

# The Portal

A cool collection of short stories and poems

## Halloween Edition



### Fang Fest (Part One) By DiVitto Kelly

Trevor Kirkland, projectionist, popcorn maker, and part-time usher at the Morningside Movie Theater, reviewed his bosses' cheat sheet, checking off the list with an orange pencil decorated with little black bats in hand. It even had a bat eraser on top.

"Let's see, we've already reeled off 30 Days of Night, uh, Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Slayer . . ." He perked up, hearing a bellowing horn coming from the parking lot.

The young man stepped outside into the late October chill. A white four-door Ford F-150 pickup truck pulled up in front of the theater, parking the handicap space. The hazard lights popped on just as the driver rolled down the window.

"Hi Trevor, how's everything going?" asked Deacon Art Walters, 67, a former college football player from way back in the day and stalwart deacon at Saint Michael's Church in Portsmouth, New

Hampshire, a town famous for its perpetual fog and blue-collar disposition.

"Hi Deacon," replied Trevor, a senior at Saint Michael's Catholic High School. "Almost got a full house already." Behind him the large white vinyl 'Welcome Vampires!' banner hoisted above the theater entrance flailed in the breeze, before plummeting to the ground like a poorly folded paper airplane.

"Excuse me for a sec." The young man raced back to the theater entrance and planted the familiar eight-foot aluminum ladder. He scrambled three-quarters of the way up. This time, he triple-knotted the thick black rope from each corner grommet. "Finally," he uttered before jogging back.

The deacon ambled out of his truck and circled around to greet the teen. He had a bum left knee, courtesy of his playing days up at Dartmouth. When it stiffened up, it was a dependable indicator that rain was on its way. "Did I miss Salem's Lot?" Deacon Walters was eager to delve into some cinematic mischief.

"Nope, not yet," answered Trevor, catching his breath. He shifted through his papers. "According to the boss, aka dad, we'll be showing it . . . around ten-o'clock tonight, plus or minus. Gotta love David Soul's flowing mane in that made-for-TV flick, directed by the one and only?"

The deacon offered up a blank stare and shrugged his broad shoulders. "Um, Steven Spielberg?"

"Close, although it's kind of a nice segue to the correct answer," replied Trevor, a horror movie aficionado. "It was directed by Tobe

Hooper, who also directed the Texas Chainsaw Massacre. But one of his most famous films was Poltergeist. People still argue if he really directed it solo or if Spielberg lent his moviemaking expertise."

"You're just like your dad, a walking, talking monster movie encyclopedia," joked the deacon. "Your dad is a good man. He's told me how very proud he is of you."

"And I'm proud of him," replied Trevor. "Dad stuck it out and finally completed his college degree. Even though he has his own business, not having that diploma really bugged him. He wants to be a good roll model for me. I told him he accomplished that years ago."

"And after your mom died, God bless her soul, he was kinda lost for a while, but he's persevered," added the deacon.

"That he has," said a sandpaper course voice coming up from behind. The man gave his son a burly bear hug from behind before rubbing his blondish locks. "And good to see you too, Art," he said, patting him on the shoulder. "Almost over this dang cold."

"You look excited as a school kid, Lance," replied Deacon Walters. "Last year was a hoot, showing all those killer crocodile and alligator movies. I never thought there were so many?"

"Gator Nation was dope," chimed Trevor, "Especially those two Australian films, Rogue and Black Water. Very cool stuff."

"If it's got teeth, Hollywood will exploit it," smirked Kirkland. "This year, I wanted to kick it up a notch so I chose vampire films."

"Which is why you're dubbing it the First Annual Fang Fest. I get it

loud and clear,” replied the deacon, busting a gut.

Kirkland’s plan was to select a dusk to dawns worth of vampire films, some conventional, others not so much. He already kicked off the event at six PM beginning with a contemporary selection then planned to wrap things up with the 1922 German gem, *Nosferatu*, featuring Max Schreck’s tour-de-force performance as Count Orlok.

“You’ve got a hell of an imagination, Kirk,” said the deacon. “It’s a wonder you went into contracting instead of something, you know, artsy, although you’ve done quite well for yourself.” The single parent was nicknamed Kirk by Deacon Walters ever since he was an alter server way back in high school at Saint Michael’s Catholic Church. The deacon was also a big Trekkie fan.

“Trevor says you’ve already got more people than last year,” he added, “Although I don’t see a lot of cars in the parking lot.”

“We’ve had a ton of walk-ups as they say,” said Kirkland. “Besides, it’s a beautiful evening; cool and crisp. It’s perfect for our Fang Fest.”

“It looks like a Dracula convention in there,” kidded Trevor. “You gotta see this one group of guys; they look like they’re straight out of a Vineyard Vines meets Bela Lugosi catalog.”

“Well, this town can always use a shot of excitement,” added Deacon Walters. “I’ve got tomorrow off so maybe I’ll stick around and watch a couple more – nothing like ‘sinking your teeth’ in some classic movies up there on the big screen. And by the looks of things, you may need me for crowd control.” The deacon then recognized a pair of

frumpy, middle-aged parishioners doing their best to appear as Dracula’s vixens, but falling way short. “Whoa.”

“We’re hoping for a really big turnout,” replied Kirk, fist bumping his son. “And yes Deacon Walters, your appearance is mandatory.”

“I promise I’ll be here,” he replied. “You know, I enjoy Salem’s Lot a whole bunch, especially since our town is almost a carbon copy of said film, but you what really frosts my keister? It’s the way men of faith are constantly portrayed in horror films. They’re always so . . . what’s the word . . . linguini spined. Some of us actually DO have a rock-solid belief in the Almighty.”

“Amen to that,” added Kirkland, a practicing Catholic like his son.

Trevor nodded in agreement before sporting a puzzled look. “Hey, what’s a keister?”

“It’s Yiddish for butt,” replied the deacon.

Trevor shrugged his shoulders then patted his dad on the back. “I’m just glad as all heck you didn’t select any of those God-awful Twilight films. There was no way I was gonna sit through those atrocities.”

“Twilight sounds like a fine title for a vampire film. No good?” asked Deacon Walters.

“Horrible, just horrible, and they made three of them. Like one wasn’t bad enough,” sneered Trevor. “And from what I’ve gathered from this crowd, we’d be run out of town if we did. Horror fans are very particular, especially when it comes to vampire films.”

“Well, I’m looking forward to it,” replied the deacon, pulling out his

cell from his jacket pocket. “I see by the little hand on my iPhone I’ve got about a couple of hours until show time. I think I’ll pop down to O’Malley’s Pub for a burger and a pint. I promise to join you later.”

