

The Cobra's Ghost

Volume 40 (!)
October 30, 2003

“Willard! There
are RATS in the
basement!”

Ghost Notes...

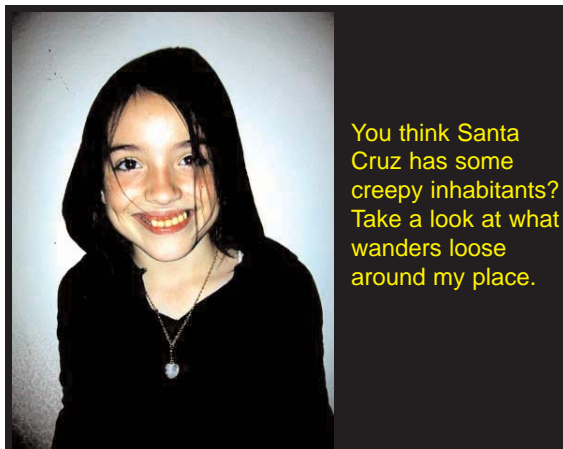
Lots of publications (including this one) have claimed with varying levels of sincerity (except for this one, which is always, *always* sincere) that they just wouldn't exist without you, the reading public. In this case, it happens to be true (as it always is--I *adore* you *all!*).

This issue was especially blessed by reader participation. Our cover ghost, Sally Logan of Brookdale Lodge, was submitted by the incomparable Pat Lang who got it from her brother. And on Page 2, I have included a set of photos taken in the Blythe City Cemetery and the story of an otherworldly encounter from two gentlemen who found me via *The Cobra's Ghost* internet incarnation. The “Do You Like to Watch?” article was helped along by conversations with Mr. P-body about favorite horror films (remind me to tell him about the remake of *The Stepford Wives*, it sounds hilarious, even more than the original).

I myself have not seen a ghost or other paranormal entity this year. This despite two recent illnesses that have not, alas, been wasting. As I have maintained a robust 425 lbs, the most frightening thing I have seen recently is me. Can't get more specific as I promised the Amazing Amy I'd lay off the Lou Reed cracks, but it has made me doubly grateful for those with insight into the Mysteries.

Now, go ahead and dig into *The Nose*, and as the creepy creatures say, *boo appetit!*

Sharon C. McGovern
Editor/Publisher/Cobra-in-Chief



You think Santa Cruz has some creepy inhabitants? Take a look at what wanders loose around my place.



Pat,

...Mary and I went back to the Brookdale Lodge just last month and stayed a couple of nights. It's a rather bizarre place to begin with even without it's ghostly reputation.

Again we took pictures as we walked around exploring the hotel and the grounds....If you look in the bottom right hand corner there appears to be perhaps a little girl with blonde hair sitting by the creek. She wasn't there when we were taking the photos.....interestingly one of the ghosts that supposedly haunts the place is the daughter (she was a blonde) of the original owner that drowned in that very creek that runs through the dining room and then outside to the spot we took the picture....Pretty cool...

Santa Cruz is Weird

The above was excerpted from an e-mail from the brother of fabulous, skydiving Pat Lang. And aside from providing the cover ghost for this edition (thank you!), the pic inspired me to research Santa Cruz. Let me tell you, although the Brookdale Lodge is perhaps the most famous haunt, the place is just lousy with tragedy, ghosts, and scandal.

The ghostliness goes back at least as far as Native American history and legend. At least three Indian burial grounds have been discovered within city limits. The local Ohlone tribe told tales of a sycamore grove off of what is now Highway 9, which housed a spider whose web would entangle only those with dark secrets, and of a giant snake in the redwood forest that killed indiscriminately. There is a story of a young Ohlone man who defied the tribal elders and was executed by them for his trouble. He cursed the land, and at a later date, it was invaded by a tribe from the Stockton area. The Yachicumne, who considered the Ohlone “unathletic” at best, slaughtered so many of the locals that a person could transverse most of what is now Santa Cruz without ever (cont. on page 4)

A Cemetery in Blythe, California

These photos came to *The Cobra's Ghost*, courtesy John, or perhaps "John," who was kind enough to share them and patient enough to wait for their eventual publication here and on the website. Sorry about that, John. He and some friends took the pics with a digital camera at about 11pm at the Blythe, California Cemetery. The round spots (lower right) are classic orbs, while the stringy, misty apparitions (upper right) are good old fashioned ectoplasm. The bottom two were taken seconds apart, and seems to show an increase in intensity of...whatever it is.

