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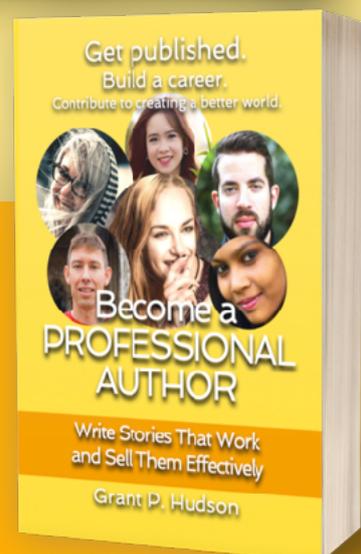
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Welcome

Dear Reader,

In this free-spirited forty-sixth issue, we get to meet the multi-talented **Sam Phillips** and learn about his burgeoning career as an author and publisher (see page 36) AND we find out who won a copy of the book *Become a Professional Author* in the **Quick as Lightning Flash Fiction Contest** starting on page 14.

We also begin our travels through Oxford with **Annie Nardone**, and get to enjoy the latest TWO chapters from **George MacDonald's** classic 'At the Back of the North Wind'.

Go on another journey into the depths of fiction in **Myth & the 'Now'** on page 94, discover the anatomy of the resistive prospect on page 112 and delve into **William Makepeace Thackeray's** humorous horror story in Part One of 'Bluebeard's Ghost'

And there's much more, of course, including a quiz and amazing submission opportunities.

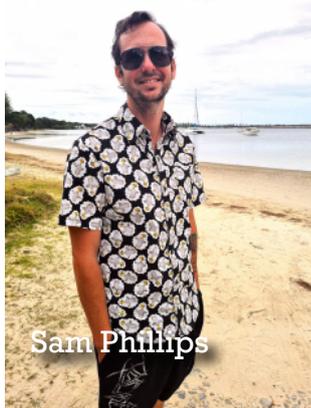
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Grant P. Hudson

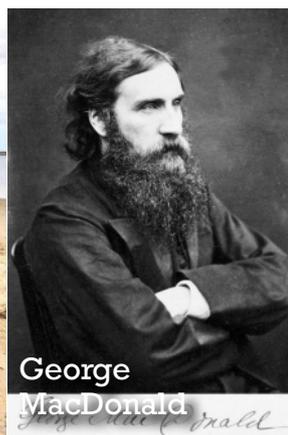
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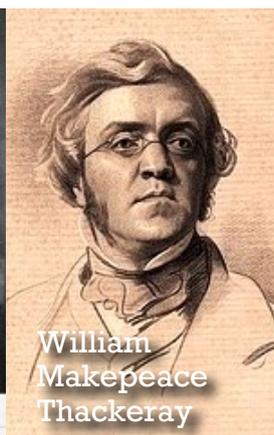
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Sam Phillips



George MacDonald



William Makepeace Thackeray

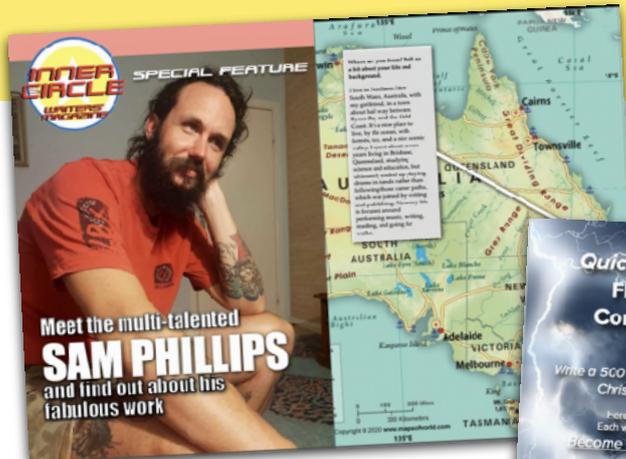


Annie Nardone

with Riham Adly, Jim Bates, Ann Stolinsky, Jean Smith, A. L. Paradiso and C. L. Steele

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IN THIS ISSUE



FICTION

14 QUICK AS LIGHTNING FLASH FICTION CONTEST RESULTS featuring the work of **Jim Bates, Ann Stolinsky, Jean Smith, A. L. Paradiso and C. L. Steele**

58 THE BRIEF CHRONICLED HISTORY OF THE GIRL AS TOLD BY THE REALIST BUT YET OPTIMISTIC AFRICAN FORTUNETELLER by **Riham Adly**

70 CLASSIC MASTERPIECES At the Back of the North Wind Parts 14 and 15 by **George MacDonald**

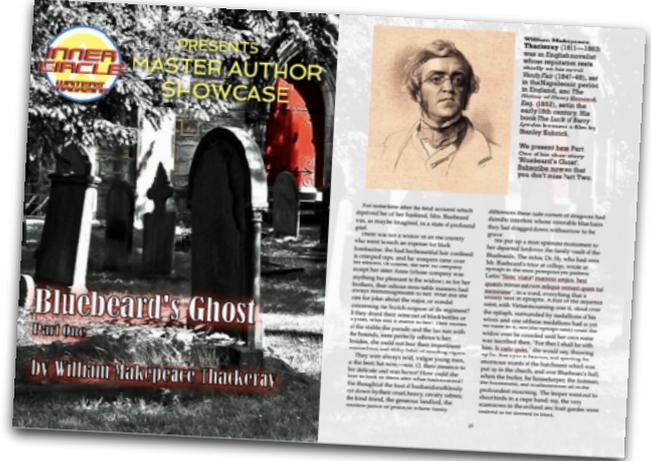
126 MASTER AUTHOR SHOWCASE: 'Bluebeard's Ghost' Part One, by **William Makepeace Thackeray**

INTERVIEWS AND SNAPSHOTS

36 Meet the multi-talented SAM PHILLIPS and find out about his latest work

EXPERT ADVICE

94 MYTH & THE 'NOW' After How Stories Really Work, the investigation into stories went deeper. Myth & the 'Now' takes the reader on a journey into the heart of myth and brings it into view in new ways. Part Eight: The Fall of a King



NEWS AND FEATURES
66 A SOJOURNER IN OXFORD
Annie Nardone's Travel Blog
Part One, July 2022
112 THE WONDERFUL WORLD
OF MARKETING examining
 the underlying principles of
 business — Chapter 14: The
 Resistive Prospect

9 FREE GIFT FOR
SUBSCRIBERS
108 SUBMISSION
OPPORTUNITIES with
 Clarendon House Publications
63 A LITERALLY LITERARY
QUIZ

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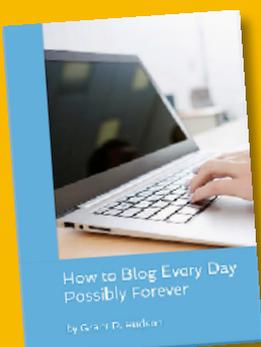
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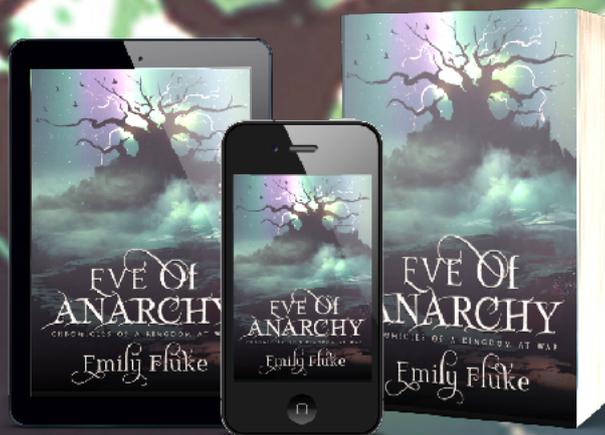
EMILY FLUKE

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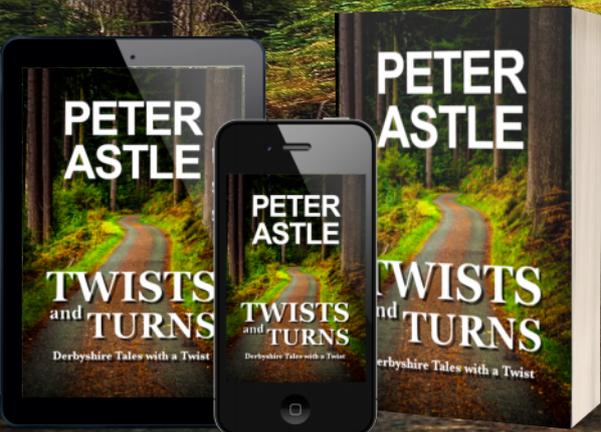
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BRUCE ROWE



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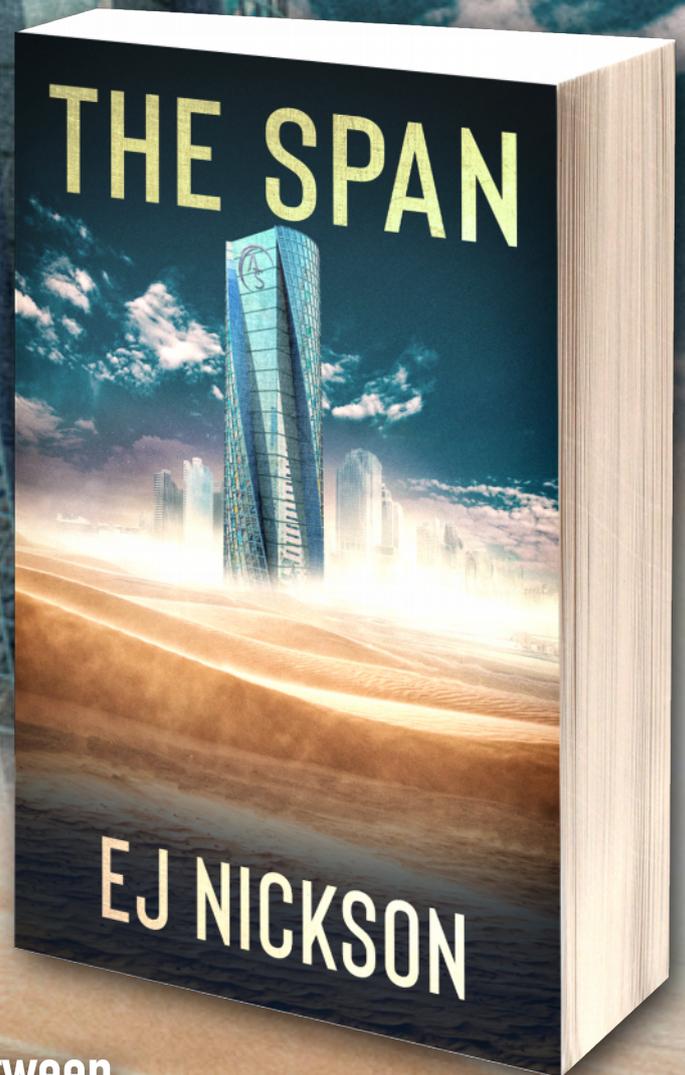
EJ NICKSON

Cole Pateras is the fastidious and calculating firstborn son in the most powerful family left on a burned-out planet. When there is haunting news of someone from his past, Cole begins to question the character he plays and his role in the empire that reigns over the remnants of humanity.

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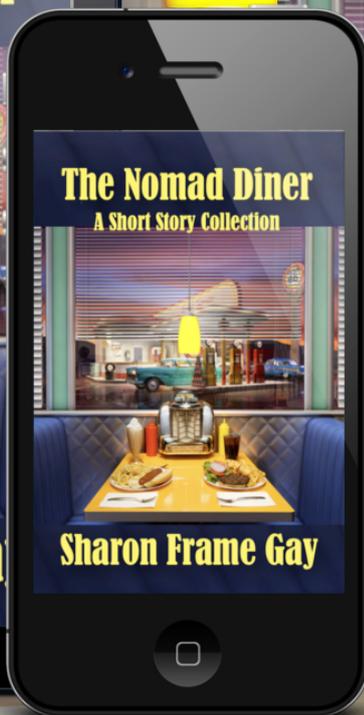
SHARON FRAME GAY



*Sharon Frame Gay has been internationally published in many anthologies and literary magazines, including Chicken Soup For The Soul, Typehouse, Lowestoft Chronicle, Literary Orphans, and others. She has won awards at The Writing District, Wow-Women On Writing, Owl Hollow Press, and Rope and Wire and is a Pushcart Prize nominee. Her first collection of short stories, **Song of the Highway**, was published in 2020 by Clarendon House Publications. Her master storytelling continues in **The Nomad Diner**.*

The Nomad Diner

A Short Story Collection



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Quick As Lightning Flash Fiction Contest Results

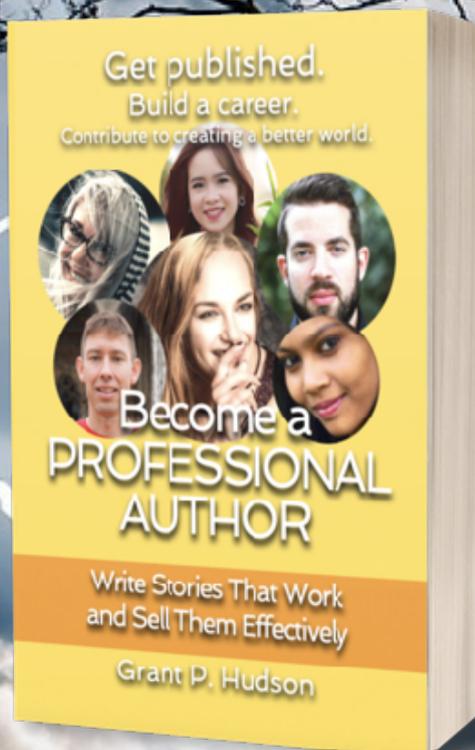
The task was:

*Write a 500 word story on the theme of
Christmas and/or Winter.*

Here are the top five entries.

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THE WREATH BY JIM BATES



The old man pulled back the curtain and peered into his front yard. It was covered with dirty snow, the stalks of forgotten annuals bent and frozen. He frowned. *Should have pulled them last October. Who cared anyway?* He let the curtain fall back and made his way to his worn armchair. He sank wearily into the cushion, grabbed his ever-present glass of whiskey, flipped on the television, and gazed at the flickering image of "Miracle on 34th Street." After a while he fell asleep, thankful for the escape. His wife Abby had died that summer, and he lived alone in their home full of memories. All he wanted was to somehow make it through the holidays. Was that asking too much?

Rrrrring! Rrrrring! The doorbell startled him awake. *What the...?* The house was dark

except for the image on the television. He looked toward the front door. Rrrrring! Rrrrring! *Damn.* Outside, he heard singing. "Joy to the world. The Lord is come." *Shit.* That was the last thing he needed. Carolers singing songs of peace and joy.

He stumbled to the door, yanked it open, and yelled, "Get out of here!" He caught only a glimpse of a bundled-up group of neighborhood parents and children before slamming it shut. He leaned against the door, hand on his heart, panting. Then he turned the lights off and went back to his whiskey and television. He raised his glass in a toast to the season. "Here's to nothing." Then he passed out.

When he awoke in the morning, something made him get up from his chair and go to the front window. He pulled back the curtain and gasped. The world outside had been magically transformed by freshly fallen snow. He noticed a red cardinal and its mate flitting in nearby bushes. Out on the street, a man and a woman wearing matching red and green stocking caps were jauntily walking their black and white

terrier. The sun made the snow sparkle like jeweled crystals.

A tear suddenly formed and rolled down his cheek. It was the kind of day Abby would have loved. She would have made a thick beef and barley soup while he was outside shoveling the sidewalk. Then they would have gone for a walk together. Oh, my, how he missed her.





He went to the front door for the newspaper. As he opened it, he noticed a wreath. It was made of balsam fir and had a red bow tied to it. "Merry Christmas," the tag said. There was a set of small footprints in the snow. He didn't have to think, but knew instinctively they were from one of his

neighbor's children. He couldn't help it. He started to cry.

That night, he turned the outdoor light on. When the carolers came to the door, he opened it wide. "Merry Christmas!" he called out and began to sing with them. A little girl stepped forward and took his hand. "Merry Christmas," she said.

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

JIM BATES



Overlapping memories, overlapping lives, wide open spaces and soft but sometimes heart-breaking reminiscences, with the mighty Mississippi running through it all — let Jim Bates take you on rich, human, intertwining journeys into a landscape of souls where you can glimpse beauty and peace, longing and contentment, the burden of past decisions and their forgiveness, and perhaps find yourself . . .



Dreamers



Artificial Christmas Trees

by Ann Stolinsky

Nothing beats the smell of a freshly cut Christmas tree. The aroma brings back memories of Christmases past, memories of family, friends, and of course, gifts. Walking past a Christmas tree, the freshly cut aroma delicately traveling through my olfactory system, always evokes a cherished memory of my parents, both deceased.

But, on the other hand, the decision to purchase an artificial tree invaded my

household last year. The heady smell of a fresh tree was replaced by the smell of a cardboard box and an aerosol can filled with the artificial scent of evergreen. What a bummer.

My kids loved the look of a silver tree, or a gold one, anything but the traditional green. I couldn't give in that much. It was difficult to give up the Christmas I had loved for so many years. We got a green tree.



Our ornaments looked different on the artificial tree. Each year we pack up the ornaments and store them for the following year, tenderly wrapping each one while reminiscing. The carousel was a gift from Uncle Harry, the year before he passed away. The reindeer was a gift from Aunt Martha. We visited her in Lake Placid, NY, a few summers before, and she took us to a wonderful place called Santa's Workshop. The star, well the star was a gift from my parents.

Christmas at our house was incredible. Mom spent days, weeks, making cookies of every conceivable shape, size and color. Our

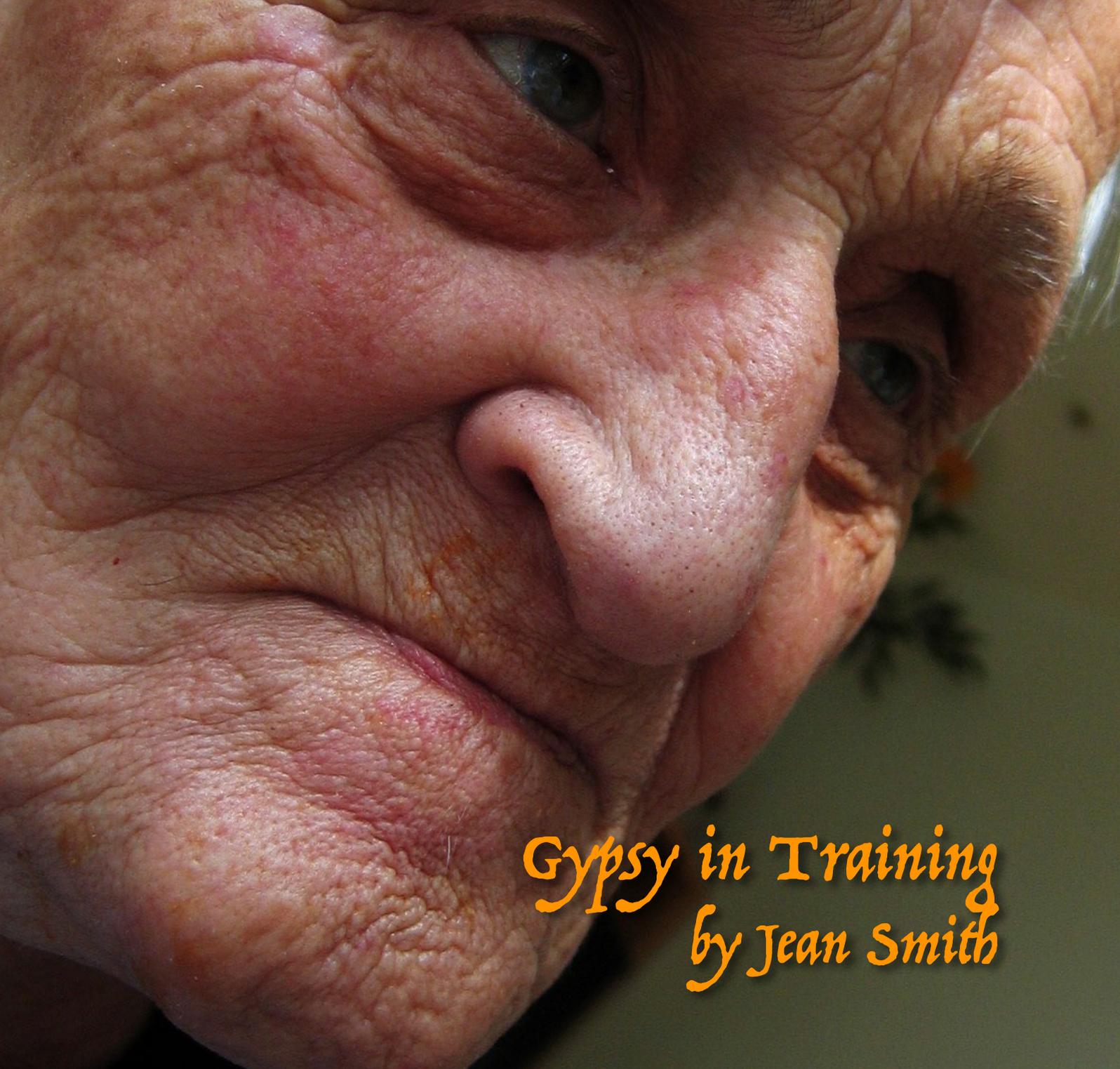
house always smelled like sugar and spice and everything nice. The weeks leading up to Christmas were filled with shopping, and baking, wrapping, and more baking. The feverish pace to get everything done on time, before Christmas Eve, was a sharp contrast to the calm and peace that settled over our house as we finished dressing for Midnight Mass.

We had many traditions that define the holiday for me to this day. The last item to go on the tree was the star. It was my honor as the eldest child to place the star on the tree just before we walked out the door.

A young girl with red hair styled in a braid, wearing a white dress with large orange and pink floral patterns and a black ribbon at the waist. She is looking upwards and to the left with a thoughtful expression. The background is a dense forest of large, dark green leaves, with warm, golden light filtering through, creating a soft, bokeh effect.

Christmas Day was a day for family. My siblings and I woke early, running down the stairs to see the presents Santa had left for us under the tree. We always stopped to take in the delicious scents. I don't know which we liked best; the smell of the tree or the smell of the turkey, already in the oven when we awoke.

The artificial tree was decorated finally. My family stood around it, dressed and ready to go to Church for Midnight Mass. My eldest child looked up at me with joy in her face. I realized the spirit of the holiday is the most important. Fresh cut tree or artificial tree didn't matter. My daughter jumped into my arms, holding ever so carefully the star we all cherished. Placing the star on the top, we all hugged. It was time to start a new tradition.



Gypsy in Training *by Jean Smith*

Elsie's nan rubbed soot on her face, chasing away some of the icy cold in her cheeks.

"Why are you making us dirty, Nan?"

"So that the farmer's wife will feel sorry for you, me and Absalom, but also so she won't recognise us later!"

The farmhouse was old and rambling, smoke pouring from the chimneys and cracks in the brickwork. A couple of small children almost as dirty as themselves played in the fading snow pile outside the kitchen door. Elsie's nan rapped sharply on the old wood. A face almost as weather-beaten as Nan's appeared from the gloom, a scowl to frighten even the most wicked

of children fixed to her face. The farmer's wife, voice as old and cracked as her face, spoke sharply.

"Yes? What is it that you want?"

Nan bobbed a curtsey. "Pardon me, ma'am, we did 'ear as you've just butchered a pig, and wondered if we could buy an 'and off the beast — for a fair price, of course."

"Show me your money."

Nan produced half a silver sixpence.

"Aye, we can spare a hand from the old pig for good silver. Wait there."

She disappeared into the shadows.

A few minutes later, the farmer's wife returned, passing Nan a huge hand of pork wrapped in layers of muslin. A bonus. She wondered if she dared try for more.

"Pardon me, mistress, I don't suppose you have any potatoes to go with it? They needn't be your best ones. It's for the babbies. Always 'ungry and it breaks my 'eart to hear 'em cry."

With barely a grunt, the farmer's wife disappeared again, then returned with a small sack of potatoes.

"Thank you," enthused Nan. "It's a shame there's no carrots to go with 'em, but you can't have everything." A matching sack of carrots appeared. "You're a good woman. We'll be thirsty, but not hungry, at least." A battered flask joined the rest.

"It's milk. Nothing else, you hear? I just want your word that you won't curse this house and then you can take your leave."

"I'll do better than that," said Nan. "I'll bless this house from the foundations to the rafters!"





"Be quick about it before my husband comes to see why his dinner's late."

Nan produced a snuff-stained handkerchief, waved it around, uttered some arcane-sounding gibberish, then marched off down the path, still waving the hanky. Elsie followed, noting that Absalom was nowhere to be seen.

Once back on the road, Absalom burst out of a hedgerow, huffing and sweating under his load. "Nice firewood you found there, lad," said Nan. "Well done."

Elsie was puzzled. "Nan, what happened back there? We've got the meat, *and* potatoes, *and* carrots, *and* milk for just half a sixpence. Absalom stole firewood. Why aren't we being chased?"