“You’re not gonna stay for Fright Night?” asked Trevor, somewhat disappointed. “It’s a great one starring Roddy McDowell.”

“I know; I’ve seen it before, but I haven’t had dinner yet. Besides, if I don’t get my pint of Smuttynose, I’m gonna get cranky.” He limped back into his truck and connected his seatbelt. “Better have your umbrellas handy.”

“Drive safely,” replied Kirk, “I’ll even save a seat for your friend, Mr. Barlow.”

“Very good, very good,” smiled the deacon as he pulled out of the parking lot, the eight cylinders rumbling on this All Hallows Eve. Kirkland, a recent widower, still rolled in his 1967 black Oldsmobile Tornado, still kicking asphalt at 193,000 miles.

Trevor glanced over to his dad. “We’re not supposed to get any . . .”

Father and son retreated quickly back into the theater, catching some the unexpected downpour. The young man trekked up to the concession stand and snagged a handful of paper towels. “Deacon should become a weatherman.”

The elder Kirkland reveled in the month of October, particularly Halloween. The 44-year-old man resembled a muscular version of Ichabod Crane, solid build, six-foot-two and balding, with an ink-black ponytail. He treasured Halloween almost as much as Christmas.

Kirkland especially savored the opportunity to showcase his film

favorites in his very own movie theater. The historical building featured imposing exterior pillars, two to be exact, that fronted the white painted building like towering minutemen. Black shutters and crawling ivy made the whole place look and feel like a mausoleum, which was A-Okay with Kirkland. He even dubbed it, Morningside after the original Phantasm movie.

The century old theater was a former playhouse, full of good bones and acoustics. Situated in the town of Portsmouth along the pint-sized coastal region of the Granite State, the structure changed hands a bunch of times, but had remained vacant for a half dozen years. Kirkland, a contractor and carpenter elite, bought it cheap and renovated the building from head to toe. Owning a movie theater had always been at the top of his bucket list.

Inside, the interior walls were primed in crow black paint. Classic monster movie posters hung on the walls; some tilted on purpose, others illuminated in groovy black light. The concession stand was vintage 1950's, complete with popcorn machine and rolling hotdog cooker, still serving their purpose after some fine-tuning. Kirkland removed the formerly stained and mildewed burnt orange shag and replaced it with brand new wall-to-wall crimson red carpeting. But the crème de la crème was the auditorium. The antique stage setting, primed in dark oak wood, made you feel like a vaudeville show was ready to bust out at any moment. The ruby red velour seats cradled you, making movie goers feel like they were in their very own living room. The monstrous screen

even rivaled the standard movieplex variety.

Kirkland shivered. "Is it me or is it a bit on the brisk side in here?"

"Feels fine to me," replied Trevor, equipped with 210 pounds of big-boned insulated adolescence. He walked over to the thermostat mounted behind the concession stand. "It's set at seventy-two degrees."

That should be fine," said Dad, now fiddling with his cell phone. "I'm sorry son, what was it you wanted to show me?"

"Oh yeah, follow me," said Trevor, waving his dad over to the double doors leading inside to the theater. Each had a round plate-sized window resembling something from an old ocean liner. Trevor grinned. "You see 'em?"

Kirkland peered through. He saw some audience members getting ready to leave as the film credits rolled. Others appeared resting in their seats, gearing up for the next film. "I don't see . . ."

"There!" pointed his son. "To the right."

Kirkland creaked his neck, finally spotting a group of people in a corner. The five men, early to mid-twenties, were tall, slender with dark hair, and dressed to the nines in Dracula garb. They were smiling, enjoying a stimulating conversation of some sorts. "Great costumes, huh? I wonder if they're from the university, or maybe from a frat or something?"

"What kind of a frat would that be? Phi Upper Choppers?" blurted out Dad in laughter, almost unable to spit out the sentence with a straight face.

One of the five men turned and spotted the teen peeking through the portal. He narrowed his brows before flashing a toothy grin. Trevor ducked, suddenly catching a strange vibe. "Did you see that guy? He had . . . fangs!"

"Of course he does," said Dad, picking up a candy wrapper off the floor. "It's all part of the costume. I bet three-quarters of the cats in this joint are sporting fangs. Relax, relax. Why don't you prep the next film and we'll get ready to roll."

"Sorry Dad, just got caught up in the atmosphere I guess."

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An hour and forty-five minutes later, Kirkland pulled out his cell phone. Five minutes after ten. He started typing with his pudgy, course appendages. The tip of his right index finger was nicked off from a table saw accident, occurring when he was just a greenhorn in the contracting business.

"You've got ten minutes to show-time." Kirkland added a yellow round little smiley face. A minute later, he received a text with a sad face. "Ah, rats."

"What's that?" asked Trevor, biting down on an oversized Snickers bar.

"It's Deacon Walters," replied Kirkland. "It looks like he's going to be at the hospital for a while."

Trevor's heart skipped a beat. "The hospital? Is he okay?"

"He's fine, but there were a pair of deaths, both elder members of Saint Michael's parish. He's been there with Father Ryan comforting the families. What a damn shame."

There was another text. Kirkland smiled. "What?" asked his son.

“He says he’ll try and make the late, late, show, LOL.”

“Cool,” thought Trevor. “So we’re really gonna be here until six in the morning?”

“That’s the plan,” replied Dad. Both he and his son yawned in unison. “I think this event will be a one-off.”

The teen sighed, not especially enthused, although he had free reign of the concession stand. A trough of nachos smothered in artificially flavored cheese and maybe a box of Goobers would provide the necessary nourishment to keep his engine percolating.

Kirkland walked up stage inside the movie theater and served up a brief introduction and mounds of movie trivia (he loved monster movie trivia) before presenting the next film. He called out to his son. “Let’s roll!”

The teen had already watched Salem’s Lot at least six times before so he headed downstairs. He set a timer on his cell to make sure he didn’t miss the jail cell scene. That one still freaked him out. As he approached the lobby he got a sudden chill, like he’d walked through a wall of cold. Dad was right; it was getting a tad brisk inside. He walked over to the thermostat on the wall and added a few degrees. As he strode behind the concession stand, more patrons were showing up, dressed sharply in black, white, with just the right accent of red. The women seemed to prefer scantily lengthen dresses. On one hand, you had sharp dressed men and women, most who could pass as models. On the other end of the spectrum, it was easy-peasy to spot the ones who’d purchased their wears from thrift

stores, consignment shops, or borrowed grandpa’s aged old black suits. Those particulars resembled disheveled undertakers.