Thank you, John, for your time and effort, and best of luck with the ghost hunting!



The following story was submitted through [The Cobra's Ghost](http://www.thecobrasnose.com) portion of www.thecobrasnose.com. You should visit; largest selection of TV ghosts on the web. Anyway, here goes...

A Soldier Story

I was at my ex-finance's house for dinner and she was giving me a guided tour. As it turned out, her parents were not the original owners of the house (an unusual circumstance in the area). Passing into a side hall beyond the laundry room, my attention was drawn to an old portrait hanging next to a room I hadn't seen yet. The picture was of a man in uniform of the style worn during the Second World War. I asked my fiancée if the man in the picture was her grandfather because he bore somewhat of a resemblance to her father. Her response surprised me. She told me that the man wasn't a relative and the picture had in fact, been in the house when her family moved in. She claimed that the picture had been hanging in the room at the end of the hall that I hadn't been shown yet.

She told me that the portrait bothered her; that she just didn't feel right around it, something about the eyes. I asked her why her family kept it. Her parents believed that the picture gave the house a history... an identity of sorts. They had moved it out of the room to turn it into an entertainment center.

I asked if I could see the room and she quickly said no. Being the annoyingly inquisitive person that I am, I asked her why. She responded with "I don't want to see him again."

We ate dinner, I had a somewhat uncomfortable conversation with her parents, I asked to be excused to the restroom. I was

pointed down the side hall with the portrait and I stopped to look at it again. Her words bothered me and I looked into the man's eyes. I saw a sadness in them that I hadn't noticed before.

I did my business, exited the bathroom, and was surprised to find that the hallway which was well lit while I was in the bathroom was now dark... and the door beside the portrait was now standing wide open. That room was dark as well.

Despite all better judgment, I stuck my head into the room. There was a tv, and a bed from what I could see in the dark and I was just about to leave when something passed in front of the window; black on black. There was no sound and the room seemed to have gotten somewhat colder without my realizing it right off. Deciding that it was time to leave, I turned and started to walk away. What I saw next will stick with me for a long time. The light in the bathroom was the only one on in that area of the house and I went to turn it off (the polite thing to do). I got right in front of the door and was suddenly shoved back against the wall as a black mass passed in front of the lighted bathroom and vanished immediately past the doorway.

Deciding at this point that the bathroom light could stay on, I made my way back to the dining room, somewhat shaken from the incident. However, fearing ridicule from my fiancée's parents and not wanting to upset her, I said nothing, but I think she could see it in my eyes. She stayed silent.

Within the space of a year, I saw the same story in three different movies.

That's not terribly uncommon. There are fads in film plotting just as in anything else. A few years ago, I was fine with just the one volcano movie, and managed to dodge the asteroid disaster craze in its entirety. I can only regret I didn't bail on the whole old-ladies-take-trips sub-genre far, far earlier. But these were horror movies, and that genre is uniquely responsive to the public mood in a way, say, that the mid-nineties rash of Jessica Tandy flicks (may God rest her lovely and talented soul) are not. They are also a new variation in the ghost movie. (for more on that subject, please see "The End of The Innocents" from Vol. 33 of *The Cobra's Nose*. Also, the normal spoiler warning should be considered in effect.)