"My little gypsy-in-training, the secret is to never let the mark feel like they've been fleeced. As for stealing, take only enough that the loss won't be noticed. They have a barn full of firewood for the winter — and how else are we going to cook that Christmas pork?"

Cadet Christmas

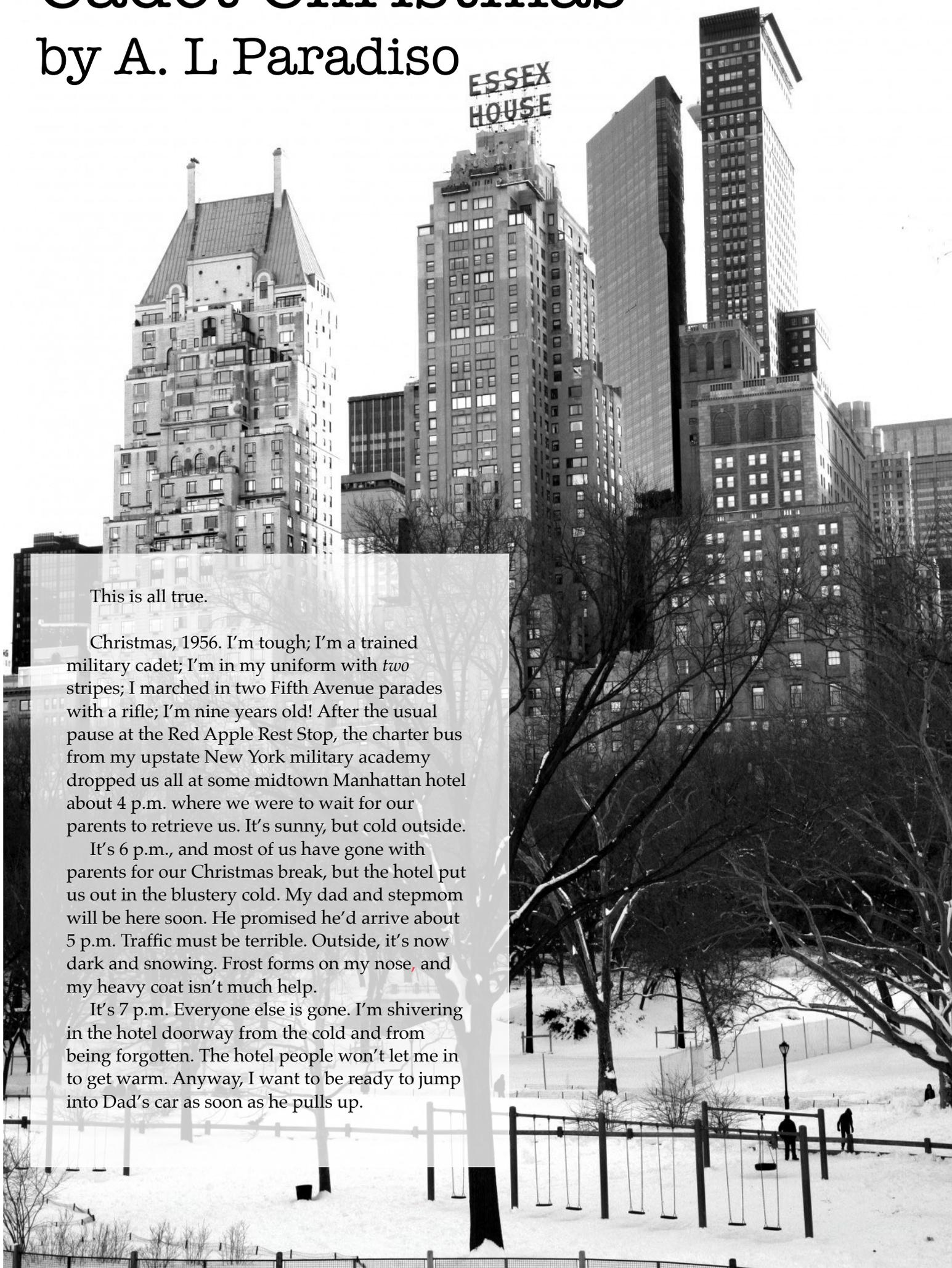
by A. L. Paradiso

This is all true.

Christmas, 1956. I'm tough; I'm a trained military cadet; I'm in my uniform with *two* stripes; I marched in two Fifth Avenue parades with a rifle; I'm nine years old! After the usual pause at the Red Apple Rest Stop, the charter bus from my upstate New York military academy dropped us all at some midtown Manhattan hotel about 4 p.m. where we were to wait for our parents to retrieve us. It's sunny, but cold outside.

It's 6 p.m., and most of us have gone with parents for our Christmas break, but the hotel put us out in the blustery cold. My dad and stepmom will be here soon. He promised he'd arrive about 5 p.m. Traffic must be terrible. Outside, it's now dark and snowing. Frost forms on my nose, and my heavy coat isn't much help.

It's 7 p.m. Everyone else is gone. I'm shivering in the hotel doorway from the cold and from being forgotten. The hotel people won't let me in to get warm. Anyway, I want to be ready to jump into Dad's car as soon as he pulls up.



A photograph of a snowy street lined with trees and parked cars, serving as a background for the text. The scene is a winter street view with snow-covered trees and cars. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the upper left quadrant.

It's 7:30 p.m., and my West Point-like uniform with cape and cap is stained from tears a tough cadet *can't* shed. *Where are they?* Besides being forgotten, I'm now sure I'm abandoned. How do I reach them? How do I get back to the vacated academy? I will fight the fears. Who the hell *am* I?

Now, 7:50 p.m., they arrived warm and smiling. They laughed at my fear, and told me I was silly for doubting them. They arrived as promised! Their over-warm car whisked us away to celebrate a frustrating Christmas.



*

Twenty years later, those rancid memories and gut-wrenching fears were still alive in my soul. Another Christmas, this one in our Pennsylvania home project, and I still felt alone despite being with dad and stepmom and ignoring my acidic conflicts. I went through the motions, but I had made a promise to my seven-year-old son, 2500 miles away in California, that I would be with him for Christmas.

Was it my turn to disappoint my son? My conscience kept nagging, stabbing, me. The weather was horrible all across the country; planes were grounded; getting a last minute ticket was unlikely; washed out roads; Dad was thrilled to have me home for the holiday after being separated for years. This was my dilemma --- disappoint my dad or my son. The choice was hard, but clear. I asked Dad to take me to the airport.

He pleaded, but I had promises to keep. We took three stops in life-threatening storms and starvation. I dripped all the way to my son. "I'm here," I beamed.

He lifted his head from his toys, briefly looked at me, and greeted me with a bored, "Oh. Hi." Then, he returned to his toys. Echoes of the past slammed me. Sorry dad, but I had promises to keep.

Sweetie Pie, It Could Be a Cold, Cruel Winter

by CL Steele

Round, blue eyes, surrounded by tabby fur and paws, gazed at the darkened sky with trepidation. Elongated rain transformed into fluffy snow, relieving some fear. The 'M' marking on her forehead become pronounced as she squinted at the tire tracks from her owner's car. She couldn't see the red lights anymore, though she could hear the crusty snow. With her pink paws warmed by her tongue, she set out to follow the treaded trail. Traveling as far as she could, she stopped and shook off the snow, then continued, until the cold, cruel white had piled too high, and bumped against her trembling belly. That's when she collapsed to her knees. She tried to mew for help, but no mew sounded. *I may die today. It's a cold cruel world, she thought.*

Her lifted nose sniffed. Pine and exhaust mingled. A car with an evergreen tree tied to the roof stopped. White Boots came toward her, calling, "I think it's a... 'you-know-what' that Katie wants for Christmas."

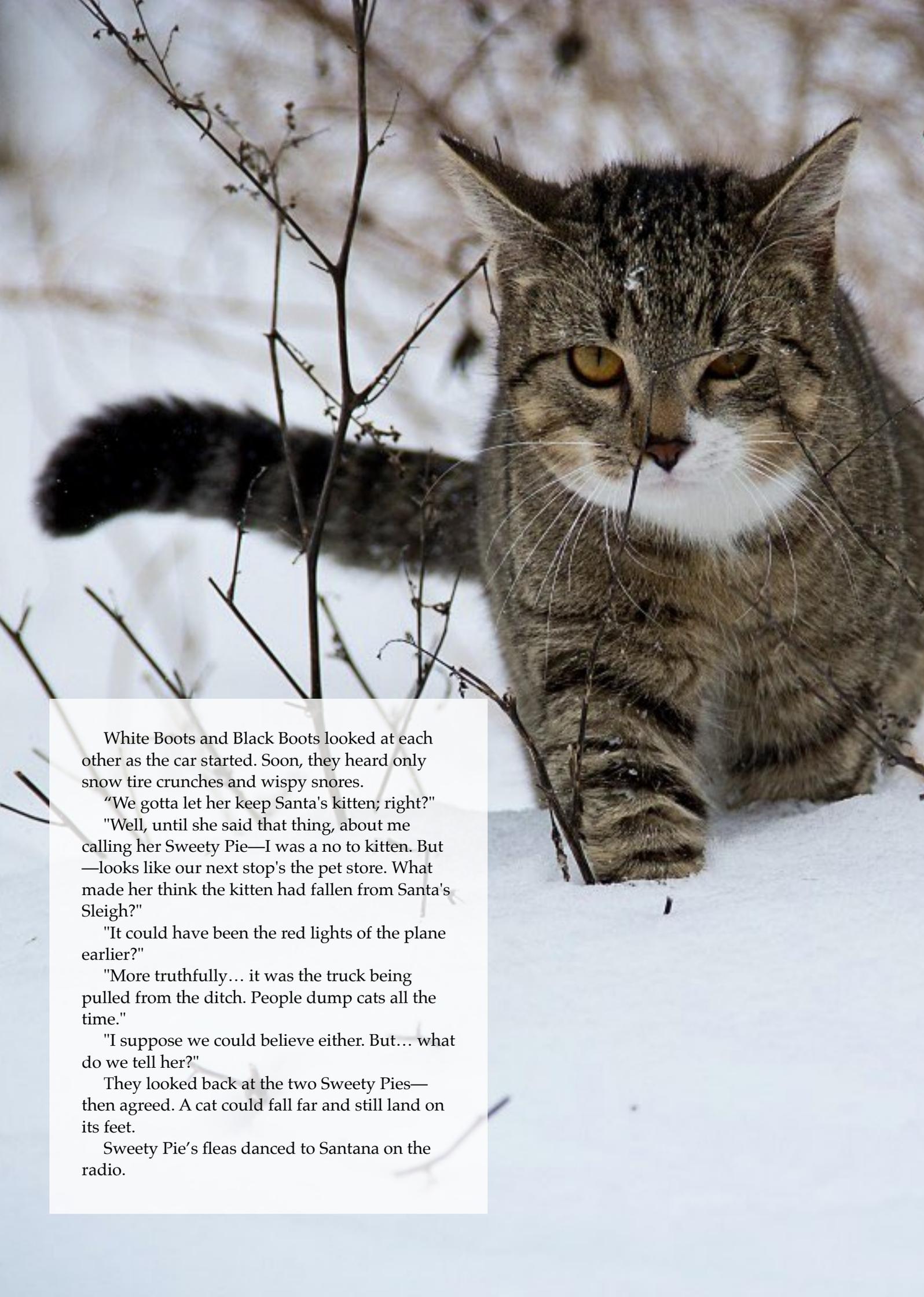




Black boots strode to stand beside white boots. "We talked about this."

White Angel or Dark Angel—which will carry me to my death? thought the kitten, almost buried in the snow. Her blue eyes, rimmed with tears, glistened as she stared beyond the white headlights, to the cold, clear periwinkle dusk, now encompassing the once gloomy day.

That's when Pink Boots shuffled up, fighting their way between the White and Black boots. With pure amazement and joy, Pink said, "Oooh, my Christmas kitty! You must've fallen from Santa's sleigh. Here, I got you." She yanked and lifted the shocked kitten and shoved it inside her half-zipped pink coat. Both sets of blue eyes searched upward, then blinked before they tottered off to the pine and exhaust smell. As the doors slammed and the buckles clicked, the Cheetos' scent appeared. The kitten didn't mind the orange on her fur or the dripping snow. Achy, she wiggled around, at last resting her head on Pink Boot's chest; which seemed to beat that name San-ta-ah-San-ta-ah, over and over. Pink Boots whispered, "I'm going to call you Sweetie Pie. Because my Dad calls me Sweetie Pie, sum-the-times."



White Boots and Black Boots looked at each other as the car started. Soon, they heard only snow tire crunches and wispy snores.

"We gotta let her keep Santa's kitten; right?"

"Well, until she said that thing, about me calling her Sweetie Pie—I was a no to kitten. But—looks like our next stop's the pet store. What made her think the kitten had fallen from Santa's Sleigh?"

"It could have been the red lights of the plane earlier?"

"More truthfully... it was the truck being pulled from the ditch. People dump cats all the time."

"I suppose we could believe either. But... what do we tell her?"

They looked back at the two Sweetie Pies—then agreed. A cat could fall far and still land on its feet.

Sweetie Pie's fleas danced to Santana on the radio.

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GABRIELLA BALCOM

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INNER CIRCLE WRITERS MAGAZINE

How Stories Really Work Special Workshop continues

Meet **ASH GALLAGHER**
author of **Reckoning in the Rubble**
The words on the paper were surgical tools and I breathe a little easier these days.

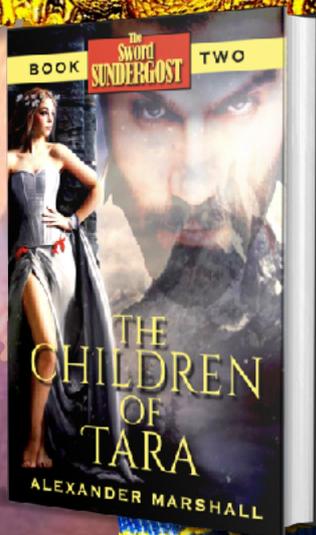
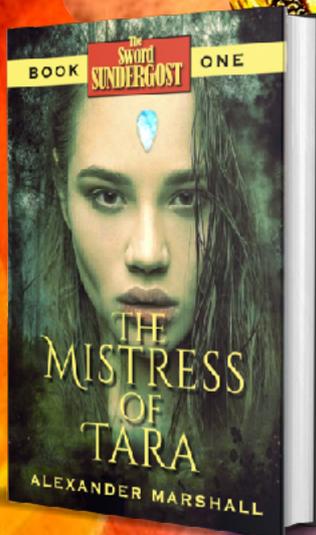
The Great Clarendon House Writing Challenge

Meet the **FINALISTS** for 2021 INSIDE!

Clarendon House Publications'
Biggest Ever Book Release

The Sword SUNDERGOST

'The Great Worm groaned, Great will be the deeds
Of this Sword, and it will serve with strength
The sovereignty of men, even thy
Line of long-awaited lords in time—
But its greatest deed will be in the
Service of Dragons.'



ALEXANDER MARSHALL

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Writings
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You'll be taken on fast-paced trips to the stars; you'll see distant futures; you'll journey to alternate realities. You'll meet larger-than-life as well as ordinary heroes and heroines; you'll travel to the past and into fantastic forests full of the strangest things; you'll get to know people who might be real as well as people who are decidedly not. But, perhaps more significantly, you'll start to wonder about the boundary between fact and fiction, stories and truth, reality and illusion. 'Metafiction' is defined in the dictionary as 'fiction in which the author self-consciously alludes to the artificiality or literariness of a work by parodying or departing from novelistic conventions and traditional narrative techniques.' But in practice there can be a bit more to it, as you will find out, if you read on. Or you can put the book back on the shelf and never know...

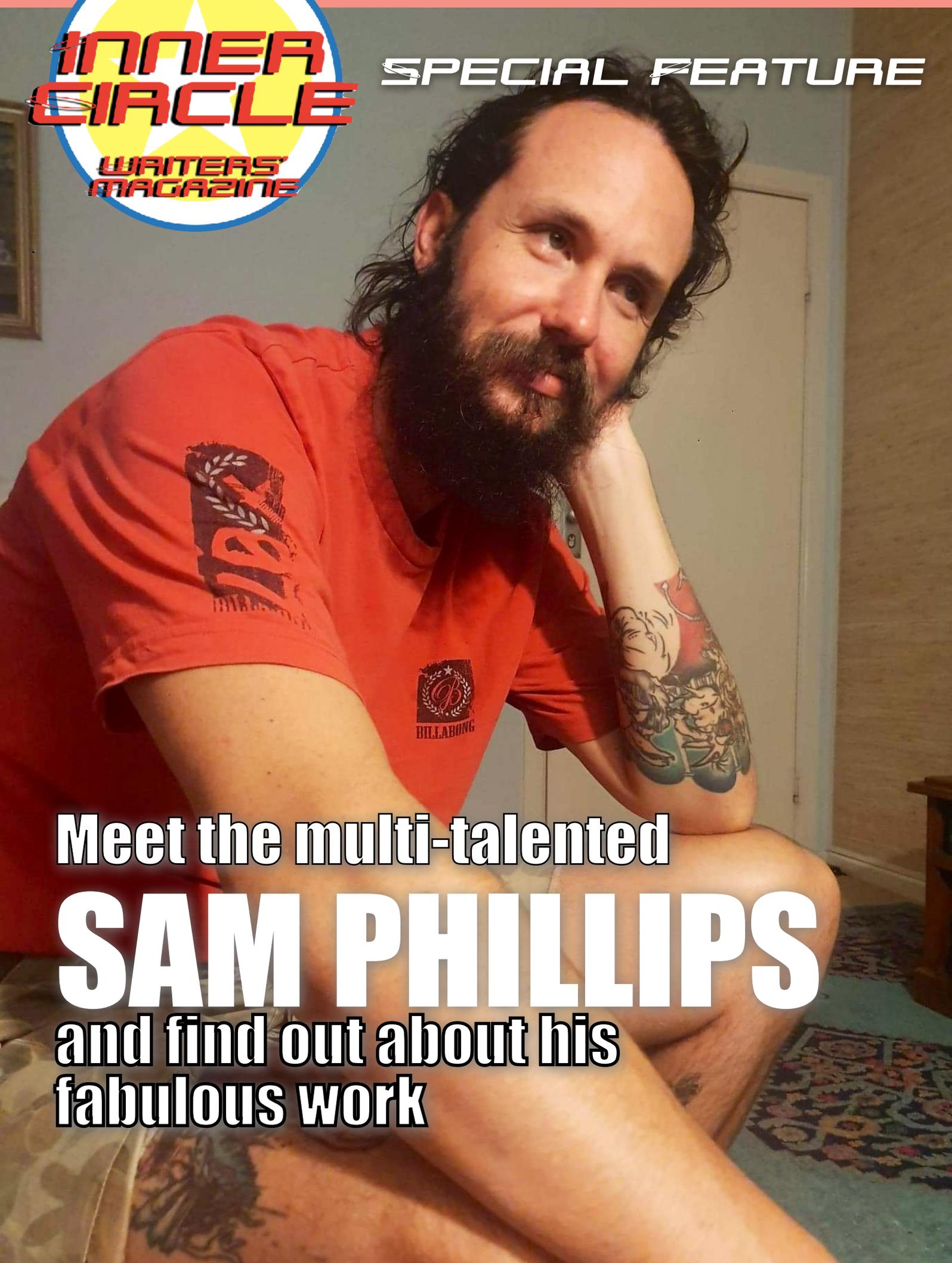
—Grant P. Hudson, Editor



www.clarendonhousebooks.com/alexander-marshall



SPECIAL FEATURE



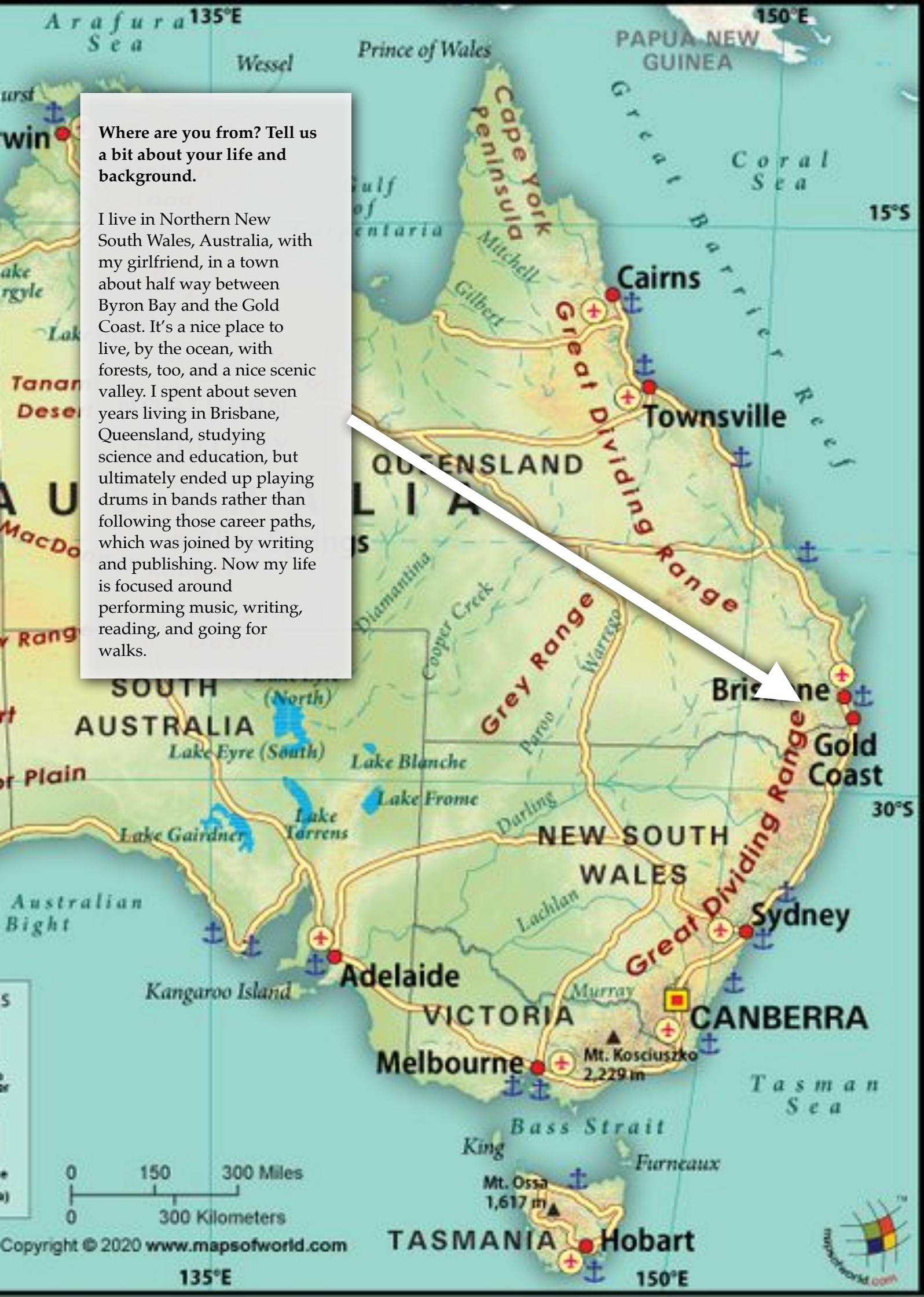
Meet the multi-talented

SAM PHILLIPS

**and find out about his
fabulous work**

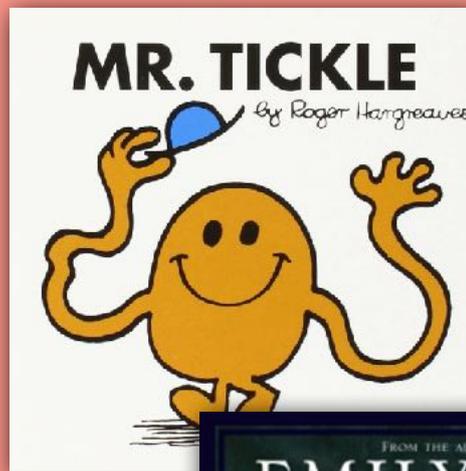
Where are you from? Tell us a bit about your life and background.

I live in Northern New South Wales, Australia, with my girlfriend, in a town about half way between Byron Bay and the Gold Coast. It's a nice place to live, by the ocean, with forests, too, and a nice scenic valley. I spent about seven years living in Brisbane, Queensland, studying science and education, but ultimately ended up playing drums in bands rather than following those career paths, which was joined by writing and publishing. Now my life is focused around performing music, writing, reading, and going for walks.



What's your earliest memory of fiction?

My mother is a big book lover and there were always books around the house. There were kid's books for sale for a dollar or so at the checkout of supermarkets, *Mr Men* and the like, and she would get me those. A little later in primary school we had great book fairs where you could order out of a catalogue. My first memories of chaptered fiction were books I got from these like *Rowan of Rin* and the *Goosebump* series.



Did you want to be a writer from an early age? Tell us about your first attempts.

I certainly enjoyed books but it wasn't a clear goal in my mind to be a writer when I was a kid, though it did develop more as a teenager. That said, I wrote a short story for my school newsletter at around ten years old and was

pleased it was published. I believe it ended up being republished in an edited form for a Clarendon House anthology a few years ago. Besides this I went through a poetry phase in my mid-teens. I still have the poems in a drawer.