It was after two in the morning. Kirkland offered up a Hammer film starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee as the vampire. At the climax, the peaking Kirkland noticed many of the patrons in tears, grimacing as Cushing whacked that wooden spike deep into the heart of Lee’s Dracula.

“That’s a first,” thought Kirkland. He checked his cheat sheet. “Went out of order, but what the hell. Let’s see now . . . ah, Shadow of the Vampire, that’s a good one, kind of a cinematic curveball too.”

Kirkland wandered over to the concession stand. Trevor was chatting with an attractive, buxom brunette, medium height, a little on the plumpy side. “Son, how’s the popcorn holding up?”

He turned around slowly, glancing towards the lower shelf. “We could use another bag,” he answered. His smitten eyes returned to the woman’s full figure and pasty complexion. “You . . . uh . . . need me to get it?”

“Nah, I got it. Besides, it looks like you’re a bit busy.” Trevor was beaming, sharing a package of M&Ms with peanuts with the woman, possibly in her late teens or early twenties.

As Kirkland headed downstairs to the storage room, his cell rang. “Hello? Oh hi Art. Are you heading this way? What? Does the doctor have any idea what . . . I’m sorry, you’re breaking up.” He tried to call, but the phone coverage crapped out.

Kirkland hung up the phone and slid it in his back pocket. He schlepped a bag of popcorn over his shoulder and headed back upstairs. He smiled as he sashayed past all the patrons milling about in the lobby before plopping it down on a shelf below the popcorn machine that was working overtime. Trevor was still chatting with the brunette. The theater owner was hitting a seventh-inning lull. He grabbed a sixteen-ounce orange plastic cup designed with snarling pumpkn faces, loaded it halfway with ice and hit the soda fountain tab. He was doing his best to avoid anything caffeine, but at the present moment, he needed a Coke in the worst way. The machine coughed and sputtered as it delivered the sugary drink. “Oh swell.”

Dad gulped down half before speaking to his son. “So, you see any more interesting . . .” The rest of his voice trailed off as if someone had just pulled the plug. In the mirror stationed on the wall behind the popcorn machine, Dad saw his son’s reflection, but no one else. He quickly turned away, shook his head and pinched the bridge of his nose. No way. He took another gander at the mirror, trying not to look suspicious.

“Oh my God,” he whispered, paralyzed in fright. He could not see the woman . . . nor the thirty or so people milling about in the lobby.

Kirkland forced a weak smile, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. He planted his hands down on the back counter. He pretended to inspect the shelves, moving things around, hoping something needed restocking.

Kirkland did his best to shackle his anxious disposition. “Uh son, I

think I need to get something else downstairs, be right back. By the time Trevor answered, his father had amscrayed around the corner.

Kirkland raced downstairs and headed for the supply room, feeling an adrenaline rush of maximum proportions. His hands were shaking. He shut the door, making sure no one was around. He quickly dialed his friend. “Come on, come on.” It went to voice mail. “Damn it.”

Kirkland took in a deep breath, composing himself before opening the door. He screamed.

“What are you doing?” asked Trevor. “We’ve got a bunch of people who want KitKat bars. We have more, right?”

Dad stammered. He reached up to the top shelf. “Uh, got ‘em right here son, a whole box of ‘em! I’ll be up in a moment.”

Trevor grabbed the box then headed out the door. He stepped back, poking his head in the dimly lit room. “Are you okay? You seem . . . I don’t know, jittery.”

“I’m fine son, really,” he answered. “Go back upstairs but don’t let on. I mean, just show off your awesome customer service skills. Be there in a sec.”

Trevor headed back to the concession but wasn’t sure if his dad was okay. The teen was in total shock after hearing his mother had gone missing and later found dead near an abandoned church. After a couple of weeks of home-bound mourning, he returned to school in late November, finished up football season, moved on to wrestling after the New Year, and found a steady girlfriend. He at least had his fair share of healthy distractions. Dad, on the other hand, had too much

idle time between contracting jobs and it churned him into a depressing mess. It was only within the last three months he was climbing his way back to normalcy. Having the Fang Fest seemed to be a perfect diversion. Hopefully he wasn’t having a relapse.

Ahh!” jumped Kirkland, spooked by his ghoulish Halloween ringtone. “Oh God, I’m glad it’s you.” The signal dropped again. “Damn it. Why don’t I just use soup cans and string for Christ’s sake!”

Minutes later, Kirkland regrouped and headed back upstairs with a case of Coke and Sprite. His phone rang again -- same number, answering it in a heartbeat.

“Hey Art, I think we may have a little situation down here at the theater,” he whispered.

“What?” answered the voice, crackling in and out with every step Kirkland took.

“I said WE have a situation here,” raising his voice. A sea of black-caped moviegoers turned in his direction. He gulped. “Everything’s fine folks, just having an issue with . . . the soda dispenser.”

Kirk continued to balance the two cases of soda while meandering through and between filmgoers in the lobby. He felt like he had a great big bull’s-eye tattooed on his jugular. His inner voice was begging him to stay calm, cool, and collected. It wasn’t working.

A young redhead woman, decked out in full black attire and accented with three-inch long fingernails painted in florescent orange, abruptly confronted him.

Kirkland forced a smile. “Hi Miss, uh . . . enjoying the show?”

The voluptuous woman moved closer. Kirkland’s masked composure began evaporating. He felt as if beads of sweat were ready to burst from his skin like a geyser. She spoke. “You know soda is very very bad for you. You should really try . . .”

Kirkland made a sigh of monumental deflating proportions. “Oh God, for a moment I thought . . .” He exhaled, regaining his composure. I’m sorry, um . . . try what should I drink. I mean, I should try what?”

“Seltzer.” The woman dragged her distinctively knife-sharp fingernails up Kirkland’s three-day old neck scruff. “It’s got the effervescence you seek, but without all that unnecessary sugar.” Her sultry voice and mesmerizing gaze made him feel drowsy, like he’d just downed a mug of warm milk before bedtime.

Kirkland replied in slow motion. “That is so true,” he said, feeling relieved as if he’d just finished up a high school oral presentation. He sidestepped over to his son and snatched the big gulp soda from his hands.

“Hey!”

“It’s very very bad for you, son. You should know better.”

“Dad, are you alright?” asked Trevor.

“Fine, son,” he answered before handing the cases to Trevor. “Gotta keep those shelves full of goodies.” He then glanced over at the redhead, now frowning. “But next year it’s nothing but fruits and veggies. Boy I could sure go for some kale.”

The familiar ringtone sounded off, loud and clear. He fumbled with the phone, nearly dropping it. He sensed everyone was glaring at him. “Quick, bonehead, think on your feet!” cried his inner voice.