The first, released on August 30, 2002, is the most straightforward. *FearDotCom* is the name of a URL appropriated by the vengeful spirit of a murdered woman. Though seemingly nice enough in life, Jeannie's web mistress persona is fully accoutered with bondage wear and she greets each new visitor

with a come hither gaze and the query, "Do you like to watch?" Aroused surfers click through the disclaimers until they reach the main attraction: horrific slayings by the Jeannie's murderer, who is still at large. And though she doesn't bother with details, anybody who just watched the show has two days to bring him to justice. If time runs out before then, Jeannie kills the viewer in the manner he or she most dreads. Pitiless, yes, but the ghost seems to feel the viewers had it coming—there must be consequences for voluntarily watching something so vile, for making an entertainment of terror.

About two months later, on October 2, 2002, the American re-make of the Japanese film *The Ring* was released. I haven't seen the original, *Ringu*, and so cannot comment on its faithfulness to the original. Both have to do with mysterious videotape. After the tape plays, the phone rings and a creepy voice says, "Seven days." As in *FearDotCom*, that is the viewer's projected lifespan. When a group of

teenagers in different locations are found dead with similar grotesque symptoms, the reporter aunt of one of them begins piecing the mystery together. The urgency of her quest is amplified after she, her ex-lover, Noah, and their son all watch the tape and receive the message. Unlike the

kinky thrill delivered on feardotcom.com, the videotape plays like a puzzle begging to be solved ("Very student film," Noah clucks). And so, the reporter, Rachel, dutifully follows the clues, tries to dig up the root causes of the little girl discontent that blossomed into full-blown malevolence after death. In the nick of time Rachel finds the vengeful ghost's murdered remains and insures they will be properly be laid to rest. She does not die at the end of the seventh day. She reports her success to her son, who had a psychic connection with the ghost.

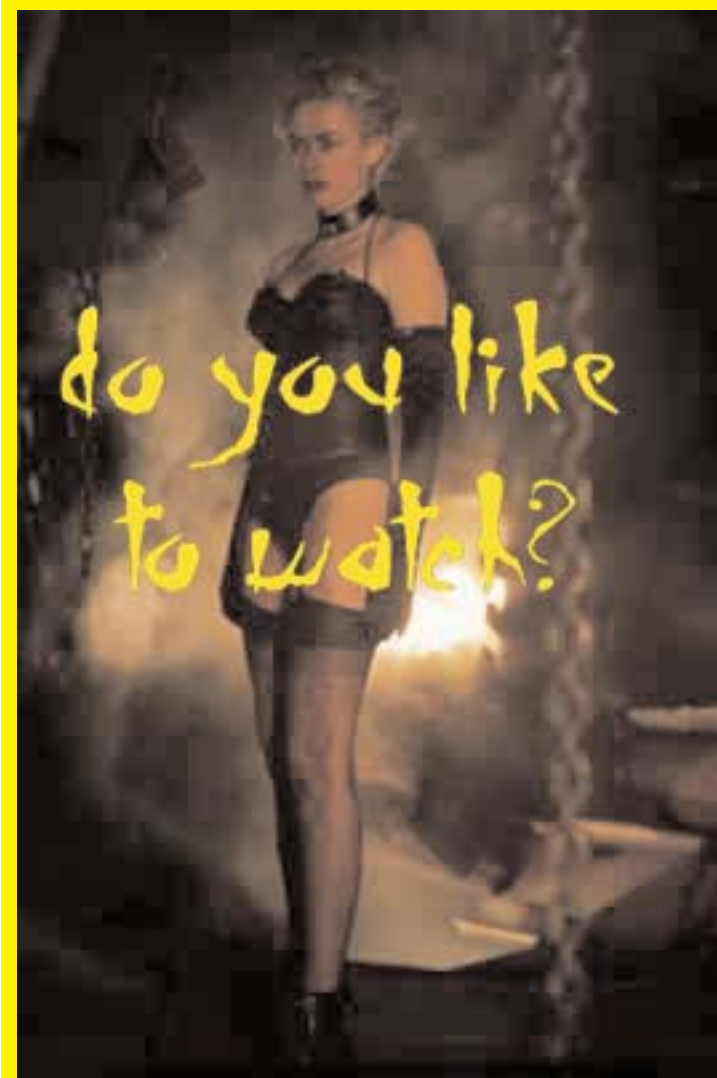
"It's over baby, I helped her," she tells him.
"What do you do that for?"
"What do you mean?"
"You weren't supposed to help her."