What ultimately led me on a long and rambling path

towards being a writer was a school assignment to write the first chapter of a novel. Encouraged by my teacher I continued writing the novel from there when I had time in school and university holidays, and it ultimately grew into quite an epic tale which I only finished recently after 19 years.



What kept you hooked on fiction as you grew older?

The escapism and the joy of engaging with a fantasy. I was bullied a lot in school and books and my imagination were a way to get away from that. I was also very dedicated to my

studies and needed a way to unwind. Fiction tied in with my big love at the time, which was gaming miniatures, so I mainly engaged with stories in those settings for a long time, especially as I was heavily distracted while studying and so couldn't devote

myself to deeper fiction. When I finished university I realised I had not read many of the 'greats' of fiction, so at around twenty five years old I started making a concentrated effort to read a lot wider, and that's when books and writing came more into focus.

The world of gaming miniatures

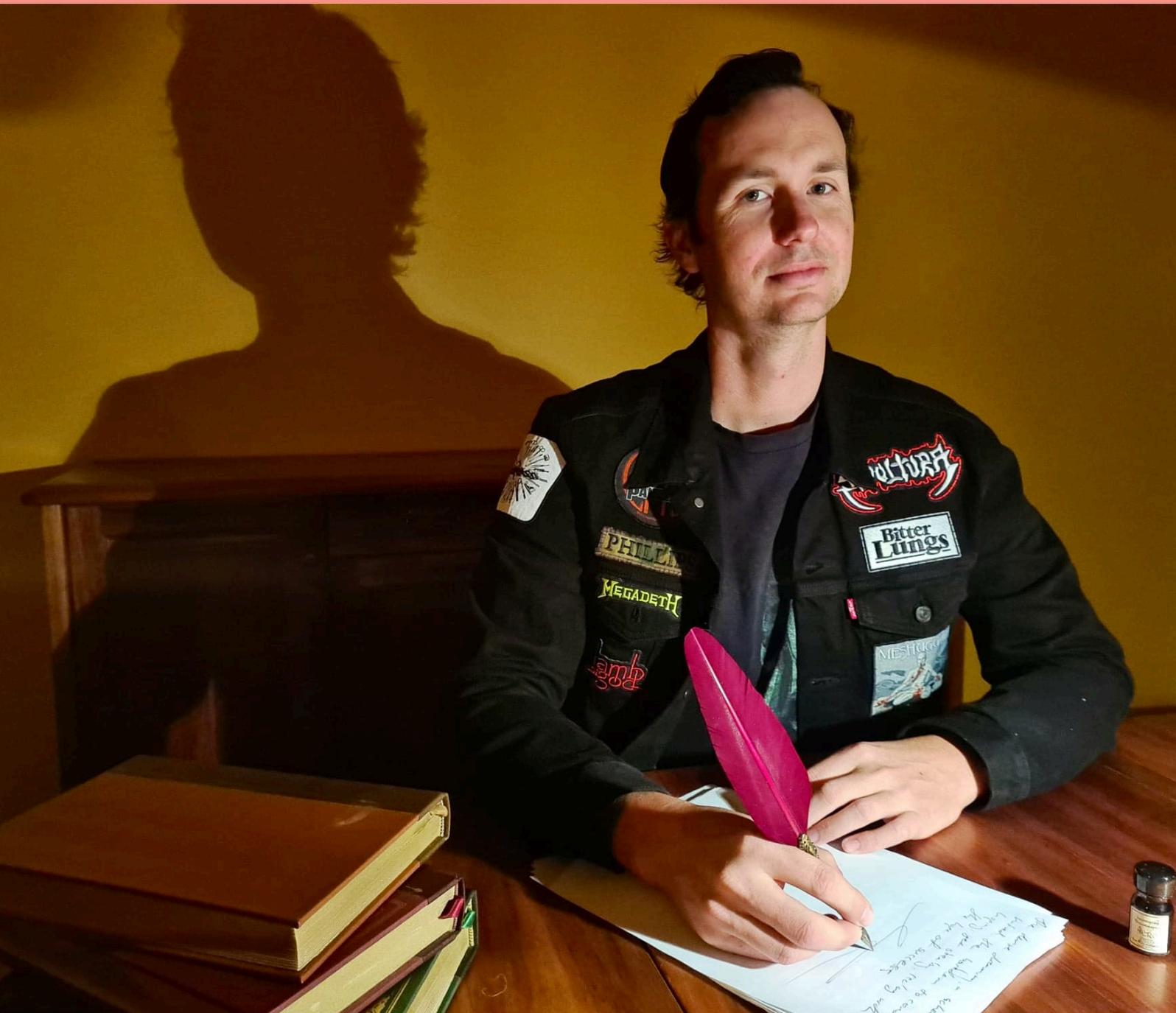


What do you consider to be a 'good book' and why?

I think a book has to 'do something' or 'say something.' There has to be some point to it, a focused expression of an idea or a way of being. I have nothing against a story for a story's sake, however, as being entertaining is a reason to be. I certainly believe a good book

should have solid editing and the basics done right. It's possible to be experimental but if your book is a rambling mess which can't be made sense of, readers can't engage. A good book can be of any genre and for any level of reader, so I won't put my personal tastes as requirements of what makes something good. Basically, a good book has a solid story,

well told, with good pacing and a satisfying ending, as well as sentences which flow well. I think a lot of writers neglect the poetry of their sentences and paragraphs, and make reading their work unnecessarily into a chore. But sentences and paragraphs are the building blocks of any book, and should be a major focus of the writer's craft.



Was there ever a point where you said to yourself 'I'm a writer'? Tell us about that.

There are a few points but no clear line of demarcation, more of a transition. I learned this from being a musician. I knew no one was going to hurry along to give me validation or awards, so I would have to reward myself with each step I took. If I recorded an album or played a big show, I could say I'd levelled up a little in my mind. Each time I did something new, gained a new experience, I was closer to becoming a 'master' in that field. But just because I wasn't yet a master didn't mean I wasn't the musician yet, only that I was at a certain level of learning.

It's the same with writing. I can look at key moments and see the transitions. Writing the first dozen chapters of my first novel was a moment. Completing another book I wrote to try to get properly published was another. The first time I had a short story published in an anthology, the first paying market, etc. These are all signposts on the road. As an artist you're on your own most of your career, so you have to be open to giving yourself the label. If you're writing, you're a writer. From there, you can be a published writer, a semi-professional, then professional perhaps. I think I stepped into new territory when I published my first standalone book,

INFINITY AND I: Seventy Science Fiction Stories. And from there I've had my own novellas and now a six book series deal with a publisher. I can't say I think I've made it yet, but I've taken steps towards it. It's all you can do.



Tell us about your adventures on your way to being published, and what it was like seeing your name in a proper print book.

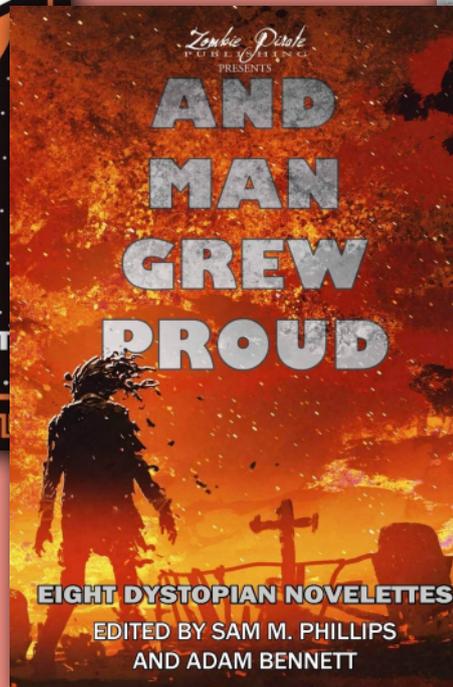
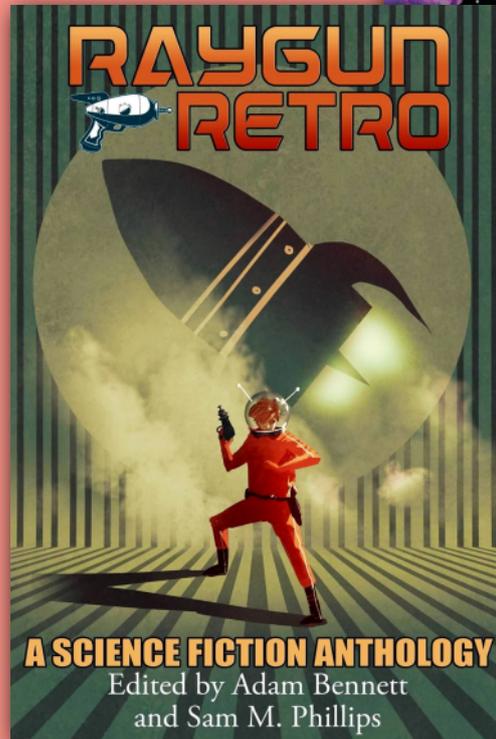
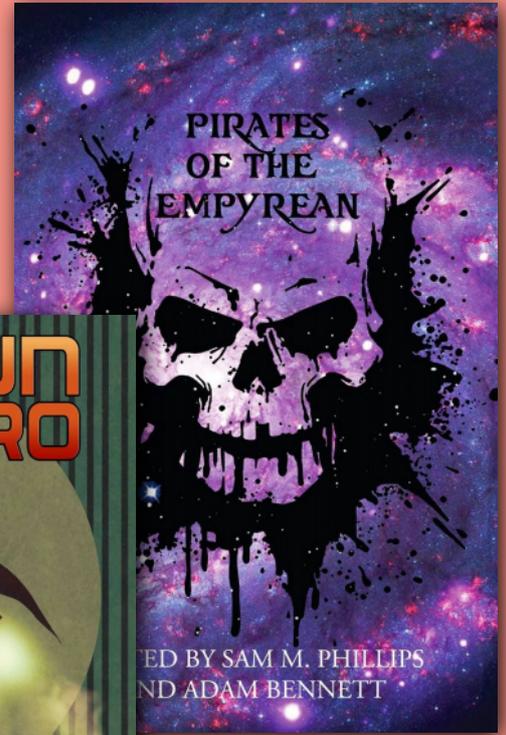
In my twenties I was mainly writing poetry, which started as a means to cope with mental health problems. At some point a friend asked me if I'd like to write a short story for

an anthology he was appearing in. I immediately went off and wrote a poem with the theme 'don't tell me what to write,' which shows how obstinate I could be at the time. I eventually calmed down and wrote a short story about an anecdote from my life where I was injured in a fire breathing accident. It appeared in the anthology. For the next

one I wrote about a UFO experience I had. It went on from there, and I enjoyed being part of that group of authors working with that editor. After appearing in these types of books for a while, my friend and I, in our hubris, decided we could start our own indie press, Zombie Pirate Publishing, and publish our own anthologies.



We did that for about five years and it was a lot of fun, though very hard work with slim rewards. One of the perks though was seeing my name on the spine and cover of a book for the first time, and that really motivated me to write more and see myself as a writer. I can't say I feel it's enough for me to have my name in print however, as those first books I appeared in were very obscure and I knew it at the time. It was a good first step but as a seasoned musician, I had the itch to perform to bigger crowds, and this has carried over to writing. I'm not egotistical or seeking huge fame, just enjoy myself more when the work gets some eyes on it.



Some classics from
Zombie Pirate
Publishing

Has being published changed what you do as a writer? i.e. habits, types of thing you write, expectations etc.

Yes, though it's a strange journey. For some people they find a formula which works critically or economically and focus in on that. I haven't found a formula yet, or otherwise have perhaps bucked against any such restraint. I have a bit of a rebellious personality.

My first two published short stories were written in second person, present tense. I think that was a bold statement and showed I wasn't there to write in a conventional manner or meet people's expectations.

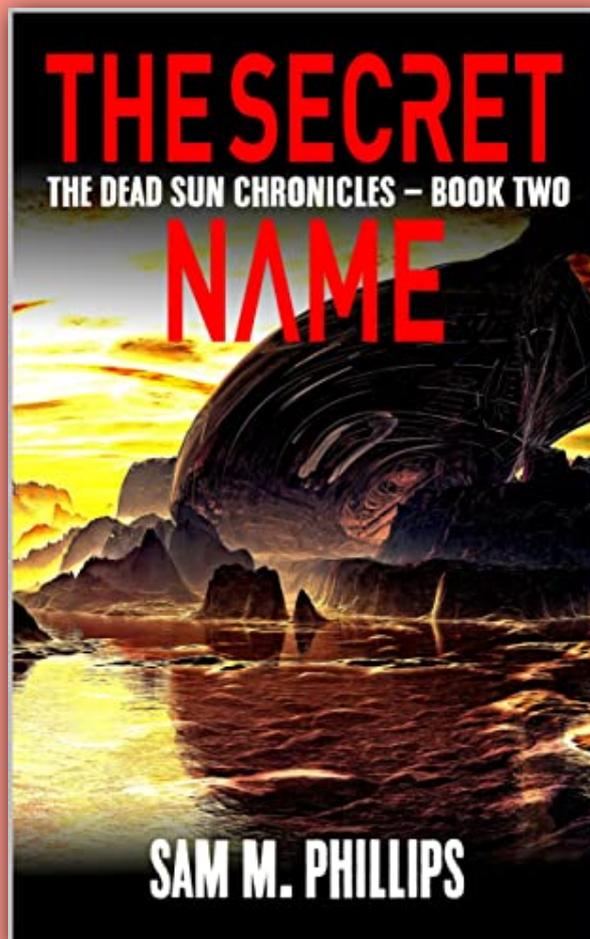
That said we all change in response to what we see giving us a reward, of any type, and what we see as a dead end. I don't write many short stories at the moment because, after years of

appearing in many anthologies, I feel my efforts are better spent on novellas and novels. It's taken a lot of effort but I've trained myself to write a bit more to a brief, even if it's something as broad as my latest request from my publisher to write a deep sea creature feature, which I did. I enjoyed it enough to want to write another one. Hopefully it sells decently and there's an impetus to keep down that path.

Some of the Clarendon House anthologies in which Sam's work has appeared



The types of stories I write has changed over time. I remember the first time I wrote a horror story I didn't really know what one involved. It wasn't a genre I was widely read in. Now half of my work is horror and most of my current projects are horror. We all evolve. I think I can attribute my flexibility to being part of anthologies for a lot of small presses. There was room to experiment and also opportunities to write in a lot of genres. So I gave everything a try, from romance to fantasy to crime. It's a good exercise to broaden your horizons and lets you be ready to take on a task when opportunity knocks.



INFINITY AND II

SEVENTY EXCITING SCIENCE FICTION SHORT STORIES AVAILABLE NOW

My writing habits have also evolved dramatically. In the very early days I only wrote when I felt like it, or had spare time, and this was usually during school and university holidays. Later I made efforts to write to deadlines and improve my ability to get my word counts up on a daily basis. It takes a lot of practice

and willpower. Now I can write a short novel in a month or two and this isn't because I'm writing huge amount of words in a single sitting but because I've built my life around writing. Using discipline and having a structured life you can write a thousand words a day, most days of the week, and find

you've got a lot to show for it at the end of the year. So I've brought consistency to my writing habits. And also, I have a dedicated writing space with a door I can close. It's about making the time and taking yourself seriously as a writer. You have to do the work and focus.





What's a really profound thing that has happened to you (related to writing or not)?

I think two quite profound moments were the ones I mentioned earlier which turned into my first short stories. I had a fire breathing accident and this had a big impact on me, as I was confronted with my mortality and a serious injury. Through a lot of pain and time I recovered and it changed my perspective about what I wanted from life. The other thing was the UFO encounter. Friends and I saw a flying Yin Yang shape with light coming out of it. It completely changed how I saw the universe and my place in it. My mind was opened to a lot of possibilities. Combined with the fire breathing accident, this event really changed my life and made me into a spiritual person where before I was an atheist. Soon after I had an out of body experience, met my higher self in the astral plane, and learned that death is an illusion. These things had a huge impact on my future writing and life philosophy.

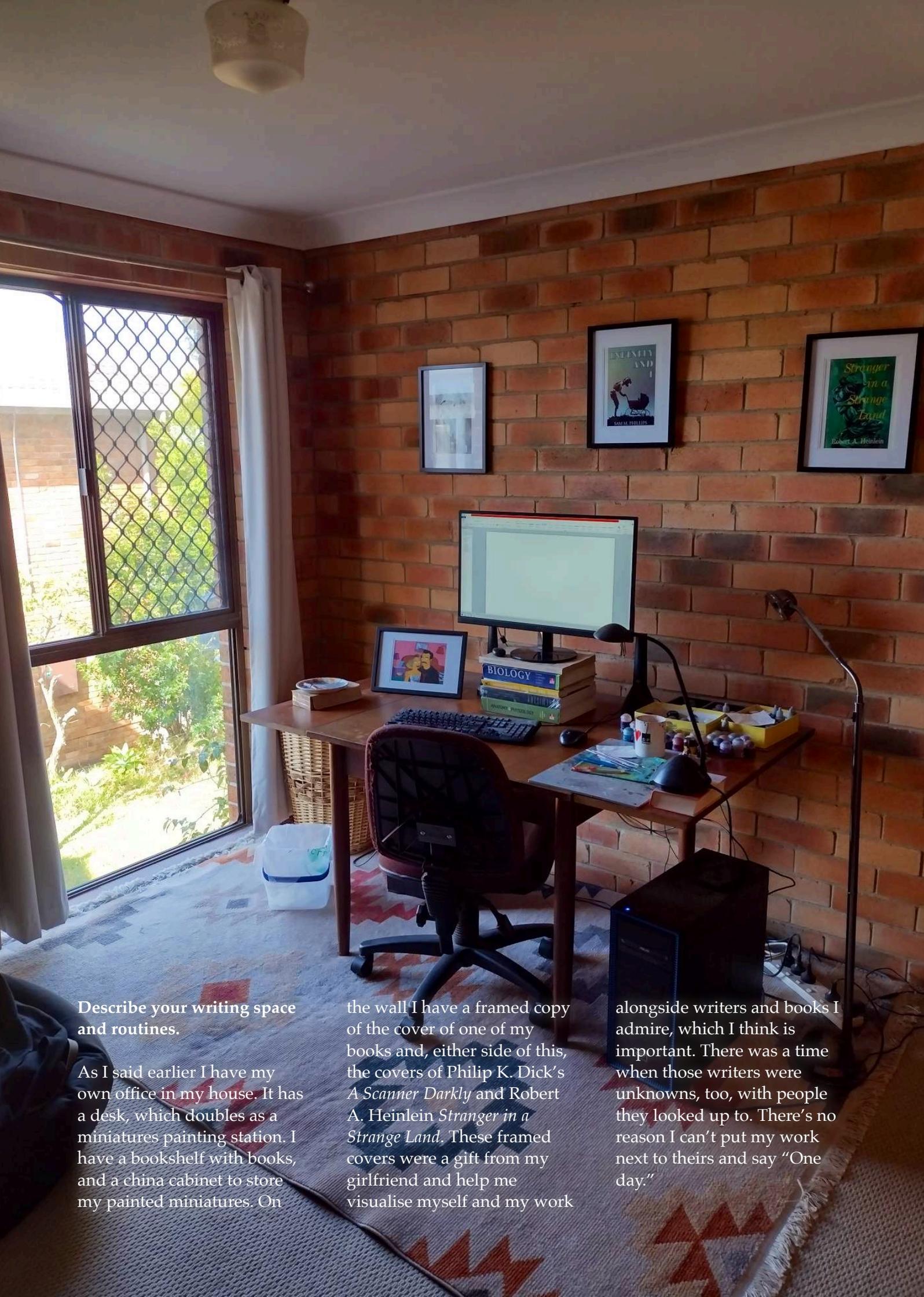
Who or what has helped you the most as a writer?

Reading lots of books helps a lot. Being the editor of a small press for five years helped in many ways I never thought it

would. At the time it felt like a lot of hard work for no pay, but in hindsight I realise I was gaining valuable experience, learning a lot more about what made a good and bad story, common

mistakes writers made, how to have an eagle eye for grammar and other editing skills. It's held me in good stead as now I can write both fast and neatly.





Describe your writing space and routines.

As I said earlier I have my own office in my house. It has a desk, which doubles as a miniatures painting station. I have a bookshelf with books, and a china cabinet to store my painted miniatures. On

the wall I have a framed copy of the cover of one of my books and, either side of this, the covers of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* and Robert A. Heinlein *Stranger in a Strange Land*. These framed covers were a gift from my girlfriend and help me visualise myself and my work

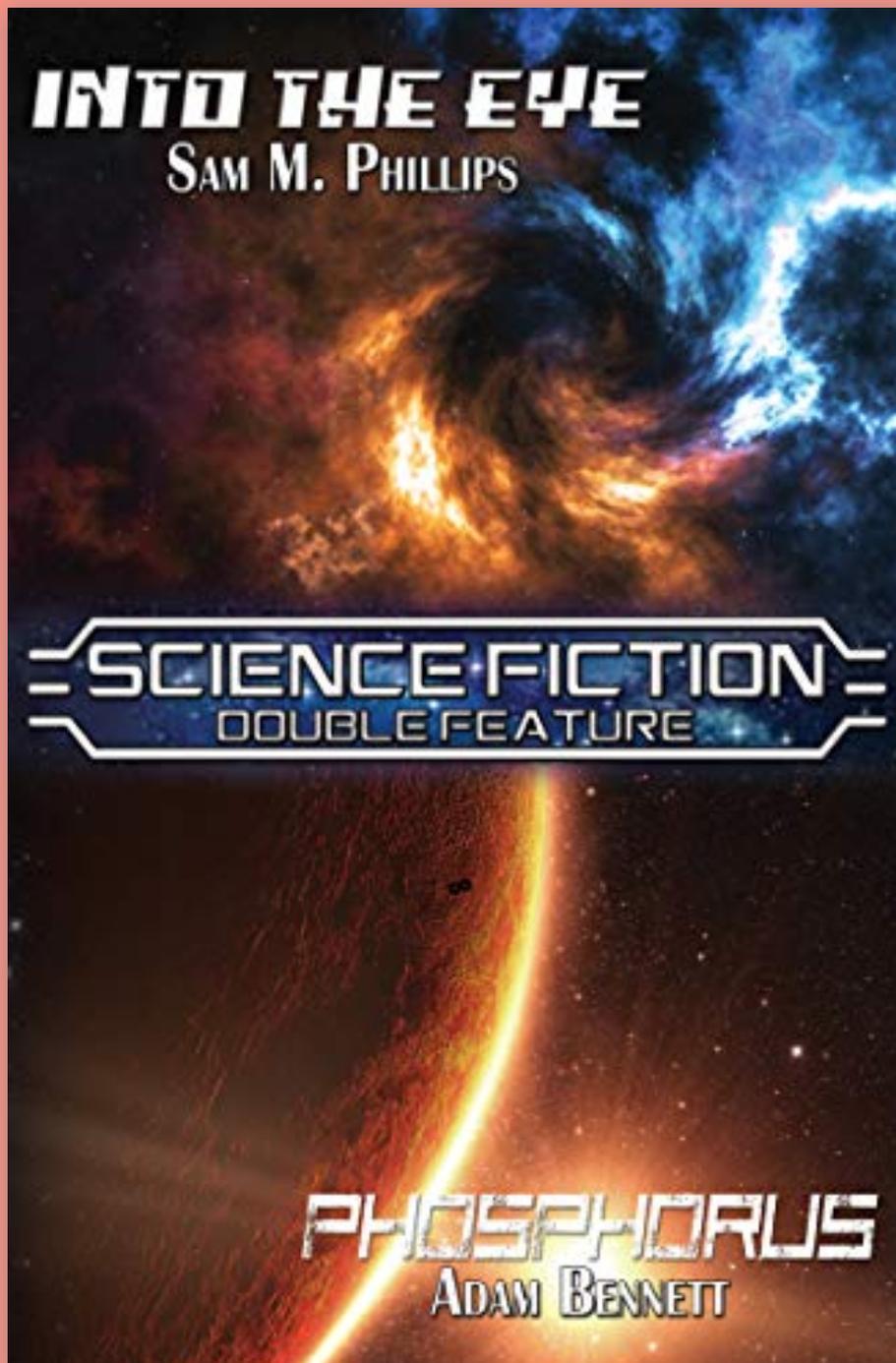
alongside writers and books I admire, which I think is important. There was a time when those writers were unknowns, too, with people they looked up to. There's no reason I can't put my work next to theirs and say "One day."

I mostly write in the mornings. If I have a project I'm keen on I'll work hard at it. This mainly involves a session soon after I wake up. I rarely sleep in. If I get one or two thousand words down I'll feel good all day as I've made a solid contribution to my work in progress. I then relax a little, have lunch. I have anxiety so I put aside time and activities for my mental health, which is very important for a writer. It's a lonely job without many rewards or structure. It can get on top of you. So I go for a long walk after lunch,

followed by quiet time where I read and have a little nap. When I wake up I do some household chores to clear my mind of sleep then try to do another writing session. If I don't, it's okay. In the evenings I spend time with my partner, watch shows, read books. Sometimes I'll get another writing session in. If I aim at this routine I might write for a single session, or I might write twice or three times. It depends on what else I have going on in my life and how much energy and motivation I have. But, as I

said earlier, even if I only get the single session in and write one thousand words, I'm making progress. And I try to take a day or two off from writing every week, though sometimes it's hard to stop yourself and take that time away from it. When I've finished a big project I try to take a couple weeks away. I've just finished writing and editing three books in three months and so I'm presently forcing myself to step away and recharge.