“Uh, no thank you sir, I’m quite content with my Internet access.” He faked hanging up before heading for the supply room again.

“What now?” asked Trevor. “Dad, I think we’re all good with the candy; from Almond Joys to Zagnuts.”

“Need the mop, son, got a spill in aisle thirteen!” His voice trailed off as he power-walked towards the supply room, once again.

Exasperated, Trevor barked, “We don’t have a spill in aisle thirteen. Wait, we don’t even HAVE an aisle thirteen!”

“You’re funny,” said the girl.

The teen settled down and propped his elbows on the counter, his hands under his chin, blushing. “I try.”

The woman in black approached Trevor. She placed her fingers on the counter, tapping them in unison. “Your dad seems a bit . . . edgy.” Her eyes followed Kirkland as he turned the corner and headed downstairs. “Is everything okay?”

“He’s fine,” said Trevor. “I just think maybe he bit off more than he can chew tonight.”

The woman directed her lustful gaze upon the young man. “I know the feeling.”

Kirkland rushed back downstairs and shifted in the direction of the storage room. He shut the door, nearly tripping over the mop and bucket. “Deacon, where the hell are you?”

“I’m pulling into the parking lot, why?”

“Never mind,” yelled Kirkland. “Meet me in the storage closet downstairs. No, that might look suspicious. Stay put; I’ll be out there in a sec.”

Kirkland opened the door ready to hang up when he was abruptly confronted by the woman in black. Her eyes glared red as she cupped his mouth with her hand. The woman placed her index finger on her lips signaling to be quiet. “Something tells me Mr. Kirkland you’re up on current events.”

“Uh, what do you mean?” squirmed the theater owner. She hurled the single father into a wall of boxes, most tumbling down on his head. The woman picked up Kirkland by the collar then flashed her canines.

“You’re going to be quite tasty,” the woman said, wetting her lips. “A bit sweet . . . with all that poisonous sugar you put in your doughy body, but you’ll serve my purpose.”

“Doughy?” Kirkland fumbled for his crucifix dangling around his neck. Before he had a chance to brandish it, the woman snatched it from his throat. Running out of options, he crossed his sausage-thick fingers into a makeshift cross.

“Pathetic, just pathetic,” uttered the woman. “Now if you don’t mind, I’m a little thirsty.”

She moved in for the kill when the door burst open. The vampire turned around just as Deacon Walters doused her with a thermos full of holy water. She cried out as the water scarred her sensuous face. He raised a two-foot sharpened wood stake and skewered it deep into her flesh.

Using his 250-pound frame, Walters plunged the weapon of choice deeper into her heart, exiting through her back. As she cried out in agony, Walters wailed off a couple of punches to her face for good measure.

“I have always wanted to do that,” he smiled. “Do me a favor Kirk, place that rag over her face – things are gonna turn ugly real quick.”

Kirk obliged. “What the . . . ?” The vampire’s body deflated. In seconds, the once sultry flesh dried up like beef jerky. Five minutes later, her once curvy disposition had turned to nothing but ash. “You . . . ?”

“You my friend bit off more than you can chew,” said the deacon. “By the way, your cell was on so I heard the whole play-by-play in here.”

“You knew about this all along, didn’t you?” asked Kirkland, still gawking at the outline of the woman’s charred body.

Deacon Walters reached over for the broom and dustpan and tidied things up, pouring the dusty remains into a garbage can. “Talk about your carbon footprint,” he said before breaking into a healthy laugh.

“So you know why I’m doing this,” posed Kirkland.

“Damn straight,” replied Deacon Walters. “Kirk, I secretly believed you almost a full year ago and I believe you now. A vampire did kill your wife, Nicole. And this whole Fang Fest thing was nothing more than one big trap, am I right?”

Kirk gritted his teeth. The memory of finding his beloved wife of twenty-three years murdered still

flowed in his veins. “Damn straight, Art.”

“So what was your choice of weapon,” the deacon asked.

“The old tried and true stake and mallet, I guess” said Kirkland. The deacon shook his head. “What, no good?”

“We’ll talk,” he replied. “Meanwhile, let’s get back upstairs before . . .”

“Kirkland grabbed Walters’ arm. “There’s more of them here.”

“Of course there are,” replied Deacon. “You offered these whacke-out trick-o-treaters a dozen hours of nonstop vampire movies and your concession stand prices are to die for. You do realize you could double the price of everything here and still be cheaper than all those megaplexes.”

“Deacon, I didn’t know there were so many? What am I going to do?”

“We,” said the deacon. “We’re in this together. Now let’s help Trevor serve these bastards some popcorn before we devise a game plan to wipe them off the face of New Hampshire. Just play it cool, okay.”

The two men walked upstairs and moseyed over to the counter. “Where’s your boy?” asked the deacon.

“Trevor?” his dad called out. Kirkland sensed something was wrong. “Trevor? Those sons of bitches took him!”

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### **The Horse You Came In On By Rick Weber**

To say that Liam O’Brien was brought up in a poor family would be both an understatement and an assessment of the times in Ireland during the 1830s. Like his peers, he did not have the opportunity to go to school at all because he was needed to work on the family farm which yielded nothing. Famine marked the times. He knew no other life, but he heard stories of other worlds beyond his island home. Hungry and frustrated with his lot, O’Brien ran away from home to the Port of Cork at the age of twelve and got a job as a cabin boy on a merchant ship. He knew that it would be hard work, but he would not go hungry. He was big for his age passing himself off as fourteen.

Liam found himself hustling buckets of food from the galley to the forecastle where the seamen ate. He soon learned the ropes, the sails, and the lines of the ship often finding himself in the rigging trimming the sails. A hard life, but better than the one he had left. Over the next decade, he saw ports in many different places learning how the world functioned.

He had a number of close calls on ships during storms. He took it all in stride as part of the job until

his ship encountered two hurricanes back to back in the mid-Atlantic. The first was bad, but the second one was worse, coming only a few days later. During the second, the ship almost capsized with Liam at the helm. With the captain’s steady directions, they made it through, but Liam felt he had pressed his luck as far as it would go. When the ship made it into Baltimore, Liam called quits and jumped ship. Baltimore became his new home, the first on dry land in over ten years.

Looking around, he found work on the docks loading and unloading ships, but he did not see himself making a life of it, although many folks did.

With the help of a parish priest with some political connections, he got a job working for the city as a constable. It was the only thing his pastor could get for him at the time. O’Brien also met Ann, an Irish girl several years younger than him, at church. They fell in love and after a brief courtship got married.

On October 3, 1849 inside of Ryan’s Tavern date elections took place and Ryan’s Tavern was the polling place for the 10<sup>th</sup> ward.