The boy intuitively knows what his mother, for all her research and sympathetic inquiry, couldn't comprehend—the girl,

Samara, was toxic, and her ghost is simply and irredeemably evil. And after all his effort on her behalf, she murders Noah—on the seventh day, right on schedule.

If a child sees the Tooth Fairy when she comes to collect his last baby tooth, she will hunt him down and kill him if she ever again catches him in the dark. Presumably, this would happen with girl children, too, but the victims shown in the movie are boys—later men, provided they survive long enough. Well anyway, that's the premise behind *Darkness Falls*, released in late January 24, 2003. This Tooth Fairy isn't a benign sprite or generous parent. She is the, say it with me now, vengeful spirit of woman who in life gave the local children gold coins for their baby teeth. At some point, she was horribly disfigured in a fire, and later she was wrongly accused of child murder and lynched by the townsfolk.

3 If this set-up sounds forced and feeble even by C- or D-movie standards, it is. On the level, there (cont. on page 5)





Look familiar? This Santa Cruz landmark was the inspiration for the Bates Mansion in the original *Psycho*

(cont. from page 1) touching the ground for all the skulls and bones and gore.

Since then, the town has seen numerous catastrophes, including severe earthquakes and a fire in 1894 that reduced the town to ashes. In 1898, on the day news of the Spanish American War reached Santa Cruz, there was an explosion at the Powder Works that blew out windows up to three miles away. Nine Irishmen died on the spot and were buried in a mass grave at the Odd Fellows cemetery. Also killed was a young bride who stepped out on her porch and was struck on the head by a rock thrown more than a mile by the explosion. There were several other deaths related to the incident, but nobody knows for sure how many.

The 1870s saw the origin of two of Santa Cruz's most famous ghosts. One begins with a city elder named William Waddell, who lost his arm to a protective mother bear. It was buried in a meadow, but when the rest of Waddell died and the locals tried collect all his pieces, the arm could not be found. Ever since, the area has been plagued by small thefts, blamed on the sticky fingers of the mutilated arm.

The other is a mail order bride from Massachusetts who was forced to wear her wedding dress every night whilst her drunken husband beat her. When he learned of her plans to leave him, he pummeled her to death, cut off her head, and burned down their house with her body inside it. The shade of a woman wearing white has been reported in the neighborhood in subsequent decades. Though the spirits of misused or otherwise tragic women in white are commonplace, they are usually benign. The one that roams Santa Cruz, however, is notable for her vile temperament. She has been known to slap people around and curse a blue streak. There is also a story of her throwing an axe, at either an old drunk or a little boy, depending on which version you read. All the ghost advisories warn readers to steer clear of this White Lady.

A few of the other ghosts of Santa Cruz include a woman mur-

dered by her boyfriend on the Red, White, and Blue Beach. The spirits of a woman in a Victorian-era dress looks for a book upstairs, a man in glasses dwells downstairs, and an angry dog barks in the basement of the Rispon Mansion. Three rooms in the B-Building in the University of Santa Cruz (the "Bermuda Triangle") were host to heavy poltergeist activity before being shut down for good. The ghost of a student who committed suicide wanders Building A, and the spirit of a transient named Lily walks in a nearby meadow dressed either in rags or nothing at all. In 1898, Major Frank McLaughlin—financially ruined, disinterested in political opportunities—shot his little daughter and poisoned himself on the second anniversary of his wife's death. The spirit of the little girl has been see in the drawing room of the Golden Gate Villa where she died, and floating around its gold plated chandelier.