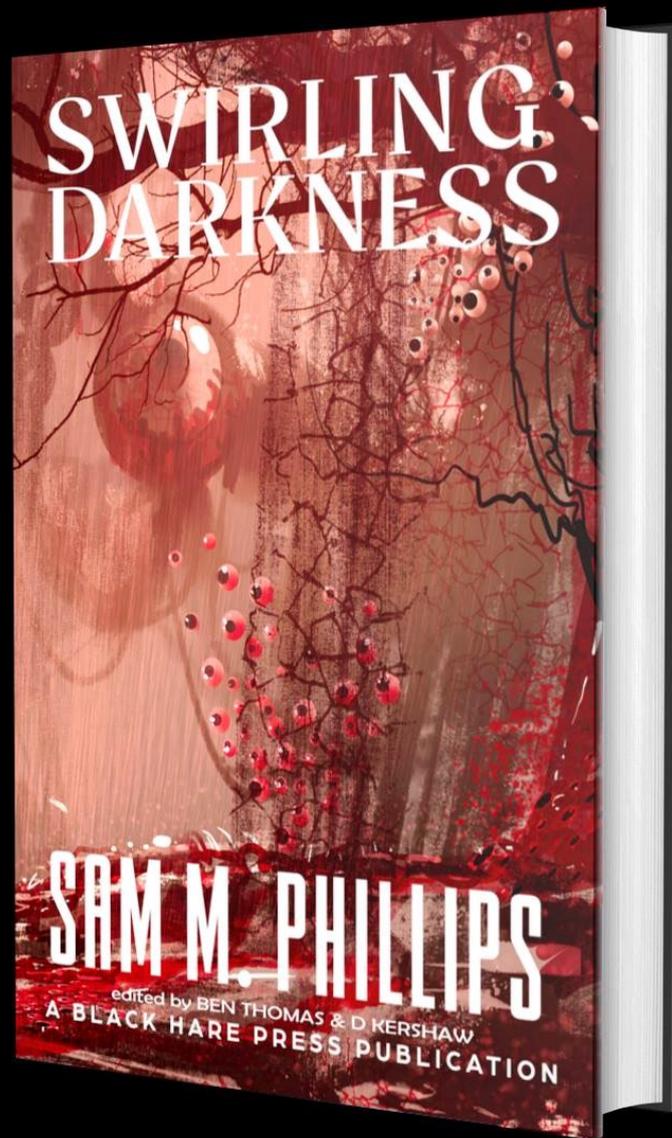
Tell us about the books you've written so far. How did they evolve, what did you enjoy/not enjoy, etc?

My short story collection was the culmination of four years of writing and growing as an artist. I'm very proud of it and the evolution I made during that time. I'm really pleased there's a time capsule of that

part of me in the world forever now.

The first novella I had published was part of a double feature and is called *Into the Eye*. It's about a miner of inter-dimensional 'pearls' which power spaceships. It's fun to look back on it and realise that's when I started to change gears to writing longer pieces as well as when the beginnings

of my current style evolved. In it you can find the things which I've used a lot in later books: strange sci-fi drugs, the bending of reality, kooky characters with mechanical spider legs, a large ominous force in the universe influencing events, as well the crazy love triangles and squares I use to create drama. I think it's a really fun book.



After that I have a novella called *Swirling Darkness*, which was published by Black Hare Press. An artist living in the Arctic Circle digs a hole in the ground and discovers a surreal nightmare realm of the subconscious mind. I love that I was so free to experiment in this one. It's written in first person present tense, the main character has no name. They're the only character and he only speaks to himself until the very end of the book. And he's also

naked and covered in grease the whole time, carrying around his favourite painting.

My current work is an evolution of both these books, combining the surreal style of *Swirling Darkness* with the sci-fi drama of *Into the Eye*. This has resulted in *The Beast From Beyond* and *The Secret Name*, about a journey into space to escape a dying Earth, with a bizarre cult on board which worships demons from space.

These books one and two of a series, *The Dead Sun Chronicles*.

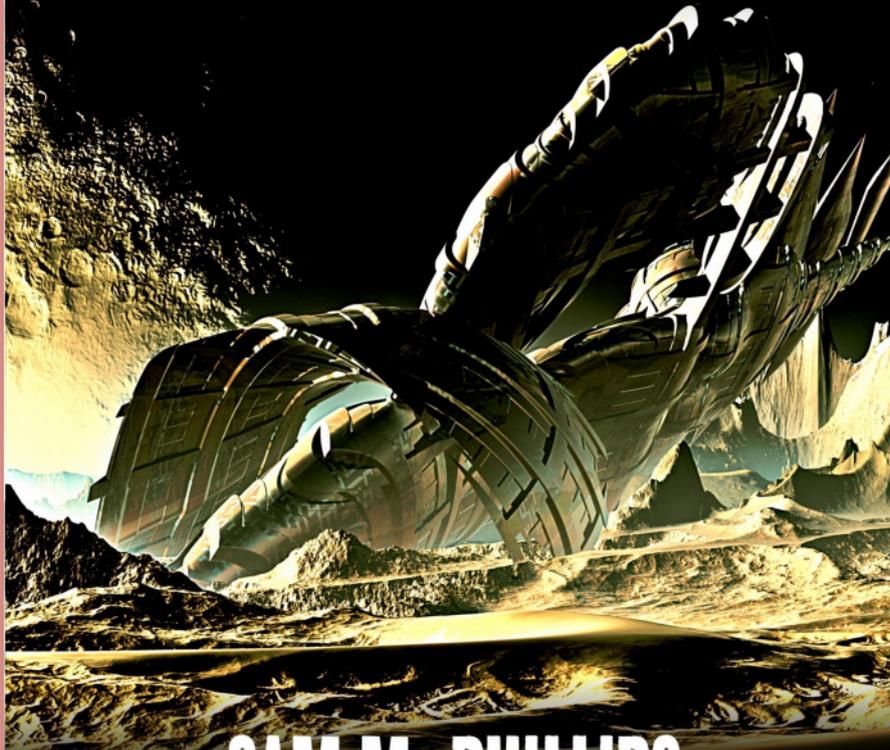
**What are you working on?
What are your plans?**

I'm continuing to write the above cosmic horror series for Raven Tale Publishing. I'm also writing deep sea and other creature feature horror novels. Plenty of tentacles and madness on the horizon.

THE BEAST

THE DEAD SUN CHRONICLES – BOOK ONE

FROM BEYOND



SAM M. PHILLIPS

My favourite book is *The Beast From Beyond*. It's book one of my debut series so has a special place. The main character is a young man named Ryon Barker. I have a lot of sympathy for him as I really put him through the ringer. Inter-dimensional demons whisper to him as his life falls to pieces, he gets addicted to the drug venom, his sex life is complicated and dramatic, and through all this he's expected to take

on a responsible role in their mission into space. It all goes very pear shaped for him. But I put a lot of myself into him, so I love to see his story read. I have written books three and four of the series, with a couple more planned.

Anything you'd love to see made into a movie/Netflix series?

I'm not aiming at that particular type of success. It

would be great, of course, as it would lead people back to reading my books, but I don't have a passion for film and so presently can't visualise my work in that way. I also know one of my heroes, Philip K. Dick, drank himself to death over the stress of his books being made into films, among other reasons, and I'd like to sidestep that kind of massive pressure.

Describe your ideal life from your point of view.

I have a great life. It's hard to know what it is we need versus simply want, so I'm open to the universe bringing me what I need to grow. As a recovering drug addict who is now five years sober I'm just happy to be alive and living with girlfriend in a nice house in a nice town. I've always struggled to make money being an artist but I get by, so I can't complain. I like my life as it is and hope it continues this way, with perhaps more publishing success and a steady income from that.

All in all, I can't complain as I'm free to pursue my passion for creating books, exploring my inner world and discovering who I am and what I want to say.

Links

INFINITY AND I: Seventy Science Fiction Stories by Sam M. Phillips - <http://a-fwd.to/7FCcEjD>

THE BEAST FROM BEYOND: A Science-Fiction Horror Novel (The Dead Sun Chronicles Book 1) - <https://amazon.com/dp/B09J6H17C5>

SWIRLING DARKNESS - <https://books2read.com/swirling-darkness>

SCIENCE FICTION DOUBLE FEATURE: Phosphorus and Into The Eye - <http://a-fwd.to/1sgxgOA>

**Thanks very much Sam!
And all the best in your continuing endeavours!**



CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

G. MARINO LEYLAND



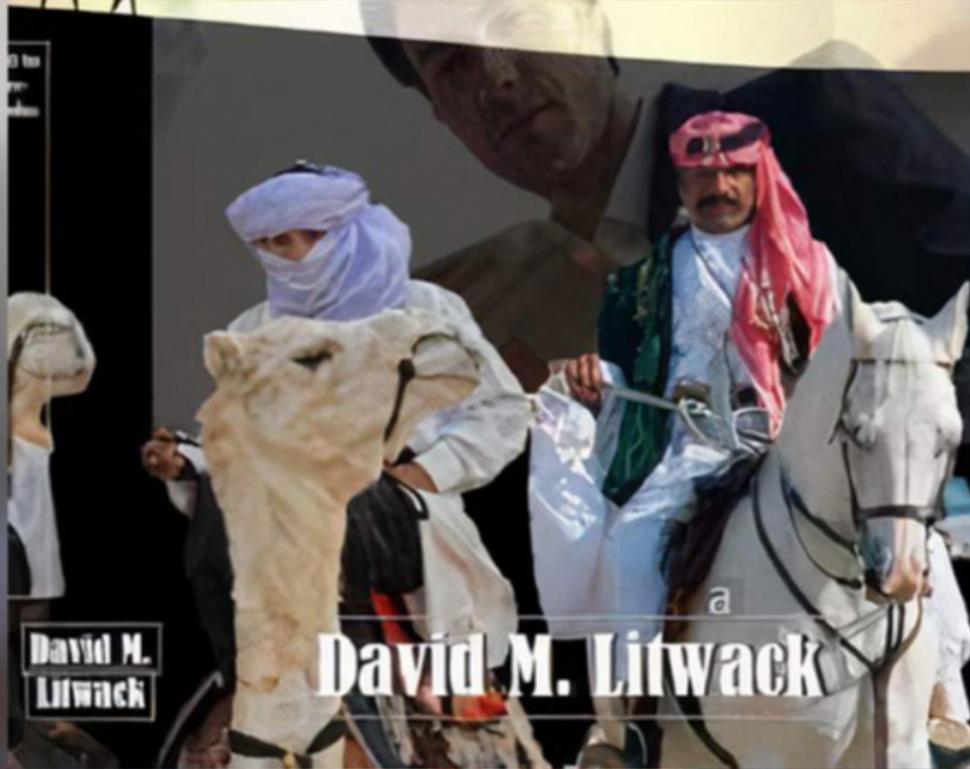
Pezzi Pazzi 2 is a sister anthology to 'Pezzi Pazzi/Crazy Pieces' published in 2019, another mixed genre collection of poetry, prose, fiction, non-fiction and experimental writing. Quirky, eclectic and infused with an Italian–Australian flavour, this collection is presented like a fancy Italian lunch menu. Feast your eyes. **Warning:** Contains sexual references and coarse language. For Mature Readers Only.



***Pezzi Pazzi* | Crazy Pieces 2: Collected Writings**

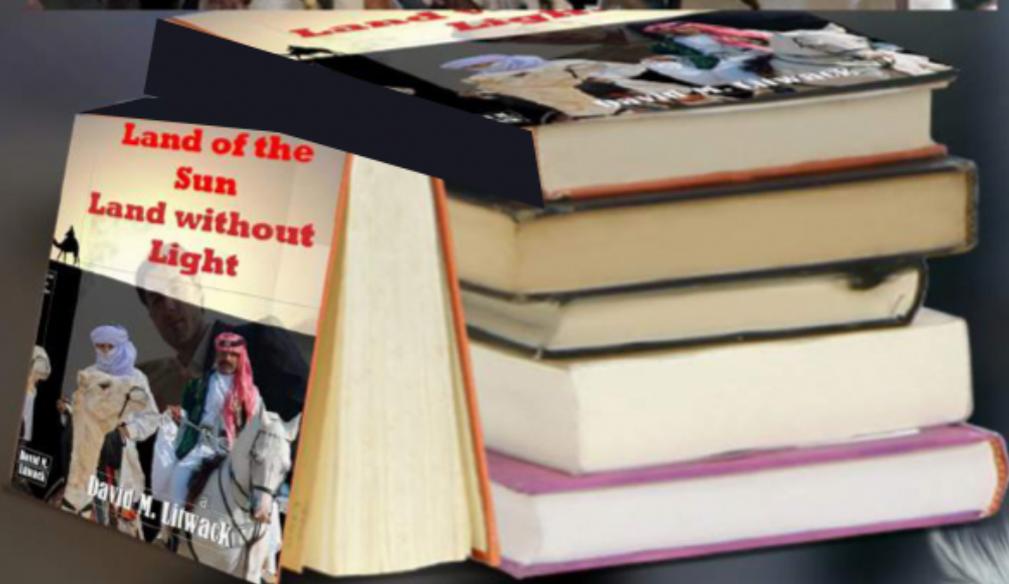
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Land of the Sun Land without Light



David M.
Litwack

David M. Litwack



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FICTION by RIHAM ADLY

Trigger Warning: This short story contains adult themes

The Brief Chronicled History of The Girl as told by the Realist but yet Optimistic African Fortuneteller



Girl, before your father implanted you in your mother's womb, before being assigned your X's and not the salubrious Y's, you were in the water, in the air, in the elements: a tri-atom that didn't belong to any tribe, any clan, any *Kabilah*.

In your first incarnation,

You were given the name Mary. You splashed in the mud and played with Abdullah and Abel. You bathed in Central Eriteria's River Mereb near your church, your curiosity always hovering like that rare blue-tailed damselfly eager to soar high during rainfall. You knew you were different than your sisters, your sad-eyed aunts, and all your kin. You were whole, uncut, every inch of flesh still your very own. When the time came and one of the boys was to wed you, they pointed to that place between your legs. *Impure*, they'd said. The womenfolk in the village knew they had work to do—turning you into one of *them*, into the woman Abel and Abdullah approved of. So, when the midwife sliced off your clitoris, the womenfolk came out, satisfied, proud. You didn't resist because you had so much trust, so much love. You became hollowed-out: emptied of all what made you, *You*.

On your second incarnation,

You wanted to resist what they deemed as your purification, but submission had always been the currency of survival.

Your pain spilling faster than your blood, filled Kenya's Tana River.

You simply, died.

In this third incarnation,

You push away the head-cover they force you to wear in the mosque. You scream when your mother drags you to the barber in *Beni Suef*. You push his hand when the blade nicks your labia minora. You run, bleeding your own River Nile, and when your balking feet can no longer run, you almost lift off with your wings; you smile for the freedom to be had, but girl...

You will stay.

You will repeat it all in another incarnation.

You will not let them use your trans-vaginal traumatization as a metaphor for chastity.

You will not let them veil or erase you because you are not the making of sin.

You will not let them de-flower the love you have for YOU.

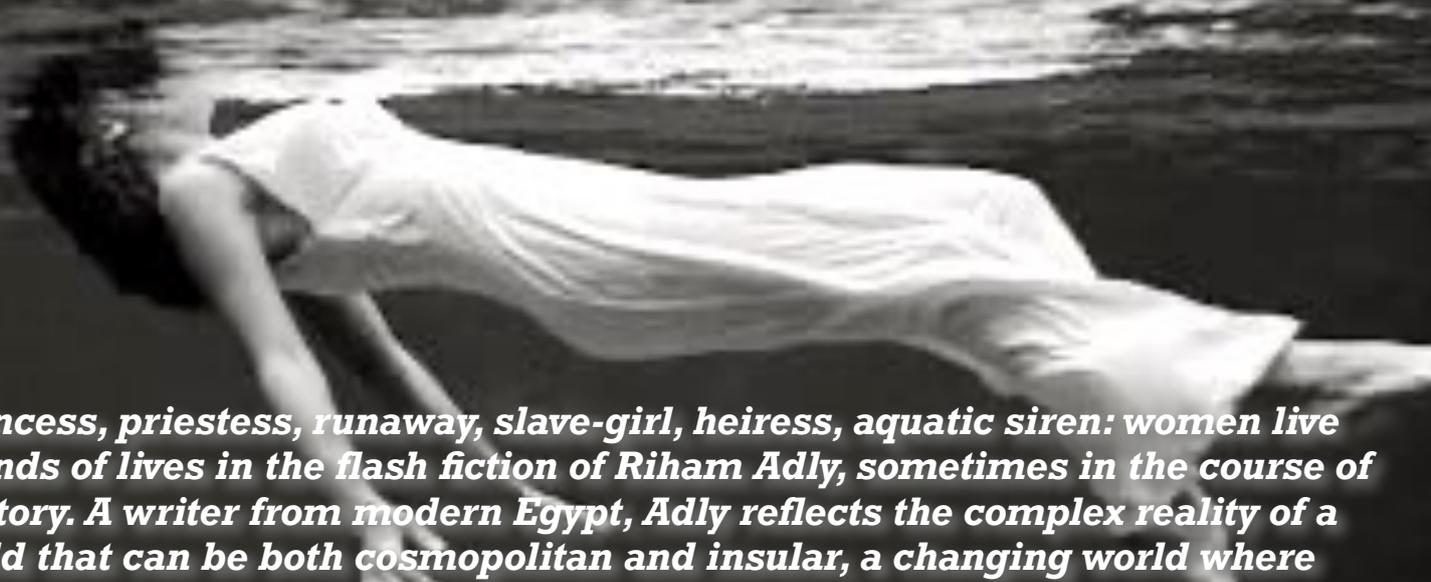
Girl, you will stay because it is amazing how tree stumps sprout back after they've been cut.

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

RIHAM ADLY



LOVE IS MAKE-BELIEVE



Princess, priestess, runaway, slave-girl, heiress, aquatic siren: women live thousands of lives in the flash fiction of Riham Adly, sometimes in the course of one story. A writer from modern Egypt, Adly reflects the complex reality of a world that can be both cosmopolitan and insular, a changing world where women risk new roles, but still struggle to push through family and cultural conditioning that tells them to “expect nothing, stay quiet, be smart.” The women in these stories ignore that advice. They expect everything, rebel, push boundaries, speak from the heart.



www.clarendonhousebooks.com/riham-adly

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

RUTH MORGAN



“So, Superintendent you’re the man who watched my daughter die?”

The Whitworth Mysteries are a collection of short crime fiction stories set in and around a rural city located in outback New South Wales. Beneath the sunshine of Whitworth, lurk dark secrets, deceit and betrayal.

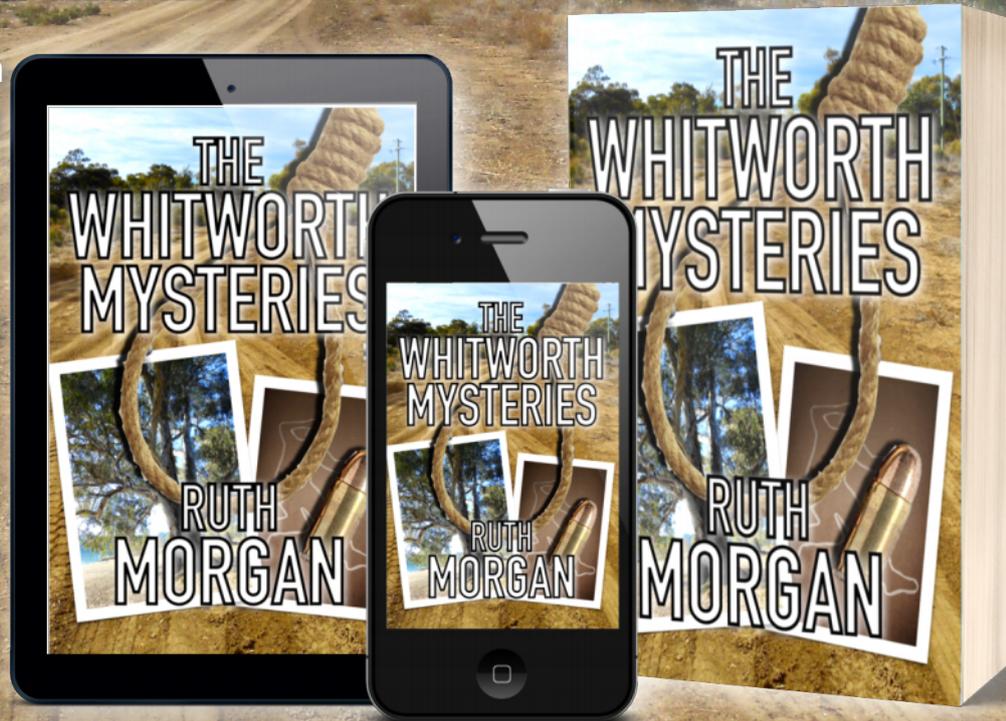
“Never point a loaded gun at anyone, unless you mean to kill them.”

Beyond the murky waters of the river, and a bank lined with ancient river red gums is a land of red dust, blue saltbush and vast empty spaces.

The squeak of hemp rope... as the suspended weight moved, caught by the breeze.

In a small country town, police officers are reliant on each other, a band of blue. A rural posting is punishment for some, isolation from a vibrant city. For others an attempted escape. Some are forced to confront the decisions of the past, and pay the price. The harsh nature of the climate, floods, violent storms, and the almost limitless open spaces are as much a character as the humans themselves.

THE WHITWORTH MYSTERIES



“Let me kill him. Finish the story.”

www.clarendonhousebooks.com/ruth-morgan

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR



MARK SCHEEL

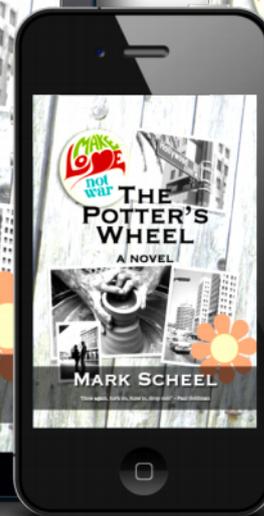
The year is 1967. Mel Steadman, a Midwestern farm youth recovering from a severe head injury, becomes dissatisfied living at home and hops a bus to California. He finds work in a low-rent hotel chain and mingles with the young drifters along Hollywood Boulevard. Soon he bonds with an estranged night wanderer named Burch who clerks in a shop called The Potter's Wheel and encounters a free-spirited femme fatale named Maureen. Adventure follows adventure, culminating, however, in abandonment and violence...

“Having experienced the turbulent California sixties myself, I can vouch that Scheel’s portrayal of the people and the times is spot on. Once again, turn on, tune in, drop out!”

—Paul Goldman, ecstatic poet, author of *Silence Speaks* and *Upon Your Canvas*.

THE POTTER’S WHEEL

A NOVEL



AVAILABLE AS A PAPERBACK OR ON KINDLE

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR



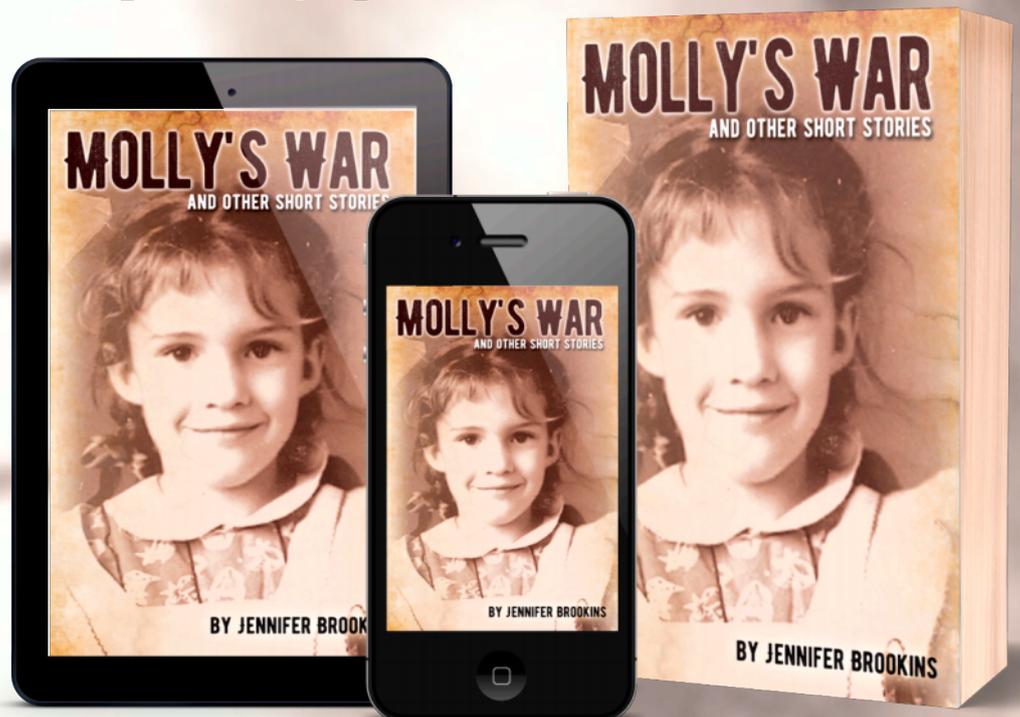
JENNIFER BROOKINS

MOLLY'S WAR

AND OTHER SHORT STORIES

'In this extraordinary collection, Jennifer Brookins takes us on journeys into the past so vividly that we see and hear the sights and sounds of times long gone — but also we voyage inward, into the human condition, with humour, insight, poignancy and joy.'