Liam made his way into the bar to get a pint of ale. O’Brien, a big burly Irishman, was greeted by everyone in the place. As O’Brien was served his grog, the door opened and a local printer, Joseph Walker brought in an incoherent intoxicated man, and the room’s attention shifted onto them. O’Brien took a sip of ale looking on before making any comment. He observed the man Walker brought, in addition to being intoxicated, to be clad in a bombazine coat, old pantaloons, worn out shoes, and a straw hat.

“Don’t you think he’s had enough already?” O’Brien asked Walker in a loud voice.

Walker paid no attention and asked the bartender for a sheet of paper and a quill. The bartender nodded and brought the items to the bar where Walker wrote a note.

“Is it his last will and testament?” O’Brien asked with a smirk.

Again, no answer from Walker, who finished the note, and asked a young man, “Do you know Dr. Snodgrass?” The young man nodded. “Please take this to him right away,” handing the note to him.

“Who might this fellow be?” O’Brien belted out in a deep Irish brogue intending for this question to be answered.

“He’s Edgar Allan Poe, a writer. You may have heard of him,” Walker answered.

“Can’t say that I have,” O’Brien said in a flat tone.

“He’s pretty well known around town,” Walker added.

O’Brien did not want to pursue anything about Poe because he, himself, could not read.

In the current situation, he looked at the disheveled drunken man before him and thought to himself, “Not my problem.” Before he could add to his train of thought, the saloon door opened and Dr. Snodgrass in the company of Henry Herring, Poe’s uncle, entered the premises. O’Brien knew Dr. Snodgrass to be a temperance fanatic who obviously was not enjoying his trip to the public house. O’Brien, now amused, listened to

the conversation between the two men.

Herring argued against taking Poe home to care for him and they decided to take Poe to Washington Medical College Hospital which was nearby. A cab was hailed, and Snodgrass and Herring loaded Poe into it for his trip to the hospital.

O’Brien heard conversation around him from other patrons who knew Poe’s uncle, and they talked about Poe’s cousin, Nelson Poe, a politico in the 18<sup>th</sup> ward. With politics being mentioned, O’Brien knew that there might be some stir about how Poe was found, but did not think much of it.

O’Brien made his way home, and talked about his day with Ann as she made him dinner. When he mentioned Poe’s name and him being a writer, Ann interrupted and said that she read some of his works quoting from *The Raven*.

O’Brien, taken in by what his wife quoted from *The Raven*, regretted not knowing how to read. The next day he ran into his parish priest who asked him if he heard about the Poe incident. When he said yes, the clergyman recommended that he get ahead of things should Poe’s family want to know more about what happened to him, especially the whereabouts of his clothing. The pastor added that from his reputation, Poe would never be seen in tattered garments. O’Brien took the hint and did some background work not knowing where it would take him.

O’Brien during his rounds went back to Ryan’s Tavern and asked about Poe. He found out Poe was still at Washington Medical College Hospital and that no one from Poe’s family asked about him at the bar.

O’Brien shrewdly took it all in and heard comments made by some of the people that Poe was obviously “cooping”, being drunk and forced to vote multiple times on Election Day. O’Brien knew from his short time in Baltimore that one way to get away with “cooping” was to change the “voter’s” clothes each time he went to the poll, which was probably how Poe ended up in rags. O’Brien laughed and left the bar.

O’Brien went to the hospital and inquired about Poe. A nurse told him that Poe was in the drunk ward under the care of Dr. Joseph Moran and could not have visitors. No other information was available but to O’Brien none was needed, Poe was a lush being treated for his problem.

At home that night O’Brien asked his wife to tell him some more from Poe’s works. Upon hearing *The Raven* in its entirety, O’Brien asked his wife to teach him how to read. She agreed and the learning process began for him.

While making his rounds over the next several days, he did not find out much about Poe’s activities in Baltimore before he ended up in the hospital. He learned that Poe left Richmond on September 27<sup>th</sup> en route to Philadelphia and New York.

No political stir came from Poe’s family concerning his activities, belongings, or that he may have been the victim of a robbery. O’Brien took that to mean they wanted this incident behind them. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, O’Brien learned that Edgar Allan Poe had died. O’Brien heard about the funeral plans, and curiosity caused him to be near the First Presbyterian Church the next day to watch it from a distance.

Poe was laid to rest in a plain wooden coffin constructed by his uncle, Henry Herring. What was simpler than the coffin was the funeral itself. It took less than five minutes in a cold damp rain with only 8 mourners.

O'Brien left the church yard thinking, "How could a man who wrote such beautiful poetry end up like this?"

O'Brien persevered and over time learned how to read. He became a big fan of Poe's works reading all of them. He also became a critic of Poe's detractors mainly Joseph Snodgrass, Joseph Moran, and Rufus Wilmot Griswold, who sought to capitalize on Poe's death for their own gain. O'Brien, who years later read Griswold's obituary of Poe, found Griswold the worst type of opportunist, a rival looking to profit from another's misfortune.

O'Brien would be frustrated over the years by theories concerning Poe's death. O'Brien would only say that Poe was the victim of his own demons inside him, and that Poe should be judged by his works not by his actions. O'Brien would die many years later as an old man in his sleep.



## Smashing the Slate By Jamie White

### Chapter One

Fiona watched as her daughter leaped off her swing, her small body flying through the air as she squealed in delight. Stephanie landed on her feet and looked around the yard for something else to do. When she noticed the drinks sitting on the table, she made a mad dash to grab one. Their eyes met for a moment and Fiona froze. Maybe it was because her old roommate called earlier, but for the first time she really looked and saw something familiar in them, something that made her sick. *No... I have to be imagining things. Right?* Stephanie smiled and retrieved her skates, holding them up for her mother to see. She took Fiona's hand, trying to pull her out of the chair. "Mommy, let's go for a walk!"

Fiona stared down at the small child tugging at her hand as her stomach tightened. She forced a smile and shook her head, swallowing hard to keep her emotions in check. "Sorry, kid, Mommy's not up for a walk right now. Maybe we can go tomorrow."

Before the child could protest, her husband, Ted, came to the rescue. "I'll tell you what. Why don't

you go inside and get your jacket, and I'll take you."

"Yay! Okay!" The child hurried inside the house, Fiona all but forgotten.

Ted straightened up and took a seat beside his wife. "Okay, what's wrong?"

"What do you mean?" Fiona looked up at him, an eyebrow raised.

"I know you too well for this. Something really spooked you just now — what was it?"

Fiona bit her lip, unsure of what to say. Stephanie offered a small reprieve when she returned with a jacket in hand.

