

Chicago Antisocial

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Clockwise from top left: wine guzzler and bad pasties at Crobar (September), dancer at Food Mart in Wicker Park (April), cheering the White Sox' World Series win at *Stop Smiling* headquarters (October), Rotten Milk outside Big House in Lincoln Park (September)

Mistakes, I've Made Two

Sandra the Huntress gets back in touch, Reserve loses a star

By Liz Armstrong

After an entire day and night of spiked hibiscus tea and martinis with my friend Hilary, I decided I should call my boyfriend.

"Hey, are you OK?" he asked worriedly.

"Yeah," I slurred. "Why?"

"Some woman called me saying she's your mom. She said you and Hilary drank Lemon Drops and the cops were there and she was nervous. She told me to bring her \$62. She keeps calling me. What's going on?"

"Don't give her a penny," I said.

The caller was Sandra the Huntress, an excitable, leathery legend in her own mind whom Hilary and I had met in front of a mansion on Astor Street while staking out a celebrity for a gossip magazine. A couple months ago I wrote about the wild ride through the Gold Coast Sandra took us on, an adventure that included drinks at the Pump Room, ringing buzzers at random mansions in search of Jennifer Aniston (who, according to Sandra, "wants" her), and checking out a condo she claimed to be buying (I had my

doubts, but with Sandra, as I soon learned, one can never be sure). She acted like we were her daughters, dubbing Hilary "Paris" and me "Nicky," and she kept telling us about her many lovers. It was all pretty hilarious and exhilarating—until Sandra led us to a hotel room where we were all supposed to get it on. Then the night lost a bit of its charm.

Before we managed to disentangle ourselves, I gave her my boyfriend's number, saying it belonged to my "bodyguard." But I kind of forgot to tell him this.

Sandra called Ringo the next day. "I saw Paris and Nicky earlier today," she said, and instructed him to bring us to an address on the 100 block of East Erie at 8 that night.

"They're in an interview right now," he lied. "They should be done later. I'll let them know."

Sandra called him back at 8:30. "I stuck my head out and looked for the girls, but I didn't see them. What's the number for the Crystal Palace?"

He said he didn't know, which was true.

"Great, give it to me then," she said.

"No, Sandra, I don't know it."

"OK, I'm going to the Crystal Palace at Madison and Pulaski. I'll tell the door guy they're coming and have a private room set up for them in the back."

I couldn't find a listing for such a place, so I didn't go. Sandra continued to call Ringo for the next three days, giving him addresses and times of where we should meet her. Each time he gave her a different excuse why we couldn't—we were out of town, we had another appearance to make, the press would be there and we didn't want to deal with it—making our lives sound infinitely more glamorous than they really are. (My actual late-night plans when I'm not working usually involve reruns of *Dr. Phil*. It's sick, I know, but I really love him.)

After that it seemed Sandra the Huntress was out of our lives for good. Until October 28, the day my column came out, when she called Ringo again.

"Hi, hon," she said, and

informed him that she was at a mental hospital, a real one I won't name here. "My lawyer can't get here. Will you please come visit with an attorney? I gotta get out of here." She gave him loose directions, the landmarks including the White Castle where she was going to have her first meal as soon as she was released. "If you can't get me out by tomorrow I'm going to bust out. I know how to do it—I've done it before."

I was sitting next to him, listening to their conversation. Feeling guilty for having encouraged a bona fide crazy person's paranoid delusions, I whispered to Ringo to tell her we'd come visit. She gave him two hospital phone numbers where she could be reached—they both checked out. But after he hung up we figured out there was no way we'd make it before visiting hours were over. He called her back.

"I'm sorry," he told Sandra. "We can't make it in time."

"That's OK," she said. "I'm here with Paris. She's really tired. She's been in restraints all day. Is Nicky here? If she is, I

don't recognize her."

"No, Nicky's with me," he said gently.

"Oh, I didn't think she was here. But Paris definitely is."

"We'll visit you tomorrow," he told her, and he meant it.

But in the tenderness of the moment, he forgot we were moving the next day. We haven't heard from Sandra since.

Back in August, *UR Chicago* changed its format from newsprint tabloid to glossy-cover magazine. The "30 Under 30" issue was the first in the new style. This cheerfully ageist annual tradition presents people in their 20s and younger who are doing things that editor in chief Stacey Dugan and her staff deem interesting and worthwhile—turns out I was one of them, so I happily went to the relaunch party at the River West club Reserve. But at the door the bouncers were pulling some exclusive New York bullshit, letting in slick-headed dude after fake-titted chick coming out of fancy cars with tinted windows and drivers, despite a long line of people behind the velvet rope, a few of whom were also highlighted in the issue—I'm not naming names because it's embarrassing enough to be excluded from a party in your honor without having people reminisce about it months later.

After waiting outside for half an hour I had to pull an embarrassing "but I'm in the magazine!" move with the bouncers just to get inside, where we'd been promised there would be free drinks and food. Surprise: there wasn't.