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A LITERALLY LITERARY QUIZ

Try to answer the following tricky questions without using Google! Answers next month.

1. Which Clarendon House author's novel is set in California in the 1960s?
2. Which literary character says "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard"?
3. What is the name of the tiger in the philosophical novel *Life of Pi*?
4. Complete this quote from Gandalf in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: "Many that live deserve death. And some that die _____."
5. Which character in which novel said "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."
6. What is the secret superhero identity of blind lawyer Matt Murdoch in Marvel Comics?
7. What was the name of the actor who first portrayed The Doctor in the BBC's long-running science fiction series, *Doctor Who*?
8. Who took over as Dumbledore in the Harry Potter films after the death of Richard Harris?
9. Which well-known English poet was also a librarian in Hull?
10. What is the chief city on Sir Terry Pratchett's Discworld?

Brave readers can email their non-Gogled answers in to grant@clarendonhousebooks.com



Answers to last month's questions:

1. Which star recently retired, at age 91, from providing the iconic voice of a classic *Star Wars* villain? **James Earl Jones**
2. 'Courage, dearheart' is spoken by Aslan in which Narnia book? ***The Voyage of the Dawn Treader***
3. What is the name of Hermia's father in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? **Egeus**
4. On which planet in our solar system does Edgar Rice Burroughs hero John Carter find himself? **Mars**
5. What was the official title of Sir Kay in King Arthur's household? **Seneschal or steward**
6. *Witness Testimony and Other Tales* is a collection of stories written by which Clarendon House author? **P. A. O'Neil**
7. What is the name of the king of Rohan in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*? **Theoden**
8. What year was Terry Gilliam's film *Jabberwocky* released? **1977**
9. In what year was George Orwell's *1984* published? **1949**
10. What is the name of the small white ghost-like creatures in Tove Jansson's Moomintroll books? **Hattifatteners**



CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

SAMANTHA HAMILTON



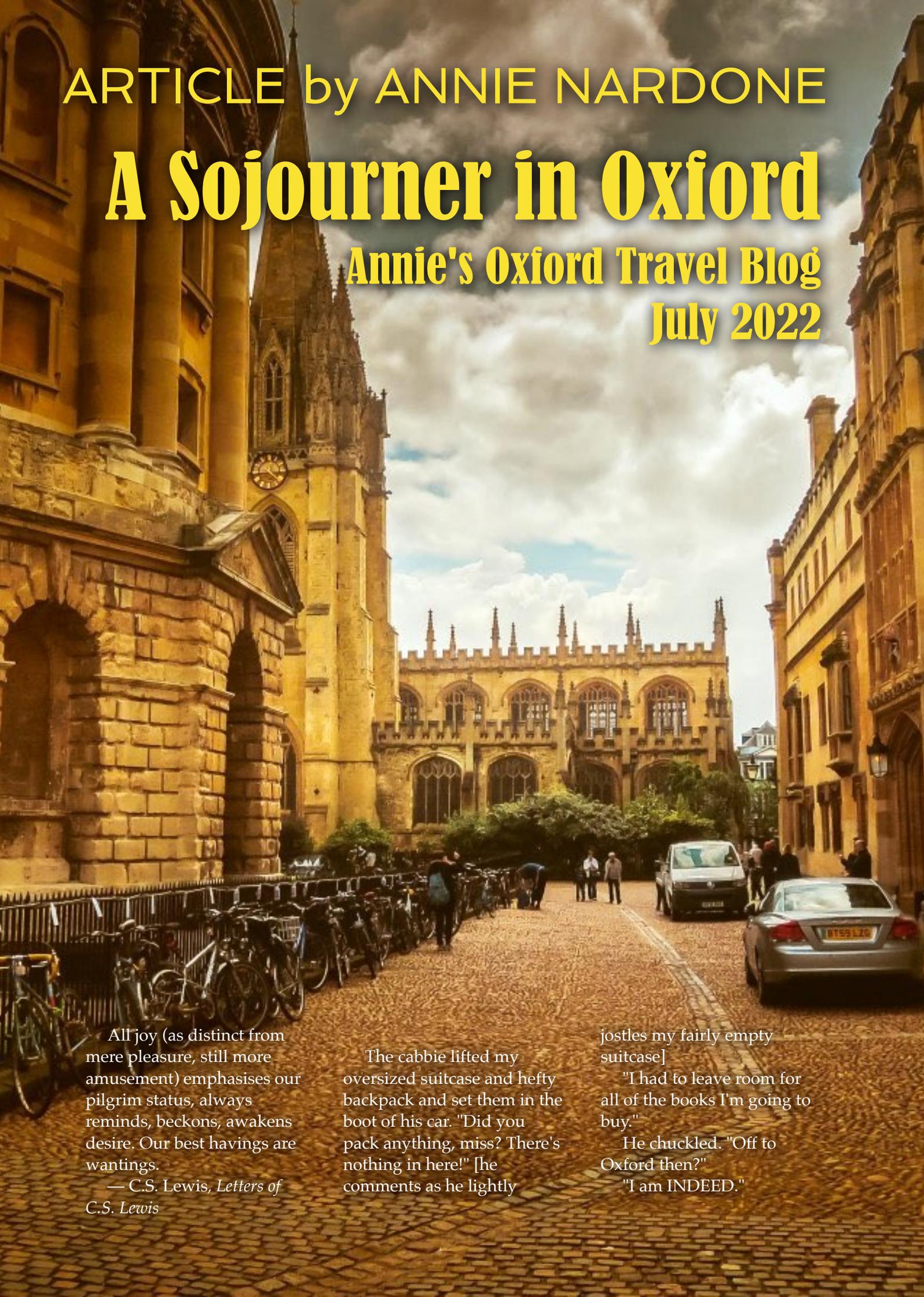
WELCOME TO BLEKELEIGH COURT

Welcome to Blekeleigh Court, nestled in the mythical countryside of England between the Wars, a setting in which P.G. Wodehouse would feel right at Stately Home. Here the sons and daughters of the Jazz Age face off against Crusty Uncles, Dotty Aunts, and Superhuman Butlers—and unexpected complications abound.

Move over, Downton Abbey! The real action is at Blekeleigh Court.

Samantha Hamilton started her career as a wordsmith right out of college, some misty time in the last century. This is her first book-length work.





ARTICLE by ANNIE NARDONE

A Sojourner in Oxford

Annie's Oxford Travel Blog

July 2022

All joy (as distinct from mere pleasure, still more amusement) emphasises our pilgrim status, always reminds, beckons, awakens desire. Our best havings are wantings.

— C.S. Lewis, *Letters of C.S. Lewis*

The cabbie lifted my oversized suitcase and hefty backpack and set them in the boot of his car. "Did you pack anything, miss? There's nothing in here!" [he comments as he lightly

jostles my fairly empty suitcase]

"I had to leave room for all of the books I'm going to buy."

He chuckled. "Off to Oxford then?"

"I am INDEED."



Summer Institute. I began rattling off a list of must-see spots: the book stacks at Bodleian Library, dining on fish and chips accompanied by a fine pint, wandering the paths at Magdalen College and, of course, strolling along the famous footpath of Addison's Walk. Definitely meandering through an old cemetery or two as well.

As we rolled up the driveway to the b&b, I realized that a.) I was at the mercy of public transit in a country where I b.) had little-to-no phone service. Phone companies can tout their international service in chirpy phrases of "yes, you'll have unbroken phone service!" all they want, but that was not my experience. As the cabbie drove away, leaving me with my stuff in the middle of an ancient farmyard, I muttered a short prayer for two weeks of abundant, issue-free transportation.

He politely ushered me into his cab, (and I will say at the very beginning of this blog, Oxford Brits are the most polite people I have ever met in my travels.) and I gave him the address of my first destination

— a randomly chosen air b&b in a country setting. Just the overnight place to help me adjust for jet lag. The driver asked what brought me to England and I explained that I was attending the C.S. Lewis



The owner and dear hostess of Hill Farm B&B greeted me at the porch. The musical coos of the wood-pigeons, who sing a very different song than our American pigeons, a sheep or two, and whinnies from the horses in the paddock floated in the air. A peacock squawked his own greeting.

I asked about the history of this farm as I made mental notes on the ancient roof and sturdy stone house and outbuildings. She said, "Well, about 400 years old and it is a bit to keep up with restoration and such, but we love it out here. Now, I must ask. What would you like for breakfast when you wake? Scones and fruit or the full English breakfast?"

I dreamed of the day I would be asked those very words.

"Oh, the full English breakfast PLEASE. And Earl Grey with a splash of milk, if you have it!"

I settled into my room above an old carriage house, and I was delighted to see a tea tray, generously filled with tea bags, instant coffee, cocoa, artisanal waters and a variety of biscuits. A delightful and proper welcome!

The next morning, I packed up and popped down to the dining room for my highly anticipated, authentic, glorious, full English breakfast. All of the savory breakfast meats (sans the ominously colored black pudding that I bury in my eggs in order to consume it with a brave face), eggs, cooked mushrooms, those lovely canned baked beans, and the standard broiled tomato half garnish. (It's a garnish. Nobody eats it.) As I sipped my tea and buttered my toast, I imagined my upcoming adventure, the Oxford that I had dreamed of for decades. My hostess called the cab company for me. He arrived shortly thereafter, loaded my bags, and we were off.





We pulled up in the turnaround of St. Catz Oxford dorms, my lodging for the next two weeks, the driver placed my stuff at the curb, and drove off. Familiar folk from the Lewis Foundation greeted me with a "Welcome! You made it! You have the entire day, so go have fun!"

I just stared at them and confessed, "Well, I actually have NO idea what I'm doing. None. At all."

"That's okay! Just start walking that way." They gestured down the street. "Turn right, and you'll be on High Street. You'll find everything down there. Just be back by 5pm."

Yes, but...foreign country. Phone doesn't work. No printed map to plot my day, and I do love a paper map.

The best approach seemed to be in asking how to get to my #1 destination, the Holy Grail of all bookshops — Blackwell's.

"Let's say I want to walk to Blackwell's Books..."

"OH, just use the app on your phone! That's what everyone uses!"

Right.

"I have NO SIGNAL."

The helpful porters at the dorm desk took pity on me, an old-school adventurer. Digging deep into a pile of old papers, they found a legitimate, foldable, 4-color thing of beauty that needed no batteries nor radio signal. VICTORY.

And off I strode.



Oh, the glories of exploring with an open schedule and a map that is laden with possibilities. Combine that with the city I had dreamed of visiting for decades and I was absolutely giddy. I would leave no stone unturned. Which, ironically, brought me to my first unplanned wandering in my hunt for Blackwell's.

About a block from St. Catz, I found St. Cross Church and at the side of the church, there stands an old, unassuming, iron and wooden gate with an arch marking Holywell Cemetery. Not particularly old by Oxford standards, the site of Holywell was gifted by Merton College in 1847 to provide additional burial plots. The lure of history and poetic epitaphs drew me in.

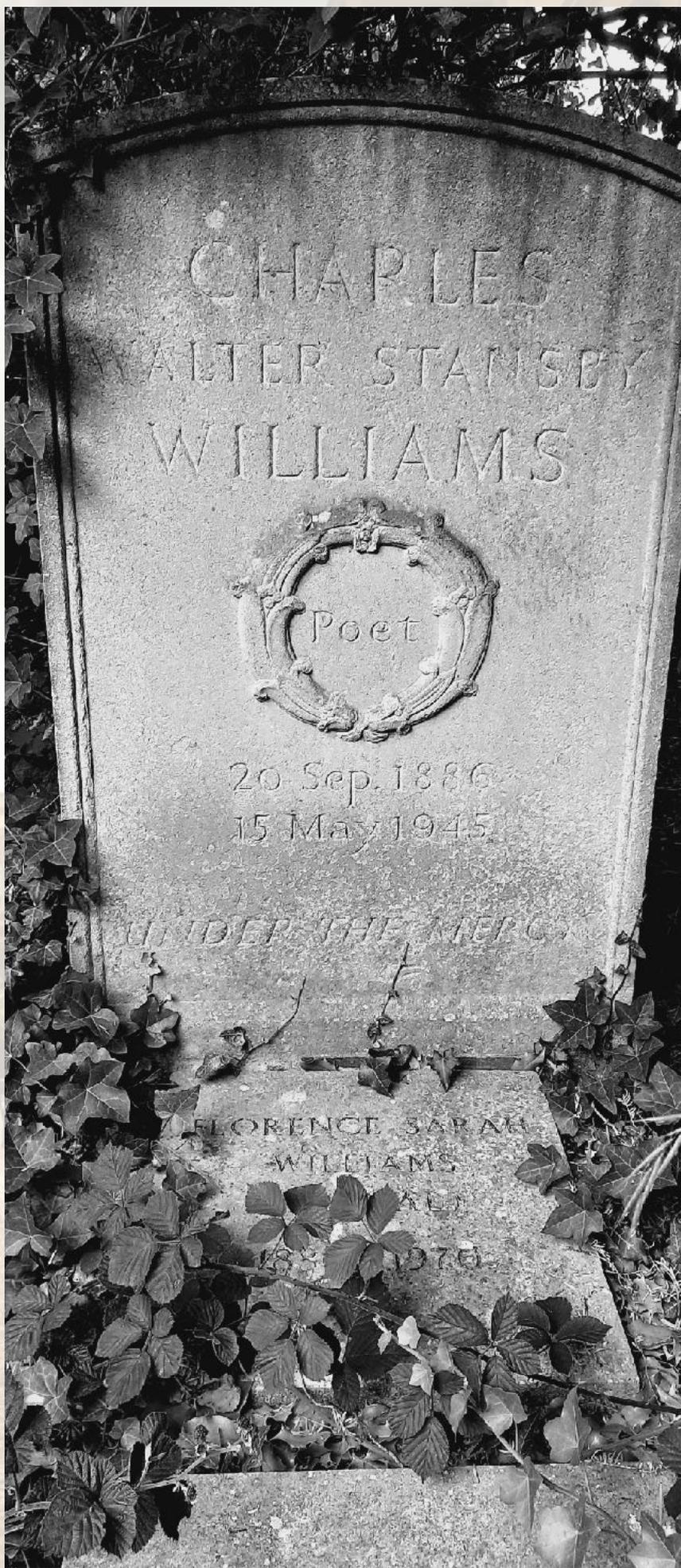
I love cemeteries and find them quite comforting — ageless, with mystery and stories writ on every stone and marker. Someone mentioned to me that two of the Inklings, Hugo Dyson and Charles Williams, are buried there, and I felt that it was good and proper to pay my respects. The final resting place of Kenneth Grahame, author of my forever-favorite story *Wind in the Willows*, is also found there.

I slipped through the arch, stepping on the footpath that was flanked by brambles and tall grasses. The beauty of the place was in the quietness and the tangle of trees, hedges, holly, and low-growth greens. A bit overgrown, but with a sweet wildness to it, where bunnies and birds found a home. Grahame would be pleased. And indeed, I found his marker first, on the right side of the path. I thanked him for his gifts of Toad, Ratty, Badger, and Mole, who first charmed me and then my children.

I was not alone. Settled on a bench and seated on a blanket in the grass, three women were drawing in sketchbooks and pleasantly chatting, as if they were at the local tea shop rather than surrounded by tombstones. Against the backdrop of the wildness of the place, I felt as if I had stepped into a Victorian afternoon. When asked where I could find Williams and Dyson, they directed me to the posted cemetery map along the walk. Hugo Dyson was first on the way, then around a jog to the left, tucked into a large holly tree, I found Charles Williams. All of the recollections I had read about the Inklings, especially Williams, came to mind and Charles became a tangible soul, a real person to me. Seeing the stone marker that was carved simply with his name and the word "Poet" was a gentle reminder of the passage of time. I pulled a stray vine off of the front of Williams' stone and spent a few minutes listening to the birds and who-knows-what rustling in the undergrowth, then wandered back past the artists and through the gate.

Feeling a bit peckish, I headed off toward High Street and picked up a bit of lunch and mint lemonade from the deli. Next door to the deli, there was a lovely shop that featured every type of fine writing instrument and fountain pen, wax seals, and all necessary accessories to please a stylophile's heart. (There are few things more satisfying than writing a letter with a perfectly balanced fountain pen.) A periwinkle-tone Parker caught my eye, so I indulged my love of such things. And it was a smallish thing that could be easily packed for the flight home. (Pro tip, never fill your pen with the ink before you fly or your clothes will become blotters.)

With pen and spare ink tucked in my backpack, I search my map for the next adventure. C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien are my favorite authors, so the dream of spending two glorious weeks treading on the same cobblestone streets, sipping a pint in the same pubs, and attending chapel services that these men also attended was overwhelming in a magical way. When I read that there was a "Tolkien's Tree" on the grounds of Merton College, I knew my next stop.





Merton College

I continued down High Street (noting all of the tea shops to visit), turned left on Magpie Lane (every street has a charming name) and followed it to Merton Street. The medieval, stone wall enclosed Merton College, so I continued past the stone arch that opened to the quad, continuing along the entirety of the wall. No door. No gate.

Not wanting to sound like a tourist, I avoided asking for help, because asking how to get to "Tolkien's Tree" in exasperated tones might

sound odd. I stared at my map, stabbing the little tree icon with my fingertip, growling, "BUT IT'S RIGHT THERE. Just waiting for me in that field!" I reversed course and walked back down the cobblestone street to the gatehouse and inquired within at the porter's desk.

"I'm here to see Tolkien's Tree, but there's a medieval wall that's a problem."

"Ah yes. The Tree. Well, it has been cut down and removed because it was old and diseased."

I sighed.

"But as a next best thing, if you take the Merton Chapel tour, you'll walk the gardens and buildings that Tolkien walked. You can see our library that dates back to 1373, which is the oldest academic library in the world that is still in use. (the guide had me at "world's oldest library.") Visit the chapel where Tolkien attended, and you can sit at his favorite table where he'd take a break from teaching."

Things were looking up.



Tolkien's table

I purchased my timed ticket and returned to start my tour. We made our way across the quad, stopping at the steps and the "oldest door in Oxford" that opened to a small room and dimly lit staircase leading to the library. I was the last one up the steps, not wanting to miss a single feature, railing, squeaky step, or ancient-book fragrance. As I stood on the creaky wooden floor at the top of the stairs, gazing at the chained volumes, stained glass windows, and ornately carved wooden accents, I thought "this is surely what a corner of heaven must look like." Shafts of light shone through colored glass and onto the wooden surfaces and book bindings. The scent of ages of leather covers, old paper and ink, and oaky dust was exactly what I'd been missing in my bibliophile soul.

Wandering through the stacks and coming to grips with the knowledge that Tolkien and T.S. Eliot had walked these very same floors and pulled ancient texts from these very same shelves was a transcendent experience. (And in true bibliophile tradition, I held an old book and breathed in the redolence of paper and ink) Our docent ahem'd and halloooo'd from the base of the steps and I reluctantly turned to the staircase and slowly walked down to join her and catch up with our group.



She guided us through brightly hued English gardens and along a walkway backed by the original old city wall. Pointing to a hexagonal greystone table, she said that we might want to "have a sit at Tolkien's favorite place in Merton to take a break." Yes, I shall, and I did.

I sat on the bench at Tolkien's Table for several minutes, soaking in, as C.S. Lewis would call it, the donegality of the place; imagining the centuries of scholars, dons, and students who walked those paths through the centuries. in times of war and peace. Countless books and exams had been labored over and

still remain as routine, steady as time. Perfectly manicured gardens perfume the air. And this magnificent school, the first College in the University, remains much as it was when it was founded in 1264, built over decades beginning in 1288.

T.S. Eliot, the Nobel Prize-winning poet studied philosophy at the graduate level at Merton during 1914-1915. J.R.R. Tolkien was a Merton Professor of English Language and Literature from 1945 to 1959. Our student docent had resided in Tolkien's rooms at some point of her own Merton College career. She also shared with us that several episodes of the

BBC's Endeavour show were filmed in and around the quad. In fact, when we watch Endeavour I'm forever saying, "Oh my word, I'VE BEEN IN THAT ALLEY (or quad, or street, or church)!"

Oxford is laden with historical gems, but nobody ever told me about Merton College. If ever you visit Oxford, make Merton your first destination and dedicate your day to the experience.

...and I did eventually make it to Blackwell's, but that's for another day.

Next up, I head out for a bite and a pint and find fish and chips nirvana.



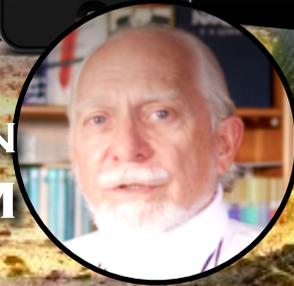
JUSTIN WIGGINS
and
GRANT P. HUDSON

SURPRISED BY MYTH

ESSAYS ON THE
INKLINGS
AND THEIR
FRIENDS



AS RECOMMENDED BY
C. S. LEWIS'S STEP-SON
DOUGLAS GRESHAM



'This new book Surprised by Myth, a collaboration between Justin Wiggins and Grant Hudson, is a remarkable piece of work. It stands apart from most other works of its kind, if indeed there are any, in that both Justin and Grant each take their own viewpoint about the complex writings and attitudes of my Stepfather C. S. Lewis, and write their feelings and ideas about the work and indeed the man himself accordingly. To our benefit, this results in all of us being able to see differing angles on Lewis's ways of writing, and why both these two men (and anyone else) can read his works from very different background ideologies.'

— Douglas Gresham, step-son of C. S. Lewis and author of *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis*.

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CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

MEL LEE NEWMIN



Humanity's worst nightmare: an intelligent alien race equipped with vast spacecraft is attacking the furthest outposts of Earth's expansion — attacking ruthlessly, brutally and relentlessly, refusing to communicate. Their onslaught is so merciless that it is kept secret from the world's population for fear of mass panic.

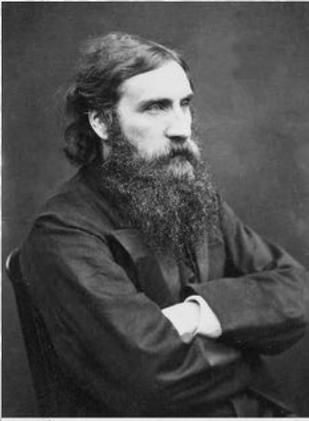
When expert linguist and political rebel Daj Dimarco is press-ganged into the desperate diplomatic mission charged with ending the aggression, he has little hope of ever returning to his former life on Earth. But when an unexpected confrontation with a member of his own crew suddenly flings him into a world he could never have imagined, Daj becomes the only hope for humanity's continuing existence— if he can somehow stay alive himself...

Mel Lee Newmin presents a story destined to be a classic of the science fiction genre: a fast-paced, multilayered adventure which is also richly textured and thought-provoking.



NOMAN'S LAND

CLASSIC MASTERPIECES



George MacDonald

George MacDonald (1824 – 1905) a Scottish author, poet and Christian minister, was a pioneering figure in the field of modern fantasy literature. MacDonald also wrote several works of Christian theology, and his writings have been cited as a major literary influence by many notable authors including Lewis Carroll, W. H. Auden, J. M. Barrie, Lord Dunsany, Mark Twain, Robert E. Howard, L. Frank Baum, T. H. White, Richard Adams, Lloyd Alexander, Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, E. Nesbit, Peter S. Beagle, Neil Gaiman and Madeleine L'Engle. ***At the Back of the North Wind*** was serialised in the children's magazine *Good Words for the Young* beginning in 1868 and was published in book form in 1871.

At The Back Of The North Wind Chapter 14: Old Diamond

After this Diamond recovered so fast, that in a few days he was quite able to go home as soon as his father had a place for them to go. Now his father having saved a little money, and finding that no situation offered itself, had been thinking over a new plan. A strange occurrence it was which turned his thoughts in that direction. He had a friend in the Bloomsbury region, who lived by letting out cabs and horses to the cabmen. This man, happening to meet him one day as he was returning from an unsuccessful application, said to him:

“Why don't you set up for yourself now—in the cab line, I mean?”





"I haven't enough for that," answered Diamond's father.

"You must have saved a goodish bit, I should think. Just come home with me now and look at a horse I can let you have cheap. I bought him only a few weeks ago, thinking he'd do for a Hansom, but I was wrong. He's got bone enough for a waggon, but a waggon ain't a Hansom. He ain't got go enough for a Hansom. You see parties as takes Hansoms wants to go like the wind, and he ain't got wind enough, for he ain't so young as he once was. But for a four-wheeler as takes families and their luggages, he's the very horse. He'd carry a small house any day. I bought him cheap, and I'll sell him cheap."