"Daddy, help!"

Ted motioned for Stephanie to come over to him and helped the little girl with her coat. "Why don't you go inside and wait for me, okay? I want to talk to your mommy a second."

"Do I have to?" Stephanie's face fell as she looked from one to the other.

"Yes, you have to. Go on, now. I'll be right there."

Stephanie pouted. "Okay." She turned and went back into the house, leaving the back door open.

Fiona motioned to the house, silencing any further question for the moment. "Go ahead and go; we can talk about this later." *Much later.*

Ted looked like he wanted to argue, but he shrugged instead. "All right, if that's what you want. Tomorrow?"

Fiona nodded, the tension in her body easing. “Sure.” *Tomorrow is always better...*

He gave her a quick kiss, then made his way toward the house. “See you soon.”

“Bye.” Fiona watched as he walked in the house and closed the door behind him. *How am I going to tell him this?*

He adored the child; had since the moment he’d found out she was on her way — after the shock and terror wore off, anyway. Fiona hadn’t been as enthusiastic, something that still made her feel subhuman.

\*\*\*

Fiona sat on the edge of the tub, wringing her hands as her stomach twisted in knots. She stared at the small plastic object that held her fate in its hands. She’d only just started the test, but it felt like she’d been sitting there waiting for hours.

“Fiona? Are you okay in there?”

She jumped at the sound of Ted’s voice, holding back a scream. “Yeah, I’m fine. I’ll be out in a sec.”

“Are you sure? You’ve been in there a lot lately. You’re starting to worry me.”

*Think you’re worried now? Wait about five minutes...* “I told you, I’ll be out in a sec. I promise.”

She listened as the sound of Ted’s footsteps broke the silence that settled in the apartment. Satisfied he was waiting, she returned to staring at the cursed stick. Just when Fiona thought she would go mad if she had to wait another moment, she saw the change on the small screen. Her stomach dropped and Fiona paled

as she took in the colored lines. *Now, you can worry.*

\*\*\*

The ringing phone snapped Fiona back to the present moment. She looked down at the screen, a smile crossing her features as she saw her sister’s name. “Hey, how’s it going?”

“Great, how’s my favorite niece? You said drop by at eight to get her, right?”

“Yeah, she’ll be ready in the morning. Thanks for taking her for us.”

“Are you kidding? If you’re not careful, I might not give her back.”

*Be my guest...* Where had that thought come from? A pang of guilt radiated through her as she processed the words. The worst part was, she realized a small part of her meant it. She forced a laugh and took on a serious tone. “Don’t even think it.”

Rebecca laughed in response. “See you guys in the morning. Tell Ted I said ‘hello’.”

“I will. Bye.” Fiona hung up the phone and checked the time. Almost half an hour had passed since they’d left and they’d be back soon. Fiona stood up and walked inside to use the bathroom. Once inside, she shut the door and approached the mirror, inspecting her face with a critical eye. Fiona didn’t want even a trace of her current mood visible when they got back.

She splashed some water on her face and did a couple of grounding exercises to relax, then distracted herself with dinner preparations. Fiona was just in the middle of setting the table when

Stephanie raced through the door with Ted bringing up the rear.

“I win, I win!”

He shook his head, a sad expression on his face as he kneeled down to help her remove the skates. “You are just too fast for me, kiddo.” He walked over to Fiona and gave her a kiss before turning his attention back to the little girl. “Looks like we’re just in time for dinner. Come on, I’ll help you clean up.”

Stephanie followed him to the sink and Ted helped her wash her hands while Fiona pulled dinner out of the oven and set it on the table. She watched the two interact while she waited for them to finish.

His eyes shone as Stephanie laughed at a joke he’d told her. There was an ease in the way he dealt with her Fiona never quite mastered; a pride radiated from him she just couldn’t feel at times. Now she understood why, and the thought of telling Ted what she suspected hurt more than she could describe. *Maybe I should keep it to myself...*

There was always a chance she was wrong, or at least somewhat off. Why upset him over what might be just an over-reaction on her part? As soon as the thought occurred to her a sinking sensation consumed her, making her feel light-headed. *Or not...* No matter what her instincts were saying, she couldn’t do it now, not with Stephanie able to overhear. She smiled and reached for Stephanie’s seat to pull it out for her to hide the sudden distress. He sat her down and pushed it back into place before taking his own seat.

Fiona turned her attention to her daughter, handing her a cup of juice. “So, did you guys have fun?”

“Lots! Can we go again tomorrow?”

“Afraid not, Steph. Don’t you remember? Aunt Becca’s coming tomorrow to pick you up for the weekend.”

Stephanie’s eyes lit up. “Yay, she’s fun! I like her.”

Ted joined them at the table and picked up his own glass, taking a sip. “That’s right; I almost forgot. Did Aunt Becca say what you were doing?”

Stephanie shook her head, a pout on her face. “Uh-uh. She said it’s a surprise.”

Fiona swallowed the bite she’d been chewing on and turned to face the child. “Surprises are fun.”

“You don’t like ‘em.”

Fiona frowned, watching as Stephanie took another bite of her food. “I never said that.”

“Yes, you did.”

Ted looked from one to the other, raising an eyebrow. “Better hurry and finish; it’s almost bedtime and you have to be up early.”

Stephanie nodded, looking down at her plate a minute before she took the last bite. A few minutes later, Ted led Stephanie out of the room while Fiona stayed behind to wash the dishes. What had Stephanie been talking about, and why did it bother her so much? Fiona had no idea, but she intended to find out.

Just as she put the last dish into the drainer, Ted returned. He came up behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist. “I hope you’re

planning to tell me what that was all about tomorrow, too.”

Fiona frowned, her brow creasing as she tried to come up with an answer. “I wish I could

**(Now for a bit of flash fiction)**

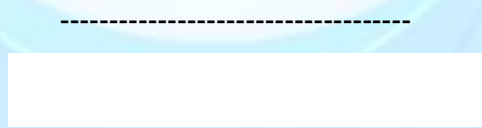
**The End  
By Jaime White**

The good thing about dreams is, they always come to an end. The bad thing about dreams is, they always come to pass. Well, my dreams do anyway.

The first time I had a prophetic dream, I was six years old. At the time, I thought it was fun. They just showed me what my friends would be wearing to school the next day or where we’d be going on the next field trip— harmless stuff.

That was then. Now? I’ve just woken from the worst dream I’ve ever had in my life. It was a nightmare, filled with nothing but destruction and pain. The worst part of it isn’t the terror the images brings or the knowledge that something bad will happen. It’s the helplessness.

