overburdened with fecundity, and visited the three to ask why they had allowed this. The youngest sister turned her blind eyes to him and explained her fear.

He Who Is smiled. "You are blind so you will favor no thing over another," he said. "Do not neglect your duty." And so death came to the world, and so it comes for all.

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First and foremost, a special thank you to Lady K who has helped me to discover my true potential.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank the Cripe family, without them, I wouldn't even be here. ...or would I?

I would also like to extend a thanks to my friends, including, but not limited to, the following:

Comrade and Comradess Taylor of Bloo Dove Productions

F! who's the best and oldest friend I've never met

RebAlikahson Waylor, a shoulder when I needed it and a flogger made with love

Taylor Anne Prescott, I swear I'm still going to buy your book

Rebecca Lyons, nerdess extraordinaire and socially conscious, philanthropist in training

Steph Johnson, Huaa! or whatever it is you Marines say

Valerie Valdes aka Quoth, brilliance in a pen

Jeremy Cripe, I'm still waiting on your submission for The Blowhole

Marcia Cripe, who beat me to the punch (I'll include your zine once I can get it scanned)

Andy Cripe, a rider, always riding, down the longest roads

and last but not least, Mary Cripe, tamales, love and everything a growing boy needs.

Apologies if I've forgotten anyone, feel free to call or contact and bitch me out

WELCOME TO ISSUE I

BY J. A. CRIPE

Welcome to Caffeine Zine: A Collection of the Diverse and Non-Sensical.

It is currently 11:55 PM and, unfortunately, I have had no caffeine this evening. Instead, the warming grasp of barley tea coaxes me to sleep, but in a desperate attempt at resolution, I will forgo the comforts of my bed for a few hours more. I've been working on this edition for around a year now, but finally it is finished. This will be the first edition going live as an e-publication within a matter of minutes. Future editions will be formatted for graphic friendly printing, either as a double sided or single sided edition, depending on how much work I can sink into it and how long it takes me to get tired of planning out page coordination. Future e-published editions will also include color images where applicable. In fact, I'll probably repring this issue as a color edition as soon as I get around to replacing the graphics (tonight, maybe? Maybe not...)

Anyways, this work was originally inspired and put forth with the help of several bowls of generic cocoa pebbles and the inspirational support of my friends and family, most of all, the wonderful, talented and beautiful Lady K. The original idea was a vehicle for the creative efforts of those around me. A means for us to cast our collective voices into the world in the hopes that perhaps someone out there will be inspired to do the same. This publication is currently, and always, accepting submissions at CaffeineZine (AT) Gmail.com and a website will be coming shortly. It will be published on an erratic, yet hopefully bi-annual schedule,

depending upon when I gather the submissions and manage to compile another edition. We are accepting works of any and all sort that can be legibly or discernably printed on half of letter size page in black and white. Appropriate pieces may receive color printing, if I have the cash and feel the beauty would be missing otherwise. We really don't care about distribution rights in the slightest, so as long as you have the rights to submit the work to us in the first place, the artist will continue to retain the rights. Once published, however, your work will be somewhat permanently contained within this publication (as permanent as the zine itself proves to be). Also, I promise to be far more creative with future releases. Doodles, comics and all that jazz

Please feel free to contact me with any and all questions via the provided e-mail address.

May we always keep creating, whether the drugs flow or not.

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