"Oh, I don't want him," said Diamond's father. "A body must have time to think over an affair of so much importance. And there's the cab too. That would come to a deal of money."

"I could fit you there, I daresay," said his friend. "But come and look at the animal, anyhow."

"Since I lost my own old pair, as was Mr. Coleman's," said Diamond's father, turning to accompany the cab-master, "I ain't almost got the heart to look a horse in the face. It's a thousand pities to part man

and horse."

"So it is," returned his friend sympathetically.

But what was the ex-coachman's delight, when, on going into the stable where his friend led him, he found the horse he wanted him to buy was no other than his own old Diamond, grown very thin and bony and long-legged, as if they had been doing what they could to fit him for Hansom work!



"He ain't a Hansom horse," said Diamond's father indignantly.

"Well, you're right. He ain't handsome, but he's a good un," said his owner.

"Who says he ain't handsome? He's one of the handsomest horses a gentleman's coachman ever druv," said Diamond's father; remarking to himself under his breath — "though I says it as shouldn't" — for he did not feel inclined all at once to confess that his own old horse could have sunk so low.

"Well," said his friend, "all I say is—There's a animal for you, as strong as a church; an'll go like a train, leastways a parly," he added, correcting himself.

But the coachman had a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes. For the old horse, hearing his voice, had turned his long neck, and when his old friend went up to him and laid his hand on his side, he whinnied for joy, and laid his big head on his master's breast. This settled the matter. The coachman's arms were round the horse's neck in a moment, and he fairly broke down and cried. The cab-master had never been so fond of a horse himself as to hug him like that,

but he saw in a moment how it was. And he must have been a good-hearted fellow, for I never heard of such an idea coming into the head of any other man with a horse to sell: instead of putting something on to the price because he was now pretty sure of selling him, he actually took a pound off what he had meant to ask for him, saying to himself it was a shame to part old friends.



Diamond's father, as soon as he came to himself, turned and asked how much he wanted for the horse.

"I see you're old friends," said the owner.

"It's my own old Diamond. I liked him far the best of the pair, though the other was good. You ain't got him too, have you?"

"No; nothing in the stable to match him there."

"I believe you," said the coachman. "But you'll be wanting a long price for him, I know."

"No, not so much. I bought him cheap, and as I say, he ain't for my work."

The end of it was that Diamond's father bought old Diamond again, along with a four-wheeled cab. And as there were some rooms to be had over the stable, he took them, wrote to his wife to come home, and set up as a cabman.



Chapter 15: The Mews



It was late in the afternoon when Diamond and his mother and the baby reached London. I was so full of Diamond that I forgot to tell you a baby had arrived in the meantime. His father was waiting for them with his own cab, but they had not told Diamond who the horse was; for his father wanted to enjoy the pleasure of his surprise when he found it out. He got in with his mother without looking at the horse, and his father having put up Diamond's carpet-bag and his mother's little trunk, got upon the box himself and drove off; and Diamond was quite proud of riding home in his father's own carriage. But when he got to the mews, he could not help being a little dismayed at first; and if he had never been to the back of the north wind, I am

afraid he would have cried a little. But instead of that, he said to himself it was a fine thing all the old furniture was there. And instead of helping his mother to be miserable at the change, he began to find out all the advantages of the place; for every place has some advantages, and they are always better worth knowing than the disadvantages. Certainly the weather was depressing, for a thick, dull, persistent rain was falling by the time they reached home. But happily the weather is very changeable; and besides, there was a good fire burning in the room, which their neighbour with the drunken husband had attended to for them; and the tea-things were put out, and the kettle was boiling on the fire. And with a good fire, and tea and bread and butter, things cannot be said to be miserable.

Diamond's father and mother were, notwithstanding, rather miserable, and Diamond began to feel a kind of darkness beginning to spread over his own mind. But the same moment he said to himself, "This will never do. I can't give in to this. I've been to the back of the north wind. Things go right there, and so I must try to get things to go right here. I've got to fight the miserable things. They shan't make me miserable if I can help it." I do not mean that he thought these very words. They are perhaps too grown-up for him to have thought, but they represent the kind of thing that was in his heart and his head. And when heart and head go together, nothing can stand before them.

"What nice bread and butter this is!" said Diamond.

"I'm glad you like it, my dear" said his father. "I bought the butter myself at the little shop round the corner."

"It's very nice, thank you, father. Oh, there's baby waking! I'll take him."

"Sit still, Diamond," said his mother. "Go on with your bread and butter. You're not strong enough to lift him yet."



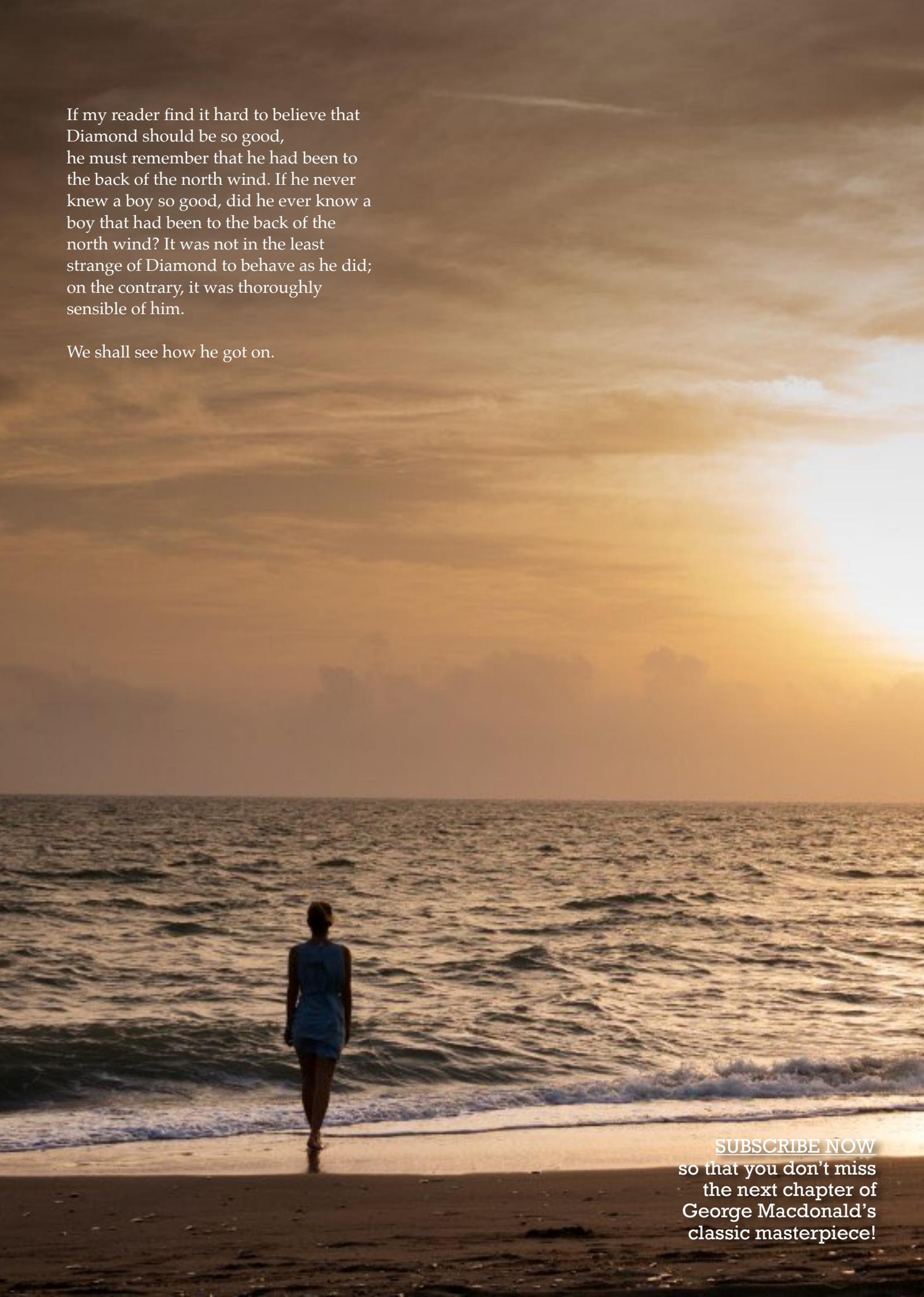
So she took the baby herself, and set him on her knee. Then Diamond began to amuse him, and went on till the little fellow was shrieking with laughter. For the baby's world was his mother's arms; and the drizzling rain, and the dreary mews, and even his father's troubled face could not touch him. What cared baby for the loss of a hundred situations? Yet neither father nor mother thought him hard-hearted because he crowed and laughed in the middle of their troubles. On the contrary, his crowing and laughing were infectious. His little heart was so full of merriment that it could not hold it all, and it ran over into theirs. Father and mother began to laugh too, and Diamond laughed till he had a fit of coughing which frightened his mother, and made them all stop. His father took the baby, and his mother put him to bed.





But it was indeed a change to them all, not only from Sandwich, but from their old place, instead of the great river where the huge barges with their mighty brown and yellow sails went tacking from side to side like little pleasure-skiffs, and where the long thin boats shot past with eight and sometimes twelve rowers, their windows now looked out upon a dirty paved yard. And there was no garden more for Diamond to run into when he pleased, with gay flowers about his feet, and solemn sun-filled trees over his head. Neither was there a wooden wall at the back of his bed with a hole in it for North Wind to come in at when she liked.

Indeed, there was such a high wall, and there were so many houses about the mews, that North Wind seldom got into the place at all, except when something must be done, and she had a grand cleaning out like other housewives; while the partition at the head of Diamond's new bed only divided it from the room occupied by a cabman who drank too much beer, and came home chiefly to quarrel with his wife and pinch his children. It was dreadful to Diamond to hear the scolding and the crying. But it could not make him miserable, because he had been at the back of the north wind.

A person is walking away from the camera on a sandy beach towards the ocean. The scene is set during a golden sunset, with the sun low on the horizon to the right, casting a warm, orange glow across the sky and water. The person is wearing a light-colored, sleeveless dress. The waves are gentle and white-capped as they meet the shore. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

If my reader find it hard to believe that Diamond should be so good, he must remember that he had been to the back of the north wind. If he never knew a boy so good, did he ever know a boy that had been to the back of the north wind? It was not in the least strange of Diamond to behave as he did; on the contrary, it was thoroughly sensible of him.

We shall see how he got on.

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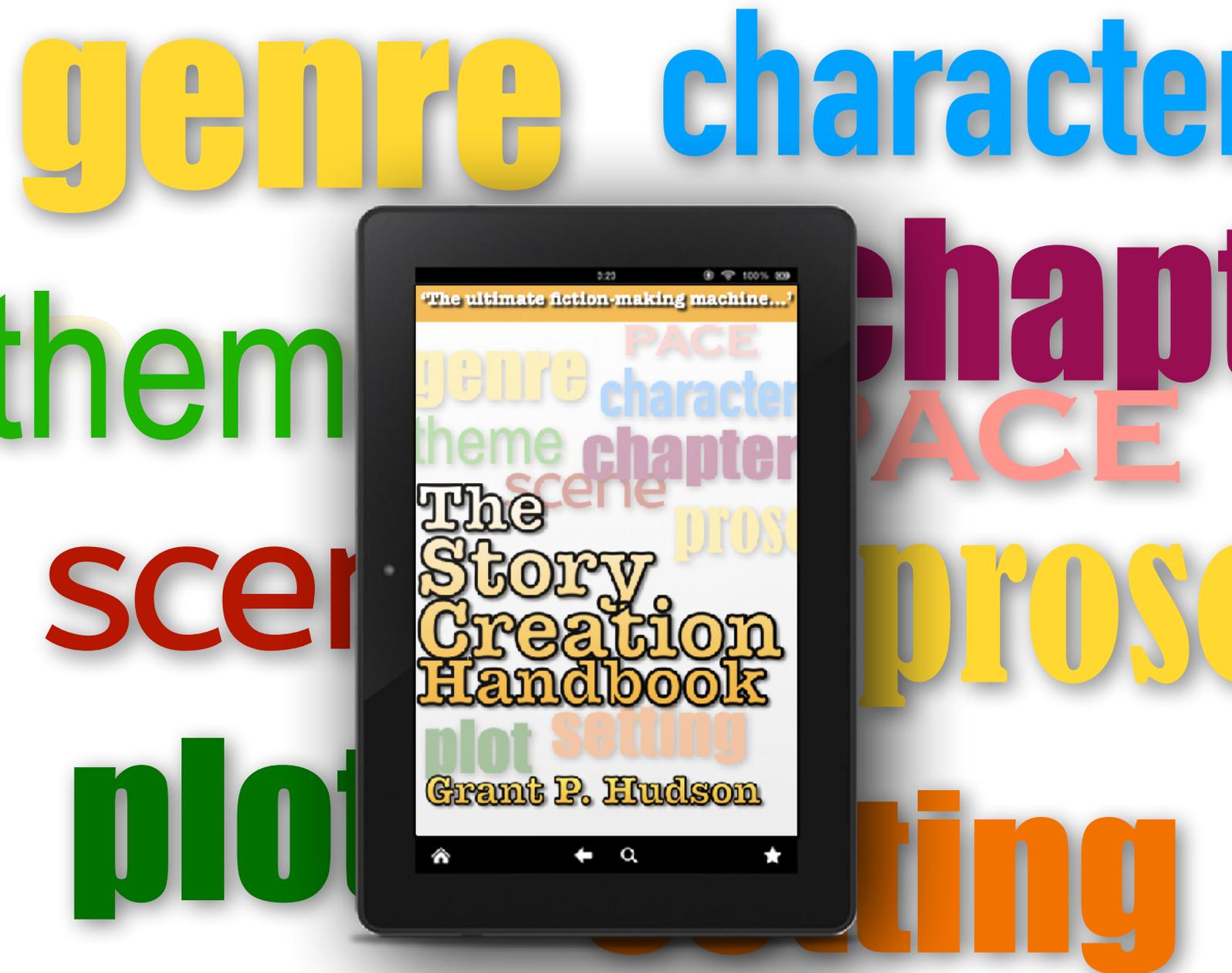
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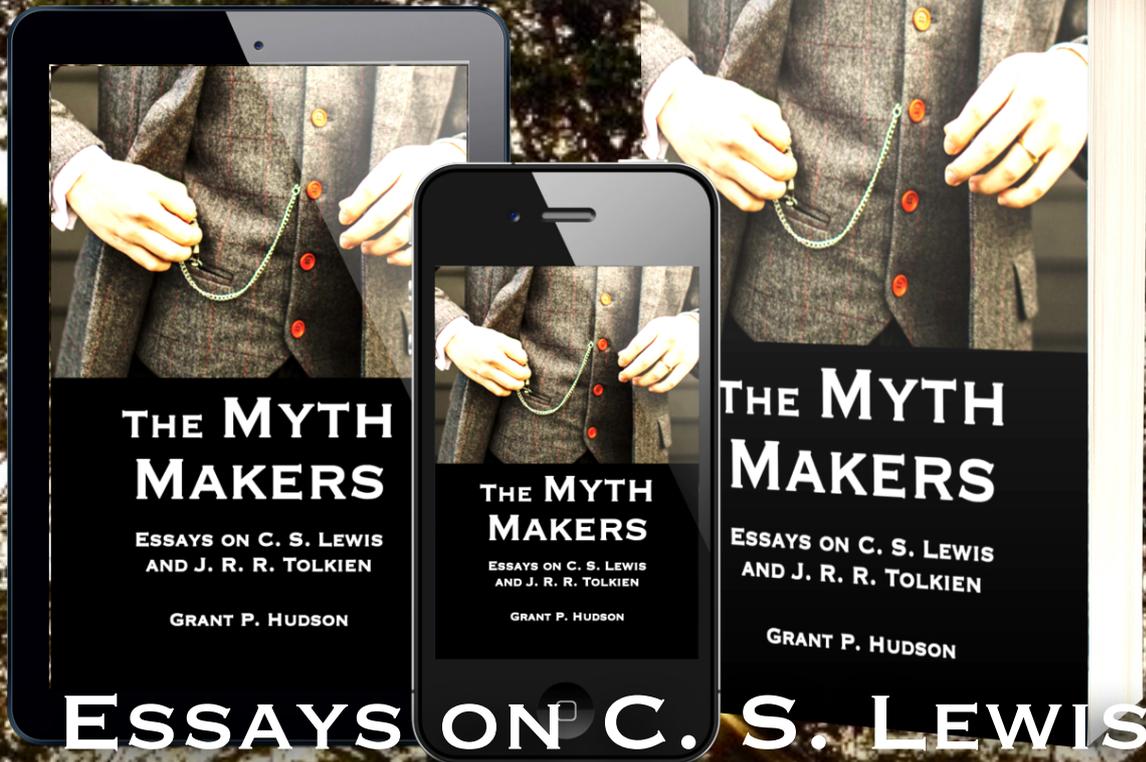
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The Fall of a King

We have seen that the powerful images and motifs of Myth can be found in different forms in what Northrop Frye called Romance, the genre of legends and tales of heroes and demigods. Examining the Matter of Britain, we detected quite easily the presence of most of the great archetypes — the Wise Old Figure, the Comic Companion, the Emerging Companion, the Aware Protagonist, the Submerged Companion, the Shadow Protagonist and the Antagonist — partaking of adventures under different names: Merlin, Lancelot, Arthur, Guinevere, Mordred and Morgana Le Fay, with only the Comic Companion missing, at least until T. H. White and Disney came along and retold the stories.

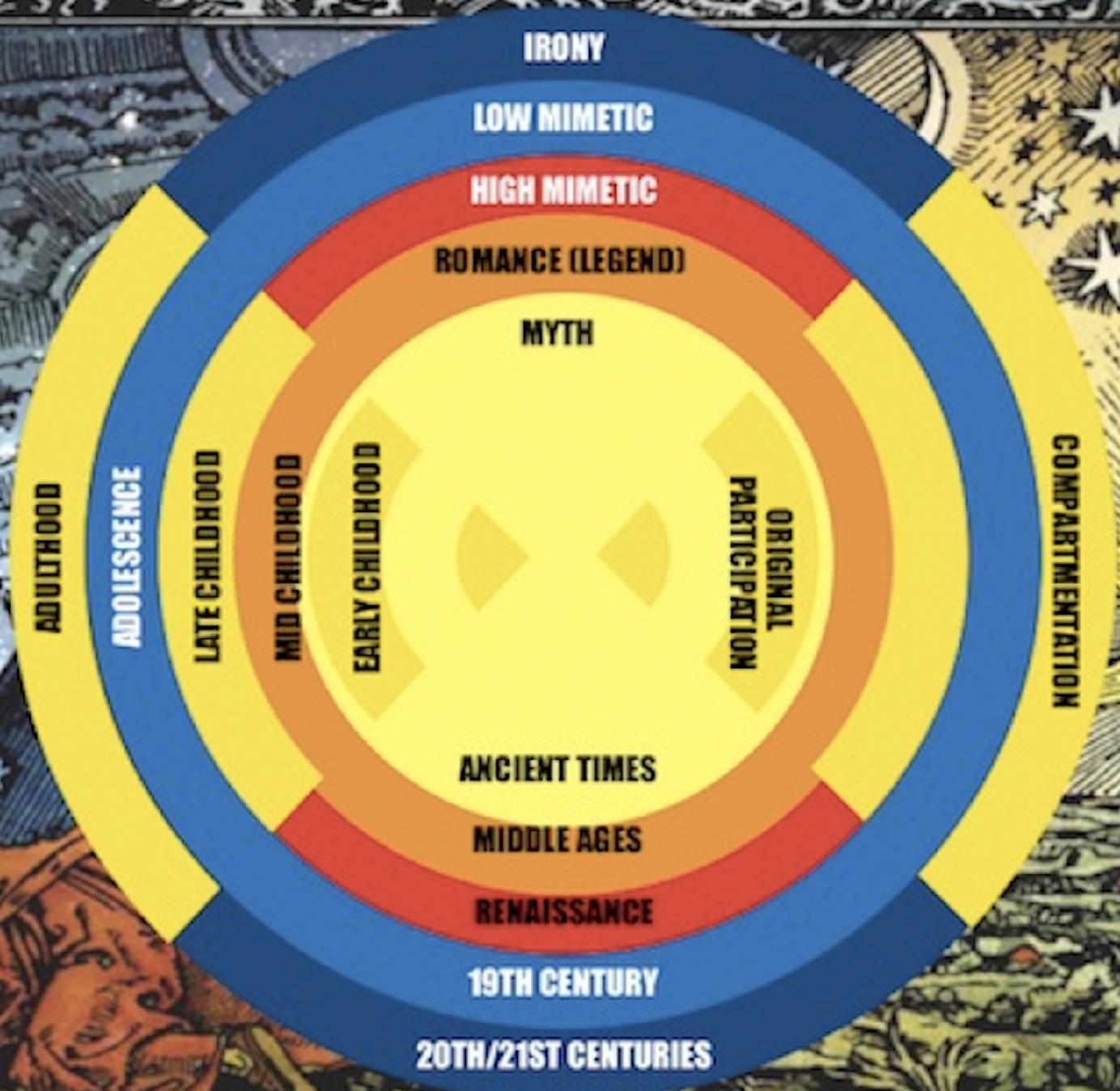


In our diagram of Frye's modes — a diagram that we have changed from one of linear historical progression to a series of concentric circles, with Myth at the heart — the next circle moving out from Romance is what Frye called High Mimesis, a grand name betokening those stories of kings and other leaders which come to us most memorably in

the form of Shakespeare's Tragedies and Histories.

Here, as Frye outlined, instead of a tale telling us about demigods and superheroes, as in the Arthur stories, we hear about the rise and fall of 'real' political figures: Shakespeare's kings are for the most part based on real kings who actually reigned. Of course, they are not portrayed in what we could consider

'realistic' ways: Shakespeare took earlier historical chronicles, which were themselves embellished and anecdotal, and added, developed or tweaked fictitious elements to create interesting dramas. He did not intend to create documentaries; he was a playwright and a master author.





And that is the point: High Mimesis, as we glimpse it through Shakespeare's plays, was another form of fiction, and as such drew its power from the same source as Romance: Myth.

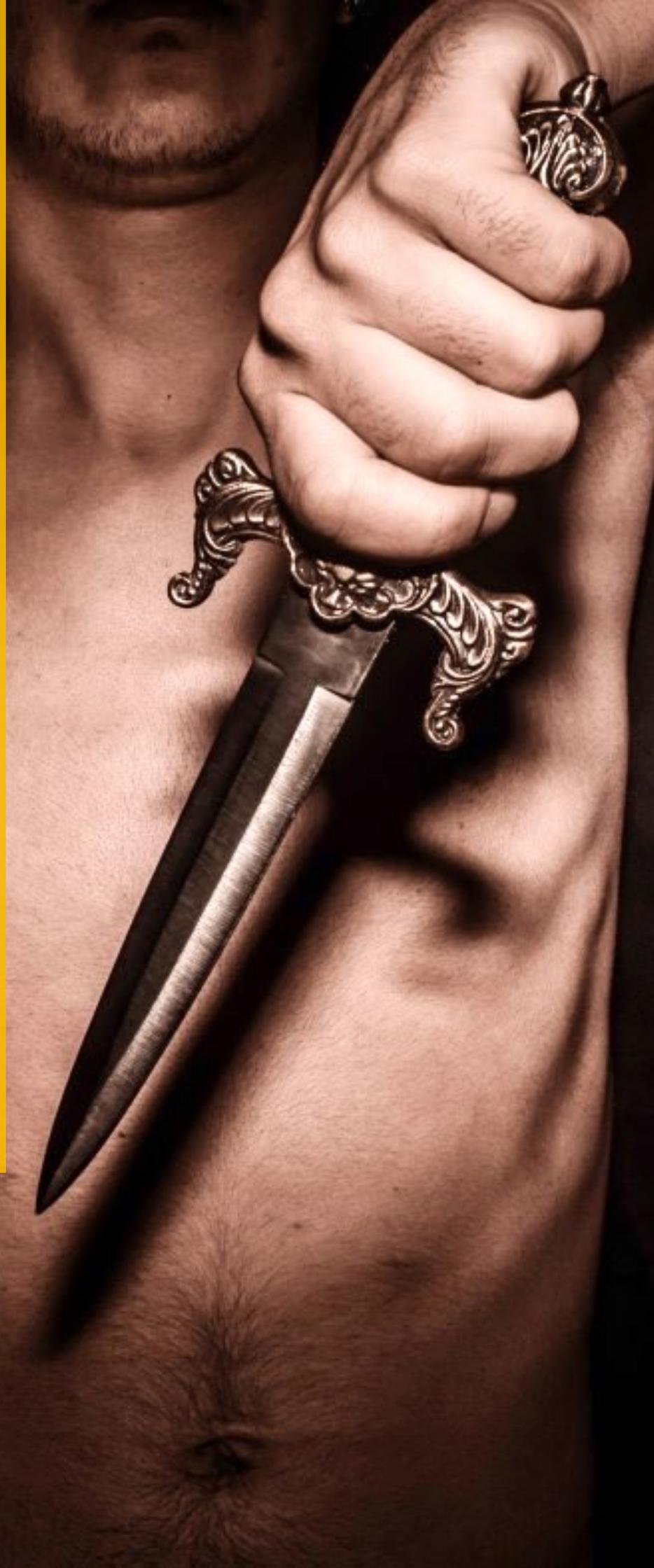
To see what this means, let's take a close look at *Macbeth*.