Tomorrow, the world will burn and even if I had a way to stop it, who would believe me?



**Soul Catcher Serial Part Two  
By CP Bialois/Ed White**

**Chapter 3**

The alarm sounded its obnoxious klaxon-like signal for Patricia to begin a new day. Reaching for it with her lone free hand as she kept her face buried in her pillow proved a wasted endeavor. It took her three attempts to find the alarm by touch. Even then, she resulted in knocking the lamp off the table before quieting the blaring nuisance.

*Crap!* She let out a breath and pushed her face deeper into the pillow at the expected sound of the lamp breaking. Her grip on the pillow released only when a light thumping sound reached her. Lifting her head, she squinted into the midday light pouring through the cheap blinds she bought at a dollar store when she first moved in.

Between getting to bed a couple of hours before and the blinding afternoon glow, she forgot what had angered her a moment before. Then her gaze settled on the empty spot where her lamp had been a minute before.

Without looking at the digital clock, she dropped back onto her pillow with thoughts of calling off dancing through her head. She all but made up her mind when she

remembered the man’s death the night before.

She opened her eyes and forced herself to sit p. While the memory served as a mental stimulant, her body refused to work at the same pace. Rubbing the remaining sleep from her eyes, Patricia let out a breath and glanced at the clock. 12:30. Not even a full ten minutes had passed since it woke her.

“So much for the snooze,” she mumbled, reaching over to turn the alarm off. With the first real activity of the day completed, her body started to shake off the rust from sleep. She even surprised herself by standing and taking two steps to the other side of the table. With one hand on the table for support, she bent over and picked up the lamp. In all the years she owned it, she could never remember it was plastic until touching it. Shaking her head at the idiocy of her actions, she placed the lamp back on the table and turned toward the kitchen. Her shower could wait. She needed coffee. Now.

\*\*\*\*\*

It took toward the end of her second cup to feel more like herself. There was still a ways to go, but it was a start.

Patricia had stared into space while drinking her first cup, but now that she could focus, she turned her attention to the morning newspaper she brought in after returning home from work. It was the first time in over ten years she had come home after it was delivered, but that wasn’t what caught her attention.

Though she managed to forget about it when sleep overcame her, the headline rekindled the memory of the previous evening. The title

read: **Local Man Dies During Routine Procedure.**

Something about the article’s title sent a shiver along her back despite the warm cup of coffee in her hand. Shaking her head, she muttered, “Jesus, come on. This is ridiculous.”

Given her gift, feeling chills when a spirit was near wasn’t strange, but feeling it so often in such a short period of time was. She glanced around the tight confines of her kitchen. Nothing was out of place and while the feeling wasn’t as intense as the previous night, she still expected to see someone sitting or standing by the kitchen table she sat at.

She let out a breath she didn’t know she’d been holding when no one appeared. She was about to mumble something about losing her mind when something moved out of the corner of her eye.

\*\*\*\*\*

The figure stepped out of the empty darkness. His cloak blended with the surrounding shadows that traveled with him so completely it appeared as little more than a shadow in the bright sunlight of midday.

As it approached the old woman that suffered a fatal stroke a few seconds earlier, a pair of pale white hands appeared out of the shadowed cloak. In one, the figure held a dark stained box. In a slow, smooth motion it reached over with its other hand and opened the lid. A small pile of thin wood-like sticks of varying colors sat unmoving no matter how the figure moved.

Reaching out its free hand, the figure touched its forefinger to the center of the woman’s forehead.

After a couple of seconds, the figure’s thumb and forefinger came together and it pulled a bright yellow stick from the woman’s forehead.

Placing the stick in the box, the figure then closed the box’s lid before its hands disappeared with the box into its cloak. Turning, the figure paused as something outside the house caught its eye before it made its way back to the spot it first appeared.

\*\*\*\*\*

Patricia turned and looked out her window. She didn’t know what she expected to see. The yard between hers and the Morgan’s house next door was little more than ten feet across with a sidewalk cutting it in half.

Her breath froze in her throat when she looked through the window directly across from hers. Mrs. Morgan was laying across her kitchen table staring at Patricia with dead eyes.

Patricia pushed away from the kitchen table and hurried to the phone on the wall. All she could think was she needed to call an ambulance for Mrs. Morgan even if it was too late to help, Mrs. Morgan had always been kind to her and deserved that and more.

**Chapter 4**

*This is not how life was in a small town.* Patricia shook her head as she dialed 9-1-1 on her cell phone. She made it to her front door before the familiar call failed chime rang in her ear.

“Crap!” She looked at the display as though she could make it work by glaring at it. Shaking her head, she pulled the door open and stepped outside into the afternoon sun before trying to call again. That

time she watched the bars at the top left on her phone's display. Once she was certain the connection was made she lifted it to her ear and her eyes toward the Morgan's house.

A squeak escaped from her before fright closed her throat against another sound at the sight of the homeless man from the night before pushing his cart in the middle of the sidewalk. She didn't know how long it took, but after what felt like minutes, she could think and feeling returned to her body. She opened her mouth to say something, but a voice in her ear caught her attention.

"Hello? Are you all right? Hello?"

Patricia pulled her eyes from the homeless man and focused on her hand with her phone. *How long has he been talking?* Unsure of what else to do, she put the phone to her ear. "I'm sorry... my neighbor died..."

The sound of the person typing on a computer carried over the phone. "Did you see what happened?"

Patricia continued answering the operator's questions while glancing at the homeless man. While he hadn't sped or slowed his pace, he remained near the same spot where she first saw him. It was only when the operator asked her what her neighbor's name was that she turned her eyes to the Morgan's house. "Oh my God..."

She took a step toward the house as everything around her swirled into scramble vision. Her head swam as the earth shifted under her. She stopped to wait for the feeling to pass and tried to answer the rest of the operator's questions. The sound of police and

ambulance sirens filled the air as the scramble vision faded and the homeless man was gone.

\*\*\*\*\*

Patricia answered all the questions she was asked, but the fact she didn't know as much as she thought she should bothered her. The officer talking with her, a polite young man in his first year on the force, told her things like someone dying alone were common. Sometimes, their significant other didn't know it happened either. Just as the case had been with the Morgans. Paul was in the backyard tending his garden when the police arrived.

Patricia struggled to find comfort in the fact her neighbor had died across from her kitchen window and no one noticed. Glancing around, she noticed Paul standing to the side as they carried his wife out to the medical examiner's van. She thought it odd that they would do such a thing if the death wasn't a murder or suicide, but she shook her head. After living in Glenn's Ford for six months, she still struggled to understand the differences between a small town and city.