On the evening of August 18, 1961, hundreds of shearwater seabirds slammed into the homes and businesses of Santa Cruz. People attempting to escape were attacked by the birds, which were attracted by headlights and porch lights. The following day, two truckloads of the dead animals were collected and destroyed. Theories to explain the birds' strange behavior were proposed (an unusually heavy fog? toxins in the bay?), but no conclusions were ever reached. There are still occasional shearwater attacks in the region. The incident, combined with Daphne du Maurier's novella, formed the basis of *The Birds*, directed by Santa Cruz's most famous part time resident Alfred Hitchcock.

Hitchcock was also inspired by the Kittredge family mansion in Santa Cruz. Built in the 1860s, the house changed hands multiple times and became progressively seedier as the decades passed, eventually becoming a magnet for drug dealers and Satanists. In the sixties, new owners bought it and remodeled it as the McCray Hotel. Soon after, their son began seeing ghosts there. In the eighties, the building was remodeled yet again as the Sunshine Villa Assisted Living Retirement Center. But though the structure has a new respectability, the nursing staff still report cold spots, flashes of blue light, and disembodied voices. The building's most lasting fame, however, is as the inspiration of the Bates Mansion in the original *Psycho*.

Speaking of creepy hotels, we come to Brookdale Lodge. Opened in 1870 as the headquarters of the Grover Lumber Mill, the building was bought in 1900 by H.J. Logan who converted it into a campgrounds and hotel. The Lodge's heyday was between 1922 and 1945 when it was owned by Dr. F.K. Camp. It was Camp who commissioned the famous Brookroom, a dining hall constructed around a stream that changed course in 1922. A strict Seventh Day Adventist and Prohibitionist, Camp kept a close eye on his guests, which included Mae West, Marilyn Monroe, Tyrone Power, Joan Crawford, Rita Hayworth, Hedy Lamarr, and Herbert Hoover. At least three songs were written about Brookdale Lodge during this era, including "My Brookdale Hideaway," "A Place Known as Brookdale," and "Beautiful Brookdale Lodge." Camp sold the property in 1945, and it changed hands several times throughout the rest of the 40s and into the 50s. Absent Camp's stern control, the site became a draw for gangsters and other shady types. Hidden rooms and secret passageways were installed in the grounds, and rumors of bodies buried beneath the dining room floor persist to this day.

It was during these years that Sarah Logan, niece of the original Lodge owner, was drowned in the Brookroom creek. Her ghost is the one most often seen—and perhaps (cont. on page 6)

(cont. from page 5) photographed by Pat's brother—usually running around the dining area, and sometimes asking guests to help her find her mother then mysteriously vanishing. A spectral woman has been seen walking over the brook, as if crossing a bridge that had long been removed. The scent of gardenias often suffuses the room though there are no gardenias on the property. The sounds of a dinner party are faintly heard even when the room is empty.

The phenomena are not restricted to the Brookroom. Doors slam without any discernable reason and disembodied footsteps are heard throughout the property. The Mermaid Room, so called because of its proximity to the hotel's pool, was closed in 1972 after the drowning death of a thirteen-year-old girl; but the jukebox stored inside it has been known to turn itself on and off, and soft sounds of voices and clinking glasses have been heard from the empty room. Big band music has also been heard in the Fireside Room and the Pool Room though the

(cont. from page 3) is little if anything about *Darkness Falls* not idiotic. But as with many horror movies, its significance is not dependent on its quality. For all its faults it does have some interesting features, and as with the other two films, timing is chief among them. *FearDotCom*, *The Ring*, and *Darkness Falls*, all movies about being thrown into peril by seeing something terrible, were released within six months of one another, and within six months of the first anniversary of the September 11 atrocities. The murder of thousands of people has been shown endlessly on television, on video, on the internet. We all saw it, and all know there isn't a particularly good reason it didn't happen to us.

This doesn't mean us as in US citizens. The attacks on the World Trade Center took the lives of people of 43 different nationalities. Subsequent atrocities in Bali, Riyadh, the mosque in Najif, and the UN compound in Baghdad, among others, have been decidedly multicultural affairs. Although the odds are certainly against death by terrorist, that's not a function of terrorist humanity or restraint. To quote Hussein Massawi, a former Hezbollah leader, "We are not fighting so that you will offer us something. We are fighting to eliminate you." The news broadcasts are an alarm—the death sentence has been passed on us. Maybe not with a 48 hour or seven day specificity, but with the same lack of concern for individuals. It's a twist on the hoary movie promo line: This time, it's impersonal.