For most of us, the plot is familiar. Amidst thunder and lightning, three witches decide that their next meeting shall be with Macbeth, a Scottish warrior-general who has just defeated the allied invasion forces of Norway and Ireland, led by the traitorous Thane of Cawdor. As they wander onto a heath, Macbeth and his lieutenant Banquo encounter the three witches who prophecy that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor, and 'King hereafter', before they vanish — just as another thane, Ross, arrives and informs Macbeth of something that the audience already knows at that point — that King Duncan has bestowed upon Macbeth the title Thane of Cawdor as a reward for his efforts in defending Scotland. Macbeth begins to ponder how he might become king after all.

Duncan welcomes and praises Macbeth and Banquo, declaring that he will spend the night at Macbeth's castle at Inverness; Macbeth sends a message ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her about the witches' prophecies. She suffers none of her husband's vacillation, overriding all of his objections and successfully persuading him to kill the king that night in their own home.

While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth overcomes his doubts and hallucinations - he sees a dagger floating in front of him, guiding the way to the king - and stabs his guest. He is so shaken that Lady Macbeth has to follow through and frame Duncan's sleeping servants for the murder by placing bloody daggers on them.

Early the next morning, the darkly comic porter opens the gate to Macduff, the loyal Thane of Fife, and Macbeth leads him to the king's chamber, where Macduff discovers Duncan's body. Soon afterwards Macbeth murders the guards to prevent them from professing their innocence, claiming he did so in a fit of anger. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain then flee to England and Ireland, and Macbeth assumes the throne as the new King of Scotland.





Deeply uneasy despite his success, Macbeth becomes suspicious of everyone, including his best friend Banquo whom the witches prophesied would be the father of kings. Macbeth arranges to have him and his son Fleance murdered — assassins succeed in killing Banquo, but Fleance escapes. At a banquet that evening, Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost enter and sit in Macbeth's place. Macbeth causes panic by raging at what to the guests is an empty chair, and a desperate Lady Macbeth is unable to prevent widespread concern over Macbeth's apparent insanity from breaking up what was supposed to be a joyous occasion.

Growing more and more mentally restless, Macbeth visits the three witches again, who, in answer to his questions, summon horrible apparitions, each of which offers predictions and further prophecies: an armoured head tells him to beware of Macduff; a bloody child tells him that no one born of a woman shall be able to harm him; and a crowned child holding a tree, states that Macbeth will be safe until Great Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. As all men are apparently born of women and forests cannot move, this puts Macbeth at ease. But when he is told that Macduff has fled to England, Macbeth orders Macduff's castle to be seized, and sends murderers to slaughter Macduff's wife and children.





Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth, tormented by guilt from the crimes she and her husband have committed, is witnessed sleepwalking and bemoaning the murders of Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo, as she attempts to wash imaginary bloodstains from her hands.

In England, Macduff, learning of the death of his wife and family, vows revenge and joins with the rightful heir to Scotland's throne, Malcolm, and an army raised with the support of the Scottish nobles. Malcolm leads the army, along with Macduff and Englishmen against Macbeth in Dunsinane Castle. As they pass through Birnam Wood, the soldiers are ordered to cut down and carry tree limbs to camouflage their numbers. Lady Macbeth kills herself, causing Macbeth to sink into despair, reflecting on the brevity and meaninglessness of life. Still certain that the witches' prophecies guarantee his invincibility, he is struck with fear when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood, in apparent fulfilment of one of the prophecies.

The play ends with a battle between Macbeth and Macduff, whose declaration that he was 'from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripp'd' (V.8.15-16), (i.e. born by Caesarean section) and is therefore technically not 'of woman born', finally brings Macbeth to realise that he has misinterpreted the witches' words. Though doomed, he continues to fight; Macduff kills and beheads him, thus fulfilling the remaining prophecy.

Although Malcolm, and not Fleance, is then placed on the throne, the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo ('Thou shalt get kings') was known to the audience of Shakespeare's time to be true: James VI of Scotland (later also James I of England) was supposedly a Banquo's descendant.

Astute readers will note the echoes of Myth and Romance here, including the three witches resemblance to the three Norse Norns, controllers of Fate; the killing of a king; the suggestion of a moving forest and supernatural invincibility. But the play bridges the chasm between Romance and the Low Mimetic modes: none of what is suggested as supernatural turns out to be so, except for the mystery of the witches' foreknowledge of it. Characters are not superhuman, but mortal; the world is revealed to be grim and harshly real rather than full of magic, even though magic is strongly suggested throughout.

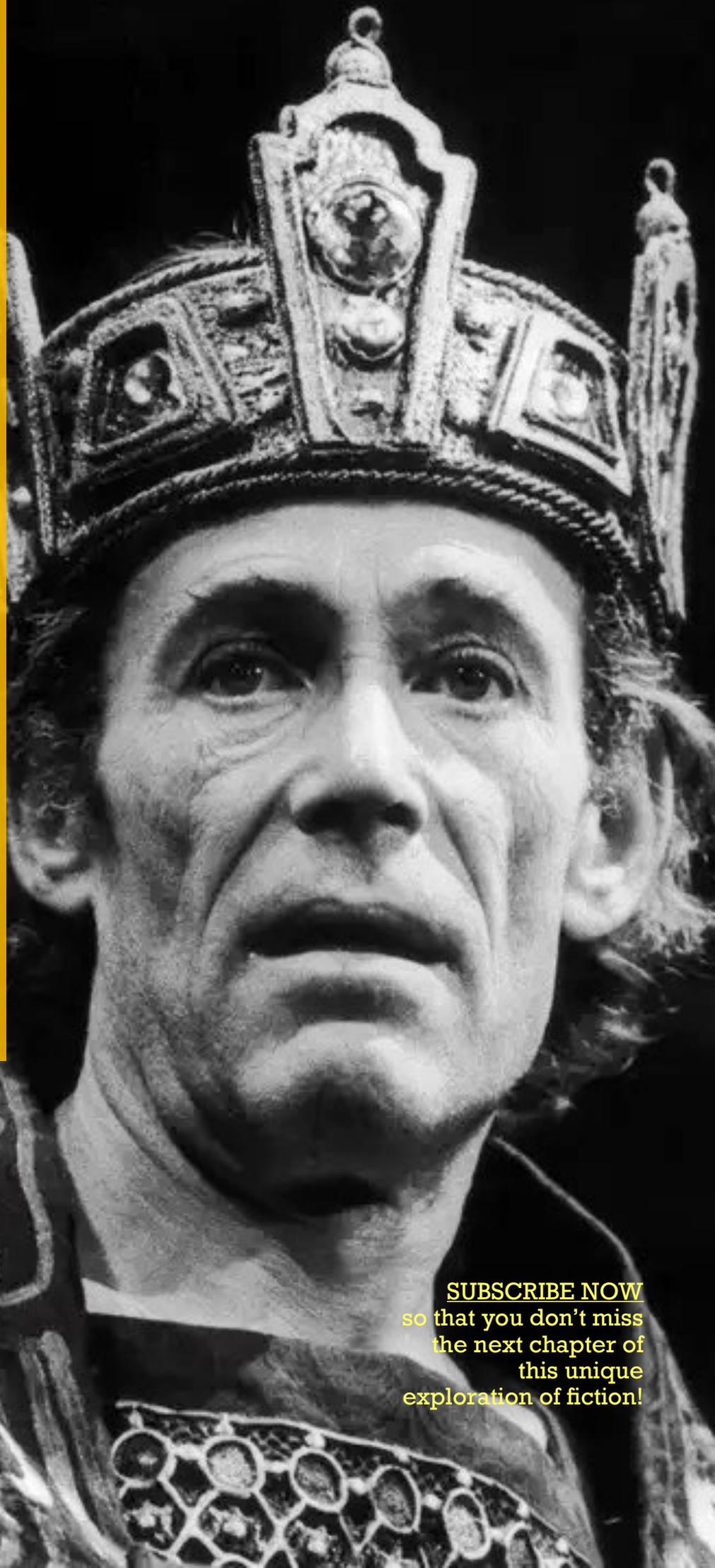




As for the Seven Archetypes, they are all present and performing their roles as they have done in Myth and Romance, given that we are in a Tragedy: a wise (but powerless) old man tells of doom; a grimly comic porter jokes about Hell; the emerging warrior Malcolm comes to his throne from the shadows; the protagonist Macbeth, instead of rising to greatness as in an Epic tale, is pulled down the wrong path by his submerged and hollow wife, and becomes a Shadow Protagonist, making consistently flawed decisions before ending up bereft of all hope and dead. If Myth gives us the two poles of darkness and light, and then moves into a narrative form as these archetypes arrange themselves around one pole or the other (as we have seen), then *Macbeth* is about going into orbit around darkness.

Macbeth rekindles something of the strangeness of Myth too with its motifs and images: bearded witches, bloodied children, moving woods, men 'not born of woman'. Shapes emerge from the darkness but never quite make it into the light. But we can clearly see that, in this High Mimetic mode, there has been a motion away from the eerie and inexplicable motions of the mythic and the colourful but supernatural tapestry of the romantic epic towards something else. Great warriors who speak in iambic pentameter and let us see inside their minds through soliloquys are different creatures to the strange gods of myth or the super-heroic knights of legend — they are that much closer to the 'person in the street', in a sense, though still aloof.

In examining the Low Mimetic, we will see whether our thesis holds true: do stories of 'ordinary folk' as outlined in 19th century novels, also resonate with the same motifs and archetypes as the myth we think lies at their core?



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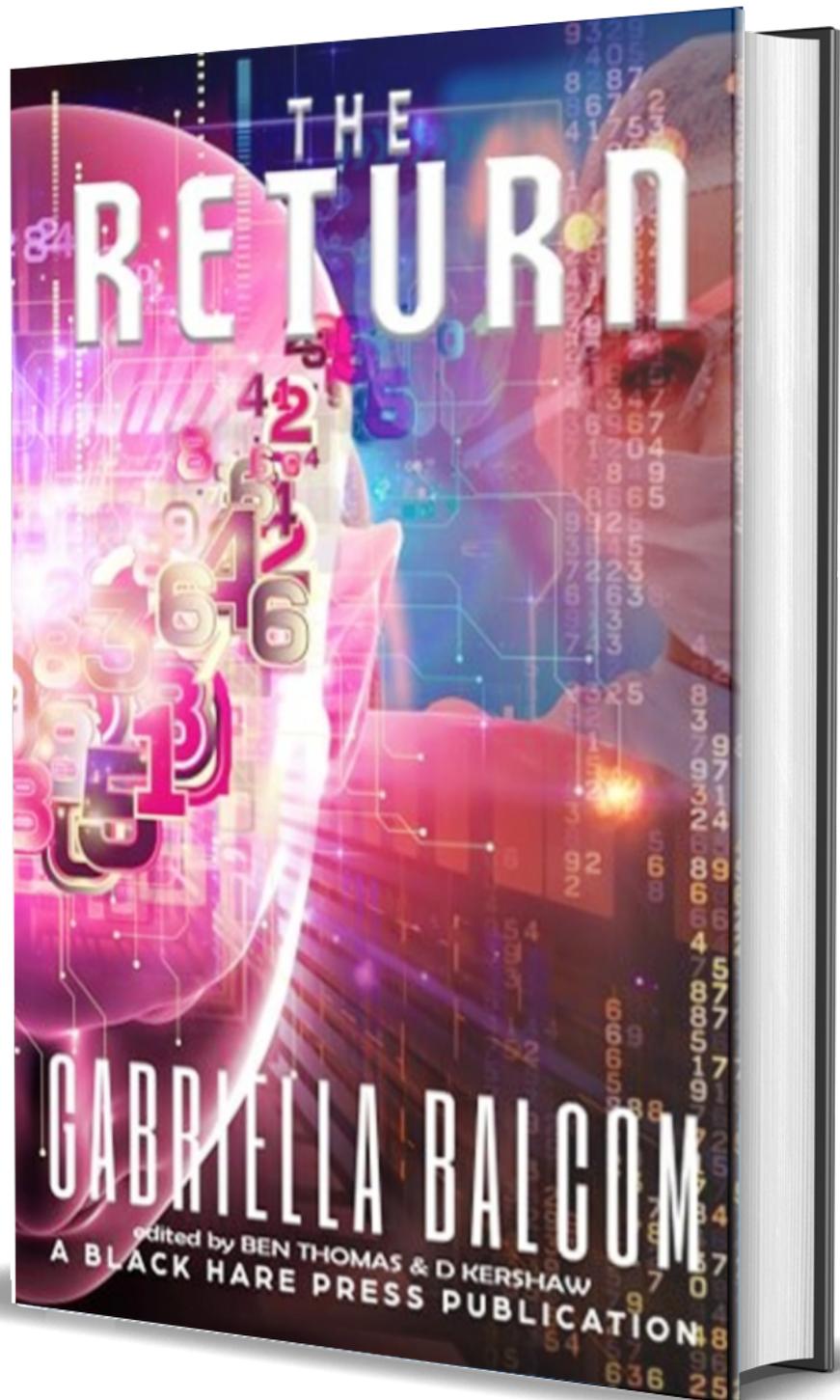
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Gabriella Balcom writes fantasy, horror, romance, sci-fi, literary fiction, and more, and was nominated for the 2020 Washington Science Fiction Association's Small Press Award. She won second place in JayZoMon/Dark Myth Company's Open Contract Challenge, and her novelette, *Worth Waiting For*, was published. Her book, *On the Wings of Ideas*, came out recently, while another is pending publication. Her author's page: <https://m.facebook.com/GabriellaBalcom.lonestarauthor>

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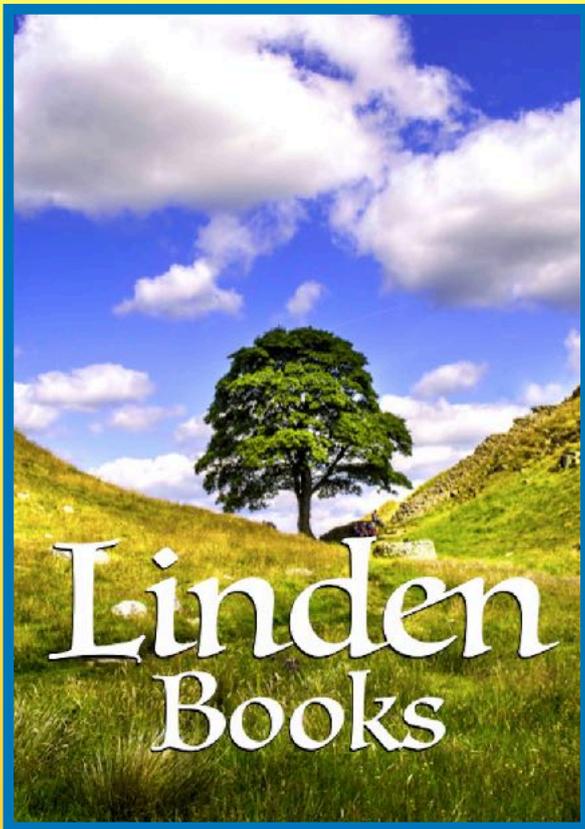
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Chapter Fourteen: The Resistive Prospect

Just as there is an enemy at the heart of your business, so there is a kind of 'enemy' in the heart of all but the most desperate customer (the one who would give anything to get your product or service).

Every other customer except that desperate buyer has at least some element of resistance in them.

This is that part of your potential customer who portrays himself or herself as self-sufficient, needing nothing; whether because they are intentionally falling themselves, or are actually ignorant of their own need in some way, a Resistive Customer is one who remains 'vacuum-free' to some degree. This is 'sales resistance' personified.





Resistance in a prospect is when that prospect pretends to have no requirements and/or doesn't recognise real needs.

As with resistance in an employee, this comes across in any kind of sales or marketing campaign as a thick shell, resistive to being sold to, almost impossible to pierce.

The prospect who seems to have no recognition of need displays a high degree of certainty about most things and seems to intentionally or unintentionally dominate you or your sales or marketing people. The resistive prospect is trying to fill any vacuum around him or her with illusions, opinions and ideas of what is needed or wanted, even as you are trying to sell something to him or her.

You will be probably already have recognised this kind of behaviour in some people you've dealt with. This is the prospect who apparently rejects logic over the top of all the evidence you can present.

Should you persist? Yes, if you have identified that they actually are a *prospect* — i.e. someone with a real need for what you are offering, even if they don't recognise that need.

Why is the resistive prospect like this?

Just as with the employee, *the resistive prospect is simply the personality which results when vacuums become invisible or when the person is trying hard to keep them hidden.*

You tackle this aspect of a prospect just as you tackle the employee: *work to make vacuums visible.*

Here's another interesting thing: just as any business breaks down into the aspects that we have discovered earlier in the Business Analysis Tool and the Wheel of Fortune, so does a prospect's movement towards your product or service break down into parts.

Remember the cup of tea in our earlier example? Well, each and every person who could use your product or service could be said to be at the beginning of that progression through the steps needed to make a cup of tea.

A prospect's movement towards your product or service breaks down into parts.





Half-conscious idea of
need



physical presence
(if only slight)



faint desire



Making a cup of tea begins with the *idea* of making a cup of tea. Your prospect begins his or her journey towards your product or service with an idea. It may be a very small and weak idea; it may be half-conscious and very vague; but for the person in front of you to be there at all, there must have been a tiny inkling that we can't even call a vacuum yet, a miniscule need, a sub-atomic awareness of something missing. Otherwise they would simply move on.

Then there needs to be someone to make the tea. He or she has to be *present* as a person or the idea remains in limbo, inside his or her head. Either they are sitting at a computer keyboard linked to your website, or they are on the end of a phone, or they are standing in front of you. They are physically *there* in some way.

There needs to be a *desire* for a cup of tea to ensure that the idea actually begins to turn into reality and there needs to be a vacuum for the person to remain at all interested in what you have to offer.

Of course, many prospects, even the ones who arrive in your business, do actually walk right by at this stage, which is why Familiarity or marketing are so key. A correct use of marketing — as we are discovering — is key to having the customer proceed to the next step, the exchange of money for your product or service.

Certain materials are needed for the tea to be made: a kettle, a cup, the tea itself, milk and so

forth. These have to be purchased. A prospect must be brought to a point where his or her vacuums outweigh the considerations about money and then they pay and become a customer.

Then, just as the tea has to actually be made, so the product has to be gotten ready.

The quality of the cup of tea parallels the quality of any product or service in the eyes of the prospect.

Quality is defined as the degree to which a product or service matches a need.





Then the item or service is delivered or consumed. If the product or service matches the customer's original need exactly, you achieve Fulfilment which results in positive word-of-mouth and possible future business.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, if any one of these

steps is not there, the whole product is not fully achieved. Now we can see that, if anything is missing, the customer cannot reach the end of the journey and the cycle is incomplete.

Into this scenario comes your nemesis, the resistive prospect.

Just as we did with the business side of things, we can break this down in terms of a customer cycle by looking at the progression aspect by aspect.

Foresight is the prospect at an idea level, it's what the prospect wants to do, or wants to achieve.

If resistance gets into the Foresight aspect of this cycle, it's pretty hard to see how the thing can progress. Every person that exists, from the most casual to the most desperate, is motivated by vacuums — the absence of something, which your business hopefully intends to provide. The vacuums include any kind of need or want, personal, family, social, material, spiritual, any kind of goal you can imagine, including of course financial ones.

The resistive prospect will, by his or her nature, crush these things by denying their existence or importance. It's an internal battle, a psychological struggle taking place largely out of your sight.

Whatever it is that the prospect wants to do is being denied. The resistive prospect is trying not to really recognise that there is a need. This manifests itself in a prospect as a defiance, a lack of listening, and a negation of what you have to say or present. No vacuums are allowed, no motion, no change.

And yet...the prospect remains in communication, however slightly

With the resistive prospect, a psychological struggle is taking place largely out of your sight.



If they had zero interest, they would walk away.

What can you actually do about this?

Well, one thing you can be sure of: if the person is still standing there, or is still on the phone, or is still browsing the website, there is a vacuum there.

The presence of a vacuum makes the person a prospect.

It might be deeply concealed, it might be denied, it might be refuted to your face — but if it wasn't there on some level, the person would have moved on, disconnected.

Think of yourself, browsing the internet. If you accidentally come across a website for something in which you have not the slightest interest — how to clean an Inuit fishing spear, for example — how long do you remain on that site? A nano-second, no more.

If you accidentally come across a website which has even the slightest iota of interest for you, what happens? You linger slightly, even if you have no intention of buying anything or doing anything further. Why? Because a vacuum of some kind made you 'stick' to the site, however briefly.

It's the same with resistive prospects on the end of a line or in front of you. If they had zero interest, they would walk away. So, even though they may be denying and defying and arguing with you at every step of the way, the fact that they are still there means that you have a potential customer. This leads into the Formation aspect.



As we have seen, the Formation aspect includes everything that puts a business there so that it can operate. In terms of potential customers, it is the physical presence of the customer. The person in front of you must have a need to be there or he or she would physically leave.

It won't seem that way to you, if the customer is being resistive. No needs or wants of desires or vacuums will be acknowledged. But they must still be there.

Your task is to use everything you know about Familiarity to get into a full communication with this resistive person, creating or spotting vacuums which align to the products or services on offer, talking about them, clarifying them, intensifying them as needed and then allowing the motion thus created to pull the prospect and the product or service closer together. If you do this well, you will be converting resistance into vacuum power.





For the resistive prospect, this whole process is a strange thing. They are suspicious and don't want to be tricked into acquiring products or services 'against their will'.

But gradually, if you are doing your job, the vacuum comes into view and grows, gaining strength and validity, connecting up perhaps with other, larger vacuums until it becomes a true force of nature that will bring your prospect and your product or service together.

Often, as soon as money is mentioned, you will get a resurgence of resistance. That's because to the resistive prospect, money represents a *solidification of vacuums*. Thinking of money means that a prospect has come to be aware of vacuums as real in relation to your product. Once you have reached that point, you simply continue to create vacuums until money changes hands.

In the Formulation stage, the product itself arrives on the scene having been purchased, and the customer now finds out just to what degree the things matches the original need. Fine Tuning steps in here to make sure that the product or service is actually going to be what the customer wanted exactly.

As we have said, the resistive prospect represents the self-satisfied self, the vacuum-

defier, unable to appreciate or denying that he or she has needs that externals can meet. But as the product is inspected after purchase, resistance tends to be at its weakest in the customer, just as the Fine Tuning aspect finds less resistance in its department. The sophisticated niceties of vacuums being fine-tuned are beyond the powers of resistance to comprehend.

With Fulfilment, the customer and the product or service are together at last, an exact match. Resistance is vanquished, the enemy has been defeated, the nemesis destroyed.

Just as we saw patterns for your business in all of this, so we can here note some interesting patterns that apply to all prospects arising from these and many other examples:





Prospects who have fewer resistive impulses by definition buy more and acquire more of what you have on offer.

A customer with no resistive impulses would purchase everything you had and ask for more.

As a prospect accumulates resistive attitudes, he or she begins to lose interest.

Or rather to *seems* to lose interest - remember, if the person is still standing there, they are still a potential customer.

As resistive impulses accumulate, the customer becomes critical.

Instead of being motivated by vacuums, the motion slow down and inwardly there's a struggle with an internal nemesis, out of your sight.

The resistive prospect's work in suppressing vacuums can have the opposite effect eventually: vacuums that are denied for a long period of time grow so great and urgent that they become desperate.

In prospect terms, this means that the resistance is a clue to their greatest weakness, just as it is in business terms.