"Why invite people you think are special if they won't be able to attend the party celebrating their participation in your publication?" I later wrote to Dugan in an e-mail. "I think choosing a nasty, selective club like Reserve did a great disservice to your magazine."

Dugan apologized and said she'd had a similar experience there. "I'd never been before," she wrote, "although I'd heard pretty good things from others, including from yr column."

It's true: early this year I called Reserve "cozy," "polished," and "fun," if "a little too slick." If it's not too late, I'd like to take that back.

Staying out till the wee hours several nights in a row every week in search of fun, beauty, enlightenment, and drama is hard enough when you're driving the party train. Imagine having to tag along, convincing half-dressed drunks to pose for the camera—oh, and this will be for publication, OK? Andrea Bauer, this column's official photographer, gives up most of her weekend nights to take pictures like the ones you see above—some of her favorites from this year. ☐

What still remains unsolved is Gerry's Chicago childhood, the early years of an artist who was always in some way writing about or for children, despite his oft-expressed discomfort in the classroom. What follows, so far as I know, is the first close look at the man who would become the most famous cartoonist in America.

Gerry's parents, who married in 1921, were a steady stream of immigrants. His mother "somehow" her father, who was born in Ireland, was a street laborer. The family in Forest Park, Family lost to warlike Gery's exiled to Europe for fighting with the British government, and Gerry was built like his relatives: tall and thick, with hands. There aren't any short bones. Gerry's work; they're all long limbs and topped with small jolly heads.

You might link the heady lives of Gerry's children to his experience as an only child, especially as a child of divorced parents. But there's also a lot of family in his books, in the background, like all that patterned wallpaper. More often than not the social context of his work is a crime and justice story, a Chicago Evening Post, the Daily News, and other papers. By 1920 he was regularly covering politics for the Chicago American— in those days of aggressive Chicago journalism, when asked over again, why "Gerry" and horror and terror are the accompanying focus of his work, "Gerry famously replied, 'I write about everyday life.' The Gerys find who would've had to have known everybody in have the job he did. Gerry, on the other hand, was named once for Adlai Stevenson then up completely. He was a T-shirt fan, but the only aspect of Gerry's work that appears to have enjoyed was the creation of a character who would be a character over time his mouth.

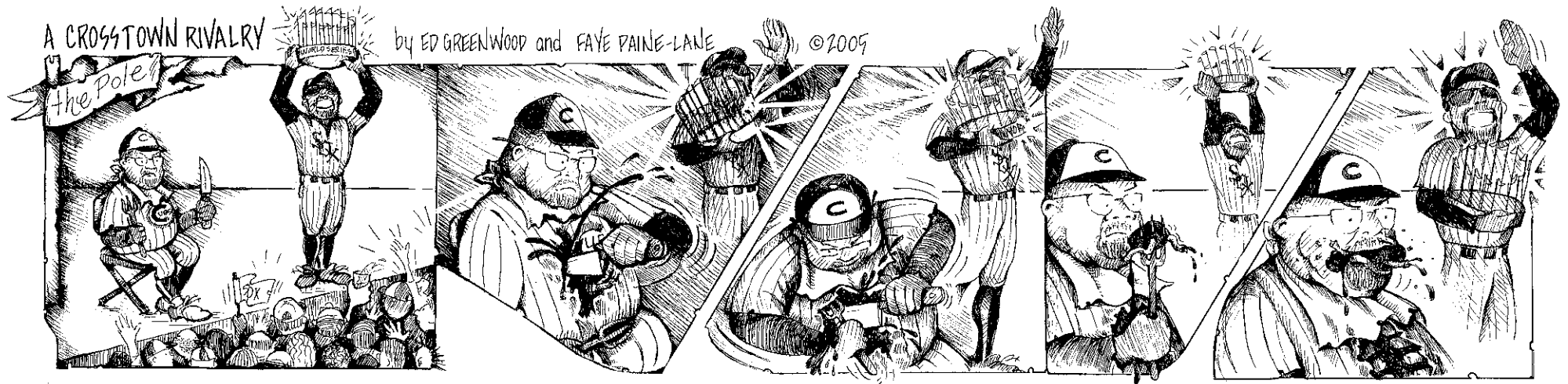
When asked over again, why "Gerry" and horror and terror are the accompanying focus of his work, "Gerry famously replied, 'I write about everyday life.' The Gerys find Gerry as "the man who sings the 'Mambo Line' in Casablanca" (although the women people usually think of when they hear that) the young First Woman, Yvonne, Marnie, and Marnie, the successful band singer). There are obvious connections to Marnie's distinctly waxy, waxy look in Gerry's work. His friend Alexander Theobaldus, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and all the other things that Gerry has done, all be Gerry's work. He was a T-shirt fan, but the only aspect of Gerry's work that appears to have enjoyed was the creation of a character who would be a character over time his mouth.

COMICS

The Year in Review



ELIZABETH M. TANNY



-ED GREENWOOD AND FAYE PAINE-LANE



-JEFFREY BROWN