*How bad would I be if this was New York or Philly?* She shook her head to clear the thoughts away. There was more going on around her than the culture shock of living in a small city. She thought back to the homeless man.

*Did I really see him?* The question was one she had asked herself a dozen times. Each time she dismissed him as being a figment of her imagination. It sometimes happened when her scramble vision took over. She had never taken the time to study her

ability, so beyond seeing dead people she had little understanding of what she could and couldn't see. It was how she preferred it.

Following her mother's threat to have Patricia committed if she continued to talk about seeing her Uncle Jimmy's spirit had broken her of looking at her ability as anything but a curse. Being taken anywhere where men in white lab coats could poke, prod, and drug her terrified her more than any "imaginary" people. It was for that reason she flinched when people on television referred to seeing the dead as a gift.

For years she told herself her mother was right. After all, seeing her favorite uncle hang himself right in front of her on his fortieth birthday should've screwed her up. Even now, she couldn't imagine how or why she hadn't suffered some sort of breakdown. Was it happening again?

She rubbed her arms as gooseflesh broke out across her body. Her gaze had become fixed on the Morgan's house, but she didn't see it. Instead of the wood and vinyl siding, she saw Uncle Jimmy as he stood on his chair all those years before.

*"I love you, Patty-girl. But when you ain't here, I got nuthin'."*

*Patricia watched him as he pulled the noose made out of his ties around his neck. The sound of her mother's car pulling into the driveway caught her attention, but something told her this was something she needed to see.*

*Uncle Jimmy smiled at her one final time. "Go on to your mom, Patty-girl. You shouldn't see this."*

## Portal Poetry Corner



*Despite his wishes, Patricia couldn't move even if she wanted to. Although she was only ten, Uncle Jimmy had been the only adult she felt comfortable around. He never yelled or berated her for no reason like her mother. "I can't, Uncle Jimmy. Not until you come down." Tears welled in her eyes as she spoke and a cry started in her throat when she saw him start to cry. His eyes shifted to the door where his sister, Patricia's mother, would open any second, then turned back to her.*

*"I can't look after you anymore, Patty-girl. Listen to your mom and be good. Don't give her cause to turn on you."*

*Patricia hesitated for a second before nodding. Uncle Jimmy smiled at her one more time, then stepped off the chair.*

Patricia's body shook as though an electric current ran through her. It'd been years since she last thought about her Uncle Jimmy and his suicide. She had pushed it aside along with the other memories she didn't want to think about.

The medical examiner's van pulled away from the curb and Mr. Morgan returned to his home as the rest of the police and neighbors returned to their homes. It was the first time she noticed the onlookers, but she couldn't fault them. They wanted to offer their support, and those that didn't would've already moved off to start gossiping about Mrs. Morgan.

Shaking her head, Patricia let out a disgusted snort and turned back to her home. She had made up her mind. She wasn't going to work today.

### Halloween Poems, anyone?

#### From *A Nightmare on Elm Street*

One, two, Freddy's coming for you.  
Three, four, Better lock your door  
Five, six, grab a crucifix.  
Seven, eight, Gonna stay up late.  
Nine, ten, Never sleep again....

#### The Vampire by Rudyard Kipling

A fool there was and he made his prayer  
(Even as you or I!)  
To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair,  
(We called her the woman who did not care),  
But the fool he called her his lady fair--  
(Even as you or I!)

Oh, the years we waste and the tears we waste,  
And the work of our head and hand  
Belong to the woman who did not know  
(And now we know that she never could know)  
And did not understand!

A fool there was and his goods he spent,  
(Even as you or I!)  
Honour and faith and a sure intent  
(And it wasn't the least what the lady meant),  
But a fool must follow his natural bent  
(Even as you or I!)

Oh, the toil we lost and the spoil we lost  
And the excellent things we planned  
Belong to the woman who didn't know why  
(And now we know that she never knew why)  
And did not understand!

The fool was stripped to his foolish hide,  
(Even as you or I!)  
Which she might have seen when she threw him aside--  
(But it isn't on record the lady tried)  
So some of him lived but the most of him died--  
(Even as you or I!)

``And it isn't the shame and it isn't the blame  
That stings like a white-hot brand--  
It's coming to know that she never knew why  
(Seeing, at last, she could never know why)  
And never could understand!"

#### The Shadow on the Stone By Thomas Hardy

I went by the Druid stone  
That broods in the garden white and lone,  
And I stopped and looked at the shifting shadows  
That at some moments fall thereon  
From the tree hard by with a

rhythmic swing,

And they shaped in my imagining  
To the shade that a well-known  
head and shoulders

Threw there when she was  
gardening.

I thought her behind my back,  
Yea, her I long had learned to  
lack,

And I said: 'I am sure you are  
standing behind me,

Though how do you get into this  
old track?'

And there was no sound but the  
fall of a leaf

As a sad response; and to keep  
down grief

I would not turn my head to  
discover

That there was nothing in my  
belief.

Yet I wanted to look and see  
That nobody stood at the back of  
me;

But I thought once more: 'Nay, I'll  
not unvision

A shape which, somehow, there  
may be.'

So I went on softly from the glade,  
And left her behind me throwing

her shade,  
As she were indeed an apparition—

My head unturned lest my dream  
should fade.

**The Writer's Group meetings  
are held the second Monday of  
every month in the second floor  
conference room from  
6:00 – 7:30pm.**

**\*Upcoming dates 2015:**

**Oct 12, Nov 9, and Dec 14.**

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All communications with the  
editor and all inquiries  
concerning this publication  
should be addressed to:

**Michael Kelly, Portal Editor**

South Regional/BC Library  
7300 Pines Blvd.

Pembroke Pines, FL. 33024.

Telephone: 954-201-8870

[mkelly@broward.org](mailto:mkelly@broward.org)

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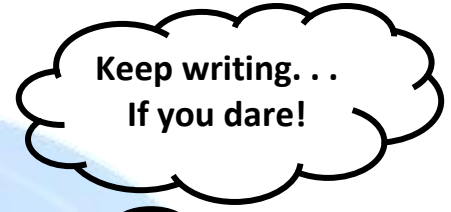
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know what you think of our stories.  
Feel free to email Michael Kelly,  
head of the writer's group at  
[mkelly@broward.org](mailto:mkelly@broward.org) or call  
(954) 201-8870.



**Authors!**

<b>Clive Barker</b>	<b>Oct. 5</b>
<b>DiVitto Kelly</b>	<b>Oct. 10</b>
<b>Oscar Wilde</b>	<b>Oct. 14</b>
<b>Arthur Miller</b>	<b>Oct. 17</b>

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