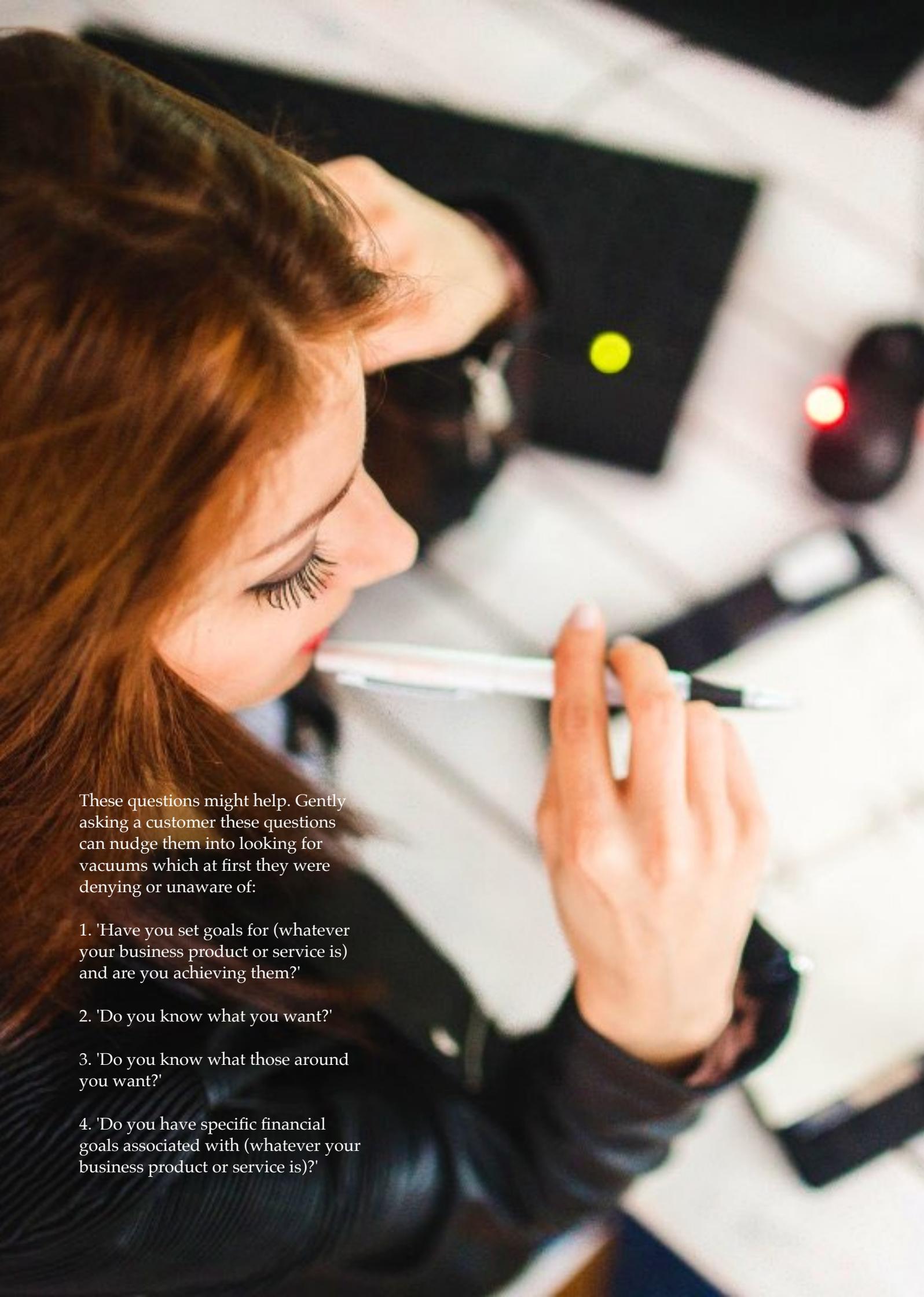
Let's remind ourselves of one of the greatest laws of the Physics of Fortune, mentioned above, which we can now apply to individual customers as well as businesses:

Vacuums grow the more they are denied.

To deal with resistive impulses in your customer, *find the vacuum that is being denied.*

How?

Vacuums grow the more they are denied.



These questions might help. Gently asking a customer these questions can nudge them into looking for vacuums which at first they were denying or unaware of:

1. 'Have you set goals for (whatever your business product or service is) and are you achieving them?'
2. 'Do you know what you want?'
3. 'Do you know what those around you want?'
4. 'Do you have specific financial goals associated with (whatever your business product or service is)?'



5. 'Are you working on new (things associated with whatever your business product or service is)?'

6. 'Do you have an idea of the kind of quality you're looking for?'

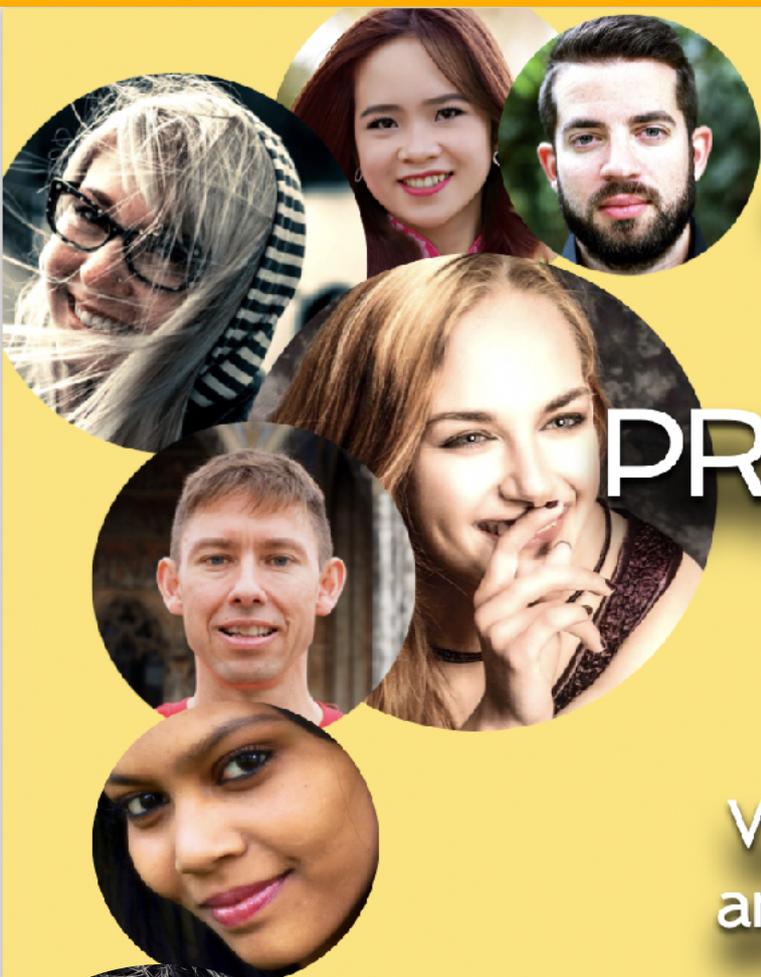
7. 'Are you looking to acquire (whatever your business product or service is) today?'

If the prospect's answers were mainly Yes, he or she is thinking in terms of finding and filling vacuums and your conversation is heading in the right direction or soon will be.

If the customer answered mainly No, then there are too many resistive attitudes there and motion will be stuck or slow. Keep nudging along the lines of the above.

Coming up soon is plenty more on how to do this and what exactly is going on here. This is another instance of where physics provides a useful analogy.

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Wilfred has always been a loner, though less of one with his late wife, Beth. She's been gone over thirty years, but he still misses her...

Cancer took her while he served in the Army overseas, devastating him and their five young children. He left the military to care for them, days stretching into months and years. By the time they left home, his routines were set in stone—work, hobbies, work... Coworkers had tried to set him up on dates, but he'd resisted. He'd stayed busy, found life rewarding, and being alone was normal. Comfortable.

Eventually, Wilfred moves to a different place, and a sweet lady named Sadie welcomes him to the neighborhood. He has no idea he's lonely, or that his life's about to change...



Gabriella Balcom writes fantasy, horror, romance, sci-fi, literary fiction, and more, and was nominated for the 2020 Washington Science Fiction Association's Small Press Award. She won second place in JayZoMon/Dark Myth Company's Open Contract Challenge, and her novelette, *Worth Waiting For*, was published. Her book, *On the Wings of Ideas*, came out recently, while another is pending publication. Her author's page: <https://m.facebook.com/GabriellaBalcom.lonestarauthor>

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Bluebeard's Ghost

Part One

by William Makepeace Thackeray



William Makepeace Thackeray (1811—1863) was an English novelist whose reputation rests chiefly on his novel *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), set in the Napoleonic period in England, and *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.* (1852), set in the early 18th century. His book *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* became a film by Stanley Kubrick.

We present here Part One of his short story 'Bluebeard's Ghost'. [Subscribe now](#) so that you don't miss Part Two.

For some time after the fatal accident which deprived her of her husband, Mrs. Bluebeard was, as may be imagined, in a state of profound grief.

There was not a widow in all the country who went to such an expense for black bombazine. She had her beautiful hair confined in crimped caps, and her weepers came over her elbows. Of course, she saw no company except her sister Anne (whose company was anything but pleasant to the widow); as for her brothers, their odious mess-table manners had always been disagreeable to her. What did she care for jokes about the major, or scandal concerning the Scotch surgeon of the regiment? If they drank their wine out of black bottles or crystal, what did it matter to her? Their stories of the stable, the parade, and the last run with the hounds, were perfectly odious to her; besides, she could not bear their impertinent mustachios, and filthy habit of smoking cigars.

They were always wild, vulgar young men, at the best; but now,—now, O, their presence to her delicate soul was horror! How could she bear to look on them after what had occurred? She thought of the best of husbands ruthlessly cut down by their cruel, heavy, cavalry sabres; the kind friend, the generous landlord, the spotless justice of peace, in whose family

differences these rude cornets of dragoons had dared to interfere, whose venerable blue hairs they had dragged down with sorrow to the grave.

She put up a most splendid monument to her departed lord over the family vault of the Bluebeards. The rector, Dr. Sly, who had been Mr. Bluebeard's tutor at college, wrote an epitaph in the most pompous yet pathetic Latin: "Siste, viator! mœrens conjux, heu! quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse"; in a word, everything that is usually said in epitaphs. A bust of the departed saint, with Virtue mourning over it, stood over the epitaph, surrounded by medallions of his wives, and one of these medallions had as yet no name in it, nor (the epitaph said) could the widow ever be consoled until her own name was inscribed there. "For then I shall be with him. In cœlo quies," she would say, throwing up her fine eyes to heaven, and quoting the enormous words of the hatchment which was put up in the church, and over Bluebeard's hall, where the butler, the housekeeper, the footman, the housemaid, and scullions were all in the profoundest mourning. The keeper went out to shoot birds in a crape band; nay, the very scarecrows in the orchard and fruit garden were ordered to be dressed in black.

Sister Anne was the only person who refused to wear black. Mrs. Bluebeard would have parted with her, but she had no other female relative. Her father, it may be remembered by readers of the former part of her Memoirs, had married again, and the mother-in-law and Mrs. Bluebeard, as usual, hated each other furiously. Mrs. Shacabac had come to the hall on a visit of condolence; but the widow was so rude to her on the second day of the visit that the step-mother quitted the house in a fury. As for the Bluebeards, of course *they* hated the widow. Had not Mr. Bluebeard settled every shilling upon her? and, having no children by his former marriage, her property, as I leave you to fancy, was pretty handsome. So Sister Anne was the only female relative whom Mrs. Bluebeard would keep near her; and, as we all know, a woman *must* have a female relative under any circumstances of pain, or pleasure, or profit,—when she is married, or when she is widowed, or when she is in a delicate situation. But let us continue our story.

"I will never wear mourning for that odious wretch, sister!" Anne would cry.

"I will trouble you, Miss Anne, not to use such words in my presence regarding the best of husbands, or to quit the room at once!" the widow would answer.

"I'm sure it's no great pleasure to sit in it. I wonder you don't make use of the closet, sister, where the *other* Mrs. Bluebeards are."

"Impertinence! they were all embalmed by M. Gannal. How dare you report the monstrous calumnies regarding the best of men? Take down the family Bible, and read what my blessed saint says of his wives,—read it, written in his own hand:—

"*Friday, June 20.*—Married my beloved wife, Anna Maria Scrogginsia.

"*Saturday, August 1.*—A bereaved husband has scarcely strength to write down in this chronicle that the dearest of wives, Anna Maria Scrogginsia, expired this day of sore throat.'

"There! can anything be more convincing than that? Read again:—

"*Tuesday, September 1.*—This day I led to the hymeneal altar my soul's blessing, Louisa Matilda Hopkinson. May this angel supply the place of her I have lost!





"Wednesday, October 5.—O Heavens! pity the distraction of a wretch who is obliged to record the ruin of his dearest hopes and affections! This day my adored Louisa Matilda Hopkinson gave up the ghost! A complaint of the head and shoulders was the sudden cause of the event which has rendered the unhappy subscriber the most miserable of men.

"Bluebeard."

"Every one of the women are calendared in this delightful, this pathetic, this truly virtuous and tender way; and can you suppose that a man who wrote such sentiments could be a murderer, miss?"

"Do you mean to say that he did not kill them, then?" said Anne.

"Gracious goodness, Anne, kill them! they died all as naturally as I hope you will. My blessed husband was an angel of goodness and kindness to them. Was it *his* fault that the doctors could not cure their maladies? No, that it wasn't! and when they died the inconsolable husband had their bodies embalmed in order that on this side of the grave he might never part from them."

"And why did he take you up in the tower, pray? And why did you send me in such a hurry to the leads? and why did he sharpen his long knife, and roar out to you to COME DOWN?"

"Merely to punish me for my curiosity,—the dear, good, kind, excellent creature!" sobbed the widow, overpowered with affectionate recollections of her lord's attentions to her.

"I wish," said Sister Anne, sulkily, "that I had not been in such a hurry in summoning my brothers."

"Ah!" screamed Mrs. Bluebeard, with a harrowing scream, "don't,—don't recall that horrid, fatal day, miss! If you had not misled your brothers, my poor, dear, darling Bluebeard would still be in life, still—still the soul's joy of his bereaved Fatima!"

Whether it is that all wives adore husbands when the latter are no more, or whether it is that Fatima's version of the story is really the correct one, and that the common impression against Bluebeard is an odious prejudice, and that he no more murdered his wives than you and I have, remains yet to be proved, and, indeed, does not much matter for the understanding of the rest of Mrs. B.'s adventures. And though people will say that Bluebeard's settlement of his whole fortune on his wife, in event of survivorship, was a mere act of absurd mystification, seeing that he was fully determined to cut her head off after the honeymoon, yet the best test of his real intentions is the profound grief which the widow manifested for his death, and the fact that he left her mighty well to do in the world.

If any one were to leave you or me a fortune, my dear friend, would we be too anxious to rake up the how and the why? Pooh! pooh! we would take it and make no bones about it, and Mrs. Bluebeard did likewise. Her husband's family, it is true, argued the point with her, and said, "Madam, you must perceive that Mr. Bluebeard never intended the fortune for you, as it was his fixed intention to chop off your head! It is clear that he meant to leave his money to his blood relations, therefore you ought in equity to hand it over." But she sent them all off with a flea in their ears, as the saying is, and said, "Your argument may be a very good one, but I will, if you please, keep the money." And she ordered the mourning as we have before shown, and indulged in grief, and exalted everywhere the character of the deceased. If any one would but leave me a fortune, what a funeral and what a character I would give him!





Bluebeard Hall is situated, as we all very well know, in a remote country district, and, although a fine residence, is remarkably gloomy and lonely. To the widow's susceptible mind, after the death of her darling husband, the place became intolerable. The walk, the lawn, the fountain, the green glades of park over which frisked the dappled deer, all,—all recalled the memory of her beloved. It was but yesterday that, as they roamed through the park in the calm summer evening, her Bluebeard pointed out to the keeper the fat buck he was to kill. "Ah!" said the widow, with tears in her fine eyes, "the artless stag was shot down, the haunch was cut and roasted, the jelly had been prepared from the currant-bushes in the garden that he loved, but my Bluebeard never ate of the venison! Look, Anne sweet, pass we the old oak hall; 'tis hung with trophies won by him in the chase, with pictures of the noble race of Bluebeard! Look! by the fireplace there is the gig-whip, his riding-whip, the spud with which you know he used to dig the weeds out of the terrace-walk; in that drawer are his spurs, his whistle, his visiting-cards, with his dear, dear name engraven upon them! There are the bits of string that he used to cut off the parcels and keep, because string was always useful; his button-hook, and there is the peg on which he used to hang his h—h—*hat!*"

Uncontrollable emotions, bursts of passionate tears, would follow these tender reminiscences of the widow; and the long and short of the matter was, that she was determined to give up Bluebeard Hall and live elsewhere; her love for the memory of the deceased, she said, rendered the place too wretched.

Of course, an envious and sneering world said that she was tired of the country, and wanted to marry again; but she little heeded its taunts; and Anne, who hated her step-mother and could not live at home, was fain to accompany her sister to the town where the Bluebeards have had for many years a very large, genteel, old-fashioned house. So she went to the town-house, where they lived and quarrelled pretty much as usual; and though Anne often threatened to leave her, and go to a boarding-house, of which there were plenty in the place, yet, after all, to live with her sister, and drive out in the carriage with the footman and coachman in mourning, and the lozenge on the panels, with the Bluebeard and Shacabac arms quartered on it, was far more respectable, and so the lovely sisters continued to dwell together.

For a lady under Mrs. Bluebeard's circumstances, the town-house has other and peculiar advantages. Besides being an exceedingly spacious and dismal brick building, with a dismal iron railing in front, and long, dismal, thin windows, with little panes of glass, it looked out into the churchyard, where, time out of mind, between two yew-trees, one of which is cut into the form of a peacock, while the other represents a dumb-waiter, it looked into the churchyard where the monument of the late Bluebeard was placed over the family vault. It was the first thing the widow saw from her bedroom window in the morning, and 'twas sweet to watch at night, from the parlour, the pallid moonlight lighting up the bust of the departed, and Virtue throwing great black shadows athwart it. Polyanthes, rhododendra, ranunculuses, and other flowers, with the largest names and of the most delightful odours, were planted within the little iron railing that enclosed the last resting-place of the Bluebeards; and the beadle was instructed to half kill any little boys who might be caught plucking these sweet testimonials of a wife's affection.





Over the sideboard in the dining-room hung a full-length of Mr. Bluebeard, by Ticklegill, R. A., in a militia uniform, frowning down upon the knives and forks and silver trays. Over the mantel-piece he was represented in a hunting costume, on his favourite horse; there was a sticking-plaster silhouette of him in the widow's bedroom, and a miniature in the drawing-room, where he was drawn in a gown of black and gold, holding a gold-tasselled trencher cap with one hand, and with the other pointing to a diagram of Pons Asinorum. This likeness was taken when he was a fellow-commoner at St. John's College, Cambridge, and before the growth of that blue beard which was the ornament of his manhood, and a part of which now formed a beautiful blue neck-chain for his bereaved wife.

Sister Anne said the town-house was even more dismal than the country-house, for there was pure air at the Hall, and it was pleasanter to look out on a park than on a churchyard, however fine the monuments might be. But the widow said she was a light-minded hussy, and persisted as usual in her lamentations and mourning. The only male whom she would admit within her doors was the parson of the parish, who read sermons to her; and, as his reverence was at least seventy years old, Anne, though she might be ever so much minded to fall in love, had no opportunity to indulge her inclination; and the town-people, scandalous as they might be, could not find a word to say against the *liaison* of the venerable man and the heart-stricken widow.

All other company she resolutely refused. When the players were in the town, the poor manager, who came to beg her to bespeak a comedy, was thrust out of the gates by the big butler. Though there were balls, card-parties, and assemblies, Widow Bluebeard would never subscribe to one of them; and even the officers, those all-conquering heroes who make such ravages in ladies' hearts, and to whom all ladies' doors are commonly open, could never get an entry into the widow's house. Captain Whiskerfield strutted for three weeks up and down before her house, and had not the least effect upon her. Captain O'Grady (of an Irish regiment) attempted to bribe the servants, and one night actually scaled the garden wall; but all that he got was his foot in a man-trap, not to mention being dreadfully scarified by the broken glass; and so *he* never made love any more. Finally, Captain Blackbeard, whose whiskers vied in magnitude with those of the deceased Bluebeard himself, although he attended church regularly every week, —he who had not darkened the doors of a church for ten years before,—even Captain Blackbeard got nothing by his piety; and the widow never once took her eyes off her book to look at him. The barracks were in despair; and Captain Whiskerfield's tailor, who had supplied him with new clothes in order to win the widow's heart, ended by clapping the captain into jail.

His reverence the parson highly applauded the widow's conduct to the officers; but, being himself rather of a social turn, and fond of a good dinner and a bottle, he represented to the lovely mourner that she should endeavour to divert her grief by a little respectable society, and recommended that she should from time to time entertain a few grave and sober persons whom he would present to her. As Dr. Sly had an unbounded influence over the fair mourner, she acceded to his desires; and accordingly he introduced to her house some of the most venerable and worthy of his acquaintance,—all married people, however, so that the widow should not take the least alarm.







It happened that the doctor had a nephew, who was a lawyer in London, and this gentleman came dutifully in the long vacation to pay a visit to his reverend uncle. "He is none of your roystering, dashing young fellows," said his reverence; "he is the delight of his mamma and sisters; he never drinks anything stronger than tea; he never missed church thrice a Sunday for these twenty years; and I hope, my dear and amiable madam, that you will not object to receive this pattern of young men for the sake of your most devoted friend, his uncle."

The widow consented to receive Mr. Sly. He was not a handsome man, certainly. "But what does that matter?" said the doctor. "He is *good*, and virtue is better than all the beauty of all the dragoons in the Queen's service."

Mr. Sly came there to dinner, and he came to tea; and he drove out with the widow in the carriage with the lozenge on it; and at church he handed the psalm-book; and, in short, he paid her every attention which could be expected from so polite a young gentleman.

At this the town began to talk, as people in towns will. "The doctor kept all bachelors out of the widow's house," said they, "in order that that ugly nephew of his may have the field entirely to himself." These speeches were of course heard by Sister Anne, and the little minx was not a little glad to take advantage of them, in order to induce her sister to see some more cheerful company. The fact is, the young hussy loved a dance or a game at cards much more than a humdrum conversation over a tea-table; and so she plied her sister day and night with hints as to the propriety of opening her house, receiving the gentry of the county, and spending her fortune.

To this point the widow at length, though with many sighs and vast unwillingness, acceded; and she went so far as to order a very becoming half-mourning, in which all the world declared she looked charming. "I carry," said she, "my blessed Bluebeard in my heart,—*that* is in the deepest mourning for him, and when the heart grieves, there is no need of outward show."

So she issued cards for a little quiet tea and supper, and several of the best families in the town and neighbourhood attended her entertainment. It was followed by another and another; and at last Captain Blackbeard was actually introduced, though, of course, he came in plain clothes.

Dr. Sly and his nephew never could abide the captain. "They had heard some queer stories," they said, "about proceedings in barracks. Who was it that drank three bottles at a sitting? who had a mare that ran for the plate? and why was it that Dolly Coddlin left the town so suddenly?" Mr. Sly turned up the whites of his eyes as his uncle asked these questions, and sighed for the wickedness of the world. But for all that he was delighted, especially at the anger which the widow manifested when the Dolly Coddlin affair was hinted at. She was furious, and vowed she would never see the wretch again. The lawyer and his uncle were charmed. O short-sighted lawyer and parson, do you think Mrs. Bluebeard would have been so angry if she had not been jealous?—do you think she would have been jealous if she had not ... had not what? She protested that she no more cared for the captain than she did for one of her footmen; but the next time he called she would not condescend to say a word to him.

"My dearest Miss Anne," said the captain, as he met her in Sir Roger de Coverley (she herself was dancing with Ensign Trippet), "what is the matter with your lovely sister?"





"Dolly Coddlin is the matter," said Miss Anne. "Mr. Sly has told all." And she was down the middle in a twinkling.

The captain blushed so at this monstrous insinuation, that any one could see how incorrect it was. He made innumerable blunders in the dance, and was all the time casting such ferocious glances at Mr. Sly (who did not dance, but sat by the widow and ate ices), that his partner thought he was mad, and that Mr. Sly became very uneasy.

When the dance was over, he came to pay his respects to the widow, and, in so doing, somehow trod so violently on Mr. Sly's foot, that that gentleman screamed with pain, and presently went home. But though he was gone, the widow was not a whit more gracious to Captain Blackbeard. She requested Mr. Trippet to order her carriage that night, and went home without uttering one single word to Captain Blackbeard.

The next morning, and with a face of preternatural longitude, the Rev. Dr. Sly paid a visit to the widow. "The wickedness and bloodthirstiness of the world," said he, "increase every day. O my dear madam, what monsters do we meet in it,—what wretches, what assassins, are allowed to go abroad! Would you believe it, that this morning, as my nephew was taking his peaceful morning-meal, one of the ruffians from the barracks presented himself with a challenge from Captain Blackbeard?"

"Is he hurt?" screamed the widow.

"No, my dear friend, my dear Frederick is not hurt. And O, what a joy it will be to him to think you have that tender solicitude for his welfare!"

"You know I have always had the highest respect for him," said the widow; who, when she screamed, was in truth thinking of somebody else. But the doctor did not choose to interpret her thoughts in that way, and gave all the benefit of them to his nephew.

"That anxiety, dearest madam, which you express for him emboldens me, encourages me, authorises me, to press a point upon you which I am sure must have entered your thoughts ere now. The dear youth in whom you have shown such an interest lives but for you! Yes, fair lady, start not at hearing that his sole affections are yours; and with what pride shall I carry to him back the news that he is not indifferent to you!"

"Are they going to fight?" continued the lady, in a breathless state of alarm. "For Heaven's

sake, dearest doctor, prevent the horrid, horrid meeting. Send for a magistrate's warrant; do anything; but do not suffer those misguided young men to cut each other's throats!"

"Fairest lady, I fly!" said the doctor, and went back to lunch quite delighted with the evident partiality Mrs. Bluebeard showed for his nephew. And Mrs. Bluebeard, not content with exhorting him to prevent the duel, rushed to Mr. Pound, the magistrate, informed him of the facts, got out warrants against both Mr. Sly and the captain, and would have put them into execution; but it was discovered that the former gentleman had abruptly left town, so that the constable could not lay hold of him.



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