FearDotCom, *The Ring*, and *Darkness Falls* are horror parables of recent events, and each has the same basic premise. Where the films diverge is in how the characters in each confront the evil.

In *FearDotCom*, it is handled as a criminal matter. The police follow clues, which lead to the original murderer, who is duly dispatched. Presumably, the satisfied ghost then quits her reign of terror on the internet—but her victims cannot be avenged by accommodating her grievances. Whatever the validity of her complaint, and she did suffer mightily, she became a monster in her own right. Her moral fig leaf is in punishing those who watch suffering lightly. Like the mullahs who call for the destruction of Western civilization, the ruthless detection and annihilation of the decadent becomes her animating cause.

FearDotCom's spiritual ancestor is David Cronenberg's

source of the music could not be located. A man in period dress has been glimpsed standing at the hotel bar long after closing time, and a lumberjack nicknamed George haunts the conference rooms.

Ghosts are also rumored to infest the cabins that were built on the old campgrounds. The occupant of number 46, who lives there and does odd jobs on the property, has reported seeing spectral faces and witnessing poltergeist type activity in her home. All in all, psychics have discerned up to 49 ghosts in and about Brookdale Lodge.

Most cities with long histories have ghost stories, but the above only scratches the surface of Santa Cruz's paranormal scene. But if those stories are not intriguing enough, there's also the Santa Cruz curse that states that men who do not marry by age 30 are doomed to lives of endless promiscuity.

Sounds like something that deserves investigation.



Insert the tape, program the man: *Videodrome*

1983 movie *Videodrome*. In it, Max Renn is a cable porn programmer looking for "the next thing" to broadcast on his station. "Videodrome," a low budget, highly realistic depiction of rape and torture seems just the ticket, and Renn assigns his lackey to obtain as many episodes as he can from his third world sources. What Renn doesn't realize is *Videodrome* was created by a terrorist organization, and that watching it is mentally and physically transforming him into their tool, a suicide shooter. The organization's leader, whose death is disguised by his acolytes' constant re-editing of old videotapes (sound familiar?), justifies Max's violation by citing the weak moral fiber he displayed in watching "a scum show like *Videodrome*" in the first place.

In both *FearDotCom* and *Videodrome*, the perpetrators, convinced of the holiness of their mission, exploit the viewers' corruptibility in order to control their behavior and destinies. Far fetched? Well, nobody will die just because of something they saw on the internet, and nobody will have a fleshy videotape port open up in their chest. But consider how video and internet versions of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl's decapitation flooded the Middle East and sympathetic communities worldwide. The purpose of the images was not to shock the radical Muslim world out of barbarity, but to recruit the next wave (cont. on page 6)

(cont. from page 5) of murderous zealots. By all accounts, it was a roaring success.

The Pearl video is not unique. Visual records of terrorist acts are never more than a couple of mouse clicks away. Al Jazeera, “the CNN of the Middle East,” doesn’t shrink from blood soaked bodies like the pansy press of the west. Heck, their reporters have been charged with hiring provocateurs to incite violence during demonstrations and membership in Al Queda.

Here, the US government was widely criticized for releasing post mortem photos of Uday and Qusay Hussein after they had been substantially cleaned up, and film of people jumping from the Twin Towers has not been shown by any major network almost from the day it happened. Honestly, I can’t say whether these decisions were for the best. Constant exposure to the repellant is desensitizing; underexposure is lulling. Can enormity be understood, and should it?

