

EDITORIAL

IN THE FIRST PAGES of Scott Randall's story, "Before Our Worldwide Interconnected Networks," the teenage protagonist, Billy, gives up looking for his dad's porn stash, only to discover it stored beneath his bed: Gobsmacked, he thinks, "all that time, I'd slept on top of naked women photographs." With its meditations on the merits of menthol cigarettes and baby-doll nighties, Randall's story captures something of what it was to be a teenager in the early eighties. Reading it, I couldn't help but think that Billy and his buddies would have been very much at home in my parents' house, where they would have joined my brother's cohort on the "stairway to heaven"—the nickname for the ladder used to access my parents' attic, where my father stored three decades of *Playboy*. I remember being scandalized when I first watched the procession of fourteen-year-olds quietly singing Led Zeppelin as they ascended into the attic by torchlight. But now, in the age of internet porn, Ashley Madison and Tinder, there is something decidedly old-fashioned and even endearing about the memory of a gaggle of boys reading "dirty" magazines in a dusty attic.

In contrast, Nancy Jo Sales's article, "Tinder and the Dawn of the Dating Apocalypse," published in the September issue of *Vanity Fair*, paints a deeply depressing portrait of today's digital hookup culture. Sales demonstrates that the instant sexual gratification and nearly limitless choice promised by apps like Tinder has stoked a callousness and expediency that has obliterated courtship as we knew it only twenty years ago. "Boom-boom-swipe" is the memorable phrase with which one of Sales' interviewees describes his approach to dating.

Perhaps this explains why I laughed with delight when I first read the following line in David Huebert's story "A-Word": "You wooed her with your Wookiee call after noticing her Yoda t-shirt." Though Huebert's darkly funny story is a study of emotional and romantic ambivalence, it is also heart-rending and wise. For all these reasons, it won first place in our short story contest.

A similar combination of wisdom and wit characterizes Kevin Hartford's "An Obsessive-Compulsive's Guide to Sidewalks," which earned second prize. Succinctly and deftly, Hartford uses the knowledge and skill demonstrated by crows to understand the thin line between quirky and compulsive human behaviour. (For the record, Wookie calls are quirky but not compulsive. Long live the Wookie call!)

Thanks so much to the always judicious and deeply thoughtful Ian Colford for judging this year's contest.

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