That question is at the heart of *The Ring*. Although Rachel knows some mysterious force kills people for watching a little tape, she convinces herself that the answer lies in sympathizing with and justifying the actor behind it. Like the cops in *FearDotCom*, she approaches the ghost phenomenon as a crime story, with Samara (also the name of an ancient city in Iraq) as the victim of uncaring parents and a hostile community. Rachel’s investigation seems to uphold the idea. The local doctor asserts the island Samara grew up on was better off without her, her father said she should never have been born and imprisoned her in a room above the stables, and her mother killed her, for crying out loud. But Rachel seriously confuses cause and effect. When Samara’s therapist asks, “You don’t want to hurt anyone, do you?” she says, “But I do,” then disingenuously adds, “and I’m sorry.” Samara’s personal misfortunes amount to no more than bad things happening to a bad person. Who gets worse.

Rachel looked into the abyss, the abyss looked into her and swallowed her whole. She figures the reason she didn’t die at the end of the seventh day is because she made a copy of the tape, which her son subsequently watched. Taking no

chances, she guides his hand to the RECORD button on a tape-to-tape copier. The act may save his life, but it obliterates his instinctive moral sensibility. An early cut of the film depicts Rachel delivering the tape to an accused child killer who had earlier asked her to help plead his case in the media, as if murder could



Stay in the light: *Darkness Falls*

be excused if the right sort of victim is chosen. Recall those who condemned the employees of the World Trade Center as capitalist pigs who as part of the globalization effort had it coming—that the buildings themselves displayed a hubris that had to be humbled; or Oscar winning filmmaker Michael Moore’s lament that the terrorists targeted the wrong segment of the population, that is to say, people who did not vote for Bush. Rachel may be nice, well meaning, compassionate, and eager—but she is weak and unprincipled, and that makes her vulnerable to corruption. Her end was predicted by Samara’s father, who asks her, “What is it with you reporters? You take another’s tragedy and force the whole world to experience it. You spread it like a sickness.”

Rachel is comfortable with tragedy, but flummoxed by evil. I’ve not quite given up on listening to NPR, though I constantly wonder at their news broadcasts of Amnesty International and other self-proclaimed peace loving organ-

izations who are in a constant uproar about the treatment of enemy inmates of Guantanamo Bay and illegal aliens from terrorist sponsoring nations being expelled from the US, but long ago gave up on condemning Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat. I’ve gotten to the point where I never want to hear another remark about the “illegal” American occupation of Iraq unless it’s followed by the words “mass grave” or “childrens’ prison;” nor another opinion of the inadvisability of exiling Arafat without mention of the seven month old child shot to death at her parents’ Rosh Hashanah dinner by one of his fans, or for that matter, of the Palestinian tots dressed by their parents in jihad-wear, complete with mock bomb-belts. Just today (September 29th), I heard another Arab commentator remark on how “unhelpful” removing Arafat (cont. on page 7)



Looking into the abyss: *The Ring*

(cont. from page 6) would be, though he did admit suicide bombing was no longer an appropriate means to achieve a Palestinian homeland. Apparently old ladies and kids were fair game ten or fifteen years ago.

Observe an image (page eight) from a recent "peace" protest in Berlin, the members of which decried the liberation of Iraq. The trope of the "bloody hand" is taken from a notorious incident in which Palestinian "militants" literally ripped two Israeli reservists to pieces. In the weeks before the incursions into Iraq, Jesse Jackson barred an Iraqi refugee, a grandmother, from addressing the crowd at an anti-war rally, explaining that really wasn't the appropriate forum for her views.

Last summer, two US Congressmen traveled to Baghdad and via Iraqi sponsored television proclaimed Saddam Hussein more reliable than the President of the United States.

Shortly after end of major military operations in Iraq, CNN's news chief Eason Jordan admitted that his network's coverage of the brutality of the regime was deliberately curtailed in order to protect its access to Iraqi officials. Recently, New York Times reporter John Burns claimed this was standard practice for most media operatives in Iraq. A few weeks ago, Democrat Congressman Jim Marshall returned from a visit to Iraq and opined that excessive focus on negative news in Iraq was harming coalition troops by emboldening critics in the US, Iraq, and abroad, and more importantly, enemy combatants.

NPR commentators, CNN reporters, peace protesters who invite terrorist sympathizers into their midst and discourage dissenting Iraqi opinion (the Jesse Jackson incident was one of dozens documented), are not the same as terrorists, are not the same as Saddam (cont. on page 8)

Top Three Paranormal Stories of 2003

Okay, there's no methodology here, just three items that stood out (and had pictures). Enjoy!



3 Lightning Strikes Twice Actor Jim Caviezel and assistant director Jan Micheleni were struck by lightning while working on Mel Gibson's controversial new film *Passion of Christ*. It is the second time Micheleni has been struck during the filming. BBC News, Oct. 23, 2003 (Here is another picture of Jim Caviezel)



2 Killer Icon (not IKON) Professor Boris Sapunov of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, removed a medieval icon (detail to the right) after it was implicated in the deaths of several museum employees. A local doctor theorized the painting was never meant to be beheld by commoners, who do not have the wherewithal to withstand the "high-frequency signals" that form the "biofield" the icon emits. The icon was painted over an unknown number of years by an unknown number of artists. World Net Daily, Sept. 4, 2003

1 Squash Symbols The owner of the Baba Afghan restaurant in Salt Lake City cut into a 15 lb. banana squash and was astonished to find each of the hundreds of seeds were marked with what looked like letters, numbers, and pictographs, including the Arabic symbol for "Allah." Salt Lake Tribune, March 14, 2003



(cont. from page 7) Hussein. But they are enablers. Hussein and Osama bin Laden both publicly thanked those who opposed the US led coalition into Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of them were literally in their employ. This is not to say that there was no principled objection to recent wars—certainly much of it was carefully reasoned and heartfelt. But a good portion was rooted in desire for access, for money, and for a sense of righteousness—and to get it, nice, well meaning, compassionate, eager people colluded with monsters.

Which is almost enough to go with the *Darkness Falls* approach to dealing with menace. After years of living in fear, drag the terrorist out into the light and kill it. Ah, *simplisme!* But a petrifying and risky choice. Consider the horror that could have been, but wasn't.

On March 20, 2003, President George W. Bush unloosed the most massive arsenal the world has ever known. He announced the hour of the incursion, and television cameras were trained on Baghdad to capture the shock and awe. American cruise missiles could have leveled the place. Nobody knew what Hussein would do; he had a world-class record of abominations and God only knew what kind of firepower.

After an hour or so with Baghdad still standing, I got bored and took a nap.

There has never in history been a nation as powerful as the United States in 2003. And when it suffered the worst terrorist attack ever, it retaliated by liberating two nations. When I suggested to a couple of friends that Iraq and Afghanistan might just as easily have been transformed into craters, they rather tartly replied that that sort of talk was simply not *on*, even as hyperbole or a joke. While it's true I have friends of exceptional quality and sensibility, they hardly seem of the same species as those Palestinians filmed celebrating the murder of thousands of innocents, handing out candies, and calling themselves "children of bin Laden." That's a piece of film I avoided until the second anniversary of the event. It's one of the most soul numbing things I've ever seen.

There are no end of horrors in this world. This summer, there was news of a brisk trade in videotaped rape and torture from Saddam Hussein's prisons. Shades of *FearDotCom* and *Videodrome*? Not exactly. The primary market for the tapes were families members hoping to find some clue as to what happened to their husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children....

The question then, is once you have seen what the moster has done, and realize it wants to murder you and everyone you love, what do you do? Maybe this time it is personal after all.



End Ghost

The vampires to the left and the strange little thing on page one are Partick, Peggy, and Sophia (who, yes, has been seeing a team of professionals about those teeth). The pictures were taken at our Day of the Dead party by Tim Smith, and used with thanks (if not permission).

Look for a new edition come Christmas at the same Cobra time, same Cobra channel. Until then, I can, as always, be reached at

Cobra HQ
3910 N Granite Reef
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

or thecobrasnose@yahoo.com or 480 GAY KATS

Happy Holidays!